

2019-20 access and participation plan monitoring Provider impact report

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

1. Ambition and strategy

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

This summary details our ambition and strategy at the time of writing the 2019/20 APP:

We will continue to improve all aspects of the student experience from access, through success on course to progression into employment. There will be a particularly strong, well-resourced and continual focus on success, student continuation and completion of degree courses, and especially for those in student segments where we see significant underperformance e.g. good honours outcomes for BAME students and academic performance of BTEC students.

The University's evaluation strategy is built upon an interpretative methodological approach using both quantitative and qualitative data to address the 'what works' questions. Our focus is on activities that already appear to be effective which is consistent with appreciative enquiry and is likely therefore to yield findings that will allow us to highlight good practice that can be disseminated and transferred to other activities. Staff bid to deliver commissioned projects that address pedagogic challenges linked to our strategic priorities, or to develop and evaluate staff learning and teaching innovations. The Students' Union is active in evaluating bids to ensure they address issues important to students. Students are also able to bid alongside their tutors in order to undertake collaborative pedagogic research. Our ambition is to increase the number of projects with students as leads and/or co-researchers.

Our APP is aligned with the University's Equality & Diversity Strategy and specific Equality Objectives mirror those targets and all of these are derived from the University's overarching Strategic Plan which contains the goal to 'maximise the individual potential for all students'.

The University is committed to closing gaps in access, retention, attainment and progression for all students and is taking an inclusive practice approach under the institution-wide 'Include Me' initiative. This examined all stages of the student lifecycle including: pre-entry information, advice and guidance; admissions and recruitment; curriculum delivery and assessment; student support; and continuation to employability and further study. Evidence from our "What Works?" research identified that through improving the outcomes for all, student performance gaps reduce. The "Include Me" initiative is expected to improve success and progression to target groups, in particular disabled, mature and BAME students.

Access. Key to improving performance in access and recruitment for the University is a strategic and sustained re-focussing of our relationships with regional FE Colleges and schools.

A new Directorate structure recognises, and resources through the Apprenticeship Hub, the growth in demand for degree apprenticeships and Regional Learning Centres. By 2020, we aim to have more than 1,000 students studying with us for degree apprenticeships (currently c.400). Growth in provision will increase opportunities for under-represented groups including white working class boys for whom research shows that degree apprenticeships might be more attractive. We are also working closely with regional FE Colleges to develop the degree apprenticeship supply chain from Level 3 into Levels 4 to 6, including franchising some elements of the provision to colleges at Levels 4 and 5.

In terms of access, we already recruit 80% of our undergraduate students from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, we have made a commitment to recruit more Care Leavers, mature students and students onto degree apprenticeships.

The University has 13 schools (10 primary and 3 secondary) which it sponsors through the ECMAT Multi-Academy Trust, as well as sponsoring two University Technical Colleges (UTCs). The objective is to raise attainment in the schools, increase progression to higher education and work with the school communities.

A number of sustained initiatives to raise pupil attainment, including the 'right track' programme have seen steadily increasing numbers of students accessing higher education. This work is aligned with our Institute of Education and we are able to place teacher training students in our sponsored schools in Nursery, Primary, Secondary and Post-16 classrooms, and support school staff through CPD programmes. We are also able to support staff in our schools to obtain the National Professional Qualifications for Middle, Senior, Headship and Executive Headship in the Institute and our CPD is now used by others MATs.

Success and Progression. The University's 'students first' strategic pillar is underpinned by three interdependent and inclusive strategies: Learning and Teaching Strategy, Student Experience (The Wolverhampton Offer) Strategy, Employability and Enterprise Strategy. The University's Learning & Teaching Strategy (2016-2021) has three priority areas for development: Learner engagement, Learning opportunities, Subject communities.

Learner engagement: We perform well in recruiting students from disadvantaged and underrepresented groups, but recognise that we have work to do on retaining these students and ensuring they perform as well as they can. We have set ourselves four separate targets for this area for different groups of students in higher education.

Learner engagement begins before students enrol at the University through diagnostic testing to ensure students who need help receive it. The University's participation in the DRIVER Catalyst project is enabling us to explore ways in which the transition process can be enhanced. We are reviewing our assessment strategy to ensure that activities allow all students to demonstrate that they have achieved course learning outcomes. As part of the project, the University has been working in partnership with Halesowen College to identify effective transition processes and practices and these will be disseminated to other key post-16 providers.

The former School of Applied Sciences developed individual learner profiles (ILPs) and diagnostic activities to ensure personalised support during the early stages of study. This has been widened to all students and supplemented by further diagnostic testing in different subject areas. The aim is for all students to be able to participate in diagnostic testing and to provide appropriate signposting to support resources to develop and enhance their skills. Our ambition is that all students will be fully aware of the skills support offer available to them.

We have set a target to increase the number of students achieving a 1st or 2:1; we are below the sector average for all students. We are putting a particular focus on BAME students because, as a group, they are further behind the benchmark. Data for student success shows

us that we need to focus on closing the gaps for disabled students, mature students and students from low participation neighbourhoods.

We are currently reviewing assessment modes and methods to ensure that students who come to us through vocational routes are not disadvantaged.

Our ambition is for all courses to be achieving a minimum Value Added (VA) score of 1 (i.e. achievement of the predicted proportion of good degrees, based on the entry qualifications and subject of study of the student cohort). The VA score has been used primarily in discussions relating to the attainment of BAME students, but the data can also be used to explore the impact of intersectionality on attainment.

Learning opportunities: Research conducted by the University and the Students' Union has demonstrated the diverse nature of our student body, and the fact that many of our students lead complex lives. Our ambition is for all students to be able to access all appropriate and relevant learning resources to support their studies at a time and location that is convenient to them. This ambition has been supported by a cross-University Digital Campus Transformation Programme focused on enabling further innovations in learning, teaching and student support through the introduction of new technology and staff development. A new virtual learning environment (VLE) – Canvas – was implemented for all taught courses in September 2017 adopting a 'pedagogy first' methodology.

The University has established a strong reputation in the innovative development of effective learning and teaching facilities underpinned by research. This has resulted in innovative, flexible, collaborative, and technology-enhanced teaching environments alongside extensive social learning spaces.

Each campus has a learning centre which brings together extensive physical and digital library resources, study skills support and social learning spaces with 24/7 opening. Part of the development of our physical learning spaces includes the provision of technology within these areas e.g. capture technology software to support the development of video resources to complement other learning and teaching activities.

To meet the personalised needs of the University's diverse student body, an institution-wide Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) scheme was implemented in 2014, led by one of our National Teaching Fellows. The GTAs work one-to-one with students in order to personalise support. Following the outcomes of the evaluation of the GTA Scheme (evidence of 2% increase in module pass rates) there has been a focus on using the GTAs with Level 3 and 4 students.

Subject communities: We have recently co-located cognate disciplines in order to foster staff and student communities through the creation of 'academic homes', particularly important given the commuter nature of our students.

While our figures for students progressing on to employment or further study are above benchmark at 96.3%, we recognise we need to work on improving the percentage of graduates who move into highly skilled occupations. To support student progression, the University's Employability and Enterprise Strategy ensures that business and professional practice permeates the curriculum to support students' development of skills that are highly valued by employers.

Our Enterprise and Employability Strategy provides encouragement and support to students to start their own business. The University also provides incubator and grow-on space at its Science and Innovation Parks and access to a £250,000 seed-corn fund which is allocated through the Green Shoots scheme. For many years, the University has operated a 'SPEED Plus' scheme on behalf of West Midlands universities. Our ambition is to continue to grow the

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numbers of students participating in these schemes, and to increase the proportion of students progressing into graduate-level employment.

Over 13% of students at the University of Wolverhampton have identified themselves as having some form of disability. We have recognised that our disabled students particularly present with issues relating to confidence, self-marketing and how/when to disclose their disability. The careers service deliver a range of targeted workshops by specialists like Remploy, Leonard Cheshire and organise an annual 'Disability Employability Event' that is delivered in association with the Student Support and Wellbeing team.

As a University we also have a sizeable population of mature students with young children. We are consulting with the students in question and exploring additional support initiatives for students with children.

The biggest challenge for us is not an access challenge, although we will continue to focus on providing opportunities and widening participation. Our challenge is to ensure that our students are supported to be successful, to realise their ambitions and potential, during the course of their studies and progressing into highly skilled employment.'

2. Self-assessment of targets

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

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

Any optional commentary provided against the targets is given in Annex B.

Statistical targets and milestones

Reference Number (lifecycle stage)	Description	Baseline year	Baseline data	2018-19 milestone	2019-20 milestone	Units of target	Comparison year	Actual performance in comparison year	Target self- assessment
T16a_01 (Access)	Continue to increase overall number of enrolled students who declare with a disability as percentage of the total student population.	2014-15	12%	15%	16%	Percentage	2019-20	12.59	Limited progress
T16a_02 (Access)	Increase the number of part-time undergraduate entrants to 2020 by 2020	2014-15	1780	1880	1980	Headcount	2019-20	2111	Expected progress
T16a_03 (Access)	Increase year on year to 23%	2014-15	20%	22%	22.5%	Percentage	2019-20	21.7	Limited progress
T16a_04 (Student success)	Better than benchmark	2014-15	10.5	9.6	9.4	Percentage	2018-19	11.3	No progress
T16a_05 (Student success)	Better than benchmark	2014-15	18.4	14	13	Percentage	2018-19	16.5	Limited progress
T16a_06 (Student success)	Better than benchmark	2014-15	13.6	11.5	11	Percentage	2018-19	13.9	No progress
T16a_07 (Progression)	Better than benchmark	2014-15	12.3	10.5	10	Percentage	2018-19	14.3	No progress
T16a_08 (Student success)	Improve % predicted to complete 1st degree to benchmark	2014-15	68.5	72	73	Percentage	2019-20	64	No progress
T16a_09 (Access)	Increase the number of participants in Aspire2Uni programme	2015-16	30	120	150	Headcount	2019-20	143	Expected progress

T16a_10 (Student success)	Continue to improve the proportion of ALL students who achieve a 1st or 2:1 degree outcome.	2014-15	61.3	65	67	Percentage	2019-20	75.2	Expected progress
T16a_11 (Progression)	Maintain DLHE employed or further study above benchmark and above UK average	2014-15	95	96	96	Percentage	2017-18	0	Expected progress
T16a_12 (Student success)	Increase the % of BME graduates achieving 1st or 2:1s	2014-15	50	57	60	Percentage	2019-20	68.4	Expected progress
T16a_13 (Access)	Increase entry to HE from 'family schools' (Smestow, ACE Academy and Wednesfield High) by 15% year on year	2016-17	53	+15%	+15%	Headcount	2019-20	56	Expected progress

Other milestones and targets

No data was returned for this section in University of Wolverhampton's 2019-20 access and participation plan.

3. Investment commitments

3.1. Access and participation investment for the last audited year

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

Financial year	2019-20				
	Predicted spend (£)	Actual spend (£)	Difference (ppt)		
Access investment	£632,000.00	£631,000.00	0%		
Financial Support	£2,280,000.00	£2,659,000.00	17%		

4. Action plan

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

Reference Number	Steps that will be taken in the future to make expected progress against target
T16a_01	We are currently running targeted interventions to increase awareness of the University's specialist expertise in Deaf Studies. This is aimed at increasing awareness of courses available and careers options for interested students. We are also creating strong partnerships with the key stakeholders working in Local Authorities and careers services to ensure clear progression pathways and linked activities. As the University is positioned within 7 Local Authority areas, this is a significant piece of work. We are also working with FE College partners on a joined up offer for Student Service Support and Wellbeing teams to create a coordinated approach for learners to progress. We adopted a number of recommendations from the Commision's reprort including running transition events throughout the end of August and September ahead of enrolment to support students with disabilities. We are currently developing an evaluation of the impact of online learning and assessment on disabled students' experience and progression. We are working to ensure consistency in the learning delivery and assessment method within courses. We have made new commitments in regard to support for visually impaired students - we have invested approximately £55,000 in IT equipment and software specifically for these students. These assets are to be loaned to visually impaired students while they are waing for their DSA funding to be approved and necessary equipment to be acquired. We will make to the switch to the trust-based model of disability support permanent.

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T16a_03	We have finalised our Contextual Admissions policy for 2021-22 to include reference to students who study in LPN schools/colleges or where these schools have previous low levels of attainment at level 2. We have enhanced transition events and support. Our school and college feeder list has been updated to ensure we prioritise schools/colleges in LPNs.
T16a_04	Student Transition Teachers introduced in 2020/21 to provide additional support for transition, including teaching on the Foundation Year programmes. Assessment strategies will continue to be reviewed and evaluated in the light of changes that had to be made during the pandemic. Aspects of blended learning that have been identified by students as being effective during the pandemic will be continued, in order to provide flexible provision. An online version of the ILP was piloted in 2019/20 and has been rolled out across the University in 2020/21. This has increased submission rate.
T16a_05	Student Transition Teachers introduced in 2020/21 to provide additional support for transition, including teaching on the Foundation Year programmes. Assessment strategies will continue to be reviewed and evaluated in the light of changes that had to be made during the pandemic. Aspects of blended learning that have been identified by students as being effective during the pandemic will be continued, in order to provide flexible provision. An online version of the ILP was piloted in 2019/20 and has been rolled out across the University in 2020/21. This has increased submission rate.
T16a_06	Student Transition Teachers introduced in 2020/21 to provide additional support for transition, including teaching on the Foundation Year programmes. Assessment strategies will continue to be reviewed and evaluated in the light of changes that had to be made during the pandemic. Aspects of blended learning that have been identified by students as being effective during the pandemic will be continued, in order to provide flexible provision. An online version of the ILP was piloted in 2019/20 and has been rolled out across the University in 2020/21. This has increased submission rate.
T16a_07	Student Transition Teachers introduced in 2020/21 to provide additional support for transition, including teaching on the Foundation Year programmes. Assessment strategies will continue to be reviewed and evaluated in the light of changes that had to be made during the pandemic. Aspects of blended learning that have been identified by students as being effective during the pandemic will be continued, in order to provide flexible provision. An online version of the ILP was piloted in 2019/20 and has been rolled out across the University in 2020/21. This has increased submission rate.
T16a_08	Assessment strategies will continue to be reviewed and evaluated in the light of changes that had to be made during the pandemic. Aspects of blended learning that have been identified by students as being effective during the pandemic will be continued, in order to provide flexible provision.

5. Confirmation

University of Wolverhampton confirms that:

Student engagement

Have you worked with your students to help them complete the access and participation plan monitoring student submission?

Yes

Have you engaged with your student body in the design, evaluation, and monitoring of the plan?

Yes

Verification and sign off

University of Wolverhampton has confirmed that the information included in this impact report is accurate, that it has been compiled in line with OfS guidance, and that it is being submitted on behalf of the governing body of the provider.

Yes

Accountab	Accountable officer sign off		
Name	Professor Geoff Layer		
Position	Vice-Chancellor		

Annex A: Commentary on progress against targets

University of Wolverhampton's commentary where progress against targets was less than expected.

Target reference number: T16a_01

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

Yes

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

Additional steps taken focused on enhancing the information we provide to disabled students during the application phase. These include: adding further information to our Clearing apply pages in the central University pages - we redirected students specifically applying through Clearing to this information to ensure that they access it: virtual Open Days were recorded and subtitled prior to being sent out to students and live BSL interpreters were used for the main programme of the virtual event; REV Live Captions on Zoom for activities moving forward have been addded; specialist staff were available at our virtual Open Days and Clearing Offer Holder Virtual Q&As were held to answer queries from students with disabilities with specific focus on accessiblity and provision of our blended learning approach. In addition, we have enhanced our virtual offer with specialist staff from the Student Support and Wellbeing team to ensure that we supported questions about mental health and wellbeing, especially during the transition to HE. We switched to a trust-based model of implementing reasonable adjustments, including those which require funding from the institution. We have committed additional resources to our Mental Health and Wellbeing Team. We have driven down waiting times for a first appointment with a Mental Health and Wellbeing practitioner. We have introduced 'welfare checks' for all students. We have introduced and run twice weekly 'Quarantining' online sessions with students. We have been delivering a mixture of synchronous and asynchronous sessions. We have provided members of staff with example templates of of ways in which they can design their sessions to be engaging, interactive and accessible. We have explicitly highlighted the accessibility of specific software tools that are available to use in a Canvas topic which supports approaches to blended and flexible learning. We have introduced teaching sessions recording and captioning across the board, thus reducing or in many cases eliminating, the need for notetaking. Academic staff have been advised on how to ensure full access to learning to all disabled students and our Organisational Development team has been delivering sessions such as Teaching and Supporting Dyslexic and Neurodiverse Students and Understanding Autism.

Target reference number: T16a_03

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

Partially. Engagement in schools and colleges has been extremely challenging as a result of COVID. We moved our provision online and made it 'on demand' to support engagement, but this has been low. Some schools have not engaged with activities such as Children's University as a result of COVID.

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

We have adapted our provision, offered alternative assessment pathways to students as a result of Centre Assessed Grades and worked with our Regional Learning Centres and UniConnect programme to enhance existing offer in the community as our school/college engagement was reducing.

Target reference number: T16a_04

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

All commitments were implemented by 19/20; however, these were not all in place by 18/19, which is when the data point was taken. We recognise that the progress is negative, and additional actions have been put in place beyond the stated commitments. Improvements in some commitments still required to meet commitment target; for example, 100% of all students submitting an Individual Learner Profile (ILP). Also, work on revising assessment strategies was disrupted because of the pandemic in 2019/20; however, a larger number of assessment processes were reviewed – to take account of students being at a distance – and anecdotal evidence is that the assignment tasks overall were more inclusive. The data are being analysed and evaluated to determine if this was the case.

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

Academic Coaches were introduced in 2019/20 across all academic faculties as a 'Personal Tutor Plus' for Level 3 and 4 students, building on the GTA Scheme, in order to support transition, retention, progression and attainment.

Amendments were made to the University's Academic Regulations in 2018/19 to support students' continuing study with their original cohort (e.g. increased level of compensation) and to remain in full-time education.

Target reference number: T16a_05

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

All commitments were implemented by 19/20; however, these were not all in place by 18/19, which is when the data point was taken. We recognise that the progress is negative, and additional actions have been put in place beyond the stated commitments. Improvements in some commitments still required to meet commitment target; for example, 100% of all students submitting an Individual Learner Profile (ILP). Also, work on revising assessment strategies was disrupted because of the pandemic in 2019/20; however, a larger number of assessment processes were reviewed – to take account of students being at a distance – and anecdotal evidence is that the assignment tasks overall were more inclusive. The data are being analysed and evaluated to determine if this was the case.

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

Academic Coaches were introduced in 2019/20 across all academic faculties as a 'Personal Tutor Plus' for Level 3 and 4 students, building on the GTA Scheme, in order to support transition, retention, progression and attainment.

Amendments were made to the University's Academic Regulations in 2018/19 to support

students' continuing study with their original cohort (e.g. increased level of compensation) and to remain in full-time education.

Target reference number: T16a_06

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

All commitments were implemented by 19/20; however, these were not all in place by 18/19, which is when the data point was taken. We recognise that the progress is negative, and additional actions have been put in place beyond the stated commitments. Improvements in some commitments still required to meet commitment target; for example, 100% of all students submitting an Individual Learner Profile (ILP). Also, work on revising assessment strategies was disrupted because of the pandemic in 2019/20; however, a larger number of assessment processes were reviewed – to take account of students being at a distance – and anecdotal evidence is that the assignment tasks overall were more inclusive. The data are being analysed and evaluated to determine if this was the case.

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

Academic Coaches were introduced in 2019/20 across all academic faculties as a 'Personal Tutor Plus' for Level 3 and 4 students, building on the GTA Scheme, in order to support transition, retention, progression and attainment.

Amendments were made to the University's Academic Regulations in 2018/19 to support students' continuing study with their original cohort (e.g. increased level of compensation) and to remain in full-time education.

Target reference number: T16a_07

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

All commitments were implemented by 19/20; however, these were not all in place by 18/19, which is when the data point was taken. We recognise that the progress is negative, and additional actions have been put in place beyond the stated commitments.

Improvements in some commitments still required to meet commitment target; for example, 100% of all students submitting an Individual Learner Profile (ILP). Also, work on revising assessment strategies was disrupted because of the pandemic in 2019/20; however, a larger number of assessment processes were reviewed – to take account of students being at a distance – and anecdotal evidence is that the assignment tasks overall were more inclusive. The data are being analysed and evaluated to determine if this was the case.

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

Academic Coaches were introduced in 2019/20 across all academic faculties as a 'Personal Tutor Plus' for Level 3 and 4 students, building on the GTA Scheme, in order to support transition, retention, progression and attainment.

Amendments were made to the University's Academic Regulations in 2018/19 to support students' continuing study with their original cohort (e.g. increased level of compensation) and to remain in full-time education.

Target reference number: T16a_08

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

Work on revising assessment strategies was disrupted because of the pandemic; however, a larger number of assessment processes were reviewed – to take account of students being at a distance – and anecdotal evidence is that the assignment tasks overall were more inclusive. The data are being analysed and evaluated to determine if this was the case.

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

Amendments to the University's Academic Regulations in 2018/19 to support students' continuing study with their original cohort (e.g. increased level of compensation) and to remain in full-time education.

Annex B: Optional commentary on targets

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

Reference Number	Optional commentary
T16a_01	
T16a_02	Our target was to increase the number of part-time students through the growth of our apprentices provision. Therefore, we have included apprenticeship numbers within the performance figure.
T16a_03	
T16a_04	
T16a_05	
T16a_06	
T16a_07	
T16a_08	
T16a_09	
T16a_10	The rise noted may be explained partially by the temporary adjustments made to the University's degree classification algorithm, to take account of the impact from the pandemic. This algorithm is still in place for students who were studying at Levels 5 and 6 during semester 2 2019/20, and the University will continue to monitor the impact of this temporary adjustment. The starndard degree classification algorithm applies to all other students.
T16a_11	The DLHE survey has changed to the Graduate Outcomes survey, and the census has changed from 6 months to 15 months. This means that the percentages are no longer comparable as a trend. In addition, HESA has not produced a PI percentage for the new Graduate Outcomes data so we cannot measure our performance in this way.
T16a_12	
T16a_13	ACE Academy was re-brokered to another multi-academy trust in 2017/18 and is therefore no longer a 'family school'. The figures are for the remaining two schools and 83 students progressed to higher education from these schools in 2020/21.