



Kaplan Open Learning
Access and Participation Plan (APP)
2025-26 to 2028-29

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Introduction and strategic aim

Kaplan Open Learning (KOL) has over 15 years' experience of delivering online degree programmes and has been working in partnership with the University of Essex since 2007. In 2017 we renewed our collaboration agreement with the University for a further 10 years. KOL is part of the Kaplan, Inc. Group, one of the world's largest and most diverse education providers. KOL successfully registered with the OfS for Approved status in 2018, and subsequently registered for Approved (fee cap) status in 2021.

KOL delivers undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in a number of subject areas including Business, Computing, Criminology, Education, Health, Law, and Psychology. The flexibility of our online provision enables students to study our courses from anywhere in the world, at a time and place to suit them.

KOL's vision is to become a world leader in online learning, making higher education accessible to anyone with the potential and drive to succeed.

Our mission is to continue to transform students' lives and careers by delivering and expanding our suite of innovative, industry led and career enhancing and relevant higher education programmes to a global market.

The KOL vision is underpinned by Kaplan's core values. Our core values define our company culture and provide the framework for what we deliver to our students each day.

- **Integrity** - we hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards in everything we do.
- **Knowledge** - we offer expert resources to help students achieve their academic and career best.
- **Support** - we give students the tools they need to succeed.
- **Opportunity** - we open doors and broaden access to education.
- **Results** – we are dedicated to helping students achieve their goals – we succeed when they succeed.

In pursuit of the KOL vision, our approach has always been to provide equality of educational opportunities for those who may not have been able to access higher education (HE) at a traditional time or in a traditional way by widening access to a high-quality university education that expands across the globe. This approach provides the overarching framework for the educational gain that we provide to our students, which includes a widened access to higher education through an open entry route to all of our programmes, wraparound support to succeed (both academic and pastoral) and vocationally related assessment and activities enabling a truly global learning experience through our vibrant international learning community.

The student population demographic is mature, with an average age of 33: males at 36 years and females at 32 years. The population is geographically and ethnically diverse.

Our students are typically mature, in work (97% of our current student population is in full or part-time employment), with family responsibilities seeking career advancement through further study.

Analysis of the entry qualifications of our undergraduate students indicates that almost one third of our students (21%) joined us on the basis of their work experience and without the usual academic qualifications at NQF level 3 or above.

KOL is committed to providing an outstanding student experience for everyone who enrolls on our degree programmes. Our strategic focus has always been and continues to be on widening participation for those students who could not enter higher education through traditional routes. Recognising that the withdrawal rates for students with our demographic profile combined with the part-time mode of delivery can be high, we have developed a comprehensive wraparound structure of academic and pastoral support which is at the forefront of online learning.

Risks to equality of opportunity

In the development of this Access and Participation Plan (APP) we have paid due regard to the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) whilst also ensuring that we implement intervention strategies that are realistic and appropriate for a provider delivering provision entirely online to a global student population.

The following is a summary of the key risks to equality of opportunity for KOL students that our APP will address:

Risk 6: Academic Support: Challenges for Online Students Transitioning to Higher Education

Online students often face significant hurdles when adapting to the rigors of higher education. The lack of direct, face-to-face interaction with instructors and peers can make it difficult to obtain the necessary academic support.

This situation is compounded by limited access to resources. Unlike on-campus students who have immediate access to libraries, academic counselling, and study groups, online students may struggle to find equivalent resources digitally. This lack of access can hinder their ability to conduct thorough research, receive personalised academic advice, and engage in collaborative learning experiences, all of which are critical components of a well-rounded education.

Virtual communication can sometimes lead to misunderstandings or delays in receiving feedback, which is critical for academic success. The absence of face-to-face interaction can make it challenging to interpret tone and intent in written communications, leading to potential confusion and frustration. Additionally, the time lag in receiving responses from instructors or peers can slow down the learning process and negatively impact students' ability to keep up with coursework.

The autonomy required for online learning demands strong self-discipline and time management skills, which some students may not have fully developed. Without the structured environment of a traditional classroom, students must motivate themselves to stay on track with their studies, adhere to deadlines, and manage their time effectively. This can be particularly challenging for those who are not naturally self-motivated or who have competing responsibilities such as work or family obligations.

Reliable internet access and up-to-date technology are essential for online learning. Any disruptions, such as poor internet connectivity or outdated hardware and software, can impede a student's ability to participate fully in their courses. Technical issues can cause interruptions during live lectures, difficulties in accessing course materials, and challenges in submitting assignments on time, all of which can significantly affect academic performance and overall learning experience.

Risk 8: Mental Health: Factors Contributing to Declining Mental Health Among Students

The mental health of students is a growing concern, particularly for those facing financial constraints, lack of peer support, inadequate study environments, or work-related time constraints.

The pressure to manage tuition fees, living expenses, and potential debt can be overwhelming, especially for students from low-income backgrounds. Financial stress can affect their ability to focus on their studies, leading to decreased academic performance and increased dropout rates. The constant worry about money can also negatively impact their mental health, causing anxiety and stress.

Online learning can be a solitary experience, reducing opportunities for social interaction and peer support that are crucial for mental well-being. The lack of face-to-face interaction can make students feel isolated and disconnected from their peers and instructors. This isolation can exacerbate feelings of loneliness and depression, further hindering their academic success.

Not all students have access to a quiet, comfortable, and conducive study environment. Crowded living conditions or noisy surroundings can negatively impact concentration and learning. Without a proper study space, students may find it challenging to complete their assignments and prepare for exams, leading to lower grades and increased frustration.

Many students juggle their studies with part-time or full-time jobs. The stress of balancing these responsibilities can lead to burnout and mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. The constant pressure to meet academic and work-related deadlines can leave students feeling exhausted and overwhelmed, ultimately affecting their ability to perform well in both areas.

Risk 10: Cost Pressures: Economic Factors Hindering Students' Ability to Continue their Studies

Economic challenges pose a significant risk to students' ability to persist in their education. These challenges include:

Rising tuition fees, textbook prices, and other educational expenses can significantly strain students' budgets. Even minor increases in these costs can be prohibitive for some students, making it difficult for them to afford the necessary resources to succeed in their studies. This financial pressure can lead to increased stress and may force students to take on additional work, which can detract from their academic focus and performance.

Students who have dependents or significant family responsibilities often face the challenge of balancing their studies with family needs. The demands of caregiving and managing a household can make it difficult to prioritize education, leading to higher dropout rates among these students. The additional burden of family responsibilities can also limit the time and energy available for academic pursuits, further hindering their educational progress.

Employment instability, particularly during uncertain economic times, can force students to choose between their education and immediate financial survival. Job loss can have a profound impact, as losing a source of income often means losing the financial means to pay for tuition and other educational expenses. This instability can result in students postponing or discontinuing their studies, which can have long-term consequences on their career prospects and financial stability.

The fear of accruing substantial debt is another significant factor that can deter students from continuing their education. Concerns about the ability to repay loans after graduation can create a financial barrier to pursuing higher education. This apprehension is especially pronounced among students who may already be facing financial difficulties, leading them to question whether the potential long-term benefits of a degree are worth the immediate financial risks.

Addressing these risks requires a multifaceted approach, including improved academic support systems, mental health resources, and financial aid options to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed in their studies.

Objectives

To address the challenges faced by online students in transitioning to higher education and accessing support from staff or peers, we have set a measurable objective to enhance targeted academic support specifically for mature students, who make up the majority of our online student demographic. Our target is to decrease the withdrawal rate of students within the first 6 months of study by 0.5 percentage points each year reaching a withdrawal rate of 10.6% by 2028-29. This will be achieved through the implementation of enhanced induction processes and additional support during module one including study skills support. Regular surveys and feedback mechanisms will be used to monitor progress and ensure continuous improvement in support services.

Recognising the impact of mental health challenges exacerbated by financial constraints, lack of peer support, inadequate study environments, and work-related time constraints, we aim to provide comprehensive support to improve students' ability to continue and succeed in their studies. Our target is to gradually reduce the module pass rate performance deficit of students declaring a mental health condition from 6.2% to 3% by 2028-29. This will involve expanding mental health resources, such as counselling services and wellness workshops, and integrating mental health awareness into the curriculum. Additionally, we will create virtual support groups and provide training for staff to identify and support students facing mental health challenges.

To mitigate financial pressures that may cause students, particularly those from vulnerable groups such as BAME, disabled, and deprived students, to withdraw, we aim to enhance access to financial support and on-programme assistance. Our target is to reduce the aggregated four-year gap for continuation rates of students from IMD quintile 1 compared to IMD quintile 5 from 13.3 to 9.3 percentage points. This will be achieved by increasing the availability of scholarships and grants and providing personalised advice and guidance on managing tuition fees. We will also collaborate with external organisations to secure additional funding and support services where possible, ensuring that students have the necessary resources to continue their education without financial burdens. Regular monitoring and reporting will track the effectiveness of these measures and inform any necessary adjustments to meet our objectives.

Intervention strategies and expected outcomes

The following section outlines the intervention strategies and expected outcomes for each objective aimed at addressing the identified risks to equality of opportunity. Each strategy is designed to mitigate specific challenges, such as academic support for online students, mental health issues exacerbated by financial constraints, and financial pressures that could lead to student withdrawal.

For each objective, we describe the activities that will be implemented, the financial and human resources required, and the evaluation methods to be used to assess the efficacy of the interventions. Furthermore, we provide a rationale for each strategy, supported by evidence where applicable, to demonstrate why we believe these interventions will be effective.

Detailed evidence supporting these strategies can be found in Annex B of the plan.

Intervention Strategy 1 (IS1): Targeted Academic Support for Mature Students

To address the challenges faced by online students in transitioning to higher education and accessing support from staff or peers, this strategy aims to provide targeted academic support to ensure their success with a focus on mature students who make up the majority of our online student demographic.

Risks to equality of opportunity: *EoRR Risk 6: Insufficient Academic support:* Online students may encounter challenges transitioning to higher education and seeking support from staff or peers.

Objectives: To provide enhanced targeted support during the induction and the first 6 months of study to ensure mature students are supported to access and continue with their studies and succeed on our programmes, resulting in improved satisfaction, continuation and completion.

Targets: PTA_1: Our target is to decrease the withdrawal rate of students within the first 6 months by 0.5 percentage points each year reaching a withdrawal rate of 10.6% by 2028-29.

Related risks to equality of opportunity: Insufficient personal support, mental health, cost pressures, knowledge and skills

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
IS1.1 Provision of additional support during Module One.	Target student groups: All first-year students. This is a new activity and will be collaborative, involving faculty and student support services.	Staff time to design and develop resources, mentors, tutors, administrative support, training materials, and programme costs.	Increased student continuation rates, enhanced student satisfaction, improved academic performance in first-year courses, and increased	IS2

			confidence and resilience among students.	
IS1.2 Enhanced induction processes and peer mentoring.	<p>Target student groups: All new entry students.</p> <p>This activity is new and involves collaboration involving faculty and student support services.</p>	Staff time for planning and coordinating induction sessions, peer mentors, academic advisors, training costs, and programme materials.	Higher rates of student acclimatisation, improved academic preparedness, stronger peer connections, and enhanced engagement and sense of belonging among new and transfer students.	IS2
IS1.3 Enhanced resubmission support.	<p>Target student groups: students needing resubmission.</p> <p>This is a new activity and involves collaboration between academic staff and student services.</p>	Staff time for resubmission coordination, tutors, resubmission materials, administrative costs.	Increased pass rates on resubmissions, reduced student stress, enhanced academic recovery, and improved continuation rates by providing targeted support during resubmissions.	
IS1.4 Implement an enhanced Academic Readiness Assessment (ARA) prior to enrolment to assess academic ability and highlight areas requiring additional support.	<p>Target student groups: all new incoming students.</p> <p>This is a new activity and involves collaboration between admissions and academic departments.</p>	Staff time for assessment coordinators, academic advisors, assessment tools, and administrative costs.	Early identification of students needing additional support, personalised academic plans, increased preparedness for coursework, and higher initial academic performance.	IS2

<p>IS1.5 Implementation of an AI-powered Study Skills BOT providing 24/7 study skills support.</p>	<p>Target student groups: all students, with a focus on those needing more flexible study support options.</p> <p>This is a new activity involving collaboration with IT, Learning Technology and Student Services teams.</p>	<p>Staff time for BOT developers, content specialists, development and maintenance costs, training for usage, and administrative support.</p>	<p>24/7 access to study skills support, increased student engagement with study resources, improved academic performance, enhanced self-directed learning skills, and better overall student satisfaction and continuation.</p>	
<p>Total cost of activities over 4 years:</p>				<p>£332,000</p>

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Intervention Strategy 1 is designed to address the critical challenges faced by mature students, particularly in their first year. Research indicates that early interventions significantly improve student continuation, satisfaction, and academic performance. For instance, comprehensive support during the initial stages of online study helps students acclimatise academically, reducing dropout rates and enhancing their overall educational experience. Induction and mentorship programmes have been shown to improve students' academic preparedness and sense of belonging, which are crucial for their success. Similarly, expanding tutoring services and providing targeted resubmission support can help struggling students improve their understanding of course material and academic performance.

Moreover, early identification of students' academic readiness through assessments can lead to personalised support plans, ensuring that students are well-prepared for their coursework. The implementation of an AI-powered Study Skills BOT provides flexible, 24/7 support, helping students engage more effectively with study resources and develop self-directed learning skills.

Research indicates that students with access to these interventions have higher pass rates and better overall academic outcomes. By focusing on these key areas, this intervention strategy aims to create a supportive and effective learning environment, enhancing student continuation and success.

Evaluation

This section provides a summary of the evaluation for Intervention Strategy 1, aimed at improving student continuation, satisfaction, and pass rates, particularly among first-year and incoming students. The intervention strategy as a whole will also be evaluated to measure its overall impact and inform future improvements.

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Provision of additional support during Module One	Increased student continuation rates, enhanced student satisfaction, improved academic performance in first-year courses, and increased confidence and resilience among students.	Empirical (Type 2): Student Surveys (pre- and post-intervention), continuation and pass rate data analysis, focus groups with participants.	Findings will be published in an annual report shared with stakeholders. Results will be disseminated through internal reports and presentations at relevant forums.
Enhanced induction processes, technical literacy support and peer mentoring.	Higher rates of student acclimatisation, improved academic preparedness, stronger peer connections, and enhanced engagement and sense of belonging among new students.	Empirical (Type 2): Pre- and post-programme surveys, focus groups, student feedback, tracking of continuation and pass rates.	Findings will be published in an annual report shared with stakeholders. Results will be disseminated through internal reports and presentations at relevant forums.
Enhanced resubmission support	Increased pass rates on resubmissions, reduced student stress, enhanced academic recovery, and improved continuation rates by providing targeted support during resubmissions.	Empirical (Type 2): Resubmission pass rate analysis, student surveys, qualitative feedback from resubmission support sessions.	Findings will be published in an annual report shared with stakeholders. Results will be disseminated through internal reports and presentations at relevant forums.

Enhanced Academic Readiness Assessment (ARA)	Early identification of students needing additional support, personalised academic plans, increased preparedness for coursework, and higher initial academic performance.	Empirical (Type 2): Assessment results analysis, follow-up surveys, academic performance tracking.	Findings will be published in an annual report shared with stakeholders. Results will be disseminated through internal reports and presentations at relevant forums.
Implementation of AI-powered Study Skills BOT	24/7 access to study skills support, increased student engagement with study resources, improved academic performance, enhanced self-directed learning skills, and better overall student satisfaction and continuation.	Empirical (Type 2): BOT usage analytics, student feedback surveys, academic performance tracking.	Findings will be published in an annual report shared with stakeholders. Results will be disseminated through internal reports and presentations at relevant forums.

Intervention Strategy 2 (IS2): Address the impact of mental health challenges

To address the impact of mental health challenges exacerbated by financial constraints, lack of peer support, inadequate study environments, and work-related time constraints, this strategy aims to provide comprehensive support to improve students' ability to continue and succeed in their studies.

Risks to equality of opportunity: EoRR Risk 8: Mental health: Financial constraints, lack of peer support, inadequate study environment, or work-related time constraints may contribute to declining mental health among students, impacting their ability to continue studying.

Objectives: To ensure all students are supported to continue with their studies, especially those who declare mental health conditions, to succeed on their programme of study, resulting in improved module pass rates and continuation rates.

Targets: PTS_1: Our target is to gradually reduce the module pass rate performance deficit of students declaring a mental health condition from 6.2% to 3% by 2028-29.

Related risks to equality of opportunity: Insufficient personal support, cost pressures

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
IS2.1 Launch a comprehensive mental health platform to provide resources, self-help tools, and access to counselling services.	<p>Target student groups: all students, with a focus on those who have declared a mental health condition.</p> <p>This is a new initiative involving collaboration between learning technology and student services.</p>	Staff time for development and maintenance, IT resources, platform development costs, ongoing administrative support, collaboration with mental health professionals.	Improved access to mental health resources, increased utilisation of support services, better management of mental health conditions, and higher pass rates for students who declare a mental health condition due to timely and effective support.	IS3
IS2.2 Provide Mental Health Awareness training. Comprehensive training for academic and support staff on identifying and supporting students with mental health conditions.	<p>Target group: all permanent academic and support staff.</p> <p>This is a new initiative involving collaboration with mental health professionals and HR.</p>	Staff time for training coordination, professional development costs, hiring mental health experts for training sessions, development of training materials, and administrative support.	Increased awareness and understanding of mental health issues among staff, improved ability to support students with mental health conditions, enhanced student-staff relationships, and increased pass rates due to better support structures.	IS1
IS2.3 Offer resilience training for students. Provide resilience training workshops and seminars to help students develop	<p>Target group: all students, with a focus on those who have declared a mental health condition.</p> <p>This is a new initiative</p>	Staff time for planning and delivering resilience training sessions, hiring trainers, development of training materials, administrative	Enhanced resilience and coping skills among students, reduced impact of mental health issues on academic performance, increased	IS1 & IS3

coping strategies and resilience.	involving collaboration with mental health professionals and student services.	support, and coordination with student services.	student engagement and participation, and improved pass rates for students who declare a mental health condition.	
Total cost of activities over 4 years:				£147,000

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Intervention Strategy 2 is designed to address the significant impact of mental health on student success. Our internal data indicates that module pass rates for students who declare a mental health condition are lower.

Research indicates that accessible mental health resources and support services can significantly improve student wellbeing and academic performance. For instance, studies have shown that online mental health platforms can increase the utilisation of mental health resources, leading to better management of mental health conditions and improved academic outcomes. This strategy involves collaboration between learning technology and student services, ensuring that the platform is user-friendly and accessible. By improving access to mental health resources and support services, this initiative aims to enhance the overall wellbeing of students, particularly those who have declared a mental health condition, thereby increasing their pass rates and continuation.

Mental health awareness training for academic and support staff is crucial for creating an inclusive and supportive educational environment. Research shows that training staff to identify and support students with mental health issues increases their confidence and competence, leading to improved student outcomes. This initiative, involving collaboration with mental health professionals and HR, aims to enhance the ability of staff to support students effectively, improving student-staff relationships and academic performance. Additionally, resilience training for students, which includes workshops and seminars to develop coping strategies, has been shown to enhance students' ability to manage stress and improve their engagement and participation in academic activities.

By focusing on students with declared mental health conditions, this initiative aims to reduce the impact of mental health issues on academic performance, ultimately leading to higher pass rates and greater student success.

Evaluation

This section provides a summary of the evaluation for Intervention Strategy 2, related to mental health support. Each activity will be evaluated for its effectiveness in improving student continuation, satisfaction, and pass rates, particularly among students who declare a mental health condition. The intervention strategy as a whole will also be evaluated to measure its overall impact and inform future improvements.

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Launch Mental Health Platform	Improved access to mental health resources, increased utilisation of support services, better management of mental health conditions, and higher pass rates for students who declare a mental health condition due to timely and effective support.	Empirical (Type 2): Usage analytics, surveys (pre- and post-intervention), qualitative interviews with users, continuation and pass rate data analysis.	Findings will be published in an annual report shared with stakeholders. Results will be disseminated through internal reports and presentations at relevant forums.
Provide Mental Health Awareness Training for Staff	Increased awareness and understanding of mental health issues among staff, improved ability to support students with mental health conditions, enhanced student-staff relationships, and increased pass rates due to better support structures.	Empirical (Type 2): Pre- and post-training surveys, focus groups, staff feedback, student outcomes tracking (continuation and pass rates).	Findings will be published in an annual report shared with stakeholders. Results will be disseminated through internal reports.
Offer Resilience Training for Students	Enhanced resilience and coping skills among students, reduced impact of mental health issues on academic performance, increased student	Empirical (Type 2): Surveys (pre- and post-training), continuation and pass rate data analysis, qualitative feedback from participants.	Findings will be published in an annual report shared with stakeholders. Results will be disseminated through internal reports.

	engagement and participation, and improved pass rates for students who declare a mental health condition.		
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Intervention Strategy 3 (IS3): Mitigations to financial pressures

To mitigate financial pressures that may cause students, particularly those from vulnerable groups such as BAME, disabled, and deprived students, to withdraw, this strategy aims to enhance access to financial support and on-programme assistance. Our objective is to ensure students are less likely to discontinue their studies due to financial constraints, thereby promoting greater equality of opportunity and improving continuation rates.

Risks to equality of opportunity: *EoRR Risk 10: Cost pressures:* Increases in costs, family responsibilities, or job loss may hinder students' ability to continue their studies.

Objectives: To ensure that the most deprived students are more likely to apply and less likely to withdraw due to financial pressures.

Targets: PTS_2: Our target is to reduce the aggregated four-year gap for continuation rates of students from IMD quintile 1 compared to IMD quintile 5 from 13.3 to 9.3 percentage points.

Related risks to equality of opportunity: Insufficient academic support, Insufficient personal support, mental health

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
<p>IS3.1 Establish a hardship fund. Provide financial support to students facing unexpected financial difficulties through a hardship fund.</p> <p>This is a new initiative involving collaboration between student support services and the finance department.</p>	<p>Target group: all students, with a focus on those experiencing financial hardship.</p> <p>Staff time for processing applications and disbursements, financial resources for the fund, administrative support, collaboration with student support services and the finance department.</p>	<p>Decreased financial stress, improved ability to focus on studies, increased continuation and pass rates, and enhanced student wellbeing and satisfaction.</p>	IS2

<p>IS3.3 Offer merit-based and need-based full scholarships to support students financially.</p> <p>This is a new initiative involving collaboration between the admissions office, finance department.</p>	<p>Target group: high-achieving students and students from low-income backgrounds.</p> <p>Staff time for managing applications, reviewing and awarding scholarships, financial resources for scholarships, administrative support, collaboration with admissions and finance.</p>	<p>Reduced financial barriers to education, increased access for high-achieving and low-income students, improved academic performance and continuation, and higher pass rates.</p>	<p>IS2</p>
<p>Total cost of activities over 4 years:</p>			<p>£100,000</p>

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Intervention Strategy 3 is grounded in a robust evidence base highlighting the critical impact of financial stability and support on student continuation and success. Additionally, it considers the specific needs and challenges faced by mature students over 25 years of age.

Our data consistently shows that mature students over 25 years old have unique challenges that can impact their continuation rates. Factors such as financial stability, work-life balance, and family responsibilities often affect their ability to persist in their studies. Interventions that provide financial support and reduce initial enrolment risk are particularly effective for this demographic. Studies have demonstrated that mature students receiving such supports are more likely to continue their studies, achieve higher pass rates, and complete their programmes successfully.

Research indicates that unexpected financial difficulties are a significant barrier to student continuation and academic performance. By providing timely financial support through hardship funds, students can alleviate financial stress, allowing them to focus on their studies. For mature students, who often balance education with family and work responsibilities, hardship funds are crucial in maintaining their continuation rates and academic performance. Scholarships, both merit-based and need-based, also play a vital role in reducing the burden of tuition and living expenses, enabling students to dedicate more time and energy to their studies. Implementing a 21-day money-back guarantee provides new students with a safety net, reducing the financial risk associated with enrolment. This policy can enhance student confidence in their decision to join a programme, leading to better initial engagement and commitment.

Overall, the rationale for these interventions is supported by extensive evidence demonstrating that financial security and early commitment significantly enhance student continuation, satisfaction, and academic success, particularly for mature students over 25 years old.

Evaluation

This section provides a summary of the evaluation strategy for Intervention Strategy 3. Each activity will be evaluated for its effectiveness in improving student continuation, satisfaction, and pass rates, particularly among mature students over 25 years old. The intervention strategy as a whole will also be evaluated to measure its overall impact and inform future improvements.

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation Include type of evidence you intend to generate e.g. empirical (Type 2).	Summary of publication plan When evaluation findings will be shared and the format that they will take.
Hardship funds	Decreased financial stress, improved focus on studies, increased continuation and pass rates, enhanced wellbeing and satisfaction	Empirical (Type 2): Surveys (pre- and post-intervention), continuation and pass rate data analysis, qualitative interviews with beneficiaries	Findings will be published in an annual report shared with stakeholders, academic journals, and conference presentations.
Scholarships	Reduced financial barriers, increased access, improved academic performance, higher continuation and pass rates	Empirical (Type 2): Analysis of scholarship recipient data (pass rates, continuation rates), surveys, focus groups with scholarship recipients	Results will be disseminated through internal reports, academic publications, and presentations at educational forums.

Overall Evaluation Strategy

Method(s) of Evaluation: The Intervention Strategy as a whole will be evaluated using a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data analysis (e.g., continuation and pass rates) with qualitative methods (e.g., surveys, interviews, focus groups). This comprehensive evaluation will ensure a thorough understanding of the strategy's impact on student outcomes.

Summary of Publication Plan: The findings from the overall evaluation will be compiled into a comprehensive report to be shared with stakeholders. Additionally, key insights and outcomes will be presented at relevant educational conferences to contribute to the broader discourse on student support and continuation strategies.

When Evaluation Findings Will Be Shared: Initial findings will be shared annually, with more comprehensive evaluations conducted at the midpoint and end of the intervention period (e.g., every two years). These findings will be disseminated through various formats, including detailed reports, executive summaries, and presentations, to ensure wide accessibility and engagement with the evaluation outcomes.

Whole provider approach

Equality of Opportunity

KOL is subject to the Equality Act 2010, which requires it to pay due regard to the need to “advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it”. We require all policies and procedures to be assessed for equality, diversity and inclusion to ensure that students are not adversely impacted by the introduction of a policy or any changes to existing policies. This is evidenced through the documentation presented to relevant governance committees and boards.

Strategic approach

Strategically, our APP is aligned with our broader institutional goals set out in the Strategic Planning Framework 2022 – 2027 which aims to extend access to higher education and provide educational opportunities for those who may not have been able to engage with higher education in the traditional ways.

This long-term commitment to access and participation is embedded across all levels of the institution, including our Management Board, Senior Management Team and Academic Board. This ethos is reflected in our Admissions Policy which offers multiple entry routes including a work experience entry route at every level, and an open entry route onto all our CertHE programmes.

Over the next five years the Management Board and Senior Management Team will continue to invest to enable the introduction of new undergraduate programmes across multiple disciplines all with an open entry route, furthering our commitment to inclusivity.

We routinely monitor performance against a suite of metrics including B3 thresholds through our governance structures, such as the Academic Quality and Standards Committee and Academic Board. A key focus is on identifying and mitigating performance gaps among at risk students, as highlighted in our APP. This monitoring process also informs the annual programme reviews and action plans, which are subsequently scrutinised by the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee, where progress on the intervention strategies related to access and participation are closely monitored and subsequently reported into Academic Board.

Staff Collaboration

Since 2007, KOL has maintained a holistic, institution-wide approach to widening access, supported by a centralised structure that facilitates student success throughout their academic journey. In the development of our APP, we engaged colleagues from the Student Services, Academic Team, Learning Technology, Senior Management and Finance teams to draw on a range of knowledge and experience. This structure is vital to the successful implementation of the APP and delivery of the initiatives.

This is KOL's first APP and we will continue to encourage staff involvement in the APP through a series of periodic awareness presentations and updates through our quarterly All Staff Updates delivered by the Senior Management Team. This collaborative framework is vital for the successful implementation of the plan and associated interventions and initiatives.

Student Journey

The following sections illustrate the student journey at KOL and how our whole provider approach supports our students to succeed and achieve their educational goals.

Student Admissions

KOL attracts a broad range of applicants to its online provision many of whom are in full time employment and are seeking to enhance or completely change their careers. As such, most applicants apply directly rather than via UCAS, and many are returning to education after a significant hiatus. Our aim is to reduce unnecessary barriers to entry by offering academic, work experience and open entry options ensuring that we provide opportunities to all students at an appropriate level.

Each applicant is assigned to a dedicated Student Adviser who will support the student through the admissions process, providing advice and guidance on all aspects including loan applications. Furthermore, recognising that many applicants may be new to online study, KOL offers a 21-day money back guarantee which is over and above the legally required 14-day 'cooling off' period. During this period applicants can explore the Learning Platform, connect with peers and familiarise themselves with the online library before fully committing to the programme. At the end of this period students can decide whether to continue to the first module and we can assess whether they will need additional support if they continue. Students who do not continue beyond 21 days will receive a refund of any monies already paid.

KOL regularly reviews their [Admissions Policy](#) to ensure it is inclusive and fair for everyone regardless of their background.

KOL's Online model and flexible provision

KOL's provision is 100% online and we have developed an innovative bespoke sector leading learning platform to support students to achieve their educational goals. The platform allows us to provide a multi-faceted approach to student support. The platform has a responsive theme which provides easy access on a wide variety of mobile devices and conforms to WCAG 2.1 Level AA, which means that there should be no barriers for people regardless of disabilities, assistive technologies that students may use, different screen sizes and different input devices. We have an Accessibility Working Group, with members from Learning Technology, Student Services and the Academic Teams who regularly review the VLE and resources to ensure that accessibility standards are maintained.

Students can engage with their learning from anywhere, at any time. Indicative study durations are provided for each programme, although students can also adjust their pace of study supported by our Leave of Absence policies, this is particularly valuable for students with disabilities or a mental health condition who may need to take study breaks from time to time.

All new students participate in an induction period which provides an orientation tailored to their specific programme, alongside live welcome sessions from the Student Services and Academic teams. Students are supported in managing their workload by clear standardised layouts and information on the Learning Platform.

KOL has 17 years' experience of providing a high quality fully supported online learning experience supported by the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, curriculum and module content is designed to offer an inclusive learning experience. Content, resources and learning activities are built and embedded into every module. Inclusivity is provided through:

- Authentic assessments which enable students to contextualise their assessment to their own real-world workplace or regional locality. A variety of learning materials and assessment formats provide a range of opportunities to demonstrate their learning.
- Programmes which are designed to offer a 'ladder of opportunity' whereby students can begin their learning journey on the CertHE and progress to the full Bachelors should they wish to do so. This particularly supports students who may not wish to make a significant financial or time commitment at the outset of their studies.

Supporting Students throughout their studies

Our access and participation strategies are inextricably linked to our broader institutional goals, such as our aim to provide exceptional student support that enables students to achieve their full potential. This objective is reinforced by the structure of our centralised Student Services team which encompasses first line student support, disability and study skills support. New students attend the welcome activities during their induction which includes an overview and familiarisation with the Learning Platform, and introduction to their subject specific student support team, academic team and the study skills team. The induction period and first module have academic study skills and support embedded to prepare them for future assessments, and the Study Skills team proactively reach out to those who require additional support. The Study Skills team are available for one-to-one sessions and module tutors offer weekly office hours during the module for students to book individual appointments.

The subject specific Student Support team are the first point of contact for students and are able to proactively identify 'at-risk' students through regular touchpoints in the induction and first module so that interventions can be made to offer further support. This team also provide individually focussed advice and guidance to support students in accessing policies and procedures such as late submission, extenuating circumstances; through active problem solving the team aim to maximise and support continued engagement.

The Disability team is also part of the Student Services function, and they provide information, advice and guidance to students on the support and reasonable adjustments that may be available. All students can contact the Disability team directly at any point in their studies and can also be referred from the subject specific Student Support Team. Each student's circumstances are considered on a case-by-case basis to identify the support that is best suited to them.

The Student Voice is critical to shaping and enhancing the learning experience that KOL is providing to its students. We have established mechanisms such as course representatives, a Student Council and the Student Experience Committee to capture and act on student feedback.

Membership of the Student Council is open to all students and the Lead Advocate of the Council is a member of our Student Experience Committee.

In addition to utilising course representation and the Student Council, students can also provide feedback through end of module surveys, via the Student Voice Forum on the learning platform and through individual consultations used during programme developments and periodic reviews.

This collaborative approach ensures that student feedback is integrated into our practices, contributing to the continuous enhancement of the education experience at KOL.

Supporting Student Mental Health

KOL seeks to support all students who are experience difficulties with their mental health, student can declare a mental health condition at any stage of their studies, and we have seen an increase in the number of students declaring mental health conditions. As a result, we have completed a pilot with a number of our Student Advisers undertaking MHFA training to become Mental Health First Aiders. Feedback from the pilot was that they felt more prepared to support students presenting with mental health conditions and so we plan to roll out to the rest of the team.

Re-assessment Support

The Study Skills Team offer proactive support to students at the most vulnerable periods of their studies. This includes when they first start their course, at which time a live introductory session is held, and students are offered advice and support via email. If students receive an academic offence throughout their studies, the Study Skills Team reach out to them to offer varied types of support ranging from advice based on draft submissions to a personalised one to one session to discuss the reasons for the offence and how to improve academic practice moving forward.

We have also identified failure to complete reassessment following a module failure as a critical point in a student learning journey when they are at greatest risk of withdrawing/being withdrawn from their studies. As a result, following each Examination Board, the Study Skills Team contact all students required to undertake resubmission and are available throughout the resubmission period to answer any academic skills queries the students may have and offer feedback on a draft submission.

Student consultation

To ensure that our access and participation plan (APP) is truly reflective of the needs and perspectives of our student body, we engaged in extensive consultation with students before its submission for approval. This process began with a briefing session and sharing a draft of the APP with the Student Council, who were asked to provide feedback based on their experiences and insights. Additionally, we conducted a consultation with our whole student population on a Student Voice forum via our VLE.

As a result of these consultations, several key modifications were made to the APP. For instance, students emphasised the need for more mental health support services, leading us to allocate additional resources to expand our wellness support. Other areas highlighted included technical literacy support for mature students and enhanced induction and orientation processes which is now reflected in this plan. They also emphasised the importance of accessible information regarding financial support, prompting us to improve our communication strategies and provide more

comprehensive information on funding opportunities. These changes reflect our commitment to incorporating student feedback into actionable steps that enhance their overall experience and support their success.

Moving forward, students will continue to play a crucial role in the planning, monitoring, evaluation, and delivery of our access and participation work via the Student Council which will review progress, provide ongoing feedback, and suggest new initiatives. The Student Council will work closely with our administrative teams to ensure that student voices are integral to the decision-making process. Additionally, student representatives will be involved in annual reviews of the APP, helping to assess the effectiveness of implemented strategies and identify areas for improvement. This collaborative approach not only ensures accountability but also fosters a sense of shared responsibility and engagement among the student community.

Evaluation of the plan

Our strategy for strengthening the evaluation activity of our access and participation plan (APP) is multi-faceted, aimed at ensuring rigorous, comprehensive, and continuous assessment. Firstly, we are enhancing our data collection and analysis capabilities by investing in the development of the reporting element of our student management system to provide a suite of management information reports and a data dashboard for more in-depth data diving and analysis, alongside training staff to use this effectively. This will enable us to gather more granular data on student demographics, engagement, academic performance, and continuation rates. By leveraging this data, we can identify trends, measure the effectiveness of our initiatives, and make data-driven decisions to refine our strategies.

In addition to improved data capabilities, we are establishing a robust framework for regular review and feedback. This involves setting up an Evaluation Group comprising faculty, administrative staff, and student representatives who will meet quarterly to assess progress against our APP objectives. The committee will use a set of predefined key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure success, ensuring that our evaluations are consistent and objective. The Evaluation Group will report quarterly into the Operations Management Committee which is part of our formal governance structure. The reporting route into this committee which is responsible for day-to-day operations will enable swift amendments to the support activities where necessary.

To ensure the transparency and accountability of our evaluation process, the Evaluation Group will develop annual evaluation reports that detail our findings, progress, and areas for improvement. These reports will be shared with all stakeholders, including students, staff, and external partners, fostering a culture of openness and continuous improvement. Additionally, we plan to conduct periodic external audits to provide an unbiased assessment of our efforts and outcomes. By adopting these comprehensive evaluation strategies, we aim to create a dynamic and responsive APP that continuously evolves to meet the needs of our diverse student body.

Provision of information to students

This APP outlines how information regarding fees and financial support will be communicated to both prospective and current students through the following methods:

- a) Tuition fees, scholarships and discounts are clearly published on the [Fees and Funding](#) section of the programme information on our website.

- b) All prospective students are assigned to a dedicated Admissions Adviser who will support the applicant through the admissions process and will be their contact point for any questions, advice and guidance. Our Admissions Advisers will also provide information about available financial support.
- c) Prospective students will receive detailed information about the fees for their entire programme in their KOL Offer Letter, which includes a comprehensive fee schedule.
- d) The complete Access and Participation Plan and its Executive Summary will be accessible to all prospective students via the website.
- e) The complete Access and Participation Plan and its Executive Summary will also be available to all current students through KOL's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).
- f) KOL will ensure that student facing staff are well-versed in the details of the Access and Participation Plan, enabling them to provide feedback and assist students in taking advantage of available opportunities.
- g) We also have a dedicated Student Finance and Retention team who operate across all programmes and are available to provide advice and guidance to students throughout their studies. The Team will support students who are experiencing financial difficulties in paying their tuition fees, including advice on our hardship fund. The team collaborate closely with the Admissions Team, Student Services and Academic Teams to ensure a holistic whole organisation approach.

Annex A: Further information and analysis relating to the identification and prioritisation of key risks to equality of opportunity

Assessment of Performance

This summary is an analysis of KOL's data and its implications for the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR). In this process, KOL has ensured compliance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 concerning the use and publication of non-identifiable student information.

KOL's datasets indicate that the majority of students (59%) covered by the Access and Participation Plan (APP) enrolled on one of our undergraduate bachelors degree programmes. The remaining students enrolled on a Certificate of Continuing or Higher Education (38%) or the top-up degree (3%).

Overall enrolment numbers have generally shown an upward trend year after year. KOL anticipates this trend to persist in the coming years due to the continued growth and advancement of its undergraduate degree offerings.

To evaluate KOL's access and participation performance, the following datasets have been analysed:

- **OfS Access and Participation Dashboard:** This dashboard provides up to six years' worth of KOL data (from 2016-17 to 2021-22) sourced from HESA returns and the Graduate Outcomes Survey. Figures marked as Not available ('N/A') indicate suppressed data to safeguard sensitive information. Disaggregating data by key groups, including mental health conditions and further ethnicity groupings, was sometimes infeasible due to insufficient student numbers. It's noteworthy that some data covers periods coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic, posing challenges in interpreting results reliably.
- **Institutional raw data:** Analysis of raw data was conducted to evaluate the performance of small student groups to the extent feasible with these limited datasets.
- **Sector level data:** Released by the OfS, this data serves as a benchmark to assess KOL's current position against comparable higher education sector lifecycle data.
- **Sector data publications:** These publications offer data and statistics on areas of deprivation concerning access within KOL's student demographic.
- **Mature student demographic data:** Given KOL's majority mature student demographic, efforts were made to identify specific gaps and risks within this demographic to align with KOL's targets.

By analysing these datasets, KOL aims to gain insights into its access and participation performance and identify areas for improvement to ensure equitable opportunities for all students.

Institutional Approach

KOL, due to the nature of its part-time and flexible approach to study, faces limitations in the datasets sourced from the OfS data dashboard. Consequently, setting meaningful targets is challenging, especially for student groups with small populations.

Given the statistical uncertainty associated with small numbers, KOL acknowledges the limitations of statistical significance within the data dashboard and recognises that some data in the dashboard is suppressed due to low numbers resulting in limited data.

KOL is committed to annual reviews of this data as part of the evaluation process to identify any gaps and inform improvements. By regularly reviewing and evaluating data, KOL aims to address

limitations, ensure accuracy, and identify opportunities for enhancement in its access and participation strategies.

Institutional Context

KOL faces distinct institutional challenges due to its mode of delivery, with students studying 100% online and part-time and an older student age on entry (average student age is 40). When initially examining the OfS data dashboard, it was crucial to consider these specific challenges alongside the risks identified through consultation with the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR).

Identified risks to equality of opportunity from the EORR include:

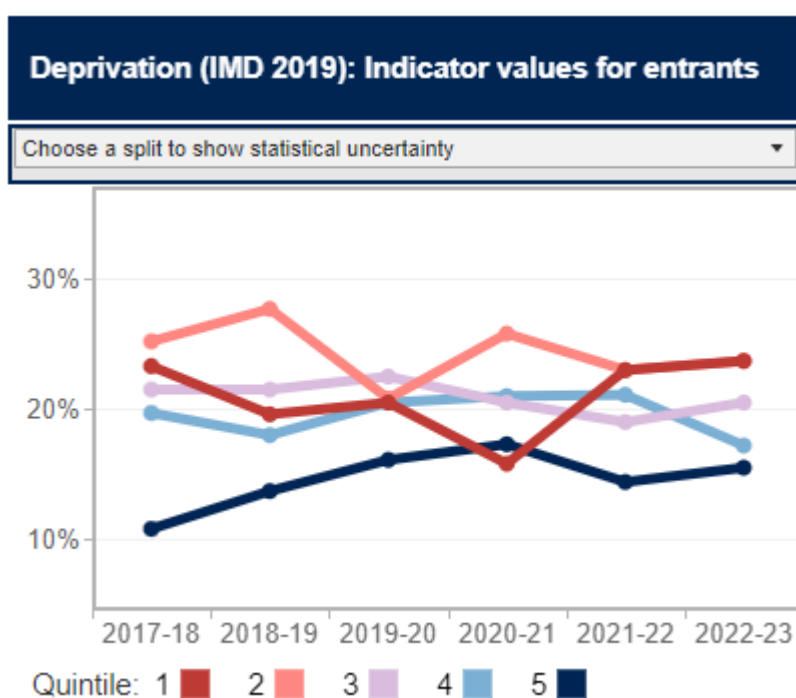
- **Risk 6: Academic support:** Online students may encounter challenges transitioning to higher education and seeking support from staff or peers.
- **Risk 8: Mental health:** Financial constraints, lack of peer support, inadequate study environment, or work-related time constraints may contribute to declining mental health among students, impacting their ability to continue studying.
- **Risk 10: Cost pressures:** Increases in costs, family responsibilities, or job loss may hinder students' ability to continue their studies.

These specific risks were then compared with the data dashboard analysis to identify the groups with the highest risks. This informed KOL's target setting and strategy development to deliver measurable impacts for these groups.

Access

Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

The graph below taken from the OfS access and participation dashboard displays the deprivation levels of entrants based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for the years 2017-18 to 2022-23. The data is segmented into quintiles, with Quintile 1 representing the most deprived and Quintile 5 the least deprived.



The proportion of entrants from the most deprived quintile (Quintile 1) has shown fluctuations but generally remains higher than other quintiles. Quintile 2 also exhibits a similar trend to Quintile 1,

with relatively higher percentages compared to Quintiles 3, 4, and 5. The least deprived quintile (Quintile 5) consistently has the lowest percentage of entrants throughout the period.

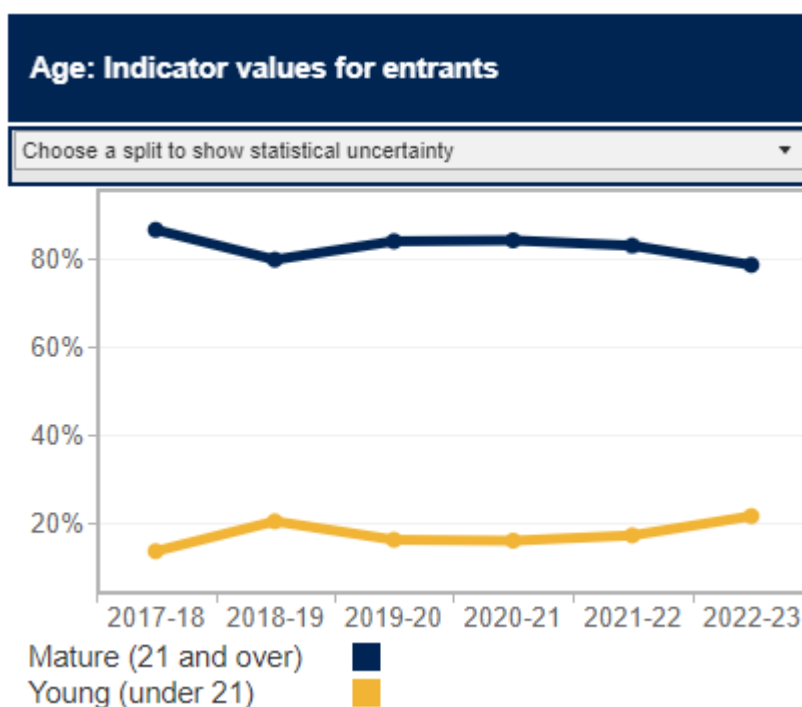
In terms of comparative analysis, entrants from more deprived backgrounds (Quintiles 1 and 2) are consistently higher compared to those from less deprived backgrounds (Quintiles 4 and 5). Quintile 3 shows less fluctuation and remains in the middle range throughout the years.

The data suggests a significant representation of students from deprived areas in the entrant population, particularly in the most deprived quintile. This trend reflects targeted efforts to increase access to education for students from deprived backgrounds including offering an open entry route to access via our CertHE programme and a 21 day money back guarantee.

Considering the significant number of participants from underprivileged backgrounds and the absence of major achievement gaps, KOL will allocate resources to support the success of these students in their programmes.

Age

The graph below taken from the OfS access and participation dashboard displays the age distribution of entrants based on two categories: Mature (21 and over) and Young (under 21) for the years 2017-18 to 2022-23.



The proportion of mature entrants (21 and over) is consistently high throughout the period, maintaining levels around 80%. This indicates that the majority of entrants fall into the mature age category. There is a slight decrease in the percentage of mature entrants over the years, but it remains the dominant group.

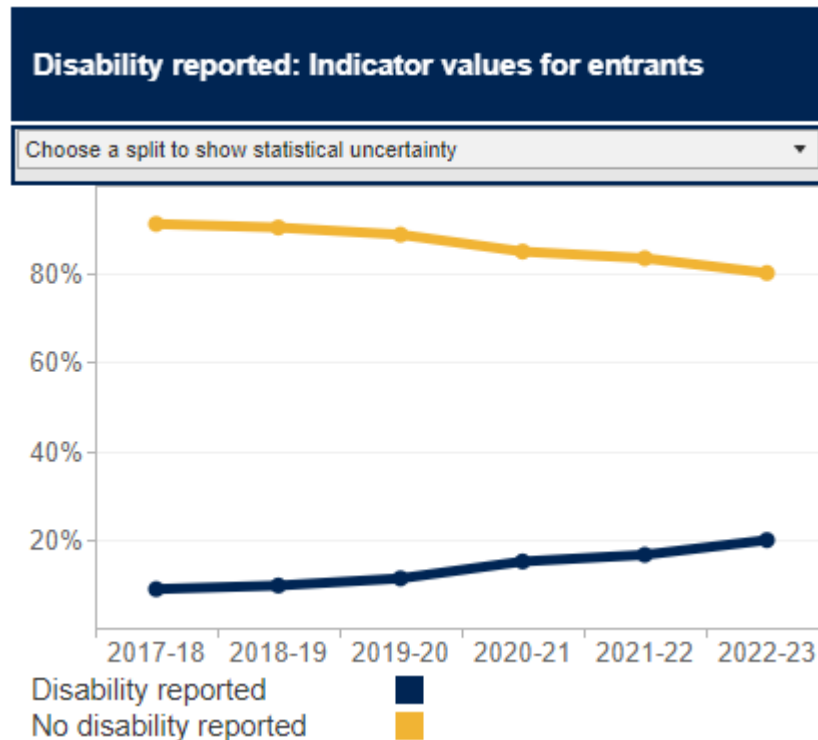
This data suggests that mature students form the bulk of entrants over the years, significantly outnumbering young students. The stable trend of mature entrants remains high, while a slight rise in younger students in recent years hints at a growing acceptance of online learning post-Covid.

Given the nature of our student demographic and considerable participation of mature students, KOL will invest resources to aid mature students in succeeding within their programmes rather than establishing access targets.

A large majority of KOL's students are mature and that this is a well-known risk factor for continuation in the sector, KOL will dedicate resources to support the continuation of these students. Additional support will be provided during their induction and in their first module to ensure that they have the support required to successfully progress in their programme of study. Internal data will be used to measure the 6-month withdrawal rate of students with the aim to reduce this by 0.5% each year until it reaches 10.6% in 2028-29.

Disability

The graph below taken from the OfS access and participation dashboard displays the number of entrants who declared a disability from 2017-18 to 2022-23.



The graph shows a clear upward trend in the percentage of students declaring a disability from 2017-18 to 2022-23. In 2017-18, the proportion of entrants who reported having a disability was just under 20%. Over the subsequent years, this figure steadily increased. By the 2019-20 academic year, the percentage had risen slightly, maintaining a similar pace of growth in the following years.

By 2022-23, the proportion of students declaring a disability reached approximately 23%. This steady increase suggests a gradual change in the number of students with disabilities entering higher education.

The online study mode already facilitates participation for disabled students who might find it challenging to attend campus physically. KOL intends to prioritise offering resources to aid the success of disabled students in their programmes, rather than establishing access targets.

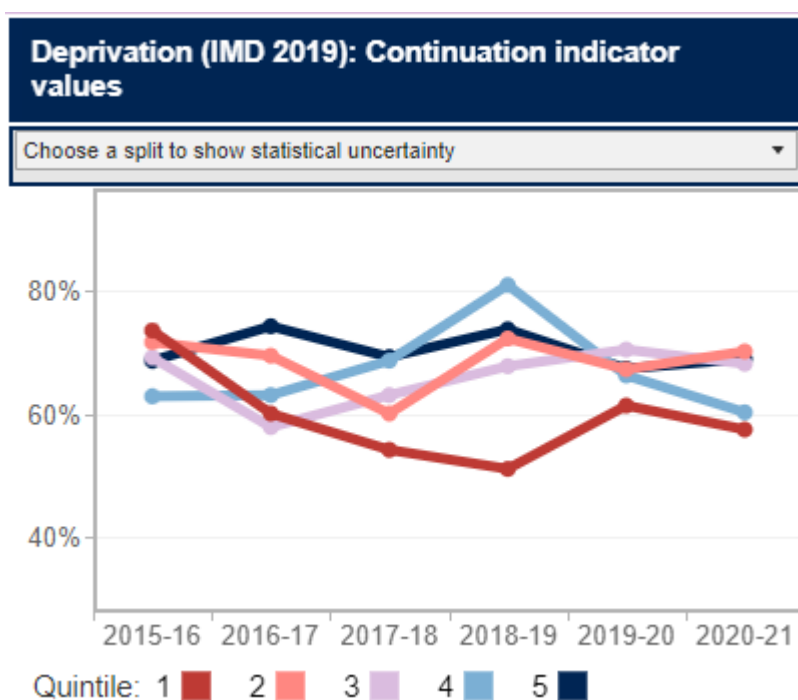
Other under-represented groups

For some under-represented student groups, the population sizes were consistently too small, leading to data suppression in some or all academic years or low numbers resulting in high levels of statistical uncertainty. As a result, meaningful analysis and accurate assessment of any gaps were not possible and some population sizes were too small to determine any potential risks to equality of opportunity relating to Access in the study of Higher Education qualifications. This included TUNDRA, Ethnicity, ABCS and Eligibility for Free School Meals.

Continuation

Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

The chart from the OfS access and participation dashboard depicts continuation rates of students based on their levels of deprivation, as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) from 2015-16 to 2020-21. The IMD divides areas into quintiles, with Quintile 1 representing the most deprived areas and Quintile 5 representing the least deprived.



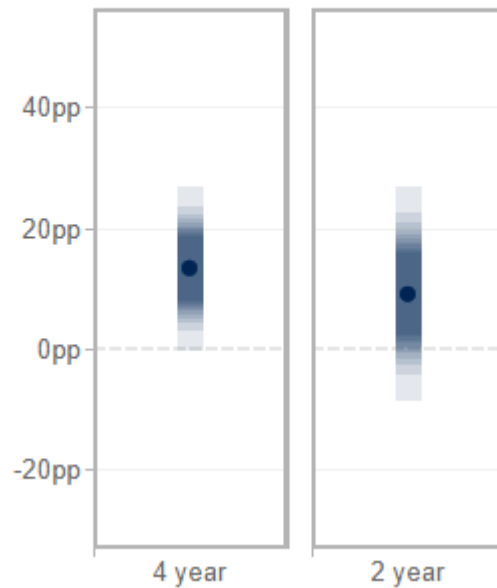
Students from Quintile 5 (the least deprived) consistently show the highest continuation rates, generally around 80%. Although there is some fluctuation between 2017-18 and 2018-19, this group has a relatively stable continuation rate, suggesting better retention among students from less deprived backgrounds.

In contrast, students from Quintile 1 (the most deprived) exhibit lower continuation rates, typically hovering around 60%. This group saw a decrease in continuation rates from 2015-16 to 2018-19 but experienced a slight recovery afterward, particularly in 2020-21, when the rate approached 65%. Nonetheless, this is significantly below the rate for less deprived students.

The patterns for Quintiles 2 to 4 show some variation. Quintile 2 students have similar continuation rates to those in Quintile 1, particularly between 2016-17 and 2020-21, where both groups have continuation rates around 60-65%. Meanwhile, Quintile 3 students saw a sharp decline between 2017-18 and 2018-19, reaching below 60%, but then their rates stabilised, recovering slightly in 2020-21. Quintile 4 students exhibit a relatively stable trend, similar to Quintile 5, though their rates are slightly lower, hovering around 70-75%.

The gaps between quintile 1 and quintile 5 over aggregated four and two year periods are shown on the graph below. Over a four-year period, the gap is 13.3 percentage points, while over two years, it narrows to 9.0 percentage points.

Deprivation (IMD 2019): gap between quintile 5 and quintile 1



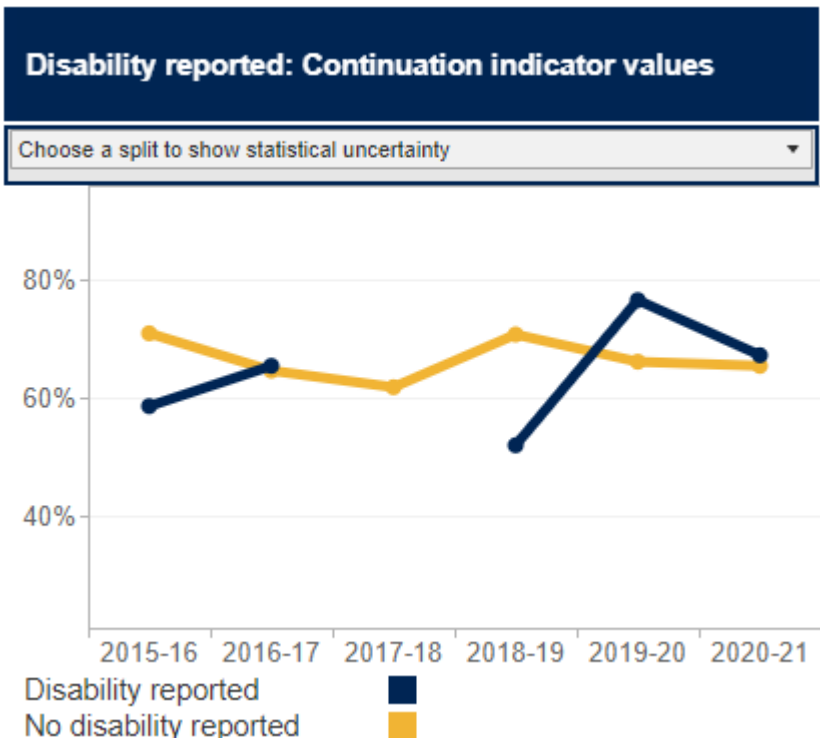
The data highlights clear disparities in student continuation rates based on deprivation levels, with those from more deprived areas (Quintiles 1 and 2) facing greater challenges in staying on course compared to their less deprived counterparts. This suggests that socioeconomic factors have a significant impact on student retention. Internal data highlights that one of the biggest factors impacting these students is financial, with 29% of those who withdraw citing financial difficulties as the main reason for withdrawal.

Intervention Strategy 3 outlines our plan to provide additional hardship support and scholarships to students from more deprived backgrounds to ensure deprived students are more likely to apply and less likely to withdraw due to financial pressures. The target will be to reduce the aggregated four-year continuation gap between student in IMD quintile 1 (most deprived) and IMD quintile 5 (least deprived) by 4 percentage points to 9.3 by 2028-29.

Intervention Strategy 1 which outlines the additional support that we plan to provide to all students during the induction period and the first six months of study will further support continuation for students in this category.

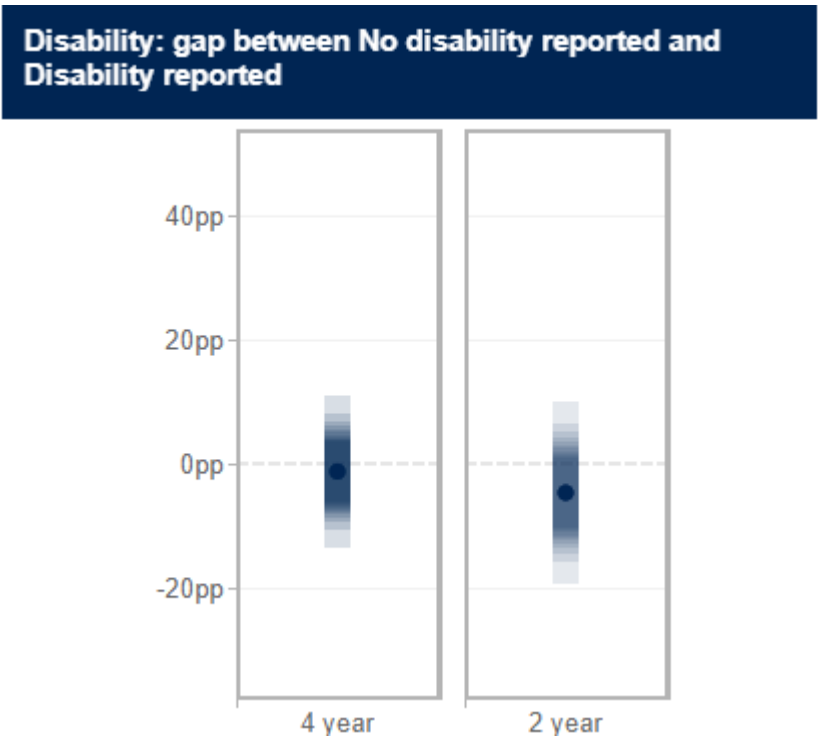
Disability

This chart from the OfS access and participation dashboard shows the continuation rates of students based on whether they reported a disability or not, across the academic years 2015-16 to 2020-21.



This data shows that students who did not report a disability have consistently higher continuation rates compared to those who reported a disability. Their rates hover around 70% throughout most of the period, with only slight fluctuations. However, the population size is small, leading to data suppression in some years. Internal data supports this, with module pass rates consistently being lower for students who declare a disability.

This chart from the OfS access and participation dashboard presents the aggregated gaps for continuation over a four-year and two-year period. The four-year gap is reported as 1.4 percentage points, but due to missing and suppressed data, this timeframe is not a reliable indicator. Therefore, the two-year gap of 4.7 percentage points should be used as the more appropriate measure of continuation rates, as it provides a clearer and more accurate reflection of the current situation.



This analysis indicates that students with disabilities face more inconsistent outcomes when it comes to continuation. Internal data shows that almost of third of disabled students declare a mental condition.

Intervention Strategy 3 outlines how we plan to provide more consistent mental health support to students so that those who declare a mental health related disability are given the support required so that they can continue their studies at rates comparable to their peers without disabilities of this nature. The aim is to reduce the module pass rate gap for students who declare a disability from 6.2% to 5.0% by 2028-29.

Other under-represented groups

For some under-represented student groups, the population sizes were consistently too small, leading to data suppression in some or all academic years or low numbers resulting in high levels of statistical uncertainty. As a result, meaningful analysis and accurate assessment of any gaps were not possible and some population sizes were too small to determine any potential risks to equality of opportunity relating to Continuation in the study of Higher Education qualifications. This included TUNDRA, Age, Ethnicity, ABCS and Eligibility for Free School Meals.

Completion

The OfS dashboard measures completion primarily by tracking the proportion of students who successfully complete their degree programmes within a specified period. It is difficult for KOL to use completion rates as a measurement due to the extended timeframes allowed for part-time students to complete their studies, which can be up to nine years for bachelor's degree students. As a result, there is insufficient data to accurately identify gaps, and it would take too long to assess whether any targeted interventions were successful. Therefore, we believe it is more appropriate to measure progress through continuation rates, which provide a more timely and practical means of assessment.

Attainment

The OfS dashboard measures attainment in higher education primarily through the monitoring of degree outcomes, particularly focusing on the proportion of students achieving "good degrees" (typically classified as first-class or upper second-class honours). Attainment is analysed across different student demographics, such as socio-economic background, ethnicity, disability status, and other factors, to identify attainment gaps.

KOL will not set attainment targets due to the limitations in its performance data. The data is either suppressed, incomplete or involves population sizes that are too small across all four years. As such, KOL feels this is not an area where it can make the most impact, given the small year-on-year numbers and the length of time it takes to complete a degree programme.

As an institution, KOL prioritises positive learning outcomes for all students, focusing on module and programme engagement and success rates. Institutional targets are clearly defined for module engagement, success, and programme completion. Progress towards these targets is monitored by the Senior Management Team, academic committees, and through programme quality assurance processes.

At the programme level, detailed reviews of module and programme outcomes data are conducted to monitor the performance of different student groups, such as students with declared disabilities or those in apprenticeship programmes, to ensure all students have the opportunity to succeed. If necessary, additional support or enhancements are provided to specific student groups.

KOL also undertakes an annual review of degree outcomes data, which monitors the classification outcomes of different student groups.

Progression

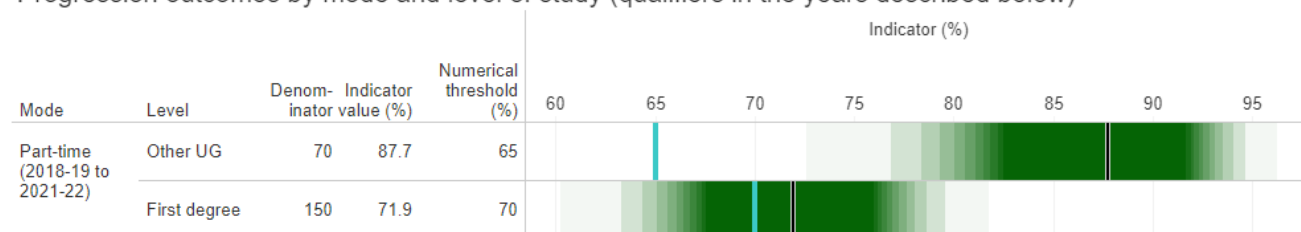
There is insufficient data available in the OfS APP dashboard to enable KOL to set specific targets related to progression. KOL only has small populations of under-represented student groups, and an even smaller proportion of these students complete the Graduate Outcomes Survey.

Overall progression rates at KOL are good, so progression is not considered an area of concern for the institution. This is outlined below in the OfS data dashboard ¹ used to inform the regulation of B3 conditions relating to Progression.

For "Other UG", the indicator value is 87.7%, significantly exceeding the numerical threshold of 65%. This suggests a high success rate in terms of student progression. The denominator value for this category is 70.

The "First degree" category has an indicator value of 71.9%, which, while just above the threshold of 70%, demonstrates that students are meeting the expected benchmark. With a denominator value of 150, this result reflects a consistent level of performance in line with the required standard.

Progression outcomes by mode and level of study (qualifiers in the years described below)



The EORR highlights that many under-represented groups face unequal opportunities when it comes to progressing into further study or employment. Despite the lack of detailed data, KOL is committed to supporting traditionally under-represented groups as part of its widening participation approach.

KOL has not set a specific objective or numerical target for progression.

Intersections of disadvantage

KOL's student population size makes it challenging to conduct any meaningful intersectional analysis. KOL did attempt to cross-reference certain datasets (particularly concerning mature students, as one of the largest student groups) and utilised disaggregated data for further intersectional analysis. However, the smaller sample sizes did not reveal any significant evidence of risks to equality of opportunity.

Other groups who experience risks to equality of opportunity

KOL does not focus on access and participation initiatives related to improving pre-16 attainment in the UK because our student demographic and educational model cater to a distinct audience. With an average age of 34, our students are typically working professionals who join our programmes to enhance or change their careers. Our 100% online, geographically diverse student population means that we serve a global, adult learner community rather than school-aged learners. Therefore, our efforts are centred on providing flexible, career-focused education for adult learners rather than initiatives aimed at pre-16 educational outcomes within the UK.

¹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/student-outcomes-data-dashboard/data-dashboard/>

Annex B: Further information that sets out the rationale, assumptions and evidence base for each intervention strategy that is included in the access and participation plan.

Intervention Strategy 1

Intervention Strategy 1 is designed to address the key challenges that students, particularly first-year students, face in their academic journey. The strategy leverages evidence-based approaches to significantly enhance student continuation, satisfaction, and academic performance.

Early Interventions and Continuation

Research underscores the importance of early interventions in improving student continuation. The 2015 HEFCE report "Causes of Differences in Student Outcomes"² concludes that early interventions are pivotal in enhancing student continuation and success in higher education. By proactively identifying at-risk students through early monitoring of academic performance and engagement, institutions can provide personalized and timely support tailored to individual needs. Such interventions include academic assistance, transition support programs, fostering a sense of belonging, and addressing well-being and financial concerns. The report emphasises that a holistic, institution-wide commitment to early intervention not only mitigates disparities in student outcomes but also enriches the educational experience for all students.

Orientation and Induction Programmes

Orientation and induction programmes are foundational to effective student support. These programs help new students understand academic expectations, navigate campus resources, and build a sense of community. Research by Thomas (2012)³ supports the notion that these programmes help new students understand academic expectations, become familiar with campus resources, and build a sense of belonging within the university community. Such early engagement is linked to improved student retention and success.

Resubmission Support

Targeted resubmission support is a key strategy to help struggling students. Personalised study skills support addresses specific academic challenges, improving students' understanding and performance. Our internal data indicates that students who engage in regular study skills sessions exhibit marked improvements in their grades. Resubmission support ensures that students who initially struggle with course material have the opportunity to master it, thereby promoting better long-term academic outcomes.

Early Identification and Personalised Support Plans

Early assessment of students' academic readiness allows institutions to tailor support plans to individual needs. Personalised interventions based on early assessments have been shown to improve student outcomes significantly. Kandiko Howson, C., & Buckley, A. (2017)⁴ identifies tailored support as a key factor in enhancing academic experiences. Tailored feedback and support help students understand coursework requirements better, leading to improved academic outcomes and reduced failure rates.

² King's College London, ARC Network, and The University of Manchester. (2015). *Causes of Differences in Student Outcomes*. Report to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), July 2015. Retrieved from HEFCE website.

³ Thomas, L. (2012). *Building Student Engagement and Belonging in Higher Education at a Time of Change: Final Report from the What Works? Student Retention & Success Programme*. Higher Education Academy.

⁴ H Kandiko Howson, C., & Buckley, A. (2017). *Development of the UK Engagement Survey*. Higher Education Academy.

AI-Powered Study Skills BOT

The integration of technology, such as an AI-powered Study Skills BOT, offers flexible, around-the-clock support for students. This BOT will provide immediate assistance with study resources, helping students develop self-directed learning skills and engage more effectively with their coursework. Technology-enhanced learning tools have been found to significantly boost student engagement and academic performance (Means et al., 2010)⁵.

In conclusion, Intervention Strategy 1 employs a multifaceted approach to address the critical challenges faced by first-year students. By integrating induction and mentorship programs, providing targeted resubmission support, conducting early academic readiness assessments, and leveraging technology such as AI-powered Study Skills BOTs, the strategy aims to create a supportive and effective learning environment. This comprehensive support system is crucial for enhancing student continuation, satisfaction, and academic success.

Intervention Strategy 2: Addressing the Impact of Mental Health on Student Success

Intervention Strategy 2 aims to mitigate the significant impact of mental health issues on student success. Institutional data indicates that module pass rates are lower for students who declare a mental health condition. By enhancing access to mental health resources and support services, this strategy seeks to improve student wellbeing and academic performance, thereby increasing pass rates and continuation.

The Importance of Mental Health Resources

Accessible mental health resources are crucial for improving student outcomes. Research consistently shows that mental health conditions can severely affect academic performance, leading to lower continuation and pass rates. The Office for Students (OfS) has highlighted that students with reported mental health conditions generally have lower continuation and completion rates compared to their peers without such conditions. For instance, continuation rates for full-time students with reported mental health conditions are consistently lower than for those without. This disparity underscores the impact of mental health issues on students' ability to persist in their studies⁶. By providing comprehensive mental health support, institutions can help students manage their conditions more effectively, resulting in better academic performance and higher continuation rates.

Online Mental Health Platforms

Online mental health platforms can play a significant role in increasing the utilisation of mental health resources. The NHS Long Term Plan (2019)⁷ states that online platforms are pivotal in transforming mental health care delivery. These platforms can offer a range of services, including counselling, mental health assessments, and self-help resources, making them an essential component of the strategy.

Collaboration Between Learning Technology and Student Services

Ensuring that mental health support is accessible and user-friendly requires collaboration between learning technology and student services. This collaboration can lead to the development of intuitive

⁵ Means, B., Toyama, Y., Murphy, R., Bakia, M., & Jones, K. (2010). Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning: A Meta-Analysis and Review of Online Learning Studies. US Department of Education.

⁶ Office for Students (OfS). (2019). *Mental health: Are all students being properly supported?* Insight Brief. Retrieved from OfS website

⁷ NHS England. (2019). *The NHS Long Term Plan*.

platforms that integrate seamlessly with other student services. As noted by Davies et al. (2020)⁸, such integration is crucial for creating a supportive environment that encourages students to seek help when needed.

Mental Health Awareness Training for Staff

Mental health awareness training for academic and support staff is critical for creating an inclusive and supportive educational environment. Research Universities UK (2015)⁹ indicates the critical role of staff training in recognising and supporting students with mental health issues. It highlights that when university staff are adequately trained, they can identify early signs of mental distress, provide appropriate interventions, and refer students to specialised services. Such proactive support has been linked to improved student outcomes, including enhanced academic performance and reduced attrition rates.

Resilience Training for Students

Resilience training, including workshops and seminars on coping strategies, can significantly enhance students' ability to manage stress and improve their engagement in academic activities. According to a study by Conley et al. (2015)¹⁰, resilience training programs can reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, leading to improved academic performance and continuation. These programmes equip students with the skills necessary to handle the challenges of academic life, promoting a healthier, more productive student body.

By focusing on students with declared mental health conditions, Intervention Strategy 2 aims to reduce the negative impact of mental health issues on academic performance. This comprehensive approach includes the use of online mental health platforms, collaboration between learning technology and student services, mental health awareness training for staff, and resilience training for students. Together, these initiatives aim to enhance the overall wellbeing of students, increase pass rates, and improve continuation, ultimately leading to greater student success.

Intervention Strategy 3: Financial Stability and Support for Mature Students

Intervention Strategy 3 is grounded in robust evidence demonstrating the critical impact of financial stability and support on student continuation and success. This strategy particularly addresses the unique challenges faced by mature students, who often juggle financial, familial, and work responsibilities alongside their academic pursuits. By providing financial support and reducing initial enrolment risk, this strategy aims to enhance the continuation, pass rates, and overall success of mature students.

Challenges Faced by Mature Students

Mature students, face distinct challenges that can impede their academic progress. Financial instability, work-life balance, and family responsibilities are significant factors affecting their ability to persist in their studies (Bye, Pushkar, and Conway, 2007)¹¹. These students often have to manage multiple roles, including being primary caregivers or full-time employees, which can lead to higher stress levels and less time for academic activities (National Union of Students, 2012)¹².

⁸ Davies, E.B., Morriss, R., Glazebrook, C. (2020). Computer-delivered and web-based interventions to improve depression, anxiety, and psychological well-being of university students: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 22(8), e13065.

⁹ Universities UK (UUK). (2015). *Student Mental Wellbeing in Higher Education: Good Practice Guide..*

¹⁰ Conley, C.S., Durlak, J.A., Kirsch, A.C. (2015). A meta-analysis of universal mental health prevention programs for higher education students. *Prevention Science*, 16(4), pp. 487-507.

¹¹ Bye, D., Pushkar, D., & Conway, M. (2007). Motivation, Interest, and Positive Affect in Traditional and Nontraditional Undergraduate Students. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 57(2), pp. 141-158.

¹² National Union of Students (NUS). (2012). *Never Too Late To Learn: Mature Students in Higher Education.*

Financial Support and Student Continuation

Financial support is a critical factor in improving student continuation and success. Research indicates that financial difficulties are a major barrier to academic performance and continuation rates (HEFCE, 2013)¹³. Timely financial interventions, such as hardship funds, can alleviate financial stress, allowing students to concentrate on their studies. Hardship funds are particularly vital for mature students, who are more likely to face unexpected financial challenges due to their complex life situations (Callender, C., & Jackson, J., 2008)¹⁴.

Hardship Funds

Hardship funds provide immediate financial relief for students facing unexpected expenses, thereby preventing financial stress from escalating into academic difficulties. The Institute for Employment Studies (2015)¹⁵ found that students who received financial support through hardship funds were more likely to persist in their studies and achieve higher academic outcomes. For mature students, who often balance education with family and work responsibilities, these funds can be crucial in maintaining their continuation rates and academic performance.

Scholarships

Scholarships, both merit-based and need-based, reduce the financial burden of tuition and living expenses, enabling students to focus more on their studies. According to Callender, C., & Wilkinson, D. (2013)¹⁶, scholarships significantly improve continuation rates and academic performance by reducing the need for students to work long hours, which can interfere with their studies. This is particularly important for mature students, who may have higher living costs and additional family-related expenses.

Evidence-Based Rationale

The rationale for these interventions is supported by extensive evidence demonstrating that financial security and early commitment significantly enhance student continuation, satisfaction, and academic success.

Intervention Strategy 3 addresses the financial and practical challenges faced by mature students, aiming to improve their continuation and academic success. By providing hardship funds, support and scholarships, this strategy offers critical financial stability and reduces the initial risk of enrolment. The evidence underscores that financial support and early commitment are pivotal in enhancing student continuation and success, particularly for mature students juggling multiple responsibilities.

¹³ HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England). (2013). *Higher Education and Beyond: Outcomes from Full-time First Degree Study*.

¹⁴ Callender, C., & Jackson, J. (2008). *Does the Fear of Debt Deter Students from Higher Education?* Journal of Social Policy.

¹⁵ Institute for Employment Studies (IES). (2015). *Understanding the Impact of Institutional Financial Support on Student Outcomes*. Commissioned by the Office for Fair Access (OFFA)

¹⁶ Callender, C., & Wilkinson, D. (2013). *Student Perceptions of the Impact of Bursaries and Scholarships on Their Higher Education Choices and Experiences*. London: Sutton Trust.

Annex C: Targets, investment and fees

The OfS will append the information from the fees, investment and targets document when an access and participation plan is published.

Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: Kaplan Open Learning (Essex) Limited

Provider UKPRN: 10021682

Summary of 2025-26 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflation statement:

Subject to the maximum fee limits set out in Regulations we will increase fees each year using RPI-X
Tuition fee increases are clearly outlined on the website and in the terms and conditions

Table 3b - Full-time course fee levels for 2025-26 entrants

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	*	N/A	*
Foundation degree	*	N/A	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	N/A	*
HNC/HND	*	N/A	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	N/A	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	N/A	*
Accelerated degree	*	N/A	*
Sandwich year	*	N/A	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	N/A	*
Other	*	N/A	*

Table 3b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2025-26

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Sub-contractual provider name and additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

Table 4b - Part-time course fee levels for 2025-26 entrants

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	N/A	N/A	6935
Foundation degree	*	N/A	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	N/A	*
HNC/HND	*	N/A	*
CertHE/DipHE	N/A	N/A	6935
Postgraduate ITT	*	N/A	*
Accelerated degree	*	N/A	*
Sandwich year	*	N/A	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	N/A	*
Other	Level 6 top up programme	N/A	6935

Table 4b - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2025-26

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Sub-contractual provider name and additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: Kaplan Open Learning (Essex) Limited

Provider UKPRN: 10021682

Investment summary

A provider is expected to submit information about its forecasted investment to achieve the objectives of its access and participation plan in respect of the following areas: access, financial support and research and evaluation. Note that this does not necessarily represent the total amount spent by a provider in these areas. Table 6b provides a summary of the forecasted investment, across the four academic years covered by the plan, and Table 6d gives a more detailed breakdown.

Notes about the data:

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.

Yellow shading indicates data that was calculated rather than input directly by the provider.

In Table 6d (under 'Breakdown'):

"Total access investment funded from HFI" refers to income from charging fees above the basic fee limit.

"Total access investment from other funding (as specified)" refers to other funding, including OIS funding (but excluding Uni Connect), other public funding and funding from other sources such as philanthropic giving and private sector sources and/or partners.

Table 6b - Investment summary

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Breakdown	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Access activity investment (£)	NA	£98,000	£78,000	£78,000	£78,000
Financial support (£)	NA	£25,000	£25,000	£25,000	£25,000
Research and evaluation (£)	NA	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000

Table 6d - Investment estimates

Investment estimate (to the nearest £1,000)	Breakdown	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
Access activity investment	Pre-16 access activities (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Access activity investment	Post-16 access activities (£)	£98,000	£78,000	£78,000	£78,000
Access activity investment	Other access activities (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Access activity investment	Total access investment (£)	£98,000	£78,000	£78,000	£78,000
Access activity investment	Total access investment (as % of HFI)	45.8%	12.1%	7.3%	5.2%
Access activity investment	Total access investment funded from HFI (£)	£98,000	£78,000	£78,000	£78,000
Access activity investment	Total access investment from other funding (as specified) (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	Bursaries and scholarships (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	Fee waivers (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	Hardship funds (£)	£25,000	£25,000	£25,000	£25,000
Financial support investment	Total financial support investment (£)	£25,000	£25,000	£25,000	£25,000
Financial support investment	Total financial support investment (as % of HFI)	11.7%	3.9%	2.3%	1.7%
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (£)	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (as % of HFI)	7.0%	2.3%	1.4%	1.0%

Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: Kaplan Open Learning (Essex) Limited

Provider UKPRN: 10021682

Targets

Table 5b: Access and/or raising attainment targets

Aim [500 characters maximum]	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone	2028-29 milestone
To provide enhanced targeted support during the induction and the first 6 months of study to ensure mature students are supported to access and continue with their studies and succeed on our programmes, resulting in improved satisfaction, continuation and completion.	PTA_1	Access	Age	Mature (over 21)		This will be achieved through the implementation of an enhanced induction and academic readiness assessment, additional support during the first 6 months and study skills support. Internal data will be used to measure the pass rate of the 21 day induction period and the 6-month withdrawal rate with the aim to reduce this by 0.5 percentage points each year until it reaches 10.6% in 2028-29.	No	Other data source (please include details in commentary)	2022-23	Percentage points	12.6	12.1	11.6	11.1	10.6
	PTA_2														
	PTA_3														
	PTA_4														
	PTA_5														
	PTA_6														
	PTA_7														
	PTA_8														
	PTA_9														
	PTA_10														
	PTA_11														
	PTA_12														

Table 5d: Success targets

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone	2028-29 milestone
To ensure all students are supported to continue with their studies, especially those who declare mental health conditions, to succeed on their programme of study, resulting in improved module pass rates and continuation rates.	PTS_1	Continuation	Reported disability	Mental health condition	No disability reported	This will be achieved through the implementation of an enhanced induction and academic readiness assessment, additional support during the first 6 months and study skills support. Internal data will be used to measure the 6-month withdrawal rate with the aim to reduce this by 0.5 percentage each year until it reaches 10.6% in 2028-29.	No	Other data source (please include details in commentary)	2022-23	Percentage points	6.2	5.4	4.6	3.8	3.0
To ensure that the most deprived students are more likely to apply and less likely to withdraw due to financial pressures.	PTS_2	Continuation	Deprivation (Index of Multiple Deprivations (IMD))	IMD quintile 1	IMD quintile 5	This will be achieved by increasing the availability of hardship funds, scholarships and grants and providing personalised advice and guidance on managing tuition fees. The OfS APP Dashboard will be used to measure continuation rates for students based on IMD assessing the aggregated gap over a 4 year period.	No	The access and participation dashboard	2022-23	Percentage points	13.3	12.3	11.3	10.3	9.3
	PTS_3														
	PTS_4														
	PTS_5														
	PTS_6														
	PTS_7														
	PTS_8														
	PTS_9														
	PTS_10														
	PTS_11														
	PTS_12														

Table 5e: Progression targets

