



St Helens College



University Centre
St Helens

Access and Participation Plan 2020/21 - 2024/25



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St Helens College

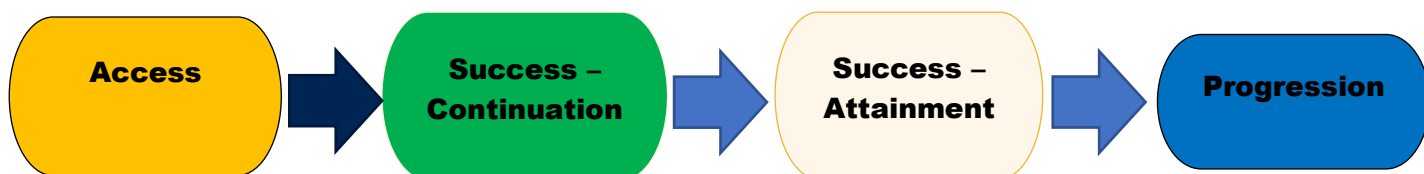
Access and participation plan

2020-21 to 2024-25

1. Assessment of performance

St Helens College continuously monitors its performance, against a range of metrics and key performance indicators. For the purpose of preparing our Access and Participation Plan (APP), 2020-21 to 2024-25, we have reviewed our performance, as reported on the OfS Data Dashboard, against the Participation of Local Areas (POLAR4) classification groups, which shows the proportion of young people in the population that participate in Higher Education. It addresses how likely young people are to participate in higher education across the UK and how this varies by area. Across the Merseyside region, there are many areas of low participation, represented by POLAR4 quintiles 1 and 2, with higher participation classed as being within quintiles 3, 4 and 5. All graphs, and associated commentary, have been prepared using the OfS Data Dashboard and relate to all Undergraduate Full Time or Apprenticeship students, unless otherwise stated.

Performance at each stage of the student lifecycle is assessed and presented against each of the identified target groups as follows:

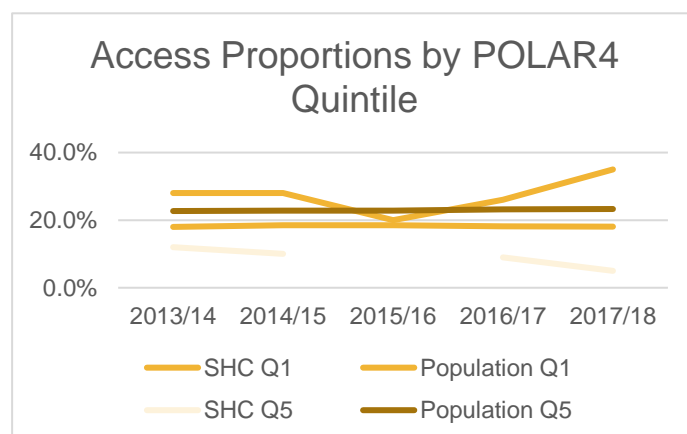


Our priority student groups:
Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status
Black, Asian and minority ethnic students, Mature students
Disabled students Care Leavers
Intersections of disadvantage/Other under-represented groups

1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

Access

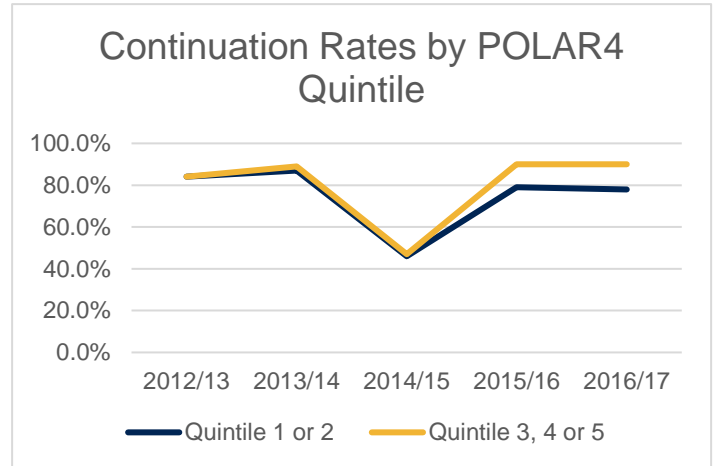
Over the five year period, from 2013/14 to 2017/18, the proportion of 18 year olds from POLAR4 Quintiles 1 and 2 has been significantly above the proportion in the population, and has increased by 5 percentage points from 65% in 2013/14 to 69% in 2017/18. This compares to just 28% in the 2017/18 population. On that basis, we do not see access for students from low participation areas as a priority for our 2020/21 to 2024/25 access and participation plan.



Success

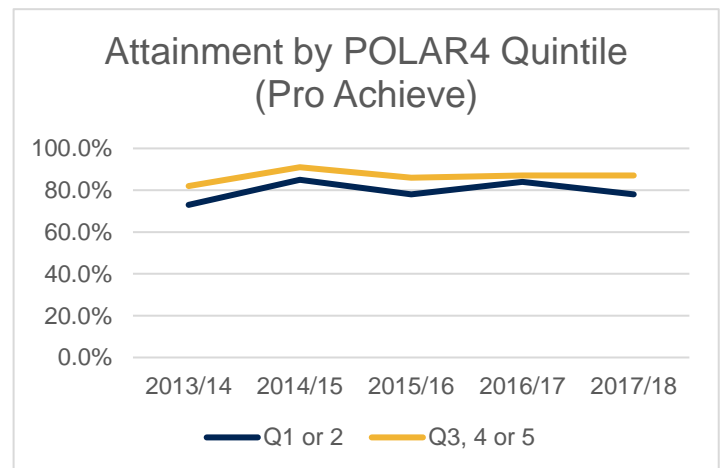
Continuation

Continuation rates for students from POLAR4 Quintile 1 or 2 have been variable over the period 2012/13 to 2016/17, and show a net decline of six percentage points over the period. Furthermore, for the last two years of the period being reviewed, the gap in continuation rates between POLAR4 quintile 1 or 2 students and POLAR4 quintile 3, 4 or 5 students, has been 11% and 12% respectively. Therefore, through our access and participation work, we will aim to close the gap in continuation rates between these student groups.



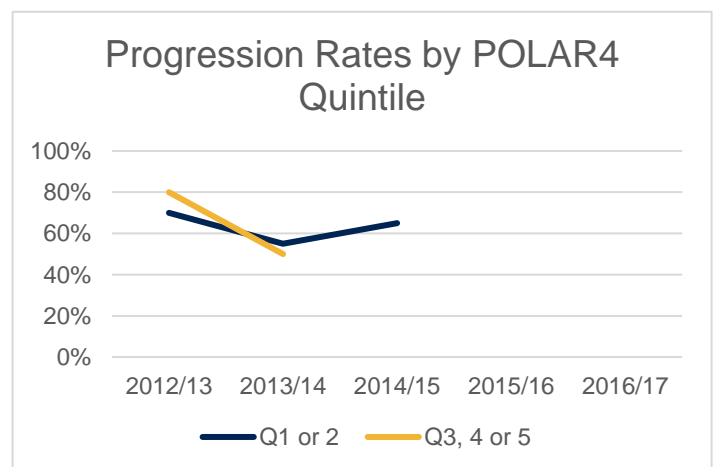
Attainment

Attainment rates for students from POLAR4 Quintiles 1 and 2 are slightly below those for students from POLAR4 Quintiles 3, 4 and 5. Whilst the gap had closed slightly in the middle of the five year review period, the difference was 9 percentage points in the first year and the last year. As part of our APP the college will do more to understand why this gap exists, and work to close the gap.



Progression to employment or further study

There is no available data for progression rates beyond 2014/15. However, the data for 2012/13 to 2014/15 shows that since 2012/13 POLAR4 quintile 1 or 2 students have progressed at a higher rate than POLAR4 quintile 3, 4 or 5 student. On that basis, this will not be an area of significant focus in our access and participation plan for 2020/21 to 2024/25.

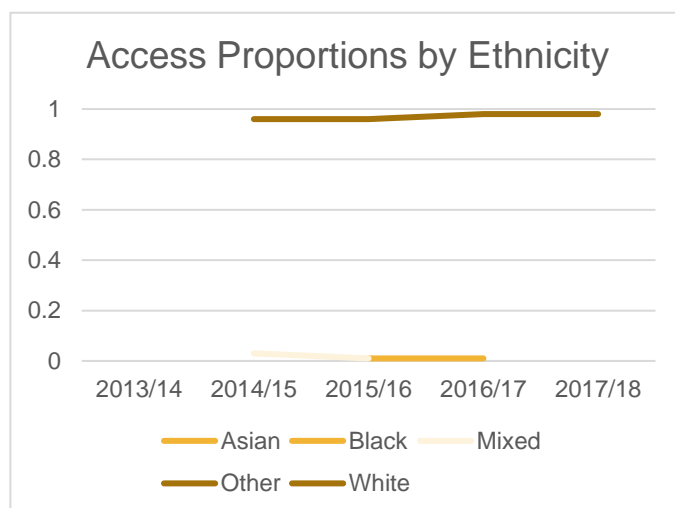


1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

Over the last five years, the college has recruited very small numbers of BAME students to its HE courses, which is a reflection of the local communities from which the college recruits; i.e. St Helens has a population that is 98% white, whilst the wider Merseyside region is 94.5% white. Consequently, even when using a 5-year rolling average (as per the APP guidance), the numbers are too low to report on in detail, as this could potentially lead to the identification of individual students. Given this, it is not currently possible to report on Continuation, Attainment or Progression for BAME students, with the level of detail for which we are able to report on the lifecycle stages of other students. Likewise, we are unable to disaggregate the BAME groups for reporting purposes, due to the very low numbers, i.e. <10 students in each BAME group in any of the last five years. However, the college has a suite of internal reports, providing detailed data in relation to its BAME students, which it monitors through various committees, including the Marketing, Recruitment, Access and Widening Participation Group, which reports to the HE Strategy Committee. The college is fully committed to reporting on all lifecycle stages for its BAME students, as soon as the numbers reach a reportable level.

Access

Whilst there is limited available data, it is clear that St Helens College has consistently recruited mainly white students to its courses over the last four years, with Years 1 and 2 being 96% white and Years 3 and 4 being 98%. The ONS 2011 Census data stated that within Merseyside, 94.5% of the population has a white ethnic background, which was higher than the North West average of 90.2%, whilst 5.5% of the Merseyside population had a Black, Minority Ethnic background (BAME) which was lower than the North West average. Given that BAME participation rates are lower than this, the college will work to close this gap through its access and participation work across the life of the 2020/21 to 2024/25 access and participation plan.



Success

Continuation

Because the number of BAME students at the college is so low, 98% of students are white, the college is unable to report on continuation rates for BAME students, as it could potentially identify individual students.

Attainment

Because the number of BAME students at the college is so low, 98% of students are white, the college is unable to report on attainment rates for BAME students, as it could potentially identify individual students.

Progression to employment or further study

Because the number of BAME students at the college is so low, 98% of students are white, the college is unable to report on progression rates for BAME students, as it could potentially identify individual students.

1.3 Mature students

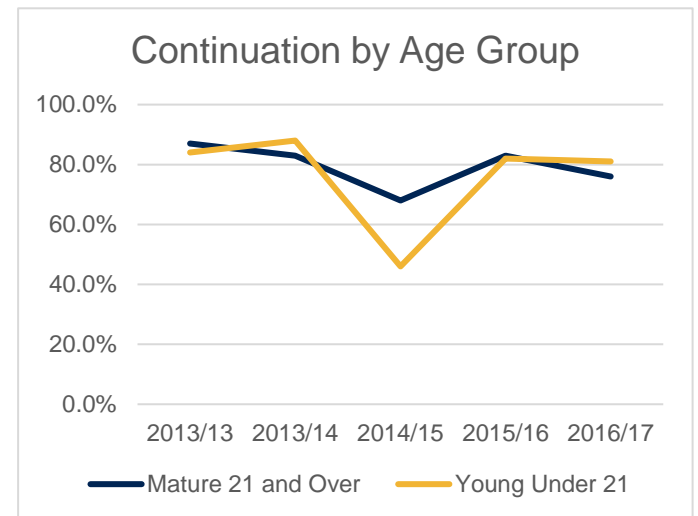
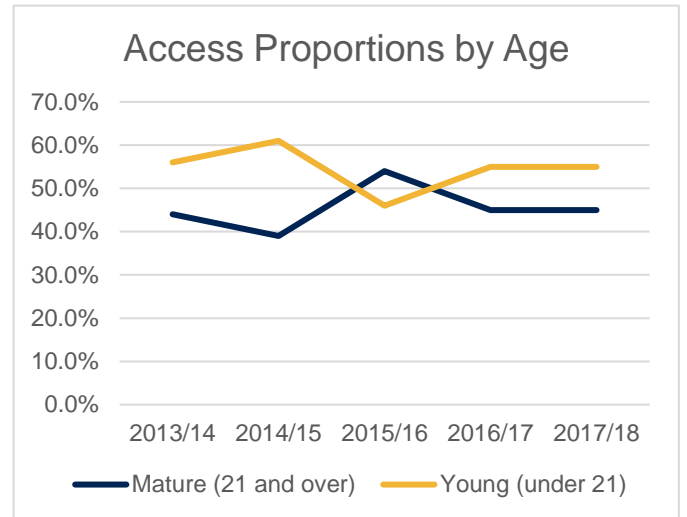
Access

The proportion of Mature students studying on full time courses has been relatively stable over the five year period from 2013/14 to 2017/18, but with an overall decline of 3.1 percentage points. Furthermore, the proportion of mature students has been, for four of the five years being reviewed, lower than the proportion of young students. Through our APP we will aim to close the access gap between mature and young students.

Success

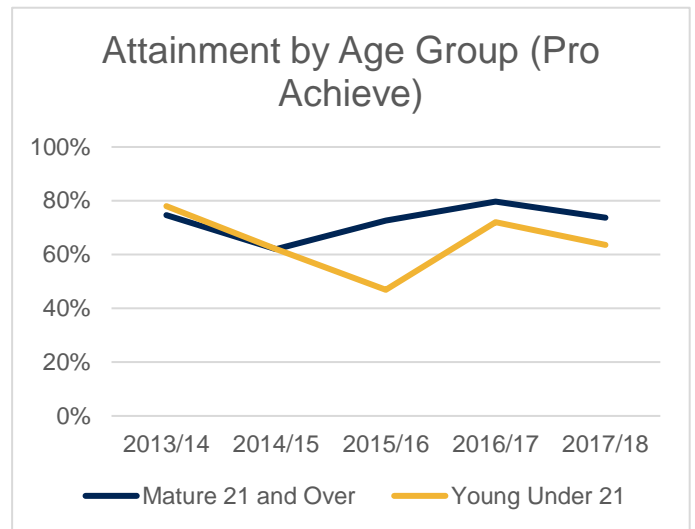
Continuation

Continuation rates for mature students, studying on full time courses, have declined over the five year period from 2012/13 to 2016/17, by 11 percentage points, and in 2016/17 were 5 percentage points below the continuation rate for young students. On that basis, we consider continuation rates for mature students a priority for our 2020/21 to 2024/25 access and participation plan.



Attainment

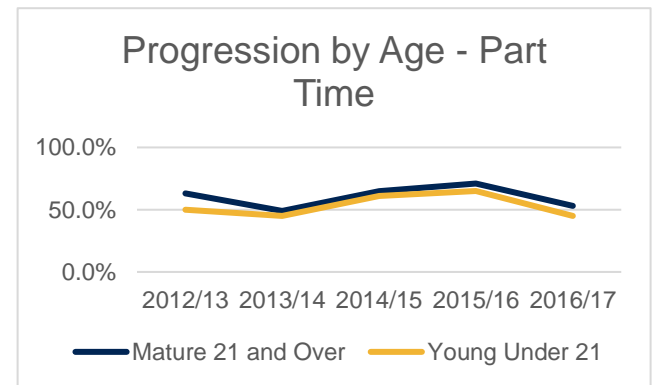
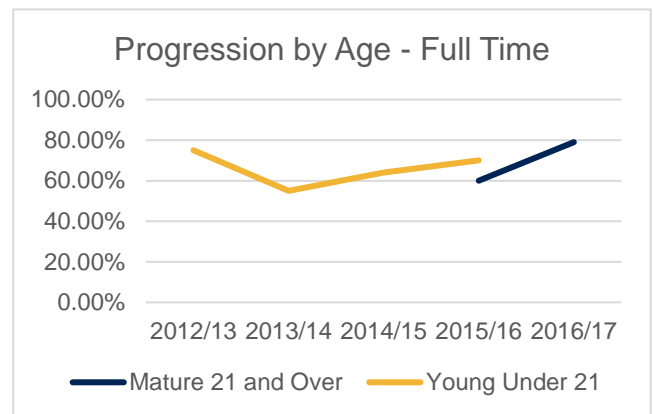
Attainment rates have fluctuated somewhat over the five-year review period, and show an overall decline of 4 percentage points from Year 1 to Year 5. Whilst mature students' attainment is higher than that for young students, we consider raising attainment levels for mature students as a priority for our access and participation plan 2020/21 to 2024/25.



Progression to employment or further study

Over the five year period, 2012/13 to 2016/17, there is limited data for full time students. At 79%, the 2016/17 progression rate, for full time mature students, is 19 percentage points above that for the previous year, and 9 percentage points above the most recent figure for young students (2015/16).

For mature students studying part time courses, there is available data for all of the five years, from 2012/13 to 2016/17. Over this period, progression rates have been variable, with the 2012/13 rate being 63% and the 2016/17 rate being 53%, there is a net drop of 10 percentage points. Therefore, it is our aim, through our access and participation work, to improve progression rates for our mature students.

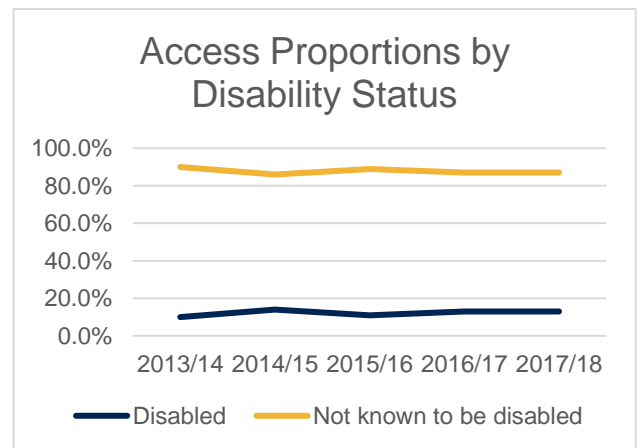


1.4 Disabled students

Over the last five years, the college has recruited very small numbers of disabled students to its HE courses. Consequently, even when using a 5-year rolling average (as per the APP guidance), the numbers are too low to report on in detail, as this could potentially lead to the identification of individual students. Given this, it is not currently possible to report on Attainment or Progression for disabled students, with the level of detail for which we are able to report on the lifecycle stages of other students. Likewise, we are unable to disaggregate the disabled groups for reporting purposes, due to the very low numbers, i.e. <10 students in each disabled group in any of the last five years. However, the college has a suite of internal reports, providing detailed data in relation to its disabled students, which it monitors through various committees, including the Marketing, Recruitment, Access and Widening Participation Group, which reports to the HE Strategy Committee. The college is fully committed to reporting on all lifecycle stages for its disabled students, as soon as the numbers reach a reportable level.

Access

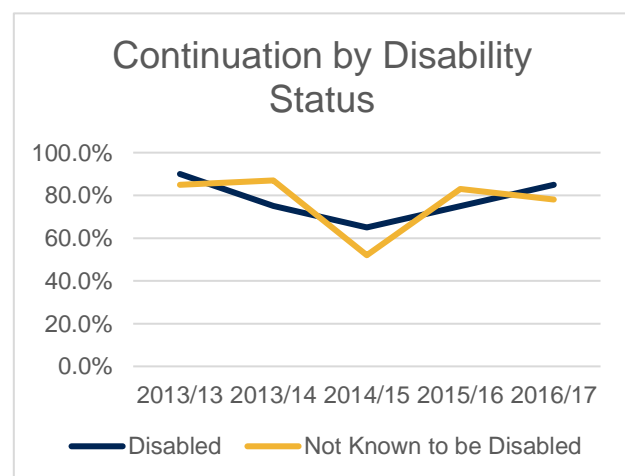
The proportion of disabled students, studying full time courses, over the five year period from 2013/14 to 2017/18, has increased. For full time students, the proportion, at 13%, is close to that across all providers. Given that access for disabled students shows an upward trend over the five year review period, we do not consider access for disabled students to be a priority for our 2020/21 to 2024/25 access and participation plan.



Success

Continuation

Continuation rates for disabled students were 90% in 2012/13, but declined to 75% and then 65% by 2014/15. For 2015/16, there is no available data, but in 2016/17 there is a significant improvement, to 85%, which is 7 percentage points above the continuation rate for non-disabled students. The gaps between continuation rates for disabled and non-disabled students have fluctuated somewhat over the five year review period, but are not statistically significant in any of the five years, due to the very low number of students who are known to have a disability. On that basis, we do not consider continuation for disabled students to be a priority for our 2020/21 to 2024/25 access and participation plan.



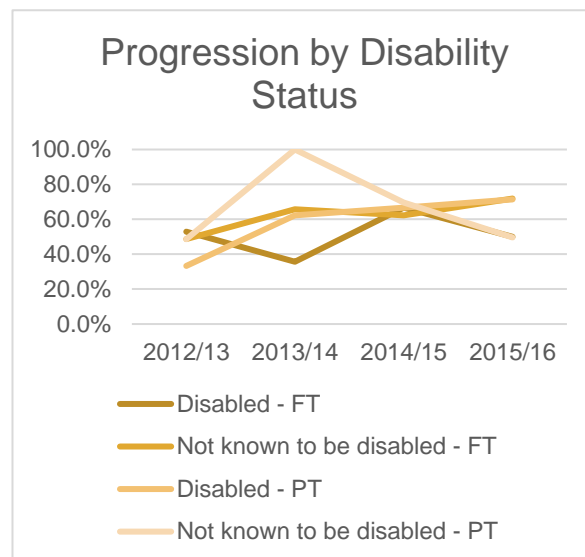
Attainment

Because the number of disabled students at the college is so low, there is no statistically significant data to report on in terms of attainment rates for disabled students, as this would potentially identify individual students.

Progression to employment or further study

As can be seen in the adjacent graph, there is some inconsistency in progression rates between disabled students and those not known to have a disability. As part of our APP work over the next five years we will aim to remove that inconsistency and close the progression gaps between disabled and non-disabled students.

Because the number of disabled students at the college is so low, there is no statistically significant data to report on in terms of progression rates for disabled students, as this would potentially identify individual students.



1.5 Care leavers

St Helens College does not currently systematically collect information on access, continuation, attainment and progression for Care Leavers against the student lifecycle. However, as part of our approach to student support, these individuals are known to relevant teams who are able to address their needs and any emerging issues at each stage of the lifecycle.

Whilst we acknowledge that the APP should measure gaps between target groups and their peers, with regard to Care Leavers, we believe that our initial target must be to capture accurate information which will help us to evaluate the activity of care leavers and carers in order to fully support them moving forward. We have therefore introduced changes to our recruitment practices in 2019/20 to ensure that data is available from 2020/21 onwards.

As part of this, the College will sign up to the Care Leaver Covenant, and will adopt 'Principles to guide higher education providers on improving care leavers access and participation in HE'. As part of this APP the College will use the widening participation budget to support care leavers through taster days, summer schools and study support; and will provide care leavers with priority access to year-round mentoring.

1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

Over the last five years, the college has recruited very small numbers of students in most of the underrepresented groups being considered as part of the APP. Consequently, the college is unable to report in detail with regard to intersections of disadvantage for the Access, Success and Progression lifecycle stages of its HE students. However, the college has, through its well-developed internal reporting mechanisms, a meaningful understanding of the impact of the various intersections of disadvantage and is committed to reporting on this, once the numbers of students reach a level at which such reporting would not present the possibility of individual students being identifiable.

1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

Carers: From 2019/20 there will be a category on the Learning Agreement that asks for self-declaration 'a young or full time carer (age 14-25)' as per the Carers Trust definition. This will allow for reports to be created along with disaggregated data to inform the monitoring of these students in terms of access, success and progression. We will continue to monitor the data capture and reporting systems to ensure that we are able to identify the impact of our work with this group.

Estranged students: From 2019/20 there will be a category on the Learning Agreement that asks for self-declaration 'Are you estranged from your family?' The availability of this data is dependent upon self-declaration, however, this data will allow reports to be created along with disaggregated data to inform the monitoring of these students in terms of access, success and progression. We will continue to monitor the data capture and reporting systems to ensure that we are able to identify the impact of our work with this group.

Children from military families: Historically the College has not asked students to self-declare if they are ex-military/ armed forces. However, from 2019/20 there will be a category on the Learning Agreement that asks for self-declaration 'Are you: a child from a military family?'. The availability of this data is dependent upon self-declaration, however, this data will allow reports to be created along with disaggregated data to inform the monitoring of these students in terms of access, success and progression. We will continue to monitor the data capture and reporting systems to ensure that we are able to identify the impact of our work with this group.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities (GRT): The 2018/19 Learning Agreement allows for the self-declaration of students from Gypsy or Traveller communities only. Currently this data isn't analysed in terms of access, success or progression. Moving forward the Learner Agreement for 2019/20 will also include the additional option to self-declare 'the Roma community' which will allow for reports to be created along with disaggregated data to inform the monitoring of these students. It will also allow for future comparisons with the planned inclusion of Roma community data in the 2021 Census.

Refugees: From 2019/20 there will be a category on the Learning Agreement that asks for self-declaration 'Are you: a refugee?'. The availability of this data is dependent upon self-declaration, however, this data will allow reports to be created along with disaggregated data to inform the monitoring of these students in terms of access, success and progression. We will continue to monitor the data capture and reporting systems to ensure that we are able to identify the impact of our work with this group.

2. Strategic aims and objectives

2.1 Target groups

St Helens College's overarching strategic APP mission is to improve access and participation outcomes for key groups of underrepresented students. To this end we have set an overarching Strategic Aim of: **"Developing an environment in which all students can enjoy their learning, be ambitious, achieve academically, and personally and be able to progress to the best of their abilities."**

Our Access and Participation Plan, 2020/21 to 2024/25, focusses on how we can support underrepresented groups, and developing clear targets for improving access, success and progression. This is core to our mission and is expressed through the following strategic aims:

Ref	Target Group	Life Cycle Stage	Aim(s)
A1	BAME	Access	Increase BAME population to equal to that found in the local area by 2025
A2	Mature Students	Access	Reduce the gap in Access for Mature Students compared to Young Students
S1	POLAR4 Q1 or 2	Success - Continuation	Reduce the gap in Continuation between POLAR4Q 3, 4 or 5 students and POLAR4 Q1 or 2 students

S2	Mature Students	Success - Continuation	Improve the continuation rates for Mature Students studying full time
S3	Mature Students	Success - Attainment	Improve attainment by Mature Students by 9% by 2025
P1	Disabled Students	Progression	Improve progression by Disabled Students by 10% by 2025

By adopting these 6 Strategic Aims based around Access, Continuation, Attainment and Progression we believe that this APP will lead to improved performance for disadvantaged, BAME, disabled, and Mature students.

2.2 Aims and objectives

In order to achieve the 6 overarching APP targets, aims and objectives have been created and provided in the table below. The broad aims directly align with the targets detailed in the supporting Targets and Investment Plan.

Aim	Ref	Target Group	Description	Collaborative	Data Source	Baseline data	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Reduce the gap in access for BAME students to that found in the local population.	A1	BAME	Reduce the gap in recruitment of BAME students enrolled from below that found in the local population to that found in the local population by 2025	No	Access & Participation Data Set	2%	1%	1%	0%	0%	Zero
Reduce the gap in Access for Mature Students compared to Young Students	A2	Mature Students	Reduce the gap in Access for Mature Students compared to Young Students by 6% by 2025	No	Access & Participation Data Set	6%	4%	3%	2%	1%	Zero
Reduce the gap in Continuation rates between POLAR4 Q3, 4 or 5 students and POLAR4 Q1 or 2 students	S1	F/T students from POLAR4/ Q1	Reduce the gap in continuation rates between full time students from POLAR4 Quintile 3, 4 or 5 and POLAR4 Quintiles 1 or 2, by the end of the plan	No	Access & Participation Data Set	12%	10%	8%	4%	2%	Zero
Reduce the gap in continuation rates between young students and mature students studying full time	S2	Mature Students	Reduce the gap in continuation rates between Young students and Mature students, by 4% over the life of the plan.	No	Access & Participation Data Set	5%	4%	3%	2%	1%	1%
Reduce the attainment gap between Young students and Mature students by 9% by 2025	S3	Mature Students	Reduce the percentage difference in attainment between Young students and Mature students, by 9%.	No	College Pro-Achieve Data Set	10%	7%	5%	3%	2%	1%
Reduce the progression gap for Disabled Students by 10% by 2025	P1	Disabled Students	Reduce the percentage difference in progression between Disabled students and non-disabled 10%	No	College Pro-Achieve Data Set	10%	8%	6%	4%	2%	Zero

The measurable objectives indicate the position the College intends to reach over the life of the APP together with yearly milestones.

In addition to the Aims outlined above, the College will also work in collaboration with Shaping Futures (NCOP) outreach hub to provide information, advice and guidance to an additional 10 Liverpool City Region schools (from a baseline of 43) in order to increase access and participation across a range of student groups.

3. Strategic measures

3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

Overview

St Helens College's Mission Statement is 'Transforming lives through excellence in education and training'. This Mission Statement is underpinned by a number of aims relevant to the widening participation agenda for the College:

1. To make a leading contribution to the welfare and economic development of our local communities and the Liverpool City Region by providing the curriculum and skills that employers need;
2. To provide good value for taxpayers' money ensuring high quality education and training and delivering the commitments to product offer, high quality provision and strong financial health
3. To be an inclusive College Group where each individual is respected, valued and safeguarded as part of an enjoyable, supportive and caring learning and working environment;
4. To motivate high performance and innovation within a culture of high expectations of professionalism, integrity, strong work ethics and teamwork;
5. To ensure successful education, training and personal, social, moral, cultural and spiritual development and welfare for students ensuring that they are well prepared for life and work in Britain today;
6. To build students' confidence and employability skills, including English and maths, through excellent careers advice, teaching and training and work experience resulting in progression to further study or sustainable employment;
7. To achieve consistently high customer satisfaction from students, parents, employers and other stakeholders;
8. To lead in education and training partnerships for the benefit of all partners and the local community.

We deliver these through a whole-institution approach, which includes:

- A HE Strategy that is the catalyst for supporting all HE students to access HE provision which meets the needs of both their academic and career aspirations
- Approaches to teaching, learning and assessment that are inclusive and enable all HE students to meet their full potential
- A supportive student-centred environment for all students including those from backgrounds with no history of HE, adults returning to education and those in employment needing to balance study with work and other commitments.
- A comprehensive range of support services for students to access from the point of first enquiry and throughout their HE journey at the College e.g.
 - financial advice and guidance;
 - careers advice in choosing and applying for undergraduate and postgraduate study; discussing progression routes and career option; support for CV writing, searching for jobs and preparing for interviews;
 - additional learner support services for students with additional support needs.

Alignment with other strategies

Achievement of the aims and objectives in this Access and Participation Plan will be supported by the following strategies and policies:

Higher Education Strategy 2017-2020

The St Helens College Higher Education Strategy links directly to the St Helens College Strategic Plan 2016-2019, by expanding the content and developing the detail specific to Higher Education.

The Strategy takes account of national policies relating to widening participation and clearly articulates the College's plans for stimulating demand in HE, in what is a more student-led market, and to meet regional and local workforce development needs through a more innovative curriculum and a revised

marketing approach. The Strategy also sets out a plan for maintaining excellent success and satisfaction rates, and increasing the emphasis on progression and employability.

Higher Education Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy and Procedure

St Helens College is responsible for maintaining the academic standards of its programmes in relation to the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the assessment regulations of the Awarding Bodies. The curriculum, learning and teaching, information and guidance, support for students, and resources collectively provide learning opportunities, which facilitate students in attaining their qualifications.

The Higher Education Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) Policy is founded upon the principle that students develop progressively from dependent to independent learners throughout the duration of their programme. This reflects the value placed by the College on being student-focused, on widening participation and on the development of academic and employability skills.

The policy reflects the need to support a Higher Education student population, which is diverse in terms of background and patterns of study and the requirements of validating Universities and other Awarding Bodies.

Equality and Diversity Policy

St Helens College strives to build a culture that values equality, diversity, openness, fairness and transparency for its staff and students. The College believes that by embracing equality and diversity we are providing a sound foundation on which to build a successful and vibrant environment whose cultures and values are respected by both our students and the community as a whole. To this end the College Group is committed to produce, implement, review and monitor policies which promote equality and diversity for all those who study and work within the institution.

University Centre St Helens Student Admissions Policy

University Centre St Helens' student admissions policy is designed to support the aims and objectives of St Helens College's Strategic Plan, University Centre St Helens' Higher Education Strategy and the College's Mission and strategic aims. The procedure for considering and approving applications to Higher Education programmes is compliant with Part B of the Quality Code.

The College has long-established practice for admission to HE programmes. All applications are received centrally and logged by the Admissions Team. They are then forwarded to the relevant programme team. All applicants are considered on their individual merits. Programme teams invite appropriate applicants for interview, following which, offers can be made. Applications for full time places are made through UCAS, and for part time courses through the University Centre St Helens application process. This practice is in line with the recommendations and good practice guidelines provided by the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) programme, details of which can be found at www.spa.ac.uk.

University Centre St Helens Marketing Plan

Higher Education provision at St Helens College is now into its fourth recruitment cycle under the specific 'University Centre St Helens' brand.

The 2018/2019 marketing plan has been devised with both primary and secondary objectives in mind. The main aim of the plan is to support the attainment of key recruitment targets, whilst meeting and supporting key aims and priorities of the wider St Helens College Strategic Plan.

This plan details the wider national context for Higher Education, as it falls against what is, quite possibly, it's most challenging backdrop of recent years, before detailing the local context. The latter half of the plan outlines key periods of recruitment activity, in the form of detailed campaign action plans, which, once fully executed, aim to raise the profile of University Centre St Helens, whilst also improving recruitment figures for 2019 entry onto the range of degree courses offered at University Centre St Helens.

The marketing plan aims to strengthen University Centre St Helens' brand, in terms of brand values and public perceptions of the brand and reputation, whilst also enhancing and strengthening brand visibility and recognition. In addition, it will encourage alumni, friends, parents, students, prospective students and

staff to take pride in University Centre St Helens. It will inspire those who are not directly connected with University Centre St Helens to take notice of both academic reputation and offer, whilst making a positive contribution to the local and wider communities.

The plan will cover activity over a 12-month period from mid-August 2018 – July 2019 with a marketing budget of circa £50k specifically allocated to University Centre St Helens, in order to execute and achieve aims and objectives outlined in this plan. This budget will cover all design, print, event and media costs. The activity was launched from the 15th September 2018 and will support recruitment for September 2019 entry. The rationale for this spend is to ensure University Centre St Helens student recruitment figures for 2019 are a marked increase on 2018, as the Higher Education audience provides St Helens College with a valuable income stream.

Employability strategy

Our employability strategy has a clear focus on enhancing student employability. Our strategy details the following priorities designed to increase graduate employability:

- Develop and expand the higher and degree apprenticeships offer
- Continue to develop strategic partnerships with employers, providers and community organisations
- Provide networking opportunities with a range of employers and other professional bodies within and beyond the college community
- Continue to engage employers actively in curriculum planning and delivery
- Promote the value and breadth of opportunities to study, work and volunteer within the local and wider community
- Encourage students to approach their employability by promoting resilience, and reflection
- Provide high quality careers advice and guidance together with services such as interviewing practice, CV preparation
- Develop and expand the graduate mentoring programme
- Continue to invest in the professional development of staff

Teaching, learning and assessment strategy

St Helens College is committed to delivering high quality teaching, learning and assessment that provides inclusive education for all our learners. This strategy details the following key priorities:

- Ensure that all learners receive a high quality learning experience
- Implement assessment strategies that meet individual needs, promote personal development and progression
- Listen to our student and help them to become independent learners
- Develop a culture whereby all tutors and assessors aspire to good or outstanding curriculum delivery
- Continue to embed e-learning within the curriculum so that it is blended into all curriculum areas
- Champion the promotion of equality of opportunity and inclusion, social and cultural diversity and safeguarding

Information learning technology strategy

Our ILT strategy has a clear focus on the use of technology to improve access and inclusivity, reflecting our college-wide approach and commitment to equality of opportunity. The key priorities of this strategy are to facilitate staff and students collective use of ILT to:

- Equip students with the digital literacy and specialised skills required in the modern workplace
- Enrich and extend learning opportunities
- Encourage innovation in the classroom
- Support independent study, collaborative working and problem solving
- Develop innovative, engaging and differentiated digital materials
- Develop digital literacy in staff and support them to build confidence in their abilities

Risk management strategy

Our approach to risk management is well embedded within college practice. Potential risks and associated risk controls are reviewed, and their effectiveness closely monitored by the senior leadership team on a monthly basis. The associated risk register has a clear focus on recruitment and retention of students, quality of provision, recruitment and retention of appropriately skilled staff, equality and diversity, physical resources and national policy changes. Many of the risk controls support the implementation of this APP.

All of the above strategies contribute to our strategic objectives for access and participation. By creating a whole college approach in which inclusivity and accessibility are embedded within our practice at every stage of the student journey, we aim to create a learning environment within which all students, including those within our target groups, have equity in opportunity and realise their full potential.

Strategic measures

Theory of Change Model

Our Theory of Change model has identified 13 Activities and Outcomes which will support the achievement of the 5 Aims and Objectives set out in Section 2 of this APP. These are set out below:

Ref	Target Group	Desired Change	Activities & Outcomes	Lead	Deadline
A1	BAME	Reduce the gap in recruitment of BAME students to equal to that found in the local area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The College will review the advertising and course information to reduce any perceived barriers for BAME students Provide additional progression sessions specifically aimed at BAME students; provided specific progression events for parents/carers. 	Director of Marketing, Commercial & Customer Relations	July 2023
A2	Mature Students	Reduce the gap in Access for Mature Students compared to Young Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target increased progression from Access Programmes Increase activity through the NCOP for targeting mature students Further use of bursaries to encourage access by Mature Students Embed the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant (previously signed up to by Knowsley College) across the merged College to encourage the recruitment of service leavers 	Deputy Principal	July 2025
S1	POLAR4 Q1/2 students	Reduce the gap in Continuation between POLAR4Q3/5 students and POLAR4Q1/2 students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide additional support sessions to develop academic reading, writing and research skills; Provision of dedicated HE learning mentors for students from POLAR4 Q1 and Mature Students; Provision of additional weekly tutorials and study support sessions for students from POLAR4 Q1 and Mature Students. 	Deputy Principal	Oct 2024
S2	Mature Students	Reduce the gap in continuation rates for mature students studying full time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide additional staff development sessions on teaching and strategies for 	HE Quality Manager	July 2025

P1	Disabled Students	Reduce the gap in progression by Disabled Students compared to their peers by 10%	Mature Students and Disabled Students; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of communities of practice for staff engaged with Mature students and Disabled Students. • Provision of specialist support/ equipment for Disabled students 		
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The achievement of these outcomes will require a number of key resources/inputs. These include from our Student Services and NCOP staff. It will also require significant input through the College committee structure including through the HE Quality & Standards Committee, the Student Progress & Achievement Working Group, the Student Experience & Enhancement Working Group, the HE Student Forum, and the Marketing, Recruitment, Access & Widening Participation Group.

To support the APP the College will provide additional staff time for tutorial support and progress monitoring, we have put in place dedicated Quality Management support and Learning Resources support. We will also put in place Personal Progress Coaches and additional Mentoring Support, together with Staff Development activities which are targeted at teaching staff involved in the delivery of Higher Education. We will also allocate a member of the Finance Team to specifically support the achievements of the financial elements of this APP.

The key assumption within our Plan are that whilst a number of elements of this APP are targeted at specific groups of students, it is clear that the majority of activities will impact on all areas of the Plan. It is also assumed that all the Activities and Strategic Measures support the wider College and OfS Key Performance Indicators. The APP also assumes that there will be targeted campaigns for BAME students, Mature students, Disabled students and Care leavers. A further key assumption is that monitoring of the APP will be undertaken through the College Committee structure, with regular report being provided to the College Governing Body.

Theory of Change Diagram



Financial Support

Up to, and including, the period covered by its 2019-20 Access and Participation Plan, St Helens College has provided financial support for students in the form of a Study Enhancement Gift, up to the value of £400, for each Year 1 Higher Education student. It should be noted that this is not a cash award, but is used to provide students with a range of other benefits, including, course related resources, IT equipment, software, educational trips, etc. In addition to this, the college has allocated monies to a hardship fund for HE students.

Based on the evidence of the previous APP, St Helens College intends to continue to offer bursaries and other financial support to students at a level consistent with the 2020-21 Plan. This financial support which will be carefully managed to promote the key aims within this APP and will sit alongside funding to support additional staff time for tutorial support and progress monitoring, personal progress coaches, additional mentoring support, and learning resources support. Bursaries will be aimed at providing financial support for disadvantaged students to students from POLAR4Q1/2 households whilst the other elements of the package will be targeted at BAME students, Mature Students, and Disabled Students .

The bursaries will be awarded in each year of study, at three points throughout the academic year, subject to satisfactory attendance and engagement with studies, e.g. submission of coursework. This package of financial support will enable students to concentrate more on their studies without the worry of additional study related pressures on home life, time management etc. whilst also providing a package of support aimed at helping them continue on their course, to achieve the course aim, and to progress to the best of their ability.

The college Senior Leadership Team will continue to recommend fee levels and bursary arrangements and other elements of the Targets and Investment Plan to the Governing Body. The Governing Body includes a student governor, who attends regular meetings, and represents the HE student body. The impact of the financial support will also be monitored through the Governing Body HE Committee and the Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee.

3.2 Student consultation

The College has embedded a number opportunities for students to be fully engaged with all aspects of the operation of the higher education curriculum. We see it as imperative that the student voice is a key component in the success of HE within the college in order to continually improve the student experience throughout their period of study with us. Students are formally engaged in enhancing and approving College HE policies and procedures including this Access and Participation Plan. This is undertaken via regular meetings of the HE Student Forum, together with regular Student surveys and focus groups. In addition we have consulted with students through face-to-face meetings and an electronic survey. These considered:

- Issues of common interest and joint solutions to enhance all aspects of the HE provision within the college;
- How the student body could provide further advice the HE Quality and Standards Committee on quality enhancement;
- How the student body could advise the HE Quality Enhancement Group on the progress against the APP targets.

Through these forums student representatives reviewed the draft Access and Participation Plan and have expressed their satisfaction with the Plan, and suggested that termly progress reports be presented to the HE Student Forum and the HE Quality and Standards Committee, and the HE Committee. This has now been actioned and the first progress reports will be submitted in the Autumn term 2019.

A student governor represents the student body on the Governors HE Committee and on the full Governing Body. At committee and board meetings, the Governing Body undertakes a strategic role in approving, monitoring and evaluating the College's APP. This ensures that the Institution has a clear focus on achieving its objectives as set out in the APP. Training and development on the APP aims, objectives and college targets will be planned into the Committee's and Governing Body schedule of activities.

We will continue to listen to our students to ensure that their views are considered in our planning for the future of College HE. In addition we will continue to look for opportunities to develop partnerships with the students in order to further enhance their experience.

In response to the new sector requirements in terms of OfS registration conditions and the new QAA UK Quality Code, the College has updated its HE Regulatory and Governance Structure. As part of its Student Engagement Strategy, student involvement at each of the HE meetings including the HE Strategy Committee and Marketing and Recruitment Group will be sought. This will allow for the student voice to be a key part of the monitoring of performance targets process for Access and Participation performance measures.

3.3 Evaluation strategy

Using a theory of change approach, the College has identified 13 key outcomes which together will lead to the achievement of the strategic APP targets – see Table above relating to the Theory of Change Model. The outcomes result from consideration of the change that is desired for each target group across the relevant stages of the student lifecycle. These activities have been planned to effect change and the identified outcomes will enable structured evaluation of the activities that have taken place and the extent to which change has been achieved.

The actions and outcomes cover a range of activities across the College and, accordingly, responsibility for achieving the outcomes is spread over multiple senior managers supporting the whole-college approach to WP and underpinning the College's strategic commitment to its APP targets.

We are committed to ensuring that financial issues do not present an obstacle for Students to access the full experience at the college. Therefore, in order to evaluate the impact of the package of financial support, the college is introducing a formalised interview schedule in addition to the personal tutoring system where the students will be asked to describe how the bursaries and other financial support offered by the College has helped them, and whether the measures have contributed to greater or lesser degree to their programme.

The intention is for St Helens to conduct these interviews within a month of making each payment (currently three a year) so that early interventions can be put into practice if additional needs are identified, and financial support arranged from other budgets when the evaluation recommendations are scrutinised at the College's Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee and Governing Body Meetings.

The development of approaches to foster a sense of community and belonging has previously been shown to significantly reduce early withdrawal from courses within our FE provision, and this will be extended to cover our HE provision. This was shown within the College's Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 FE provision where, by creating a sense of community and belonging through the development of extra-curricular activities, clubs, and visits has contributed to reduced student drop out, improved student attendance, improved retention, and improved student satisfaction. The Student Experience and Enhancement Working Group and the HE Student Forum will be tasked with building on the activities which have been developed for the FE students to make them relevant for the HE Community, whilst the Data Working Group will build the evaluation of the impact of the approach into the data dashboard.

Moving forward, the College will also use the OfS toolkit for the evaluation of financial support in order to add robustness to our evaluation processes.

The OfS evaluation self-assessment has highlighted that the College's current evaluation processes are limited and require further development. The areas where the College is particularly looking to improve its evaluation processes relate to Care Leavers, Carers, Estranged Students, Children from Military Families, Gypsy Roma & Traveller Communities and Refugees. We have now put in place systems to collect more information on these groups of students in order that we can evaluate their performance against their peers. The use of an evidence-based approach to develop its theory of change approach combined with outcomes enable each stage of the plan to be separately tracked, monitored and evaluated.

To measure the effectiveness of actions aimed at improving student success, the College enhanced its Committee structure and Quality Framework to aid continuous improvement and has created a WP

dashboard which will be updated and monitored termly by the HE Quality Standards and Committee which is Chaired by the Deputy Principal. This WP dashboard will aid the College in reviewing the progress against the targets in the APP and will be a key part of our overall monitoring process. In addition, we have enhanced the Governing Body Committee structure, with the addition of a HE Committee. While access outcomes will be known and updated only once per year, termly monitoring will support close attention to continuation and allow interventions and other actions to be modified in-year, as required. The actions and recommendations of the HE Quality and Standards Committee are regularly reported to the senior management team and governors, through the HE Committee as part of our whole-college approach to monitoring the success of the APP.

The College has also set aside £10,000 for an external evaluation of the APP. This evaluation will be undertaken at the end of Year 1 of the Plan, Year 3 of the Plan and Year 5 of the Plan and will provide the Governing Body with an independent assessment of the progress against the strategic aims and objectives of the APP together with the impact of the package of financial support for students. The reports on the evaluation of the APP will draw upon direct feedback from student representatives, feedback from Student Focus Groups, and a review of the quantitative data within the data dashboard. The evaluation reports will provide an overview of the effectiveness of the measures employed. Where the measures are deemed to be ineffective or it is likely that the milestones and/or strategic targets may not be achieved in the given timescales set out in the APP, the reports will include recommendations of how the actions are to be revised with clear timescales and responsibilities set out for any changes. These actions will be tailored in response to which target may be in danger of not being met. A typical action may be to bring together a task and finish group to analyse evaluation of progress to date and identify potential solutions. These may include collaboration with other providers to explore successful strategies. The task and finish group will be chaired by a member of the Senior Leadership Team and will report to the Principal and Chief Executive and the Governing Body HE Committee.

Programme Design

Good programme design is essential to the success of our HE provision. Programmes are designed to meet local need, taking into consideration the diverse needs of our students, including modes of attendance, academic starting points and personal and financial needs. Learning outcomes are set to ensure the best possible outcomes for our students, within the context of their planned next steps in either education or employment.

The termly reports produced for our Data Working Group, HE Student Forum, Student Experience & Enhancement Working Group and HE Quality and Standards Committee, together with the external evaluation reports will be used by Curriculum Delivery Teams to influence our Programme Design, and to inform a rigorous self-assessment process.

A thorough annual review of the APP will also be carried out by HE Quality & Standards Committee, and actions required to address any areas requiring further improvement will be fed back to the relevant curriculum teams in order to improve the overall programme for the students.

Evaluation Design

Our Access and Participation aims and objectives are clearly measurable and will be monitored through our HE Data Working Group, reporting to the HE Strategy Committee, via the HE Curriculum Development Group. The Group was established in 2017/18 to monitor HE performance through our HE data dashboard. The main areas monitored by the group are:

- Student recruitment
- Monitoring participation of underrepresented groups
- Continuation, progression and attainment in HE
- Student surveys
- HE student destinations
- Sharing best practice, both internally and across our HEI partners

The work of HE Data Working Group, HE Strategy Committee, and HE Curriculum Development Group coupled with a rigorous self-assessment process will also feed into our evaluation design and evaluation approach. This combined with the work of our Student Experience & Enhancement Working Group and the external evaluation will provide a robust basis for evaluating the design of our programmes to ensure that they are meeting the aims and objectives of the APP, that student feedback is being taken into account, that the outcomes of the monitoring of the APP targets feeding through to curriculum plans, that

the results of the Colleges' own quality monitoring are being used to enhance programme design, and the results of any external quality visits from our HE partners, QAA etc. are being used to enhance the overall student experience.

Evaluation Implementation

The College is cognisant on the extreme importance of effective approaches to evaluation and impact in terms of assessing whether its evaluation plans and methodologies are sufficient to generate high quality evidence in relation to the impact of activities in our Access and Participation Plan. It is the intention to use the APP Evaluation Self-assessment Tool to support a comprehensive appraisal of our existing planned evaluation methods in 2019/20. This activity will be steered through the Access and Widening Participation Group with termly updates being provided to the HE Strategy Committee. The College is keen to ensure robust and informative evaluatory mechanisms are in place in association with its Access and Participation Plan and is committed to this self-assessment activity.

3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

In cognisance of the new regulatory framework for HE, including the OfS ongoing registration conditions and the new UK Quality Code for Higher Education, from 2019/20 the College has set in place a new HE Regulatory/Governance meeting structure. The APP planned activity will be monitored by the Access and Widening Participation Group that meets termly. Update reports from these meetings will be received by the HE Strategy Committee that also meets on a termly basis. In line with the regulatory responsibilities now placed on the College Governing Body, a reporting schedule for HE updates to the Governors Quality & Outcomes Committee and Full Board is agreed annually between the HE Quality Manager and the Clerk to the Governors to allow for the Governing Body to have full oversight of the College's Access and Participation activity. It should be noted that there is student representation across all of the regulatory/governance meetings.

All of our HE provision is reviewed quarterly at Curriculum Area Level against key performance indicators set at the highest level of the college, to cover widening participation, access, continuation, progression (internal and external), attendance, achievement, attainment, student feedback and course/module evaluations. In particular, the Deputy Principal and the HE Quality Manager are responsible for monitoring the APP through the termly meetings of the HE Quality and Standards Committee and, the HE Strategy Committee, and for providing advice to the Governing Body HE Committee.

Evaluation of progress against the targets expressed in this plan, are standing items for the HE Quality and Standards Committee, and the cross-college Marketing, Recruitment Access and Widening Participation Group. If gaps in progress towards targets are identified, the College will take to action to address any deficiencies. These actions will be tailored in response to which target may be in danger of not being met. A typical action may be to bring together a task and finish group to analyse evaluation of progress to date and identify potential solutions. These may include collaboration with other providers to explore successful strategies. The College is an active member of a number of HE provider networks and is confident appropriate support will be available if needed. The task and finish group will be chaired by a member of the Senior Leadership Team and will report to the Principal and Chief and the Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee.

The Principal and Chief Executive will take overarching responsibility for the APP. Each member of the Senior Leadership Team accepts collective responsibility for the actions and targets set out in this Plan. Using a range of evaluative information and input from relevant groups as described above, reports to the Committees and Working Groups will provide an evaluation of the effectiveness of the activities, the likelihood of the milestones and strategic aims and objectives being achieved in the given timescales.

The APP planned activity will be monitored by the Access and Widening Participation Group that meets termly. Update reports from these meetings will be received by the HE Strategy Committee that also meets on a termly basis. In line with the regulatory responsibilities now placed on the College Governing Body, a reporting schedule for HE updates to the Governors Quality & Outcomes Committee and Full Board is agreed annually between the HE Quality Manager and the Clerk to the Governors to allow for the Governing Body to have full oversight of the College's Access and Participation activity. It should be noted that there is student representation across all of the regulatory/governance meetings.

4. Provision of Information to Students

Clear information about the tuition fees that apply to St Helen's College's higher education provision and the financial support available to students is, and will continue to be, publicised on the College website at www.sthelens.ac.uk.

This Access and Participation Plan (and other documents) is published on the College website in an accessible format, with other formats such as Braille produced on request and sent to current or prospective students by our Student Services Team. The Student Services Team can be contacted by telephone and/or in writing for additional guidance, and to respond to questions or requests for supplementary information, Individual advice is always provided at course interview prior to any offers of a place.

We provide information to UCAS and to the Student Loans Company in a timely fashion for incorporation in their databases for each academic year and ensure compliance to the mandatory information required in relation to Key Information Sets and Wider Information Sets as required for OfS, Unistats, and other bodies to whom we report as part of our normal college operating procedures.

The College is committed to providing full financial information, including information on fees and financial support to current and prospective students using the following means and methods:

- UCAS – all full time provision is listed and advertised on UCAS, this includes all information regarding tuition fees, loans and grants. Timely and accurate information is provided to UCAS and the Student Loan Company (SLC) in good time and to deadline to ensure these platforms are populated so as to inform prospective students early on in their decision making process.
- Websites – the College website has separate areas and individual programme information that clearly indicates fees per year and course duration. The website also provides information on any additional programme costs that may be incurred. This is provided via the programme specific student handbooks.
- The website provides information on all student support services and signposting that is available, including who to contact for financial IAG and support with the SLC and loan applications, study support, access arrangements and additional learning support etc.
- The website clearly signposts and easily navigates browsers to the financial support section and promotes these services and the accessibility to independent financial IAG. This service is available from our specialist Finance Advice and Guidance Manager, and is available via email, telephone or face to face.
- All course literature and the prospectus includes information on fees, support and IAG available and signposting to the SLC portal.
- All applicants are provided with the tuition fee policy along with all other relevant terms and conditions and College policies as part of their "offer" communications, in a durable format, this includes all other alternative payment methods available other than SLC loans and grants.
- Face to face IAG is provided at school assemblies, careers events, UCAS exhibitions, College open events, interviews and careers events etc. whereby school liaison staff and programme tutors provide face-to-face and 1:1 IAG.
- In-College IAG activity for current level 3 students and Access to HE students takes place in individual classes, as requested by tutors, and includes careers and finance IAG.

5. Appendix

The OfS will append the following items from the fees and targets and investment documents when an access and participation plan is published:

1. Targets (tables 2a, 2b and 2c in the targets and investment plan)
2. Investment summary (tables 4a and 4b in the targets and investment plan)
3. Fee summary (table 4a and 4b in the fee information document)

**Access and participation plan
Fee information 2020-21**

Provider name: St Helens College

Provider UKPRN: 10006174

Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflationary statement:

We do not intend to raise fees annually

Table 4a - Full-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£7,750
Foundation degree		£7,750
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND		£7,750
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Table 4b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Table 4c - Part-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£3,750
Foundation degree		£4,950
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	Business	£3,750
HNC/HND	Engineering & Science	£2,750
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT		£3,750
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Table 4d - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Targets and investment plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: St Helens College

Provider UKPRN: 10006174

Investment summary

The OfS requires providers to report on their planned investment in access, financial support and research and evaluation in their access and participation plan. The OfS does not require providers to report on investment in student success and progression in the access and participation plans and therefore investment in these areas is not recorded here.

Note about the data:

The investment forecasts below in access, financial support and research and evaluation does not represent not the total amount spent by providers in these areas. It is the additional amount that providers have committed following the introduction of variable fees in 2006-07. The OfS does not require providers to report on investment in success and progression and therefore investment in these areas is not represented.

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.

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Total access activity investment (£)	£30,000.00	£30,000.00	£30,000.00	£30,000.00	£30,000.00
Access (pre-16)	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	£5,000.00
Access (post-16)	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£10,000.00
Access (adults and the community)	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£10,000.00
Access (other)	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	£5,000.00
Financial support (£)	£75,000.00	£75,000.00	£75,000.00	£75,000.00	£75,000.00
Research and evaluation (£)	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£10,000.00	£10,000.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HF1%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HF1)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Higher fee income (£HF1)	£598,500.00	£598,500.00	£598,500.00	£598,500.00	£598,500.00
Access investment	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%
Financial support	10.9%	10.9%	10.9%	10.9%	10.9%
Research and evaluation	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%
Total investment (as %HF1)	17.5%	17.5%	17.5%	17.5%	17.5%

