Sysco Business Skills Academy Access and Participation Plan 2024-25 to 2027-28

1. **INTRODUCTION & STRATEGIC AIM**

Sysco Business Skills Academy Ltd is an established and experienced Grade 2 Ofsted-inspected and Matrix accredited training provider based in the Liverpool City Region. With over 34 years' extensive experience in education, we have vast knowledge of Apprenticeships, Adult Education, Student Loans and 16-18 Study Programme.

Sysco believe that an aspirational approach to curriculum and learning is fundamental and central to everything we do, underpinning our Vision, Mission and Values. We will deliver a high quality curriculum, where all learners are fully supported, engaged and challenged whilst working towards achieving their potential.

We aim to promote a culture of a passion for learning so that students are enthusiastic, inquisitive, resilient and develop the propensity to become life-long learners. We strive to empower our students to succeed and make excellent progress in their learning, achieve excellent outcomes and become well-skilled and equipped for future life, aspiring to be the best they can be. We aim to motivate our students to exceed their expectations and to contribute to local, national and global communities growing in self-esteem and confidence.

Sysco is committed to achieving the highest standards of commitment to Equality and Diversity, which are essential in meeting the wide & diverse needs of our community.

Widening participation in learning is a key goal for the Sysco Group. We aim to achieve this by ensuring equality of opportunity, promoting the benefits of diversity through our marketing actions, materials and avoiding discrimination in all areas of our engagement with students from recruitment through to achievement.

Increasing participation and engagement may not occur organically; instead a clear focus on promoting widening participation, social inclusion and diversity is required. Sysco will ensure that within the delivery of our Higher Education programmes, diversity and equality of opportunity is prioritised.

It is our intention to ensure that our learning programmes are open to all sections of the local community, that the profile of our students reflects the cultural diversity and demographic profile of the local population and barriers to access, continuation, achievement and progression are systematically removed and addressed.

Sysco encourage, through positive action, initiatives that will promote the full engagement of under-represented groups.

1.1 Vision

'To enable individuals to maximise their employability opportunities or workplace capabilities through the provision of outstanding quality training, and by so doing, increase the profitability and competitiveness of the local community, hence contributing to the social and financial development of our economy.'

1.2 Mission

Our aim is to provide educational and training services that exceed all our stakeholders' expectations in order to continue an aspirational and sustainable business.

1.3 Values

S skills development; structured learning

Y youth investment, development and opportunity

S standards; searching for innovation

C continuous improvement; celebrating success and achievement

O organisational excellence and openness

2. <u>RISKS TO EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY</u>

Sysco has a small Higher Education cohort of full-time students, which we intend to grow over the period of this report time period.

Sysco has been delivering Higher Education for four years as a subcontractor to The City of Liverpool College. We have active data collection processes in place and employ an experienced MIS Team across our suite of programmes throughout the business and we discuss our data internally. However, our datasets in Higher Education are small due to the small cohorts we have recruited since our expansion into Higher Education. In addition, our performance data over this period has been suppressed within those of The City of Liverpool College.

As such, it is difficult for us to publish data sets on all of the student priority areas of the Office for Students access and participation data dashboard. Therefore, the data analysed within Annex A of this Access and Participation Plan relates to internal data that we had collected and provided to The City of Liverpool College. We believe this data to be robust and appropriate and the analysis of this data is central to assessing our performance against the targets we set in this plan.

The Assessment of Performance in Annex A of this document demonstrates that Sysco performs well against a wide variety of access and participation indicators. This section will highlight the risks we have identified to equality of opportunity in our Higher Education programme.

2.1 Non-White British[1] Students Access Rates

According to the latest HESA data, 28.4% of Higher Education entrants in 2023/24 are from non-White British ethnic groups. Our analysis has identified that too few of our students are from non-White British communities. While our Higher Education provision

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[1] Please refer to Annex C for a full classification of Ethnic Groups.

to date has focused on Performing Arts, which has a lower proportion of non-White British participants, our lack of students from non-White British communities demonstrates a risk of equality which we will wish to improve.

2.2 First in Family Students Continuation Rates
Our analysis shows a clear gap between the continuation rates of our Higher Education students who are First in Family compared to those who are not First in Family. Caution must be taken to the low cohort size on our Higher Education programme (especially in 2021/22), however, there would appear to be a trend of underperformance by our students who are First in Family into Higher Education.

3. <u>OBJECTIVES</u>
While Sysco performs well against a wide variety of access and participation indicators, we recognise that there is more we can do to address all under-represented student populations. As such, we have formed our objectives using the assessment of performance in Annex A and will focus on those areas in which we believe we can make most impact.

3.1 Increase the proportion of non-White British students within our Higher Education entrants
Our objective is to increase the proportion, and therefore number, of students starting our Higher Education programmes from non-White British communities. We are expecting to increase the size of our total student population over the next five years and so, by setting an objective to increase the proportion of non-White British students within our Higher Education entrants, we will both increase the representation of this group within our wider student population and also disproportionately increase the numbers of non-White British students.

3.2 Increase the continuation rate of First in Family students within our Higher Education cohort
Our objective is to ensure more First in Family students remain in-learning on their Higher Education programme, thus reducing drop-out for this group. We are expecting to increase the continuation rate of First in Family students over the next five years by 5% year-on-year to reach a target of 85% continuation for this group by 2027/28.

4. <u>INTERVENTION STRATEGIES</u>
Sysco are committed to reducing the risks to equality of opportunity for all student groups and particularly those identified in Section 2.

To achieve our objectives laid out in Section 3, we will implement the intervention strategies identified below using the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register as the framework.

To support our strategic objectives, we will be utilising TASO's Core Theory of Change model as a framework upon which strategic situation and aims can be established and the desired outcomes and impact can be achieved through targeted inputs, activities and outputs (Annex B).

It should be noted that issues of equality of opportunity are complex and there are many elements that will have a more profound impact, which we have little control to impact. As such, the intervention strategies we will implement are targeted specifically at activities in which we feel we can make an impact.

4.1 Increase the proportion of non-White British students within our Higher Education entrants

While our Higher Education provision to date has focused on Performing Arts, which has a lower proportion of non-White British participants, our lack of students from non-White British communities demonstrates a risk of equality which we will wish to improve.

Most of our students access our Higher Education programme from a vocational, college-based pathway. This may limit equality of opportunity for non-White British students to access our programme from more academic pathways. However, we believe this approach positively addresses another equality of opportunity to Higher Education access (accessing Higher Education from a non-traditional pathway) and so we would not wish to dilute this as this would disadvantage many other underrepresented groups from accessing Higher Education.

We do accept, however, that non-White British students (particularly those from the black British-Caribbean and black or black British - Other; white or Gypsy, Traveller or Roma ethnic groups, or the Boater and Showmen communities) who are undertaking BTEC-type qualifications at Level 3 may not feel they can aspire to Higher Education.

It is interesting to note that none of the non-White British students that have accessed our Higher Education programme to date are First in Family and the majority have parents in higher or lower managerial and professional occupations. This may suggest that many non-White British students (particularly those in the communities highlighted above) who are First in Family and/or have parents outside of higher or lower managerial and professional occupations may not feel able to apply to Higher Education despite being qualified due to their perception of Higher Education.

To combat this, we will implement an aspiration-raising strategy for the non-White British community. Aspiration-raising activities consist of interventions carried out to

raise students' aspirations to apply to, and attend, Higher Education. Research has not found a causal link between raising aspirations and reducing equality of opportunity to access and so we will be careful to constantly evaluate whether our strategy is having an impact on aspirations.

Improving students' expectations – the belief that they will attend Higher Education – may be a more effective avenue for widening participation and there is some evidence that superficially supports this approach. For example, pupils' expectations about the future correlate with attainment at age 16 (Chowdry, Crawford & Goodman, 2011) and HE entry (Anders and Micklewright, 2015). However, prior attainment is the dominant factor which determines whether and where a person studies, and aspirations appear to largely reflect this prior attainment (Chowdry et al., 2013; Cummings et al., 2012).

An analysis of the prior attainment of students in vocational training programmes in the areas in which we intend to deliver our HE programmes indicates that non-White British students are less likely to attain HE Entry Requirement grades compared to White British students. As such, our aspiration-raising promotional campaign will focus on motivating non-White British students undertaking vocational training programmes to aspire to the necessary grade profile.

As such we will implement the following strategies (Annex B):

1. **Targeted aspiration-raising promotional campaign**
   We will create an aspirational promotional campaign targeted at non-White British students on vocational Level 3 qualifications. This will highlight the positive experiences of our non-White British current and ex-students (our continuation, achievement and progression rates for non-White British students is 100%) and ex-students from other HEIs, demonstrating the benefits of Higher Education.

   Within this campaign we will use:
   1. Case Studies
   2. Career Progression talks by members of the non-White British community to students undertaking Level 3 vocational qualifications
   3. Social Media campaigns involving members of the non-White British community
   4. Promotion of the financial support available to our students

2. **Scholarship**
   As a recognition that there may be an accessibility gap for prospective non-White British students who are either First in Family and/or have parents who are outside of higher or lower managerial and professional occupations, leading to an increased likelihood of living in a more deprived area, we will offer a Scholarship to all non-White British students accessing our programme from a vocational qualification.

Summary of Intervention Strategies, Investment Costs & Expected Outcomes				
Activity	**Inputs**	**Amounts**	**Outcomes**	**Impact**
Targeted aspiration-raising promotional campaign	Communications Officer Careers and Progression Officer Non-White British Student Ambassadors and Role Models	£162,000	Increased attractiveness of HE provision as a career progression to the BAME community.	Close the recruitment gap between non-White British and White British students on our HE programmes. Annual monitoring of progress against targets will be undertaken and the findings published on Sysco's HE website page. Upon the completion of the four year period of this Plan, a summary of performance against targets will be completed and published on Sysco's HE website page.
Scholarship	Financial Support Officer BAME Grant	£24,000	Improved welfare and wellbeing Improved financial resources	Close the recruitment gap between non-White British and White British students on our HE programmes. Annual monitoring of progress against targets will be undertaken and the findings published on Sysco's HE website page. Upon the completion of the four year period of this Plan, a summary of performance against targets will be completed and published on Sysco's HE website page.

4.2 Increase the continuation rate of First in Family students within our Higher Education cohort

There is a clear gap between the continuation rates of our Higher Education students who are First in Family compared to those who are not First in Family. Caution must be taken to the low cohort size on our Higher Education programme (especially in 2021/22), however, there would appear to be a trend of underperformance by our students who are First in Family into Higher Education.

We have identified that this may be due to differences in educational experiences before university that did not equip them with the same level of relevant skills or knowledge as other students.

To combat this, we will seek to enhance our academic and personal support package to First in Family students to ensure they are accessing this additional resource. Mentoring,

counselling, coaching and advising all involve a relationship between two individuals where a more experienced person provides support, advice and/or information to a less experienced individual. This normally includes some combination of psychological/emotional support, course/career support, academic skills support, and acting as a role model.

There is some evidence from the UK to suggest that mentoring, counselling, coaching and advising programmes are associated with positive effects on students. This evidence is mainly drawn from quantitative studies comparing participant groups with non-participant groups, to show that individuals who take part in the programmes have better outcomes. Nearly all these studies suggest a positive impact on attainment, retention/completion or other outcomes (such as intention to remain on-course).

There is some stronger evidence of impact from studies in other countries. Multiple randomised controlled trials (RCTs) have been run in the US. One tested the effect of coaching for first-year college students and found that recipients were more likely to persist to the second year than non-recipients (Bettinger & Baker, 2011).

Some studies using quasi-experimental methods also find a positive impact. A quasi-experimental study from the US evaluated the effectiveness of the Academic Coaching for Excellence programme for academically at-risk undergraduate students, using archive data to look at retention and academic achievement. It concluded that, in this mid-sized urban research institution, students who participated in academic coaching had experienced significant Grade Point Average increases and higher retention rates in the semester following the intervention compared to those who did not participate in the programme (Capstick et al., 2019).

However, some other studies find mixed results. One RCT in Canada found that first years who were randomly assigned a student support programme including mentoring did not perform better than their peers who did not receive the support. However, when this programme was combined with financial support, there was a significant impact on attainment (Angrist et al., 2009).

Another study from the US tested the effect of a light-touch advising programme in which whole maths classes were randomly assigned to receive support. It found an effect on uptake of student support and withdrawal rates but not on pass rates (except for part-time students) (Butcher & Visher, 2013).

Using the results of this research, we will implement the following strategies (Annex B):

a. **Improve personalised academic support for First in Family students**
   We will provide additional academic support for students who are identified as First in Family. All First in Family students will have an individual academic coach who will hold regular support meetings and will deliver study skills coaching sessions. This will take into account any individual circumstances, such as personal health issues, special educational needs (SEN) diagnosis or home difficulties that impact on a student's ability to engage to the fullest extent with their academic studies.

b. **Improve personal support**
   We will ensure additional focus from our support teams on to First in Family students. Our support teams consist of a Student Support team and Mental Health First Aiders.

   Our Student Support team provide students with confidential support and advice. They provide help with non-academic areas, such as welfare, financial and other personal matters. All First in Family students will be allocated a named Student Support contact and who will arrange six-weekly one-to-one sessions.

   Our Mental Health First Aiders provide an additional resource through one-to-one guidance to students. They champion mental health matters with all student-facing staff on mental health awareness to ensure all staff are adequately trained to deal with student mental health-related situations. In addition, our Mental Health First Aiders are available to provide specialist mental health support to students.

c. **Scholarship**
   As a recognition of the added costs associated with being a First in Family student and the research conclusion that financial support alongside academic and personal support has an improved success, we will provide a Scholarship to all First in Family students.

Summary of Intervention Strategies, Investment Costs & Expected Outcomes				
Activity	**Inputs**	**Amounts**	**Outcomes**	**Impact**
Improve personalised academic support for First in Family students	Academic Mentor/Coach IT Infrastructure – Laptop Device, Microsoft Office 365 Package	£80,000	Increased Continuation Rates of First in Family students Increased awareness around personal and academic support available	Continuation gap is reduced to allow First in Family students to attain HE qualifications at a similar rate to non-First in Family students. Improved perception of belonging. Annual monitoring of progress against targets will be undertaken and the findings published on Sysco's HE website page. Upon the completion of the four year period of this

			Improved academic study skills	Plan, a summary of performance against targets will be completed and published on Sysco's HE website page.
Improve personal support for First in Family students	Student Support – Mentor/Coach Mental Health First Aider	£81,000	Increased Continuation Rates of First in Family students Increased awareness around personal and academic support available Improved welfare and wellbeing	Continuation gap is reduced to allow First in Family students to attain HE qualifications at a similar rate to non-First in Family students. Improved perception of belonging. Annual monitoring of progress against targets will be undertaken and the findings published on Sysco's HE website page. Upon the completion of the four year period of this Plan, a summary of performance against targets will be completed and published on Sysco's HE website page.
Scholarship	First in Family Bursary Financial Support Officer	£84,000	Increased Continuation Rates of First in Family students Improved financial resources	Continuation gap is reduced to allow First in Family students to attain HE qualifications at a similar rate to non-First in Family students. Improved perception of belonging. Annual monitoring of progress against targets will be undertaken and the findings published on Sysco's HE website page. Upon the completion of the four year period of this Plan, a summary of performance against targets will be completed and published on Sysco's HE website page.

5. **TARGETS**

The targets we set within this plan will be monitored and we will adjust our actions accordingly. Our expectation is that by increasing the size of our student population over the next five years, we will be able to report on a wider set of targets.

5.1 Increase the proportion of non-White British students within our Higher Education entrant

Our targets are:

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Non-White British (% of total entrants)	9%	12%	15%	17%

5.2 Increase the continuation rate of First in Family students within our Higher Education cohort

Our targets are:

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
First in Family (% continuation rate)	70%	75%	80%	85%

6. **WHOLE PROVIDER APPROACH**

Sysco is committed to improving access and continuation as well as maintaining excellent standards in achievement and progression for an increasingly diverse student cohort.

Our focus will be on increasing access for students from non-White British communities and improving the continuation rates for students who are First in Family.

We will do this by implementing the strategies identified in Section 4. This will require a whole-provider strategic approach and embedding the identified strategies within our existing evidence-based, data-driven approach to decision-making. We will make ongoing improvements in strategy, leadership and governance as we seek to understand our student cohort further.

Our organisation vision, mission and values demonstrate a commitment to support all students.

Vision

'To enable individuals to maximise their employability opportunities or workplace capabilities through the provision of outstanding quality training, and by so doing, increase the profitability and competitiveness of the local community, hence contributing to the social and financial development of our economy.'

Mission

Our aim is to provide educational and training services that exceed all our stakeholders' expectations in order to continue an aspirational and sustainable business.

Values

S skills development; structured learning

Y youth investment, development and opportunity

S standards; searching for innovation

C continuous improvement; celebrating success and achievement

O organisational excellence and openness

Sysco's Senior Management Team are dedicated to Equality and Diversity and are responsible for reviewing and updating this strategy as well as accompanying policies, procedures and setting annual targets.

Sysco is committed to promoting equality, diversity and an inclusive and supporting environment for staff and students.

Sysco has a number of policies in place, specific to Equality of Opportunity, which run in conjunction with our Safeguarding policies and ensure that organisations undertaking training hold an appropriate policy. We have two Equal Opportunities Policies in place, one for staff and a Pride and Dignity Policy for learners. Both Policies express Sysco Group's commitment to meeting its obligations under The Equality Act 2010 which includes the following legislation combined as part of the protected characteristics.

- Equal Pay Act 1970 (Equal Value Amendment 1984)
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (Gender Reassignment Regulations 1999)
- The Race Relations Act 1976 (amendment) Regulations 2003
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (amendment) Regulations 2003
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Human Right Act 1998
- The General Data Protection Regulations
- The Employment Equality (sexual orientation) Regulations 2003
- The Employment Equality (religion or belief) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

Access and participation for Higher Education will be promoted across the organisation by Sysco's Equality & Diversity Focus Group. This Focus Group consists of members from across all sections of the business including our Quality Team, Delivery Team, Student Support, Mental Health, HR and MIS. In addition, the Operations Manager and a member of the Board of Directors are members of the Focus Group. This ensures a multi-disciplinary whole-provider approach to access and participation.

Our Participation and Access Plan focuses on five intervention strategies that seeks to address two areas of access and continuation. This will require support from across the whole organisation and will be managed by the Equality & Diversity Focus Group and the Head of Higher Education.

Increasing participation and engagement may not occur organically, instead a clear focus on promoting widening participation, social inclusion and diversity is required. Sysco Group will ensure that within the delivery of our learning programmes, diversity and equality of opportunity is increased and underpins the delivery of our contracts.

It is our intention to ensure that our learning programmes are open to all sections of the local community, that the profile of our learners reflects the cultural diversity and demographic profile of the local population and barriers to participation, retention and achievement are systematically removed and addressed. Sysco encourage, through positive action, initiatives that will promote the full engagement of under-represented groups. Sysco are committed to developing the capacity and capability of our staff to work in a way that actively promotes social inclusion and widening of participation via two-way commitment and communication.

We will use Equality & Diversity Focus Group members to disseminate best practice to our programmes. Students are asked through surveys to provide feedback on equality.

Widening participation in learning is a key goal for the Sysco. We aim to achieve this by ensuring equality of opportunity, promoting the benefits of diversity through our marketing actions, materials and avoiding discrimination in all areas of our engagement with students from recruitment through to achievement.

It is the responsibility of everyone working with or on behalf of The Sysco Group to be fully aware of the relevant Strategy and policies and to work diligently in and maintaining, the highest level of commitment to equality and diversity at all times.

All members of staff and students are expected to own and act upon the principals of this strategy. A number of individuals and groups have additional responsibilities these are:

Management:
It is the responsibility of the management team to ensure that Equality and Diversity are embedded within the delivery of all programmes by or on behalf of Sysco. The monitoring of performance and development of action plans for improvement are implicit aspects of the management role. This will include monitoring of equality and diversity where employers are engaged in bespoke training programmes, to meet individual employer needs, ensuring equal opportunity to training programmes for all individual students engaged through this strand of Sysco's provision. Managers will assess programmes on offer regularly with the view that Sysco will continue to increase opportunities to participate in learning.

Staff/Associates:
The staff responsibilities are focussed on ensuring a commitment to Sysco's Equality and Diversity Policies. To further enhance the profile of Equality and Diversity as critical agendas for a better awareness, through their own training and development and their efforts to uphold the principles of the Pride and Dignity Policy.

The Board and Focus Group:
The team has overall responsibility for monitoring the strategy implementation and development and the ongoing progress of the annual Equality and Diversity Action Plan. They meet quarterly specifically to review data and use the findings to monitor targets and agree actions to address areas of concern.

Hot Topics:
Hot topics are produced by the company monthly to raise awareness of Equality & Diversity issues which are current and raise awareness of key areas. They are to be shared with all staff. Academic Staff and Managers have the responsibility of ensuring that Hot Topics are discussed with students.

Sysco will ensure that equality and diversity is embedded into all our systems and delivery functions including

• Teaching, Learning & Assessment
• Staff Development
• Policy and Practice
• Learner Support

Sysco will continue to develop and monitor 6 key objectives for 2023/24, these will be monitored as part of the Focus Team meetings. The objectives are as follows;

Objective 1
Continue to evaluate the engagement of representative and consider pro-active recruitment.

Objective 2
All staff to continue to be aware of their own and the company responsibilities for advancing a culture of Equality and Diversity and fostering good relations, achieved through targeted training and development activities.

Objective 3
To ensure Equality and Diversity is reflected in our teaching, learning and assessment, leading to a good experience throughout the learner journey.

Objective 4
Continue to Widen Participation within learning and remove barriers where possible.

Objective 5
Continue to use and monitor data of staff and students to build a greater awareness and understanding of diversity and use findings to improve our policies and practices.

Objective 6
Ensure staff and learners are aware of the effects of their behaviour on others and are equipped to challenge and report inappropriate behaviour.

7. **STUDENT CONSULTATION**

Sysco Business Skills Academy to date have participated in the City of Liverpool College's termly Board of Studies meetings in which elected Student Representatives are asked to provide a range of feedback on their programmes. Upon approval to deliver our own HE programmes, we would operate our own Board of Studies meetings in which widening participation would be a key element. In addition, Sysco Business Skills Academy will issue links to HE programme surveys in which anonymous feedback can be collated, including questions specifically related to Sysco's Access and Participation Plan and the targets within. Any follow-up actions, including focus groups, will address concerns or queries raised. Sysco Business Skills Academy will also produce an annual monitoring report detailing all relevant programme information, including a comprehensive Equality & Diversity data section, with an action plan to take forward into the following academic year.

In the development of this plan, we have consulted with our student cohort via Board of Studies meetings, in which any barriers to continuation and achievement are highlighted by our existing student cohort.

8. **EVALUATION OF THE PLAN**

We have used the TASO Core Theory of Change methodology as a technical tool to help us develop a logical sequence of events in our intervention programmes to bring about the changes we wish to achieve. As such we will use TASO's Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (MEF) to evaluate the plan.

MEF promotes an impact-driven evaluation approach, interlaced with process evaluation, to determine which interventions work in transforming access and student outcomes.

The MEF contains four main steps:
Step 1: Diagnose
Step 2: Plan
Step 3: Measure
Step 4: Reflect

The evaluation process is iterative with the findings in each step helping to support continuous improvement.

Our Diagnose and Plan steps develop evidence-based outcomes using our internal data and national statistics together with academic research to identify intervention programmes that target an identified gap with a desired outcome. We have developed ambitious goals for our HE programme and identified appropriate key performance indicators.

Sysco has been delivering Higher Education for four years as a subcontractor to The City of Liverpool College. We have active data collection processes in place and employ an experienced MIS Team across our suite of programmes throughout the business. We will measure the impact of our intervention programmes and reflect upon this to ensure it is achieving the desired impact.

The Access and Participation Plan has been approved by our Board of Directors and our Equality & Diversity Focus Group.

Sysco's Equality & Diversity Focus Group has the responsibility to frequently monitor and review the targets. They will highlight any concerns early and report this to the Academic Board, allowing us to make alterations to actions at an early stage.

Our Academic Board will monitor performance against our Access and Participation Plan targets. Our Head of Higher Education is responsible for our access and participation activities and will present progress against our targets to our Academic Board via a monitoring report. This report would include an action plan which would be discussed by the Academic Board should progress against the targets worsen. If required, Sysco is prepared to further strengthen evaluation capabilities and capacities where appropriate.

Annual monitoring of progress against the intervention strategies set out within this Access and Participation Plan will be undertaken and the findings published on Sysco's HE website page, alongside the monitoring report presented to the Academic Board. Upon the completion of the four year period of this Plan, a summary of performance against targets will be completed and published on Sysco's HE website page.

The details of the plan, including resources and timelines, will be considered at appropriate sub-group meetings, which are attended by members of the Academic Board. Additionally, Equality & Diversity Focus Group members feed into the following meetings:
- Board of Studies
- Student Support Team
- Quality Team

The Academic Board is responsible for the integrity of the HE programme and will report into our Board of Directors. The Board of Directors will receive quarterly updates and an annual report on the Access and Participation Plan. The Board of Directors will be required to review impact monitoring reports before submission to the Office for Students.

9. **INVESTMENT**

Sysco is committed to making significant investments in the implementation of this Access and Participation Plan to achieve the stated objectives. These are documented in the Fees, Investments and Targets document appended to this plan.

10. **PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO STUDENTS**

Sysco will ensure that the Access & Participation Plan is presented in a clear manner both on our website and on our virtual learning environment to enable prospective and current students, their parents and guardians and other stakeholders to easily access and understand.

All information relating to fees and financial support, including eligibility criteria, will be made available to prospective and current students in a number of formats including print and electronically through our website, via a dedicated Higher Education section.

Tuition fee and financial support will also be provided to applicants in their Offer Letter, which specifies the fees due for the duration of their programme, including any indication of fee increases and any additional costs they may incur because of their studies.

Sysco will be careful to ensure that all published information is accurate, clear, complete, accessible and timely.

Due to the structure of the Higher Education qualifications we seek to deliver, all programmes will consist of a one year length of study rather than multi-year programmes. Should this approach change, we will ensure that students on multi-year programmes continue to receive the financial support that was advertised to them when they applied, which may be subject to any inflationary increases or decisions to increase the support offered.

The financial support we will offer to students is directly linked to the objectives of the Access and Participation Plan. These are:

Scholarships
All students from the non-White British community will be eligible for a Scholarship of £250. This Grant will be used to overcome the financial concerns of prospective students from the non-White British community relating to accessing Higher Education. The Grant will be payable as a lump sum at the end of Semester 1.

All students confirming that they are First in Family to access Higher Education will be eligible for a £500 First in Family Scholarship. This Scholarship is issued as an acceptance that First in Family students often incur higher costs during their studies.

The Grant will be paid over three instalments:
- £200 if the student is on-programme on 1st November
- £100 if the student is on-programme on 31st January
- £200 if the student remains on-programme until the end of their academic year

Sysco Hardship Fund
Sysco will also provide a Hardship Fund which aims to help students in financial difficulty (i.e. those who are struggling with unexpected changes in their financial circumstances which would impact their ability to continue studying). This will only cover living costs and does not include tuition fees. This is most likely to support those students from areas of lower Higher Education participation and increased deprivation, however any student can fall into hardship. Students in care or who are care leavers would have priority access to the Sysco Hardship Fund. Evidence must be provided with an application which will be reviewed by the Student Finance Team and approved by the Head of HE.

Annex A – Assessment of Performance

Sysco has a small Higher Education cohort of full-time students, which we intend to grow over the period of this report time period.

Sysco has been delivering Higher Education for four years as a subcontractor to The City of Liverpool College. We have active data collection processes in place and employ an experienced MIS Team across our suite of programmes throughout the business and we do discuss our data internally. However, our datasets in Higher Education are small due to the small cohorts we have recruited since our expansion into Higher Education. In addition, our performance data over this period has been suppressed within those of The City of Liverpool College. Therefore, it is difficult for us to publish data sets on all of the student priority areas of the Office for Students.

As such, the data analysed within this Access and Participation Plan relates to internal data that we had collected and provided to The City of Liverpool College. We believe this data to be robust and appropriate and the analysis of this data is central to assessing our performance against the targets we set in this plan.

Furthermore, it should be noted that our entry into Higher Education has coincided with the Coronavirus pandemic, which has had a recognised impact on the student population of the UK. We have yet to fully understand the differences this made to our individual cohort demographics and so caution must be made when making assumptions against national benchmarks.

The Office for Students have identified that *'many students do not experience equality of opportunity in higher education. This is true across the three main stages of a student's higher education journey: access, participation and progression'*.

Access rates among the more advantaged groups range from 1.6 to 4.1 times higher than for their less advantaged peers leading to a widening of the gap of Higher Education entry between different groups of students.

There are also large differences in progression outcomes by demographic characteristics. These gaps appear directly after graduation and widen over time. The gender gap widens particularly rapidly over the years after graduation, whereas the premium attached to being from a higher SES background does not appear to grow considerably over time.

1. **Higher Education Participation and Socioeconomic Status**
   Research has shown that the link between Higher Education participation and socioeconomic status (SES) has a high correlation. Those students from higher socioeconomic groups are more likely to access Higher Education, continue with their studies, gain higher levels of achievement and progress into better outcomes than those from lower socioeconomic groups.

   There are multiple different ways of measuring SES, and all give a slightly different picture of patterns of HE entry. Socioeconomic status can be identified using a wide range of measures; for instance, their neighbourhood, whether they were eligibility

for Free School Meals (FSM) and prior family educational attainment. Some students may fit the definitions of higher SES in all of these measures, some of these measures or one of these measures. As such, it is important to take a well-rounded, broad approach to the definition of socioeconomic status.

Within this section we will assess our performance against the POLAR4/Adult HE 2011/TUNDRA/IMD neighbourhood data, FSM-eligible and prior family educational attainment to identify any gaps.

Access

a. **Neighbourhood**
   POLAR4, Adult HE 2011, TUNDRA and IMD are all area-based measures of socioeconomic status.

   The participation of local areas (POLAR) classification groups areas across the UK are based on the proportion of young people who participate in higher education. It looks at how likely young people are to participate in higher education across the UK and shows how this varies by area. POLAR4 classifies local areas into five groups - or quintiles - based on the proportion of young people who enter higher education aged 18 or 19 years old. Quintile one shows the lowest rate of participation. Quintile five shows the highest rate of participation.

   Using POLAR4 as a measure of SES nationally, there is a trend of overall participation rising over time, from 18% in the most disadvantaged quintile in 2009-10 to 29.5% in 2020-21. The overall participation for the most advantaged quintile has not increased as quickly over this period, so there has been some narrowing in the gap between top and bottom quintiles, from 33.3pp (18% compared to 51.3%) in 2009-10 to 29.7pp in 2020-21 (29.5% compared to 59.2%).

   Using POLAR4 as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 4 years:

	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
2020/21	25.8%	32.3%	16.1%	9.7%	16.1%
2021/22	21.4%	35.7%	14.3%	14.3%	14.3%
2022/23	37.9%	13.8%	20.7%	17.2%	10.4%
2023/24	35.9%	23.1%	12.8%	23.1%	5.1%

   This demonstrates that our cohort of students across the last four years are drawn from areas with low HE participation, and in increasing proportions.

Adult HE 2011 measure assigns a quintile to an area based on the proportion of adults from that area that held a higher education qualification at the point of the 2011 census. This measure uses the same boundaries as POLAR4.

Using Adult HE 2011 as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 4 years:

	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
2020/21	32.3%	16.1%	22.6%	16.1%	12.9%
2021/22	32.1%	17.9%	21.4%	14.3%	14.3%
2022/23	41.5%	10.3%	24.1%	13.8%	10.3%
2023/24	48.7%	12.8%	17.9%	10.3%	10.3%

This demonstrates that our cohort of students across the last four years are drawn from areas with low HE participation, and in increasing proportions.

TUNDRA (tracking underrepresentation by area) is an area-based measure that uses tracking of state-funded mainstream school pupils in England to calculate young participation.

TUNDRA classifies local areas across England into five equal groups – or quintiles - based on the proportion of 16 year old state-funded mainstream school pupils who participate in higher education aged 18 or 19 years. Quintile one shows the lowest rate of participation. Quintile five shows the highest rate of participation.

TUNDRA MSOA uses Middle Super Output Area (MSOA) as the definition of local area, and TUNDRA LSOA uses Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) as the definition of local area.

Using TUNDRA LSOA as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 4 years:

	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
2020/21	19.2%	34.6%	15.4%	3.9%	26.9%
2021/22	20%	32%	20%	8%	20%
2022/23	26.1%	26.1%	21.7%	8.7%	17.4%
2023/24	29.7%	29.7%	21.6%	13.5%	5.5%

This demonstrates that our cohort of students across the last four years are drawn from areas with low HE participation, and in increasing proportions.

Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is a measure of relative deprivation for small, fixed geographic areas of the UK. IMD classifies these areas into five

quintiles based on relative disadvantage, with quintile 1 being the most deprived and quintile 5 being the least deprived.

UCAS provides useful insight into patterns of entry in the admissions data. Using the most recently available UCAS data for 18-year-old students from England, analysis using IMD quintiles shows that the absolute gap in 2022 entry between those from the least and most deprived quintiles was 19.7pp, meaning that the most advantaged students were 1.67 times more likely to enter HE than the least advantaged on this metric (UCAS, 2022d).

Using IMD as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 4 years:

	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
2020/21	37.1%	14.8%	22.2%	11.1%	14.8%
2021/22	32.1%	17.9%	14.3%	14.3%	21.4%
2022/23	40%	12%	20%	16%	12%
2023/24	43.2%	21.6%	13.6%	10.8%	10.8%

This demonstrates that our cohort of students across the last four years are drawn from areas with low HE participation, and in increasing proportions. Over the last two years, almost half of our students live in the 20% most deprived areas of England.

The analysis of access to our HE programme from students living in areas of low HE participation and high deprivation is consistent. The vast majority of our students live in areas where HE access is usually very poor and deprivation is high. As such we do not believe there to be any equality of opportunity risks relating to our students' neighbourhood.

b. **FSM-eligible**
National data show that entry rates for FSM-eligible pupils has increased steadily over time, from just 14.2% in 2005-06 to 28.1% in 2020-21. However, entry rates among other pupils have also risen over this period, so the gap in entry remains large, at 18.7% in 2020-21 (28.1% compared to 46.8%). This gap has not narrowed appreciably over time. Farquharson et al. (2022) note that the gap closed slowly between the mid-2000s and 2015 but that it has opened up again since then, and that the gap in 2021 was the same as it was in 2007.

Using FSM-eligible data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 4 years:

	Yes	No
2020/21	3.1%	96.9%
2021/22	3.4%	96.6%
2022/23	3.3%	96.7%
2023/24	2.4%	97.6%

While there would appear to be low equality of opportunity for students who have been eligible for Free School Meals, due to low numbers and the results of the above section, we do not yet consider these results to be a significant access risk and so will not be setting targets at this stage.

c. **First in Family**

Another SES-related measure in widening participation contexts is being 'first in family' to enter HE. First-in-family students are those whose (step)father and (step)mother or guardian(s) did not experience HE.

Henderson, Shure & Adamecz-Völgyi (2020) conducted analysis using the Next Steps longitudinal survey. Using a sample of approximately 7,700 individuals, they generate an estimate of the proportion of the general population they expect to be first in their family to attend HE. They propose that, of the 27% of graduates who achieved their degree by age 25, 17% are first in family and 9% are not first in family (i.e. first-in-family students comprise two thirds of graduates). This finding is consistent with a story of HE expansion over the period in question. These numbers imply an entry rate of 22% among students who would be first in family if they attended HE, compared to 52% among students who had at least one parent/guardian attend HE (a gap of 30pp).

Using First in Family data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 4 years:
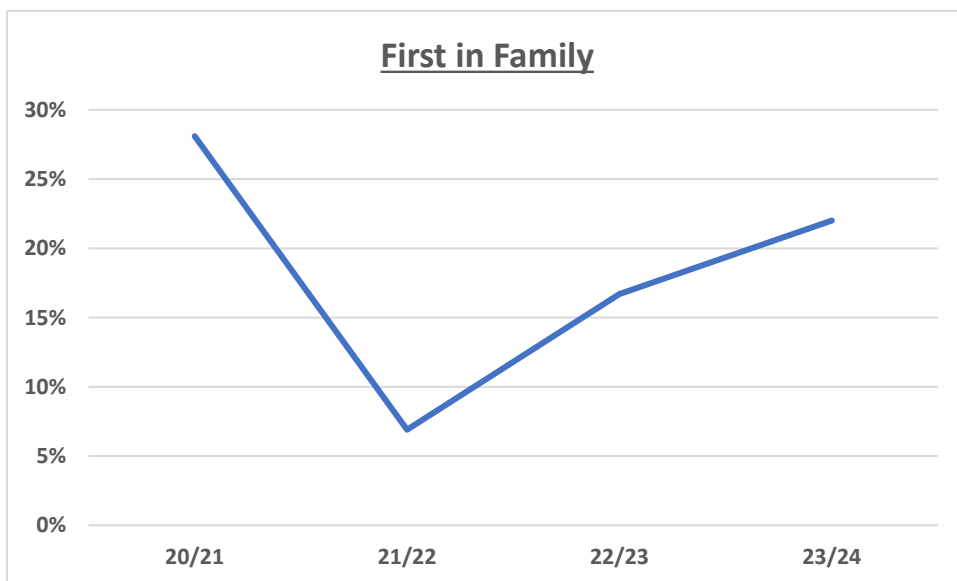
Although there was a significant drop in First in Family entrants to our Higher Education programme in 2021/22, our performance across the other years is in line with those expected nationally. The drop in 2021/22 may be attributable to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic during the application period for this year of entry, which would explain the rapid increase in First of Family entrants in the preceding years almost returning to the 2020/21 levels by 2023/24.

Continuation

An analysis by Crawford (2014) identified that there are sizable differences in the likelihood of non-continuation by SES; less than 10% of those from the highest SES students dropped out within two years, compared to more than 20% among the lowest SES group. Controlling for attainment, background characteristics and information about the HE courses attended leaves a difference between the top and bottom SES quintile group of 3.5 pp which cannot be accounted for by the data.

a. **Neighbourhood**
   We have used our internal data to analyse continuation of our students by a variety of area-based measures: POLAR4, Adult HE 2011, TUNDRA and IMD.

   Using POLAR4 continuation data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 4 years:

	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
2020/21	87.5%	100%	100%	66.7%	100%
2021/22	83.3%	80%	75%	100%	75%
2022/23	90.9%	100%	66.7%	80%	100%

   Continuation rates across our student population do not appear to be affected by the neighbourhood of our students using the POLAR4 analysis. Due to low numbers, it is difficult to make a firm conclusion, however in no year is the continuation rate lower in Quintile 1 and Quintile 2 than in at least one of the higher Quintile groups.

   Using Adult HE 2011 continuation data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 4 years:

	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
2020/21	90%	100%	100%	80%	100%
2021/22	77.8%	60%	100%	100%	75%
2022/23	91.7%	100%	71.4%	75%	100%

   Continuation rates across our student population do not appear to be affected by the neighbourhood of our students using the Adult HE 2011 analysis. Due to low numbers, it is difficult to make a firm conclusion, however in no year is the

continuation rate lower in Quintile 1 than in at least one of the higher Quintile groups.

Using TUNDRA continuation data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 4 years:

	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
2020/21	80%	100%	100%	100%	85.7%
2021/22	80%	87.5%	80%	100%	60%
2022/23	83.3%	100%	80%	100%	75%

Continuation rates across our student population do not appear to be affected by the neighbourhood of our students using the TUNDRA analysis. Due to low numbers, it is difficult to make a firm conclusion, however in the more recent years the continuation rate is higher in Quintile 1 and Quintile 2 than in at least two of the higher Quintile groups.

Using IMD continuation data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 4 years:

	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
2020/21	90%	100%	100%	100%	75%
2021/22	77.8%	60%	100%	100%	83.3%
2022/23	90%	100%	80%	100%	66.7%

Continuation rates across our student population do not appear to be affected by the neighbourhood of our students using the IMD analysis. Due to low numbers, it is difficult to make a firm conclusion. In 2021/22 there would appear to be more of a link but this is not supported in the 2020/21 and the 2022/23 years.

There would appear to be no link between the neighbourhood of our students and their likelihood of continuing on their studies. In the vast majority of cases, students living in areas of lower HE participation and/or areas of multiple deprivation are more likely to remain in their studies than those from other areas.

b. **FSM-eligible**
We have used our internal data to analyse continuation of our students who were eligible for FSM and those who were not.

Using FSM continuation data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 4 years:

	Yes	No
2020/21	100%	93.5%
2021/22	100%	85.7%
2022/23	100%	86.2%

While numbers are very small, all of our students who were FSM-eligible remained in their studies.

c. **First in Family**

In their analysis of HE behaviour for First in Family students, Henderson, Shure & Adamecz-Völgyi (2020) find evidence of a statistically significant difference between First in Family status and the likelihood of dropping out of university. Once they take into account prior attainment, individual characteristics and SES, First in Family students are 4pp more likely to drop out than students whose parents have a degree.

We have used our internal data to analyse continuation of our students who were eligible for First in Family and those who were not.

Using First in Family continuation data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 4 years:
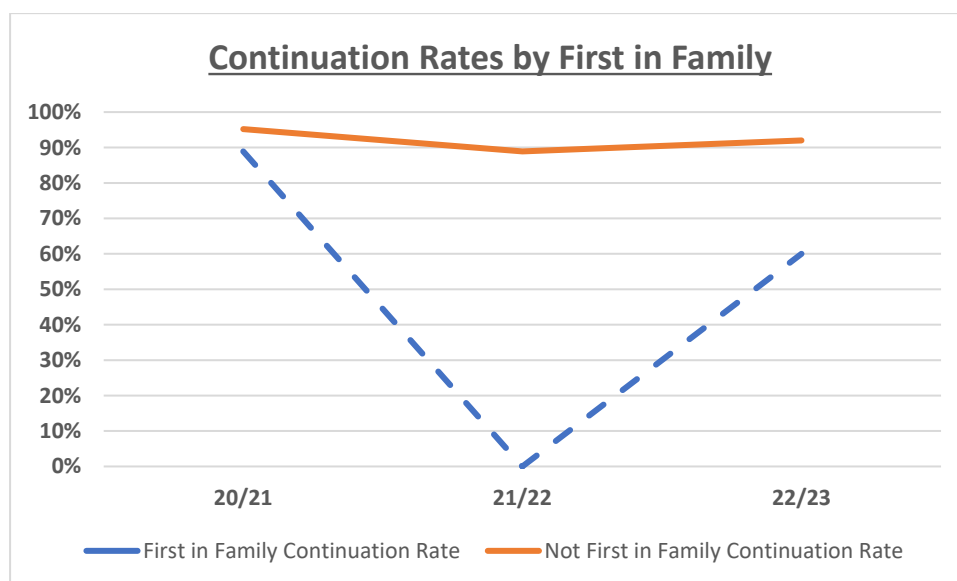
This analysis shows a clear gap between the continuation rates of our Higher Education students who are First in Family compared to those who are not First in Family. Caution must be taken to the low cohort size on our Higher Education programme (especially in 2021/22), however, even taking into consideration the research by Henderson, Shure & Adamecz-Völgyi (2020), there would appear to be a trend of underperformance by our students who are First in Family into Higher Education.

Achievement

Research by Crawford (2016) looks at degree outcomes as well as completion. This identifies that, among the highest SES students in their study, nearly 70% graduate with a first or 2:1, compared to 40% among the lowest SES. They find that the raw differences in likelihood of getting a first or 2:1 are bigger than those in drop-out or degree completion.

Our Higher Education programmes relate to HNC and HND delivery and, as such, we will analyse our performance against HNC and HND grades (Distinction, Merit, Pass).

a. **Neighbourhood**

We have used our internal data to analyse achievement grades of our students by a variety of area-based measures: POLAR4, Adult HE 2011, TUNDRA and IMD.

Using POLAR4 achievement grades data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 3 years:

	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
D	9.1%	13.6%	0%	0%	0%
M	72.7%	50%	91.7%	66.7%	63.6%
P	18.2%	36.4%	8.3%	33.3%	36.4%

While numbers are small, this analysis suggests that our students living in areas of lower HE participation using the POLAR4 methodology are more likely to achieve higher grades than students living in other areas.

Using Adult HE 2011 achievement grades data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 3 years:

	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
D	3.7%	18.2%	11.1%	0%	0%
M	66.7%	72.7%	72.2%	60%	60%
P	29.6%	9.1%	16.7%	40%	40%

While numbers are small, this analysis suggests that our students living in areas of lower HE participation using the Adult HE 2011 methodology are more likely to achieve higher grades than students living in other areas.

Using TUNDRA achievement grades data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 3 years:

	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
D	7.7%	13.6%	0%	0%	9.1%
M	61.5%	72.8%	75%	60%	63.6%
P	30.8%	13.6%	25%	40%	27.3%

While numbers are small, this analysis suggests that our students living in areas of lower HE participation using the TUNDRA methodology are more likely to achieve higher grades than students living in other areas.

Using IMD achievement grades data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 3 years:

	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
D	8%	20%	7.2%	0%	0%
M	64%	70%	57.1%	81.8%	55.6%
P	28%	10%	35.7%	18.2%	44.4%

While numbers are small, this analysis suggests that our students living in areas of lower HE participation using the POLAR4 methodology are more likely to achieve higher grades than students living in other areas.

Across the various methodologies, it would appear that grade achievement for our students is higher in areas of lower HE participation and/or increased deprivation compared to other areas.

b. **FSM-eligible**
Due to low numbers, this analysis is insignificant.

c. **First in Family**
Blanden, Doepke & Stuhler (2022) investigate the link between family background and attainment by conducting analysis of the Next Steps longitudinal study. Focusing on a sample of almost 8,000 pupils in England, they use parental education as a simple proxy for SES, and define more advantaged pupils as those who have at least one parent who had obtained a level of education beyond high school. They find that the probability of obtaining a degree by age 25 is 17pp higher for this group.

We have used our internal data to analyse achievement grades of our students who were eligible for First in Family and those who were not.

Using First in Family achievement grades data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 4 years:

	First in Family	Not First in Family
D	0%	7.4%
M	63.6%	69.1%
P	36.4%	23.5%

Due to lower numbers remaining on programme, it is difficult to be sure of a causal link between being First in Family and lower grade achievement. As such, we will be focusing our efforts on improving the continuation rates of First in Family students and further investigating the grade achievement once more First in Family students remain on their studies.

Progression

Crawford & Van de Erve (2015) produce evidence on differences in graduates' earnings by SES. The authors conclude that *"even amongst similarly qualified individuals graduating from similar universities having studied similar subjects and achieving the same degree class… those from higher socio-economic backgrounds still earn more, on average, than those from lower socio-economic backgrounds"*. Comparing graduates who go into similar jobs does help account for the remaining SES differences somewhat, suggesting that part of the benefit of coming from a higher SES background is to enable access to higher status jobs. But even amongst similarly qualified graduates who work in the same occupations, there remain some significant differences in earnings by SES.

Our data set is limited to progression outcomes rather than earnings in the progression route and so our analysis relates to progression outcomes rather than a more detailed analysis. Progression outcomes are considered positive should the student progress onto a higher level of education (for instance, a HND or top-up degree) or they gain employment.

Progression data was not collected for the 2020/21 cohort and so we will assess our performance related upon 2021/22 and 2022/23 academic years.

a. **Neighbourhood**
   We have used our internal data to analyse progression of our students by a variety of area-based measures: POLAR4, Adult HE 2011, TUNDRA and IMD.

   Using POLAR4 progression data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 4 years:

	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
2021/22	100%	100%	100%	75%	100%
2022/23	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

While progression is strong across our entire student population, using the POLAR4 methodology, the progression rates of students in the areas of lower HE participation is very strong.

Using Adult HE 2011 progression data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 2 years:

	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
2021/22	100%	100%	100%	75%	100%
2022/23	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

While progression is strong across our entire student population, using the Adult HE 2011 methodology, the progression rates of students in the areas of lower HE participation is very strong.

Using TUNDRA progression data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 2 years:

	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
2021/22	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
2022/23	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

While progression is strong across our entire student population, using the TUNDRA methodology, the progression rates of students in the areas of lower HE participation is very strong.

Using IMD progression data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 2 years:

	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
2021/22	100%	100%	75%	100%	100%
2022/23	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

While progression is strong across our entire student population, using the IMD methodology, the progression rates of students in the areas of lower HE participation is very strong.

Progression is a major strength of our programme across all students. However, this is particularly strong in areas of lower HE participation and/or increased deprivation.

b. **FSM-eligible**
We have used our internal data to analyse progression of our students who were eligible for FSM and those who were not.

Using FSM progression data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 2 years:

	Yes	No
2021/22	100%	95.7%
2022/23	100%	100%

Although numbers are low, all of our students who were FSM-eligible progressed upon completion of their programme.

c. **First in Family**

We have used our internal data to analyse progression of our students who were eligible for First in Family and those who were not.

Using First in Family progression data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 2 years:
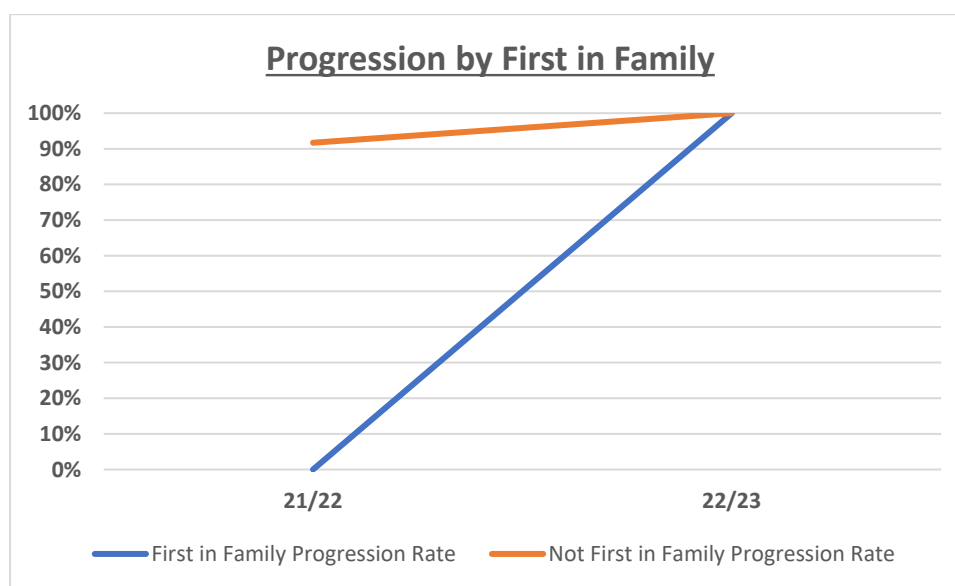
This data is difficult to analyse as the 2021/22 cohort consisted of only two First in Family students and both did not continue their Higher Education programme. Based upon increased numbers of First in Family students in the 2022/23 academic year, 100% progressed into additional education or industry related work. As such, no clear indication of performance can be concluded.

2. **Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Students**

Due to our small cohorts of students, we will refer to White British and non-White British students throughout this report rather than disaggregating the data. We recognise that, like all forms of ethnicity categorisation, there are limitations with

this terminology. However, to disaggregate ethnicity would reduce its meaning with such a small population size.

As we increase student numbers, we would intend to disaggregate ethnicity data.

Access

In 2021-22 the national Higher Education entry rate was 65.7% for Asian students, 62.1% for Black students, 48.1% for Mixed students and 39.7% for White students. As noted in Crawford & Greaves (2015) participation among all ethnic groups has risen over time, but most groups have seen larger increases than White British students. Entry rates among Black, Mixed and White students were much closer 16 years ago, essentially overlapping, but White students have lagged behind these other groups in terms of improved progression. According to the latest HESA data, 28.4% of Higher Education entrants in 2023/24 are from non-White British ethnic groups.

Using ethnicity access data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 4 years:

	White British	**Non-White British**
2020/21	96.9%	3.1%
2021/22	89.7%	10.3%
2022/23	93.3%	6.7%
2023/24	92.7%	7.3%

From this analysis, it is clear that we are significantly below the national rates for non-White British students entering Higher Education. Our Higher Education provision to date has focused on Performing Arts, which has a lower proportion of non-White British participants, however this is an area in which we will wish to improve access.

Continuation

According to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (2021), non-White British students, with the exception of Asian students, are more likely to leave Higher Education early than White British students and the lowest continuation rates belong to black students.

Using ethnicity continuation data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 4 years:

	White British	**Non-White British**
2020/21	93.5%	100%
2021/22	80.7%	100%
2022/23	82.8%	100%

While our continuation rates for White British students over the last two years have hovered in the low-80's, our continuation rates for non-White British students have remained at 100%. Therefore, we do not believe any target should be set for improving the continuation in learning of students in the non-White British ethnicity groups.

Achievement

Data on degree awarding in English HE suggest that BAME students are significantly less likely to get a first or a 2.1 than White students. Universities UK (UUK) highlight a gap of 13% for 2017-18 graduates, with the largest gap being between Black and White students (23.4%) (UUK, 2019). The gap exists across UK HEPs, and in 2017-18 more than two-thirds of institutions had an attainment gap above 10% while 29% of institutions had an attainment gap of between 10% and 15%. Entry qualifications can account for some of the patterns of degree awarding, but large gaps remain. A UUK report on OfS analysis found that after controlling for prior attainment, gender and age there remains a difference between White and Black students of 17%, and of 10% between White and Asian students, which cannot be accounted for.

Using ethnicity achievement grades data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 4 years:

	White British	Non-White British
D	7%	0%
M	69.4%	57.1%
P	23.6%	42.9%

Due to the low numbers of students from the non-White British communities accessing our programme, the grade achievement uses a statistically insignificant population base. As such, we will aim to increase the numbers of students from non-White British communities accessing our Higher Education programme and then further analyse grade achievement.

Progression

Ramaiah & Robinson (2022) present analysis of national administrative data, focusing on the median earnings of different groups of graduates three years after graduating in the 2018-19 tax year. They find variation in earnings by ethnicity, with gaps between those with the highest and lowest earnings of £4,800. Looking at a longitudinal picture, soon after graduation, the different ethnicities broadly fall into low average earners (Pakistani, Caribbean, Bangladeshi, White and Black Caribbean and any other Black background), middle average earners (White, African, White and Black African and Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background) or high average earners (Chinese, Indian, White and Asian or Any other Asian background). At one year after graduation, the high earning groups earn 16% more than the low earning ethnicities. Ten years after graduation, the average earnings of the different

ethnicities have significantly diverged. Indeed, the averages for graduates from both African and White and Black African ethnicities have diverged away from the averages for the other groups who were previously middle earners (White and Any other mixed background) and are more similar to those of the low earning groups. The evolution of the average earnings of Pakistani graduates is particularly notable, falling well below even the other low earning groups. Ten years after graduation, the high earning groups are earning 24% more than the low earning groups.

Research from the Resolution Foundation also explores labour market outcomes by ethnicity and has found that accounting for compositional differences, such as differences in age and country of birth, substantially reduces raw pay gaps between different groups; however, they find that for most groups there is a remaining pay 'penalty' of more than 5% for most groups (Henehan & Rose, 2018). The largest penalty is for Black male graduates, who can expect to be paid 17% less than White male graduates after accounting for their background and their job. They further find that there is less variation in the size of penalties that exist between graduates and non-graduates than there is between different ethnic groups themselves and that penalties are generally smaller among women than men. The penalties they observe have remained relatively stable over time for graduates.

Waltmann, Dearden & Britton (2021) find considerable differences in financial benefits of doing a degree by ethnicity and gender; for example, women from south Asian backgrounds all do particularly well from gaining a degree, but black Caribbean women achieve the lowest returns. Men in general have lower returns, but male Pakistani graduates attract sizable returns, partly reflecting the very low earnings of non-graduates in this group. The returns for white British, black Caribbean and black 'other' men are particularly low. The authors conclude that these differences are partly driven by university and subject choices. As noted by Mirza & Warwick (2022), Asian students tend to choose subjects with higher financial returns such as business, law and computing, whereas Black and White British students tend to choose subjects such as sociology, creative arts and social care which have lower returns.

Our data set is limited to progression outcomes rather than earnings in the progression route and so our analysis relates to progression outcomes rather than a more detailed analysis. Progression outcomes are considered positive should the student progress onto a higher level of education (for instance, a HND or top-up degree) or they gain employment.

Progression data was not collected for the 2020/21 cohort and so we will assess our performance related upon 2021/22 and 2022/23 academic years.

Using ethnicity progression data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 2 years:

	White British	Non-White British
2021/22	100%	100%
2022/23	89.5%	100%

Our progression rates for all students are high and the progression rates of non-White British students has been 100% since we started to collect this data. Therefore, we do not believe any target should be set for improving the progression rates of students in the non-White British ethnicity groups.

3. **Mature Students**

There is no official definition of a 'mature student' – this term is usually used to refer to older students, particularly students over 21 at the start of an undergraduate degree course (Hubble & Bolton, 2021) and so that is the definition we have used in this report.

Access

Sysco has historically recruited very small numbers of mature students on to our Higher Education programmes. This is a particularly difficult group for Sysco to attract given the programmes we deliver in Performing Arts, which require students to be engaged in training from a young age.

Using age access data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 4 years:

	Mature Student	Non-Mature Student
2020/21	9.4%	90.6%
2021/22	10.3%	89.7%
2022/23	3.3%	96.7%
2023/24	0%	100%

While we would never exclude mature students from our Higher Education programmes, given the types of Higher Education programmes we offer, Sysco does not intend to focus on this target group as part of this plan.

Continuation

Given the small numbers of mature students on our programme over the last 4 years, an analysis of the continuation rate would be of limited benefit. However, only one mature student from a combined population of seven mature students have not continued their Higher Education programme over the last three years.

Achievement

Given the small numbers of mature students on our programme over the last 4 years, an analysis of the achievement rate would be of limited benefit. However, only one

mature student from a combined population of seven mature students has not achieved their Higher Education programme over the last three years.

Progression

Given the small numbers of mature students on our programme in the last two years in which we have collected progression outcomes, all achieving mature students progressed on to a higher level qualification or industry related work.

4. **Disabled Students**

Due to our small cohorts of students, we will refer to 'Learners with Learning Difficulties or Disabilities' (LLDD) and non-LLDD students throughout this report. We recognise that, like all forms of disability categorisation, there are limitations with this terminology. However, to disaggregate disability would reduce its meaning with such a small population size.

As we increase student numbers, we would intend to be able to disaggregate disability data.

Access

Disabled students remain under-represented at point of entry to HE. The HESA Widening Participation summary tables show that, in England, the proportion of UK domiciled students in receipt of Disabled Student Allowance sits at around 7% of the student population, and this has not changed substantially since 2015-16 (HESA, 2022). According to the latest HESA benchmark data, 17.3% of students are LLDD.

Using disability access data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 4 years:

	LLDD	Non-LLDD
2020/21	25.0%	75%
2021/22	34.5%	65.5%
2022/23	23.3%	76.7%
2023/24	24.4%	75.6%

Sysco's cohort consists of a high proportion of students who are LLDD. We suspect this may be a conservative indicator as not all students choose to disclose this information. We are therefore comfortable that our performance sits above the national data and we have not identified this as a target area.

Continuation

Using disability continuation data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 3 years:

	LLDD	Non-LLDD
2020/21	100%	91.7%
2021/22	70%	89.5%
2022/23	85.7%	87%

This assessment would indicate that LLDD students remain in education at a comparable rate to non-LLDD students. We believe these continuation rates are high and so we will not be setting targets for this area.

Achievement

The Office for National Statistics (2021) report that in a recent Annual Population Survey, a quarter (24.9%) of disabled people aged 21 to 64 years had a degree or equivalent as their highest qualification, compared with 42.7% of non-disabled people.

Using disability achievement data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 3 years:

	LLDD	Non-LLDD
2020/21	100%	91.7%
2021/22	70%	89.5%
2022/23	85.7%	87%

This assessment would indicate that LLDD students achieve their programme at a comparable rate to non-LLDD students. We believe these continuation rates are high and so we will not be setting targets for this area.

Progression

The DfE Widening Participation statistics do not provide a breakdown for disabled compared to non-disabled students, but they do report differences in progression rates for pupils with Special Education Needs and show that they lag well behind those for other pupils.

Using disability progression data as an analysis tool, we can compare Sysco's Higher Education cohort over the last 2 years:

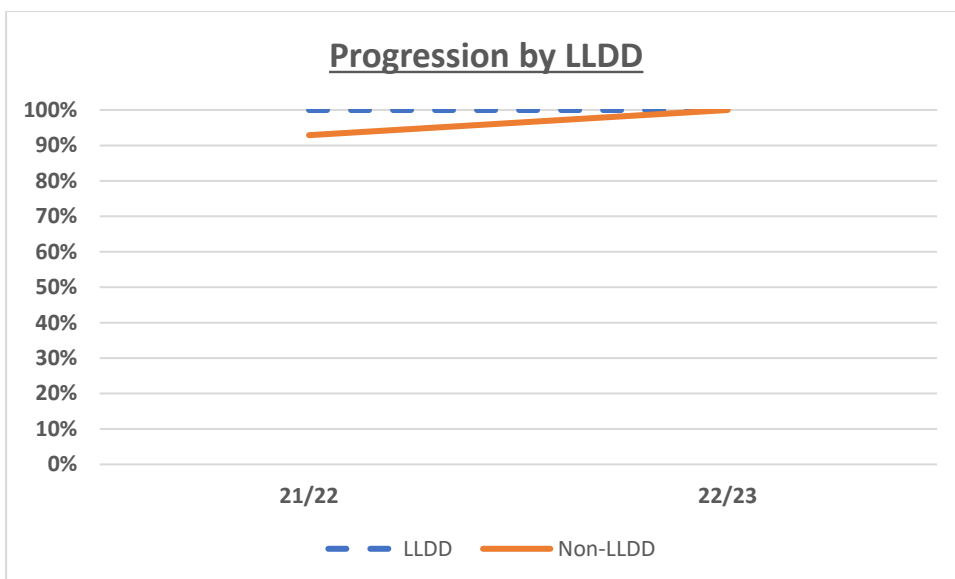## Progression by LLDD

Progression data is very strong for all of our students and every LLDD student to achieve their programme has progressed on to a higher level qualification or industry-related work. As such, we will not be setting targets for this area.

5. **Care Leavers**

The DfE Widening Participation data provides two sets of statistics which relate to learners with experience of children's social care. The first is HE entry for Children in Need and shows 13% of Children in Need at age 15 progressed to HE by age 19 by 2020-21 compared to 45% of all other pupils (a gap of 32pp). The second set of statistics relates to Looked After Children and shows 13% of pupils who were looked after continuously for 12 months or more at 31st March 2017 progressed to HE by age 19 by 2020-21 compared to 45% of all other pupils (also a gap of 32pp). These gaps have remained large over time and, in the latter case, show some signs of widening.

Harrison (2020) aims to provide a mapping of HE entry for care leavers. The paper uses annual reports on care leavers developed by the DfE and finds that, compared to a steady rise in participation among young people from among areas with historically low participation rates (i.e. POLAR4 quintile 1 areas), the HE entry rates for care leavers sat at around 6% between 2006 to 2017, somewhat declining over this period. Using data from the National Pupil Database on young people who were aged 16 at the end of 2007-08, Harrison then links these records to HESA data for those who had entered HE at any point up to 2014-15. Based on this mapping, they conclude that 11.8% of the care leavers participated in HE (higher than estimates based on DfE reports mentioned above), compared to 43.1% for the whole cohort and 26.1% for those previously FSM-eligible students. The analysis found that care leavers tended to enter HE later than other young people; for example, only 33.3% of care leavers were aged 19 at the end of their first year, compared to 57.6% for the cohort as a whole. Harrison highlights that these students have significantly lower

attainment at school than other learners and more likely to have special educational needs at age 16 (62.7% compared to 19.8% for the wider cohort). However, when controlling for special education needs, prior attainment and other demographic characteristics, care learners were still less around 11% less likely to go to HE than other learners.

Access

Sysco has had no care leavers our programmes over the four years we have delivered Higher Education. In other programmes delivered by Sysco, we have more significant number of Care Leavers however they have not progressed into Higher Education. We have noted that the Office for Students reported that the Care Leavers entering Higher Education in 2016/17 was less than 1% of the student body.

While this is a concern, Sysco does not propose to set any targets at this stage given the significant barriers to access. However, we will investigate this area and we will make attempts to increase the numbers of Care Leavers on our programme. Students in care or who are care leavers would have priority access to the Sysco Hardship Fund.

6. **Intersections of Disadvantage**
   It is interesting to note that none of the non-White British students that have accessed our Higher Education programme to date are First in Family and the majority have parents in higher or lower managerial and professional occupations. This may suggest that many non-White British students (particularly those in the communities highlighted above) who are First in Family and/or have parents outside of higher or lower managerial and professional occupations may not feel able to apply to Higher Education despite being qualified due to their perception of Higher Education.

   Due to the small cohort size, Sysco does not propose undertaking further analysis of intersections of disadvantage as this would be statistically insignificant.

7. **Other Groups Who Experience Barriers in Higher Education**
   A significant barrier for people wishing to enter Higher Education in England are those accessing from a non-academic route. We have undertaken analysis to understand our performance in this area.

   a. **Non-academic Route**
      The DfE Destinations data show the percentage of level 3 pupils (e.g. those that studied A-levels, tech levels and applied general qualifications) continuing to a sustained education or training destination at level 4 or higher (such as degrees, Higher Apprenticeships and higher national diplomas) in the year after completing 16 to 18 study. Progression varies widely by institution type, with

47% of further education (FE) college learners progressing to a level 4 or higher destination compared to 73.1% in sixth form colleges and 74.6% in mainstream.

Furthermore, Shields & Masardo (2018) investigate differences in HE outcomes according to the qualifications with which students enter university. The analysis is based on national administrative data comprising records of all students who graduated from United Kingdom HEPs between the years 2009 to 2013. The authors find that while 92.3% of graduates had academic entry qualifications, only 4.3% had vocational entry qualifications. Even when controlling for demographic factors, students who enter HE with vocational qualifications are unlikely to receive the same degree outcomes as students who enter with academic qualifications.

A significant proportion of our students enter Higher Education from an vocational route via an FE college (97%). 92.1% of this cohort continue their Higher Education programme and achieve. 95.8% of of this cohort who achieve then gain a positive progression on to a higher level qualification or industry-related work.

This is a significant strength of Sysco's Higher Education programme and while we will not set targets for this to improve, we will continue to monitor.

Annex C – Classification of Ethnic Groups

White British

- White English
- White Welsh
- White Scottish
- White Northern Irish
- White British

Non-White British

- Irish
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Any other White background
- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Any other Asian background
- African
- Caribbean
- Any other Black/African/Caribbean background
- Arab
- Any other ethnic group

(Source: Ethnic group, national identity and religion - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk))

Fees, investments and targets 2024-25 to 2027-28

Provider name: ACM Guildford Limited

Provider UKPRN: 10067853

Summary of 2024-25 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflation statement:

We will not raise fees annually for 2024-25 new entrants

Table 3b - Full-time course fee levels for 2024-25 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	9250
HNC/HND	*	N/A	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	N/A	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	N/A	*
Accelerated degree		N/A	11100
Sandwich year	*	N/A	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	N/A	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	N/A	*
Other	*	N/A	*

Table 3b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2024-25

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	*	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

Table 4b - Part-time course fee levels for 2024-25 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	*	N/A	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	N/A	*
Accelerated degree	*	N/A	*
Sandwich year	*	N/A	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	N/A	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	N/A	*
Other	*	N/A	*

Table 4b - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2024-25

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	*	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*	*
Turing Scheme and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

Fees, investments and targets
2024-25 to 2027-28

Provider name: ACM Guildford Limited

Provider UKPRN: 10067853

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	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Access activity investment (£)	NA	£62,000	£64,000	£65,000	£66,000
Financial support (£)	NA	£230,000	£279,000	£312,000	£350,000
Research and evaluation (£)	NA	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000

Table 6d - Investment estimates

Investment estimate (to the nearest £1,000)	Breakdown	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Access activity investment	Pre-16 access activities (£)	£50,000	£51,000	£52,000	£53,000
Access activity investment	Post-16 access activities (£)	£12,000	£13,000	£13,000	£13,000
Access activity investment	Other access activities (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Access activity investment	**Total access investment (£)**	**£62,000**	**£64,000**	**£65,000**	**£66,000**
Access activity investment	***Total access investment (as % of HFI)***	**1.5%**	**1.2%**	**1.1%**	**1.0%**
Access activity investment	**Total access investment funded from HFI (£)**	£62,000	£64,000	£65,000	£66,000
Access activity investment	***Total access investment from other funding (as specified) (£)***	**£0**	**£0**	**£0**	**£0**
Financial support investment	Bursaries and scholarships (£)	£230,000	£279,000	£312,000	£350,000
Financial support investment	Fee waivers (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	Hardship funds (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	**Total financial support investment (£)**	**£230,000**	**£279,000**	**£312,000**	**£350,000**
Financial support investment	***Total financial support investment (as % of HFI)***	**5.4%**	**5.4%**	**5.4%**	**5.4%**
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (£)	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000
Research and evaluation investment	*Research and evaluation investment (as % of HFI)*	0.7%	0.6%	0.5%	0.5%

Fees, investments and targets
2024-25 to 2027-28

Provider name: ACM Guildford Limited

Provider UKPRN: 10067853

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	2024-25 milestone	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone
To increase the proportion of students from IMD Q1 areas at ACM.	PTA_1	Access	Deprivation (Index of Multiple Deprivations [IMD])	IMD quintile 1	N/A	In 2021-22 at ACM, there are 12.7% students from IMD Q1 areas, compared to 26.7% student's from IMD Q5 areas. Other quintiles (Q2,Q3,Q4) are also better represented than IMD Q1. Over the lifetime of this Plan, we want to increase the proportion of IMD Q1 enrolments to 19%.	No	The access and participation dataset	2021-22	Percentage	12.7%	14%	15%	17%	19%
	PTA_2														
	PTA_3														
	PTA_4														
	PTA_5														
	PTA_6														
	PTA_7														
	PTA_8														
	PTA_9														
	PTA_10														
	PTA_11														
	PTA_12														

Table 5d: Success targets

Aim (500 characters maximum)	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2024-25 milestone	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone
To reduce the attainment gap between IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 students.	PTS_1	Attainment	Deprivation (Index of Multiple Deprivations [IMD])	IMD quintile 1	IMD quintile 5	To reduce the attainment (achievement of a First or 2:1 Degree outcome) gap between IMD Q1 and IMD Q5 students, from 17.3 percentage points (aggregate 2020-21 to 2021-22) to 12 percentage points (aggregate 2026-27 to 2027-28).	No	The access and participation dataset	Other (please include details in commentary)	Percentage points	17.3	16.5	15.5	14	12
To reduce the attainment gap between Black students and their white peers.	PTS_2	Attainment	Ethnicity	Black	White	To reduce the attainment (achievement of a First or 2:1 Degree outcome) gap between Black students and their white peers, from 19.3 percentage points (aggregate 2020-21 to 2021-22) to 9.5 percentage points (aggregate 2026-27 to 2027-28).	No	The access and participation dataset	Other (please include details in commentary)	Percentage points	19.3	17.3	15	12.5	9.5
	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	2024-25 milestone	2025-26 milestone	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone
	PTP_1														
	PTP_2														
	PTP_3														
	PTP_4														
	PTP_5														
	PTP_6														
	PTP_7														
	PTP_8														
	PTP_9														
	PTP_10														
	PTP_11														
	PTP_12														