2019-20 access and participation plan monitoring

Provider impact report

This impact report summarises the progress made by The University of Bolton 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

The University of Bolton's ambition and strategy as detailed in the 2019-20 access and participation plan:

Our strategic plan to transform the institution in to a 'Teaching Intensive, Research Informed University' to address student experience, retention and graduate outcomes involves reshaping our core academic provision with the creation of a strong 'course based student eco-system' which provides a large enough critical mass of high quality learners to provide cohesions and team spirit amongst students. These student groups create strong learning communities and enhance overall student experience. These strong student groups are supported by full-fledged and sufficiently varied high quality academic staff teams in the respective disciplines, whose research directly informs the teaching and student learning experience. This strong eco-system of courses has now emerged as the University's Platinum Critical Mass (PCM) courses strategy; aiming to achieve a radical positive change in the quality and quantum of student recruitment, learning experience, progression, retention, and attainment, in the invested areas. Based on a focussed set of structural adjustments in its UG and PG course portfolio, staffing composition, and learning infrastructure, the University aims to achieve concrete and sustainable improvements in student recruitment and participation, learning experience, progression, retention, student satisfaction and graduate outcomes including, but not exclusively, levels of employability.

Our student recruitment strategy, based on the platinum (PCM) course portfolios, is to attract stronger and more able applicants yet maintaining our access agenda. This has already and will continue to result in structural adjustments include closing weaker courses with non-viable student numbers and growing our stronger PCM provision. Our initiatives in these areas are already showing tangible dividends confirming the appropriateness of our bold approach. We are confident in our ability to innovate and invest in all aspects of access and participation.

Access Strategy

We consistently exceed our benchmark indicators for access data. We will continue to maintain these high levels of access across the board. We align this success down to the holistic approach that we take to student recruitment in the institution which does not differentiate between widening participation and other recruitment activities. The students that come to Bolton tend to be predominantly local or from the Greater Manchester area and are typically from low participation neighbourhoods. This in turn influences our recruitment and therefore access strategy, from the schools we work closely with, to the targeted advertising that we do.

Success Strategy

The University of Bolton has a strategic and centrally-coordinated approach to addressing student retention, progression and success which is informed by, and aligned with, the student lifecycle.

Progression

We fully appreciate that we need to improve the employment/further study outcomes for all full and part-time under-represented groups and therefore our employability approach must remain holistic. The changes we are making are being driven by our five year strategy for Employability, Enterprise and Apprenticeships (EEA). This requires both Academic and Professional Support Services to work in partnership and encompasses the development of a Platinum course portfolio, integrated employer collaborations, and enterprise and knowledge transfer operations to achieve a step change in the University's engagement within these facets.

2. Self-assessment of targets

The tables that follow provide a self-assessment by The University of Bolton 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 The University of Bolton'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)	Percent of students no longer in HE	2014-15	16.9	12.4	12	Percentage	2018-19	13.1	Limited progress
T16a_02 (Progression)	Employment of graduates Table E1 - Full time first degree	2014-15	85.9	90	91	Percentage	2016-17	82.3	Limited progress
T16a_03 (Access)	Proportion of students from state schools	2015-16	99.3	99.3	99.3	Percentage	2019-20	98.5	Expected progress
T16a_04 (Access)	Proportion of students from state schools	2015-16	99.2	99.2	99.2	Percentage	2019-20	98.6	Expected progress
T16a_07 (Access)	Proportion of students from low participation neighbourhoods	2015-16	21.2	21.5	21.5	Percentage	2019-20	21.2	Expected progress
T16a_08 (Access)	Proportion of students from low participation neighbourhoods	2015-16	21.3	21.5	21.5	Percentage	2019-20	21.1	Expected progress
T16a_09 (Student success)	Percent of students no longer in HE from Low Participation Neighbourhoods	2014-15	24.4	18	16	Percentage	2018-19	14.3	Expected progress
T16a_10 (Student success)	Employment of graduates in Highly Skilled or Further Study - Full time first degree	2014-15	64.4	67	68	Percentage	2017-18	64.8	Limited progress
T16a_11 (Progression)	Students exiting with an award	2014-15	72	73.5	74	Percentage	2016-17	72.7	Expected progress

T16a_12 (Access)	Mentoring Y13 students capable of attaining a higher grade. They will be mentored by our PGCE students in the relevant subject area. Attainment will be measured by looking at the students' yr12 results then final grade and whether the grade or points score has risen. We will identify a particular sixth form, then work with the staff within the school to identify pupils within that sixth form to work with. We hope to work with approximately 20 pupils in the first year, we aim to raise their results by a grade or elevate the students' score within the grade if they were only just achieving a C.	Other (please give details in Description column)	n/a	20 students	25 students	Headcount	2019-20	20	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)	Includes strategic relationships such as with UTCs and progression accords or access collaborative working	2014-15	26	38	40	Other	2019-20	42	Expected progress
T16b_02 (Access)	Greater Manchester Higher is a collaboration of universities and further education colleges from Greater Manchester working together to provide high quality outreach activities for local schools and colleges.	2014-15	87 secondary schools engaged with	114 secondary schools	122 secondary schools	Other	2019-20	176	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	£221,198.00	£1,446,000.00	554%
Financial Support	£328,516.00	£411,000.00	25%

4. Action plan

Where progress was less than expected The University of Bolton 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	We continue to build upon and develop the approaches which are delivering improvement, such as an extension of the diagnostics to Level 5.
T16a_02	Implementation of planned activities such as risk dashboard and early diagnostics. Development of our online careers portal will allow us to progress key APP outcomes such as the career registration project, and pushing out further resources, guides and case studies. We plan to develop our curriculum to further embed employability.
T16a_10	Implementation of planned activities such as risk dashboard and early diagnostics. Development of our online careers portal will allow us to progress key APP outcomes such as the career registration project, and pushing out further resources, guides and case studies. We plan to develop our curriculum to further embed employability.

5. Confirmation

The University of Bolton 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
The University of Bolton 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 George E. Holmes
Position	President and Vice Chancellor

Annex A: Commentary on progress against targets

The University of Bolton'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?
We have made considerable progress in improving retention rates from 14-15 to 18-19 (latest available data). Although we have not reached our expected position of 12.4 by 18-19 we are confident that the investment and interventions we have in place will continue to improve the retention rates noting that many of our more recent strategies will only result in outcomes in data post 18-19.
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
The pandemic had a direct impact on several areas to differing degrees but the university worked hard to ensure that we could pivot our provision online and develop and offer supporting infrastructure where needed. Ultimately this has enhanced our use of technology, our pattern of engagement with students and the uptake of various initiatives.

Target reference number: T16a_02
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
We have made the significant investment in the Employment Team. Our employability outcomes are all in the development stages but all have been initiated.
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
The Pandemic has allowed us to develop our services online and this has shown a positive increase in the number of students accessing our support. In 2020, we ran our first ever virtual careers fair, which saw our platform receive over 9,000 hits. This level of monitoring would not have been possible if the event had been held on campus. We are also seeing a positive increase in the number of employers engaging with us. Online sessions are much easier for large employers to attend, as they remove the necessity for travel and additional costs.

Target reference number: T16a_10
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
We have made the significant investment in the Employment Team. Our employability outcomes are all in the development stages but all have been initiated.
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
The Pandemic has allowed us to develop our services online and this has shown a positive increase in the number of students accessing our support. In 2020, we ran our first ever virtual careers fair, which saw our platform receive over 9,000 hits. This level of monitoring

would not have been possible if the event had been held on campus. We are also seeing a positive increase in the number of employers engaging with us. Online sessions are much easier for large employers to attend, as they remove the necessity for travel and additional costs.

Annex B: Optional commentary on targets

The University of Bolton's commentary on any of the targets listed in Section 2.

Reference Number	Optional commentary
T16a_01	
T16a_02	Target is no longer measureable due to removal of DLHE. Future APP targets will be based on GOS data and re-setting of GOS based target.
T16a_03	
T16a_04	
T16a_07	
T16a_08	
T16a_09	
T16a_10	Target is no longer measureable due to removal of DLHE. Future APP targets will be based on GOS data and re-setting of GOS based target. Actual shown based on TEF4 data
T16a_11	This target has been removed in our latest APPs with a focus on closing gaps between underrepresented groups. However, we continue to put strategic priority on ensuring that the proportion of students exiting with an award increases in future.
T16a_12	
T16b_01	We have continued to form partnerships for recruitment and outreach as planned. This will no longer form a target in our future APPs however.
T16b_02	Actual performance is ahead of plan