



## 2019-20 access and participation plan monitoring

### Provider impact report

This impact report summarises the progress made by Brunel University London 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

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

Our Brunel 2030 vision drives the University's strategic direction, including the ambition to enable students to realise their potential irrespective of social or cultural backgrounds. The focus on 'success for all' builds on a long history of widening access and successful participation for students from diverse backgrounds, and is articulated in the Strategy for Access and Student Success 2016-2021.

The University's commitment to a full student lifecycle approach is evident in our Access Agreements, which have over time (from 2006/7) moved from outreach and financial support to also encompass transition, retention, progression and academic/personal support. We are now seeing the benefit of a more joined-up approach to student success, and welcome the explicit guidance of "getting in and getting on" (Director of Fair Access and Participation, March 2018), as well as a focus on tailoring access and participation priorities to the institutional context.

Brunel has made significant contributions over the past decade in improving life opportunities for underprivileged and underrepresented students, and our diverse student body has very good outcomes compared to the sector. However, we take an absolute rather than a relative approach to equality, and therefore we want to achieve more. Our strategic ambitions for the next five years are shaped by the drive for continuous improvement to:

- Embed a whole-institution approach
- Engage 'Students as Experts'
- Improve evaluation and understanding what works
- Increase engagement with external stakeholders

Wherever possible we take a non-deficit approach to our activities, as agreed with our Student Union. We will continue the excellent work we are already doing whilst prioritising activities that address the gaps identified by our analysis and intended to have the greatest impact on Black, mature and care leaver students.

#### Access

**Ambition:** Maintain and build on our sustained outreach activities for disabled, care leavers and low household income students, and increase focus on access for mature students.

We will maintain our high numbers of students from state schools, Index of Multiple Deprivation quintile 1 areas, care leavers and disabled students, through a wide package of sustained outreach.

We aim to increase the number of mature students. Our current target is for those from POLAR quintile 1 areas with no previous HE experience, but our analysis suggests that POLAR is a poor measure of disadvantage within our student population. Additionally, we believe that mature students upskilling or changing careers is beneficial for the individual and the wider society, and we will therefore seek to increase the overall numbers of mature students within our population, including within our PGCE programmes.

As a civic University, Brunel aspires to be an anchor institution in the local community. We will therefore continue to build on our longstanding engagement with local primary and secondary schools and colleges, including teachers and parents, third party organisations and employers.

We will continue to take a whole institution approach to access, increasing engagement of our academic staff and utilising students as ambassadors. We will evaluate the short-term impact of our activities, where appropriate, with pre and post surveys, and use feedback from participants and teachers to drive improvements. We will measure the long-term impact of our outreach efforts using HEAT. Students will be central to the delivery of our outreach activity as student ambassadors.

#### Success

**Ambition:** Close institutional gaps in attrition and attainment, particularly for Black and BTEC students, and build on current support for care leavers and mature students.

Our strategy is to engage academic departments and professional services, which we believe is key to successful transition into university: to engender a sense of belonging; to deliver an inclusive and positive student experience; and a joined-up approach to academic support and mental health and wellbeing.

We aim to close the attainment gap for Black students, increasing our focus both on the 1st class degree attainment gap and BTEC attainment gap. We will also maintain our current ambitions to improve the progression and attainment of care leavers.

Students contribute their expertise in a range of ways, including as peer mentors and facilitators; as Student Success Project placement students; and through joint University-Union projects. Students are also partners in our programme development and approval, periodic

review and curriculum review processes, ensuring that the student voice is at the heart of our programme design and helps to identify any barriers to success.

We will increase engagement with external stakeholders, particularly around sharing what works and look to establish both research and activity based collaborative projects with other universities. Deploying institutional expertise, we will commission academic staff to undertake research related to our interventions. We will evaluate our activities using increased retention and attainment as key success measures.

#### Progression

**Ambition:** Enhance support for progression to professional employment or further study, with a specific focus on Black students.

As an institution we believe in work-based experience to develop the attributes and attitudes required for professional careers, and we will continue to facilitate and diversify opportunities for disadvantaged students. Engaging with alumni, as well as current students, ensures we draw on their expertise in determining what makes a difference to successful outcomes. We have inspirational alumni from disadvantaged backgrounds and we intend to engage them as role models to inspire our current students. We will engage with employers and organisations, including overseas institutions, with a view to increasing opportunities for students to broaden their horizons through placements, internships, study abroad and mentoring.

We will evaluate the short term impact of our activities using uptake of placements, internships and study abroad. The reduction in the progression gap between Black and White students is a key success measure of long-term impact.

## 2. Self-assessment of targets

The tables that follow provide a self-assessment by Brunel University London 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 Brunel University London’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 (Access)	Participation of under-represented groups in higher education: young full-time first degree entrants	2013-14	42.1	42.8	43	Other	2019-20		Expected progress
T16a_02 (Access)	HESA Tables T2a: Participation of under-represented groups in higher education: mature full-time first degree entrants (based on POLAR3 method)	2013-14	4.7	4.9	5	Percentage	2019-20	2.1	No progress
T16a_03 (Access)	HESA Table T7 - Participation of students in higher education who are in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA): Full-time all undergraduates	2013-14	8.7	9.8	10	Percentage	2019-20	6.3	No progress
T16a_04 (Student success)	Table T3a - Non-continuation following year of entry: full-time first degree entrants	2013-14	17.4	12	11.7	Percentage	2018-19	13.9	Limited progress
T16a_05 (Access)	Postgraduate ITT: Disabled - Disability profiles of intake - first year trainees Primary & Secondary - NCTL	Other (please give details in Description column)	11.3	12.8	13	Percentage		11.5	Limited progress
T16a_06 (Access)	Postgraduate ITT: Mature - Age profiles of intake (Age 25+) - first year trainees Primary & Secondary - NCTL	2012-13	44.9	53	55	Percentage		48.9	Limited progress

T16a_07 (Student success)	HESA Tables T3b -Non-continuation following year of entry: young full-time first degree entrants (Young entrants from low participation neighbourhoods (based on POLAR3 method)	Other (please give details in Description column)	6.7	5	4	Percentage	2018-19	3.7	Expected progress
T16a_08 (Access)	Participation of under-represented groups in higher education: young full-time first degree entrants (based on POLAR3 method)	2013-14	5.7	5.9	6	Percentage	2019-20	3.9	No progress
T16a_09 (Student success)	Attainment gap between Black and White students achieving 1st or 2.1s	2014-15	23	17	14	Percentage points	2019-20	18	Limited progress
T16a_10 (Progression)	Proportion (%) of black students with 1st or 2.1s progressing onto graduate-level jobs or further study	2013-14	71.6	73.85	74.6	Percentage			
T16a_11 (Student success)	Increase linear, consecutive progression of care-leaver students from Level 1 to Level 2, to be achieved through dedicated staff support and bespoke initiatives	2015-16	72% achieve linear progress	78%	81%	Percentage	2019-20	68.5	No 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)	Organise activities for WP students Yrs 6 - 13 in connection with new STEM Learning Centre opening Winter 2016	2016-17	2 events for min 30 students	5 events for min 75 students	6 events for min 90 students	N/A (see description / commentary)	2019-20		Expected progress
T16b_02 (Access)	Organise activities for WP students in collaboration with other HEIs, in partnership with AccessHE members and other organisations such as LAs and voluntary organisations	2015-16	6 events for min 160 students	6 events for min 160 students	6 events for min 160 students	N/A (see description / commentary)	2019-20		Expected progress
T16b_03 (Student success)	Expansion of HeadStart transition programme	2015-16	100 participants	130 participants	140 participants	Headcount	2019-20	55	No progress
T16b_04 (Progression)	Expansion of Professional Mentoring Programmes in collaboration with employers	2015-16	90 participants	180 participants	180 participants	Headcount	2019-20	285	Expected progress
T16b_05 (Access)	Outreach activities for care leavers, ranging from IAG to residentials, in collaboration with Virtual Schools and voluntary organisations	2016-17	38 participants	42 participants	44 participants	Headcount	2019-20	71	Expected progress
T16b_06 (Access)	Increase the percentage of Yr 10 Scholars starting the Brunel Urban Scholars programme in 2017/18 who meet or exceed their end-of-year target grades in English and Maths, as reported by their schools. Baseline data is pre-entry 2016-17 and reflects end of Year 9 assessment and three-year GCSE course target grades. Future groups (2019 onwards) cannot as yet be identified because of the charitable funding element of the programme (still to be confirmed) which requires us to take into account funders' wishes e.g. in respect of the entry year group and the duration of the funded programme.	2016-17	20%	75%	Group not yet identified	Percentage	2019-20	68	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	£850,000.00	£813,000.00	-4%
Financial Support	£1,920,000.00	£1,922,000.00	0%

### 4. Action plan

Where progress was less than expected Brunel University London 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_02	We will continue with our work as planned, whilst we are not necessarily seeing progress for this metric which focuses on mature students from POLAR3 areas, we are seeing progress in terms of increasing our overall mature student population.
T16a_03	At this stage we do not propose to make any significant changes to the work we are delivering, primarily because the number of students with a disclosed disability is stable. We will actively contribute to any Government or sector reviews of DSA and the application process, which we believe is burdensome for students.
T16a_04	As noted in the previous question, we will review what additional academic support we may be able to offer mature students and implement new activity as appropriate. The development of this work will be supported by focus groups with mature students to identify activities that would support them.
T16a_05	We will continue as planned, the representation of disabled students in our PGCE population is in line with our broader undergraduate student population and we will focus our actions where we see the largest gaps in outcomes.
T16a_06	We will continue as planned and consider if PGCE students could be further included in our mature student outreach work.

T16a_08	We will continue to build our relationships with schools in POLAR Q1 and Q2 areas, as well as participating in collaborative sector activities which supports these groups. We will keep our activity under review and monitor the impact of our activities so that we can make any adjustments as required.
T16a_09	As well as Access and Participation Committee, the work against this target is also being reported into a newly formed institutional Anti-Racism Working Group (ARWG). The ARWG formed in Autumn 2020 following work taken forward as a result of the Black Lives Matter movement. To date the ARWG has focused on training and developing resources. A portal of resources on race and racism is now available to staff and in 2020-21 we will deliver a training programme for members of the senior leadership team, as well as a programme for academic staff. The training for academic staff will be supported by follow-up mentoring sessions and funding will be made available to academic departments to deliver and evaluate activity towards reducing the awarding gap. An Anti-Racism Officer has also been appointed and is now in post, they will take forward designing and delivering anti-racism training for our broader University community
T16a_11	We will continue with our current activity and plan to implement new accommodation support, providing a welcome pack for care-leavers and supporting them to meet other care-leavers.
T16b_03	We will continue to deliver the programme for our target groups and continuously review how it could be improved. In particular we will consider how the online element may be able to be accessible to a larger number of students in the target groups.

## 5. Confirmation

Brunel University London 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	
Brunel University London 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 Julia Buckingham
Position	Vice-Chancellor and President

## Annex A: Commentary on progress against targets

Brunel University London's commentary where progress against targets was less than expected.

<b>Target reference number: T16a_02</b>
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
Yes, we have delivered a specific outreach programme for mature students and continued to work collaboratively with the sector to reach a broader cohort of potential students. We have appointed a full-time contextual admissions officer and age on entry is used as a contextual flag, which means that applicants who are initially rejected are reviewed and, if appropriate, issued a contextual offer. We have also reviewed our entry requirements, including the time limits for qualifications to be recognised, to ensure we are recognising the experience mature students can bring.
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
Yes. In 2019-20 we developed a 'Lifelong Learning Bursary', a full fee waiver for ten mature students per year which will be offered for entrants from 2020-21 onwards. The bursary is focused on those in the local area and are in the age groups particularly underrepresented at Brunel (25+). We also ran a digital marketing campaign to specifically target mature students and encourage them to participate in a 1:1 consultation with a Widening Access officer.

<b>Target reference number: T16a_03</b>
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
Yes, we continue to offer specific outreach for disabled students including awareness days and visits to local partner schools. The proportion of entrants with a disability reported has remained at a fairly consistent 11% over the last five years (source: OfS Access and Participation Data Dashboard), though we note from the HESA PI that the proportion in receipt of Disabled Students Allowance has been dropping. We encourage our disabled students to apply for DSA, although it should be noted that they are able to access our internal support structures regardless of whether they are in receipt of DSA.
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
We have been taking steps to try and encourage students to apply for DSA, though as noted above we will offer them support regardless of their choice.

<b>Target reference number: T16a_04</b>
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
Yes, in 2019-20 we appointed a full time Student Welfare Officer who was focused on providing pastoral support to underrepresented groups, including mature students. We also focused our HeadStart programme more directly on mature students to support them with the transition to higher education.

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

We noticed during our internal monitoring and review process that mature student engagement with pastoral support was not as high as we had expected, and we are now reviewing our Theory of Change which assumed that providing targeted pastoral support would improve mature student retention. As a result of this we investigated mature student engagement with our other success activities and found that engagement with our Academic Skills Service was very high. We believe therefore that a more targeted approach towards academic skills would be more beneficial to support mature student retention.

**Target reference number: T16a\_05**

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

Yes, we have continued to offer our PGCE access bursary and advertise PGCE opportunities to our diverse student body.

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

No.

**Target reference number: T16a\_06**

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

Yes, we have continued to offer our PGCE access bursary and advertise PGCE opportunities to our diverse student body.

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

We have progressed with our work to increase the proportion of mature students in our undergraduate student body and some of this activity, including that delivered at open days, will also have been accessible to PGCE applicants.

**Target reference number: T16a\_08**

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

Yes, we have expanded the range of schools we are working with to further include schools in POLAR Q1 and Q2 areas. These relationships take time to develop and whilst we have now begun this process we expect there to be a time-lag between activity and impact. This lag is more accurately reflected in our target and milestones for our Access and Participation Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25.

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

We have appointed a full-time contextual admissions officer and POLAR Q1 or Q2 is used as a contextual flag, this means applicants who are initially rejected are reviewed and, if appropriate, issued a contextual offer.

**Target reference number: T16a\_09**

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

Yes, we continued to deliver our Student Success Project in 2019-20 which included activity to support students' sense of belonging, supporting academic departments to review their curriculum content, developing resources for students, appointing student success ambassadors to review activities, and engaging with the sector to share good practice.

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

In Spring 2020 we undertook a review of the Student Success Project; the review panel had internal and external members and consulted with various members of the University community. The review found that whilst the work to date had been positive, further impact could be achieved by a specific focus on anti-racism and providing training for staff and students. It was felt that the academic elements of this work should be driven by a newly formed Academic Professional Development Unit, whilst the Student Success team should focus on broader University training. These recommendations are being taken forward in the 2020-21 academic year.

**Target reference number: T16a\_11**

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

Yes, we have continued to deliver our Care Leavers Bursary, HeadStart programme, Brunel Summer Internship Programme, and a specific, tailored set of activities for care leavers. We now have a full-time Student Welfare Officer who works with target underrepresented groups, including care leavers, to provide them with support throughout their studies. Whilst our performance for this target is not as high as hoped when the target was set, the numbers of students within this group are relatively small and there are likely to be year on year changes which are not necessarily significant. For our 2020/21-2024/25 plan we have moved to a five-year rolling average and we feel this will better show sustained progress over time.

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

In 2019-20 we increased the size of our Care Leavers Bursary to £2,000 per year for new and existing students. Since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, we have worked hard to maintain contact with our care leaver students to ensure they have the support they have needed, and we have provided them with laptops, emergency loans, hardship funds and accommodation support as required.

**Target reference number: T16b\_03**

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

Yes, we have continued to deliver the programme for groups where we see gaps in outcomes for retention and students have advised they would like additional support with their transition.

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

Following the programme delivery in September 2018 we reviewed the programme and found that whilst we had been successfully increasing the number of students on the programme, partly achieved by widening the eligibility criteria, the numbers of students fully engaging with the whole programme was actually dropping. Combining this with feedback from students about the programme led to the decision that instead of focusing on expanding the programme we should focus on the experience we are giving the students who do attend. We, therefore, decided to more tightly limit the groups we were targeting - limiting it to mature students, disabled students and care leavers – and focus on giving these students the absolute best support. As a result of this our participant numbers have dropped but engagement whilst on the programme has increased, with more students completing the full programme.

## Annex B: Optional commentary on targets

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

Reference Number	Optional commentary
T16a_01	Data no longer provided by HESA and target was to be dropped.
T16a_02	
T16a_03	
T16a_04	
T16a_05	The latest data available relates to 2018-19 (option not available to be selected in column S).
T16a_06	The latest data available relates to 2018-19 (option not available to be selected in column S).
T16a_07	
T16a_08	
T16a_09	
T16a_10	DLHE data no longer available and we do not feel it is appropriate to present GO data here as suitably comparable.
T16a_11	
T16b_01	5 events 431 students
T16b_02	16 events for 508 students
T16b_03	
T16b_04	
T16b_05	
T16b_06	