

Yeovil College

Access and Participation Plan

2020-21 to 2024-25

Yeovil College University Centre is a small HE provider based within a medium-sized Further Education College in South Somerset. Our higher education portfolio is designed to serve the needs of our students and local community, remaining responsive to the local and regional landscape. We pride ourselves on the high quality of pastoral care and personalised learning support that all of our staff provide to our learners and take a whole-institutional approach to access and participation. The principle of ensuring anyone with potential and desire is able to access, succeed in and progress from higher education is closely aligned to our mission 'to maximise potential for all' and five core values:

- Creating a learner centred environment.
- Having uncompromising ambition for our learners.
- Valuing, respecting and providing opportunities for all.
- Proactively and positively collaborating with our local community and employers.
- Being flexible, innovative and forward thinking.

We work alongside Pearson, the University of Gloucestershire and the University of Plymouth to deliver a mixture of HNC, HND, CertHE, Foundation Degree and Bachelor's Degree (Hons) provision. We also offer a growing range of higher and degree apprenticeships, offering the opportunity for individuals to undertake HE study alongside developing their work-based skills and knowledge with the support of their employer. The majority of our provision is validated, with a small number of franchised courses available. This range of provision, with an emphasis upon Level 4 and Level 5 courses, including Higher Technical Qualifications, is part of our institutional commitment to delivering flexible HE that works for real people with real lives – giving learners the option to study in smaller 'chunks', and to choose a level of programme and a mode of study that works best for them.

We are committed to ensuring that anyone with potential and a desire to study is able to access, succeed in and progress from our higher education courses. As a small provider with a core institutional value of 'being flexible, innovative and forward thinking', we remain agile and responsive, readily changing the way that we organise our higher education provision if it is in the best interest of the student, and especially if it allows those from the most underrepresented groups to thrive and succeed. In our access and participation work, we do not solely focus on outreach or support mechanisms to help students overcome barriers, whether perceived or real. Our first step is always to consider whether we can remove a barrier, wholly or partially. An example of our success with this bold approach to widening participation is having reimaged the structure of our courses so that the vast majority are now taught in a condensed way over one or two days or evenings per week, making higher education incredibly accessible to those who are balancing study with work, childcare, or other commitments.

The preparation of this Plan coincides with a period of strategic change and development for the College, with the appointment of a new principal and our successful bid to become part of an Institute of Technology. We have also appointed a new Higher Education Manager, who prior to holding this post worked within our local NCOP consortium, and therefore brings to this role valuable experience of working in an evidence-informed and research-led widening participation environment.

1. Assessment of performance

Owing to our small cohort sizes, it is not possible to provide data from Yeovil College for all areas of this assessment of performance. In situations where using provider-specific data would make individual students identifiable or result in unreliable analysis, we have instead focussed upon academic research,

national datasets and regional contextual information. Where provider-specific data is used, it cannot be considered statistically significant due to small sample sizes. Despite this, we have included primary data where it presents trends that are worthy of note, especially when considered alongside other sources.

As our HE students are undertaking a combination of HNC, HND, Foundation Degree and Bachelor's Degree qualifications, direct comparisons of student achievement across cohorts is not possible. For the purposes of this Access and Participation Plan, we have decided to include students achieving 'Merit' or 'Distinction' in HNC, HND or Foundation Degree courses alongside students achieving a first or upper second class Bachelor's Degrees when considering our 'high attaining' students.

Historically, information around student progression has been collated anonymously on a college or faculty-wide level, and has also been discussed and documented on an individual level within subject areas. This has allowed for both identification of top-level trends across college, and rich and meaningful support for students from those staff members who know them best and have expertise within a relevant field. However, it does mean that individualised data has not been collated in a way that is conducive to robust data analysis of progression for underrepresented groups. Considering this historical limitation of our data collection alongside the introduction of the Graduate Outcomes Survey, which necessitates changes to measures of continuation and progression, has allowed us to rethink our approach to collecting and tracking destination data. Significant work by the College's Quality Assurance and Management Information Systems teams means that moving forwards we will be able to collate and analyse intended and actual destination data for the ten currently underrepresented student groups in the central Student Records System. This will also allow for meaningful data analysis both dynamically throughout the year, and at identified reporting points.

1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

Access

When using the IMD measure, we have identified that our averaged full-time access rates 15/16 – 17/18 are broadly in line with the 2015 IMD rankings from our LSOA of South Somerset and the neighbouring LSOAs of North Dorset, West Dorset, Mendip, Taunton Deane and Sedgemoor. The vast majority of students at Yeovil College live within Yeovil or the surrounding area. Therefore, the IMD makeup of our full-time HE students is very closely representative of the local area there does not seem to be a gap in access here.

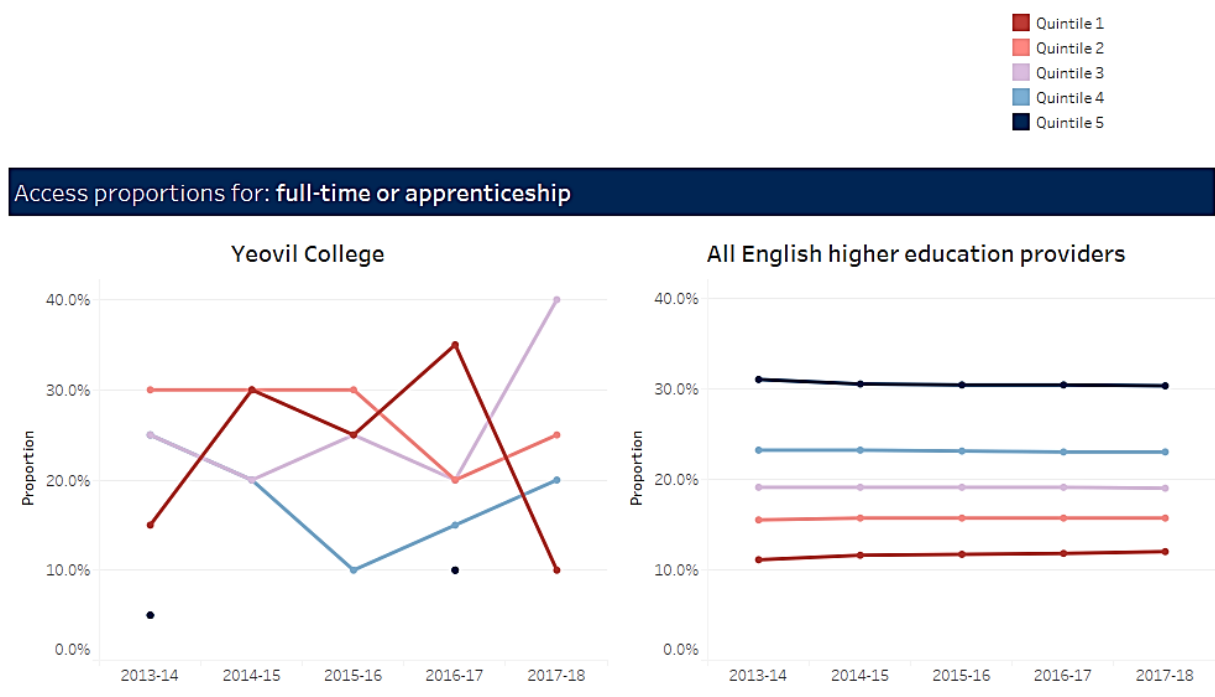
	3 yr 'Access' average from OfS' Data Dashboard <i>FT students 15/16 – 17/18</i>	2015 IMD quintiles for South Somerset and the 5 neighbouring LSOAs ¹
IMD Q1	6% (4% / 7% / 7%)	6%
IMD Q2	Suppressed in some years due to small numbers.	13%
IMD Q3	38% (37% / 38% / 40%)	36%
IMD Q4	31% (31% / 26% / 36%)	29%
IMD Q5	14% (19% / 8% / 14%)	15%

For this reason, and also to better align with the OfS key performance measure, we will focus on the POLAR4 measure for this strand. Focussing on POLAR4 will also ensure there is a sustained institutional commitment to support low-participation areas in the region when the National

¹ Department for Communities and Local Government. *English Indices of Deprivation 2015* (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2015), Data File. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/467765/File_2_ID_2015_Domains_of_deprivation.xlsx

Collaborative Outreach Programme’s targeted outreach work comes to an end during the lifecycle of this Plan.

The OfS’ Data Dashboard presents a varied picture when comparing the proportion of 18 -19 year old students accessing full-time HE at Yeovil College by POLAR4 Quintile:



The number of students from Quintile 5 areas attending Yeovil College is so low that the data has been suppressed. Whilst it is therefore not possible to compare our relative proportions of Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 learners in line with the national key performance measure, it is still possible to consider our Quintile 1 proportions over time. From 16/17 to 17/18 we saw a sharp decline in the proportion of students from POLAR4 Quintile 1 postcode areas accessing HE at Yeovil College. Whilst not statistically significant, we will need to monitor future data closely to identify whether this data point from 17/18 is an anomalous outlier or indicative of an alarming trend.

Whilst there are years where our young access proportions for POLAR4 Quintile 1 students are above national average, the variance in our data shows there is more work to be done to stabilise our entry proportions to ensure we are consistently supporting young people from POLAR4 Quintile 1 in a successful and robust way. This is especially important when considering benchmarking against our local context, and as four of the wards in Yeovil are classified as POLAR4 Quintile 1. We will therefore set a target around achieving a consistently strong performance in this area.

Success: Non-continuation

Our non-continuation data by POLAR4 Quintile is not available on the OfS’ Data Dashboard due to low numbers. Our ILR data shows that in 15/16, 16/17 and 17/18, students from POLAR4 Quintile 1 areas were more likely to complete all of their planned credits for the year than those from Quintiles 2-5 areas.

	% of students completing all their planned credits for the year.		% of students completing all their planned credits for the year AND either completing or continuing their programme at the end of the academic year.	
	From POLAR4 Quintile 1 postcodes	NOT from POLAR4 Quintile 1 postcodes	From POLAR4 Quintile 1 postcodes	NOT from POLAR4 Quintile 1 postcodes
15/16	47%	42%	43%	39%
16/17	55%	43%	53%	41%
17/18	78%	77%	78%	73%

Whilst nationally the OfS' Data Dashboard shows that there is a rising gap in continuation rates between students from POLAR4 Quintile 1 areas and other areas, we will not make this a target as there is not a gap in performance at Yeovil College. We will continue to monitor this area closely moving forwards.

Success: Attainment

This data is not available for Yeovil College on the OfS' Data Dashboard due to low numbers. When aggregating three years of ILR data (15/16-17/18) we can see that, of students who remained on their programme until the end of their final year, 76% of those from a POLAR4 Quintile 1 area achieved a first class honours, upper second class honours, distinction or merit grade. This compares to 63% of those who were not from POLAR4 Quintile 1 postcodes. Nationally, the OfS' Data Dashboard shows a statistically significant attainment gap between POLAR4 Quintile 1 students and others every year from 15/16–17/18. Quintile 1 students typically outperform their peers within Yeovil College, as this gap does not exist in Yeovil College's data, we will not set an objective here but will continue to monitor data carefully.

Progression to employment or further study

This data is not available for Yeovil College on the OfS' Data Dashboard due to low numbers. Nationally, we can see that every year from 15/16 – 17/18 there has been a statistically significant gap between the progression of students from POLAR4 Quintile 1 areas and other students. The Office for Students identify that these differences in degree and employment outcomes "are mostly related to differences in prior attainment, but higher education is not closing the gap and a small difference remains even once this is considered."² We will continue to monitor this area to identify whether the sector-wide progression gap also exists for POLAR4 Quintile 1 students at Yeovil College.

1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

Access

This data is not available for Yeovil College on the OfS' Data Dashboard due to low numbers. Typically, the majority of students accessing HE provision at Yeovil College identify as White British; our ILR shows that 92% of new entrants in 2015-16 identified as White British, 87% in 2016-17 and 90% in 2017-18. When aggregating the data for new entrants 15/16 – 17/18, 93.0% of new entrants identified as White, 0% identified as Black, 0.3% identified as Asian, 0.6% identified as Mixed, and 6.1% identified as 'Other'. Whilst our proportion of BAME learners puts us below the national average, this data puts Yeovil College broadly in line with 2011 census data that showed: "94.6% of Somerset's population are 'White British'. This proportion is typical of that seen in Somerset's neighbouring local authorities but much higher than the England and Wales average"³. As the vast majority of our students come from the local area, this census data means it is unlikely that we will see a dramatic change in the proportion of Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic students accessing HE at Yeovil College over the duration of this Access and Participation Plan. However, we will continue to monitor this area closely and adapt our approach as necessary as new enrolment data is processed and regional statistics are released.

Non-continuation, Attainment and Progression to employment or further study

This data is not available for Yeovil College on the OfS' Data Dashboard due to low numbers, and reporting on internal data would risk making individual students easily identifiable. We recognise that nationally there is a gap in attainment between black and white students, and that this is a key

² <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/evaluation-and-effective-practice/low-higher-education-participation-household-income-and-socio-economic-status/>

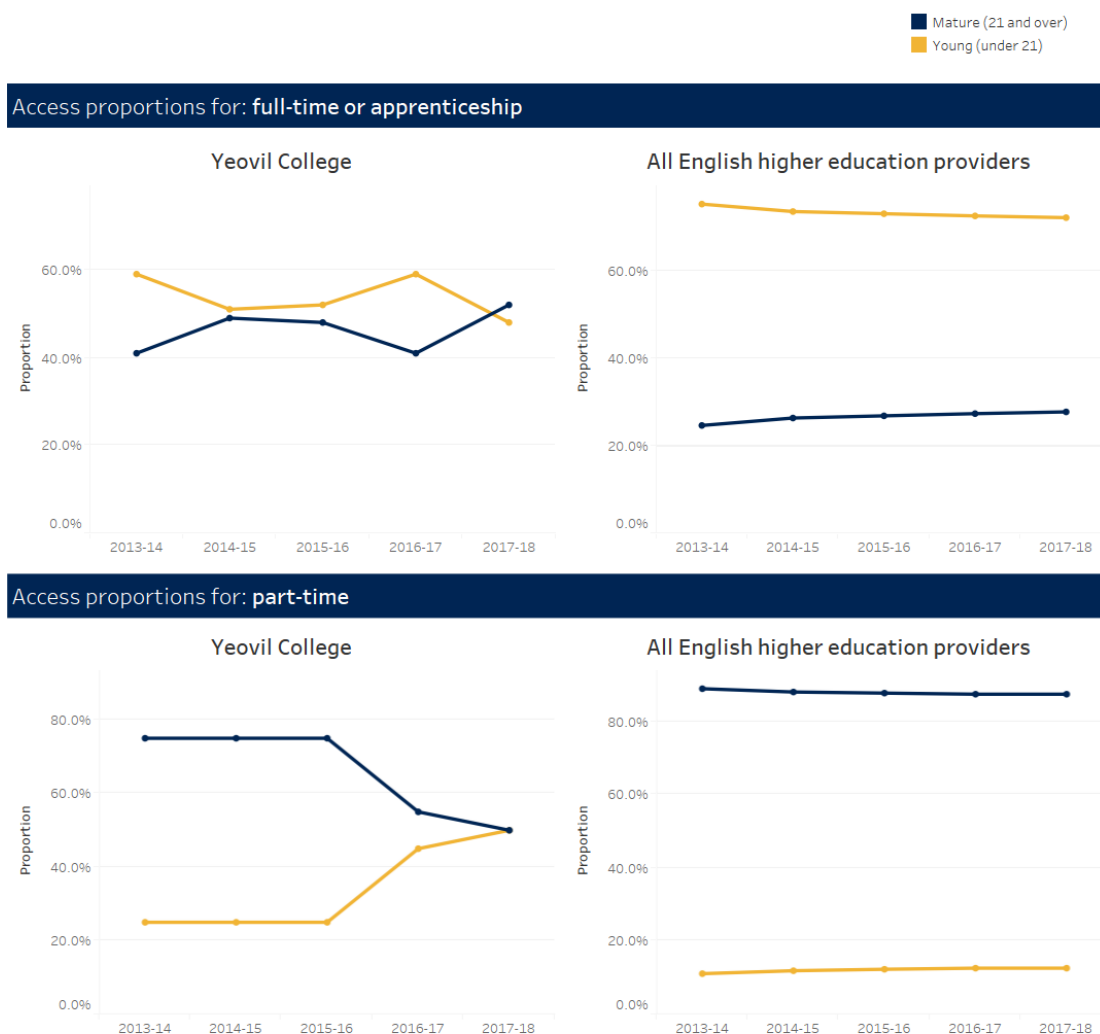
³ <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/census-ethnicity.html>

performance measure for the Office for Students. However, owing to the incredibly low number of black students attending Yeovil College, it would not be appropriate for us to focus on this area if our student numbers and proportions of BAME students remain consistent over the coming years, as data would be statistically insignificant and would risk making individual students readily identifiable. However, a lack of targets in this area does not in any way translate into a lack of ambition or support for Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic students. In line with the College’s Equality and Diversity Policy, all tutors and lecturers are required to “have high expectations of all learners regardless of their age, disability, race, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity or any other grounds”.⁴ However, student success monitoring processes will now identify students who are black for additional risk managed scrutiny to increase their likelihood of success.

1.3 Mature students

Access

The OfS’ Data Dashboard shows that over the last five years, a notably higher than average proportion of students accessing full-time courses at Yeovil College have been mature students. The year-on-year fluctuations in proportion seen over this period are not statistically significant due to small numbers. The Data Dashboard shows that in 17/18, 52% of Yeovil College’s full-time students were mature, against a sector average of 27.8%. We recognise the importance of benchmarking against our own performance, not just national average, and will strive to maintain our strong performance in this area.



⁴ <https://www.yeovil.ac.uk/Footer/PoliciesReports.html>

There has been a decline in the proportion of mature students accessing part-time courses, but it is likely that this is because the majority of full-time HE Courses at Yeovil College are now delivered in a highly accessible way, which makes them appealing to mature learners who might have traditionally chosen part-time. MillionPlus identified that “part-time study allows mature learners the opportunity to access higher education while managing other commitments such as work and caring responsibilities”⁵. Most full-time courses at Yeovil College are offered over one or two days or evenings per week, allowing students the opportunity to study whilst managing work and caring responsibilities; this therefore might explain the fall in proportion of mature students studying part-time.

Success: Non-continuation

Owing to small student numbers, there is limited data available on student continuation rates on the OfS’ Data Dashboard. The data that is available suggests that from 14/15 to 16/17 we have seen an improvement in the ratio of continuation of full-time mature students compared to young students. However, using ILR data to look across our entire student population shows mature students are still more likely to not complete or withdraw from their courses than young students at Yeovil College. In 2017-18 our ILR data showed that 86% of young students completed their planned credits for that academic year, whereas only 74% of mature students achieved the same. A very small number of students might complete all of their planned credits for a year, but then withdraw and not continue their studies. From aggregated ILR data 15/16 – 17/18 we can see that this withdrawal rate is approximately 2% for both mature and young students. Therefore, the non-continuation gap for mature students that we will focus on closing is an issue that occurs in-year, rather than between academic years. Thus, we will set a target around closing the gap in in-year continuation rates for mature students.

We are aware that this continuation gap is a sector-wide issue: the Office for Students identify that mature students are more likely to discontinue their studies and suggest this may be because some mature students do not experience the same sense of belonging at their provider as younger students.⁶ It is worth noting that NSS 2019 data showed that 83.33% of both mature and young students at Yeovil College agreed that “I feel part of a community of staff and students”. Indeed, mature students reported a higher percentage agree rate than young students for 25 of the 27 questions in the NSS 2019. As this data suggests that a sense of belonging is unlikely to be the issue driving non-continuation for mature learners, further evaluation must be undertaken to determine why this gap exists at Yeovil College.

Success: Attainment

No progression data for mature students is available for Yeovil College on the OfS’ Data Dashboard. When considering the national picture, the Office for Students have identified that a lower proportion of mature students attain first or upper second class degrees than young students. However, when prior attainment is taken into account, mature students outperform their younger counterparts, suggesting that mature learners with equivalent entry qualifications achieve better outcomes.⁷

From internal data, we can see that the attainment rates for young and mature students fluctuate between years. Aggregating ILR data from 15/16 – 17/18 shows that overall 66% of mature students completing their final year of study achieved either a First or Upper Second Class Degree, or a Merit or Distinction grade, compared to 72% of young students. Given Yeovil College’s strong approach to contextual offers for students aged 21 and over, it is likely that this gap in attainment can be explained by lower prior attainment for mature students. Despite this, and in line with our institutional value of

⁵ MillionPlus. *Forgotten Learners: building a system that works for mature students* (London: MillionPlus, 2018), 25, http://www.millionplus.ac.uk/documents/Forgotten_learners_building_a_system_that_works_for_mature_students.pdf

⁶ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/evaluation-and-effective-practice/mature-learners/>

⁷ Office for Students. *Topic Briefing: Mature and Part-Time Students* (2018), 4, https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/3da8f27a-333f-49e7-acb3-841feda54135/topic-briefing_mature-students.pdf

'having uncompromising ambition for our learners', we will set a target in this area, and are committed to closing this attainment gap, explained or otherwise, by 2024/25.

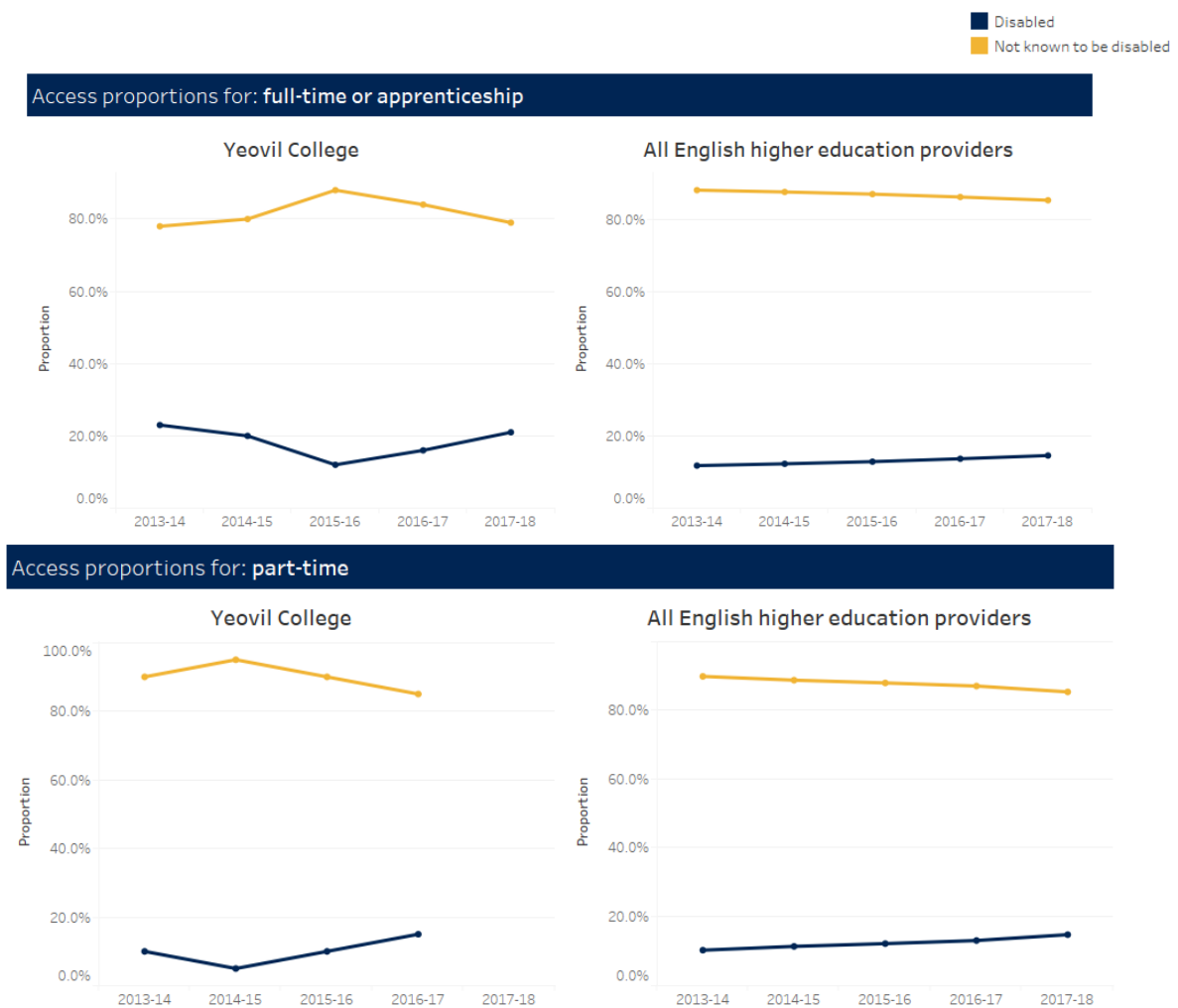
Progression to employment or further study

No mature student progression data is available for Yeovil College on the OfS' Data Dashboard. Nationally, mature students are more likely to progress into highly skilled employment or further study at a higher level than young students. Moving forwards, we will monitor progression data across the college for mature students to ensure that a gap does not emerge in this area.

1.4 Disabled students

Access

With the exception of 15/16, the OfS' Data Dashboard shows that the proportion of students accessing full-time HE Yeovil College with a declared disability has been above sector average. Access proportions for part-time students have steadily risen until they were slightly above national average in 16/17. Low numbers mean this data is not available in 2017-18.



Access for students with disabilities is particularly strong in certain areas of our HE provision. When aggregating ILR data from 15/16 - 17/18, we can see that 25% of new student enrolments on courses in Creative Industries faculty declared a learning difficulty or disability, compared to 14% overall in the

college. This is in line with national findings from AdvanceHE that “disability disclosure rates continue to be markedly higher [...] among students studying subjects such as creative arts and design”.⁸

When disaggregated by disability type, sample sizes are incredibly small, and it would produce unreliable conclusions to analyse this data in detail. However, we can see on the OfS’ Data Dashboard a rise in the number of students with a mental health condition accessing HE at Yeovil College, in line with the sharp rise across the sector.⁹

Success: Non-continuation

This data is not available on the OfS’ Data Dashboard due to low numbers. When aggregating ILR data from 15/16-17/18, we can see that Yeovil College students with a declared disability or learning difficulty are more likely to complete their planned credits over the course of a year than those without (66% compared to 51%). That said, when disaggregating by disability type, just 37% of students who declare Dyslexia as their primary disability type completed their planned credits for an academic year over this same period. Thus, whilst our continuation rates for students with disabilities overall might be strong, there is a gap to be closed for students with Dyslexia and we will set a target around closing this gap. It is not possible to disaggregate further by disability type, as data is likely to be unreliable and there is the risk of individual students becoming identifiable due to small numbers of students and a high proportion of those with a disability declaring two or more impairments and / or medical conditions.

Success: Attainment

This data is not available on the OfS’ Data Dashboard due to low numbers. Aggregating ILR data from 15/16–17/18, shows 65% of students without a declared disability or learning difficulty who completed their final year of study at Yeovil College achieved a First or Upper Second Class Degree, or a Merit or Distinction grade. Over this same period, 67% of students declaring a disability or learning difficulty achieved this level of success. Thus, whilst this is a national key performance measure, data suggests there is no attainment gap to close at Yeovil College. We will monitor data carefully to ensure a gap does not emerge in future. Owing to low student numbers and a high proportion of those with a disability declaring two or more impairments and / or medical conditions, disaggregating this data by disability type is likely to produce unreliable results and could risk individuals becoming identifiable.

Progression to employment or further study

This data is not available for Yeovil College on the OfS’ Data Dashboard due to low numbers. The 2018 Students Statistical Report from AdvanceHE identified that for 2016/17 “A higher proportion of disabled leavers were unemployed six months after qualifying than non-disabled leavers (6.4% compared with 4.5%). However, higher rates of disabled leavers were also in some form of further study than non-disabled leavers (22.6% compared with 20.4%). 59.8% of non-disabled leavers were in full-time work six months after qualifying, compared with 51.9% of disabled leavers.”¹⁰ We will carefully monitor these gap areas for Yeovil College students moving forwards and provide targeted support accordingly.

1.5 Care leavers

Due to an incredibly low number of students who identify as having been in local authority care attending Yeovil College, this section will focus solely on national data, so as not to make any individual identifiable. From an institutional perspective, we look forward to the opportunity to further strengthen our relationship with the County Council over the lifecycle of this Plan to develop a robust and appropriate offer of support for care-experienced students.

⁸ Advance HE. *Equality + Higher Education: Students Statistical Report 2018* (York: Advance HE, 2018), 76, https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2019-05/2018-06-ECU_HE-stats-report_students_v5-compressed.pdf.

⁹ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-15>.

¹⁰ Advance HE. *Equality + Higher Education: Students Statistical Report 2018*, 78.

Nationally, there is a large Access gap for care-leavers; in the year ending 31 March 2018, the Department for Education found that just 6% of 19-21 year old care leavers were in higher education.¹¹ That said, a report for the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) identified that “Care leavers tended to enter HE later than other young people, which was associated with their weaker KS4 attainment.”¹² There is also a large gap in non-continuation for care leavers. The NNECL report identified: “even once entry qualifications were taken into account, care leavers were around 38% more likely to withdraw from their course”.¹³ However, this report did find that “care leavers had a similar level of success as similar students who were not care leavers, if they completed their degree”.¹⁴

1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

When using the OfS’ Data Dashboard, intersectional analysis is available for the ‘access’ intersection of POLAR4 quintile and sex. This data paints a complicated picture; whilst sample sizes are too small to have statistical significance, there does seem to have been a decline in the proportion of both male and female students from Quintiles 1 and 2 since 2016-17. We will monitor this closely to ensure that gaps do not begin to impact upon a specific sub-group disproportionately. Moving forwards, we are committed to intersectional analysis wherever sample sizes make this feasible to identify any groups who may experience inequality, but are initially hidden by underrepresented groups-level data.

1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

Historically, Yeovil College have not collected data on other underrepresented groups. In September 2019 we updated our enrolment process, and are now collecting data on the five further underrepresented group characteristics for all incoming and returning students. We will monitor this data closely to identify where gaps in access, success and progression may exist for students from other underrepresented groups. We intend to dynamically amend our approach to supporting student access, success and progression if this incoming data suggests any of the five further underrepresented groups experience inequality of opportunity at Yeovil College.

2. Strategic aims and objectives

2.1 Target groups

In line with our Assessment of Performance, we have identified four key areas where we have set ambitious targets to ensure current gaps in access and success are closed. We have also identified a number of cohorts and lifecycle stages where we do not intend to set targets but instead, over the coming five years, will closely monitor and track these groups in order to build a stronger evidence base around any current gaps and how we can ensure all students receive appropriate and robust support.

We have chosen not to target certain groups who are identified in the Office for Students’ national key performance measures, as our Assessment of Performance identifies that they do not experience inequality of opportunity at Yeovil College. Data demonstrates that POLAR4 Quintile 1 students are **more** likely to complete their studies than those from Quintile 2, 3, 4 or 5 areas. In addition, disabled students are **more** likely to achieve either first or upper second class honours, or a merit or distinction grade than those without a disability. Therefore, whilst we will continue to track data to ensure gaps do not emerge, we do not feel targets need to be set in these areas. We recognise that nationally there is a

¹¹ Department for Education, *Children looked after in England (including adoption), year ending 31 March 2018*, (Darlington: Department for Education, 2018), 17, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/757922/Children_looked_after_in_England_2018_Text_revised.pdf

¹² Neil Harrison, *Moving On Up: Pathways of care leavers and care-experienced students into and through higher education*, (National Network for the Education of Care Leavers, 2017), 22, <https://www.nnecl.org/resources/moving-on-up-report?topic=guides-and-toolkits>.

¹³ Ibid, 33.

¹⁴ Ibid, 37.

gap in attainment between black and white students. However, owing to the current ethnic mix of our students, which is reflective of our region, it would not be appropriate for us to focus on this area if our student numbers and relative proportions of black students remain consistent over the coming years, as data would be statistically insignificant. Therefore, we have chosen not to set a target around this key performance measure. We remain committed to monitoring these three national priority areas, and ensuring that no gaps begin to open.

We will focus on closing gaps and improving performance by:

- Improving access for 18 and 19 year old entrants from POLAR4 Quintile 1 postcode areas.
- Improving continuation rates for mature students.
- Improving attainment rates for mature students.
- Improving continuation rates for students with dyslexia.

We will use data to build a stronger evidence base in order to improve our current performance by:

- Collating and monitoring progression information for all ten identified underrepresented student groups, in order to identify any gaps and build a bank of best practice to support students.
- Collating and monitoring access and success information for Care Leavers, Estranged Students, Carers, Children from Military Families, students from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and Refugees to build a bank of best practice around supporting prospective and existing students from all of these underrepresented groups.

2.2 Aims and objectives

Objective 1: Improving access for 18 and 19 year olds from POLAR4 Quintile 1 postcode areas.

As POLAR4 Quintile 5 access rates for Yeovil College are incredibly low, we will focus on improving and creating consistency in access for students from Quintile 1 postcode areas, rather than closing a gap where data is unavailable. By 2024-25, we would like to consistently see at least 25% of our young entrants coming from POLAR4 Quintile 1 postcode areas, against a baseline from our 17/18 ILR data of 17%. We recognise that there are instances over the five year period on the OfS' Data Dashboard where we have met this 25% target. However, the inconsistency between years demonstrates that our approach to supporting young people from low-participation postcode areas is not consistently strong, and we aim to provide consistent and stable support moving forwards.

Objective 2: Improving continuation rates for mature students.

In 2017-18 our ILR data showed that 86% of young students completed their planned credits for that academic year, whereas only 74% of mature students achieved the same. This means there is a 12% gap in in-year completion rates for mature students. We recognise that as the reasons for this gap are currently complex to identify and support, it may take time to build an appropriate evidence bank of how to best support mature student continuation. Therefore, we intend to fully close this gap by 2030.

Objective 3: Improving attainment rates for mature students.

When aggregating ILR data from 15/16 - 17/18, we can see that 66% of mature students completing their final year of study at Yeovil College achieved either a First or Upper Second Class Degree, or a Merit or Distinction grade, compared to 72% of young students; a gap of 6%. We recognise that our strong approach to contextual offers may explain this gap. That said, in line with our institutional value of 'having uncompromising ambition for our learners' we aim to close the gap by 2024/25.

Objective 4: Improving continuation rates for students with dyslexia.

Aggregated data from 15/16 - 17/18 shows there is a 14% gap in students completing their planned credits for a year between students declaring dyslexia as their primary disability and students who do not have a disability or learning difficulty. We aim to close this gap by 2024-25.

3. Strategic measures

3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

Overview

Yeovil College's mission is 'to maximise potential for all'. The inclusivity and commitment to continuous improvement contained within this statement is fully aligned with the ethos of access and participation work; to ensure that every student with the ability and desire has the opportunity to access higher education, succeed during their studies, and progress into a high-quality destination once their qualification is completed. We take a whole-institution approach to access and participation; academic teaching teams, personal tutors, support service staff, senior managers and the governing body are all aligned in their commitment to support all students to succeed, in line with our core institutional value of 'having uncompromising ambition for our learners'.

We have drawn on expertise from Evaluation Specialist staff at both the NCOP consortium we are part of, Next Steps South West, and a validating partner university to support with our development of an overarching Theory of Change to underpin all of our access and participation activity. This Theory of Change starts with the identified problem that gaps exist in access, success and progression for underrepresented groups, and outlines the steps that need to be taken in order to achieve the long-term outcome of eliminating gaps at every lifecycle stage. The model also outlines intermediate outcomes that will indicate successful progress and assumptions that are being made across the model. Included in this model are barriers that will need to be overcome in order to support prospective and current students from underrepresented groups to achieve both intermediate and long-term outcomes. These barriers have been identified through academic research, consultation with evaluation staff within our NCOP consortium, and discussion with academic staff, support staff and senior managers within our College. This diversity of perspectives has allowed us to identify a comprehensive range of barriers across the strands of access, success and progression. For each barrier, the impact we hope to achieve through targeted and well-evaluated outreach or support has been identified.

Our Theory of Change is evidence-informed, and activities to support student access, success and progression are in the process of being mapped against this model to ensure we have coherent and comprehensive support measures in place for underrepresented groups across the whole student journey. The steps in the Theory of Change remain consistent across the entire student lifecycle as part of our institutional commitment to a coherent and complete strategy, however, we have created separate models for Access, Success and Progression, in order to identify that different barriers, assumptions and interim outcomes exist at each stage of the student lifecycle. (Appendices 1, 2 and 3).

Alignment with other strategies

College Values

The college commits to working in line with the following values, which underpin all areas of our work, including teaching, learning and assessment, student support, and student experience:

- Creating a learner centred environment.
- Having uncompromising ambition for our learners.
- Valuing, respecting and providing opportunities for all.
- Proactively and positively collaborating with our local community and employers.
- Being flexible, innovative and forward thinking.

These Values are closely aligned to our commitment to access and participation; ensuring that learners of all backgrounds are at the centre of any decision we make about our portfolio of courses, teaching and learning practices and the wider student experience. To ensure we are genuinely providing opportunities for all in the most effective way possible, a robust evaluation strategy is vital. Being flexible, innovate and forward thinking will be essential in order to deliver transformational Access and

Participation work that makes higher education appealing, accessible and relevant to those from underrepresented groups. Strong employer and community links allow us to encourage a range of people to consider HE study, and also to support students to progress into skilled employment once their course is completed.

Strategic Aims

The college has five strategic aims:

1. To inspire, be ambitious, respect and support all our learners, through outstanding teaching, learning and assessment to maximise their potential.
2. Provide a high quality, innovative, relevant and responsive curriculum to meet the needs of local, regional and national priorities.
3. Maintain a stable long term financial position and manage the college effectively, efficiently and innovatively in order to proactively invest and further improve facilities and learning experience for all.
4. Work effectively and innovatively with our partners to maximise all opportunities in order to provide an outstanding experience for our learners, employers and the local community.
5. Value, develop and recognise staff with highly effective performance management to provide the best quality experience for our learners and employers.

As with our Values, these Strategic Aims are closely aligned with our work in access and participation. In particular with Aim 2, as we work to ensure that our portfolio of courses are relevant to both local labour market needs, and that courses are designed in a way that meets the study needs and requirements of our prospective and current students, especially those from underrepresented groups.

Performance Impact and Review Group

Key to our assessment strategy is the College's Performance Impact and Review Group; a selection of senior managers who meet regularly to scrutinise and close any gaps in performance between underrepresented sub-groups and their peers. This allows us to monitor and respond to any gaps in attainment or attendance for target groups in an agile and responsive way. This group has a strong track record of improving attainment for disadvantaged groups at FE-level.

Equality and Diversity Policy

Throughout the creation of this Access and Participation Plan, we have ensured that we are compliant with our duty under the Equality Act (2010) to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, bullying and any other conduct prohibited by the act; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. Where appropriate, we will use equality impact assessments to ensure we maintain high standards in this area. The College's Equality and Diversity Policy¹⁵ is comprehensive in outlining our commitment to these key principles across all stages of the student lifecycle. Whilst just short extracts, the excerpts below demonstrate the close alignment between this Policy and our work to eliminate gaps in Access, Success and Progression for those from underrepresented groups:

- Ensure that admissions criteria do not discriminate against or unnecessarily exclude any individual or group of learners (where appropriate).
- Use data to monitor learner performance and identify and address any issues of under-representation or under-performance by any group of learners.
- Have high expectations of all learners regardless of their age, disability, race, religion or belief, gender, gender re-assignment, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity or any other grounds.

¹⁵ <https://www.yeovil.ac.uk/Footer/PoliciesReports.html>

- Use teaching materials, content and methods, where possible, which take account of the diverse learning needs, styles and preferences of learners.
- Create a classroom ethos and learning environment which is inclusive and enables all learners to feel comfortable and is conducive to learners realising their potential.
- Adopt marking policies and assessment methods which treat all learners impartially and do not discriminate against any individual or group of learners.

Employability

The character of Yeovil College is shaped by our business community, the high number of apprentices shapes the learner experience with professionally current teachers and employers supporting learners with their skills and knowledge development. As a consequence, employability skills are embedded within HE programmes, through Personal Development Planning, employer-led briefs and work related learning where appropriate. This allows tutors to tailor support, especially for learners from underrepresented groups, in a student-led and subject-specific way.

Strategic measures

Across all areas of our work to improve access and participation for underrepresented groups, we are committed to continually improving our practice through evaluation. Below are the strategic measures that we currently envisage will be key to our access and participation work over the lifecycle of this plan, however, should evaluation data suggest that approaches below should be modified, we will welcome the opportunity to adapt our approach. Measures below have all been mapped to our evidence-informed Theory of Change (Appendices 1, 2 and 3). Given the fact that the vast majority of our learners are in at least one WP priority group, YCUC is, by necessity as well as design, a provider who work to ensure that all learners can successfully participate on their courses and achieve good quality outcomes. We use a range of strategic measures, including those outlined below, to ensure that learners from WP courses successfully engage with their programmes and achieve high-quality outcomes.

Key strategic measures to support student Access

We recognise that having strong strategic relationships with schools is key to delivering successful support for young people from underrepresented groups to access higher education¹⁶. To this end, Yeovil College manages the South Somerset Careers Partnership: a strategic collaboration between the schools, further education college and pupil referral unit in our region. As such, we have an incredibly robust and positive relationship with partnership schools in the local area, including those whose catchment areas cover POLAR4 Quintile 1 areas where our 'access' work is focussed. This enables the delivery of continuous and coherent outreach throughout students' secondary and post-16 education. In order to not unfairly disadvantage those who are not from Quintile 1 postcode areas but may experience another category of disadvantage, we focus on working with whole-cohort groups at secondary and post-16 level. Evaluation from our local NCOP has highlighted the key role played by parents in influencing decisions around HE progression and so we are working to increase opportunities for parental engagement across our partnership schools and college. This strategic measure will be key to achieving Objective 1 (access for POLAR4 Quintile 1 students).

Our strategic engagement with schools covers multiple strands of work beyond HE outreach, including KS3 attainment-raising and ensuring successful progression into post-16 study. Our work to support KS3 student attainment is multifaceted and wholly underpinned by the importance of listening to our Secondary colleagues and being led by their expertise. An example of this dynamic approach is funding 'Impress the Examiner' workshops for our local secondary schools in 21/22, as well as College learners

¹⁶ Toby Greany et al., *School-University Partnerships: Fulfilling the Potential* (Bristol: National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement, 2014), https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publication/supi_project_report_final.pdf.

taking GCSE English and Maths, to help to improve GCSE-level attainment for cohorts who have been particularly impacted by Covid-19 disruption. Current strategic measures to improve KS3 student attainment include sustained outreach work to impress upon students the importance of hard work and success at GCSE level, and how this opens up future opportunities. Operationally, this involves our College Principal delivering workshops and assemblies to Year 10 and 11 students, as well as running sessions for parents and carers so they can better understand the importance of GCSE attainment. Our most impactful KS3 attainment-raising strategy is our radical approach to offer-making for FE courses at the College. Feedback from Secondary colleagues was clear that the traditional FE practice of offering a College place based upon the lowest possible grade combination for the required course (e.g. “you need at least 5 GCSEs at Grade 4 or above, including English and Maths”) was having a detrimental impact upon learner motivation in Year 11, as many students felt comfortable they would exceed their entry criteria, and as such, stopped pushing for the highest possible outcomes. As a result of this, we now ask students to bring the statement of predicted grades that their school issues to their College interview. We then set each student’s entry conditions for their chosen course as meeting or exceeding the predicted grades their school have issued them with. This ensures that students continue to push hard throughout Year 11 to achieve the outcomes that their school believe they are capable of, rather than only aiming for the bare minimum.

In line with the 2016 report to the Office for Fair Access ‘Understanding the impact of outreach activity for mature learners with low or no prior qualifications’, we recognise that “to be effective, outreach with adults needs to build confidence through supported small steps and tasters of HE”.¹⁷ In order to support mature students to better understand our higher education provision, we run a series of free ‘Pleased to Meet You’ taster sessions throughout the academic year. These sessions have been piloted and refined via our participation in the European Social Fund ‘Hidden Talent in Somerset’ project. When this project comes to an end in 2020, we will continue to run these sessions as a dedicated part of our ‘access’ work. Alongside this outreach, we have a strong institutional commitment to contextual offers for mature students, recognising depth and breadth of experience where formal qualifications are not necessarily held. Alongside this, we guarantee an interview to all applicants aged 21 or over. To further support mature learners, the college has a broad offer of ‘Access’ provision available. This well-recognised qualification facilitates progression to HE, whether at Yeovil College or elsewhere.

The majority of HE courses at Yeovil College are delivered over one or two days or evenings per week, meaning that they are highly accessible to mature students who are balancing study with work or caring responsibilities. The Office for Students identify that “reduced intensity programmes studied over a longer period, but within the same structures as standard full-time programmes, may not be flexible enough for potential part-time students.”¹⁸ We understand well the truth of this statement and endeavour to ensure both our full-time and part-time programmes are accessible to the widest range of students possible, considering not just intensity of study, but also how study sessions are timetabled. We have seen particular success in access for mature students with the development of evening-only teaching for some courses. The strategic measures of taster events, contextual offers, Access courses and compressed timetabling are key to maintaining our strong access rates for mature learners.

Key strategic measures to support student success

A key strategic measure to support student continuation is our dedicated Student Liaison Officer, who provides pastoral care and supports all learners to engage fully with student life. This may be particularly relevant for any mature learners concerned about their emotional capacity to cope with the challenges of higher education.¹⁹ The Student Liaison Officer also helps learners to access in-house

¹⁷ Office for Fair Access, *Understanding the impact of outreach on access to higher education for adult learners from disadvantaged backgrounds: an institutional response*, (Office for Fair Access, 2017), 8, <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20180511112343/https://www.offa.org.uk/egp/improving-evaluation-outreach/outreach-mature-learners/>.

¹⁸ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/evaluation-and-effective-practice/mature-learners/>

¹⁹ Million+ and National Union of Students, *Never Too Late To Learn: Mature Students in Higher Education*, (2012), 22, http://www.millionplus.ac.uk/documents/Never_Too_Late_To_Learn_-_FINAL_REPORT.pdf

counselling support or regional mental health support services where appropriate. This support is available in person and via email, so is accessible for learners with other responsibilities. In addition, small cohorts allow our students to form high-quality relationships with personal tutors, delivering personalised pastoral and academic support. These strategic measures are key to supporting continuation for all students, supporting achievement of Objectives 2 and 4 (mature and dyslexic student continuation).

We recognise that in order to deliver successful access and participation activity, “it is crucial the sector listens to adult learners’ voices”.²⁰ We are committed to ensuring further work to support student success is student led. When focussing on our target area of improving mature learner continuation, student consultation on this Access and Participation Plan produced a raft of suggested operational measures, which we look forward to piloting and evaluating over the coming years. Many students identified a desire for further support to improve IT-literacy. Students presented mixed opinions around whether dedicated events, spaces or services for ‘mature students’ would be appealing or whether this label is off-putting. We are therefore likely to focus ongoing support on specific barrier areas from our Theory of Change. This allows the creation of a group identity, but also ensures we are inclusive in our approach and do not disadvantage students who are not over 21 at the commencement of their course but experience barriers to success that are typically seen in older students. For example, providing dedicated support or resources for students who are parents, students who are working, and students who want to improve IT skills. This strategic measure will be key to achieving Objectives 2 and 3 (mature continuation and attainment).

We know that both internally and nationally there is not sufficient awareness, especially amongst prospective students, of the existence and scope of Disabled Students Allowances.²¹ We are working to increase awareness of DSA throughout application cycle and post-enrolment in order to support students to access the full range of support that can help them to succeed during their programme of study and remain on their course. During student consultation on this Plan, a range of fantastic operational measures to increase awareness were suggested, and we look forward to implementing these moving forwards. In 2019-20 we are piloting the use of a DSA Diagnostic Support Fund to ensure that the cost of a diagnostic test is not a barrier to students accessing DSA support. As a result of student consultation on this Plan, some of our Creative Industries students are interested in developing some short, accessible videos explaining the DSA process in a non-written format. These key measures should support our delivery of Objective 4 (continuation for students with dyslexia).

A significant strategic measure for improving attainment rates for identified groups is the enhanced monitoring of attainment data in line with underrepresented group characteristics. Close work with the College’s MIS team has led to improved methods of centralised collection and tracking of data. This means that monitoring of student attendance and progress in line with underrepresented group characteristics will happen both on a faculty level in the termly Course Review process, and through senior management scrutiny at the College’s Performance Impact and Review Group. This strategic measure will be key to achieving Objective 3 (mature student achievement).

There are further bespoke measures to support student attainment and continuation embedded within faculty areas. For example, additional ‘Maths for Engineers’ sessions either prior to course commencement or alongside the first year of study to ensure those who have been out of formal education have time to refresh the mathematic skills required to succeed on their course. This strategic measure will be key to supporting Objective 3 (mature student achievement) in specific subject areas.

²⁰ Office for Fair Access, *Understanding the impact of outreach on access to higher education for adult learners from disadvantaged backgrounds: an institutional response*, 42.

²¹ Claire Johnson, *Evaluation of Disabled Students’ Allowances*, (Department for Education, 2019), 20-37, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/770546/Evaluation_of_DSAs_Report_IFF.pdf.

All students participate in a Learning Resources and Research induction with our Learning Resources Team each year. This ensures all students, regardless of when they were last in a formal education setting, are familiar with how to access resources, including online journals and e-books, and are confident in their referencing skills. Students are able to access further support with academic research and writing skills throughout the year. We also ensure that all course materials are uploaded to the programme's Moodle page, making learning accessible remotely to minimise the need for students to be on-site outside of their designated teaching hours. This strategic measure will be key to achieving Objectives 2 and 3 (mature student continuation and achievement).

We have introduced 'Ally' software across our Moodle platform. This software gives every resource an accessibility score which highlights to staff where resources need to be amended in order to be accessible for all learners. Ally software also allows students to access a resource in the most appropriate format, for example, as spoken word or electronic braille. We also participate in the RNIB Book Share scheme so students with a reading impairment, including dyslexia, can access digital version of texts. These measures will be key to achieving Objective 4 (dyslexic student continuation).

KEY MEASURES: STUDENT PROGRESSION

Across the College, we have robust links with local employers, both within faculties and through our Employer Engagement team. We recognise that these relationships are crucial to ensuring we address both national and regional skills challenges.²² Our successful collaboration with employers to fill local skills gaps can be evidenced through the delivery of higher and degree level apprenticeships, as well as via the number of employer-sponsored students at the College. We are keen to continue exploring how further benefits to our students can be delivered through these employer relationships. Strong relationships with validating partner universities means that students are well-informed about potential routes into further study, both 'topping-up' their qualifications, and at post-graduate level as appropriate.

Careers and employability skills are embedded within our courses, through the use of employer-set briefs, personal development planning, and other work-related learning activities. For higher or degree apprentices, extensive workplace skill development is embedded within their qualification. Talks by guest speakers are provided throughout the year, which include talks with a focus on careers and employability. Our HE Student Liaison Officer is on hand and available via email to support students to contact internal or local support services. The College has recently received a Beacon award for Innovation in Careers and Enterprise for the work carried out at FE level. We intend to work alongside the FE careers leaders within the College to draw out best practice that can be used at HE level.

Moving forwards, we will monitor and track student intended destination data on a termly basis, alongside tracking of attendance and attainment. This will be monitored in line with indications of students from underrepresented groups. This allows us to be proactive in our support to ensure that students have a high-quality intended destination in mind, and that they are able to access appropriate support to achieve this goal. This data will then be compared to students' actual destinations.

Collaboration and Alignment with Other Funding Sources

Alongside the work with the South Somerset Careers Partnership, and ESF's Hidden Talent in Somerset project outlined above, there are other key strategic collaborations that will support our Access and Participation work. The first is our active engagement with the Association of Colleges, which gives us the opportunity to share best practice with other FE colleges delivering HE across the region. Incredibly positive working relationships with other local Colleges, as well as with our Local Authority, ensure that there is a coherent approach to HE outreach across the region, and economies of scale can be achieved where appropriate. For example, joint contribution from all local HEIs to resources created by the Local Authority as part of their 'Talent Academies' programme, which is offered to all schools in the county. Furthermore, as a core member of the Next Steps South West

²² Universities UK, *Routes to High-Level Skills*, (London: Universities UK, 2018), 32, <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2018/routes-to-high-level-skills.pdf>.

(NSSW) NCOP Consortium, Yeovil College is collaborating both strategically and operationally with other HE providers in Devon, Cornwall and Somerset. At present, this collaboration with NCOP means we can dovetail our support at schools whose catchment areas cover low-participation wards. For example, providing taster sessions for Year 8 students before they come into scope of NCOP activity and focussing our post-16 workshops and tasters on areas NSSW do not cover, to ensure there is no duplication of support. The NCOP Outreach Hub expansion in Phase 2 will facilitate relationship-building with a broader range of regional stakeholders, employers and third sector organisations, which will enable Yeovil College to capitalise on NSSW-forged relationships to develop broader, partner-led WP activity. Advances in the development of outreach evaluation theory and practice, established through NSSW and shared with the consortium, will promote institutional progress. Our work with NSSW thus far has helped to embed a culture of evaluation within Yeovil College, as we have successfully bid for and delivered a number of partner-led projects, which were all subject to NSSW procedures, including providing explicit identification of which barriers to HE would be addressed, SMART targets and rigorous evaluation of impact, through outcomes-based evidence.

This collaboration with NSSW and the Outreach Hub aligns with Objective 1 (access for POLAR4 Quintile 1). Whilst NCOP postcode targeting does not precisely map to POLAR4 Quintile 1, the overlap means we are well placed to continue providing robust support in these areas when NCOP ends. Our commitment to collaborating with NSSW, both strategically as Board members, and also operationally through hosting a NSSW staff member within the College, means that we are fully engaged with helping to shape, and in time deliver, their programme of attainment raising work at KS3 and KS4.

Targeted Financial Support

We currently have three sources of financial support available to enable student continuation and success. All policies around financial support are reviewed annually in order to ensure that eligibility criteria and award amounts are appropriate. Owing to our small sample sizes, we are unable to use the Office for Students' toolkit to analyse the impact of our financial support. We are instead relying on both internal data collection and academic research to assess whether our financial support is achieving its desired impact. The 2016 report, 'Closing the gap: understanding the impact of institutional financial support on student success' identified the role of financial support in supporting student retention, especially for mature students or those with caring responsibilities²³. This aligns with our Objective 2 (mature student continuation). We know that 18/19, 100% of students who accessed the College's Bursary or Hardship Fund were in at least one of the five groups underrepresented in higher education, the majority were in two. We also know that all of these students went on to complete their year of study, and either then complete their qualification altogether, or progress into study for 19/20. This suggests our current Bursary and Hardship Fund are having the desired impact of supporting student continuation, however, we will continue to monitor this moving forwards, and amend our approach in line with internal data or developments in widening participation more broadly.

YCUC Student Bursary: This fund supports students who are care leavers, have a household income under £25,000, or both. This fund can provide one payment per year, and students are able to re-apply for the funding in each year of their studies. At current rates, this fund will provide a student with a payment up to £250, eligible students can also apply for YCUC Hardship Fund.

YCUC Hardship Fund: This fund supports students who are care leavers, have a household income up to £45,000, or both, and can evidence financial need. This fund can provide one payment per year, and students are able to re-apply for the funding in each year of their studies. At current rates, this fund will provide a student with a payment up to £250.

²³ Colin McCaig et al., *Closing the Gap: Understanding the Impact of Institutional Financial Support of Student Success*, (Office for Fair Access, 2016), 11, <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20180511112320/https://www.offa.org.uk/egp/impact-of-financial-support/>.

YCUC Disability Diagnostic Support Fund: This fund has been established as a direct result of student feedback that it can be difficult for students to fund the necessary diagnostic tests to access DSA. This is often because the evidence or medical information that had enabled students to obtain support at Level 3 or in the workplace was either out of date or insufficient for the DSA assessors. Whilst the fund can be used for diagnostic tests required for any DSA application, we are anticipating that the majority of applicants will use this for the cost of dyslexia tests. At current rates, this fund will provide a student with a payment up to £250, or the full cost of their diagnostic test, whichever is lower. We are anticipating this fund will support Objective 4 (dyslexic student continuation).

3.2 Student consultation

In line with our core value to 'create a learner-centred environment', Yeovil College is committed to engaging students as co-creators of their educational experience, and ensuring that barriers to student engagement are removed wherever possible, including sensitively approaching the principle of 'self-selection'. In the NSS 2018, 86.05% of students from Yeovil College agreed that 'I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course', 83.72% agreed 'Staff value student's views and opinions about the course' and 76.4% agreed 'It is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on'. Whilst there is still work to do to continually improve, in particular closing the loop so students can see how their feedback is acted on, these figures give us confidence that our systems for student feedback are strong, especially as we exceed the sector-wide % agree rate in all three areas.

The HE Student Governor will be involved in the monitoring of our work towards this Access and Participation Plan on a strategic level. HE Student Representatives will feed back on access and participation work both within faculties via termly Programme Team Meetings, and through the College-wide Student Voice process. In 2018-19, we worked alongside the Next Steps South West NCOP consortium to establish a highly successful HE Student Ambassador Scheme at Yeovil College, which we envisage playing an integral part in our access and participation work moving forwards. This scheme allows Student Ambassadors to be actively involved in the design and implementation of outreach activities throughout the year.

Owing to the time of year that this plan was in development, the Student Governor and full range of Student Representatives had not yet been elected. This provided us with an incredibly valuable opportunity to collect a broad and varied range of student feedback outside of usual representation channels as we developed this Plan. In order to be wholly inclusive, we provided multiple ways for students to feed back. All HE students were invited to attend drop-in sessions, hosted in the HE Student Lounge, and were also given the opportunity to take part in the consultation process via email. Teaching staff also provided classroom time for consultations to take place. This was a particularly meaningful experience, as there was no selection bias as to the students involved; those who might not be confident enough to attend drop-ins, or who juggle their HE study with work or caring responsibilities were all able to fully participate in discussions around our Access and Participation Plan. In these sessions, we ensured that students who would ordinarily have a non-medical helper available for taught sessions had the same support. Feedback sessions in this style were run with eight student cohorts.

Through these channels, approximately 30% of our current HE learners from a variety of faculty areas and years of study provided feedback on this Plan. In addition, one of our Student Ambassadors from 2018-19, who has now completed their course, kindly agreed to return to provide their feedback on this Plan, using their experience of supporting the delivery of a range of outreach events to inform their recommendations. All consultation sessions saw students engaging with the principles of access and participation work in an enthusiastic and thoughtful way. Key points of feedback were:

- Students were in agreement across all feedback sessions that the areas we had chosen to focus our targets on as a result of our assessment of performance were sensible.

- Multiple sessions highlighted the value of using 'live chat' facilities via social media to provide support to prospective students who might be nervous about attending events in-person.
- Several sessions highlighted the importance of raising awareness of DSA availability. Measures suggested included the appointment of Student Ambassadors with disabilities to support targeted outreach, and the creation of videos to raise DSA awareness in a non-written format.
- All sessions highlighted the importance of working with schools, and many students identified their own moment of realisation that HE study was something that could be accessible as occurring when University Centre staff visited their school or college.
- We received mixed feedback on whether targeted support provided specifically for mature students would be helpful, or was potentially an off-putting label.
- Some sessions highlighted that a lack of IT skill was a barrier to accessing online resources for mature students, although those in digital or IT-focussed courses did not share this issue.

Some feedback from students which is particularly high in cost may not be possible to introduce or pilot during the lifecycle of this plan. This includes suggestions that mature student continuation could be supported by the creation of dedicated social spaces for mature students, or dedicated car-parking facilities for students who are juggling HE study with childcare. That said, we will continue to monitor and evaluate all aspects of student support, and consider the viability of all suggestions set forth during this, and future, student feedback cycles. If work from our Evaluation Steering Group finds there is appropriate evidence that these measures are the best way to support student continuation, and represent value for money, they will be considered in line with the college's strategic plans.

As will be detailed further below, we intend to involve students in key strategic and operational roles in the evaluation of our widening participation work.

3.3 Evaluation strategy

Having completed the Office for Students' evaluation self-assessment, we are categorised as 'emerging' in all areas of evaluation practice. Throughout the process of completing the self-assessment tool and creating this Plan we have welcomed the opportunity to work collaboratively with a validating partner university and the Evaluation Specialist staff within the Next Steps South West NCOP consortium to develop our evaluation capacity and methods. As a College, we are excited by this opportunity to ensure our access and participation work is evidence-led and identify through a robust and iterative evaluation processes where we can invest our time and financial resources to have the greatest impact upon potential and existing learners from underrepresented groups.

Strategic Context

Yeovil College is committed to evaluating all of our access and participation work in a robust and proportionate way. This allows us to ensure that time and funds are being directed towards activities that will have the greatest impact upon potential and current learners, ensuring we secure value for money from our investment in this area. Our theories of change for all stages of the student lifecycle will underpin all evaluation work. From these theories of change, we have developed indicator banks of statements to be used for evaluation purposes to ensure that the effectiveness of multiple interventions seeking to address the same barrier can be compared. We are working to develop and improve our lifecycle framework; mapping our activities and interventions across the student lifecycle to ensure we have a coherent approach to student support.

In order to embed a culture of evaluation and ensure there is appropriate expertise available to successfully achieve the ambitions set out in this plan, we have established an Evaluation Steering Group. This group is led by our Higher Education Manager, and is comprised of management, teaching and support staff from across the College with expertise in research and evaluation methods as well as current HE students who are studying Research Methods. This group meet on a termly basis to develop, scrutinise & continually improve how we:

- (1) Evaluate the impact of our widening participation work,
- (2) Analyse evaluation data,
- (3) Disseminate our findings.

We are in the process of auditing the skills of our Evaluation Steering Group to identify where CPD can address any gaps. An amount of the evaluation budget in this Access and Participation Plan will be ring-fenced for CPD for members of the Evaluation Steering Group each year.

Programme Design

We are working to develop and improve our lifecycle framework through mapping all activities against the relevant barrier on our Theory of Change. This allows us to identify any gaps in provision and ensure there is appropriate support in place for all underrepresented groups at all lifecycle stages. This mapping will also provide clarity on which barrier(s) each intervention is intending to overcome and thereby facilitate precise evaluation design. Moving forwards, we are committed to ensuring that when planning activities staff use previous evaluation data or published research to evidence their rationale for programme design. Evaluation methods should be considered at the point of programme design.

Designing Impact Evaluation

All activities should be clearly mapped to the relevant barriers to Access, Success or Progression outlined in our Theory of Change and associated Indicator Bank. This will allow us to ensure that multiple interventions seeking to address the same barrier can be compared. We will ensure that for each intervention we use an evaluation tool that is reasonable and proportionate to the scale of the activity, financial investment, and quality of evaluation information available around similar activities. As a minimum, all interventions will have narrative evaluation, and most should aim to include empirical evaluation as well. As we develop our evaluation capacity across the College, we will work to develop evaluation methods to establish causality. Where possible, we will aim to use sources such as application data, attendance and attainment data or graduate outcomes data when evaluating activities, as we are aware of the limitations of using self-reported data in isolation. We intend to use a variety of evaluation methods in line with existing and developing expertise within the Evaluation Steering Group, including, but not limited to, surveys, focus groups, interviews and informal discussions.

Implementing Evaluation

Embedding evaluation design at the programme development stage will ensure that we select evaluation methods we have the capacity to deliver. The Evaluation Steering Group will draw on research expertise across the College to strengthen research practices across our APP work. Expertise from partner universities and our NCOP consortium could help develop our capacity for evaluation analysis and dissemination. We will collaborate with the College's GDPR Panel to ensure evaluation is being conducted in a way that demonstrates best practice in both GDPR and ethical compliance.

Learning from Evaluation

The Evaluation Steering Group will discuss evaluation findings and seek to continually improve both our interventions and research methods. As a small provider, with a core institutional value of 'being flexible, innovative and forward thinking', we are agile in our responses to live evaluation data. An iterative process of continuous development will be applied to APP activities, in order to identify the ideal set of conditions to deliver the most effective version of an intervention. Whether activities have been successful or unsuccessful, we will seek to identify areas of best practice and areas for future development that can be drawn out. The limitations of data we are working with should always be considered, to ensure we neither overstate nor underestimate the impact of the activity we are evaluating. Where feasible and compliant with Data Protection legislation, findings can be shared with other organisations, including other HEIs or, for example, a school where an intervention took place.

Our approach to financial support is outlined in the 'Strategic Measures' section. Refining evaluation of the impact of our financial support will be an ongoing objective for the Evaluation Steering Group. We intend to collaborate with other small providers who do not have enough recipients to use the OfS' statistical tools to develop appropriate evaluation measures.

3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

The operational delivery of this plan will be led by the Higher Education Manager, with strategic support from the College Principal. There will be a multi-layered approach to monitoring of progress against the delivery of the Plan. The Performance Impact and Review Group will monitor data on the success of students from underrepresented groups throughout the year and identify whether we are on track to meet attainment and continuation targets. The Higher Education Management and Strategy Group, which is chaired by the Principal and meet five times per year, will review progress against targets throughout the academic year and consider operational successes and limitations of access, success and progression work. The Curriculum, Quality & Assurance Committee is a sub-group of our governing body who meet three times a year, and will have ultimate responsibility for monitoring progress against delivery of this plan. At each meeting, the Higher Education Manager will present on progress against targets from this Access and Participation Plan. The members of this Committee will then feed this information through to the Yeovil College Corporation, our full governing body, which always includes a HE Student Member. Evidence and data from the Evaluation Steering Group will feed into reports to both the Higher Education Management and Strategy Group and the Curriculum, Quality & Assurance Committee to ensure that both monitoring and evaluation data are actively used to ensure compliance with the provisions of this Plan and our progress against targets.

If any of these groups find that progress is not being achieved at the ambitious rate set out in this plan, appropriate steps will be taken at a management and operational level to identify the cause and ensure appropriate measures are in place to allow the required progress to be made.

4. Provision of information to students

In line with guidance from both the Office for Students and the Competition and Markets Authority, up to date information about fees is published on our website in a format accessible to students²⁴. At Yeovil College, students are charged the same tuition fee for the duration of their course, and so should not need to be informed of tuition fee changes during their studies.

We are committed to ensuring that all current and prospective students are able to readily access information about the financial support they may be entitled to as a result of the provisions set out within the plan. This information is available online²⁵, and staff are at hand to discuss this in more depth both at Information Evenings and via email or telephone throughout the year. Information about financial support is also provided directly to all students at the start of each year, once enrolment is complete.

5. Appendix

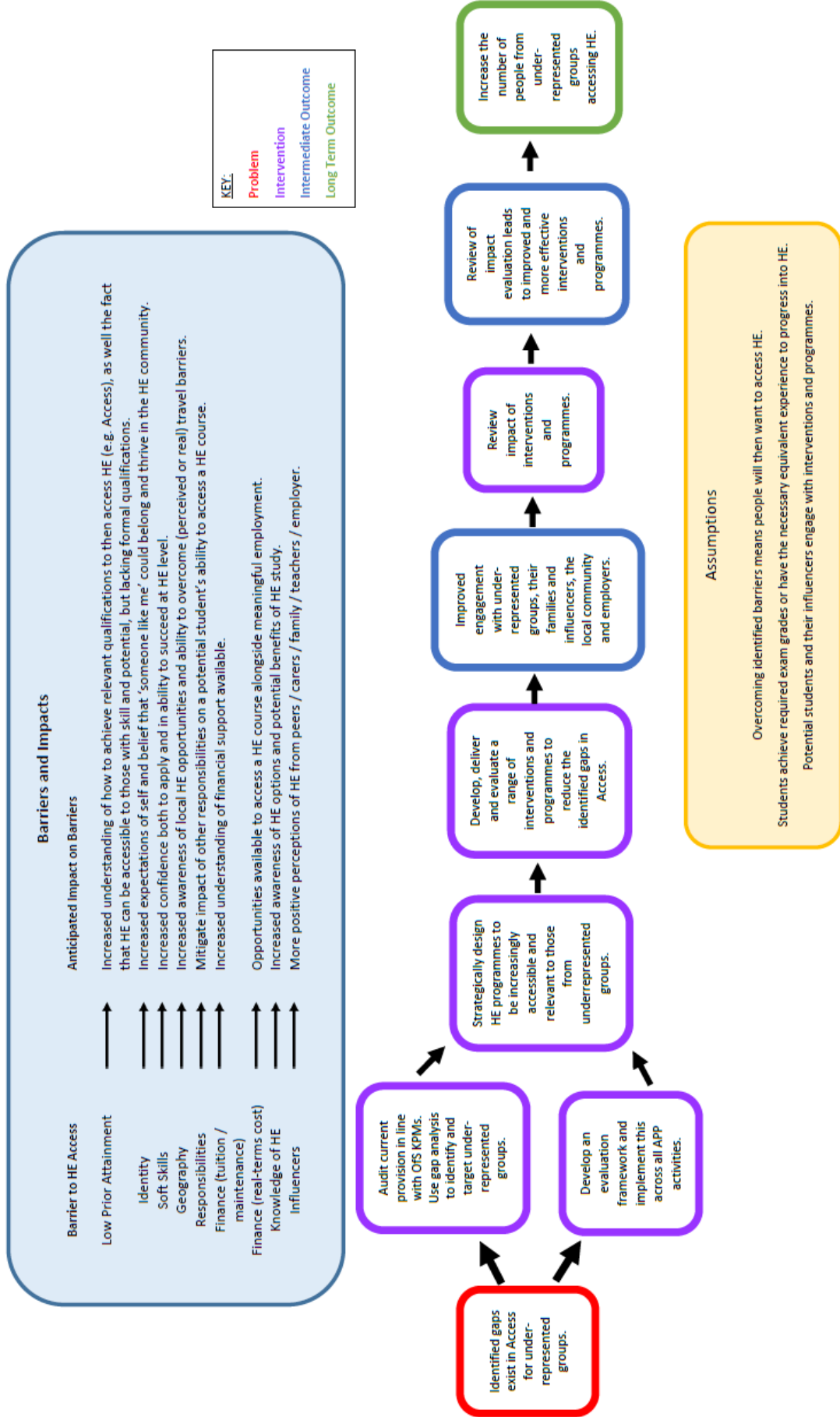
The OfS will append the following items from the fees and targets and investment documents when an access and participation plan is published:

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

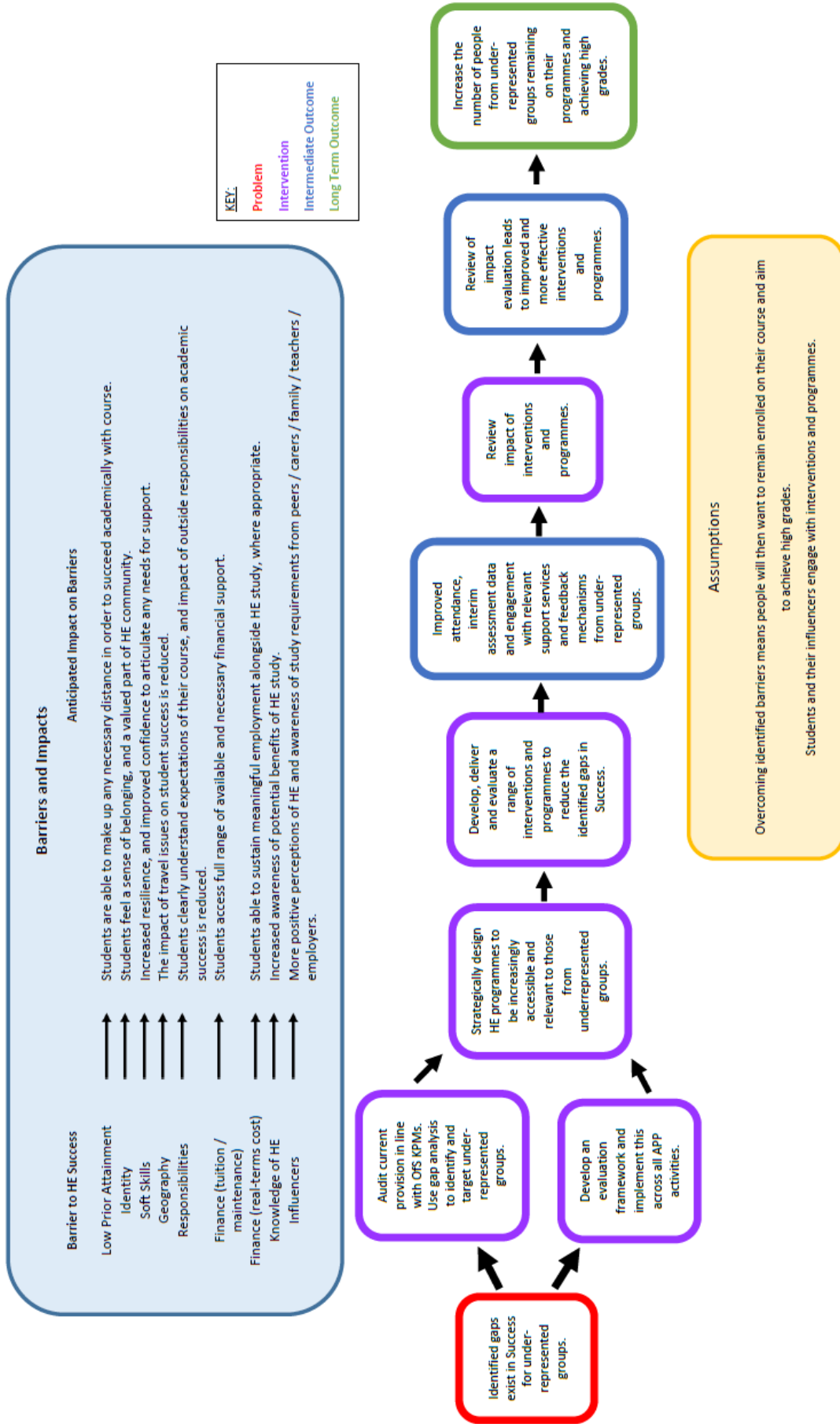
²⁴ <https://www.yeovil.ac.uk/Documents/YCUC%202020-21%20Fees.pdf>

²⁵ <https://www.yeovil.ac.uk/Documents/HE%20Student%20Bursary%20and%20Hardship%20Fund%20Policy%20and%20Information%202019-20.pdf>

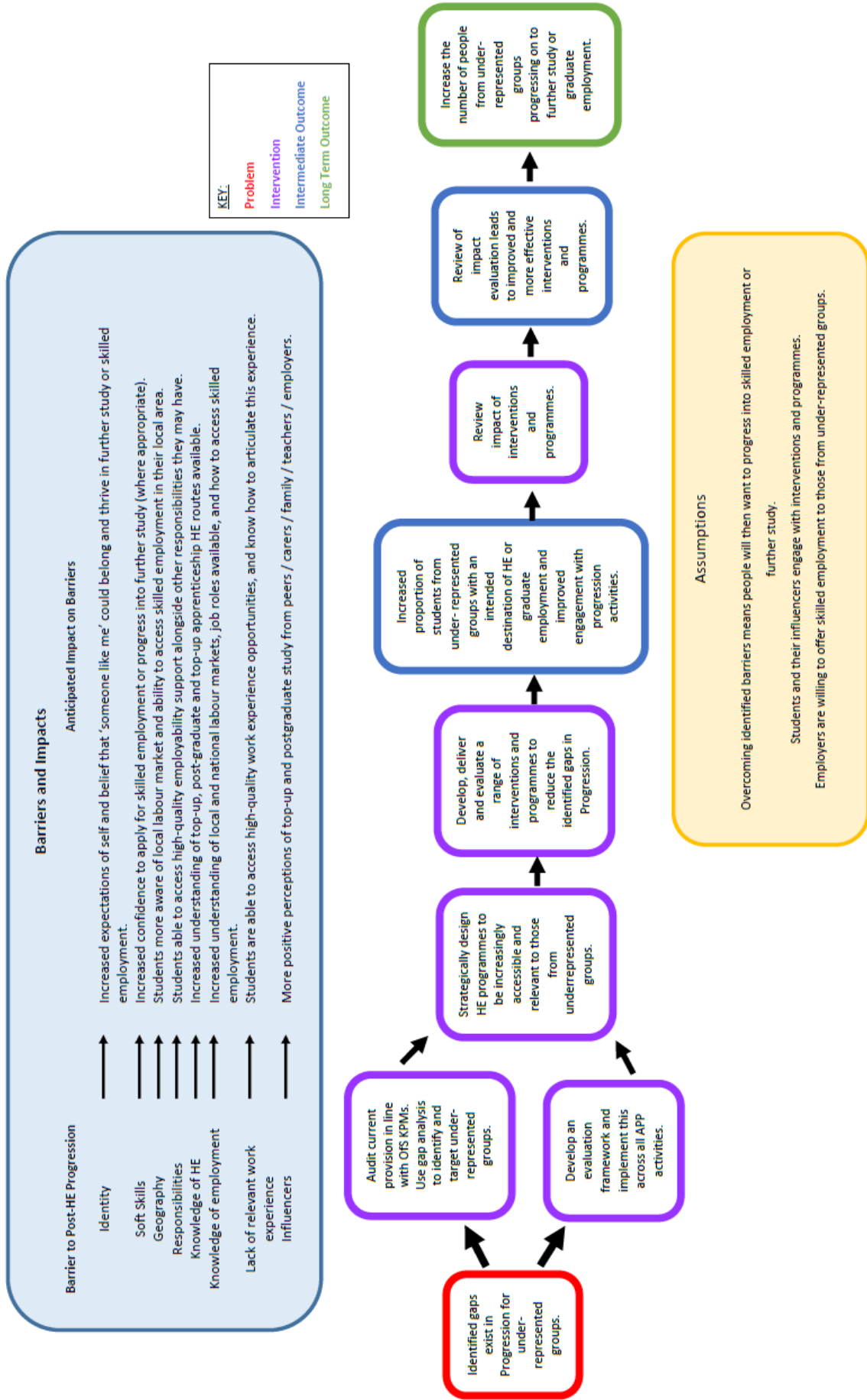
Theory of Change for Access



Theory of Change for Success



Theory of Change for Progression



Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflationary statement:

We do not intend to raise fees annually

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

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	Including students only studying one year of a full degree as a level 6 'top-up'	£7,127
Foundation degree	Students beginning their course in 2020	£7,127
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	Students beginning their course in 2020	£6,451
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	N/A	£7,127
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

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

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

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

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	Studied at 1/2 intensity, starting 2020	£4,751
First degree	Studied at 2/3 intensity, starting 2020.	£4,751
Foundation degree	2 year programme (1/2 intensity) starting 2020	£3,564
Foundation degree	3 year programme (2/3 intensity) starting 2020	£4,751
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	2 year programme (1/2 intensity) starting 2020	£3,226
HNC/HND	3 year programme (2/3 intensity) starting 2020	£4,301
HNC/HND	Studied at 1/3 intensity, starting 2020	£2,150
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

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

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

Targets and investment plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: Yeovil College

Provider UKPRN: 10007696

Investment summary

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

Note about the data:

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

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

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Total access activity investment (£)	£35,191.00	£35,191.00	£35,191.00	£35,191.00	£35,191.00
Access (pre-16)	£16,957.00	£16,957.00	£16,957.00	£16,957.00	£16,957.00
Access (post-16)	£9,907.00	£9,907.00	£9,907.00	£9,907.00	£9,907.00
Access (adults and the community)	£8,327.00	£8,327.00	£8,327.00	£8,327.00	£8,327.00
Access (other)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Financial support (£)	£16,500.00	£20,500.00	£24,500.00	£27,500.00	£29,500.00
Research and evaluation (£)	£5,231.00	£5,231.00	£5,231.00	£5,231.00	£5,231.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HF1%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HF1)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Higher fee income (£HF1)	£98,152.00	£122,613.00	£144,924.00	£168,926.00	£176,116.00
Access investment	35.9%	28.7%	24.3%	20.8%	20.0%
Financial support	16.8%	16.7%	16.9%	16.3%	16.8%
Research and evaluation	5.3%	4.3%	3.6%	3.1%	3.0%
Total investment (as %HF1)	58.0%	49.7%	44.8%	40.2%	39.7%

