



Widening Participation

Strategy 2024-2030

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Approval History

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1.00	28/11/2023	Ashley Wheaton, UCEM Vice Chancellor, and Jane Fawkes, Deputy Vice Chancellor	UCEM
2.00	11/09/2025	Approved changes by WP Strategic Group	University of the Built Environment
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Document History

Version	Date	Reason	Person
V2.00	From 12/2/2025	Revisions to the Strategy based on necessary amendments, updated targets, activities and groups, University name change and LSA integration	C. Thackeray
V2.01	29/05/2026	Take into account the merger with the London School of Architecture and the revised Access and Participation Plan (from January 2026)	C. Thackeray

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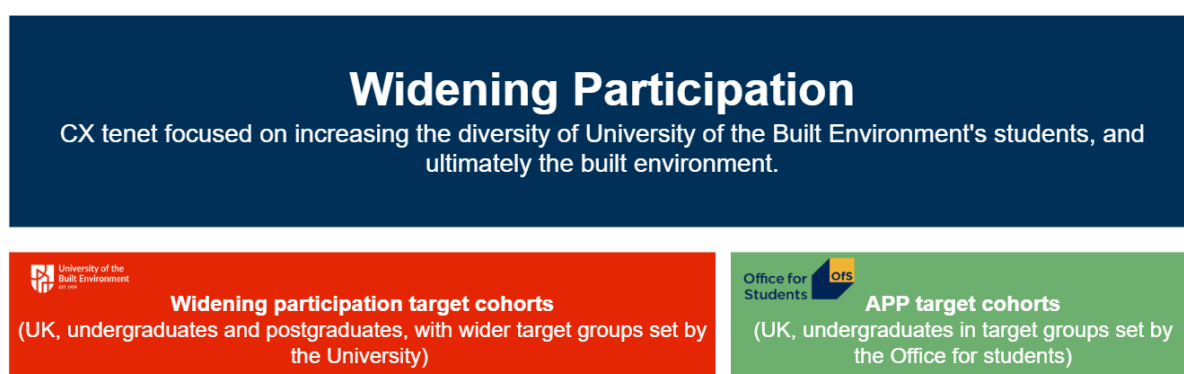
1. Overview

University of the Built Environment's Widening Participation Strategy 2024–2030 outlines the vision for how the institution will deliver increased equality of opportunity for primarily UK-based students to access, succeed on and progress from all the University's programmes. Widening participation covers equality, diversity and inclusion student activities, of which University of the Built Environment's Access and Participation Plans (APP) forms a sub-set.

The Widening Participation Strategy aligns with the institution's core purpose: *to provide accessible, relevant and cost-effective education, which enhances careers, increases professionalism and contributes to a sustainable Built Environment*, and subsequently, the University's Strategic Plan 2025–30, including the institution's vision to become the Centre of Excellence (CX) for built environment education.

This strategy further contributes to, and is informed by, the University's overarching Inclusion Policy, ensuring that principles of equitable access, participation and achievement are systematically embedded within institutional policy, governance, and practice. This strategy also aligns to University of the Built Environment's current Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy (LTAS) 2026–30, where offering different pathways, welcoming more diversity, and improving accessibility is embedded in the University's pedagogic approach to teaching, learning and assessment.

Figure 1–1. Diagram of Strategic Plan and widening participation



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2. Core principles

The five core principles underpinning this strategy are as follows:

01 A Whole-Student-Lifecycle Approach

University of the Built Environment recognises that widening participation is not just about entry, it is about access, success, and progression across all programme routes and learning types (including online as well as blended learning). This includes pre-entry outreach through to transition, retention, attainment, and graduate outcomes.

02 Targeting Under-Represented Groups through inclusivity and a Whole-Institution Approach

University of the Built Environment will explicitly identify and work with groups that face persistent barriers to Higher Education. Widening participation must be embedded into the institutional culture, not just specialist teams, and therefore has a shared ownership across leadership, academic schools, professional services, and students.

03 Primarily UK- based students

University of the Built Environment will primarily focus on UK-based students, in order to align this strategy to work by the UK Government and Office for Students on widening equality through providers' APPs.

04 Collaboration

Strong emphasis is placed on evaluation, data-driven decision-making, and evidence-informed intervention design.

05 Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice

This strategy will ensure that widening participation works to broaden social mobility, community benefit, equality, and social justice across Higher Education and the built environment.

3. Key objectives

The University has set out five key objectives that will run until 2030, and ensure equality for target groups of students (as found in Appendix A: Target student cohorts) and reduce gaps in achievement.

In order to achieve these ambitious objectives, specific widening participation targets and activities will be planned and delivered during 2024-28. These targets and activities will work towards achieving the overall long-term objectives. A theory of change¹ model has been used to plan these activities, and high-level details of this and the activities can be found in the appendices (see Section 3 and Appendix A: Target student cohorts). Due to the agile nature of this strategy, some targets will continue to be pursued beyond the formal end date of the strategy. In addition, as the University's APP targets have evolved over time, associated measures and priorities have also changed. Targets highlighted in grey will cease to be applicable from the 2026-27 academic year onwards.

3.1 Objective 1

01 To increase the attainment of pre-16 young people from secondary schools and Further Education colleges

University of the Built Environment will be undertaking interventions to raise school attainment for under 16-year-olds, in line with its APP 2024-25 to 2027-28. The University will look to enhance the Geography and Design, Engineer Construct curriculum and training of teachers in order to raise pre-16 attainment of secondary school pupils in deprived Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. For further details, please see [the University's APPs](#). The University will also work with pre and post 16 students across all Part 0 programmes at the London School of Architecture (LSA), thereby enhancing the diversity and inclusivity of future professionals in the built environment sector. The SDGs that map to this objective are as follows: 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17.

3.2 Objective 2

02 To increase the number of young, college, and adult learners with an expectation that they can progress into the University's programmes

The University will focus on improving access to its programmes (and thus increasing diversity in the built environment) through targeted outreach. This objective will focus on engagement with schools, colleges and on occasion providers of adult learning as well as its employers. Specific outreach work with key under-represented groups in the built environment will support the diversification of the sector, by ensuring that students are not only more aware of built environment-based careers, but for girls to have gained experience of them as well. The SDGs that map to this objective are as follows:4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17.

Targets	Process		Outcomes	
	Inputs	Activities	Outcomes	Impact
By 2028, 20% of the University's medium-sized employers will have published formal EDI strategies and targets, (expanding the current APP apprenticeship groups to include apprentice disability and other postgraduate groups).	Staff and administration costs for resource creation and dissemination.	See also University of the Built Environment 2024-28 APP for details of further activities. This activity would include a toolkit that would provide more details for students from for example disabled and care experienced backgrounds.	Increased numbers of medium-sized employers publishing formal EDI targets and strategies.	More diverse applications from Widening Participation target cohorts to University of the Built Environment.

¹ A Theory of Change is a method which outlines (based on available evidence) how certain activities should lead to a specific change.

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Targets	Process		Outcomes	
	Inputs	Activities	Outcomes	Impact
25% of surveyed young people who take part in the University's activities are considering built environment careers in the future.	Staff time to attend events and organise activities. Staff time to develop surveys and analyse data Physical and travel costs.	Attendance at Careers fairs. Running outreach events around the UK (sometimes linked to success and progression events) including identified HE and BE 'cold spots' at schools and FE colleges as well as those that teach BTECs, V levels, A levels and T levels. Collaborating with schools and other built environment organisations to raise further awareness. This includes collaborating with other universities and Uni Connect Partnerships as part of regional collaborations across the UK. Student Ambassador Programme for University students and alumni. Deliver Postgraduate access activity across the UK.	Increased awareness and knowledge of future career pathways and options, including the built environment and Higher Education.	More diverse applications from Widening Participation target cohorts to University of the Built Environment.
For further targets and activities relating to this objective, please see the University's APPs .				

3.3 Objective 3

03 To broaden the diversity of University of the Built Environment students by supporting their transition into the institution

Students from under-represented groups often require more support with their transition into Higher Education² as not all students are prepared for the level of study, or for self-directed learning. The ambition under this objective is to encourage students to be more proactive in identifying their own ongoing support needs, so that support – including self-serving or seeking relevant resources earlier in the semester, result in improved outcomes. It will aim to strengthen transition into Higher Education for students from underrepresented groups by implementing a structured programme of early engagement, financial support, personalised academic preparation, and sustained pastoral support, ensuring that all learners enter their studies with the confidence, skills and guidance needed to succeed. The SDGs that map to this objective are as follows: 4, 10.

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Targets	Process		Outcomes	
	Inputs	Activities	Outcomes	Impact
To encourage 10% of disabled students to declare a disability earlier in the semester, in order to receive earlier support.	Staff time for key delivery teams including Admissions and Business Development. Time to undertake specific transition sessions. Administrative time to develop any resources. BAU resource to enhance existing systems and processes.	Disability and mental health transition support. Business as usual activity undertaken within the Disability team. SilverCloud	Increase in positive expectations for study. Increased awareness and understanding of and the support available (academic and additional support). Improved awareness of the skills needed to study successfully online. Students receive ASPs earlier and more dedicated support.	Disabled students and those with mental health conditions to continue their programme. More students receive support through an Additional Support Plan.
[Target to be determined but in relation to second semester registration date]	Staff time to review documentation and organise and deliver activities. Staff time to develop surveys and analyse data.	Care experienced transition support from application to duration of study. Supporting student data poverty. Providing financial support via University fee waiver bursaries and scholarships. Steps to Success (pre-entry transition activity to specific WP student groups). LSA student Buddy Scheme.	Increased student sense of belonging An increase in a student's confidence in their own ability and skills necessary to perform well academically in Higher Education Increased student understanding and awareness of the resources and skills necessary to begin their learning journey in Higher Education	Increase the continuation rate amongst WP students.
For further targets and activities relating to this objective, please see the University's APPs .				

3.4 Objective 4

04 To further support widening participation students who could face sustained disadvantage or barriers during their studies

The University is dedicated to supporting and improving student success across the institution, for all students. Alongside business-as-usual success initiatives, the University will use ongoing close analysis of qualitative and quantitative data to identify where target groups of students could be facing disadvantage or barriers during their studies and will put in place success initiatives in order to reduce and mitigate those barriers. This objective aims to further support the success of certain widening participation student groups. This can include student fostered collaboration by utilising students as partners to ensure their voice is continuously consulted. This will be achieved through increasing student confidence and resilience, as well as ensuring staff are suitably knowledgeable to support the diverse range of students. This objective will work alongside the Institution's [Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy](#), which sets out details of how the University's academic offer will continue to provide programmes which serve the most diverse range of student needs and encourage participation through inclusivity and accessibility. The SDGs that map to this objective are as follows: 1, 3, 5, 10, 16.

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Target/ Aim	Process		Outcomes	
	Inputs	Activities	Outcomes	Impact
To monitor, evaluate and set new targets relating to PG ethnic minority, mature and disabled students by July 2025 and to be monitored within the Quarterly Business Review pack from Autumn 2025. Targets to be set from August 2025.	Staff time to monitor and evaluate data. Staff time to devise new targets and activities.	Planning and delivering annual reporting of analysis (LTEC, WP PB and QBR as applicable). Gathering LGBTQ+ and Forces Veterans admissions and success data. To implement measures for analysis and evaluation of continuation metrics for the target groups. Dissemination of the evaluation activities to share data via a communications plan.	Increased staff knowledge on barriers faced by disadvantaged students, and how best to support key groups. The opportunity to devise further targets in relation to the three target groups. The opportunity to devise and implement activities based on the agreed targets.	Where possible, gaps are identified and targets are created to support student success.
100% of staff to undertake agreed levels of equality, diversity and inclusion training, in order to address barriers to students in business-as-usual delivery.	Staff time to produce resources and training for activities. Staff time to develop and organise activities and funds. Recruitment of EDI champions and staff time to undertake this activity. Other physical costs.	Staff EDI Training, potentially to include: - Generalised All Staff EDI training, delivered by Human Resources. - Funds for the Communities of Practice sessions Creating a staff group to support educational pedagogy and small scale funding of projects. Awareness-raising via communications plan including Bulletin posts and All Staffs [ID. 4.22].	Increased staff knowledge on barriers faced by disadvantaged students, and how best to support key groups. Increased students' sense of belonging. Reduced stigmas around disability and mental health.	Staff awareness of barriers results in changes to BAU delivery in order to embed sector best practice and support student success of traditionally disadvantaged groups.
To increase the number of UG diagnosed disabled students with an Additional Support Plan to 65% by 2028, so that they are more likely to continue with their studies.	Staff time to develop and organise activities and funds Other physical costs Costs to maintain support for specific funds	Lionheart (continuing activity) as well as investigating support available via other organisations for students (such as those within the construction industry). Wellbeing platform (continuing activity)	Decreased financial barriers for students, in order to continue with their studies or access support Reduced stigmas around disability and mental health, leading to increased student belonging and self-efficacy	More UG students receive support through an Additional Support Plan More disabled and mental health students actively seeking support and declaring disabilities

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Target/ Aim	Process		Outcomes	
	Inputs	Activities	Outcomes	Impact
	Staff time to produce resources and training for activities	Business as usual activity undertaken within the Disability team. Disabled Students Success Fund. Neurodiversity Fund.		Increased continuation rates for UG disabled students
Ensure that WP student groups are encouraged to engage with at least one WP support activity to ≥ 40%.	Staff time to develop and organise activities and funds Other physical costs Costs to maintain support for specific funds Staff time to produce resources and training for activities	Space to Study (included expanded programmes). Peer Assisted Learning. Childcare learning fund. Financial support. Supporting student digital inclusion. Student project funding. Care student support. LSA Culture of Care activity. Student Panel. Student Engagement Roadshow (access, success, progression). Student Officers (including their involvement with the Student Panel). Women's Network. Parents and Carers support. Funded support of student projects. NB: Other more broader University activity across the academic year such as networking events, virtual hangouts and student representation will be included.	Increased confidence, connection, and awareness Improved academic engagement and reduces early disengagement	Increased continuation rates amongst WP student group
For further targets and activities relating to this objective, please see the University's 2024-25 to 2027-28 APPs .				

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In addition to these support activities, the University's Financial Support Fund is also available to support all students experiencing challenges. Staff support and training through conferences, academic communities of practice etc continues to support staff professional development resulting in increased awareness and enabling WP students to benefit from enhanced staff expertise..

3.5 Objective 5

05 To build the experience, skills and knowledge for widening participation students to enable them to influence change and contribute to a diverse built environment.

The University is dedicated to influencing and contributing to a sustainable built environment, which is synonymous with a diverse built environment. In order to support this vision, the institution will support target students to grow their experience, skills and knowledge to progress successfully in the sector. Despite high rates of progression into relevant employment for graduates, it is crucial that under-represented groups are supported to increase their motivation, knowledge and confidence in entering the built environment, in order to influence the diversification of the industry. This will be achieved through increasing students' awareness and understanding of built environment careers and progression opportunities, as well as through supportive mentoring and development, which will provide role-models for groups typically under-represented in the industry. The SDGs that map to this objective are as follows: 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 17.

Targets	Process		Outcomes	
	Inputs	Activities	Outcomes	Impact
Fewer than 10% of WP students in the final year of their programme that respond to the Careers Registration survey will express requiring additional support in joining a relevant PSRB by July 2028.	Staff time to produce resources and training for activities. Staff time to develop and organise programmes. Staff time to review and analyse survey responses. Other physical costs.	PSRB awareness, coaching and education, including activity on Careers Connect.	Raising awareness of PSRB opportunities for URGs. Educating key target groups on the benefits and value of PSRB membership etc.	More women retained in built environment professions, rather than dropping out during their early career. More students from target groups making use of PSRB membership etc, and advancing their career as a result.
80% of students will answer positively in an evaluation questionnaire regarding their career confidence after participating in progression widening participation activities.	Staff time to produce resources and training for activities. Staff time to adapt current surveys and analyse results. Staff time to develop and organise programmes.	Mentoring for those from global majority heritage minority backgrounds, those who identify as women and forces veterans. Micro-placements. Graduation financial support. Targeted Personal and Career Development Support. Student Engagement Roadshow (access, success, progression).	Providing role models for UG and PG target groups. Providing built environment experience and networking opportunities for those in and not working in the sector. Creating a sense of community and belonging for women in the built environment.	More women retained in built environment professions, rather than dropping out during their early career Students without built environment experience proceed into relevant careers in the industry. More students from target groups advancing their careers and retained in the built environment.

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4. Targets beyond 2028

The objectives set out in this strategy (see section 3) will run until 2030, and Widening Participation continues to be a core tenet of the University's Strategic Plan 2025–30. However, there is a need for an agile approach to managing the detailed targets and activities that sit below these overarching objectives. For this reason, the detailed activities and targets set out in this document will only run for 2024–28, to ensure that:

- Any changes in the Higher Education landscape or compliance or regulatory requirements can be accounted for in future (i.e. future iterations of the Access & Participation Plan).
- The impact of the targeted activities in this strategy are understood, and new targets or changes are made to ensure University achieves its overall objectives (as part of the cycle of continuous evaluation and enhancement).
- Review and analysis of the University's data sets on an annual basis (see activity ID 4.21), will ensure that new targets are set where the size of under-represented groups are meaningful, or if future barriers are identified in the institution's delivery.

Work will therefore be carried out in the academic year 2026–27 to review this strategy alongside renewal of University of the Built Environment's Access & Participation Plan 2024–28, and develop a detailed plan for delivering the objectives in the final two years of the strategy, including:

- Removing targets and activities where objectives have been met and gaps in student performance have closed.
- Considering the impact of new Office for Students (or other) regulatory and compliance requirements upon this strategy.
- Considering how this strategy can be extended and broadened to include a focus on international widening participation.

5. Strategy implementation

An implementation roadmap will be developed following approval of this strategy, which will set out how the University will achieve these ambitious objectives during 2024–28. Further to this, interim (milestone), year-on-year targets will be developed in order to effectively track and monitor progress.

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The Widening Participation Strategic Group will take ownership for delivery of this strategy, and will monitor the implementation of activities set out in this document and progress against the agreed targets (see group terms of reference for further information on roles and accountability). Progress against this strategy will also be reviewed by the University Student Panel, ensuring alignment with and accountability to the University's overarching Inclusion Strategy.

There will be the opportunity to apply for additional research grants and funds throughout the duration of this strategy. It will be important to investigate grant opportunities relevant to the objectives of this strategy and applications will be made if the University has the staffing capacity to support these funds.

6. Monitoring and evaluation

Widening participation activities will be subject to the same robust evaluation framework that University of the Built Environment's APP commits to (see [the Evaluation Framework: in the University of the Built Environment APP](#)). Every activity has a theory of change supporting it, that ensures the University is delivering activities that will impact on the targets identified for each student group.

The University will implement an annual cycle of evaluation to assess each widening participation activity and will use evidence-informed data to assess improvements. Evaluation will be monitored and reported to the Widening Participation Strategic Group, to ensure that activities continue to produce the desired outcomes outlined in this strategy.

Progress against widening participation activities, targets and KPIs will be reported to the following groups:

- The Widening Participation Strategic Group will be accountable for all monitoring, reporting, and evaluation against this strategy.
- The Quarterly Strategic Review (QSR), to ensure visibility of this strategy and its objectives.
- The University's Learning, Teaching & Enhancement Committee
- Academic Review Committee (Board of Trustees), will review annually as part of their role in monitoring the University's progress against the Strategic Plan.

In terms of dissemination, staff will be encouraged to share the findings of their work internally and externally

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Appendix A: Target student cohorts

‘Widening participation’ as a term represents a broad range of individuals from across society. University of the Built Environment defines the target groups to be covered by this strategy in the list below: the institution is mindful that this strategy does not cover all students who could be under-represented or could benefit from support services at the University or across the UK Higher Education sector in general. It should also be noted that the University delivers, as standard, success initiatives for all students and that this strategy focuses specifically on targeted interventions for UK-based, under-represented groups

Student Group	Rationale
Forces veterans	The skills utilised by those in the Armed Forces are transferable to the built environment. There is also financial support provided by the Armed Forces to support the change in circumstances. The institution currently have a number of former Armed Forces in the student body, so it would be building on a student group the University already have and links well with the WP target: “children of military personnel.”
Cohorts where there are gender imbalances: Women in the built Environment (UG and PG)	The institutional focus is primarily upon the built environment with one of the largest under-represented groups within the sector being women. Undergraduate women are a group that will be directly support in the APP, which is why the University have continued to focus on this across both APP and widening participation further at postgraduate level.
Higher Education	
Students within lower affluency postcodes across the UK, IMD1-2 (UG and PG)	Students from lower affluency postcodes (IMD1-2) are more likely to face a wide range of barriers to Higher Education access, continuation, attainment and progression, identifying socio-economic disadvantage, financial pressures, and unequal access to support as key risks to student success
Students from areas across the UK who live in areas designated as ‘cold spots’ for Higher Education Institutions and the built Environment ³	Identifying key areas across the UK where access to Higher Education is more sparse or less likely, as well as areas of the UK where there are fewer built environment companies and therefore fewer opportunities to be aware of the sector. Students who live in cold spots could be supported by an online based university, especially if they are based in a remote location and do not have to travel. Currently the APP refers to primarily working within the Reading borough, but establishing gaps in the UK would be important to establish where else across the UK there are gaps for students who could receive further online support.
Disabled students (UG and PG)	Whilst referenced as part of the Whole Provider Approach in the APP, internal data suggests that more students are disclosing a disability or mental health condition and therefore interventions should be introduced to support the needs and amount of these students.
LGBTQ+ (UG and PG)	This group is a key built environment target group and is considered to be heavily under-represented. Having targeted other key under-represented groups in the built environment, it was important to also support the access, success and progression of this group.
Care Experienced students (UG and PG)	On average care experienced students have significantly poorer educational and life outcomes than the general population and consistently are under-represented in Higher Education. The Office for Students states that ‘ <i>all universities and colleges must consider care leavers in their access and participation plans</i> ’ and this group was recognised as part of the Plan, but that more information would be included in this strategy due to the very small numbers that the institution currently has.

³ Built environment “cold spots” are defined as those areas where the type of built environment employer, size of employer, and accessibility of employer (i.e. availability of apprenticeship routes or those without an EDI focus) are limited. The University will focus on built environment specialisms that align to the institution’s academic provision.

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Student Group	Rationale
Mature (UG and PG)	Mature students are a key group and are likely to have a number of key additional pressures during their study and therefore could require supplementary support during their studies at UG and PG level. The UG group is a target groups within the APP for apprentice students.
Global majority heritage (UG and PG)	A key EDI area for the built environment sector is ethnicity and the University should look to support students from global majority backgrounds access, succeed in their studies and progression into the sector at both levels of the institution's education.
Students with Caring Responsibilities (parents and carers) (UG and PG)	Students who have careering responsibilities often juggle significant responsibilities at home alongside their academic commitments. These students provide essential care for family members or dependents, which can be both physically and emotionally demanding. Student caregivers might struggle to allocate adequate time to their studies and often have minimal or no leisure time. Furthermore, students with caring responsibilities face issues with scheduling, financial stress, and feelings of inadequacy.
Students in receipt of bursaries (UG and PG)	Students who currently receive fee-waiver scholarships and bursaries at UG and PG level. These funds help alleviate the financial burden on students, allowing them to focus more on their studies rather than worrying about tuition fees and living expenses. However, some student recipients withdraw and it is important to recognise whether supplementary support could further enhance their studies and pre-empt the risk of withdrawal.
Students who were in receipt of free school meals during their time in school (UG and PG)	Students who received Free School Meals are more likely to have experienced long-term educational and financial disadvantage, which can affect attainment before university, confidence in navigating Higher Education, access to enrichment opportunities, and their ability to manage the increasing costs associated with study. It is also a key metric measured by Ofsted and the Office for Students.

Student groups listed as part of the institution's APP will be considered as part of the Widening Participation Strategy groups but also have their own Intervention Strategies as listed as part of the current APPs. For more information, see [the University's Plans](#) and Office for Students [guidance](#) on risks to equality of opportunity.

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Appendix B: Data analysis and collection

For data collection and analysis information, please see separate document.

Future data commitments

The data analysis and target setting exercise revealed some gaps in current data collection practices that must be addressed within the four-year lifetime of this strategy. As a result, additional data should be collected year- on- year by the University in order to give an accurate picture of under-represented group performance. This includes:

- To create mechanisms by which data can be collected and measured by July 2028 in order to create new targets from September 2028 for certain student target groups: LGBTQ+ (UG and PG), forces veterans (UG and PG).
- To continue to collect data by July 2028 in order to create new targets from September 2028 for care leaver students (UG and PG), this data is currently being collected but the numbers of students are very low.
- To explore admissions data in order to identify any barriers to conversion onto University programmes.
- Identifying common trends and themes in at what point in their studies students choose to disclose a disability or mental health requirement (the earlier a student discloses, the more support they can receive and the more successful they will be. Data should look to identify what triggers disclosure at different points in the student journey, in order to better support this.)
- To establish which non-apprenticeship are not in relevant employment (the assumption is that students who are not in relevant employment may find their studies more challenging as they cannot contextualise, and that they go on to find progressing into the industry much harder. Data collection is therefore required).