



2019-20 access and participation plan monitoring

Provider impact report

This impact report summarises the progress made by Birmingham City University against targets, objectives and written commitments set out in its 2019-20 access and participation plan. This document is a summary of information submitted by the provider to the OfS. This document is a self-report by the provider only and does not indicate any OfS assessment of compliance.

1. Ambition and strategy

Birmingham City University's ambition and strategy as detailed in the 2019-20 access and participation plan:

Birmingham City University recognises that the decision to enter higher education is a life-changing one. However, for some of our prospective and current students, the decision is a harder one to make because of their personal circumstances. The UK Government, working with Higher Education Institutions, aims to minimise or remove the barriers to under-represented or disadvantaged students attending university and succeeding once there.

At Birmingham City University, we aim to widen participation and support success in higher education, in particular for students who:

- Have a low household income (as measured through IDACI, especially those from quintiles 1 and 2);
- Have a disability;
- Are from an ethnic minority;
- Are from an area with comparatively low participation in higher education (Low Participation Neighbourhoods); or
- Are highlighted by the Government as being from another under-represented group, such as care-leavers.

The ways in which we do this are split into three main areas:

1. **Access:** raising attainment and aspiration; primarily in schools and colleges, to enable young people to believe they can enter higher education. Working with identified schools and colleges who have learners at risk of achieving well at GCSE but not accessing HE, in particular those with high numbers of POLAR 4, Quintile 1 learners and first in family to HE. Our HESA data shows that our full-time undergraduate population is extremely diverse, with 45% of entrants coming from the most income deprived neighbourhoods (IMD Q1) in England and 57% of all entrants from a variety of ethnic minority backgrounds. In terms of intersection of ethnicity and disadvantage we recruit black and Asian students predominantly from IMD Q1 neighbourhoods at 60% and 50% respectively compared to white at 15% IMD Q1.

2. Success: supporting students to complete their degree and achieve the best degree classification they can and working to ensure that all students, whatever their personal circumstances, are able to gain the maximum benefit from their time at the University.
3. Progression: enabling our students and graduates to achieve their desired goals upon completion of their course, whether entering higher skilled employment or going on to further study.

2. Self-assessment of targets

The tables that follow provide a self-assessment by Birmingham City University of progress against the targets approved in its 2019-20 access and participation plan.

Please note the tables contain only a summary of target milestones approved in 2019-20 access and participation plans. Full information can be found in **Table 8a – statistical targets and milestones** and **Table 8b – Other milestones and targets** of Birmingham City University's 2019-20 [access and participation plan](#).

Any optional commentary provided against the targets is given in [Annex B](#).

Statistical targets and milestones

Reference Number (lifecycle stage)	Description	Baseline year	Baseline data	2018-19 milestone	2019-20 milestone	Units of target	Comparison year	Actual performance in comparison year	Target self-assessment
T16a_01 (Student success)	Full-time first degree entrants projected for neither award or transfer	2014-15	10.7%	9.7%	9.4%	Percentage	2019-20	11.4	Limited progress
T16a_02 (Progression)	Full-time first degree entrants projected to achieve a degree	2014-15	79.1%	81%	81.5%	Percentage	2019-20	78.1	Limited progress
T16a_03 (Access)	Full-time all undergraduate entrants declaring a disability, as captured through HESA Student Record	2014-15	1651	1950	2025	Headcount	2019-20	2429	Expected progress
T16a_04 (Success)	Improvement in progression from Year 1 to Year 2 for students entering with pre-entry BTEC qualifications	2016-17	70%	72%	74%	Percentage	2019-20	83	Expected progress
T16a_05 (Success)	Improvement in retention following year of entry for students from black or minority ethnic backgrounds	2015-16	84.7%	86%	87%	Percentage	2019-20	87	Expected progress
T16a_06 (Success)	Reduction in BME good honours attainment gap - percentage point difference between BME and white students	2016-17	12%	10%	9%	Percentage	2019-20	13	Limited progress
T16a_07 (Progression)	Increase in rates of transition from UG to PGT study for BME students	2016-17	14.3%	16%	18%	Percentage	2018-19	18	Expected progress

Other milestones and targets

Reference Number (lifecycle stage)	Description	Baseline year	Baseline data	2018-19 milestone	2019-20 milestone	Units of target	Comparison year	Actual performance in comparison year	Target self-assessment
T16b_01 (Access)	Number of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds engaged in intensive activity with collaborative partnership using a basket of indicators	Other (please give details in Description column)	500	1000	1000	Headcount	2019-20	11362	Expected progress
T16b_02 (Access)	Proportion of engaged young people from disadvantaged backgrounds attaining 5 x GCSE A* to C inc. English and Maths (or Attainment 8 equivalent) is greater than local average for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, using a basket of indicators	2013-14	FSM 60.2% (regional baseline 36.2%)	25% above baseline	25% above baseline	Percentage points	2019-20	32	Expected progress
T16b_03 (Access)	Proportion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in intensive activity target group entering HE and retained for 6 months is greater than local average for YP from disadvantaged backgrounds, using a basket of indicators	2013-14	FSM 31.6% (regional baseline 22%). POLAR3 Q1 40.0% (regional baseline 12.4%)	10% above baseline	10% above baseline	Percentage points	2019-20	0	Expected progress

3. Investment commitments

3.1. Access and participation investment for the last audited year

Please note that some differences in predicted vs actual spend may be due to reporting differences between academic and financial years.

Financial year	2019-20		
	Predicted spend (£)	Actual spend (£)	Difference (ppt)
Access investment	£1,300,000.00	£1,320,000.00	2%
Financial Support	£50,000.00	£236,000.00	372%

4. Action plan

Where progress was less than expected Birmingham City University has made the following commitments to increase the rate of progress against their targets.

Reference Number	Steps that will be taken in the future to make expected progress against target

T16a_01	<p>There are no plans to focus any specific further activities on these targets as the new 20/25 APP does not contain these targets directly. However, the planned actions within our 20/25 APP should see further improvement as we close the gaps around continuation (student success) which will indirectly improve the projected outcomes of future cohorts. Some examples of student success related activities can be seen below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The Educational Development service have two areas of activity to support student success:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. The Centre for Academic Success (CAS) provides academic writing, study skills, maths and English for Academic Purposes support with additional targeted support and coaching for students retaking their first year of study. The University's new Digital Assessment Centre (DAC), developed and managed by CAS, plans further developments that will target students within our target groups who miss a scheduled exam to offer a full cycle of assessment. In addition, it will facilitate all exams by computer to promote inclusive assessment by 2020/21.b. Graduate+ has developed from an extra-curricular awards framework (skills development and volunteering) to that of a co-curricular offer where it has become embedded within the curriculum. Graduate +complements the diversity of the student offer by its mix of focusing on student engagement, retention and employability through a community engagement approach. Further developments include a completely digital offer including Graduate+ On-Demand which has been designed to capture the broad range of workshops which can be accessed later via the ongoing resource portal.2. The previous integration of Academic Quality with Disability Services (Inclusion) to embed reasonable adjustments into curriculum refresh (reporting to PVC Learning & Teaching) so that the new 20/25 Inclusive Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy will reduce the need for adjustments by being more anticipatory. The benefits of this organisational and thematic change have already been seen in the impact of more inclusive assessments for 2019-20.3. New timetabling and attendance monitoring system introduced in September 2020 is overseen by new student engagement team, located in Academic Registry. This team take the lead in monitoring student success and work very closely with the Student Governance, Mental Health and Wellbeing Team; to create more student-centred monitoring of the student journey and thereby enable earlier intervention to ensure student success. Both teams mentioned above report directly to the DVC Academic.
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T16a_02	<p>There are no plans to focus any specific further activities on these targets as the new 20/25 APP does not contain these targets directly. However, the planned actions within our 20/25 APP should see further improvement as we close the gaps around continuation (student success) which will indirectly improve the projected outcomes of future cohorts. Some examples of student success related activities can be seen below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Educational Development service have two areas of activity to support student success: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Centre for Academic Success (CAS) provides academic writing, study skills, maths and English for Academic Purposes support with additional targeted support and coaching for students retaking their first year of study. The University's new Digital Assessment Centre (DAC), developed and managed by CAS, plans further developments that will target students within our target groups who miss a scheduled exam to offer a full cycle of assessment. In addition, it will facilitate all exams by computer to promote inclusive assessment by 2020/21. b. Graduate+ has developed from an extra-curricular awards framework (skills development and volunteering) to that of a co-curricular offer where it has become embedded within the curriculum. Graduate +complements the diversity of the student offer by its mix of focusing on student engagement, retention and employability through a community engagement approach. Further developments include a completely digital offer including Graduate+ On-Demand which has been designed to capture the broad range of workshops which can be accessed later via the ongoing resource portal. 2. The previous integration of Academic Quality with Disability Services (Inclusion) to embed reasonable adjustments into curriculum refresh (reporting to PVC Learning & Teaching) so that the new 20/25 Inclusive Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy will reduce the need for adjustments by being more anticipatory. The benefits of this organisational and thematic change have already been seen in the impact of more inclusive assessments for 2019-20. 3. New timetabling and attendance monitoring system introduced in September 2020 is overseen by new student engagement team, located in Academic Registry. This team take the lead in monitoring student success and work very closely with the Student Governance, Mental Health and Wellbeing Team; to create more student-centred monitoring of the student journey and thereby enable earlier intervention to ensure student success. Both teams mentioned above report directly to the DVC Academic.
T16a_06	<p>Two key additional activities have been planned to tackle digital hardship and therefore get us back on track with further closing the awarding gap:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A digital hardship fund was created during 20-21 which secured an additional 1,800 laptops targeted to students with a family income of less than £30,000 is given a laptop for life 2. The EDI Strategy and Black Lives Matter Antiracist Commitment Plan covers additional measures that will be taken to reduce the attainment gap.

5. Confirmation

Birmingham City University confirms that:

Student engagement	
Have you worked with your students to help them complete the access and participation plan monitoring student submission?	
Yes	
Have you engaged with your student body in the design, evaluation, and monitoring of the plan?	
Yes	
Verification and sign off	
Birmingham City University has confirmed that the information included in this impact report is accurate, that it has been compiled in line with OfS guidance, and that it is being submitted on behalf of the governing body of the provider.	
Yes	
Accountable officer sign off	
Name	Professor Philip Plowden
Position	Vice Chancellor

Annex A: Commentary on progress against targets

Birmingham City University's commentary where progress against targets was less than expected.

Target reference number: T16a_01
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
<p>The 2019/20 published data relates to students who started in 2017/18 and does not reflect the outcome of the 19/20 activity set out below. The two-year data lag makes it extremely difficult to report on the impact of 19/20 activity, the only metric available at the present time that we can provide as evidence is the full-time first-degree entrant continuation rate, which looks at the proportion of entrants that continue their study at the same level at the same provider; shown as 88.7%, a 1.9% improvement for students who started in 19/20 compared to those that started in 17/18. In terms of retention across all years of study our internal data shows great progress in student retention, as evidenced by our annual in year academic fail withdrawals which have reduced in volume from 773 students in 2015/16 to 169 in 2019/20.</p> <p>A range of activities were delivered as planned to improve our non-continuation rates, including the following highlights:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A fundamental review of our academic regulations to ensure that we maintain our academic standards without disadvantaging our students. As a result of the review, we implemented changes to the academic regulations in 2017/18 and based them on a set of principles to ensure all students have a sit and resit (if <30% no resit was allowed), we allowed 20cr of trailed credit and permitted in year credit retrieval. 2. Increasing our portfolio of foundation year zero provision to better support students with the potential, but not the academic qualifications, to succeed. As a result, every UG course now has a foundation level entry point and contact time set at 20 hours minimum per week, we now have 82.8% progression rates from FY to Y1 for those who commenced in 2019/20 previously we had 60% progression for those who commenced foundation study in 2016/17. 3. Creating a stronger learning community through our Graduate + programme. Graduate+ has now completed four years of operation, since inception in 2016. During this time, the programme has developed from an extra-curricular awards framework (skills development and volunteering) to that of a co-curricular offer where it has become embedded within the curriculum. 4. Targeted investment in support of students' mental health and wellbeing; where we appointed a full-time community psychiatric nurse on secondment from our local NHS Trust, with a ring-fenced annual budget of £300,000 to allocate according to a clear evidence base. As a result, BCU redesigned its service to put the disability and quality teams together as 'Quality Enhancement & Inclusion' and to establish a separate wellbeing and mental health service. The wellbeing and mental health service has doubled in size over the past 18 months by appointing to 9 new posts and a full-time NHS Community Psychiatric nurse (now in the 3rd year of secondment to this post.) We have established an assessment and triage system which enables faster access to services with counselling appointments available within two weeks of presentation, with emergency cases managed by our university and NHS teams working in partnership.
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
<p>We progressed a number of additional activities to further improve non-continuation rates, including:</p>

1. Set-up of a new Digital Assessment Centre (DAC) in September 2019 to run simulated assessments for practice purposes. The DAC enabled us to deliver 5171 student exams during the academic year with a further 1300 remote exams during lockdown and over the summer period. Additionally, the team was able to support the remote delivery of more than 2500 GCSE equivalency tests during the summer.
2. Worked with college partners to support the transition to higher education for vocational / BTEC qualification holders
3. Student life coaches support students who are repeating a year and/or completing resits with improved retention. This has resulted in 165 level 4 students who took up the life coach offer, to support them through a repeat year, with 82% progressing into level 5.
4. A review of the academic misconduct policy which had a significant impact on student continuation; for example, previously our plagiarism penalties recorded a zero for a second misconduct case, including the smallest failure to reference the source. We now teach students good academic practice and apply proportionate penalties for errors.
5. Enhancing the role of the Student Success Advisors by the roll out of the university assistant mobile phone application; enabling temperature 'Check In' surveys, in which we specifically addressed questions of student preparedness and barriers to achievement in relation to COVID-19.

Target reference number: T16a_02

How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?

We had set ambitious targets above the sector average/benchmark and met our commitments during the academic year; however, the published data relates to the 17/18 entrants and does not reflect the impact of the 19/20 action plan, due to HESA lagged data reporting. There has been an improvement in continuation for new entrants of 1.9% and an improved in year academic fail withdrawals which have reduced from 773 students in 2015/16 to 169 in 2019/20. Therefore, we are confident that when the 19/20 data is published it will evidence the positive progress made.

A range of activities were delivered as planned to improve our non-continuation rates, including the following highlights:

1. A fundamental review of our academic regulations to ensure that we maintain our academic standards without disadvantaging our students.
2. Increasing our portfolio of foundation year zero provision to better support students with the potential, but not the academic qualifications, to succeed.
3. Creating a stronger learning community through our Graduate + programme. Graduate+ has now completed four years of operation, since inception in 2016.
4. Targeted investment in support of students' mental health and wellbeing; where we appointed a full-time community psychiatric nurse on secondment from our local NHS Trust, with a ring-fenced annual budget of £300,000 to allocate according to a clear evidence base.

Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?

We progressed a number of additional activities to further improve non-continuation rates, including :

1. Set-up of a new Digital Assessment Centre (DAC) in September 2019 to run

- simulated assessments for practice purposes.
2. Worked with college partners to support the transition to higher education for vocational / BTEC qualification holders
 3. Student life coaches support students who are repeating a year and/or completing resits with improved retention.
 4. A review of the academic misconduct policy which had a significant impact on student continuation
 5. Enhancing the role of the Student Success Advisors by the roll out of the university assistant mobile phone application

Target reference number: T16a_06

How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?

The BAME and white attainment gap has significantly narrowed over recent years and reduced further for the 2018/19 qualifier cohort to a gap of 10%, however this trend of improvement was lost in 2019/20 which we believe was impacted by the COVID-19 national lockdown in March 2020. The impact on students' part-time employment combined with the campus closure has had a disproportionate impact on poverty suffered by our BAME students. The profile of our leavers cohort in 2019/20 shows that for graduates from BAME backgrounds, 57% live in the most deprived neighbourhoods in England (IMD quintile 1) compared to just 16% for white graduates.

Please see below the commitments we have met for this target:

1. The Graduate+ initiative, which aim to align student personal development, employability and belonging. Through initial participation in activities such as Welcome Week, students make connections with staff and students (personal tutors, Library induction) across the university that receive recognition through the framework. Once students become connected, Graduate+ starts to explore their sense of purpose and how we can help them engage with the resources to achieve that. In the first two years of operation, over 9000 students registered for this extra-curricular award. Early evaluative data suggests that a significantly higher proportion of BME students and students with a disability access the programme than might be expected given the institutional demographic.
2. The next phase of Graduate+ is to engage with Birmingham's local communities. Over 70% of our students are commuters and live across Birmingham (source: HEPI). Through engagement with organisations and activities in their local environments, we have supported these students and shown the relevance of their university experience to diverse communities.
3. Successful initiatives in Student Mentoring (39 student engagement projects funded in 2017-18) have been embedded across the institution. There is a specific focus on this call for projects on how we address all barriers to learning. This has seen student led projects on issues around being a commuter student, disability, and issues around BME attainment at university and beyond graduation.
4. Joint work with Birmingham City University Students' Union (BCUSU) seeking fuller roles for students in all aspects of curriculum design and delivery including through the Student Academic Partners programme, where students and staff worked together to identify and resolve student experience issues.

Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?

The following additional activities have taken place in support of closing the awarding gap:

1. The university made a fixed term (18 months) appointment of a black female professor of Access and Participation in November 2019; to develop, design, co-ordinate and promote a range of interventions in support of closing the attainment gap; the following activities took place under this appointment:

a. A number of logic models were created to address the attainment gap which outlined a suite of potential interventions for faculties to consider adopting; a number of these interventions are now currently underway.

b. Conducted a BAME Student Voice research project which involved 1:1 interviews with 39 BAME students with the aim of understanding their experiences and identify all barriers to BAME student success at BCU. The report made a number of recommendations which would support closing the BAME attainment gap.

c. BCU have adopted the 'value added' measure which is a sector recognised indicator used to monitor attainment gaps that control for known factors that influence outcomes, such as subject area of award and prior entry qualifications.

2. Improving the timely access to and sight of performance gap data; which is enabling discussions and decisions to be made at a local department (school) level around gaps within the annual course monitoring review processes.

Annex B: Optional commentary on targets

Birmingham City University's commentary on any of the targets listed in [Section 2](#).

Reference Number	Optional commentary
T16a_01	
T16a_02	PLEASE NOTE: The narrative is expected to be similar to that of target T16a_01
T16a_03	PLEASE NOTE: The target milestones relates to all fulltime students inclusive of entrants.
T16a_04	
T16a_05	
T16a_06	
T16a_07	PLEASE NOTE: the actual performance in selected comparison year is 17.6%, however, this has been rounded to 18% as the actual is embargoed at present.
T16b_01	
T16b_02	The external data source is no longer available and had previously tracked all students who moved across England. The actual data set used was sourced within the West Midlands region. Therefore, the 32% actual performance reflects local data only and could be higher if we were able to track beyond the West Midlands.
T16b_03	NS-SEC measure has been removed by HESA and is no longer reported.