

# Pearson College London

## Access and participation plan

### Dates 2020-21 to 2024-25

- 0.1 Pearson College London (“PCL”) is a young alternative provider of higher education with a unique character. We are an autonomous, not-for-profit, legal entity within the Pearson PLC group and the first higher education institution to be established within a global FTSE 100 company. Our strong commitment to widening access and participation is reflected in the Access and Participation Statements that we have published in connection with the Teaching Excellence Framework. As an alternative provider with specific course designation, we were not required to have an Access Agreement with the Office for Fair Access and we are pleased now to be able to set out our strategy for ensuring all students from all backgrounds have equal opportunity to enter, succeed in and progress from higher education.
- 0.2 We are a young institution: we opened our doors to a group of twenty students in September 2012. Since then we have grown steadily, and our student population now includes over 1000 undergraduates in our two Schools:
- **Pearson Business School**, which has a suite of undergraduate programmes in Business and Management, Accounting and Law, including two integrated Master’s programmes
  - **Escape Studios** which delivers programmes in Visual Effects (“VFX”), Game Art and Animation. Escape runs professional short courses, Master’s degrees, and a suite of undergraduate degrees (including integrated Master’s) which commenced in September 2016.
- 0.3 This is a five-year plan for the period 2020 – 2025. The academic year 2019/20 will be the first year of our Access and Participation Plan (A&P Plan) and the first year when we will have higher fee income to invest in our A&P Plan. For 2018/19, we took the strategic decision to not charge higher tuition fees. Our policy with respect to fee increases has always been not to increase the tuition fees of current students, so the additional fee income will only relate to new students. Notwithstanding, we have progressed a range of committed measures, in preparation for our A&P Plan 2019/20 implementation. These have included recruiting an Access and Participation Manager, preparing to recruit a specialised outreach officer, establishing parameters for the hardship fund for attending admissions workshops and preparing to roll the provision out from January 2020, exploring data tools and solutions, and identifying memberships and subscriptions to support our A&P strategy.
- 0.4 The decision not to increase fees in 2018/19 affects the investment available for the 2019/20 A&P Plan so, in formulating our measures, we also considered how best to introduce them in a phased manner over the five-year period. Our targets reflect this phased approach, as it will take some years before the measures have a significant impact on the metrics. We also anticipate that our future Impact Evaluations and Access and Participation Plans will include bolder targets and a more extensive range of measures, reflecting both the availability of more sophisticated and granular data and higher levels of investment.

### Assessment of performance

- 1.0.1 We are a new, small College, in our seventh year of operation, and our data collection systems and requirements have developed during this time. The amount of data available is limited by the fact that only a small number of students have completed their learning journeys with us (at the time of writing this plan, fewer than 200 of our undergraduate degree students have graduated). In addition, our undergraduate students in Escape Studios (our school of creative industries providing degrees in VFX, Computer Animation and Game Art) are only now in their third year and so we do not yet have any data for this school on attainment or progression into employment. These facts have a particular impact on our data for success and progression to employment. Our small student population also limits our ability to carry out meaningful analysis of intersectional data.
- 1.0.2 The fact that our subject and curriculum mix has radically changed as we have grown also has an impact on data analysis to the extent that historical comparisons are not helpful and we are not yet in a position to judge whether our performance in access and participation has changed over the years. We have, however, compared our performance to the sector generally using appropriate benchmarks where available.
- 1.0.3 Our entry data is also affected by a high proportion of students who apply to us directly rather than via UCAS, including our degree apprentices. Less information about the characteristics and background of direct entry candidates is collected at application stage. This affects, in particular, characteristics which are not mandated for the HESA AP Student Record, such as care leaver status or parental occupation. This data collection process has been reviewed to facilitate collection of this information through registration and enrolment data capture from September 2019 onwards.

- 1.0.4 In addition to analysing the data provided by the OfS dashboard, HESA and the TEF we have used our internal data in the following ways:

#### **Access**

- 1.0.5 We have analysed our most recent admissions data and our entire current student population, in order to assess our performance in relation to students from under-represented groups accessing our programmes.

#### **Success**

- 1.0.6 We have four years' complete data on degree completion and classification, representing under 200 completing undergraduates. The cohorts have changed during those years, both with respect to the numbers graduating and the mix of programmes. The numbers increased from 14 in 2014/15 to 76 in 2017/18, with each cohort comprising a different combination of graduates of a Top-up, one-year degree; a two-year accelerated degree and our 3-year degree in Business and Management.
- 1.0.7 As might be expected, the data is very variable making it difficult to draw firm conclusions about possible differential continuation and attainment by under-represented groups.

#### **Progression to employment**

- 1.0.8 We have even less data on our students' progression to employment. We completed our first DLHE survey in 2017 and our second in 2018. While we are proud of the results, we are also aware that the numbers were small. In common with the rest of the sector, we have not had destinations data since the replacement of DLHE with Graduate Outcomes. We are participating in Graduate Outcomes and await the first tranche of data reports to evaluate any potential gaps further and make appropriate adjustments to our plan. It is of note that the range of strategic measures we are introducing as part of our Access and Participation Plan are expected to positively affect employability for under-represented groups (See Paragraphs 3.1.31 – 3.1.55; 3.2.14, 3.2.16).

#### **Initial conclusions**

- 1.0.9 Much of our analysis is necessarily tentative, owing to the small numbers and variable data, as discussed above. Nevertheless, we are able to reach initial conclusions to inform the development of this Plan. We have identified these in a more granular analysis of the data below.

### **1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status**

#### **Access**

##### *POLAR analysis*

- 1.1.1 The data (from the OfS dashboard) shows that the proportion of students enrolling at PCL who are from the least represented groups (POLAR4 Quintile 1) has been rising steadily from 6% in 15/16 to 8% in 17/18. The gap between those in the least and most represented groups is less than in HE nationally being 4.33:1 rather than the national figure of 5:1. Nevertheless the gap is still wide with those in POLAR Q5 representing 35% of students enrolling at the College in 17/18 as against 8% of those in Q1.

##### *Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Analysis*

- 1.1.2 It is difficult to draw conclusions from analysis of students enrolling at PCL against the quintiles on IMD due to the limited number of years of data available and the fluctuations each year which make trends hard to assess. Nevertheless internal data indicates the gap between those in the least deprived (Q5) and most deprived (Q1) narrowed between 2014-15 and 2017-18 from approximately 2:1 to 1.25:1. However, the OfS data also shows that, whereas the percentage of 18 year-olds in the population from Q1 is 22% and in HE as a whole in 17/18 it was 16%, at PCL the percentage in 17/18 was only 10%, dropping from 16% the previous year.

##### *Conclusion*

- 1.1.3 Due to the difficulty in being certain of trends in relation to the IMD, PCL has relied on analysis of the POLAR4 data to determine its targets in this area and has identified the gap in access between the most and least represented groups as one which needs to be addressed. It has developed the following target in relation to this.

## Target One (PTA\_1)

**Target to reduce the gap in participation between the most and least represented groups from a ratio of 4.33:1 to a ratio of 3:1 by 2024-25**

1.1.4 This contributes to the OfS National Key Performance Measure and associated target to reduce the gap in participation between the most and least represented groups (POLAR4 quintiles 5 and 1) from a ratio of 5:1 (nationally) to a ratio of 3:1 by 2024-25 (Regulatory Notice 1 para 83a and 83a(i))

1.1.5 The details of the intended pathway to this target are set out below:

	Base-line 17/18*	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
<b>Total students enrolling</b>	380	587	667	737	807	877
<b>POLAR Q5%</b>	35	34	33	32	31	30
<b>POLAR Q1%</b>	8	8.5	9	9.5	9.75	10
<b>POLAR Q5 nos</b>	130	200	220	236	250	263
<b>POLAR Q1 nos</b>	30	50	60	70	79	88
<b>Ratio</b>	4.33:1	4:1	3.67:1	3.37:1	3.16:1	3:1

**Table 1**

\*Note that baseline figures are subject to the conventions used in the rounding and suppression strategy for data protection used by the OfS so that while percentages are rounded to the nearest 1, student numbers in any category (including total student numbers) are rounded to the nearest 10.

1.1.6 The pathway to the table above shows that to achieve this ratio, the target includes increasing the percentage of entrants from POLAR4 quintile 1 from a baseline of 8% in 17/18 to 10% in 24/25. This is more ambitious than the target in the Access and Participation Plan we submitted in 2018 where the target was to increase the proportion of entrants from POLAR quintile 1 to 5% by 2022-23 (the figure for 22-23 in our new target is 9.5%). This more stretching target is based on our having a further year's data showing we have improved significantly in this area.

## Success

### Non-continuation

1.1.7 The OfS dashboard is unable to provide data here due to the small sample sizes. Our own internal data shows that, using POLAR3 as a guide, the non-continuation rates for PCL's POLAR Q1 in 17/18 are higher than those for Q1 for HE as a whole (i.e. 15% as opposed to 11% - although the PCL measure only considers students not continuing at PCL, whereas the overall statistic is measuring those who do not continue in HE at all).

1.1.8 PCL's TEF Year 4 data shows a non-continuation rate of 13% for all students over the two years 15/16-16/17 and 16/17-17/18 (with 10.1% for 16/17-17/18 alone). The rate for students in POLAR4 Q3,4,5 is 10.5% and IMD Q3,4,5 is 6.6%. Due to the small sample size the rate is suppressed for students in Q1 and Q2, however, the non-continuation percentages for Qs 1 and 2 in both POLAR and IMD must be higher than those in Qs 3, 4 and 5 to bring the overall percentage to 13%. Due to this, PCL has developed a target to bring the non-continuation rates for those in POLAR Q1 in line with its overall institutional KPI of 90% by 24/25.

## Target Two (PTS\_1)

**Target to bring the continuation rates for those in the least represented groups (POLAR4 quintile 1) in line with the target continuation rate of 90% for PCL students overall (i.e. non-continuation rates of 10%)**

1.1.9 This contributes to the OfS National Key Performance Measure and associated target to reduce the gap in non-continuation by eliminating the unexplained gap between the most and least represented groups (POLAR4 quintiles 5 and 1) by 2024-25 and eliminating the absolute gap (the gap caused by both structural and unexplained factors) by 2030-21 (Regulatory Notice 1 para 83b and 83b(i))

POLAR Q1	Baseline 17/18 enrolls*	20/21 enrolls	21/22 enrolls	22/23 enrolls	23/24 enrolls	24/25 enrolls
Number of students	27	50	60	70	79	88
Number of students continuing	23	43	52	62	70	79
Number of students not continuing	4	7	8	8	9	9

<b>% students not continuing</b>	15%	14%	13%	12%	11%	10%
----------------------------------	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

**Table 2**

\* PCL internal data – note that this does not include students who have transferred elsewhere

#### Attainment

1.1.10 The numbers of graduates in the different quintiles are so small that it is not possible to draw any robust conclusions, however the data does not currently provide any cause for concern here.

#### Progression to employment or further study

1.1.11 The data does not reveal a cause for concern. TEF year 4 data shows that for PCL graduates, the percentage of those going into highly skilled employment from POLAR Qs 3, 4 and 5 in both (82.5%) and IMD Qs 3, 4 and 5 (84.2 IMD) is slightly lower than the percentage of PCL graduates overall (84.4%). This means that, although the data for Qs 1 and 2 is suppressed, percentages of those from Qs 1 and 2 on both POLAR4 and the IMD going into highly skilled employment must be higher than those in Qs 3,4 and 5.

## 1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

#### Access

1.2.1 Our data shows that the proportion of students from Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority students enrolling at PCL is, in all cases, higher than in higher education generally. While our strategy is to maintain high rates of access for these groups we have not identified a gap which we need to address here.

#### Success

##### Non-continuation

1.2.2 It is difficult to draw conclusions from analysis of PCL's last 3 years' non-continuation rates according to ethnicity due to relatively small numbers in 14-15 and 15-16. Additionally, rates have fluctuated making trends hard to identify.

1.2.3 Nevertheless, the OfS data reveals a gap in relation to 16-17 entrants, between the non-continuation rates of black students and those of white, Asian, mixed race or other students. Whereas the non-continuation rate was 7% students other than black students, for black students it was 15%.

1.2.4 While it is not clear that the non-continuation rates for black students at PCL are indicative of a trend, (and preliminary analysis of PCL data for 17-18 entrants indicates that the gap may be closing), PCL considers it appropriate to set a target that by 24-25 any gap in continuation rates for black students should be eliminated and brought into line with PCL's target of 90% continuation across all students.

#### Target Three (PTS\_2)

##### Target to bring the non-continuation rates for black students in line with the target continuation rate of 90% for PCL students overall

1.2.5 The details of the pathway to this target are set out below:

	<b>Base-line 16/17</b>	<b>20/21</b>	<b>21/22</b>	<b>22/23</b>	<b>23/24</b>	<b>24/25</b>
<b>Non-continuation % black students</b>	15	14	13	12	11	10

**Table 4**

#### Attainment

1.2.6 PCL's attainment data for ethnicity is based on such small student numbers that it is not possible to draw robust conclusions from the data or to ascertain whether there are explained or structural reasons for differences in attainment between different ethnic groups. Our internal data shows that, in 16/17 the percentage of BAME students achieving a good degree was the same as, or better than, the percentage of white students, however, this was reversed in 17/18 and, in particular, the percentage of black students achieving a good degree was markedly less than the percentage of white students in that year, although this is based on a handful of black graduates. We have also looked at the national picture and are aware of the OfS Key Performance Measure in this area.

1.2.7 We have set a target, which we believe is realistic given the small data set we are working with, and will continue to monitor and research this area, in particular to explore any structural or unexplained reasons for the gap in attainment between black students and white students.

**Target Four (PTS\_3)**

**To increase the percentage of black students achieving a good degree to 60% by 2024/25.**

1.2.8 This contributes to the OfS National Key Performance Measure and associated target to eliminate the unexplained gap in degree outcomes (1sts or 2:1s) between white students and black students by 2024-25 and to eliminate the absolute gap (the gap caused by both structural and unexplained factors) by 2030-31. (Regulatory Notice 1 para 83c and 83c(i))

	Base-line 17/18	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
<b>% graduating black students who achieve a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2:1</b>	29	33	38	45	52	60

**Table 5**

**Progression to employment or further study**

1.2.13 We are concerned about the attainment gap between BAME and white students in relation to progressing to highly skilled employment shown in our 2018 DLHE survey. However, this result is very different from the first year (where BAME students did better on this metric) and the sample number is small. We do not, therefore, propose to introduce any specific targets in relation to this yet, as it is too early to establish any trends, but we will wait for data from the Graduate Outcomes Survey. However, we are proposing strategic measures in our Plan that would seek to positively affect employability for under-represented groups (See Paragraphs 3.1.31 – 3.1.55; 3.2.14, 3.2.16).

1.2.14 Our Talent Development service will also collect data on the use of their services which can be analysed and tracked against student characteristics. This will also put us in a good position in future years to develop suitable measures in the event that future progression data confirms this finding or reveals any other attainment gap or issues to be addressed.

**1.3 Mature students**

1.3.1 We have given consideration to the position of mature students in the College. We have a relatively low proportion of mature students and are aware that this is probably, at least to an extent, a result of the nature of our offering which is predominantly based upon face to face, full time programmes. Given the budgetary limitations for the first years of the A&P Plan and the entrenched nature of this issue, we have postponed development of further measures aimed at mature students to a future plan, to allow time for some detailed research into the types of measures which have been found to be effective elsewhere in the sector, together with consultation with our current mature students.

**1.4 Disabled students**

**Access**

1.4.1 The percentage of students enrolling at the College with a disability is broadly in line with the percentage in higher education as a whole and we have not set a target in this area. We note, however, that the percentage for the College has remained flat at 13% from 15/16-17/18, whereas in higher education as a whole it has increased from 12.9% to 14.6% during this period, but it is difficult, with the relatively low numbers at the College, to assess whether this gap will continue (or increase). We will continue to monitor this and, in particular, consider the inclusivity of our admissions system in this respect as part of our Admissions Review.

1.4.2 The data we have so far shows that the percentage of those with different disability types fluctuates and it is difficult to perceive any trends due to this and the relatively few years of data, together with the relatively low numbers in each category. We will continue to monitor this as part of our research and evaluation as we build up more years of data and our numbers grow.

## Success

### Non-continuation

- 1.4.3 The data supplied by the OfS shows that our non-continuation rates for 16/17 students with a disability is 10%. While this is slightly below that for students with a disability in HE as a whole (10.6%), the OfS data shows that the non-continuation rates for these students were slightly higher than for those without a disability at the College (8%).
- 1.4.4 The OfS dashboard does not provide data for the College analysed by disability type due to the small sample sizes. However, our internal data shows that the non-continuation rates in 16/17 for students with a mental health condition (27%) were considerably higher in 16/17 than either those for the College's student body as a whole (9%) or those for students with mental health conditions in HE as a whole (13.2%). However, it is emphasised that as our sample size is so small as to be suppressed, and represents only one year of data, it is hard to draw any robust conclusions. We also note that since September 2018, the College has had a permanent, in-house mental health counsellor, whereas the data is looking at student continuation from September 16 to December 17. We will be evaluating the impact the employment of a counsellor has had on the continuation rates of students with a mental health condition before deciding whether it is appropriate to set a target in future plans and if so what that target should be.
- 1.4.5 16/17 is the only cohort for which the OfS has provided non-continuation data for disabled students at the College due to the small sample sizes in other years. Although we have internal data it is inconclusive due to fluctuating patterns and relatively small numbers in each category.

### Attainment

- 1.4.6 As the College only took its first students in 2012 and our student numbers in our first few years were small, PCL's attainment data for disability is based on such small student numbers that it is not possible to draw robust conclusions. On the whole, the data for the College shows that students with disabilities have been performing as well if not better than students without disabilities.
- 1.4.7 We note, however, that students with disabilities did less well than those without disabilities in 17/18 – with 66.7% achieving a good degree as opposed to 73% of those without a disability, but this is based on fewer than 5 students with a disability. Looking at disability type, the gap in attainment is greatest for students at the College with a learning difficulty or cognitive impairment. In both 16/17 and 17/18, 66.7% of students with these characteristics achieved a good degree as opposed to rates of 74% (16/17) and 75% (17/18) for students with a similar disability in HE overall, or rates of 76% (16/17) and 73% (17/18) for students at the College without a disability. Again, however, this analysis is based on fewer than 5 graduating students with those characteristics at the College in each of those years.
- 1.4.8 While the numbers are too small to indicate a trend in this area, we are aware of the Key Performance Measure in relation to attainment for disabled students. We have therefore set the following target:

### Target Five (PTS\_5)

**Target to bring the percentage of disabled students achieving a good degree in line with the 74% rate for PCL students overall for 2017/18.**

- 1.4.9 This contributes to the OfS National Key Performance Measure and associated target to eliminate the gap in degree outcomes (1sts or 2:1s) between disabled and non-disabled students by 2024-25. (Regulatory Notice 1 para 83d and 83d(i))

	Base-line 16/17	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
% PCL graduating students with a disability who achieve a 1 <sup>st</sup> or 2:1	66.7	68	69	70	72	74

Table 6

### Progression

- 1.4.10 We have a very small data set due to the small number of students who have graduated from the College so far. Our DLHE for 15/16 and 16/17 (the only years we have been in the survey) shows 100% of our students with a disability going into employment or further study. While the numbers are so small the percentage is suppressed for those going into highly skilled employment, we do not consider this to be a concern but will monitor this to ensure that gaps do not emerge over time.

## 1.5 Care leavers

### Access

- 1.5.1 The OfS has not provided data on care leavers accessing, succeeding in or progressing from HE. Nevertheless, the College is aware that the percentage of children in care gaining entry to university is 7% and this figure has not been improved since 2006, compared to university entry in 2016 of around 40% of their peer group (Care Leavers Covenant<sup>1</sup>, 2016). We are also aware that the OfS places importance on the percentage of care leavers accessing, succeeding in and progressing from higher education (Regulatory Notice 1 para 85).
- 1.5.2 Internal analysis of the data has taken place but the sample size is so small it would not be appropriate to set out the data here although it can be provided to the OfS, if required. We have concluded that, in relation to access, we need to increase the proportion of care leavers enrolling at the College.
- 1.5.3 We have, accordingly, decided on a target for access as set out below.

### Target Six (PTA\_2)

#### To increase the percentage of care-leavers to 1.1% by 24/25.

- 1.5.4 This is against national statistics which show that children in care represent 0.7% of the under-18 UK population (NSPCC Statistics Briefing: Looked After Children January 2019 which shows that there are 69.5 looked after children per 10,000 of the under-18 population). Nevertheless, we are aware of the importance the OfS places on access to HE for care-leavers and that the national picture shows that they are much less likely to go to university than other students (see Paragraph 1.5.1 above). The pathway to this target is shown in the table overleaf.

### Success

#### Non-continuation

- 1.5.5 Our non-continuation rate for care-leavers has fluctuated and is based on very small data sets; nevertheless, we consider it appropriate to have non-continuation rate targets for this group and, given the small numbers involved, to set a more stretching target than that in our previous plan which was to increase the continuation rate of care leavers to 65% (i.e. reduce the non-continuation rate to 35%) by 2022-23.

### Target Seven (PTS\_4)

#### To decrease the non-continuation rates for care-leavers to 20% by 24/25.

- 1.5.6 The table below shows our pathway to both the above targets.

	Base-line 17/18*	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25
Total students enrolling	380	587	667	737	807	877
% of care leavers	0.78%	0.85%	0.9%	0.95%	0.99%	1.1%
Non-Continuation % of care leavers	n/a	40%	33%	29%	25%	20%

Table 7

### Attainment and Progression

- 1.5.7 We do not yet have data on either of these factors for care-leavers but will be monitoring both going forward.

## 1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

- 1.6.1 Due to the small sample sizes and the limited number of years for which we PCL has been in operation and has data, we do not have sufficient information to make informed decisions on this. We will be doing research on intersections of disadvantage and our investment in research reflects this.

<sup>1</sup> Care Leavers Covenant (2016) <http://spectrafirst.com/identity-cms/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/CLC-INTRO-LEAFLET-BRANDED-ALTERNATIVE-LOW.pdf>

## 1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

1.7.1 PCL does not have historic data in relation to the groups identified by the OfS (in Regulatory Notice 1 para 74), however we will be collecting this data for students who enrol from Autumn 2019 onwards.

### Strategic aims and objectives

- 2.0.1 Consistent with our student-centred mission and institutional commitment to enable all students to thrive, our strategic aim is to establish a holistic approach to widening participation which encompasses aspiration raising for pre-16 year olds in London, targeted outreach for the post-16 age group, an admissions methodology centred on talent and potential, tailored and effective student support for underrepresented groups, and rich and ambitious employability opportunities for our graduates.
- 2.0.2 Through our flexible pedagogy, employability focus and access and participation work, we aspire to promote strong academic communities and a sense of belonging for all our students, in recognition that ‘belonging’ has been identified as a key factor in student outcomes (Mountford-Zimdars et al, 2015<sup>2</sup>; Canning et al, 2018<sup>3</sup>). Our Access and Participation Strategy will seek to enhance the social, cultural and economic capital of learners from under-represented backgrounds, in order to improve how they access, experience and succeed at higher education and into employment. Our financial support package over 2020 – 2025 for those least represented groups of care leavers and students from low income backgrounds aims to overcome barriers to engagement and success.
- 2.0.3 Over the next few years, as we grow and more students complete their studies with us and enter employment, we will learn more about whether there are differential attainment levels between groups of students with different characteristics or backgrounds. At the same time, we will be building a College infrastructure to provide leadership and resources for our work on Access and Participation, which will enable us to evaluate our Plan, refine our targets, conduct research on what has worked (and not worked) elsewhere, and develop collaborative relationships with employers and others. We will also develop more robust baselines for our student body, for example, by analysing both current and past year groups to establish a statistically significant cohort.

### 2.1 Target groups

- 2.1.1 Based on the evidence analysed in Section 1, we will prioritise those activities which are directed towards improving our performance in relation to the following:
- Access and non-continuation for **economically disadvantaged students**, using POLAR Quintile 1 and/or other measures such as Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), parental occupation or free school meals (Targets 1 (PTA\_1) and 2 (PTS\_1), respectively)
  - Continuation and degree outcomes of **black students** (Targets 3 (PTS\_2) and 4 (PTS\_3), respectively)
  - Degree outcomes of **disabled students** (Target 5 (PTS\_5))
  - Access and continuation of **care leavers** (Targets 6 (PTA\_2) and 7 (PTS\_4), respectively)

### 2.2 Aims and objectives

2.2.1 Our aims and logic chain are outlined in Table 8 below. Our targets are specified in the Targets Investment Plan. For detailed description of our strategic measures, please refer to Section 3 of this document.

Target Ref	Aims	Objectives	Measurements	Strategic Measures
	Priorities based on performance	Outcomes to influence to achieve aims.	Measurements to evaluate success of activities.	Activities to achieve desired outcomes
	<b>Access</b>			
Target 1 (PTA_1)	To reduce the gap in participation between the most and least represented groups	Reduce ratio in entry rates for POLAR quintile 5	Reduction to 3:1 by 2025	1) Access & Participation Manager; 2) Outreach recruitment officer; 3) More inclusive admissions workshop

<sup>2</sup> Mountford-Zimdars et al, *Causes of Differences in Student Outcomes*, HEFCE, July 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Canning et al, *KCLxBIT Project Report*, King's College London, January 2018



Target Ref	Aims	Objectives	Measurements	Strategic Measures
		versus quintile 1 students		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4) Outreach strategy for young learners (pre-16)</li> <li>5) Recruitment promotion to apprenticeship employers</li> <li>6) Partnerships with local authorities, schools, ERIC, Access VFX, to deliver collaborative reach</li> <li>7) Targeting schools in low participation areas – career events, university visits and taster days, academic skills, degree apprenticeship promotion</li> <li>8) Saturday Clubs in Arts and Business</li> <li>9) Mentorship scheme</li> <li>10) Work shadowing programme</li> <li>11) Travel grant</li> </ul>
Target 6 (PTA_2)	Increase participation in HE for care-leavers	Increase numbers of care-leavers accessing HE at PCL	Increase the percentage of care-leavers at PCL to 1.1% (10 care experienced students) by 2024 - 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Access &amp; Participation Manager;</li> <li>2) Outreach recruitment officer;</li> <li>3) More inclusive admissions workshop</li> <li>4) Outreach strategy for care experienced learners</li> <li>5) Recruitment promotion to apprenticeship employers</li> <li>6) Partnerships with virtual schools, local authorities, schools, to target care-leavers</li> <li>7) Saturday Clubs in Arts and Business</li> <li>8) Mentorship scheme</li> <li>9) Work shadowing programme</li> <li>10) Travel grant</li> </ul>
	<b>Success</b>			
Target 2 (PTS_1)	Increase the continuation rates for those in the least represented groups (POLAR4 quintile 1) in line with the PCL overall target continuation rate of 90% (i.e. aim for non-continuation rates of 10%)	Reduce the gap in non-continuation rates between POLAR Q1 and Q5 students	Decrease non-continuation to 10% by 2024/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Access &amp; Participation Manager</li> <li>2) Dedicated personal tutor</li> <li>3) Targeted mentoring/ study support provision</li> <li>4) Future leaders programme with mentorship from a) industry; b) peer to peer and c) of secondary-school pupils</li> <li>5) Student performance tracker</li> <li>6) Student inclusivity and wellbeing ambassadors. Preferential recruitment from targeted groups</li> <li>7) Hardship Fund</li> <li>8) Laptop loan</li> <li>9) More inclusive curriculum</li> </ul>

Target Ref	Aims	Objectives	Measurements	Strategic Measures
Target 7 (PTS_4)	Improve the success of care-leavers by increasing their continuation rates.	Reduce the percentage difference in non-continuation rates between care-leavers and other students	Decrease the non-continuation rates for care-leavers to 20% by 2024-25	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Access &amp; Participation Manager</li> <li>2) Dedicated personal tutor</li> <li>3) Targeted pre-induction session</li> <li>4) Targeted mentoring/ study support provision</li> <li>5) Future leaders programme with mentorship from a) industry; b) peer to peer and c) of secondary-school pupils</li> <li>6) Student performance tracker</li> <li>7) Student inclusivity and wellbeing ambassadors. Preferential recruitment from targeted groups</li> <li>8) Hardship Fund</li> <li>9) Laptop loan</li> <li>10) More inclusive curriculum</li> <li>11) Staff training on experience of care.</li> </ol>
Target 3 (PTS_2)	Bring the continuation rates for black students in line with the PCL overall target of 90% (i.e. aim for 10% non-continuation)	Reduce the gap in non-continuation rates between black students and other students	Decrease non-continuation by to 10% by 2024/25	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Access &amp; Participation Manager</li> <li>2) Dedicated personal tutor</li> <li>3) Targeted mentoring/ study support provision</li> <li>4) Future leaders programme with mentorship from a) industry; b) peer to peer and c) of secondary-school pupils</li> <li>5) Student performance tracker</li> <li>6) Student inclusivity and wellbeing ambassadors. Preferential recruitment from targeted groups</li> <li>7) Hardship Fund</li> <li>8) Laptop loan</li> <li>9) More inclusive curriculum</li> <li>10) Staff training on unconscious bias.</li> </ol>
Target 4 (PTS_3)	Increase the percentage of black students achieving a good degree	Decrease the percentage difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between white and black students	Increase the percentage of black students achieving a 1 <sup>st</sup> or 2:1 to 60%	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Access &amp; Participation Manager</li> <li>2) Dedicated personal tutor</li> <li>3) Targeted mentoring/ study support provision</li> <li>4) Future leaders programme with mentorship from a) industry; b) peer to peer and c) of secondary-school pupils</li> <li>5) Student performance tracker</li> <li>6) Student inclusivity and wellbeing ambassadors. Preferential recruitment from targeted groups</li> <li>7) Hardship Fund</li> <li>8) Laptop loan</li> <li>9) More inclusive curriculum</li> </ol>

Target Ref	Aims	Objectives	Measurements	Strategic Measures
				10) Staff training on unconscious bias.
Target 5 (PTS_5)	Reduce the attainment gap for disabled students	Reduce the gap in degree outcomes (1st and 2:1) between disabled and non-disabled students	Bring the percentage of disabled students achieving a good degree in line with the 74% rate for PCL students overall by 2024-25	1) Access & Participation Manager 2) Dedicated personal tutor 3) Targeted pre-induction session 4) Targeted mentoring/ study support provision 5) Future leaders programme with mentorship from a) industry; b) peer to peer and c) of secondary-school pupils 6) Student performance tracker 7) Student inclusivity and wellbeing ambassadors. Preferential recruitment from targeted groups 8) Laptop loan 9) Staff training on disabilities awareness

**Table 8**

## Investment

- 2.2.2 Our decisions about the amount of investment we intend to make in access and participation measures have been based on current information and government policy on fees and fee increases and may be subject to change. We intend to allocate between 18% and 18.5% (by 2024/25) of our additional fee income to measures targeted at under-represented groups overall.
- 2.2.3 The amount of money available to us is modest when compared with larger, more established HEIs, amounting to around £291,892 in 2019/20, increasing to £448,181 in 2020/21 until it stabilises in 2021/22 at £636,660, growing thereon by approximately £30,000 per annum for the remainder of the period. This is appropriate to our size and our recruitment projections. Our policy of not increasing fees for continuing students, means that the additional income available to us is limited in 2019/20 to new students only.
- 2.2.4 Given our limited funds, especially in the early years of our Access and Participation Plans, we need to target the investment carefully and have chosen measures which reflect our student body and where we believe the investment can make the most difference.
- 2.2.5 Division of investment between access, financial support, and research and evaluation is shown below. We have also indicated our estimated investment in success and progression initiatives.
- 2.2.6 In the first years of our Plan's operation, we anticipate higher set-up costs in areas such as setting up additional tailored student support measures, establishing better data collection, tracking and evaluation across a range of measures, designing a student performance tracker, establishing school collaborations, undertaking an inclusive curriculum review and building a laptop fund. For this reason, our investment plan reflects significant 'set up' investments, which are front-loaded into the 2020/21 and 21/22 spend. It is important to emphasise that while the proportion of investment dedicated to financial support increases with anticipated growing numbers of eligible students, the investment in access, success and progression, and research and evaluation remains stable, and, indeed, increases for access, in line with our five-year access targets.
- 2.2.7 We recognise that our financial support package represents a large proportion of our proposed investment, and intend to track the impact of our hardship bursaries using the OfS's financial support evaluation tool. As a young institution, about to start implementing its first ever Access and Participation Plan (in 2019/20), we plan to undertake close evaluation of the effectiveness of our measures and investment, and adapt our budget allocation accordingly. Our Access and Participation Plan, its implementation and investment, will be subject to ongoing monitoring by the APRAC Committee and to annual review by the Governing Body.

Investment Category	Percentage of investment from 18-18.5% of higher fee income				
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Financial support	3.5%	6.4%	7.8%	8.4%	9.1%
Access	6.1%	4.6%	4.6%	4.5%	4.1%
Research and Evaluation	2.7%	2.3	2.3%	2.2%	2.0%
Success and Progression	5%	4.6%	3.7%	3.3%	3.2%

Table 9

## 3.0 Strategic measures

### 3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

#### Overview

- 3.1.1 As a College, we have been, from the outset, committed to widening participation and equality and diversity. Our goal is to reflect the diversity of the community in London and to provide opportunities and promote successful outcomes for all students from all backgrounds. Our culture is inclusive and our strategic approach is embedded throughout the organisation. Our approach to admissions was designed, from the outset, to admit students on the basis of potential rather than only on the basis of academic performance to date. Our teaching and learning strategy has always had inclusivity at its core.
- 3.1.2 This commitment runs throughout the entire student lifecycle and includes:
- Outreach Activities
  - Admissions Policy
  - Apprenticeships
  - Scholarships, Bursaries and Financial Aid
  - Student Learning Support
  - Careers and Employability
- 3.1.3 Our Access and Participation Strategy is two-fold. On the one hand, to build institutional expertise and capacity to better appreciate the journeys of our students and, in particular, those from under-represented groups. On the other hand, to introduce a set of targeted measures aimed at making a positive difference across the student lifecycle in closing gaps of access, success and progression for under-represented groups. These would seek to enhance existing student support, as well as introduce new institutional practices, directed at promoting student integration, sense of belonging and academic success. In recognition that finances can be both a psychological and practical barrier for certain students from more disadvantaged backgrounds, we propose a generous hardship financial package for students with experience of care and those from low income backgrounds, contributing to our spend on student success and progression, which is supported by sector research (please see Paragraphs 3.2.17-3.2.24).
- 3.1.4 Our strategy is based on the evidential analysis carried out in Section 1 above, and continuing development of this Plan will be based on further and deeper analysis as more data becomes available. We are at an early stage of the growth and development of the College, so we expect that our targets and focus may change as we track the progress of our students throughout their learning journey with us and beyond.
- 3.1.5 Our strategy is based on a portfolio of short- and long-term measures which reflect our priorities and enables us to combine activities which have some immediate impact, for example, on support for our existing cohorts of students with disabilities, with longer term projects aimed at more fundamental long-term change.

## Alignment with other strategies

- 3.1.6 This Plan has been drawn up with reference to our Equality and Diversity Policy, the new Student Wellbeing Policy, Safeguarding Policy and our Learning and Teaching strategy so that it coordinates with the College's work on Equality and Diversity in general. The new registration system with the Office for Students gives us an opportunity to progress to the next phase of our work on access and participation using the potential availability of additional funds to target investment towards those initiatives which will have the most significant impact on access, success and progression of students from under-represented groups. This will assist us in meeting the commitments in our Equality and Diversity Policy to:
- *Develop and implement practices and programmes that enable previously under-represented groups to work and compete fairly within Pearson College.*
  - *Develop processes that set aspirations and measure progress towards diversity commitments.*
  - *Establish processes that ensure a clear and shared responsibility for integrating Equality and Diversity into the Pearson College culture.*
  - *Analyse programme performance data in order to set objectives which aim to ensure equal access to and achievement at Pearson College.*
- 3.1.7 We have a whole-College approach to the development and implementation of our Access and Participation ("A&P") Plan, involving both staff and students throughout. This Plan has been developed by our A&P Working Party, which is chaired by the Deputy Vice-Principal (Academic Affairs) and has committed members from amongst the teaching faculty in both academic schools and all relevant departments of professional staff, including Talent Development, Student Services, Student Support, Student Recruitment and Finance. From 2019, the A&P Working Party has included the President and Vice-President of the Student's Association. From 2019/20, the cross-institutional A&P Working Group, which includes students, will assume an explicit responsibility for student wellbeing to ensure coordinated approaches that benefit all students. The A&P Working Party reports into the Admissions, Progression, Retention and Attainment (APRAC) Committee. Both are chaired by the Deputy Vice-Principal (Academic Affairs), who, additionally, has responsibility for safeguarding, equality impact, and driving student wellbeing initiatives, in alignment with the A&P Plan. There has been wide consultation throughout the College regarding the Plan and it has been agreed by the Governing Body and Executive Team. Annual progress on the A&P Plan will be reported to the Governing Body, to help ensure oversight and accountability, and to drive changes which may be necessary based on the outcome of evaluation of our measures.
- 3.1.8 We will consolidate the whole-College approach by instituting a programme of training for all student-facing staff, so that there is widespread understanding of the Plan and of the particular needs of these groups of students. Additional resources will be targeted in response to evidence of gaps in performance relating to students from different backgrounds or with particular characteristics, in particular those groups identified as under-represented in Higher Education generally, in order to address existing inequalities.
- 3.1.9 In preparation for this plan, an equality impact assessment was undertaken on the prior 2019/20 A&P Plan and reviewed by APRAC in June 2019. As the Plan is implemented, we will be evaluating the measures introduced, and further equality impact assessments will be undertaken with the evaluation. Equality Impact Assessments have been introduced as standard practice for policies and initiatives and will be overseen by the DVP (AA) and reported into relevant committees.
- 3.1.10 We involve a wide range of students in A&P decisions and initiatives and are transparent that directed measures are aimed at removing barriers to equal opportunities and eliminating disadvantage. Our strategy is continuously enhancing our curriculum, pedagogy, learning environment, talent development, student support and wellbeing to benefit all students. By involving students in targeted interventions, we intend to foster appreciation and good relations. We propose to establish a network of student inclusivity and wellbeing ambassadors to work closely with students and applicants, and thereby promote a greater sense of community and belonging in our student population, and help us take access and participation forward (see Paragraph 3.1.54).
- 3.1.11 The new Access and Participation Manager will have a role in promoting equality and opportunity for all applicants and students, and devising initiatives to foster an inclusive culture of tolerance and collegiality. In this, they will work closely with the Students' Association, student representatives and the new network of student inclusivity and wellbeing ambassadors.
- 3.1.12 The Access and Participation Manager will also work closely with academic and professional staff to devise even more sophisticated and targeted programmes that enhance study skills and mentoring support, personal tutor support, talent development at the College for all students, included under-represented students, and students with protected characteristics.

- 3.1.13 As part of our policy to promote student wellbeing, we plan to explore further policies and provisions to monitor and safeguard students experiencing challenges, and to address mental ill health, sexual and other harassment, suicide prevention, among others.

## **Strategic measures**

### General Strategic Measures

- 3.1.14 A key part of our strategy is building the institutional infrastructure and expertise to take our access and participation approach to the next level. We have created the post of an Access and Participation Manager to lead on our work in this area and oversee the implementation of this Plan and develop future plans. We are pleased to report that, following a successful recruitment round, such a manager has been appointed, due to start in summer 2019.
- 3.1.15 In setting strategic measures, our approach has been integrated and holistic, in seeking to explore synergies between measures and combine these, as appropriate. For example, the *Future Leaders* programme will seek to promote the success and employability of students from underrepresented groups, and as part of that programme, students will become mentors both for their peers and for school pupils. Our apprenticeship employers will become mentors for the *Future Leaders* programme, as well as join us in both access and employability initiatives to close inequality gaps.

### Access

- 3.1.16 We already have partnership outreach activity and an admissions process that evaluates aptitude and potential, beyond UCAS tariff points. Our approach on access would be an extension of our provision into more targeted initiatives to promote aspiration in low participation areas, to assist students from under-represented groups into higher education and to establish further collaborative partnerships.
- 3.1.17 We will introduce a series of measures aimed at improving access by students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods and/or lower income families and care leavers. We intend to include those described below, although the precise measures may vary as we evaluate our activities.
- 3.1.18 Our **admissions procedure** reflects our commitment to opening up educational opportunity to applicants from non-traditional backgrounds, in particular those who have potential but may not have already achieved academic success at school. For all our undergraduate programmes, we have an admissions procedure which does not rely solely on UCAS tariff points but looks at each candidate's aptitude, commitment and potential to succeed.
- 3.1.19 All applicants are invited to an Admissions Workshop to participate in activities relevant to the programme to which they have applied. The workshops reflect the ethos of our learning and teaching strategy and include cognitive abilities and critical thinking assessment, group tasks, reflective work and interview, all of which are designed to test a set of core competences as well as promote an inclusive community of learners even before enrolment. Offers are made on the basis of the combined scores from these activities, regardless of actual or predicted UCAS tariff.

### Strategic Measures 2020 – 25

- 3.1.20 **Review admissions workshop:** We will review our Admissions Workshops to identify any unintended barriers to applicants from under-represented groups, with a particular emphasis on students with disabilities and those from low income families and/or low participation neighbourhoods. This will include a comparison of accepting and non-accepting students to ascertain whether students from particular groups are less likely to attend Admissions Workshops or receive or accept offers. *We will, additionally, explore applying contextual admissions measures within our Admissions Workshops.* In this review, we will also consider our successes, for example, the relatively good representation of female applicants on our Games programmes, so that we also consolidate our good practice. The review will take into account the views of current students, obtained through focus groups or individual consultations, with particular reference to obtaining the views of students who are members of the targeted groups. The review will also be based on evidence of the effectiveness of the objective tests which we use in our Admissions Workshops, as measured by correlation with degree outcome. Any revisions indicated by the review will come into effect by the January 2020 admissions cycle and will be evaluated by continuing to collect and analyse evidence of degree outcomes and by increased proportion of successful applicants who are disabled or from low income families and/or low participation neighbourhoods. This Review of Admissions is already under way, led by the Head of Data and Planning, with interim reports received by APRAC in March and June 2019.
- 3.1.21 **New post of access officer in Student Recruitment team:** The post-holder will work closely with the A&P manager, exclusively focussed on access initiatives for under-represented groups. In the first instance, the post-holder will concentrate on additional measures targeted at applicants who are care leavers or from low income groups and/or low participation neighbourhoods.

- 3.1.22 **Saturday Clubs:** We run an Art and Design Saturday Club for computer graphics, over 30 weeks a year, in collaboration with the National Saturday Club<sup>4</sup>. These Clubs are aimed at 13-16-year olds and their objective is to raise aspiration and attainment. We will review recruitment to this Club and, from 2019/20 target it more specifically at children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds as evidenced by criteria such as POLAR Q1 or free school meals and care leavers. We will evaluate it and, if successful in reaching these under-represented groups and improving the knowledge and skills of the students, we will expand its operation and introduce a second Club for a business-related subject in 2020/21. Students who attend will be surveyed at the outset to provide a baseline assessment of their knowledge of computer graphics. We will use HEAT to monitor this activity and will also survey participants at the start and, again, at the end of the programme as to the likelihood of their progressing to higher education. When recruiting for our mentorship and work experience programmes, we will attempt to include eligible students from the Saturday Clubs to ensure continuity and progression within our outreach offering.
- 3.1.23 **Apprenticeships:** Industry engagement and collaboration with employers are at the heart of our identity and embedded in our programmes, curriculum and student experience. We have been at the forefront of the development of degree apprenticeships and commenced delivery of the Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship in September 2016. Our apprenticeship provision has nearly doubled over the last year with currently approximately 150 learners on apprenticeship programmes with 23 different employers. Our business development team will work with the A&P manager and the access officer, in order to collaborate with employers to promote apprenticeship recruitment to under-represented groups, in particular applicants from POLAR Q1, care leavers and mature candidates. As well as discussing with employers, current apprentices will also be consulted. A strategy will be developed in time for implementation in the 2020/21 recruitment cycle. Its success will be evaluated by reference to the targets set for increasing access by the target groups.
- 3.1.24 **Outreach for care leavers:** We will develop and launch a specific series of measures aimed at encouraging successful applications from more candidates with experience of care. During 2019/20, this activity will focus on planning and information gathering and the specific activities will be limited, reflecting the budget available and the need to build up expertise in this area in the Student Recruitment team. Development of the strategy will be informed by consultation with our current students and, if possible, former students, who have had experience of care. During this developmental period, we will also consider in detail the most appropriate methods of evaluation of these initiatives, and we have allocated funding specifically for outreach to care leavers in the later years of the plan to cover costs such as running events and travel which are likely to arise from the new strategy. We intend to have a specific strategy relating to outreach for care leavers for implementation in 2021/22, although some limited measures will be introduced in 2020/21, for example:
- Appointment of a student ambassador to specialise in outreach to care leavers (preferably a student with experience of care);
  - Collaboration with neighbouring local authorities, schools and virtual schools on early aspiration raising;
  - Membership of Access HE Looked After Children forum and the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL).
- 3.1.25 **Outreach for younger age groups:** This is a longer-term goal as we will not have the resources to invest in initiatives with primary age students during the early years of this Plan. However, a strategy for younger age groups will be developed for implementation in future years and we aim to have this in place by 2020/21. We intend to review best practice from across the sector when formulating this plan, and will consider working in collaboration with third-sector organisations who specialise in younger-age interventions. We have set aside specific funding to cover the cost of the activity we will undertake in the later years of the Plan.
- 3.1.26 **Working with Schools:** As part of our A&P Plan, we propose to extend and further target our outreach work with Schools identified as in an NCOP ward, with a high proportion of students from POLAR quintile 1 postcodes, a high proportion of free school meals and 'first-generation' students, both at the pre-16 and post-16 stage. School collaboration represents the largest proportion of our access investment, as we recognise the value of sustained interaction with schools to build capacity and expertise in progression to higher education. We plan to develop a detailed, coherent strategy for implementation from 2020/21, and as such the funds allocated for this activity are not earmarked for specific activities to avoid imposing premature constraints on our delivery. The precise methodology and activities will be developed as part of our outreach strategy and in consultation with schools, and are likely to include awareness raising around degree apprenticeships, careers materials to support the school's curriculum in business and creative subjects, targeted initiatives at students from under-represented groups, e.g. academic support, skills-based sessions, university visits and taster days, interactive subject- or career-based workshops, mentorship scheme (see Paragraph 3.1.27), work shadowing programme (see Paragraph 3.1.28). Our

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://saturday-club.org/>

schools outreach will place emphasis on providing students with practical strategies to navigate their entry to higher education, following Slack et al's (2012)<sup>5</sup> research on information and decision-making among less advantaged students. Evaluation of the effectiveness of initiatives will be undertaken via questionnaires with students, teachers and PCL staff, school performance of pupils in programmes (e.g. GCSE results) and HEAT and UCAS tracking.

- 3.1.27 **Mentorship Scheme:** As part of our outreach strategy, we plan to approach schools in low participation areas and design engagement programmes for under-represented groups, for both pre-16 and post-16 learners. Mentorships will be an important aspect of this work – undertaken both by faculty and by student mentors. The success of the proposed mentorship scheme in schools will be evaluated via survey questionnaires with school teachers, focus groups with mentored pupils and by monitoring trends in school performance for the pupils concerned and longer-term, via HEAT.
- 3.1.28 **Work Shadowing Programme:** We intend to develop a work shadowing programme across Pearson PLC to offer young people from under-represented backgrounds an insight into the variety of roles at a FTSE 100 company. We intend to work with schools to identify candidates for the programme from our targeted underrepresented groups, focussing, in particular, on attracting care experienced learners and those from low-income backgrounds. The programme will be monitored via questionnaires with the students on the programme and the staff involved, and also through HEAT.
- 3.1.29 **ERIC.** We intend to collaborate with ERIC<sup>6</sup>, one of our incubator companies, through in-house events for underrepresented groups, promotion of initiatives to their target audience, podcasts of inspirational personal journeys from alumni, among other activities. ERIC have the expertise and reach to build relationships effectively with groups of prospective post-16 and mature learners (see also Paragraphs 3.1.37, 3.2.14). In-house theatre-style events, already trialled by ERIC, would immerse up to 80 people aged 16 – 25 into the life of the College and the experiences of students, and open opportunities and horizons. We would also explore offering direct admissions to applicants who are interested in enrolling at Pearson College following an in-house immersive event. ERIC build evaluation into all their activity, which includes feedback, surveys and focus groups. We will, additionally, use HEAT to measure the outreach from this partnership.
- 3.1.30 **Mature students:** While cognisant from experience and discussions with FE colleges that our predominantly full-time face-to-face provision holds limited appeal for mature learners, we are committed to developing a strategy for mature learners, with an action plan by 2022. We do expect, however, that our range of post-16 access measures would have a positive effect in attracting a higher proportion of mature learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. As we explore, with growing evidence and capacity, our approaches to mature learners, for example, solutions that further enhance the flexibility of our provision in terms of access and timetabling, could benefit a much wider group of students, beyond those specifically targeted, e.g. carers. We have set aside funds to explore our potential offering to mature students.

### Curriculum, Pedagogy and Employability

#### *Current Provision*

- 3.1.31 The **College's ethos of authentic, real-world learning**, with a learning and teaching methodology that integrates academic study and industry relevance, is embedded within all our provision. Examples include self-managed learning modules within the Business School, which allow students to incorporate work-based or entrepreneurial activities as credit-bearing modules within the degree; the studio-based pedagogic approach in Escape Studios with extensive use of team work, portfolios, peer and self-appraisal; the alignment of academic learning and workplace application inherent to degree apprenticeships. The above approaches enable students to tailor a significant part of their degree to their academic and professional interests.
- 3.1.32 The **design process for PCL programmes** is consistent with our mission and ethos of providing courses that are academically demanding, industry-informed and inspire students with a real interest in how their chosen discipline plays a role in the modern professional world. To this end a design team, known as the Degree Concept Team ("DCT"), is formed for each programme comprising members from industry/practice, academics (both internal to PCL and external) and the student body. In the HER (Plus) Review of 2014 the QAA identified the role of the DCTs at PCL as a feature of good practice and we have worked to ensure that this has not only been maintained, but further enhanced.
- 3.1.33 **Our Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL)** team ensures that our Blackboard VLE is as accessible as possible to staff and students, drawing on good practice web accessibility guidelines<sup>7</sup>. We assist students to adapt their

<sup>5</sup> Slack, Mangan, Hughes and Davies, "Hot", 'cold' and 'warm' information and higher education decision-making, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 35, No. 2, December 2012.

<sup>6</sup> <https://ericfestival.com/>

<sup>7</sup> For example, WCAG 2.0, WCAG 2.1 and BS 8878.



online learning experience and, further, encourage the installation of additional assistive technologies. Teaching staff receive training and guidance on producing accessible materials and incorporating digitally inclusive practices into their teaching.

- 3.1.34 In 2017 we established our **Centre for Industry Engagement** as a hub for collaboration between higher education and employers which promotes exploration, debate and research around issues at the interface of higher education and the world of employment.
- 3.1.35 Another mechanism we use to ensure industry relevance is to seek **professional accreditation** for our programmes wherever possible, for example the ACCA and the CMI accredit some of our programmes or modules and the Solicitors Regulation Authority (“SRA”) and Bar Standards Board accredit our LLB programmes. In addition, the SRA has approved our MLaw programme as an exempting law degree, exempting students from the professional stage of training as a solicitor, one of only 6 programmes in England and Wales to afford this exemption.
- 3.1.36 We continuously enhance our **tailored career development** opportunities, which include career development, internships, industry networks and events, support for enterprise.
- 3.1.37 Following a student proposal, we have established an **‘incubator project’** and host start-up businesses within the College, which, in turn, contribute to the learning experience by integrating student projects with the real work of the company. We intend to collaborate with one of our incubator companies for 2019, ERIC, as part of our Access and Participation Plan (see Paragraphs 3.1.29, 3.2.14).

#### *Strategic Measures 2020 - 25*

- 3.1.38 **Inclusive curriculum:** As new academic programmes are developed, and as existing programmes come up for review, we will enlist internal and external expertise to review the curriculum and ensure its inclusivity. We will, further, develop an Equality Impact Assessment, specifically, to inform and enhance the design of academic programmes.
- 3.1.39 **Staff Training:** We will develop a training programme to raise awareness among all student-facing staff of the issues faced by students from under-represented groups (e.g. disability awareness, unconscious bias, experience of care), and of this Plan and related policies. We will, further, increase the digital resources available to teaching faculty on themes such as classroom dynamics, inclusive language, assessment and strategies.

#### Student support

- 3.1.40 We pride ourselves on our flexible, inclusive, **industry-focused programmes** which support a diversity of student journeys, learning interests and career aspirations.

#### *Current Provision*

- 3.1.41 All our **degrees** are designed to incorporate **flexibility**, to maximise student choice while still ensuring overall coherence. Two examples of this are the ability of Business School students to accelerate their studies if they fulfil certain requirements, and a common first year for programmes with different pathways so that students can transfer to a different pathway after their first year without affecting their studies. Students have opportunities to accelerate, decelerate, transfer between programmes and modes of study allow students to adapt their learning to their individual preferences and personal circumstances.
- 3.1.42 **Personal Tutors** advise students on academic and pastoral issues, and signpost students to additional College-based or external agency support.
- 3.1.43 **Additional Learning Support** assists students with specialised learning and assessment provision for a range of disabilities and/ or learning difficulties.
- 3.1.44 **Study Skills support** promotes good academic practice, digital literacy, and achievement in research and academic writing.
- 3.1.45 A contemporary, adaptive, **purpose-build learning environment of physical and online resources** supports effective academic engagement and skills development. The design of communal spaces fosters socialisation and collaborative working. Students are consulted in the design and redesign of the physical environment. A new project is under way in the summer of 2019 to further enhance the social and inclusive feel of the College’s spaces and promote a sense of belonging in students.
- 3.1.46 Tailored, specialised assistance to students who need support to achieve their potential, including a dedicated full-time **counsellor** for students experiencing challenging life events, and signposting to appropriate external agencies for targeted assistance.

3.1.47 **Student Protection:** Our Student Protection Plan identifies all risks as low and we strive to ensure that this remains the case in our provision strategy and delivery model.

#### *Strategic Measures 2020 – 25*

3.1.48 We will introduce a series of measures aimed at improving the success of students from POLAR Q1 domiciles, care leavers, Black students and students with disabilities. As we introduce the measures set out in Paragraphs 3.1.49 – 3.1.55, we will evaluate their effectiveness, and as appropriate adjust them, in the light of experience and the availability of additional data about the retention, progression and attainment of students from under-represented groups.

3.1.49 **Study skills/mentoring support:** We will appoint a study skills tutor with a remit to work exclusively with students from under-represented groups, in particular, students with disabilities, care experienced students and students from low income families. This tutor will develop a programme of activities in consultation with students, for example targeted study skills support or employability related workshops, as well as acting as a specialist mentor and trainer for other staff. Evidence from HE sector research and case studies indicates that a dedicated support person who provides a stable framework of pastoral guidance is particularly beneficial for care experienced learners and students with certain communication disabilities. Staff are '*agents of change*' and are central to addressing gaps in progression, attainment and to fostering feelings of belonging (Mountford-Zimdars et al, 2015<sup>8</sup>; Cousin & Cuerton, 2012<sup>9</sup>; Harrison, 2017<sup>10</sup>).

3.1.50 **Targeted pre-induction session:** Students with certain disabilities, in particular social communication disorders, are known to benefit from specific preparation for new environments. We propose to introduce a special orientation session for students with the aim of familiarising them with the new environment. This session may include, for example, activities to promote confidence building, study skills, how to prepare for classes, how to deal with working in groups, introduction to specialist staff and specific guidance to the services available to them. We will also explore the benefit of holding pre-induction sessions for students from other groups.

3.1.51 **Personal tutors:** All Pearson College students are allocated a personal tutor. Specialist training will be given to those personal tutors who have care leavers or students with disabilities among their personal tutees, and these personal tutors will be expected to work closely with the A&P manager and the student support team. Positive relationships (with staff, with peers) are a factor known to influence student outcomes (Cousin & Cuerton, 2012<sup>11</sup>).

3.1.52 **Student progression tracking:** We are also starting to use **learner analytics** more systematically to gauge and track learner engagement and to include this in the reflection, which is part of module review, and have developed a series of training videos for academic staff on using these analytics. We will develop and improve our monitoring of the progression of current students from under-represented groups, including, for example, consistent analysis by student characteristic of withdrawal reports, attendance records, OLE user analytics, applications for extenuating circumstances and extensions and module assessment results. This data will be used by the study skills tutor, student support team and academic staff to provide additional support where students are identified as at risk.

3.1.53 **Future Leaders programme:** Following a successful pilot in our Business School, we want to commit to a *Future Leaders* programme for students from under-represented groups which will include a range of academic, social and employability related activities and events, alongside a three-tier **mentorship scheme** involving a) mentorship by an employer; b) mentorship of student peers by *future leaders*; and c) mentorship of school pupils (either pre-16 or post-16) by *future leaders*. The mentorship programme aims to boost the participants' confidence, engagement and employability. Research indicates that peer mentorship is beneficial for both mentors and mentees and improves academic performance, anxiety management, engagement in the university community and 'adds value to student outcomes' (Snowden & Hardy, 2012<sup>12</sup>). Students who act as mentors will receive training, support and remuneration on the scale we pay our outreach ambassadors. To promote a sense of collegiality and avoid isolating students into 'under-represented groups', we will open up the *Future Leaders* programme to other students, but guarantee spaces for students from our targeted under-represented groups. In our focus group with students, students felt strongly that it is important to promote social networks, and avoid segregation, even if positively targeted.

---

<sup>8</sup> Mountford-Zimdars et al, *Causes of Differences in Student Outcomes*, HEFCE, July 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Cousin & Cuerton, 2012, accessed at <http://www.raratutor.ac.uk/download/targeted-personal-tutoring-support-programme-narrowing-gaps-student-achievement/>.

<sup>10</sup> Harrison, N. *Moving on Up: Pathways of care leavers and care-experienced students into and through higher education*, National Network for the Education of Care Leavers, November 2017.

<sup>11</sup> Cousin & Cuerton, 2012, accessed at <http://www.raratutor.ac.uk/download/targeted-personal-tutoring-support-programme-narrowing-gaps-student-achievement/>.

<sup>12</sup> Snowden & Hardy (2012) 'Peer mentorship and positive effects on student mentor and retention and academic success', *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, Vol. 14, Special Issue, Winter 2012-13

- 3.1.54 **Student Inclusivity and Wellbeing Ambassadors:** As part of our strategy to promote equality of opportunity and wellbeing for our students, we propose to create Student Inclusivity and Wellbeing Ambassadors to work on initiatives that promote wellbeing, foster an inclusive community and support students who would benefit from such peer engagement. These ambassadors will be recruited from the student body, and receive training, support and remuneration for the role. They will be led by the Access and Participation Manager, in association with Student Services and the PCSA to ensure coordinated and effective approaches. In shortlisting for such ambassadorial roles, preference will be given to students from the targeted under-represented groups (e.g. care-leavers, students with disabilities). With this proposition, we draw on HE case studies, e.g. Universities of Manchester, Worcester, Central Lancashire, who have reported success. Student ambassadors have, further, been shown to have a positive impact on care experienced learners (Rawson, A., 2016<sup>13</sup>).
- 3.1.55 **Evaluation:** We will evaluate the measures set out in Paragraphs 3.1.49 – 3.1.55 through a combination of self-evaluation by tutors and other staff and questionnaires or qualitative feedback sessions from students who attend. Retention, progression and attainment data is monitored by our Admissions, Progression, Retention and Attainment Committee (“APRAC”) which reviews data, broken down by student characteristics, on a regular basis. Success of these measures will be assessed by the milestones and targets set in relation to continuation and degree outcomes of the targeted groups (Targets PTS\_1 – PTS\_5). In future years, if our data indicates gaps in relation to success of other under-represented groups, further targets will be set.

## 3.2 Student consultation

- 3.2.1 We embed the principle of student engagement into all aspects of our provision and work in partnership with students to influence positive change to the learning experience and environment. We involve students in the design of programmes and decisions on initiatives. Student – tutor academic partnerships lead to publications and international conference presentations.
- 3.2.2 Students are involved in our decision-making and governance via their representation on our committees. They are, also, able to give feedback on all aspects of learning and teaching via feedback questionnaires on the programme at the end of each year and on individual modules at the end of each module. Student-staff liaison committees (“SSLC”), further, meet twice a term to enable student representatives to give feedback on an ongoing basis. The results of the questionnaires and SSLC meetings feed directly into the monitoring, review and enhancement of programmes (on an ongoing basis and as part of annual monitoring) and resulting actions are reported back to students for comment and approval. Student representatives receive training to assist them with their role and are, further, supported by staff in fulfilling the role.
- 3.2.3 **The Pearson College Student Association (PCSA)** represents the student body and organises student events, sports, and societies. Student Ambassadors work with prospective students, faculty, external organisations, and industry partners on outreach activities and College events, thereby positively influencing the experience of applicants and students, as well as, themselves, gaining valuable transferrable skills.
- 3.2.4 Students from a range of backgrounds have been involved in the preparation of the Plan, through their representatives on our governance committees, consultation with the Staff Student Liaison Committee and focus groups with a representative group of students and alumni. From 2019, the President and Vice-President of the Students’ Association are members of the A&P Working Group. Our Plan and proposals changed following the consultation with students, particularly in relation to the financial support package, and some of the success support schemes. Our students felt strongly that initiatives like *Future Leaders*, pre-sessional induction, mentorship should be made more widely available to the wider student body, while still targeted at under-represented groups, both to avoid singling out students in a deficient model and to promote networks and good relations with other students.
- 3.2.5 The wider student body and a representative sample of alumni from under-represented groups were surveyed on the College’s proposed measures via a poll inviting them to rank their support for the proposed strategic measures. The respondent sample was not statistically significant; however, it was representative of the student body and included students from the targeted under-represented groups. The results indicated broad support for the proposed initiatives. Notably, the support across the initiatives from students declared as ‘disabled’ or mature was 100%. Similarly, the proposals were favoured more by BAME respondents than white students. Female students were more supportive of the initiatives in the plan. Interestingly, students from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2 were more reserved in their support than respondents from quintiles 4 and 5. This could be influenced by a multitude of factors and warrants further interrogation. Overall, the results from the student consultation gives us confidence in our proposals.

<sup>13</sup> Rawson, A. (2016), *The Caring University in 2016: Practice, Partnerships and Strategy with the Care Experienced Students*, Action on Access, July 2016

3.2.6 We plan to involve students in the implementation of the measures through various means, including consultations with students and the PCSA on the detailed design of proposed initiatives, thereby promoting transparency and inclusivity of our plans. We would actively seek to involve students from the targeted under-represented groups to define solutions. Student involvement will also be fostered through the range of new student mentor and ambassador roles. We also see a role for alumni to get involved in mentoring students.

### Collaboration strategy

3.2.7 Pearson College London collaborates with a range of partners, including schools, employers, the National Saturday Club, Access VFX, among others, to raise aspiration in schools and promote the employability of its students. As part of our Access and Participation Plan, we intend to scope out, grow and purposefully target our partnership work further in order to advance our access and participation ambition. Our latest data indicates improved recruitment from underrepresented groups and strong DLHE outcomes, which offers indication that our current approach, albeit modest in scale, have a positive effect. Listed below are examples of collaborative initiatives we already undertake to raise aspiration among under-represented groups and suggested further partnerships for which discussions are under way as part of this A&P Plan.

3.2.8 **Escape Studios Saturday Club:** We hold Escape Studios Saturday Club in Games, VFX and Animation, as part of the National Art and Design Saturday Club, which culminates in students submitting work for the Summer Show at Somerset House. Recruitment has been through targeted communication with schools highlighted as likely to have students that meet the criteria set out below, as well as targeted fliers sent to families in postcodes highlighted as areas of deprivation. Priority has been based on the following criteria:

- Come from a home where neither parent/carer attended university
- Eligible or previously eligible for free school meals
- Have a disability or long-term health condition
- Have lived, or living in local authority care
- Already part of any other widening participation programme run by another institution

3.2.9 As indicated in Paragraph 3.1.22, we intend to extend the Saturday Club to Business.

3.2.10 **Access VFX:** We are active members of Access VFX – a group of VFX, Animation and Games studios who collaborate to promote diversity and inclusion in their industries. In 2017 and 2018, we exhibited at the World Skills Live event in Birmingham, attended by 70,000 young people; and in 2019 at a VFX and UK Black Tech<sup>14</sup> event to promote careers in VFX, animation and games to families from BAME backgrounds. As part of VFX, we have hosted events in Stoke, Manchester and London for primary and secondary schools, and introduced a mentorship scheme.

3.2.11 **School visits through the charity Think Forward**, which works with *"young people (...) from backgrounds that are disadvantaged in multiple ways (...) identified as being most at risk of unemployment, with all the negative impacts that then has on their life chances. We use a scoring mechanism that measures attainment, behaviour, attendance and other factors such as being in care or on free school meals."* This year PCL delivered Character Workshops to Samuel Rhodes MLD School and City and Islington College (Centre for Business, Arts and Technology). We intend to extend this work as part of our A&P access strategy.

3.2.12 **Teacher events with academics and industry partners.** In May 2019, we hosted a panel discussion for teachers with IBM and Pearson College London to discuss Degree Apprenticeships. We had teachers and careers advisors from 17 schools booked to attend, of which, two were in postcodes that score low in POLAR3. From 2020 onwards, we plan to increase the range of teacher activities for schools with postcodes with a low POLAR score, by inviting them to onsite events, as well as hosting teacher professional development events on their sites. In June 2019, we will be hosting a training event about Degree Apprenticeships for teachers at Uxbridge College as a pilot. If it receives positive feedback, we will offer to host professional development events for teachers at their schools, within postcodes highlighted as scoring low in POLAR, cross-referenced against OfS information on NCOP Wards. Topics that have been highlighted by teachers are accelerated two-year degrees, degree apprenticeship applications, boosting success in interviews, understanding creative careers.

3.2.13 The following additional collaborative outreach is being planned as part of this plan:

3.2.14 **ERIC.** ERIC seeks to promote careers in the creative industries for 16-25-year olds from under-represented groups in London<sup>15</sup>. In 3 years, it has built a community of 25,000 young creatives and designed initiatives with companies

---

<sup>14</sup> <https://ukblacktech.com/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://ericfestival.com/>

like BBC, Warner Music, Lush Cosmetics, Framstore, and Disney, among others. ERIC is one of the Pearson College incubator companies from 2019. As set out in Section 3.1 above, we plan to explore a partnership with ERIC over a range of access and careers initiatives to better reach out to certain under-represented groups (Paragraphs 3.1.29, 3.1.37).

- 3.2.15 **Targeted School outreach.** As indicated in 3.1.26-27 above, we will seek to engage with schools in POLAR Q1 areas, or those with a large concentration of children eligible for free school meals, from low income and 'first in the family' backgrounds. Our particular approach will be refined as part of this plan.
- 3.2.16 **Working with employers:** We plan to utilise our strong employer network in strengthening the access, success and progression for under-represented groups. Areas of partnership will include degree apprenticeship recruitment, industry and career events, internship placements, mentorship scheme, among others.

## Financial Support

- 3.2.17 Our Financial Support package supports our targets and Theory of Change. The overarching aims of our financial support is to remove barriers to access and engagement, and to support student success.
- 3.2.18 Following research into the financial support provision at other universities in relation to our targeted under-represented groups, we determined to introduce a simple, but we hope, effective, approach to financial support consisting of 4 key elements:
- 1) **Travel grants** (paid travel) to attend Open Days and Admissions workshops for care experienced applicants, those entitled to free school meals, POLAR quintile 1, and household residual income below £25,000;
  - 2) **Hardship bursary of £1500 per annum** for care experienced students and those with household residual income below £25,000; accompanied by
  - 3) *Managing Finances* course;
  - 4) **Laptop fund** for students from families with residual income below £25,000, care leavers and students from POLAR Quintile 1.
- 3.2.19 In our investment plan, as the A&P Plan gets implemented, the Financial Support allocation increases to match estimated growth in numbers of students in bursary qualifying categories. In terms of the laptop fund, we will build a pool of laptops upfront to be able to loan these smoothly to students in need.
- 3.2.20 **Travel Grants:** Our admissions policy is to invite all applicants to an Admissions Workshop, so that we can assess their potential, rather than relying purely on predicted or actual tariffs. We recognise that this may create a barrier to applicants from lower income households, in particular, those from outside London, and propose, therefore, to offer travel grants for applicants who fulfil certain criteria. The eligibility criteria are highlighted at 3.2.18 (1) above and have been approved by the Executive Team for implementation from January 2020. We will monitor the numbers of applicants applying for the travel grants and survey applicants (including those who apply for a travel grant and those who do not) to evaluate whether the existence of the travel grants had an impact on applications and attendance at admissions workshops. We have included this measure under "Hardship Funds", alongside the investment in the laptop fund. It is important to note that this is the only facet of financial support which focuses on access, rather than success, progression and inclusion. Its aim is to remove barriers to access.
- 3.2.21 **Hardship Bursary:** UK HE case studies confirm that a financial bursary has a strong positive impact on the success and retention of care experienced and low income students (Liverpool John Moores, Kingston University (Rawson, A., 2016<sup>16</sup>), Sheffield Hallam University, City University, Bath Spa University, University of Bedfordshire (OFFA Topic Briefing: Financial Support<sup>17</sup>) Leeds University, University of Queen Mary (OFFA, 2017<sup>18</sup>), Buckinghamshire New University (Byrne & Cushing, 2015<sup>19</sup>). Reviewing sector evidence has informed our approach to offering £1500 per annum to students from those two groups. With this bursary, we seek to assist students from lower income backgrounds to overcome debt worries and psychological barriers in considering university, and importantly, to feel 'included' and supported once they join. Research has indicated that such bursaries assist low income students, care-leavers, and BAME students feel welcome and valued, and contribute towards 'levelling' of opportunity by providing practical assistance with the extra costs of university study and

<sup>16</sup> Rawson, A. (2016), *The Caring University in 2016: Practice, Partnerships and Strategy with the Care Experienced Students*, Action on Access, July 2016

<sup>17</sup> OFFA Topic Briefing: Financial Support, accessed on <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20180511112448/https://www.offa.org.uk/universities-and-colleges/guidance/topic-briefings/offa-topic-briefing-financial-support/>

<sup>18</sup> OFFA (2017), *Access agreement monitoring for 2015-16: supplementary note. Institutional evaluation of access agreement activity and financial support*.

<sup>19</sup> Byrne & Cushing, (2015) 'The Impact of Structured Financial Support on Student Retention, *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, Vol. 17, No 3, October 2015

socialisation (O'Brien, 2015<sup>20</sup>; Jackson & Cameron, 2012<sup>21</sup>; Stevenson, 2012<sup>22</sup>). Money worries can undermine the engagement of low-income students in university life, not least because they can be under greater pressure to work longer hours alongside study, which can impact negatively both on their involvement in extra-curricular opportunities and on their academic results (Atherton, McNeill, Okonkwo, 2010<sup>23</sup>; Crockford, Hordosy, Simms, 2015<sup>24</sup>). Offering financial support to students to aid success and retention is particularly important for PCL - as a small, new institution situated in central London, our students face the highest living costs in the country, without the subsidised accommodation other institutions can offer. The intention behind the hardship bursary is to remove barriers to engagement and to allow the poorest students to meet exceptional costs – whether additional course materials, travel to College, socialising with peers, or even accommodation deposit. Recent research<sup>25</sup> from Bristol has indicated that if bursaries are of a level where they enable students to meet exceptional costs such as a housing deposit, they can remove stress and uncertainty from students and enable them to focus on their studies. The proposed hardship bursary, additionally, aligns with our commitment to promote a sense of student community and belonging, by enabling its recipients to take part in student networking and social activities, from which they might otherwise disengage on account of worries over cost. Another consideration in devising this measure has been assisting such students with a financial package that may help them meet financial demands and focus on their studies, rather than take on considerable paid work which can be at the expense of their studies success. Our financial support proposition is based on evidence from elsewhere in the sector that bursaries can be particularly effective in supporting the retention and success of these groups (see Cotton et al, 2014<sup>26</sup>; Byrne and Cushing, 2015<sup>27</sup>; Harrison et al, 2007<sup>28</sup>; Hoare and Lightman, 2015<sup>29</sup>). While we recognise that there is limited evidence that financial support results in promoting greater access for underrepresented students, we highlight that the vast majority of this investment is directed towards student success and progression, for which there is a more substantive research base for efficacy.

3.2.22 Students in receipt of the hardship bursary will be invited to undertake a course on *Managing Finances* to assist them with budgeting. The Hardship Bursary will, also, work in conjunction with the Laptop Fund outlined below. It is also worth noting that PCL already operates a Hardship Fund which is available to all students in financial hardship. The Hardship Bursary will be additional and targeted at the specified groups. The Hardship Bursary constitutes the largest dedicated investment in our A&P investment plan and it is emphasised that it is intended as a success and progression measure. We recognise that this is a significant investment of funds, and will track its impact and effectiveness, by using the OfS statistical and interview tools from the financial support evaluation toolkit, to ensure the hardship bursaries are meeting their objectives.

3.2.23. **Laptop fund:** Students in our Business School<sup>30</sup> require a laptop or tablet computer to be able to access the online library and the online learning environment and to prepare and submit assessments. We recognise that this may be a barrier to students from low income families and care leavers and propose to have laptops available to loan for eligible students. This measure relates to both access and support, as applicants may be discouraged from applying to Pearson College if they do not have a suitable device and, if they join one of our programmes without a suitable device, they are unable to participate properly. We will evaluate this measure by monitoring the number of successful applicants and surveying those students who take advantage of the scheme. This is also one of the measures which, among others, may enable us to achieve an increase in proportion of students from low income families and care leavers. The laptop grants will be available to students from families with residual income below £25,000, care leavers and students from POLAR Quintile 1. The scheme will apply to all students whether full time or part time, including apprentices. The laptop fund investment is included in the Investment Plan under "Hardship Funds", alongside the travel grants for attending Open Days and Admissions Workshops. The cost of establishing

<sup>20</sup> O'Brien, M. (2015) 'Student Finance, Progression and 'Inclusivity': indicative data from the University of Liverpool, *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, Vol. 17, No 3, October 2015, Pages 74 - 88

<sup>21</sup> Jackson, S. and Cameron, C. (2012) 'Leaving care: Looking ahead and aiming higher'. *Children and Youth Services Review*. Volume 34, issue 6. Pages 1107–1114

<sup>22</sup> Stevenson, J. (2012) Black and minority ethnic student degree retention and attainment. York: Higher Education Academy [Online]. Available at [http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/retention/Summit/bme\\_summit\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/retention/Summit/bme_summit_final_report.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Atherton, G., McNeill, J. and Okonkwo, J. (2010) What price fairness? the impact of finance and cost on young people's views of higher education participation.

<sup>24</sup> Crockford et al. (2015) 'I really needed a job, like, for money and stuff': Student finance, part-time work and the student experience at a northern red-brick university, *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, Vol. 17, No 3, October 2015, Pages 89 – 109.

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/sraa/documents/Final%20Report%20-%20Rich%20Harris,%20outreach&bursaries.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Cotton et al, *Investigating the Experience of Care Leavers at Plymouth University, 2013-14: Final Report*, Plymouth University, 2014

<sup>27</sup> Byrne & Cushing, 'The Impact of Structured Financial Support on Student Retention, *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, Vol. 17, No 3, October 2015

<sup>28</sup> Harrison, Baxter and Hatt, 'From opportunity to OFFA: discretionary bursaries and their impact on student finance, academic success and institutional attachment', *Journal of Access Policy and Practice*, Vol. 5, No. 1, January 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Hoare and Lightman, 'Student funding, student retention and student experiences: perspectives from Bristol', *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, Vol. 17, No. 3, October 2015.

<sup>30</sup> It is worth noting that our Escape Studio students get access to computers with specialised software in College, as these are required for their engagement with the programme.

the laptop fund is subsumed in the first three years of the plan, explaining the spike in financial support investment in 2021/22. The proposed laptop loan provision is also a success measure, aimed at removing barriers to engagement and progression.

- 3.2.24 It is our intention that our financial support package will complement our access, success and progression activities in closing gaps and achieving our targets for the identified under-represented groups. We have chosen to concentrate the largest spend in financial support on income-based bursaries for the poorest students to both ensure the sustainability of our provision and optimise the impact for students. The bursary will be complemented by travel grants and the laptop fund which aim to remove barriers to access and engagement. The *Managing Finance* course will be open more broadly to students to assist them with budgeting and life skills. Based on internal evidence from other institutions in London<sup>31</sup>, we believe this financial support is well-placed to support our most disadvantaged students, and can have a significant positive impact on retention and sense of inclusion. We will evaluate the impact of our support package, using the OfS financial support tool as well as analysing retention and achievement of bursary holders in comparison to the general student population. This evaluation will inform our logic chain for our financial support package and our Theory of Change.

### 3.3 Evaluation strategy

- 3.3.1 In designing our A&P Plan, we undertook extensive sector research into measures shown to be effective with under-representative groups within our targets. We plan to closely analyse and monitor the implementation of our proposed measures within our context to ensure their effectiveness and impact.
- 3.3.2 Evaluation of the effectiveness of the A&P Plan measures is embedded within the Plan. Building additional capacity to enable us to track progress, establish more granular data and develop more sophisticated analytical tools for evaluation of our measures is an essential part of our strategy, so that we can refine measures in future years and ensure that they are effective.
- 3.3.3 Throughout our Plan, we have indicated a number of methods of evaluation of the measures which we will introduce to improve the access, success and progression of students from those groups which are under-represented in Higher Education generally, with particular reference to those groups which we know are under-represented in Pearson College.
- 3.3.4 We will subscribe to HEAT or a similar facility and improve our strategy for data collection at both application and enrolment with a view to including additional non-statutory information, such as care leaver status and parental occupation. We will ensure that data is recorded on the implementation of the measures in this plan, so that they can be properly evaluated. We will also subscribe to HEBSS in order to obtain more comprehensive data on the socio-economic background of our students.
- 3.3.5 We will collect evidence on the effectiveness of the measures and use tools such as evaluability assessment, the OfS Evaluation Self-Assessment tool, the OfS Evaluating Financial Support tool, as well as solutions such as HEAT and HEBSS to assist with evaluating them while, at the same time, we continue to monitor our performance using relevant benchmarks, Heidi Plus and other sector-wide data sources. For example, when evaluating our financial support package, we intend to adopt the elements of the OfS tool appropriate for an institution of our size, with an openness to changing our approach should the results suggest that our particular financial support design is not producing the intended outcomes.
- 3.3.6 We will collect data on student use of our services e.g. Talent Development, Student Support, so that we can analyse these against student characteristics and see whether these services are equally accessed by different groups. We will refine our use of information such as attendance records, learner analytics from the Online Learning Environment (“OLE”), assessment results and applications for extensions and extenuating circumstances to improve our intelligence about differential engagement and early indications of students facing problems. We will triangulate this information with student retention, achievement and destination data, analysed by student characteristics, to evaluate the impact of our A&P initiatives.
- 3.3.7 We matched our proposals against the OfS Evaluation Self-Assessment tool and found them to be robust. Admittedly, our programme and evaluation design are ‘emerging’ and our evaluation implementation and dissemination are ‘in development’, but we re-iterate that, as a relatively new institution, 2019/20 will be the first year of higher fee investment and the first year of our A&P Plan. We are pleased to report that according to the Self-evaluation tool, our ‘strategic context’ is ‘advanced’. Systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of the College’s A&P measures will be undertaken by the new Access and Participation Manager, in accordance with the Plan and its targets. Data analysis requirements and evaluation methodology will be designed by the Institutional Data Working Group, comprising the Head of Data and Planning, the Head of Student Information Systems, the

---

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/media/qmul/undergraduate/teachers/wp/QMUL-2019-20-Access-and-Participation-Plan.pdf>

Deputy Vice-Principal (Academic Affairs), the new Access and Participation Manager and the Head of Contracts and Compliance. Individually, and collectively, these officers possess expertise for quantitative and qualitative research, appreciation of data security and confidentiality, as well as understanding of access and participation aspirations. They are also all members of the Access and Participation Working Group.

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

- 3.4.1 The presently compact size of the College's structures facilitates cross-institutional engagement and collaboration on initiatives and consultation with student representatives. The Access and Participation Working Group, which has senior cross-departmental and PCSA representation, will drive and oversee the implementation of the PCL A&P Plan. The Access and Participation Manager is expected to work closely with all College teams and with students to support the successful implementation and evaluation of the Plan. Outcomes from evaluation will be scrutinised by the APRAC committee, which also undertakes detailed analysis of student recruitment, continuation, attainment and destination results. The Plan will be monitored by the Governing Body, to whom regular reports will be made, including an annual monitoring report which will be prepared alongside the annual OfS Access and Participation Impact Report. The individual measures included in this Plan will be monitored on an operational level by the appropriate governance committee, depending on the nature of the measure. The College's committees and the A&P Working Group will have a role in disseminating A&P outcomes.

## **4. Provision of information to students**

- 4.1 We currently have a Fees and Funding section for every programme which we advertise on our website, which sets out all the likely costs of that programme and is compliant with CMA guidelines. It includes a statement of our policy of not imposing fee increases for continuing students. We also have a section on the website setting out the position regarding fee waivers and student loans. There are links in every programme page to the information about fee waivers and student loans.
- 4.2 We are developing our Financial Support provision to explicitly assist students from low-income backgrounds and care leavers, in particular, travel grants for applications to attend Admissions Workshops, a laptop fund and a hardship bursary of £2,000 per annum. Our information about the Financial Support available will include information about the nature and timing of payments, the criteria and process for application.
- 4.3 Once approved by the Office for Students, this A&P plan will be posted on our website, alongside other general information for students and applicants.

## **5. Appendix**

1. Targets (tables 2a, 2b and 2c in the targets and investment plan)
2. Investment summary (tables 4a and 4b in the targets and investment plan)
3. Fee summary (table 4a and 4b in the fee information document)



**Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees**

\*course type not listed

**Inflationary statement:**

We do not intend to raise fees annually

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

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	Higher Fee TEF	£9,000
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	Standard Fee	£10,800
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: Pearson College Limited

Provider UKPRN: 10042570

## 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>	£152,150.00	£163,650.00	£166,150.00	£169,850.00	£164,350.00
Access (pre-16)	£15,000.00	£18,000.00	£21,000.00	£22,000.00	£22,000.00
Access (post-16)	£19,500.00	£21,000.00	£22,000.00	£20,700.00	£16,700.00
Access (adults and the community)	£10,000.00	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	£3,000.00	£3,000.00
Access (other)	£107,650.00	£119,650.00	£118,150.00	£124,150.00	£122,650.00
<b>Financial support (£)</b>	£87,500.00	£228,000.00	£283,000.00	£318,500.00	£363,500.00
<b>Research and evaluation (£)</b>	£67,300.00	£82,300.00	£82,300.00	£82,300.00	£79,300.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Higher fee income (£HFI)</b>	£2,489,895.00	£3,537,000.00	£3,645,000.00	£3,810,000.00	£3,975,000.00
<b>Access investment</b>	6.1%	4.6%	4.6%	4.5%	4.1%
<b>Financial support</b>	3.5%	6.4%	7.8%	8.4%	9.1%
<b>Research and evaluation</b>	2.7%	2.3%	2.3%	2.2%	2.0%
<b>Total investment (as %HFI)</b>	12.3%	13.4%	14.6%	15.0%	15.3%

# Targets and investment plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: Pearson College Limited

Provider UKPRN: 10042570

## Targets

Table 2a - Access

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones					Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
								2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	
To reduce the gap in participation between the most and least represented groups	PTA_1	Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN)	Ratio in entry rates for POLAR4 quintile 5: quintile 1 students	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	4.33:1	3.8:1	3.6:1	3.4:1	3.2:1	3:1	These milestones have been set by growing the number of quintile 1 students we admit each year by approximately 10 per annum. This will be achieved through our outreach strategy for young learners and school collaboration, collaboration with apprenticeship employers, targeting our outreach work, mentorship and work shadowing.
To increase participation in HE for care-leavers	PTA_2	Care-leavers	Increase the percentage of care-leavers enrolling at PCL from 0.78% to 1.1% (10 students) by 2024/25	No	Other data source	2017-18	0.78%	0.85%	0.9%	0.95%	0.99%	1.1%	This target is based on our internal data.  The number of students represented in these percentages is very small and the actual values are suppressed.  These milestones have been set anticipating modest but steady increase in the numbers of care leavers being admitted. This will be achieved through the outreach strategy for care leavers, partnership with LAs and virtual schools, mentoring, and the Future Leaders programme.
	PTA_3												
	PTA_4												
	PTA_5												
	PTA_6												
	PTA_7												
	PTA_8												

Table 2b - Success

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Target group	Description	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones					Commentary on milestones/targets (500 characters maximum)
								2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	
To increase the continuation rates for those in the least represented groups (POLAR4 Q1) in line with the PCL overall target continuation rate of 90%	PTS_1	Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN)	Decrease the non-continuation rate for POLAR4 Q1 students to 10% to reduce the gap	No	Other data source	2017-18	15%	14%	13%	12%	11%	10%	This target is based on our internal data.  These milestones have been set by aiming for an achievable increase in continuation rates for quintile 1 students year on year until 2024/25. This will be achieved through the personal tutor, study support, the Future Leaders programme, performance tracking, recruitment to ambassador roles, and financial support.
To increase the continuation rates for black students in line with the PCL overall target continuation rate of 90%	PTS_2	Ethnicity	Decrease the non-continuation rate for black students to 10% to reduce the gap	No	The access and participation dataset	2017-18	15%	14%	13%	12%	11%	10%	These milestones have been set by aiming for an achievable increase in black students' continuation rates year on year until 2024/25. This will be achieved through personal tutoring, study support, the Future Leaders programme, the progression tracker, review of curriculum for 'inclusivity' and financial support.
To increase the percentage of black students achieving a good degree to 60%	PTS_3	Ethnicity	Decrease the percentage difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between white and black students	No	Other data source	2017-18	29%	33%	38%	45%	52%	60%	This target is based on our internal data.  These milestones have been set by aiming for an achievable increase in black students' attainment year on year until 2024/25. This will be achieved through personal tutoring, study support, the Future Leaders programme, the progression tracker, review of curriculum for 'inclusivity', and financial support.
To increase the continuation rates for care-leavers to 80%	PTS_4	Care-leavers	Reduce the percentage difference in non-continuation rates between care leavers and other students. Decrease the non-continuation rate for care-leavers to 20% by 2024/25	No	Other data source	2017-18	N/A	40%	33%	29%	25%	20%	This target is based on our internal data.  The percentage relates to the non-continuation rate decreasing, based on only 1 student discontinuing within each new cohort, against growing numbers of care-leavers as set out in PTA_2.  These milestones have been set by aiming for an achievable increase in care leavers' continuation rates until 2024/25. They will be achieved through personal tutoring, study support, the Future Leaders programme, and financial support among other initiatives.

