South Essex College

Access and Participation Plan

2021/22 to 2025/26

February 2021

1. Assessment of performance

South Essex College (SEC) undertakes regular assessment of widening access, participation, success and progression for home undergraduate, sub-degree and PgCE students, using a broad range of quantitative and qualitative data and information, including but not limited to the OfS access and participation dashboard and dataset, TEF indicators (if/when published), HESA KPIs, UNISTATS and Nomis labour market statistics, findings from HE Programme Board meetings with student representatives for each HE programme and via an open dialogue between the HE Student Engagement Officer and HE student representatives. We became an active member of AccessHE in 2019 in order to access Uni Connect schools network in London, obtain assistance in the design and development of outreach activities and participate in collaborative projects and AccessHE action forums (in particular the BAME forum for Evidence and Evaluation). Membership will continue for the duration of this Plan and is expected to be extended thereafter. This approach was supplemented by the purchase in 2019/20 of the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) (which is due to be implemented in 2020/21) and the introduction in 2019/20 of the NERUPI framework, both of which should increase the data and information available and ensure effective evaluation of impact of outreach and widening participation activity. Assessment of performance takes place at programme, faculty and provider level.

In 2020 data capabilities were increased in terms of planned capital investment and data analysis being undertaken at programme, faculty and provider level. Continuous improvement in data capture and analysis capabilities is expected to continue from the start of 2020/21 for the duration of this Plan and in response to developments in the HE sector. For example, systems are being developed further in order to increase the range of data captured, reported and analysed internally ahead of external publication by the OfS. Dedicated widening participation related structures were introduced in 2019/20 (see Diagram 2 below) within and underpinned by an established Faculty of Higher Education (in place since August 2018) (see Diagram 1 below) and a commitment to research, evaluation and staff development, which in mid-2020/21 is being extended through membership of AdvanceHE and planned annual purchase of associated consultancy for these aspects and staff development packages accordingly.

This section provides a summary of published outcomes and internal data that has informed the development and approach to this Plan (based on full-time undergraduate and, where relevant, sub-degree home students). Key priorities, in the form of targets, are noted below in brown italicised text, while those not identified continue to be monitored, with a commitment to intervene at programme, faculty and provider level where performance changes (see further Section 3.4 below).

Progression rates for full-time undergraduate students for each of the groups below are less than the HE sector average; this is something that the College has responded to for students as an aggregated group (in terms of resources and other commitments outside of this Plan) as part of an undertaking for Condition B3 provided to the OfS in February 2019. The remaining resource considerations to improve student progression are considered in this Plan (as part of Tables 3 and 4 below), although not always as individual targets, which require comparators in order to identify relative gaps. Such comparators for a number of student groups are too small at the College, either in the form of original student groups (e.g. BAME) or comparator groups (e.g. POLAR4 quintiles 3, 4 or 5). Consequently, where feasible, three years of aggregated data have been used on a rolling average basis, as evidenced by the calculation of BAME attainment gaps and rates). However, the substantial under-performance in reported progression rates for students as an aggregated group

relative to the Condition B3 numerical baseline and HE sector average cannot be overlooked, hence the extent of the resources deployed since 2018/19 and the continuing commitment to reversing this under-performance. Given the significant time lag for publication of progression data, the relatively small graduation numbers covered by outcomes/destinations-related surveys and as yet insufficient internal progression data, the full impact of the actions taken to date to improve progression rates are not likely to start materialising in a meaningful way for at least three years (i.e. by mid-2023/24).

Consequently, this Plan adopts a flexible approach to resourcing for and in response to progression by student group, allocating resources for: (a) progression gaps (even where these are only reported for one year), (b) student progression generally, (c) focusing on student groups which have the lowest and/or declining progression rates relative to the HE sector average, where the student numbers are too small for comparisons to be made between student groups at the College, and (d) prioritising progression resources where gaps emerge at the College in subsequent published data or as a result of qualitative data from the repository add-on to Unit E (the College's student record system) containing graduating student data (once fully implemented - see below). This approach is considered by the College to be consistent with the undertaking given for Condition B3 in February 2019, proportionate, risk averse and pro-active, especially in the context of the planned modest growth in student numbers (which has been adjusted to take account of the potential impact of COVID-19). A strategic approach to employability is being adopted by the Faculty of HE from 2020/21, encapsulated by the *HE Employability Strategy 2021 to 2025*, which is aligned to this Plan, and is considered further below in section 3.1.

Where the student numbers at the College (in relation to original student groups or comparator student groups) are too small to identify gaps in progression, also taking account of the time lag in published data on progression and the significant proportion of students who work on a self-employed, freelance or non-traditional employed basis following graduation from some programmes, the College invested in a repository add-on to Unit-E at the start of 2020/21 for the purposes of recording graduate student data and will continue to finance servicing of and updates to this repository for at least the duration of this Plan (unless replaced with something equivalent in specification or better). The repository at present falls short of a fully-fledged alumni database due to technical limitations in available software on the market (namely a minimum student number of 1,000 for the alumni database to be functional). In the interim, the said repository should provide more timely quantitative and qualitative data available to fine-tune and/or critically review existing progression related activities and initiatives. The repository add-on is expected to be fully implemented, operational and utilised in 2020/21. These data will focus on all full-time undergraduate students, while increasing the granular and timely nature of data where student numbers are relatively small or progression paths not fully reflected in external student destinations-related surveys.

SEC has taken a holistic approach to arrive at the targets in this Plan, considering a range of contributory measures, including NSS, programme level indicators and additional intersections. In 2019/20 this approach was extended with the implementation of the NERUPI framework and the planned implementation of HEAT in 2020/21. In 2019/20, this was further extended to include OfS and TASO guidance in relation to evaluation practices. We will be critically exploring explained, unexplained and hidden gaps (i.e. those not in programme or provider level data) from 2020/21. This will be an ongoing exercise. We introduced a robust student data capture approach in 2019/20 by updating our existing student record system, which will ensure effective and timely reporting of internal student data and a broad range of current intersections. There is still some

work to be done in this regard, which is expected to be completed in 2020/21. Thereafter, the student record system will be reviewed on an annual basis in order to maintain currency with stakeholder requirements and expectations. This will be complemented by a robust approach to monitoring from 2021/22, with an enhanced version in place by the middle of 2021/22, which includes risk assessment, scenario analysis, contingency planning and modelling to predict possible changes to student indicators based on changes to the HE programme offer (including, but not limited to expansion in student numbers), marketing and student recruitment activities and changes within the areas from which our students are drawn. This approach, which was delayed due to the brief introduction of temporary student number controls for 2020/21 student entry, will be evaluated and reviewed annually to ensure it remains fit for purpose and will be underpinned by effective structures and processes (see Diagram 2 below). This will allow us to anticipate whether we are likely to meet or exceed the targets set in this Plan and make any necessary adjustments in-year to ensure we remain in line with the stated targets.

1.1 Higher Education participation – POLAR4 Quintiles

The majority of the College's undergraduate provision is delivered in Southend-on-Sea, with one undergraduate programme delivered in Purfleet, while sub-degrees (i.e. Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals) are delivered at Southend-on-Sea, Basildon and Grays, Thurrock. These are areas of high deprivation and low participation in higher education. For the purposes of this Plan, any reference to undergraduate programmes is in relation to full-time first degree programmes.

Access

- The College is committed to widening participation, including for students from POLAR4 quintiles 1 and 2, which form a significant proportion of its local demographic. This is evidenced in part by the positive gaps noted in the next two bullet-points below.
- The OfS data from 2015/16 to 2017/18 for POLAR4 Q5 to Q1 students show that there is a positive gap of -35 percentage points (pp), -28pp and -28pp across this period respectively.
- Similarly, the OfS data from 2014/15 to 2018/19 for POLAR4 Q1 students show that there is a positive gap, when compared to the national population, of -15.0pp, -27.0pp, -16.0pp, -14.0pp, and -20.0pp across this period respectively. The data also show the gap to be positive for POLAR4 Q2 when compared to the national population across the same period, being -20.0pp, -11.0pp, -16.0pp, -24.0pp and -5.0pp respectively. This also compares favourably to average participation gaps in the HE sector for the same quintiles and across the same period. Consequently, access targets are not being set for these quintiles and the position will continue to be monitored.

Success

(a) **Non-continuation**

- The percentage gap between POLAR4 quintiles 3, 4 or 5 to Q1 or Q2 was 5.0pp in 2016/17. In 2017/18 this was a positive gap of -5.0pp (and has been a positive gap also in 2013/14 and 2015/16), which means that the gap has been closed since the target set for this comparator group in the APP 2020/21. However, this comparator group's continuation rates will continue to be monitored and targets set, with associated targeted interventions should the gap re-emerge

(this approach to continuation rates is reflected in our Theory of Change model (Diagram 3 below).

- Strategies and initiatives (including but not limited to inclusive educational practices) to improve continuation rates were applied holistically since 2016 at programme and provider level across all of our students aged under 21, which is likely to account for the improvement in the continuation gap in 2017/18.

(b) **Attainment**

- The OfS data show no gaps when comparing POLAR4 quintiles 3, 4 or 5 to Q1 or Q2, with only two data points in 2014/15 and 2018/19 presenting a positive gap of -15.0pp and -5.0pp respectively in favour of Q1 or Q2 relative to a HE sector average gap for the same period of 5.8pp and 5.1pp respectively.
- While student support initiatives have focused on improving student outcomes, these have not been targeted at any one or more POLAR4 quintiles until 2019/20, with a data-led approach to the development of a HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and APP related project proposals. Targeted interventions have been designed and implemented in 2019/20 (mainly in the form of projects), with associated impact being measured annually across student groups to reduce the likelihood of gaps in attainment emerging for POLAR4 quintiles 3, 4 or 5 to Q1 or Q2 as and when the provision grows and/or recruits more students from Q3, Q4 or Q5.

Progression to highly skilled employment or further study at higher level - *SEC to reduce the progression gap between students from POLAR4 quintiles 3, 4 or 5 compared with students from POLAR4 quintiles 1 or 2 to 0.0pp by 2025/26.*

- OfS data show a gap of 15.0pp in 2015/16 for POLAR4 quintiles 3, 4 or 5 compared with 1 or 2, which under-performs the HE sector average gap of 3.3pp for the same period.
- Until 2018/19 there was insufficient investment in initiatives to improve student progression rates, hence contributing to the under-performance across most of the categories noted in the APP 2020/21 and in this Plan. Since 2018/19 there has been sustained financial and curriculum-related investment for employability and progression related activities. This commitment is planned to continue for the foreseeable future, as evidenced in part by the content of Table 3 below.
- There are no OfS data published for gaps at the College between POLAR4 quintiles 5 to 1 and, therefore, there are no gaps between POLAR4 Q5 students and Q1 students. The numbers and proportions of POLAR4 Q5 students are too small to be reportable across the remainder of the student lifecycle in the current APP dashboard and dataset. Notwithstanding this, the College commenced monitoring performance annually of these student groups across the student lifecycle in 2019/20, based on internal data and for progression to highly skilled employment or further study at higher level (once numbers are reportable in subsequent iterations of the APP dashboard and dataset).
- However, the progression rate for POLAR4 Q1 is available. In 2016/17 this was 35.0% and has substantially under-performed the HE sector average for this period by 33.5pp (HE sector average for POLAR4 Q1 was 68.5%).

1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

Access - *SEC to increase the access and participation rates of BAME students onto its undergraduate programmes (taking account of sub-groups within this category) to 14.0% by 2025/26, adjusting for the local and regional BAME population rates and taking account of the HE sector average over the longer-term.*

- Although the numbers are very small at a disaggregated level, OfS data show Asian students at the College to comprise 2% for 2015/16 to 2018/19 compared to a local population in Southend-on-Sea of 3.7% in 2011 (2011 Census, Nomis KS201UK) and in the South East of England and Wales of 5.2% (Census 2011, ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk).

- Meanwhile black students made-up 6.0%, 5.0%, 4.0%, 3.0% and 5.0% for the annual periods 2014/15 to 2018/19 respectively, compared to a local population in Southend-on-Sea of 2.1% (2011 Census, Nomis KS201UK) and in the South East of England and Wales of 1.6% (Census 2011, ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk).

- Mixed students comprised 6.0%, 2.0%, 3.0% and 3.0% for the annual periods 2014/15 to 2017/18 respectively, compared to a local population in Southend-on-Sea of 2.1% (2011 Census, Nomis KS201UK) and in the South East of England and Wales of 1.9% (Census 2011, ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk).

- Other students were recorded as 4.0%, 1.0% and 2.0% for the annual periods 2016/17 to 2018/19 respectively, compared to a local population in Southend-on-Sea of 0.52% (2011 Census, Nomis KS201UK) and in the South East of England and Wales of 0.6% (Census 2011, ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk).

- ABMO (BAME) OfS student data show access and participation rates for 2014/15 to 2018/19 of 14.0%, 9.0%, 13.0%, 9.0% and 9.0% respectively against a local BAME population in Southend-on-Sea of 8.43% (2011 Census, Nomis KS201UK) and in the South East of England and Wales of 9.3% (Census 2011, ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk).

- According to OfS data, the BAME HE sector average for 2014/15 to 2018/19 was 27.9%, 29.2%, 30.4%, 31% and 31.4% respectively.

- The HE programme offer has been broadened since 2019/20 in order to attract students from a larger catchment area (including up the Thames corridor) and to provide subjects which have a wider appeal than the current HE offer, including but not limited to prospective BAME students, reflecting their academic and career related aspirations. The impact of this approach is not likely to start being realised for at least three years while the recently validated programmes recruit students and bed-in (student recruitment in viable numbers for these programmes is not expected until 2021/22, in large part due to the adverse impact of COVID-19 on the student recruitment cycle), but is expected to increase the BAME intake from 2022/23, which is reflected in our target rate in this Plan. We intend to examine the inclusive nature of the pedagogy relating to the full-time undergraduate programmes, including but not limited to reading lists, employability elements and delivery as part of the continued development of and/or updates to the *HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy*.

- In 2018/19, there was a close working relationship between the newly formed Faculty of Higher Education and the Marketing Department (including input from the Dean of Higher Education and the Programme Partnership Managers for UEA and UAL portfolios), resulting in a collaborative approach to the design of the HE prospectus and marketing activity and ensuring it was more engaging and inclusive in nature. In 2019/20, this was planned to be increased to include greater sharing of data analytics associated with social media (such as traffic through the College's HE landing page and engagement data linked to social media platforms), which is in addition to data on prospective students attending open days and other relevant HE events.

Due to the disruption caused from the second quarter of 2019/20 by COVID-19, this greater sharing of data was delayed to 2020/21.

Success

(a) **Non-continuation**

- OfS data show no gaps between white and all ethnicities except white, with only one data point published for 2016/17, although with a focus on increased participation (as noted above in the access target for BAME students) the position will continue to be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis, with timely interventions as needed.
- There are no published continuation data by the OfS for the College's BAME students at a disaggregated level. If or when there are sufficient BAME student numbers to be published at a disaggregated level, these will be analysed on an annual and/or three-year aggregate rolling average basis per BAME category of student (i.e. 'Asian', 'black', 'mixed', 'other') and presented accordingly.

(b) **Attainment**:

SEC to reduce the attainment gap between BAME students and white students on undergraduate programmes to 18.0pp by 2025/26 (measured with the latest three years of aggregated data for programmes that have BAME students enrolled and attaining a degree)

SEC to raise the attainment rate of BAME students from deprivation quintiles 1 and 2 when compared with white students from deprivation quintiles 1 and 2 on undergraduate programmes to 46.0% by 2025/26 (measured with the latest three years of aggregated data for programmes that have BAME students from deprivation quintiles 1 and 2 enrolled and attaining a degree).

SEC to reduce the attainment gap of BAME students aged over 21 when compared with white students aged over 21 on undergraduate programmes to 25.0pp by 2025/26 (measured with the latest three years' of aggregated data for programmes that have BAME students aged over 21 enrolled and attaining a degree).

- OfS data (collected from the APP dashboard, APP data resources and the individualised student data) show the attainment gap at provider level (i.e. including data from all undergraduate programmes and not just those which have BAME students) between white and ABMO (BAME) students to be 10.0pp, 18.0pp, 23.0pp and 34.0pp across the periods 2014/15 and from 2016/17 to 2018/19 respectively. This is against a HE sector average attainment gap of 15.2pp in 2014/15, 14.5pp in 2016/17 and 13.7pp in 2017/18 and 2018/19.
- Meanwhile, using three years of aggregated data (i.e. from 2016/17 to 2018/19) for programmes that have BAME students achieving a degree resulted in a gap of 30.0pp. Using three years of aggregated data for ABMO provides a sufficient data set for analysis, while limiting the data analysis to programmes with graduating BAME students (rather than all programmes) ensures a suitable comparison and potentially more effective targeted intervention. This three years of data aggregation will be used on a rolling average basis from 2020/21 (i.e. for data from 2017/18 to 2019/20). We have also considered the institutional level

gaps noted in bullet-point one above for completeness and will continue to do so moving forward.

- Using intersections across three years of aggregated data (i.e. from 2016/17 to 2018/19) for ethnicity and deprivation 1 & 2 resulted in an attainment gap of 33.0pp, while for intersections of ethnicity and students over 21 resulted in an attainment gap of 51pp. This three years' aggregation will also be used on a rolling average basis from 2020/21 (i.e. for data from 2017/18 to 2019/20).

- Meanwhile, using the intersections across three years of aggregated data (i.e. from 2016/17 to 2018/19) for ethnicity and deprivation quintiles 1 & 2 resulted in attainment rates of 65% and 31% for white students from deprivation quintiles 1 & 2 and BAME/ABMO students from deprivation quintiles 1 & 2 respectively. Given that both of these intersections relate to OfS priority or under-represented student groups, setting a target based on closing the gap between these groups of students could have the unintended consequence of reducing the attainment rate for one of these groups. Consequently, the target has been set to raise the attainment rate of BAME students from deprivation quintiles 1 & 2 when compared to the attainment rate for white students from deprivation quintiles 1 & 2 as opposed to considering the relative attainment gap.

- We recognise the importance of and have been committed to developing and implementing BAME contextualised strategies and initiatives since 2019/20 (to be monitored on an annual basis) in order to raise attainment (steering clear of a deficit model approach) supplementing and/or complementing strategies to increase BAME student access rates.

- Overall, the BAME student attainment numbers at present are too small to be published at a disaggregated level (i.e. 'Asian', 'black', 'mixed', 'other'), even as a three-year aggregate on a rolling average basis for each BAME category. If or when there are sufficient BAME student attainment numbers to be published at a disaggregated level, these will be analysed on an annual and/or as a three-year aggregate on a rolling average basis per BAME category of student (i.e. 'Asian', 'black', 'mixed', 'other') and presented accordingly.

Progression to highly skilled employment or further study at higher level

- The ABMO (BAME) student numbers relative to white students are too small to arrive at an indication of a progression gap between these groups from OfS data. At present there are no reported progression gaps between white and BAME students.

- There are no published OfS progression data for the College's BAME students at a disaggregated level (i.e. 'Asian', 'black', 'mixed', 'other'). If or when there are sufficient BAME student numbers to be published at a disaggregated level, these will be analysed on an annual and/or as a three-year aggregate on a rolling average basis per BAME category of student (i.e. 'Asian', 'black', 'mixed', 'other') and presented accordingly.

1.3 Mature students

Access

- OfS data show that the entry rates for mature students onto undergraduate programmes have consistently outperformed the HE sector average from 2015/16 to 2018/19 and in part reflect the continued commitment the College has to widening access and participation.

Success

(a) **Non-continuation**

- OfS continuation data show a gap of 4.0pp in 2015/16 for mature undergraduate students relative to young undergraduate students, but no gaps for 2013/14 and 2014/15, outperforming their under-21 counterparts in 2017/18, with a positive gap of -2.0pp.

(b) **Attainment**

- OfS data show outperformance during 2014/15 to 2018/19 of mature undergraduate students relative to their under-21 counterparts, although performance for the same period against the HE sector average is variable, with no discernible trend evident.

Progression to highly skilled employment or further study at higher level

- OfS data for 2016/17 show a positive gap for mature students, with young (under 21) compared with mature (21 and over) students recording a gap of -20.0pp. This compares favourably to the HE sector average gap for this comparator group of -4.8pp for the same period.
- However, it does not compare favourably to HE sector average progression rates; for instance, in 2016/17 the progression rates for both groups of students were substantially below the HE sector average, with the SEC progression rate for young students at 30.0%, compared to a HE sector average of 70.9%, while the SEC rate for mature students was 50.0%, compared to a HE sector average of 75.8%.

1.4 Disabled students

Access

- OfS data show that the entry rates for students with declared disabilities on undergraduate programmes have significantly outperformed the HE sector average in 2014/15 and 2015/16 and then in 2017/18 and 2018/19. This is also the case for sub-degree programmes from 2015/16 to 2017/18 (although the rate is broadly in line with the HE sector average for 2018/19).
- OfS data also show that student entry rates by disability type have tended to outperform the HE sector average on several occasions, or in the few instances where they have underperformed on undergraduate programmes only, this has not formed a trend of underperformance (i.e. the instances have occurred for three of the disability types during only one of the years between 2014/15 to 2017/18).
- In 2018/19, the access rate for disabled students at the College on an undergraduate programme with cognitive or learning difficulties was 10%, compared to a HE sector average of 5.7%, for those with a mental health condition it was 5.0%, compared to a HE sector average of 4.6%, while for disabled students with sensory, medical or physical impairments it was 15.0%, compared to a HE sector average of 2.2%, and for those with social or communication impairment it was 2.0%, compared to a HE sector average of 0.9%. There were no published data for students with multiple impairments at the College in 2018/19.

Success

(a) **Non-continuation**

- OfS data show there to be a positive gap of -10.0pp, -1.0pp and -5.0pp in 2013/14, 2015/16 and 2016/17 respectively when comparing students not known to be disabled with disabled students. There was no gap for this comparator in 2017/18. This compares favourably to the HE sector average of 0.9pp, 1.0pp, 0.8pp and 0.5pp for the same data points. The continuation rates for disabled students for 2016/17 and 2017/18 are comparable to the HE sector average, being 90.0% and 90.0% respectively, against a HE sector average for the same periods of 90.3%.
- There is insufficient data at present to comment on continuation rates or gaps by disability type, but we will do so if the number of disabled students increases in subsequent years and/or where three-year aggregates/rolling average makes this feasible.

(b) **Attainment**

- There was no gap in attainment during 2018/19 for disabled students, and therefore the target set in the APP 2020/21 to close the gap to 2.5pp by 2024/25 is no longer relevant. However, given that there was a gap of 5.0pp in 2015/16 and 2017/18, the position will continue to be monitored and if a gap emerges a target will be introduced accordingly, together with targeted intervention seeking to close the gap.
- Furthermore, a substantial proportion of disabled students at the College were also from deprivation quintiles 1 and 2 and/or POLAR4 quintiles 1 and 2 between 2013/14 to 2018/19 (based on the OfS individualised student data set). Therefore, disabled students with intersections with these quintiles are likely to benefit indirectly from College initiatives to improve attainment of students from deprivation quintiles 1 and 2 and/or POLAR4 quintiles 1 and 2. Consequently, removing the earlier target for disabled students, but continuing to monitor the relative gap between students not known to be disabled with those that are disabled is reasonable in the circumstances.
- There is insufficient data to comment on attainment rates or gaps by disability type, but we will do so if the number of disabled students increases in subsequent years and/or where three-year aggregates/rolling average makes this feasible.

Progression to highly skilled employment or further study at higher level

- There is only one year of OfS data (2015/16) for comparisons between students not known to be disabled with those that are disabled, which show disabled students out-performing students not known to be disabled, with a positive gap of -10pp. This compares favourably to the HE sector average gap in 2015/16 of 1.5pp.
- However, the progression rate for disabled students in 2015/16 was 17.8pp below the HE sector average of 67.8%.
- There is insufficient data at present to comment on progression rates or gaps by disability type, but we will do so if the number of disabled students increases in subsequent years and/or where data collated as a three-year aggregate on a rolling average basis makes this feasible.

1.5 Deprivation Quintiles

Access *- SEC to close the access gap between deprivation quintile 5 compared with 1 to 0.0pp by 2024/25 and maintain its closure at 0.0pp in 2025/2*6.

- OfS data show a gap of 2.0pp in 2018/19 for deprivation quintile 5 compared with 1, while for 2014/15 to 2017/18 the gap has been positive, being -2.0pp, -2.0pp, -2.0pp and -5.0pp respectively, which compares favourably to the HE sector average gap for this period of 3.5pp, 2.6pp, 2.1pp and 1.4pp.
- There is also a gap in 2018/19 of 5.0pp for deprivation quintile 1 when comparing the rate in the population with that at the College. This is marginally smaller than the HE sector average gap of 5.4pp for the same period. The gap has increased since 2016/17 from 0.0pp to 1.0pp in 2017/18 and 5.0pp in 2018/19, indicating potentially the start of a widening of the gap. (Given that this remains marginally better than the HE sector average a numerical target is difficult to set in order to ensure it remains in line with or better than the sector average moving forward.)
- Meanwhile, OfS data show that, with the exception of 2017/18, the gap for deprivation quintile 2 in the population compared with that at the College has been positive since 2014/15, being -5.0pp (2014/15), -11.0pp (2015/16), -7.0pp (2016/17), 3.0pp (2017/18) and -5.0pp (2018/19). This compares very favourably with the HE sector average gap for the same period of 3.3pp, 3.0pp, 3.1pp, 2.7pp and 2.6pp respectively.

Success

(a) **Non-continuation**

- In 2017/18 the OfS data showed no gap between deprivation quintile 5 compared with 1. This compares favourably with the average gap of 6.6pp in the HE sector.
- Also, in 2017/18, the OfS data showed a positive gap of -5.0pp between deprivation quintile 5 compared with 2, which compares very favourably with the HE sector average gap of 5.5pp.
- OfS data show a positive gap of -1.0pp in 2017/18 for deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5 compared with 1 or 2. Comparing deprivation quintiles for Q4 with Q1 and Q4 with Q2 show no gap, while comparing Q3 with Q1 and Q3 with Q2 show no gap and a positive gap of -5.0pp respectively. In light of this and the continued improvement in continuation rates for undergraduate programmes, the earlier target of a gap of 5.0pp by 2024/25 for deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5 compared to Q1 or Q2 has been met and therefore that target has been removed accordingly. However, the position will continue to be monitored annually and should a gap re-emerge a new target will be set, with targeted intervention taken seeking to close the gap.

(b) **Attainment:**

SEC to reduce the student attainment gap between deprivation quintile 5 compared to 1 to 6.0pp by 2025/26.

SEC to reduce the student attainment gap between deprivation quintiles 5 compared to 2 to 6.0pp by 2025/26.

- The OfS data show a gap of 10.0pp in 2018/19 for both deprivation quintiles 5 compared to 1 and 5 compared to 2 (no data is available for the preceding period 2014/15 to 2017/18). This compares favourably to the HE sector average of 17.7pp and 12.0pp respectively for the same period.
- Deprivation quintile 4 compared to 1 and Q4 compared to Q2 show a gap of 5.0pp and no gap respectively and outperform the HE sector average gap of 14.7pp and 9.0pp respectively.
- Given the availability of this comparator data in 2020, the previous target of 7.0pp by 2024/25 for deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5 compared to Q1 or Q2 has been updated accordingly to the new target above, which should increase granularity and enhance the planning and impact of targeted interventions.

Progression to highly skilled employment or further study at higher level

- The OfS data show a progression gap of 15.0pp in 2016/17 for all other quintiles except 2 compared with 2. However, there are no OfS data to provide a breakdown of the individual comparator groups (i.e. deprivation quintiles 1, 3, 4 or 5 in order for comparisons to be made between deprivation quintile 2 with deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5 (or their aggregate (i.e. deprivation quintiles 3, 4 and 5) (with deprivation quintile 1 being excluded as a comparator group, since it is an under-represented student group)). The College will continue to monitor the OfS APP annual data set so that if or when the data for comparator groups 3, 4 or 5 (or their aggregate) become available a new target can be set and/or suitable targeted intervention undertaken, if required.

1.6 Intersections of deprivation and POLAR4 quintiles

Success – intersection of deprivation quintiles

(a) **Non-continuation**

- The OfS data show a positive continuation gap of 5.0pp in 2017/18 for white students from deprivation quintiles 1 and 2 compared with white students from deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5 (i.e. white students from deprivation quintiles 1 and 2 had continuation rates which were 5.0pp higher than white students from deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5). There were also positive gaps of 5.0pp and 2.0pp in 2013/14 and 2015/16 respectively for this intersection and gaps in 2014/15 and 2016/17 of -5.0pp and -10.0pp respectively. The gap in 2017/18 compares favourably to the HE sector average gap for the same period of -4.5pp.
- OfS data also show a positive gap of 6.0pp in 2017/18 for female students from deprivation quintiles 1 and 2 compared with female students from deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5. In addition, there were positive gaps of 10.0pp and 6.0pp in 2013/14 and 2015/16 respectively for this intersection and a gap of -12pp in 2016/17. The current gap outperformed the HE provider sector average gap for this quintile in 2017/18, which shows a gap of -4.0pp.
- There is either no attainment gap for the remaining intersections of deprivation, or where there is a gap it is not for a priority or under-represented intersected student group.

(b) **Attainment**:

SEC to reduce the attainment gap between female students from deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5 compared with female students from deprivation quintiles 1 or 2 to 8.0pp by 2025/26.

- According to OfS data, there is a positive attainment gap of 25.0pp in 2018/19 for male students from deprivation quintiles 1 and 2 compared with male students from deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5 (i.e. male students from deprivation quintiles 1 and 2 had attainment rates that were 25.0pp higher than male students from deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5). There was no gap in 2017/18. This exceeds the HE sector average in 2017/18 for this quintile, which showed a gap of -4.5pp.
- Based on OfS data, there was a gap of 25.0pp in 2018/19 between the attainment of male students from deprivation quintiles 1 or 2, when compared with the attainment of female students from the same quintiles. This is well below the HE sector average gap for this comparator group of -4.8pp in 2018/19. This is an area that will be examined, but for which a target has not been set since it is not a priority comparator group for the OfS (i.e. there is no difference beyond sex, which without more (such as different intersections) cannot form a target).
- OfS data show a -19.0pp attainment gap in 2018/19 for female students from deprivation quintiles 1 and 2 when compared with female students from deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5 (i.e. female students from deprivation quintiles 1 and 2 attained 19.0pp lower than female students from deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5). There was a positive gap of 10.0pp for this comparator in 2014/15 and 2015/16 and a gap of -15.0pp in 2016/17 and 2017/18. This does not compare favourably to the HE sector average gap of -12.9pp. The target to reduce the attainment gap to a difference of -8.0pp (i.e. female students from deprivation quintiles 1 and 2 attaining 8.0pp lower than female students from deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5), is suitably ambitious in the circumstances (i.e. when compared to the current HE sector average gap of -12.9%). The attainment target above has been drafted so as to avoid a negative gap being set as a target.
- OfS data show a positive gap of 5.0pp in 2018/19 for male students from deprivation quintiles 1 or 2 when compared with female students from deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5, which compares favourably to the HE sector average of -17.7pp.
- The data from the OfS show a positive attainment gap in 2018/19 for male students from deprivation quintiles 1 or 2 compared to female students from quintiles 3, 4 or 5. This compares favourably to the HE sector average gap for this intersection of -17.7pp. However, in 2016/17 and 2017/18, the gap was -30.0pp and -25.0pp respectively; therefore this intersection's attainment will be monitored going forward.
- There is either no attainment gap for the remaining intersections of deprivation, or where there is a gap it is not for a priority or under-represented intersected student group.

Progression to highly skilled employment or further study at higher level - *SEC to reduce the progression gap between white students from deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5 compared with white students from deprivation quintiles 1 or 2 to 0.0pp by 2025/26.*

- The OfS data show a gap of -5.0pp in 2015/16 for white students from deprivation quintiles 1 or 2 compared to white students from deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5. This does not compare favourably to the HE sector average gap for this intersection in 2015/16, which shows a gap of -4.0pp. The attainment target above has been drafted so as to avoid a negative gap being set as annual milestones.

Success – intersection of POLAR4 quintiles

(a) **Non-continuation**:

- The OfS data show a positive gap of 5.0pp in 2017/18 for white students from POLAR4 quintiles 1 and 2 compared with white students from POLAR4 quintiles 3, 4 or 5. There was also a positive gap of 10.0pp in 2013/14 and 2015/16 for this intersection. This compares favourably to the HE provider sector average in 2017/18 for this quintile, which shows a gap of -3.1pp.
- There are no published data or there is no gap for the remaining intersections.

(b) **Attainment**:

- OfS data show no attainment gaps in 2018/19 for this intersection. This compares favourably to the HE sector average gaps for this intersection.

Progression to highly skilled employment or further study at higher level

- OfS data show no progression gaps in 2018/19 for this intersection.

1.7 Other intersections of deprivation and disadvantage

During 2018/19 and 2019/20 we considered a range of intersections from the APP dashboard and OfS individualised student data set in order to inform our understanding of access, disadvantage and deprivation, thereby increasing the contextual nature of the data and subsequent interpretation. The intersections of particular relevance are as follows:

- The OfS individualised data set for 2014/15 to 2018/19 demonstrates that local undergraduate students under the age of 21 are more likely than non-local students to be from POLAR4 Q1 or Q2, while non-local students are more likely to be from POLAR4 Q3 or Q2. This raises the question of hidden forms of disadvantage (i.e. those not currently captured by external or internal data systems), namely the impact of care responsibilities for local and non-local students and commuting for non-local students, hence the points noted in section 1.8 below).
- Local undergraduate students, as demonstrated by the OfS individualised student data set for 2014/15 to 2018/19, are more likely than non-local students to be from deprivation Q2 or Q1, while non-local students are more likely to be from deprivation Q3, Q4 or Q5. This could be compounded by hidden forms of disadvantage, such as care responsibilities and commuting, as noted above.
- Undergraduate programmes have had and continue to have a high proportion of students from POLAR4 quintiles 1 and 2 and deprivation quintiles 1 and 2, as well as intersection of these quintiles; and there are a significant proportion of mature students on undergraduate programmes from deprivation Q1 & Q2, which can be seen in Table 1 below.

	2014/15		2015/16		2016/17		2017/18		2018/19	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
POLAR4 Q1 & Q2	155	66.2%	231	73.6%	259	71.5%	262	68.9%	231	67.3%
deprivation Q1 & Q2	175	50.7%	244	50.6%	306	53.6%	313	52.6%	320	52.0%
Number/% of POLAR4 Q1 & 2 students from deprivation Q1 & Q2	85	54.8%	126	54.5%	148	57.1%	150	57.3%	130	56.3%
Number/% of mature students from deprivation Q1 & Q2	57	51.4%	91	54.2%	123	58.9%	125	54.1%	152	55.9%

Table 1: Full-time undergraduate students from (and intersections relating to) POLAR4 and deprivation Q1 & Q2.

- There are also noticeable intersections of deprivation and disadvantage faced by students with one or more declared disabilities, as evidenced by Table 2 below.

	2014/15		2015/16		2016/17		2017/18		2018/19	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Students with a declared disability	80	23.2%	126	26.1%	105	18.3%	130	21.1%	148	24.0%
Number/% of students with a declared disability from deprivation Q1 & Q2	40	50%	62	49.2%	55	52.4%	62	47.7%	81	54.7%
Number/% of students with a declared disability from from POLAR4 Q1 & Q2	41	51.3%	63	50.0%	44	41.9%	53	40.8%	44	29.7%
Number/% of students with a declared disability that are over the age of 21	23	28.8%	41	32.5%	42	40.0%	51	39.2%	78	52.7%

Table 2: Full-time undergraduate students with one or more declared disabilities from (and intersections relating to) POLAR4 Q1 & Q2, deprivation Q1 & Q2 or over the age of 21.

- The data contained in tables 1 and 2 above will inform the Faculty of HE's approach to strategies, projects and resources when seeking to achieve the targets in this Plan that are associated with these groups of students and the potential added impact of intersections of deprivation and disadvantage that many of them face.
- Particular undergraduate programmes, because of their subject content, reflection of recruitment trends in the sector and popularity among BAME students (as noted in publications, such as N. Alberts & G. Atherton (2016): *The more colours you add, the nicer the picture*, AccessHE) have a disproportionate representation at programme level of particular student personal characteristics. For instance, the Counselling programme recruits predominantly mature students, as do Psychology & Sociology and Costume Construction. Therefore, increasing the range of the HE offer provides an opportunity for subtle positive action, which should contribute to some of the provider level targets, while increasing student choice generally. However, this also exposes possible intersections of disadvantage (including

but not limited to hidden forms of disadvantage), which require a more granular approach to be adopted. In 2019/20, the Faculty of HE increased programme level data analysis relating to widening access and participation, using predominantly OfS published individualised student data. This has included, but is not limited to students from the following groups: POLAR4 quintiles, deprivation (IMD) quintiles, age, disability, BAME/ABMO, local/not local and a range of intersection of these (some of which can be seen in tables 1 and 2 above).

- Prior educational attainment and qualifications are noted by HESA-related research to have an impact on student attainment. In 2019/20, the student record system was updated to capture student qualifications on entry and build capacity to increase the range of intersections that could be considered internally.

1.8 Care leavers

We started tracking care leavers in 2019/20. In addition, the HE Widening Participation Officer is working with the Looked After Children (LAC) Adviser for further education provision at the College to assist in signposting and transitioning looked after children into HE, facilitated by training to HE staff. In 2019/20, she also met with the LAC and virtual school pre- and post-16 teams at Southend Borough Council, commenced a dialogue with Thurrock Council on how to support their looked after children and started exploring opportunities to support the local Uni Connect partnership, *Make Happen*, in their work relating to looked after children. In March 2020, the College started developing strategies and initiatives to support looked after children, especially in the context of COVID-19. We will continue to examine national data to understand the barriers that care leavers experience and use this to inform the ongoing development of any associated strategies, taking account of our local and regional context. We now expect this work to be completed by 2021-22 (taking account of the delay caused by COVID-19).

1.9 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

In 2019/20 we explored updates to our existing data capture and reporting systems so as to include a broader range of student personal characteristics in order to increase the impact at programme and provider level of our widening participation initiatives and/or further inform and granularise our approach to intersectionality. In particular, during 2019/20 we commenced development of our internal data systems to capture, report on and utilise data for analysis relating to the following student personal characteristics: (i) those with caring responsibilities (including students with children), (ii) those with English as an additional language, (iii) those that commute to SEC, (iv) those from military families, (v) those with refugee status, and (vi) those with Roma, Gypsy and Traveller backgrounds. This development is expected to be completed by mid-2020/21. We will then utilise the data collected and associated analysis to inform specific strategies, projects and initiatives across relevant stages of the student-life-cycle, with a view to prioritising targeted interventions to the stage(s) of the student-life-cycle where they are likely to have the greatest impact.

2. Strategic aims and objectives

2.1 Overview

We have used the points below to inform the development of an ambitious, credible and sustainable set of aims, objectives and targets, taking account of the relatively new structures in place (such as the Faculty of HE, which was agreed with validating partners and formed an integral part of the OfS submissions for first registration in 2018 and continued registration in 2020, following merger with PROCAT). This is to ensure equality of opportunity and recognition of difference (where relevant and permissible under the Equality Act 2010 in the form of positive action) for all individuals across the student lifecycle:

- Our assessment of performance – this focuses on:
    - where we have significant gaps by student personal characteristic (i.e. +/- 5.0% or more, or lower when considered in the context of other relevant gaps, or if there is a risk of the gap increasing, if not addressed, due to rising student recruitment)
    - relative performance when compared with the HE sector average and/or population rates where these are relevant or a concern and provide further context
    - being aware of and seeking to respond to a wide range of intersections of deprivation and disadvantage
    - potential gaps in the published and internal data relating to the above
    - adopting a more granular approach to assessing our performance at provider and programme level, using aggregated data (e.g. 'ABMO'/BAME) and three-year totals (on a rolling average basis) where student numbers are too small for annual comparison
    - complementing ongoing relevant commitments to the OfS, such as the Condition B3 undertaking (02/2019) relating to student non-continuation and progression rates.

- An understanding of SEC's strategic context in relation to its HE offer, student catchment area and the potential impact that ongoing broadening of the HE offer (taking account of the implications of COVID-19 for such broadening) could have on student recruitment patterns across student personal characteristics and widening access generally.
- Implementation of Faculty level sub-structures (see Diagram 2 below) and resourcing - these were introduced in 2019/20, with a proportionate approach to increasing resourcing, in order to respond to the demands of understanding, action-planning, monitoring, evaluating and reporting on findings to the Principal and Governors and to validating partners.

The Targets and Investment Plan, attached at the end of this document, has clear and measurable milestones for the duration of this Plan. Where a gap in a target cannot be closed by 2025/26 a longer duration is indicated in this Plan (see section 2.2 and Annex 1 below). In this situation, the College will ensure that ongoing gaps beyond 2025/26, where they continue to be relevant to the prevailing widening participation philosophy, requirements and expectations, will be carried over to the next APP and sufficient resources allocated to closing the gap accordingly. Further or alternatively, the College will continue to actively promote equality of opportunity for the students it serves, in line with the prevailing legislation and funding requirements.

Table 5 at Annex 1 below summarises our continued commitments in this Plan and from the APP 2020/21, where relevant (including progress to date), together with the timeframe within which they are expected to be completed.

Meanwhile, Table 3 below summarises our ongoing financial commitment (first noted in the APP 2020/21, with similar percentages) and for the duration of this Plan across the entirety of the student lifecycle. The percentages reflect the investment needed to meet the targets in this Plan for each stage of the student lifecycle.

Type of investment from higher fee income	2021/22 %	2022/23 %	2023/24 %	2024/25 %	2025/26 %
Access (pre-16)	1.40%	1.40%	1.40%	1.40%	1.40%
Access (post-16)	2.60%	2.60%	2.60%	2.60%	2.60%
Access (adults and community)	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%
Access (other)	0.70%	0.70%	0.70%	0.70%	0.70%
Total access investment (a)	*7.20%*	*7.20%*	*7.20%*	*7.20%*	*7.20%*
Hardship fund (b)	3.70%	3.70%	3.70%	3.70%	3.70%
Research and evaluation investment (c)	1.40%	1.40%	1.40%	1.40%	1.40%
Sub-total (a+b+c)	*12.30%*	*12.30%*	*12.30%*	*12.30%*	*12.30%*
Success investment (d)	13.00%	13.00%	13.00%	13.00%	13.00%
Progression investment (e)	14.70%	14.70%	14.70%	14.70%	14.70%
Total higher fee income investment (a+b+c+d+e)	*40.00%*	*40.00%*	*40.00%*	*40.00%*	*40.00%*

Table 3: Summary of financial investment as a proportion of higher fee income across the student lifecycle.

2.2 Target groups, aims and objectives

We have set the strategic aims and objectives below for full-time undergraduate degree programmes for the duration of this Plan, with associated annual milestones in order to respond to access and participation, success and progression gaps, as well as intersections of deprivation and disadvantage (and significant under-performance, where relevant). In addition, the targets below are suitably ambitious, proportionate, timely and sufficiently resourced across the student lifecycle (see Section 2.1 above and this section below).

- To increase access to HE generally (through outreach activities) and SEC specifically:

    o for **students from BAME backgrounds**, improving the access rate at SEC for this group from 9.0% in 2018/19 to 14.0% by 2025/26
    o for students from **deprivation quintile 1**, closing the gap when compared with students from deprivation quintile 5 from 2.0pp in 2018/19 to 0.0pp by 2024/25 and maintain the closed gap at 0.0pp in 2025/26.

- To narrow the attainment gap:

  - for **BAME students** when compared with white students from 30.0pp (covering the three-year aggregate for 2016/17 to 2018/19) to 18.0pp by 2025/26 (representing the three-year aggregate for 2023/24 to 2025/26)
  - for **BAME students aged over 21** when compared with white students aged over 21 from 51.0pp (for the three-year aggregate of 2016/17 to 2018/19) to 25.0pp by 2025/26 (representing the three-year aggregate for 2023/24 to 2025/26)
  - for students from **deprivation quintile 1** when compared with students from deprivation quintile 5 from 10.0pp in 2018/19 to 6.0pp by 2025/26
  - for students from **deprivation quintiles 2** when compared with students from deprivation quintile 5 from 10.0pp in 2018/19 to 6.0pp by 2025/26
  - for **female students from deprivation quintiles 1 or 2** when compared with female students from deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5 from 19.0pp in 2018/19 to 8.0pp by 2025/26

- To raise the attainment:

  - for **BAME students from deprivation quintiles 1 and 2** when compared with white students from deprivation quintiles 1 and 2 from 31.0% (for the three-year aggregate of 2016/17 to 2018/19) to 46.0% by 2025/26 (representing the three-year aggregate for 2023/24 to 2025/26)

- To close the progression gap:

  - for students from **POLAR4 quintiles 1 or 2** when compared with students from POLAR4 quintiles 3, 4 or 5 from 15.0pp in 2015/16 to 0.0pp by 2025/26
  - for **white students from deprivation quintiles 1 or 2** when compared with white students from deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5 from 5.0pp in 2015/16 to 0.0pp by 2025/26

- To increase progression rates for all students ensuring equality of opportunity in particular for students identified in this plan and move them closer to HE sector average.

In relation to the rate of progress made in closing the gaps or addressing significant under-performance across the entirety of the student lifecycle we will continue to examine both internal and external sources (such as national data sets looking at challenges for target and under-represented student groups) to supplement existing data sets (particularly where data is limited or it is new data). This should increase our understanding of, result in a timely response to, and lead to the development of proactive strategies for closing emerging and existing gaps.

In addition to these targets, we have committed to increasing our understanding of and support for students facing multiple barriers when studying with us by the end of 2020/21 (as outlined in this section below and in section 1.7 above), thereby contributing to strategies to deliver continuous improvement. We expect to develop specific aims for students with these personal characteristics in 2020/21 and, where we have identified significant gaps or relative underperformance internally

for students with these intersections of deprivation and/or disadvantage, we commit to setting objectives for the remaining term of this Plan. Consequently, we will:

- increase our understanding of and support for **students who have been in local authority care and/or are from military families**.
- increase our understanding of and support for **local and non-local students who are parents,** with care responsibilities for their children **and/or who have other care responsibilities**.
- increase our understanding of and support for **students who have non-traditional educational backgrounds** (such as non-A level qualifications), have had a significant break from education, are mature entry students with low or no tariff scores and those taking a career break to study.
- increase our understanding of and support for **students facing intersections of disadvantage and hidden disadvantage** (such as non-local mature students, with care responsibilities, from deprivation Q1 or Q2; BAME POLAR Q1 or Q2 students with English as an additional language; non-local disabled students returning to education, disabled students that are from POLAR Q1 or Q2 or deprivation Q1 or Q2).
- increasing our understanding of and support for **students with mental health issues**. In order to facilitate this, we will recruit a *HE Mental Health Practitioner* (0.5 to 1.0 FTE) by the end of 2021/22.
- increase our understanding of and response to the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the groups of students considered in this Plan (in particular during their journey to us and while with us). An initial response to this is to recruit a *Study Skills Officer* (1.0 FTE) by the start of 2021/22 in order to contribute to easing transition to HE and between levels while on programme, thereby assisting in improving student success rates and relative performance of student groups.

We have also implemented the NERUPI framework in 2019/20 and are implementing HEAT in 2020/21. These will assist in informing the development of any associated targets moving forward.

Our Targets and Investment Plan (TIP) was completely redesigned in 2019/20, and it has been further updated in 2020/21. The TIP is in addition to existing successful strategies, such as ring-fencing of higher tuition fee income increases across existing HE programmes from the baseline year of 2018/19 in order to use such additional money to continuously improve the student academic experience. For new HE programmes the ring-fencing of higher tuition fees is on the basis of added value elements, such as trips, equipment or other aspects that improve the student academic experience, employability and/or advance value for money. Both the allocation percentages in the TIP and the ring-fenced higher tuition fee income amounts ('earmarked funds') inform annual course viability calculations and the annual budget for the Faculty of HE. The expenditure from earmarked funds is monitored by the Senior Leadership Team, HE Value for Money Committee and Governors, thereby ensuring and assuring effective, efficient, transparent and timely allocation of such earmarked funds and consideration of their impact on the student academic experience and, more recently, employability.

The targets in this Plan are increasingly data-led, stretching and supported by complementary resources and strategies in addition to those noted in this document. All things considered, including but not limited to the substantial and sustained increase in resources across the entirety of the student lifecycle, as well as the commitment to continuously improving the student academic experience, the expected improvements in student outcomes (even as the student numbers

increase) are credible, context-sensitive and underpinned by structural changes implemented since 2018 and which have in part been independently externally tested. A key example is the successful introduction of a dedicated Faculty of HE in August 2018 (and the subsequent sub-structure for widening participation), which has been externally audited, with positive outcomes for student recruitment and retention (in April 2019) and management and governance (in January 2020), Since 2018, there has been greater accountability for and more effective evaluation of the impact of structures, strategies, initiatives and processes at various levels within the College, and since 2019/20 the strategic focus on employability has been reviewed in light of the emerging impact of COVID-19.

A number of assumptions have also been made due to the relatively small size of the provision and the expected change in comparator metrics to ensure the robustness of the targets set and that gains are sustainable:

- Given the regional ethnic demographic, the range of HE programmes now on offer and the timeframe required to validate, promote and recruit to a broader range of HE provision, progress on increasing access for BAME students at the College is likely to be relatively slow in the first three years, with acceleration expected thereafter once the diversity of HE provision has had time to become established. Adjusting for local and regional population demographics, the BAME student access and participation rate is expected to be in line with or exceed the regional population demographic by 2025/26 and start moving to the HE sector average by 2026/27 and be aligned to the HE sector average by 2029/30. The timescale for these two latter elements has been revised downwards from the APP 2020/21 due to the increased investment, resources (and associated sustainable commitment) and progress being made to increase the effectiveness of outreach activities since the beginning of 2019/20. Outreach activities to increase BAME access and participation in HE generally have been underway since 2018/19 and are being adapted from March 2020 in order to adjust to the evolving impact of COVID-19. This will also have an impact on the outreach activities being planned for deprivation quintile 1, which in terms of the College and relative to deprivation quintile 5 showed a gap of 2.0% in 2018/19. The College realises that as the HE offer expands in size and diversity, as well as its catchment area, there is likely to be a relative percentage increase in students from deprivation quintile 5 and therefore a risk of this gap widening if not addressed. Consequently, the College will further refine its existing student record system and data collection (including UCAS data) for full-time undergraduate programmes in 2020/21 to identify increases across student groups in both percentage and absolute terms (or numbers) and at programme level, thereby ensuring a greater degree of granularity. Although not part of the numerical target, the College intends to identify and deploy strategies to ensure that deprivation quintile 1 in the population when compared with that at the College is in line with or better than the HE sector average.

- There are no gaps in continuation rates evident from the 2020 OfS data set, which is likely to be attributable to the sustained focus, investment and targeted intervention to improve these across programmes and at provider level since the QAA Reviews in 2016 and 2017 and subsequent HEFCE and OfS monitoring. To this end, there has been a dramatic improvement in continuation rates at provider level and across many full-time HE programmes since 2015/16. Notwithstanding this, the College continues to take a robust approach to monitoring all student groups and intersections and all facets of continuation, including but not limited to intercalation across its full-time HE offer. This monitoring is expected to increase in 2020/21 in response to the impact of COVID-19.

- Strategies to improve attainment for SEC's BAME students is expected to be relatively slow over the duration of this Plan due to the time lag from making improvements and the impact on attainment to feed through, as well as responding to intersections of deprivation and disadvantage faced by many of the BAME students studying at the College. Time will also be required to implement, evaluate and review any positive action activities at curriculum level for BAME students. Consequently, we anticipate the gap for attainment to be brought in line with the sector average by the start of 2026/27 and to close the gap with white students by the start of 2032/33. However, in order to ensure a timely and proportionate response to gaps in attainment for BAME students, the Faculty of HE has started aggregating three years attainment data on a rolling average basis from the start of 2020/21 in order to provide sufficient student numbers for comparisons to be made, as well as limiting the aggregated data to programmes which have BAME students on them (and excluding those that do not). Given that the College has a high proportion of students (including BAME students) from deprivation quintiles 1 and 2 and who are mature, these intersections will also be considered and targeted accordingly and should complement in part the attainment target regarding reducing the gap between the attainment of students from deprivation quintile 5 compared to 1 and deprivation quintile 5 compared to 2. When designing targeted projects and considering associated links and overlap between them, the above two sets of gaps should complement in part the reduction in the attainment gap between male students from deprivation quintiles 1 or 2 compared with female students from quintiles 1 or 2 (although this is not a specific target of this Plan) and to reduce the attainment gap between female students from deprivation quintiles 1 or 2 compared with female students from quintiles 3, 4 or 5. This is expected to result in greater granularity and underpin a holistic approach to targeted interventions in relation to achieving the targets in this Plan. As for the timeframe for improving the attainment gap for the latter two specific targets above, the College considers it to be proportionate in the circumstances and taking account of the time lag from intervention to impact feeding through. The College envisages that the gap for these two targets will be in line with or better than the HE sector average beyond the duration of this Plan and the new targets and associated milestones will be updated accordingly in the next APP.

- Progression rates across student groups are well below the HE sector average (and started to be addressed by the College at the end of 2018/19) and, despite the relatively small cohort size, some gaps are evident in the APP data set. These can be seen in the progression rates of students from POLAR4 quintiles 1 or 2 relative to POLAR4 quintiles 3, 4 or 5, and of white students from deprivation quintiles 1 or 2 compared with white students from deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5. The planned and actual investment since 2018/19 on employability strategies, associated resources and embedding of employability into the HE curriculum is likely to contribute to the improvement in these relative gaps going forward. This will be complemented by targeted interventions to reduce the gaps in these student groups as well as improve student progression rates generally (thereby reducing the likelihood of gaps widening and/or (re-)emerging), with proportionate allocation and timely application of adequate financial resources to do so (as evidenced in part in Table 3 above).

Given the relatively small nature of the provision, an expanding HE offer and expected catchment area, a range of internal milestones will be embedded to track progress to meet the targets set, complemented by strong leadership within the Faculty of HE, specialist research, a strengthening of the HE team to cover the additional resourcing requirements to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate these targets and a robust Theory of Change.

3. Strategic measures

3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

<u>Overview</u>

SEC has had a longstanding commitment to widening participation, equality and diversity and supporting students. In 2017, the College recognised the increasing demands being placed on it with changes in the HE sector and therefore a Faculty of HE was formed and implemented from 1st August 2018 as part of the institutional approval with UEA and application for OfS registration in 2018. The central HE related strategies are developed through peer review with SEC's validating partners, in particular UEA and UAL and internally approved by the Principal and Governors, with detailed discussions about value for money at senior level and through the HE Value for Money Committee. Validating partners are invited to take part in the recruitment process for key Faculty of HE staff, thereby ensuring and assuring the ongoing oversight, quality and operational integrity of the HE provision. (Aspects of this approach were externally tested by the College's internal auditors in April 2019 and January 2020, with a positive outcome for the College's full-time undergraduate provision on both occasions.) This approach will continue for the duration of this Plan and may be extended thereafter. The move to a Faculty of HE and its associated deliberative and dedicated structure, strategies, personnel, systems, policies, procedures, processes, close working relationship with its validating partners and an increasingly data-led approach places the HE provision at SEC in a relatively strong position, although it is recognised that there is further work to be done. Notwithstanding this, the Faculty of HE has developed a robust Theory of Change, which has been updated from last year for this Plan and which is supported by the Principal and Governors and underpinned by the following overarching principles:

- **An increasingly data-led approach** to the continued design, development, implementation, monitoring and review of widening participation, student success and progression, taking account of a range of data sources, metrics and indicators.
- Promoting equality of opportunity, valuing difference and avoiding the use of a deficit model, **embedding an inclusive approach**.
- **Sharing good practice and learning from a range of stakeholders**, including but not limited to the College's validating partners.
- **A strategic approach to regulation, quality assurance and planning**, which takes account of the implications of change on operations and resourcing.
- **Close attention is paid to value for money for all models of delivery** and the ongoing dialogue in the sector regarding developments in this area.
- **Use of an effective course viability model**, ensuring and assuring that resources follow students and is flexible enough to accommodate the implications of COVID-19.
- **A holistic approach is adopted to data and metrics at both programme and provider level**. This takes account of a range of contributory factors and influences affecting our HE students and their journey with us.
- **Clearly articulated and time-scaled commitments**.
- **A robust and evolving evaluative process, with proportionate and timely interventions**. These should ensure that the set targets are achieved as planned.

- **A collaborative and transparent working arrangement with relevant departments and key staff outside of the Faculty of HE**, ensuring that due regard is paid to, priority given to and resources allocated to this Plan and its associated targets.

Whole institution approach

As a FE College with HE in FE, a balanced approach is necessary to align to the distinctive regulatory and funding frameworks for each (and the crossover in Higher Apprenticeships) to ensure value for money and a good student academic experience for all students. The implementation of the Faculty of HE, reporting directly to the Principal, ensures and assures a whole institution approach to this Plan and HE generally (see Diagram 1 below). For instance, structures and systems continue to be refined within the Faculty of HE (see Diagram 2 below) in order to respond in a timely manner to changes in the HE sector and stakeholder requirements and expectations. Developments within the Faculty of HE are considered at an institutional level by the HE Committee, chaired by the Principal, with membership including a range of managers and Programme Leaders from the Faculty of HE, managers from outside of the Faculty of HE that engage with it, the Vice Principal (Quality and Compliance), who has quality and regulatory oversight of HE provision outside of the Faculty of HE, a HE Link Governor and a Partnerships Manager from UEA; a similar approach is adopted to membership of the HE Value for Money Committee, chaired by the Principal and/or Deputy Principal. Formed in 2016/17, the HE Student Support Forum has been pivotal to informing the HE Student Support Strategy, its implementation and sharing of good practice across the College.

The Forum is now chaired by the HE Student Engagement Officer, with Faculty of HE related and cross-College membership of individuals involved in or contributing to HE. This is supplemented by regular formal meetings with validating partners (UEA, UAL, The OU and UoE), all of whom monitor the College's alignment to their approval and validation requirements and those of the sector, including but not limited to the OfS and associated commitment to widening participation and Access and Participation Plans. Governors have oversight of Access and Participation Plans. In 2019/20, the following structure was introduced within the Faculty of HE in preparation for the APP 2020/21 to complement the SEC widening participation evidence base (Table 4 below) and the SEC Theory of Change (Diagram 3 below), which should contribute to achievement of the targets in this Plan and, through the Widening Participation Evidence and Evaluation Board, facilitate continuous improvement:
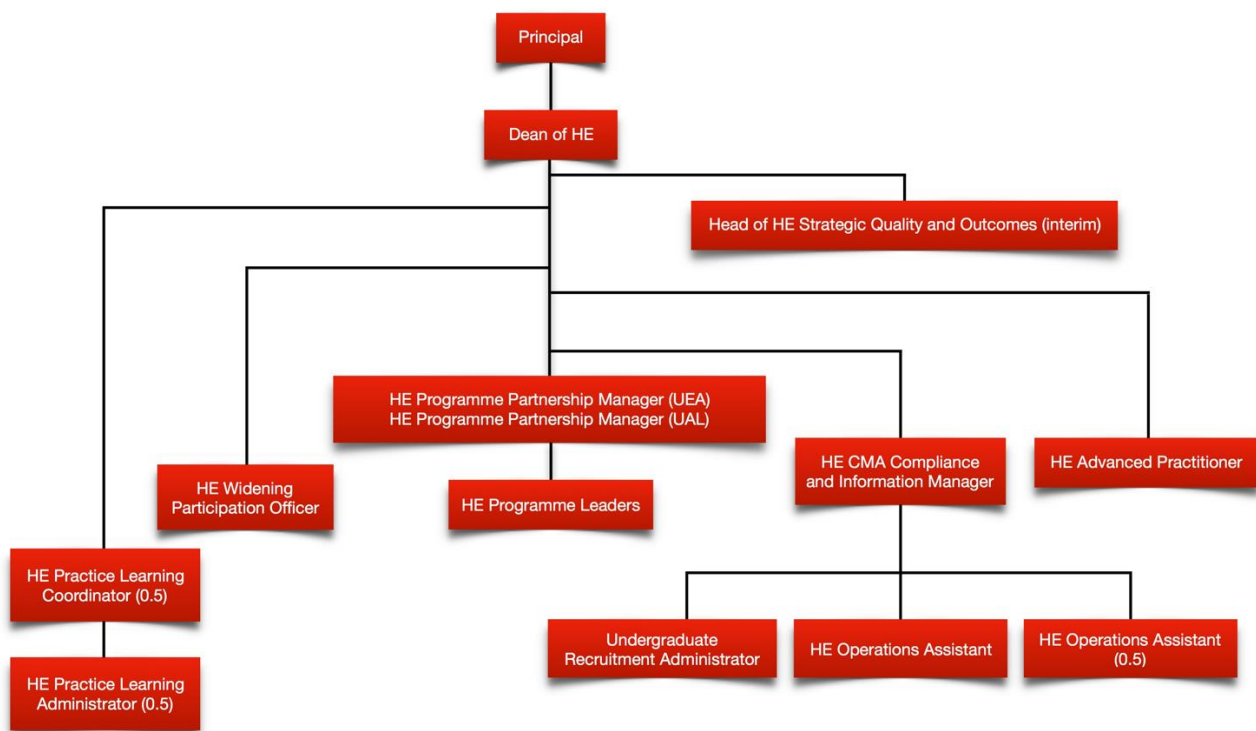
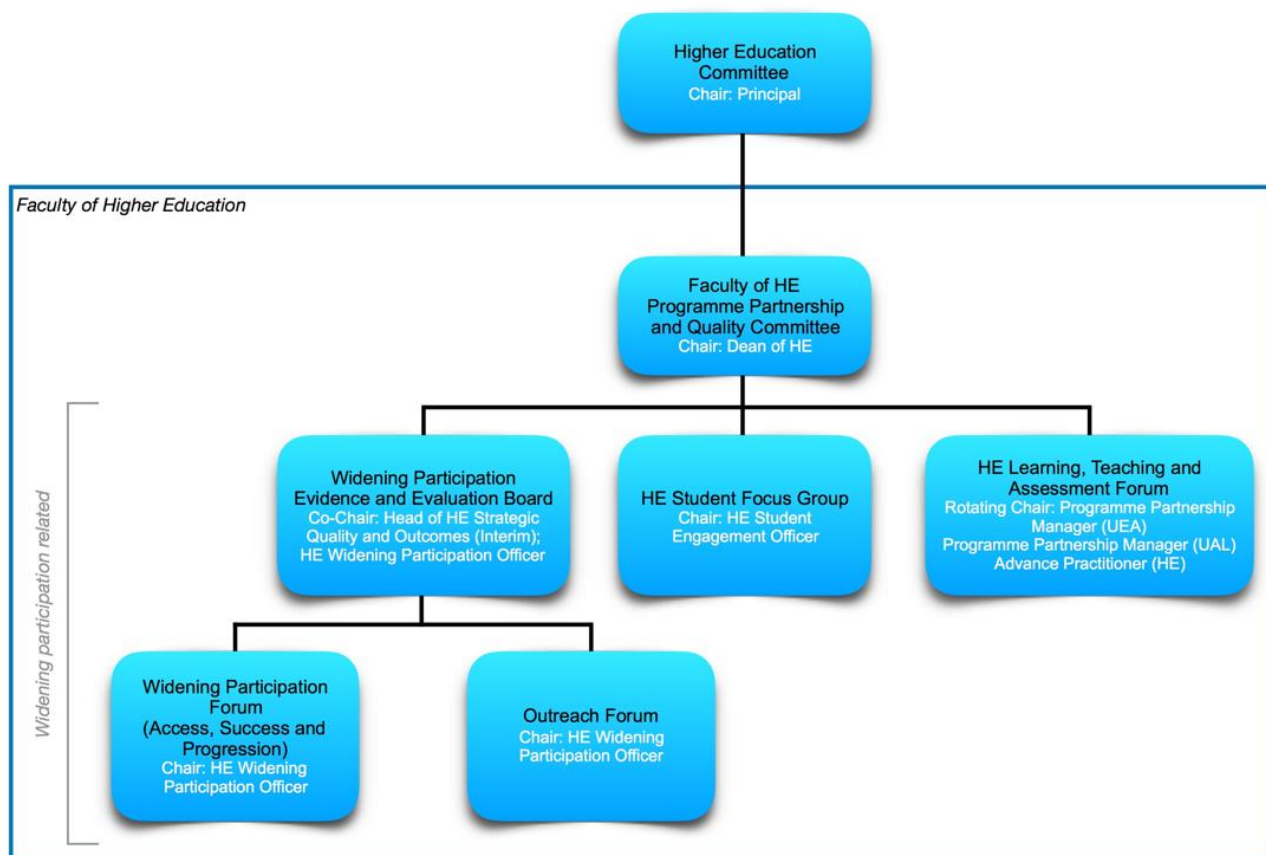**Diagram 1**: Faculty of Higher Education structure

Diagram 2: Faculty of Higher Education widening participation related structure.

<u>Alignment with other strategies and collaboration</u>

SEC actively promotes equality and diversity, which has been underpinned across the College by the **Strategic Plan 2017-20**, including strategic aims that committed the College to delivering high quality, inclusive teaching, learning and assessment, developing HE provision through continuous improvement of the student academic experience and of student outcomes (this dovetails to the Higher Education Strategy 2017-20) and respecting, promoting and celebrating diversity. (The recently published *Strategic Plan 2020*-23 values this approach, emphasising the importance of continuing to improve HE student outcomes.) The **Higher Education Strategy 2017-20** has key drivers that include "Positively engaging with a changing HE landscape" (Driver 1); this focuses on responding to regulation, meeting various HE metrics and is reinforced by the **HE Enhancement and Continuous Improvement Strategy 2017-20** (which seeks to facilitate the identification, sharing and continuous improvement of good practice in HE). The *Higher Education Strategy 2017-20* also focuses on effective resourcing and course viability (Driver 2), acknowledges the need to reposition the HE portfolio, promoting cultural capital as it does so (Driver 3) and maximising student opportunities and direction across the student lifecycle from access to progression (Driver 4). These two HE specific strategies are supplemented by the **HE Student Support Strategy**, which seeks "to enhance the overall student experience for every Higher Education student studying at the College". These three HE strategies were recognised as contributing to institutional level enhancement in the QAA HER partial re-review in June 2017. The HE related strategies are being reviewed in the first half of 2020/21 (in order for updating and further alignment to changes in the HE sector). These and subsequent HE related strategies will have due regard for, be informed by and be appropriately aligned to this Plan, with the Dean of Higher Education and the Head of HE Strategic Quality and Outcomes roles leading on the drafting and implementation of these strategies.

The strategies noted above, and the design of this Plan have been informed by or had due regard to the Equality Act 2010. At provider level, the commitment to equality and diversity is demonstrated by an **Equality and Diversity Policy** and associated monitoring and reporting, as well as positive outcomes of external scrutiny by regulatory, funding and quality assurance bodies. The Faculty of HE is currently finalising an HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) (to be completed and introduced by mid-2020/21), and will in 2020/21 design and implement a HE specific equality, diversity and inclusion strategy that seeks to "glue" the other strategies in a HE-focused manner, enhancing the existing whole provider approach to equality, diversity and inclusion articulated in the College's *Strategic Plan 2020-23*) and associated documentation, with peer review by UEA and UAL. This includes a focus on transition and will in 2020/21 consider the interactions between students with protected characteristics and students who are under-represented in HE, as well as those who fall within intersections of deprivation and/or disadvantage.

The LTAS is being informed by OfS metrics, including but not limited to TEF metrics (both provider and subject level if and when they become available), Condition B3 baseline numerical data and any associated undertaking, APP data set, OfS individualised student data, widening participation priorities, with embedded themes of inclusivity, resilience building, transition, academic stretch, skills development and employability. This is being dovetailed to the **HE Employability Strategy 2021-25**, which applies a holistic approach across the student lifecycle. The Strategy adopts a Graduate Capital Model and a range of sector leading frameworks, such as the AdvanceHE framework for embedding employability, elements of the NERUPI Evaluation Framework for Levels 3 to 6, and the UAL Creative Attributes Framework (for the UAL validated provision), as well as explicitly signposting the commitments to this Plan in the Strategy document. The current and

future projects relating to employability are informed in part by the range of metrics noted above and, in particular, the progression rates and gaps noted in this Plan and associated targets.

External research and consultancy input for employability is expected to be primarily sourced through AdvanceHE, with additional input from others. Careers advice and associated platforms such as Abintegro are already being utilised to increase student engagement with career and progression planning and form an integral component of the *HE Employability Strategy 2021-25*. This is expected to be expanded through other platforms, such as Gradintelligence, thereby increasing students' employability. We are planning to purchase and implement the HEAR report element of Gradintelligence by the end of 2020/21. In addition, a strategic approach is taken to quality assurance by the Head of HE Strategic Quality and Outcomes and operational management by the Dean of Higher Education. Both roles will directly lead on and be accountable for the implementation of this Plan from 2020/21 to its conclusion. The Faculty of HE works closely with its key validating partners (UEA and UAL) to share good practice, participate in peer review of its strategies, policies and procedures. This approach informs aspects of the Theory of Change outlined below in Diagram 3.

SEC works collaboratively with a range of stakeholders. For instance, the College is a HE Partner of Uni Connect, working with other local HEIs (examples of projects include "day in the life of a uni student" online taster days, delivered with input from Programme Leaders for associated HE provision). SEC also works with Southend Borough Council (examples of projects include two Programme Leaders mentoring Year 8 students in school as part of the 60 Minute Mentor programme organised by the Council and on design of the Business Entrepreneurship degree and placements for students). In 2020/21, collaborative working will extend to (i) HE Programme Leader input to design and evaluation of outreach provision, (ii) the HE Widening Participation Officer visiting UEA to shadow the widening participation team and sharing best practice in outreach, and (iii) working with students through the HE Student Focus Group.

Our Theory of Change and strategic measures

SEC is becoming increasingly focused on widening participation and student outcomes throughout the student lifecycle. The move to a Faculty of HE has accelerated this journey, but there is still much to do, which is reflected in our existing and planned approach to the evidence base (see Table 4 below) to inform and/or underpin our Theory of Change, the associated strategic measures and their monitoring and evaluation (see Diagram 3 below).

AIMS	ONGOING MONITORING	TRIGGERED 'DEEP DIVES'	EVALUATION	OUTCOMES
Development of robust evidence base – internally and externally sourced desk research, literature reviews and contextual data.				
Existing approach				
Assessment and monitoring of performance.	• Tracking of and alignment to sector policy, regulations, guidance and provider context (including consideration	• Specific projects to respond to existing and emerging underperformance or gaps in relative performance of student groups.	• Institutional level reports drafted by the Faculty of HE which embed or consider contributory aspects of WP, such as annual monitoring reports,	Improved understanding of widening access, participation, success and

AIMS	ONGOING MONITORING	TRIGGERED 'DEEP DIVES'	EVALUATION	OUTCOMES
	of a range of metrics and indicators). • Wider understanding of developments in the HE sector through affiliate membership of AdvanceHE since the beginning of 2019/20. • Increasing HE academic and non-academic staff's understanding of developments in the HE sector through "fellowship" level of membership (and above) of AdvanceHE (introduced/facilitated by UEA in late 2019/20)	• Holistic approach to SEC metrics, indicators and contributory measures (e.g. provider and subject level TEF, NSS, APP data set, labour market data and trends). • Initial visit to Northampton University in 2019 to learn from best practice in employability.	NSS reports, HE papers to Governors. • Peer review of OfS aligned activities by validating partners (in particular UEA).	progression across the HE sector and, in particular, the region and SEC's catchment area.
		Planned improvements to the approach in 2020/21		
Enhanced assessment and monitoring of performance.	• Identifying and monitoring sector best practice across a range of HEIs. • Working more closely with validating partners (UEA and UAL) to develop programme area level and subject level approaches to improving student access, participation, success and progression.	• 'Bought-in' specialist external research relating to SEC's strategic measures. • Allocated basic research and implementation roles ("HE WP Champions") for each portfolio in the Faculty of HE. • Full integration of WP related approach, activities and strategies with complementary strategies and activities, such as learning, teaching assessment and student support.	• Improved evaluative framework, such as NERUPI to inform the design of WP related projects. • Full implementation of HEAT to measure the impact of outreach activities. • Active membership of AccessHE.	Better informed / more data-led investment that continues to maximise impact.
Increasing the granular nature of performance monitoring – management data, information and analytics.				
		Existing approach		
Understanding of contributory factors, context and barriers faced by students.	• Monitoring multiple indicators and metrics (including split metrics), intersections and HE sector averages.	• Holistic and drilled-down approach to metrics across NSS, TEF (provider and subject level if/when they become available), APP	• Evaluation of the impact of certain interventions and projects. • Extension of NERUPI evaluative framework to student transition from	Design of effective measures and initiatives.

AIMS	ONGOING MONITORING	TRIGGERED 'DEEP DIVES'	EVALUATION	OUTCOMES
	• Identifying and responding to a range of intersections of deprivation and disadvantage at programme and provider level.	data set and individualised student data. • Consideration of sector research and publications and contextualising to SEC accordingly. • Initial analysis of the relationship between input factors and output measures (mainly in the context of progression rates). • Use of three-years' aggregated data for BAME (ABMO) students in order to identify gaps in attainment.	level 4 to 5 and 6 while at SEC.	
**Planned improvements to the approach in 2020/21**			
Improved understanding of a wider range of contributory factors and barriers (including a broader range of intersections of disadvantage).	• Analysis of gaps within data systems, increasing use of intersectionality and identification of hidden barriers to facilitate greater drilling down to understand contributory causes of barriers.	• Detailed analysis of relationship between input factors and output measures across the student lifecycle. • Increasing contextual examination of performance gaps and relative under-performance, disaggregating into student sub-groups wherever feasible, using quantitative and qualitative data/information. • Introduction of three years' aggregated totals on a <u>rolling average basis</u> for students from BAME/ABMO backgrounds in order to gain a better understanding of long-term trends, if any.	• Robust evaluation of input and outcomes of interventions and projects (including but not limited to using the OfS evaluation self-assessment tool to inform continuous improvement of our approach to evaluation). • Sharing best practice in evaluation with members of Access HE.	Design of more granular and targeted initiatives that increase impact.
**Understanding and responding to root causes – active quantitative and qualitative analysis and investigation.**			
Existing approach			
Evidence-led measures and investment,	• Unit E, the HE student record system, is being further updated at the end	• Specific Access and Participation Plan 2019/20 projects to meet set targets.	• Annual review of value for money through HE Value for Money Committee to	Effective evaluation of strategic

AIMS	ONGOING MONITORING	TRIGGERED 'DEEP DIVES'	EVALUATION	OUTCOMES
informing Theory of Change.	of 2019/20 to include the range of student data (including intersections) required to meet this Plan. • Course viability model underpins aspects of value for money and budget allocation. • Widening access and participation related structures introduced in the Faculty of HE.	• Design of projects to meet set targets for the Access and Participation Plan 2020/21 (commencing at the end of 2019/20).	underpin oversight of spending on HE. • Monitoring by Governors of Access and Participation Plan related projects and spend.	approach to Theory of Change.
Planned improvements to the approach in 2020/21				
Enhancements to evidence-led measures, investment and evaluation of impact, leading to sustainable impact.	• Increased data analysis across intersections of student characteristics, including but not limited to intersections of deprivation and disadvantage.	• Design and development of APP projects at provider and portfolio level, underpinning the strategic measures identified in the Theory of Change for this Plan. • Continue to expand understanding of value for money and sector expectations accordingly, further informing refinement of scope of monitoring processes.	• Stakeholder satisfaction level with project outcomes and impact. • Initial impact on internal and externally verified performance indicators. • Monitoring by Governors of commitments in this Plan that commence in 2020/21.	Robust evaluation of strategic approach to Theory of Change.

Table 4: SEC Access and Participation Evidence Base and planned improvements for 2020/21.

Our Theory of Change is divided into three inter-related sections, with strategic measures including overarching elements, a response to barriers and targeted measures. The overarching elements recognise the importance of a distinctive structure and approach to HE, with a focus on inclusivity throughout the student lifecycle (exclusivity here is implied within the scope of positive action under the Equality Act 2010). The response to barriers provides an outline of the approach to promoting inclusivity, which is then narrowed in scope to targeted measures. Intermediate outcomes then provide opportunities to monitor and evaluate performance against the target measures and highlight the distance travelled to achieving the outcomes targets and milestones in this Plan. A robust data-led, sector informed and contextualised approach is fundamental to ensuring the effectiveness of our Theory of Change, hence the approach adopted in Table 4 above, which includes planned improvements in 2020/21. This section provides the narrative to our Theory of Change.

Diagram 3: SEC Theory of Change.

(1) Underpinning strategic measures across the student lifecycle

(i) Dedicated HE structure and approach

All undergraduate degree programmes reside within and have been directly line managed by the Faculty of HE since August 2018, with the Dean of HE having oversight of the HE provision within the Faculty of HE only, thereby leading to a more focused and responsive approach to meeting stakeholder needs, expectations and regulatory requirements. A good example is the introduction of the course viability model for the Faculty of HE provision and the HE Value for Money Committee, which have contributed to a substantial increase in and a more targeted allocation of financial resources to fund new job roles and a range of strategies, initiatives and projects associated with and complementary to widening access, participation, success and progression; this approach has been viewed positively by validating partners and by the TEF 4 Panel (in its report of the College's successful submission for the TEF 4 award).

Since August 2018, student recruitment and admissions for full-time undergraduate degree programmes were brought into the Faculty of HE, not only to comply with *The revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education*, but also legal and regulatory requirements. The Faculty of HE structure started to have a positive impact on the approach to the APP 2020/21, with the introduction of a dedicated sub-structure (see Diagram 2 above), which was not possible prior to formation of the Faculty. There is now greater transparency in resource allocation, since undergraduate provision has been removed from a mixed-economy model of an FE and HE department structure, which has improved its effectiveness and efficiency (as evidenced in part by two consecutive independent auditors' reports in May 2019 and January 2020 by the College's internal auditors),

also becoming evident in subsequent HE Value for Money Committee meetings, monitoring of impact by Governors and feedback from student representatives in HE Programme Boards from 2019/20.

Student recruitment and admissions controls have been tightened since student recruitment and admissions were brought into the Faculty of HE, which is important for monitoring applications and ensuring and assuring students are recruited with integrity, thereby contributing positively to non-continuation rates. Following an external audit in April 2019 (and internal publication of the report in May 2019) of student recruitment and retention within the Faculty of HE, it was recognised that while the internal structures and processes within the Faculty are robust, there were opportunities to "optimise" student recruitment strategies, one aspect of which was to design and develop a Higher Education Recruitment Strategy for the Faculty of HE (considered further in section 3.4 below). Further controls were introduced at the end of 2019/20 following temporary student number controls for 2020/21 entry and in response to consumer protection law in light of the restrictions imposed by COVID-19 and the Government's and OfS's response to it. The dedicated Faculty of HE structure ensures that consistency is maintained across the full-time HE programmes in the Faculty and that decision-making is timely and fair (even with the disruption caused by the current pandemic).

(ii) Inclusive HE offer, curriculum and marketing
The Faculty of HE is continuing to explore a range of measures to further improve the inclusivity of the HE offer and curriculum, building on its existing approach to module and unit changes, active inclusion of student representatives in course (re)validations and facilitating students as partners and co-creators in their learning, in part through HE Programme Boards, where student representatives provide feedback and suggestions for continuous improvement of their course design, delivery, resourcing and sector alignment. Student representation is encouraged from all student groups (including minority and under-represented student groups). As the provision expands, dedicated marketing effort will be required to ensure and assure an inclusive approach to marketing programmes to non-local students in the UK. To this end and in order to increase subject focused marketing to under-represented groups such as BAME students and those from deprivation quintile 1, a new role is being created (which will be recruited to in early 2022/23 and will be based predominantly within the Faculty of HE) entitled *HE Marketing and Widening Participation Communication Officer*; this will crystallise the momentum of key operational elements of the College's Theory of Change. The role will be closely informed by the priorities in this Plan and will involve liaising with relevant parts of the College's and Partners' marketing departments. In the interim, we will continue to engage an external consultant (a consultant was first engaged in 2019/20) to assist in HE marketing associated with widening participation priorities in the APP 2020/21 and this Plan (namely access and progression) and more generally so as to ensure sufficient momentum is generated and understanding gained about the target groups and relevant commitments in the APP 2020/21 and this Plan before handing over to the *HE Marketing and Widening Participation Communication Officer*.

(iii) Inclusive student admissions and induction
The College recognises the different journeys that prospective students have undertaken before considering and entering HE and is exploring how the pandemic is affecting its prospective students. Consequently, the College provides effective information, advice and guidance to applicants, remains committed to maintaining relatively low tariff points on entry and provides a range of engaging induction activities to all of its students, with student-led evaluation of the same

through HE Programme Boards. Part of this approach has been adapted in early 2020/21 in response to the Government restrictions (and their variations at national and local level) imposed as a result of COVID-19.

(iv) Inclusive learning, teaching and assessment and associated support
"Inclusive learning and teaching recognises all students' entitlement to a learning experience that respects diversity, enables participation, removes barriers and anticipates and considers a variety of learning needs and preferences." (HEA Framework for Student Access, Retention, Attainment and Progression (2015))

To ensure that HE students are supported effectively across the student lifecycle (including through the current pandemic) and encouraged to reach or exceed their initial aspirations and over time realise their potential, student transition into HE is supported through the 'keep in touch' newsletters and updates from HE Programme Leaders prior to the start of their course, followed by the induction process, where existing students are available to share their experiences and provide first hand advice (which will be updated on an ongoing basis in response to COVID-19 and the associated restrictions). This assists students to develop a sense of belonging in HE and build relationships with their peers and staff as part of the HE community. Programme Facebook pages and Whatsapp groups evidence the peer and staff support available, which align to students' engagement preferences via social media. This is complemented by a '(virtual) open-door' policy that enables students to contact their tutors outside of timetabled contact times online or in person. The transitional support continues with the summative assessment feedback that is intended to assist students with moving on to the next level of their academic study, while Canvas (the HE VLE) provides a wide range of learning materials. Support services work collaboratively with academic staff to ensure that strategies are developed to support any disclosed student needs.

Staff prioritise the student learning experience with weekly one-to-one tutorials and student-centred HE Programme Boards (which will also be available virtually, if required, through Microsoft Teams, from 2020/21), enabling students to enter into a meaningful dialogue, voicing concerns, raising or reflecting on issues and considering on-going or completed actions as well as highlighting good practice. Quality assurance and developmental activity in learning teaching and assessment is provided through staff and peer observations aligned to HE expectations and taking account of levelness, further supported by liaison with external examiners and validating partners. (A quality model to assure the changes to the delivery of full-time HE programmes within the Faculty of HE will be developed and rolled-out by early 2020/21 and updated as the guidance relating to COVID-19 restrictions evolves). Diversity is being actively considered in reading materials, seeking to reduce the concentration of white Eurocentrism, although this is an area for further examination and development.

(v) Sector informed learning, teaching and assessment and progression
The Faculty of HE has substantially increased the investment in developing its academic staff in order to enhance the quality and currency of their delivery. This is supplemented by the number of Programme Leaders and Lecturers that have been or are practitioners in their subject discipline. Within the Faculty of HE there is a dedicated member of staff that leads on employability, while outside of the Faculty there are two HE Careers Officers (one full-time and the other fractional (0.4 FTE)). Their job descriptions were updated at the beginning of 2019/20 to reflect engagement with relevant targets and/or commitments in the APP 2020/21 and the approach more generally; these will be reviewed before the commencement of this Plan in order to ensure continued alignment to the most recent APP. These roles are expected to be increased to 2.0 FTE by the end of 2020/21

in order to respond to the low progression rates noted in this Plan and expected growth in student numbers and will be reviewed annually thereafter as part of annual monitoring of this Plan. This will be supplemented by the end of 2021/22 with careers advice and guidance for graduates from SEC undergraduate programmes who remain unemployed one year after graduation. A HE Practice Learning Coordinator engages with the UEA validated programmes in order to promote practice learning and source placement providers.

(2) Responding to whole student lifecycle barriers

(i) Distinctive HE social and cultural capital building (and facilitating progression)
In recognition of the importance of securing the sustainable development of HE social and cultural capital and their evidenced contribution to improving inclusivity, continuation rates and attainment, the Faculty of HE invests financially and fully resources both of these capital forming activities. Recent examples in 2019/20 include a calendar of social events throughout the academic year, which are facilitated by a HE Student Engagement Officer, the Marketing Department and Programme Leaders. These social events are being reviewed from 2020/21 and thereafter in the light of and in response to the impact of COVID-19 and associated restrictions/guidance.

Meanwhile, cultural capital continues to be developed by a series of initiatives that embed the HE ethos to study skills, academic development, independent learning, active engagement with peers within and across programmes, undergraduate level employability skills development, engagement with the sector through work-related and work-based learning, entering sector-related competitions and delivering end-of-year exhibitions at prestigious locations. Where activities form part of the programme, engagement is mandatory. Where the activities are optional, such as study skills workshops, participation is being measured. In 2020/21, we will formalise the processes to further identify participation rates for optional activities (including those delivered on a blended basis and virtually), identify any gaps in participation rates across under-represented and/or priority student groups and the impact that the optional activities are having on student engagement on programme, performance at module/unit level, continuation rates and through feedback from the HE Student Focus Group to identify opportunities to increase/maximise associated student engagement and impact.

(ii) Continuing to expand and adjust the HE offer and curriculum to widen access and participation
A broader range of HE programmes are being offered (with further expansion planned over the course of the next five years), which are expected to appeal to a wider student demographic and provide an increased value proposition, with a focus on employability and progression. These will be dovetailed to marketing efforts and aspects of outreach related activities in order to increase access by underrepresented groups, in particular BAME students. The impact will be measured by student recruitment (application and conversion rates), enrolment and subsequent continuation and attainment rates relative to the sector norm and adjusted for the region. Outreach projects will be designed alongside these new programmes to capture, among other things, outcomes in terms of prospective student applications to SEC. This is subject to the expanded HE offer recruiting sufficient student numbers during the on-going COVID-19 pandemic and its after-effects. (In 2019/20 for the 2020/21 intake, some of the expanded HE provision that was expected to attract more BAME students was suspended due to reduced student recruitment, and student numbers on many other programmes have also been adversely impacted.)

(iii) Supporting transition to HE and progression
Dedicated measures are in place and are being expanded to support student transition between levels of an undergraduate degree. These include, but are not limited to targeted projects to support study skills, contextualised induction programmes at each level of a course, embedded employability skills development (including workshops, training, sector related professional accreditation supplementary to the main programme of study), guest speakers and guidance from employers on sector expectations. Since 2019/20 support has been made available through online media, such as popular social media (including Instagram and Facebook) and *Canvas* (the College's VLE); these are underpinned by dedicated support channels for Year 1 induction and support for Years 2 and 3 (complemented by provision of regularly updated student support information through handbooks and tutorials). Employability roles have been expanded from a fractional (0.4 FTE) HE Careers Officer to the addition of a full-time HE Careers Officer in 2019/20. Student support remains a strength of the College, and in particular the full-time HE provision, underpinned by a HE Student Support Strategy and recognised in various external reports (including the QAA HER 2016 and 2017, institutional approvals by UEA and The OU in 2017 and the TEF 4 award). In relation to post-graduate study, the programmes started to engage with strategies to promote more information on and active preparation for post-graduate study in 2019/20, including methods (both quantitative and qualitative) to measure impact.

(iv) Continuous identification and embedding of work-related learning opportunities and dialogue with employers
Work-related learning forms an integral part of undergraduate programmes, with many including placement opportunities and some including live briefs with employers. Employers were consulted during the UEA and UAL programme validations in 2017/18 and have been consulted in the UAL programme revalidations in 2018/19 and 2019/20. Employability has been a strength of the full-time undergraduate programmes and is being further strengthened within programmes and at portfolio and Faculty level, with the increased roles associated with this area already noted above. A steering group exists, seeking engagement and input from employers and there are collaborative opportunities between the Costume Construction programme and the Royal Opera House. These have had a positive impact on the student academic experience and contributed to engaging students and improving progression opportunities. These will take time to feed through to the progression metrics, but the College recognises further sustainable investment and resources are needed (which have been included in this Plan and may need to be increased in due course and adapted (in line with OfS guidance) to take account of COVID-19), particularly given the student demographic and the relatively low socio-economic mobility and (intersections of) disadvantage faced by the majority of our students.

(3) Targeted measures

(i) Closing of the continuation gap
A calendar of social events for students was introduced in 2018/19 to underpin the first year induction experience, sense of belonging, student engagement with HE staff and studies and to provide a distinctive experience for HE students from FE students (particularly for those progressing from level 3 programmes internally). Feedback from student representatives in HE Programme Boards during 2018/19 and 2019/20 has been positive, with useful suggestions for enhancing social events, which have informed improvements and/or enhancements. Induction activities were restructured in 2018/19 to be more subject oriented and engaging, with transition-focused induction in Year 2 and 3 of programmes. This was further improved in 2019/20, based on staff and student feedback. Programme integrated study skills are also in place and being further

developed. However, while continuation rates continued to improve in 2017/18, existing strategies and initiatives to improve student retention in 2018/19 had not investigated and responded to the particular needs of students from POLAR4 Q1 and Q2, deprivation Q1 and Q2 and the intersections of disadvantage that students from these quintiles are likely to experience. This was one of the priority areas being explored and strategies, initiatives and projects started to be planned, designed and implemented in 2019/20. Although OfS data show no gaps in continuation rates, the Faculty of HE maintains its commitment to continuously improve continuation rates (often tied-in as part of the overall student lifecycle, thereby ensuring a holistic approach to continuously improving student outcomes). This is particularly relevant during the current pandemic, when the risk of students disengaging with their studies is likely to increase due to various personal, social and economic factors.

(ii) Increasing access and participation
Targeted outreach projects were researched, designed and rolled-out in 2019/20 to increase the access opportunities for local pupils and activities to increase the transition support for prospective students (including from BAME backgrounds wherever possible under the APP 2019/20 and, going forward, more specifically as per the APP 2020/21 targets). This will continue to be complemented by closer working relationships with internal and external feeder provision to understand and respond to the needs and expectations of prospective BAME HE students. In 2020/21, the outreach projects will be adapted, where needed, in response to the implications of COVID-19, and projects will be designed to consider deprivation quintile 1 generally and the associated target in this Plan specifically, with initial roll-out by mid-2020/21 and full roll-out by the start of this Plan. The HE Widening Participation Officer leads on the research and design of outreach and access related activities (including how impact is to be evaluated).

(iii) Increasing attainment, progression and retention
In 2020/21, the Faculty of HE will continue to investigate the barriers faced by full-time undergraduate students in the success stage of their journey with the College, including now the implications of COVID-19, and design strategies to improve continuation rates generally and attainment rates in particular for the student groups identified in this Plan by the end of 2020/2021. The Advance Practitioner (HE) works with the Programme Partnership Managers, the Dean of Higher Education and the Head of HE Strategic Quality and Outcomes to arrive at a joined-up approach to the development and roll-out in 2020/21 of the HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, including being informed by a range of metrics, this Plan and taking account of any change in pedagogy or delivery model due to COVID-19 so as to maximise the impact and increase the timely achievement of the targets set and relevant commitments herein. (The intermediate outcomes in the Theory of Change underpin this focus.)

A range of support structures are in place that consider individual student needs. Assisted by feedback from Programme Leaders and student consultation, structures and systems will continue to be developed for effective targeted interventions to support students, in particular the student groups identified in this Plan by the end of 2020/21. The overall financial commitment in this Plan as a proportion of higher tuition fee income is noted in Table 3 above, which represents a substantial increase from previous Agreements and Plans (prior to 2020/21) and is proportionate to the challenging targets in this Plan and general commitments, such as improving progression rates. For instance, the hardship fund for 2020/21 was increased to 3.2% (and from 2021/22 to 2025/26 to 3.70%) of higher tuition fee income (i.e. above £6,165). This increase takes account of the possible added hardship faced by students during the current pandemic, but remains in addition to any extra COVID-19 related funding increments issued by the OfS. This approach

contributes to our commitment to improving student success, in particular attainment rates and is sufficiently responsive to cover temporary financial shortfalls affecting students with a broad range of personal characteristics, including but not limited to those who experience disadvantage, intersections of disadvantage and hidden barriers, thereby recognising the various challenges our students face during their journey with us. The impact of the hardship fund on student success will be evaluated accordingly. The supply of timely and complete information in relation to the availability of and access to the hardship fund is integral to its successful application (this is covered in section 3.5 below).

The financial commitment of higher tuition fee income outlined in Table 3 above is in addition to the 'ring-fenced' higher tuition fee income set aside for continuously improving the student academic experience, which dates back to the rationale for tuition fee increases in 2018/19 (and is calculated independently of APP higher tuition fee income). In the Access and Participation Plans 2019/20 and 2020/21 this 'ring-fenced' higher tuition fee income was confirmed as being cumulative in nature, so that in this Plan it covers the complete duration of an HE programme affected by tuition fee increases in 2018/19 for the duration of this Plan. This level of financial resourcing contributes towards ensuring and assuring sustainable growth in student numbers, value for money and supports our Theory of Change model (see Diagram 3 above). For the purposes of completeness, Table 3 above summarises the proportion allocated from higher tuition fee income across the student lifecycle (this does not include 'ring-fenced' higher tuition fee income or any other sources of income or grants).

The Faculty of HE works closely with its validating partners, in particular UEA, sharing good practice and seeking expert guidance to continuously improve our approach to learning, teaching and assessment, sector expectations and widening participation. UAL also plays an important role in informing enhancements to learning, teaching and assessment of the UAL validated provision at SEC. Relevant staff on sub-degree and level 3 feeder provision are invited to certain training events delivered by UEA and UAL in order to cascade sharing of good practice across the entirety of the HE provision and inform progression related enhancements to level 3 feeder provision. This formed a discrete part of the inreach/internal activities for 2019/20. In 2018/19 the College substantially increased its investment in employability related activities to support the development of students' employability skills and understanding of the sectors they intend to enter. The approach to employability was received positively in the TEF 4 Panel report of the College's TEF 4 award.

3.2 Student consultation

The HE Student Engagement Officer arranges meetings with student representatives from a variety of backgrounds for the purposes of consultation, feedback and critical evaluation on a range of key documents that affect them. A similar approach was adopted with the data analysis findings related to this Plan (student representatives from a range of backgrounds were provided with a copy of the targets in this Plan and associated data and graphs from the APP dashboard, together with a verbal narrative from the HE Student Engagement Officer. This ensured that students from all backgrounds were given the opportunity to engage and feedback on this Plan). Virtual meetings were undertaken between the HE Student Engagement Officer and student representatives. This was the approach preferred by the students, since it allowed them to have a more practical insight into the improvements that the College had prioritised in this Plan. The Dean

of Higher Education, Consultant (HE Quality and Regulation) (who drafted this Plan) and the HE Widening Participation Officer were available to field any queries from students via the HE Student Engagement Officer.

Given the submission timing of this Plan and the implications of COVID-19, a more traditional consultation process was not possible. However, the students were offered the option to review the draft version of this Plan prior to submission and comment accordingly. The students consulted asked questions about this Plan and sought technical clarification on some points, which were duly answered, but made no recommendations to improve or enhance the Plan. Consequently, no changes were made to this Plan from the student consultation.

Moving forward, the College has updated its Students' Union for 2020/21 to include the following student roles: Equality and Diversity Officer and Access and Participation Officer in order to increase student involvement in the development and evaluation of APP-related work across the entirety of the student lifecycle (i.e. across access, success and progression stages) and to ensure and assure that all student groups' views are reflected in this process. For example, the Equality and Diversity Officer is responsible for chairing the newly formed Equality and Diversity Focus Group on a termly basis, while the Access and Participation Officer is responsible for chairing the existing Student Focus Group. These Officers will be supplied with all relevant information relating to the prevailing APP and will be actively involved in the development of APP-related projects from 2020/21. These focus groups will be promoted using the College's HE Bulletin, the MS Teams Student Forum, internal social media and at course representative meetings. A diverse group of students (including those from the student groups noted in this Plan) will be invited through these media to attend the Equality and Diversity Focus Group and the Student Focus Group. The course representative system has also been enhanced in 2020/21 with a standing agenda item included at termly meetings to inform students of upcoming APP-related projects and how they can get involved in their development.

3.3 Evaluation strategy

We continue to utilise the OfS evaluation self-assessment tool to inform and/or refine aspects of our evaluation strategy and underpin the adoption of associated frameworks and structures noted earlier in this Plan, as well as increasing the transparency of our commitment, which should enhance evaluation of planned and deployed resources and their impact. This evaluative tool will inform aspects of evaluation going forward (including continuous improvement of our approach to evaluation).

Embedding a structure and culture of evaluation
Prior to 2018/19, SEC did not have a structure or culture of evidence-led evaluation of its Access Agreements. With changes in the sector, we introduced evidence-led projects for 2018/19 covering the student lifecycle and refined the approach to their development and evaluation in 2019/20. These improvements were re-enforced by the structural changes noted in Diagram 2 above, the strengthening of the evidence base needed for monitoring and evaluation stated in Table 4 above, transparency of commitment across this document (see Table 3 above and the narrative on ring-fenced higher tuition fee income) and other documents (such as the TEF 4 submission and the

undertaking for Condition B3 (02/2019)), as well as the Theory of Change in Diagram 3 above. Of particular note is the planned implementation of HEAT (to measure the impact of outreach projects) and the implementation of the NERUPI framework (for designing outcomes-focused targets to capture the impact from widening participation activities), both of which are recognised tools for evaluation within the HE community and adopted by several HE providers. A proportionate approach has been taken to resourcing evaluation throughout the cycle of widening participation activities and projects from initial design of strategies, initiatives and projects to their implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This, coupled with an institutional approach to widening participation and working closely with our validating partners (including sharing good practice) ensures and assures a commitment to effective evaluation practices.

Increasing data, resources, skills and expertise
There is continuing investment in building more robust data systems and to consider a range of qualitative methods to increase our understanding of the barriers faced by our students and to develop and evaluate an effective response, taking account of data protection requirements and ethics during the evaluation process. Additional financial and human resources have been allocated to evaluation since 2018/19, with the appointment of the HE Widening Participation Officer, HE Student Engagement Officer and Programme Partnership Managers taking lead roles in their respective areas, ensuring that a holistic approach is adopted, with sufficient triangulation of the evidence base to demonstrate impact across widening participation projects (and reported to governors), learning, teaching and assessment strategies and associated quality assurance and the student voice. In 2019/20, there was increased engagement with building capacity within the HE team and associated support departments through staff development activities and in response to adaptations to delivery, which were necessary due to COVID-19 in 2019/20. In relation to improving data and information held at the College about initial graduate destinations, the Faculty of HE is expected to purchase by the end of 2019/20 (implement by early 2020/21) and maintain thereafter a software add-on for Unit E (its student record system); this will act as a repository of data for graduating students in order to track their initial destinations and allow the College to continue to engage with them with a view to improving their progression opportunities and destinations. The team associated with widening participation possesses complementary skills and expertise and maintains currency through staff development and meetings with validating partners, in particular UEA and UAL.

All evaluations currently assess or will be able to assess the impact on intermediate objectives and the overarching aims stated in our Theory of Change by 2021/22, taking account of:

Effective methodologies

Existing approach:
- Access, success and progression related projects from 2018/19 have an impact focus.
- Monitoring changes in APP, OfS and NSS indicators/metrics, HESA data, student outcomes and the student voice (internally through HE Programme Boards and student surveys).
- Regular reports to Governors to ensure oversight of APP resource allocation and spend, associated projects and impact.
- Implementation of the NERUPI framework.
- Pre and post questionnaires and meetings with stakeholders aligned to NERUPI aims, led by the HE Widening Participation Officer.
- Preparation for implementing HEAT (e.g. relevant staff training to use/manage HEAT).

- Qualitative data through focus groups and forums, including but not limited to those noted in Diagram 2 above.
- Embedding of Theory of Change explanations and expectations in all relevant projects and evaluation plans.
- Greater transparency in resource allocation and value for money since 2018/19.
- Following OfS and TASO guidance in relation to evaluation practices.

Additional elements from 2020/21:
- Discussions with UEA's evidence and evaluation team to provide guidance and peer review for further improvements to existing approaches to evaluation.
- Use of the OfS evaluation self-assessment tool to inform continuous improvement of our approach to evaluation.
- Implementation of HEAT.

Proportionality: our evaluation activities will have resources and effort applied effectively, taking account of the size, complexity, priority associated with, progress being made on and the duration of the targeted measures and associated projects/initiatives.

By 2025/26, we expect the evaluation strategy to have evolved into the following:
- An established evaluation culture underpinned by
    - o successful operation (and some fine tuning) of the Faculty of Higher Education widening participation related structure,
    - o effective and sustainable collaborative working with a range of internal and external stakeholders
    - o increased and effective flexible approaches to and resourcing and evaluation of projects during a pandemic and post-pandemic, and
    - o a track record of strong leadership by the Dean of Higher Education and the Head of HE Strategic Quality and Outcomes.
- Established annual review cycles of the evaluation strategy, informed by peer review from validating partners (UEA and UAL).
- Continued support from HEAT associated with evaluation and data.
- Conduct Type 2 (Empirical Enquiry) and Type 3 (Causality) standards of evaluation (whether with developed in-house expertise or external support).
- Established engagement with relevant stakeholders (in particular students) in the monitoring and evaluation of progress with this Plan.
- Hidden barriers and a wider range of intersections across the student lifecycle fully explored and associated strategies developed and implemented, with impact being measured.
- A critically reflective consideration of return on investment in terms of course viability, resources allocated and the (contributory) impact these have had on student outcomes, as well as value for money.

Analysis and transparency
Analysis and evaluation of widening participation related projects is currently undertaken by the departments that design and implement them. From the beginning of 2020/21, the funding, implementation, output and impact of projects will be evaluated by the Widening Participation Evidence and Evaluation Board (this has been delayed from its original start date of 2019/20 due to various factors, in particular COVID-19). This will ensure an objective approach to evaluation that is aligned effectively to the Theory of Change in this Plan. Evaluation findings will be reported

to the HE Committee and Governors, where they can be further scrutinised, and shared with all those involved in the design and implementation of projects, validating partners and students.

Evaluation of financial support

Our commitment to financial support in this Plan is focused on the hardship fund. This is in recognition of the range of barriers and pressures faced by our students (some of which may be hidden). However, in order to ensure that this fund continues to have the desired impact a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis has been used since 2019/20, informed by the OfS Financial Support Evaluation Toolkit (OfS Toolkit) to identify possible patterns of access to such support and the impact that accessing this fund has had, including but not limited the impact of COVID-19. This will continue to be developed further in 2020/21. For instance, the OfS Toolkit's survey tool and sample questions will be used at appropriate annual intervals to survey the recipients of the hardship fund; the interview tool will then be used to hold focus groups with these students. The JISC Online Survey tool (introduced at SEC in 2019/20) is also being used to survey students at two intervals: one month and then one year after their hardship fund applications. The BlackBullion platform will be introduced from 2020/21, designed to provide information and training activities for students who may be at risk of financial hardship; students will apply for hardship funds through this platform, thereby simplifying the application and tracking/audit process for hardship funds and making it more accessible (particularly during periods of remote working).

3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

Within the Faculty of Higher Education this Plan will be monitored using the structure outlined in Diagram 2 above as well as existing structures and the leadership roles noted above, with five perspectives considered in relation to impact, covering: (i) the student voice (through the HE Student Focus Group and HE Programme Boards); (ii) outreach (through the Outreach Forum); (iii) widening participation across the student lifecycle (through the Widening Participation Forum (Access, Success and Progression)); (iv) learning, teaching and assessment (through the HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Forum) and (v) overarching operational considerations (through the Faculty of HE Programme Partnership and Quality Committee). Outside of the Faculty, there is institution-wide oversight through the Higher Education Committee, Governors and, to a lesser extent, the HE Value for Money Committee. This is complemented by the HE Student Support Forum, which monitors implementation of the HE Student Support Strategy. Formal internal reporting of monitoring activity associated with this Plan will be through the Widening Participation Evidence and Evaluation Board, which will send reports to the Faculty of HE Programme Partnership and Quality Committee, with finalised reports then being submitted to the Higher Education Committee and Governors. These reports will be drafted by the Head of HE Strategic Quality and Outcomes and the HE Widening Participation Officer, with oversight and contribution by the Dean of Higher Education. The finalised reports will be published internally on the staff and student VLE, thereby ensuring transparency. The operational planning cycle for monitoring will be led by the CMA Compliance and Information Manager (HE).

At the planning stage of projects and associated strategies to meet the targets in the APP 2020/21 (and now this Plan), the approach was enhanced in 2019/20 to include (i) logic chains for each project or strategy, (ii) scenario analysis (as needed) and associated risk assessments, and (iii) contingency planning (points (ii) and (iii) will be extended from 2020/21 to factor in the potential

impact or limitations of COVID-19). This should ensure and assure effective deployment of resources, effort and underpin an expedient response where data and information indicate an actual or potential worsening of progress against each planned project, strategy or target.

In the context of increasing student access and in turn contributing to student recruitment, the Faculty of HE, in consultation with the Marketing Department, in 2020/21 will set and monitor engagement targets for social media activity and spend (e.g. traffic via the HE landing page of the College website, response rate to social media marketing), attendance rates at HE related events, such as Open Days, UCAS Fairs and stakeholder engagement with the same (e.g. public enquiries, attendance and applications). This has been delayed slightly from the original date of 2019/20 due to the disruption caused by COVID-19. In addition, HE Programme Leaders will continue to be set agreed targets for student recruitment generally and since 2019/20 have liaised with the Widening Participation Officer (who has agreed targets for outreach activities) to contribute towards aspects of inreach (i.e. internal) and outreach activities. Once agreed and set with the Marketing Department, Programme Leaders and the Widening Participation Officer, where such targets are not being met at particular milestones this will activate remedial measures in line with contingency plans (or new measures where the outcome is unexpected). The Faculty of Higher Education widening participation related structure will monitor progress, remedial action and report accordingly to the HE Committee. This approach will also inform aspects of the design and development of a Higher Education Student Recruitment Strategy for the Faculty of HE, which commenced in 2019/20 and is expected to be completed by early-2020/21.

For success related targets, the Dean of Higher Education and Programme Partnership Managers have since 2019/20 started to negotiate projects, strategies and activities with Programme Leaders, the Advanced Practitioner (HE) and relevant external departments to the Faculty of Higher Education from early 2019/20. This approach will be reviewed and refined in 2020/21. The HE Programme Boards will continue to provide initial student feedback regarding success elements, complemented by in-year continuation data, internal module/unit and programme level attainment data across student groups (in particular those forming the basis for the targets in this Plan), outcomes of peer and lesson observations and internal and external student survey outcomes. Depending on the aspects adversely impacting on achievement of success-related targets in this Plan, relevant elements of the Faculty of Higher Education widening participation related structure will monitor progress, remedial action and report accordingly to the HE Committee. Given the significant time lag in published continuation rates through APP metrics and associated data sets, less reliance has been placed on these in the immediate short-term (i.e. under a year) to initiate intervention and remedial action, relying more on internal in-year continuation data (including but not limited to intermission) drilled down to programme level.

In relation to increasing student progression rates, improvements have been underway since the end of 2018/19 to substantially increase resources for employability and progression activities at programme, Faculty and institutional level. Priority was given to student progression from early 2019/20, with the Dean of Higher Education overseeing coordination of efforts by Programme Partnership Managers with their Programme Leaders, the Student Engagement Officer, HE Careers Officers and other existing relevant stakeholders. This approach is expected to continue and, as needed, be extended during 2020/21 and for the duration of this Plan, underpinned by the *HE Employability Strategy 2021-25*. The HE Programme Board receives student feedback through course student representatives about a range of course related matters, including progression opportunities and employability. This, coupled with the HE Student Support Forum and functioning of the Faculty of Higher Education widening participation related structure, will consider qualitative

data and information regarding employability and student progression opportunities and associated activities to continuously improve both. They will also monitor feedback from student alumni (once the alumni database or its equivalent is in place), employer contacts, UEA and UAL to further improve student progression strategies and activities.

Acknowledging the significant time lag for progression data to be published through APP indicators, metrics and datasets, but recognising their importance, the above qualitative methods will provide the initial indicators of whether the College is on track to improving student progression rates noted in this Plan and in subsequent monitoring. Where progress is below expectations, contingency plans will be partially activated, pending publication of progression indicators (taking account of the associated time lag), which could fully activate the contingency plans or revised strategies. Typical contingencies include, but are not be limited to one or more of the following: (a) seeking external consultancy and research input on the matter from HE sector experts, such as AdvanceHE; (b) developing and implementing new projects targeting the areas of weakness in achieving the progression target milestone(s) and progression rates generally; (c) increased monitoring of existing activities, with enhanced evaluation and review of the impact they are having in the short-term (utilising more qualitative data and information), undertaken within the Faculty of HE and reported back to senior leadership and governors.

3.5 Provision of information to students

A dedicated HE team exists to deal with admissions and the operational quality cycle for HE programmes, led by the CMA Compliance and Information Manager (HE), who is the College lead on CMA related compliance. All programme related information is CMA compliant, and available on both the College's public facing website and internal VLE.

We recognise the need to provide accurate information to all prospective HE applicants and existing students. This information is supplied through a range of communication sources for both prospective HE applicants and existing students from emails, telephone, dedicated webpages to onsite literature, while existing students also receive information through Canvas (the College's HE VLE). Prospective applicants and existing students are provided with good quality, accurate and timely information so that they can make informed decisions (and we remain committed to continuously improving this process). For instance, we have a dedicated HE micro-website on our public facing website which:

- provides prospective HE applicants with a range of information at various stages of the recruitment cycle, including but not limited to the following:
  - **HE programme search stage**: courses on offer and associated information, an application cycle, frequently asked questions, schedule of open events, fees, funding and financial support (such as hardship fund)
  - **Pre-application stage**: we ensure that UCAS and Student Finance England are regularly updated so that they can populate their course database, thereby ensuring that prospective HE applicants have all the necessary information available prior to making a higher education decision. We ensure students receive accurate information about the implications of any policy and funding changes.

- o **Application stage**: although all offers are made on UCAS, applicants are sent an email from the HE Admissions team with links to the College services (student support, College policies and procedures, student funding and additional costs).
- o **Pre-enrolment stage**: one month prior to enrolment all applicants holding an offer with the College are sent information about their timetable. This will be of particular use for students who are in employment or students with family commitments so that they can plan their time with us accordingly, thereby positively contributing to their student experience. All applicants are provided with pre-arrival information about student support and funding. The College has a dedicated webpage for enrolment, informing students about the process and what to expect on the day. The webpage is updated in a timely manner; students are also informed through email.
- o **Course fees information**: this is available for undergraduate degrees and higher national diploma programmes at each stage of the student recruitment cycle on both the UCAS page and on the respective course landing page of the College website.

- provides existing HE students with the following information:
  - o **Year 1 onwards**: information about fees, funding, student services, HE policies and procedures for students' validated programmes, exam timetables and results.
  - o **Year 2 of 3**: HE policies and procedures for students' validated programmes, notification of changes to policies and procedures, results and re-enrolment.
  - o **Final year**: HE policies and procedures for students' validated programmes, notification of changes to policies and procedures and results

In addition, students are provided with the following information through Canvas:
- o **Year 1 onwards**: links to the HE policies and procedures, HE results website, HE surveys, programme handbook, information about work placements, where applicable, for HE programmes, minutes of HE Programme Board meetings and formalised monitoring reports about this Plan.
- o **Year 2 of 3**: as bullet point one above and information about Year 2 induction, employability events and other workshops or events relevant to Year 2 students.
- o **Final year**: as bullet point one above and information about Year 3 induction, employability events and other workshops or events relevant to Year 3 students.

Information about the hardship fund and application criteria were published in early 2019/20 on the dedicated HE micro-website, with associated hyperlinks on Canvas and course handbooks. This is updated on an annual basis in response to COVID-19. For 2020/21, the College is introducing a user-friendly and online application process for accessing the hardship fund using the Blackbullion platform, including uploading all supporting evidence electronically.

The hardship fund is distinct from standard financial support in that there is no automatic financial support entitlement to any group of students. Consequently, in order to access the hardship fund a set of criteria have to be met by an applicant, and all applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis. Once an applicant is found to qualify for hardship funding, the money is duly released and may or may not be subject to repayment depending on the type of hardship funding applied for.

For instance, the hardship fund is divided into three application routes. The first leads to a Standard Award, which prioritises the following groups of students: "final year students", "students

with disabilities which prevent working", "single parents with dependent children", "care leavers", "estranged students" and "disabled students". The award is not repayable and is assessed by working out the shortfall between income and expenditure, using the NASMA database (National Association of Student Money Advisers), requiring the following evidence: three most recent bank statements, a student finance breakdown, mortgage/rent statements and benefits (if applicable), childcare costs (if applicable) and any other relevant evidence related to household income. The minimum award is £300. The maximum award for a student belonging to a priority group is £1,500, while the maximum award for a student belonging to a non-priority group is £750. These amounts may be increased, based on annual evaluation and student feedback as to their needs.

The second application route leads to a Non-Standard Award, which is designed for unforeseen one-off expenses, such as a broken laptop, car repairs, unexpected course costs, trips or emergency assistance to fund travel home to deal with a family crisis. Applicants are required to show evidence of the cause of the expense, their most recent bank statements and the estimated cost of resolving the issue. The minimum award is £50. The maximum award is £500. This award is not repayable. These amounts may be increased, based on annual evaluation and student feedback as to their needs.

The third and final application route leads to a late funding loan, which is available to students in receipt of funding from Student Finance England/Wales/Scotland/Northern Ireland, but whose funding has been delayed. The loan is a temporary solution and must be repaid by students in full 10 days after receiving their latest finance payment from Student Finance. The minimum amount for a single student/couple (with no children) is £260, while the maximum amount for a student with one child is £330. This increases by £40 for any additional child under 18-years-old. Additional loans are available for childcare (with a minimum of £50 and up to a maximum of £148.75 (for one child) or £255 (for 2 or more children)) and one month's mortgage/rent payment (with a minimum of £200 and up to a maximum of £645). These minimum and maximum amounts are likely to change in accordance with NASMA annual guidelines and in response to changes in local childcare and rent and mortgage costs.

The aims of the above three routes to accessing the hardship fund are to ensure transparency, ease of application, flexibility and responsiveness to students' financial needs in a manner that is proportionate, expedient and fair in the circumstances. The three routes should contribute to improved engagement and increase student continuation and attainment, while providing a safety net if or when an unforeseen event or events occur. This approach has been informed by previous operation of a student hardship fund, feedback from students accessing it and the emerging impact of COVID-19.

Annex 1: Summary of SEC commitments.

Commitment	Location in Plan	Start date	Expected progress by end of this Plan, where relevant	Expected end date if different from end of this Plan
TARGETS AND ASSOCIATED MECHANISMS				
1. Implementation of Higher Education Access Tracker (delayed from original date due to COVID-19)	Section 1	2020/21	N/A	N/A
2. Membership of AdvanceHE and annual purchase of consultancy associated with research and evaluation and training/packages linked to staff development.	Section 1	Mid-2020/21	N/A	Ongoing
3. Continuous improvement in data capture and analysis capabilities in response to this Plan and developments in the HE sector.	Section 1	2020/21	Updates made, as needed.	
4. Investment in a repository add-on of graduating student data to Unit E	Section 1	Start of 2020/21	N/A	Full-implementation in 2020/21 and ongoing servicing and updating (unless replaced with something equivalent in specification or better)
5. Critical exploration of explained, unexplained and hidden gaps (i.e. those not in programme or provider level data).	Section 1	2020/21	N/A	Ongoing
6. Further updating and annual review of student record system in order to improve data capture and analysis, thereby maintaining currency with stakeholder requirements and expectations.	Section 1	Start of 2019/20	N/A	2020/21 Annual review
7. Robust approach to monitoring, evaluated and reviewed annually to ensure fitness for purpose and underpinned by structures and processes (see Diagram 2 above)	Section 1	Start of 2019/20	N/A	Enhanced approach by mid-2020/21 Annual review

Commitment	Location in Plan	Start date	Expected progress by end of this Plan, where relevant	Expected end date if different from end of this Plan
8. Annual monitoring of POLAR4 Q5 to Q1 students and POLAR4 Quintiles 3, 4 or 5 compared to Q1 or Q2 across the student lifecycle.	Section 1.1	2019/20	N/A	Ongoing
9. SEC to reduce the progression gap between students from POLAR4 quintiles 3, 4 or 5 compared with students from quintiles 1 or 2 to 0.0pp by 2025/26.	Section 1.1	2020/21	Gap reduced to 0.0%	
10. SEC to increase the access and participation rates of BAME students onto its undergraduate programmes (taking account of sub-groups within this category) to 14.0%, adjusting for the local and regional BAME population rates and taking account of the HE sector average in the longer term.	Section 1.2 & Section 2.2	2019/20	Participation increased to 14.0%	Moving towards the HE sector average by 2026/27 Aligned to the HE sector average by 2029/30
11. SEC to reduce the attainment gap between BAME students and white students on undergraduate programmes to 18.0pp by 2025/26 (measured with the latest three years' of aggregated data for programmes that have BAME students enrolled and attaining a degree).	Section 1.2	2020/21	Attainment gap reduced to 18.0pp	2028/29 (gap in line with the HE sector average) 2033/34 (gap closed with white students)
12. SEC to raise the attainment rate of BAME students from deprivation quintiles 1 and 2 when compared with white students from deprivation quintiles 1 and 2 on undergraduate programmes to 46.0% by 2025/26 (measured with the latest three years' of aggregated data for programmes that have BAME students from deprivation quintiles 1 and 2 enrolled and attaining a degree).	Section 1.2	2020/21	Attainment rate raised to 46.0%	
13. SEC to reduce the attainment gap of BAME students aged over 21 when compared with white students aged over 21 on undergraduate programmes to 25.0pp by 2025/26 (measured with the latest three years'	Section 1.2	2020/21	Attainment gap reduced to 25.0pp	2028/29 (gap in line with the HE sector average) 2033/34 (gap closed with white students)

Commitment	Location in Plan	Start date	Expected progress by end of this Plan, where relevant	Expected end date if different from end of this Plan
of aggregated data for programmes that have BAME students aged over 21 enrolled and attaining a degree).				
14. SEC to close the access gap between deprivation quintile 5 compared with 1 to 0.0pp by 2024/25 and maintain its closure at 0.0pp in 2025/26. In addition, ensure that the access gap between deprivation quintile 1 in the population compared with that at the College is in line with or better than the HE sector average.	Section 1.5	2020/21	Access gap of deprivation Q1 in the population to the College in line with HE sector average or better.	Access gap for deprivation Q5 to Q1 reduced to 0.0pp by 2024/25
15. SEC to reduce the student attainment gap between deprivation quintile 5 compared to 1 to 6.0pp by 2025/26.	Section 1.5	2020/21	Attainment gap reduced to 6.0pp	
16. SEC to reduce the student attainment gap between deprivation quintile 5 compared to 2 to 6.0pp by 2025/26.	Section 1.5	2020/21	Attainment gap reduced to 6.0pp	
17. SEC to reduce the attainment gap between female students from deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5 compared with female students from quintiles 1 or 2 to 8.0pp by 2025/26.	Section 1.5	2024/25	Attainment gap reduced to 8.0pp	
18. SEC to reduce the progression gap between white students from deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5 compared with white students from quintiles 1 or 2 to 0.0pp by 2025/26.	Section 1.5	2024/25	Progression gap reduced to 0.0pp	
19. Examination of national data to understand the barriers that care leavers experience and use this to inform the development of any associated strategies, taking account of our local and regional context.	Section 1.8	2019/20	N/A	2021-22
20. Develop internal data systems to capture, report on and utilise data for analysis relating to the following student personal characteristics: (i) those with caring responsibilities (including students with children), (ii)	Section 1.9	2019/20	N/A	Mid-2020/21

Commitment	Location in Plan	Start date	Expected progress by end of this Plan, where relevant	Expected end date if different from end of this Plan
those with English as an additional language, (iii) those that commute to SEC, (iv) those from military families, (v) those with refugee status, and (vi) those with Roma, Gypsy and Traveller backgrounds.				
STRUCTURE, SYSTEMS AND UNDERSTANDING				
21. Remain an active member of AccessHE, with associated widening participation related benefits through accessing their London Uni Connect schools network, assistance in the design and development of outreach activities and participation in collaborative projects and action forums.	Section 1	Start of 2019/20	N/A	2028/29 or later
22. Recruitment of a *Study Skills Officer* (1.0 FTE) by the start of 2021/22 in order to ease student transition to HE and across levels while on programme, in particular for groups of students covered in the Plan.	Section 2.1	Start of 2021/22	N/A	N/A
23. Increase our understanding of and support for students facing multiple barriers when studying at SEC.	Section 2.2	Start of 2019/20	N/A	End of 2020/21
24. Recruit a *HE Mental Health Practitioner* (0.5 to 1.0 FTE).	Section 2.2	End of 2021/22	N/A	N/A
25. Development and roll-out of a quality model to assure changes to full-time HE provision within the Faculty of HE, updated as the guidance relating to COVID-19 restrictions change.	Section 2.2	Early 2020/21	N/A	Ongoing revisions until end of current or subsequent pandemic(s).
26. The invitation of validating partners to participate in the recruitment process of key personnel in the Faculty of HE.	Section 3.1	2018/19	N/A	Ongoing.
27. Existing and subsequent HE related strategies will have due regard for and be informed by this Plan, with the	Section 3.1	First half of 2020/21	N/A	N/A

Commitment	Location in Plan	Start date	Expected progress by end of this Plan, where relevant	Expected end date if different from end of this Plan
Dean of HE and the Head of HE Strategic Quality and Outcomes roles leading on drafting and implementation of these strategies.				
28. Purchase and implement the HEAR component of the Gradintelligence platform.	Section 3.1	late 2020/21	N/A	Purchased and rolled out by the end of 2020/21.
29. The Dean of Higher Education and the Head of HE Strategic Quality and Outcomes will both directly lead on and be accountable for the implementation of this Plan.	Section 3.1	2020/21	Plan fully implemented.	N/A
30. Increased APP related collaborative working with a range of stakeholders.	Section 3.1	Start of 2020/21	Completed.	N/A
31. Planned improvements to SEC's access and participation evidence base (see Table 2 above)	Section 3.1	Start of 2020/21	N/A	End of 2020/21
32. Creation of and recruitment to *HE Marketing and Widening Participation Communication Officer* (with an external consultant continuing to be engaged in the interim to assist in HE marketing associated with widening participation).	Section 3.1	Early 2022/23	N/A	N/A
33. Review of job descriptions of the current HE Careers Officers before commencement of this Plan.	Section 3.1	Start of 2020/21	N/A	Reviewed annually or earlier as needed (due to changes in COVID-19 or other regulatory guidance).
34. HE Careers Officer roles to be increased to 2.0 FTE from 1.4 FTE in order to respond to the progression gaps in this Plan and expected growth in student numbers, with annual review thereafter as part of annual monitoring of this Plan.	Section 3.1	End of 2020/21	N/A	N/A

Commitment	Location in Plan	Start date	Expected progress by end of this Plan, where relevant	Expected end date if different from end of this Plan
35. Careers advice and guidance for graduates from SEC undergraduate programmes who remain unemployed one year after graduation.	Section 3.1	End of 2021/22	N/A	N/A
36. Review of social events for full-time HE students in the Faculty of HE from 2020/21 and thereafter in the light of and in response to COVID-19 and associated restrictions/guidance.	Section 3.1	2020/21	N/A	Review continues until COVID-19 impact has been minimised.
37. Formalisation of processes to further identify participation rates in optional activities (including those delivered on a blended basis and virtually) within undergraduate programmes and their impact on relevant student outcomes.	Section 3.1	2020/21	N/A	End-2020/21
38. Sustainable broadening of the HE offer in order to appeal to a wider student demographic and provide an increased value proposition, with a focus on employability and progression. Outreach projects to be designed alongside these new programmes in order to capture, among other things, outcomes in terms of prospective student applications to SEC.	Section 3.1	2021/22	N/A	2025/26
39. The continued research and design of outreach projects associated with BAME student participation in HE and SEC undertaken by the Widening Participation Officer.	Section 3.1	Start 2020/21	Conclusion of these outreach related projects	
40. In 2020/21, the outreach projects will be adapted, where needed, in response to the implications of COVID-19. Outreach related projects will be broadened to include increasing access for students from deprivation quintile 1 generally and respond to the associated target in	Section 3.1	Mid-2020/21	N/A	Rolled out start of 2021/22

Commitment	Location in Plan	Start date	Expected progress by end of this Plan, where relevant	Expected end date if different from end of this Plan
this Plan specifically (see commitment 13 above).				
41. In 2020/21, the Faculty of HE will continue to investigate the barriers faced by full-time undergraduate students in the success stage of their journey with the College (including implications of COVID-19) and design strategies to improve continuation rates generally and attainment rates in particular for student groups identified in this Plan.	Section 3.1	2020/21	N/A	End of 2020/21
42. Arrive at a joined-up approach to the development and roll-out in 2020/21 of the HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, including being informed by a range of metrics, taking account of any change in pedagogy or delivery model due to COVID-19, and this Plan.	Section 3.1	2020/21	N/A	N/A
43. The evidence-led development of structures and systems for effective targeted interventions, with priority given to student groups identified in this Plan.	Section 3.1	Start of 202021	N/A	End of 2020/21
44. An increased focus is being planned to cover all student groups as well as those highlighted in this Plan for employability related projects.	Section 3.1	2019/20	N/A	N/A
45. Hardship fund for 2020/21 increased to 3.2% (and from 2021/22 to 3.70%) of higher tuition fee income (i.e. tuition fee above £6,165). This is in addition to any extra COVID-19 related funding increments issued by the OfS.	Section 3.1	Start of 2020/21	N/A	End of 2020/21
46. Purchase and maintenance thereafter of a software add-on for Unit E to act as a repository of data for graduating students in order to track their initial destinations and allow the College to	Section 3.3	End of 2019/20	N/A	Early 2020/21

Commitment	Location in Plan	Start date	Expected progress by end of this Plan, where relevant	Expected end date if different from end of this Plan
continue to engage with them with a view to improving their progression opportunities and destinations.				
47. The funding, implementation, output and impact projects to be evaluated by the Widening Participation Evidence and Evaluation Board.	Section 3.3	Start of 2020/21	N/A	N/A
48. Further development of techniques to identify possible patterns of access to financial support, such as the Hardship Fund, including but not limited to the impact of COVID-19.	Section 3.3	2020/21	N/A	N/A
49. Extension of scenario analysis, risk assessments and contingency planning to factor-in the potential impact or restrictions of COVID-19.	Section 3.4	2020/21	N/A	
50. Greater sharing of data analytics associated with social media and setting and monitoring associated targets.	Sections 1.2 & 3.4	2020/21	N/A	
51. SEC will continue to actively seek the student voice in the context of this Plan.	Section 3.2	2019/20	Evidence of student engagement in relation to this Plan.	N/A
52. Evaluation by the Widening Participation Evidence and Evaluation Board of the funding, resource allocation, implementation, output and impact of widening participation related projects.	Section 3.3	Start of 2020/21	N/A	N/A
53. Design and development of a Higher Education Student Recruitment Strategy for the Faculty of HE.	Section 3.4	2019/20	N/A	early-2020/21
54. In the context of access targets in this Plan, setting and monitoring of prospective HE applicant engagement targets with the Marketing	Section 3.4	2021/22	N/A	N/A

Commitment	Location in Plan	Start date	Expected progress by end of this Plan, where relevant	Expected end date if different from end of this Plan
Department, Programme Leaders and the Widening Participation Officer.				
55. In the context of success-related targets in this Plan, the negotiation of projects, strategies and activities with Programme Leaders, the Advanced Practitioner (HE) and relevant external departments to the Faculty of Higher Education and associated monitoring.	Section 3.4	Early 2019/20	N/A	Approach reviewed and refined in 2020/21
56. In the context of progression-related targets in this Plan, existing employability and progression activities will continue to prioritise these target groups of students. Efforts will continue to be coordinated within and outside the Faculty of HE, with relevant stakeholders and monitored accordingly. The approach will be extended, as needed, in 2020/21 and for the duration of this Plan.	Section 3.4	2020/21	Improved progression rates, as per targets and more generally.	N/A
57. Continued publication of the hardship fund and application criteria.	Section 3.5	2020/21	N/A	N/A

Table 5: Summary of SEC commitments in this Plan and associated timeframe.

Access and participation plan
Fee information 2021-22

Provider name: South Essex College of Further and Higher Education

Provider UKPRN: 10005981

Summary of 2021-22 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflationary statement:

We will not raise fees annually for 2021-22 new entrants

Table 4a - Full-time course fee levels for 2021-22 entrants

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£8,000
First degree		£8,500
First degree		£9,000
Foundation degree		£8,000
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND		£7,000
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT		£7,750
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Table 4b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2021-22

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 2021-22 entrants

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	*	*

Table 4d - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2021-22

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	*	*

Office for Students

Targets and investment plan
2021-22 to 2025-26

Provider name: South Essex College of Further and Higher Education

Provider UKPRN: 10005981

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				
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Total access activity investment (£)	£89,633.16	£120,704.76	£159,185.16	£207,458.64	£235,325.88
Access (pre-16)	£17,428.67	£23,470.37	£30,952.67	£40,339.18	£45,757.81
Access (post-16)	£32,367.53	£43,587.83	£57,483.53	£74,915.62	£84,978.79
Access (adults and the community)	£31,122.63	£41,911.38	£55,272.63	£72,034.25	£81,710.38
Access (other)	£8,714.34	£11,735.19	£15,476.34	£20,169.59	£22,878.91
Financial support (£)	£46,061.49	£62,028.84	£81,803.49	£106,610.69	£120,931.36
Research and evaluation (£)	£17,428.67	£23,470.37	£30,952.67	£40,339.18	£45,757.81

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Higher fee income (£HFI)	£1,244,905.00	£1,676,455.00	£2,210,905.00	£2,881,370.00	£3,268,415.00
Access investment	7.2%	7.2%	7.2%	7.2%	7.2%
Financial support	3.7%	3.7%	3.7%	3.7%	3.7%
Research and evaluation	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%
Total investment (as %HFI)	12.3%	12.3%	12.3%	12.3%	12.3%

Targets and investment plan
2021-22 to 2025-26

Provider name: South Essex College of Further and Higher Education

Provider UKPRN: 10005981

Targets

Table 2a - Access

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Underrepresented group (optional)	Comparator group (optional)	Description (500 character	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	Yearly milestones 2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Commentary on how milestones/targets were calculated (500 characters maximum)
To increase the participation rates on undergraduate programmes of students from BAME backgrounds.	PTA_1	Ethnicity			Adjusted to consider the percentage of BAME students in the region and compared to the sector average.	No	The access and participation dataset	2018-19	Percentage	9.0%	10.0%	11.0%	12.0%	13.0%	14.0%	These are due to (a) the low concentration of BAME in the catchment area from which the College recruits, (b) the logistics of and timeframe for diversifying the HE offer to appeal to more BAME students from a wider catchment area, and (c) the student recruitment growth plans the College has agreed with its validating partners a steady percentage increase (although in absolute terms, i.e. BAME student numbers, the percentage masks the planned growth in BAME student numbers year-on-year).
To reduce the participation gap on undergraduate programmes for students from deprivation quintile 1.	PTA_2	Socioeconomic	IMD quintile 1	IMD quintile 5	Compared with students from deprivation quintile 5 at the College.	No	The access and participation dataset	2018-19	Percentage points	2.0	1.5	1.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	The gap emerged between these groups of students at the College in the 2018/19 APP data. Prior years have shown a positive gap; therefore, this does not appear to be a persistent gap. Consequently, with the projected investment and commitments in the Plan, the gap should be closed by 2024/25 and remain closed in 2025/26.
	PTA_3															
	PTA_4															
	PTA_5															
	PTA_6															
	PTA_7															
	PTA_8															
	PTA_9															
	PTA_10															
	PTA_11															
	PTA_12															

Table 2b - Success

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Underrepresented group	Comparator group	Description (500 character	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	Yearly milestones 2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Commentary on how milestones/targets were calculated (500 characters maximum)
To reduce the attainment gap for BAME students on undergraduate programmes.	PTS_1	Ethnicity	Other (please specify in description)	White	Compared with white students, using aggregated data for BAME (ABMO) and white students for the latest three years of published data.	No	The access and participation dataset	Other (please include details in commentary)	Percentage points	30.0	28.0	25.0	22.0	20.0	18.0	Given the very small annual student numbers for each sub-group and as an aggregated group (i.e. BAME/ABMO), the targets are based on three year aggregates (on a rolling average basis) of BAME/ABMO for programmes which have BAME students (the baseline for the three year aggregates is 2016/17 to 2018/19). Based on the level of investment already committed from 2019/20 and in the APP 2020/21, a reduction in the attainment gap of at least 2.0 percentage points (pp) per annum is suitably ambitious.
To raise the attainment rate for BAME students from deprivation quintiles 1 and 2 on undergraduate programmes.	PTS_2	Ethnicity	Other (please specify in description)	White	Compared with white students from deprivation quintiles 1 and 2, using aggregated data for BAME (ABMO) and white students for the latest three years of published data.	No	The access and participation dataset	Other (please include details in commentary)	Percentage	31.0%	34.0%	37.0%	40.0%	43.00	46.0%	As per the commentary in PTS_1 above, except that the focus is on raising the attainment rate rather than closing the gap. In addition, the student numbers were even smaller due to the intersection considered. Given the time delay due to the length of the programme, the timing of assessments and their contribution to the overall award and three years of aggregated data, an annual increase in attainment of 3.0pp is suitably ambitious in the circumstances.
To reduce the attainment gap for BAME students aged over 21 on undergraduate programmes.	PTS_3	Ethnicity	Other (please specify in description)	Other (please specify in description)	Compared with white students aged over 21, using aggregated data for BAME (ABMO) and white students for the latest three years of published data.	No	The access and participation dataset	Other (please include details in commentary)	Percentage points	51.0	46.0	40.0	35.0	30.0	25.0	As per the commentary in PTS_1 above, except that the annual reduction in the gap is expected to be at least 5.0pp per annum. In addition, the student numbers were even smaller due to the intersection considered.
To reduce the attainment gap for students from deprivation quintile 1.	PTS_4	Socioeconomic	IMD quintile 1	IMD quintile 5	Compared with students from deprivation quintile 5.	No	The access and participation dataset	2018-19	Percentage points	10.0	9.5	8.5	7.5	6.5	6.0	Although a gap of 10pp in 2018/19 for deprivation quintile 1 compares favourably to the HE sector average of 17.7pp, the continued commitment to invest in improving attainment levels of students since 2018/19 and as part of this Plan, coupled with the conservative growth in the number of students from deprivation quintile 5, the projected annual contraction of the attainment gap by up to 1.0pp is ambitious and achievable in the circumstances.
To reduce the attainment gap for students from deprivation quintile 2.	PTS_5	Socioeconomic	IMD quintile 2	IMD quintile 5	Compared with students from deprivation quintile 5.	No	The access and participation dataset	2018-19	Percentage points	10.0	9.5	8.5	7.5	6.5	6.0	Although a gap of 10pp in 2018/19 for quintile 2 compares favourably to the HE sector average of 12.0pp, the continued commitment to invest in improving attainment levels of students since 2018/19 and as part of this Plan, coupled with the conservative growth in the number of students from deprivation quintile 5, the projected annual contraction of the attainment gap by up to 1.0pp is ambitious and achievable in the circumstances.

Aim	Ref	Target group	Underrepresented group (optional)	Comparator group (optional)	Description	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Commentary
To reduce the attainment gap for female students from deprivation quintiles 1 or 2.	PTS_6	Intersection	Other (please specify in description)	Other (please specify in description)	Compared with female students from deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5.	No	The access and participation dataset	2018-19	Percentage points	19.0	17.0	15.0	13.0	11.0	8.0	Increased student support mechanisms have been introduced since 2018/19 and further support (both financial and in terms of resources) is expected in 2020/21 (partly in response to the impact of COVID-19). This Plan also identifies a broad range of intersections of deprivation and disadvantage and hidden barriers to learning. The College is committed to a sustained response to these; therefore, the annual reduction of at least 2.0pp in the gap is achievable in the circumstances.
	PTS_7															
	PTS_8															
	PTS_9															
	PTS_10															
	PTS_11															
	PTS_12															

Table 2c - Progression

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Underrepresented group (optional)	Comparator group (optional)	Description (500 characters)	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Commentary on how milestones/targets were calculated (500 characters maximum)
To reduce the progression gap for students from POLAR4 quintiles 1 or 2.	PTP_1	Low participation neighbourhood (LPN)	POLAR quintile 1 and 2	POLAR quintile 3, 4 and 5	Compared with students from POLAR4 quintiles 3, 4 or 5.	No	The access and participation dataset	Other (please include details in commentary)	Percentage points	15.0	12.0	9.0	6.0	3.0	0.0	The baseline of 15.0pp is for 2015/16 and is the only data point available in the APP data set. Given the level of investment committed to in this Plan and earlier to improve progresion rates, an annual reduction of the gap by 3.0pp in the circumstances is achievable.
To reduce the progression gap for white students from deprivation quintiles 1 or 2.	PTP_2	Intersection	Other (please specify in description)	Other (please specify in description)	Compared with white students from deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5.	No	The access and participation dataset	Other (please include details in commentary)	Percentage points	5.0	4.0	3.0	2.0	1.0	0.0	The baseline of 5.0pp is for 2015/16 and is the only data point available in the APP data set. Given the level of investment committed to in this Plan and earlier to improve progresion rates, an annual reduction of the gap by 1.0pp is achievable in the circumstances.
	PTP_3															
	PTP_4															
	PTP_5															
	PTP_6															
	PTP_7															
	PTP_8															
	PTP_9															
	PTP_10															
	PTP_11															
	PTP_12															