Activate Learning

Access and participation plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Introduction

Activate Learning is a forward-thinking education group that aims for far-reaching, progressive change and impact through learning.

The Activate Learning Group is comprised of secondary, further and higher education, apprenticeship and workforce training, consultancy, international, commercial business and social enterprise. Activate Learning is united by a common purpose; **'To provide work-ready talent for business, and to transform lives through our learning philosophy'[1].**

The Activate Learning Group is on an ambitious mission to transform lives through learning by enabling opportunities, creating life chances and generating prosperity for individuals and communities. In achieving this mission, Activate Learning Group is committed to advancing equality of opportunity, respecting and celebrating difference, eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation and fostering good relations.

Higher education provision is located within the Colleges division of the Activate Learning Group, which comprises:

- Banbury and Bicester College
- Bracknell and Wokingham College
- City of Oxford College
- Guildford College
- Merrist Wood College
- Reading College

Activate Learning Group currently has partnership arrangements for its higher education provision with the following awarding organisations:

Organisation	Arrangement
Pearson	Validated
Kingston University	Validated
University of Greenwich	Validated/Franchised
Oxford Brookes University	Franchised
University of Reading	Franchised
University of Chichester	Franchised

For the purposes of clarification, this Access and Participation Plan relates to those programmes for which Activate Learning Group receives direct funding and has authority to charge fees, such as Higher National Certificates and Diplomas validated by Pearson, land-based Foundation Degrees and BSc Honours provision at Merrist Wood College campus, which is delivered through a validated arrangement with Kingston University and the Foundation Degree in Counselling, which is delivered through a validated arrangement with the University of Greenwich.

The following Access and Participation Plan sets out how Activate Learning intends to improve equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education, from 2020/21 to 2024/25.

In summary, Activate Learning Group plans to distribute 45% of the higher fee income to support underrepresented groups of HE students in 2020/21.

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[1] https://www.activatelearning.ac.uk/experience/learning/learning-philosophy

1. Assessment of performance

In preparing this Access and Participation Plan, Activate Learning Group has collated and considered a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data, including OfS Access and participation data resources, OfS data dashboard, TEF metrics, HESA data, and Activate Learning Group HE student data, feedback from student and staff focus groups, NSS results and QAA review reports[2]. The data relates to all students studying on prescribed directly funded higher education programmes delivered by Activate Learning Group and therefore excludes all sub-contracted provision franchised to Activate Learning Group through its collaborative arrangements with University partners.

In assessing student performance, Activate Learning Group has utilised the updated (post-merger) AP data set provided by the OfS to identify any significant gaps in performance informed by statistically significant differences in data across the five years. Where OfS data is limited or not available due to small numbers (<10), and in order to provide a level of detailed analysis, Activate Learning Group has referred either to its own data set and/or included a qualitative analysis. As a result of the two mergers during 2019, Activate Learning Group is currently establishing a comparative data set for higher education students, which will be completed by January 2020. This data set will enable Activate Learning Group to monitor, analyse, evaluate and report upon the performance of all students from underrepresented groups, compared to their peers across the student lifecycle.

In assessing attainment of students, less than 8.0% of directly funded provision is classified degree-level with the remainder being higher national diplomas and certificates. Therefore, in compiling our own post-merger data set (by January 2020) we intend to consider high grades as 1st, 2:1, Distinction and Merit which will provide the opportunity to disaggregate the data by classification and compare performance between the least and most represented groups. In the meantime, Activate Learning has included comparative data in the attainment tables below which refers to the percentage of most and least represented groups who passed their qualification.

1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

Access

Participation of most and least represented groups (relevant to OfS KPM 1 and KPM 2)

Group / Year	Activate Learning					Variance 2013/14 to 2017/18	Variance 2016/17 to 2017/18
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18		
POLAR4 Q1	8.0%	10.0%	8.0%	21.0%	20.0%	+12.0pp	-1.0pp
POLAR4 Q2	8.0%	6.0%	8.0%	5.0%	10.0%	+2.0pp	+5.0pp
POLAR4 Q3	28.0%	22.0%	22.0%	14.0%	25.0%	-3.0pp	+11.0pp
POLAR4 Q4	17.0%	22.0%	21.0%	16.0%	15.0%	-2.0pp	-1.0pp
POLAR4 Q5	39.0%	41.0%	42.0%	43.0%	35.0%	-4.0pp	-8.0pp

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[2] QAA Higher Education Review Report - Activate Learning
QAA Higher Education Review Report - Bracknell and Wokingham College
QAA Higher Education Review Report - Guildford College

Group / Year	Activate Learning					Variance 2013/14 to 2017/18	Variance 2016/17 to 2017/18
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18		
EIMD Q1	4.0%	3.0%	2.0%	3.0%	4.0%	0.0pp	+1.0pp
EIMD Q2	8.0%	7.0%	11.0%	9.0%	15.0%	+7.0pp	+6.0pp
EIMD Q3	15.0%	18.0%	21.0%	13.0%	20.0%	+5.0pp	+7.0pp
EIMD Q4	28.0%	30.0%	23.0%	26.0%	19.0%	-9.0pp	-7.0pp
EIMD Q5	45.0%	43.0%	43.0%	50.0%	44.0%	-1.0pp	-6.0pp

There has been a significant increase in the proportion of students entering from POLAR4 Quintile 1 from 8.0% in 2013/14 to 20.0% in 2017/18, which compared with the declining proportion of POLAR4 Quintile 5 students still reveals a negative 15.0pp difference, although this is 8.0pp above all English HE providers. The proportion of entrants from EIMD Quintile 1 has remained consistent between 2013/14 and 2017/18 at 4.0%. Whilst this is low, it is primarily as a result of the majority of directly funded provision being located in Surrey, which has no neighbourhood area classified in the most deprived 10% and the fact that students have low travel to learn distances.

In identifying the gaps in access for underrepresented groups, Activate Learning Group will set the following targets to increase the proportion of students from POLAR4 Quintile 1 and EIMD Quintile 1 over the duration of this plan:

- Eliminate the 15.0pp Gap between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 by 2024/25
- Increase the proportion of EIMD Q1 by 10.0pp by 2024/25.

Continuation

Due to the small number of students in POLAR4 Quintile 1 (<10) OfS data is currently unavailable between 2012/13 and 2016/17. In addition, as a result of the recent mergers Activate Learning Group's HE data set is only available for 2016/17 which reports that continuation rates for students in POLAR4 Quintile 1 group were 75.0% compared to 85.0% for POLAR Quintile 5.

Given the above, the indication is that there is a gap in performance between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 which Activate Learning Group will review during 2019/20 by aggregating data across 2017/18 and 2018/19 to identify a more accurate level of performance. We will therefore aim to set a target in a variation of this plan by 2020/21. In the meantime, we will analyse reasons for withdrawals, undertake student focus groups and monitor the progress of students to identify specific reasons for non-continuation. Once identified, we will implement measures to improve continuation rates.

Similarly, due to the very small number of students in EIMD Q1 (<10) OfS data is currently unavailable between 2012/13 and 2016/17. In addition, as a result of the recent mergers Activate Learning Group's HE data set is only available for 2016/17 which reports that continuation rates for students in EIMD Q1 group were 100% compared to 77.0% for EIMD Q5. However, as previously mentioned, the number of students in this cohort is very small and the proportion can therefore vary significantly due to the non-continuation of one student.

As a result, Activate Learning Group is cautious about the positive gap in performance based upon one year of limited data and will therefore undertake to review this during 2019/20 by aggregating data across 2017/18 and 2018/19 to identify a more accurate level of performance. We will therefore aim to set a target in a variation of this plan by 2020/21. In the meantime, we will analyse reasons for withdrawals in 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20, undertake student focus groups and monitor the progress of students to identify specific reasons for non-continuation. Once identified, we will implement measures during 2019/20 to address any issues that may arise.

Attainment

Similarly, due to the very small number of students in EIMD Q1 and POLAR Q1 (<10) OfS data is currently unavailable between 2012/13 and 2015/16. In addition, as a result of the recent mergers Activate Learning Group's HE data set is only available for 2016/17. However, as previously mentioned, the number of students in this cohort is very small and as a result it has not been possible to construct any meaningful analysis.

Against the background of limited data Activate Learning Group will therefore undertake to review this by aggregating data across 2017/18 and 2018/19. This will facilitate the more accurate identification of performance and enable us to set a meaningful target in a variation of this plan by 2020/21. In the meantime, we will analyse reasons for withdrawals, grade profiles in 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20, undertake student focus groups, individual student feedback, and monitor the use of HE Study Support systems to identify specific reasons for non-attainment. Once identified, we will implement measures during 2019/20 to address any issues through early interventions.

Progression to highly skilled employment or higher-level study

Due to the small number of students in POLAR4 and EIMD Q1 groups, it has not been possible to disaggregate the data to construct a comparative analysis between Q5 and Q1 for both POLAR4 and EIMD with regards to progression to highly skilled employment or higher-level study.

Analysis of internal data shows that 42% of students are employer sponsored and studying subjects such as Construction and Engineering, with all students remaining in employment upon completion of their studies. Additionally, a quarter of directly funded students are self-employed in Counselling related employment and indications from the pilot subject-level TEF results show that 83.5% of these graduates progress to highly skilled employment or higher study, which is 2.6% above benchmark.

In addition, a third of provision is land-based and evidence from focus groups conducted with students and staff has identified that one of the factors affecting progression to highly skilled employment relates to the fact that students tend to take longer than 6 months to find paid employment due to the highly competitive jobs market in the sector and often start their careers initially through voluntary, part-time or work experience. Activate Learning has also identified that these students experience financial barriers in securing suitable work placements during their studies (200 hrs per year) which can therefore have a significant impact on their progression to employment or further study, as these work placements often result in securing employment.

In the absence of current OfS data, Activate Learning undertakes to conduct its own graduate survey during 2019/20 which will enable us to develop our own data set which will include, but not be limited to, the aggregation of data across 2017/18 and 2018/19 to identify more accurately the level of performance. We will therefore aim to set a target in a variation of this plan by 2021/22.

1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

Access

Group/Year (full-time)	Activate Learning					Variance 2013/14 to 2017/18	Variance 2016/17 to 2017/18
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18		
Asian	7.0%	6.0%	4.0%	7.0%	3.0%	-4.0pp	-4.0pp
Black	1.0%	2.0%	2.0%	3.0%	3.0%	+2.0pp	0.0pp
Mixed	2.0%	3.0%	2.0%	2.0%	2.0%	0.0pp	0.0pp

The proportion of full-time BAME students enrolled on higher education programmes at Activate Learning Group was 8.0% in 2017/18 which is consistent with the ethnic mix within the Southeast, which was 8.7% (Census, 2011). When disaggregating the data by individual ethnic groups, the decline relates primarily to Asian students where there has been a 4.0pp fall since 2013/4, whereas the percentage of Black students has increased by 2.0pp. Whilst based upon very small numbers of students, these figures reflect in part the regional demographics of Surrey where most of the students' study, and the nature of provision (predominantly land-based) which typically does not attract BAME students. However, Activate Learning Group recognises there is further progress to be made and will therefore introduce measures to increase the percentage of BAME students enrolled on higher education programmes by 5.0pp over the duration of this plan. In addition, in developing our own data set we are committed to including the disaggregation of BAME students by 2020/21 so that performance across the student lifecycle can be accurately monitored.

Continuation

Group/Year	Activate Learning					Variance 2013/14 to 2016/17	Variance 2016/17 to 2017/18
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17		
BAME	ND	90.0%	ND	85.0%	75.0%	-15.0pp	-10.0pp
White	84.0%	90.0%	76.0%	85.0%	79.0%	-5.0pp	-6.0pp
Variance	-	0.0pp	-	0.0pp	-4.0pp		-4.0pp

ND=No data

Continuation rates for BAME have been consistent with those for White students but have declined over time and were 4.0pp below those for White students in 2016/17. In setting a target for improvement, Activate Learning Group has taken the average performance for White students over the past five years, which is 83.0% and will therefore set a target to increase the continuation rates for BAME students by 8.0% over the duration of this plan.

Attainment

Group/Year (full-time)	Activate Learning		Variance 2016/17 to 2017/18
	2016/17	2017/18	
BAME	60.0%	67.0%	+7.0pp
White	69.3%	76.0%	+6.7pp
Variance	-9.3pp	-8.0pp	-1.3pp

Although there is limited data available in the OfS AP Data set for the attainment of BAME students. Activate Learning Group's own data- indicates the attainment rates for BAME students have increased by 7.0pp between 2016/17 and 2017/18 but remain below the rate for White students. Due to the small numbers of students involved it has not been possible to disaggregate this data. However, Activate Learning are committed to including the disaggregation of BAME in developing our data capabilities so that it can be reported on as from January 2020.

It will therefore be a specific target within this plan to introduce measures to improve the attainment rates for BAME students enrolled on higher education programmes at the Group to 76.0%, in line with attainment rates for White students by 2024/25. In addition, Activate Learning Group will take measures to develop its own data set which will include the disaggregation of BAME and also, high grades e.g. 1st, 2.1, Merits and Distinctions, by January 2020 to facilitate the disaggregation of attainment.

Progression to highly skilled employment or higher-level study

It has not been possible to assess the proportion of BAME students who progress to highly skilled employment or further higher-level study due to very small numbers and the subsequent lack of available data. Going forward, as a result of the significant expansion of HNC provision, particularly in Engineering, Sport and Construction, BAME student numbers are forecast to increase beyond the OfS reporting threshold (>10). Therefore, targets will be introduced following establishment of Activate Learning Group's own AP data set and dashboard in a variation to this plan by 2020/21.

1.3 Mature students

Access

Group / Year (full-time)	Activate Learning					Variance 2013/14 to 2017/18	Variance 2016/17 to 2017/18
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18		
Mature	53.0%	58.0%	66.0%	59.0%	67.0%	+14.0pp	+8.0pp
Young	47.0%	42.0%	34.0%	41.0%	33.0%	-14.0pp	-8.0pp

The majority (67%) of full-time students studying higher education at Activate Learning Group are mature and seeking to upskill or retrain in their chosen career path. This is reflective of the Groups' strategy to increase provision that is directly related to meeting the needs of employers by providing qualifications which are accessible, and sector recognised. As a result, 42.0% of all higher education students studying at Activate Learning are now employer sponsored.

Group / Year (part-time)	Activate Learning					Variance 2013/14 to 2017/18	Variance 2016/17 to 2017/18
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18		
Mature	74.0%	74.0%	82.0%	75.0%	72.0%	-2.0pp	-3.0pp
Young	26.0%	26.0%	18.0%	25.0%	28.0%	+2.0pp	+3.0pp

The majority of part time students are mature although there has been a slight fall of 2.0pp between 2013/14 and 2017/18. Within Activate Learning there are significant and ongoing changes to the provision of our part-time offer particularly in ensuring Activate Learning Group continues to meet the needs of employers. This is in turn has altered the approach to delivering intensive one-year (full-time)

HNC rather than two-year (part-time) programmes. This in turn will decrease the number of 'traditional' part-time students in line with the OfS definition but continue to increase the number of mature full-time students and subsequently the number of mature students overall.

Continuation

Group / Year (full-time)	Activate Learning					Variance 2012/13 to 2016/17	Variance 2015/16 to 2016/17
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17		
Mature	83.0%	89.0%	76.0%	85.0%	79.0%	-4.0pp	-6.0pp
Young	83.0%	91.0%	77.0%	85.0%	74.0%	-9.0pp	-11.0pp
Variance	0.0pp	-2.0pp	-1.0pp	0.0pp	+5.0pp	+5.0pp	+5.0pp

Group / Year (part-time)	Activate Learning					Variance 2011/12 to 2015/16	Variance 2014/15 to 2015/16
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16		
Mature	77.0%	69.0%	87.0%	74.0%	77.0%	0.0pp	+3.0pp
Young	ND	75.0%	75.0%	80.0%	ND	ND	ND

Continuation rates for full-time mature students have remained consistent with those for young students although they have declined slightly over the last four years. It has therefore not been included as a target in this plan but Activate Learning Group will aim to deliver an improvement in continuation rates for mature students to ensure that they remain consistent with those for young students.

Attainment

Full time	Activate Learning		Variance 2016/17 to 2017/18
	2016/17	2017/18	
Mature	65.6%	73.0%	+7.4pp
Young	73.7%	81.4%	+7.7pp
Variance	-8.1pp	-8.4pp	-0.3pp

Part time	Activate Learning		Variance 2016/17 to 2017/18
	2016/17	2017/18	
Mature	52.3%	67.0%%	+14.7pp
Young	71.2%	82.5%%	+11.3pp
Variance	-18.9pp	-15.5pp	-3.4pp

From an examination of Activate Learning Group's own data set, attainment rates for full and part-time mature students have increased in line with those for young students between 2016/17 and 2017/18, but still remain lower overall. Further investigation has identified that the gap in attainment relates primarily to mature part time students and was partly due to a number of mature students withdrawing from their programme of study before the end of the academic year as a result of job changes and/or being relocated by their employer.

Activate Learning Group has recognised the particular needs of mature students and has made structural changes to delivery and assessment schedules and increased the level of additional study support provided in order to increase attainment rates to the same level as young students. In addition, Activate Learning Group has worked with other providers to transfer credit where students have had to relocate, so that they can complete their qualification elsewhere.

As the number of mature students studying across Activate Learning Group is increasing and now forms the majority of the student profile, Activate Learning Group will set a target to eliminate the 8.4pp attainment gap between full-time Mature and Young students and the 15.5pp attainment gap between part-time Mature and Young students.

Progression to highly skilled employment or higher-level study

Group / Year (full-time)	Activate Learning					Variance 2012/13 to 2016/17	Variance 2015/16 to 2016/17
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17		
Mature	70.0%	50.0%	64.0%	51.0%	73.0%	+3.0pp	+22.0pp
Young	60.0%	49.0%	52.0%	50.0%	50.0%	-10.0pp	0.0pp
Variance	+10.0pp	+1.0pp	+8.0pp	+1.0pp	+23.0pp	+13.0pp	+22.0pp

Group / Year (part-time)	Activate Learning					Variance 2012/13 to 2016/17	Variance 2015/16 to 2016/17
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17		
Mature	85.0%	80.0%	65.0%	55.0%	65.0%	-20.0pp	-10.0pp

Progression rates for full-time mature students to highly skilled employment or higher-level study have improved over the past 4 years and were consistently above those for young students. This is reflective of the increase in employer-led and sponsored provision where the vast majority of mature students are in employment.

1.4 Disabled students

Access

Group / Year	Activate Learning					Variance 2013/14 to 2017/18	Variance 2016/17 to 2017/18
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18		
Disabled (FT)	23.0%	26.0%	14.0%	26.0%	18.0%	-5.0pp	-8.0pp
Disabled (PT)	8.0%	8.0%	12.0%	19.0%	9.0%	+1.0pp	-10.0pp

Activate Learning Group performs well in attracting students with a self-declared disability, particularly for full-time provision where we have consistently been above the sector as a whole for the last five years. We are committed to ensuring that our provision and the support we provide continues to be accessible and effective in meeting the individual learning needs of students.

Data on student disability is captured at three key stages; as part of the application process, upon enrolment and post-enrolment. This data is then disaggregated into separate categories which enables the Group to track the access, continuation and attainment of students compared to their peers. However, due to the small number of students in many of the categories, Activate Learning Group

intends to focus upon those areas which relate to the OfS strategic measures, such as mental health, Dyslexia and other medical conditions such as epilepsy and asthma where numbers are more significant.

Whilst the initial profile of students with a declared disability on entry relates mainly to Dyslexia and other forms of specific learning difficulties (SpLD) this equated to 8% of those students who enrolled in 2016/17 and 5% in 2017/18. Further, there are an increasing percentage of students, who post-enrolment, present new and additional complex needs, particularly neurodiversity related to confidence issues, stress and emotional difficulties. Based upon the number of students who have received additional learning support during 2017/18 and 2018/19, Activate Learning Group estimates that over 40% of students have an additional learning need, which is more than double the actual number who declared a disability on entry.

Continuation

Group / Year	Activate Learning					Variance 2012/13 to 2016/17	Variance 2015/16 to 2016/17
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17		
Disabled (FT)	90.0%	92.0%	77.0%	81.0%	85.0%	-5.0pp	+4.0pp
Non-Disabled	82.0%	89.0%	76.0%	83.0%	74.0%	-8.0pp	-9.0pp
Variance	+8.0pp	+3.0pp	+1.0pp	-2.0pp	+11.0pp	+3.0pp	+13.0pp

In response to the increase in students with a declared disability, combined with those who are identified post-enrolment, Activate Learning Group took the decision in 2014/15 to adopt a fully inclusive approach to providing additional learning support to any student who requested it, without the need to provide any evidence. Results from the monitoring and evaluation of student outcomes from those who received additional learning support show that the increase in continuation rates since 2014/15 is largely attributable to the additional support provided.

Attainment

Due to small numbers, there is no Activate Learning Group data available in the OfS AP Data set or dashboard for the attainment of disabled students. The Group's own data indicates that in line with the increase in continuation rates, the percentage of students with a declared disability who successfully attained their qualification has also increased and remained constant over the last two years at 90.0% in 2016/17 and 91.0% in 2017/18, which is now comparable with attainment rates for students with no declared disability (92.0%).   Although not a target our aim is to continue, during the life of this plan, to provide the level of support that has enhanced continuation rates which has had a positive impact on increasing the attainment rates of disabled students.

Progression to highly skilled employment or higher-level study

It has not been possible to assess the proportion of disabled students who progress to highly skilled employment or further higher-level study due to very small numbers and the subsequent lack of available data, which is restricted to full-time only for 2015/16 as 60.0% compared to 47.0% for non-disabled. However, qualitative analysis coupled with a review of the pilot subject level TEF metrics for directly funded provision revealed that the land-based provision is below benchmark by 5.0%, and that this relates primarily to disabled students. Although not a target in this plan associated measures will be introduced to address the feedback from qualitative research. In addition, specific targets will be

introduced following the establishment of Activate Learning Group's own AP data set and dashboard in a variation to this plan by 2020/21

1.5 Care leavers

Activate Learning Group captures data on care leavers at the point of application and enrolment through a self-declaration process. The number of students who self-declared themselves as being a care leaver was too low to facilitate meaningful statistical analysis and would potentially identify specific individuals. Going forward, we will look to increase the level of self-declaration by promoting the additional support and entitlements of care leavers in line with the government's Care Leaver Covenant[3].

The Department for Education in 2016/17, reported that 870 children were in local authority care across Surrey and so Activate Learning Group recognise the need to support and engage care leavers in learning about and accessing higher education. Care leavers will continue to be a key target group to engage with. We will include data on care leavers in the monitoring and evaluation of other underrepresented groups, and if necessary, will include specific targets and interventions in a variation to this plan in 2020/21.

1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

One notable intersection relates to the increasing proportion of mature students with a declared disability, which currently stands at 19.6% compared to 17.0% in 2016/17. As previously identified, the achievement rates for mature students were 8.4pp below those for young students in 2017/18, which may in part be due to the increase in mature students with a disability. In targeting the achievement gap between mature and young students, Activate Learning Group will also ensure that this sub-group is closely monitored and that positive interventions are in place to support the additional learning needs of these mature students.

1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

Activate Learning Group has become aware of an increasing number of estranged students entering higher education who often lack the support of their wider family. This has become evident from the increasing number of students who apply under mitigating circumstances for extensions to assessment or suspend their studies due to the stress, particularly financial stress, related to their circumstances. Whilst Activate Learning Group currently has limited data on the number of students affected, it will introduce measures in 2019/20 to improve the collection, accuracy and evaluation of estranged student data so that positive interventions such as promoting additional learning support and/or providing hardship funding can be put in place to support students, both pre-entry and on programme. If necessary, we will include specific targets and interventions in a variation to this plan in 2020/21.

2. Strategic aims and objectives

Activate Learning Group is committed to advancing equality of opportunity, respecting and celebrating difference, eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and fostering good relations between all who work or learn at, or use the services of Activate Learning Group. This commitment is

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[3] Care Leaver Covenant

embedded in the policies, procedures and practices of the Group, which are detailed in our Equality and Diversity Policy[4] Safeguarding Policy[5] and Preventing Extremism and Radicalisation Policy[6]

Activate Learning Group has an overarching strategic aim in respect of the delivery of equality of opportunity and outcomes for all students; to create and maintain a working and learning environment in which all people have the opportunity to participate fully, give their best and achieve their full potential in a climate free from discrimination or harassment.

The Group recognises that all have a right to equality of opportunity irrespective of race, disability, gender, gender reassignment, age, nationality, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity status, or socio-economic status, background or class. Equality and diversity are central to all that Activate Learning does, and fundamental to its mission and values.

Activate Learning Group has an historically strong record for welcoming applicants with a wide variety of entry qualifications including BTEC Diplomas, Access to HE and in certain cases with no formal qualifications but have been admitted based upon their work experience and successful interview. For the last three years, c.60% of students entered with low or non-tariff grades and whilst the Group does not operate any specific recruitment targets for students of this type, we will continue to ensure that this position is at least maintained whilst also maintaining our focus on 'Right student, right course'.

As confirmed by the Group's most recent QAA Higher Education Review (2015), our policies, procedures, and operation of recruitment, selection and admission meet the Expectations in Chapter B2 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education in that they adhere to the principles of fair admission.

2.1 Target groups

In summary, Activate Learning Group has set two strategic aims and identified six objectives in relation to its access and participation work for the duration of this plan;

Aim 1: **Our aim is to create a fully inclusive and supportive learning environment that tailors support to meet the academic and pastoral needs of all students, resulting in enhanced academic outcomes**

Objectives for Aim 1:

- Eliminate the 8.0pp gap in attainment between BAME and White students by 2024/25

- Increase continuation rates by 8.0% for BAME students by 2024/25

- Eliminate the 8.4pp attainment gap between Full-time Mature and Young students by 2024/25.

- Eliminate the 15.5pp attainment gap between Part-time Mature and Young students by 2024/25

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[4] Equality_and_Diversity_Policy.pdf
[5] Safeguarding_Policy.pdf
[6] Preventing-Extremism-and-Radicalisation-Policy.pdf

Aim 2: **Our aim is to establish an approach to access that encourages and supports all groups in society to participate and succeed in higher education**

Objectives for Aim 3:

- Eliminate the 15.0pp Gap between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 by 2024/25

- Increase the proportion of EIMD Q1 by 10.0pp by 2024/25

- Increase the proportion of BAME students by 5.0pp by 2024/25

2.2 Aims and objectives

Students from POLAR Quintile groups 1 & 2

Activate Learning Group recognises that more can be done to attract students from POLAR4 Q1 and EIMD Q1 and has already started to develop its curriculum offer by expanding HNC provision across the Group. In addition, the Group have been successful in gaining approval from Pearson to deliver off-campus HNC provision in association with Virtual Learning UK which will provide further opportunities for students to study closer to home. Early indications show that these developments have already resulted in an increased proportion of POLAR4 Q1 and BAME students being enrolled at Activate Learning.

Additionally, Activate Learning plans to appoint an HE Outreach Officer by September 2020 to work with community groups, feeder Schools and Colleges, particularly those in low participation neighbourhoods, to raise the awareness and aspirations of potential students in progressing to higher education.

With a specific focus on improving student progression to employment or further study from the land-based provision delivered at Merrist Wood College campus, Activate Learning Group plans to introduce a Placement Bursary, appoint a dedicated HE Study Support tutor, improve careers advice in line with the GATSBY[7] benchmark, and invest in establishing on-campus opportunities for students with additional learning needs to undertake voluntary work in order to fulfil the placement requirement of their study. By 2024/25.

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students

One of the ways in which Activate Learning Group plans to increase the percentage of BAME students accessing higher education is through the work being undertaken to further increase Level 4 (HNC) part-time provision which is employer sponsored as this provides an initial point of entry which is financially free for the students, and from which they are then able to progress to further (higher level) study. This has been particularly successful in Construction and Engineering where increasing numbers of BAME students are now progressing from Level 4 (HNC) to Level 5 (HND) and then 'topping up' to Level 6 (BSc/BA) through one or two years of study. Additionally, through the appointment of a Higher Education Outreach Officer, combined with involvement in HEON and NCOP projects and the introduction of an HE Student Ambassador scheme, the Group will ensure that students studying at Schools and Colleges in low participation neighbourhoods are actively engaged in activities which aim to widen access and participation in higher education, particularly for BAME students. By 2024/25,

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[7] https://www.gatsby.org.uk/education/focus-areas/good-career-guidance

Activate Learning Group aims to have increased the proportion of BAME students enrolling across the Group by 5.0pp

In order to eliminate the gap between continuation and attainment rates for BAME and those for White students, Activate Learning Group plans to introduce a number of measures including; the introduction of HE Study Support tutors at Merrist Wood College, Guildford College and Bracknell and Wokingham College campuses as from September 2019, which will bring it in line with the support offered to students across the rest of the Group. In addition, the appointment of HE Student Ambassadors and enhanced tracking of attendance and assessment for BAME students in order to identify those 'at risk' will be implemented to enable positive interventions to be made in a timelier way.

Mature Students

Continuation rates for mature students have reduced slightly but remain above the rates for young students. Activate Learning Group plans to eliminate the attainment gap that has emerged between Mature and Young students by initially embedding and evaluating the measures which have recently been put in place such as; structural changes to delivery schedules, revised assessment schedules to avoid bunching of assessment and increasing the level of additional study support provided. In addition, the Group will continue to work with other providers to transfer credit where students need to relocate due to work commitments, so that they can complete their qualification elsewhere.

Disabled students

The Group aims to further enhance the positive performance of disabled students by engaging with its employer advisory groups to establish opportunities for student work experience; improving careers advice in line with the GATSBY benchmark, and establishing an Alumni network to provide additional advice and guidance. In addition, a placement bursary will be established to support disabled students in accessing work placements and experience. Activate Learning Group will also undertake to ensure that all HE Programme Coordinators and all HE Study Support Tutors are provided with Mental Health first aid training as from September 2019.

Estranged students

As from September 2019, Activate Learning Group will invite students who are estranged from their family to self-declare this at the point of entry on the enrolment form, which will include an explanation as to what the information will be used for. In addition, applicants for September 2020 entry will also be asked to self-declare this on their application form.

Based upon the data collected for estranged students, Activate Learning Group will undertake a review to determine what support, if any, is required to support students and will, if appropriate, include additional targets and support for these students in future iterations of this plan.

3. Strategic measures

Strategies to increase Access

In 2020/21, Activate Learning Group will spend 13.0% of the higher fee income on access activities designed to widen participation in higher education. This includes the appointment of an HE Outreach Officer and an allocation of funding for related activities. A further 26.3% of the higher fee income will be allocated to bursaries for new and continuing students if they meet the eligibility criteria detailed below;

1. Activate Learning Group will provide a phased cash bursary of £1000 for all full-time and part-time (pro-rata) higher education students. To be eligible for the bursary, students must:
   a) Be on the first year of a foundation degree validated by Kingston University or the University of Greenwich
   b) Be on the second year of a foundation degree validated by Kingston University or the University of Greenwich
   c) Not sponsored by an employer or third party
   d) Be in receipt of the maximum statutory maintenance loan (currently for students with a household income of £25,000 or less).
   e) Applications must be received by the published deadline

2. Activate Learning Group will provide a phased cash bursary of up to £1000 for all full-time and part-time (pro-rata) higher education students. To be eligible for the bursary, students must:
   f) Be on the first year of a foundation degree validated by Kingston University or the University of Greenwich
   g) Be on the second year of a foundation degree validated by Kingston University or the University of Greenwich
   h) Not sponsored by an employer or third party
   i) Be able to provide satisfactory evidence of family income under £42,620
   j) Applications must be received by the published deadline.

3. Activate Learning Group will provide a means-tested cash bursary of up to £500 to all full-time and part-time (pro-rata) higher education students who are a Care Leaver or an estranged student (in line with the Office for Students definition). Students who are eligible for the Care Leaver or Estranged student bursary may also be entitled to claim other bursaries.

Evidence from the distribution of bursaries in 2017/18 shows that all first-year students who received a bursary remained on the course and progressed into their second year of study.
Student feedback from the consultation on this plan was also clear that bursaries should be made available to continuing students, which has been put in place for the duration of this plan.

Bursaries will be awarded in 2 instalments in the middle of each semester (e.g. October and January) and will be subject to satisfactory attendance and academic progress on the part of the student. Assessment and allocation of bursaries will stop once the entire bursary fund has been allocated for the particular year. The allocation of bursaries will be prioritised in line with the Access targets set out within this plan and so the bursaries will not be issued on a first come first served basis.

Activate Learning Group will utilise the OfS financial support toolkit to evaluate the effectiveness of the financial support provided for students.

Strategies to increase Success

Activate Learning Group will increase the support provided to all students as a result of student feedback and the recent mergers to ensure equity. This will include the appointment of new HE Study Support Tutors in Merrist Wood College, Bracknell and Wokingham College, and Guildford College by September 2020 and the purchase of assistive technologies. Feedback from students has identified that they value the additional and targeted support and the positive impact it has had on their studies.

Also, in response to student feedback, the Group will provide bursaries for students continuing into the second year of their studies to help improve retention and success.

In addition, 2.0% of the higher fee income will be allocated to Hardship funding as a result of student feedback to assist students who experience unexpected financial difficulties due to mitigating

circumstances which could not have been predicted at the start of their studies. The hardship fund is a grant and is therefore non-repayable.

In determining the level of hardship funding awarded to students, the following groups of students will receive priority:

- Students with children (particularly single parents)
- Disabled students (especially where the DSA allowances are unable to meet particular costs)
- Care leavers
- Carers
- Estranged students
- Homeless students

Strategies to increase Progression

As a direct response to student consultation, Activate Learning Group will introduce a placement bursary to provide support to students studying on the land-based provision at Merrist Wood College in securing work placements by providing funding to cover additional costs e.g. travel, childcare and accommodation. In order to apply for the placement bursary, applicants must be:

- Currently enrolled as a full-time or part-time student on one of the land-based foundation degree programmes delivered at Merrist Wood College; and
- A permanent resident of the UK or EU; and
- Undertaking a placement in the UK or abroad as a formal part of their programme.

The bursary amount available will be informed by the estimated cost of the placement, as illustrated below:

Estimated cost of placement	Less than £500	£500 - £1,000	£1,001 - £2,500	More than £2,500
Bursary amount	£200	£300	£500	£1,000

We hope to be able to award funds to every applicant, however, if the scheme is oversubscribed, we will prioritise on the basis of whether the placement is paid or unpaid and household income.

In addition, Activate Learning Group has introduced a suite of BSc (Hons) top-up degrees in land-based related subjects which will be further developed for September 2020 entry, thus providing an articulated progression route to higher level study from the existing suite of Foundation degrees in this subject area.

3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

Overview

Activate Learning believes that higher education should be a transformational experience for students and is committed to ensuring that it provides a high quality, vocationally relevant learning experience for all students which enhances their opportunities for progression to employment and/or further study.

Activate Learning's ambition 'to provide talent for business and transform lives through our Learning Philosophy' is reinforced in the Group's vision for higher education:

To provide sustainable, high quality provision, with a clear focus on student employability, widening participation and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities.

In adopting a whole provider approach, Activate Learning actively engages staff and students from across the organisation in formulating, supporting and evaluating access and participation which covers the full student lifecycle from pre-entry to progression to employment or further higher study. With the support of Governors, Executive Directors and the introduction in September 2020 of new staff dedicated to supporting higher education students in Access, Success and Progression roles, and a Widening Participation Research and Evaluation Officer, there will be more resources committed to the work that is required in order to close the gaps we have identified in this plan.

Staff representing Group services; IAG, learning resources, IT, careers, student welfare and study support are actively involved in supporting HE students throughout the student lifecycle, from pre-entry advice and guidance to supporting their academic and pastoral needs. Group services staff regularly attend HE programme committee meetings, which include student representatives, to discuss new developments and ways in which to continually enhance the services offered to students.

Outcomes from programme committees are collated and fed into the relevant faculty performance boards highlighting areas of good practice and areas for further improvement. Each faculty is also made aware of its performance on access, continuation, attainment and progression in relation to other faculties, which facilitates the sharing of good practice and identification of any institutional factors that may be affecting access and participation.

Executive Directors chair their respective faculty performance boards, and are members of the HE Academic Board where they are joined by Group service Directors to review the outcomes of programme, faculty and Group-level performance, and in doing so, identify and agree key priorities to further enhance the access and participation of higher education students.

This cycle is repeated three times each year and provides an opportunity to identify areas for improvement, implement measures to improve outcomes and then monitor and evaluate the impact of those measures in order to inform best practice in the follow year.

This whole provider approach has led to several changes being made in order to widen access and participation and enhance the learning opportunities provided for students, which include;

Curriculum design
Activate Learning has designed its curriculum to widen access and participation in meeting the specific needs of employers and students, and in so doing has established flexible modes of delivery to support their needs. This includes the provision of day-release, block-release and part-time (as well as full-time) modes of study. In addition, all subject areas provide progression routes from level 4 to level 6 with exit points (and recognised awards) at each stage. In addition, all programmes include a module or component of study skills which supports students in their transition to higher education. This is particularly beneficial for the increasing number of part-time mature students who have not been in education for a long period of time.

Entry requirements
Entry requirements are typically more flexible than for Universities and an increasing number of students are accessing higher education through the accreditation of prior learning or experience, which is evident in the high percentage (c.60%) of students who access higher

education at Activate Learning with low or non-tariff entry qualifications. In assessing the suitability of applicants, Activate Learning also ensure that each applicant is interviewed and that an initial assessment of any additional learning needs is undertaken.

Learning environment

Activate Learning provides an appropriate learning environment where students are encouraged to take risks and learn from mistakes in a safe and supportive environment. Beyond this, Activate Learning ensures that there are no artificial barriers to access and participation and takes deliberate steps to ensure that students are familiarised with the environment pre-entry and that opportunities for socialisation are planned within the first four weeks. Typical group sizes of 15-20 are maintained in order to provide a more personalised learning experience, which is something that students often comment positively upon.

Teaching and learning

Activate Learning's Learning Philosophy is rooted in an understanding of how the brain, motivation and emotions work together to impact on learning. Teaching strategies and methods are designed to develop independent learning skills, enhance active listening and problem-solving skills and develop the resilience to persevere and succeed. A team of HE Study Support Tutors also provide a fully inclusive service to any student who feels they need additional learning support.

Assessment

A wide variety of assessment methods have been designed to ensure that students develop both the academic knowledge and vocational skills for their chosen career pathway. In doing so, provision is also made for students to undertake alternative methods of assessment where appropriate.

A mitigating circumstances procedure also helps to support student progression and achievement where circumstances occur which are beyond the students' control.

Theory of Change

In determining its overarching strategic approach, Activate Learning is working on a Theory of Change model (see diagram below) to provide a framework upon which strategic aims and objectives can be established and the desired goals achieved through targeted inputs which are evaluated and a robust assessment of the resulting outputs undertaken.

Activate Learning: Access and Participation Theory of change
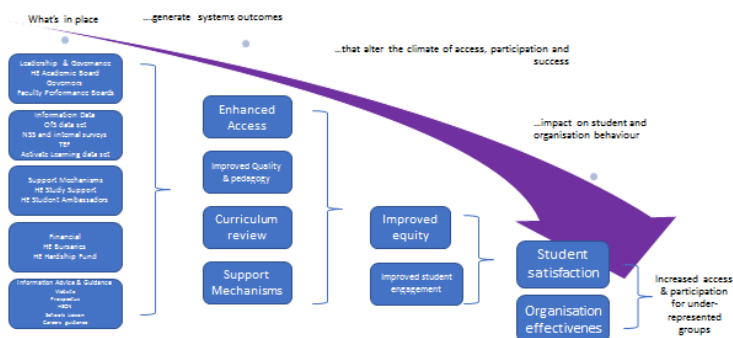
Alignment with other strategies

The Group's overarching strategic plan (2017 – 2021) has at its core a redefining of learning and the learning professional and a dynamic network of business partnerships, collectively known as 'Learning Re-imagined'.

Within the plan, two clear objectives have been established;

1. An innovative, responsive curriculum that builds a talent pipeline for business;
2. Teaching, learning and assessment that drives individual progress and progression[8].

Both of these objectives also inform the development and delivery of higher education provision and are evidenced through Activate Learning's portfolio of programmes and in positive student outcomes, particularly in relation to student continuation rates and destinations to employment or further study, which have consistently been >95% and were identified as good practice by the QAA in the Group's most recent higher education review.

The success of the Group's strategic plan will be measured by three main outcomes;

1. Lives transformed
2. First choice for business
3. Reputation for excellence

In supporting the achievement of the Group's measures, the strategic plan for higher education (2019/20 – 2022/23) has set out the following strategic objectives;

Strategic objective		Strategic measure
1.	Achieve 800 enrolments by September 2023	Lives transformed
2.	Close the gaps in Access, Success and Progression between underrepresented groups and their peers	
3.	Maintain Continuation rates at +90% for each year of the plan	
4.	Achieve progression to employment or further study results which are in the top quartile (+95%)	First choice for business
5.	Achieve a 'Gold' award under the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes framework	Reputation for excellence
6.	Achieve National Student Satisfaction (NSS) survey results which are in the top quartile (+90%)	
7.	Meet OfS requirements to apply for New Degree Awarding Powers by 2021	

Two underlying principles will shape our strategy for the development of higher education within the Group:

1. Ensuring we identify and maximise the benefits of delivering vocational higher education within a further education setting;
2. At the same time, developing ways of managing higher education which recognise the distinctiveness of the staffing, teaching, learning, and resourcing strategies needed to achieve success

These two principles recognise the particular needs of higher education students and provide a clear and practical focus for realising the objectives of our higher education strategic plan.

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[8] Teaching and Learning Policy

This access and participation plan is closely aligned to the Group's overall strategic approach and focus on equality and diversity, which also identifies gaps in the performance of underrepresented groups and their peers and sets out a series of objectives, proposed actions and outcome measures. In addition to identifying gaps within each faculty, which are monitored and actioned through faculty performance boards, each of the group service areas of Activate Learning also have a set of objectives related to enhancing equality and diversity. At the end of each academic year, a full impact review is undertaken which reports upon the extent to which gaps in retention; attendance and achievement have been closed for underrepresented groups in comparison to their peers.

As a result, where gaps have increased or remained significant, this is summarised for each faculty and included in their implementation plan for the following year. Where significant gaps are identified and if there is a risk of a further increase, then a Group Rapid Intervention Project (GRIP) will be constituted to address the issue until it is resolved.

3.2 Student consultation

Activate Learning Group has taken action both formally and informally to ensure that students have been involved in the preparation of this plan and that the student voice is heard through each stage of the student lifecycle going forward.

In developing this plan, a representative group of students have been consulted through formal mechanisms as well as focus groups held specifically to gain student feedback and input to the plan. Issues raised through those processes highlighted areas of concern in respect of financial support, for example; whilst students welcomed the bursaries provided in their first year of study, they were concerned that similar support was not available for subsequent years even though their financial circumstances remained similar. Students also requested improvements in careers advice and an increase in additional learning support.

The lack of financial support has been noted elsewhere in the plan as having a significant impact on students' progression to employment or further study, particularly for land-based students at Merrist Wood College. This approach has also facilitated the consultation on specific deliberate steps to address the issues identified leading to some of the steps, and how they will operate, which are outlined in this plan including the introduction of a Work Placement Bursary, Student Hardship fund and an increase in HE Study Support tutors.

Activate Learning Group recognises the challenge of consulting with a student body that is not only spread across seven separate campuses, but also located in three different counties. In addition, that body is also, predominantly made up of mature students who study on a part time basis which is recognised in the way the student consultative processes have been developed.

The Group has in place a formal student consultative process which has been used to inform the development of the Access and Participation plan and will inform the continuous monitoring and evaluation of the plan. This process includes:

- HE Student representatives for each programme;
- HE Student Ambassadors (new role) on each campus;
- Higher Education Learning Partnership/HE Student Ambassador Campus Forums;
- Programme Committees which are held once each term,

These are supported by informal mechanisms which include: focus groups to address particular issues and topics, social media (Facebook and Instagram), email and Activate Learning Group's virtual learning environment.

Activate Learning Group will also ensure that HE Student representatives have access to relevant and appropriate training, including but not limited to equality, diversity and inclusion, the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and data interpretation.

To ensure the plan is continually monitored, evaluated and enhanced, Access and Participation has been introduced as a core agenda item on all Staff/Higher Education Student forums including each of the Campus HE Forums.

3.3 Evaluation strategy

Activate Learning's evaluation strategy underpins our entire plan, all its aims and objectives and is based upon the recommended OfS approach. Measures include:

- Utilisation of the OfS Evaluation Self-assessment tool, working towards achieving 'Commended' in all areas
- Utilisation of the OfS Financial support toolkit to evaluate the effectiveness of financial support
- Establishing an institutional data set which enables Activate Learning to effectively track and evaluate performance across the student lifecycle
- Adoption of a mixed methods approach that combines and triangulates qualitative and quantitative, primary and secondary data, as appropriate, to ensure we have the knowledge required for robust and context specific evaluation.
- Further increasing our engagement with students to gain greater input into our planning, monitoring and evaluating.

Aims of our evaluation

The overall purpose of our evaluation work is to enable Activate Learning to meet its institutional objectives by developing a robust evidence base for the Group's widening participation activity. As such, the evaluation plan has the following aims:

1. To enable Activate Learning to evidence the impact of its widening participation activity in order to meet the expectations of the Office for Students regarding Access and Participation plans.

2. To inform the development of widening participation interventions as a result of evaluating the impact of activities undertaken within Activate Learning.

3. To align the evaluation of widening participation activity within Activate Learning's timelines for reporting and evaluation of higher education, in order to inform operational planning and internal/external reporting.

In order to achieve these aims, the following objectives have been identified. While they are divided below into three work strands; data, evaluation and evidence, and research, there will naturally be synergies and interdependencies between them.

Data

a. Conduct timely and effective analysis of evaluation data in order to facilitate detailed end of year reporting which enables continuous improvement;
b. Define baseline data and project KPIs for access and participation interventions that relate to the achievement of overall institutional targets;
c. Establish clear written processes for the collection and processing of data related to participants in access and participation interventions in order to comply with the requirements of GDPR and enhance our ability to conduct longer-term evaluation of impact.

Evidence and evaluation

d. Create tailored evaluation plans for all widening participation interventions at the project design stage;

e. Align annual and ongoing evaluation of widening participation activity into Activate Learning's planning timeline, to ensure it informs the development of the curriculum and operational plans;
f. Report annually to the HE Academic Board on the impact of widening participation activity and identify any risks and mitigations associated with meeting the targets;
g. Utilise supplementary sector-level evidence when developing proposals for new widening participation interventions;
h. Expand the use of impact assessments across policies, curriculum development and teaching, learning and assessment strategies, resulting in a greater understanding of the factors which affect the access, success and progression of underrepresented groups.

Research

i. Conduct research which expands the Group's sector and institution-level knowledge of best practice to support evidence-based project design and evaluation;
j. Continue to engage actively in sector networks, conferences and publications in order to maintain knowledge of best practice within the sector.

As part of the development of this Access and Participation Plan, Active Learning has implemented an evaluation strategy that will facilitate strategic oversight of the evaluation of the plan. Formal oversight of the evaluation of the plan rests with the Board of Governors who are supported in that activity by the HE Academic Board. Further, each Faculty has access and participation as an integral element of its regular performance monitoring, review and action planning process.

It is acknowledged that significant impact on the plans success in addressing gaps can be achieved at individual programme level. Consequently, to underpin the empirical evaluation of the plan a revised core data set at individual programme level will be created.

The core data set and OfS self-assessment tool will be updated on a monthly basis by the Higher Education Learning Partnerships (HELP) office within Activate Learning and disseminated through the formal performance review mechanisms within Activate Learning to individual programme teams. This dissemination will be undertaken by the HELP office through the provision of a narrative commentary and direct involvement in the review of performance. This facilitates the regular review of the plan, associated actions to ensure that it is a living document through its ongoing revision and updating.

This activity will be informed by the Head of Quality Assurance (HE) who will also be accountable for highlighting and sharing good practice within the Group and from across the sector.

An independent budget has been established to facilitate the evaluation of the plan with clear protocols around the percentage of funding allocated to each element of the student life cycle. This will be managed by the Director of Higher Education with funds allocated to specific projects through a business planning process.
All initiatives delivered under the plan will be developed and delivered against clear objectives to ensure that the target audience is clearly identified, and impact measured.

Each intervention will have a tailored evaluation plan that takes account of specific outcomes and longer-term tracking. This will form part of an overarching reporting cycle, which will be designed to bring reporting in line with Activate Learning's existing planning timelines. The design of initiatives has and will draw upon learning from Activate Learning's partnerships and involvement with bodies such as partner HEIs, the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) and the Higher Education Outreach Network (HEON) which Activate Learning are involved with. Activate Learning is committed to developing the partnership with the HEON embracing the shared objectives, targets, initiatives and measures.

3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

The monitoring of progress against the aims, objectives and specific targets related to this Access and Participation plan will be undertaken using a range of mechanisms including the OfS self-assessment tool which will be employed at all levels of the organisation, from programme-level to Governing body. This is supported by the existence of a data set that facilitates the review of performance against each

of the target groups at programme, faculty and organisation level. Overall, the Director of Higher Education will be responsible for the monitoring of the plan and subsequent reporting to the OfS.

Programme-level monitoring

Programme committees occur regularly throughout the year and include student representation. These meetings are used to monitor, review and evaluate the progress of students, quality of students learning opportunities and the development of the curriculum. Going forward, programme committees will also be required to consider any gaps in performance for underrepresented groups and their peers and to identify what actions, if necessary, are being taken to close them.

In supporting programme committees to undertake this, the Higher Education Learning Partnerships (HELP) office within Activate Learning will provide each Programme Coordinator with an enhanced version of the current programme-level key performance indicator (KPI) report which will identify any significant gaps in performance and RAG-rate these accordingly. Where any indicators are rated RED (significantly below benchmark/target) an action plan will be established in collaboration with the HELP office and additional support provided to address the issue within the identified timescale. Where any indicators are rated AMBER (below benchmark/target) close monitoring will be triggered.

At the end of each academic year, Programme Coordinators are required to complete an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). As from 2019/20, the AMR template will be prepopulated with additional data from the HELP office including new sections requiring commentary in response to the performance of underrepresented groups over the year in order to identify improvements (good practice) and any areas for further development, which will subsequently be included in an action plan for the following year with progress monitored by the programme committee.

Faculty-level

Each faculty has a monthly performance board which is chaired by one of the Faculty Directors and attended by either the Director of Higher Education or the Head of Quality for Higher Education. Higher education is a standing agenda item and the HELP office provides a KPI report which summarises the performance of all higher education provision within the faculty. Using the enhanced KPI report for programmes, each faculty will receive a RAG-rated summary of the most significant gaps in performance and what actions are in place to address these. In addition, the Head of Quality Assurance (HE) will collate and share examples of good practice across all faculties and provide additional support to close any gaps, if required.

Group-level

The Higher Education Academic Board (HEAB) meets every other month and is chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, and attended by Faculty Executive Directors, the Director of Higher Education and the Academic Registrar for Higher Education. The HEAB has overall responsibility for assuring the standards, quality and enhancement of all regulated higher education provision delivered by Activate Learning and reports to the Governing body via the Group Executive Team.

Going forward, the HEAB will be responsible for reviewing and recommending approval of the Groups' Access and Participation Plan to the Group Executive Team who will have the authority to approve the plan on behalf of the Governing body prior to it being assessed by the Office for Students. The HEAB will also seek to appoint an additional member with particular expertise in widening participation to advise upon the development of the plan.

Activate Learning acknowledges its responsibility under the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 for ensuring that the governing body is also responsible for overseeing the development of the access and participation plan and for monitoring its performance. This will be undertaken by providing updates to the governing body via the Group Executive Team.

The key performance indicator report for HE is a standing agenda item and provides members with an up to date RAG-rated summary of faculty-level performance against benchmark/target. As with the enhanced KPI report for programmes and faculties, the HEAB will receive a similar report in future which will highlight the most significant gaps in performance for underrepresented groups, and detail the action being taken to address them.

Where gaps have increased or remained significant despite the interventions and measures in place, this will be highlighted in the monthly (RAG-rated) performance reports and identified as a risk at the Faculty Performance Boards and escalated to the HE Academic Board. Where there is a significant worsening of progress (RED), then a Group Rapid Intervention Project (GRIP) will be constituted to address the issue until there is evidence of improvement. Where there is a significant risk attached to closing a particular gap in performance or where performance is worsening, the Governing body will be notified as part of the Groups' standard risk management reporting process.

The HEAB is also responsible for approving the annual HE Self-evaluation Document and Improvement Plan, which will include a summary of performance against the Groups' Access and Participation Plan.

4. Provision of information to students

Activate Learning will ensure, as it currently does, that information relating to fees and financial support, including bursaries and hardship funding, are made available to students in a number of formats including print and electronic and through a range of sources including Activate Learning's website, UCAS, Student Loan Company, Activate Learning On-line (VLE), joining instructions (hard copy and email) and the higher education prospectus (hard copy and on-line). In addition, Activate Learning will ensure that all published information is accurate, clear, complete, accessible and timely.

Activate Learning will also ensure that information relating to the publication of additional financial support is included in the Group's HE Information Policy and approval procedure and is reviewed and updated on a regular basis to ensure it remains current.

The process for applying for financial support, including eligibility criteria, will be clearly explained to both current and prospective students and will be published on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) site for current students and the Activate Learning website for prospective students. Activate Learning will also make it clear to existing and prospective students if it requires them to agree to sharing their financial information.

Tuition fee information is also provided to applicants in their 'Offer letter' which specifies the fees due for the duration of their programme, including any indication of fee increases and any additional costs that they may incur as a result of their studies. In addition, information relating to bursaries will also be included, where appropriate.

Activate Learning will also ensure that continuing students continue to receive the financial support that was advertised to them when they applied, which may be subject to any inflationary increases or decisions to increase the support offered.

5. Appendix

The OfS will append the following items from the fees and targets and investment documents when an access and participation plan is published:

1. Targets (tables 2a, 2b and 2c in the targets and investment plan)

2. Investment summary (tables 4a and 4b in the targets and investment plan)

3. Fee summary (table 4a and 4b in the fee information document)

Access and participation plan
Fee information 2020-21

Provider name: Activate Learning

Provider UKPRN: 10004927

Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflationary statement:

Subject to the maximum fee limits set out in Regulations we intend to increase fees each year using the RPI-X

Table 4a - Full-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	Land-based	£8,000
Foundation degree	Land-based / Counselling	£8,000
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	Media / Construction / Engineering	£6,165
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Table 4b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	Virtual Alliance Limited 10026108 - Sport and Exercise Science	£6,165
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Table 4c - Part-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£5,335
Foundation degree		£4,000
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND		£3,265
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Table 4d - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants

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	*	*

Targets and investment plan
2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: Activate Learning

Provider UKPRN: 10004927

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				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Total access activity investment (£)	£73,000.00	£74,460.00	£75,947.00	£77,468.00	£80,017.00
Access (pre-16)	£8,250.00	£8,415.00	£8,583.00	£8,755.00	£8,930.00
Access (post-16)	£24,750.00	£25,245.00	£25,748.00	£26,265.00	£26,790.00
Access (adults and the community)	£40,000.00	£40,800.00	£41,616.00	£42,448.00	£44,297.00
Access (other)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Financial support (£)	£87,018.00	£71,874.00	£89,488.00	£97,760.00	£120,532.00
Research and evaluation (£)	£18,700.00	£20,496.00	£21,670.00	£23,912.00	£26,154.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Higher fee income (£HFI)	£330,485.00	£307,045.00	£355,055.00	£384,715.00	£451,075.00
Access investment	13.0%	14.9%	13.7%	13.4%	12.5%
Financial support	26.3%	23.4%	25.2%	25.4%	26.7%
Research and evaluation	5.7%	6.7%	6.1%	6.2%	5.8%
Total investment (as %HFI)	45.0%	45.0%	45.0%	45.0%	45.0%

Targets and investment plan
2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: Activate Learning

Provider UKPRN: 10004927

Targets

Table 2a - Access

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones 2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
Eliminate the 15.0pp gap between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5	PTA_1	Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN)	Eliminate the 15.0pp gap between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	15pp	14.0pp	10.0pp	6.0pp	2.0pp	0.0pp	Data based upon full-time undergraduate student numbers
Increase the proportion of EIMD Q1	PTA_2	Socio-economic	Increase the proportion of EIMD Q1 students by 10.0pp	No	Other data source	2017-18	4.0% of students from EIMD Q1	9.0%	10.0%	12.0%	13.5%	14.0%	Data based upon Activate Learning's own HE data set covering full-time undergraduate student numbers
Increase the proportion of BAME students	PTA_3	Ethnicity	Increase the proportion of BAME students by 5.0pp	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	8.0% of students from BAME background	9.0%	9.5%	10.0%	11.5%	13.0%	Data based upon full and part-time undergraduate student numbers
	PTA_4												
	PTA_5												
	PTA_6												
	PTA_7												
	PTA_8												

Table 2b - Success

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones 2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
Increase the attainment rate for BAME students	PTS_1	Ethnicity	Eliminate the 8.0pp gap in attainment between BAME and White students	No	Other data source	2017-18	8pp	8.0pp	7.5pp	6.0pp	3.0pp	0.0pp	Using Activate Learning's own HE data set and given the range of qualification outcomes e.g. 1st, 2:1, Distinction and Merit, attainment is regarded as those that successfully 'Passed' their qualification
Increase continuation rates for BAME students	PTS_2	Ethnicity	Eliminate the 4pp continuation gap between BAME and White students	No	Other data source	2016-17	4pp	3.0pp	1.0pp	0.0pp	0.0pp	0.0pp	The target has been derived from using Activate Learning's own data set taking the average performance across five years and will eliminate the current gap of 4.0pp by 2022/23
Increase the level of attainment for Full-time Mature students	PTS_3	Mature	Eliminate the 8.4pp attainment gap between Full-time Mature and Young students	No	Other data source	2017-18	8.4pp	8.0pp	7.0pp	6.0pp	3.0pp	0.0pp	Using Activate Learning's own HE data set and given the range of qualification outcomes e.g. 1st, 2:1, Distinction and Merit, attainment is regarded as those that successfully 'Passed' their qualification
Increase the level of attainment for Part-time Mature students	PTS_4	Mature	Eliminate the 15.5pp attainment gap between Part-time Mature and Young students	No	Other data source	2017-18	15.5pp	15.0pp	13.0pp	10.0pp	5.0pp	0.0pp	Using Activate Learning's own HE data set and given the range of qualification outcomes e.g. 1st, 2:1, Distinction and Merit, attainment is regarded as those that successfully 'Passed' their qualification
	PTS_5												
	PTS_6												
	PTS_7												
	PTS_8												

Table 2c - Progression

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones 2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
	PTP_1												
	PTP_2												
	PTP_3												
	PTP_4												
	PTP_5												
	PTP_6												
	PTP_7												
	PTP_8												