

# South Essex College

## Access and Participation Plan

### 2020/21 to 2024/25

September 2019

## 1. Assessment of performance

South Essex College (SEC) undertakes regular assessment of widening access, participation, success and progression for home undergraduate, sub-degree and PgCE students, using a broad range of quantitative and qualitative data and information, including but not limited to the OfS access and participation data set, TEF indicators, HESA KPIs, UNISTATS and Nomis labour market statistics, findings from HE Programme Board meetings with student representatives for each HE programme and via an open dialogue between the HE Student Engagement Officer and HE student representatives. We will become an active member of AccessHE from the beginning of 2019/20 in order to access NCOP schools network in London, obtain assistance in the design and development of outreach activities and participate in collaborative projects and AccessHE action forums (in particular the BAME forum for Evidence and Evaluation). Membership will continue for the duration of this Plan and may be extended thereafter. This approach will be supplemented by the introduction in 2019/20 of the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) and the NERUPI framework to increase the data and information available and ensure effective evaluation of impact of outreach and widening participation activity. These are expected to be fully implemented by the end of 2019/20. Assessment of performance takes place at both programme and provider level. Data systems are being developed further in order to increase the range of data captured, reported and analysed internally ahead of external publication by the OfS. Dedicated widening participation related structures are also being introduced by the start of 2019/20 (see Diagram 1 below).

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

Progression rates for full-time undergraduate students for each of the groups below are less than the HE sector average; this is something that the College has responded to for students as an aggregated group (in terms of resources and other commitments outside of this Plan) as part of an undertaking for Condition B3 provided to the OfS in February 2019. The remaining resource considerations to improve student progression are considered in this Plan (as part of Tables 1 and 1b), although not as individual targets, which require comparators in order to identify relative gaps. Such comparators are too small at the College, either in the form of original student groups (e.g. BAME) or comparator groups (e.g. POLAR4 Quintiles 3, 4 or 5). However, the level of under-performance for students as an aggregated group relative to the sector average cannot be ignored. There is also a significant time lag for publication of progression data and insufficient internal data for decision-making for this part of the student lifecycle.

Consequently, this Plan adopts a flexible approach to resourcing for and in response to progression by student group, allocating resources for (a) student progression generally, (b) focusing on student groups which have the lowest and/or declining progression rates relative to the HE sector average, where the student numbers are too small for comparisons to be made at the College, and (c) prioritising progression resources where gaps emerge at the College in subsequent published data or as a result of qualitative data from the Alumni Database (once fully implemented). This approach is considered by the College to be consistent with the undertaking given for Condition B3, proportionate, risk averse and pro-active, especially in the context of the planned growth in student numbers.

Where the student numbers at the College (in relation to original student groups or comparator student groups) are too small to identify gaps in progression, also taking account of the time lag in published data on progression and the significant proportion of students who work on a self-employed, freelance or non-traditional employed basis following graduation from some programmes, SEC is investing in an Alumni database from the beginning of 2019/20, so that there is more timely quantitative and qualitative data available to fine-tune and/or critically review existing progression related activities and initiatives. The database is expected to be fully implemented and operational by mid-2019/20. These data will focus on all undergraduate students, while increasing the granular and timely nature of data where student numbers are relatively small or progression paths not fully reflected in external student destination surveys.

SEC has taken a holistic approach to arrive at the targets in this Plan, considering a range of contributory measures, including NSS, programme level indicators and additional intersections. We will extend this approach in 2019/20 to include implementation of HEAT, the NERUPI framework and to critically explore explained, unexplained and hidden gaps (i.e. those not in programme or provider level data). We are introducing an increasingly robust student data capture approach in 2019/20 by updating our existing student record system, which will ensure effective and timely reporting of internal student data and a wide range of current intersections. The student record system will be reviewed on an annual basis in order to maintain currency with stakeholder requirements and expectations. This will be complemented by a robust approach to monitoring from 2019/20, with an enhanced version in place by the start of 2020/21, which includes risk assessment, scenario analysis, contingency planning and modelling to predict possible changes to student indicators based on changes to the HE programme offer, marketing and student recruitment activities and changes within the areas from which our students are drawn. This approach will be evaluated and reviewed annually to ensure it remains fit for purpose and will be underpinned by effective structures and processes (see Diagram 1 below). This will allow us to anticipate whether we are likely to meet or exceed the targets set in this Plan and make any necessary adjustments in-year to ensure we remain in line with the stated targets.

## **1.1 Higher Education participation – POLAR4 Quintiles**

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

### **Access**

- The OfS data from 2013/14 to 2017/18 for POLAR4 Q5 to Q1 students show that there is a positive gap, when compared to the national population, of -13.0%, -15.0%, -27.0%, -16.0% and -14.0% across this period respectively. The data also show the gap to be positive for POLAR4 Q5 to Q2 when compared to the national population across the same period, being -11.0%, -20.0%, -11.0%, -16.0% and -24.0% respectively. This also compares favourably to participation gaps at HE providers for the same quintiles and across the same period. Consequently, access targets are not being set for these quintiles and the position will continue to be monitored.

## Success

(a) **Non-continuation** - *SEC to continue improvements in non-continuation rates so that the gap between POLAR4 Quintiles 3, 4 or 5 compared to Q1 or Q2 on undergraduate programmes is reduced to 2.5% by 2024/25.*

- The percentage gap between POLAR4 Quintiles 3, 4 or 5 to Q1 or Q2 has varied between 2012/13 and 2016/17. In 2016/17 the gap was 5% against an average gap of 2.2% at English HE providers.
- Strategies and initiatives to improve non-continuation rates were applied holistically since 2016 at programme and provider level across all of our students aged under 21 without reference to POLAR4 Quintiles, in part because the majority of these students have been from Q1 and Q2 (based on contextual data from the individualised APP data set).

(b) **Attainment**

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

## Progression to highly skilled employment or further study at higher level

- Until 2018-19 there has been insufficient investment in initiatives to improve student progression rates, hence contributing to the underperformance across most of the categories noted in this Plan.
- There is no OfS data for gaps at the College between POLAR4 Quintiles 3, 4 or 5 to Q1 or Q2.
- However, progression rates for POLAR4 Q1 or Q2 are available. These have substantially under-performed the HE sector average in 2015/16 and 2016/17 by 41.3% and 34.2% respectively.
- There are no gaps between POLAR4 Q5 students and Q1 students. The numbers and proportions of POLAR4 Q5 students are too small to be reportable across the remainder of the student lifecycle in the current APP dashboard and dataset. There are also no gaps for progression on undergraduate programmes between POLAR4 Quintiles 3, 4 or 5 compared to Q1 or Q2. Notwithstanding this, SEC will be monitoring performance annually of these student groups across the student lifecycle from early 2019/20 based on internal data and for progression to highly skilled employment or further study at higher level once numbers are reportable in subsequent iterations of the APP dashboard and dataset.

## 1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

**Access** - *SEC to increase the access and participation rates of BAME students onto its undergraduate programmes (taking account of sub-groups within this category) to 13% by 2024/25, adjusting for the local and regional BAME population rates and taking account of the HE sector average over the longer-term.*

- Although the numbers are very small at a disaggregated level, OfS data show Asian students at the College to comprise 5% in 2013/14 and 2% for 2015/16 to 2017/18 compared to a local population in Southend-on-Sea of 3.7% in 2011 (2011 Census, Nomis KS201UK) and in the South East of England and Wales of 5.2% (Census 2011, ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk).
- Meanwhile black students made-up 4.0%, 6.0%, 5.0%, 4.0% and 3.0% for the annual periods 2013/14 to 2017/18 respectively, compared to a local population in Southend-on-Sea of 2.1% (2011 Census, Nomis KS201UK) and in the South East of England and Wales of 1.6% (Census 2011, ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk).
- Mixed students comprised 6.0%, 2.0%, 3.0% and 3.0% for the annual periods 2014/15 to 2017/18 respectively, compared to a local population in Southend-on-Sea of 2.1% (2011 Census, Nomis KS201UK) and in the South East of England and Wales of 1.9% (Census 2011, ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk).
- Other students were recorded as 4.0% for 2016/17, compared to a local population in Southend-on-Sea of 0.52% (2011 Census, Nomis KS201UK) and in the South East of England and Wales of 0.6% (Census 2011, ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk).
- ABMO (BAME) OfS student data show access and participation rates for 2013/14 to 2017/18 of 9.9%, 13.7%, 8.7%, 12.5% and 8.8% respectively against a local BAME population in Southend-on-Sea of 8.43% (2011 Census, Nomis KS201UK) and in the South East of England and Wales of 9.3% (Census 2011, ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk).
- According to OfS data, the BAME HE sector average for 2013/14 to 2017/18 was 26.5%, 27.9%, 29.3%, 30.4% and 31% respectively.
- The HE programme offer is being broadened to attract students from a larger catchment area (including up the Thames corridor) and to provide subjects which have a wider appeal than the current HE offer, including but not limited to prospective BAME students, reflecting their academic and career related aspirations. The impact of this approach is not likely to start being realised for at least three years while the newly validated programmes recruit students and bed-in, but is expected to increase the BAME intake from 2021/22, which is reflected in our target rate in this Plan.
- In 2018/19, there was a close working relationship between the newly formed Faculty of Higher Education and the Marketing Department, resulting in a collaborative approach to the design of the HE prospectus and marketing activity. In 2019/20, this is planned to be increased to include greater sharing of data analytics associated with social media (such as traffic through the College's HE landing page and engagement data linked to social media platforms). This is in addition to data on prospective students attending open days and other relevant HE events.

### Success

#### (a) Non-continuation

- OfS data show no gaps between white and all ethnicities except white, although with a focus on increased participation (as noted above in the access target for BAME students)

the position will continue to be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis, with timely interventions as needed.

(b) **Attainment** - *SEC to reduce the attainment gap between BAME students and white students on undergraduate programmes to 18% by 2024/25.*

- OfS data show the attainment gap between white and ABMO (BAME) students to be 21.7% in 2016/17 and 22.6% in 2017/18, against a sector average attainment gap of 14.4% in 2016/17 and 13.7% in 2017/18. Although this gap could be affected or skewed by the relatively small BAME student numbers at the College, we recognise the importance of and are committed to developing and implementing BAME contextualised strategies and initiatives from the beginning of 2019/20 (to be monitored on an annual basis) in order to raise attainment (steering clear of a deficit model approach) supplementing and/or complementing strategies to increase BAME student access rates.

### **Progression to highly skilled employment or further study at higher level**

- The ABMO (BAME) student numbers relative to white students are too small to arrive at an indication of a gap between these groups.
- However, OfS data show ABMO (BAME) progression rates for 2015/16 and 2016/17 to be 7.8% and 14.1% below the HE sector average respectively.
- Interestingly, when examining progression rates in 2015/16 and 2016/17 for white students at the College relative to the HE sector average for these periods and group, progression rates were 30.5% and 37.2% below the sector average. When considering intersections of:
  - White NIMD Q1 or Q2 against the sector equivalent for 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17, the progression rates were 9.0%, 26.9% and 37.2% below the sector average respectively, and
  - White POLAR4 Q1 or Q2 against the sector equivalent for 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17, the progression rates were 1.4%, 39.4% and 33.2% below the sector average respectively.

## **1.3 Mature students**

### **Access**

- OfS data show that the entry rates for mature students onto undergraduate programmes have consistently outperformed the sector average from 2013/14 to 2017/18.
- Although this is not the case for mature students on sub-degree provision, which has consistently underperformed the sector average for mature student entry, the student numbers are small, with the provision limited to three programmes that attract a younger demographic due to positioning and/or subject area. Allocating resources to attract more mature students for sub-degrees is, therefore, likely to have very limited impact on overall access rates for mature students and so is not an area that we are actively focusing on.

## Success

### (a) Non-continuation

- OfS non-continuation data show undergraduate mature students outperforming their under-21 counterparts across 2012/13 to 2016/17 and, in 2016/17, with the increase in overall continuation rates for undergraduate students at SEC, mature students outperformed the HE sector average.

### (b) Attainment

- OfS data show continued outperformance during 2013/14 to 2017/18 of mature students relative to their under-21 counterparts, although performance against the sector average is variable, with no discernible trend evident.

## Progression to highly skilled employment or further study at higher level

- OfS data show mature students to have outperformed their under-21 counterparts in 2016/17.
- However, for 2016/17, the progression rate for mature students was 25.8% below that of the HE sector average.

## 1.4 Disabled students

### Access

- OfS data show that the entry rates for students with declared disabilities on undergraduate programmes have outperformed the sector average between 2013/14 to 2015/16 and in 2017/18. This is also the case for sub-degree programmes from 2015/16 to 2017/18.
- OfS data also show that student entry rates by disability type have tended to outperform the sector average or, in the few instances where they have underperformed on undergraduate programmes only, this has not formed a trend of underperformance (i.e. the instances have occurred during one of the years between 2013/14 to 2017/18).

### Success

#### (a) Non-continuation

- OfS data show disabled students having better non-continuation rates than students not known to be disabled, which outperforms the sector average for this comparison.
- There is insufficient data at present to comment on non-continuation rates or gaps by disability type, but we will do so if the number of disabled students increases in subsequent years.

#### (b) Attainment - *SEC to reduce the attainment gap between disabled students and students not known to be disabled to 2.5% by 2024/25.*

- The gap in attainment according to OfS data in 2015/16 and 2017/18 was 5% for both years against a sector average gap of 2.3% and 2.4% respectively. A substantial proportion of disabled students at the College were also from Deprivation Quintiles 1 and 2 and POLAR4

Quintiles 1 and 2 between 2013/14 to 2017/18 (based on the APP individualised data set). Therefore, the proposed target of 2.5% by 2024/25 is suitably ambitious relative to the HE sector average, which based on earlier analysis is statistically likely to have disabled students with fewer intersections of disadvantage than the College.

- There is insufficient data to comment on attainment rates or gaps by disability type, but we will do so if the number of disabled students increases in subsequent years.

### **Progression to highly skilled employment or further study at higher level**

- There is only one year of OfS data (2015/16) for comparisons between disabled students and those not known to be disabled, which show disabled students outperforming students not known to be disabled.
- However, the progression rate for 2015/16 is 17.9% below the HE sector average.

## **1.5 NIMD/Deprivation Quintiles**

### **Access**

- OfS data show that the entry rates for students from NIMD/Deprivation Q1 and Q2 on undergraduate programmes have been higher than the national population between 2013/14 to 2017/18. For instance, during this period Deprivation Q5 to Q1 had the following positive gaps: -8.5%, -6.8%, -6.3%, -6.6% and -7.9% respectively, while Deprivation Q5 to Q2 had the following positive gaps: -16.2%, -14.5%, -14.6%, -13.7% and -13.5% respectively. This also compares favourably to average participation gaps at HE providers for the same quintiles and across the same period. Consequently, access targets are not being set for these quintiles and the position will continue to be monitored.

### **Success**

(a) **Non-continuation** - *SEC to improve non-continuation rates so that the gap between Deprivation Quintiles 3, 4 or 5 compared to Q1 or Q2 on undergraduate programmes is reduced to 5.0% by 2024/25.*

- OfS data show the gap between Deprivation Quintiles 3, 4 or 5 to Q1 or Q2 for undergraduate students to vary between 2012/13 and 2016/17 from 1.0% in 2012/13 to -5.0%, 4.0%, -1.0% and 8.0% annually thereafter. compared to a HE sector average of 3.9%, 3.8%, 4.0%, 4.8% and 4.8% for the same period.

(c) **Attainment** - *SEC to reduce the attainment gap between Deprivation Quintiles 3, 4 or 5 compared to Q1 or Q2 to 7.0% by 2024/25*

- SEC has out-performed the sector average gap for attainment of Deprivation Quintiles 3, 4 or 5 compared to Q1 or Q2 during 2014/15 to 2017/18, with the gap for this period at SEC being -10.0%, 0.0%, 12.0% and 8.0% respectively compared to 12.9%, 12.7%, 12.4% and 12.1% for the same period. Notwithstanding this, the College recognises the need to continuously improve on the existing attainment gap, while taking account of the likely rise in students from Deprivation Quintiles 3, 4 or 5 as it increases recruitment of students from outside of the local area, which could limit the extent of the improvement.

## Progression to highly skilled employment or further study at higher level

- There is only one data point for Deprivation Quintiles 3, 4 or 5 compared to Q1 or Q2 in 2015/16, which demonstrates no progression gap for these quintiles (being 0.0% for that year).
- However, three progression data points are available for Deprivation Quintiles 1 or 2, which in 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17 were 7.6%, 25.3% and 30.3% below the progression rates for these quintiles when compared to the HE sector average respectively.

### 1.6 Care leavers

We will start tracking care leavers from the beginning of 2019/20. In addition, the HE Widening Participation Officer will work with the Looked After Children (LAC) Adviser for further education provision at the College to assist in signposting and transitioning looked after children into HE, facilitated by training to HE staff. We will also examine national data to understand the barriers that care leavers experience and use this to inform the development of any associated strategies, taking account of our local and regional context. We expect this work to be completed by 2020-21.

### 1.7 Intersections of disadvantage

During 2018/19 we considered a range of intersections from the individualised TEF4 data set and, more recently, the APP individualised data set in order to inform our understanding of access and disadvantage, increasing the contextual nature of the data and subsequent interpretation. The intersections of particular relevance are as follows:

- Local undergraduate students, as reported by the APP individualised data set for 2013/14 to 2017/18, are more likely than non-local students to be from POLAR4 Q1 or Q2, while non-local students are more likely to be from POLAR4 Q3 or Q2. This raises the question of hidden forms of disadvantage (i.e. those not currently captured by external or internal data systems), namely the impact of care responsibilities for local and non-local students and commuting for non-local students, hence the points noted in section 1.8 below).
- Local undergraduate students, as reported by the APP individualised data set for 2013/14 to 2017/18, are more likely than non-local students to be from NIMD Q1 or Q2, while non-local students are more likely to be from NIMD Q2 or Q3. This could be compounded by hidden forms of disadvantage, such as care responsibilities and commuting, as noted above.
- Females tend to outperform their male counterparts in relation to attainment, based on OfS data for 2015/16 to 2017/18 and exceed the HE sector average for attainment gaps by sex for the same period; this continues to be the case in 2016/17 and 2017/18 for “deprivation quintiles 1 or 2, male compared to female”, but not for “deprivation quintiles 1 or 2 and male compared with quintiles 3, 4 or 5 and female” measures (although numbers tend to be relatively small across deprivation quintiles 3, 4 or 5). This might change as the HE provision expands and SEC seeks to increase its catchment area, hence requiring scenario analysis and modelling to consider the possible impact on the targets set in this Plan.
- Particular undergraduate programmes, because of their subject content, reflection of recruitment trends in the sector and popularity among BAME students (as noted in recent publications, such as N. Alberts & G. Atherton (2016): *The more colours you add, the nicer the picture*, AccessHE) have a disproportionate representation at programme level of particular

student personal characteristics. For instance, the Counselling programme recruits predominantly mature students, as do Psychology and Sociology and Costume Construction. Therefore, increasing the range of the HE offer provides an opportunity for subtle positive action, which should contribute to some of the provider level targets, while increasing student choice generally. However, this also exposes possible intersections of disadvantage (including but not limited to hidden forms of disadvantage), which require a more granular approach to be adopted.

- Prior educational attainment and qualifications are noted by HESA-related research to have an impact on student attainment. At present, this data is not captured by the student record system; consequently the system is currently being updated during 2018/19 so that this intersectionality feeds through in due course, informing resourcing and initiatives further. This position will be reviewed at the beginning of 2019/20 and thereafter on an annual basis to ensure full and effective implementation and reporting.

## **1.8 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education**

We are exploring updates to our existing data capture and reporting systems to include a broader range of student personal characteristics in order to increase the impact at programme and provider level of our widening participation initiatives and/or further inform and granularise our approach to intersectionality. In particular, during 2019/20 we will be developing our internal data systems to capture, report on and utilise data for analysis relating to the following student personal characteristics: (i) those with caring responsibilities (including students with children), (ii) those with English as an additional language, (iii) those that commute to SEC, (iv) those from military families, (v) those with refugee status, and (vi) those with Roma, Gypsy and Traveller backgrounds. This development is expected to be completed by mid-2019/20.

## **2. Strategic aims and objectives**

### **2.1 Overview**

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

- Our assessment of performance – this focuses on:
  - where we have the relatively largest gaps by student personal characteristic
  - relative performance to the HE sector average and/or population rates where these are relevant or a concern and the original groups or comparator groups are too small for gaps to be apparent
  - being aware of and seeking to respond to intersections of disadvantage
  - potential gaps in the published and internal data relating to the above
  - adopting a more granular approach to assessing our performance at provider and programme level

- complementing existing relevant commitments to the OfS, such as the Condition B3 undertaking (02/2019) relating to student non-continuation and progression rates.
- An understanding of SEC’s strategic context in relation to its HE offer, student catchment area and the potential impact that broadening the HE offer could have on student recruitment patterns across student personal characteristics and widening access generally.
- Introduction of Faculty level sub-structures (see Diagram 1 below) and resourcing - these are being introduced by the start of 2019/20, with a proportionate approach to increasing resourcing, in order to respond to the demands of understanding, action-planning, monitoring, evaluating and reporting on findings to the Principal and Governors and to validating partners.

Table 1 at Annex 1 below summarises our commitments in this Plan and the timeframe within which they are expected to be completed.

Meanwhile, Table 1b below summarises our financial commitment for the duration of this Plan and across the entirety of the student lifecycle.

Type of investment from higher fee income	2020/21 %	2021/22 %	2022/23 %	2023/24 %	2024/25 %
<b>Access Investment Forecast</b>					
Access (pre-16)	1.28%	1.40%	1.50%	1.60%	1.60%
Access (post-16)	2.55%	2.60%	2.75%	2.80%	2.85%
Access (adults and community)	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%
Access (other)	0.65%	0.65%	0.65%	0.65%	0.65%
<i>Total access investment (a)</i>	6.98%	7.15%	7.40%	7.55%	7.60%
<b>Financial support investment forecast</b>					
Hardship fund (b)	3.20%	3.20%	3.20%	3.20%	3.20%
<b>Research and evaluation investment forecast</b>					
Research and evaluation investment (c)	1.30%	1.35%	1.40%	1.45%	1.50%
<i>Sub-total (a+b+c)</i>	11.48%	11.70%	12.0%	12.20%	12.30%
<b>Success</b>					
Success investment (d)	14.0%	14.0%	14.0%	14.0%	14.0%
<b>Progression</b>					
Progression investment (e)	14.52%	14.30%	14.00%	13.80%	13.70%
<i>Total higher fee income investment (a+b+c+d+e)</i>	40.00%	40.00%	40.00%	40.00%	40.00%

Table 1b: Summary of financial investment as a proportion of higher fee income across the student lifecycle.

## 2.2 Target groups, aims and objectives

We have set the following strategic aims and objectives to respond to access and participation, success and progression gaps (and significant under-performance, where relevant) in a proportionate and timely manner:

- Increasing access to HE generally (through outreach activities) and SEC specifically, for **students from BAME backgrounds** and seeking to narrow the gap for these students in relation to attainment and progression, while monitoring non-continuation rates (and responding where necessary) as BAME student recruitment increases.
- Improving non-continuation rates for SEC **POLAR4 Q1 and/or Q2 students**, seeking to narrow the gaps and bringing the gaps in line with, or where possible ensuring they are better than, the sector average.
- Improving non-continuation rates for SEC **Deprivation Q1 and/or Q2 students**, with a view to narrowing the gaps and bringing the gaps in line with the sector average (for non-continuation) and, where relevant, continuing to outperform the sector average (for attainment).
- Increasing the attainment rates of SEC **disabled students**, with a view to narrowing the attainment gap and bringing the gap in line with the sector average, taking account of intersections of disadvantage.
- Increasing progression rates for **all student groups (in particular those identified in this Plan)** in order to bring them closer to the HE sector average, recognising the importance of intersections as we do so.

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

In addition to these targets, we have committed to increasing our understanding of and support for students facing multiple barriers when studying with us by the end of 2020/21 (as outlined below), thereby contributing to strategies to deliver continuous improvement. We expect to develop specific aims for students with these personal characteristics by the end of 2020/21 and, where we have identified significant gaps or relative underperformance internally for students with these intersections of disadvantage, we commit to setting objectives for the remaining term of this Plan. Consequently, we will be:

- Increasing our understanding of and support for **students who have been in local authority care and/or are from military families**.
- Increasing our understanding of and support for **local and non-local students who are parents**, with care responsibilities for their children **and/or who have other care responsibilities**.
- Increasing our understanding of and support for **students who have non-traditional educational backgrounds** (such as non-A level qualifications), have had a significant break from education, are mature entry students with low or no tariff scores and those taking a career break to study.
- Increasing our understanding of and support for **students facing intersections of disadvantage and hidden disadvantage** (such as non-local mature students, with care responsibilities, from NIMD Q1 or Q2; BAME POLAR Q1 or Q2 students with English as an additional language; non-local disabled students returning to education, disabled students that are from POLAR Q1 or Q2 or Deprivation Q1 or Q2).
- Increasing our understanding of and support for **students with mental health issues**. In order to facilitate this, we will recruit a *HE Mental Health Practitioner* (0.5 to 1.0 FTE) by the end of 2020/21.

We are also planning to introduce HEAT and implement the NERUPI framework from the beginning of 2019/20. These will assist in informing the development of any associated targets from 2020/21.

Our Targets and Investment Plan has been completely redesigned and it is in addition to existing successful strategies, such as ring-fencing tuition fee increases in order to use such money to continuously improve the student academic experience. The targets are now more data-led, stretching and supported by complementary resources and strategies in addition to those noted in this Plan. The expected improvements in outcomes are now more credible, context-sensitive and underpinned by structural changes (such as the introduction of a dedicated Faculty of HE), greater accountability for and more effective evaluation of the impact of structures, strategies, initiatives and processes. A number of assumptions have also been made due to the relatively small size of the provision and the expected change in comparator metrics to ensure the robustness of the targets set and that gains are sustainable:

- Given the regional ethnic demographic, the range of HE programmes currently on offer and timeframe required to validate, promote and recruit to a broader range of HE provision, progress on increasing access for BAME students is likely to be relatively slow in the first five years, with acceleration expected thereafter once the diversity of HE provision has had time to become established. Adjusting for local and regional population demographics, the BAME student access and participation rate is expected to be in line with or exceed the regional population demographic by 2024/25 and start moving towards the HE sector average in the next 10 years (by 2028/29) and be aligned to the HE sector average in the next 15 years (by 2033/34), assuming continued growth up the Thames corridor.
- Strategies to improve attainment for SEC's BAME students is expected to be relatively slow over the duration of this Plan due to the time lag from making improvements and the impact on attainment to feed through. In addition, the planned growth in BAME access and participation and strategies to differentiate between sub-categories of BAME participants and responding to their particular needs, expectations and aspirations in order to improve attainment is expected to require a period of critical reflection and updating of resources, strategies and initiatives (in part conducted through the new Forum structure noted below in section 3.1). Time will also be required to implement, evaluate and review any positive action activities at curriculum level for BAME students. Consequently, we anticipate the gap for attainment to take at least the next 10 years (by 2028/29) in order to be brought in line with the sector average and at least 15 years (by 2033/34) to close the gap with white students.
- Based on the direction of travel on non-continuation rates generally and the underpinning strategies, structures, systems, policies, procedures and processes put in place to monitor and improve non-continuation rates, it is expected that specific measures to improve non-continuation rates for POLAR4 Q1 and Q2 and Deprivation Q1 and Q2 should lead to a sustained narrowing of the gap with POLAR4 Q3, Q4 or Q5, taking it to 2.5% by 2024/25. There should also be a sustained narrowing of the gap with Deprivation Q3, Q4 or Q5, taking it to 5.0% by 2024/25 respectively. However, the expansion of the HE offer and increasing the catchment area is likely to increase students from POLAR4 Q3 and possibly Q4 or Q5 and Deprivation Q3, Q4 or Q5, which may affect these gaps, since POLAR4 Q3, Q4 or Q5 and Deprivation Q3, Q4 or Q5 at present are disproportionately smaller than POLAR4 Q1 and Q2 and Deprivation Q1 and Q2 respectively. The increased recruitment of POLAR4 Q3 and possibly Q4 or Q5 students and Deprivation Q3, Q4 or Q5 students is likely to start feeding

through to non-continuation rates in 2022/23 for the 2020/21 intake. Therefore, we are factoring-in a sustained narrowing of the gap as opposed to its closure.

- Improving the attainment of NIMD/Deprivation Q1 and Q2 students relative to Q3, Q4 or Q5 students is expected to take the duration of this Plan, bringing it to a relative gap of 7% in 2024/25. The rate of progress in closing the gap is expected to be slow, in part since the sector average gap remains much higher, which is potentially indicative of the challenges faced by HE providers in closing the attainment gap. It is also in part because any growth in non-local students, represented by a rise in Deprivation Q3, Q4 or Q5, which form the comparators for this gap, could start to significantly impact on the gap from 2025/26, since the intakes from 2020/21 to 2022/23 would start graduating from 2022/23 to 2024/25. We will commit more resources from 2022/23 if this appears to be the case. Given the range of variables involved and the persistent nature of the gap at sector level, we anticipate closure of the gap at SEC to take at least 15 years (by 2033/34), factoring-in anticipated student recruitment patterns noted earlier.
- The gap in attainment for disabled students is expected to be narrowed to 2.5% by 2024/25.
- Given the small student original and comparator numbers for progression data, we expect that relative progression gaps are not likely to emerge in any meaningful way for the duration of this Plan. However, the approach to resourcing strategies, projects and initiatives to improve student progression, as noted earlier, should reduce the likelihood of gaps emerging as the provision grows and to improve the existing progression rates across the student groups noted in Section 1 above. The relatively low progression rates for all student groups present a real risk, if not addressed from the start of this Plan, of progression gaps emerging, especially as the provision grows and/or the student demographic changes to include greater numbers of comparator groups, such as POLAR4 Quintiles 3, 4 or 5, Deprivation Quintiles 3, 4 or 5 and original groups, such as BAME, students with disabilities and mature students.

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

### **3. Strategic measures**

#### **3.1 Whole provider strategic approach**

##### Overview

SEC has had a longstanding commitment to widening participation, equality and diversity and supporting students. In 2017, the College recognised the increasing demands being placed on it with changes in the HE sector and therefore a Faculty of HE was formed and implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2018 as part of the institutional approval with UEA and application for OfS registration. The central HE related strategies are developed through peer review with SEC's validating partners, in particular UEA and UAL and internally approved by the Principal and Governors, with detailed discussions about value for money at senior level and via the HE Value for Money Committee. Validating partners are invited to take part in the recruitment process for key Faculty of HE staff, thereby ensuring and assuring the ongoing oversight, quality and operational integrity of the HE provision. This approach will continue for the duration of this Plan and may be extended thereafter.

The move to a Faculty of HE and its associated deliberative and dedicated structure, strategies, personnel, systems, policies, procedures, processes, close working relationship with its validating partners and an increasingly data-led approach places the HE provision at SEC in a relatively strong starting position, although it is recognised that there is still a lot of work to be done. Notwithstanding this, the Faculty of HE has developed a robust Theory of Change, which is supported by the Principal and Governors and underpinned by the following overarching principles:

- **An increasingly data-led approach** to the design, development, implementation, monitoring and review of widening participation, student success and progression, taking account of a range of data sources, metrics and indicators (including those for Condition B3 in the context of progression rates for the purposes of this Plan).
- Promoting equality of opportunity, valuing difference and avoiding the use of a deficit model, **embedding an inclusive approach**.
- **Sharing good practice and learning from a range of stakeholders**, including but not limited to the College's validating partners.
- **A strategic approach to regulation, quality assurance and planning**, which takes account of the implications of change on operations and resourcing.
- **Close attention is paid to value for money** and the ongoing dialogue in the sector regarding developments in this area.
- **Use of an effective course viability model**, ensuring and assuring that resources follow students.
- **A holistic approach is adopted to data and metrics at both programme and provider level**. This takes account of a range of contributory factors and influences affecting our HE students and their journey with us. This approach is being developed further, with underpinning structures (as noted below).
- **Clearly articulated and time-scaled commitments**.
- **A robust and evolving evaluative process, with proportionate and timely interventions**. These should ensure that the set targets are achieved as planned.
- **A collaborative working arrangement with relevant departments and key staff outside of the Faculty of HE**, ensuring that due regard is paid to, priority given to and resources allocated to this Plan and its associated targets.

#### Whole institution approach

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

of HE related and cross-College membership of individuals involved in or contributing to HE. This is supplemented by regular formal meetings with validating partners (UEA, UAL, The OU and UoE), all of whom monitor the College's alignment to their approval and validation requirements and those of the sector, including but not limited to the OfS and associated commitment to widening participation, Access Agreements and Access and Participation Plans. Governors have oversight of Access Agreements and Access and Participation Plans. By the beginning of 2019/20, the following structure will be in place within the Faculty of HE to complement the SEC widening participation evidence base (Table 2 below) and the SEC Theory of Change (Diagram 2 below), which should contribute to achievement of the targets in this Plan and, through the Widening Participation Evidence and Evaluation Board, facilitate continuous improvement:

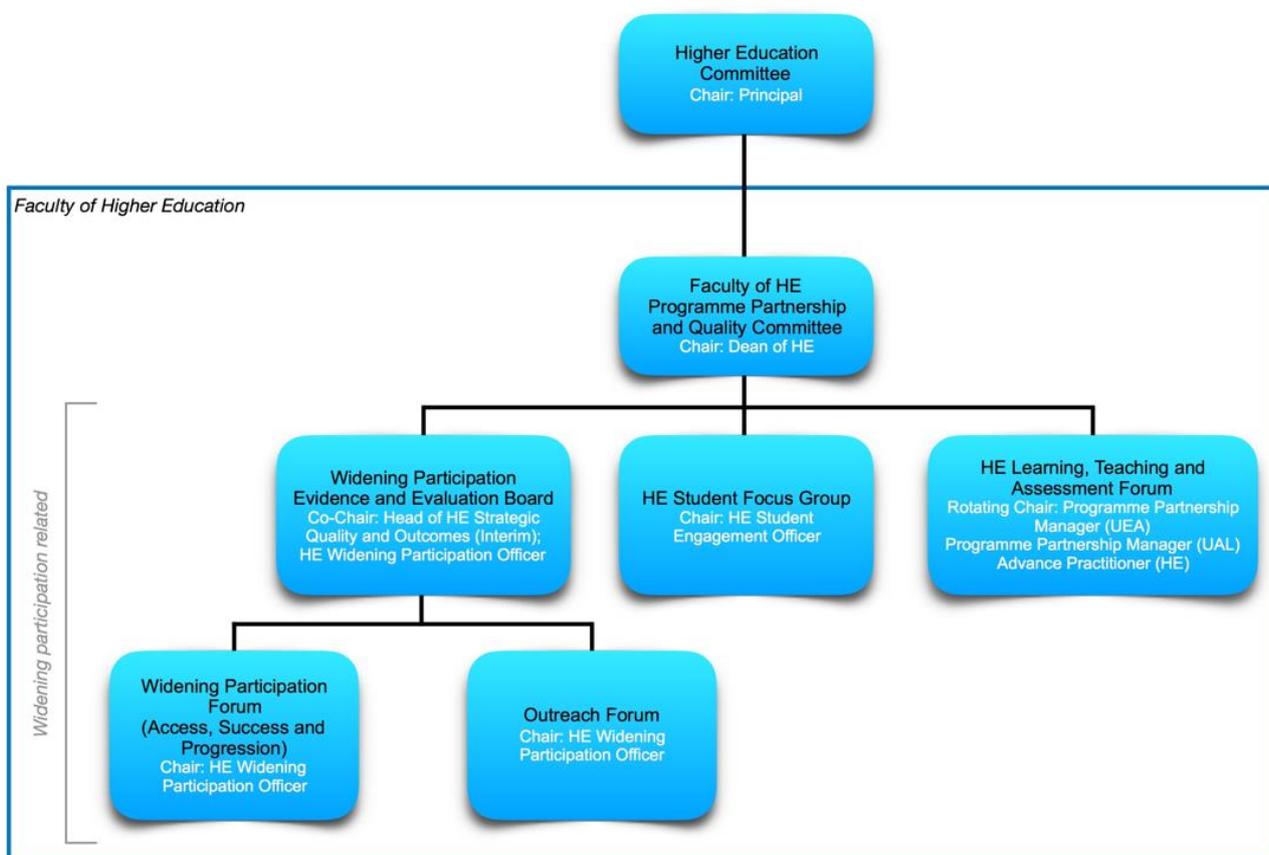


Diagram 1: Faculty of Higher Education widening participation related structure.

### Alignment with other strategies and collaboration

SEC actively promotes equality and diversity, underpinned across the College by the Strategic Plan 2017-20, which includes strategic aims that commit the College to delivering high quality, inclusive teaching, learning and assessment, developing HE provision through continuous improvement of the student academic experience and of student outcomes (which dovetails to the Higher Education Strategy 2017-20) and respecting, promoting and celebrating diversity. The Higher Education Strategy 2017-20 has key drivers that include “Positively engaging with a changing HE landscape” (Driver 1); this focuses on responding to regulation, meeting various HE metrics and is reinforced by the HE Enhancement and Continuous Improvement Strategy 2017-20

(which seeks to facilitate the identification, sharing and continuous improvement of good practice in HE). The Higher Education Strategy 2017-20 also focuses on effective resourcing and course viability (Driver 2), acknowledges the need to reposition the HE portfolio, promoting cultural capital as it does so (Driver 3) and maximising student opportunities and direction across the student lifecycle from access to progression (Driver 4). These two HE specific strategies are supplemented by the HE Student Support Strategy, which seeks “to enhance the overall student experience for every Higher Education student studying at the College”. These three HE strategies were recognised as contributing to institutional level enhancement in the QAA HER partial re-review in June 2017. The HE related strategies are due for review in early 2020/21. These and subsequent HE related strategies from early 2020/21 will have due regard for and be informed by this Plan, with the Dean of Higher Education and the Head of HE Strategic Quality and Outcomes (interim) roles leading on the drafting and implementation of these strategies.

The strategies noted above, and the design of this Plan have been informed by or had due regard for the Equality Act 2010. At provider level, the commitment to equality and diversity is demonstrated by an Equality and Diversity Policy and associated monitoring and reporting, as well as positive outcomes of external scrutiny by regulatory, funding and quality assurance bodies. The Faculty of HE is currently developing an HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) (to be completed and introduced by mid-2019/20), and will in 2019/20 design and implement an HE specific equality, diversity and inclusion strategy that seeks to “glue” the other strategies in a HE-focused manner, enhancing the existing whole provider approach to equality, diversity and inclusion articulated in the College’s Strategic Plan 2017-20 and associated documentation, with peer review by UEA and UAL. This includes a focus on transition and will in 2019/20 consider the interactions between students with protected characteristics and students who are under-represented in HE. In 2019/20, the Faculty of HE will undertake an impact assessment of activities and support measures in HE at the College and evaluate how they affect students with protected characteristics and explicitly align equality objectives at Faculty and provider level to participation objectives and specific target groups associated with widening participation and this Plan (this will be informed by relevant indicators, metrics and contextualised evidence base for the College).

The LTAS will be informed by OfS metrics, including but not limited to TEF metrics (both provider and subject level), Condition B3 data and any associated undertaking, APP data sets, widening participation priorities, with embedded themes of inclusivity, resilience building, transition, academic stretch, skills development and employability. In addition, a strategic approach is taken to quality assurance by the Head of HE Strategic Quality and Outcomes (Interim) and operational management by the Dean of Higher Education. Both roles will directly lead on and be accountable for the implementation of this Plan from the beginning of 2019/20 to its conclusion. The Faculty of HE works closely with its key validating partners (UEA and UAL) to share good practice, participate in peer review of its strategies, policies and procedures. This approach now informs aspects of the Theory of Change outlined below in Diagram 2.

SEC works collaboratively with a range of stakeholders (this is planned to increase in 2019/20). For instance, the College is a HE Partner of NCOP, working with other local HEIs (examples of projects include PULSE CSI and Experimental Psychology, delivered with input from Programme Leaders for associated HE provision). SEC also works with Southend Borough Council (examples of projects include two Programme Leaders mentoring Year 8 students in school as part of the 60 Minute Mentor programme organised by the Council and on design of the new Business Entrepreneurship degree and placements for students). In 2019/20, collaborative working will extend to (i) HE Programme Leader input to design and evaluation of outreach provision, (ii) the

HE Widening Participation Officer visiting UEA to shadow the widening participation team and sharing best practice in outreach, and (iii) working with students via the HE Student Focus Group.

### Our Theory of Change and strategic measures

SEC is becoming increasingly focused on widening participation and student outcomes throughout the student lifecycle. The move to a Faculty of HE has accelerated this journey, but there is still much to do, which is reflected in our existing and planned approach to the evidence base (see Table 2 below) to inform and/or underpin our Theory of Change, the associated strategic measures and their monitoring and evaluation (see Diagram 2 below).

AIMS	ONGOING MONITORING	TRIGGERED 'DEEP DIVES'	EVALUATION	OUTCOMES
<b>Development of robust evidence base – internally and externally sourced desk research, literature reviews and contextual data.</b>				
Existing approach				
Assessment and monitoring of performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tracking of and alignment to sector policy, regulations, guidance and provider context (including consideration of a range of metrics and indicators).</li> <li>Wider understanding of developments in the HE sector by becoming an affiliate member of AdvanceHE by the beginning of 2019/20.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specific projects to respond to existing and emerging underperformance or gaps.</li> <li>Holistic approach to SEC metrics, indicators and contributory measures (e.g. provider and subject level TEF, NSS, APP data sets, labour market data and trends).</li> <li>Initial visit to Northampton University to learn from best practice in employability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Institutional level reports drafted by the Faculty of HE which embed or consider contributory aspects of WP, such as annual monitoring reports, NSS reports, HE papers to Governors.</li> <li>Annual TEF submissions</li> <li>Peer review of OfS aligned activities by validating partners (in particular UEA).</li> </ul>	Improved understanding of widening access, participation, success and progression across the sector and, in particular, the region and SEC's catchment area.
Planned improvements to the approach in 2019/20				
Enhanced assessment and monitoring of performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying and monitoring sector best practice across a range of HEIs.</li> <li>Working more closely with validating partners (UEA and UAL) to develop programme area level and subject level approaches to improving student access, participation, success and progression.</li> <li>Increasing HE academic and non-academic staff's understanding of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Bought-in' specialist external research relating to SEC's strategic measures.</li> <li>Allocated basic research and implementation roles ("HE WP Champions") for each portfolio in the Faculty of HE.</li> <li>Full integration of WP related approach, activities and strategies with complementary strategies and activities, such as learning, teaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved evaluative framework, such as NERUPI to inform the design of WP related projects.</li> <li>Full implementation of HEAT to measure the impact of outreach activities.</li> <li>Active membership of AccessHE.</li> </ul>	Better informed / more data-led investment that continues to maximise impact.

AIMS	ONGOING MONITORING	TRIGGERED 'DEEP DIVES'	EVALUATION	OUTCOMES
	developments in the HE sector through "fellowship" level of membership (and above) of AdvanceHE.	assessment and student support.		
<b>Increasing the granular nature of performance monitoring – management data, information and analytics.</b>				
Existing approach				
Understanding of contributory factors, context and barriers faced by students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring multiple indicators and metrics (including split metrics), intersections and sector averages.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Holistic and drilled-down approach to metrics across NSS, TEF (provider and subject level), APP data sets and individualised student data.</li> <li>Consideration of sector research and publications and contextualising to SEC accordingly.</li> <li>Initial analysis of the relationship between input factors and output measures (mainly in the context of non-continuation rates).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Basic evaluation of the impact of certain interventions and projects.</li> </ul>	Design of effective measures and initiatives.
Planned improvements to the approach in 2019/20				
Improved understanding of a wider range of contributory factors and barriers (including a broader range of intersections of disadvantage).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analysis of gaps within data systems, increasing use of intersectionality and identification of hidden barriers to facilitate greater drilling down to understand contributory causes of barriers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Detailed analysis of relationship between input factors and output measures across the student lifecycle.</li> <li>Increasing contextual examination of performance gaps and relative under-performance, disaggregating into student sub-groups wherever feasible, using quantitative and qualitative data/information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extension of NERUPI evaluative framework to student transition from level 4 to 5 and 6 while at SEC.</li> <li>Robust evaluation of input and outcomes of interventions and projects.</li> <li>Sharing best practice in evaluation with members of Access HE.</li> </ul>	Design of more granular and targeted initiatives that increase impact.
<b>Understanding and responding to root causes – active quantitative and qualitative analysis and investigation.</b>				
Existing approach				
Evidence-led measures and investment,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unit E, the HE student record system, is being updated in 2018/19 to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specific Access Agreement 2018/19 projects to meet set targets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual review of value for money via HE Value for Money Committee to</li> </ul>	Effective evaluation of strategic

AIMS	ONGOING MONITORING	TRIGGERED 'DEEP DIVES'	EVALUATION	OUTCOMES
informing Theory of Change.	include the range of student data required to meet this Plan and OfS's requirements. • Course viability model underpins aspects of value for money and budget allocation.		underpin oversight of spending on HE. • Monitoring by Governors of Access Agreement projects and spend.	approach to Theory of Change.
Planned improvements to the approach in 2019/20				
Enhancements to evidence-led measures, investment and evaluation of impact, leading to sustainable impact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A cost-benefit-analysis to review the effectiveness of Unit E in meeting the increasing HE data analysis and reporting needs of SEC.</li> <li>• Increased data analysis across intersections.</li> <li>• WP related structures (e.g. Forums within the Faculty of HE fully implemented).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design and development of APP projects at provider and portfolio level, underpinning the strategic measures identified in the Theory of Change.</li> <li>• Expand understanding of value for money and sector expectations accordingly, further informing refinement of scope of monitoring processes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder satisfaction level with project outcomes and impact.</li> <li>• Initial impact on internal and externally verified performance indicators.</li> <li>• Monitoring by Governors of commitments in this Plan that commence in 2019/20.</li> </ul>	Robust evaluation of strategic approach to Theory of Change.

Table 2: SEC Access and Participation Evidence Base and planned improvements for 2019/20.

Our Theory of Change is divided into three inter-related sections, with strategic measures including overarching elements, a response to barriers and targeted measures. The overarching elements recognise the importance of a distinctive structure and approach to HE, with a focus on inclusivity throughout the student lifecycle (exclusivity here is implied within the scope of positive action under the Equality Act 2010). The response to barriers provides an outline of the approach to promoting inclusivity, which is then narrowed in scope to targeted measures. Intermediate outcomes then provide opportunities to monitor and evaluate performance against the target measures and highlight the distance travelled to achieving the outcomes targets and milestones in this Plan. A robust data-led, sector informed and contextualised approach is fundamental to ensuring the effectiveness of our Theory of Change, hence the approach adopted in Table 2 above, which includes planned improvements in 2019/20. This section provides the narrative to our Theory of Change.

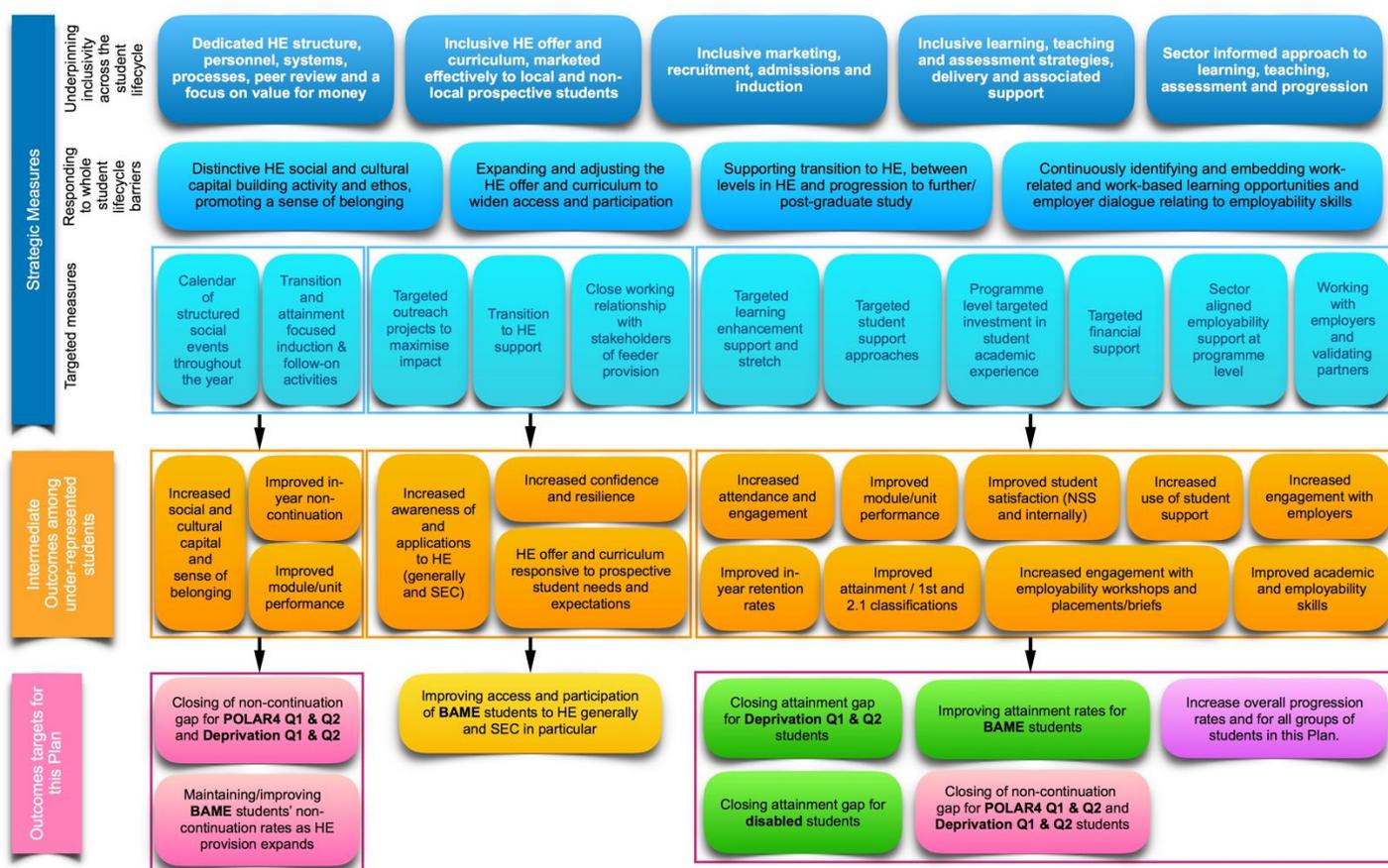


Diagram 2: SEC Theory of Change.

## (1) Underpinning strategic measures across the student lifecycle

### (i) Dedicated HE structure and approach

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

Since August 2018, student recruitment and admissions for full-time undergraduate degree and sub-degree programmes were brought into the Faculty of HE, not only to comply with *The revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education*, but also legal and regulatory requirements. The Faculty of HE structure is already having a positive impact on the approach to this Plan, with the introduction of a dedicated sub-structure (see Diagram 1 above), which was not possible prior to formation of the Faculty. There is now greater transparency in resource allocation, since undergraduate provision has been removed from a mixed-economy model of an FE and HE department structure, which should improve its effectiveness and efficiency, becoming evident in subsequent HE Value

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

Student recruitment and admissions controls have been tightened since student recruitment and admissions were brought into the Faculty of HE, which is important for monitoring applications and ensuring and assuring recruitment with integrity, thereby contributing positively to non-continuation rates. Following an external audit in April 2019 of student recruitment and retention within the Faculty of HE, it was recognised that while the internal structures and processes within the Faculty are robust, there were opportunities to “optimise” student recruitment strategies, one aspect of which was to design and develop a Higher Education Recruitment Strategy for the Faculty of HE (considered further in section 3.4 below)

*(ii) Inclusive HE offer, curriculum and marketing*

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

*(iii) Inclusive student admissions and induction*

The College recognises the different journeys that prospective students have undertaken before considering and entering HE. Consequently, the College provides effective information, advice and guidance to applicants, remains committed to maintaining relatively low tariff points on entry and provides a range of engaging induction activities to all of its students, with student-led evaluation of the same through HE Programme Boards.

*(iv) Inclusive learning, teaching and assessment and associated support*

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

To ensure that HE students are supported effectively across the student lifecycle and encouraged to reach or exceed their initial aspirations and over time realise their potential, student transition onto HE is supported through the ‘keep in touch’ newsletters and updates from HE Programme

Leaders prior to the start of their course, followed by the induction process, where existing students are available to share their experiences and provide first hand advice. This assists students to develop a sense of belonging in HE and build relationships with their peers and staff as part of the HE community. Programme Facebook pages and Whatsapp groups evidence the peer and staff support available, which align to students' engagement preferences via social media. This is complemented by an 'open-door' policy that enables students to contact their tutors outside of timetabled contact times. The transitional support continues with the summative assessment feedback that is intended to assist students with moving on to the next level of their academic study, while Canvas (the HE VLE) provides a wide range of learning materials. Support services work collaboratively with academic staff to ensure that strategies are developed to support any disclosed student needs.

Staff prioritise the student learning experience with weekly one-to-one tutorials and student-centred HE Programme Boards, enabling students to enter into a meaningful dialogue, voicing concerns, raising or reflecting on issues and considering on-going or completed actions as well as highlighting good practice. Quality assurance and developmental activity in learning teaching and assessment is provided through staff and peer observations aligned to HE expectations and taking account of levelness, further supported by liaison with external examiners and validating partners. Diversity is being actively considered in reading materials, seeking to reduce the concentration of white Eurocentrism, although this is an area for further examination and development.

*(v) Sector informed learning, teaching and assessment and progression*

The Faculty of HE has substantially increased the investment in developing its academic staff in order to enhance the quality and currency of their delivery. This is supplemented by the number of Programme Leaders and Lecturers that have been or are practitioners in their subject discipline. Within the Faculty of HE there is a dedicated member of staff that leads on employability, while outside of the Faculty there are two HE Careers Officers (one full-time and the other fractional (0.4)). Their job descriptions are being updated at the beginning of 2019/20 to reflect engagement with relevant targets and/or commitments in this Plan and the approach more generally. These roles are expected to be increased to 2.0 FTE by the end of 2019/20 in order to respond to the low progression rates noted in this Plan and expected growth in student numbers and will be reviewed annually thereafter as part of annual monitoring of this Plan. This will be supplemented by the end of 2021/22 with careers advice and guidance for graduates from SEC undergraduate programmes who remain unemployed one year after graduation. A HE Practice Learning Coordinator engages with the UEA validated programmes in order to promote practice learning and source placement providers.

There were discussions in 2017/18 to develop a 1.0 FTE HE Work-related Coordinator role for UAL validated programmes; this was delayed due to the volume of undergraduate degree validations and revalidations taking place and the bedding-in of the Faculty of HE. The low student progression rates now necessitate the development of this role in early 2019/20, with recruitment/appointment by the end of 2019/20. Programme Leaders are allocated budgets to fund enhancements to the provision, including but not limited to purchasing resources, sourcing guest speakers, arranging course specific trips and workshops and being consulted on employability initiatives. An increased focus is being planned in 2019/20 to cover all student groups as well as those highlighted in this Plan for employability related projects.

## **(2) Responding to whole student lifecycle barriers**

### *(i) Distinctive HE social and cultural capital building*

In recognition of the importance of securing the sustainable development of HE social and cultural capital and their evidenced contribution to improving inclusivity, non-continuation rates and attainment, the Faculty of HE invests financially and fully resources both of these capital forming activities. Recent examples include a calendar of social events throughout the academic year, which are facilitated by a HE Student Engagement Officer, the Marketing Department and Programme Leaders. Meanwhile, cultural capital is being developed by a series of initiatives that embed the HE ethos to study skills, academic development, independent learning, active engagement with peers within and across programmes, undergraduate level employability skills development, engagement with the sector through work-related and work-based learning, entering sector-related competitions and delivering end-of-year exhibitions at prestigious locations. Where activities form part of the programme, engagement is mandatory. Where the activities are optional, such as study skills workshops, participation is being measured. In 2019/20, we will formalise the processes to further identify participation rates for optional activities and the impact they are having on student engagement on their programme, performance at module/unit level, non-continuation rates and via feedback from the HE Student Focus Group to identify opportunities to increase/maximise associated student engagement and impact.

### *(ii) Expanding and adjusting the HE offer and curriculum to widen access and participation*

A broader range of HE programmes are being offered (with further expansion planned over the course of the next three years), which are expected to appeal to a wider student demographic and provide greater value propositions, with a focus on employability and progression. These will be dovetailed to marketing efforts and aspects of outreach related activities in order to increase access by underrepresented groups, in particular BAME students. The impact will be measured by student recruitment (application and conversion rates), enrolment and subsequent non-continuation and attainment rates relative to the sector norm and adjusted for the region. Outreach projects will be designed to capture, among other things, outcomes in terms of applications to SEC.

### *(iii) Supporting transition to HE and progression*

Outreach projects for 2019/20 are being researched and designed by the HE Widening Participation Officer, responding to existing under-representation of BAME students locally, in the region, sector and at the College and to use both inclusive and exclusive strategies (such as positive action) to promote progression to HE for BAME students. Dedicated measures are in place and are being expanded to support student transition between levels of an undergraduate degree. These include, but are not limited to targeted projects to support study skills, contextualised induction programmes at each level of a course, embedded employability skills development (including workshops, training, sector related professional accreditation supplementary to the main programme of study), guest speakers and guidance from employers on sector expectations. Employability roles have been expanded from a fractional (0.4) HE Careers Officer to the addition of a full-time HE Careers Officer. Student support remains a strength of the College, and in particular the HE provision, underpinned by a HE Student Support Strategy and recognised in various external reports (including the QAA HER 2016, institutional approvals by UEA and The OU in 2017 and, more recently, the TEF 4 award). In relation to post-graduate study, the programmes are starting to engage with strategies to promote more information on and active preparation for post-graduate study, although further development is necessary in 2019/20, including methods (both quantitative and qualitative) to measure impact.

*(iv) Continuous identification and embedding of work-related learning opportunities and dialogue with employers*

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

### **(3) Targeted measures**

*(i) Closing of the non-continuation gap*

A calendar of social events for students was introduced in 2018/19 to underpin the first year induction experience, sense of belonging, student engagement with HE staff and studies and to provide a distinctive experience for HE students from FE students (particularly for those progressing from level 3 programmes internally). Feedback from student representatives in HE Programme Boards during 2018/19 across all undergraduate programmes has been positive, with useful suggestions for enhancing social events. Induction activities were restructured in 2018/19 to be more subject oriented and engaging, with transition-focused induction in Year 2 and 3 of programmes. Programme integrated study skills are also in place and being further developed. However, while non-continuation rates have continued to improve in 2017/18, existing strategies and initiatives to improve student retention have not investigated and responded to the particular needs of students from POLAR4 Q1 and Q2, Deprivation Q1 and Q2 and the intersections of disadvantage that students from these quintiles are likely to experience. This is one of the priority areas being explored and strategies, initiatives and projects are planned to be designed and implemented from the beginning of 2019/20 when they can have the greatest impact on non-continuation rates.

*(ii) Increasing access and participation*

Targeted outreach projects are being researched and will be designed for roll-out in mid-2019/20 to increase the access opportunities for local pupils from BAME backgrounds and activities to increase the transition support for prospective BAME HE students. This will be complemented by closer working relationships with internal and external feeder provision to understand and respond to the needs and expectations of prospective BAME HE students. The HE Widening Participation Officer will lead on the research and design of outreach and access related activities.

*(iii) Increasing attainment, progression and retention*

In 2019/20, the Faculty of HE will recruit two HE Widening Participation Champions to investigate the barriers faced by students in the success stage of their journey with SEC and design or co-design strategies to improve the non-continuation and attainment rates of the student groups

identified in this Plan by the end of 2019/20. This will supplement existing strategies to improve student outcomes generally. The Advance Practitioner (HE) is working with the Programme Partnership Managers, the Dean of Higher Education and the Head of HE Strategic Quality and Outcomes (Interim) to arrive at a joined-up approach to the development of the HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, including being informed by a range of metrics and this Plan so as to maximise the impact and increase the timely achievement of the targets set and relevant commitments herein. (The intermediate outcomes underpin this focus.)

A range of support structures are in place that consider individual student needs. With input from the findings of the HE Widening Participation Champions, feedback from Programme Leaders and student consultation, structures and systems will be developed for effective targeted interventions to support students, in particular the student groups identified in this Plan by the end of 2019/20. The overall financial commitment in this Plan as a proportion of higher fee income is noted in Table 1b above, which represents a substantial increase from previous Agreements and Plans and is proportionate to the challenging targets in this Plan and general commitments, such as improving progression rates. For instance, the hardship fund for 2020/21 has been increased to an initial sum of £45,021.60 or 3.2% of higher tuition fee income (i.e. above £6,165), whichever is the lower. This approach contributes to our commitment to improving student success, in particular continuation and attainment rates and is sufficiently responsive to cover temporary financial shortfalls affecting students with a broad range of personal characteristics, including but not limited to those who experience disadvantage, intersections of disadvantage and hidden barriers, thereby recognising the various challenges our students face during their journey with us. The impact of the hardship fund on student success will be evaluated accordingly. The supply of timely and complete information in relation to the availability of and access to the hardship fund is integral to its successful application (this is covered in section 3.5 below).

The financial commitment of higher fee income outlined in Table 1b above is in addition to the 'ring-fenced' tuition fee income towards continuously improving the student academic experience, which dates back to the rationale for tuition fee increases in 2018/19 (and is calculated independently of APP tuition fee income). In the Access and Participation Plan 2019/20 this 'ring-fenced' tuition fee income was confirmed as being cumulative in nature, so that in this Plan it covers the complete duration of an HE programme affected by fee increases in 2018/19 for the period of this Plan. This level of financial resourcing contributes towards ensuring and assuring sustainable growth in student numbers, value for money and supports our Theory of Change model (see Diagram 2 above). For the purposes of completeness, Table 1b above summarises the proportion allocated from higher fee income across the student lifecycle (this does not include any other sources of income or grants).

The Faculty of HE works closely with its validating partners, in particular UEA, sharing good practice and seeking expert guidance to continuously improve our approach to learning, teaching and assessment, sector expectations and widening participation. UAL also plays an important role in informing enhancements to learning, teaching and assessment of the UAL validated provision at SEC. Relevant staff on sub-degree and level 3 feeder provision are invited to certain training events delivered by UEA and UAL in order to cascade sharing of good practice across the entirety of the HE provision and inform progression related enhancements to level 3 feeder provision. This forms a discrete part of the inreach/internal activities being planned for 2019/20 (and are expected to be in place by mid-2019/20). In 2018/19 the College substantially increased its investment in employability related activities to support the development of students' employability skills and

understanding of the sectors they intend to enter. The approach to employability has been received positively in the TEF 4 Panel report for the College.

### **3.2 Student consultation**

The HE Student Engagement Officer arranges meetings with student representatives for the purposes of consultation, feedback and critical evaluation on a range of key documents that affect them. A similar approach was adopted with the data analysis findings related to this Plan (student representatives were provided with a fully unpacked OfS APP dashboard in an Excel workbook, with graphs from the said dashboard; the data was rated red, amber and green (RAG) to identify gaps, underperformance and outperformance across undergraduate and sub-degree programmes). Meetings were undertaken between the HE Student Engagement Officer, student representatives, the Dean of Higher Education, the Head of HE Strategic Quality and Outcomes (Interim) and the HE Widening Participation Officer to outline the findings from the data, the approach taken by this Plan and the narrative.

Working drafts of this Plan were also provided, ensuring that the student representatives had sufficient time to critically evaluate the document and prepare questions during follow-on meetings. Students welcomed the clear mapping of the HE reporting structure at Faculty and provider level, including the new widening participation related structure within the Faculty of HE (see Diagram 1 above), which was informed in part by their feedback in the Student Focus Group meetings. During ongoing dialogue with student representatives, they also suggested additional staffing, with particular widening participation aligned commitments, which we then interpreted and fed back to them at the final meeting of the Student Focus Group with possible roles, which they agreed to. This is now reflected in some of the new staff roles noted in this Plan. SEC will continue to seek the student voice through similar meetings from the start of 2019/20 for the duration of this Plan, including also the presence of key staff involved in the implementation of this Plan, during delivery of projects, monitoring of intermediate outcomes, milestones and evaluation. Student representatives will also be members of key widening participation related forums (see Diagram 1 above), spanning the lifecycle of associated activities (including project design, development, implementation and evaluation).

### **3.3 Evaluation strategy**

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

#### ***Embedding a structure and culture of evaluation***

SEC has not traditionally had a structure or culture of evidence-led evaluation of its Access Agreements. With changes in the sector, we introduced evidence-led projects for 2018/19 covering the student lifecycle. This approach is now being re-enforced by the structural changes noted in Diagram 1 above, the strengthening of the evidence base needed for monitoring and evaluation stated in Table 2 above, transparency of commitment across this document (see Table 1b above and the narrative on ring-fenced tuition fee income) and other documents (such as the TEF 4

submission and the undertaking for Condition B3 (02/2019)), as well as the Theory of Change in Diagram 2 above. Of particular note are the proposed implementation of HEAT (to measure the impact of outreach projects) and the NERUPI framework (for designing outcomes focused targets to capture the impact from widening participation activities), both of which are recognised tools for evaluation within the HE community and adopted by several HE providers. A proportionate approach has been taken to resourcing evaluation throughout the cycle of widening participation activities and projects from initial design of strategies, initiatives and projects to their implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This, coupled with an institutional approach to widening participation and working closely with our validating partners (including sharing good practice) ensures and assures a commitment to effective evaluation practices.

### ***Increasing data, resources, skills and expertise***

There is continuing investment in building more robust data systems and to consider a range of qualitative methods to increase our understanding of the barriers faced by our students and to develop and evaluate an effective response, taking account of data protection requirements and ethics during the evaluation process. Additional financial and human resources are being allocated to evaluation, with the HE Widening Participation Officer, HE Student Engagement Officer and Programme Partnership Managers taking lead roles in their respective areas, ensuring a holistic approach is adopted, with sufficient triangulation of the evidence base to demonstrate impact across widening participation projects, learning, teaching and assessment strategies and associated quality assurance and the student voice. There is increased engagement with building capacity within the HE team and associated support departments through staff development activities. The team associated with widening participation possesses complementary skills and expertise and maintains currency through staff development and meetings with validating partners, in particular UEA and UAL.

All evaluations currently assess or will be able to assess the impact on intermediate objectives and the overarching aims stated in our Theory of Change by 2019/20, taking account of:

#### *Effective methodologies*

##### *Existing approach:*

- Access, success and progression related projects for 2018/19 have an impact focus.
- Monitoring changes in TEF, APP and NSS indicators/metrics, student outcomes and the student voice (internally through HE Programme Boards and student surveys).
- Regular reports to Governors to ensure oversight of Access Agreement resource allocation and spend, associated projects and impact.

##### *Approach from 2019/20:*

- Implementation of the NERUPI framework.
- Pre and post questionnaires and meetings with stakeholders aligned to NERUPI aims, led by the HE Widening Participation Officer.
- Implementation of HEAT.
- Qualitative data through focus groups and forums, including but not limited to those noted in Diagram 1 above.
- Embedding of Theory of Change explanations and expectations in all relevant projects and evaluation plans.
- Greater transparency in resource allocation and value for money.

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

*By 2024/25, we expect the evaluation strategy to have evolved into the following:*

- An established evaluation culture underpinned by
  - successful operation (and some fine tuning) of the Faculty of Higher Education widening participation related structure, and
  - a track record of strong leadership by the Dean of Higher Education and the Head of HE Strategic Quality and Outcomes (Interim).
- Established annual review cycles of the evaluation strategy, informed by peer review from validating partners (UEA and UAL).
- Continued support from HEAT associated with evaluation and data.
- Conduct Type 2 (Empirical Enquiry) and Type 3 (Causality) standards of evaluation (whether with developed in-house expertise or external support).
- Established engagement with relevant stakeholders (in particular students) in the monitoring and evaluation of progress with this Plan.
- Hidden barriers across the student lifecycle fully explored and associated strategies developed and implemented, with impact being measured.
- A critically reflective consideration of return on investment in terms of course viability, resources allocated and the (contributory) impact these have had on student outcomes, as well as value for money.

### ***Analysis and transparency***

Analysis and evaluation of widening participation related projects is currently undertaken by the departments that design and implement them. From the beginning of 2019/20, the funding, implementation, output and impact of projects will be evaluated by the Widening Participation Evidence and Evaluation Board. This will ensure an objective approach to evaluation that is aligned effectively to the Theory of Change in this Plan. Evaluation findings will be reported to the HE Committee and Governors, where they can be further scrutinised, and shared with all those involved in the design and implementation of projects, validating partners and students.

### ***Evaluation of financial support***

Our commitment to financial support in this Plan is focused on the hardship fund. This is in recognition of the range of barriers and pressures faced by our students (some of which may be hidden). However, in order to ensure that this fund continues to have the desired impact a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis will be used, informed by the OfS Financial Support Evaluation Toolkit (OfS Toolkit), from the beginning of 2019/20 to identify possible patterns of access to such support and the impact that accessing this fund has had. For instance, the OfS Toolkit's survey tool and sample questions will be used at appropriate annual intervals to survey the recipients of the hardship fund; the interview tool will then be used to hold focus groups with these students. Existing data systems are being updated accordingly as are monitoring processes for 2019/20.

## **3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan**

Within the Faculty of Higher Education this Plan will be monitored using the structure outlined in Diagram 1 above as well as existing structures and the leadership roles noted above, with five

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

At the planning stage of projects and associated strategies to meet the targets in this Plan, the existing approach will be enhanced from the beginning of 2019/20 to include (i) logic chains for each project or strategy, (ii) scenario analysis and associated risk assessments, and (iii) contingency planning. This should ensure and assure effective deployment of resources, effort and underpin an expedient response where data and information indicate an actual or potential worsening of progress against each planned project, strategy or target.

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

For success related targets, the Dean of Higher Education and Programme Partnership Managers will negotiate projects, strategies and activities with Programme Leaders, the Advanced Practitioner (HE) and relevant external departments to the Faculty of Higher Education from early 2019/20. The HE Programme Boards will continue to provide initial student feedback regarding success elements, complemented by in-year non-continuation data, internal module/unit and programme level attainment data across student groups (in particular those forming the basis for the targets in this Plan), outcomes of peer and lesson observations and internal and external

student survey outcomes. Depending on the aspects adversely impacting on achievement of success-related targets in this Plan, relevant elements of the Faculty of Higher Education widening participation related structure will monitor progress, remedial action and report accordingly to the HE Committee. Given the significant time lag in published non-continuation rates via TEF metrics and APP data sets, less reliance will be placed on these to initiate intervention and remedial action.

In relation to improving student progression rates, improvements are already underway to substantially increase resources for employability and progression activities at programme, Faculty and institutional level. Priority will be given to student progression from early 2019/20, with the Dean of Higher Education overseeing coordination of efforts by Programme Partnership Managers with their Programme Leaders, the Student Engagement Officer, HE Careers Officers and other existing (or to be recruited (see Annex 1 below)) relevant stakeholders. The HE Programme Board receives student feedback through course student representatives about a range of course related matters, including progression opportunities and employability. This, coupled with the HE Student Support Forum and functioning of the Faculty of Higher Education widening participation related structure, will consider qualitative data and information regarding employability and student progression opportunities and associated activities to continuously improve both. They will also monitor feedback from student alumni (once the alumni database is in place), employer contacts, UEA and UAL to further improve student progression strategies and activities. Acknowledging the significant time lag for progression data to be published through TEF indicators and metrics and APP datasets, but recognising their importance, the above qualitative methods will provide the initial indicators of whether the College is on track to improving student progression rates noted in this Plan and in subsequent monitoring. Where progress is below expectations, contingency plans will be partially activated, pending publication of progression indicators (taking account of the associated time lag), which could fully activate the contingency plans or revised strategies.

### 3.5 Provision of information to students

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

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

- provides prospective HE applicants with a range of information at various stages of the recruitment cycle, including but not limited to the following:
  - **HE programme search stage:** courses on offer and associated information, an application cycle, frequently asked questions, schedule of open events, fees, funding and financial support (such as hardship fund)

- **Pre-application stage:** we ensure that UCAS and Student Finance England are regularly updated so that they can populate their course database, thereby ensuring that prospective HE applicants have all the necessary information available prior to making a higher education decision. We ensure students receive accurate information about the implications of any policy and funding changes.
  - **Application stage:** although all offers are made on UCAS, applicants are sent an email from the HE Admissions team with links to the College services (student support, College policies and procedures, student funding and additional costs).
  - **Pre-enrolment stage:** one month prior to enrolment all applicants holding an offer with the College will be sent information about their timetable. This will be of particular use for students who are in employment or students with family commitments so that they can plan their time with us accordingly, thereby positively contributing to their student experience. All applicants are provided with pre-arrival information about student support and funding. The College has a dedicated webpage for enrolment, informing students about the process and what to expect on the day. The webpage is updated in a timely manner; students are also informed through email.
- provides existing HE students with the following information:
    - **Year 1 onwards:** information about fees, funding, student services, HE policies and procedures for students' validated programmes, exam timetables and results.
    - **Year 2 of 3:** HE policies and procedures for students' validated programmes, notification of changes to policies and procedures, results and re-enrolment.
    - **Final year:** HE policies and procedures for students' validated programmes, notification of changes to policies and procedures and results

In addition students are provided with the following information through Canvas:

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

Information about the hardship fund and application criteria will be published in early 2019/20 on the dedicated HE webpage, with associated hyperlinks on Canvas and course handbooks. However, the current website is under review and will be undergoing redesign in 2019/20 so as to increase engagement and interaction with it by prospective HE applicants and existing students. It is due to launch by mid-2019/20. All departments have been consulted during the process, ensuring that stakeholder needs are captured and that continuity of service is maintained through the existing website and associated HE webpages.

**Annex 1:** Summary of SEC commitments.

Commitment	Location in Plan	Start date	Expected progress by end of this Plan, where relevant	Expected end date if different from end of this Plan
<b>TARGETS AND ASSOCIATED MECHANISMS</b>				
1. Introduction of HEAT and NERUPI framework to increase the data-led approach to evaluating the impact of widening participation activity.	Section 1	Start of 2019/20	N/A	End of 2019/20 (full implementation)
2. Updating and annual review of student record system in order to improve data capture and analysis, thereby maintaining currency with stakeholder requirements and expectations.	Section 1	Start of 2019/20	N/A	Annual review
3. Update our existing data capture and reporting systems to include a broader range of student personal characteristics.	Section 1.8	2019/20	N/A	Mid-2019/20
4. Design and implementation of an alumni database to inform and aid in facilitating progression-related strategies and activities at Faculty of HE and institutional level.	Section 1.1	Start of 2019/20 for design & implementation	N/A	Mid-2019/20 – fully implemented and operational alumni database
5. Robust approach to monitoring, evaluated and reviewed annually to ensure fitness for purpose and underpinned by structures and processes (see Diagram 1 below)	Section 1	Start of 2019/20	N/A	Enhanced approach by start of 2020/21  Annual review
6. Design and implementation of targeted interventions, with measurement of impact, across student groups.	Section 1.1	Start of 2019/20 for design & implementation	N/A	End of 2019/20 for measurement of impact
7. SEC to continue improvements in non-continuation rates so that the gap between POLAR4 Quintiles 3, 4 or 5 compared to 1 or 2 is reduced to 2.5% by 2024/25	Section 1.1	2019/20	Gap reduced to 2.5%	N/A

Commitment	Location in Plan	Start date	Expected progress by end of this Plan, where relevant	Expected end date if different from end of this Plan
8. Annual monitoring of POLAR4 Q5 to Q1 students and POLAR4 Quintiles 3, 4 or 5 compared to Q1 or Q2 across the student lifecycle.	Section 1.1	2019/20	N/A	Ongoing
9. SEC to increase the access and participation rates of BAME students onto its undergraduate programmes (taking account of sub-groups within this category), adjusting for the local and regional BAME population rates and taking account of the HE sector average in the longer term.	Section 1.2 & Section 2.2	2019-20	Participation increased to 13.0%	Moving towards the HE sector average by 2028/29  Aligned to the HE sector average by 2033/34
10. Introduce aggregated and disaggregated analysis, with rolling averages for BAME student groups in order to ensure effective quantitative analysis, coupled with qualitative analysis.	Section 1.2	2019-20	N/A	N/A
11. SEC to reduce the attainment gap between BAME students and white students on undergraduate programmes to 18% by 2024/25, with the gap being aligned to that of the HE sector average and closed thereafter.	Section 1.2	2019-20	Attainment gap reduced to 18.0%	2028/29 (gap in line with the HE sector average)  2033/34 (gap closed with white students)
12. There is insufficient data at present to comment on non-continuation rates and attainment rates or gaps by disability type, but we will do so if the number of disabled students increase in subsequent years.	Section 1.4	2019-20	N/A	N/A
13. SEC to reduce the attainment gap between disabled students and students not known to be disabled to 2.5% by 2024/25.	Section 1.4	2019-20	Attainment gap reduced to 2.5%	N/A
14. SEC to improve non-continuation rates so that the gap between Deprivation Quintiles 3, 4 or 5 compared to Q1 or Q2 on undergraduate programmes is reduced to 5.0% by 2024/25.	Section 1.5	2019-20	Non-continuation gap reduced to 5.0%	2028/29 (gap closed with students from Deprivation Quintiles 3, 4 or 5)

Commitment	Location in Plan	Start date	Expected progress by end of this Plan, where relevant	Expected end date if different from end of this Plan
15. SEC to reduce the attainment gap between Deprivation Quintiles 3, 4 or 5 compared to Q1 or Q2 to 7.0% by 2024/25.	Section 1.5	2019-20	Attainment gap reduced to 7.0%	2033/34 (gap closed with students from Deprivation Quintiles 3, 4 or 5)
16. Examination of national data to understand the barriers that care leavers experience and use this to inform the development of any associated strategies, taking account of our local and regional context.	Section 1.6	2019-20	N/A	2020-21
<b>STRUCTURE, SYSTEMS AND UNDERSTANDING</b>				
17. Become an active member of AccessHE, with associated widening participation related benefits through accessing their London NCOP schools network, assistance in the design and development of outreach activities and participation in collaborative projects and action forums.	Section 1	Start of 2019/20	N/A	2028/29 or later
18. Increase our understanding of and support for students facing multiple barriers when studying at SEC.	Section 1.6	Start of 2019/20	N/A	End of 2020/21
19. Recruit a <i>HE Mental Health Practitioner</i> (0.5 to 1.0 FTE).	Section 2.2	End of 2020/21	N/A	N/A
20. The invitation of validating partners to participate in the recruitment process of key personnel in the Faculty of HE.	Section 3.1	2018/19	N/A	End of 2024/25
21. Introduction of the Faculty of HE widening participation related structure.	Section 3.1	Start of 2019/20	N/A	N/A
22. Existing and subsequent HE related strategies will have due regard for and be informed by this Plan, with the Dean of HE and the Head of HE Strategic Quality and Outcomes	Section 3.1	Early 2020/21	N/A	N/A

Commitment	Location in Plan	Start date	Expected progress by end of this Plan, where relevant	Expected end date if different from end of this Plan
(interim) roles leading on drafting and implementation of these strategies.				
23. The completion and introduction of the HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and an HE specific equality, diversity and inclusion Strategy.	Section 3.1	Start of 2019/20	N/A	Mid-2019/20
24. Faculty of HE to undertake a data-led impact assessment of activities and support measures at SEC and evaluate how they affect different student groups (across protected characteristics and the target student groups within this Plan).	Section 3.1	Start of 2019/20	N/A	Mid-2019/20
25. The Dean of Higher Education and the Head of HE Strategic Quality and Outcomes (Interim) will both directly lead on and be accountable for the implementation of this Plan.	Section 3.1	Start of 2019/20	Plan fully implemented.	N/A
26. Increased APP related collaborative working with a range of stakeholders.	Section 3.1	Start of 2019/20	N/A	End of 2024/25
27. Planned improvements to SEC's access and participation evidence base (see Table 2 above)	Section 3.1	Start of 2019/20	N/A	End of 2019/20
28. Creation of and recruitment to HE Marketing and Widening Participation Communication Officer.	Section 3.1	2019/20	N/A	N/A
29. Engage an external consultant to assist in HE marketing associated with widening participation priorities in this Plan (namely access and progression) and more generally so as to ensure sufficient momentum is generated and understanding gained about the target groups in this Plan.	Section 3.1	Start of 2019/20	N/A	N/A
30. The job descriptions of the current HE Careers Officers will be updated to	Section 3.1	Start of 2019/20	N/A	N/A

Commitment	Location in Plan	Start date	Expected progress by end of this Plan, where relevant	Expected end date if different from end of this Plan
reflect engagement with the targets in this Plan.				
31. HE Careers Officer roles to be increased to 2.0 FTE in order to respond to the progression gaps in this Plan and expected growth in student numbers, with annual review thereafter as part of annual monitoring of this Plan.	Section 3.1	End of 2019/20	N/A	N/A
32. Careers advice and guidance for graduates from SEC undergraduate programmes who remain unemployed one year after graduation.	Section 3.1	End of 2021/22	N/A	N/A
33. The development of a 1.0 FTE role entitled HE Work-related Coordinator (UAL) and recruitment/appointment to that role.	Section 3.1	Early 2019/20 (development of said role)		End of 2019/20 (recruitment/appointment to said role)
34. Formalisation of further identifying participation rates in optional activities within undergraduate programmes and their impact on relevant student outcomes.	Section 3.1	Start of 2019/20	N/A	Mid-2019/20
35. Sustainable broadening of the HE offer in order to appeal to a wider student demographic and ensuring greater value propositions, with a focus on employability and progression.	Section 3.1	2018/19	N/A	End of 2021/22
36. The research and design of outreach projects associated with BAME student participation in HE and SEC undertaken by the Widening Participation Officer.	Section 3.1	2018/19	N/A	Mid-2019/20
37. Further development of strategies related to undergraduate student progression to post-graduate study and the measurement of their impact on progression rates.	Section 3.1	Early 2019/20	N/A	End of 2019/20

Commitment	Location in Plan	Start date	Expected progress by end of this Plan, where relevant	Expected end date if different from end of this Plan
38. Investigation of the possible intersections of disadvantage faced by POLAR4 Q1 and Q2 and Deprivation Q1 and Q2 students, with a view to designing strategies and initiatives to improve the non-continuation rates of students from these quintiles.	Section 3.1	Early 2019/20	N/A	End of 2019/20
39. Recruitment of two HE Widening Participation Champions to investigate and respond to the barriers faced by students in the success stage of their journey at SEC.	Section 3.1	2019/20	N/A	N/A
40. The evidence-led development of structures and systems for effective targeted interventions, with priority given to student groups identified in this Plan.	Section 3.1	Start of 2019/20	N/A	Mid-2019/20
41. An increased focus is being planned to cover all student groups as well as those highlighted in this Plan for employability related projects.	Section 3.1	2019/20	N/A	N/A
42. Hardship fund for 2020/21 increased to an initial sum of £45,021.60 or 3.2% of higher tuition fee income (i.e. above £6,165), whichever is the lower.	Section 3.1	Start of 2020/21	N/A	End of 2020/21
43. Quantitative and qualitative analyses of the hardship fund, informed by the OfS Financial Support Evaluation Toolkit, with updated data monitoring systems to identify possible patterns of access and associated impact.	Section 3.3	Start of 2019/20	N/A	N/A
44. Development and roll-out of inreach/internal activities at SEC.	Section 3.1	Early 2019/20	N/A	Mid-2019/20

Commitment	Location in Plan	Start date	Expected progress by end of this Plan, where relevant	Expected end date if different from end of this Plan
45. SEC will continue to actively seek the student voice in the context of this Plan.	Section 3.2	Start of 2019/20	N/A	N/A
46. Evaluation commenced by the Widening Participation Evidence and Evaluation Board of the funding, resource allocation, implementation, output and impact of widening participation related projects.	Section 3.3	Start of 2019/20	N/A	N/A
47. Greater sharing of data analytics associated with social media.	Section 1.2	2019-20	N/A	N/A
48. Monitoring processes to be enhanced to include: (i) logic chains for each project or strategy, (ii) scenario analysis and associated risk assessments, and (iii) contingency planning.	Section 3.4	Start of 2019/20	N/A	N/A
49. Design and development of a Higher Education Student Recruitment Strategy for the Faculty of HE.	Section 3.4	Start of 2019/20	Mid-2019/20	N/A
50. In the context of access targets in this Plan, setting and monitoring of prospective HE applicant engagement targets with the Marketing Department, Programme Leaders and the Widening Participation Officer.	Section 3.4	2019/20	N/A	N/A
51. In the context of success-related targets in this Plan, the negotiation of projects, strategies and activities with Programme Leaders, the Advanced Practitioner (HE) and relevant external departments to the Faculty of Higher Education and associated monitoring.	Section 3.4	Early 2019/20	N/A	N/A
52. In the context of progression-related targets in this Plan, existing employability and progression activities will prioritise these target groups of students. Efforts will be	Section 3.4	Early 2019/20	N/A	N/A

Commitment	Location in Plan	Start date	Expected progress by end of this Plan, where relevant	Expected end date if different from end of this Plan
coordinated within and outside the Faculty of HE, with relevant stakeholders and monitored accordingly.				
53. Publication of the hardship fund and application criteria.	Section 3.5	Early 2019/20	N/A	N/A

**Table 1:** Summary of SEC commitments in this Plan and associated timeframe.

**Access and participation plan  
Fee information 2020-21**

Provider name: South Essex College of Further and Higher Education

Provider UKPRN: 10005981

**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		£8,000
First degree		£8,500
First degree	Costume Construction / Accounting & Finance	£9,000
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND		£7,000
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	PgCE (Professional Graduate Certificate in Education)	£7,500
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	*	*
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	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

**Table 4d - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 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: South Essex College of Further and Higher Education

Provider UKPRN: 10005981

## Investment summary

The OfS requires providers to report on their planned investment in access, financial support and research and evaluation in their access and participation plan. The OfS does not require providers to report on investment in student success and progression in the access and participation plans and therefore investment in these areas is not recorded here.

### Note about the data:

The investment forecasts below in access, financial support and research and evaluation does not represent not the total amount spent by providers in these areas. It is the additional amount that providers have committed following the introduction of variable fees in 2006-07. The OfS does not require providers to report on investment in success and progression and therefore investment in these areas is not represented.

The figures below are not comparable to previous access and participation plans or access agreements as data published in previous years does not reflect latest provider projections on student numbers.

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Total access activity investment (£)</b>	£98,203.37	£147,229.94	£202,143.22	£242,433.15	£277,313.74
Access (pre-16)	£18,008.64	£28,828.24	£40,974.98	£51,376.56	£58,381.84
Access (post-16)	£35,876.59	£53,538.16	£75,120.79	£89,908.98	£103,992.65
Access (adults and the community)	£35,173.13	£51,479.00	£68,291.63	£80,275.88	£91,221.63
Access (other)	£9,145.01	£13,384.54	£17,755.82	£20,871.73	£23,717.62
<b>Financial support (£)</b>	£45,021.60	£65,893.12	£87,413.28	£102,753.12	£116,763.68
<b>Research and evaluation (£)</b>	£18,290.03	£27,798.66	£38,243.31	£46,560.01	£54,732.98

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Higher fee income (£HFI)</b>	£1,406,925.00	£2,059,160.00	£2,731,665.00	£3,211,035.00	£3,648,865.00
<b>Access investment</b>	7.0%	7.2%	7.4%	7.6%	7.6%
<b>Financial support</b>	3.2%	3.2%	3.2%	3.2%	3.2%
<b>Research and evaluation</b>	1.3%	1.4%	1.4%	1.5%	1.5%
<b>Total investment (as %HFI)</b>	11.5%	11.7%	12.0%	12.2%	12.3%



