University of Cambridge
Access and participation plan 2025-26 to 2028-29

Introduction and strategic aim

Introduction

This Access and Participation Plan (APP) sets out how the University of Cambridge will address barriers to equality of opportunity across the undergraduate student lifecycle, encompassing admissions, on-course experiences and progression to further study or employment. It focuses on UK undergraduate students and follows detailed analysis of data to identify potential risks to equality of outcomes and proposed actions to mitigate these risks. It is not intended to be read as the collegiate University's strategy for widening participation or strategy for supporting on-course student success and outcomes.

Institutional context

Cambridge has a longstanding global reputation for scholarship and research; no other university can claim as many Nobel prizes, and our world-leading research which extends the frontiers of knowledge feeds directly into our undergraduate degree programmes. Our students study and live in collegiate residential settings which provide highly personalised academic and pastoral support.

Entry to Cambridge is highly competitive and our academic requirements are among the highest in the country (a minimum of A*AA for Arts, Humanities and Social Science degree courses and A*A*A for STEM degree courses, although in practice the majority of our UK entrants exceed those minimum requirements). We are committed to ensuring we offer admission to those with the highest academic achievement and potential, taking full account of the educational, financial, social and cultural obstacles applicants may have experienced. We are likewise committed to ensuring we provide the tailored academic, pastoral and financial support that our students need to flourish at Cambridge, succeed in their studies and access career and further study opportunities.

Cambridge is a collegiate university with a devolved culture and therefore addressing inequality necessitates active engagement from Colleges, students, faculties and departments; central provision such as the Cambridge Bursary Scheme is combined with scope for local innovation and the development of examples of best practice that are then disseminated.

The interventions presented in our Plan focus on University-led activities, and for reasons of space available in the document we have had to be selective about what is included. To capture the wide range of interventions that departments, colleges, museums, libraries, collections, and organisations such as Cambridge Students' Union and the Institute of Continuing Education carry out across the student lifecycle, it is intended that the collegiate University creates a 'What Works'

document for publication at the start of the 2025-26 academic year. The collegiate nature of Cambridge provides an ecosystem which is ideally placed to generate creative new ideas and approaches, with opportunities to pilot initiatives and then disseminate the lessons learned in order that impactful interventions can be more widely promulgated.

Progress to date

We have made significant progress in recent years to address risk to equality of outcomes, including, for example, increasing the proportion of undergraduates admitted from Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintiles 1 & 2. We have introduced a Foundation Year in Arts, Humanities and Social Science subjects, providing a fully funded pathway for students who have experienced educational disadvantage and who may therefore be from underrepresented groups, to be in a position to gain admission to undergraduate degree courses at Cambridge and other highly selective universities. We have created a new Student Support Department within Education Services to coordinate improved and expanded mental health, student wellbeing, disability and other support services. But we recognise there is more work to do. Our analysis indicates that persistent inequalities remain, and our strategic aim is to address these risks in the context of this Plan.

Risks to equality of opportunity

Our analysis has drawn on the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register, the Office for Students (OfS) access and participation dataset, and in some cases also UCAS and HESA sector data, 2021 census data, and/or our locally held data. Full details of the indications of risk that our analysis identified can be found in Annex A. We have also undertaken significant qualitative research with staff and students, ranging from cross-institutional open meetings to in-depth focus groups, the purpose of which was to develop understanding of staff and student perceptions of these risks in the context of Cambridge, how they manifest, their underlying causes, and how best to address them. As Annex A illustrates, we have identified six key risks as outlined below.

Risk 1: Students from IMD quintiles 1 & 2 and those who are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) are underrepresented at Cambridge. Sector evidence and our own analysis suggest the causes are complex and multifactorial, including knowledge and skills (lower prior attainment than is needed for entry to Cambridge); information and guidance (lack of access to information and guidance that supports students in making informed decisions about higher education options); misperception of Cambridge (that despite being qualified they do not feel Cambridge is for ‘people like them’ and that their application would not be successful); application success rates (that applicants from certain backgrounds are less likely to be admitted); and limited choice of delivery mode (Cambridge’s degree programmes are largely full-time and residential).

Risk 2: Students from Black-British, British-Bangladeshi and British-Pakistani ethnicities are underrepresented at Cambridge. The reasons for the underrepresentation of certain ethnic groups at Cambridge are similarly complex and multifactorial. Evidence indicates that there is a particularly acute challenge around ‘sense of belonging’ and a perception among some students from underrepresented ethnic groups that Cambridge is not for 'people like them'. Black-British, British-Bangladeshi and British-Pakistani students are underrepresented at the application stage, due to a complex interplay of issues relating to a lack of knowledge and skills and a lack of information and guidance. They are also less likely to receive an offer and be admitted, which is

suggestive of risks arising during the application process (application success rates) and possibly also comparative levels of prior attainment (knowledge and skills).

Risk 3: There is an awarding gap for Black-British and British-Bangladeshi students. Research undertaken with our own students along with published research, indicates that inequities in educational experiences and awarding gaps arise from a complex interplay of factors, including students' experiences of their curricula, relationships between and among students and with staff, identities and perceived identities, potentially combined with other factors. These may include insufficient academic and personal support tailored to individual needs, and cost pressures (ethnicity often intersects with IMD and less advantaged students are more likely to have to seek paid employment to supplement their income and have less time to focus on their studies).

Risk 4: There is a risk to educational outcomes for students with mental health conditions. Our own and sector analysis indicates that the reasons for this may range from increased stress or isolation resulting from transition, the demanding nature of Cambridge degree courses placing additional pressures on students, as well as limited access to formal mental health treatment via the NHS. Students with mental health conditions may need to study less intensively during periods of their courses, and together with stress and anxiety and the demanding nature of Cambridge's degree courses this can impair academic performance. They may receive insufficient academic and personal support tailored to their needs, and they may also face additional cost pressures (for example being required to pay privately for treatment unavailable on the NHS).

Risk 5: There is a lower rate of progression to postgraduate study at Cambridge amongst applicants from certain groups, including underrepresented ethnicities, lower socio-economic backgrounds and mature students. This risk applies principally to applicants who have not undertaken prior study at Oxford or Cambridge, who typically receive offers at lower rates than Oxford or Cambridge graduates. One contributing factor to this could be a lack of exposure to a research-intensive educational environment during their undergraduate studies, and applicants' resulting limited experience of undertaking their own research. Additionally, these applicants may not have access to the necessary information and guidance to navigate the postgraduate admissions process and successfully apply. Access to funding for offer-holders from underrepresented demographics, including Cambridge graduates, may also be a progression barrier.

Risk 6: There is a lower rate of progression to further study, managerial or professional employment or other positive outcomes for students with a declared disability. In addition to factors in the employment market and in the awarding of places for postgraduate study which may disadvantage students with declared disabilities, these students may not receive sufficient academic and personal support to enable them to access progression opportunities, and they may also face additional cost pressures.

Objectives

Objective 1: We will seek to increase the proportion of students from IMD quintiles 1 & 2 and those in receipt of Free School Meals. We will do this by enhancing our collaborative outreach and attainment-raising activities that target these groups, including a new focus on regions which are currently underrepresented at Cambridge. We will update our outreach targeting

and priority selection criteria for 2025-26, to reflect a stronger focus on students from IMD quintiles 1 & 2 and those in receipt of FSM.

Objective 2: We will seek to increase the proportion of students from Black-British, British-Bangladeshi and British-Pakistani ethnicities. We will do this by enhancing our collaborative outreach and attainment-raising activities that target these groups, with a particular focus on driving outcomes pertaining to sense of belonging. We will update the outreach targeting and priority selection criteria that we apply in identifying participants, to reflect a stronger focus on students from underrepresented ethnicities.

Objective 3: We will improve the experiences and outcomes of Black-British and British-Bangladeshi students by encouraging evidence-based and research-led awareness of the awarding gap. We will do this by supporting students and staff in participatory approaches to understanding and addressing inequities (for example through the APP Participatory Advisory Research Project). We will consistently monitor quantitative and qualitative evidence. We will encourage systematic, effective evaluative approaches and we will contribute to sharing and developing good practice within the institution, between institutions and through publications.

Objective 4: We will support students with mental health conditions to achieve positive educational outcomes. Our work will draw on the significant additional investment in provision of support for student mental health and wellbeing in recent years. We will monitor and evaluate the impact of enhanced service delivery on educational outcomes.

Objective 5: We will address progression to postgraduate study at Cambridge amongst undergraduates from other universities, particularly from certain groups, including underrepresented ethnicities, those who have faced socio-economic disadvantage and mature students. We will do this via a programme of funded research experience placements targeted at participants from groups that are underrepresented in postgraduate research study at Cambridge. We will also offer a postgraduate application support programme and appropriate signposting of funding opportunities.

Objective 6: We will address the gap in progression to further study, managerial or professional employment or other positive outcomes for students with a declared disability. We will do this via a skills assessment and development project, and specialist advice and support from dedicated careers consultants. We will also conduct a survey six months post-graduation to provide more immediate progression destination information in order that targeted additional support can be provided to those with a disability.

In addition to these six objectives, we will continue to report the proportion of entrants from State and Independent Schools. We recognise that school type is a measure that masks a range of educational experiences and socio-economic backgrounds, and that it is not a measure used by the OfS in assessing risks to equality of opportunity. It is, however, of enduring interest to the public, politicians and the media, notwithstanding its limitations as an indicator or relative (dis)advantage, and so we will continue to report it.

We will also continue to focus on the gender awarding gap in First Class degrees. Although female students outperform male students in attaining a ‘good degree outcome’ (defined by the OfS as a

degree classification of First or 2.1), there is a statistically significant gap in female students awarded a First.

Data analysis outlined in Annex A indicates that there are inequalities to educational outcomes for students with a Sensory, Medical or Physical Condition (SMPC). However, a current Review of Disability Provision is examining existing policy, process and practice across the collegiate University with the aim of developing a clear strategic and operational framework for supporting disabled students. We are confident that the Review will result in clear recommendations that will support mitigation of the risks identified to students with an SPMC, as well as other disabilities. We have concluded that we should await the outcome of the Review and its recommendations prior to defining objectives, targets and interventions. We will, therefore, submit a formal variation of our Plan setting out how we will address risks to educational outcomes for these students once the Review is concluded.

Intervention strategies and expected outcomes

Intervention strategy 1: IMD and FSM

Objectives and targets

Objective 1: We will seek to increase the proportion of students from IMD quintiles 1 & 2 and those in receipt of FSM.

Target 1: (PTA_1) Increase the proportion of students from IMD quintiles 1 & 2 entering the University to 25.1% by 2029.

Target 2: (PTA_2) Increase the proportion of students in receipt of FSM entering the University by 2029, with a target to be set in 2025 once additional data become available.

Risks to equality of opportunity

Risk 1: Knowledge and skills; Risk 2: Information and guidance; Risk 3: Perception of higher education; Risk 4: Application success rates; Risk 5: Limited choice of delivery mode.

Related objectives and targets

Objective 2: We will seek to increase the proportion of students from Black-British, British-Bangladeshi and British-Pakistani ethnicities.

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
Apply: Cambridge (Existing activity)	Mentoring and tailored information, advice and guidance for target students to make successful applications to Cambridge. - Post-16 students - 600 students p/a - Collaboration with other mentoring projects and mentoring platform provider	1.0 FTE staff Staffing: £57K p/a Project cost: £150K p/a Total: £857,007	**Short term outcomes, include:** - Increased knowledge of application process - Increased familiarity with Cambridge - Increased sense of belonging and confidence - More competitive applications **Long term outcomes, include:** - Students apply to Cambridge - Students receive offers from Cambridge	IS2
August Reconsideration Pool (ARP) (Existing activity)	Applicants who are not made an offer after interview but who meet widening participation (WP) criteria are eligible for reconsideration if they meet or exceed the typical academic entry requirements. - Transition support (webinars, mentoring, visit to Cambridge) - College collaboration and university administration	Built into admissions process; costs cannot be disaggregated	**Short term outcomes:** - Students accept offer of study - Students admitted through ARP have the same retention rates in Year 1 as peers **Long term outcomes:** - Students admitted through ARP attain at the same level as peers - Students admitted through ARP retain at the same level as peers	IS2
HE+ (Existing activity to be reviewed)	Established national programme for Y12 focusing on specific regions providing collaboration and super-curricular support. - Underrepresented students with priority for: care experienced, FSM or underrepresented ethnic group (Black African or Black Caribbean, Pakistani or Bangladeshi, Roma, Gypsy or Traveller)	1.0 FTE staff Staffing: £57K p/a Project cost: £330K p/a Total: £1,602,230	**Short term outcomes:** - Improved subject knowledge of university application process (in students and partner schools/hubs) - Super-curricular engagement and metacognition - Improved academic self-efficacy - Increased sense of belonging and confidence in applying to selective universities	IS2

	- 20 consortia, comprising 180 schools and 4,300 students each year - Existing programme, refocused within cold spots - Collaboration with local third sector organisations, HEIs, LAs, MATs.		- Relationships developed between regional hubs, Cambridge University, local third sector organisations and Cambridge Colleges **Long term outcomes:** - Students apply to highly selective HEIs - Students receive offers from highly selective HEIs - Improved school networks and peer learning	
Atom Valley Education Challenge (New activity)	Regionally focused outreach in Greater Manchester. Sustained intervention over five years. Working from Y5-13. - Pre-16 and Post-16 - c.200 students each year - In collaboration with Rochdale Development Agency, Pembroke College Oxford, St John's College Cambridge, Rochdale Sixth Form College and the Altus Education Partnership.	0.4 FTE staff Staffing: £20K p/a Project cost: £30K p/a Total: £207,006	**Short term outcomes:** - Academic self-efficacy - Increased knowledge of higher education - Increased sense of belonging - Improved understanding of and confidence in the university admissions process **Long term outcomes:** - Students make applications to selective HEIs - Students receive offers from selective HEIs - Students meet conditions of offer - Students make successful transition to HE - Teachers have increased knowledge, skills and confidence	IS2
neaco (Existing activity)	Cambridge-led partnership of all HEIs and FECs in East Anglia, with HE provision since 2017. - Pre-16 (attainment raising) and post-16 - Pilot attainment raising activities focussing on 1,600 Y7-11 students - Teacher CPD - Support for parents and carers - Work with 40 schools in East Anglia	1.0 FTE staff Staffing: £50K p/a Project cost: £1.2M p/a (funded by OfS) Total: £207,006 (excluding UniConnect)	**Short term outcomes:** - Academic self-efficacy and metacognition - Improved study skills - Improved oracy skills - Increased knowledge of higher education **Long term outcomes:** - Improved GCSE attainment - HEI progression	IS2

	- In collaboration with partner HEIs and third sector organisations			
STEM SMART (Expanded existing activity)	National STEM-focused attainment raising programme - Post-16 - 16-month online attainment raising programme for students intending to apply for STEM degree courses - WP eligibility criteria - c2800 students engage online - c450 attend the residential	18.5 FTE staff Staffing: £1.27M p/a Project cost: £200K p/a Total: £6,085,988	**Short term outcomes:** - Academic self-efficacy and metacognition - Improved study skills - Improved sense of belonging in HEI - Improved resilience - Improved knowledge of higher education **Long term outcomes:** - Improved A Level attainment - Enhanced problem solving and admissions tests related skills - Students apply to selective HEI - Students receive offer of study from HEI	IS2
Foundation Year (FY) (Existing activity)	Fully funded one-year programme providing alternate pathway in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences subjects. - Successful completion leads to first year of undergraduate degree - Targets students from underrepresented backgrounds who have experienced significant educational disadvantage - 50 places per year	8.5 FTE staff Staffing: £600K p/a Project cost: £987K p/a Total: £6,570,383	**Short term outcomes:** - Increased sense of belonging and academic confidence - Reduce financial barrier to study - High proportion of students complete the FY programme and receive Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) - Students receive offers from high tariff universities - High proportion of students progress to degree study at Cambridge **Long term outcomes:** - FY students who progress to Cambridge have the same retention rates as those entering through other routes	IS2

			- FY students who progress to Cambridge attain at the same level as those entering through other routes	

Total cost of activities and evaluation for the intervention strategy across the four years of the Plan (excluding Uni Connect): £15,529,621

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Intervention Strategy 1 consists of activities designed to mitigate against EORR risks identified above (Lack of knowledge/skills, Lack of information and guidance, Perception of HE/Cambridge, Low applicant success rates, Limited choice of course type) to support us to deliver on our objectives. All activities are underpinned by sector evidence, and where possible with existing programmes, enhanced by our own internal data. We regularly review the evidence underpinning our activities and our targeting approaches to ensure they are the most effective means of reducing risks for our target populations. Further detail on the evidence base and rationale influencing our approach can be found in Annex B.

In order to develop an FSM admissions target, we need to consider both FSM status and attainment. From the next admissions cycle, validated FSM data will be available via school referees which will improve the data significantly and enable us to consider an appropriate target to submit to the OfS as part of a variation. Cambridge lobbied on behalf of the HE sector to secure FSM data during the admissions process, so we look forward to making good use of it in the near future.

Evaluation

All interventions are underpinned by a Theory of Change, with clearly defined activities, linked to specific, measurable outcomes. Short, intermediate and long-term outcomes are measured using sector standard methods such as the validated TASO ASQ, HEAT comparison tools, UCAS Outreach Evaluator and tracked via HEAT and HESA. We aim to further enrich our data by using a range of qualitative methodologies, such as focus groups and interviews, and triangulating data, where relevant with teachers, parents, carers and other stakeholders. This is particularly important for interventions in their pilot phase, or where we look to expand on existing activities.

All interventions use a pre/post design, and therefore meet OfS standards for Type 2 evaluation. We will be exploring opportunities for Type 3 evaluation, where appropriate. We are particularly motivated to generate Type 3 evidence for our more resource intensive interventions. Additional implementation and process evaluation questions, such as dosage, form part of our evaluation plan to inform our understanding of delivery and sequencing. Where relevant, for example where activities support similar outcomes, we will share learnings across interventions.

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Apply Cambridge	**Short and intermediate term outcomes**: - Knowledge of Cambridge application process - Increased familiarity with Cambridge and academic expectations - Increased sense of belonging at Cambridge	**Mixed Methods Design (Type 2)** **Short and intermediate term outcomes: Pre/Post Design (Type 2)** - Self-report survey using TASO validated ASQ. - Dosage and reach analysis	Theory of Change published on our website in Autumn 2025. Annual Report covering all outcomes published on

	Long term outcomes: - Students apply to Cambridge - Students receive invitation to interview at Cambridge - Students receive offers from Cambridge	**Long term outcomes:** **Longitudinal track with comparison group (Type 2)** - Longitudinal track with comparison group (UCAS Outreach Evaluator Tool, HEAT, HESA) - Internal applicant non-random comparison group using Cambridge Tracking We will explore opportunities for Type 3 evaluation over the course of the APP	website in our APP Evaluation Repository from Autumn 2027 onwards.
August Reconsideration Pool	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Offer of study at Cambridge for target students - Students make successful transition to Cambridge **Long term outcomes:** - Students admitted through ARP attain at the same level as peers - Students admitted through ARP retain at the same level as peers	**Multiple Regression analysis (Type 3)** - Comparing retention and attainment outcomes Potential for exploratory sequential mixed methods design depending on quantitative trends that emerge from regression analysis	We will publish findings on our website from 2026-27 Summary report to published Autumn 2027 on the website in our APP Evaluation Repository.
HE+	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Improved subject knowledge of university application process (in students and partner schools/hubs) - Super-curricular engagement - Improved academic self-efficacy - Increased sense of belonging and confidence in applying to selective universities - Relationships developed between regional hubs, Cambridge University, local third sector organisations and Cambridge Colleges **Long term outcomes**: - Students apply to highly selective universities - Students receive offers from highly selective universities	**Mixed Methods Design (Type 2)** **Exploratory sequential mixed methods design** **Implementation and Process Evaluation** (IPE) - Dosage, Reach, Fidelity, Quality - Various data gathered to support IPE questions such as attendance records, reflection logs, surveys and web analytics **Qualitative Research (all outcomes) (Type 1)** - Focus group and interviews with staff, students and parents to understand change mechanisms and interrogate assumptions **Short and intermediate term outcomes: Pre/Post Design (Type 2)** - Self-report survey using TASO validated ASQ.	Interim reports published on our website annually from 2026-27 Impact report published on our website in the APP Evaluation Repository in 2028-29

	- Improved school networks and peer learning	- Dosage and reach analysis by WP characteristic **Long term outcomes:** **Longitudinal track with comparison group (Type 2)** - Longitudinal track with comparison group (UCAS Outreach Evaluator Tool, HEAT, HESA) - Internal applicant non-random comparison group using Cambridge Tracking We will be exploring opportunities for Type 3 evaluation over the course of the APP	
Atom Valley Education Challenge	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Improved subject knowledge of university application process (in students and partner schools/hubs) - Super-curricular engagement and metacognition - Improved academic self-efficacy - Increased sense of belonging and confidence in applying to selective universities - Relationships developed between regional hubs, Cambridge University, local third sector organisations and Cambridge Colleges **Long term outcomes:** - Students make applications to selective HE - Students receive offers of study from selective HE - Students make successful transition to HE - Teachers have increased knowledge, skills and confidence - Relationships developed between Rochdale Development Agency, Cambridge University, local third sector organisations and Cambridge Colleges	**Mixed Methods Design (Type 2)** **Implementation and Process Evaluation** - Dosage and reach analysis **Qualitative Research (all outcomes)** - Focus group and interviews with students, teachers and parents to understand change mechanisms and interrogate assumptions **Short and intermediate term outcomes: Pre/Post Design (Type 2)** - Self-report survey using TASO validated ASQ (Student) - Self-report survey adapted from TASO ASQ (Teacher) - Dosage and reach analysis **Long term outcomes:** **Longitudinal track with comparison group (Type 2)** - Longitudinal track with comparison group (UCAS Outreach Evaluator Tool, HEAT, HESA) - Internal applicant non-random comparison group using Cambridge Tracking	Theory of Change published on our website in Spring 2026. Annual interim reports published on our website from 2026-27. Summary report available Autumn 2028 in the APP Evaluation Repository on our website.

neaco	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Improved academic self-efficacy and metacognition - Improved study skills - Improved oracy skills - Improved knowledge of HE **Long term outcomes:** - Improved GCSE attainment - HE progression	**Mixed Methods Pre/Post Test Design using Experimental, Quasi-experimental and Qualitative designs (Type 3)** **Implementation and Process Evaluation** - Dosage and reach analysis	Annual report published on neaco website covering all intended outcomes.
STEM SMART	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Academic self-efficacy and metacognition - Improved study skills - Improved resilience - Improved sense of belonging in HE - Improved knowledge of HE **Long term outcomes**: - Improved A Level attainment - Enhanced problem solving and admissions tests related skills - Students apply to selective HE - Students receive offer of study from HE	**Mixed Methods Design (Type 2)** **Short and intermediate term outcomes:** **Continuous Formative Assessment** - Pre/post-intervention self-report survey **Implementation and Process Evaluation** - Dosage (measured for both mentoring and tuition components) and reach analysis **Attainment:** - Quantitative analysis using a non-random comparison group for both A Level attainment and admissions test results **Long term outcomes:** Longitudinal track with comparison group (UCAS Outreach Evaluator Tool, HEAT, HESA), additional data through UCAS EXACT Internal applicant non-random comparison group using Cambridge Tracking	Report on outcomes to date published during 2025-26.

Foundation Year	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Increased sense of belonging and academic confidence - Learner identity as a Cambridge student - Reduce financial barrier to study - High proportion of students complete the FY programme and receive CertHE - Students receive offers from high tariff universities - High proportion of students progress to degree study at Cambridge **Long term outcomes:** - FY students who progress to Cambridge have the same retention rates as those entering through other routes - FY students who progress to Cambridge attain at the same level as those entering through other routes	**Mixed Methods Design (Type 2)** **Implementation and Process Evaluation** - Quantitative analysis to observe any trends over time for example, demographical - Pulse Surveys to assess teaching quality and on-course experience of FY students **Pre/Post Design** - Self-report survey Focus groups with FY students *and* students who have progressed to Cambridge from the FY **Long term outcomes**: - Quantitative analysis with non-random comparison group using internal Cambridge Tracking data - Multiple regression analysis to understand attainment and retention (Type 3) Additional monitoring and evaluation will be conducted to understand institutional change	External summary report covering all outcomes of first few cohorts to be published in 2026-27. This is before the end of the pilot phase. This will be published on our website, and in the APP Evaluation Repository on our website We also hope to share interim findings internally and externally at conferences where there is opportunity to do so.

Intervention strategy 2: Underrepresented ethnicities

Objectives and targets

Objective 2: We will seek to increase the proportion of students from Black-British, British-Bangladeshi and British-Pakistani ethnicities.

Risks to equality of opportunity

Risk 1: Knowledge and skills; Risk 2: Information and guidance; Risk 3: Perception of higher education; Risk 4: Application success rates; Risk 5: Limited choice of delivery mode.

Related objectives and targets

Objective 1: We will seek to increase the proportion of students from IMD quintiles 1 & 2 and those in receipt of FSM.

Target 1: Increase the proportion of students from IMD quintiles 1 & 2 entering the University to 25.1% by 2029.

Target 2: Increase the proportion of students in receipt of FSM entering the University by 2029, with a target to be set in 2025 once additional data become available.

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
Target Oxbridge (Existing activity)	Pre-16 and Post-16 targeting students of Black African or Caribbean heritage - Priority for students from IMD quintiles 1 & 2 and FSM - 160 Y12 students each year (2024: 70% of students have postcodes in the bottom two IMD quintiles and 38% are FSM-flagged. 51% of the cohort are from outside London) - Additional programme for Y10-11 students - Existing programme with digital expansion (500 places for 2025) - In collaboration with the University of Oxford and Rare Recruitment	1.0 FTE staff Staffing: £50K p/a Project cost: £185K p/a Total: £972,930	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Academic self-efficacy - Increased knowledge of HE - Increased sense of belonging - Improved understanding of and confidence in the university admissions process **Long term outcomes:** - Students make applications to Oxford or Cambridge - Students receive offers of study from Oxford or Cambridge	IS1
Embedded outreach (Expanded existing activity)	Embedded outreach officers - Teacher CPD - Application support programmes - Attainment raising programmes - Support for parents and carers - Visits including residential events - Undergraduate mentoring - Super-curricular enrichment - Parental engagement - Student Societies	2 FTE staff Staffing: £100K p/a Project cost: £40K p/a Total: £579,618	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Academic self-efficacy - Increased knowledge of HE - Increased sense of belonging - Improved understanding of and confidence in the university admissions process **Long term outcomes:** - Students make applications to selective HEI - Parents and carers have increased familiarity with HEI	IS1

Total cost of activities and evaluation for the intervention strategy across the four years of the Plan: £1,552,548

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Intervention strategy 2 consists of activities designed to mitigate against the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) risks identified above (lack of knowledge/skills, lack of information and guidance, perception of HE/Cambridge, low applicant success rates, limited choice of course type), to support us to deliver on our objectives. The absence of validated information on the ethnicity of applicants in the UCAS process represents a challenge in setting meaningful and robust numerical targets. Our assessment of applicant attainment data considered alongside available ethnicity data indicates that raising attainment is a more important focus for our activity than seeking to establish proxy criteria to use in the admissions process. For example, analysis of recent UCAS datasets (from their EXACT service) shows that although Black students are underrepresented among acceptances to Cambridge compared to what would be expected from their proportion of all national UCAS acceptances (only 58% of expected), once Cambridge's minimum A Level attainment requirement (A*AA) is taken into account, Black students are actually over-represented among Cambridge acceptances (161% of expected). We also know that Black and Asian applicants apply disproportionately for the most oversubscribed and competitive courses at Cambridge, which means we need to focus on better advice and guidance to applicants, teachers and also parents. We are also aware that Black students disproportionately take types of KS5 qualifications that are not suitable for making competitive applications to Cambridge, which will also require us to focus on improving the guidance we provide to applicants, their teachers and parents.

All activities are underpinned by sector evidence, and where possible with existing programmes, enhanced by our own internal data. We regularly review the evidence underpinning our activities and our targeting approaches to ensure they are the most effective means of reducing risks for our target populations. Further detail on the evidence base and rationale influencing our approach be found in Annex B.

Evaluation

All interventions are underpinned by a Theory of Change, with clearly defined activities, linked to specific, measurable outcomes. Short, intermediate and long-term outcomes are measured using sector standard methods such as the validated TASO ASQ, HEAT comparison tools, UCAS Outreach Evaluator and tracked via HEAT and HESA. We aim to further enrich our data by using a range of qualitative methodologies, such as focus groups and interviews, and triangulating data, where relevant with teachers, parents, carers and other stakeholders. This is particularly important for interventions in their pilot phase, or where we look to expand on existing activities.

All interventions use a pre/post design, and therefore meet OfS standards for Type 2 evaluation. We will be exploring opportunities for Type 3 evaluation, where appropriate. We are particularly motivated to generate Type 3 evidence for our more resource intensive interventions. Additional implementation and process evaluation questions, such as dosage, form part of our evaluation plan to inform our understanding of delivery and sequencing. Where relevant, for example where activities support similar outcomes, we will share learnings across interventions.

Please see the Evaluation Table for intervention strategy 1 for detail on the evaluation of the activities highlighted as forming part of a cross intervention strategy. Additional activities and outcomes specific to intervention strategy 2 have been included below.

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Target Oxbridge Y12	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Improved academic confidence - Increased understanding of Oxbridge student life - Increased sense of belonging at Oxbridge universities - Improved understanding of and confidence in the Oxbridge admissions process **Long term outcomes:** - Students make applications to Oxford or Cambridge - Students receive offers of study from Oxford or Cambridge	**Mixed Methods Design (Type 2)** **Pre/Post Test Design** - Self-report survey to assess short and intermediate-term outcomes **Implementation and Process Evaluation** - Dosage and reach analysis to interrogate value of individual programme components **Qualitative Research (all outcomes)** - Interviews with students and parents to understand change mechanisms and interrogate assumptions - Interviews with mentors and university staff **Long term outcomes**: - Longitudinal track with comparison group (UCAS Outreach Evaluator Tool, HEAT, HESA) - Internal applicant non-random comparison group using Cambridge Tracking	Theory of Change published on our website in Spring 2026. Evaluation is conducted collaboratively between Target Oxbridge partners We will co-publish an impact report every 2 years on our website and publish aggregate reports every five-year cycle to draw upon trends over time.
Target Oxbridge KS4	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Increased knowledge of HE - Increased familiarity with HE - Exposure to super-curricular activities **Long term outcomes** - Improved understanding of and confidence in the Oxbridge admissions process	**Pre/Post Test Design** - Self-report survey to assess short and intermediate-term outcomes **Implementation and Process Evaluation** - Dosage analysis **Long term outcome**: - Longitudinal track with comparison group (UCAS Outreach Evaluator Tool, HEAT, HESA)	Co-published with Target Oxbridge partners every 3 years from 2025/26.
Embedded Outreach Officers	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Increased academic self-efficacy - Increased knowledge of HE - Increased sense of belonging - Improved understanding of and confidence in the university admissions process - Parents and carers have increased familiarity with HEI	**Mixed Methods Design (Type 2)** **Implementation and Process Evaluation** - Quality and reach analysis - Dosage using engagement data **Qualitative Research (all outcomes)** - Focus groups and interviews with students, teachers and parents to understand change mechanisms and interrogate assumptions **Short and intermediate term outcomes: Pre/Post Design (Type 2)**	Theory of Change published on our website in Spring 2026. Interim report published from 2027-28 on our website.

	- Teachers have increased confidence in supporting students to make competitive applications to HEI **Long term outcomes:** - Students make applications to selective HEI - Students receive offers from selective HEI - Students place at selective HEI - Relationships developed between Cambridge University, local third sector organisations and Cambridge Colleges	- Self-report survey using TASO validated ASQ (student) - Self-report survey adapted from TASO ASQ (teacher) **Long term outcomes:** **Longitudinal track with comparison group (Type 2)** - Longitudinal track with comparison group (UCAS Outreach Evaluator Tool, HEAT, HESA)	Full report published 2028-29.

Intervention strategy 3: Ethnicity awarding gaps

Objectives and targets

Objective 3: We will improve the experiences and outcomes of Black-British and British-Bangladeshi students by encouraging evidence-based and research-led awareness of the awarding gap.

For the reasons described in the summary of evidence base and rationale for this objective, we have concluded we should not set numerical outcomes targets. We will instead measure the effectiveness of our activities through the following milestones:

2025-26 milestone: completion of cycle 1 of annual student-led research and pedagogical consultancy

2026-27 milestone: findings of student-led research and pedagogical consultancy are disseminated through staff conferences and network events (~400 staff participants), Teaching & Learning Newsletter (currently ~1,400 subscribers) and Centre for Teaching & Learning workshops and programmes for teaching staff (~850 staff participants)

2027-28 milestone: publication of self-evaluation materials which are contextualised to Cambridge's distinctive environment and which support individuals and teams in identifying and enacting meaningful change

2028-29: indicatively, 60-80 students involved as co-researchers over APP lifetime); findings of student-led research & pedagogic consultancy inform development of the next APP.

Risks to equality of opportunity

Risk 6: Insufficient academic support; Risk 7: Insufficient personal support; and Risk 10: Cost pressures.

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
Sustained focus on staff awareness and engagement **(Existing activity)**	Increase awareness among teaching and learning support staff of factors giving rise to awarding gaps, including those affecting Black-British, British-Bangladeshi, British-Pakistani and other racially minoritised students through: - Annual programme of staff conferences and network events (~400 participants) - Planned programme of publication, including internal Teaching & Learning Newsletter (currently ~1,400 subscribers)	2.4 FTE staff & operating budget Staffing: £117K p/a Project cost: £5K p/a Total: £505,096	**Short and intermediate outcomes:** - Increased understanding of complex factors, including contextual factors giving rise to awarding gaps - Increased awareness of inclusive, pedagogy-led approaches to addressing inequities in experiences and outcomes	
Supporting pedagogy-led approaches **(Existing activity)**	Support teaching staff in using pedagogy-led approaches to developing students' academic capabilities, academic confidence and sense of belonging; pedagogy-led approaches are sensitised to inequities experienced by Black, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and other racially minoritised students, through: - Systematic embedding into Centre for Teaching & Learning workshops and programme (~650 participants and ~200 participants, respectively) - Improved suite of online self-evaluation guides and supporting materials for individual members of teaching staff and for teaching teams	2.9 FTE staff Staffing: £142K p/a No project costs Total: £587,898	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Access to self-evaluation materials which are contextualised to Cambridge's distinctive environment and which support individuals and teams in identifying and enacting meaningful change - Participating staff report increased understanding of factors giving rise to awarding gaps - Participating staff report increased awareness and application of pedagogy-led approaches **Long term outcome:** - Staff are actively engaged in developing, embedding, innovating and sharing inclusive, pedagogy-led approaches to improving undergraduate education	

APP Participatory Action Research **(Existing activity)**	Encourage pedagogical inquiry and evaluation, in particular inclusive and participatory approaches, with a particular focus on inequities affecting Black, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and other racially minoritised students - Continuation of innovative APP Participatory Research Project: annual cycles of student-led research and pedagogical consultancy (indicatively involving 60-80 students as researchers over APP lifetime) - Planned programme of internal and cross-institutional workshops to support knowledge exchange, evaluation capacity building and dissemination	2 FTE staff Staffing: £94K p/a Project cost: £12.5K p/a Total: £440,924	**Short and intermediate term outcome:** - Participating staff have increased awareness of and confidence in pedagogical enquiry and evaluation **Long term outcomes:** - Increased institutional capacity at a range of levels; stronger profile for institutional and cross-institutional knowledge exchange	
Black Advisory Hub **(Existing activity)**	Extend the contribution of the **Black Advisory Hub** in building a diverse and inclusive community for all students and staff, as part of institutional action to improve Black students' outcomes, including: - Co-created and facilitated induction programme for incoming students - Student-led qualitative research and pedagogic consultancy informing Cambridge-wide and local enhancement and actions - Extended student and staff-facing online resources and in-person workshops	1.5 FTE staff Staffing: £74K p/a Project cost: £12K p/a Total: £356,051	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Increasing opt-in participation by students identifying as Black in induction programme; incoming students report perceived relevance and connections with Cambridge student and staff communities and co-creating students and staff report perceived 'added value' **Long term outcomes:** - Student researchers perceive activity as meaningful, personally developmental; resources and workshops are perceived by students and staff as contributing to understanding and cumulative change	

Total cost of activities and evaluation for the intervention strategy across the four years of the Plan: £1,889,969

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Intervention strategy 3 consists of activities that increase awareness among academic and professional staff of factors giving rise to awarding gaps; encourage active engagement by students affected by inequities and by staff in exploring, innovating and contributing to institutional learning; and which emphasise pedagogy-led, inclusive approaches to improving undergraduate education. In developing these activities, we have drawn on academic and professional literature, and our own enquiry, into inequities in education and outcomes experienced by racially minoritised students in particular (e.g. Stevenson et al, 2019; Arday & Mirza, 2018; Wong et al, 2021) and research into inequities in education and outcomes more generally (e.g. Austen et al, 2021; Mountford-Zimdars et al, 2015; Webb et al, 2017). We are also mindful of critical scholarship which cautions that policies oriented at eliminating 'gaps' between 'minority' and 'majority' populations risk reinforcing deficit models (Bhopal & Pitkin, 2020) and which argues for research methods which explore experiences of students as 'whole beings in a social context, and not an identity category' (McArthur, 2021). We also build on academic studies which demonstrate the potential of high-quality educational practices and experiences to disrupt inequities through enabling students to become informed, proficient and enquiring agents in their own education (McLean et al, 2017; Walker, 2006).

Evaluation

Theory of Change underpins the planning, monitoring and reviewing of all APP-associated activities undertaken by the Centre for Teaching & Learning (CTL). More generally, our baseline expectation is narrative (Type 1) across all initiatives and empirical (Type 2) across selected initiatives; inclusive and practice-based approaches are preferred, including planned in stakeholder engagement & focus on usability. The CTL's work programme includes a planned programme of evaluative enquiry, engagement and dissemination, including annual cycles of student-led action research; institutional and cross-institutional events; and publications.

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Sustained focus on staff awareness and engagement	Increased understanding of complex factors, including contextual factors giving rise to awarding gaps. Increased awareness of inclusive, pedagogy-led approaches to addressing inequities in experiences and outcomes	**Empirical Qualitative Enquiry (Type 2)** - Self-report staff surveys - Follow-up surveys/interviews to identify applications in practice, barriers or enablers of change	Regular internal reports (annual at minimum), published on our website & internal newsletters from 2025-26 Conference presentations (internal and sector)
Supporting pedagogy-led approaches	Participating staff report increased understanding of factors giving rise to awarding gaps, increased awareness and application of pedagogy-led approaches	**Empirical Qualitative Enquiry (Type 2)** - Audit of CTL teaching workshops and programmes; (online self-evaluation guides) monitoring of web analytics	Regular internal reports (annual at minimum), published on our website & internal newsletters from 2025-26

	Access to self-evaluation materials which are contextualised to Cambridge's distinctive environment and which support individuals and teams in identifying and enacting meaningful change	- Follow-up surveys/interviews to identify applications in practice, barriers or enablers of change	Conference presentations (internal and sector)
APP Participatory Action Research (PAR)	Participating staff: increased awareness of and confidence in pedagogical enquiry and evaluation Institution: increased capacity at a range of levels; stronger profile for institutional and cross-institutional knowledge exchange	**Empirical Qualitative Enquiry (Type 2)** - Reflective activities integrated into research process; surveys/focus groups; monitoring of recommendations and cumulative outcomes - Programme of internal and cross-institutional workshops: **Mixed Methods Empirical Enquiry (Type 2)** - Monitoring trends in participation, web access; monitoring dissemination activities (conference presentations, publications); surveys, interviews/focus groups to identify applications in practice, perceived meaningful outcomes	APP PAR Project: – regular internal report, published on our website & internal newsletters – case study for sector publication Programme: – regular internal reports, published on our website & internal newsletters
Black Advisory Hub	Increasing opt-in participation by students identifying as Black in induction programme; incoming students report perceived relevance and connections with Cambridge student and staff communities and co-creating students and staff report perceived 'added value'.	**Empirical Qualitative Enquiry (Type 2)** - Participants surveys and/or focus groups; monitoring trends in registration and participation; monitoring of student and staff perceptions of meaningful changes arising	Regular (annual at minimum) internal reports, published on our website 2025-26

Intervention strategy 4: Educational outcomes for students with mental health conditions.

Objectives and targets

Objective 4: We will support students with mental health conditions to achieve positive educational outcomes.

Risks to equality of opportunity

Risk 6: Insufficient academic support; Risk 7: Insufficient personal support; Risk 8: Mental health; Risk 10: Cost pressures.

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
Case Management System (New activity)	Implement a new case management system	1.5 FTE staff Staffing: £100K p/a Operating cost: £46K p/a Total: £604,549	**Short and intermediate outcomes:** - Improved data systems and processes to ensure students receive joined up care - Improved data sharing policies and processes - Improved evaluation of service provision - Improved insights into student experience **Long term outcomes:** - Opportunity to join up with other institutional data sources to better assess and monitor continuation, completion, attainment and progression rates of students with mental health conditions and to look in more detail at intersectionality - Integration of targeted interventions/activities based on data insights/analysis	IS3, IS6
NHS Partnership (New activity)	Develop and deliver a new integrated student mental health service in partnership with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT) and Anglia Ruskin University (ARU). Targeted at students with long-term, complex presentations or higher levels of risk, providing improved pathways to clinical treatment	No University staff Total project cost: ~£1M per year of which £525,000 is met by the University Total: £2,173,567	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Better clinical outcomes and a reduction of students accessing care through crisis pathways and locality teams **Long term outcomes:** - Integrated working developed, including data sharing policies and protocols to improve data reporting and analysis capabilities	IS3, IS6
Wellbeing Stimulus Fund	Establish a Wellbeing Stimulus Fund to support innovation in preventative and early intervention activities within the Colleges	0.3 FTE staff Staffing: £15K p/a	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Reduced financial barriers for Colleges to introduce activities or initiatives which improve student wellbeing	

(New activity)	Match funding development and delivery of innovative activities at community level and sharing findings and resources across collegiate Cambridge and beyond	Operational cost: £710K p/a for 3 years Total: £2,225,409	- Reduced barriers to student engagement in activities which improve wellbeing **Long term outcomes:** - Better understanding of what works in the prevention/intervention space in the Cambridge context to lead to improved contextualised preventative and early intervention activities - Improved contextualised preventative and early intervention activities	
Staff Training Framework (Expanded existing activity)	Deliver enhanced mental health training with pathways for frontline student-facing staff and leadership role holders Delivered in partnership with The Charlie Waller Trust	1.3 FTE staff Staffing: £77K p/a Operating cost: £43K Total: £408,344	**Short and intermediate term outcomes**: - Better informed, properly tasked and trained staff working to clear, shared objectives - Staff are more confident about their role and remit, as a potential first responder to a student in distress or crisis, in supporting improved signposting to appropriate specialist services	IS3, IS6
Mentoring (Existing activity)	Deliver specialist mentoring support to students who disclose a mental health condition.	No permanent staffing Operating cost: £302 p/a (includes temporary staffing) Total: £1,250,319	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Improved student functioning, academic performance, and experience - Preventative support means students are less likely to need more specialist or crisis intervention **Long term outcomes:** - Reduced numbers of intermissions - Improved educational outcomes	IS3, IS6

Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy across the four years of the Plan: £6,662,097

Summary of evidence base and rationale

All interventions are underpinned by a Theory of Change, with clearly defined activities linked to specific, measurable outcomes. The activities are informed by staff and student consultation, case studies from the OfS Student Mental Health Partnerships Project, TASO Mental Health Evidence Hub, sector-wide peer learning and shared experience, as well as academic literature on what works. A summary is provided in Annex B. All interventions align with the growing evidence base that improved mental health outcomes for students lead to better educational outcomes. However, we are mindful that setting numerical targets may result in unintended perverse incentives to focus on student educational outcomes at the expense of student mental health and wellbeing outcomes. For example, we must ensure that there is no pressure, led by a numerical target, to encourage students to sit exams in order to progress or complete their degree if there is the potential for this to have a negative impact on their mental health, wellbeing or safety. The primary focus is to ensure the best interests of each individual student are met.

We are also aware that the activities which are directed at supporting positive educational outcomes for students with mental health conditions intersect with and, to a certain extent, underpin improved outcomes for risks highlighted in other areas, particularly risks relating to ethnicity awarding gaps and progression for students with a disability for which mental health problems or poor wellbeing might well be a contributory factor.

Evaluation

The evaluation methodology largely focuses on a baseline of Type 1 narrative evaluation delivery across all activities, in recognition that the majority of activities are new and being delivered on a pilot basis and that these evaluations at Type 1 will be seeking to triangulate data points across a number of sources to provide a rich dataset to allow us to reflect on our Theory of Change, assumptions and change mechanisms to inform our iterative intervention design. We will endeavour to introduce Type 2 empirical evaluation over the course of the APP cycle where possible. Two of the activities within IS4 rely on partnership working, and evaluation will therefore be subject to agreement with all relevant parties.

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Case Management System	- Improved data systems and processes to ensure individual students receive joined up care - Improved data sharing policies and processes - Improved evaluation of service provision - Improved insights into student experience - Join up other institutional data sources to better assess and monitor continuation, completion, attainment and progression rates of students	**Mixed Methods Design (Type 1)** - Implementation and process evaluation to include reach and implementation fidelity - Student self-report survey - Interviews and focus group with staff	A high-level evaluation summary will be published on our website (student support webpages). Sector conference presentation.

	with mental health conditions, and to consider intersectionality - Integration of targeted interventions/activities based on data insights/analysis		
NHS partnership	- Better clinical outcomes and a reduction of students accessing care through crisis pathways and locality teams - Integrated working developed, including data sharing policies and protocols to improve data reporting and analysis capabilities	**Mixed Methods Design (Type 2)** - Pre/post-test design using validated clinical outcome measures - Quantitative and qualitative analysis across a number of data points to better understand student pathways to care	Interim high-level annual reporting available from Spring 2027 via the Student Support webpages. Final evaluation findings available in 2029-20 to be published on the University's webpages within the APP Evaluation Repository. Sector conference presentations.
Wellbeing Stimulus Fund	- Improved contextualised preventative and early intervention activities - Reduced financial barriers for Colleges to introduce activities or initiatives which improve student wellbeing - Reduced barriers to student engagement in activities which improve wellbeing - Better understanding of what works in prevention/intervention in the Cambridge context to lead to improved contextualised preventative and early intervention activities	**Mixed Methods Design (Type 1)** - Implementation and process evaluation - Self-report survey - Interviews with fund beneficiaries - Synthesis and review of the information provided in project evaluation reports (from beneficiaries) to assess the value of activities, the sustainability and scalability of individual projects Activities funded will be evaluated according to the nature of the intervention and undertaken by the College in receipt of the funding – funding	It is anticipated that funding will be granted across a number of tranches over a number of years and meaningful evaluation will be available on conclusion in 2027 A high-level evaluation summary will be published

		will be subject to a credible evaluation plan	on our website (Student Support webpages) during 2029.
Training framework	- Better informed, properly tasked and trained staff working to clear, shared objectives - Staff are more confident about their role and remit, as a potential first responder to a student in distress or crisis, supports improved signposting to appropriate specialist services	**Mixed Methods Design (Type 1)** - Self-report survey - Focus groups	A high-level evaluation summary will be published on our website (Student Support webpages) during 2028.
Specialist mentoring	- Improved student functioning, academic performance, and experience - Preventative support means students less likely to need more specialist or crisis intervention - Reduced numbers of intermissions - Improved educational outcomes	**Mixed Methods Design (Type 2)** **Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Pre/post design self-report survey - Qualitative feedback on student experience **Long term outcome:** - Longitudinal track with non-random comparison group of educational outcomes from admission to graduation	A high-level evaluation summary will be published on our website (Student Support webpages) during 2027. Sector conference presentation.

Intervention strategy 5: Progression to postgraduate study at Cambridge

Objectives and targets

Objective 5: We will address progression to postgraduate study at Cambridge among undergraduates from other universities, particularly from certain groups, including underrepresented ethnicities, those who have faced socio-economic disadvantage and mature students.

Target 3: (PTP_1) We will offer a minimum of 160 funded research experience placements over the period of this Plan.

Risks to equality of opportunity

Risk 1: Knowledge and skills; Risk 2: Information and guidance; Risk 3: Perception of higher education; Risk 4: Application success rates; Risk 5: Limited choice of course type and delivery; Risk 10: Cost pressures; Risk 12: Progression from higher education.

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
Research experience placements (Existing activity)	Support for dedicated widening participation research experience placements in all six academic Schools Placements offered to undergraduates and graduates who have experienced socio-economic disadvantage and who belong to underrepresented groups, including: - FSM, first generation, young carer, care experienced, estranged, single-parent - Black-British, British-Bangladeshi, British-Pakistani - Mature Additional targeting criteria based on gender and other ethnicities may also apply, depending on the discipline. A minimum of 160 placements would be offered over the four-year period	2.6 FTE staff Staffing: £109K p/a Project cost: £215K p/a (approx. £6.1K per participant) Total: £1,345,542	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Interns have strengthened research skills gained through practical experience - Target students have increased familiarity with Cambridge student life and prospective sense of belonging - Increased knowledge of and confidence in Cambridge admissions process **Long term outcome:** - Participants are more likely to successfully apply to postgraduate study at Cambridge or other research-intensive institutions	
Applicant support programme (New activity)	An applicant support programme will be established to support those who have not previously studied at Cambridge to apply for postgraduate study Priority will be given to applicants who have experienced socio-economic disadvantage and who belong to underrepresented groups, including: - FSM, first generation, young carer, care experienced, estranged, single-parent - Black-British, British-Bangladeshi, British-Pakistani - Mature Participants supported through information, advice and guidance sessions, and mentoring	0.5 FTE staff Staffing: £23K p/a Project cost: £44K p/a (approx. £850 per participant) Total: £277,389	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Increased knowledge of the Cambridge admissions process - Increased knowledge of what makes a strong application - Increased academic self-esteem - Increased confidence in navigating Cambridge admissions process **Long term outcome:** - Participants are more likely to successfully apply to postgraduate study at Cambridge	

Funding for Master's study (Existing activity/new activity)	Existing provision of Master's scholarships will be sustained and developed to improve access to funding for applicants from underrepresented backgrounds. Improved allocation of scholarships funds to target eligible former participants of research experience programmes and ensure that they are considered and prioritised for financial support where appropriate	Total: £2,693,384	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Funding opportunities for students most in need of financial support are maintained - Improved process for identifying former internship students when allocating funding **Long term outcome:** - Applicants from underrepresented backgrounds are more likely to apply and take up an offer of Master's study	

Total cost of activities and evaluation for the intervention strategy across the four years of the Plan: £4,316,314

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Intervention Strategy 5 consists of activities designed to mitigate against EORR risks identified above (Risk 1: Knowledge and skills; Risk 2: Information and guidance; Risk 3: Perception of higher education; Risk 4 Application success rates; Risk 5: Limited choice of course type and delivery; Risk 10: Cost pressures; Risk 12: Progression from higher education. The OfS has historically not considered activities focused on mitigating inequalities of opportunity in progression to postgraduate study as within the scope of the APP process, although it has responded positively to suggestions that we should include it in our plan. There is a paucity of evidence in the sector to support postgraduate widening participation activity and we think it is likely that we will be the only university to make it a focus of APP activities. As such, we have drawn from the evidence where possible, and supplemented this with best practice where relevant, from other areas of the lifecycle (e.g. mentoring and access). We have concluded that the most appropriate numerical measure at this early, explorative stage of development is a numerical target for participation in the research experience placements programme, as this will ensure that we secure the necessary buy-in from potential participants and from a wide range of subject disciplines across the University, to develop our understanding of how inequality of opportunity operates in the context of progression to postgraduate study and the efficacy of our interventions. As this activity then generates applicants for our postgraduate courses we will be in a better position to revise and review the impact and outcomes of this work. We see this as an opportunity to contribute our own findings to the sector and are committed to sharing our learnings.

As we progress throughout the APP cycle, we will regularly review the evidence underpinning our activities in anticipation of emerging evidence from other providers undertaking similar activity and integrate our learnings. We will also review our targeting approaches to ensure they are the most effective means of reducing risks for our target populations. Further detail on the evidence base and rationale influencing our approach be found in Annex B.

Evaluation

All interventions are underpinned by a Theory of Change, with clearly defined activities, linked to specific, measurable outcomes. Short, intermediate and long-term outcomes are measured and tracked using sector standard methods such as the validated TASO ASQ and HEAT. We aim to further enrich our data using a range of qualitative methodologies, such as focus groups and interviews with participants. This is particularly important for pilot phase interventions. Whilst all interventions use a pre/post design, and therefore meet OfS standards for Type 2, in recognition of the emerging evidence base and the fact that many of the activities are in their pilot phase, we will be seeking to undertake rich Type 1 narrative evaluation to explore the relationship between activities and outcomes, and to help us identify any change mechanisms important for success.

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Research experience placements	**Short and intermediate term Outcomes:** - Strengthened research skills gained through practical experience - Increased familiarity with Cambridge student life and prospective sense of belonging	**Mixed Methods Design (Type 2)** **Short and intermediate term Outcomes**: - Pre/post survey design adapted from TASO validated ASQ	Interim report published on our website annually from 2025-26, summary report published 2028.

	- Increased knowledge and confidence of Cambridge's postgraduate application process **Long term outcome**: - Participants are more likely to successfully apply to postgraduate study at Cambridge or other research-intensive institutions	- Interviews and focus groups with participants **Long term outcome**: - HEAT longitudinal tracking	
Applicant support programme	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Increased knowledge and confidence of Cambridge's postgraduate application process - Increased knowledge of what makes a competitive application - Increased academic self-esteem **Long term outcome:** - Participants are more likely to successfully apply to postgraduate study at Cambridge	**Mixed Methods Design (Type 2)** **Short and intermediate term outcomes**: - Pre/post survey design adapted from TASO validated ASQ - Interviews and focus groups with participants **Long term outcome**: - HEAT longitudinal tracking	Interim report published on our website annually from 2025-26, summary report published 2028.
Master's funding	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Funding opportunities for students most in need of financial support are maintained - Improved process for identifying former internship students when allocating funding **Long term outcome:** - Applicants from underrepresented backgrounds are more likely to apply and take up their offer for Master's study	**Mixed Methods (Type 1)** **Short and intermediate term outcome:** - Quantitative analysis of allocated funding **Implementation and Process evaluation** - to understand success of internship flag, including reach analysis **Long term outcomes:** - Narrative interviews with students who have received funding and progressed to Cambridge, and those who did not receive funding and not progressed to Cambridge to understand how funding influenced their decision to take up their offer - HEAT longitudinal tracking	Interim report published on our website annually from 2025-26, summary report published 2028.

Intervention strategy 6: Progression to further study, managerial or professional employment or other positive outcomes for students with a declared disability

Objectives and targets

Objective 6: We will address the gap in progression to further study, managerial or professional employment or other positive outcomes for students with a declared disability.

Target 4: (PTP_2) Given the small cohort and natural volatility in outcomes from year to year, we will set a target based on the rolling four-year average gap seen in the Graduate Outcomes survey. We will aim to ensure that the gap in positive outcomes between students with a declared disability and students with no declared disability does not exceed 4%.

Risks to equality of opportunity

Risk 6: Insufficient academic support; Risk 7: Insufficient personal support; Risk 10: Cost pressures; Risk 12: Progression from higher education.

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
Skills assessment & development project (New activity)	Funding is committed for provision of a skills discovery tool enabling students to identify, understand and articulate their skills, a key determinant in students accessing appropriate progression opportunities. Gaps in skills among students with a declared disability will be identified, monitored and further interventions implemented	0.5 FTE staff Staffing: £30K p/a Project cost: £30K p/a Total: £248,408	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Students develop enhanced knowledge and understanding of personal skillset - Students receive personalised recommendations based on their skills profile - Students have increased confidence in their ability to navigate personal development opportunities whilst studying at university **Long term outcomes:** - Institutional awareness of patterns of student skills development, particularly between different demographic groups - Development of a dataset that supports the evaluation of other interventions designed to enhance skills development across the institution	IS4
Inclusivity by design (Existing activity)	Continue to audit careers support activities against 'inclusivity by design' principles. Active monitoring of engagement by characteristics to enable focus of resource if students with declared disabilities are underrepresented	No overt costs	**Short and intermediate term outcome:** - Students will continue to have access to guidance and information in accessible formats and in a way which is designed for them in addition to the standard provision **Long term outcome:** - Monitoring of engagement by characteristics allows adjustment of design and delivery to ensure equity of provision across all groups	IS4
Dedicated careers consultants (Existing activity)	Dedicated careers consultants with a focus on support for students with a declared disability. Support includes appointments, interview practice, sessions and communications designed for those with specific disabilities, e.g. provision of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion newsletter and blog posts	0.4 FTE staff Staffing: £27K p/a	**Short term outcomes:** - All users will have access to high quality, bespoke and appropriate careers education and guidance which meets their specific needs - Students have improved understanding of external sources of support	IS4

		Total: £111,783	- Students have improved confidence in engaging with employers and employment opportunities **Long term outcome:** - Students feel supported in transitioning to the labour market	
Post-graduation survey (New activity)	Survey of graduates with a declared disability six months after graduation utilising the same survey structure and coding as the Graduate Outcomes survey, to provide: - More immediate data on the destinations of our graduates, opportunity to offer targeted additional support to those who report being underemployed or unemployed - Promote the Graduate Outcomes survey and improve quality of contact details which would hopefully have a positive impact on survey response rates for these official statistics	Total: £8,280	**Short term outcomes:** - Improved data set pertaining to graduate destinations outcomes enhances knowledge of target group position at six months - Improved contact data provided to HESA for Graduate Outcomes for this important section of the cohort **Long term outcomes:** - Enhanced data insights allow careers team to provide appropriate interventions for target students to mitigate any negative differentials across progression outcomes - Data point to inform interventions during study to avoid necessity of post-graduation support - Response rate to HESA Graduate Outcomes for students with declared disability will increase, further enhancing our data	

Total cost of activities and evaluation for the intervention strategy across the four years of the Plan: £368,471

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Existing activities and interventions are informed by the literature relating to effective Careers Education Advice and Guidance and the work of the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) disability task group. The interventions are designed to address the recommendations made by the Disabled Students Commission in the Disabled Graduate Employment report (2021) and the Commission's subsequent Disabled Student Commitment (2023).

The presenting 'gap' is different across the various categories of disability. For example, those with a declared mental health disability are more at risk of not progressing than those with cognitive or learning disabilities. The composition of the population in terms of the type of declared disability (and particularly the composition of the population who choose to respond to the Graduate Outcomes survey) will impact significantly on the outcomes. For example, the most recent dataset (2020-21) elicited a response rate across all characteristics of 51.8%, but the response rate from those with a declared social and communication impairment was 71.4%, and for those with a sensory medical or physical impairment it was 48.7%. Analysis of data from the OfS Student Outcomes dashboard demonstrates both the statistical uncertainty around outcomes for this demographic but also shows that Cambridge is already outperforming its benchmark by 2%. Nationally, students with declared disabilities are more likely to enter part-time employment rather than full-time. A smaller proportion of disabled graduates were employed in major centres (e.g. London) than those with no known disability. This is likely owing to the additional challenges that may be faced in relocating for work (such as access to healthcare and support networks) compared to the cohort without known disabilities (AGCAS, 2021. What Happens next? 2021 A report on the Employment Outcomes of Disabled Graduates).

The Skills Assessment and Development intervention is designed based on the widespread and well-documented evidence that the ability to recognise, develop and articulate skills set is crucial both in terms of securing future employment and successful progression through academic studies. Further feedback from students of all demographics but especially those with Specific Learning Disabilities (SpLD) makes clear that whilst opportunities for skills development are rich and diverse within the institution, some students experience significant barriers to navigating and access those opportunities.

The six-month destinations survey is an intervention which is designed to address a paucity of robust, timely data regarding outcomes for this group and for that data to further inform the other interventions. Further detail on our evidence base and rationale is available in Annex B.

Evaluation

The evaluation methodology largely focuses on mixed methods approach in recognition that there are many data points available to support the evaluation of these activities. Additionally, several of the activities (Skills Assessment & Graduation Survey) involve fairly complex operational undertakings and we recognise the need for comprehensive implementation and process evaluation, particularly as these are new pilot activities. Furthermore, given that all of the careers activities are optional, we will be seeking to triangulate data points across a number of sources to help inform our understanding of any patterns in engagement. This enhanced implementation and process evaluation, in combination with any impact findings, will allow us to reflect on our Theory of Change assumptions and change mechanisms to inform our iterative intervention design. We have

a well-established Student Panel and Feedback group, and student voice is a central feature of our programme design and evaluation processes.

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Skills assessment & development project (New activity)	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Students develop enhanced knowledge and understanding of personal skillset - Students receive personalised recommendations based on their skills profile - Students have increased confidence in their ability to navigate personal development opportunities whilst studying at university **Long term outcomes:** - Institutional awareness of patterns of student skills development, particularly between different demographic groups - Development of a dataset that supports the evaluation of other interventions designed to enhance skills development across the institution	**Mixed Methods Design (Type 2)** - Longitudinal analysis of students' repeated skills assessment results to understand skills development - Quantitative analysis on student skills data to understand patterns of skills development across demographic groups - Focus groups to understand implementation effectiveness	Internal publication from 2025-26 Subject to response rates, additional info graphics and summary reports will be published on our webpage From 2027 we will seek to publish experience and findings in Sector literature e.g Phoenix (AGCAS journal) and at relevant national conferences e.g. AGCAS and ISE
Inclusivity by design (Existing activity)	Continue to audit careers support activities against 'inclusivity by design' principles Active monitoring of engagement by characteristics to enable focus of resource if students with declared disabilities are underrepresented	**Mixed Methods Design (Type 2)** - Quantitative analysis of engagement, dosage, and reach data of service usage - Pulse surveys on each engagement with service - Pre/post design through termly surveys - Regular engagement with Student Feedback Panel and additional focus groups for deep dives into specific themes, strategic plans and pilot projects	Internal publication from 2025-26 Subject to response rates, additional infographics and summary reports will be published on our webpage. We also hope to share interim findings internally and externally at conferences

			where there is opportunity to do so
Dedicated careers consultants (Existing activity)	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - All users will have access to high quality, bespoke and appropriate careers education and guidance which meets their specific needs - Students have improved understanding of external sources of support - Students have improved confidence in engaging with employers and employment opportunities **Long term outcome:** - Students feel supported in transitioning to the labour market	**Mixed Methods Design (Type 2)** - Quantitative analysis of engagement, dosage, and reach data of service usage - Pulse surveys on each engagement with service - Pre/post design through termly surveys - Regular engagement with Student Feedback Panel and additional focus groups for deep dives into specific themes, strategic plans and pilot projects	Internal publication from 2025-26 We also hope to share interim findings internally and externally at conferences where there is opportunity to do so
Post-graduation survey (New activity)	**Short and intermediate term outcomes:** - Improved data set pertaining to graduate destinations outcomes enhances knowledge of target group position at six months - Improved contact data provided to HESA for Graduate Outcomes for this important section of the cohort **Long term outcomes:** - Enhanced data insights inform appropriate targeted interventions - Reduced necessity for post-graduation support - Improved response rate to HESA Graduate Outcomes	**Mixed Methods (Type 1)** - Implementation and process evaluation including reach and engagement analysis using data insights from survey software - Comparison of the dataset provided by Graduate Outcomes to assess if six-month survey is providing higher quality data	Internal publication from 2025-26. Subject to response rates, additional infographics and summary reports will be published on our webpage

Whole provider approach

The collegiate nature and devolved culture of Cambridge necessitates a whole provider approach, both in identifying the key risks and associated interventions we have chosen to focus on as well as the implementation and monitoring of our Plan.

Formal responsibility for the APP resides with the Council, the principal executive and policy-making body of the University, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor. Operational responsibility for developing the Plan and its implementation rests with the APP Scrutiny Group (APPSG), chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education. APPSG's membership comprises representatives from the six academic Schools of the University; the President and the Access, Education & Participation Officer (UG) of Cambridge Students' Union; and College representatives, supported by administrative officers from the Education Services Division.

Detailed engagement with the collegiate University community has been undertaken, which has taken a variety of forms ranging from an open meeting for all staff and students, participatory action research and student/staff focus groups, through to critical review of iterations of this document by a wide variety of University and College bodies.

The APPSG will maintain operational oversight of the implementation of the Plan, as part of which it has approved the creation of a dedicated Evaluation Sub-Committee drawing on the expertise of practitioners across the collegiate University in monitoring evaluation standards and moderating findings. Similarly, key University and College committees engaged in policy-making and oversight of activities with a bearing on student outcomes across the lifecycle from access to progression will add APP monitoring to their terms of reference where this is not already explicit. All of the University and intercollegiate bodies include student representatives in their memberships, and as this document makes clear all major initiatives are devised and implemented with active student participation.

These formal structures will be complemented and supported by diverse communities of practice across the collegiate University, the purpose of which is to promote ever-improving understanding of risks to equality of opportunity in the Cambridge context and how these risks are best mitigated. Communities of practice will also play a role in disseminating findings in order that examples of best practice can be promulgated more widely.

Student consultation

Students are at the heart of the Plan and therefore we have sought to seek views from students, who are best placed to advise us, throughout the process. This includes:

- Focus groups with current students to better understand the risks to equality of opportunity
- Student representation on University committees which considered or approved the Plan
- Student representatives invited to join the panel at the open meeting for students and staff

Consultation with our students will not end with the approval of this Plan; we will continually ensure that we engage with our students as our critical friends during its implementation.

Student feedback was incorporated within the drafting process for the Plan and resulted in changes including tighter timescales for some internal reviews and earlier commitments to formal variations. In addition, our students requested further analysis of attainment data which resulted in the inclusion of British-Pakistani students in risk 3.

A number of student-led consultations and focus groups were established in conjunction with Cambridge SU, College access officers and relevant student-led access and outreach groups. The participants reflected the diversity of the undergraduate population, with a bias towards under-represented demographics where appropriate.

We continue to develop student engagement through key oversight and governance groups, with student members being active participants in the Access and Participation Plan Scrutiny Group, the General Board Education Committee, Undergraduate Admissions Committee and the College Admissions Forum. Students are co-conveners of the University’s Black Advisory Hub and are active participants in our outreach initiatives.

Evaluation of the Plan

The University appreciates the importance of evaluation and is committed to continual enhancement of our practice. We know that more needs to be done across the sector to understand what works, for whom, and in what context. We are committed to strengthening our understanding of our own interventions to support sector learning.

Understanding evaluation at Cambridge

Cambridge is a collegiate institution with a highly devolved culture and this influences our approach to evaluation. Historically, University teams supporting access, success and progression worked largely independently of one another, but a reorganisation of Education Services has significantly improved coordination. The University also supports the evaluation training of College practitioners.

We have made progress since the last APP submission in 2020-21. To situate this in context, we have utilised the OfS 'Self-Assessment' tool and drawn comparisons with our prior performance. Much of our work remains classified as 'emerging', albeit with pockets of ‘good’ and 'advanced' practice. Our Plan contains a summary of the specific steps we will take to embed stronger evaluation standards throughout the student lifecycle. Additional details, including a Theory of Change, can be found in Annex B.

Dimension	2021-22	2024-25 Score	2028-29 Target
Strategic Context	Emerging	Advanced	Advanced
Programme Design	Emerging	Emerging	Advanced
Evaluation Design	Emerging	Emerging	Good
Evaluation Implementation	Emerging	Advanced	Advanced
Learning from Evaluation	Emerging	Emerging	Good

Strategic context

There is a strong institutional understanding of the importance of evaluation, which is reflected in our ‘Advanced’ score for the strategic context for evaluation. Our primary focus in this area is to maintain the structures supporting evaluation and to encourage greater collaboration across teams.

Since the last APP, the University has increased investment in evaluation staff across all areas of the student lifecycle. In advance of the next cycle, this will extend to include 3 new FTE in Access, 1.6 FTE in Success and 1 FTE in Progression to ensure robust evaluation of all APP interventions. The University has also enhanced the profile of evaluation by integrating additional responsibility into senior role profiles, and ensuring evaluation staff will be represented in relevant governance structures and committees.

The previous self-assessment highlighted the need for a structured approach to support top-down evaluation implementation and bottom-up sharing of solutions and best practice. In response, we have established internal processes to allow practitioners and evaluators to share knowledge.

Additionally, we have recently formed an Evaluation Sub-Group of the APPSG. The sub-group will enhance oversight of evaluation, ensuring the implementation and dissemination of evaluation outputs as outlined in the Plan whilst also fostering peer learning and support.

Finally, we will seek to enhance the technical knowledge within evaluation teams by drawing upon the expertise of the University's renowned academics, most notably those in the Faculty of Education whose work includes contributions to numerous internal projects (our UniConnect partnership, for example) and to the sector (including an evaluation of the Scholar's Programme using a randomised control trial (RCT), and the development of the ASQ with TASO). We will explore opportunities for collaboration and enhancing our Type 3 methodologies throughout the APP.

Embedding a culture of evaluation

We recognise the importance of high-quality training to build knowledge and confidence in evaluation practice among staff. We provide comprehensive, bespoke evaluation training throughout the academic year, upskilling staff across all stages of the evaluation cycle.

A shorter training series is regularly offered across the collegiate University, extending to staff in colleges, departments, museums, libraries, and our UniConnect partner HEIs and FE colleges. Evaluation resources, including guidance on developing a Theory of Change, methodologies, data analysis and implementation evaluation, are also provided. Colleagues from this broader audience can also request ad hoc support from the central evaluation team and are encouraged to join our University-wide Access and Participation Evaluation Community of Practice, established following a recommendation arising from our last self-assessment in 2021-22.

Programme design, evaluation design and implementation

Our evaluation design practice in some areas of the University is advanced, although our overall capability in this area is developing. Most staff have a strong grasp of evaluation design and implementation, but we have identified a need to align language and approaches to evaluation across all teams to ensure we are consistently meeting OfS standards of evidence.

All of our APP interventions were audited in 2023-24 to ensure they meet required evidence and evaluation standards. To embed consistency across the teams, we will ensure all APP interventions have completed a standardised individual evaluation plan clearly identifying responsibilities and accountability. We will submit these via our newly established Evaluation Sub-Group and use this as a mechanism to hold colleagues accountable for implementation. All approved evaluation plans will be published on our Evaluation Repository, which will be created in 2025-26.

We will formally review our interventions annually, and informally through standing items and sharing via our Community of Practice. We will incorporate an annual Evaluation Security Risk Assessment and Data Collection Audit into our practice. We have already identified some implementation challenges, such as fragmented data hindering participant outcome tracking, which we are actively addressing. Our objective is to enhance the security of all evaluation activities, recognising that we need strong examples across all typologies of evaluation.

Research and evidence

The University is dedicated to making evidence-based decisions to improve equality of opportunity for students at all stages of their academic journey. Our research team conducts research and analysis to provide the evidence base. This includes additional research to better understand the reasons behind identified 'gaps' and research to support the collegiate University's use of contextual data in its holistic admissions process and targeting.

Over the next APP cycle, we will be undertaking further primary research to understand how specific EORR risks present in target populations and to understand the barriers and enablers to access and success in a Cambridge context.

Learning from evaluation

We know that evaluation findings are of limited use without the opportunity to reflect, learn, iterate and share. We commit to publishing findings regardless of outcomes, both internally and externally. We are classed as ‘emerging’ in this dimension. Historically, this has been an area of weaker progress for the University, due to a lack of consistent application of the evaluation cycle across interventions. There are pockets of excellent learning and reflexive practice, notably in the Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning.

Since the last self-assessment of evaluation, there has been considerable investment in upskilling staff and creating effective infrastructures to support evaluation practice. We have made some progress in this area. All centrally delivered interventions will undergo annual reviews involving both evaluators and practitioners to ensure we are capturing accurate insights from any analysis and to ensure findings will be translated into practice. Additional opportunities for sharing cross-institutionally are available, including via our Community of Practice and 'Carousel' sessions as part of our training programme.

We are committed to contributing more findings and evidence to the sector. We will establish clear guidance and expectations to support effective dissemination to ensure colleagues feel confident sharing internally and externally. We will consult with students and staff to ensure publications are clear and accessible for all audiences. We have created a new Evaluation Repository and all evaluation outputs will be uploaded there, once approved via our Evaluation Sub-Group.

The University is also a member of various sector networks, including the Russell Group Evaluation Forum, FACE APPSIG, AdvanceHE, NEON, HEAT, and the TASO Sector Network.

Provision of information to students

The Plan will be published on our website, alongside previous iterations of the Plan, so that our ongoing commitments and progress can be clearly seen by prospective and current students as well as other stakeholders. We will also produce a summary of the Plan. We intend to produce a short film outlining the key elements of the Plan by the end of 2024.

Providing clear and accessible information on fees, financial support and additional course costs is of primary importance to students in making decisions about the HE choices and while undertaking their course. Undergraduate tuition fees are provided on our website[1], with historical information retained. Likewise, details of financial support available via the government in the form of

[1] Tuition fees | Undergraduate Study (cam.ac.uk)

maintenance loans and that are available from the University via the Cambridge Bursary Scheme[2] are provided on our website and during our in-person and online open events.

The Cambridge Bursary Scheme (CBS) is a means tested Bursary providing financial support for students from lower-income households, consistently across all of our Colleges. Currently (as of 2024) students with a household income of up to £62,215 are eligible, with the students from the lowest income households (up to £25,000/pa) receiving the highest payment of £3,500. There is a sliding scale for household incomes up to £62,215, with students in this top band receiving £100 per year. Further examples can be found in the table below. This funding is per year and does not have to be repaid.

Household Income	Cambridge Bursary amount
£25,000	£3,500
£35,000	£2,580
£45,000	£1,670
£55,000	£760
£62,215	£100

Students who were eligible for FSM receive an additional £1,000 per year. Furthermore, independent students and care leavers are eligible for additional funding via an enhanced bursary, resulting in a total of up to £8,350 per year.

All information for prospective and current students is produced and checked internally to ensure accuracy and accessibility, recognising that prospective students in particular may not be familiar with HE fees and financial support and thus need to be guided through the process with clear signposting to additional sources of information such as the gov.uk webpages.

[2] Cambridge Bursary Scheme funding | Cambridge students

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

Introduction

Our assessment of performance relied principally on the OfS access and participation dataset that was published in March 2023, supplemented with the July 2023 progression data update. We considered all years of this data which were available (up to six), except for attainment data from 2019-20 or 2020-21 (due to the impact of Covid-19 on this):

- Access 2016-17 – 2021-22 entry years
- Continuation 2015-16 – 2020-21 entry years
- Completion 2012-13 – 2017-18 entry years
- Awarding (attainment) 2016-17 – 2018-19 and 2021-22 qualification years
- Progression 2017-18 – 2020-21 qualification years

Because relevant courses at Cambridge are all full-time, we utilised the OfS data for full-time students, and we also included all undergraduates (including those on courses with postgraduate components). The absence of Cambridge data in the OfS dataset for certain groups and years (for reasons including suppression for data protection reasons and due to low numbers) meant that assessment was not possible in some cases; this is noted where applicable.

In many cases where we identified a limitation in the assessment that was possible with the OfS data, we used additional data sources for further analysis. These are detailed where relevant, and include: our own internal data, UCAS End of Cycle data resources, data purchased from the UCAS EXACT service, HESA sector data, and 2021 census data. We also paid heed to what we have learned from our APP Participatory Action Research (APP PAR) project with our students over the last four years, and from focus groups that we conducted in late 2023 with students on access and participation topics, as detailed where relevant.

As instructed, our reported assessment of performance does not report all of the analysis we have undertaken, but only that from which indications of risk arose. Our assessment of performance for the access stage focuses on comparing the proportion of Cambridge entrants that are in each disadvantage-related characteristic group with *the proportion of entrants in the sector that are in the same group*, because ideally there would not be groups of students that are underrepresented at Cambridge compared to the sector (so this would be an indication of risk). For our assessment of performance in the other lifecycle stages, we did also compare the proportion of Cambridge students from each group that achieve a positive outcome (e.g. completing their degree) with the proportion for the sector and, in all cases where this could be assessed, the proportion with positive outcomes was higher for Cambridge, so this identified no risks. Therefore, our reported assessment where we did identify some risks focuses on comparing the proportion of Cambridge students in each disadvantage-related characteristic group that achieve a positive outcome with *the proportion of Cambridge students from less disadvantaged groups* that do, because ideally there would not be groups of students that have a greater chance of positive outcomes at Cambridge than others (so this would be an indication of risk). Because it is unlikely that any two groups consistently have exactly the same outcomes, we only regarded quite consistent differences of at least 2% as indications of risk, and we also took into account how the differences at Cambridge compared to those for the sector.

We have not reported any of the analysis that we undertook with respect to POLAR4 and TUNDRA, and nor did we consider these as target groups for interventions set out in this APP. This is because we are aware of many criticisms of POLAR4[3], most of which also apply to TUNDRA. This position was supported by our students' views in our focus groups.

In addition to detailing our identified risks for Cambridge students at each lifecycle stage, in the last section of this Annex we have also presented the risks which we have identified for students from other universities in terms of their progression to Cambridge for postgraduate study. The data sources used for our analysis were necessarily different to those utilised in the rest of this Annex, as, for example, the OfS access and participation dataset is not relevant.

Access to Cambridge

INDICATIONS OF RISK

Mature students

We identified an indication of risk at the access stage for ***mature*** students from the OfS access and participation data. This shows that the proportion of mature Cambridge entrants has varied between 3.5% and 4.3% over the last six years with no consistent trend, whilst the sector's entrance proportion has consistently been much higher (e.g. 29.0% in 2021-22).

Students with a declared disability

We identified indications of risk at the access stage for students with a ***declared disability*** from the OfS access and participation data. This shows that, although the proportion of disabled Cambridge entrants has increased over the last six years from 10.1% to 14.3% (in 2021-22), this is still a little below the sector's entrant proportion (17.4% in 2021-22). When the data are disaggregated into different types of disability, the specific groups which are consistently underrepresented at Cambridge are those with ***Cognitive and Learning disabilities*** (Cambridge 4.0% in 2021-22 compared to sector 5.7%), ***Mental Health disabilities*** (Cambridge 3.9% in 2021-22 compared to 5.0%) and ***Sensory, Medical and Physical disabilities*** (Cambridge 1.5% in 2021-22 compared to 2.3%).

Students from minority ethnic groups

We identified indications of risk at the access stage for students from the Black and Other minority ethnic groups from the OfS access and participation data. This shows that although the proportion of Cambridge entrants who are ***Black*** has increased over the last six years from 1.5% to 4.4% (in 2021-22), this is still well below the sector's entrant proportion (10.5% in 2021-22). The proportion of Cambridge entrants who are in the ***Other*** group has varied between 1.0% and 1.6% over the last six years with no consistent trend, whilst the sector's entrance proportion has been consistently higher and also increasing (to 3.0% in 2021-22).

We also identified indications of risk at the access stage for students from the Bangladeshi and Pakistani minority ethnic groups, from our supplemental analysis of UCAS data (2023 End of Cycle

[3] See, for example, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0309877X.2013.858681 and https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Measuring-Disadvantage.pdf

data resources) and our own internal data (for 2022 and 2023 combined) which enabled disaggregation of the Asian group. We found that only 1.5% of acceptances to Cambridge of UK students with known ethnicity were from ***Bangladeshi*** backgrounds, compared to 2.5% for the sector (from all UK regions except Scotland), and that only 2.0% of acceptances to Cambridge were from ***Pakistani*** backgrounds, compared to 5.3% for the sector.

Students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)

We identified an indication of risk at the access stage for students that had been ***FSM eligible*** from the OfS access and participation data. This shows that, although the proportion of FSM eligible Cambridge entrants has increased over the last six years from 5.2% to 9.5% (in 2021-22), this is still well below the sector's entrant proportion (18.4% in 2021-22). Furthermore, in our focus groups with current students, FSM was viewed positively as a good indicator of disadvantage.

Students from socio-economically deprived areas (IMD Q1-2)

We identified an indication of risk at the access stage for students from IMD Q1-2 areas from two sources. Firstly, the OfS access and participation data (for English IMD 2019 only) shows that, although the proportion of English-domiciled Cambridge entrants from IMD Q1-2 has increased over the last six years from 12.5% to 21.1% (in 2021-22), this is still well below the sector's entrant proportion (44.1% in 2021-22). Secondly, we have analysed UCAS data (2023 End of Cycle data resources) and our own internal data to assess our performance with all four regional IMD measures for England, N. Ireland, Scotland and Wales combined. We found that, in the 2023 application cycle, only 21.2% of acceptances to Cambridge were from ***regional IMD Q1-2***, compared to 40.8% for the sector. Furthermore, in our focus groups with current students, IMD was viewed positively as a good indicator of disadvantage.

Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS)

Students in the lower ABCS quintiles for access have combinations of characteristics (ethnicity, FSM eligibility, gender, 'Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index' (IDACI) quintile, IMD quintile and TUNDRA quintile) which analysis of past data by the OfS has shown make them relatively unlikely to access higher education. We identified an indication of risk at the access stage for students in ***ABCS Q1-2*** from the OfS access and participation data. This shows that the proportion of ABCS Q1-2 Cambridge entrants has varied between 11.4% and 13.5% over the last six years with no consistent trend, whilst the sector's entrance proportion has consistently been much higher (e.g. 21.2% in 2021-22).

Students from regions of the UK which are underrepresented at Cambridge

We have also identified indications of risk at the access stage for students from the ***North West***, ***South West***, ***West Midlands***, and ***Wales***. This is based on our internal analysis of data purchased from UCAS via their EXACT service for the 2016-19 cycles, in combination with our own internal data. This enabled us to identify regions of the UK from which Cambridge consistently receives fewer applications and accepts fewer students than would be expected given the numbers of students applying and accepted via UCAS each year that are from each area, even when only those with very high A Level attainment are included. Students from Northern Ireland and Scotland are also underrepresented at Cambridge, but we do not believe this indicates risk because of the much lower (or absent) tuition fees for students from these regions who choose to stay there for university.

OUTCOME OF ASSESSMENT

In summary, our assessment of performance has identified indications of risk at the access stage for the following groups of UK-domiciled students:

- From socio-economically deprived areas (IMD Q1-2) in any of the four UK regions
- Black, Other, Bangladeshi and Pakistani minority ethnic groups
- Eligible for FSM
- From the North West, South West, West Midlands, or Wales
- Mature
- Declared a disability (in particular, Cognitive and Learning; Mental Health; and Sensory, Medical and Physical)
- Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS) Q1-2

Sector evidence (i.e. the EORR) and our own analysis suggests that the underlying causes of these indications of risk are complex and multifactorial, and may include: knowledge and skills (lower prior attainment than is needed for entry to Cambridge; EORR risk 1); information and guidance (lack of access to information and guidance to encourage levels of ambition and make informed decisions about higher education options; EORR risk 2); misperception of Cambridge (that despite being qualified they do not feel Cambridge is for 'people like them' and that their application would not be successful; EORR risk 3); application success rates (that applicants from certain backgrounds are less likely to be admitted; EORR risk 4); and limited choice of delivery mode (Cambridge's degree programmes are largely full-time and residential; EORR risk 5).

As detailed elsewhere in our Plan, the University of Cambridge has identified the underrepresentation of several of the above groups as a key institutional risk for Cambridge, and set out intervention plans and objectives accordingly: these groups are students from ***IMD Q1-2***, those who are ***eligible for FSM*** and ***Black-British***, ***British-Bangladeshi*** and ***British-Pakistani*** ethnicities. Our objectives include a numerical target for the proportion of entrants from IMD Q1-2. A numerical target for the proportion of FSM eligible entrants will be set in 2025 once additional data become available (presently only one year of (self-declared) FSM eligibility data for HE acceptances is available to purchase from UCAS, in a form that can be intersected with A Level attainment). We will also not be setting a numerical admissions target for any underrepresented ethnic minority groups, because this information is not available to universities during the admissions cycle; instead, we will increase our outreach work with these groups. Because of the indications of risk identified for students from the ***North West***, ***South West***, ***West Midlands***, or ***Wales***, our access intervention strategy set out in this APP also includes increasing our outreach work with students from these regions who are from IMD Q1-2.

For the reasons explained below, the University has decided against including the other groups for which indications of risk were identified as focuses in this APP, specifically: students from Other ethnicities, mature students, students with a declared disability, and students in ABCS Q1-2.

We believe that the ***'Other' ethnicity*** group is an unsuitable target for interventions due to its nebulous nature. The only specific ethnic group included within Other is Arab and, with that one exception, students selecting this group on their UCAS application form are likely doing so due to *not* identifying in one of the other specified ethnic groups, rather than positively identifying as 'Other' ethnicity.

The severe underrepresentation of ***mature students*** at Cambridge was also identified in our last APP, and a subsequent analysis[4] investigated the reasons for this. We found that the main contributing factors were that Cambridge does not offer several courses which are particularly popular with mature students; the residential nature of Cambridge's degree programmes in combination with the fact that mature students are relatively likely to stay living at home, or at least to attend a provider near their home (note: this corresponds with EORR risk 5); and that mature students may be less likely to have the qualifications needed for entry to Cambridge (note: this corresponds with EORR risk 1). The University has recently introduced an intervention which will help to address the latter of these factors (i.e. the Foundation Year, which is discussed elsewhere), but the other two factors are fundamental to the nature of Cambridge's undergraduate degree offering, and therefore realistically intractable.

Although our analyses found indications of risk for students with ***declared disabilities***, in the form of underrepresentation at Cambridge compared to the sector, the underrepresentation is of a lesser magnitude (proportionally) than for the other groups which have been taken forward as focusses for the access stage in this APP.

Although we found indications of risk for students in ***ABCS Q1-2***, we do not propose to target interventions towards these students specifically. This is because we have set out access-stage interventions in this Plan for students in IMD Q1-2, in underrepresented minority ethnic groups, and students who are FSM-eligible, and all of these characteristics are constituent parts of the ABCS, so we anticipate that these interventions will also address the indications of risk which we found for students in ABCS Q1-2 to at least some extent. We intend to monitor this during the lifetime of this APP.

We would also like to note that we intend to undertake further analysis of data in relation to the following disadvantaged groups during the duration of this APP, as more data for these become available from UCAS (similar to FSM eligibility): ***service children***, ***students who have service experience***, ***estranged students***, ***students with caring responsibilities***, ***care experienced students*** and ***students with parenting responsibilities***. Finally, as more (self-declared) FSM eligibility data become available from UCAS during the course of this APP, we also intend to undertake an analysis of the representation of White 'working class' (which for this purpose we will define as FSM eligible) males and females at Cambridge.

On-course success at Cambridge: continuation, completion and awarding/attainment

INDICATIONS OF RISK

Mature students

We identified indications of risk from the OfS access and participation data for ***mature*** students at the continuation and completion stages (but not awarding). As the data reported below show, the proportion of mature Cambridge students who continue and complete their courses has consistently been lower than the proportion for non-mature (young) students over the last six years. However, the difference at Cambridge has also consistently been smaller than in the sector.

[4] Further self-assessment of undergraduate admissions gaps by age at the University of Cambridge

Difference in proportion (%) of students that attain each positive outcome: mature - young

		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Continuation	**Cambridge**	-2.2	-4.9	-2.3	-3.0	-3.8	-2.0
	Sector	-7.0	-7.3	-8.1	-8.0	-8.2	-9.9
Completion	**Cambridge**	-4.9	-4.0	-8.4	-4.3	-4.3	No data
	Sector	-9.7	-9.4	-9.6	-9.4	-9.7	-10.2

Students with a declared disability

We identified several indications of risk from the OfS access and participation data for students with specific types of declared disabilities. As the data reported below show, insofar as data were available for analysis, the proportion of Cambridge students that have continued their studies has consistently been lower for those with ***Mental Health***, ***Multiple Impairments*** or ***Sensory, Medical and Physical disabilities*** compared to students at Cambridge without a disability, whilst this could not be assessed for the other two types of disability due to lack of data (Cognitive and Learning, and Social and Communication types)***.*** In the one year of data available, the proportion completing their course was also lower for students with a ***Mental Health*** disability over the last six years, whilst none of the other four specific disability types could be assessed due to lack of data. The proportion of Cambridge students attaining at least a 2.1 has been lower for those with ***Mental Health*** and ***Sensory, Medical and Physical disabilities***, but this could not be assessed for students with Social and Communication disabilities due to lack of data. These indications of risk are also exacerbated by the fact that the differences at Cambridge are often larger than those in the sector.

The awarding and continuation gaps for students with a mental health disability has been a focus of the University's access and participation related work since this issue was identified in our 2020-21 – 2024-25 APP. A key initiative arising from that was a five-year student-led qualitative research project, the APP PAR project. Among other things, this project has identified, and deepened our institutional understanding of, several risks to equality of opportunity faced by students with mental health disabilities at Cambridge. Additionally, our recent focus groups with current students found that although students mostly welcome the University's focus on mental health, they feel that more attention should be paid to other types of disability, particularly physical ones.

Difference in proportion (%) of students that attain each positive outcome: Mental Health disability – no declared disability

		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Continuation	**Cambridge**	No data	-4.9	No data	-8.2	-3.3	No data
	Sector	-4.0	-3.7	-3.2	-3.5	-3.0	-2.0

Completion	**Cambridge**	No data	No data	-8.1	No data	No data	No data
	Sector	-11.1	-9.5	-7.9	-6.0	-4.9	-5.4
Attainment	**Cambridge**	-4.2	-5.6	-1.5			-3.4
	Sector	-0.4	-1.5	-0.9			2.1

Difference in proportion (%) of students that attain each positive outcome: Multiple Impairments – no declared disability

		Year 1	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**Year 4**	**Year 5**	**Year 6**
Continuation	**Cambridge**	No data	No data	-5.8	-6.9	No data	No data
	Sector	-2.3	-1.1	-0.9	-0.9	-1.1	-0.5

Difference in proportion (%) of students that attain each positive outcome: Sensory, Medical and Physical disability – no declared disability

		Year 1	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**Year 4**	**Year 5**	**Year 6**
Continuation	**Cambridge**	No data	-6.1	No data	No data	No data	No data
	Sector	-1.7	-1.5	-1.6	-1.2	-1.5	-0.8
Attainment	**Cambridge**	No data	No data	No data			-6.3
	Sector	-2.9	-1.5	-2.7			0.9

Sex

We identified indications of risk from the OfS access and participation data for male students at the awarding stage. As the data reported below show, the proportion of male Cambridge students who are awarded at least a 2.1 has consistently been lower than the proportion for female students. This difference at Cambridge has also consistently been larger than in the sector. However, analysis of our internal data (not shown) reveals that, in contrast, the proportion of male Cambridge students who are awarded a 1st has consistently been higher than the proportion for female students; therefore it is unclear overall which sex is at greater risk, if either, and this possible risk will not be discussed further in our assessment outcome.

Difference in proportion (%) of students that attain each positive outcome: male - female

		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Attainment	**Cambridge**	-5.5	-7.5	-7.5			-7.7
	Sector	-3.8	-4.0	-4.6			-3.6

Students from minority ethnic groups

We identified several indications of risk from the OfS access and participation data for students from minority ethnic groups. As the data reported below show (insofar as data were available for analysis), the proportion of Cambridge students that have been awarded at least a 2.1 has been lower for ***Asian, Black*** and ***Other ethnicity*** students compared to White students at Cambridge over the last six years, although the differences at Cambridge have consistently been smaller than in the sector. In the one year of data available, the proportion completing their course has also been lower for Black students, and this difference was slightly larger than for the sector. It should also be noted that continuation and completion outcomes could not be assessed for the Other group due to lack of data.

Difference in proportion (%) of students that attain each positive outcome: Asian - White

		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Attainment	**Cambridge**	-7.1	-5.6	-4.6			-7.8
	Sector	-11.3	-11.0	-11.5			-8.4

Difference in proportion (%) of students that attain each positive outcome: Black – White

		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Completion	**Cambridge**	-8.3	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
	Sector	-6.1	-6.3	-7.2	-7.5	-7.3	-7.8
Attainment	**Cambridge**	No data	-14.2	-11.7			-10.9
	Sector	-24.3	-23.6	-22.9			-20.1

Difference in proportion (%) of students that attain each positive outcome: Other - White

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6

Attainment	**Cambridge**	No data	No data	-8.3			No data
	Sector	-13.5	-14.0	-14.7			-10.6

The awarding gap for Black students has been a focus of the University's access and participation related work since this issue was identified in our 2020-21 – 2024-25 APP. Since then, the APP PAR project has identified, and deepened our institutional understanding of, several risks to equality of opportunity faced by Black students at Cambridge. Our recent focus groups with current students found that the University's focus on awarding gaps for Black students was supported, but some students queried why Asian students (particularly those from Bangladeshi and Pakistani backgrounds) were not a focus too. For this reason, we undertook further analysis of our own internal awarding data, with the Asian group disaggregated. To maximise group sizes for analysis, we combined data for the most recent six years together (2015-16 –2022-23, excluding 2019-20 and 2020-21 due to the impact of Covid-19 on these). We found that ***Bangladeshi*** students had a much lower chance of being awarded a 2.1 during this time than any other Asian group, and uniquely their chance (78%) was actually lower than for Black students (82%). In contrast, Pakistani students had a chance (89%) that was much more similar to that of White students (93%).

Students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)

We identified indications of risk from the OfS access and participation data for students that had been ***FSM eligible*** at the continuation and awarding stages. As the data reported below show (insofar as data were available for analysis), the proportion of FSM eligible Cambridge students who continue their courses and are awarded at least a 2.1 has been lower than the proportion for non-FSM eligible students over the last six years. However, the difference at Cambridge has usually been smaller than in the sector. It should also be noted that the completion stage could not be assessed due to lack of data for the FSM eligible group at Cambridge.

Difference in proportion (%) of students that attain each positive outcome: FSM eligible – not eligible

		Year 1	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**Year 4**	**Year 5**	**Year 6**
Continuation	**Cambridge**	No data	No data	No data	No data	-2.6	No data
	Sector	-5.3	-5.4	-5.6	-5.5	-4.0	-5.3
Attainment	**Cambridge**	-6.1	-22.0	-6.5			-12.0
	Sector	-12.6	-13.0	-13.6			-12.4

Students from socio-economically deprived areas (IMD Q1&2)

We identified indications of risk from the OfS access and participation data for students from English ***IMD Q1*** areas at the continuation and awarding stages. As the data reported below show, the proportion of IMD Q1 Cambridge students who complete their courses and are awarded at least a 2.1 has been consistently lower than the proportion for IMD Q5 students. However, the difference at Cambridge has also consistently been much smaller than for the sector.

Difference in proportion (%) of students that attain each positive outcome: IMD Q1 (most disadvantaged) – IMD Q5 (least disadvantaged)

		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Completion	**Cambridge**	No data	No data	-6.2	-3.6	-2.7	No data
	Sector	-8.9	-9.2	-10.0	-10.7	-10.4	-10.6
Attainment	**Cambridge**	-4.6	-4.3	-9.7			-5.9
	Sector	-18.3	-18.2	-18.3			-17.8

Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS)

ABCS data are not available for the attainment/awarding stage. Students in the lower ABCS quintiles for continuation and completion have combinations of characteristics (age, care experience, disability status, ethnicity, FSM eligibility, IDACI, IMD, local or distance learning, NS-SEC socio-economic background, parental HE, sex and TUNDRA) which analysis of past data by the OfS has shown make them relatively unlikely to continue their studies into their second year or to complete their course within four years. We identified indications of risk from the OfS access and participation data for students in the two lower ABCS quintiles at the completion stage. As the data reported below show, the proportion of ***ABCS Q1*** and ***Q2*** Cambridge students who complete their courses has been consistently lower than the proportion for ABCS Q5 students. However, the difference at Cambridge has also consistently been much smaller than for the sector. It should also be noted that continuation for ABCS Q1 could not be assessed due to lack of data for this group at Cambridge.

Difference in proportion (%) of students that attain each positive outcome: ABCS Q1 (most disadvantaged) – ABCS Q5 (least disadvantaged)

		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Completion	**Cambridge**	-9.8	No data	No data	-6.7	-8.0	No data
	Sector	-21.1	-21.5	-22.4	-22.8	-23.2	-23.5

Difference in proportion (%) of students that attain each positive outcome: ABCS Q2 (second most disadvantaged) – ABCS Q5 (least disadvantaged)

		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Completion	**Cambridge**	-2.5	No data	-8.3	-2.6	-2.3	No data
	Sector	-12.5	-12.4	-12.4	-12.5	-12.7	-13.0

OUTCOME OF ASSESSMENT

In summary, our assessment of performance, primarily using OfS access and participation data, has identified indications of on-course risk for the following groups of UK-domiciled students:

- Asian (in particular, Bangladeshi), Black and Other minority ethnic groups
- Declared a Mental Health, Multiple Impairments or Sensory, Medical and Physical type of disability
- From socio-economically deprived areas (English IMD Q1)
- Eligible for FSM
- Mature
- Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS) Q1-2

Sector evidence (i.e. the EORR) suggests that the underlying causes of these on-course indications of risk may include: insufficient academic and personal support (EORR risks 6 and 7), the mental health of students (EORR risk 8), and cost pressures (EORR risk 10).

We are not making substantial changes to the focus of our on-course work in this APP, for two main reasons. Firstly, as explained in the main body of our APP, we are currently conducting a Review of Disability Provision, and we feel it would be premature to make any new commitments pertaining to students with disabilities before that is concluded. Secondly, we believe that any substantial changes to our focus need to be informed by substantial further analysis of our internal data, which has not been possible yet due to lack of appropriate data for attainment/awarding (which is where we see the greatest indications of risk among the three on-course areas). This lack of data is due to the fact that we have recently made a major change to our final degree awarding system, affecting degree classes awarded from Summer 2023 onwards[5]. When sufficient awarding data from this new system are available for a reliable analysis (i.e. at least three years of data, after Summer 2025), we plan to conduct an analysis to identify any groups of students with certain characteristics who have lower chances of positive outcomes at Cambridge (that might be indicative of risk for them), across all three on-course areas. Where this initial analysis identifies that students with certain characteristics have lower chances of positive outcomes, we plan to utilise multiple regression analyses to investigate the extent to which these are 'unexplained' by structural and other factors. If our analysis indicates that on-course interventions are needed for any additional groups of students, then we will submit a formal variation to this APP as appropriate.

[5] Degree classes | Cambridge Data

Given this situation, instead of making substantial changes to the focus of our on-course work in this Plan, we will continue with our two existing foci – ***Black-British students*** and students with ***Mental Health conditions*** - and we have set out intervention plans and objectives accordingly in this Plan. We have, however, made one addition now, to include ***British-Bangladeshi*** students, based on the analysis detailed above of our internal data under the old degree awarding system. We have made this exception both because we were aware that our students considered this particularly important, and because our analysis showed that these students actually had an even lower chance of being awarded a 2.1 than Black-British students who were already a focus. In developing our plans, we have further considered the underlying causes for these specific groups in our institutional context; this is detailed elsewhere.

Progression from Cambridge to positive outcomes (including managerial or professional employment and further study)

INDICATIONS OF RISK

Students with a declared disability

We identified several indications of risk from the OfS access and participation data for students with declared disabilities at the progression stage. As the data reported below show, the proportion of Cambridge students that have progressed to positive outcomes has consistently been lower for students with a ***declared disability*** compared to those without, although only by a few percentage points in recent years. When considering specific types of disability, there is often a high level of year-on-year variation in the Cambridge data (which is common when relatively small number of individuals are involved, as is the case here), sometimes even to the point where it's not always the same group that has the most positive outcome every year, which complicates interpretation of the data. Nonetheless, with the only exception being the social and communication type of disability, due to a lack of data meaning no assessment of risk is possible, there are indications of risk in the data shown below for each type of disability: ***cognitive and learning***, ***mental health***, ***multiple impairments*** and ***sensory, medical and physical***. For every disability group there was at least one year where their proportion achieving a positive outcome was at least 7.5% less, and these indications of risk are also exacerbated by the fact that the negative differences at Cambridge are often larger than those in the sector.

Difference in proportion (%) of students that attain positive outcome: Any declared disability – no declared disability

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Cambridge	-9.0	-3.4	-4.0	-3.0
Sector	-2.8	-2.1	-1.7	-2.1

Difference in proportion (%) of students that attain positive outcome: Cognitive and learning disability – no declared disability

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Cambridge	-7.5	7.7	-1.5	2.1
Sector	0.2	0.4	1.8	1.0

Difference in proportion (%) of students that attain positive outcome: Mental health disability – no declared disability

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Cambridge	-14.1	1.1	-5.6	-13.1
Sector	-6.6	-4.8	-4.2	-4.2

Difference in proportion (%) of students that attain positive outcome: Multiple impairments – no declared disability

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Cambridge	-10.9	-21.8	-2.0	-1.0
Sector	-3.1	-1.9	-2.4	-2.1

Difference in proportion (%) of students that attain positive outcome: Sensory, medical and physical disability – no declared disability

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Cambridge	0.8	-2.1	-7.5	No data
Sector	-1.8	-1.7	-1.3	-2.1

Sex

We identified an indication of risk from the OfS access and participation data for ***female*** students at the progression stage. As the data reported below show, the proportion of female Cambridge students who have progressed to positive outcomes has consistently been lower than the proportion for male students, although only by a few percentage points. This difference at Cambridge has also usually been slightly larger than in the sector.

Difference in proportion (%) of students that attain positive outcome: female - male

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Cambridge	-4.2	-1.8	-1.6	-3.5
Sector	-2.9	-1.9	-0.9	-2.1

Students from minority ethnic groups

We identified a possible indication of risk from the OfS access and participation data for Black students at the progression stage. As the data reported below show, the proportion of Black Cambridge students who progressed to positive outcomes was 8.8% lower than for White students in the most recent of data. However, this indication of risk is moderated by the fact that in the one other year of data available, Black students actually had a greater chance of positive outcomes (by 3.5%); this variation between years is often seen when small numbers of individuals are involved (as is the case here). Given the uncertain nature of this indication of risk for Black students, the possible risk for them will not be discussed further in our assessment outcome.

Difference in proportion (%) of students that attain positive outcome: Black - White

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Cambridge	No data	No data	3.5	-8.8
Sector	-5.5	-4.1	-4.5	-3.6

Students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)

We identified a possible indication of risk from the OfS access and participation data for FSM eligible students at the progression stage. As the data reported below show, the proportion of FSM eligible students who progressed to positive outcomes was 9.0% lower than for non-eligible students in the most recent of data. However, there is a high level of year-on-year variation in the Cambridge data (which is common when relatively small number of individuals are involved, as is the case here), and the indication of risk is moderated by the fact that in two of the other years of data available, FSM eligible students actually had a greater chance of positive outcomes (by 5.7 and 7.5%). Given the uncertain nature of this indication of risk for FSM eligible students, the possible risk for them will not be discussed further in our assessment outcome.

Difference in proportion (%) of students that attain positive outcome: FSM eligible – not eligible

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Cambridge	5.7	-0.5	7.5	-9.0
Sector	-7.8	-6.3	-6.7	-6.8

Students from socio-economically deprived areas (IMD Q1-2)

We identified a possible indication of risk from the OfS access and participation data for students from English IMD Q1 areas at the progression stage. As the data reported below show, the proportion of such students who progressed to positive outcomes was 8.7% lower than for students from Q5 areas in the most recent of data. However, this indication of risk is moderated by the fact that there was little difference in the preceding three years, and we have seen from the preceding sections here that progression outcomes data can often have a high level of year-on-year variability. The risk is further moderated by the fact that the difference at Cambridge has consistently been much smaller than for the sector. Given the uncertain nature of this indication of risk for students from IMD Q1 areas, the possible risk for them will not be discussed further in our assessment outcome.

Difference in proportion (%) of students that attain positive outcome: IMD Q1 (most disadvantaged) – IMD Q5 (least disadvantaged)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Cambridge	2.6	2.5	-1.2	-8.7
Sector	-10.3	-9.6	-10.6	-10.8

Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS)

Students in the lower ABCS quintiles for progression have combinations of characteristics (age, care experience, disability status, ethnicity, FSM eligibility, IDACI, IMD, local or distance learning, NS-SEC socio-economic background, parental HE, sex and TUNDRA) which analysis of past data by the OfS has shown make them relatively unlikely to progress to a positive outcome. We identified indications of risk from the OfS access and participation data for students in the two lower ABCS quintiles at the progression stage. As the data reported below show, the proportion of ***ABCS Q1*** and ***Q2*** Cambridge students who progressed to positive outcomes has quite consistently been much lower than the proportion for ABCS Q5 students. However, the difference at Cambridge has also usually been much smaller than for the sector.

Difference in proportion (%) of students that attain positive outcome: ABCS Q1 (most disadvantaged) – ABCS Q5 (least disadvantaged)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Cambridge	-14.3	-2.6	-10.4	-19.2
Sector	-22.6	-23.7	-21.8	-17.3

Difference in proportion (%) of students that attain positive outcome: ABCS Q2 (second most disadvantaged) – ABCS Q5 (least disadvantaged)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Cambridge	-10.7	-8.3	-2.5	-7.9
Sector	-15.3	-16.3	-14.3	-11.0

OUTCOME OF ASSESSMENT

In summary, our assessment of performance, primarily using OfS access and participation data, has identified indications of risk at the stage of progression for the following groups of UK-domiciled students:

- Declared a disability
- Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS) Q1-2
- Female

These indications of risk may relate to several sector-level risks: insufficient academic and personal support whilst on course (EORR risks 6 and 7), cost pressures (EORR risk 10) and progression from higher education (EORR risk 12).

As detailed elsewhere in our Plan, the University of Cambridge has decided to focus on the progression of students with a ***declared disability*** as a key institutional risk for Cambridge, and set out intervention plans and objectives accordingly, including a numerical target to reduce the differences in chance of progressing to a positive outcome between students with and without a declared disability. However, the interventions that we have documented will benefit all students, and therefore we anticipate that they will also address the indications of risk which we found for students in ABCS Q1-2 and females. We intend to monitor this during the lifetime of this APP.

Progression to Cambridge for postgraduate study

INDICATIONS OF RISK

Students who have faced socio-economic disadvantage during their secondary education (comprising FSM eligible, first generation, young carers, or care experienced) and who have not most recently studied at Cambridge or Oxford

The University of Cambridge already had a ‘contextual data flag’ prior to this APP, which is used to signal to admissions assessors that these postgraduate applications should be given particularly careful attention. This flag is given to applicants who a) have faced socio-economic disadvantage during their secondary education (defined as having been previously FSM eligible, first generation HE, young carers or care experienced) AND b) who have not previously studied at Cambridge or Oxford. Our analysis of our internal data, shown in the table below, confirms that there is an indication of risk for this group at the stage of progression to Cambridge for postgraduate study, in that they have a lower offer rate compared to applicants without the flag.

Offer rates for postgraduate applicants to Cambridge. (Only applicants schooled in the UK have been included; applicants with unknown socio-economic disadvantage status or unknown last HEI have not been included; data are for 2020-21 to 2022-23 entry years.)

Flag	Socio-economic disadvantage	Previous HEI	Offer rate
Yes	Yes	Not Oxford or Cambridge	33.3%
No	No	Not Oxford or Cambridge	40.3%
No	Yes	Oxford or Cambridge	62.6%

Mature students

We identified an indication of risk for ***mature students*** (i.e. aged over 25) at the stage of progression to Cambridge for postgraduate study, from our analysis of HESA sector data for UK-domiciled postgraduate study entrants in 2021-22[6], and our internal data for 2018-19 to 2022-23 postgraduate study applicants who had been schooled in the UK. Specifically, we found that 62.0% of sector entrants were mature, compared to only 19.9% of those with confirmed places for postgraduate study at Cambridge.

Students from minority ethnic groups

We identified indications of risk at the stage of progression to Cambridge for postgraduate study for students from several minority ethnic groups, from our analysis of 2021 census data and our own internal data. As shown in the table below, students from all ***Black*** and ***White/Black mixed ethnic*** backgrounds are underrepresented at Cambridge, with the exception of the Mixed White and Black African group which is therefore not shown. Students from the ***Pakistani***, ***Bangladeshi***, ***Other*** and ***Gypsy/Traveller/Roma*** groups are also underrepresented.

Representation ratios for each minority ethnic group, produced by comparing the proportion of individuals in England and Wales who are in each group (among 20-34 year olds in the 2021 census) with the proportion in each group among the Cambridge postgraduate applicant, offer-holder and confirmed place populations in entry years 2018-19 to 2022-23. A ratio below 1 indicates underrepresentation; only groups with ratios <0.9 are shown. (Cambridge data only included individuals with known ethnicity who were schooled in the UK.)

	Representation ratio		
	Applications	**Offers**	**Confirmed**
Black - African	0.77	0.55	0.62
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	0.53	0.62	0.57

[6] https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/whos-in-he

Other (excluding Arab)	0.67	0.60	0.56
Asian - Pakistani	0.62	0.37	0.43
Asian - Bangladeshi	0.74	0.36	0.41
Black - Caribbean	0.46	0.44	0.38
Black - Other	0.28	0.13	0.09
White - Gypsy, Traveller, Roma	0.08	0.00	0.00

OUTCOME OF ASSESSMENT

In summary, our assessment of performance has identified indications of risk at the stage of progression to Cambridge for postgraduate study for the following groups of students (who were schooled in the UK):

- Those who have faced socio-economic disadvantage during their secondary education (comprising FSM eligible, first generation, young carers, or care experienced) and who have not most recently studied at Cambridge or Oxford
- Mature
- Black (including Mixed White and Black Caribbean), Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Other and Gypsy/Traveller/Roma minority ethnic groups

This links to the national EORR risk 12 (progression from higher education).

As detailed elsewhere in our Plan, the University considers the lower progression rates of these groups to Cambridge a key risk, and we have set out an intervention plan accordingly which targets them. One notable exception is that the Other group will not be targeted, for the same reasons as explained in our assessment of performance at the Access stage.

Our intervention plan will additionally target refugees, carers, estranged students and single parents. We are not currently able to assess our performance for these groups due to a lack of internal data, however we know that they are likely to have experienced disadvantage in their educational journey.

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

Theories of Change

As part of our APP process, we collaborated with colleagues across student lifecycle to develop high level theories of change underpinning our APP interventions. We will review them on an annual basis, and intend to use them as “living” documents around which to share evidence, research and findings.

We have also included our APP Evaluation System Theory of Change which underpins our approach to strengthening our whole provider approach to evaluation and supports the “Evaluation of Plan” section in the main APP document.

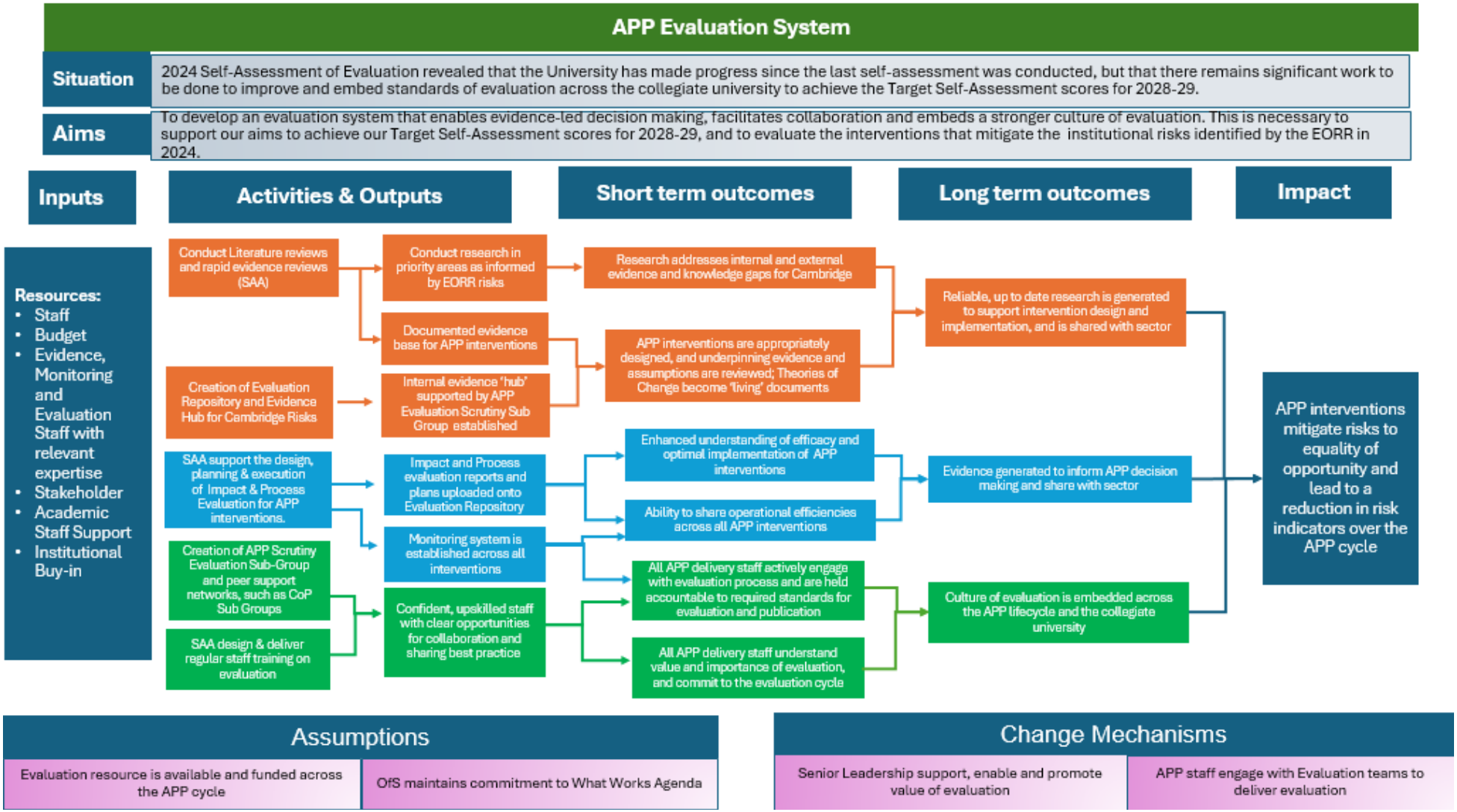

Fig. 1 Evaluation System Theory of Change

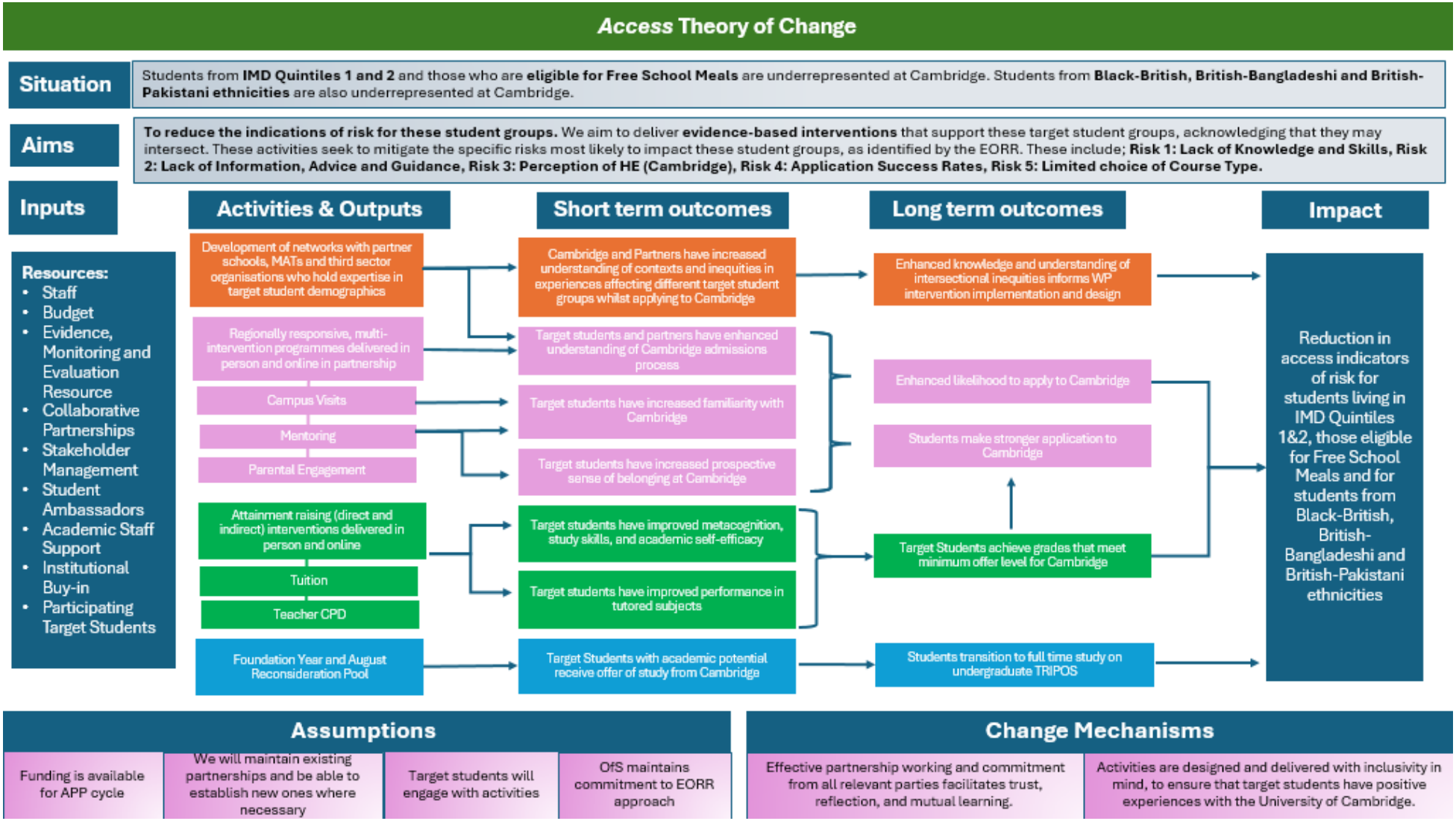

Fig. 2 Access Theory of Change

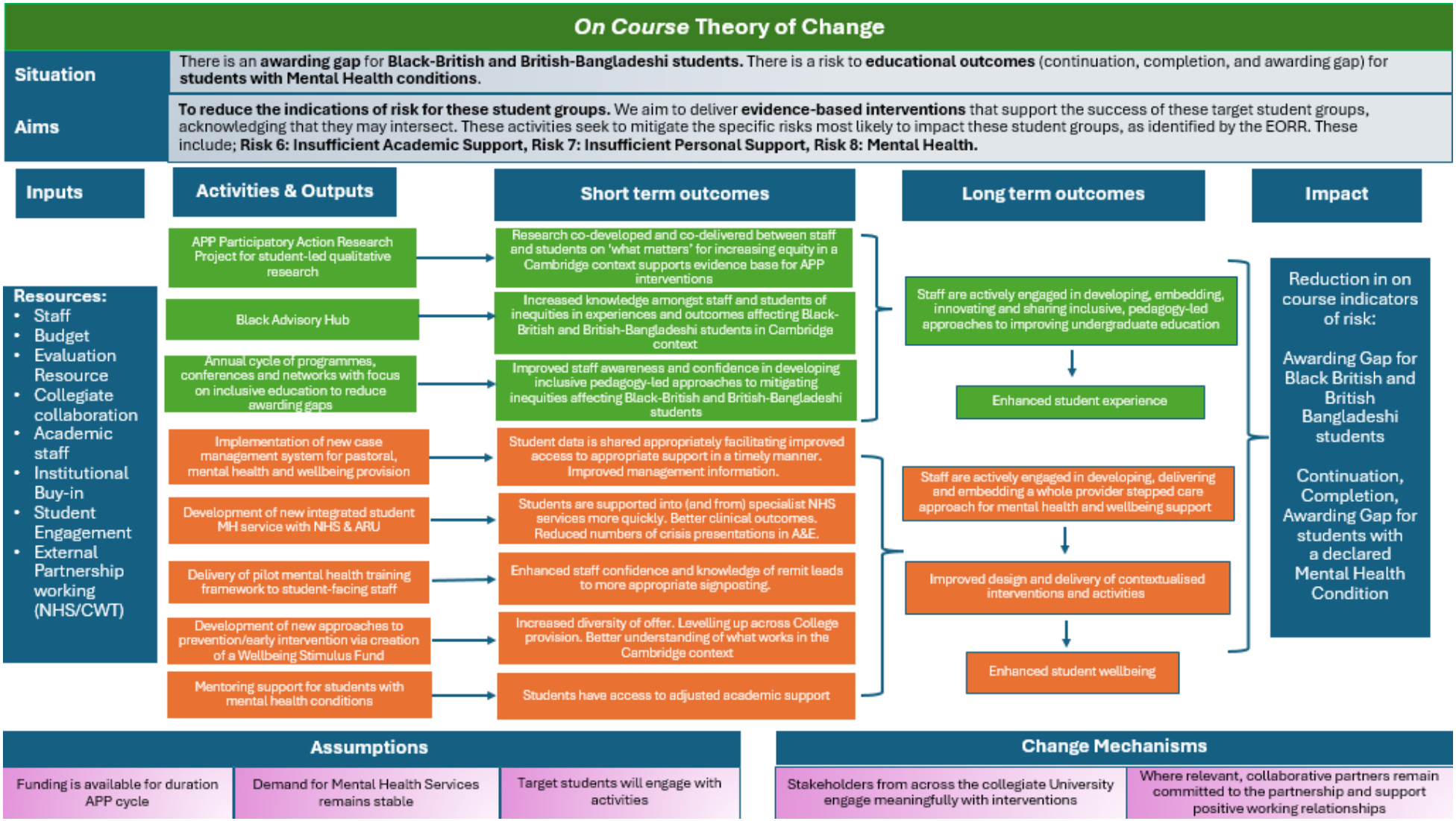

Fig. 3 On Course Theory of Change

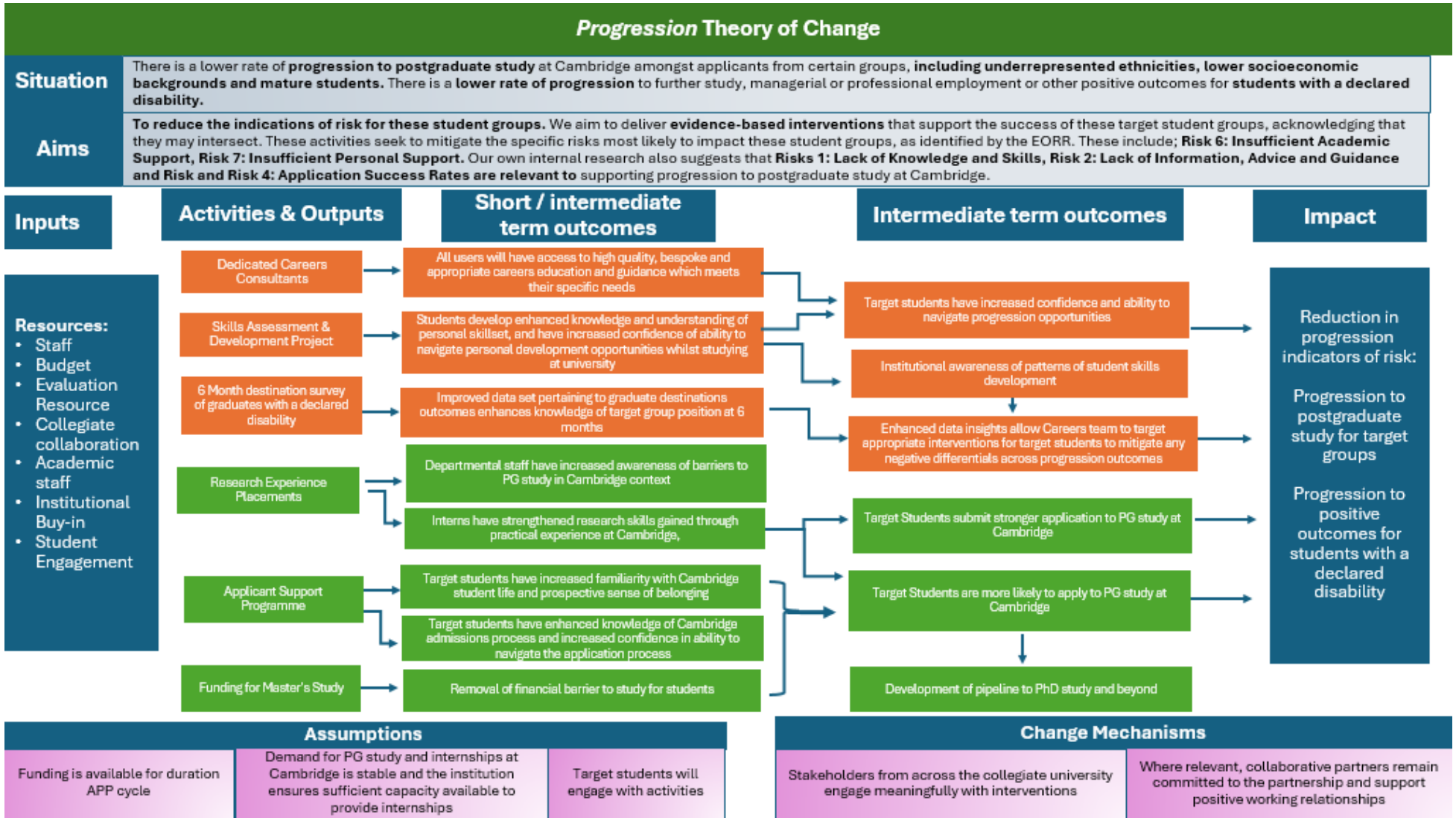

Fig. 4 Progression Theory of Change

Rationale and evidence base for interventions

Intervention Strategy 1

Intervention Strategy 1 consists of activities that seek to mitigate the risks identified above (Lack of knowledge and skills, Lack of information and guidance, Perception of HE, Low applicant success rates and Limited choice of course type) and support us to deliver on our objectives. Multiple studies evidence that long-term, multi-intervention outreach is associated with better outcomes for students (Robinson and Salvestrini, 2020), and all our access work is underpinned by a commitment to sustained, long-term support for students.

Intervention Strategy 1 is characterised by an intention to move away from scaled information, advice and guidance to more personalised, targeted support. Over the course of the next APP, we will be strategically reviewing our activities on an annual basis as we strive to provide the most appropriate support for each student, at the appropriate time in their journey to higher education. All our work is underpinned by a commitment to understanding and supporting what works, for who, and in what context. We acknowledge that we need to enhance our knowledge of causal change for our target student groups and we will seek to do so through regularly updating our evidence bases, undertaking mixed methods primary research and committing to robust evaluation where possible. Central to our work is a belief that delivery and evaluation are of equal importance, and we will embed infrastructure to allow for them to inform each other.

Our own internal evidence shows that even when we control for attainment, we do not receive an equal number of applications from students with the academic potential to study at Cambridge from IMD Quintiles 1 & 2 across the country. We know that where students live and are schooled has an impact on their decision-making processes. An important assumption underpinning our rationale for some of our activities (such as HE+, Atom Valley, Embedded Outreach Officers, neaco) is that regionally responsive approaches are required to meet our access objectives. For all pilot activity we will be reviewing our targeting processes and partnerships to ensure we are targeting the right students. To further enhance this work over the course of the APP cycle, we are committed to undertaking primary and secondary research to understand barriers and enablers across some of the regions with the highest levels of underrepresentation. We will use this internal evidence to supplement and inform our activities in this area. We acknowledge that there are many organisations who are already undertaking effective work in these geographies, and collaboration is therefore a central feature of our approach to activities in this area. A key assumption of this work is that for it to be successful, we will need to underpin our delivery efforts with strong partnership working, and that key stakeholders will continue to engage with us. This will involve working with students, teachers and parents, and developing long-term relationships with a range of partners in regions to ensure that we can build up hubs of knowledge and expertise across the UK to support long-term change.

We have enhanced our attainment raising offer at both KS4 and KS5 as we believe this type of activity is key to mitigating the risk related to knowledge and skills. High prior attainment is required for undergraduate study at Cambridge and there is a growing body of evidence that demonstrates a widening gap between attainment and socio-economic status (DfE 2024, Holt-White and Cullinane, 2023). This includes ‘direct attainment raising’ such as tuition for GCSE and A Level (neaco, STEM SMART), and additional focus on developing skills that are important in the admissions process. This includes development of problem solving and academic resilience in STEM SMART, supervision style academic challenge in STEM SMART and Apply:Cambridge, and

super-curricular engagement in HE+, Atom Valley. Additionally, we have integrated indirect attainment raising strategies into all projects, such as metacognition, academic self-efficacy, and oracy. Our approaches to this are informed by pedagogical research suggesting the most effective format and dosage, which are outlined in further detail below.

We acknowledge that the Cambridge admissions process is highly specific and requires substantial time investment from prospective candidates and supporters both to understand and complete. We also acknowledge that some schools, teachers and parents will not have had much relative experience preparing competitive applications, and we understand our responsibility to support these prospective candidates to ensure they are not unfairly disadvantaged in the application process. Over the next APP cycle, we will continue to leverage our expertise in admissions to provide students with high-quality information, advice and guidance to support competitive applications in all pilot activities. We consciously embed application support across all programmes. Many activities offer highly personalised support, such as Apply:Cambridge and STEM SMART, and the Foundation Year.

We also recognise that some students will not be able demonstrate their full academic potential via the standard entry process. This may be because they have faced significant educational disruption or disadvantage, or simply because they are experiencing a steep upward trajectory in Y13 and are unable to demonstrate their full potential at interview in Autumn. We are proud to offer our Foundation Year in Arts and Humanities and the August Reconsideration Pool. As has been noted in rapid evidence reviews conducted by TASO (2023), and from within our own institution, there is a lack of robust causal evidence to support the design of Foundation Years. Our Foundation Year draws upon best practice examples from the sector, and we are aware that we are well positioned to undertake robust evaluation to generate and share evidence with the sector as we recruit more cohorts.

As outlined above, Intervention Strategy 1 consists of a range of activity, including ‘black box’ interventions. We are aware that there has not been sufficient attention in the sector to isolate and evaluate the effectiveness of individual components of multi-intervention strategies. As such, we are committed to undertaking more dosage and engagement evaluation and look for opportunities to undertake this type of evaluation where possible. We will deploy our evaluation resource accordingly, ensuring more robust evaluation and reporting for pilot activities, ‘black box’ interventions, and resource intensive interventions.

Intervention Strategy 1:

Objective 1: We will seek to increase the proportion of students from IMD Quintiles 1 & 2 and those in receipt of Free School Meals.

Risks to equality of opportunity:
Risk 1: Knowledge and skills; Risk 2: Information and guidance; Risk 3: Perception of higher education; Risk 4: Application success rates; Risk 5: Limited choice of delivery mode.

Targets:

i. Increase the percentage of students from IMD quintiles 1 & 2 entering the University to 25.1% over a four-year period.
ii. Increase the proportion of students in receipt of free school meals (FSM) entering the University over a four-year period, with a target to be set in 2025 once additional data become available.

Activity type and risk	Activities named in APP	Sector evidence	Internal evidence
Attainment raising direct: Tuition (Lack of knowledge and skills)	neaco, Embedded Outreach, STEM SMART	The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF, 2022) suggests that **one-on-one tutoring is an effective means of improving educational outcomes**, particularly for students with **low prior attainment, delivering approximately f**ive **months additional progress** on average). We use the EEF Toolkit (EEF, 2022) to inform our approach to dosage and implementation. The EEF Toolkit finds that **frequent sessions** that last **up to an hour and take place over a period of six to twelve weeks**, typically **show the greatest impact**. NTP research purports that for optimal results, tutoring needs to be **high quality**, with **frequent sessions**. More tutoring hours are associated with greater impact on attainment. Tutors should have **strong subject knowledge and pedagogic expertise**. Tuition should be additional to classroom teaching (rather than substitute for it), aligned with classroom learning and focus on pupils' learning needs (DfE, 2022).	Internal data suggest that programmes such as STEM SMART support the development of problem-solving skills required for admissions assessments. Internal evidence from our tuition partners suggests approximately seven hours of tuition supports one grade of progress (MyTutor report).

Attainment raising indirect: Meta-cognition, self-efficacy, oracy *(Lack of knowledge and skills)*	HE+, neaco, STEM SMART, Apply:Cambridge, Target Oxbridge, Atom Valley, Embedded Outreach	Klauer and Phye (2008) assert that meta-cognition and self-regulation will 'improve cognitive functioning in terms of **(a) increased fluid intelligence performance and (b) better academic learning of classroom subject matter**'. According to studies, the **average impact of metacognition and self-regulation strategies** is the equivalent of an **extra seven months' worth of progress** over the course of a year (EEF, 2021). Further, there is evidence to suggest that **disadvantaged pupils are less likely to apply** metacognitive and self-regulatory strategies **'without being explicitly taught these strategies'** (EEF, 2021). Consequently, we seek to make our metacognitive activities both explicit and implicit. Studies show that the relationship between a learning-goal orientation and higher performance is generated by **academic self-efficacy, and that confidence in meta-cognition and self-efficacy this is useful predictor of retention** (Honicke and Broadbent, 2016).	
Information, advice and guidance (IAG) *(Lack of information and guidance)*	HE+, Apply, STEM Smart, FY, Target Oxbridge, Embedded Outreach, Atom Valley, neaco	Providing information, advice and guidance to underrepresented students is a longstanding widening access activity. Notably, however, Robinson and Salvestrini (2020) find that although implementation of IAG is widespread, most **impactful results are generated by those that are tailored to the students, start early and are integrated into other forms of support**. **The quality of the information provided also matters.** An interim evaluation of Causeway Education's Access Champions programme showed that **improving the quality of IAG in schools improves the quality of applications to higher tariff group courses** (Causeway Education, 2019). This is particularly important for Cambridge, as **we strive to support students at risk of 'undermatch'**	We will supplement this evidence base with IAG specific to Cambridge admissions process, using internal survey data and teacher focus groups to better understand how to optimise IAG implementation with regards to elements such as sequence and dosage.

		or 'mismatch'. Campbell et al (2019) found that **students from low socio-economic backgrounds were most likely to 'undermatch'.** Undermatching describes the instance where students apply and choose courses and universities that are less selective than expected given their academic attainment at A Level. **We seek to ensure students with the academic potential for Cambridge do not self-select out of the process due to misinformation or misplaced perceptions of life at Cambridge.** We know that the Cambridge application process is highly specific, and that many students require additional support to navigate it effectively. We strive to ensure a culture of collaborative best practice amongst access practitioners which ensures consistently high standards of IAG. The evidence analysed also showed that simply providing information may not be enough, and that **students need personalised support** to help them to make decisions about their education. 'Passive' information such as websites does not suffice. The literature identifies that **underrepresented students tend to turn to informal sources of IAG, have less access to formal IAG and prefer first-hand information** (J. Moore et al, 2013; Sanderson and Spacey, 2021). **We strive to ensure our mentors, student ambassadors, and other figures students may approach for first-hand, less formal IAG are appropriately trained on the most up to date admissions information.**	
Residential and/or campus visits *(Lack of information and guidance,*	Target Oxbridge, STEM SMART, Embedded Outreach	There are mixed findings in the literature about the impact of summer schools on progression to higher education. Some studies find a **positive correlation with summer schools and application to and**	Internal data from multiple cohorts from our partners corroborate the finding that residential visits enhance prospective sense of belonging, particularly in an Oxbridge setting (Sutton Trust Bridge Report and Target Oxbridge). We plan to

Perception of HE/Cambridge)		**acceptance by HE providers** (HEFCE, 2010; Hoare & Man, 2011; Burgess et al 2021) find that **summer schools and combinations of information, campus visits and master classes were most effective** of all the various elements of their Uni Connect multi-intervention outreach. Summer schools are also **associated with positive outcomes in short and intermediate attitudinal and confidence towards HE** (Robinson and Salvestrini, 2020). A recently commissioned RCT by TASO found that most students applying to take part in a summer school were **likely already interested in attending higher education (about 94% according to self-report) (TASO, 2021)**. The study finds however, a statistically significant finding that **summer schools supported a prospective sense of belonging in HEI**. This echoes other research by the Sutton Trust (Tyndall, 2022). Other research has suggested that whilst students were already likely to apply, **participation in a summer school may increase the tariff of university pupils aim for** (Tyndall, 2022).	further interrogate the relationship between sense of belonging, familiarity with HE and residential visits using qualitative research methods.
Diverse pathways to HE *(Limited choice of course type, Low applicant success rates)*	ARP, Foundation Year (FY)	There is **limited evidence in the sector** that consistently identifies causal mechanisms for widening participation foundation years. TASO (2024) has described it as 'patchy'. Outcomes that are of interest for informing our approach include progression to HE, continuation rates, and socio-psychological short-term outcomes such as sense of belonging. There are promising studies, such as McLellan et al (2016) study of a FY in Arts and Humanities organised by the University of Bristol. They observed an 89% completion rate for the programme as well as **quantitative improvements in grades and an**	We are committed to generating evidence for the sector on FY provision. A systematic evaluation strategy combining both quantitative and qualitative methods has been developed to inform our evidence base and support decision making. We have promising internal data from inaugural FY cohort at Cambridge. This includes intermediate outcomes such as progression and retention rates to Cambridge, and other HEI. We also have additional self-reported survey & focus group data, interrogating

		increase in confidence, based on self-report measures of FY students. Despite lack of causal evidence, the FY at Cambridge has been developed using sector research to understand barriers to HE **(Sanders and Daly, 2013)** and **features all of the 'success factors' identified by Kettley and Murphy (2021)**. For example, an important aspect of the course is the fact that it is fully funded and supports students to develop a learner identity in a Cambridge context.	short-term outcomes including learner identity and sense of belonging. We intend to strengthen our understanding of our FY over multiple cohorts before sharing findings with the sector.
Multi-intervention and mentoring *(Lack of information and guidance, Perception of HE/Cambridge)*	Apply Cambridge Target Oxbridge	**Longer term sustained multi-intervention is associated with better outcomes.** There are many examples in the sector. These include The Access Project (2021), PPUP (Millet & Kevelson, 2018) and IntoUniversity (2023). A quasi-experimental evaluation of the UniConnect multi-intervention outreach programme showed that **engagement with the intervention was associated with a greater likelihood of achieving a place in a HEP** (Burgess et al, 2021). **Importantly, the results showed that any engagement with UniConnect, no matter how limited, was associated with an improved chance of achieving a place in HE**, but the type of engagement, the extent of engagement and the combination of types of engagement all mattered. **The benefit of each additional engagement beyond five or six engagements was small (Burgess et al, 2021).** White, Eames, and Sharp (2007) evaluated IntoUniversity, an English programme delivering academic support, mentoring and skills development workshops to young people at risk of failing to meet their potential due to economic, social, cultural or linguistic disadvantage. The authors found evidence of **increased motivation, self-esteem and**	

		confidence, as well as of improved academic, social and practical skills, amongst participants. We strive to ensure all our mentors and student ambassadors provide the most up to date IAG and are confident in their roles. There is some evidence that the **more successful programmes are those where mentors/counsellors are trained and demonstrate consistency/confidence** (J Sanders & Higham, 2012; O'Sullivan et al, 2017), and this is an important assumption underpinning our work with mentors. Programme evaluations and research demonstrate that mentoring is more effective when there are **sustained, high-quality relationships between mentors and mentees, allowing for high rapport and trust**. Moreover, confident, well-trained and well-supported mentors who follow a structured programme with their mentees are also more likely to be impactful (Sanders & Higham, 2012; O'Sullivan et al, 2017). **Role models** are also likely to be most effective when they can **credibly represent HE** as a desirable and attainable destination and they are **seen as successful individuals** (Morgenroth et al, 2015). We are also interested in the delivery of model of mentoring. Brightside undertook a longitudinal analysis and found that **77% of participants** (from POLAR Quintiles 1 & 2) who took part on their **online mentoring progressed to HE, compared to the national average of 24%, and 46% of all students tracked through HEAT** (Brightside, 2020). There is qualitative evidence to suggest **role model interventions are most effective when students see the role model as relatable** (Gartland, 2014). We strive to find inspirational role models from	

		similar backgrounds on all our access interventions to support prospective sense of belonging in participants.	
Influence of place *(Lack of knowledge and skills, Lack of information and guidance, Perception of HE/Cambridge)*	Neaco, HE+, Atom Valley, Embedded Outreach	**There has long been academic interest in the role of 'place' in accessing higher education, driven by persistent inequalities in attainment** (OfS, 2017; OfS, 2021), and marked by an interest in geo-demographic indicators (POLAR, TUNDRA, IMD). Although there is limited agreement in the literature on the best ways to design regionally responsive interventions, we will be guided by emerging evidence, informed by the narrative research outlined below. Research published a year later highlighted unequal progression into higher education across regions in England (County All Party Parliamentary Group, 2018; Department for Education, 2017). London ranks first, with a participation rate of 43.1%, closely followed by the South East at 36.6%. Other regions fall behind; the North East has a participation rate of 29.4%, and the South West stands at 32.1% (Department for Education, 2017, p.17). A report by Universities UK in 2016 stated that "the existence of 'cold spots' where higher education participation is low illustrates the **complex and important relationship between person and place**" (2016, p.5). They recommend, therefore, that **"effective responses to inequality in higher education must be grounded in localities or regions"** (Universities UK, 2016, p.5). We understand that for many students, physically accessing higher education is challenging. A lack of infrastructure and transport often means rural students face more financial, logistical, and emotional barriers compared to those from urban locations (The Bridge Group, 2019, Wilson, 2016).	Internal data showing lower rates of application from certain regions in research undertaken by Cambridge Admissions Office, even once we have controlled for prior attainment. We will be undertaking further analysis to understand the drivers behind any patterns of application and placement for students from these regions.

		Although we have committed to using IMD to support our contextual admissions, a significant drawback of 'official' place-based widening participation measures is that **not all deprived areas are similar** (Brown, 2012; Donnelly & Evans, 2016; Crossley, 2017; Donnelly & Gamsu, 2018). **As such, we seek to further support students from less advantaged areas by understanding the varying social and spatial dynamics within different communities** that can differentially impact young people's aspirations and their higher education progression paths (Davies et al, 2021, 1082). A DEFRA report highlighted further relationships between geography and rural schools that hinder HE progression. **They found that disadvantaged rural areas are more likely to have a lack of quality teachers, less access to guidance counsellors, fewer post-secondary engagement activities, poor student assessment structures, poor data management, poorly trained staff in key positions, and low staff morale** (Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, 2018). We aim to boost the confidence of teachers in under-resourced schools in their ability to support competitive applications to Oxbridge. The lack of local employment available in some areas, for example in coastal, rural and de-industrialised areas, also means limited career opportunities for graduates, which can in turn decreases the incentive to pursue higher education qualifications among young people who wish to remain in their local communities (Wilson, 2016). This is compounded by research suggesting that students from disadvantaged backgrounds increasingly prefer to stay at home to study (COSMO, Sutton Trust, 2023). Our internal analysis of student destinations suggests a more nuanced	

		pattern, but we are interested to observe patterns from further beyond the anomalies of the COVID years. **One of our key assumptions is that having a physical presence in a region, and by working closely with communities over a sustained period of time, will enable us to build trust between key local stakeholders, and, in turn, influence the perception of Cambridge**. According to a Department for Education report (2017), **individuals in socially diverse regions have increased exposure to aspirational 'role models', broadening their view of potential career trajectories**. Given that socially diverse areas are typically in cities in the UK, it follows that disadvantaged students in urban settings may disproportionately benefit from such interactions, potentially influencing their aspirations toward attending prestigious universities (Davies, 2021). Conversely, **young people residing in similarly disadvantaged areas, such as small towns** affected by de-industrialisation or large social housing estates on city outskirts (Brown, 2012, as cited in Davies et al, 2021), often **experience greater physical and social isolation.** **Third sector widening participation organisations are also more likely to be based in urban areas, with a particular concentration in London** (Gamsu, 2016). A case study of an East London locality (Davies, 2023) found that engagement with these third sector organisations and the benefits from their connections are likely to positively impact disadvantaged students' propensities to progress to elite institutions. **Davies (2021) argues that the pattern of third sector activity underscores a pre-existing geographic inequality that may further entrench**	

		disparities. We seek to address this imbalance by using our own internal school-based metrics, derived from historical Oxbridge application data and publicly available data from HEAT that shows ‘cold spots’ of widening participation activity, to inform our outreach strategy.	

Intervention Strategy 2

Intervention Strategy 2 seeks to mitigate many of the same risks as Intervention Strategy 1 (Lack of knowledge/skills, Lack of information and guidance, Perception of HE/Cambridge and Low applicant success rates). As such, many of the activities listed in Intervention Strategy 2 are 'cross intervention' and are supported by the same rationale, assumptions and evidence as outlined in the preceding section. Here, we seek to expand upon the previous section by highlighting additional evidence and considerations that underpins our work to support students from underrepresented ethnicities.

Central to this approach is our intention to support a sense of belonging for prospective students. Whilst the University of Cambridge has made progress in admitting more diverse undergraduate cohorts over the past 10 years, there has been persistent underrepresentation of Black-British, British-Pakistani and British-Bangladeshi students, and we acknowledge the impact that a persistent lack of representation can have on prospective sense of belonging, and indeed, on-course, particularly when a student's ethnic identity may intersect with other underrepresented characteristics at elite institutions (Reay, 2018).

We are committed to facilitating opportunities for Black-British, British-Pakistani and British-Bangladeshi students to meet and have opportunities for networking with current undergraduate students at Cambridge who share their ethnic backgrounds. Sector evidence from across the UK and the US supports the hypothesis that mentoring programmes work most effectively when students see their role models as relatable (Gartland, 2014). Feedback from our own Target Oxbridge cohorts from 2017-23 consistently cite that they value the opportunity to engage with current black undergraduate students, and that this is an enabling factor in their ability to self-construct a prospective sense of belonging at Oxford and Cambridge universities. During the lecture series and residentials at Cambridge, we also strive to find opportunities for students to meet black academics, postgraduates and gain familiarity with student societies such as the Cambridge Black Medics society and the Cambridge African Caribbean society, to gain greater understanding of student life beyond the academic curriculum. Indeed, there is evidence that multi-generational mentoring relationships are particularly impactful (Hunter et al, 2018), and that the impact is greater when mentors are seen as successful and present HE as a credible destination (Morgenroth et al, 2015).

We are also aware that Black-British and British-Bangladeshi students also experience on-course indicators of risk in relation to awarding gaps. Whilst we are aware that the causes of ethnicity awarding gaps are complex and multifactorial, often requiring institutional change and inclusive pedagogy, we seek to align our pre-entry support and programme design with evidence and what works research on successful transition, to ensure that our activities not only support entry, but also facilitate transition and contribute to student on-course success. Over the course of this APP cycle we are committed to working with colleagues across the collegiate University to enhance our understanding of students from underrepresented ethnicities' journeys throughout the student lifecycle in a Cambridge context to ensure that our information, advice and guidance is tailored to reflect student experiences and student voice, and to identify any needs for institutional change.

Finally, we note the importance of disaggregating the Black-British student group further to inform our programme design. Students of Black African, Black Caribbean, Black (Mixed) heritage exhibit different trends across the data that we use to inform our strategy, including attainment, aspiration,

expectation and belonging (TASO, 2023; DfE, 2024). We are committed to undertaking primary and secondary research to understand barriers and enablers among these groups, including where student characteristics intersect with other underrepresented characteristics. This will involve working with students, teachers, parents, and third sector partners, and will inform our programme design accordingly.

Intervention Strategy 2: **Objective 2**: We will seek to increase the proportion of students from Black-British, British-Bangladeshi and British-Pakistani ethnicities. **Risks to equality of opportunity**: Risk 1: Knowledge and skills; Risk 2: Information and guidance; Risk 3: Perception of higher education; Risk 4: Application success rates; Risk 5: Limited choice of delivery mode.			
Activity type and risk	**Example activities named in APP**	**Sector evidence**	**Internal evidence**
Targeted support for students of Black African, Black Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage *(Lack of information and guidance, Perception of HE/Cambridge)*	Target Oxbridge, Embedded SLO	**There is a lack of consensus in the literature as to the barriers and enablers of participation in elite HE of students from traditionally underrepresented ethnicities.** Various hypotheses have been explored including **family background** (Modood, 2010)**, differing aspirations** (TASO, 2022)**, and unequal admissions processes** (Boliver, 2015). Importantly, we understand and see students of Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage as **'whole beings in a social context, and not an identity category'** (McArthur, 2021). We understand that ethnicity forms part of a student's personal identity, and as such our evidence base here is enhanced by evidence above. Our work is influenced by emerging evidence and narrative research supporting widening access, and our own internal data from five years of Target Oxbridge. We are committed to undertaking further research to understand barriers and enablers in progression to Cambridge and other highly selective HE.	Internal data from multiple cohorts from our partners corroborates the finding that residential visits enhance prospective sense of belonging, particularly in an Oxbridge setting. (Sutton Trust Bridge Report and Target Oxbridge). We plan to further interrogate the relationship between sense of belonging, familiarity with HE and residential visits using qualitative research methods

		Research suggests that higher education students who have a **greater sense of belonging tend to have higher motivation, more academic self-confidence, higher levels of academic engagement and higher achievement** (Pedler et al, 2022). Furthermore, when **students' sense of belonging increases, it enhances their likelihood of persisting from the first year to the second year of their studies** (Thomas et al 2018). Cureton and Gravestock (2019), Hunt et al (2022) find that belongingness is found to have an unstable nature, which can be **lost or developed at any point of the student lifecycle**. It is our hope that we can support a strong prospective sense of belonging to ensure a more stable sense of belonging post entry. There is qualitative evidence to suggest **role model interventions are most effective when students see the role model as relatable (Gartland, 2014)**. A unique feature of Target Oxbridge is the inter-generational mentoring scheme supported by our third sector partner. In a case study analysis of the Intergenerational Mentoring Network in Scotland, Hunter et al (2018) **found that intergenerational mentoring can play a crucial role in supporting disadvantaged young people in their journey into higher education**. **A report by Universities UK (2019) found** the most significant contributing factor to self-de-selection, according to 87% of respondents, was a **lack of role models from different ethnic minority backgrounds**. We strive to	

		find inspirational role models from similar backgrounds on all our access interventions, but we place particular emphasis on this for interventions designed to support students from underrepresented ethnicities.	
Teacher CPD	Embedded Outreach	We know that schools play vital roles in supporting students to make informed decisions about higher education (Thompson, 2018; Thornton at el, 2014; Sutton Trust, 2019; Jones, 2013). There are a myriad of influencing factors and enablers in schools, including teacher support, resources, knowledge, staff retention and school context. Sutton Trust research highlights that **some students have better access to high-quality IAG via their school**, and that even students attending state-maintained schools can experience differing levels of support through no fault of their own (Montecute and Cullinane, 2018). Additional research flags other school based-factors which may influence a student's decision-making processes, including "teachers' political and ethical dispositions as well as their social capital" (Oliver and Kettley, 2010, p.737). Other factors considered influential include school culture and leadership, organisation, and the socio-economic standing of the school (Foskett et al, 2008). This has important implications for Cambridge, when we consider that **teachers often hold inaccurate perceptions about Oxbridge**, particularly in relation to the % of state educated students, and likelihood of applicant success (Sutton Trust, 2016).	Our own internal data suggest a significant level of misperception about studying at Oxbridge, and about the diversity of the student body.

		However, there is some evidence that by providing school **teachers with training and support** to improve the system they use to guide their students in the transition to post-18 destinations, Access Champions schools saw a **statistically significant increase in offers from higher tariff group institutions** (Robinson & Salvestrini, 2020). We seek to provide teachers with **high-quality IAG to support competitive HE applications**. We also plan to develop teachers' understanding of supercurricular resources and provide resources in schools to support teachers to embed this provision into their teaching.	
Parental engagement		Whilst there is a scarcity of evidence supporting interventions that specifically target parental engagement, there is some narrative evidence that suggest **parents are an influential factor in students' decision-making processes, although this should be understood as one component of a complex array of other mediating factors**. Thiele et al (2017) highlighted that family perceptions of post-school destinations are critical to shaping young people's perceptions of the risks and benefits of attending HE. There is some evidence that **students from under-resourced backgrounds may prefer informal information sources, such as parents or peers** (Campbell and McKendrick, 2017; Brooks, 2004). The need for these supporters to have access to high-quality information, advice and guidance is therefore	

		critical, particularly when considered in line with findings that parents are influenced by familiarity with HE ‘brands’ (Moogan and Baron, 2003, p.273), or driven by emotional factors (Diamond et al, 2014). We intend to be strategic about engagement with schools and parents, acknowledging the schools as vital stakeholders through which to gain access to, and the trust of, parents. **As Smyth and Banks find, “disadvantaged students and their families tend to be more dependent on their schools for access to resources relevant for post-secondary education”** (2012, p.272).	

Intervention Strategy 3

Intervention Strategy 3 consists of activities that: increase awareness among academic and professional staff of factors giving rise to awarding gaps; encourage active engagement by students affected by inequities and by staff in exploring, innovating and contributing to institutional learning; and which emphasise pedagogy-led, inclusive approaches to improving undergraduate education. In developing this section, we have drawn on academic and professional literature, and our own enquiry, into inequities in education and outcomes experienced by racially minoritised students in particular (e.g. Stevenson et al, 2019; Arday & Mirza, 2018; Wong et al, 2021) and research into inequities in education and outcomes more generally (e.g. Austen et al, 2021; Mountford-Zimdars et al, 2015; Webb et al, 2017). We are also mindful of critical scholarship which cautions that policies oriented at eliminating ‘gaps’ between ‘minority’ and ‘majority’ populations risk reinforcing deficit models (Bhopal & Pitkin, 2020) and which argues for research methods which explore experiences of students as “whole beings in a social context, and not an identity category” (McArthur, 2021). We also build on academic studies which demonstrate the potential of high-quality educational practices and experiences to disrupt inequities through enabling students to become informed, proficient and enquiring agents in their own education (McLean et al, 2017; Walker, 2006).

Intervention Strategy 3: **Objective 3**: We will improve the experiences and outcomes of Black-British and British-Bangladeshi students by encouraging evidence-based and research-led awareness of the awarding gap. **Risks to equality of opportunity**: Risk 6: Insufficient academic support; Risk 7: Insufficient personal support; and Risk 10: Cost pressures.			
Activity type and risk	**Activities named in APP**	**Sector evidence**	**Internal evidence**
Developing knowledge of students' educational experiences and inclusive education, contextualised to Cambridge Systematic promotion of inclusive education, contextualised to Cambridge Contributing to individual, institutional and cross-institutional learning about students' experiences of their education, educational enquiry and evaluative practices	APP PAR Project: annual cycles of student-led research and pedagogic consultancy Black Advisory Hub: co-developed educational initiatives, resources and institutional research Centre for Teaching & Learning: annual programme of forums, educational development workshops and programmes; self-evaluation materials support staff in pedagogy-led and evidence-informed enhancement	Multiple studies indicate the complex interplay between students' outcomes and higher education environments, in particular: students' experiences of their education; relationships among students and between students and staff and their institutional environment; identity factors, such as the expectations which staff have about individual students or student groups and that students have about themselves; and the extent to which educational and social practices are perceived as familiar or alien, affecting perceptions of 'belonging' and 'mattering' (Ahn & Davis, 2020; Austen et al, 2022; Gravett & Ajjawi, 2022; Mountford-Zimdars et al, 2015; Read et al, 2003). Studies demonstrate that pedagogical approaches can make significant contributions to increasing equity and make strong	We have supported to date four annual cycles of student-led qualitative research, involving around 80 students as (paid) researchers and with several hundred students and staff as respondents. Black student researchers identified the following as potential factors giving rise to differential educational experiences and assessment outcomes ('awarding gaps'): negative group stereotypes; poor sense of belonging; imposter syndrome; inconsistent transition support/provision during the first year; lack of representation in the curriculum; time and mental health costs of identifying and communicating needs ('self-advocacy'); teaching and assessment practices and pastoral provision (https://www.cctl.cam.ac.uk/app-par-project). In focus groups with department and college academics (n = 44) regarding opportunities to address on-course risks (https://www.cctl.cam.ac.uk/events/directors-teaching-senior-tutors), colleagues identified a range of educational priorities, including: curriculum reforms which aim to scaffold students' development of academic knowledge and capabilities as well as by social and scholarly movements such as decolonisation; improving assessment and feedback literacies (staff and students); increasing understanding of the interplay between Cambridge's distinctive educational cultures and variations in students' sense of belonging/mattering, wellbeing and outcomes; encouraging and supporting staff in developing 'evidenced awareness' through evaluative enquiry, including improved access to qualitative and quantitative data and support in analysing these.

Risks: insufficient academic and personal support; experiencing an environment which is not conducive to good mental health and wellbeing	Centre for Teaching & Learning: planned programme of institutional and cross-institutional forums to support knowledge exchange, evaluation capacity building and dissemination	associations between equity and quality in higher education (Ashwin, 2020; Burke et al, 2017; Campbell, 2021; McLean et al, 2018). Academic and practitioner research identifies 'fear' and 'unease' among some staff at the prospect of 'saying the wrong thing' when talking about race and indicates the likelihood that avoiding open discussions results in the continuation of deficit understandings, as opposed to addressing structures and practices that underpin awarding gaps (Andrews, 2023; UUK, 2019). Qualitative and participatory methods are an important counterpoint to critical quantitative analysis as a means of recognising that identities and experiences are complex; further, in addressing issues and opportunities which are perceived as significant in context, they are more likely to give rise to sustainable change (Andrews et al, 2023; Attridge, 2021; Cohen et al, 2018; McArthur, 2021). A major review of sector efforts to address inequities in educational experiences and outcomes highlights the need to acknowledge complexity, to develop multi-stage planning which incorporates continuous evaluation as part of a	

		long-term strategy for sustainable change (Andrews, 2023). Studies also demonstrate the powerful impacts of encouraging staff and students in developing capabilities in formative evaluation, including framing ‘evaluation’ as ‘educational enquiry’ which aims at understanding and improving educational experiences, practices and environments (Mountford-Zimdars et al, 2015; Austen & Jones-Devitt, 2023). Inclusive evaluative practices which aim at developing knowledge, informing planning and reviewing changes arising from enhancement activities can make valuable contributions to individual and institutional learning and reflexivity (Saunders et al, 2005).	

Intervention Strategy 4

Numbers of UK university students disclosing a mental health condition has grown significantly (Hubble & Bolton, 2021; UCAS, 2021), and there is growing sector evidence of rising numbers of students reporting adverse effects of stress or seeking support for low levels of wellbeing (Johnson & Crenna-Jennings, 2018). This trend is borne out in our own data and the University and Colleges' Strategic Review of Student Mental Health Provision, which we undertook in 2021 in partnership with SUMS Consulting.

A recent report on student mental health by the Royal College of Psychiatrists highlights that the later teenage years and early twenties are a particularly critical period of vulnerability to mental illness which, for students, can be triggered by academic requirements and other aspects of their student experience, making them in some ways more vulnerable than non-students in the same age group (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2021). We know that poor mental health or wellbeing has a significant and detrimental impact on a student's ability to participate fully in their studies (Transforming Access and Student Outcomes, 2022) and there is a growing body of evidence which indicates that students who report a mental health condition have lower continuation, attainment and progression rates than students overall (Office for Students, 2023). There is also evidence that mental health issues can play a significant role in students deciding to leave university without completing their studies, although the reasons for this are often multifactorial, complex and interlinked (Nieuwoudt & Pedler, 2021).

However, there is a paucity of research about 'what' and 'how' specific interventions impact student mental health and wellbeing outcomes, and the evidence relating to impact on educational outcomes is even more sparse (Chappell, 2022).

Following the Strategic Review in 2021, Cambridge has embarked on delivering an extensive programme of work aimed at delivering our institutional Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan (initiated in 2022-25 and upon which this APP builds). The University has committed to investing an initial £5million over a three-year period 2022-25, underlining this work as a critical institutional strategic priority.

The aim of the programme is to develop a whole-institution approach to student mental health and wellbeing; with all parts of the system working in coordination to ensure students at the University of Cambridge receive the support they need to thrive both academically and personally.

Drivers for the Plan were:

- Better and more consistent management of risk around student mental health and wellbeing
- Improved data to enable planning and delivery of student mental health and wellbeing support
- More informed, properly tasked and trained staff working to clear, shared objectives
- More direct/improved access for students to the right service for them
- More students supported into and from NHS or specialist services
- Better mental health outcomes for students
- Enhanced student wellbeing and experience

The main focus of this work so far has been governance reform to improve strategic oversight in this area, expanding and enhancing provision within University support services as well as establishing a network of wellbeing leads across all of the 31 Colleges to embed preventative and

early intervention support within the unique communities that collegiate Cambridge offers. This APP submission occurs at a timely juncture to explore the change programme's longer term intended deliverables in the context of educational outcomes.

Whilst delivery of the Plan absolutely aligns with the growing evidence base that improved mental health outcomes for students will lead to better educational outcomes, this is not something we have hitherto sought to measure. Additionally, given that support services and provision are not solely designed to improve educational outcomes, we are also conscious of the risk that setting numerical targets may result in perverse incentives to focus on student educational outcomes at the expense of student mental health and wellbeing outcomes.

Delivering a stepped care approach to mental health and wellbeing provision across the institution is central to delivering our mental health and wellbeing Plan, and our activities broadly centre around this aim. We hope that embedding a stepped care approach will mitigate against the risks to equality of opportunity identified throughout our APP consultation.

Intervention Strategy 4: **Objective 4**: We will support students with mental health conditions to achieve positive educational outcomes. **Risks to equality of opportunity**: Risk 6: Insufficient academic support; Risk 7: Insufficient personal support; Risk 8: Mental health; Risk 10: Cost pressures.			
Activity type and risk	**Activities named in APP**	**Sector evidence**	**Internal evidence**
Implement new case management system (Insufficient personal support)	New CMS	The Higher Education Mental Health Implementation Taskforce's (HEMHIT) first report highlighted **difficulties experienced across HE providers (HEP) to coordinate support for students exhibiting mental distress or illness** being underpinned by **poor information sharing**. This was often due to misplaced concerns, misunderstandings around GDPR as well as limitations in providers' data systems and processes. The report further identified that a growing number of HEPs were **adopting case management systems to overcome perceived obstacles to information sharing and to enable greater combination and analysis of insight that HEPs hold on students about which they have concerns** (HEMHIT, 2023). A recent HEI Research Conference at Kingston University further **underlined the role that data play** in **supporting improved student outcomes** (Craig, 2023). The introduction of a case management system at Cambridge has therefore been identified as a **priority to address the risks associated with poor information sharing and data collection practices** and – following implementation – **we aspire to utilise the system to join up datasets in order to deliver a better institutional understanding of how the differing experiences and backgrounds of students and the support they interact with may impact both mental health and educational outcomes**.	The HEMHIT report aptly summarises the situation here. The Strategic Review referred to above highlighted that the heterogenous and devolved nature of Cambridge had - over time - resulted in **inadequate data collection and insufficient data sharing practices across the collegiate University**. **This data deficit was problematic at both macro and micro level**: the lack of management information **inhibited strategic oversight and decision making,** whilst the lack of effective information sharing to support case management resulted **in duplication and inefficiencies across services/provision, students having to repeat their stories over and over, and poor institutional management of risk** (SUMS Consulting, 2021).

NHS partnership: Develop and deliver a new integrated student mental health service in partnership with CPFT and ARU. (Insufficient personal support, Mental health)	NHS/ARU partnership	Ongoing pressures to NHS mental health services are well documented and never more so post-pandemic (NHS England, 2021). **HE students experience ongoing issues in accessing adequate mental health and wellbeing support because of long waiting lists** (UUK, 2018). **Many students** with existing mental health difficulties often **move from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to adult services** around the same time they move to university, thereby **compounding issues for those students supported by locality community mental health teams moving between regions. This can also result in difficulties with continuity of care when moving between health service areas for study.** There is a consequent pressure placed on HEI support services to **bridge these gaps** (Thorley, 2017). A recent annual report from the National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Safety in Mental Health (NCISH) **sets out the need for students to have a clear pathway from university to NHS mental health services** (NCISH, 2024). A number of HEIs have already embarked on an NHS-university collaboration to achieve this. Aligning with the NHS Long-Term Plan and learning from the OfS Student Mental Health Partnerships Project (OfS, 2022; UUK, 2022), **we have set up a partnership with the Cambridge and Peterborough Foundation Trust (CPFT) and Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) to facilitate increased specialist mental health support for students with severe and/or complex mental health needs through development and delivery of a specific CPFT mental health pathway for Cambridge and ARU students**. We hope to be able to add to the growing sector evidence base (TASO, 2022) about the efficacies and benefits that these collaborations can bring.	

Establish a Wellbeing Stimulus Fund Supporting innovation in preventative and early intervention activities within the Colleges – match funding development and delivery of innovative activities at community level and sharing findings and resources across collegiate Cambridge and beyond. (Insufficient personal support, Mental health).	Wellbeing Stimulus Fund	In a similar way to the OfS funded Mental Health Challenge Competition (2020) the collegiate University has set up a Wellbeing Stimulus Fund as an incentive to Colleges to fund and deliver preventative and early intervention mental health and wellbeing initiatives at community level, which are underpinned by the stepped care approach to mental health and wellbeing provision we are aspiring to as an institution.	The Stimulus Fund has been modelled on a prototype deployed successfully at Cambridge previously, with the time-limited Harding Challenge (2019) having offered a template upon which we can offer University-wide matched funding opportunities to maximise the impact of College fundraising activity in the area of student mental health and wellbeing. The collegiate and heterogenous nature of Cambridge means that consistency of provision - and equality of access to that provision - presents challenges across many policy questions, including mental health and wellbeing provision. Additionally, whilst there is clearly much we can learn from other HEIs and the sector more generally, it is not always clear that 'what works' in terms of interventions and approaches elsewhere will follow in the context of collegiate Cambridge. We hope this Fund will stimulate pockets of innovation which can then be shared as best practice. Colleges which apply for significant funding are expected to source a degree of match-funding, but there is also non-matched funding available for lower-level bids. The criteria and terms of the Fund also allow for the relative wealth and resources of each College to be considered and funding

			available is scaled to provide greater rewards for those with less direct access to investment. This is intended to contribute to an overall levelling up of provision to an equitable baseline across the 31 autonomous and independent Colleges, whilst also pump priming innovation to find 'what works' in our unique context.
Deliver enhanced mental health training for student-facing staff (Insufficient academic support; Insufficient personal support; Mental health)	Training framework	**Establishing an institutional training framework to upskill staff, promote wellbeing and support mental health** forms a key pillar of our **whole-institution approach to student support** (TASO, 2022; Thorley, 2017; UUK, 2020). In the Mental Health Charter consultation study (Hughes et al, 2018), staff participants noted that **students often first went to their personal tutors** – usually members of academic staff – when facing difficulties, rather than specialists. **However, the literature is clear that academic staff and those in professional services roles often feel they lack the requisite skills, knowledge and training to support students with mental health difficulties and respond appropriately** (Margrove et al,2014; Gulliver et al,2019; Spear et al, 2021). **There is evidence that increased awareness of mental health conditions is associated with increased staff confidence in supporting students with mental health conditions**. We are also aware that **supporting student mental health without appropriate training also poses a risk to staff wellbeing**. (Hughes et al, 2018; Kinman & Jones, 2008). Ensuring academic and professional services staff are appropriately trained to hold conversations about student mental health is therefore **vitally important as part of our duty to staff wellbeing**. We therefore believe that providing staff with **increased mental health awareness and literacy via an institutional training**	The final report of our Strategic Review clearly highlighted that **more training and guidance was needed for all student-facing staff** (SUMS Consulting, 2021).

		framework where staff receive training appropriate to their role is likely to **facilitate improved student access to informal support, better signposting to appropriate specialist care sooner** (Gulliver et al, 2019) and ultimately **better student educational outcomes**.	
Delivery of specialist mentoring for students with mental health disabilities (Insufficient academic support; Insufficient personal support; Mental health)		The University Mentoring Organization's (UMO) White Paper on the role and impact of specialist mental health mentoring on students in UK HEIs sets out an evidence base for the impact of mentoring to a student's university career. It highlights that **specialist mentoring not only increases wellbeing but is often a key lynchpin to enabling educational outcomes and supporting a fulfilling university experience** (UMO, 2020). A recent Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCP) report on student mental health describes the reliable presence of a calm and thoughtful mentor **"can often make the difference between the student's success or withdrawal from the course"** (RCP, 2021).	Specialist mentoring has been a key part of our reasonable adjustments offer to students with mental health conditions for some time and **we seek qualitative and quantitative self-reported data** from students on their satisfaction levels. Qualitative feedback aligns with the external evidence, which indicates that this is a **highly valued intervention**, often making a key difference to a student's experience at Cambridge. However, we haven't hitherto robustly evaluated the impact that this intervention has had to student educational outcomes. **We hope to be able to put in place evaluation which will track the impact of this support longitudinally across students' academic careers – subject to data quality and recording improvements being possible within our central student records system.**

Intervention Strategy 5

Admission to postgraduate study at Cambridge is highly competitive and our academic requirements are high. We are committed to ensuring we offer admission to those with the highest potential, taking full account of the educational, financial, social and cultural obstacles participants may have had to overcome. We know that accessing higher education is more challenging when students face multiple, often intersecting factors.

In the context of Cambridge, we know from internal data that students who completed their undergraduate degree at non-research-intensive universities are accepted at lower rates. We also know that students from Black-British, British Pakistani and British Bangladeshi backgrounds are underrepresented at postgraduate level. At present, our data show that being from a non-research-intensive university is the biggest risk indicator for accessing postgraduate study at Cambridge. We also know from the sector that students from widening participation backgrounds are more likely to study at these institutions (Boliver, 2014). We have implemented changes to our admissions process to reflect this, including the creation of a contextual flag which highlights applicants who have not previously studied at Oxbridge and who have faced socio-economic disadvantage in earlier life. We will continue to review our data annually to monitor these trends.

We are committed to enhancing our understanding of the data available to us, and the ways in which student characteristics and experiences may shape their experiences of applying to postgraduate study. As part of this commitment, we are participating in a collaborative project between several HEIs to gather more data from prospective applicants to inform our understanding of the postgraduate population.

The postgraduate landscape is highly devolved due to the role of academic departments in admissions and the admissions process can be challenging to navigate, particularly if applicants have not previously studied at Cambridge. Through our Postgraduate Applicant Support Programme and Research Experience Placements we are committed to supporting prospective applicants with high-quality information, advice and guidance tailored to the Cambridge application process. We mirror this work with students by also engaging with admissions staff across the University to ensure that our admissions processes promote equitable access.

We acknowledge that the Cambridge admissions process is highly specific and requires substantial time investment from prospective candidates both to understand and complete. A key assumption underpinning our Applicant Support Programme is that if students received their first degree from a non-research-intensive university, they will likely find it challenging to produce a competitive application at a highly competitive research-intensive university such as Cambridge. To support applicants to develop a more competitive application we have developed activities that we believe will enhance understanding and confidence in the application process. This includes contact with a Cambridge academic and mentoring from a current PhD student.

We know that research experience is a requirement for many postgraduate courses at Cambridge. We acknowledge that students from non-research-intensive universities may not have had access to research opportunities, and we are trying to address this through our provision of highly personalised Research Experience Placements. These placements give participants the opportunity to conduct their own research in a supportive environment. We have designed Research Experience Placements to drive outcomes that research suggests are effective for

supporting HE access and that we think are particularly relevant for Cambridge postgraduate study (TASO, 2022). These include: development of knowledge in a particular academic context; empowering participants to think critically about the issues that exist inside and outside of their environment; and encouraging a sense of belonging in the university environment (TASO, 2022).

We are committed to the development of a pipeline into PhD study and beyond for students from widening participation backgrounds. Many PhD courses at Cambridge require applicants to have completed a Master's qualification, but funding limitations mean that there is a sizeable pool of candidates for whom the cost would be prohibitive. We have committed to reducing the financial burden on students at Master's level in the hope that this will support their progression to PhD study by maintaining our Master’s funding for students who are currently underrepresented at postgraduate level.

Intervention Strategy 5:			
Objective 5: We will address progression to postgraduate study at Cambridge amongst undergraduates from other universities, particularly from certain groups, including underrepresented ethnicities, those who have faced socio-economic disadvantage, and mature students. **Risks to equality of opportunity**: Risk 1: Knowledge and skills; Risk 2: Information and guidance; Risk 3: Perception of higher education; Risk 4: Application success rates; Risk 5: Limited choice of course type and delivery; Risk 10: Cost pressures; Risk 12: Progression from higher education. **Target**: i. We will offer a minimum of 160 funded research experience placements over the period of this Plan.			
Activity type and risk	**Example activities named in APP**	**Sector evidence**	**Internal evidence**
Development of research skills (Knowledge and skills, Perception of higher education, Application success rates, Progression from higher education)	Research Experience Placements	At this stage, there is limited evidence of the success of research experience placements as a means of improving access to postgraduate study. We do know that participants from previous years have successfully applied to postgraduate study at the University of Cambridge, and we are working to coordinate our data collection and evaluation processes across the various programmes to allow us to better understand the impact of these placements on progression to further study. We are also engaging with the wider sector to learn from practice in other institutions and to disseminate our own findings.	We know from internal data that students with research experience are more likely to receive offers for postgraduate study. We will continue to monitor and track the pathways of our participants to supplement our learning.
Information, advice and guidance (Information, Advice and Guidance, Perception of HE)	Applicant Support Programme Research Experience Placements	We have drawn on evidence bases from pre-entry programmes and evidence to inform our approach to information, advice and guidance.	We will supplement this evidence base with IAG specific to Cambridge admissions process, using internal feedback sessions from current postgraduate students undertaken in

		Providing information, advice and guidance to underrepresented students is a longstanding widening access activity. Notably, however Robinson and Salvestrini (2020) find that although implementation of IAG is widespread, most **impactful results are generated by those that are tailored to the students**, **start early** and are **integrated into other forms of support**. The evidence analysed also showed that simply providing information may not be enough, and that **students need personalised suppor**t to help them to make decisions about their education. 'Passive' information such as websites does not suffice. The literature identifies that **underrepresented students tend to turn to informal sources of IAG, have less access to formal IAG and prefer first-hand information** (J. Moore et al, 2013; Sanderson & Spacey, 2021).	2023-24 to better understand how to optimise IAG implementation with regards to elements such as sequence and dosage. We will seek to gather this feedback on an annual basis and strive to capture representative samples of the student body.
Mentoring (Information and guidance; Application success rates; Progression from higher education)	Applicant Support Programme Research Experience Placement	In developing the applicant support programme, we have engaged with a range of research on the effectiveness of mentoring in supporting students to apply and transition into postgraduate study. However, whilst most existing programmes tend to focus on students already studying within the	

		institution, **our programme will have an explicit focus on supporting those who have not previously studied at Cambridge, which represents a different approach to traditional programmes**. We have drawn on mentoring best practice from literature across widening access and employment where insights are relevant and transferable to enhance our understanding of change mechanisms. We have drawn on evidence from Meza, Rodriguez, Trujillo and Ladd-Viti about the effectiveness of the 'GiGS' postgraduate mentoring in changing perceptions and plans for postgraduate study, through **demystification, supporting development of relationship building skills and improving knowledge of graduate school admissions**. Brutger (2023) reports that the 'PIPS' programme had a positive impact on **participants' perceptions of their own readiness to apply for a PhD** and **self-belief**, in addition to improving the **quality of their application documents**.	

		Programme evaluations and research demonstrate that mentoring is more effective when there are **sustained, high-quality relationships between mentors and mentees, allowing for high rapport and trust**. Moreover, confident, well-trained and well-supported mentors who follow a **structured programme** with their mentees are also more likely to be impactful (AimHigher Birmingham and Solihull, 2010; J. Sanders & Higham, 2012; O'Sullivan et al, 2017).	
Master's funding opportunities (Cost pressures; Progression from higher education)		Wakeling and Mateos-González (2021) claim that there is a risk that the success of Master's loans will be eroded for disadvantaged students and that the current situation has the potential to **push out graduates who cannot fund the difference between the costs of postgraduate study and the loan**. They advocate better targeting of financial support to the disadvantaged.	We will supplement this understanding from our own internal narrative evidence generated from our interviews and focus groups over the course of the APP.

Intervention Strategy 6

Our aim is that all Careers activity should be fully accessible and therefore we have adopted an ‘inclusive by design’ approach to our planning and delivery. However, we recognise that this needs to be complemented with enhanced provision for students with declared disabilities. These interventions are informed by the literature relating to effective Careers Education Advice and Guidance and the work of the AGCAS disability task group. The interventions are designed to address the recommendations made by the Disabled Students Commission in the Disabled Graduate Employment report (2021) and the Commission's subsequent Disabled Student Commitment (2023).

This intervention strategy seeks to best support the needs of students with declared disabilities by providing dedicated, adaptive appointment times bookable further in advance (versus the two-day booking window for standard appointments). Feedback from students, employers and the AGCAS disability task group shapes a programme of sessions/resources to increase students' confidence in understanding the labour market and confidently discuss their situation with employers (disclosure, reasonable adjustments for assessments, etc). We work closely with the Accessibility and Disability Service to ensure that students are aware of the services available to them and that the Careers Service is well-informed about the needs of this group.

Pre-Graduate Outcomes the Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education survey (DLHE) had response rates of 85% and higher for UK domiciled undergraduate students. Initiating a six-month survey based on the Graduate Outcomes methodology would allow us to monitor initial transitions, provide an opportunity to flag the ongoing Careers Support available and provide data with which to inform programme design.

Intervention Strategy 6:

Objective 6: We will address the gap in progression to further study, managerial or professional employment or other positive outcomes for students with a declared disability.

Risks to equality of opportunity:
Risk 6: Insufficient academic support; Risk 7: Insufficient personal support; Risk 10: Cost pressures; Risk 12: Progression from higher education.

Target 4: Given the small cohort and natural volatility in outcomes from year to year, we will set a target based on the rolling four-year average gap seen in Graduate Outcomes. We will aim to ensure that the gap in positive outcomes between students with a declared disability and students with no declared disability does not exceed 4%.

Activity type and risk	Activities named in APP	Sector evidence	Internal evidence
Targeted careers support for students with declared disabilities	**Inclusivity by Design** Wide range of activities aimed at increasing career confidence and supporting students to discuss their needs with prospective employers Careers workshops for students with Asperger Syndrome Regular careers sessions on 'Talking about disability to employers'. Interviews and guided feedback for any applicant with a declared disability who applies to the Cambridge internship scheme.	Our commitment to inclusivity by design is integral to our service. We understand inclusivity to include the key principles as outlined below by Wood (2024): "Inclusivity means applying design to people's experiences, technology (digital and data), and physical spaces with the following principles: Service access equity (services being 'easy to reach') Flexibility (understanding life events, and preferences) Simplifying and making intuitive Providing information in a range of ways (including multi-sensory) Focusing on possible unintended consequences and risks of harm Requiring low physical effort Making effective use of size and space in physical environments" (2019, p.1).	We monitor and analyse all student feedback. This includes pulse surveys after every service use, and termly surveys on a broader section of themes. Every survey includes questions to understand how inclusive our services are. We have received very positive feedback about our services, but will continue to monitor this.

		We believe, as Acevez-Gonzales et al (2014) note, that inclusivity by design is valuable for both service users and the organisation. They note that whilst service design "**aims to innovate or improve services that are useful, usable and desirable from the user perspective**" it is also "**efficient and effective** from the organisation's perspective" (Mager & Sung, 2011; Moritz, 2005) in Acevez-Gonzales et al (2014, p.2).	
	Skills assessment & development project	We acknowledge the limited causal evidence supporting skills development projects and hope to be able to contribute to the sector in time. There is some less robust evidence of skills programmes supporting good graduate employability outcomes. For example, a narrative evaluation by HE Funding Council for Wales (2012) **found that those who had participated in the 'GO' programme were more likely to be in work and, on average, were earning £3,300 more than people who didn't participate**. The World Economic Forum (2023) have conducted an analysis of the anticipated impact of macroeconomic trends on the labour market, with a specific emphasis on **projected disruptions to skills** and the reskilling and upskilling priorities for the upcoming five years. It is evident that **significant changes and disruptions are on the horizon for the labour market** in the coming half-decade. According to projections from the World Economic Forum, approximately 83 million jobs are anticipated to be lost, while 69 million new ones are expected to be created,	Students engage with the offering – positive feedback from students Internal data gathered from Handshake on current student skills inform our approach Internal data from our student panel and focus groups supported implementation decisions

		resulting in **a structural 'churn' affecting around 23% of the total workforce**. In light of these forecasts, we are dedicated to supporting students navigate this period of turbulence. The Future of Jobs Report, initially released in 2016, indicated that surveyed companies foresaw disruptions to **35% of workers' skills over the subsequent five years. By 2023, this figure has escalated to 44%** (World Economic Forum, p.37). In response to these evolving demands, we have devised the Skills Assessment project, drawing upon recommendations for core skills and skills evolution. Notably, **cognitive skills appear to be experiencing the most rapid growth in significance for employers**, followed by technological literacy, self-efficacy, and socio-emotional attitudes, including curiosity and **lifelong learning - attributes we deem integral to the Cambridge experience**. This finding is echoed by McKinsey report (2023) and Skills Taxonomy (2021). Percy and Emms (2020) highlight significant aspects of the university experience positively correlated with both higher career satisfaction and increased salaries. **The most robust relationship with career satisfaction was observed among graduates who felt that higher education equipped them with the ability to effectively function in the workplace across eight essential transferable skills.** McKinsey et al also advocate for **greater usage of technology, software and AI to support individuals assess and track their**	

		skills development in relation to particular careers. We have utilised the Skills Taxonomy (2021) to aid the development of **common standards framework** for skills, thereby ensuring a **shared understanding of what skill 'gain'** looks like. Finally, we have **drawn upon research proposing conceptual frameworks** as a basis for understanding the dimensions of learning gain (Vermunt et al, 2018).	
	Dedicated careers consultants	A TASO rapid evidence review found that **one-to-one career counselling has a strong link between graduates' ability to make effective career decisions and their belief in their ability to shape their career (TASO, 2024).** Furthermore, recent studies (Markle et al, 2017; Hillier et al, 2019) found a **positive association between mentoring/coaching services, an individual's ability to self-advocate, and positive educational and progression outcomes**. A key part of our work supports students to be able to understand their rights in the workplace, and the confidence to navigate conversations with employers to support reasonable adjustments either during the selection process, or once successful. When examining the reasons for choosing their current job, an interesting picture emerges for this disability group: **graduates with a social condition/autism** were least likely to have based their decision on the role fitting in with their career plans and **most likely to have selected their job as a way**	

		to earn a living or pay off their debts. Without further information, it is not possible to give a clear explanation for these findings but it does appear that when it comes to employment, these graduates are likely to make decisions differently to other disabled graduates. One possible reason is the amount of choice they felt they had: at two qualification levels (first degree and postgraduate (taught)) graduates with a social condition/autism were most likely to have chosen their role because it was the only offer they received. Another possible explanation is that due to the nature of their disability, some autistic individuals can experience challenges in the area of abstract thought or imagination (Boucher, 2017), which could cause difficulties in forming a career plan and navigating a path towards a specific career goal. With much research showing the national and even international disadvantage for these individuals relating to work (Lee & Carter, 2012; Howlin & Moss, 2012; Hurlbutt & Chalmers, 2004), it is clear that further research should be undertaken to explore the perspectives of individuals with a social condition/autism who are seeking and securing employment.	
	Post-graduation survey	Pre-Graduate Outcomes the Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education survey (DLHE) had response rates of 85% and higher for UK domiciled UG students.	

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Office for Students

Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: University of Cambridge

Provider UKPRN: 10007788

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 CPIH

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	9250
Foundation degree	*	N/A	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	N/A	*
HNC/HND	*	N/A	*
CertHE/DipHE		N/A	9250
Postgraduate ITT		N/A	9250
Accelerated degree	*	N/A	*
Sandwich year	*	N/A	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years		N/A	1385
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	*
Foundation degree	*	N/A	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	N/A	*
HNC/HND	*	N/A	*
CertHE/DipHE	Part-time level 4-5 courses for most subjects (standard rate)	N/A	3300
CertHE/DipHE	Part-time level 4-5 courses in subjects attracting premium rate of fees such as Cognitive Psychology, Entrepreneurship and Strategic Business and Management	N/A	4100
CertHE/DipHE	Part-time level 4-5 courses in subjects attracting premium+ rate of fees such as Coaching	N/A	4900
Postgraduate ITT	*	N/A	*
Accelerated degree	*	N/A	*
Sandwich year	*	N/A	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	N/A	*
Other	*	N/A	*

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	*	*	*

Office for Students

Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: University of Cambridge

Provider UKPRN: 10007788

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 OfS 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	£3,551,000	£3,632,000	£3,715,000	£3,800,000
Financial support (£)	NA	£14,909,000	£15,707,000	£16,552,000	£17,444,000
Research and evaluation (£)	NA	£483,000	£494,000	£505,000	£517,000

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 (£)	£102,000	£104,000	£106,000	£108,000
Access activity investment	Post-16 access activities (£)	£2,932,000	£2,999,000	£3,068,000	£3,139,000
Access activity investment	Other access activities (£)	£517,000	£529,000	£541,000	£553,000
Access activity investment	**Total access investment (£)**	**£3,551,000**	**£3,632,000**	**£3,715,000**	**£3,800,000**
Access activity investment	***Total access investment (as % of HFI)***	**11.0%**	**11.1%**	**11.3%**	**11.6%**
Access activity investment	***Total access investment funded from HFI (£)***	**£2,541,000**	**£2,599,000**	**£2,659,000**	**£2,720,000**
Access activity investment	***Total access investment from other funding (as specified) (£)***	**£1,010,000**	**£1,033,000**	**£1,056,000**	**£1,080,000**
Financial support investment	Bursaries and scholarships (£)	£14,341,000	£15,127,000	£15,958,000	£16,835,000
Financial support investment	Fee waivers (£)	£468,000	£478,000	£489,000	£501,000
Financial support investment	Hardship funds (£)	£100,000	£102,000	£105,000	£108,000
Financial support investment	**Total financial support investment (£)**	**£14,909,000**	**£15,707,000**	**£16,552,000**	**£17,444,000**
Financial support investment	***Total financial support investment (as % of HFI)***	**46.4%**	**48.2%**	**50.6%**	**53.2%**
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (£)	£483,000	£494,000	£505,000	£517,000
Research and evaluation investment	*Research and evaluation investment (as % of HFI)*	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.6%

Office for Students

Fees, investments and targets

2025-26 to 2028-29

Provider name: University of Cambridge

Provider UKPRN: 10007788

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 increase the proportion of students from IMD quintiles 1 & 2 entering the University.	PTA_1	Access	Deprivation (Index of Multiple Deprivations [IMD])	IMD quintile 1 and 2	IMD quintile 3, 4 and 5	We will increase the proportion of students from IMD quintiles 1 & 2 entering the University. We will undertake a number of interventions which are focused in areas with a high number of students from IMD quintiles 1 & 2, or which prioritise these students in the selection process. We will make use of our own internal data.	No	Other data source (please include details in commentary)	2022-23	Percentage	21.2	21.5	22.5	23.5	25.1
To increase the proportion of students in receipt of free school meals (FSM) entering the University	PTA_2	Access	Eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM)	Eligible		We will increase the proportion of students eligible for free school meals entering the University. We will undertake a number of interventions which target these students and/or prioritise them in the selection process. We will examine additional data (UCAS data and our own institional data) once it becomes available in 2025 and submit a variation to the OfS with a numerical target and milestones.	No	Other data source (please include details in commentary)	Other (please include details in commentary)	Percentage	0	0	0	0	0
	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
	PTS_1														
	PTS_2														
	PTS_3														
	PTS_4														
	PTS_5														
	PTS_6														
	PTS_7														
	PTS_8														
	PTS_9														
	PTS_10														
	PTS_11														
	PTS_12														

Table 5e: Progression 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

We will offer a miminum of 160 funded research experience placements over the period of this Plan.	PTP_1	Progression	Other	Other (please specify in description)	N/A	Academic schools will offer dedicated widening participation research experience placements, covering a number of disciplines. Placements will be offered to those who have experienced socio-economic disadvantage and who belong to underrepresented groups including: FSM, first generation, young carer, care-experienced, estranged, single-parent, Black-British, British-Bangladeshi, British-Pakistani and Mature	No	Other data source (please include details in commentary)	Other (please include details in commentary)	Headcount	0	160	160	160	160
We will address the gap in progression to further study, managerial or professional employment or other positive outcomes for students with a declared disability.	PTP_2	Progression	Reported disability	Disability reported	No disability reported	Given the small cohort and natural volatility in outcomes from year to year, we will set a target based on the rolling four-year average gap seen in Graduate Outcomes. We will aim to ensure that the gap in positive outcomes between students with a declared disability and students with no declared disability does not exceed 4%. The baseline data is 3-9% based upon an average of the four year period 2017/18 - 2020/21.	No	Other data source (please include details in commentary)	Other (please include details in commentary)	Percentage	4.85	4	4	4	4
	PTP_3														
	PTP_4														
	PTP_5														
	PTP_6														
	PTP_7														
	PTP_8														
	PTP_9														
	PTP_10														
	PTP_11														
	PTP_12														