

**Lancaster
University**



**Access and
Participation Plan
2025/26 – 2028/29**

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Access and participation plan 2025-26 to 2028-29

1. Introduction and strategic aim

This 2025-29 Access and Participation Plan (APP) sets out our commitments to achieving our widening participation (WP) and social mobility strategic aims to create a diverse and fully inclusive learning environment, enabling students to succeed regardless of background or barriers. Through our work we will address inequalities at every stage of the student lifecycle and acknowledge and address institutional and systemic barriers within higher education that prevent equality of opportunity.

Lancaster University is a highly ranked global leader in the provision of inspiring teaching and research. We are ranked Gold in the 2023 Teaching Excellence Framework and are among the top 25 most targeted universities by the UK's top graduate employers¹.

A collegiate university located in the Northwest of England, the University places great emphasis on a strong student experience and employability and gives students access to academics who are experts in their field. Across all study levels, we host circa 16,500 students on our Bailrigg campus in Lancaster with 137 different nationalities represented by students. A further 16,500 students study for a Lancaster degree at our associated colleges, partner institutions² and international campuses. This includes those in Cumbria, Lancashire and Greater Manchester as well as Germany, China, Ghana, and Malaysia. Lancaster has partnered with Australian-based Deakin University to establish a new innovative joint branch campus in Indonesia³. In addition, Lancaster's community extends far beyond the campus with research, teaching and student exchange partnerships with leading universities and institutions in 24 countries around the world.

The main theme in our Lancaster 2026 Strategic Plan is one of transformative change underpinned by our values to respect each other by being open and fair and promoting diversity, to build strong communities by working effectively together in a supportive way, and to create positive change by being ambitious in our learning, expertise, and action. The APP and our commitment to WP plays a key role in helping the University to achieve the goals set out in our Strategic Plan. Our Strategic Plan will be renewed during the lifespan of this APP and the objectives set out within this APP will continue to play a significant part in that plan.

While the sector faced many challenges during the previous APP period including the global coronavirus pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, we are proud of the achievements made during that time to further this agenda. Since 2020 we have worked with over 30,000 prospective students and nearly 6,000 current students from a WP background. During Covid we led on a local partnership programme 'Connecting Kids' that provided IT equipment, internet access and stationery to local primary and secondary school students who were suddenly having to navigate learning from home.

We have introduced improved financial support for care leavers, estranged students and carers, new scholarships for asylum seekers and refugees and a scholarship to support Lancaster graduates from a Black heritage background to progress onto postgraduate study with us. Our Medical Success programme has provided funds to support WP medical school students with access to equipment and clothing required for their course as well as funds to support their travel during elective placements outside of the UK.

¹ 2023 The Graduate Market report

² While Blackburn College, Blackpool and the Fylde College, and UA92 each have their own APP with the OfS we continue to work collaboratively on matters relating to WP and the objectives in each APP.

³ First intake of Foundation year students expected September 2024. First intake of Bachelors students expected September 2025.

Our Grow Your Future employability community for WP students has grown from 400 in 2020/21 to over 700 students in 2023/24. As part of Grow Your Future, students are provided with the opportunity to attend Capital Connections, a careers networking event in Lancaster, London, and Manchester. As part of the event students meet with a variety of employers and companies. The success of Capital Connections has led to the development of sector-specific events for Law and Medicine. Micro-internships provide WP students with no prior professional work experience with 20 hours paid work with a Lancaster University department. In 2023/24, over half of the internships led to more sustained part-time employment for students with the department they were working with.

In 2019, we started our award-winning Lancaster Success Programme, which has provided one to one coaching to over 616 WP students. As well as coaching, the co-created⁴ programme provides networking and social events, workshops, and action learning sets. Students also get access to an enrichment fund to support with additional costs associated with their time at Lancaster.

In 2023, we were successful in a bid to be a member of the Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO) institutional data project. The project aimed to expand sector awareness and understanding of post-entry widening participation (WP) initiatives and how institutional data can be used to conduct robust evaluation and impact analysis. The outcomes from this project are expected to be shared by TASO in late 2024.

Lancaster was named University of the Year at the National Educational Opportunities Network (NEON) Awards 2021, the Lancaster Success Programme won Student Success Initiative of the Year at the Student Social Mobility Awards 2022, Lancaster was named Student Success University of the Year 2023 by the Daily Mail and awarded a silver award for University of the Year at the Social Mobility Awards 2023.

Our lifecycle approach to WP introduced in 2018 has been thoroughly embedded into the University and our approach to evaluation and impact has ensured staff feel supported and empowered to undertake a proper analysis of their interventions.

But we know there is more to do. This new APP provides a decisive opportunity to build on the success of our previous plan, to consider where improvements can be made and align with the objectives in related areas of work such as the Race Equality Charter, Athena Swan, and University of Sanctuary. We have taken the opportunity to review the pillars⁵ that underpin our strategic aims for WP, identifying new actions within these that allows us to consider a greater depth of intersectionality within our student communities, a revised focus on a whole provider approach, and how to ensure consistent support for this work through better staff and student engagement at all levels.

2. Risks to equality of opportunity

It is widely agreed that certain groups of students do not experience the same equality of opportunity in higher education (HE) as their peers at every stage of the student journey (Gaskell and Lingwood 2022). The risks to equality of opportunity are complex and often intersect. Our APP looks to level the playing field for students by taking steps to mitigate these risks.

To develop this plan, we undertook a thorough analysis of the Office for Students' (OfS) access and participation data dashboard. Here we considered Lancaster performance against the sector and a subset of comparator institutions, as well as the intersectionality of different student characteristics. This data was considered alongside our own internal data, and internal and national evidence on the risks to equality of opportunity alongside the OfS's equal opportunity risk register (EORR)⁶.

⁴ Co-creation takes place between LSP staff, students and academics.

⁵ Strategic Aim pillars: a student lifecycle approach, a whole provider approach, consistent support through staff and student engagement (new for this plan), and high-quality evaluation and impact analysis.

⁶ The EORR is an OfS tool that identifies 12 sector-wide risks that may affect a student's opportunity to access and succeed in higher education.

We also pulled on research undertaken for different purposes but with relevance to this agenda, such as information collected for our Race Equality Charter submission, our curriculum transformation programme, and an internal audit for the Mental Health Charter. The internal and external evidence used has been presented in Annex B. The interventions proposed within this plan are research- and evaluation-informed, deploying practices that are underpinned by robust evidence, while at the same time, applying innovative approaches to ensure they meet the unique institutional requirements of Lancaster University.

Alongside this we spoke with staff, Lancaster University Students' Union, current and prospective students (especially those with relevant lived experiences), teachers at partner schools and colleges and colleagues at different third sector and charity organisations. This engagement with staff, students and key stakeholders allowed us to better understand the context behind what the data was telling us. We worked with these groups to understand what they thought the key risks to equality of opportunity were for different groups and intersections of students. This process identified risks already within the EORR and others that cut across the EORR risks. The consultation allowed us to also consider at which stage in the lifecycle these risks were most prevalent.

From this we identified eight risks to equality of opportunity that we plan to address through our plan. A detailed breakdown of our data analysis can be found in annex A, with further details on our objectives and plans to tackle the risks identified in the following sections of this plan. Table one provides an overview of these eight risks. These are not listed in any sort of hierarchical order of risk.

Risk	Explanation of the risk	LU student group with the highest risk based on findings	Context	Stage of the lifecycle this relates to
1. Knowledge and skills	A student does not have access to the knowledge and skills needed to be successful	Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Q1 students Free School Meals (FSM) Ethnicity Mature	This risk was particularly impactful on those students who faced socio-economic disadvantage. Students referenced feeling overwhelmed and lacking relevant knowledge and skills that they felt their more privileged peers had received through school/college preparation and family background.	Access Transition
2. Information and guidance	A student does not have access to the information and guidance needed to make informed choices	IMD Q1 students FSM Ethnicity Mature	Information and guidance were referenced as a particular challenge pre-entry and in the transition into university. It became less of a concern over the course of the degree as students learned what guidance they particularly needed and where to find it. The main challenge related to knowing where to find the right information and guidance and in the differences in support offered between different Y12 and Y13 educational providers.	Access Transition Completion Attainment
3. Insufficient academic support	A student does not have access to the academic support needed to achieve a positive outcome	All	Students referenced widely varying experiences of support with some academic departments offering extensive academic support that was appropriate and sensitive to their specific needs, whereas others were less supportive and understanding.	Completion Attainment
4. Insufficient personal support	A student does not have access to non-academic support and activities needed to achieve a positive outcome	Disability (mental health)	Experiences again varied and many discussed the pressure that student support services, particularly wellbeing and counselling face due to wider NHS crises and waiting times for diagnoses.	Completion Attainment

5. Mental health ⁷	A student's mental wellbeing is impacted by other factors	All	Pressures from other risks negatively impact on the mental wellbeing of students. Poor mental wellbeing can then make dealing with other risks more difficult.	Completion Attainment
6. Cost pressures	The cost of HE impacts on a student's ability to succeed	All	The cost-of-living crisis impacted all stages of the student lifecycle, influencing decisions to attend university, affecting adjustment, academic success, and the balance between part-time work and expenses. It also hindered access to internships and work experience, crucial for positive graduate outcomes, and made postgraduate study increasingly unaffordable.	Access
7. Social/cultural capital	A student does not have access to the same opportunities or experiences that are 'valued' by society	IMD Q1 FSM Ethnicity	Participants referenced the persistence of barriers and inequality faced by students due to their socio-economic, cultural, and educational background. It was clear that some students are more prepared and have access to more social and financial support from their families than others and that this continues to impact all stages of the HE student lifecycle.	Access Transition Completion Attainment Progression
8. Sense of belonging	A student does not feel the same connection with a place, group, individual or experience as others	Mature Ethnicity IMD Q1 FSM	Sense of belonging remains a key risk linked particularly to the earlier stages of the degree journey. Many students describe feeling out of place and unfamiliar with the habits and norms of university life. This was particularly pronounced for specific groups, for example, ethnicity and mature, where participants referenced finding it difficult to find others like them and to build a community. However, across all groups and intersections, the challenges of being able to afford to study and the effects of that was seen as a major barrier to belonging.	Access Transition Completion

Table 1 Identified risks to equality of opportunity

⁷ This risk focuses on the mental wellbeing of students rather than mental health as a clinical diagnosis as mental health disability.

3. Objectives

To tackle our eight key risks to equality of opportunity, we have identified nine objectives and related targets that will be the priority for this plan. We have also included a 10th objective around our continuing work to support additional groups of WP students throughout different stages of their student journey.

The data shows that nationally, and especially within high tariff institutions, certain groups of students are still largely underrepresented when it comes to accessing higher education. This inequality in accessing HE for certain groups is mirrored at Lancaster. The reasons for this lack of diversity is complex and can include financial concerns, insufficient access to information and guidance, and attainment at key stage four and five amongst other barriers. We are committed to addressing this and have four objectives related to improving access to Lancaster University for underrepresented groups.

- Objective 1: To increase the number of students from an Index of Multiple Deprivation quintile 1 (IMD Q1) background progressing to university. We aim to increase the number of IMD Q1 students at Lancaster University from 14.5% to 17% by 2029 (PTA_1).
- Objective 2: To increase the number of students eligible for free school meals (FSM) progressing to university. We aim to increase the number of FSM students at Lancaster University from 10.1% to 12.1% by 2029 (PTA_2).
- Objective 3: To increase the number of students from a UK Asian heritage background progressing to university. We aim to increase the number of UK Asian heritage students at Lancaster University from 12.8% to 16.8% by 2029 (PTA_3).
- Objective 4: To increase the number of students from a UK Black heritage background progressing to university. We aim to increase the number of UK Black heritage students at Lancaster University from 4.6% to 6.6% by 2029 (PTA_4).

While we understand that gaps in attainment at key stage four play a contributing factor to a lack of equal access to HE, particularly for those students who are entitled to free school meals (FSM), we have chosen not to set a specific objective or target related to raising pre-16 attainment. Instead, attainment raising is embedded as a key area across several access interventions and is listed as an intended outcome within their theory of change (see intervention strategy one for more information). In addition, our involvement in the Morecambe Bay Curriculum partnership (further detail in section five) will also contribute to raising pre-16 attainment through its commitment to supporting the development of staff in schools and colleges in the Bay area.

Lancaster has long held the belief that social mobility is not achieved once a student reaches higher education. Inequalities exist at every stage of the lifecycle. Ensuring that students can not only access HE but are supported to thrive and succeed once there is essential to levelling the playing field at every stage of the student journey and beyond. Again, the reasons for this are complex and barriers relating to financial support, a lack of support and not feeling a sense of belonging can all play a role. Lancaster is proud of the work done to date to address this inequality. To continue this, we have two objectives related to improving continuation and completion rates at Lancaster University.

- Objective 5: To improve the completion rates of students aged 21 plus at point of entry (mature students). We aim to reduce the gap in completion rates between mature students and young students (those aged under 21 at the point of entry) from 8.9 percentage points to 5 percentage points by 2029 (PTS_1).
- Objective 6: To improve the completion rates of those students with a declared disability, and specifically those with a declared mental health disability. We aim to reduce the gap in completion

rates between students with a declared mental health disability and the wider student population from 7.1 percentage points to 5 percentage points by 2029 (PTS_2).

Gaps in degree outcomes exist within HE with certain groups less likely to achieve a first or upper second-class degree than others, even when variabilities such as entry grades and qualifications are considered. Evidence suggests this could be due to lack of sufficient academic and personal support and a lack of inclusive curricula and teaching and assessment pedagogies. To address this lack of equality in student outcomes, we have set two objectives to improve the attainment outcomes at Lancaster University.

- Objective 7: To improve the attainment outcomes of students from UK Asian, Black, Mixed, and other heritage backgrounds when compared to UK White students. We aim to reduce the gap between these two groups from 8.8 percentage points to 7 percentage points by 2029 (PTS_3).
- Objective 8: To improve the attainment outcomes of students from a UK Black background. We aim to reduce the gap between UK White and UK Black students from 16.1 percentage points to 13 percentage points by 2029 (PTS_4).

Rates of progression into a positive graduate destination are not equal across all student groups (Gaskell and Lingwood 2022). Factors such as financial concerns, limited access to information, and perceptions of lower social and/or cultural capital can all contribute to this disparity. Whilst extensive provision developed by the Careers and Employability team is already in place to address these challenges, inequality in outcomes for Black students remains a cause for concern. To address this inequality in progression we have one objective to improve the progression of WP students into positive graduate destinations.

- Objective 9: To improve the progression rates of WP students. We aim to reduce the gap in progression to a positive graduate destination between students from a UK White and students from a UK Black heritage background from 10.2 percentage points to 5 percentage points by 2029. (PTP_1).

Objectives one to nine are part of sustained commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for WP students at every stage of the student journey and represent the progress we aim to make by 2028/29. Our level of ambition to increase representation at Lancaster and to close gaps between certain groups goes beyond the lifespan of this plan. This will be detailed in a new 10-year WP Strategic Plan which will sit alongside the APP and will be published in 2025. Additional areas of focus in the new WP Strategic Plan have been informed by the feedback we received from our students and the elected officers from Lancaster University Students' Union during the development of this APP. This includes looking at how WP postgraduate students are supported to succeed, the appropriateness and sustainability of our scholarship and bursary package, including the eligibility criteria and the level of award provided, and how we support WP students to engage in extracurricular activities and opportunities.

- Objective 10: To continue delivering, evaluating and where appropriate improving work to support additional groups of WP students such as care leavers, neurodivergent learners, and asylum seekers and refugees, to thrive and succeed at different stages of the student lifecycle.

4. Intervention strategies and expected outcomes

Section four provides an overview of the intervention strategies and targeted activities we have identified. This does not include a comprehensive list of the broader support available for students or details of all our targeted WP work, which will also play an important role in helping to mitigate the risks we have identified

and the objectives we have set. Some of this work is referenced in section five to demonstrate our whole provider approach but does not capture everything.

Please note, the inputs for each intervention strategy have been considered in the context of predicted student recruitment numbers and income for the life of this plan. We will review expenditure in the light of changes in student recruitment outcomes, targets, and income.

Intervention strategy one: Improving access to higher education/Lancaster University

Objectives and targets

Our first intervention strategy (IS1) looks to address objectives one to four by improving access to higher education in general and Lancaster University specifically for groups underrepresented within higher education. The activities outlined in IS1 will aim to increase the percentage of students at Lancaster University from IMD quintile one and those eligible for free school meals to 17% (PTA_1) and 12.1% (PTA_2) respectively by 2028/29. IS1 activities also aim to increase the percentage of UK Asian and Black heritage students at Lancaster University to 16.8% (PTA_3) and 6.6% (PTA_4) respectively by 2028/29. The activities in IS1 play a pivotal role in achieving these objectives but sit alongside broader work within recruitment and marketing to provide high quality information, advice and guidance on HE and Lancaster University and to reach communities of students across the UK who are underrepresented at Lancaster.

Risks and related risks to equality of opportunity

The activities in IS1 will look to mitigate the risks to equality of opportunity we identified as most relevant for the four groups in objectives one to four. As such IS1 will address student concerns around a lack of access to knowledge and skills, and information and guidance ensuring they are better prepared to make informed choices about the future and know how to navigate through the information available to enable them to access the support they need. As well as the direct financial support available to our students such as the Lancaster Bursary, and the Cowrie Foundation Scholarship, the activities in IS1 look to address the concerns these students have about the cost of going to university by ensuring students are well informed about the support available and how to budget. Programmes such as the Role Model Ambassador programme works with Muslim students and communities to address their specific concerns associated with student finance, loans, and interest, helping to make the process more accessible. A fundamental element of all activities in IS1 is to help students to feel a sense of belonging within higher education and supporting them to build their social and cultural capital ensuring they are more prepared for this next stage in the educational journey (Gaskell and Lingwood 2022). While activities specially focused on mental health and wellbeing are not part of IS1, student focus groups showed that the risks outlined above contributed to poor mental wellbeing by creating additional barriers, pressures, and concerns. As such by addressing these risks, we believe IS1 can also support student mental wellbeing.

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy

The total predicted spend for IS1 is £634,698 in the first year of the plan, with a four-year total of £2,625,000.

Summary of evidence base and rationale

As demonstrated in Annex B, sector and internal evidence points to the importance of developing sustained, targeted access programmes that offer students tailored information and guidance in a supportive and accessible setting. The benefits of this support can be found not only in accessing and transitioning into

university but also in degree outcomes (completion and attainment). See Annex B for further details on the evidence basis for this intervention strategy.

Evaluation

All activity described in IS1 will be evaluated. The targeted programmes will be/are already underpinned by programme theories of change and will include a variety of integrated type one and type two evaluations, namely pre- and post-activity questionnaires, creative evaluation designs methods integrated into the activity being delivered (e.g. graffiti boards, group reflections and verbal/informal feedback), focus groups with young people including sessions with prospective students and those that choose to come to Lancaster University, interviews and questionnaires shared with teachers and other stakeholders, and consistent data capture and monitoring using both HEAT (Higher Education Access Tracker) and Datafiltr. Outcomes will also be traced using institutional Admissions and UCAS data. For our Contextual Offer Programme pan-lifecycle data tracking and monitoring will be combined with data monitoring for interventions pre- and post-entry to explore the extent to which students in receipt of a contextual offer access available support and achieve success in their degrees and graduate outcomes.

Activity	Description	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
Lancaster Access Programme	Existing Activity The Lancaster Access Programme (LAP) works with WP students, with a priority given to IMD Q1 and FSM students. Working with 380 students in years 12 – 13, LAP offers students access to a variety of activities including workshops, subject tasters, residentials and webinars. Students who complete LAP are given a LAP contextual offer which is three grades below the advertised offer. LAP students are offered the opportunity to join the Lancaster Success Programme (see IS2) once they join Lancaster University.	Increase in IMD Q1 and FSM students applying to Lancaster University. Increase in students from LAP students enrolling and engaging in Lancaster Success Programme.	IS2
Role Model Ambassadors	Existing Activity Role Model Ambassadors (RMA) matches young people and communities from UK Asian backgrounds with RMA Ambassadors from similar backgrounds. A particular focus is given to UK Asian female students. The activities are co-created with RMA ambassadors and the community to provide workshops on different topics and follow-up visits to campus that address the specific issues raised during the workshops and to explore a broad range of subject areas. The programme works with around 200 year 8 – 13 students, their families and community leaders. Work has previously focused on the Northwest but will look to expand to other areas of the UK during the life of this plan. As part of expansion plans from RMA, we are currently speaking with relevant charities and third sector organisations about collaboration and partnerships.	Increase in UK Asian students applying to Lancaster University. Increase in UK Asian students placed at Lancaster University. Increase in UK Asian female students applying to and placed at Lancaster University.	IS3 and IS4

Uncover Progress Programme	New activity To support with the objectives set out in this plan, we will be creating a new multi-strand programme of support for UK Black students. The activities in our Uncover Progress (UP) Programme are being co-created with prospective and current Black students and third sector and charity groups. This programme has been informed by research we undertook in 2023 with students and parents from this community and the proposals drafted by Lancaster student interns with lived experience. Activities will include residential visits to campus, workshops and webinars, and a mentoring programme. In addition, in 2024 we launched our Cowrie Foundation Scholarship offering one UG UK Black student from a low-income household with a tuition fee waiver and a bursary towards their living costs. We are currently committed to working with Cowrie Foundation for a period of ten years in the first instance. The Uncover Progress Programme includes collaborative working/delivery with third sector and charity organisations.	Increase in UK Black students applying to Lancaster University. Increase in UK Black students placed at Lancaster University.	IS3 and IS4
Discover Network	Revised activity Our Discover Network will offer an introduction to HE, improve awareness of subjects beyond those taught on the school curriculum and supports students to build the skills necessary to succeed in their current studies and once they enter HE. Via online learning, in school workshops and campus visits, the Discover Networks will work with 300 students in years 8 to 11 from schools with a high proportion of IMD Q1 and/or FSM students. Particular focus will be given to the engagement of White males from low-income backgrounds. The Discover Network will include collaborative working with our UniConnect partners (Hello Future and Future U), the Morecambe Bay Curriculum partnership, and teachers.	Increase in engagement with schools with a high proportion of FSM students. Increase engagement in activities by White males from low-income backgrounds. Increase in IMD Q1 and FSM students from the Discover Network applying for the Lancaster Access Programme. Increase in FSM and IMD Q1 students applying for Lancaster University.	IS3 and IS4

Early Years Interventions	Revised activity Working with WP students in years 3 to 9 in our champion partner schools (partner schools with a high proportion of IMD Q1 and/or FSM students), our Early Years Interventions utilise a longitudinal approach to support those in early years education to build awareness of HE, create a sense of belonging, empower young people to value their community and culture and to bridge the gap between their experience and their more advantaged peers. Using Lancaster and community role models, day visits to campus and key skills workshops the programme works with a network of 16 champion schools. Focus will be given to engagement of White males from low-income backgrounds in this activity. Our Early Year Interventions work collaboratively with Morecambe Bay Curriculum partnership, the Lancaster Youth Challenge, Boys Impact Coalition for Lancashire and Cumbria, and our UniConnect partners (Hello Future and Future U).	Increase in engagement with local schools with a high proportion of FSM students. Increase engagement in activities by White males from low-income backgrounds. Increase in IMD Q1 and FSM students from our champion partner schools applying for the Lancaster Access Programme. Increase in FSM and IMD Q1 students applying for Lancaster University.	
Contextual Offer Programme	Existing activity Students eligible for FSM and care experienced students will be automatically offered a contextual offer two grades below our advertised grades. Contextual offer students are also offered a place on the Lancaster Success Programme (see IS2) once they join Lancaster University.	Increase in FSM and care experienced students applying to Lancaster University. Increase in FSM and care experienced placed at Lancaster University.	

Table 2 Activities for intervention strategy one

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
LAP	Increase in IMD Q1 and FSM students applying to Lancaster University. Increase in students from LAP students enrolling and engaging in LSP.	Pre- and post-activity questionnaires (type one and two); process evaluation utilising creative evaluation methods (type one); focus group with participants currently and historically engaged in the LAP (type one). HEAT data tracking, Datafiltr and UCAS/Institutional admissions data (type two).	Annual programme impact report; presentations at relevant conferences and events (e.g. NEON and WONKHE conferences); Three-year impact study published on University website.
RMA	Increase in UK Asian students applying to Lancaster University. Increase in UK Asian students placed at Lancaster University. Increase in UK Asian female students applying to and placed at Lancaster University.	Pre- and post-activity questionnaires (type one and two); process evaluation utilising creative evaluation methods (type one); focus group with participants currently and historically engaged in RMA and the student ambassadors (type one). HEAT data tracking, Datafiltr and UCAS/Institutional admissions data (type two).	Annual programme impact report; presentations at relevant conferences and events (e.g. NEON and WONKHE conferences); relevant publications drawing on evidence compiled through focus groups either shared via the University website or practitioner/academic journals.
UP Programme	Increase in UK Black students applying to Lancaster University Increase in UK Black students placed at Lancaster University	Pre- and post-activity questionnaires (type one and two); process evaluation utilising creative evaluation methods (type one); focus group with participants currently and historically engaged in UP (type one); focus groups with student ambassadors (type one). HEAT data tracking, Datafiltr and UCAS/Institutional admissions data (type two). Three-year quasi-experimental design (modelled on sector studies delivered by TASO, in particular work on small cohorts) (type three).	Annual programme impact report; presentations at relevant conferences and events (e.g. NEON and WONKHE conferences); Three-year study published on University website and through relevant academic/practitioner journals and publication pathways.

Discover Network	Increase in engagement with local schools with a high FSM % Increase engagement in activities by White males from low-income backgrounds. Increase in students from IMD Q1 and FSM from the Discover Network applying for the Lancaster Access Programme Increase in students from FSM and IMD Q1 applying for Lancaster University.	Pre- and post-activity questionnaires (type one and two); process evaluation utilising creative evaluation methods (type one); focus groups with participants and teachers currently and historically engaged in Discover (type one). HEAT data tracking, Datafiltr and UCAS/Institutional admissions data (type two).	Annual programme impact report; presentations at relevant conferences and events (e.g. NEON and WONKHE conferences); Three-year impact study published on university website.
Early Years Interventions	Increase in engagement with local schools with a high FSM % Increase engagement in activities by White males from low-income backgrounds. Increase in IMD Q1 and FSM students from our champion partner schools applying for the Lancaster Access Programme. Increase in students from FSM and IMD Q1 applying for Lancaster University.	Pre- and post-activity (type one and two); process evaluation utilising creative evaluation methods (type one); focus group with participants currently and historically engaged in the LAP (type one). HEAT data tracking and UCAS/Institutional admissions data (type two).	Annual programme impact report; presentations at relevant conferences and events (e.g. NEON and WONKHE conferences).

Contextual Offers	Increase in FSM and Care Experienced students applying to Lancaster University Increase in FSM and Care Experienced students placed at Lancaster University	UCAS/Institutional admissions data. Post-entry institutional data monitoring, including engagement, demographic and outcomes data.	Annual impact reports and data monitoring reviews. Presentation of findings at relevant committees and meetings.
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Table 3 Evaluation plans for intervention strategy one

Intervention Strategy Two: Improving Completion Rates

Objectives and targets

While IS1 focused on supporting students to access higher education and Lancaster University, our next three intervention strategies focus on supporting students once they have arrived at Lancaster. Specifically, intervention strategy two (IS2) looks to address objectives five and six by improving the completion rates of mature students and those with a declared mental health disability. The activities outlined in IS2 will support Lancaster to reach its target of reducing the gap in completion rates between mature students (aged 21 and over at the point of entry) and young students (aged under 21 at the point of entry) to 5 percentage points by 2028/29 (PTS_1) and to reducing the gap in completion rates between students with a declared mental health disability and the wider student population to 5 percentage points by 2028/29 (PTS_2).

Risks and related risks to equality of opportunity

The activities in IS2 will look to mitigate the risks to equality of opportunity we identified as most relevant for the two groups mentioned in objectives five and six at the completion stage of the student journey. As such IS2 will address student concerns around a lack of access to information and guidance ensuring they know how to navigate through the information available to enable them to access the support they need. IS2 also looks to address the lack of sufficient academic and personal support reported by these groups. While not detailed in IS2 the University has a broad range of support including scholarships, bursaries, and hardship funds as well as a Student Money Advisor who can support with financial concerns and budgeting to help address the risks associated with cost pressures faced by WP groups. A fundamental element of all activities in IS2 is to help students to feel a sense of belonging within higher education and supporting them to build their social and cultural capital ensuring they feel more prepared for this next stage in their educational journey. While activities specially focused on mental health and wellbeing in IS2 are focused on support for those with a declared mental health disability, student focus groups showed that for other student groups the risks outlined above contributed to poor mental wellbeing by creating additional barriers, pressures, and concerns. As such by addressing these risks, we believe IS2 can also support student mental wellbeing for a wider group of WP students.

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy

The predicted spend for IS2 is £583,952 in the first year of the plan, with a four-year total of £2,429,000.

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Differences in completion rates can occur for a variety of reasons and very often differ between groups of students. Mature students and students with a declared disability are two groups identified as particularly at risk at Lancaster and the evidence base for how to develop and design appropriate interventions to improve outcomes for these groups is significant (see Annex B). Innovative work led by Lancaster University in the development of sustained, longitudinal programmes of support, for example, the Lancaster Success Programme and Wellbeing Partnership support, highlights the value of providing targeted and well-resourced preventative interventions, which can help address problems before they reach crisis point. Evidence also points to the benefits of adopting a participatory and collaborative approach to student support development through initiatives such as reverse mentoring and student panels to help shape and inform approaches to the support the University provides, ensuring it is suitable and accessible to all students. See Annex B for detailed evidence base.

Evaluation

The evaluation of post-entry activities benefits from access to comprehensive institutional data that allow for the tracking of engagement and outcomes over the course of the degree. All post-entry WP activities are required to record student engagement and share this with the Evaluation and Impact team to facilitate long-term data monitoring, tracking and impact assessment. Additionally, all activities are required to produce a theory of change and conduct relevant evaluations, including pre- and post-activity questionnaires, focus groups, interviews, and other relevant process evaluations. Several institutional databases for tracking and monitoring engagement are in development. Where such systems become available, data monitoring will transfer to new systems.

Activity	Description	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
Lancaster Success Programme	Existing activity The Lancaster Success Programme (LSP) is a co-created programme that utilises a coaching-led approach to support students. Students eligible for the LSP include contextual offer holders, mature students, LAP participants, and recipients of the Sanctuary Scholarship (asylum seekers and refugees). The LSP works with 380 students each year. Alongside coaching students have access to action learning sets, peer support sessions, networking and social events, and an enrichment fund. The LSP includes the LSP Mature which is designed to offer increased provisions of tailored interventions that have been identified as most impactful to mature students, namely one-to-one coaching, action learning sets, and social and networking events. Where appropriate this will be expanded to support other WP groups. The LSP includes collaborative working with Inclusive Futures.	Improved continuation and retention rates for target students. Improved attainment rates for target students. Improved completion and progression rates for target students.	IS1, IS3 and IS4
Reverse Mentoring	New activity Our current reverse mentoring programme matches students from a UK Asian, Black, or other ethnic background with senior academics. We will expand this programme to include groups of students such as disabled students, mature students, and those from low-income households. The programme will work with up to 10 students from each additional student group and five members of staff.	Improved awareness of the lived experiences of learning and studying as a student from various WP communities. Staff take a more inclusive approach to the designing and delivering of teaching and learning activities.	IS3 and IS4

Exercise Referral Programme	New activity This pilot programme will support WP students with low impact mental wellbeing issues to access university sports facilities via a targeted programme to enable proactive management of wellbeing issues and to promote positive wellbeing.	Improved continuation and completion rates for students.	IS3, IS4
Wellbeing and Inclusion Partnerships	New activity The new Wellbeing and Inclusion Partnerships bring colleagues in student wellbeing services together with academic departments to introduce Wellbeing into the Curriculum and promote student uptake of appropriate mental wellbeing or mental health / disability support.	Increased understanding of presenting issues within student populations. Increased uptake of support amongst low participation groups in services. Improved continuation and completion rates for students.	IS3, IS4
Wellbeing Information, Advice and Guidance	New activity A new cross-university pro-active wellbeing intervention programme will provide one-to-one support, peer-led social events, orientation, and transitions support to encourage and support WP students in areas such as wellbeing, mental health, and disability support.	Increased awareness and use of support services. Improved continuation and completion rates for students.	

Table 4 Activities for intervention strategy two

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Lancaster Success Programme	Improved continuation and retention rates for target students. Improved attainment rates for target students. Improved completion and progression rates for target students.	Snapshot Exercise (longitudinal evaluation, comprising baseline, in-year and end of programme questionnaires) (type one and two); pre- and post-event questionnaires and creative evaluations (type one and two); focus groups linked to sub-groups (e.g. mature, disability, withdrawn, students and FSM) (type one); in-year engagement tracking and monitoring; three-year quasi-experimental design study to explore causal relationship between engagement and student outcomes (type three), building on TASO IDU Impact Evaluation. Engagement data; institutional data sources, including demographic and outcomes data.	Annual impact reports published on university website, presentations at relevant conferences and networks, publication of three-year impact study using quasi-experimental design, published on university website.
Reverse Mentoring	Improved awareness by staff of student learning and studying experiences. Inclusive approaches to the design and delivery of teaching and learning activities.	Focus groups with students and staff prior to, during and after the intervention (type one); reflective journaling by both staff and students (type two); interviews and post intervention questionnaire (type two).	Annual impact report, presentation to relevant leadership and staff committees and meetings, distribution of interviews with participants.
Exercise Referral Programme	Improved continuation and completion rates for students.	Questionnaires utilising Wellbeing scales (WEWBS) to measure participant impact; Physical health scales to measure impact on participant physical health and Goal setting scales (GBO) to measure degree to which programme facilitates behaviour change and self-efficacy through behaviours (type one and two).	Study impact report on the evaluation of the effect of physical health on mental health and conclusion of intervention. Dissemination of intervention and impact at AMOSSHE and other such sector-wide conferences.

Wellbeing and Inclusion partnerships	Increased understanding of presenting issues within student populations. Increased uptake of support amongst low participation groups in services. Improved continuation and completion rates for students.	Analysis of referral rates to specialist services (type two); monitoring of uptake of individual adjustments including extension requests (type two); exceptional circumstances, intercalation (type two). Postvention questionnaires and student panels/focus groups (type one and two).	Annual impact reports published on university website, presentations at relevant conferences and networks. Analysis and evaluation of introducing Wellbeing in the Curriculum report.
Wellbeing information, advice, and guidance	Increased awareness and use of support services. Improved continuation and completion rates for students	Engagement data with specialist services (type two); Continuation rates for students and access to key events such as graduation (type two); Lived experience advisory panels (type one).	Annual impact reports published on university website, presentations at relevant conferences and networks.

Table 5 Evaluation plans for intervention strategy two

Intervention Strategy Three: Improving Degree Outcomes

Objectives and targets

To tackle the inequality in degree outcomes for certain groups of students, intervention strategy three (IS3) will look to address objectives seven and eight. The activities within IS3, alongside other areas of work detailed within section five on our 'Whole Provider Approach' are designed to reduce the gap in degree outcomes between UK White students and UK students from an Asian, Black, or other ethnic background to seven percentage points by 2028/29 (PTS_3) and between UK White and UK Black students to 13 percentage points by 2028/29 (PTS_4). Alongside the activities in IS3, information on our curriculum transformation programme (CTP) can be found in section five. With its cross-institutional remit and focus on developing an inclusive and more streamlined educational experience, the institution CTP will support our efforts to address differences in degree outcomes for key groups such as those from ethnic minority backgrounds. Achieving positive outcomes in attainment requires a whole institutional approach, incorporating pedagogical practices, staff knowledge and awareness, curriculum design and educational policy at an institutional, faculty and departmental level (see Annex B).

Risks and related risks to equality of opportunity

The activities in IS3 will look to mitigate the risks to equality of opportunity we identified as most relevant for the two groups mentioned in objectives seven and eight. As such IS3 will address student concerns around a lack of access to information and guidance ensuring they know how to navigate through the information available to enable them to access the support they need. IS3 also looks to address the lack of sufficient academic and personal reported by these groups. While not detailed in IS3 the University has a broad range of support including scholarships, bursaries, and hardship funds as well as a Student Money Advisor who can support with financial concerns and budgeting to help address the risks associated with cost pressures faced by WP groups. A fundamental element of activities in IS3 is to help students to feel a sense of belonging within higher education and supporting them to build their social and cultural capital ensuring they feel more prepared for this next stage in their educational journey. While activities specially focused on mental health and wellbeing are not part of all the activities in IS3, student focus groups showed that for students from an Asian, Black, and other ethnic backgrounds the risks outlined above contributed to poor mental wellbeing by creating additional barriers, pressures, and concerns. As such by addressing these risks, we believe IS3 can also support student mental wellbeing for a wider group of WP students.

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy

The predicted spend for IS3 is £70,530 in the first year of the plan, with a four-year total of £289,000.

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Addressing awarding gaps between different intersections of students and particularly in relation to ethnicity is a persistent, sector-wide challenge that is also present at Lancaster University. Extensive evidence shows that it is important to take a whole institution approach to address not only the availability of tailored personal and academic support, but also in curriculum design and inclusivity practices. The activity proposed in IS3 is aimed at taking an institutional and strategic approach to address a wide range of practices, policies and cultures. The University is committed to supporting students to achieve good degree outcomes and to ensuring inequalities in degree outcomes are eliminated. Sector and internal evidence is clear that to achieve this it is not sufficient to depend on targeted interventions/programmatic initiatives alone, there is a need to adopt a whole institutional approach. As such our work in this area will be undertaken alongside the wider

institutional CTP which aims to address sustainability, accessibility and inclusivity (see Whole Provider Approach section). For more evidence see Appendix B.

Evaluation

See IS2 for details on the evaluation approach for Reverse Mentoring. Evaluation plans relating to the work of the Student Lifecycle task and finish group will be considered by that group as they develop appropriate actions and activities.

Activity	Description	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
Reverse Mentoring	Existing activity Our reverse mentoring programme matches students from a UK Asian, Black, or other ethnic background with senior academics. Through the programme staff are provided insights into the lived experiences of teaching and studying as an ethnic minority student. The programme works with up to 10 students and five members of staff.	Improved awareness of the lived experiences of learning and studying as a student from various WP communities. Staff take a more inclusive approach to the designing and delivering of teaching and learning activities.	IS2 and IS4
Award Gap Task and Finish Group	New activity To address this objective, a new task and finish group, led by the University Academic Dean has been established pulling together staff and students from across the University (including those involved in REC and the APP) to consider the experience of students from a UK Asian, Black, or other ethnic background, the unexplained gaps in degree outcomes, and to identify activities to address inequality in opportunities for this group at different stages of the lifecycle .	Improved awareness of the lived experiences students from a UK Asian, Black, mixed and other heritage background of learning and studying as a student at Lancaster. Appropriate actions and activities identified.	IS1, IS2 and IS4

Decolonising University	Lancaster	Existing Activity Decolonisation of the curriculum generates a complex array of inquiries extending beyond the expansion of reading lists including the contemplation of the inherent power dynamics in both classroom and supervisory spaces, the forms and repercussions of assessments, and the literatures and methodologies we advocate. The Decolonising Lancaster University group was established in 2019 to provide guidance and advice, highlight available resources, and run events. The group has over 500 members as of 2024.	Staff can access resources to support their work to decolonise their curriculum. Staff feel supported to understand the complexities of decolonisation.	IS1, IS4
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Table 6 Activities for intervention strategy three

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Reverse Mentoring	Improved awareness by staff of student learning and studying experiences. Inclusive approaches to the design and delivery of teaching and learning activities.	Focus groups with students and staff prior to, during and after the intervention (type one); reflective journaling by both staff and students (type two); interviews and post intervention questionnaire (type two). Institutional data (demographic and outcomes); National Student Survey returns; Lancaster Student Survey returns. (type two).	Annual impact report, presentation to relevant leadership and staff committees and meetings, distribution of interviews with participants.
Decolonising Lancaster University	Staff can access resources to support their work to decolonise their curriculum. Staff feel supported to understand the complexities of decolonisation.	Focus groups with staff prior to, during and after the intervention (type one); reflective journaling by staff (type two); Institutional data (demographic and outcomes); National Student Survey returns; Lancaster Student Survey returns (type two).	Annual impact report, presentation to relevant leadership and staff committees and meetings, distribution of interviews with participants.

Table 7 Evaluation plans for intervention strategy three

Intervention Strategy Four: Improving Progression Outcomes

Objectives and targets

Our commitment to the whole student journey includes ensuring that inequality in relation to the progression of students to a positive graduate outcome is also addressed. As such intervention strategy four (IS4) will address objective nine to reduce the gap in progression to a positive graduate destination between our UK White and our UK Black students to five percentage points by 2028/29 (PTP_1).

Risks and related risk to equality of opportunity

The activities in IS4 will look to mitigate the risks to equality of opportunity we identified as most relevant for the group mentioned in objective nine at the progression stage of the student journey. As such IS4 will address student concerns around a social and cultural capital ensuring they feel better equipped with the tools, skills and networks needed to succeed (Gaskell and Lingwood, 2022). Elements of IS4 will also look to mitigate against the cost pressures and concerns raised by students, by providing access to bursaries and paid internships. While the activities in IS4 are not specifically focused on addressing risks around knowledge and skills, and information and guidance, they do play a key role in ensuring students do have access to accessible information, advice, and guidance. As with other intervention strategies, those in IS4 are not specially focused on mental health and wellbeing, student focus groups showed that for students from a UK Black heritage background, the risks outlined above contributed to poor mental wellbeing by creating additional barriers, pressures, and concerns. As such by addressing these risks, we believe IS4 can also support student mental wellbeing for this group.

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy

The predicted spend for IS4 is £283,465 in the first year of the plan, with a four-year total of £1,166,000.

Summary of evidence base and rationale

The activities proposed as part of this intervention strategy places student engagement and co-creation at the forefront. The challenges associated with supporting ethnicity graduate outcomes and the comparative lack of detailed research means that more work is required to solidify a package of support that can help address the inequalities that these specific groups face. The evidence that does exist emphasises the importance of supporting young people throughout their educational journeys and that support with progressing onto a positive graduate outcome cannot solely focus on the final few months of a student's degree. The literature also suggests it is crucial to devise tailored support that has been informed by the beneficiaries ensuring that support is co-produced and co-owned by students and staff with a recognition that addressing systemic disadvantage is a whole institution challenge.

Evaluation

Reflecting the importance of student voice, the approach taken to evaluation outlined below combines a mixture of qualitative pre- and post-activity evaluation, exploratory student panels and student voice engagements and careful data monitoring and analysis utilising a mixed methods approach. Making use of the extensive data available from the CareersConnect database, it has also been proposed that a type three evaluative research project be conducted that could explore the causal relationship between different types of careers support, including WP and general student services. Such a project would be dependent on capacity, availability of data and appropriateness of different methods to the specifics of the activity undertaken.

Activity	Description	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
Grow Your Future	Existing Activity Grow Your Future (GYF) is an employability community for WP students that aims to develop students' employability skills, career plans, professional networks, and career confidence. GYF works with over 700 WP students a year via one-to-one appointments and coaching, peer support, targeted information and guidance, access to networking events like Capital Connections, paid work opportunities like micro internships, and key skills, resilience and leadership workshops. GYF students can also access a careers bursary to support with costs such as a travel to interviews and assessment centres, and appropriate clothing for interviews. Recent WP graduates not in a positive graduate destination can also access graduate coaching to support them with their next steps. GYF includes collaborative working with charities and employers.	Increased confidence in knowing where to access additional support when looking for jobs and career opportunities. Clearer approach to career planning and job searching. Developed skills and increased self-awareness of skills and ability to communicate these. Access to sector specific advice and awareness of the types of companies that best suit a student's aims and values. Reduce progression gaps in relation to positive graduate destinations for WP students.	IS1, IS2 and IS3

GROW Your Future: UK Black Student Stream	New activity To support with the objectives set out in this plan, we will be creating a new multi-strand programme of progression support for UK Black students. The activities are being co-created with current Black students, alumni, and third sector and charity groups and has been informed by research with this community. This will include bespoke activities to enhance career planning, confidence, employability skills, professional networks, and increase aspirations through workshops, employer collaborations, paid work experience and careers panels. GYF: UK Black Student Stream includes collaborative working and delivery with relevant academic departments, corporate and SME employers, third sector and charity organisations, and alumni.	Increased confidence in knowing where to access additional support when looking for jobs and career opportunities. Clearer approach to career planning and job searching. Developed skills and increased self-awareness of skills and ability to communicate these. Access to sector specific advice and awareness of the types of companies that best suit a students' aims and values. Reduce progression gaps in relation to positive graduate destinations for Black students.	IS1, IS2 and IS3
Lancaster Opportunity Fund Scholarship	Existing activity Introduced in 2023, the Lancaster Opportunity Fund Scholarship provides two Lancaster graduates from a UK Black heritage background and a low-income household with a tuition fee waiver and bursary to study for a Postgraduate Taught course at Lancaster.	Increase in number of UK Black heritage students studying for a Postgraduate Taught course at Lancaster.	IS1

Table 8 Activities for intervention strategy four

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Grow Your Future	Increased confidence in knowing where to access additional support when looking for jobs and career opportunities. Clearer approach to career planning and job searching. Developed skills and increased self-awareness of skills and ability to communicate these. Access to sector specific advice and awareness of the types of companies that best suit a student's aims and values. Reduce progression gaps in relation to positive graduate destinations for WP students.	Pre- and post-activity questionnaires (type one and two); focus groups delivered with different widening participation groups (type one); process evaluation utilising interactive evaluation methods (type one); Student stories and feedback quotes collated via creative evaluation methods. (type one) Call-campaign for final year students to capture graduate destinations from outgoing participants in GYF (type one and two). Engagement data collated and monitoring via the Careers Connect database combined with a correlative analysis with demographic, degree and graduate outcomes (type two). Quasi-experimental evaluative research project utilising data collated via Careers Connect and combined with relevant qualitative evaluation to explore causal relationship between engagement in GYF and progression outcomes (type three)	Annual impact report to be published via the university website; relevant presentations at committee meetings, conferences and other events; Impact Evaluation study output and any other publications.

GROW Your Future: UK Black Stream	Increased confidence in knowing where to access additional support when looking for jobs and career opportunities. Clearer approach to career planning and job searching. Developed skills and increased self-awareness of skills and ability to communicate these. Access to sector specific advice and awareness of the types of companies that best suit a students' aims and values.	Student, staff, and alumni panels to facilitate research and co-creative work (type one and two); Questionnaires to track and monitor progress against outcomes and capture feedback from students (type one and two); focus group and interviews with students (type one). Engagement data collated and monitoring via the Careers Connect database combined with a correlative analysis with demographic, degree, and graduate outcomes (type two)	Annual impact report to be published via the university website; relevant presentations at committee meetings, conferences, and other events.
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Table 9 Evaluation plans for intervention strategy four

Intervention Strategy Five: Developing Allyship

Objectives and targets

As part of our commitment to a lifecycle and whole provider approach intervention strategy five (IS5) looks to mitigate against all eight risks and help in achieving all 10 objectives.

Risks to equality of opportunity

The activity in IS5 mitigates against all eight risks detailed in section two as well as others within the OfS EORR and beyond.

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy

The predicted spend for IS5 is £46,471 in the first year of the plan, with a four-year total of £191,000.

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Allyship is an effective tool for combating discrimination, promoting equal rights, and fostering an inclusive culture (Salter & Migliaccio, 2019). Furthermore, by actively engaging as allies, individuals can contribute to creating a supportive organisational environment where tolerance and acceptance are embraced by all stakeholders (Salter & Migliaccio, 2019).

Evaluation

The aim of the activity is to work across the institution to address key knowledge, skills and capacities around supporting students from WP backgrounds through a sustained programme of coaching, mentoring and CPD for staff. Evaluation will involve sharing post-activity feedback, annual staff surveys, focus groups and selected interviews to help monitor and evidence change over time and across different areas of the institution. Given the aim of this intervention is to support development of approaches to teaching, learning and student support, evidence will also be drawn from course evaluations, National Student Survey results and other institutional student surveys. Progress against targets will also be monitored at the department and faculty levels using the institutional APP data dashboard.

Activity	Description	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
Developing Allyship	New activity The Developing Allyship programme will provide mentoring and coaching for academic and professional services staff at Lancaster to develop allyship between different student communities. The programme will engage staff who are not already knowledgeable about or experienced with supporting diverse student groups and make allyship accessible by encouraging small changes relevant to staff's existing areas of work. The programme will encourage the quick implementation of new strategies to feed further learning/improvement and allow staff to formulate their own questions about being better allies, to ensure sustainability beyond the programme.	Increased staff knowledge, skill and capacities around supporting students from WP backgrounds. Improved alignment of existing Departmental/Unit practices with APP objectives/activities and LU People and Culture Plan. Staff take a more inclusive approach to the designing and delivering of teaching and learning activities.	IS1, IS2, IS3 and IS4

Table 10 Activity for intervention strategy five

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Developing Allyship	Increased staff knowledge, skill and capacities around supporting students from WP backgrounds. Improved alignment of existing Departmental/Unit practices with APP objectives/activities and Lancaster People and Culture Plan. A more inclusive approach to the design and delivery of teaching and learning.	Postintervention feedback/reflections (coach and coached) (type one and two); annual staff surveys (type two); focus groups and interviews (type one). APP Institutional Data Dashboard; National Student Survey responses; Institution students survey.	Annual impact report published on the university website; presentation to key senior management and department committees and meetings; publication via external blogpost and practitioner/academic journal.

Table 11 Evaluation plans for intervention strategy five

5. Whole provider approach

As detailed in section one, we are proud of our achievements in this area over the past few years but know there is more to do. During the development of this plan, we have evaluated our WP theory of change model set out in the previous APP. This WP theory of change model was underpinned by three core pillars: a lifecycle approach; a whole provider approach; and evaluation and impact analysis. These three pillars remain crucial to achieving success in this new plan.

Our lifecycle approach is now a core part of our WP work and is evident in the partnership working between different WP programmes. This most evident in the partnership between the Lancaster Access Programme, Lancaster Success Programme and Grow Your Future. The introduction of our bespoke WP Evaluation and Impact team has ensured we are building capacity and identifying appropriate methods of evaluation and building this into project development from the start.

While the activities outlined in our intervention strategies will play a significant role in helping us to achieve our objectives, we know that real change and success lies in a whole provider approach. The aims of WP have been core to the University's values since its inception in the 1960s. Lancaster University has a long-established history as a high-quality university that is open to all, where background should never be a barrier to success. Our values of respect for each other by being open and fair and promoting diversity, building strong communities by working effectively together in a supportive way and creating positive change by being ambitious in our learning, expertise, and action, all underpin this.

Our commitment to creating an environment where everyone can thrive and fulfil their potential is achieved by whole provider approach initiatives linked with recognising and supporting protected characteristics in alignment with the Equality Act 2010. Our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy, Gender Pay Gap Report, EDI charter marks, and our WP Strategic Plan and APP objectives play an important role in achieving this commitment. Through this new plan we will go further on our whole provider approach, ensuring there is more effective alignment with our WP work and the APP objectives and other University priorities and strategic commitments such as the People and Culture Plan and our EDI Strategy⁸. To achieve this, we have introduced a fourth pillar to our theory of change model: 'consistent support through staff and student engagement'.

Our collegiate system is central to the Lancaster experience that puts student experience at the heart of all we do. All staff and students are a member of one of our nine colleges which provide a community of support and home away from home. Colleges are there from day one (and often before) to offer advice and guidance, a friendly face, a sense of belonging, and a place to turn to celebrate successes and to support students through any challenges.

In July 2022, we launched our curriculum transformation programme (CTP) to ensure our curriculum reflects the knowledge, values, competencies, and skills we wish to model and foster within our university community. Our new curriculum will be based on four key principles: research-led academic excellence; inclusive design and practice; wellbeing and fulfilment for success; and an innovative and sustainable approach. The CTP will deliver opportunities and space to enhance the student experience, grow and diversify provision, and embed themes such as employability, sustainability, and global working to prepare our

⁸ EDI objectives include deliver high quality, inclusive education with support services that are accessible, inclusive, and responsive to students' needs; strive for workforce diversity and inclusion; promote and celebrate diversity; and demonstrate more inclusive leadership, accountability and fairness at all levels of management.

students for the challenges of a fast-moving workplace and for them to be able to contribute meaningfully to future world challenges.

The CTP embodies the WP strategic aims within this APP and will play a significant role in helping us to achieve our objectives. We recognise that inclusive practices benefit everyone. The CTP will enhance our commitment to teaching and assessment that is inclusive by design and fosters a welcoming environment for all, that is inclusive of the widest possible range of needs, focuses on overcoming barriers to success, and seeks to prepare students for their next steps.

As part of our whole provider approach, the CTP will play an important role in mitigating against the risks we identified in section two such as enhancing the academic and personal support our students receive, addressing issues around social and cultural capital and ensuring students develop a sense of belonging through an inclusive curriculum, and teaching and assessment pedagogy (Gaskell and Lingwood 2022).

Following the successful launch of the Lancaster University School of Mathematics with The Rigby Education Trust and Cardinal Newman College in 2022, we are working with local colleges to explore diverse pathways to HE for students. This includes plans to launch a new UK Foundation Course in 2025.

In 2019 Lancaster joined the Civic University Network and pledged to work with other civic partners (local authorities, health sector, FE colleges) to grow the regional economy, improve public health outcomes and strengthen our communities. Our civic engagement work has included student-led engagement to support access to the University for everyone and working with partners to co-create programmes of activity to improve the outcomes for those in our community.

Key examples of our university-wide civic engagement work and its link to our APP include the Eden project Morecambe (EPM) and the Morecambe Bay Curriculum. EPM exemplifies the impact of a university in its place, when harnessed with key partners and an inspiring vision. Originating from engagement with our local community, we have co-led this development as a founding partner and in 2022 contributed strategically to a successful £50M Levelling Up Fund bid led by Lancaster City Council (LCC). More than £200k has been invested in developing the Morecambe Bay Curriculum since 2020, a community-curated, place-based approach to learning about sustainability. Inspired by plans for EPM, the curriculum aims to ensure that the different stages of the education system provide the green skills, knowledge and values required by industry to respond to the climate emergency. This work focuses on supporting teachers to enable children and young people to become the change-makers and innovators our planet needs; through CPD, resource development, networking, and research.

Lancaster's Athena Swan commitments, membership of the Stonewall Global Diversity Champions programme and our recently submitted applications for the Race Equality Charter⁹ and University of Sanctuary¹⁰ all have strong ties to the WP agenda and the objectives within this plan.

As part of our work on University of Sanctuary we have created two annual scholarships for asylum seekers and refugees (one UG and one PGT) and provide students from this community with a key point of contact both pre- and post-entry. Working with the Lancashire Refugee Resettlement team, the Lancashire UniConnect programme (Future U) and local universities, colleges, and charity groups we developed the region's first Education and Careers Day for resettlers. The annual event provides those from the sanctuary community with information, advice, and guidance on different education and career pathways. Working with Lancashire Refugee Resettlement team and Lancaster City of Sanctuary we are developing free online

⁹ Application submitted March 2024.

¹⁰ Assessment visit planned for Summer 2024.

English Language courses and online resources in multiple languages on UCAS, applying to HE, student finance and careers.

The University's application for the Race Equality Charter further underlines our position on the strategic imperative to ensure inclusion and fairness applies to all at Lancaster and that it is essential we understand and acknowledge the specific challenges faced by certain communities such as students and staff from ethnic minority backgrounds. Representatives from the Race Equality Charter group have been invited to join the Widening Participation Advisory Group (WPAG) to ensure effective alignment, conversation, and engagement between the work of the Race Equality Charter group and their action plan and our commitments and activities set out within this plan.

Networks such as the Inclusive Learning Network, Lancaster Women's Network, EDI Stakeholders, Parents and Carers Network, LGBTQIA+ Ally Network, Sanctuary Network, Decolonising Lancaster, and WP Forum provide staff with opportunities to share good practice, project evaluation findings and connect with peers on range of topics relevant to this agenda.

Established interventions such as our academic tutor system, college advisory teams, Look After Your Mate training, 24/7 access to trained health professional via Health Assured and access to free online tools like Silvercloud provide all students with access to support. Black Voices allows students from an Asian, Black or minority ethnic background, who wish to speak to our Asian, Black, or other ethnic minority members of staff, to make a one-off appointment without having to complete a self-referral form. Our work to embed the Advance HE Disabled Student Commitment in all areas of the University has included efforts to work towards removing the requirement for students to evidence their disability and move towards better understanding the impact of their disability on their daily lives which can then be supported with a set of anticipatory adjustments in the learning and teaching/curriculum context. As a member of the Student Minds Mental Health Charter Programme we have engaged in Student Minds training and established task group to ensure the principles of the charter are embedded throughout all we do. As with the Race Equality Charter, representatives from this task group are members of WPAG to ensure effective alignment and collaborative working.

As founding members of the Lancashire (Future U) and Cumbrian (Hello Future) UniConnect programmes (and its predecessors) we are committed to partnership working to develop and deliver WP initiatives, to share findings and learning and to support staff CPD. We have committed to working with colleagues in local universities, colleges and UniConnect partnerships on staff CPD around evaluation practices and impact analysis.

We are active members of Network Evaluating and Researching University Participation Interventions (NERUPI), National Education Opportunities Network (NEON) (including the Northwest Research and Evaluation Group), the Forum for Access and Continuing Education (FACE) and the FACE APP Special Interest Group, all of which allows opportunities us to collaborate with colleagues nationally, contribute to collective learning and provide opportunities for staff development. We are members of the Higher Education Access Tracker and Datafiltr and use both tools to support our work on evaluating our access activities and considering impact.

WP at Lancaster remains the responsibility of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC). The DVC working with the Widening Participation Advisory Group has oversight for WP work at Lancaster and the APP. This includes monitoring progress against targets, overseeing the evaluation of WP activities, and working with the wider University to embed WP into other areas of work. The membership of the groups includes representation

from senior management, faculties, professional services, and students (via Lancaster University Students' Union).

Following student feedback on the Student Advisory Board established during the last APP, we are working with Lancaster University Students' Union to establish a new approach to student engagement for 2024/25 onwards. This will centre around a student-led approach to reviewing intervention strategies, evaluation findings and data to make recommendations and provide insights. This work will focus on those with relevant lived experiences at different stages of the student lifecycle.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Group set up during the previous APP has now served its purpose with the establishment of a specialised WP Evaluation and Impact team and has therefore been laid down. To support with the successful implementation of this APP, to build on our whole provider approach to WP and to further the commitment in our TOC regarding consistent support through staff and student engagement, WPAG will work with the University's Standing Committee on Teaching Excellence (SCoTE). SCoTE have responsibility for considering student engagement and performance data, highlighting areas of good practice and scrutinising action plans where there is work to be done.

The WPAG provides regular updates to Council, Senate, University Executive Board, and the Student Experience Committee. Representatives from the WPAG are also invited to join or present at a variety of other committees and groups to ensure that our WP students and the risks around inequality at every stage of the lifecycle are taken into consideration. This includes committees and groups such as the Cost of Living Working Group, University Leadership Group, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee, the Engagement Oversight Group and faculty level recruitment and student focused groups. The governance structure for WP at Lancaster demonstrates the strategic importance given to this agenda by senior management.

6. Student consultation

We have a strong relationship with our students and our Students' Union (LUSU). LUSU have representation through their elected officers in all of Lancaster University's major committees, including the Widening Participation Advisory Group, Student Experience Committee, Senate and University Council.

The student voice has always been at heart of Lancaster's WP work. Our current WP activities regularly engage with students to ensure that the student voice continues to be heard and ensures that we deliver our work with students and not to them and that we learn from their insights and lived experiences.

For example, our Lancaster Success Programme appoints students on the programme as LSP advocates. To promote a strong sense of belonging and student voice, the Student Advocates are responsible for representing the LSP cohort at termly Student-Staff Committee meetings, presenting the views, concerns, and needs of the students, making recommendations accordingly. Additionally, they provide opportunities for our students to come together regularly at social activities both on and off campus, enhancing peer-to-peer connections and space to have their voices heard.¹¹

Engaging students and embedding the student voice meaningfully has been a priority for Lancaster in the development of our plan. We have worked closely with LUSU and our colleges (all students and staff belong to one of Lancaster University's colleges) to engage current students throughout the entire APP development process. Focus groups, surveys and targeted discussions have been central to our consultation activities. This included bringing students in to help design our focus groups and in some cases facilitate them. We also ran

¹¹ Alongside the student advocates, other members of the committee including LSP project staff and academic staff from each faculty.

specific focus groups with current students from underrepresented backgrounds to ensure that we were hearing feedback from students with lived experience.¹² We also engaged with prospective students on our Lancaster Access Programme and key stakeholders in our partner schools, colleges and alternative education institutions through surveys and consultation workshops.

The focus groups, surveys and discussions were centred on a consideration of the risks to equality of opportunity that current and prospective students face and at which stage of the lifecycle. Feedback was gathered on the strengths and weaknesses of existing activities to address these risks. The activities in the intervention strategies along with the objectives and targets were presented in targeted discussions with students with relevant lived experience. This enabled us to identify the key risks to equality of opportunity that are being addressed within this plan as well as the objectives and intervention strategies to mitigate against these risks.

Students' Union Officers were included in the final phase of our consultation and were also represented on the governance boards which had oversight of various drafts of the plan as it was internally approved.

Following this student consultation, we made extensive changes to various elements of the plan:

- The risks experienced by our students across the entire lifecycle.
- Our priority risks to the equality of opportunity.
- Specific activities contained within each intervention strategy.

Some specific examples of changes made include:

- Improved plans for communication with students about opportunities that are available to them.
- Lancaster Access Programme
 - Improving the activity credit-bearing system to enhance the accessibility of the programme's lowered offer.
 - Increasing the number of on-campus, in-person events and providing more opportunities for parental and carer engagement.
- Lancaster Success Programme
 - Increasing number of mature student socials and opportunities for mature student to establish peer-to-peer connections to enhance mature student sense of belonging.
 - Students in our Mature Student focus groups raised concerns that the term 'LSP Mature' did not adequately reflect their student identity nor the programme's offering. 'LSP Mature' was recommended by focus groups attendees instead. This change will be actioned for 24/25 academic year.
- Uncover Progress Programme
 - Recruit current LU Black Heritage students to act as role models to enable UPP participants to engage with those who have shared experiences.

Students were receptive to the commitments in this plan and welcomed continued opportunities to co-create, offer feedback, and connect Lancaster's WP agenda as we move through into the implementation, delivery and evaluation of the APP. Students were also supportive of plans for a ten-year WP strategic plan which included postgraduate students as well. Across the lifecycle of our APP, we will continue to engage with our

¹² We ran a number of focus groups to enable students to contribute to the APP. All students on the LSP and GYF were invited to sign-up to one of four themed focus groups. The themes were low socio-economic backgrounds, UK Black and/or Asian heritage background, declared disability and/or declared mental health disability, and mature and risks and challenges facing these students. Students could, if they wished, sign-up for more than one dependent on eligibility. We engaged over 70 students across 10 focus group. As such, a variety of student opinion and feedback was gathered and used to inform the APP.

LUSU elected officers and the wider student community on our activity, this will include students (LUSU) being involved in the annual review of impact.

We have identified five priority areas for continued collaboration with LUSU and our students:

- Our scholarship and bursary offer, with specific focus on the future sustainability of our financial support packages, the eligibility criteria for support, and the level and type of support available.
- Opportunities for students to engage in extra-curricular activities beyond their studies. This includes but is not limited to societies and sports clubs, volunteering, and opportunities to connect and network with other students, staff, and communities.
- Co-creation of activities within our new Uncover Progress Programme (intervention strategy one).
- Co-creation of activities within our new GYF: UK Black Student Stream Programme (intervention strategy four).
- Following the pilot year of our new Developing Allyship Programme (intervention strategy five) exploring how students can also become allies and supporting students to expand their knowledge and understanding and how to have constructive conversations with their peers.

7. Evaluation of the plan

Lancaster University's strategic approach to evaluation combines two core principles: that evaluation should be co-developed in partnership with the teams and individuals engaged in the delivery of WP interventions; and that those evaluations should be appropriate to the evidence needs and capacities of the intervention and delivery teams involved (Befani, 2020), all while generating evidence of impact that meets sector standards and expectations (OfS 2019a and 2019b).

At the core of our approach is a commitment to nurturing a culture of evaluation and reflective practice, led by the Evaluation and Impact Team. There is a clear understanding among teams delivering WP interventions of the importance of evaluation, how it can be used to inform practice, demonstrate impact, and communicate information to diverse audiences. Evaluation is now integrated throughout programme design and implementation. Teams are required to produce theories of change, outline the assumptions and rationale that underpin their proposed intervention, provide evidence to support those claims, present a plan for how evaluation will be integrated into their delivery, and how findings will be collated, analysed, and shared.

There is also a commitment to continuous improvement across all these areas with the aim of enhancing the overall standard of evidence. Though considerable progress has been made to date, opportunities remain to further enhance the overall quality of evaluation delivered and particularly how those findings are leveraged to enhance decision making and improve knowledge and understanding of best practice. Several areas for continued improvement have been identified through the completion of the evaluation self-assessment tool. The steps taken to address these areas for improvement over the next cycle are also detailed below.

We have made significant progress in the development and enhancement of our evaluative research across all stages of the student lifecycle over the course of the previous APP. We conducted a self-assessment using the OfS evaluation self-assessment tool to help identify areas of success and continued improvement. The findings and overview of each area can be found in table 12. The key areas for improvement are centred around the implementation of evaluation designs and methodologies that can generate type three evidence and to support the wider sharing of evaluation insights externally.

Dimension	Score	Rating	Overview
Strategic context	22/24	Advanced	Support is provided to all teams engaged in WP with particular emphasis on supporting skills-development and cultural change. There is a coherent and overarching strategic approach adopted to WP and evaluation that spans all stages of the student lifecycle.
Programme design	17/18	Advanced	All programmes/interventions are required to embed evaluation into their project design as part of internal reporting procedures. Training, consultation, and other resources are supporting continued improvement in these areas. All interventions are underpinned by a Theory of Change, which define key aims, objectives, outcomes, and impacts.
Evaluation design	7/9	Advanced	We have delivered one example of type three evaluation design as part of the TASO Institutional Data Use Project. In this APP we are working towards additional type three evaluations within three projects, the remainder of the work not being appropriate for this type of evaluation at this stage. Across all stages of the student lifecycle, we provide type one and two evidence.
Evaluation implementation	17/20	Emerging	This is an area for continued improvement, focussing on the processes and systems for collating, monitoring, and analysing data. Other areas for consideration include resource allocations for evaluation and conducting relevant risk assessments and ensuring ethical approval and GDPR compliance processes are in place.
Learning from evaluation	16/22	Emerging	There are improvements to be made across most areas included in this dimension. The way in which we use and communicate the evaluation findings generated and the established systems and procedures we have in place for acquiring ethics and publishing approval. Other areas to consider include how we attribute and demonstrate impact and acknowledging limitations of evaluation methods already adopted.

Table 12 Evaluation self-assessment tool scores and narrative

To improve the overall quality, robustness, and consistency of evaluation insights, and to address the improvements highlighted in the self-assessment above, we have adopted a framework approach, focussing on three key pillars of evaluation: capacity, design, and data.

- Evaluation capacity refers to the ability (including resources, skills, and time) of individuals, teams, and the institution more broadly to do and use evaluation.
- Evaluation design describes the process of planning, designing, implementing, synthesising and communicating appropriate and high-quality evaluations in relation to planned interventions.
- Data describes the collation, monitoring, and analysis of relevant data of different kinds, including engagement, demographic and student outcomes data that can help measure short-, medium- and long-term progress toward desired targets.

These core elements link directly to the criteria described in the self-assessment and give direction to the efforts of the Evaluation and Impact team and the teams engaged in the delivery of WP interventions.

We have invested considerable resources and time into evaluation capacity building initiatives (Preskill & Boyle 2008; Bourgeois & Cousins 2013; Cousins et. al. 2014). This has been achieved through: 1) the establishment of the Evaluation and Impact team; 2) the delivery of training, resources, toolkits and tailored IAG (consultations and workshops) to teams and individuals engaged in widening participation interventions, offering support throughout the evaluation planning, implementation and reporting process; and 3) allocation of project/programme budgets to account for the resource demands (including skills, finances and time) associated with evaluation. Teams are encouraged to invest time and resources into evaluation, to consider how it can be best integrated into their wider intervention lifecycle and reflect on and share the lessons that arise from the findings internally and increasingly externally.

We are committed to continuing to support these efforts, by further developing and enhancing the resources and training available to teams, led by the Evaluation and Impact Team and drawing on sector resources provided by TASO and other relevant organisations, by engaging with the University's research community to draw on available expertise and support evaluative research projects, including the generation of type two and three evidence, and to continue to refine and collate evidence to support better quality reporting, decision making and publication of evaluation findings through relevant outlets. The institutions commitment to resourcing evaluation, both through the Evaluation and Impact team and through non-payroll allocation to evaluative research and activity are sustained in this plan with continued progression expected over the course of APP term.

We have adopted an approach to evaluation design that is informed by concepts of 'methodological appropriateness' (Befani, 2020; Crockford & Sherlock 2023). This is understood to refer to whether the selected methods are appropriate for a specific evaluation, namely that they address the research questions posed, fulfil the intended aims and objectives of an intervention, and the needs of the teams and individuals delivering interventions in the course of the evaluation. Appropriateness also includes the extent to which the evaluation meets regulatory and internal governance requirements. What constitutes an appropriate evaluation is informed by the evidence standards framework provided by the OfS, sector guidance provided by TASO and other organisations, and the unique characteristics and circumstances of the intervention under assessment. Evaluation design is done in a collaborative manner, working with the teams involved and focussed on the evidence needs revealed in the intervention plans.

There is a continued commitment to the design and implementation of robust, high-quality evaluation with the aim of generating higher standards of evidence (type two and three) demonstrated in the intervention strategies above. Navigating this process, including the identification of appropriate evaluation designs and

methods, will be facilitated by the Evaluation and Impact team, and appropriately resourced in intervention strategies. Moreover, where appropriate (particularly in the conduct of type three evaluation studies) relevant internal and external research expertise and specialisms will be sought to facilitate the successful delivery of more intricate evaluation and research designs (e.g. quasi-experimental designs). To improve the overall quality of evidence provided requires long-term planning, evidence collation and data monitoring, embedding the relevant evaluation designs from the commencement of new interventions and ensuring full integration into existing activity will be a key to improving the overall quality of evidence provided.

To produce high-quality evidence of impact in line with the standards outlined by OfS guidance requires access to reliable data both at intervention and institutional levels. As part of its engagement with TASO's Institutional Data Use project in 2023/2024, several areas for improvement in the way data is collated and monitored at Lancaster were identified. The systems and processes teams will use to record and monitor engagement with their interventions, and how that data is triangulated with demographic and outcomes data is outlined in the intervention strategies. These will include the utilisation of relevant internal and external databases and systems, and the adoption of any future developments in for example the development of learner analytics and other student engagement tracking systems in development at Lancaster.

The Evaluation and Impact team, drawing on external organisations such as HEAT and TASO, and appropriate internal research and evaluation expertise and specialists, will continue to develop resources and toolkits to support teams in the management and utilisation of their data to ensure consistency, which can then be used to contribute to impact evaluation and monitoring progress against stated targets.

Findings generated by the evaluative activity outlined in the intervention strategies and throughout this APP will be published through a variety of mediums. Space will be provided on the University website to share reports and other publications that allow for knowledge sharing and exchange. Where relevant, sharing of evaluation insights will also be encouraged via relevant sector blogs and websites, practitioner and academic journals, presentations at conferences, networking events and seminars. In addition, other opportunities will be provided for sharing of knowledge and insights internally via seminars, conferences, and other planned events, such as the Lancaster University Social Mobility Symposium, Inclusive Learning Network and Widening Participation Forum.

As detailed in section five, the APP and our WP activity is monitored and overseen by the WPAG chaired by our Deputy Vice-Chancellor. Evaluation and impact is now a standing item on the WPAG agenda and the Evaluation and Impact team are invited to attend at different points in the year to provide updates, end of year project assessments and other relevant information to support the WPAG to perform its duties.

8. Provision of information to students

Details of our financial support available to students is below and published [online](#). Details on fees can also be found on our [website](#). This information is contained both within the Study pages which are aimed at prospective students and on our internal student portal funding pages. In addition, our Admissions team direct prospective students to the relevant webpages when writing to them about their application and our recruitment team provide talks at open days and in schools and colleges across the UK on student funding in general and the support available at Lancaster.

Our [Widening Participation web pages](#) direct prospective and current students to information on opportunities and support both pre- and post-entry. Staff in recruitment and admission roles are made aware of the support for WP students both pre- and post-entry to ensure they can provide relevant information to prospective students. Teams delivering support for current WP students provide updates on provision at

various faculty, departmental and college meetings so that staff can sign-post students to this support. Where appropriate, we make use of the University's student e-newsletter, LUSU's student e-newsletter, and college communications to highlight opportunities for current students.

Information on past and current [Access and Participation Plans](#) (and Access Agreements) can be found on our WP web pages.

Scheme	Eligibility	Amount
Lancaster Bursary	- Home fee status. - Household income of less than £35,000. - Meets eligibility for UK Government funding support. - The application to Student Finance/SAAS has been income-assessed.	- £1000 per year of study, providing that the assessed household income remains under the threshold of £35,000.
Lancaster Sanctuary Scholarship	- International fee status. - Have submitted an application for asylum in the UK and been granted Refugee status, Discretionary leave to remain (DLR), Indefinite leave to remain (ILR), Humanitarian Protection (HP), Awaiting a decision on an application for refugee status (asylum seeker), Leave as an Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child (UASC Leave), Refused Asylum Seeker (application for refugee status has been denied and a fresh claim is in process), Lived in the UK for the last half of life, which was not for the principal purpose of study, and has a form of immigration permission. This can include Limited Leave to Remain (LLR). - Hold an offer to study at Lancaster University.	- Free accommodation on the University campus. - 100% tuition fee waiver until such a time as awarded a status in the UK that allows application for support from Student Finance England (Wales or Northern Ireland) or Student Awards Agency for Scotland. - Up to £5000 per year non-repayable until such a time as awarded a status in the UK that allows application for support from Student Finance England (Wales or Northern Ireland) or Student Awards Agency for Scotland. -
Cowrie Foundation Scholarship	- Applicants from a Black African and Caribbean heritage. - Home fee status. - Household income of £25,000 or less. - Applicants must be in receipt of a conditional or unconditional offer for a place at LU. - Scholarship is only available to UG students joining Part 1 LU degree programmes.	- 100% Tuition fee waiver - £8000 per year of study.

Annex A: Further information and analysis relating to the identification and prioritisation of key risks to equality of opportunity

1. Introduction

Our assessment of performance was conducted using the OfS individualised files to replicate the methodology of the OfS APP dashboard. This approach ensured the analysis at a sufficient level of granularity (exploring the data at institutional, faculty, department, and programme level). Our own Tableau APP dashboard allows in-depth interrogation of the data and further enhances our institutional engagement with the APP measures.

The visualisations shown in this annex are taken from our institutional dashboard. The charts presented in this document focus on the core population of our students (full-time all undergraduates).

As part of the development and consultation process for the APP on data and performance, and objectives and targets we have engaged with University Council, University Executive Board, and the WPAG. We have worked closely with Lancaster University Students' Union, current students with relevant lived experiences, Lancaster academic and professional services staff, prospective students and key stakeholders in schools, colleges, and relevant charities and third sector organisations.

To address the small numbers and their impact on statistical significance, we have analysed the data both at the aggregate 4-year-level, as well as looking at trends in time. The analysis leading to the identified targets was conducted in two stages. First, we analysed Lancaster performance across all APP characteristics, throughout the lifecycle stages to assess the materiality of the gaps (defining substantial gap as over five percentage points (p.p.), considering other gaps between one and five p.p. and treating difference of below one p.p. as an evidence of no gap) and then benchmarking the gaps vs sector performance, whether the gaps were more substantial, in line or smaller. This analysis allowed us to identify areas across the characteristics and lifecycle stage matrix we should focus on. As mentioned above, it is important to note that we also recognised the challenge of small populations (considering four-year aggregate populations).

This initial analysis led to identifying four characteristics: IMD (with a recognition of free school meals eligibility in the access area), Ethnicity, Disability and Age which become key in our APP target setting.

Additionally, we analysed intersectionalities and performance specific to more granular groups. While we do not propose to set targets for those groups, we will discuss their performance under relevant headlines in this annex. The intersectionalities we would like to address specifically are: ethnicity, IMD and sex (white, working-class males group), detailed disability and sex (males with declared mental health disability) and detailed disability and IMD (IMD Q1 students with a declared mental health disability). For those particular sub-groups we noticed either a new different trend than for the broad one characteristic views only, or trends that are magnified and suggest that additional support is needed for those intersectional groups. Specifically for white working-class male students, we observe a lower performance for Continuation, Completion and Attainment Lifecycle stages. For male students with mental health disability, we recognise the need to support their Completion rates in particular. For IMD quintile one students with mental health disability, we see significantly different lower trends for Completion in particular, recognising the need for extended support for this group, while also supporting them further in terms of Continuation and Progression. This support is outlined in the intervention strategies in section four. Activities include increased engagement from White males from low-income households in our Discover Network and Early Years interventions (we will continue our work with the Boys Impact Coalition for Lancashire and Cumbria), addressing how different students access information, advice and guidance on mental health and wellbeing support to ensure there is access to support for those groups who may not typically reach out that would find more appropriate.

2. Data review

Students from socio-economically deprived areas (IMD quintile 1)

a

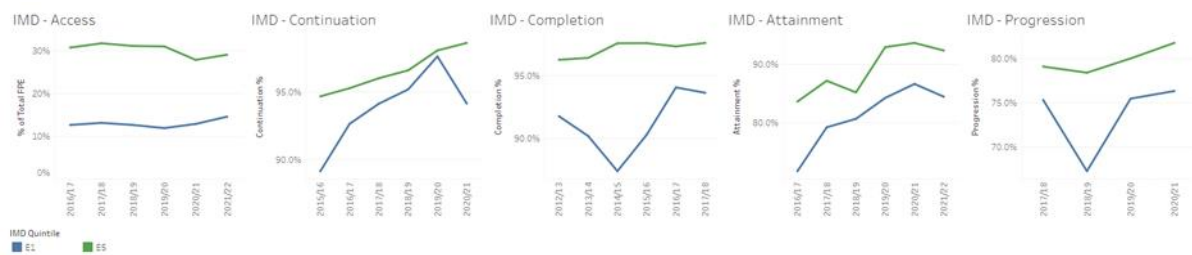


Figure 1 Difference in performance across the lifecycle stages between IMDQ1 and Q5

Having analysed the aggregate data (4 years), we can see material gaps (higher than 5 percentage point), across the lifecycle stages with the exception of the Continuation measure. The gap is most substantial for access (16.6 p.p. vs a significantly smaller, negative gap observed for the sector overall). The other gaps are overall less substantial (continuation in particular at 2.1 p.p) and it is important to note that for the remaining lifecycle stages the university's gaps are substantially smaller than the sector overall (Completion gap 5.9 p.p. vs 10.5 p.p. sector, Attainment gap 7.3 p.p. vs 16.9 sector and Progression 6.1. p.p. vs 10.3 p.p. sector).

Recognising our holistic efforts and commitment to WP and improving access for this group as detailed in intervention strategy one activities such as the Lancaster Access Programme, Discover Network, and Early Years Interventions, we would like to set a **specific measurable target for percentage of entrants from IMD quintile 1 increasing from its baseline in 2021/22 of 14.5% to 17.0% by 2028/29**. A further access target has also been introduced for students eligible for free school meal (FSME).

While choosing to recommend targets for IMD and FSME only, we were primarily concerned with the scale of the challenge (measured by the size of the gaps), difference vs sector averages (assuming that we should first and foremost address Lancaster specific areas) and finally recognising interdependence and correlation between those characteristics (as we can assume positive impact on one should improve the remaining gaps in this group of characteristics). In our institutional data, there is a moderate correlation (circa 0.5) between IMD and TUNDRA and IMD and ABCS. 46% of TUNDRA Q1 are also IMD Q1 and 63% of ABCS Q1 are also IMD Q1. The relationship is slightly weaker for FSME eligibility and IMD – 37% of all free school meals eligible students are also IMD Q1 (hence we propose an introduction of an additional target to address FSME access).

Students eligible for free school meals (FSME)



Figure 2 Difference in performance across the lifecycle stages between students eligible and not eligible for free school meals

The aggregate data (4 years) show that overall the gaps across Continuation, Completion and Attainment lifecycle stages are less substantial than the sector. In particular, the Continuation and Completion gaps are below 5 p.p. There is no gap considering progression measure.

However, within the Access dimension, we have been recruiting substantially lower proportion of those students vs sector average (10.1% at Lancaster vs 18.4% sector-wise in 2021/22). Recognising our holistic efforts and commitment to widen participation and improve access for this group as detailed in intervention strategy one activities such as the Lancaster Access Programme, Discover Network, Early Years Interventions, and our contextual offer, we would like to set a **specific measurable target for percentage of entrants eligible for free school meals increasing from its baseline in 2021/22 of 10.1% to 12.1% by 2028/29.**

Mature students

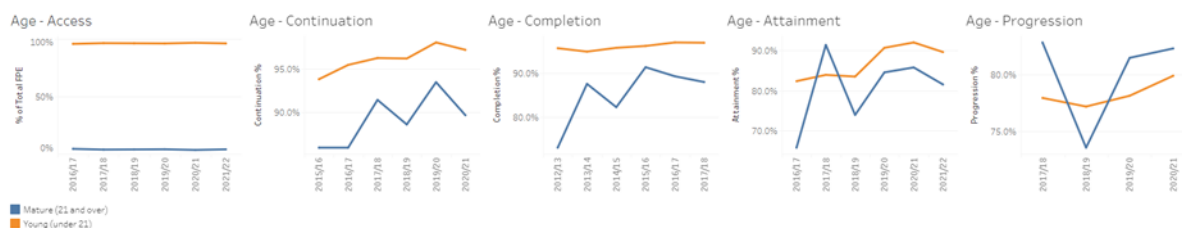


Figure 3 Differences in performance across the lifecycle stages between mature and young students

Due to specifics of the Lancaster course portfolio, the University tends to attract relatively lower percentage of mature entrants than the sector average, our focus therefore is on supporting those students throughout their student journey. Their performance after leaving the University (progression measure) shows a negative gap, as they outperform their younger peers to a larger extent than the sector average (4-year-aggregate gap at -2.2. p.p level vs -0.3% sector wise).

The gaps are more substantial for Continuation (6.2 p.p. vs 8.7 p.p. sector), Attainment (7.6 p.p. vs 10.2 p.p. sector) and Completion (8.8 p.p. vs 9.9. p.p. sector wise). Recognising the materiality of the Completion gap, we would like to set a **specific measurable target for closing the gap between completion of mature and young students decreasing from its baseline relating to 2017/18 entrant cohort of 8.9 p.p. to 5 p.p. by the end of this APP target cycle.** Details on activities to achieve this target can be found in intervention strategy two and includes activities such as reverse mentoring and the Lancaster Success Programme.

Students with known disability

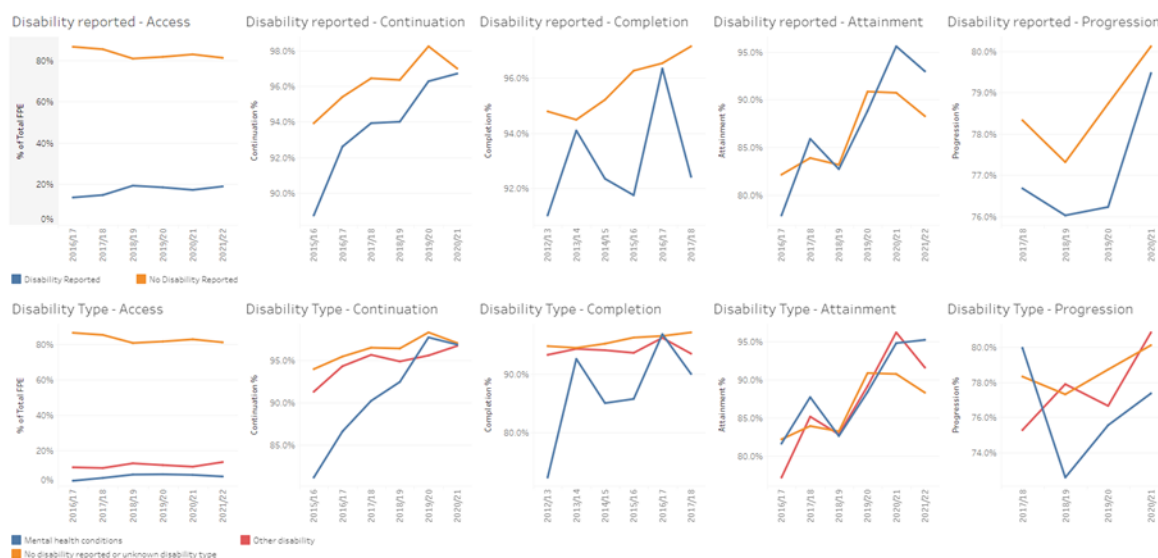


Figure 4 Difference in performance across the lifecycle stages between students with a reported disability vs no known disability. Includes a more detailed look at declared mental health disabilities

Overall, the University performance considering students with known disability shows no gaps or very small gaps (within 2 p.p.) with the exception of Competition lifecycle stage. In particular, in a four-year perspective we had a 6.3 p.p. gap between students with a mental health disability and no known disability (for the most recent published cohort 2017/18, the gap was at 7.1 p.p. vs 5.3 p.p. for the sector overall). We would like to set a **specific measurable target for closing the gap between completion of students with a reported mental health disability¹³ and no known disability decreasing from its baseline relating to 2017/18 entrant cohort of 7.1 p.p. to 5 p.p. by the end of this APP target cycle**. Details on activities to achieve this target can be found in intervention strategy two and includes activities such as reverse mentoring and student wellbeing partnerships.

Students from ethnic minority backgrounds

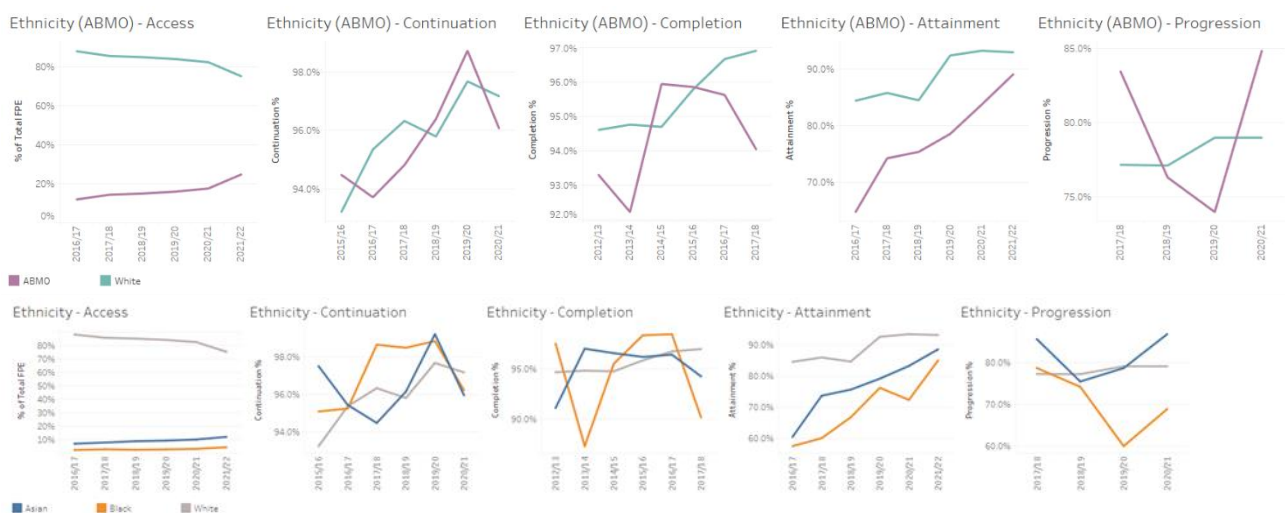


Figure 5 Difference in performance across the lifecycle stages between students from different ethnic minority backgrounds

As per the approach looking at ethnic minority groups predominantly in detail, we have included visualisations for Asian and Black students. The inclusion of top-level statistics (ABMO) was only used to help us more globally look at trends of Mixed and Other ethnic minority groups for whom the numbers were very low and therefore it was challenging to identify definite trends.

In comparison with the sector over the last 4 years combined, we recognise the need to increase the percentage of students from ethnic minority groups, therefore we would like to set a **specific measurable target for percentage of entrants from Black ethnic minority background increasing from its baseline in 2021/22 of 4.6% to 6.6% by 2028/29 and for percentage of entrants from Asian ethnic minority background increasing from its baseline in 2021/22 of 12.8% to 16.8% by 2028/29**. Details on activities to achieve this target can be found in intervention strategy one and includes activities such as the Role Model Ambassador Programme and the Uncover Potential Programme.

The last officially published year of OfS APP data 2021/22 brought a substantial closure of the attainment gap considering our ethnic minority students (ABMO vs White attainment gap overall 3.9 p.p. vs 11.0 p.p. sector; Asian vs White 4.6 p.p. vs 8.4 sector; Black vs White 8.2 p.p. vs 20.0 p.p. sector wise). Due to significant delays of the data publication for 2022/23, we do not yet know the sector performance, however internally we noticed expansion of the attainment gap to levels closer to pre-Covid. The University is committed to reducing the gap back through a series of initiatives as well as comprehensive in-depth analysis to investigate the latest data. We would like to set a **specific measurable target for closing the gap between attainment of students from Black ethnic minority background and White students from 23.0 p.p. (internal 2022/23 data) to 13.0 p.p. by 2028/29; and overall the gap between ethnic minority students and white students**

¹³ Other disabilities were considered but ultimately not included due to low numbers even when using a four-year aggregated perspective.

from 11.1 p.p. (2022/23) to 7.0 p.p. by 2028/29. Details on activities to achieve this target can be found in intervention strategy three and four and includes activities such as reverse mentoring and Decolonising Lancaster University and GYF: UK Black Student Stream.

Annex B: Further information that sets out the rationale, assumptions and evidence base for each intervention strategy that is included in the access and participation plan.

Intervention Strategy 1: Improving access to higher education/Lancaster University

Information and Guidance, knowledge and skills, personal support, and access programmes

Coertjens et al, 2017 and Nicolson, 1990, suggest that students go through four phases in transitioning to university (preparation, encounter, adjustment, and stabilisation) and that offering students tailored support in each phase should lead to long-term improvements through all stages of the post-entry student lifecycle. Information, advice, and guidance (IAG) is most effective when it is accompanied by personalised support, targeted to particular student groups (e.g. ethnically diverse groups) and part of a wider offer (e.g. access course) (McGuigan et al, 2016; Silva et al, 2016). The range of activities Lancaster is presenting as part of its access strategy demonstrate a richness of tailored support across all stages of the educational journey. The veracity of these methods is demonstrated across the range of impact studies compiled and delivered by others in the sector such as TASO.

For those students who arrive at university with 'social/cultural/academic capital' 'at odds' with the university environment they find themselves in, engaging in an intervention designed to support students during the transition into HE is predicted to increase the likelihood of a successful degree outcome. Interventions supporting the needs of a group of students (e.g. cultural, religious, ethnic needs, academic skills, knowledge) will enhance this transition and support students to develop a sense of belonging and community (Slavich and Zimbardo, 2012; Scanlon, Rowling & Weber, 2007; Thomas, 2012; Gaskell and Lingwood 2022).

Numerous studies have found that a sense of belonging at higher education is positively associated with academic success (Freeman, Anderman, and Jensen, 2007; Robertson, Cleaver and Smart, 2019). There is evidence that this effect is more pronounced for underrepresented or marginalised students (Becker and Luthar, 2002). A recent WonkHE/Pearson report (Blake, Capper & Jackson, 2022) found that connection, inclusion, support, and autonomy were the four key foundations for student sense of belonging. They also found that poor student mental health creates a major barrier to belonging and inclusion.

Students who did not experience sufficient positive role models or influencers at school age may experience additional barriers in higher education. There may be a negative impact on the decisions they make about their higher education choices. When on course, a lack of diversity in peers, staff, or in course materials and curriculums may negatively impact a student's sense of belonging and their likelihood to seek support if they face issues such as inequality, discrimination, or unconscious bias.

There is some evidence from the UK to suggest that some form of mentoring or role model interventions are associated with a positive effect on student attitudes and aspirations (Brightside, 2020). There is qualitative evidence to suggest role model interventions are most effective when students see the role model as relatable (Gartland, 2015) and can credibly represent HE as a desirable and attainable destination and are seen as successful individuals (Morgenroth et al, 2015).

In recent years we have developed our access provision to include more targeted support. The Role Model Ambassador (RMA) programme is a prime example. The 2023 'Insight Report: evaluation of current RMA programme' revealed significant successes amongst British South Asian students and their community and highlighted future developments and opportunities for use with other ethnic student groups. Work has now been completed by the delivery team, student ambassadors, community groups and participants to review and adapt the programme for use with Black, British students (Uncover Progress Programme, see

intervention strategy one). Key recommendations from the review include developing specific/targeted sessions and content on a range of topics identified as concerning ethnic minority students e.g. living on campus, studying at university, course option, university finance, bursaries, and scholarships. In line with the Role Model Ambassador programme the new programme will continue to use 'role model ambassadors' to develop and deliver the programme.

Several focus groups have taken place with students from ethnically diverse backgrounds and have identified the following common themes impacting students' HE journeys, both pre- and post-application. These key themes included those we see in other student groups (concerns over the cost of living at university, the need for information and guidance about courses, finances, university life, the knowledge and skills needed for success). However, from the students we spoke with coming from a different ethnic background presented a range of further challenges e.g. meeting people 'like' me, maintaining religious and ethnic practices, and fitting in. Feedback suggested that there was an impact of intersectionality. Being from an ethnic group alone was not the key risk but its connectivity with other pressures and their impact such as adapting to a new environment but not being about to find the social support network needed to fit in.

Social isolation and its impact on sense of belonging was identified as critically important and closely linked to a student's adjustment to university life and successful outcomes. Initiatives to address this is seen as key. Identifying ways of enhancing a student's sense of belonging and community, both pre and post arrival, is central to the RMA programme and is done via a range of means including information about social and community opportunities, advice about where to shop, and how to meet people. The role model ambassadors are key to this. Students also discussed their experience of micro-aggression and subtle racism, leading to a sense that 'they shouldn't be here', unhappiness and in some cases, mental health issues. Opportunities to discuss and address these at both a personal and institutional level was seen as key to feeling they were listened to and belonged.

Students concluded that there is a requirement for pre and post information and guidance to be specialised to needs, there to be religious, ethnic, social events and groups that are easy to find out about and access. Opportunities to inform and challenge implicit and explicit racism, develop professional networks, and access financial support once at university is also important.

Intervention Strategy 2: Improving completion rates

Reducing non-completion among students aged 21 or over on commencing undergraduate studies

The Lancaster Success Programme (LSP) is an award-winning social mobility and student success initiative. It is a targeted, opt-in intervention that utilises a coaching-led approach to support students from WP backgrounds transitioning into university, and throughout their programme of study. The programme takes a sustained, longitudinal approach to student support with each student allocated a Student Success Coach (who they retain throughout their participation in the programme) and up to two one-to-one coaching sessions each term. In addition, students can participate in the Prepare for Lancaster transitions event, Action Learning Sets (ALS), peer support sessions, social and networking events and have access to an enrichment fund which students can use to contribute toward their studies. Findings from focus groups recently conducted with mature students reveal their interest in more coaching and peer mentoring from other mature students in addition to their need to foster their sense of belonging. As such the Lancaster Success Programme Mature (LSP Mature) is designed to offer increased provisions of tailored interventions that have been identified as most impactful to mature students, namely one-to-one coaching, action learning sets, and social and networking events. LSP Mature organises bespoke social and networking events to mature students with consideration to scheduling and commuting challenges. LSP Mature is designed to promote a stronger sense of community and belonging among mature students adopting a coaching-led approach that has proven effective in relation to retention and students have found impactful.

The coaching approach adopted by the LSP has evolved over time ensuring the right balance between supporting students with their wellbeing needs, which might require a more directional mentor/advisory approach, and adopting the nondirectional, open questioning approach used in coaching, was a key consideration in the initial years. Three factors to success were identified:

- The need to ensure that staff have the requisite training and support to deliver authentic, high-quality coaching, while remaining attuned and responsive to the wellbeing needs of students;
- The importance of ensuring students and staff are aware of and comfortable with the approach being adopted and understand the boundaries of the coaching relationship, including their respective responsibilities and duty of care;
- That the LSP is seen as part of a wider student support ecosystem at the university, where students can access the appropriate support required to meet their specific needs.

Findings from focus groups conducted recently with mature students on the LSP reveal that most mature students view their coaching sessions as playing an integral role to their persevering and staying on their degree programme citing that the one-to-one coaching sessions have provided a space to think through challenges and hurdles and to devise success strategies and action plans. Findings from historical post-intervention LSP questionnaires of 2021/22 and 2022/23 indicate that students view coaching as most helpful and useful in relation to academic success and interestingly in cultivating a sense of belonging. A comparative analysis of the qualitative open-ended questions of the two questionnaires reveals an overall increase in the number of students who reported that coaching was helpful or useful in 2022/23 in comparison to 2021/22.

Academic practice literature points to the effectiveness of coaching in relation to student performance, retention, and completion (Elzen et al., 2021; Harding et al., 2018). There is sector evidence from UK higher education seems to suggest that coaching programmes can be associated with positive effects on students (TASO, n.d.). Some of the evidence is informed by quantitative studies which compared participant groups with non-participant groups to show that individuals who take part in the programmes have better outcomes. Other studies suggest a positive impact on attainment, retention or completion or other outcomes, such as the intention to remain on the course. Kerrigan and Maktelow (2021) suggest that programmes involving coaching are associated with better outcomes for students in terms of attainment and retention or completion. Additionally, strong evidence of impact is suggested by several studies conducted in the United States adopting multiple randomised controlled trials (TASO, n.d.).

One study investigated the effect of coaching for first-year college students which revealed that recipients were more likely to persist to the second year than non-recipients, with the strongest effect on male students (Bettinger & Baker, 2011). The findings of another study show that college students who received academic coaching either online or in-person had increases in their metacognitive skills over the course of the intervention (Howlett et al., 2021). Another group of studies utilising quasi-experimental methods also suggested a positive impact (TASO, n.d.). A quasi-experimental study from the US (Capstick et al., 2019) examined the effectiveness of the Academic Coaching for Excellence programme for academically at-risk undergraduate students. The study used archive data to look at retention and academic achievement. The findings show that in this mid-sized urban research institution, students who participated in academic coaching had experienced significant Grade Point Average (GPA) increases and higher retention rates in the semester following the intervention compared to those who did not participate in the programme. Worth noting are the intersectional variables in play in this context. Crisp and colleagues (2017) observed how factors such as ethnicity and existing aspirations seem to have a critical part in how students experience these programmes.

Reducing non-completion rates of those students with a declared disability, and specifically those with a declared mental health disability

A recent report into student mental health has found that the proportion of students identified as experiencing a mental health challenges has nearly tripled, from 6% in 2017 to 16% in 2023, with a

particularly significant increase of 32% in the academic year 2022/23, generally considered to be due to the coronavirus pandemic (Sanders., 2023). Presenting issues have included increased anxiety, low mood, interpersonal issues, and students reporting high levels of anxiety around their ability to maximise the potential of their study in future education or employment. Policy, legislation, and best practice across higher education institution (HEI) services reflect this increased and changing demand and have signalled a need to move away from a medical (diagnosis based) to a social (impact based) model of provision as evidenced in the Universities UK Suicide-safer universities (2018) and the Stepchange: mentally healthy universities (2023) frameworks. This guidance highlights the importance of a whole university approach, normalising wellbeing challenges and embedding support into wider HEI community consciousness, offering a range of services designed to encourage uptake from traditionally non-participating students with poor mental wellbeing. These are generally referred to as 'open access' services, as they have more fluid thresholds for access predicated upon a students perceived need rather than a medical diagnosis.

This change in approach is echoed in the broadening of HEI responsibility to include 'anticipatory' support, framed under the Equality Act, rather than Disability legislation, placing a responsibility on HEI's to manage the impact that their systems and processes have on students, and to ensure that they are proactively working with student populations to reduce overall levels of poor mental wellbeing. This, combined with an increased awareness of the need not to stray into the statutory 'duty of care', signalled by increased collaborative working with statutory services have accelerated a need to develop prevention / early intervention support, delivered according to need and aimed at preventing escalation and medicalisation of mental wellbeing issues for students.

There is evidence to demonstrate a low uptake (Musiat et al., 2014 / Wetterlin et al., 2014) and high rates of attrition within open access services (Ryan et al., 2010) meaning that preventative support is often not being utilised effectively. There are a number of reasons posited for this, including stigma (Salamanca et al., 2023), misinformation or lack of knowledge (Zhang et al., 2021), perceived financial constraints (Ryan et al., 2014), issues with access (Aller et al., 2021) and perceptions around the efficacy of support (Biringer et al., 2017). Furthermore, studies into service user expectation have established that young people want support to establish role functioning and life goals, traditionally considered the domain of preventative support, as well as symptom relief (specialist support). Therefore, if relief from emotional problems are integrated with future life goals (Biringer et al., 2017) then it is arguable that they do not see the difference in roles of prevention and intervention. This may be a further reason why many resources are either not meeting the needs of young people or not being widely accessed (Wetterlin et al, 2014) which can further limit engagement through poor service user experience (Gunasekara et al, 2017). The delivery of preventative support therefore entails significant challenges.

To engage a broader population, services must offer appropriate provision which is communicated and understood in partnership with students and wider stakeholders. They must also ensure that provision is both linked to impact and relevant or adaptable to student need. The new Student Wellbeing Partnership Service has been established to develop effective preventative provision for Lancaster University students through facilitating a 'whole University approach' and a 'whole person' approach to supporting wellbeing. The service works in partnership with students, academic departments and colleges to develop tailored interventions to support student wellbeing, adapted to students' needs, delivered where students are based, and, where relevant, targeted to the needs of a particular student cohort or community requiring more support to address the personal challenges associated with university study. This student-need focussed, evidence-based and targeted approach is designed to increase both the uptake and impact of preventative and pro-active wellbeing interventions.

Improving impact and uptake will not only support the mental wellbeing of student populations but will help Lancaster to minimise the outcomes linked to poor mental wellbeing including; lower attainment, higher rates of non-continuation and poorer student experience.

Intervention Strategy 3: Improving Degree Outcomes

Improving degree outcomes of UK students from an Asian, Black, Mixed and other heritage background

The ethnicity awarding gap in UK HE institutions is well documented (NUS, 2011; UUK & NUS, 2019).

However, although, there is evidence that racial inequalities experienced by Asian, Black or other ethnic minorities students are a contributing factor, more recent research (e.g. Stevenson and Whelan, 2013) confirm that the analysis of Asian, Black or ethnic minorities factors in student achievement is often oversimplified. Austin et al (2017), Richardson, 2008, claimed that the varying levels of success of many HE equality and diversity practices is because they fail to grasp the complexity of the issue and treat Asian, Black or other ethnic minorities groupings as a generic category (e.g. Black students) and fail to take into account the complexities of various intersectionality (e.g. gender, SES, being mature or part-time). So, while there is a growing body of research (e.g. Broecke & Nicholls, 2007. Higher Education Policy Institute, 2016) which highlights the need to improve the students' experience in the classroom, other research argues that there is a fundamental need for in-depth research into the Asian, Black, or other ethnicity minorities student experience in HE, particularly fine grained institutional research to address systemic and engrained discrimination (e.g. Davies & Garrett, 2012).

Such work is starting to appear, e.g. Auten, Heaton, Jones-Devitt and Pickering (2017) research at Sheffield Hallam University and Smith's (2016) and work at Leeds Beckett University, focuses on first gaining an in-depth understanding of the lived experience of Asian, Black and other ethnic minorities undergraduate students and staff. From the work at Leeds Beckett University, Smith identified six prioritised actions for addressing the attainment gap including a pan-university approach to addressing improvements including more inclusive approaches and practices to LTA, curricula and support services, training and development, all of which align with the approach being adopted through the CTP.

Reverse mentoring (RM) schemes have been used in a variety of organisations to address issues of diversity and inclusion and gain an understanding of the Asian, Black, or other ethnic minorities student experience. At the heart of RM schemes is a drive to understand the experiences of Asian, Black, or other ethnic minorities students in HE and the various challenges and barriers they face. It is only by studying and understanding lived experiences of students that we can start to identify strategies and solutions (Buttaro, Battle, Pastrana, 2010) and drive institutional change (McDuff, Tatam, Beacock, Ross, 2018).

RM schemes typically pair students or junior staff members from Asian, Black, and other ethnic minority backgrounds with senior staff members for open and respectful dialogue about the experiences and barriers they face. Curtis et al (2021) found that such a scheme enabled university staff to change their perspectives of under-represented students by challenging the deficit discourse, which associates students from certain backgrounds with lacking the skills, experience, or aspirations to succeed.

LU's reverse mentoring approach is based on one pioneered in the NHS and in a number of universities, including the University of Gloucestershire (Peterson & Ramsey, 2020), Leeds University (O'Connor, 2020), Liverpool John Moores (Nicholls, 2021) and Southampton University (Curtis et al, 2021). The RM project aims to bring about positive institutional change to improve student experience of learning, assessment and belonging, thereby contributing towards a reduction in the attainment gap based on ethnicity at Lancaster. The project has worked in partnership with UK Asian, Black, and Minority Ethnic students to co-design, set up and run a reverse mentoring where students from the group mentor senior teaching staff from White backgrounds. The student mentors support staff in developing their awareness of the lived experience of

learning and studying as an ethnic minority student at Lancaster. At the same time students learn how staff lead and make decisions about teaching, learning and assessment. The insights gained have led to recommendations for good practice and opportunities to adapt practices that might be hindering the success of some students. These insights will be cascaded across key institutional bodies via a range academic and non-academic committees and reports and will come to inform future policies and practices across the university.

This project contributes to improved understanding and practice/shaping of policy in the following ways:

Reverse mentoring aims to instigate a culture shift that will lead to more recognition of the role of the institution in decreasing the attainment gap for students from UK Asian, Black, Mixed and other heritage backgrounds. This recognition can lead to positive and incremental policy change through the follow-up actions of the senior teaching staff who engage as mentees. Such actions may include adapting departmental assessment and feedback practices or taking papers to forums such as Education Committee or ASQ for discussion or approval.

Together with the staff mentees, project leads are producing a set of recommendations for good practice for understanding and reducing the attainment gap at Lancaster and beyond. This will help to develop staff understanding and change the narrative around the awarding gap by challenging the deficit model of 'disadvantage' and struggle that is often used.

Through RM staff learn much more about the lived experiences of students at Lancaster. This includes insights into the experience of being a student in an institution with few role models and a predominantly white curriculum (LU Anti-Racist Toolkit, 2020). It also provides useful information on curriculum, teaching and assessment design, experiences of feedback, both positive and negative, potential barriers to success, learning environment and more. It also includes some of the more finely nuanced differences between the lived experience of different groups of students, in particular relating to intersectionality with other WP characteristics.

Intervention Strategy 4: Improving Progression Outcomes

Improving the progression of students from a UK Black heritage background to a positive graduate destination

Academic enrichment programs, designed to assist underrepresented students in gaining admission to selective universities, demonstrate a positive influence on academic achievement and progression (Barkat, 2019). Research indicates that Asian, Black, and other ethnic minority individuals who engage with leadership training still face structural barriers including racism despite having exercised individual agency in their career progress (Bhopal, 2019). As Frigerio and colleagues maintain (2022): "the diversity of the career development profession plays a critical part in the sector's ability to challenge inequality." Published data on the experiences of UK minority ethnic students on career development courses and at work in relation to their race and culture reveal the multitude of challenges faced and the sensitivities around speaking and writing about race in the context of career development support and beyond. Literature underlines these challenges and points to the introduction changes to the curriculum for trainee career development professionals, pedagogic practices in professional development programmes, and makes recommendations for further decolonial practices for career development (Frigerio et al., 2022). As such, it becomes crucial to involve ethnic minority students in the creation of career support, focusing on amplifying student voice and agency in the design process (Frigerio, et al., 2018).

Race and ethnicity play a critical role in career development programme design in how they impact not just UK minority ethnic students but all students in their professional development and practice (Dale-Rivas, 2019). This in turn affects all students' abilities to work against structural racism in the labour market, to consider the impact of their own ethnicity on their practice and its relevance when working with clients of

differing ethnic backgrounds (Opata, 2021). It is key to both critical reflective practice and an anti-racist, emancipatory understanding of careers work (Hooley et al., 2019). In adopting a participatory approach of co-creating 'GYF: UK Black Student Stream' with black students at Lancaster University, the design of this strand of GYF draws on decolonial approaches to engage with questions from participatory action research, questions such as "(h)ow do you teach careers work from a perspective that is not mostly white?" (Frigerio et al., 2022) which in turn can contribute to developing an anti-racist pedagogy of career development and support through collaborating with black alumni, black community leaders, black third sector, charity organisations and SMEs.

Academic research looking at how ethnic minority students can be supported to leverage their community cultural wealth in developing confidence, tackling inequalities, and enabling a more successful course and post-course progression (Finch & Tedam, 2023). Drawing on Critical Race Theory in education, the perspective of 'community cultural wealth' was found to be highly relevant to the participants in empirical research (Finch & Tedam, 2023). Yosso (2005) views community cultural wealth as a range of knowledge, skills and abilities possessed and used by ethnic minority people to survive and resist oppression, thus challenging the assumption that UK ethnic minority students arrive in educational establishments with cultural deficits as argued by Bourdieu (Liou et al., 2009). In collaborating with the wider black community, GYF: UK Black Student Stream acknowledges the cultural wealth of the black student community at Lancaster University.

Engaging with race and ethnicity requires a complex understanding and conceptualisation of self in relation to others argue Bhatti-Sinclair and Bailey (2010). Baumeister (2009) explains that the self-concept is a general term that encompasses what an individual knows and believes about themselves. The self-concept is multi-dimensional in that it incorporates cognitive processes, knowledge, feelings, behaviours, values, attitudes, as well as individuals' perceptions about themselves based on self-esteem and self-image (Baumeister, 2009; Campbell et al., 1996; Noguti & Bokeyar, 2014).

Historical feedback from GYF students underlines how important the programme is in relation to confidence building. Student feedback from GYF constantly shows that the programme has helped students to enhance their confidence, employability skills, and professional networks. 100% of the students said they would recommend contacting the GYF team to another student with a careers question. Student feedback from one-to-one appointments shows that clear actions happen following these interactions. Students report that these appointments give them a sense of direction on how to approach internships and confidence building. The feedback shows that students felt 24% more confident in seeking advice and guidance from careers support services after attending capital connections - this rose to an average score of 4.8/5.

Similarly, the GYF bursary supported 47 students to engage in some form of work experience such as an internship or insight day, allowing students to gain an understanding of what to expect in the workplace, and how they can prepare for this, and/or give them an understanding of the types of companies they might like to work in, in the future. Student feedback underscores the importance of the bursary in assisting them to go to networking and career events and assessment centres in further places, which has impacted their career plans and, in many instances, has helped them to land graduate jobs which collectively had a positive impact on their confidence. Through Capital Connections, students' awareness of knowing what job opportunities are available increased by 35%. By attending Capital Connections, students felt 32% more confident in making applications and attending interviews. Additionally, students felt 49% more confident about their future careers, and 30% more able to talk confidently about their skills and strengths. As of June 2022/23, 78% of final years within GYF had a LinkedIn profile, with an average of 240 connections. The bursary supported 31 students to attend interviews and/or assessment centres as part of recruitment and selection. In 2022/23, GYF completed a telephone campaign with final year students, contacting 180 of them, to discover their destinations, and offer support. Of the 148 that have returned our contact, as of the end of August, 42% have secured graduate employment, 23% are continuing onto PG study, 5% are taking a gap

year, 3% have deferred their studies, and 27% are still looking for work, but engaging with the team within this.

Intervention Strategy 5: Developing Allyship

Allyship is an effective tool for combating discrimination, promoting equal rights, and fostering an inclusive culture (Salter & Migliaccio, 2019). Furthermore, by actively engaging as allies, individuals can contribute to creating a supportive organisational environment where tolerance and acceptance are embraced by all stakeholders (Salter & Migliaccio, 2019).

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Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: The University of Lancaster

Provider UKPRN: 10007768

Investment summary

A provider is expected to submit information about its forecasted investment to achieve the objectives of its access and participation plan in respect of the following areas: access, financial support and research and evaluation. Note that this does not necessarily represent the total amount spent by a provider in these areas. Table 6b provides a summary of the forecasted investment, across the four academic years covered by the plan, and Table 6d gives a more detailed breakdown.

Notes about the data:

The figures below are not comparable to previous access and participation plans or access agreements as data published in previous years does not reflect latest provider projections on student numbers.

Yellow shading indicates data that was calculated rather than input directly by the provider.

In Table 6d (under 'Breakdown'):

"Total access investment funded from HFI" refers to income from charging fees above the basic fee limit.

"Total access investment from other funding (as specified)" refers to other funding, including OFS funding (but excluding Uni Connect), other public funding and funding from other sources such as philanthropic giving and private sector sources and/or partners.

Table 6b - Investment summary

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Breakdown	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Access activity investment (£)	NA	£980,000	£930,000	£900,000	£900,000
Financial support (£)	NA	£4,059,000	£4,542,000	£3,713,000	£3,711,000
Research and evaluation (£)	NA	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000

Table 6d - Investment estimates

Investment estimate (to the nearest £1,000)	Breakdown	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Access activity investment	Pre-16 access activities (£)	£490,000	£465,000	£450,000	£450,000
Access activity investment	Post-16 access activities (£)	£490,000	£465,000	£450,000	£450,000
Access activity investment	Other access activities (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Access activity investment	Total access investment (£)	£980,000	£930,000	£900,000	£900,000
Access activity investment	Total access investment (as % of HFI)	2.8%	2.4%	2.2%	2.1%
Access activity investment	Total access investment funded from HFI (£)	£980,000	£930,000	£900,000	£900,000
Access activity investment	Total access investment from other funding (as specified) (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	Bursaries and scholarships (£)	£3,712,000	£4,186,000	£3,357,000	£3,355,000
Financial support investment	Fee waivers (£)	£47,000	£56,000	£56,000	£56,000
Financial support investment	Hardship funds (£)	£300,000	£300,000	£300,000	£300,000
Financial support investment	Total financial support investment (£)	£4,059,000	£4,542,000	£3,713,000	£3,711,000
Financial support investment	Total financial support investment (as % of HFI)	11.7%	11.9%	9.1%	8.7%
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (£)	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (as % of HFI)	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%

Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: The University of Lancaster

Provider UKPRN: 10007768

Targets

Table 5b: Access and/or raising attainment targets

Aim [500 characters maximum]	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone	2028-29 milestone
To increase the % of students from IMDQ1	PTA_1	Access	Deprivation (Index of Multiple Deprivations [IMD])	IMD quintile 1	N/A	Lancaster University will increase the proportion of its students from IMDQ1 from 14.5% to 17% by 2028-29	No	The access and participation dashboard	2021-22	Percentage	14.5%	15%	15.5%	16%	17%
To increase the % of students eligible for Free School Meals	PTA_2	Access	Eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM)	Eligible		Lancaster University will increase the proportion of its students who were eligible for Free School Meals from 10.1% to 12.1% by 2028-29	No	The access and participation dashboard	2021-22	Percentage	10.1%	10.6%	11.1%	11.6%	12.1%
To increase the % of students from a UK Asian heritage background	PTA_3	Access	Ethnicity	Asian		Lancaster University will increase the proportion of its students from UK Asian heritage backgrounds from 12.8% to 16.8% by 2028-29	No	The access and participation dashboard	2021-22	Percentage	12.8%	13.8%	14.8%	15.8%	16.8%
To increase the % of students from a UK Black heritage background	PTA_4	Access	Ethnicity	Black		Lancaster University will increase the proportion of its students from UK Black heritage backgrounds from 4.6% to 6.6% by 2028-29	No	The access and participation dashboard	2021-22	Percentage	4.6%	5.1%	5.6%	6.1%	6.6%
	PTA_5														
	PTA_6														
	PTA_7														
	PTA_8														
	PTA_9														
	PTA_10														
	PTA_11														
	PTA_12														

Table 5d: Success targets

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone	2028-29 milestone
To improve the completion rates of mature students (those aged 21 plus at the point of entry)	PTS_1	Completion	Age	Mature (over 21)	Young (under 21)	To reduce the gap in completion rates between mature students (21 plus at point of entry) and young students (under 21 at the point of entry) from 8.9 percentage points to 5 percentage points by 2028-29	No	The access and participation dashboard	2017-18	Percentage points	8.9	8	7	6	5
To improve the completion rates of students with a declared mental health disability	PTS_2	Completion	Reported disability	Mental health condition	Other (please specify in description)	To reduce the gap in completion rates between students with a declared disability and the wider student population from 7.1 percentage points to 5 percentage points by 2028-29	No	The access and participation dashboard	2017-18	Percentage points	7.1	6.5	6	5.5	5
To improve the attainment outcomes of students from a UK Asian, Black, mixed, other heritage background	PTS_3	Attainment	Ethnicity	Not specified (please give detail in description)	White	To reduce the gap in attainment outcomes between students from a UK Asian, Black, mixed or other heritage background and UK White students from 8.8 percentage points to 7 percentage points by 2028-29: data used is from the HESA student return 2022-23 (Data Futures)	No	Other data source (please include details in commentary)	2022-23	Percentage points	11.1	10	9	8	7

