

Access and Participation Plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

June 2019

1. Introduction

The Office for Students (OfS) has consistently stated it wishes to see transformational change in the area of access and participation, with more attention paid to longer term horizons and the achievement of ambitious targets; so a move from a solely process-based focus on short-term plans to actual long-term improvements has been advocated:

“To make this sort of transformational change happen, we and the higher education sector need to be bold and ambitious. We will help the sector by publishing tools and guidance, but universities need to start thinking about this challenge now.” <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/our-new-approach-to-access-and-participation/>

The College and more specifically the University Centre at Blackburn College (UCBC) is wholly committed to enabling this transformational change. We said in our 2017-18 plan that given our locality and mission, widening participation is at the forefront of everything we do to support groups who would not otherwise enter and benefit from Higher Education. Our participation rates show how our work mirrors these ambitions in that we have higher than national rates of students who declare a disability, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, a higher percentage of black and other ethnic minority students and a greater number of mature students. These are all reflective of our local population. Our focus is to continue to raise outcomes for these groups, to reduce gaps; against both national rates and analysis of our own cohorts.

With around 12,000 students, 900 staff and a £43m turnover across Further Education, Higher Education and Training, Blackburn College plays a lead role in transforming Pennine Lancashire into a vibrant and successful economy. The College has been providing education and training for over 130 years - education and training that enhances the skills, aspirations and potential of all members of the local economy. The majority of the College’s provision is Further Education although the University Centre at Blackburn College is one of the largest suppliers of Higher Education in a Further Education College in England, with approximately 2,400 students and around 150 staff.

Whilst the 2015 Indices of Multiple Deprivation data rank Blackburn with Darwen as 12th on the list of local authorities with the highest percentage (30.8%) of its neighbourhoods in the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods nationally, the College is ideally positioned to impact on student success and social mobility. We enable our students to access high quality Higher Education, supported in the main by our primary validating partner Lancaster University. Indeed, the vast majority of our degree programmes are validated by Lancaster University, which is the Times Higher University of the Year 2018 and ranked 6th/7th 2019, and consistently in the top ten in the UK in multiple university ranking tables (The Times, The Guardian, The Complete University Guide).

We recognise that there is a big challenge for the Country in reducing current variations in Access, Student Success and progression for a range of under-represented and vulnerable groups and that these factors often multiply for the residents of Blackburn and thus our largest cohort. We are confident of our ability to create, and committed to effecting, substantial improvements in these measures across the groups identified in this document, over a five year planning horizon.

Blackburn College's performance against the key measures set out by the OfS on the Access and Participation Dashboard;

- Participation of the most and least represented groups – Blackburn College has a 10% gap between these cohorts for full-time undergraduates compared to 28% nationally.
- Continuation rate gaps between the most and least represented groups for full-time undergraduates are high at 20% compared to 5% nationally.
- Attainment gaps, (percentage of high grades achieved), exist between students who declare a disability and those that do not, but are not significant gaps on the basis of ethnicity.

2. Assessment of Performance by Key Cohort

2.1 Deprivation Indices

For the purpose of this section examination will be made on the student performance measures; Access, Success and Progression for students in Deprivation Quintile 1, (students from the most deprived neighbourhoods), as this represents the largest cohort studying at UCBC.

2.1.1 - Access

Statistical analysis provided by the Office for Students through the Access and Participation Dashboard¹, shows that the percentage of all full-time under-graduate students studying at UCBC in 2017/18 in Deprivation Quintile 1 was 56%, compared to 22% for the Sector. For part-time this was 30% at UCBC compared to 20% for the Sector. This is a reflection of the points raised above about the location of the institution, the high levels of local residents that study here and high levels of deprivation locally. The College plays a significant role in the North-West in providing access to higher education for students from these backgrounds.

2.1.2 - Continuation

There is no significant gap in continuation rates for students from Deprivation Quintile 1 as compared to all other Quintiles at Blackburn College, unlike the 5.3pp gap for all English providers. This is the same for part-time students as well as full-time.

2.1.3 - Attainment

Using full-time under-graduate as the largest comparator cohort, there is no significant attainment gap, 2%, between students from Quintile 1 and those from Quintile 3, 4 and 5. It is important to note that the College has a clear strategy to increase attainment and completion rates across all of its higher education provision. These actions will help to secure improvements in student success to the benefit of numerous cohorts, but given the large size of this group in the UCBC student population, this group should benefit the most from this improvement work.

2.1.4 - Progression

Progression rates for students from Deprivation Quintiles 1 and 2 are 11% lower than that of students in Quintiles 3-5. This is larger but reflective of gaps at a Sector level. As with attainment, the College

¹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/>

is targeting the improvement in progression outcomes for all students, against the local economic environment factors that influence opportunities to progress. – See later section on Progression and destination outcomes.

Improvement activity for this cohort will include;

- Raising continuation and attainment rates through targeted support with our Student Engagement Team
- Further improving rates of Progression, through enhanced careers advice and guidance – Targets

2.2 Students from low participation neighbourhoods

2.2.1 - Access

In 2017-18, the participation gaps at Blackburn for full-time 18 – 30 year old students between most and least represented groups using the POLAR 4 measure were 11.0 % for all undergraduates, 20.0 % for first degree students and 3.0 % for other undergraduates. It is disappointing to see that the gap for all undergraduates has worsened, as Blackburn had made good progress in the previous three years in significantly closing this gap. However, the gap is still considerably below the sector gap of 18.3 %. Moreover, in absolute terms the change in numbers is small (-30 students) and Blackburn is still progressing significant numbers for college-based provision in a challenging borough (300+). That notwithstanding, we are not complacent and plan to reverse this trend and see a return to previous gap figures of around 3-5%, achieved through a variety of actions, such as a renewed focus on summer schools, year zero support and a reinvigorated outreach provision.

			2016-17					2017-18	
Percentage gap in young participation (POLAR4)			YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	Change Year 1 to Year 5	Change Year 4 to Year 5
Full-time or apprenticeship	All undergraduates	SECTOR	19.9	18.9	18.7	18.6	18.3	1.6	0.3
		Blackburn College	9.0	4.0	3.0	5.0	11.0	1.0	6.0
	First degree	SECTOR	20.0	19.1	18.8	18.8	18.5	1.5	0.3
		Blackburn College	8.0	13.0	3.0	4.0	20.0	12.0	17.0
	Other undergraduate	SECTOR	1.3	0.1	0.4	0.7	2.2	3.7	1.5
		Blackburn College	10.0	1.0	2.0	5.0	3.0	7.0	1.0
	Undergraduate with postgraduate components	SECTOR	36.9	35.3	33.1	32.6	32.6	4.3	0.0
		Blackburn College	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Part-time	All undergraduates	SECTOR	3.3	4.8	3.6	3.6	3.0	0.3	0.6
		Blackburn College	DP	DP	DP	DP	DP	N/A	N/A
	First degree	SECTOR	4.3	7.4	5.8	4.1	3.9	0.3	0.2
		Blackburn College	DP	DP	DP	DP	DP	N/A	N/A
	Other undergraduate	SECTOR	2.6	3.1	1.9	2.9	1.7	0.8	1.2
		Blackburn College	DP	DP	DP	DP	DP	N/A	N/A
	Undergraduate with postgraduate components	SECTOR	15.0	13.0	12.0	DP	15.0	5.0	N/A
		Blackburn College	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 1: Participation rates of students from POLAR 4 quintile 1 (lowest participation) areas compared with POLAR 5 (highest participation) areas

Referring to the following table, Table 2, the proportion of full-time students from POLAR 4 quintile 1 (lowest participation) areas has been consistently around 10 % at Blackburn for the last five years, whilst the proportion from quintile 5 has ranged between 15 % and 20 %. This shows that quintile 5 students are appropriately represented sat UCBC as against the local Blackburn population, unlike the sector population generally, where Q5 students are over-represented. The dataset for part-time students is limited.

Blackburn College – Proportion of Young participation by POLAR Quintile (POLAR4) (%)			YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	Change Year 1 to Year 5	Change Year 4 to Year 5
Full-time or apprenticeship	All undergraduates	POLAR4Q1	10	11	13	10	9	0	-1
		POLAR4Q5	19	15	16	15	20	1	5
	First degree	POLAR4Q1	10	9	14	10	9	-1	-2
		POLAR4Q5	18	22	17	14	29	11	15
	Other undergraduate	POLAR4Q1	10	11	13	11	10	0	-1
		POLAR4Q5	20	12	15	16	13	-7	-2
	Undergraduate with postgraduate components	POLAR4Q1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
		POLAR4Q5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 2: Proportions of students in POLAR quintiles 1 and 5

2.2.2 - Continuation

The gaps in continuation between most and least represented young groups have increased over the last five years, although the gap fluctuated significantly over this period. As indicated above, the College will be focusing on improving continuation rates across all groups and all levels of study. This will impact across all student outcomes, but the Colleges' work through the Access and Participation Plan (APP) will target this group due to the higher rates of vulnerability. There is a significant gap in continuation rates between students from low participation areas, Q1 and those in Q5, highest levels of participation.

Percentage gap in continuation by young participation (POLAR4)			YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	Change Year 1 to Year 5	Change Year 4 to Year 5
Full-time or apprenticeship	All undergraduates	SECTOR	4.2	4.6	4.8	4.9	5.0	0.9	0.1
		Blackburn College	8.0	5.0	13.0	1.0	20.0	25.0	20.0
	First degree	SECTOR	3.3	3.9	4.2	4.2	4.3	1.1	0.1
		Blackburn College	DP	N	DP	N	N	N/A	N/A
	Other undergraduate	SECTOR	2.6	3.0	2.1	1.7	3.7	1.1	2.0
		Blackburn College	5.0	N	20.0	15.0	N	N/A	N/A
	Undergraduate with postgraduate components	SECTOR	2.1	1.6	2.1	2.6	2.9	0.9	0.5
		Blackburn College	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 3: Percentage gap in continuation by POLAR 4

2.2.3 - Attainment

Attainment rates are a strong focus in the College's improvement work that will impact significantly upon the ambitions and targets held in this Access and Participation Plan. Any current gaps in attainment rates between groups based on POLAR distributions, are likely to be heavily influenced the historical lower performance in this area.

Using POLAR 4 Quintile 1, as a comparison, there are no listed significant gaps for 2016/17 for the attainment rates of all undergraduates at full-time or part-time provision. However, the College recognises that the attainment of the least represented groups, Q1 has fallen slightly in the last year and significantly over the five years, which will be a focus in the Access and Participation Plan.

2.2.4 - Progression

Our 2016/17 Destinations for Leavers in Higher Education (DLHE) data indicates progression to employment or further study for all students was 93%. There are no significant gaps listed on the Access and Participation Dashboard for progression for this group. However, whilst accepting the impact of local economic and demographic factors on progression, the College is focused on improving the rate of positive destinations for all students. There is a significant difference between the progression rate of POLAR4 Q1 students at UCBC as compared to the sector as a whole.

Activity	Main activities: Count	Main activities: Percentage
Due to start a job in the next month	15	2%
Studying full-time	277	39%
Studying part-time	27	4%
Taking time out in order to travel	8	1%
Unemployed	40	6%
Working full-time	247	35%
Working part-time	95	13%

Table 4: Destinations of Blackburn College 2016-17 graduates with known outcomes.

Improvement activity for this cohort will include;

- *Increasing rates of participation through a multi-faceted strategy, which includes building aspiration at schools, as well as targeting specific activities and campaigns at groups who are deciding on their next steps in careers and study.*
- *Raising continuation and attainment rates through targeted support with our Student Engagement Team.*
- *Further improving rates of Progression, through enhanced careers advice and guidance.*

2.3 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

27% of the current total student population are identified as being from Asian Heritage, Black and Minority Ethnic and other groups, (a 4% increase from the previous year). Records show that 80% of those are identified as being from disadvantaged and under-represented backgrounds. In 2018 the breakdown of students from the total Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and other group cohort was as follows:

- 19% Indian students (of which 36% are male and 64% are female)
- 59% Pakistani students (of which 43% are male and 57% are female)
- 22% Other group students (of which 45% are male and 55% are female)

2.3.1 - Access

2017-2018 internal College reports show participation of 155 Indian students which constitutes a small decrease of 7 students from 162 in 2016-2017. It is also a slight decrease in terms of the student population, of 1% to 6%, which is comparable to the previous year which stood at 7%. Student participation has increased for those identifying as Pakistani, an increase of 20 students from 357 to 377. This is a 1% increase from 15% to 16% in terms of student population from 2016-2017. The ratio of male to female Pakistani students is 41% male to 59% female and is similar to the ratio for Indian students 45% male vs 55% female.

The percentage of the student population with regards to 'other BAME', has decreased from the comparable 8% for the previous three years, seeing a decline in student numbers from 181 to 157. The overall participation rate for the three categories has shown a slight decline from the previous year by 2% from 30% to 28% and a 6% decline from 34% to 28% over the past three years.

The APP Dashboard figures show that there is a difference between the proportion of Asian and White 18 year olds at the College as compared to the local population. This is in part a reflection of the distinct demographic make- up of UCBC which has a higher percentage of adult students than found across the English HE Sector.

As part of strategies to increase the rates of 18 year olds studying at UCBC, (which will both increase 18 – 21 year rates of participation and likely increase rates of students from low participation neighbourhoods and low socio-economic areas), we have increased our marketing and engagement with the College's Further Education departments, particularly in areas of engineering, computing and construction where there is particularly higher number of ethnic minority students. For example, we deliver series of guest lecturer talks for the College's Further Education departments aimed at increasing participation rates mirroring Higher Education provision within UCBC. For example, at the time of writing internal applications for STEM subjects at UCBC are up on this time last year.

Also, UCBC has increased engagement with ethnic providers and/or single gender Schools and Sixth Forms in the Blackburn and Darwen areas. For example, the UCBC Humanities team delivered a series of progression talks to students of Tauheedul Girls School in early 2018 and this resulted in increased recruitment for our foundation entry humanities programmes for entry in 2018.

2.3.1.2 - Part Time Study

In 2017-2018, 195 students opted to study part time (equating to 8% of the overall UCBC student population of 2 447). This is in comparison to 269 students in 2016-2017 which demonstrates a decline of 3% from roughly 11% part-time to 8% part-time as a proportion of the overall student population. When taking into account the decrease of 64 part-time students to 2016 then part-time numbers have seen significant decline since 2015-2016. Full-Time numbers show an increase of 3% in 2016-2017. Funding for part-time students remains challenging and partly explains the sharp decline which has also been seen sector-wide. The increase in full-time numbers given the competitive landscape was encouraging.

There has been a further reduction in the number of part time students studying at the College for the fifth successive year. Whilst the majority of higher education programmes delivered at tUCBC contain optionality for part time study the College continues to see a decreased interest (numbers of applications) for this mode of study. UCBC, as part of its curriculum review, is proposing to introduce new flexible models of study from 2019-20.

Table 5: Recruitment 2018/19 – All Undergraduate		
MODE	Ethnicity	Total
FT	Indian	97
	Other	132
	Pakistani	315
	White	1413
PT	Indian	4
	Other	8
	Pakistani	15
	White	153
Grand Total		2137

Table 5: Recruitment 2018/19 – All undergraduate

The recruitment of students from ethnic minority groups in 2018-19 is 26.7% which is above the Access Agreement 2018-19 target of 23%. 61% of the student population come from disadvantaged backgrounds, this is 6% below target. Part-time recruitment is 8.4% of the 2137 enrolments which is below the predicted 12%. This fall has been partially impacted on by changes to the flexible veterans' provision in the curriculum, which is part-time provision, for which demand has significantly reduced in recent years.

Only 22.4% of economically disadvantaged white males make up the part-time student population. We continue to investigate potential factors impacting on this - younger white working-class males make-up a disproportionate number of NEETS from Further Education, showing work to improve outcomes at this level should also impact on levels of participation. Various surveys (e.g. <https://www.sunoutreach.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ReportWhiteBritishWorkingClassmaleresearch5March-2.pdf>) show that this group perceives there to be a lack of information and higher risk in undertaking HE. At UCBC we continue to improve our communications to these groups through increasingly targeted outreach.

2.3.2 - Continuation

There are no significant differences in continuation rates listed on the Access and Participation Dashboard. White continuation rates in 2016/17 were 1% lower than that for all other ethnicities. This is across levels of study.

Overall the internal data shows a slight increase in non-continuation from 2016/17-2017/18 to 2017/18-2018/19, accounted for mainly by the performance of students with Pakistani heritage.

2016/17 - 2017/18

Course Level / Centre / Division / Course	Completed and	Progressed	16-18	19+	%
Level 4 to Level 5	687	450	52	398	66
African	12	6	0	6	50
Any other Asian background	3	1	0	1	33
Any other Black / African / Caribbean background	4	2	0	2	50
Any other ethnic group	2	2	0	2	100
Any Other Mixed / multiple ethnic background	2	2	0	2	100
Any Other White background	6	5	0	5	83
Arab	1	1	0	1	100
Bangladeshi	8	6	2	4	75
Caribbean	2	1	0	1	50
English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	485	316	22	294	65
Indian	36	23	8	15	64
Not provided	1		0	0	
Pakistani	116	78	18	60	67
White and Asian	7	5	2	3	71
White and Black African	1	1	0	1	100
White and Black Caribbean	1	1	0	1	100
Level 5 to Level 6	290	199	0	199	69
African	2		0	0	
Any other Asian background	2	1	0	1	50
Any other ethnic group	3	2	0	2	67
Any Other Mixed / multiple ethnic background	2		0	0	
Any Other White background	5	5	0	5	100
Arab	1	1	0	1	100
Bangladeshi	4	3	0	3	75
Caribbean	1		0	0	
English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	171	117	0	117	68
Indian	33	27	0	27	82
Not provided	1		0	0	
Pakistani	63	42	0	42	67
White and Asian	2	1	0	1	50

Table 6

Course Level / Centre / Division / Course	Completed and	Progressed	16-18	19+	%
Level 4 to Level 5	650	388	64	324	60
African	11	5	0	5	45
Any other Asian background	5	3	0	3	60
Any other ethnic group	5	3	0	3	60
Any Other Mixed / multiple ethnic background	2		0	0	
Any Other White background	14	6	2	4	43
Bangladeshi	7	3	0	3	43
Caribbean	3		0	0	
English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	417	253	18	235	61
Indian	45	27	15	12	60
Irish	1		0	0	
Pakistani	129	79	28	51	61
White and Asian	5	4	1	3	80
White and Black African	1	1	0	1	100
White and Black Caribbean	5	4	0	4	80
Level 5 to Level 6	531	344	0	344	65
	2		0	0	
African	8	6	0	6	75
Any other Asian background	2	1	0	1	50
Any other Black / African / Caribbean background	3	1	0	1	33
Any other ethnic group	2	1	0	1	50
Any Other Mixed / multiple ethnic background	3	1	0	1	33
Any Other White background	7	3	0	3	43
Arab	1	1	0	1	100
Bangladeshi	7	4	0	4	57
Caribbean	3	2	0	2	67
English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	365	245	0	245	67
Indian	26	16	0	16	62
Not provided	6		0	0	
Pakistani	88	56	0	56	64
White and Asian	6	5	0	5	83
White and Black African	1	1	0	1	100
White and Black Caribbean	1	1	0	1	100

Table 7

2.3.3 - Attainment

Change in the gaps in attainment over the five-year period are broadly similar to the sector. Significant gaps in the attainment of whites as compared to other ethnicities has reduced from 2013-14 to 2016-17. A 9% gap still remains and this will be a focus of our improvement work.

2.3.4 - Progression

In 2016-17 the highest percentages of students in full-time work were White (36%) and Other (35%) students. 29% of Indian students were in full-time work. Pakistani students had the lowest proportion in full-time work, with 15% of students in full-time work. Indian students had the highest percentage in part-time work (20%). 15% of Other students and 13% of White students were in part-time work. The lowest proportion of students in part-time work was Pakistani students, with 7% in part-time work.

Pakistani students had the highest proportion in further study (49%). 40% of White students were in further study. Other students had 35% in further study and 33% of Indian students were undertaking further study.

White students had the lowest proportion in unemployment (3%), while Pakistani students had the highest proportion in unemployment (14%). 8% of both Indian and Other students were unemployed.

There are no significant differences listed on the APP dashboard for full or part-time students. See later section on analysis of destination data generally and previous comments about improvement work focusing on increasing positive destination for all cohorts.

There is a 13% progression gap between Asian and White students in 2016/17. Our work will seek to reduce this gap to 5%.

Improvement activity for this cohort will include;

- *Increasing rates of participation through a multi-faceted strategy, which includes building aspiration at schools, as well as targeting specific activities and campaigns at groups who are deciding on their next steps in careers and study. Curriculum development plans will also seek to increase participation in part-time courses for BAME cohorts*

2.4 Age – Young People and Mature Students

Of the current, 2018/19, total student population in UCBC, 33% are identified as male of which 58% are from disadvantaged postcodes. The majority of white, male students are aged between 21-30 years old equating to 41% of this demographic with minimal numbers aged 16-20 at just 15%. Students aged 31-50+ equate to 44% of the white male cohort. From the full cohort of male students 58% are identified as being from disadvantaged and under-represented backgrounds and 36% male from Black, Ethnic Minority and other groups.

Mature students (aged 21 and over) account for 81% of the current student population (91% being full time and 9% being part time). This is in distinct contrast to the picture at a national level where only 27% of the 2017/18 population are mature and 72% 18-21 year olds. The part time cohort is smaller, but again dominated by the larger percentage of a mature students, 140 out of 145. This is a reflection of the employment and family care status of these students, who require or prefer a part-time study over 18-21 year olds who more often choose full-time study. From the full cohort part-time 60% are identified as being from disadvantaged and under-represented backgrounds.

2.4.1 - Access

At 76.5% in 2017-18, the proportion of full-time mature students (age 21 and over) at Blackburn College is higher than the 27.8% amongst all English Higher Education Providers and has been consistently so over the most recent five-year period, showing a higher rate of increase than at sector level (Blackburn College increase, 9.6%, sector increase, 3.1%). The proportions amongst part-time students are more similar, with 85% at Blackburn College in 2017-18 compared to 87.4% at sector level overall. Generalising, this is explained by the fact that colleges like Blackburn attract older, local, 'second-chance' students rather than traditional 18yo UCAS applicants.

2.4.2 - Continuation

Continuation rates for full-time mature students (all undergraduates) at Blackburn College has declined past five-year period, dropping from 81.0% to 77.0%, compared to a picture of decline at sector level over the same period, from 86.2% in 2012-13 to 84.8% in 2016-17. Continuation rates for part-time mature students have increased from 67.0% in 2011-12 to 88.0% in 2015-16, this compares favourably to the picture at sector level, where the highest continuation rate was 63% in 2014-15. Blackburn College therefore makes a positive contribution to continuation for mature students. Continuation rates are comparable, a 1% difference, between Mature students and those 21 and under.

2.4.3 - Attainment

Attainment rates for full-time mature students (all undergraduates) at Blackburn College have also improved over the past four years, from 47.0% achieving a first or upper second class degree in 2014-15, to 50.0% in 2017-18. Whilst statistically a small percentage it is important but there is variation year on year and no evidence trend-wise of grade-inflation. Improved grades appear to be partly as a result of a dedicated and focussed student engagement team and appropriate tutorial support. Attainment rates are comparable, a 2% non-significant difference, between Mature students and those 21 and under.

2.4.4 - Progression

Rates of progression to employment or further study for full-time mature students at Blackburn College have shown considerable improvement over the past two years, rising from 59.0% in 2015-16 to 64% in 2016-17. Sector rates, also improved over the same period, from 70.5% to 75.7%. For part-time mature students, the picture is even more favourable, with 71.0% of Blackburn College students progressing to employment or further study in 2016-17, comparable to a sector rate of 75.8%.

There is a 10% difference in the rates of young people going into positive destinations as compared to Mature students, as the higher 64%. This will be a result of many mature students already having employment during their studies that they progress in or advance their careers.

2.5 Disabled Students

2.5.1 - Access

22.2% of the full-time UCBC student population in 2017/18 declared a disability. The Disability Service Team continues to be actively involved in supporting students. The proportion of full-time disabled students at Blackburn College is above that within the sector as a whole and has been so over the last five years for which data are available, for example, in 2017-18 the proportion at Blackburn College was 22.2% compared to 14.6% at sector level. However, for part-time students, the proportion of disabled students at Blackburn College is lower than at sector level remaining stagnant from 2013-14 to 2017-18 at around 7.0% (compared to an increase from 10.3% to 13.0% at sector level). This will be an area to explore further to understand why there is such a difference and identify effective measures to increase numbers.

2.5.2 - Continuation

Whilst in terms of access, as outlined above, we take more disabled students as a proportion of all students than the sector, continuation rates are below sector averages. However, rates between disabled and non-disabled students at UCBC are comparable, improving since 2014/15, with gaps in 2016/17, no longer being significant, so much so that disabled students now have higher levels of continuation than those students who do not declare a disability. We will further improve continuation and attainment rates through our new action plan.

Continuation by level previous two years

2016/17 – 2017/18

Course Level / Centre / Division / Course	Completed and	Progressed	16-18	19+	%
Level 4 to Level 5	687	450	52	398	66
Learner considers himself or herself to have a learning difficulty and/or disability and/or	108	80	3	77	74
Learner does not consider himself or herself to have a learning difficulty and/or disability	574	366	49	317	64
No information provided by the learner	5	4	0	4	80
Level 5 to Level 6	290	199	0	199	69
Learner considers himself or herself to have a learning difficulty and/or disability and/or	48	34	0	34	71
Learner does not consider himself or herself to have a learning difficulty and/or disability	240	164	0	164	68
No information provided by the learner	2	1	0	1	50
Level 6 to Level 7	144	4	0	4	3
Learner considers himself or herself to have a learning difficulty and/or disability and/or	27		0	0	
Learner does not consider himself or herself to have a learning difficulty and/or disability	116	4	0	4	3
No information provided by the learner	1		0	0	

Table 8

2017/18 – 2018/19

Course Level / Centre / Division / Course	Completed and	Progressed	16-18	19+	%
Level 4 to Level 5	650	388	64	324	60
Learner considers himself or herself to have a learning difficulty and/or disability and/or	90	61	7	54	68
Learner does not consider himself or herself to have a learning difficulty and/or disability	556	325	55	270	58
No information provided by the learner	4	2	2	0	50
Level 5 to Level 6	531	344	0	344	65
Learner considers himself or herself to have a learning difficulty and/or disability and/or	89	60	0	60	67
Learner does not consider himself or herself to have a learning difficulty and/or disability	428	283	0	283	66
No information provided by the learner	14	1	0	1	7
Level 6 to Level 7	473	17	0	17	4
Learner considers himself or herself to have a learning difficulty and/or disability and/or	78	8	0	8	10
Learner does not consider himself or herself to have a learning difficulty and/or disability	393	9	0	9	2
No information provided by the learner	2		0	0	

Table 9

2.5.3 - Attainment

Percentage gap in attainment between non-disabled and disabled students			YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	Change Year 1 to Year 5	Change Year 4 to Year 5
Full-time or apprenticeship	All undergraduates	SECTOR	3.5	3.1	2.8	3.0	2.8	0.6	0.1
		Blackburn College	6.0	0.0	12.0	1.0	11.0	5.0	10.0
	First degree	SECTOR	3.3	2.9	2.7	2.8	2.6	0.7	0.2
		Blackburn College	6.0	0.0	12.0	1.0	11.0	5.0	10.0
	Undergraduate with postgraduate components	SECTOR	2.7	2.6	2.4	1.2	3.4	0.7	2.2
		Blackburn College	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Part-time	All undergraduates	SECTOR	4.1	4.9	4.3	5.2	4.3	0.2	0.9
		Blackburn College	N	N	N	N	DP	N/A	N/A
	First degree	SECTOR	4.0	5.0	4.3	5.3	4.3	0.3	0.9
		Blackburn College	N	N	N	N	DP	N/A	N/A
	Undergraduate with postgraduate components	SECTOR	58.0	62.0	56.0	65.0	61.0	3.0	4.0
		Blackburn College	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 10: Gap in attainment between non-disabled and disabled students

Contrary to the national picture, there is no listed gap of significance in the attainment of good degrees between students who declare a disability and those that do not. However, given that there was an 11% difference in 2016/17 between disabled students and those who do not declare a disability. We will be focusing on improving this. We will enhance the service provided through the Disability Team, to provide study skills support and peer mentoring, showcasing high levels of work and helping students to improve upon the assessment feedback they receive.

We also recognise that these attainment rates are lower than national rates and whilst being aware of the impact of 'grade inflation' at a national level, we will be focusing on improving this through our Plan.

Our main validating partner attests to our quality standards and programme consultants and external examiners have praised our efforts with students with complex needs. We are however reviewing our support to disabled students, as well as pedagogy and types of assessment so that no group, disabled students included, is disadvantaged and can realise their full potential.

2.5.4 - Progression

Gaps in rates of progression to employment or further study for disabled students compared to those with no known disability have been apparent over the last two years with a gap of 14%, being recorded in 2016/17. Improvements in the rate of progression for non-disabled students have not been mirrored in increases for those without a disability, which has broadened the gap between these two groups. We will continue to monitor this as the switch to Graduate Outcomes data takes effect over the period 2020-2024.

Improvement activity for this cohort will include;

- *Increasing attainment rates to reduce gaps between students who declare a disability and those that do not. This will include individualised support and our peer mentoring project.*
- *Further improving rates of Progression, through enhanced careers advice and guidance. This will include a personal careers plan for each student.*

2.6 Care leavers

We are mindful that there needs to be a targeted focus on supporting Care Leavers throughout their transition within educational institutions. We aim to maximise engagement with Care Leavers to raise their aspirations and enrolment within Higher Education. We aim to link further education progress and academic achievement to remove barriers and facilitate access to higher education and employment opportunities and aim to improve outcome for those students gaining higher education qualifications. As part of our approach to supporting access, progress and success to Care Leavers we will provide access and welfare support to Looked After Children (LAC) in order to influence positive engagement and retention with Higher Education.

We will take into account the 'Moving On Up' report provided by the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) which is the first study to provide an overall picture of care leavers in higher education and provides real life case studies of care leavers as students.

We also have a dedicated Student Engagement Team as Well as a dedicated Disability Advice Service and the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service team – all of whom offer extensive support.

At present we do not hold enough relevant information. We acknowledge this and we will begin picking this information up from enrolment forms as of this September.

2.7 Intersections of disadvantage

We already gather much relevant data from multiple sources. It is our intention to bring this together in a more effective manner in the future and to develop this area of analysis over the period of this plan. As this is a relatively new demand as we are beginning to understand the different elements and so we want to ensure we are gathering the right data and monitoring differences in outcomes over the full student lifecycle in order to enable us to develop appropriate responses.

The new APP Dashboard, created by the OfS it an excellent tool for helping us to identify these groups on an annual basis, as can be seen from the array to references to it in this section. The strategic aim at this stage is to improve outcomes broadly across the institution so all students benefit and then as this overall performance improves we can identify distinct gaps and cohorts to focus specific tailored improvements.

From our own work in targeting achievement gaps through our Single Equality and Safeguarding Committee, we know that white British males from lower socio-economic groups have lower levels of

performance than their counterparts, whether this be gender or ethnicity based. We have already seen improvements in this area for our 2018/19 cohort, but we will continue to focus on this group. This is partly reflected in the attainment gap for full-time first degree white students from Deprivation Q1 or 2 as compared to 3-5, listed on the APP dashboard.

2.8 Other groups who experience barriers in Higher Education

This is an area for Blackburn that is under researched and we plan to develop data and understanding further, over the course of implementing our OfS improvement plan and this access and participation plan. We will do this by analysing internal data from grade outcomes, through to continuation rates. This will include more analysis of the intersections of disadvantage, but also monitoring groups that existing in small cohorts such as the above care leavers group, traveller communities, trans-gender students, etc.

2.9 Progression and Destination Data – Local Context

High levels of UCBC graduates progress into positive destinations, which shows the effectiveness of the Colleges' work in supporting students towards their professional outcomes. 93% of UCBC 2016/17 graduates were in work or further study 6 months following completion of their course; 39% Studying Full Time, Mainly in "Degree Top-Ups" and 35% In Full Time Work. These positive outcomes are consistent with 2015/16 showing that our graduating higher education students are finding work successfully in the area.

A distinct feature of the economic mobility of local residents, and thus our graduates, is a significant majority do not go on to work outside of the local area. More than half of our employed graduates were working within 7 miles of the College campus. Thus their progression into employment outcomes is influenced by the economic prosperity of the region.

The strength of our outcomes is understood more when local contextualised data is taken into account. Economic indicators in the "*Lancashire Market Intelligence Toolkit 2018*" showed that employment rates in Blackburn and Pendle, are the lowest in the County at 66%, which is 10% below the national England average. This shows that our 35% progression into full-time employment contributes favourably to the economic prosperity of local residents.

Educational outcomes are also lower in the Blackburn with Darwen area. 32% of Lancashire residents have a Level 4+ qualification, which is 5% lower than the UK average of 37%. This is even more pronounced in Blackburn with Darwen where only 21% of residents have a Level 4 or higher qualification – *Blackburn with Darwen Strategic Partnerships – Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Summary Review 2018*.

Similarly, the most recent Index of Multiple Deprivation show levels of deprivation across a range of measures. The data shows that there is a high degree of multiple deprivation across the Blackburn with Darwen Borough, (where the larger percentage of students reside), as a whole, with 28 of the 89 areas falling in the most deprived spots in England.

Against this background, it can be seen how UCBC provision, significantly exceeds local educational and employment patterns and makes a very strong contribution not only to widening participation rates but also raises the ambitions of local residents, with a long history of non-participation at this level.

The College is conscious that a consequence of these factors is the limited number of graduate level jobs available in Blackburn with Darwen, which is further compounded by the restricted geographical mobility of graduates. Consequently, whilst the College is taking further steps, to increase the percentage, it is positive that, in 2016/17, nearly half of all employment outcomes, 47%, were in a 'graduate level' occupation. This again has not changed from the 15/16 data. Graduate median salaries, £18,000, reflect both the under-representation in 'graduate level' employment and the levels of deprivation in the area which dampens salary scales.

This means that it is not always possible to make direct comparisons between UCBC progression outcomes and the national as a whole. Thus the work we aim to improve upon in relation to destinations is around raising aspiration and providing effective career advice to more students across UCBC, so that this will increase positive outcomes for all students, and reducing any gaps between UCBC outcomes and the HE sector generally.

3. Strategic aims and objectives

3.1 Target groups

The College profile has a much higher than average proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, those who declare a disability, mature students and part-time students than the local region and the sector nationally. From a strategic perspective UCBC is widening access to the least represented and most disadvantaged groups in the area and Country, which is at the heart of its mission.

The OfS state, and we know from our own work, that all of these groups are recognised as requiring extra support compared to those from a typical university intake, to achieve similar success rates. Thus our ambition and strategic focus is to continue working with these students to enable them to fulfil their potential, creating aspirational and realistic expectations, through the opportunities provided and to secure employment preferably locally or regionally to support a sustainable economy.

We are dedicated to enhancing the 'life chances' and professional aspirations of our students, irrespective of their backgrounds, to enable them to fulfil their potential. We strive to develop them as rounded individuals and prosperous citizens. We therefore work with students from all backgrounds, but we are aware that some face greater challenges than others in accessing and succeeding in higher education.

We will therefore focus our access and participation work particularly on 18 – 21 year old students from POLAR4 Q1 neighbourhoods, mature and disabled students, as well as other low participation groups, like working class white males and disabled students under-taking part-time study.

Improving success outcomes, both continuation and attainment strategically covers all of our improvement work. We know that for some students we make a significant difference to improving their life chances as compare to sector results. But we also recognise that the rates of attainment and continuation reported on the APP Dashboard from 2017/18 do not reflect our ambitions and so we are working on improving these for all students. However, there is a specific focus on the attainment rates for BAME groups and students who declare a disability. In the same way that we will specifically monitor and support Disabled students with extra support, we are also taking a similar approach with students with BAME heritage. Given the larger size of this cohort strategies will also include cross-institution initiatives, like enhancing study skills support in Tutorials, increasing students' appreciation

of the demands and requirements of their course from an early start in the year and identifying students who are performing at lower levels, early and sign-posting them to support.

We have explained the impact of local economic and deprivation indices on rates of progression, both into employment and further study. These outcomes are lower than sector norms and whilst we have stated this is partly due to local factors, we will continue to seek to strategically improve the aspirations of our students, with a particular focus on students who declare a disability.

3.2 Aims and objectives

3.2.1 – We will increase the rate of participation in Higher Education by groups under-represented at the college.

Objectives: -

- Decrease the 11% participation gap between POLAR 4 Q1 - Low Participation Neighbourhoods and Q5, so that the gap is less than 2% by 2025.

Key Commitments: -

- Increase the percentage of young people studying at the college, as this is likely to increase the rates of students from LPN.
- Increase the percentage of part-time students at the College, as will create more opportunities for people to participate in higher education.

3.2.2 – We will substantially increase success rates for all students, with a targeted proactive support service being enhanced for students with disabilities and from low participation neighbourhoods

Objectives:-

- Reduce the 15% gap in attainment rates of students from Quintile 1 and 2 as compared to those from Quintile 3-5, by 13% to 2% by 2025.
- Reduce the 14% gap in attainment rates for students with a disability as compared to those without so that it is removed completely by 2025.
- Reduce the gap in continuation rates by 15%, from 20% to 5%, for students from POLAR 4 Q1 to reduce the gap against POLAR 4 Quintile 5 by 2025.
- Reduce the attainment rate gap between Asian and White, "All Undergraduate" students, from 9% to level outcomes for these two groups by 2025.

3.2.3 – We will further improve the percentage of students progressing into Graduate Level jobs and further study, raising their ambitions and assisting them through Careers Advice to gain high income jobs and post graduate study.

Objectives:-

- Reduce the "All Undergraduate" students gap between Asian and white students from 13% to less than 5% by 2025.

Key Commitments:-

- Improve positive destination rates for students from areas of deprivation Quintile 1 and 2 and students from low participation neighbourhoods by 2025.
- Increase the rate of positive destination for students declaring a disability to be above sector averages.

3.3 Strategic Measures

In seeking to improve access and participation rates the College will work with key stakeholders locally; schools, National Collaboration Outreach Programme (NCOP) Partnerships, employers and other Government agencies to identify activities and events that will raise aspiration towards studying at higher education and showcase Higher Education study experiences to increase knowledge and awareness of the benefits and opportunities to study locally and enhance career advancement.

In improving student success rates, the College will both improve teaching and learning practices, focusing on classroom delivery and improving assessment feedback, reducing assessment loads where possible, whilst maintaining academic rigour. This will go hand in hand with increasing the pro-active support provided to students during their studies. Using information in this APP we will target groups known to be more vulnerable or have high rates of non-continuation or lower rates of attainment.

Our work to improve progression rates must be set in the context of local economies and opportunities, as outlined elsewhere, making direct and immediate impact more difficult than in other regions. We will use our Matrix – accredited careers and Advice and Guidance service to better effect, targeting certain groups for careers advice and tailoring that advice to any specific needs they may have or careers pathways.

3.3.1 - Bursaries and Scholarships

Due to the high levels of students from low socio-economic backgrounds, that leads to financial difficulties over the course of studies. The College employs a Bursary scheme, through the APP to ameliorate this.

3.3.1.1 - Full Time UCBC Bonus - £500 Bursary

All new full time HE students who started study after the 2016/17 academic years who are paying the higher fee are automatically considered for the receipt of a £500 bursary, (except students that are fully funded by their employer). There is no application process; eligibility is determined on the basis of satisfactory attendance and progress.

The full policy, describing in detail eligibility and process, is in the Bursaries and Scholarships Policy available: <https://www.blackburn.ac.uk/media/11295/2019-20-bursaries-and-scholarships-policy.pdf> and for the £500 bursary is specifically described in Schedule 2.

3.3.1.2 - Access to Success Fund - Maximum Award £500

The purpose of The Access to Success Fund can be found in Schedule 3 of the Bursaries and Scholarships Policy: <https://www.blackburn.ac.uk/media/11295/2019-20-bursaries-and-scholarships-policy.pdf>

In essence its aim is to support and widen participation, outreach and success for student on Higher Education courses at UCBC. Its over-arching purpose is to support students who had a sound financial plan in place before they started their studies but owing to a low threshold of disposable income are unable to fund resources and/or opportunities that would enhance their student experience.

Eligibility is predicated on criteria similar to the award of the £500 bursary insofar as a student must have satisfactory attendance and be making satisfactory progress but in addition must meet further criteria. These are set out in detail in schedule 3; in summary they must be a full-time student paying above the basic course fee threshold (£6000 in 2018/19), in receipt of the maximum support available from the Student Loans Company, course attendance must be a minimum of 90%, they must not have arrears with the College, in 'good standing' and they will be subject to a means tested evaluation of

income vs expenditure. Priority will also be given to students who have not previously received support (for example in preceding years).

Awards are given on a sliding scale, to a maximum of £500, determined on the basis of the income vs expenditure means test. Students must complete an application form to be submitted between 1st November and 31st May.

Again full details of the scheme are available at: <https://www.blackburn.ac.uk/media/11295/2019-20-bursaries-and-scholarships-policy.pdf>

4. Whole Provider Strategic Approach

4.1 Strategic direction

The College has a number of aims and objectives that correlate strongly with the ambitions and priorities set out by the Office for Students in this field, UCBC subscribes to those as well as having its own focus. So for example the College has policies and strategies that relate to it as a whole on: safeguarding and equality, schools' partnerships, peer observation and so on. In some cases, practice is similar but very often tailored for HE – for example the peer observation of teaching is different, being tied to the Quality Code, in UCBC and a new 'teaching triad' scheme is also presently being piloted in HE. However, the overall College strategy is the under-pinning document - an extract of which can be seen below:

Our Mission, Vision and Values are included in the College document and for example our overarching mission as a College is:

Transforming students' lives and our community through outstanding education, training and support.

The Strategic Plan for 2019-2021 has been developed following consultation with Governors, Staff, Students, local stakeholders and employers.

The plan for the next three years focuses on five strategic pillars of activity:

- Student Experience
- Teaching and Learning
- Curriculum
- Learning Environment
- Partnerships

Each of which are underpinned by six cross cutting themes:

- Student Focus (SF)
- Quality and Standards (Q&S)
- Finance and Resources (F&R)
- People (P)
- Communication (C)
- Technology (T)

Within that strategic document there is then a breakdown of each of the strategic pillars into 'what we will do', 'how we will do it' and 'how we will measure it'. To take a few of the metrics within that document for HE as an example:

- Positive destinations data is above 96% for HE students

- In the top 25th percentile for any national survey results
- Achieving above 88% on the NSS survey for the quality of Teaching and Learning in UCBC

In achieving these ambitions College staff and services collaborate in meetings the actions and targets of the APP, which is examined termly through the Single Equality and Safeguarding Committee, as the values and ambitions of these are twinned.

4.2 - Overview of our whole institutional approach

As a College, we have a long history catering to underrepresented and underprivileged groups and successfully increasing life chances and widening participation in these groups. This is inherent in our mission to provide a service to our community.

As detailed above there are many factors that increase the percentage of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the locality. The percentage of disadvantaged students (pre-16) within the borough is 33.6% and remains at around 7% above the national rate of 27.3 %. Blackburn College has 57% of students from disadvantaged postcodes and 28% of students are from BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) backgrounds (this figure rises to 36% for FE). Around 28% of the Borough's residents are from an Asian heritage background, with 69% from a White ethnic group. Between 2014 and 2039 the population of the Borough is projected to decline by 2,698 (1.8%) to 144,045. At 6.0% the present unemployment rate in the borough is above regional (5.1%) and national (4.8%) levels.

Our whole-institution approach includes:

- Long-term, sustained outreach and engagement programmes
- Inclusive approaches to teaching, learning and assessment
- A comprehensive range of support services that promote student wellbeing and provide flexible and tailored packages of support focused on the specific needs of students
- An extensive IAG/careers support provision
- Internal progression and support through different levels and pathways
- Retention initiatives
- Dedicated Learning Support

4.3 Alignment with other strategies and initiatives

4.3.1 - Improving outcomes

As a College we seek to continuously improve student experience and their performance to act as springboards for these students to aid their progression. As such we have created a two-year Improvement Plan which we have shared with the OfS. There are a number of comparisons between the Improvement Plan and the work we undertake through APP. This means that our actions are thoughtful and reflective of the impact we are having, student-informed, directed at tangible improvements to student outcomes and combined across these two plans. Below is an extract from that plan showing the alignment.

Notwithstanding our context, and not seeking to downplay the numerous successful student outcomes of which the College is justly proud, Blackburn College recognises it needs to radically improve the continuation, completion and post-graduation professional employment rates for its higher education students.

The key areas in the Improvement Plan listed below aim to affect significant change in our continuation and completion rates and professional employment outcomes.

Firstly, ensuring we always set appropriate and specific entry criteria to so that students are offered and placed on the most suitable programme; and identifying students with predicted lower levels of attainment and completion based on previous achievement rates for focused support.

Secondly, through induction, setting clear expectations and providing detailed explanations to ensure students are aware of the demands of higher education and our academic regulations.

Thirdly, providing clear information to all students of the support available at UCBC, through Personal Tutors, the Library and HE Engagement Team; rigorously monitoring and responding to issues with student attendance, submissions and engagement; improving overall rates of student engagement; enhancing support for disabled students and students with additional support need; and promoting support to targeted students.

Fourthly, enhancing the quality of teaching, leading to an improvement in our National Student Survey quality of teaching metrics around engaging, inspiring and research-informed face to face sessions which propel student learning; expanding use of and content in Virtual Learning Environment pages (Moodle), to support teaching and learning; setting clear and proportionate assessments and providing clear and timely feedback; sign-posting and supporting students with reassessment.

Finally, to further enhance and better target our careers' advice, including for further study and career-specific guidance, through giving students increased access to and direct provision of high quality careers advice, information and guidance on further study options; and by strengthening employer links to further enhance our course portfolio, and its design and delivery.

A snapshot of the targets and milestones from the plan can be seen below:

Student Outcome	TEF – Blackburn College metric 5 year aggregate	Blackburn College TEF Y4 metric (%)	TEF Y4 regional bench-Mark (%)	Blackburn College internal measure (%) (2017/18)	Blackburn College milestone 1 metric (%) (30-10-19)	Blackburn College milestone 3 metric (%) (30-10-20)	Blackburn College final completion metric (%) (30-04-21) (Predicted)
1. Continuation rates for full-time other-undergraduate students	78.5	77.4	83.5	72 - Internal progression only (IPO)	73	82 - Internal progression only	84 - Internal progression only
2a. Continuation rates for full time first degree students	84.1	84.7	88.1	41 - IPO	50	65 - Internal progression only	70 - Internal progression only
2b. Continuation rates for part-time first degree students	64.8	73.2	66.6	75 - IPO	76	77 - Internal progression only	78 - Internal progression only
3. Completion rate for undergraduate students	58.0	n/a	n/a	60 - Internal Measure	62	68 - Internal Measure	72 - Internal Measure
4. Professional employment or progression to postgraduate study rates for full-time first degree students	40.0	46.7	65.6	43 - Based on DLHE data for 16/17 leavers	47	52	58 – Internal Measure
5a. Professional employment or progression to postgraduate study rates for full-time PGCE	80.0	n/a	n/a	66 - (DLHE 16/17)	80	87	90
5b. Professional employment or progression to postgraduate study rates for part-time PGCE	73.3	n/a	n/a	86 (DLHE 16/17)	85	90	92

Table 11: Snapshot of targets and milestones

4.3.2 - Safeguarding and Prevent

As an example, Blackburn used Safeguarding funding to launch #Safer so that students would start to identify with a brand and its meaning. The Students' Union along with Student Support and the Engagement Team have promoted the project through focus groups and events linked to raising awareness of being safe and students wellbeing. Several specific events have taken place to promote awareness such as The Sophie Lancaster Conference related to anti bullying and hate crime, Five Ways to Wellbeing to improve self-esteem, self-confidence, communication skills, self-awareness, resilience. Focus groups and continued involvement of students to help with the direction of

marketing and interventions regarding Safeguarding so that interventions are appropriate and effective. This work links with our Access and Participation Plan as we have significant cases each year of students at risk of not succeeding due to the impact of external factors, some of which have safeguarding aspects. By providing this active support service, students are able to continue to their studies and achieve. Annually we review the nature of incidents rates and themes so that we can adapt our safeguarding work. This is why we have a focus on Mental health, as the number of reported cases is increasing.

4.3.3 - Equality (Single Equality and Safeguarding Committee)

The Higher Education Disability Services Team work with their counterparts in Further Education to provide advice and guidance around the application for DSA process which includes supporting with the application and, where applicable, guidance from our Access Centre for our Further Education Level 3 students with a disability or medical conditions. This is available to all those with a disability or medical condition who progress to Higher Education, whether internal or external to our organisation. There is a high degree of combined focus between this group and the activities under the APP. This group receives reports on the work of the APP and its impact, advising on alternative approaches. External stakeholders also sit on this group and can provide insight and detail on local initiatives that the College can collaborate with. This group also sets Equality and Diversity Impact measures based upon the previous year's outcomes, this is quicker than the information provided through the Access and Participation Dashboard.

4.3.4 - The Student Engagement Strategy

The Student Engagement Team, Higher Education Transition Officer and Students' Union also work closely with Further Education Curriculum Centre staff and UCBC academic staff on progression activities and bespoke sessions to raise awareness of the Higher Education curriculum, employment opportunities post-graduation and the 'wrap around' offer provided. They work closely with students and identify students who wish to attend the Single Equality and Safeguarding Committee, or give feedback on Access and Participation work. The Student Engagement Team play a pivotal role in our work to improve success measures; supporting students, delivering study skills and working with targeted groups.

4.3.5 - Summer Schools and Transition support

Progressing and making the transition to Higher Education successfully requires a focus on students' study skills. UCBC offers, and will further enhance, a variety of opportunities for students to be supported prior to their programme commencing. Transitions to Level 6 work from Foundation Degrees/Higher National Diplomas, with an increasing emphasis on the skills required for scholarship and the development of self-reliance and independence, are challenges which are addressed through carefully planned student support. In addition, the Higher Education Transitions Officer currently works with 25 Sixth Form Schools and Colleges attending events and UCAS Fairs to raise awareness of Higher Education and to promote the UCBC offer. As a College we will continue to develop the internal working relationships with regards to collaborative outreach, combined events and activities to support progression into Higher Education and the College will continue to target 'cold spot' schools to foster stronger relationships with those Schools which feature in the College Schools Plan. This work supports both our Access improvement work, particularly around raising participation for disadvantaged and non-traditional learners entering Higher Education through targeted work. We also collaborate with our local Outreach Partnership in seeking to improve against these ends.

4.3.6 - Employability and Enterprise Strategy

The College has strategic arrangements (Memoranda of Understanding) with a number of employers. These Memoranda promote placements and develop opportunities for students to align their studies to employers, supporting a 'theory into practice' approach. With a high proportion of graduate-level

jobs with leading graduate employers being filled by candidates who have previously completed an internship or placement with that employer it is vital that students develop links through placements. UCBC works in partnership with local businesses to harness local students' talent, determination and a strong work ethic to support employability, education and enterprise. Many courses at UCBC, including all Foundation Degrees, include a work placement or work-based projects. Experiencing enterprise whilst still at College has many benefits providing students with an alternative career option and the confidence that they can set up their own business or social enterprise. Enterprise skills are useful to those in employment, or those who will become self-employed and work on a freelance or consultancy basis, developing a 'can-do' confidence, creative questioning, and a willingness to take risks. The College has a Student Enterprise Society that take part in enterprise events for example Young Enterprise. These activities enable students to develop entrepreneurship skills supported through a programme of talks and activities during Global Entrepreneurship Week. We have recently concluded another extremely successful Festival of Making event that is a high-profile occasion, of national significance and attended by prominent art, fashion and engineering luminaries that students contribute to. This work correlates with our ambitions to raise progression outcomes for students across all types of programme. The work in embedding these skills into programmes as well as our improved Career Service offer, all contribute towards that ambition.

4.3.7 - Learning and Teaching Strategy

Our strategy outlines the importance of curriculum which is accessible to all. This ethos permeates our curriculum, our exam arrangements and our in and out-of-class support. We have a highly experienced and dedicated disability team who are all appropriately qualified - all Disability Advisors are members of the National Association of Disability Practitioners. (NADP). In light of the previous changes to the Disabled Students Allowances, this service has developed to respond to existing and future changes to support the application of reasonable adjustments and the embedding of inclusive practice. When planning our strategy and the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) that accompanies it we are mindful of the very diverse nature of the student groups at the College and how this requires teaching strategies that build confidence, reinforce study skills and research methods regularly and values the importance of feedback to facilitate student reflection and improvement to their work. This fits alongside our targeted support work to aid student success.

4.3.8 - Research and Scholarship Strategy

Whilst we have extensive Teaching and Learning strategies, plans and goals, it is worth highlighting, briefly, our Research and Scholarship separately as it is somewhat unusual for college-based HE to have an explicit Research and Scholarship strategy. It focuses on including students in every endeavour as co-creators of knowledge –through our PRISM journal our PRISM gallery, conferences, community projects and funded research. We have used research projects run by staff and students to investigate issues around Success or continuation. It is this research that has informed our peer mentoring project, designed to increase attainment.

In addition, we have annual Research and Scholarship targets. The detail for these can be seen in our separate Research and Scholarship Strategy but the overall objectives areas are:

- Objective 1: Improve Student Outcomes.
- Objective 2: Develop Collaboration.
- Objective 3: Increase Scholarship and CPD
- Objective 4: Add and Define Social Value.
- Objective 5: Expand the Institutional Research Profile
- Objective 6: Increase Levels of External Funding.

4.4 Student consultation

Student representation is paramount to our improvement plans and over-arching mission. This also includes the work being undertaken under the auspices of the Access and Participation Plan. The plan is set within an ongoing dialogue where students can feedback via a variety of means –surveys, module evaluation questionnaires, (MEQ)s, NSS, student rep boards, executive lunches and much more. The most recent stop and ask survey conducted in March 2019 was particularly positive. Some examples of encouraging feedback from students, when they were asked what they like or love about UCBC, (names have been adapted):

- the lecturers – really helpful
- lectures are useful
- reflective practitioner module – useful in everyday life
- everyone mature and easy to interact with each other
- staff at uni helpful and friendly
- enjoyable
- peers. Great group
- good course content
- the teachers
- tutors are mint lad
- the teachers
- we love ‘Bob Smith’
- content of the course
- the wonderful ‘Jackie and Jill’

In terms of student representative roles, the College has a Student Union President, Student Union Officers, HE student Governor and Programme Representatives and there is student representation at all levels of the College’s governance structures – both corporate and academic. All students are encouraged to participate in internal and external student surveys to enable us to continue to enhance the quality of their experience at Blackburn. We hold a range of student focus groups and Student Voice activities including regular lunches with the Executive of the College to discuss student views and survey results to enable current students to inform strategies and operational processes and enhance future student experiences. Undoubtedly, we have a range of consultation fora and data sources, not least NSS and our OfS Improvement and Access and Participation Plan.

UCBC works closely with the student body on all aspects of strategy and policy. Students are represented on all University committees at institution and faculty level. In developing this Access & Participation Plan, we have engaged with and involved students, working closely with Students’ Union. We have had student representation on developing plans and monitoring the progress against our targets, through the SU for a number of years and value their input at this level. The UCBC Executive Dean meets with the Student Union President, monthly to discuss general operational details and concerns which have fed into planning and solutions. From September 2019 the SU President will be invited to regularly attend the Higher Education management committee.

Students also attend all programme committees and the minutes of those are kept in the centre shared area for analysis and action. Students are therefore represented on programme committees, which meet three times per year and are made up off staff and student representatives. Programme committees consider feedback received from external examiners and course consultants; resources; retention strategies; and progression, contributing to an annual programme review. Programme committees feed into the relevant School Board which, in turn, reports to a Higher Education Learning and Teaching Committee which also has student representation.

When reviewing the APP with students, we collected students from First Degree, Foundation Degrees and Higher Nationals, working with a cross-section of students based on age, gender and ethnicity and disability. Students gave insightful and impactful feedback on ways in which the College could improve successful outcomes for students. These included giving students greater insight into the demands of the course from the start of the induction process and creating IT skills workshops as well as referencing sessions throughout the year.

We are also working in conjunction with the Student Union in trialling a Student Peer support scheme from September 2019. Students will regularly feedback on and contribute to this scheme as well as monitoring its' impact. Students also commented on the role of bursaries and adaptations to the administration of those in supporting students to succeed. It was feedback from students about the need for a pro-active careers service, being advertised early on in a students' studies that has also influenced our plans in this area. This feedback has been both incorporated into the OfS Improvement Plan and the Access and Participation Plan.

There will now be a formalised student representative position on the Access and Participation team to provide feedback and help monitor progress on the target set and the ambitions of the policy itself. Annually we will meet with students about our future plans for the APP and to propose adaptations to the plans we have set out.

Students are trained, inducted and supported in these roles.

4.5 Evaluation Strategy

UCBC's Evaluation Strategy employs a mixed-methodological approach using both quantitative and qualitative data. The aim is to find out and demonstrate 'what works' and to feed that in an iterative process into improving practice.

The Evaluation Strategy adopted will draw upon:

- OfS Regulatory Notice 1, particularly pages 33-34
- OfS Access and participation standards of evidence
- OfS Evaluation self-assessment tool
- The 2015 CFE Research Report

We will complete and update the self-assessment tool on a regular basis to inform our evaluation methods. The will inform the type of activities we undertake and the focus of those activities of specific cohorts. Where possible we will use intersection data to refine the cohorts we target with this work, so that interventions are more specific to that cohort and attuned to the issues they face.

When undertaking evaluation using qualitative measures we will focus on gathering feedback from student groups about their perception of the value of our services, to identify any potential barriers. We will then use this information to adapt communication strategies, such as using peer role models, instead of college staff, or how students are identified and approached to participate.

Quantative data will be gathered both internally as well as the annual monitoring using the Access and participation dashboard. This information will allow us to examine the pace of impact we are making, so that we can adapt targets that are met quickly, to secure reductions in gaps more promptly and identify slow progress where we may need to enhance qualitative research methods to understand the reasons for this. This work will also allow us to identify successful campaigns and initiatives that we can employ with other target groups.

Examples of activities for the monitoring and evaluation of the categories (not all) in our targets and investment plan:

Increase young entrants from all ethnicities, with a focus on White and BAME other than Asian.

- We will increase outreach activity in the identified areas with our outreach team
- We will use student voice activities such as ‘stop and ask’ surveys and focus groups to gather student feedback and determine any differential needs of the identified student groups
- We will monitor student group progression via internal measures: at programme committees, and through student performance data
- We will evaluate overall impact drawing on internal data and through the OfS dashboards.

Increase part time recruitment

- We will review incentives for part-time provision at our Higher Education Management Group
- We will increase the focus of marketing activity on the benefits to part-time study
- We will focus group part-time students at least twice per year to gather information on ‘what works’ for them
- We will monitor student group progression via internal measures: at programme committees, and through student performance data.
- We will evaluate overall impact drawing on internal data and through the OfS dashboards.

Similar activities will be employed across all the categories in our Targets and Investment Plan, the appropriateness of methods determined by the specific category. Evaluation methods and data sources will include an approach similar to the logic chains and indicator bank outlined in Appendix 1 of the CFE 2015 Research Report with updated data sources – internal and external.

In the 2015 CFE report, s2.36. the evidence suggests that retention and success are best addressed by:

- approaches which seek to develop supportive peer relations
- meaningful interaction between staff and students
- knowledge, confidence and identity as successful HE learners
- and an HE experience that is relevant to students’ interests and future goals

We are developing a peer mentor scheme, we have smaller class sizes which helps with meaningful interaction between staff and students and we also have a personal tutor system; we engage students in structured and meaningful assessment activities to build their confidence and the HE experience is one focussed on student’s goals.

In terms of monitoring and evaluation, again we deploy both quantitative and qualitative measures, internal and external – such as student satisfaction through internal module evaluation questionnaires (MEQs) and externally through the National Student Survey, NSS. We conduct regular ‘stop and ask’ surveys, we invite students to meet the executive, we have student representation on programme committees and the Higher Education Management group and we also engage with the Students’ Union on a number of levels – through our student engagement team, through meetings with the Dean and activities with the Corporate Leadership Team, Executive and Governors.

We set out above in the Student Consultation section how their evaluations of our plans and information on continuation and completion rates has informed this plan and other improvement work.

We monitor and evaluate student recruitment, continuation, achievement and progression through internal proprietary electronic records systems, as well as through official publications, such as

previously DLHE and soon to be graduate outcomes, and applications vs acceptances, national statistics, engagement events, employer fora, focus groups and OfS data.

Overarching our approach to evaluation are Annual Programme Reviews (APRs), Annual Quality Reports (AQRs) for our validating Partners and Periodic Reviews which all contain masses of critical data informing all areas of provision including access and participation.

4.6 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

The detailed work to develop and deliver our Access and Participation Plan; evaluating the impact of work termly, is to be undertaken by a refreshed and extended membership Access and Participation team responding to the increased challenge set by the Office for Students and our own ambitions. Chaired by the Executive Dean and reporting through to the Governing Body, this group will meet regularly to discuss progress against the plan, new initiatives and in year adaptations to strategy based upon the success of various initiatives.

- We use institutional data to identify different aspects of under-representation within the access, success and progression remits to inform our strategy and actions.
- We draw on findings from local and regional data, validating partner information and national research and evaluation to ensure we are able to maximise the impact of our activities and resources and support our students effectively in fulfilling their full potential.
- The increased membership will allow delivery of specific initiatives to be monitored through various channels and combine with other groups such as our, OfS Improvement Plan working group, the Quality Unit, Student Engagement Team and as mentioned the SESC. This will increase co-ordination and collaboration with other colleges strategies and thus increase the propensity for success.

This group monitors operational progress and achievement against the set targets. Operationally, The Access and Participation Team, will review, termly, the actions taken in achieving the targets. Oversight of progress towards these targets and milestones is also monitored, termly, through our Single Equality and Safeguarding Committee (SESC). Where there are concerns over operational delivery or limited impact on the target from the set actions, the APP team will arrange for different approaches to be adopted in year and also to build the findings from evaluation work into the planning for future APPs.

This is then reported through the Academic Board to the Governing Body's Learning and Quality Committee which is a sub-committee of the Corporation and is chaired by the Vice Chair of the Corporation and the Principal attends. The Learning and Quality Committee (LQC), is chaired by Mark Allanson, Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations) at Edge Hill University and a former HEFCE Regional Consultant for the North West. The Students' Union is also represented on this Committee. Overall responsibility for the Access and Participation Plan resides with The Executive Dean of the University Centre at Blackburn College.

The SESC, in addition to the targets set through the APP, sets and monitors work on Equality and Diversity Impact Measures, EDIMs. These align with the ambitions of the APP, which is why this group monitors both.

5. Provision of information to students

We are committed to publishing clear and accessible information to existing and prospective students on all aspects of their course and particularly the financial expectations. UCBC is compliant with the

consumer law requirements in response to sector-wide advice published by the CMA in March 2015. Students of all types are provided with detailed information with respect to fees, additional costs, and the financial support packages we offer. Applicants are provided with the following information as part of their formal offer:

- The cost per year of the programme, as well as the course duration and total course cost (in addition to a caveat with respect to potential inflationary increases during subsequent years of study) within the offer letter which is emailed to students
- The course handbook, which details the implications of continuous unauthorised absence on tuition fees, and links to the Tuition Fee Policy
- The College student regulations and policy document which include the Tuition Fee Policy, and separate documents outlining the specific validating partner's rules and regulations
- A Standard Additional Costs document which provides details of standard optional additional costs (relating to the course, indicative living costs, or other one-off items)
- Accompanying information and conditions of offer document, which provides details regarding the payment of fees, the total amount of tuition fees payable, tuition fee team contact details and cancellation arrangements

The Hub is our student-focused support service with dedicated Student Finance and Careers advisors. A wide range of advice and support is provided, including face-to-face financial information, guidance on fees and student finance. The Hub provides daily drop-in appointments for new and prospective students. A range of online support is also available through an online chat facility. UCBC's Virtual Learning Environment (Moodle) is used to provide a wealth of academic and pastoral information. Interactive resources have been created to support entrants and returning students. Our web-pages and prospectus also provide detailed advice.

We also communicate through various talks and publications at Open Days, Interview Days and Applicant Days, and all on or off campus events and outreach activities, public engagement events, leaflets and guidance information in public places, staff advising students at recruitment fairs and open days or working with under-represented groups through a wide range of outreach activities. We are also committed to providing timely, accurate information to UCAS and the Student Loans Company so they can populate their course databases in good time to inform applicants. We will publish our approved Access and Participation Plan prominently on our website in a way that is easily accessible to both current and prospective students.

We actively promote equality of opportunity by offering support packages to students identified as having a protected characteristic. All full-time students can apply for a £500 bursary. This is for help with course-related costs. However, the College is reviewing the effectiveness of the bursary with a view to targeting specific groups. All students have access to a free breakfast which is not means tested in any way.

Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflationary statement:

Subject to the maximum fee limits set out in Regulations we intend to increase fees each year using the RPI-X

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

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	Students who started in 2017/18 or later	£8,250
Foundation degree	Students who started in 2017/18 or later	£8,250
Foundation year/Year 0	Students who started in 2017/18	£4,900
HNC/HND	Students who started in 2017/18 or later	£8,250
CertHE/DipHE	Students who started in 2017/18	£8,250
Postgraduate ITT	PGCE	£6,000
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	Industry year	£825
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	LLB	£8,250
Other	LLM	£5,400

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		£6,000
Foundation degree		£6,000
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND		£6,000
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	PGCE	£3,000
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	LLB	£6,000
Other	LLM	£2,700

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: Blackburn College

Provider UKPRN: 10000747

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 (£)	£1,050,000.00	£1,080,000.00	£1,110,000.00	£1,140,000.00	£1,170,000.00
Access (pre-16)	£81,839.14	£84,177.40	£86,515.66	£88,853.93	£91,192.19
Access (post-16)	£592,183.28	£609,102.80	£626,022.33	£642,941.85	£659,861.37
Access (adults and the community)	£213,183.83	£219,274.79	£225,365.76	£231,456.73	£237,547.69
Access (other)	£162,793.75	£167,445.00	£172,096.25	£176,747.50	£181,398.75
Financial support (£)	£532,665.00	£532,665.00	£532,665.00	£532,665.00	£532,665.00
Research and evaluation (£)	£57,440.00	£57,440.00	£57,440.00	£57,440.00	£57,440.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Higher fee income (£HFI)	£3,190,050.00	£3,273,450.00	£3,361,020.00	£3,452,760.00	£3,548,670.00
Access investment	13.2%	13.8%	14.3%	14.8%	15.2%
Financial support	16.7%	16.3%	15.8%	15.4%	15.0%
Research and evaluation	1.8%	1.8%	1.7%	1.7%	1.6%
Total investment (as %HFI)	31.7%	31.8%	31.9%	31.9%	31.9%

