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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Since our founding in 1891 as the School of Science and Art in High Wycombe, the mission of Buckinghamshire New University (Bucks) has been to transform lives through employment-focused and skills-based teaching. Our vision, encapsulated in our University Strategy 2021, is to be a leading university for professional and creative education and applied research. The strategy's three core elements — education, research and innovation, and people — drive our activities through inter alia our education strategy, our Bucks Academic Framework, our retention strategy, and numerous associated policies. Our educational aim is to provide highly accessible university learning that will transform lives and nurture abilities in all our graduates to enable them to succeed and ultimately change their world.
- 1.2 Our goal has always been to reduce barriers to higher education, enabling all that can, to succeed, and making a real difference to the lives of people from all backgrounds. We maintain today a highly diverse student intake with HESA UKPIs revealing we are above the sector average for the proportion of our students coming from state schools or colleges (96%). We are above the sector average for proportions of mature students (37%) and part-time students (38%, 99% of whom are mature – the 9th highest figure in the sector). Of our UK domiciled, young, full-time, other undergraduate entrants, we have the highest proportion of students from state schools or colleges in the sector (100%). 11% come from low participation neighbourhoods.
- 1.3 Analysis of HEIDI+ over the period 2014/15 to 2016/17 shows that we rank 22nd in the UK for our proportion of students over 21 years (58%), 17th for the proportion over 25 years (35%), and 13th for the proportion over 30 years (26%). 12% of our students have a disability. 58% of our students are female, against 56% for the sector. We have the 25th highest proportion of BAME students in the country, 36% against 19% for the sector, the 25th highest proportion of Asian students in the UK (16%) and the 11th highest proportion of Black students (18%). TEF Year 3 contextual data show more than a quarter of our students come from lower participation areas (POLAR quintiles 1 and 2), and more than one-third from areas with higher levels of deprivation (IMD quintiles 1 and 2). They show also that of our students entering higher education with a tariff, only 8% are high tariff, 61% are low and 30% medium tariff.
- 1.4 The diversity in our student body reflects our long-standing and highly successful work to reach out to under-represented groups in higher education, to provide an environment and form of education that meets their needs, and to support them into high levels of graduate employment. Building on our success, and consistent with our historic mission, we are developing our widening participation work still further. Specifically, in 2019/20, we will:
- improve still further the access to higher education for hard to reach and marginalised communities (Gypsy, Roma and Traveller; military children; and care leavers);
 - develop a sustained focus to our work in improving the educational success of BAME students and BAME male students in particular; and
 - address the challenges that face our diverse student body when they enter the employment market and progress into highly skilled employment.
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- 1.5 **Consultation with students.** The Students' Union participates in the Access and Participation Group and helps to co-ordinate the engagement of the student body with the widening participation agenda. Student representatives work closely with the University and are involved in curriculum development, student support, module evaluation, policy development, working groups and governance committees - all activities and groups which embed our widening participation strategy in their work. During 2018/19 the group will consult with identified target groups on specific strategic activities with a view to developing more effective engagement channels. Our consultation with students will include regular engagement with the Students' Union Council, an open forum which any student can attend. With the help of the Students' Union, we will establish a Students' Forum, specifically focused on the needs of students from a range of different backgrounds, and with representation from members of the University's Access and Participation Group.
- 1.6 **Statement from Bucks Students' Union.** "The University have demonstrated a commitment to engaging Bucks Students' Union in their access and participation work. The Chief Executive Officer and President of the Students' Union are members of the institution's working group in this area and have been routinely consulted about organisational priorities, spending and impact. The University has also consulted with us in relation to the best way to gather student feedback on its access and participation work and we are looking forward to strengthening this partnership next academic year. We feel the University values our work, encompassing the initiatives and schemes we are currently delivering such as '*The Big Deal*¹', and believe it to be a major contributor in attracting, supporting and developing students from widening participation backgrounds, ultimately leading to their successful university experience."
- 1.7 The remainder of this document sets out our plan.

2 Assessment of current performance

- 2.1 Bucks has been highly successful in widening participation, as evident in the outcomes for under-represented groups. This section considers outcomes relative to the key demographic factors of low participation neighbourhoods, disability, age, sex, and ethnicity. It considers the evidence of our ability to support students to participate in higher education (access), the outcomes for those students whilst at University (success), and the evidence of them securing highly skilled employment after graduation (progression).
- 2.2 **Low Participation Neighbourhoods.** UCAS data show that the University has increased its offer rates for all POLAR quintiles during 2012-17, with the largest increases being seen for quintile 1 (9.8%) and quintile 2 (10.5%) applications. Quintile 5 applications, by contrast, increased by just 5.3% in the same period.
- 2.3 Our offer rates are consistent across quintiles, with quintile 5 exceeding quintile 1 by an amount that has reduced from 5.8% in 2012 to -1.3% in 2016 and 1.3% in 2017 (compared to a 2017 average of 3.6% for UK HEIs).
- 2.4 Averaged across all quintiles, offer rates in the period 2012 to 2104 were close (-0.1) to the UCAS 'average offer rate' (adjusted for predicted grades and subject choice), and matched it in the period 2015 to 2017 (0.0). For the period 2015 to 2017, differences from the average offer rate were -0.3 for quintile 1, 1.3 for quintile 2, -0.1 for quintile 3, -0.7 for quintile 4, and -0.1 for quintile 5. This pattern shows a high degree of equality in the treatment of Bucks applications, and is impressive given the wide variations from the average offer rate seen within the sector. In 2017, for example, variation from the average offer rate for quintile 1 ranged from +25 to -9 across all HEIs; for quintile 2, they ranged from +8 to -10, for quintile 3 from +4 to -4, for quintile 4 from +4 to -4, and quintile 5 from +5 to -5.
- 2.5 Progression rates at Bucks are also highly similar across the POLAR quintiles. In the period 2014/15 to 2016/17, 84.1% of students from quintile 1 progressed successfully, whilst 86.7% did so from quintile 5. We see a similar pattern in terms of withdrawal rates, which average 10.1% for quintile 1, and 8.5% for quintile 5. The gap between these two quintiles has steadily reduced from 2.3% in

¹ '*The Big Deal*' is a University funded initiative currently run by the Students' Union that delivers a rich and diverse package of extra-curricular, social and developmental opportunities free of charge to students at Bucks.

2014/15 to 1.4% in 2015/16, and to 1.0% in 2016/17.

- 2.6 The pattern of degree classification in this period is similar. The proportion of good honours (1st and 2.i grades) stands at 56.2% for quintile 1 students, and at 58.1% for quintile 5. This difference has also steadily reduced, from 7.2% in 2014/15 to 3.7% in 2015/16 and to a negative difference of -6.6% in 2016/17, a year in which quintile 1 students produced the highest proportion of good honours degrees of any quintile.
- 2.7 DLHE data inevitably lag most recent academic performance. For example, average employability data over the past three DLHE surveys (2013/14 to 2015/16) typically reflect much earlier University student intakes, e.g., 2011/12 to 2013/14.
- 2.8 Our highly skilled employment rates show an important interaction with POLAR quintiles. For quintile 1, we observe a decline in highly skilled employment of 5.9% between 2013/14 and 2015/16. For quintiles 2 to 5, however, we observe a steady increase of 3.1%. These effects combined to produce a gap between quintiles 1 and 5 that has grown from 2.2% in 2013/14 to 9.9% in 2015/16.
- 2.9 Though we do not claim to understand fully the reasons for the differences we observe between the performance of quintile 1 and quintile 5 students, they are associated with differences in entry tariff: 8.4% of quintile 1 students enter with a non-tariff bearing qualification as opposed to 7.0% of quintile 5 students; 10.3% of quintile 1 students enter with a prior HE level qualification versus 15.3% of quintile 5 students.
- 2.10 While we believe further work is needed to explore the relationship with entry tariff, overall our analysis of Bucks' performance in relation to POLAR quintiles suggests a record of considerable achievement in relation to access and academic success. We are delighted to see this recognised in a recent HEPI publication showing Bucks ranks 26th and in the top 20% of UK HEIs for equality in its intake by POLAR quintile.² We remain concerned however about the highly skilled employment rate of our quintile 1 students.
- 2.11 **Disability.** TEF Year 3 contextual data show that around 12% of our students have a disability. Our own current data show 10% have a disability, with 53% of these students having a specific learning difficulty, 14% disclosing mental health conditions, 12% a long-standing illness or condition, and 6% autistic spectrum disorder. 1% declare a visual impairment and 2% a hearing impairment.
- 2.12 Our data show that around 8% of applicants disclose a disability, approximately 50% declaring a specific learning difficulty, around 15% a mental health condition, just under 10% a long standing illness, and 6% a social/communication impairment (e.g., Asperger's syndrome). We use our own data to track offer and acceptance rates. These show that in the period 2014/15 to 2016/17 a greater proportion of applications from disabled applicants received an offer (64.1%) than from non-disabled applicants (56.8%). This difference was also reflected in acceptance rates: 43.3% for disabled offer holders against 33.9% for non-disabled offer holders.
- 2.13 When we examine specific disclosed conditions, we see a similar pattern. Excluding conditions with small numbers of applications, application-to-acceptance rates exceed those for non-disabled applicants for all disclosed conditions, including specific learning difficulty, autistic spectrum disorder and mental health difficulties.
- 2.14 Progression rates for our disabled students (85.6%) exceed those of our students not declaring a disability (84.4%), suggesting that they experience high levels of support and an environment that meets their needs as learners. Progression rates for students with specific learning difficulty (86.7%) and mental health conditions (90.5%) also exceed the non-disabled average.
- 2.15 Withdrawal rates for all students have fallen over the period 2014/15 to 2016/17, but have fallen more quickly for disabled students, from 11.5%, to 7.7%, and finally to 5.4%, and are now exceeded by withdrawal rates for non-disabled students: the gap has reduced from 0.3% to -1.4%, and finally to -2.1%.
- 2.16 A similar pattern holds for degree classification, with 63.5% of disabled students obtaining good

² Martin, I. (2018). *Benchmarking widening participation: how should we measure and report progress?* HEPI Policy Note 6. Available: <http://www.hepi.ac.uk/2018/04/05/benchmarking-widening-participation-measure-report-progress/> [accessed 15 May. 2018]

honours in the period 2014/15 to 2016/17, as opposed to 60.4% of non-disabled students.

- 2.17 These effects continue to be seen in relation to highly skilled employment, with students declaring a disability outperforming non-disabled students, the gap being 2.4% over the period 2013/14 to 2015/16. For most specific disabilities the DLHE data report very small numbers, which we believe do not bear further interpretation. However, more than 10% of the DLHE population comprised students reporting a specific learning difficulty. These students also outperformed non-disabled students, the gap being 4.1% during the period 2013/14 to 2015/16.
- 2.18 Taken together, we believe these figures reflect a truly outstanding performance by Bucks in support of its disabled students, the excellent support we provide producing a record of achievement of which we are extremely proud. However, we are concerned that our proportion of disabled students lags the sector average, an issue we return to later.
- 2.19 **Social Class.** To examine the effects of social class, we group students according to their national statistics socio-economic classification (NS-SEC) and compare aggregate figures for groups 1-3 with those for groups 4-8. However, these data are not as available as for other demographic factors. For example, in determining the University's progression, withdrawal and good honours rates, in excess of 40% of our students have a social class that is not classified according to this method. Conclusions about social class must necessarily be tentative.
- 2.20 In the period 2014/15 to 2016/17, progression rates have improved for both socio-economic groups, by 2.1% to 89.0% for NS-SEC 1-3, and by 0.6% to 86.3 for NS-SEC 4-8. Withdrawal rates have also improved for both groups, by 3.5% to 6.8% for NS-SEC 1-3, and by 3.3% to 6.9% for NS-SEC 4-8. The attainment gap between the two socio-economic groups has also reduced in this period, from 5.7% in 2014/15 to 3.9% as the attainment of both groups has improved: by 4.3% to 66.3% for NS-SEC 1-3, and by 8.1% to 62.4% for NS-SEC 4-8.
- 2.21 In 2013/14, DLHE data showed NS-SEC 1-3 students enjoyed a higher rate of highly skilled employment – 59.2% as opposed to 57.3% for NS-SEC 4-8 students. Since then, however, this has effect has reversed, with NS-SEC 1-3 students showing a highly skilled employment rate of 59.8% and NS-SEC 4-8 students showing a much improved rate of 64.0%.
- 2.22 **Age.** TEF Year 3 contextual data show that Bucks has a high proportion of mature students, 55% being under 21, 26% in the range 21 to 30 years of age, and 19% being over 30 years old.
- 2.23 UCAS data show that Bucks' offer rates to both 18 year old and mature applicants have increased steadily in the period 2012 to 2017. For the period 2014 to 2017, the average offer rate for 18 year olds increased by 3.8% over the average for the period 2012 to 2014 to 88.7%. For mature students, the corresponding average offer rate increased by 2.1% to 52.8%. However, during 2017 whilst 18 year old offer rates fell slightly (by 0.8%), offer rates for mature applicants increased 6.3%.
- 2.24 Bucks internal data show that in the period 2014/15 to 2016/17, application to acceptance rates were in close alignment for young and mature students, with the chances of success being slightly higher for mature applicants (21.3%) than for 18 year olds (19.0%). However, this pattern is heavily influenced by subject choice as discussed later, and is not easily interpreted.
- 2.25 Nevertheless, we believe that mature students may be more likely to accept an offer from Bucks because of our strong position as a 'local' university, drawing settled students primarily from London and the surrounding counties. As a lower tariff, vocational University we also remain attractive to those considering returning to education, having not pursued the post-secondary entry route.
- 2.26 Our broad part-time offer allows those mature students with family and work commitments to access high education on flexible terms.
- 2.27 Progression rates for both young and mature students have improved in the period 2014/15 to 2016/17, by 3.2% to 87.7% for young students and by 4.4% to 87.3% for mature students. The progression gap between young and mature students having also reduced from 1.6% to 0.4%.
- 2.28 This pattern is also seen in withdrawal rates; these falling steadily in the period 2014/15 to 2016/17 for both young and mature students. Withdrawal rates among young students fell from 11.8% to 8.5% and among mature students from 10.8% to 6.3%
- 2.29 Our analysis of degree classification shows that in the period 2014/15 to 2016/17, 60.8% of young students and 55.3% of mature students obtained good honours. However, this gap has been steadily reducing: from 9.9% in 2014/15 to 4.1% in 2015/16 and to 1.5% in 2016/17, with noticeable

improvement in outcomes for mature students.

- 2.30 As stated earlier, DLHE data inevitably lag academic performance data, e.g., progression. For the period 2013/14 to 2015/16, the highly skilled employment of mature students (80.3%) considerably exceeds that of young students (53.8%). The gap has narrowed slightly in this period, from 28.8% in 2013/14 to 26.2% in 2015/16, but remains a significant concern.
- 2.31 Our understanding of highly skilled employment has advanced considerably during 2017/18 as the University has committed more resource to the analysis of DLHE data for all its students. In the University's TEF Year 3 submission, we identified two groups among DLHE respondents: 69.6% being 'career-oriented', and explaining their job choice by citing a career plan, job progression, or broadening of experience; 30.4% being 'opportunistic', citing factors such as levels of pay, paying off debts, job location, or wanting to see if they would like the work. Despite both groups having 100% employment rates, their reasons for taking employment significantly influence their highly skilled employment rates. In the TEF Year 3 period, the highly skilled employment rate for our 'career-oriented' students was a hugely impressive 80%, 79% for full-time, and 84% for part-time, and both figures more than 3% higher than their respective TEF benchmarks. Among this group, we also see evidence of our considerable success in supporting students from diverse backgrounds: BAME students have a highly skilled employment rate of 78%; known disability, 83%; 18-20 year olds, 81%; 25+ year olds, 87%; female, 81%; SEC 4-8, 80%.
- 2.32 However, the 'opportunistic' group in the TEF Year 3 period, even though fully employed, had a disappointing, but perhaps unsurprising highly skilled employment rate of 35%, and lower among some demographic groups: 18-20 year olds 30%; female 34%; known disability 30%; BAME 33%; SEC 4-8 32%.
- 2.33 We trace this difference in part to students' decision-making: the DLHE survey asks students to indicate the principal means by which they found their current job. 23% of 'career-oriented' students relied on professional networking, University contacts, and the University's careers service. Among 'opportunistic' students, this proportion fell to just 12%, relying more heavily on personal contacts, or existing relationships with an employer or agency.
- 2.34 Further analysis by the University illuminates the nature of the challenge we face in relation to highly skilled employment, and especially so for young students. Whilst around two-thirds of our students are 'career-orientated' in making job choices within 6 months of graduation, this figure rises to around 85% of students aged 25 or more, and falls to 57% of students under 25. Female students are more career orientated (69.9%) than male students (59.9%), but these data are skewed by subject choice.
- 2.35 There are complex interactions with other factors. For example, within our DLHE data, non-disabled students are slightly less career orientated, and disabled students slightly more. White students are slightly less career orientated, and BAME students slightly more. We see no obvious effect of parental education – those whose parents entered higher education being as career orientated (67.6%) as those whose parents did not (67.5%).
- 2.36 Entry tariff also seems to play a significant factor. Students entering with prior experience of higher education or on no tariff are much more career orientated (79.4%) than students entering on a tariff (57.5%). Moreover, the level of tariff plays a role: 52.7% of students on a tariff below 160 are career oriented, this figure rising to 56.5% of those on a tariff between 161 and 260, and to 60.8% of those entering on a tariff above 260. Other factors which play a role include subject choice, and many of these factors interact in a way that we still need to understand more fully.
- 2.37 In spite of the challenge of highly skilled employment, we believe that overall Bucks shows a high degree of equality in the performance of young and mature students. We return below to the issue of subject choice, which is a strong influencing factor.
- 2.38 **Sex.** TEF Year 3 contextual data show that 41% of our students are male, and 59% female. The University's internal data show current proportions have changed slightly to 46% male and 54% female.
- 2.39 UCAS data show that fewer applications from 18 year old female applicants receive offers from Bucks (79.5%) than those from male applicants (92.7%). However, once account is taken of predicted grades and subject choice, the University's offer rates are as expected. During 2012 to 2014 these data suggest some evidence that offer rates favoured male over female applicants. It is not possible to say what contributed to these differences from average offer rate, but they had been

eliminated during the period 2015 to 2017, when both male and female offer rates matched the average offer rate exactly.

- 2.40 For all ages, during the period 2012 to 2017, offer rates have steadily improved for applications from male applicants (from 70.5% to 83.7%), but only modestly for those from female applicants (from 54.9% to 56.0%).
- 2.41 The University's internal data confirm this pattern, but also that acceptance rates are higher for female applicants than male applicants. Overall, application to acceptance rates are 18.9% for male applicants and 21.8% for female applicants. These data are heavily influenced by subject choice, however, as discussed later.
- 2.42 Progression rates for both male and female students have steadily improved in the period 2014/15 to 2016/17, by 5.7% to 85.8% for male students and by 2.1% to 88.7% for female students. The gap between female and male students has decreased markedly in this period, from 6.6% in 2014/15, to 3.4% in 2015/16, and to 2.9% in 2016/17.
- 2.43 Withdrawal rates for both male and female students have also steadily improved in this period, reducing by 3.7% to 5.8% for female students, and by 4.1% to 9.4% for male students, with the gap between male and female students also narrowing slightly (from 4.0% to 3.6%).
- 2.44 Good honours degree classifications have improved in the period 2014/15 to 2016/17, by 5.1% to 54.5% for male students and by 2.3% to 61.6% for female students. The gap between female and male good honours rates has narrowed from 9.9% in 2014/15, to 7.1% in 2015/16 and 2016/17.
- 2.45 DLHE survey data show that female graduates have higher levels of highly skilled employment within 6 months of graduation, averaging 69.6% in the period 2013/14 to 2015/16, as opposed to 61.9% for male students. However, these rates are heavily skewed by subject choice, as discussed later, and influenced by the decision-making of our students as discussed in paragraphs 2.31 to 2.35.
- 2.46 **Ethnicity.** TEF Year 3 contextual data confirm the ethnic diversity of our student body, with 59% of students being white, 19% black, and 15% Asian. More recent internal data support this rich ethnic mix: 57% white, 16% black, 17% Asian, 4% mixed, and 7% unknown.
- 2.47 UCAS data show that Bucks' offer rates have increased in the period 2012 to 2017 for all ethnicities. Differences from average offer rates show that Bucks performs as expected given applicants' subject choices and expected grades. For applications from Asian applicants, our offer rate exceeds the average offer rate (by 1.1%), and matches it for white (0.0%) and black (-0.1%) applicants. Internal data support this analysis with offer rates at 69.3% for BAME students and 89.1% for white students, and acceptance rates at 78.6% and 75.7% respectively. Offer and acceptance rates are, however, significantly influenced by subject choice, as discussed later.
- 2.48 Over the period 2014/15 to 2016/17, the gap between BAME and white progression rates has reduced significantly, from 12.0% to 9.7%, with BAME progression levels improving in this period by 4.7% to 81.8%, and white progression improving modestly also 2.4% to 91.5%. While we are pleased to see the progression gap reducing, BAME progression remains a significant concern.
- 2.49 This pattern is mirrored in withdrawal rates, with BAME withdrawal rates falling substantially, from 14.1% in 2014/15 to 8.2% in 2016/17, and white withdrawal rates falling more modestly from 9.2% in 2014/15 to 6.6% in 2016/17. That the withdrawal gap has reduced from 4.9% to 1.6% in this period is pleasing, but again the relatively high BAME withdrawal rate remains a concern.
- 2.50 In the period 2014/15 to 2016/17, the BAME attainment gap at Bucks has reduced markedly, reflecting a rise in BAME attainment and a more modest improvement in white degree outcomes. BAME good honours rates have improved by 5.1% to 49.0%, and white good honours rates have improved by 1.3% to 64.8%. The substantial attainment gap of 19.6% in 2014/15 has reduced to 15.8% in 2016/17. While we are pleased to see significant progress in tackling the BAME attainment gap, we regard this still to be a significant problem and a challenge for the University.
- 2.51 We also observe that the improvement BAME attainment has not been uniform for different ethnic groups. For example, the attainment gap for Asian or Asian British – Indian students has reduced dramatically, from 32.6% in 2014/15 to 0.2% in 2016/17; that for Black or Black British - African has improved only slightly, from 23.1% in 2014/15 to 20.7% in 2016/17.
- 2.52 The University's DLHE data show a similar pattern of BAME improvement, though with one key difference – that BAME highly skilled employment rates have exceeded those for white students

during the period 2014/15 to 2016/17. Nonetheless, as BAME attainment has risen more markedly than white attainment, we observe BAME highly skilled employment rates also rise more than white highly skilled employment – by 1.8% to 68.6% for BAME students, and by 1.0% to 65.6% for white students. The gap between BAME and white students has therefore grown slightly, from 2.2% in 2014/15 to 3.0% in 2016/17.

- 2.53 **Care Leavers.** The University's HESA return for 2016/17 identified 28 students in total categorised as care leavers (approximately 0.5% of the population returned). UCAS advise that many applicants do not tick the box to identify that they have experience of being in public care, and that others tick the box incorrectly. For these reasons, and because of the low numbers of students categorised as care leavers, we attach considerable caution to statistics for this group. Averaging over the past 3 years, progression rates are 84% for care leavers, and 85% for other students; withdrawal rates are 13.3% for care leavers and 12.4% for others; good honours is 46% for care leavers, compared to 57% for others; and highly skilled employment stands at 69.2% for care leavers, and 69.8% for others. The numbers of care leavers are so low, however, that the performance data for just one care leaver would significantly alter this picture: by 2% for progression and withdrawals, and by 8% for good honours and highly skilled employment. Given this, we believe these data are consistent with care leavers at Bucks attaining the same performance standards as other students.
- 2.54 **Nursing.** As previously noted, the University's data are potentially skewed by students' subject choice. As a relatively small provider (6,420 headcount according to TEF Year 3 contextual data³) this effect can be pronounced. Within TEF Year 3, our single largest subject group was pre-registration Nursing, representing 32% of headcount.
- 2.55 As at March 2018, the University's internal data, and including students studying at partner colleges, showed a headcount of 9,712, with pre-registration Nursing still representing a significant 14.5% of these students.
- 2.56 The demographic characteristics of these students influence the University's overall profile significantly. For example, of the University's female students, 22.9% study on these programmes, while just 4.7% of the University's male students study pre-registration Nursing.
- 2.57 Just 7.6% of the University's under 21 population but 22.5% of our 21-25 year olds study pre-registration Nursing.
- 2.58 Even more striking is the way Nursing influences the University's ethnicity profile. 35.4% of our Nursing students are white, compared to 60.2% of our non-Nursing students. Black or Black British – African students make up 30.9% of our Nursing population, but only 9.1% of our non-Nursing students.
- 2.59 We noted earlier that 18 year olds are more likely to receive an offer than mature students, males are more likely to receive an offer than females, and white students are more likely to receive an offer than BAME students. However, these data must be interpreted with caution since they are to be expected given the demographic mix of Nursing and the fact that pre-registration Nursing applicants are less likely to receive an offer than other applicants. For 2017/18 entry, at end of cycle, 20.2% of all Bucks applications were for pre-registration Nursing. 77.4% of non-Nursing applications received an offer, but only 27.1% of Nursing applications did so, reflecting the criteria and approach to admissions specified by the professional body.
- 2.60 **Overall Findings.** In the foregoing analysis of the University's data, we note the following themes in relation to student outcomes:
- Consistent evidence that the University is successfully reducing gaps in access, success and progression
 - High levels of equality in relation to low participation neighbourhoods
 - Striking evidence that on average disabled students are well supported to achieve high levels of success and progression
 - Some modest though inconsistent influences of age on outcomes

³ Note TEF data excludes students at partner colleges who are otherwise included in the data referenced within this plan.

- Consistent evidence that on average females experience better outcomes than males
- Strong and consistent evidence that on average white students experience better outcomes than BAME students

2.61 **Interactions.** We are aware, however, that many of the influences of demographic factors interact. While it is not practicable for us to investigate all possible interactions, the preceding analysis suggests particular interactions which need to be examined further:

- The relationship between Sex and Ethnicity
- The relationship between Sex, Ethnicity and Social Class
- The relationship between Sex, Ethnicity and Age

2.62 Such interactions are highly likely to influence our interpretation of the effects on student outcomes noted earlier, and also the measures the University will put in place to ensure excellent student outcomes are enjoyed by all of its students. As ethnicity appears to be the strongest and most consistent influence on our student outcome data, in the following analysis, these effects are described in terms of the gap between outcomes for White and BAME students and are averaged over the last three years of available data. Positive figures for the gap imply White students have better outcomes.

2.63 **The relationship between Sex and Ethnicity.** While the White-BAME progression gap stands at 9.5%, it reduces to 6.5% for female students and increases to 14.6% for male students. This is shown in Figure 1 and illustrates the interaction, with BAME males having relatively poorer outcomes.

2.64 The White-BAME withdrawal gap stands at 2.1%, reduces to 0.2% for female students and widens to 5.6% for male students. This is shown in Figure 2 with it being clear that it is BAME male students experiencing relatively poorer outcomes.

2.65 THE BAME attainment gap in terms of degree classification (good honours) stands at 15.9%. This reduces slightly to 14.9% for female students, but widens to 19.1% for male students. This is shown in Figure 3; though there is only a slight interaction, again it is BAME male students who have the lowest student outcomes.

2.66 The White-BAME gap in terms of highly skilled employment is negative, -2.5%, and showing that BAME students are more likely to enter highly skilled employment within 6 months of graduation. However, this also interacts with sex as shown in Figure 4, where it appears the interaction derives from the relatively lower student outcomes for BAME male students.

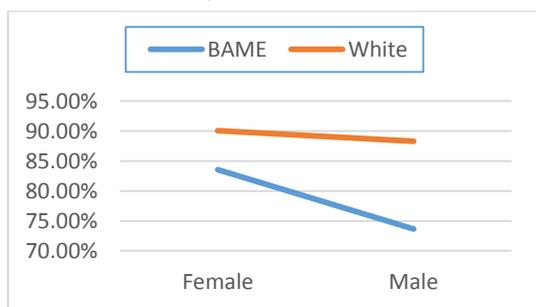


Figure 1. Relationship between Sex and Ethnicity – Progression

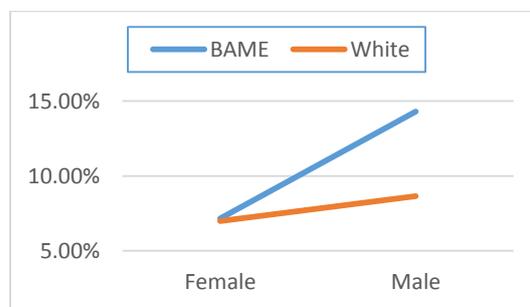


Figure 2. Relationship between Sex and Ethnicity – Withdrawal

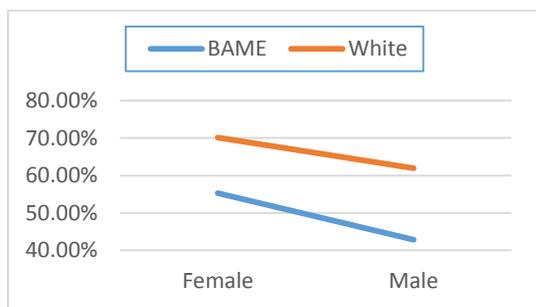


Figure 3. Relationship between Sex and Ethnicity – Good Honours

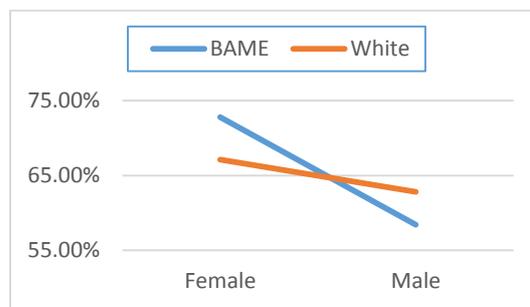


Figure 4. Relationship between Sex and Ethnicity – Highly Skilled Employment

2.67 We have also examined the further interactions of these data with social class, considering whether the overall effect of social class is the same for the four groups defined by sex and ethnicity. Positive figures indicate outcomes for NS-SEC 1-3 are better than those for NS-SEC 4-8.

Table 1. Social Class Gap by Sex and Ethnicity

Sex	Ethnicity	Social Class Gap			
		Progression	Withdrawal	Good Honours	Highly Skilled Employment
Female	BAME	4.9%	-1.3%	-4.6%	5.4%
	White	-0.9%	-0.3%	4.6%	-1.1%
Male	BAME	5.4%	2.2%	-4.7%	3.7%
	White	1.1%	0.4%	6.8%	-2.1%

2.68 The effects of social class are inconsistent. In some cases, most notably withdrawal rates, the effect is very small indeed. In other cases, it is larger, but the relationship with sex and ethnicity is inconsistent. There is not one group that appears to have the poorest outcomes across all sets of data. While this would be consistent with the view that the University generally achieves high outcomes for all its students, we note with concern the finding that BAME male students often emerge with relatively poor outcomes.

2.69 We also examined the effects of age in relation to the interaction between sex and ethnicity. For progression and withdrawal, the effects of age are consistent across all combinations of sex and ethnicity, with mature students having higher progression and lower withdrawal rates. Young and mature male students have similar good honours rates, while younger female students have better good honours rates than mature female students. Our DLHE data show that mature students have higher rates of highly skilled employment than younger students for all combinations of sex and ethnicity.

3 Ambition and strategy

- 3.1 Bucks New University Strategic Plan for 2016-21 sets out an ambitious agenda for the institution to ensure that Bucks is a leading University for professional and creative education and applied research. Student success and consistency in outcomes for students feature throughout the strategy. Bucks is an inclusive learning community and it is our aim to ensure that our courses and services enable success for students from diverse backgrounds.
- 3.2 The University and the Students' Union work together actively to promote equality. We value diversity and inclusivity and want everyone to be treated with respect whoever they are, however they identify, and whatever characteristics they feel are important to their identity. We promote equal opportunity across all the 'protected characteristics' defined in the Equality Act 2010.⁴
- 3.3 This plan is informed by and in turn informs the University's approach to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). Annual EDI objectives are approved by the University's Governance Committee, and cover a range of initiatives in relation to both students and staff. Within learning and teaching, the University's key objective is the development of inclusive practice informed by the University's overall strategic aim of ensuring that University provides for students an inclusive learning community. This objective is pursued principally through the development of the Access and Participation Plan.
- 3.4 The University has an established framework for making equalities impact assessments, and all policies and initiatives are introduced subject to an equalities impact assessment being conducted. Our work in access and participation is overseen by the Access and Participation Group which meets monthly and reports to the University's Education Committee and ultimately Senate and Council. This

⁴ Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at Bucks: <https://bucks.ac.uk/about-us/governance-and-policies/equality-and-diversity>

group is led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and includes representation from the Students' Union, Academic Registry, Directorate for Student Success, Planning and Intelligence, Academic Schools, Student Recruitment, Outreach, Finance and the Vice-Chancellor's Office. The Group is responsible for the development of the University's Access and Participation plan and:

- ensures there is effective consultation with the University community;
- provides ongoing and effective evaluation of the University's initiatives, targets and milestones in widening participation;
- collects and reviews institutional data on widening participation and retention measures, identifying areas of concern, opportunities, and recommended actions;
- makes recommendations to relevant University committees concerning the effectiveness of the University's approach to access, success, progression or financial support; and
- identifies and disseminates within the University features of good practice in relation to access, success, progression and financial support.

3.5 During 2017/18, and building on the University's TEF Year 3 submission, this Group has re-examined the University's widening participation strategy. It has carried out a review of all available data to construct a clear profile of the student population at Bucks, in terms of both demographic make-up and the 'participation indicators' of; opportunity to access higher education; success while at Bucks; and progression into graduate level employment / study. During 2018/19, further evaluation will take place at a more granular level, and there will be a stronger move towards developing evidence-based strategic interventions.

3.6 An underpinning strategic aim relating to the organisational effectiveness of the University is to establish a stronger culture and practice of data usage across the institution. The University is in the process of replacing its Student Record System and intends to bring data together from a range of other systems (as well as adding additional metrics where we feel it will help us meet strategic objectives) to provide actionable insights. The Access and Participation Group will use this to inform decisions about resources and investment, to focus on interventions showing greatest impact, and to personalise the package of support provided to each student.

3.7 The Group is also responsible for ensuring that the programme of actions and interventions undertaken within the context of the plan is fully evaluated and on a rolling annual basis. Our evaluation programme examines each intervention and draws on both quantitative and qualitative evidence to assess its impact. Evaluations are used to design subsequent interventions and enable the group to determine progress in meeting our ambitions and goals. Where possible, evaluations involve comparison between those experiencing the intervention and a 'control' group who do not. To evaluate the impact of our financial support, we will use the financial support evaluation toolkit previously developed by the Office for Fair Access.

3.8 In 2019/20, the University expects to evaluate the following:

- The impact of the University's scholarships and bursaries on retention
- The impact of curriculum interventions on BAME students' attainment
- Impact of outreach activity on progression to higher education among POLAR3 quintiles 1 and 2
- Recruitment initiatives to encourage applications from disabled applicants
- The impact of initiatives to encourage greater engagement with our employability service among BAME students
- Progress against resource plan targets and milestones

3.9 **Strategic Objectives.** Overall, the University's data indicate that we need to target a significant amount of our access and participation work on reducing the attainment and retention gaps for BAME students, and in particular BAME male students.

3.10 Informed by our strategic refresh, the University's overarching strategic objectives in relation to access and participation are informed by our existing high levels of success in relation to access, some striking achievements in student success and, in spite of our accomplishments, an ongoing challenge in relation to progression into highly skilled employment. They are:

- Access
 - To ensure that the University's UCAS offer rates remain closely aligned to UCAS annual

average offer rates for sex, ethnicity and participation of local neighbourhoods.⁵

- Success
 - To ensure that by 2021 all attainment gaps are effectively eliminated.⁶
- Progression
 - To ensure that by 2021, gaps in students' transition rates into highly skilled employment have been effectively eliminated.⁷

3.11 More specific and detailed strategic objectives are outlined in the remainder of this section.

3.12 **Access.** Our data show that Bucks does not face significant challenges to its ability to provide access to higher education for most groups. We recognise that it is important to ensure we maintain our existing high levels of equality in access.

3.13 However, we are eager to increase the representation of disabled students at the University. Building on our record of student success and progression for disabled students, we will be enhancing our access work to reach out to disabled applicants ensuring they are fully informed about the high-quality support offered by the University and further encouraged to apply to Bucks.

3.14 As a University with a regional focus, and a significant mature population, we are concerned by the decline in participation by mature students though heartened by our ability to attract this important demographic segment. We will consider how we can offer more support to mature students, as well as examining the wider sector assessment of this decline more closely.

3.15 Drawing on our existing successes as a widening participation institution, focused on providing opportunities for all, we will develop our strategy by seeking to ensure greater equality of access to even more marginalised groups, especially ones where we feel we can have the greatest impact.

3.16 In our outreach and access work, we will therefore pursue the following three priorities:

- Maintain high levels of equality in relation to access for all groups.
- Adopt a new and ambitious focus on groups where equality may be harder to achieve, working with the following marginalised groups:
 - Military families
 - Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
 - Young carers
- Pursue the more extensive collection of student data in relation to all protected characteristics, ensuring that by 2021 the University can meaningfully interrogate the effectiveness of its approach to access, success and progression for all student groups.

3.17 **Maintaining high levels of equality in relation to Access.** Building on existing successes, we will continue with initiatives to support outreach in primary and secondary education, especially in quintile 1 areas, Headstart and other programmes, such as initiatives to reach out to white, working class males, and our use of the Higher Education Access Tracker.

3.18 We will work to counteract existing disparities in application rates, for example, encouraging more male applicants into our Nursing programmes, more female applicants into our Computing programmes, more ethnic minority applicants into our Performance and Dance programmes, and more white applicants into Social Work.

3.19 The University has recently developed a strategy to offer an additional foundation year for all undergraduate provision, enabling students to enter higher education that would otherwise be prevented by entry tariff or perhaps discouraged by a lack of confidence or pre-requisite academic

⁵ We take close alignment to be within 2% of UCAS average offer rates.

⁶ By elimination, we intend that a 3 year average of relevant data would show any attainment gap to be below 5%. We accept that this threshold could be set differently, but believe this appropriately reflects natural variation in student outcomes and the relatively small size of the institution.

⁷ By elimination, we intend that a 3 year average of relevant data would show any attainment gap to be below 5%.

study skills. The foundation year includes a focus on:

- transition into HE;
- employability and enterprise;
- enquiry based learning; and
- an introduction to the degree subject.

- 3.20 The foundation year offers students the opportunity to; improve academic skills, positioning them well for progression to level 4; gain subject knowledge; and builds a sense of community through mentoring, coaching and personal tutoring. The aim is to enable students to make the right choice of degree course and so enhance chances of future success and progression.
- 3.21 The University seeks also to extend opportunities to enter higher education by its extensive development of apprenticeships, enabling those who favour this form of work-based learning to achieve higher and degree level qualifications. We believe these opportunities are likely to especially support mature learners' entry into higher education.
- 3.22 We understand the challenges care leavers face, and offer additional support⁸ to these students, extending from prior to application stage through to graduation and beyond. This includes additional assistance with applying to Bucks, accommodation, financial advice, access to mentors, and special activities designed for care leavers.
- 3.23 **Working with marginalised groups.** Drawing on the expertise of some of our academic staff who are already engaged with marginalised communities, we will refocus some of our outreach investment towards the following groups which are under-represented in the higher education sector. This will necessitate changes to data collection as some of these indicators are not currently recorded at enrolment. The characteristics and needs of these groups pose new challenges for the sector but offer an opportunity for Bucks to build on it success and adopt a more ambitious approach.
- 3.24 Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities present unique challenges: logistical (transient environment), cultural (parental expectations), social (negativity/bullying), educational (lack of engagement), language, and financial (inability to obtain support).
- 3.25 A 2009 literature review, 'Improving the Outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils'⁹, offers recommendations which include; the need for greater flexibility of, and recognition of GRT culture within the curriculum; the encouragement of greater involvement of Gypsy Traveller parents in supporting their children's learning; increased co-ordination between those working in children's services (in relation to issues affecting GRT children) and those responsible for broader policies; and, the need to involve representatives of GRT communities in any policy developments. A research project led by King's College London¹⁰ made the following recommendations for HEI outreach with GRT communities which will influence the development of our widening participation activity; addressing and eliminating discrimination; encouraging aspiration; early, primary school based intervention and outreach; supporting effective home education; staff training; information, advice and guidance for pupils and families; and, distance learning.
- 3.26 In order to impact a local, yet evident, improvement in these areas, we will utilise existing relationships with local schools, and draw upon the expertise of Bucks staff already working with GRT communities. Rather than introducing a new programme of activity for this group, we will make better connections between existing projects and people, linking this work more clearly to our widening participation strategy and enabling better impact assessment. By putting a bespoke training and

⁸ <https://bucks.ac.uk/students/your-studies/care-leavers>

⁹ Wilkin, A., Derrington C., Foster B. (2009) *Improving the Outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils: Literature Review*. London:DCSF. Available: <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/TGR01/TGR01.pdf> [accessed 15 May. 2018]

¹⁰ Mulcahy E., et al. (2017) *The underrepresentation of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in higher education*. London: King's College. Available: https://cdn.lkmco.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/KINGWIDE_28494_brief_proof2.pdf [accessed 15 May. 2018]

development offer to leaders developing curriculum and policy, and teachers developing academic materials, we hope to be able to demonstrate impact in this arena.

- 3.27 We will also develop our outreach activity to focus on the needs of children of military families. This group faces challenges related to: mobility during childhood and family separation; parental deployment; access to further education provision and student finance; as well as a sense of non-identification and disengagement stemming from a transient upbringing.
- 3.28 A focus on this group draws on our relevant course portfolio and research expertise in military and security themes, as well as our existing offer of distance learning and flexible entry. We are located close to two RAF bases (RAF Halton and RAF High Wycombe) and the schools we already work with may provide an additional opportunity to work with children from military families.
- 3.29 We currently offer specialist support for young carers on a case by case basis. The issues young carers face include: interruptions to study; increased anxiety; lack of sleep; pressure to stay at home (and therefore either avoid progression to HE, or indeed experience difficulties whilst studying); financial pressures due to limitations on parental income; and, a feeling of isolation. We have an existing offer for care leavers¹¹ which lends itself well to meeting these challenges faced by young carers and it is our intention extend this to this group. As well as additional support and advice, it provides a named Bucks contact for each area of the University, providing a good starting point for resources geared towards engaging with young carers.
- 3.30 **Protected Characteristics.** Our historic mission has always been to open the doors of higher education to all who can benefit, regardless of background or circumstance. We passionately believe in equality of opportunity, and in supporting those who may experience disadvantage and hardship. We do not currently collect data relating to all protected characteristics, and there are some challenges to doing so. We will work to resolve these challenges enabling the collection of data in relation to all protected characteristics as soon as possible. Our aim is to ensure that by 2021 the University will be able meaningfully to report on student data in terms of these characteristics, and therefore interrogate the effectiveness of its approach to access, success and progression for all student groups.
- 3.31 **Success.** In the previous section, we noted data demonstrating continuing challenges in ensuring the success of all students. In particular, we believe the student outcomes of male students, BAME students, and especially BAME male students are a cause for concern and represent a challenge to Bucks. We aim to tackle these issues by pursuing a series of strategic objectives. In particular, we aim to:
- reduce and eliminate retention gaps;
 - reduce and eliminate the BAME attainment gap;
 - nurture an academic community to which all students feel they belong; and
 - increase social, cultural and economic capital.
- 3.32 **Reduce and eliminate retention gaps.** The University will move to a more strategic approach to retention, focusing interventions across the student lifecycle, and at key moments of transition into, through and out of higher education.
- 3.33 The Access and Participation Group will lead work to further understand the issues around retention and conduct further work to develop the University's retention action plan. This will identify groups with the highest levels of attrition, and bring together actions (short and medium term) which aim to address their needs. Our current strategy has a focus on interventions around the following key areas for retention:
- Ensuring effective personal tutoring for all students
 - Providing an effective welcome, induction and transition experience
 - Ensuring accurate attendance monitoring and actions to promote attendance and reduce non-attendance

¹¹ Care Leavers, Bucks New University, <https://bucks.ac.uk/students/your-studies/care-leavers>

- Ensuring maximal student return from inter-semester breaks and after interruption of studies
 - Effectively supporting, advising and guiding students when they are at risk of not submitting assessments
 - Ensuring students referred through the Fitness to Study process have engagement plans to keep them in study
- 3.34 Our aim is continuously to enhance and develop this work to include interventions that positively impact on all student groups. As a result of these and similar interventions, as noted earlier, we have already seen the gap for withdrawals between BAME and white students close and the BAME attainment gap reduce.
- 3.35 We intend to operationalise the retention action plan in the following ways:
- Use data to identify at risk groups and implement planned programmes of intervention
 - Further develop the University's Fitness to Study policy to include clearer referral mechanisms and student engagement plans
 - Draw on the University's Attendance & Engagement policy, develop a structured communications plan to encourage students to re-engage, and regular case studies and reports on retention and achievement to school management teams
 - Deliver support through multiple channels with clear communications mechanisms
 - Ensure all students groups, such as mature students, commuting students, or BAME students, are better represented in the University's work
- 3.36 **Reduce and eliminate the BAME attainment gap.** Our data indicate that the widest gaps in terms of successful outcomes are experienced by BAME males. It is our intention to reduce and eliminate these gaps by 2021, focusing especially on the progression rates of BAME male students. We aim also to focus on their good honours rate, specifically examining those subject areas which demonstrate the most significant and consistent attainment gaps. We will develop our understanding of these disparities and draw on best practice across the sector in reducing and eliminating them.
- 3.37 The Access and Participation Group will lead the institution's efforts to:
- identify possible reasons for BAME attainment differentials by further interrogating institutional data at subject, course and module level;
 - work with BAME student representatives, facilitated by the Students' Union;
 - use internal and sector research as an evidence basis;
 - bring additional focus to the use of data from course and student satisfaction surveys; and
 - ensure widening participation indicators are fully reflected in School improvement plans.
- 3.38 The University's new Education Strategy will develop the University's curriculum to challenge and support our students to engage, to persist and to succeed, in their academic studies. The Bucks curriculum will:
- Be enquiry-led and relevant to all students, reflect diversity, use the students' experiences, offer resources which resonate (e.g. reading materials that include BAME perspectives), and promote greater integration of BAME groups.
 - Adopt a universal design approach that involves students in the development of the curriculum. We will develop and embed into the curriculum frameworks for employability, which include work-based learning, placement and study abroad opportunities.
 - Give students the skills to operate in international and cross-cultural contexts. It will embed BAME experiences into the curriculum and pedagogical practice to the benefit of all, and recognise the need and the potential to positively improve not only the experience of BAME students but all students.
 - Encourage students to work with different peers to increase their knowledge acquisition and diversity skills, drawing on educators from different cultural and social backgrounds, and better reflecting the diversity of our student body.
 - Be complemented by student support systems designed to meet the needs of all students, and especially BAME male students. We will examine data relating to attendance at scheduled and ad-hoc workshops to identify gaps in provision, and explore 'out of hours' sessions for students who need them. We will draw on course teams and personal tutors to more robustly signpost

BAME male students to support services such as the University's Learning Development Unit.

- 3.39 **Nurture an academic community to which all students feel they belong.** We will develop cross-institution, inclusive teaching and learning policies and practices designed to help all students to achieve, irrespective of background or ethnicity.
- 3.40 We will build on our existing work, sharing good practice, whilst developing new directions. Through the redevelopment and enhancement of our personal tutoring policy we will set targets for contact time for personal tutoring and develop support and development for personal tutors to enhance coaching skills, as well as pastoral and academic support for students.
- 3.41 We will work to develop more meaningful relationships between staff and students, amongst students, and between those who possess protected characteristics and those who do not.
- 3.42 We will combat feelings of isolation and enhance belonging and connectedness, support the initiatives of the BME Students' Network and increasing support for our BAME student representatives, ambassadors and societies.
- 3.43 We will expand the remit of the multi-faith chaplaincy to ensure all ethnicities are fully supported and included in the development of our participation plans, with particular reference to religious events and cultures.
- 3.44 We will refocus induction arrangements to include: developing resilience; engendering belonging; and developing academic and life skills.
- 3.45 We will help mature students develop a sense of belonging to the Bucks learning community by developing a deeper understanding of how and when they wish to engage with extracurricular activities.
- 3.46 We will build on our work with the National Disability Arts Collection & Archive (NDACA) seeking to find new opportunities to integrate the disability arts movement into learning & teaching and making firm links into our curriculum.
- 3.47 We will ensure all staff undertake enhanced training and development in relation to unconscious bias and stereotypes. We will work with personal tutors to develop and enhance a shared understanding of the issues that bias can create in an academic environment.
- 3.48 **Increased social, cultural and economic capital.** Evidence suggests that targeted financial assistance has impacted positively in facilitating access and supporting retention, engagement and hence academic and employment success. We intend to further analyse evidence of what works with which students in which contexts, to ensure the return on this investment in financial support is maximised. We will refocus our bursary support to target those most in need of financial assistance and target resources where they are most likely to have impact. We will enhance support for those disabled students who are not eligible for DSA funding, building on existing support from our disability, mental health and learning development teams.
- 3.49 We will build on our successful laptop loan initiative to provide more equipment to help students, including those affected by DSA funding changes.
- 3.50 We will redefine the beneficiary criteria for the Bucks hardship fund to provide extra financial help in addition to any monetary support students already receive.
- 3.51 We will maintain and seek to further develop our highly innovative and award-winning (Gold winner in the Green Apple Environment Awards) reuse project designed to assist students throughout their time at Bucks. Set up in 2011 through a partnership between the University's Multi-faith Chaplaincy and Bucks Students' Union, it has so far provided more than 4,500 students with recycled homeware items, including pots, pans, kettles, lamps and clothing. The student services centre also offers a foodbank supported by local businesses and we will aim to develop this still further.
- 3.52 **Progression.** The University's strategic objectives are to further increase the opportunities for all its students to enter highly skilled employment. We will continue to interrogate employability data to understand the complex interactions between demographic factors and subject choice in influencing employment outcomes, particularly for our younger students.
- 3.53 We will examine the outcomes of the University's recent employability initiative — an innovative Postgraduate Certificate in Business Leadership targeted at Bucks graduates — to understand the

benefits this brings and the student groups it supports. We will continue to offer this programme, supported by Vice-Chancellor scholarships where practicable and effective. Similarly, our academic partner Mont Rose College will also look to enhance opportunities for its majority BAME student body by providing research opportunities to students with the formation of the MRC Research Centre.

- 3.54 We will revise, and prioritise the implementation of the University's Placement Learning Policy (incorporating work-based learning, work-related learning and work experience) which will embed a universal offer of high quality work related learning experiences for all students on all programmes.
- 3.55 Both the University and our academic partner, Mont Rose College are working to improve employability with entrepreneur 'dragon's den' style competitions, which encourage students to learn about starting a new business and developing successful business plans.
- 3.56 We will expand our Erasmus programme to support students' employability. We will incorporate wider study abroad opportunities into this programme, and improve the promotion of the scheme.
- 3.57 We will develop and refocus the work of the Careers Service to support all students, and especially those students where data show most support is needed.
- 3.58 Building on the service's 'Career Start' approach, we will work across support and academic teams to develop a more consistent approach to welcoming back level 5 and 6 students and engaging them in career planning. We will explore in more detail the aspirations of BAME students, and examine the extent to which students are career-orientated or opportunistic. We will design and implement programmes to help students develop their sense of career orientation, and enhance their understanding of how they can be more successful in their career and job decision-making.
- 3.59 We will improve our monitoring of the range of services provided by the Student Opportunities and Careers team in order to better map the take-up, and impact, of different offers on BAME students specifically. This will enable enhanced targeting of such provision as mock assessment centres, introduction to study opportunities abroad, our online careers platform, and mentoring.
- 3.60 Our careers service will work directly with academic teams to refine course materials, including embedding our "Welcome in the Workplace" content, which provides material, links and connections in support of all students in accessing their chosen career sector.

4 Access, student success and progression measures

- 4.1 This section details some of the specific measures which we anticipate operating during academic year 2019/20 in support of our strategic objectives.
- 4.2 **Sub contractual arrangements.** Bucks has academic delivery agreements with external providers. This Plan covers students studying a Bucks validated/ franchised programme where the fee is above the basic fee cap. Some of these providers have also published their own Access and Participation Statements:
 - UCFB College of Football Business
 - Global Banking School
 - Mont Rose College
 - Regent College
 - European School of Osteopathy
- 4.3 Although our broader ambition and strategic priorities apply to all students, some specific activities and measures practicably apply only to Bucks New University students. We expect our partners to embed aligned activities and have engaged with them on this.
- 4.4 **Access.** We will continue to offer a Passport Day programme for Year 9 students. Currently, each Friday during term time, a group of 13-14 year olds are invited to campus with their teachers to experience a day in the university environment. The aim of the programme is to raise aspirations and increase awareness with regard to HE options within disadvantaged groups of students. This programme receives fantastic feedback from students and their teachers, and will continue in the next academic year and in 2019/20, being developed according to feedback received.
- 4.5 We are in the initial stages of a establishing a project with a local secondary school which we expect to be operational during 2019/20. We will develop a sustained outreach programme which will work

with a select cohort of arts and sports students, over the course of their GCSE years. Arts and sports have been selected, since these were the weaker areas for GCSE attainment at this school in August 2017. These are areas where we feel we can add academic value, through talks and visits to our specialist arts and sports science facilities.

- 4.6 We will continue to expand the foundation year we have introduced across all undergraduate programmes, as we believe this widens access opportunities for students. We will investigate the impact this programme has on access for all student groups as well as associated student outcomes.
- 4.7 We will continue to develop and expand our apprenticeships offer, believing that this opens up opportunities for students that seek a work-based alternative to traditional higher education.
- 4.8 We will pilot a small outreach programme for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma (GRT) communities who are currently under-represented in further and higher education. Drawing on our academic expertise in migrant communities and our links to GRT networks, we will host an annual conference with expert speakers from Bucks and other institutions, and colleagues from Health and Social Care, Social Work and Education courses. We aim to provide a rich programme of specialist workshops and events complemented by online resources.
- 4.9 We will also offer better and more targeted information, advice and guidance for GRT parents whose children may be considering applying to Bucks.
- 4.10 Using the experience of our ex-military academic staff, we will explore the potential impact of developing a new outreach programme, targeting children of all ages from military families. We will:
 - initiate contact with local primary schools with high numbers of military children with a view to developing a visiting programme;
 - research the potential impact of introducing accommodation bursaries aimed at this group;
 - introduce dedicated webpages for military families, offering targeted advice;
 - introduce the use of a special code for inclusion in the UCAS personal statement; and
 - improve identification, data capture and monitoring/evaluation of military children within the cohorts with whom we already engage.
- 4.11 We will continue our collaborative outreach work with Study Higher (NCOP). Current projects include our core NCOP e-mentoring project; Simulate Your Future; Going for Goals summer school; and other NCOP activity. We will build on the targets set last year and will propose further work from January to July 2019.
- 4.12 We will continue to subscribe to HEAT, the Higher Education Access Tracker and all activity touching the remit of the Student Recruitment team will be input. We will continue to ensure that outreach work offers the right information, advice and guidance to students before they arrive. With improved data collection at the point of entry, we will identify which students have met Bucks staff in a WP outreach capacity, prior to joining the University.
- 4.13 Those positively identified as the 'have experienced outreach' group, will be invited to focus groups and further longitudinal survey throughout their time at Bucks. This will build a picture of the impact our outreach work is having and provide us with rich feedback, upon which we can implement positive changes. Exit questionnaires for these students (whether they have graduated or not) will provide some additional insight into attrition and any causal effect based on previous outreach work.
- 4.14 **Success.** We will continue with our Headstart courses which have been developed specifically to facilitate the transition into higher education by developing academic skills and supporting the transition to university culture. These courses are designed and delivered to encourage WP students to attend, e.g. the four day workshops are offered with accommodation, the one day writing workshops is held on a Saturday for those in work. Historically these programmes consistently receive positive and enthusiastic feedback from attending students.
- 4.15 We will continue with special skills workshops designed for those entering higher education. These are a series of timetabled sessions offered as an enhanced curriculum during the start of the first semester, and include:
 - transition to HE, time management and learning strategies;
 - effective research, reading and note taking;

- referencing and avoiding plagiarism; and
 - academic writing style.
- 4.16 Evaluation of the pilot programme for these workshops shows that the sessions were well attended and that there was strong student agreement with the benefit these sessions aimed to provide. We will continue to learn from student feedback to make sure this programme of workshops is optimised to meet student needs.
- 4.17 We will develop a series of workshops to facilitate transition from level 4 to level 5 recognising that students report this transition provides a challenge and is a point of failure and can lead them to consider withdrawal.
- 4.18 As part of the University's new Education strategy, we will develop and broaden the assessments we use, in order to facilitate learning. Aspects we will introduce include:
- Assignment submission checklist
 - Enhanced feedback to students, including:
 - Choices in feedback mechanisms
 - Feedforward
 - Follow up choices
 - Enhanced Assignment briefs
- 4.19 The University has recognised that for many of our home students, English may not be their first language and as result their English proficiency could be lower than that of an international student who is required to undertake the University's English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programmes.
- 4.20 The University will therefore offer the EAP to all Bucks students, either to undertake prior to commencing their studies or during their first semester of studies. For our current international students, the evidence shows that the EAP programme positively impacts on their achievement and success therefore by extending this offer to all students it is hope that the level of success for all students will rise. We will support our academic partners to offer similar English language tuition opportunities, where they do not already do so.
- 4.21 The induction to Bucks has been designed around the key factors that we know from our data impact on success, e.g. attendance, engagement with the VLE, learning resources and student support services. These induction themes will be expanded to include those issues that impact on the student success for BAME students and those who have experienced a transient upbringing such as GRT children and military children. These will include addressing issues of isolation, belonging and integration.
- 4.22 **Progression.** We will improve our review of wider careers activities, to better understand the impact of different forms of delivery, particularly on our male and BAME students.
- 4.23 We will actively monitor the gap between male (specifically BAME) students' progression into higher skilled employment, and that of other students. We will explore levels of engagement with the careers service and employability initiatives. We will consult with student groups on perceived barriers, and better routes to effective engagement. We will carry out research and develop an evidence base to inform potential interventions to improve progressions for BAME male students.
- 4.24 Our Career Readiness questionnaire will be used consistently with joiners to the University, and re-visited with students as a tool for supporting development of our Bucks Graduate Attributes, and improved graduate employability. We will explore the possibility of using this as a monitoring tool.
- 4.25 We will continue on our trajectory of raising graduate level employment through initiatives such as the Postgraduate Certificate in Business Leadership.

5 Investment

- 5.1 The University continues to attract a high proportion of students from under-represented groups. We intend to invest additional fee income in activities which will reduce the attainment gap and increase retention for those target groups identified in this Plan. The division of APP countable expenditure between outreach, student success and progression activities and targeted financial support is set out below, and totals £5,235,588 (25% of higher fee income or HFI) in 2019/20, the same as

indicated in our 2018/19 resource plan. Since 2018/19, we anticipate an increase in fee income, and an increased investment in targeted financial support. All other investments anticipated in the 2018/19 resource plan are maintained.

- 5.2 **Access.** Based on student recruitment targets being achieved, the amount attributed to outreach work is expected to be £324,047 (1.5% of HFI).
- 5.3 **Success.** Based on student recruitment targets being achieved, the amount attributed to student success is expected to be £3,402,494 (16.3% of HFI). This will cover a range of initiatives and expenditures to improve the persistence and academic attainment of students from target groups. The amount invested in success measures will therefore be the same amount as advised in the 2018/19 resource plan; this does, however, fall as a percentage of HFI due to higher anticipated fee income.
- 5.4 **Progression.** Based on student recruitment targets being achieved, the amount attributed to progression to graduate-level occupations, self-employment and study is expected to be £324,047 (1.5% of HFI).
- 5.5 **Financial Support.** New research and evaluation of the impact of targeted financial support delivered through our Bucks Scholarship Programme (BSP) suggests a positive effect on retention for students from low income households. In response to these early research findings, we have chosen to reinstate this provision of targeted support for 2019-20 entrants, with a total allocation of £100,000. Our Partners have also set aside £865,000 for targeted financial support, explaining an increase in this investment. Together with the £100,000 allocation for 2017-18, this totals £1,065,000 for 2019-20 (and represents 5.7% of HFI). Allocation of these bursaries will be undertaken in accordance with prioritised target groups and tailored to ensure the students are given maximum opportunity and support to succeed. Bursaries will only be targeted at under-represented groups, and allocation criteria will include POLAR3, care leaver status, and disability. We will also consider the use of ethnicity, sex and GRT status to inform our bursary allocations. These bursaries will enable students from these groups to undertake activities which have been identified in this plan or which fit with our ambition and strategy for widening participation. Bursary levels will be based on current practice and our continuing evaluation of the bursary scheme, and up to the value of £1000 per person per academic year. We will continue to evaluate the impact of this programme on retention. In addition to our local research methodology we will also adopt using the toolkit resources that were developed by OFFA to ensure robustness is built into this evaluation and impact analysis.
- 5.6 Bucks intends to continue to make available the Bucks Hardship Fund (BHF) of £120,000 to support students experiencing unexpected financial hardship. Bucks believes that this supports retention and success by providing assistance to individual students experiencing hardship in the form of individual grants or advances up to a limit of £2,000.
- 5.7 **Other Investment.** Bucks prides itself on being a vocational, widening participation University. Much of our investment in curriculum development, technology, teaching, and student services is aimed at supporting students to overcome barriers such as inconsistent prior education, low participation background and low income, and to benefit from a University education. Our investment helps close the gap, so that when students graduate they achieve better employment rates than their entry tariff would have predicted. The University invests £610k annually to fund an innovative approach to student support, the Big Deal, delivered by the University's Students' Union. The Big Deal enables students to participate in a range of activities, including additional study support and advice, free of charge. Independent analysis shows that 885 of students feel the Big Deal positively impacts their employability. Other recent investments include the introduction of a new CRM, a new Student Record System, and a new Placement Management system. These new systems will significantly improve our data collection and data analysis capabilities, allowing us to more easily track the student journey from application to graduation and beyond, and to use demographic data to identify trends. They will directly improve the experience of the individual student, and enable interventions aimed at widening participation to be targeted more precisely. The University's investments also include our active contribution to four NCOP funded projects, totalling £254,000 in 2017/18.

6 Provision of information to students

- 6.1 The Access and Participation Group is responsible for the wider communication of the University's access and participation strategy and the work it involves both to students and to staff.
- 6.2 The group includes representation from the Students' Union and reports to the University's Education Committee.
- 6.3 The University's Access and Participation Plan, once approved, will be placed on the University's public-facing website and made available on the University's intranet.
- 6.4 The University is committed to ensuring that students are aware of, and receive, the financial support they are entitled to. Information for prospective students is available in the Bucks prospectus, the Bucks website and on UCAS profiles. Information on fees and finance also features prominently at Bucks Open Days and trained staff and students are available to answer questions about financial support. Most recently we have changed the format of our Fees and Finance sessions away from scheduled presentations to drop-in sessions offering more individual advice and guidance. This model has proved to be extremely successful and is one which we will continue to offer and refine in accordance with feedback. Our Schools and Colleges Liaison Team delivers presentations and workshops on a regular basis in schools and colleges and other institutions for both students and parents and in accordance with agreed activity programmes. These sessions are supported by fact sheets which are also available as downloads from the Schools and Colleges Liaison section of our website.

Date of preparation: May 2018

* course type not listed.

Full-time and part-time course fee levels for 2019-20 entrants.

Please enter inflationary statement in the free text box below.

We will not increase fees by inflation for 2019/20 entrants in subsequent years of study.

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	Core full-time first degree	£9,250
First degree	Air Transport with Airline Pilot Training	£6,000
First degree	Professional Practice Top-ups	£8,050
First degree	Specialist Practitioner (Health)	£8,750
Foundation degree	Health & Social Care / Computing (UCAV)	£6,000
Foundation degree	Health & Social Care / Early Years (High Wycombe)	£8,050
Foundation year / Year 0		*
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		*
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree	Media and Creative 2 Year	£6,500
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*
Franchise full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	Global Banking School (10042500) - All	£9,250
First degree	Mont Rose College (10023777) - All	£9,250
First degree	UCFB (10043164) - All	£9,250
Foundation year / Year 0	Regent College (RTC Education Ltd) (10008455) - All	£5,500
First degree	Regent College (RTC Education Ltd) (10008455) - All	£7,500
First degree	European School of Osteopathy (10002344) - All	£9,250
Foundation degree		*
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		*
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*
Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	- Business Management	£4,750
First degree	- Psychology	£4,900
First degree	- Aviation Management	£6,900
Foundation degree	- Early Years	£4,650
Foundation degree	- Primary Education	£4,900
Foundation degree	- Kitchen Design	£5,400
Foundation degree	Aylesbury College (10000473) - Early Years	£5,000
Foundation year / Year 0		*
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		*
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*

Table 8 - Targets and milestones

Institution name: Buckinghamshire New University

Institution UKPRN: 10000975

Table 8a - Statistical targets and milestones relating to your applicants, entrants or student body

Reference number	Stage of the lifecycle (drop-down menu)	Main target type (drop-down menu)	Target type (drop-down menu)	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target? (drop-down menu)	Baseline year (drop-down menu)	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
								2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	
T16a_01	Access	Low income background	Other statistic - Low-income backgrounds (please give details in the next column)	Qualifiers for full support against England baseline data, entrants	No	2015-16	36%	40%	41%	41%	42%	42%	Maintain good position in the sector for attracting students from lower income backgrounds, presenting an improving University profile within the life of the agreement and beyond.
T16a_02	Access	Other (please give details in Description column)	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	Qualification on entry - HEFCE derived statistic for risk weighting against England baseline data, entrants	No	2015-16	1.25	1.27	1.28	1.28	1.29	1.29	Maintain higher position in the sector for attracting students from higher and medium risk educational backgrounds, promoting life-long progression from a wide variety of formal and informal pre-HE experience, whilst presenting an improving University profile within the life of the agreement and beyond.
T16a_03	Access	Disabled	Other statistic - Disabled (please give details in the next column)	Students declaring a disability	No	2014-15	11%	12%	12%	13%	14%	-	Maintain the percentage of students who declare a disability and have the opportunity to benefit from reasonable adjustments and additional support in light of the proposed changes to the DSA. This is no longer a key target for Bucks from 2017-18 on-wards.
T16a_04	Access	Socio-economic	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	Participation of under-represented groups in higher education	No	2013-14	41.5%	42.5%	43%	44%	45%	47%	Maintain good position in the sector for attracting students from lower socio-economic groups to include a progressive increase in HESA PI score of 1.5% over a 5-year period. NS-SEC classes 4-7 (Young, full-time, undergraduate entrants) - internally replicated data as discontinued as measure

T16a_05	Student success	Other (please give details in Description column)	HESA T3a - No longer in HE after 1 year (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	Non-continuation of all full-time degree entrants	No	2014-15	8.9%	8.4	8.2	8	7.9%	7.9%	Maintain good position in the sector for retaining full-time first degree entrants to include an improvement in HESA PI score of 0.9% over a 5-year period.
T16a_06	Progression	Other (please give details in Description column)	Other statistic - Progression to employment or further study (please give details in the next column)	Graduate employment progression	No	2014-15	57%	68%	70%	72%	73%	73%	Seeking to move all courses into the 1st or 2nd quartile for graduate employment, through a steady, targeted approach to improving the outcomes for all our students, including those with WP indicators.
T16a_07	Access	Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)	HESA T1a - Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3) (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	Participation of under-represented groups within higher education	No	2014-15	11.7%	12.3%	12.5%	12.5%	13%	13%	Maintain a good position in the sector for attracting students from lower socio-economic groups to include a progressive increase in HESA PI score of 1.6% over a 5-year period.
T16a_08	Student success	White economically disadvantaged males	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	White Working Class Male - Full-time students achieving a higher (1st or 2.1) degree outcome.	No	2014-15	36%	45%	47%	48%	49%	49%	Increase the percentage of FT White Working Class Males (defined as White, Male and POLAR 3 Quintile 1) achieving a higher (1st or 2.1). Target set to raise attainment profile to that of peers over a five year period.
T16a_09	Success	Ethnicity	Other statistic - Ethnicity (please give details in the next column)	Eliminate gap between White and BAME good honours	No	2017-18	15.9%	12%	9%	<5%	<5%	<5%	Ensure that by 2021, 3 year average of data to show any attainment gap to be below 5%)
T16a_10	Success	Ethnicity	Other statistic - Gender (please give details in the next column)	Eliminate gap between White and BAME male retention	No	2017-18	5.7%	<5%	<5%	<5%	<5%	<5%	Ensure that by 2021, 3 year average of data to show any attainment gap to be below 5%)
T16a_11	Progression	Ethnicity	Other statistic - Gender (please give details in the next column)	Eliminate gap between White and BAME male graduate employment/ further study	No	2017-18	4.4%	<5%	<5%	<5%	<5%	<5%	Ensure that by 2021, 3 year average of data to show any attainment gap to be maintained below 5%)
T16a_12	Success	Ethnicity	Other statistic - Ethnicity (please give details in the next column)	Eliminate gap between White and BAME male progression	No	2017-18	14.6%	10%	<5%	<5%	<5%	<5%	Ensure that by 2021, 3 year average of data to show any attainment gap to be below 5%)

Table 8b - Other milestones and targets.

Reference Number	Select stage of the lifecycle	Main target type (drop-down menu)	Target type (drop-down menu)	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
								2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	
T16b_01	Access	Other (please give details in Description column)	Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Long-term Outreach Target. Percentage of Bucks New Outreach eligible Partnerships which have progressed into HE	No	2014-15	36%	42%	44%	48%	49%	49%	Using HEAT database we are able to understand about those students we have engaged with in all outreach activities, which go onto Higher Education. Ultimately, we wish to demonstrate the impact of our outreach by showing progression and have that progression reach a level higher than the national average.
T16b_02	Access	Other (please give details in Description column)	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Percentage of Study Higher targets schools engaged with by the partnership	Yes	2015-16	63%	80%	83%	86%	88%	88%	This is a collaborative outreach target agreed by all Study Higher partners, the goal of which is to reach an increasing proportion of targeted schools with the activities offered through the collaborative partnership.
T16b_03	Access	Other (please give details in Description column)	Strategic partnerships (eg formal relationships with schools/colleges/employers)	To support access to Bucks New Uni and HE more broadly, we will increase our strategic partnerships with schools and colleges, providing an increased and more structured, holistic, support package, with the aim of raising aspirations and easing transition into HE. This will be reported on annually using internal data.	No	2015-16	10	25 (+150%)	35 (+250%)	50 (+400%)	50 (+400%)	50 (+400%)	Number of progression agreements in place for partner schools and colleges.
T16b_04	Access	White economically disadvantaged males	Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Bucks are the lead NCOP partner for this project. The project is aimed at using football as an activity that engages white working class boys in thinking about future options. They will be encouraged to think about career opportunities relating to football, sport in general and beyond that to a wider range of options that might have a strong sporting component (such as in the leisure industry).	Yes	2016-17	10%	13%	14% (Project ends in Dec 2018 - target if extended)	15% (Project ends in Dec 2018 - target if extended)	17% (Project ends in Dec 2018 - target if extended)	-	NCOP bid - Going For Goals - aims to increase percentage of white, working class, male, students engaged in the project who go on to HE. (Target baseline of 10% based on current national average - as per OFFA guidance for developing the access agreement 2017/18 - BIS 2015 reference. Yearly milestones based on projection of students engaged in the project progressing to HE - stats to be confirmed by NCOP HEAT) This is an area which Bucks also aims to improve on as an institution, following a decline (in percentage of UG population = white, working class male) in recent years: 2014/15: 2.19% 2015/16: 1.97% 2016/17: 1.85%

T16b_05	Access	Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	POLAR3 (Quintiles 1 and 2) progression to HE (to be evaluated via HEAT, based on students who have progressed to HE after at least one interaction / engagement with Bucks outreach)	No	2016-17	21%	21.5%	22%	22.5%	23%	23%	<p>Internal data from the Planning team shows a decline over the past three years, as follows:</p> <p>2014/15: 21.57% 2015/16: 21.54% 2016/17: 21.09%</p> <p>We aim to stabilise this downturn and push towards an upwards trajectory, though our general WP activity with schools and colleges.</p>
T16b_06	Access	State school	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Attainment raising project with Cressex Community School	Yes	2017-18	not available	Upward trajectory in grade assessments of cohort of 30	Upward trajectory in grade assessments of cohort of 30	Upward trajectory in grade assessments of cohort of 30	PROGRESSION Upward trajectory in grade assessments of cohort of 30	PROGRESSION Upward trajectory in grade assessments of cohort of 30	<p>This project commences in October 2017 and will be in place over the next five years. This will involve an intensive project with Year 7s which will track through their school and college journey.</p> <p>Targeting pupils from lower socio-economic groups and working in close collaboration with school to optimise interventions. Further detail will be developed during late 2017 - early 2018. Subject to agreement, we aim to use a 'control group' methodology to give us a stronger feel for the impact of the interventions</p> <p>The above is subject to agreement with the Cressex Community School Governing Body.</p>

Optional commentary on milestones.
This box is character-limited to 1000 characters; however, we are happy for you to upload additional 'supporting information' as a separate Word/pdf document.

