

SPARSHOLT
COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE

ANDOVER
COLLEGE

UNIVERSITY CENTRE
SPARSHOLT

Sparsholt College

**Access and Participation Plan
2019-20**

Contents

	Page
1. Background	<u>3</u>
2. Assessment of current performance	<u>4</u>
2.1 Introduction	<u>4</u>
2.2 Widening Access	<u>4</u>
2.3 Success	<u>6</u>
2.4 Progression	<u>9</u>
2.5 Summary	<u>9</u>
3. Ambition and Strategy	<u>10</u>
3.1 Introduction	<u>10</u>
3.2 Widening Access	<u>11</u>
3.3 Success & Progression	<u>12</u>
3.4 Collaborative working with Access, Success & Progression	<u>12</u>
4. Targets	<u>14</u>
4.1 Student involvement	<u>16</u>
5. Access, student success and progression measures	<u>17</u>
5.1 Access	<u>17</u>
5.2 Financial support	<u>18</u>
5.3 Success & Progression	<u>20</u>
6. Investment	<u>21</u>
7. Provision of information to students	<u>21</u>
Appendix A	<u>23</u>

1. Background

The Sparsholt College Group (the Sparsholt Group) is designated as a specialist college, comprising an extensive estate with a range of land-based operations located at Sparsholt, near Winchester, Hampshire. The Group consists of three main components:

1. Sparsholt Further Education
2. University Centre Sparsholt
3. Andover College

Sparsholt Further Education offers courses in all the land-based subjects, in line with its specialist land-based designation, to approximately 1,600 students. University Centre Sparsholt (UCS) delivers specialist Higher Education programmes to c.400 students at Levels 4-7 in a range of land-based subjects.

Andover College is delivers tertiary provision for c.1,300 students from a separate campus in Andover, Hampshire; approximately 15 miles from Sparsholt. Additionally, UCS is working with Andover College to develop a small HNC provision in Digital Media, Performing Arts and Sport at the Andover campus: currently for 12 students but with plans to gradually increase numbers to c.50. For the purposes of this Plan, the HE offer at Andover College is treated as part of the overall provision of HE by UCS.

The unemployment rate in Hampshire is lower than the national rate. The number of pupils at schools in the Winchester area attaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is well above the national average, whereas the number is slightly below the national average in the Andover area.

Andover was formerly a small market town, transformed in the 1960s because of London East End housing resettlement. There has also been a strong military presence in the town, which will increase in future years given the relocation of the Land Army's HQ and the creation of new barracks close to the town. Within this heterogeneous community, there are considerable variations in deprivation, educational attainment and progression to HE.

To support the development of this Plan, a Higher Education Governance Working Group was established (HEGWG), consisting of five governors plus one student governor and three members of the Higher Education Strategy group. The governors have provided peer review, feedback and guidance. The UCS student community was represented by the student governor who additionally provided student opinion and promoted participation in the student survey that was launched to garner feedback on UCS's risk assessment. A Special Board meeting, comprised of the full board was held on 16.05.18 to approve the submission for registration and the associated documents.

2. Assessment of current performance

2.1 Introduction

University Centre Sparsholt (UCS)

UCS has a strong track record in increasing access and participation in HE for a wide range of students. We believe that UCS's offer is particularly valuable in this respect because its land-based courses provide a real local alternative for an important group of students and for the local economy. This is also apparent in UCS's more recent work to raise the profile of HE in Andover through new programmes that are tailored to engage groups in that town who might not otherwise access HE.

For the purpose of this Plan, we primarily access UCS's cohort profile by reference to the 2017-18 cohort of 377 undergraduate FTE students, of whom 368 are full-time and 9 are part-time.

The full-time year one cohort in 2017-18 shows the breakdown as follows:

- 28% male and 72% female
- 62% aged 18-19, 25% aged 20-24 and 13% age 25+
- 21% declared a disability / learning difficulty
- 67% were domiciled in the South East and 21% in the South West
- 49% had BTEC (vocational) qualifications, 26% A-levels, 12% had a mixture of vocational and A Levels, 7% already had HE qualifications and 6% had "other" qualifications
- 10% had home addresses in Polar3 Quintile 1 (most deprived), and 15% in Quintile 2.
- 94% declared their ethnicity to be white British, with 1% white Irish, and 5% white other.
- There were no care leavers in the full-time first year cohort

The January 2018 OFFA return of progress towards targets is summarised in Appendix A. 75% of applicants who enrol onto foundation degree programmes have vocational qualifications, with 50% (14/15 cohort) increasing to 58% (15/16 cohort) progressing onto BSc top-up programmes. UCS's offer of predominantly foundation degrees underpins its commitment to access and participation. The high proportion of those accessing provision from vocational backgrounds is consistent with the mission of the Sparsholt Group.

In the following paragraphs, we provide our assessment of our current performance across the whole student lifecycle (namely, access, success and progression) in respect of each of the underrepresented student groups that the OfS (see OfS Regulatory Notice 1, page 8). Those areas with existing OFFA targets are highlighted below.

In 2016/17 UCS received a 'Silver' rating for Teaching Excellence in TEF Year 2, the first assessment of teaching excellence undertaken by HEFCE. The rating was largely based on an initial hypothesis, reached by assessing UCS on a series of benchmarked core and split metrics relating to student satisfaction, continuation rates and graduate outcomes.

2.2 Widening Access

Students from areas of low higher education participation, low household income and/or low socioeconomic status

In the January 2018 OFFA return, UCS reported that that nearly 73% of its students are "financially disadvantaged" and nearly 14% are from "disadvantaged areas": this exceeded the targets that had been agreed. In particular, 26% of the HE cohort are from POLAR 3 Quintile 1 (11%) and Quintile 2 (15%) with 30% (14% and 16%, respectively) of young 1st year enrolments and 23% (7% and 16%, respectively) of mature

enrolments from this group. This provides evidence for the effectiveness of UCS's provision in addressing the widening participation agenda for this group of underrepresented students.

Level 4 enrolments of POLAR 3, Quintile 1 students indicate a preference (70% 2015/16, 89% 2016/17) for foundation degree programmes, with the remaining 30% and 11% respectively enrolling to BSc. The vocational nature and assessment structure of the foundation degree programmes are designed to support non-traditional entrants to HE.

Students of particular ethnicities

The specialist industries that UCS serves notably employ few ethnic minorities. Sparsholt FE College is alive to attracting greater numbers of ethnic minorities to study at further education level to promote participation to ethnic minorities and UCS has been successful in attracting POLAR 3 Quintiles 1 and 2 students.

Mature students

UCS has historically attracted significant numbers of mature students, particularly those who are drawn to a 'second career' in land-based industries. Internal research is providing evidence that increasing numbers of adults are put off by the higher fees, particularly where they are supporting themselves to pay for a degree leading to employment in a sector that is not well remunerated. In line with national trends, UCS is not attracting additional numbers of mature students; numbers have halved from a baseline of 26% to 11.6%. This constitutes a year-on-year decline, reflecting changing patterns of participation to the point where part-time provision no longer provides a viable market option for UCS. However, in 2017-18 the percentage of the first-year intake cohort that were adult (20+) was 38.2% compared to the UCAS end of cycle national figure of 28.5%, and the UCS's mature (26+) percentage was 10.4%, which is near identical to the 10.5% national figure reported by UCAS.

Disabled students

The number of those students declaring a disability or difficulty has increased year-on-year to 13%, ahead of its target. The land-based sector has traditionally supported learners with a wide range of (predominantly learning) disabilities to succeed in industries that value vocational knowledge and skills above academic prowess. UCS has a highly inclusive track record, nurturing individuals with disabilities through smaller seminar groups sizes, tailored and accessible one-to-one support

Care leavers

Care leavers have not historically been a specific target for the UCS. The number of care leavers in the undergraduate full-time cohort is 3 in 2017-18, the same as in 2016-17. Sparsholt College works with a very slightly larger group of care leavers in its further education provision, as the land-based curriculum offers an attractive alternative to mainstream academic programmes. UCS is committed to providing seamless progression opportunities where higher level study is the most appropriate route for the individual.

Military Families

In addition to the core under-represented groups, UCS is also seeking to engage with military families. Given the proximity and increasing numbers of military families in North West Hampshire and South East Wiltshire, the College Group will develop a new strategy to engage with this cohort.

A key pillar of UCS's strategy to widen participation is to increase the numbers eligible to study higher education by improving outcomes for FE college students studying at level 3 to enable them to progress to Level 4. In 2016-17, there was a 25% increase in numbers completing their level 3. On the other hand, after the sharp increase in achievement rate in 2015-16, the rate fell back to a level that was not as high as it was in

2015-16, but nevertheless above that in 2014-5, demonstrating a positive trajectory trend over a longer period. In addition to the overall upward trend in achievement, the percentage of starters gaining Distinction level high grades continued its upwards trajectory from 19.2% in 2014-15 to 24.8% in 2015-16 and rising again to 31.2% in 2016-17. The increase in higher grades provides evidence of the success of UCS in working with the further education cohort to increase eligible numbers and thus widen access to higher education study.

This element of the work, aligned to the former OFFA agreement, has been successful: in 2016/17, Animal Management internal progression more than doubled from the 2015/16 figure to 11%.

2.3 Success

The degree outcomes are showing an improving picture, with the completion rate of disadvantaged students exceeding that of less disadvantaged students in 2015/16. Furthermore, over the same period an increasing proportion of those entering the foundation rather than BSc programmes are then electing to top-up to BSc, demonstrating UCS's ability to build the confidence of this group to continue with its studies.

Year of graduation	% Completion of all FdSc enrolments	% Completion of POLAR 3, Quintile 1 FdSc enrolments	% POLAR 3, Quintile 1 progressing to BSc top-up from FdSc enrolment
2010/11	77	56	10
2011/12	79	67	20
2012/13	76	73	40
2013/14	68	71	25
2014/15	88	80	45
2015/16	92	93	70
2016/17	80	83	67

As illustrated in the above table, consequently, by Level 6 there is no discernible difference in achievement between FdSc top ups and 'straight through' BSc students, thus closing the achievement gap for the POLAR 3 Quintile 1&2 groups.

The in-year retention for Year 1 students within target underrepresented groups improved year-on-year to a high of 95% in 2015/16. In 2016/17 there was a significant decline in retention of year 1 students to 79.8%, resulting in UCS not achieving its retention target, as reported in the OFFA return in January 2018. A similar, though not as marked decline was seen in attendance, which also declined by 3% from the previous year. However, the same students caused the decline in the two separate measures and their reasons for leaving prematurely are well understood.

The OFFA target to "close the gaps in retention for students with disabilities/ learning difficulties" was not met in line with the trends reported above.

The three-year trend analysis of mature students' performance demonstrates that there are no statistically significant variances in either the completion or the in-year retention of this cohort. *TEF data indicates that*

Comparison of successful year-completion by age group

ACYR	Age	Successfully completed the year	Did not complete	In-Year retention rate	Variance
2014-15	18-19	98	12	89%	
2014-15	20-24	172	7	96%	

2014-15	25+	87	7	93%	0%
2015-16	18-19	114	5	96%	
2015-16	20-24	169	9	95%	
2015-16	25+	55	2	96%	+1%
2016-17	18-19	122	12	91%	
2016-17	20-24	152	15	91%	
2016-17	25+	60	9	87%	-4%

The three-year trend analysis of the performance of **students with disabilities** that, in line with most other indicators, 2016-17 was a 'blip' year and otherwise there are no significant variances, with all indications of a positive variance in 2017/18.

Comparison of successful year-completion by declaration of LD/D

ACYR	Learning Difficulty / Disability	Successfully completed the year	Did not complete	Continuing	In-Year retention rate	Variance
2014-15	Yes	39	3		93%	0%
2014-15	No	318	23		93%	
2015-16	Yes	23	2		92%	-4%
2015-16	No	315	14		96%	
2016-17	Yes	26	13		67%	-26%
2016-17	No	308	23		93%	
2017-18	Yes		3	47	94%	+3%
2017-18	No		30	293	91%	

The three-year trend analysis of **all age groups** students' performance demonstrates that there are no statistically significant variances in either the completion or the in-year retention of these cohorts

Comparison of successful year-completion by age group

ACYR	Age	Successfully completed the year	Did not complete	Continuing	In-Year retention rate	Variance
2014-15	18-19	98	12		89%	
2014-15	20-24	172	7	0	96%	
2014-15	25+	87	7		93%	0%
2015-16	18-19	114	5	0	96%	
2015-16	20-24	169	9		95%	
2015-16	25+	55	2		96%	+1%
2016-17	18-19	122	12	0	91%	
2016-17	20-24	152	15	0	91%	
2016-17	25+	60	9	0	87%	-4%
2017-18	18-19		16	112	88%	
2017-18	20-24		9	177	95%	
2017-18	25+		8	51	86%	-6%

The three-year trend analysis of **young male Polar3 Q1/2** performance demonstrates that there are no statistically significant variances in either the completion or the in-year retention of this cohort.

Comparison of successful year-completion for Young Male Polar3 Q1/2 students

ACYR	Young Male Polar3 Q1/2	Successfully completed the year	Did not complete	Continuing	In-Year retention rate	Variance
2014-15	Yes	22	2		92%	-1%
2014-15	No	335	24		93%	
2015-16	Yes	15	1		94%	-2%
2015-16	No	323	15		96%	
2016-17	Yes	13	1		93%	+3%
2016-17	No	321	35		90%	
2017-18	Yes		2	17	89%	-2%
2017-18	No		31	323	91%	

The number of enrolled **care leavers** is statistically insignificant (N=5 over 4 years). There are still three on programme, one has completed the year (2014-15) but without achieving their degree and one withdrew mid-year.

The number of **BME learners** is statistically insignificant (N=5 over 4 years). All five successfully completed their years of study.

Over the past three years, the performance of those who are 'not white British' is above the performance of 'white British'.

Comparison of successful year-completion by Ethnic Origin

ACYR	Ethnic Origin	Successfully completed the year	Did not complete	Continuing	In-Year retention rate	Variance
2014-15	Mixed White/Asian	3			100%	+7%
2014-15	White British	233	18		93%	
2014-15	White other	118	7		94%	+1%
2014-15	Unknown	3	1		75%	
2015-16	Mixed White/Asian	1			100%	+6%
2015-16	White British	246	15		94%	
2015-16	White other	64	1		98%	+4%
2015-16	Unknown	27	0		100%	
2016-17	White British	263	32		89%	
2016-17	White other	43	4		91%	+2%
2016-17	Unknown	28	0		100%	
2017-18	White British		24	293	92%	
2017-18	White Irish			1	100%	+8%
2017-18	White other		7	23	77%	-15%
2017-18	Unknown		2	23	92%	

2.4 Progression

The analysis of last year's DLHE (*TEF*) data demonstrated that the most disadvantaged and underrepresented students are performing well and are performing 0.4% above benchmark (out-performing their more advantaged peers by 2.9%). This is a strong indicator of the social mobility value of UCS's vocational degrees. Students report via their UCS Association meetings that they are aware of the challenges in their earning potential, but nevertheless view the prospects of a career in animal health, welfare or conservation as more worthwhile than just financial reward. Similarly, students with disabilities are 1.7% above benchmark for progression into continuing study and employment and are 3.3% above benchmark for Highly Skilled employment, outperforming students without disabilities by 1.9% and 3.8% respectively. Likewise mature students are 0.9% and 0.4% above benchmark for these measures and outperform their young peers by 1.5% and 0.8%. Data for ethnicity is not reported for BME due to low numbers. Furthermore, both male and female graduates are above benchmark (4.3% and 1.5% respectively). Part-time graduates are 5.2% above benchmark (top 10% of absolute performance) demonstrating the value of the cohesive, contextualised delivery of their programmes which all include work preparation, and which optimises continued employment or study.

The continuation for disadvantaged students is 0.9% above benchmark (compared to 1.5% below in 2015/16), but remains 2.2% below their more advantaged peers. For students with disability continuation is 1.1% below benchmark (an improvement from 5.2% below benchmark in 2015/16) but remains below (4.1%) that of their non-disabled peers, whilst mature students are 2.8% above benchmark. However, continuation for mature students is 2.8% above benchmark and 0.4% above their young peers. *TEF* data for BME students is not-reportable.

2.5 Summary

UCS – mostly - provides specialist niche degree programmes with a highly inclusive ethos and student-centred approach. UCS recruits a relatively high percentage of learners from vocational courses. Furthermore, as demonstrated above, the very good progress of learners who enter on a foundation degree pathway and who subsequently top-up with BSc honours degrees is testament to this inclusivity.

UCS is successful at increasing the participation of learners from more disadvantaged backgrounds: 13.8% of UCS's intake was from Q1 POLAR measures in 2017/18, which is 2.4% above the national benchmark of 11.4% in 2016/17. Whilst mature student participation has declined, nevertheless, UCS's percentage of 20+ and 25+ learners are equivalent with national trends.

Trend data demonstrates that UCS delivers successful degree outcomes, with students of all backgrounds both retained and progressing, notwithstanding the relatively lower performance for retention and progression from level 4 to level 5 in 2016/17, which was an exceptional year. Furthermore, the data demonstrates that UCS has been very successful at supporting its learners to successful progression to employment, historically within the specialist industries of the land and environment sector but with a view to achieving similar levels of progression from the digital media courses planned for Andover College.

It is the intention of the Sparsholt College Group leaders and governors that UCS will maintain its focus on those from disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly males, as a new target, in line with national trend data. A focus on the participation and successful completion of young white male students will become a new target in the years ahead. The number of learners from ethnic minorities or who are care leavers represents a tiny proportion of its overall cohort, in line with the make up the rural locality. The Group College has a robust Single Equality Scheme and is not institutionally discriminating.

UCS will pursue its inclusive agenda that is enshrined in the College's Group's mission statement and that is summarised in the key objectives articulated in the subsequent section. The evidence demonstrates that UCS will build its access and participation plan on the following priorities and areas for development:

- Participation of those from disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly young males;
- The success and therefore progression of those from disadvantaged backgrounds and / or those with disabilities;
- Curriculum delivery reform to attract - and retain - higher numbers of mature students.

3. Ambition and strategy

3.1 Introduction

The Mission of the College Group is "to inspire learners to recognise and achieve their full potential." Further Education Colleges are by their very nature inclusive and have a well-established track record of successfully engaging with all communities and enabling individuals to overcome structural disadvantages and obstacles to achieving their full potential. UCS is an integral part of the College Group and the UCS strategy for participation and ambition for growth aligns directly with stated government policy to increase the proportion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds entering higher education.

The ambition and strategy of UCS to widen participation and ensure the success and progression of students who are disadvantaged has been re-cast to provide fresh stimulus and impact at all educational levels. The strategy necessarily outlines distinct strands to engage primary schools to promote STEM, secondary schools to raise awareness of careers in applied science and digital industries and tertiary providers to improve Ofsted outcomes and support transition to higher level study. The strategy aligns directly with three primary regulatory objectives of the Office for Students, notably access, success and progression.

UCS's considered view of the guidance in relation to underrepresented groups is that, given its specialist context and relatively small scale as an HEI, UCS will focus its resources in those areas where there is the highest likelihood of achieving the greatest impact. At this point in UCS's development, and subject to review in the future, its priorities to increase participation, success and progression in underrepresented groups will be with those from low household income and/or low socioeconomic status (within Quintiles 1 and 2), students with disabilities, mature students and, as a new initiative, working with military families.

The College Group's three-year strategic plan identifies the following three objectives which align broadly with access, student success and successful progression with UCS:

- Objective 4: Support for students is assessed as outstanding which reflects a needs-led and inclusive service.
- Objective 5: Achieve planned growth in learner enrolments through the provision of a dynamic and broad curriculum offer, which meets changing market conditions and consumer tastes through new and reconfigured provision.
- Objective 6: A noted key strength of the College is the culture of inclusiveness, where staff work with the student community to promote diversity and champion the rights of all.

Progress against each of the annual objectives is reported to the Board of Governors each academic term. The leadership team has emphasised that to promote a culture of inclusiveness (objective 6) and support (objective 4), the College Group is prioritising supporting under-represented and disadvantaged learner groups, enshrined in its Single Equality Scheme.

Beneath the umbrella of priority groups of students from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds, the following sub-groups have previously been identified through the OFFA agreement as the focus of UCS's activity and thus specific targets are set to increase participation from these groups:

- Families and individuals with low incomes, with a focus on white males;
- Mature students returning to study with non-traditional entry qualifications, including military families;
- Those entering Higher Education from vocational routes, rather than the traditional A level route;
- Students with disabilities.

As stated in its self-assessment in section 1, UCS is mindful that its widening participation agenda is much broader than just increasing participation and, consequently, will provide additional focus and resources on providing students with the required support to optimize student success and progression. As will be set out, there has emerged a deeper understanding of all stages of the student journey, which is in turn crystallising a new and more systematic and detailed approach to:

- engaging and recruiting with underrepresented groups
- supporting those who are recruited, particularly in their first year of study
- ensuring positive outcomes in terms of higher-level study or moving into desirable employment opportunities, principally within the specialist land and environment sector.

To date, given UCS's unique curriculum offer in Hampshire, the primary focus of participation has been on those who are already studying within the specialist land-based sector, many of whom also fall within the government's priority groups. UCS's ambition is to build upon its success in training individuals for niche careers, which it does by providing highly tailored services that are appropriate to and designed for those from predominantly vocational backgrounds. Understanding the needs and aspirations of its community is the lynchpin to underwrite successful course and progression outcomes.

UCS's self-assessment in the previous section highlighted the need to begin to recalibrate its priority from primarily participation towards more emphasis upon support and skills development. Strategically investing resources in student success and progression will serve to retain those who are the most vulnerable to leave due to social, health or learning difficulties and disabilities.

The next section will describe the specific ambitions of the College with respect to the targets and milestones for, respectively, access, success and progression.

3.2 Widening Access

In terms of access, UCS will, in addition to the activities that are already in place and have been articulated in previous access agreements, develop more innovative approaches to support those from underrepresented groups to participate in the specialist curriculum offer.

Strategically, UCS will sharpen its ambition to widen participation with key activities and resources, which will be detailed in the plan and in the next section. The principal orbits of activity, over and above the College's mainstream marketing functions, will be across the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors:

- i. Work with Sparsholt College FE groups to improve achievement rates of 18-year olds, including strategic input with other regional specialist providers;
- ii. Work with Andover College to improve learner outcomes and to develop new provision in Digital Arts at level 4;
- iii. Engage regional 6th Form Colleges NCOP students on environmental science, applied science and zoology / biology programmes to provide participation opportunities for those who historically choose to eschew higher level study;

- iv. Lead more taster opportunity at the Sparsholt and Andover campuses in STEM-related subjects;
- v. As a longer-term project, work with Andover based primary schools on science discovery programmes.
- vi. Engage with military families through the Hampshire and Wiltshire 'Hives'.

3.3 Success and Progression

In terms of success and progression, UCS will, in addition to the activities that are already in place, develop more targeted interventions to ensure that all those recruited from disadvantaged backgrounds are proactively supported to achieve their degrees and progress to either higher study or to employment.

UCS's data shows unequivocally that almost all students who start year 2 of their programmes complete their degrees. Notwithstanding a disappointing year in 2016/17, UCS's ambition is to better support underrepresented students and return to the high-water mark of 95% retention of its year 1 cohort. UCS will track to ensure that all those who are retained then progress to year 2 of their studies.

To assist, UCS will use a new proprietary MIS system and associated human resource to track each vulnerable learner from the beginning of their student journey through to completion. In this way, all 'flagged' learners will receive enhanced levels of support to mitigate against any individual prematurely leaving their course of study. UCS recognises that there are significant strengths that have been recognised through its TEF submissions, but nevertheless, UCS will maintain a clear commitment to the CPD of lecturers wherein student engagement is given equal priority to updating subject expertise.

UCS data demonstrates that there are no clear gaps in attainment and progression for those who are the most socially disadvantaged: the data shared in section 1 outlines the excellent progress that those from POLAR3 Quintiles 1 and 2 make in relation to their peers. However, UCS will develop systems to track the performance across the student life cycle for all underrepresented groups.

3.4 Collaborative working and Access, Success & Progression

Currently UCS's marketing outreach team works with schools and colleges in Hampshire and the surrounding counties promoting opportunities for participation in higher education. To target available resources in a more focussed way, UCS will, in addition, develop better pathways with local 6th Forms & FE Colleges for those on biology / zoology A Levels or BTECs in Applied Science. Survey work conducted in the 6th Form College in Winchester in 2016/17 revealed a widespread ignorance of the highly vocational and practical careers opportunities that are open to students who are currently studying the biological sciences. UCS accepts that whilst progression to higher education from local 6th forms is generally high, it will nevertheless work to promote participation opportunities for those who might not have elected to follow traditional routes into HE.

Partnership working with Landex Colleges has enabled more students to access degree provision in those sub-sectors where the local college does not provide a degree offer or a third-year BSc top-up option, a percentage of whom come from underrepresented groups.

Whilst the strategic guidance has placed greater emphasis upon raising attainment in schools through sponsorship, UCS recognises that, as a specialist provider, it does not have local catchment schools in the same way that a metropolitan university might. Within a Tertiary County, Sparsholt FE College enrolled students from over 250 feeder schools in 2016/17 and as there are no regional specialist land and environment schools, there is no obvious strategic link. However, UCS has started to engage with a junior school in Andover to raise awareness about the applied nature of science and consequently sow seeds of an understanding of vocational learning options in Higher Education.

To respond in a proportionate way to the strategic guidance, last year, UCS established a strategic alliance with the Anton Andover Alliance for Teacher Training (<http://www.teachaaa.co.uk/>). The College has successfully

built on its existing work with the Andover Vision, a public-private partnership with core aims that include raising educational attainment within the town. The deputy principal has been on the Board of the Andover Vision Partnership for many years and the College supports the Borough's 'Aim Higher' 'graduation' ceremony in the Lights Theatre for all Andover Primary school year 6 leavers. Whilst the relationship with the Alliance has been beneficial, UCS's impact assessment has concluded that resources would be better spent working directly with year 5/6 pupils, with the express intent of starting to develop a higher education 'mindset' at this age, notably for those living in designated Wards of lower socio-economic status. Raising the achievement of children who live in the designated Wards and who attend local schools will be a key objective.

UCS has learned through its OFFA work that raising the standards of student work and outcomes in specialist FE provision has the greatest impact on supporting students to acquire the necessary skills and grades to progress into higher education. UCS works very closely with the Further Education College's specialist years 12 and 13 and aims to increase progression of this cohort by 10%. Furthermore, UCS is directly sponsoring Andover College to use its expertise in developing higher education provision in Andover.

Raising attainment in Sparsholt FE College in years 12 and 13 is integral to an annual Self-Assessment Review (SAR), quality improvement plan (QIP) and Ofsted assessment procedures that are reported to the Board of Governors. It is notable that Ofsted (2018) reported, "*Students continue to experience good teaching and effective assessment of their work in the vast majority of lessons. They develop good, and sometimes outstanding, practical and technical skills. The vast majority make good progress, gain their qualifications, and progress to further study, employment or apprenticeships. Since the previous inspection, the proportion of students gaining high grades at A level has increased. Outcomes for students on land-based programmes continue to be high.*"

Where provision cannot be measured on a national value-added measure (ALPS) – for example, animal management – high grades are used as a proxy. Improving high grades and/or value-added scores necessarily involves key elements of CPD often led by UCS staff. The main elements for Further Education staff are:

- training teachers to develop greater stretch and challenge in their teaching schemes of work to develop higher thinking skills;
- developing the 'professional learner' concept so that 'flip learning' and homework are more routinely built in to delivery so that content is covered outside of the classroom and higher learning objectives are developed by the teacher in the classroom;
- Developing independent learners who have the confidence and self-belief to study at higher education
- Providing pastoral support, learning support and mentoring to build self-esteem and desire to continue in education.

The key role of science in enabling entry to higher education has precipitated a review of the Access to Higher Education (land-based) qualification. Following feedback from last year's cohort, UCS worked with the awarding body to increase the science credits, ensuring that a wider range of HE providers would accept the Access and that no student would be disadvantaged in their UCAS application. Most of the Access to HE cohort are from non-traditional backgrounds (mature students with vocational qualifications and / or with disabilities) and are supported through a range of initiatives including outreach work, course advice and guidance, pastoral support, financial support and skills development to prepare them for higher education.

To engage students with the ambition of entering higher education, the college provides an 'HE experience' day, focussed on students from underrepresented groups, mostly disadvantaged backgrounds and. This involves an industry visit, some basic research and data collection followed by a 'lecture' to disseminate the students' findings. The day is delivered collaboratively by HE lecturers and external industry experts to differentiate it from their daily (further) education and make participation in higher education an achievable, desirable and accessible objective.

In September 2017, the College Group engaged with the Southern Universities Network (SUN) and is working on a project at Andover College to develop level 4 progression links into Digital Arts and related industries. Whilst the SUN funding is ring fenced for an element of this project, the work to enable more level 3 learners to progress by providing a level 4 option in their hometown aligns directly with the Access and Participation plan and further demonstrates effective collaborative activity.

UCS is working very closely with Andover College to build a local and credible offer for level 4 options, notably for students who are studying ICT and who wish to broaden their skills set at level 4 to incorporate design and related disciplines and, conversely, creative arts student who wish to broaden their skills set to incorporate coding and technological disciplines. Andover is noted by the local LEP as a 'step up' town (indicating it has potential), has two NCOP wards in the town and is also served by disadvantaged wards in South East Wiltshire, which includes military families.

UCS has held focus groups with level 3 learners in Andover who have not progressed to HE and this research has concluded that a combination of lack of aspiration and low confidence, together with students being put off by the perception of high costs of undertaking degree study, has created the right conditions for a limited level 4 offer to be made at the College, with a view to progression to levels 5 and 6 thereafter. The ambition is for UCS to work with Andover College to create a mini higher education community in Andover of 40-50 students. The experience to date indicates that this provision will be particularly attractive for those with lower socio-economic status and those from military families. The Applied Science, including Sports Studies, will have a larger percentage of males to potentially recruit.

Sparsholt FE College has also opened new links with the University of Portsmouth's Sports Department to introduce Sparsholt College Level 3 Sports students to a higher education environment in year 12. The University are supporting the project with workshops held at the University and a mentoring scheme wherein undergraduates mentor College sports students on their project work. The University will facilitate progression upon successful completion of the project work. It is intended that this initiative will improve rates of progression and, if numbers are viable, the College is in early discussions with the university to deliver the level 4 year on the Sparsholt campus.

The ambition and strategy of UCS to widen participation and ensure the success and progression of students who are disadvantaged has been re-cast to provide fresh stimulus and impact at all educational levels. The strategy necessarily outlines distinct strands to engage primary schools to promote STEM, secondary schools to raise awareness of careers in applied science and digital industries and tertiary providers to improve Ofsted outcomes and support transition to higher level study. The strategy aligns directly with the four primary regulatory objectives of the Office for Students, notably access, success and progression.

4. Targets

Strategically, UCS is proposing to maintain the current OFFA targets with a view to a more comprehensive review of these in the coming year in response to the likely review of targets from the Office for Students. However, to better reflect the ambitions of the strategic plan, UCS will add two new targets to address the participation of young white males from POLAR 3 Quintiles 1 and 2 and to better monitor the performance of all students with disadvantage during their first year and into the second year of study.

UCS will work towards the following milestones (as recorded within the Resource Plan):

- Improve the baseline proportion of financially disadvantaged students receiving full or partial state support, participating in our higher education courses, from 46% (2013-14) to 51% by 2022-23 (Source: College Data)
- Improve the baseline proportion of higher education students from disadvantaged areas, from 8.3% (2013-14) to 16.0% by 2022-23 (Source: College Data). The participation has been around 13% from the bottom quintile in 2015-16 and 2016-17.

- Improve the baseline proportion of higher education students age 25+ from 19% (2016-17) to 23% 2022-23 (Source: College ILR Data). This target had to be re-based to 2016-17 due to the continued decline in part-time recruitment having an adverse effect on the proportion of mature students in the overall cohort. The milestones have targeted modest growth from the current year's value of 17%.
- Improve the baseline proportion of students with physical and/or learning disability in higher education courses from 11% in 2016-17 to 17% by 2022-23. The milestones for this target have been made more modest with the target moved to 2012-22 from the original 2019-20 due to the slow rate of improvement experienced over the last 3 years.
- Achieve in-year Year 1 retention for students within the target groups from 90.9% in 2014-15 to 93% by 2022-23 (Source: College Data). The base-line has been re-stated for this target due to the rapid improvements seen as a result of improvements made in pastoral and in-class support in the last 2 years.
- Improve attendance rates of students from the target groups from 83.6% (2013-14) to 93% by 2022-23 (Source: College ILR Data). Good progress has been made in this measure, and it is currently 91.5% in 2016-17.
- Meet the College targets, set out in its Single Equality Scheme, to close the gaps in participation and retention for groups of students with either disabilities or learning difficulties.
- Increase the proportion of young Level 3 land-based students from POLAR3 Quintiles 1 and 2 who progressed to full time HE from 20% in 2015/16 to 30% in 2022-23.
- Increase the proportion of students from POLAR3 Quintiles 1 and 2 who progress from Foundation degree to BSc top-up from 61% in 2015/16 to 67% in 2022-23.

In line with our ambition to improve access and outcomes for those from socially disadvantaged background, new strategic targets are:

- i. Decrease the proportion of young full-time students from POLAR3 quintile 1 and 2 who are no longer in HE after 1 year;
- ii. Increase the numbers of young full-time entrants from POLAR3 quintile 1 and 2 neighbourhoods;
- iii. Increase the numbers of young full-time male entrants from POLAR3 quintile 1 and 2 neighbourhoods.

Hitherto the College has not had a sophisticated evaluation scheme in place for the full range of activities that are in place to improve access and to bolster success and progression. However, the clarity of its new strategic plan means there are now quantitative measures in place and at both strategic and course levels. In terms of monitoring & evaluating the methodologies, UCS is proposing a termly scrutiny at student, leadership and governor level of the plan for:

- Progress against targets for access and success
- Spend against budget
- Financial uptake of bursaries and tracking of those benefitting from bursaries
- Progress on the SUN (collaborative activity) project.
- Longer term tracking of impact of science education in Andover primary schools
- Student evaluation via the student association and qualitative feedback from students who have been identified in interventions to promote success and progression.

The specific evaluation measures will build upon the more generic monitoring that routinely occurs. UCS measures progress against its participation and performance targets at the Higher Education Strategy Group, which meets monthly and is chaired by the principal of the College Group. Performance targets are formally

assessed on a termly basis, reported via the Governor 'Quality and Standards' Committee to the Board of the College and to the University of Portsmouth. Actions are updated to reflect progress against the targets and focus attention to improve performance against those targets.

The Single Equality Scheme (SES) has been reviewed by students and the College Group has updated the scheme to better reflect non-binary gender preferences, which will be scrutinised by the governing body in July 2018. The Scheme clearly articulates the ambition for the College Group, wherein "Sparsholt College Hampshire ("the College Group") *is committed to ensuring that every individual who belongs to or who accesses our learning community is valued, supported and respected. We welcome and celebrate the unique talent and experience of each individual student and employee.*"

The College has stated within the SES that "to create a Single Equality Scheme that has the most meaning and impact on the majority of its community, the College Group will put particular focus on Gender, Race, Disability, Socio-economic factors." On a strategic level, the SES states, "Whilst there is no legislative duty in relation to socio-economic factors, the College Group recognises the impact of economic disadvantage on individuals and will therefore work to reduce barriers faced by such individuals. We will, to this end recruit those, as a direct result of their economic disadvantage, who might have lower aspirations and expectations of success. The College Group will seek to inspire them to recognise and achieve their full potential with an ethos of high expectations, high levels of support, outstanding teaching & learning and access to first class facilities."

The intended impact of the SES is:

- To support the progression of white males from Quintile 1 of POLAR 3 groups into higher education.
- To have a curriculum offer and support services which encourage participation from all communities.
- To enable students who live in areas of deprivation to do as well as their peers who do not experience comparable levels of deprivation.
- To consider socio-economic factors when impact assessing major plans, policies, procedures and practice.
- To measure a base-line of white male students from POLAR quintile 3 to improve engagement and success.

The SES has impact statements for all those with protected characteristics and the above extract is included to demonstrate the strategic intent of the organisation with respect to supporting individuals from the most disadvantaged communities.

4.1 Student involvement

UCS engages students with their academic and pastoral support experience through a range of student engagement strategies.

Each cohort (year group by subject area) is invited to nominate a course representative to attend Student Association meetings, focus group meetings and collaborative partner meetings (as appropriate), as well as collate views and opinions on a range of subjects eg; course structure, academic issues, resources and facilities, employer engagement, Access and Participation plan, TEF submission, Student Protection Plan etc. We have not previously analysed the backgrounds of the nominated course reps but going forward course tutors will provide strong encouragement to students from under-represented backgrounds to apply for the position and we will monitor the demographic 'make-up' of the Student Association to ensure a good representation from all backgrounds. Training for the position of course rep is provided by the University of Portsmouth Students Union and this is welcomed by the reps as a valuable development tool. As specific situations arise (eg OfS registration), Course Tutors will provide a standardised 'scene-setting' presentation to provide basic information and understanding and then either, facilitate a group discussion or, provide time for the group to discuss the item and produce feedback for the course rep to contribute to the overall feedback. This facilitative process ensures that under-represented groups are enabled to be more vocal and have their opinions heard.

The Higher Education Student Council was inaugurated in October 2012 and in March 2013 the Council were invited to comment on the existing Access support scheme. With little precedent and experience, the student contribution to the agenda item was initially limited. However, the renamed Student Association, now demonstrates a far greater level of active participation and engagement with a focus on academic and course related issues. A complete review of the Step-up to HE week was provided by the student body resulting in a revised programme being delivered and a 20% increase (to 80%) in student satisfaction in autumn 2017.

However, students have subsequently been invited to critically evaluate the proposed Access and Participation plan. Looking to the next academic year, 'Access and Participation' will be a standing agenda item at all student association meetings. To improve buy-in and meaningful interaction with the student body, key discussion items and data will be furnished to the association in advance of the meetings so that all members can make more informed contributions during the meetings. Students from under-represented backgrounds will be invited to consultation events to inform the development of the plan. It is planned to recruit additional student ambassadors for 2018/19 to support and promote some of the outreach activities, applications will be encouraged from students from under-represented backgrounds to provide extra perspective of the HE experience as a non-traditional student.

In terms of student engagement, the following points were noted in the 2014 QAA Review:

The QAA review team included the following features of good practice that directly referenced student engagement at Sparsholt College within its recent review. Student engagement is predominantly within the student Association.

- The numerous ways in which the College has systematically fostered engagement with students to enhance the quality of learning opportunities (Expectation B5, Enhancement);
- The proactive and strategic approach to improving student retention (Enhancement);
- The use of the virtual learning environment (VLE) to provide a wide range of accessible and student-centred information to current students (Expectation C).

Within College management structures, the Student admissions team are the frontline links with students regarding any Access issues and this team has been fully involved with the preparation of the Access agreement. To continue this consultative approach, the College will continue to consult directly with students who have benefitted from Access support and use qualitative feedback on the impact of interventions to gauge its success.

5. Access, student success and progression measures

5.1 Access

In the section on ambition and strategy, the priorities to improve Access have been articulated as follows:

- Participation of those from disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly young males;
- Curriculum reform to attract and retain higher numbers of mature students;
- Continue with further education reform to improve achievement rates of 18-year olds studying within the land-based sector, including other regional specialist providers;
- Maintain collaborative links with the SUN to improve success rates of level 2 and level 3 students in digital arts at Andover College with the intention of increasing participation at level 4;
- Work closely with SUN to extend the 2017 pilot of taking NCOP year 12 animal management and equine learners to a HE 'research experience' morning at Marwell Wildlife (Zoo), complemented with an aspirational talk on higher education;
- Engage regional 6th Form Colleges students on environmental science, applied science and zoology / biology programmes;

- As a longer-term project, engage Andover based primary schools on science discovery programmes.

In specialist educational provision, UCS research has demonstrated that engaging those who are drawn to the sector is much more likely to result in participation than trying to encourage 'outsiders' into the sector. Consequently, the target to broaden the participation appeal will be to engage in a more focused way on those who have already shown a preference for the specialist sector. For example, supporting young male school leavers who are drawn to fishery studies, game & wildlife and conservation in years 12 and 13 to raise aspirations, will provide a distinct targeted activity. The UCS project (part-funded by SUN) on the Sparsholt campus has been designed to both raise awareness and to provide additional motivation to achieve higher grades. The impact of the 2017 pilot in engaging year 12 students will be evaluated when participation figures are achieved in September 2018. To date, the pilots have worked with the cohorts in Equine and Animal Studies, where there are distinctive higher education progression routes, but this will be extended to other areas of the Further Education community over the coming years.

Whilst targeting Sparsholt Further Education students is the main strand of activity, these measures will be complemented by extending engagement activities to other regional land-based students where higher education provision is not available to them. UCS's evaluation of this outreach activity is, to date, showing mixed results. UCS has increased participation from other regional providers, but the size of this pool is diminishing more quickly as other specialist colleges in turn are failing to recruit significant volumes of learners at levels 4 and 5.

In terms of outreach activities for adults, whilst UCS is engaging effectively with a core group of those choosing Sparsholt to follow their subject passion, it is the belief of the leadership team that opening more distance and blended learning study options, as has been piloted in Zoo Biology and Animal Behaviour, will break down barriers and increase participation. The initial evaluation in animal behaviour provides evidence that adults are more likely to engage if there is more of a distance / blended learning option. However, the drive to create sufficient resources for a blended alternative is frustrated by a lack of expertise.

Building strategic relationships with schools with the 'Andover Alliance' created a 'false start' but engaging directly with years 5/6 in applied science will seek to raise aspirations to study STEM subjects, whether that be at Sparsholt or elsewhere.

The activities with Andover College also offer good prospects in higher levels of engagement with those from NCOP priority postcodes. Preliminary research has indicated that the combination of local provision at lower cost is more appealing to a proportion of students who lack confidence and / or resources to study at level 4 and beyond. This project is embryonic.

Raising achievement of students in Sparsholt college, with a focus on high grades, will increase the numbers who are eligible to participate at level 4 and beyond. The 2018 Ofsted inspection quoted improving outcomes for learners and is evidence that quality improvement measures are appropriate.

5.2 Financial support

UCS has two different types of bursary schemes, which are summarised below.

i. Sparsholt College Bursary (SCB)

This Bursary will be available to full and part-time students who are on household incomes of less than £32,000. Students' eligibility will be assessed through a means tested application form and will be based on need. The Bursary will be up to the value of £750. This will be made up of a cash award to pay for course related items or living expenses as required. Living expenses will be agreed with the Student Finance team.

The impact of the College HE Bursary is positive with a positive variance of successfully completion the year (see below).

Comparison of successful year-completion for College HE Bursary beneficiaries

ACYR	College Bursary recipient	Successfully completed the year	Did not complete	Continuing	In-Year retention rate	Variance
2014-15	N/A	357	26		93%	
2015-16	Yes	48	1		98%	+3%
2015-16	No	290	15		95%	
2016-17	Yes	42	3		93%	+3%
2016-17	No	292	33		90%	
2017-18	Yes		1	41	98%	+8%
2017-18	No		32	299	90%	

ii. 'Aim Higher – Progress Further' Bursary

UCS has approval from the Board of Governors to offer an 'Aim Higher – Progress Further' initiative to promote Higher Education from its Further Education cohort. The Scholarship offers a £1000.00 cash payment in year 1 and a further payment of £500.00 the following year. The recipients will be UK/EU Sparsholt (or Andover) students who meet the normal course entry requirement and who meet at least one of the following:

- prospective first generation Higher Education learners and / or
- family income below £32,000 and / or
- from disadvantaged groups to include care leavers, single parents, those in independent living, those with disabilities and any others in exceptional circumstances.

This Bursary will continue to be offered in 2019. The impact of both Bursaries is evaluated by tracking the progress of all those who take up the Bursary and by undertaking qualitative research on the extent to which the Bursary had an impact on their decision to apply for degree study and the extent to which the bursary was helpful in enabling them to achieve their degree.

The Aim Higher Bursary has now had a 'take up' by 8 students. One has withdrawn from the year but this is statistically insignificant.

Comparison of successful year-completion for Aim Higher Bursary beneficiaries

ACYR	Aim Higher recipient	Successfully completed the year	Did not complete	Continuing	In-Year retention rate	Variance
2014-15	?	357	26		93%	
2015-16	?	338	16		95%	
2016-17	?	334	36		90%	
2017-18	Yes		1	7	88%	-3%
2017-18	No		32	333	91%	

The fees for Andover College will be tactically lower to appeal to those from more disadvantaged backgrounds. Student feedback has indicated to us that locally based and lower priced provision are both

helpful in reducing barriers to study. These barriers are both financial and psychological for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The collaboration with the SUN project will seek to reduce psychological barriers by introducing information about progression at an earlier stage in the students' post-secondary studies. The SUN programme only commenced this academic year and the evaluation on whether awareness raising can heighten motivation and improve progression remains to be seen.

To improve the robustness of the evaluation of the impact of bursaries, we will introduce a cycle of feedback from recipients. As part of our new monitoring process to flag students from under-represented groups, we will additionally flag those in receipt of a bursary and invite feedback from them on the impact of that financial support.

The Access & Participation Plan will be included as a standing agenda item at Student Association meetings to determine what measures the student body considers would have the greatest impact on retention and success. Additionally their views will be sought on ease of accessing the bursaries and aid promotion of the bursary funding within their cohorts.

5.3 Success and Progression

As described in a previous section, in 2016/17, UCS experienced an unexpected decline in retention of students in year 1, particularly those who are most disadvantaged. The decline was against the trend as retention of year 1 students had increased year-on-year from 83.6% in 2013/14 to 95.2% in 2015/16. This annual improvement had demonstrated the positive impact of the intervention strategies that were in place to retain students. In 2016/17, although the strategies were fully embedded across the Faculty for higher education, nevertheless the retention - and thus progression - declined to 79.8%.

The internal analysis of the reasons for withdrawing before progress to year 2 shows a common thread of vulnerability in a mix of finance, personal problems and mental health and very much informs how UCS will apply a key pillar of the overall strategy, to improve the retention of vulnerable learners. UCS's self-assessment does not indicate any structural disadvantages to vulnerable students and neither is there anything to suggest that UCS recruited without full process and with integrity. UCS has examined the withdrawals on a case by case basis and had learned that, whilst there are no common themes, the students who are identified as being more vulnerable could be more proactively supported and guided, though without compromising the appropriate levels independent study that are required. The data analysis very clearly demonstrates that almost all students who start their year 2 or year 3 study, complete and achieve their degrees. Consequently, going forward, UCS will more proactively address the challenge of identifying those who are the most vulnerable to withdraw earlier in their studies and to provide enhanced levels of support to these individuals, both academically and pastorally in their first year of study at the College. The advantage for UCS in this scenario is that, given the relatively low size of its overall cohort, the College can invest its activities and support to those who have the greatest need / target groups and that all interventions can be evaluated to ensure they lead to positive outcomes.

The focus on preventing this reoccurring – and it is the perception of College leaders that the reported decline is a 'blip' and not a trend - are summarised below:

- Review and redesign structure of 'Step-up to HE week' to improve the student experience and early engagement with academic skills and building confidence, particularly to promote success and progression of more vulnerable individuals and those with learning disabilities.
- Provide bridging course for development of essential skills in preparation for dissertation unit for all new external students who come to complete Year 3 top-ups, particularly to promote success and progression of more vulnerable individuals and those with learning disabilities.
- Review delivery mode of Academic Skills unit to improve consistency and value of core study skills by ensuring learning materials are accessible in a format suitable for a range of students, particularly to promote success and progression of more vulnerable individuals and those with learning disabilities.
- Review individual performance on the academic skills unit to put in place early mentoring and rapid interventions.

- Reduce time from referral to initial screening for students declaring potential learning difficulties so ensure relevant support is in place for this group in a timely way.
- Increase ease of access to financial bursaries for diagnostic assessment and support with DSA applications so that those who are financially disadvantaged and with learning disabilities can access support in a timely way.
- Introduce on-line forums for each assessment artefact to encourage independence and peer support with assignment work, particularly with more psychologically isolated individuals and / or those with learning disabilities where they have identified peer support as helpful in gaining confidence.
- Invest in additional training and ongoing supervision for (student buddy) Study coaches to improve the value of their delivery to peers and to enhance the prestige for the role, which will improve student participation and engagement, particularly individuals who are most vulnerable and prone to leave their studies prematurely.
- Upskill library (learning resource centre) staff to provide workshops and academic study support within the Higher Education Study Centre, particularly for vulnerable individuals who have been identified as requiring enhanced levels of support.
- Provide a range of key reference books in the Higher Education Study Centre to complement those held in the library. This will help those less confident students to feel more comfortable in a learning environment than they might in the main library.
- Provide MIS markers on students deemed to be more vulnerable to leaving. Holding a 'risk register' of students due to one or multiple disadvantages will enable proactive support of each of these learners.
- Dedicate a member of student support staff to higher education interventions and better sign post availability of this support in the Higher Education Study Centre. This will benefit more psychologically
- Review the efficacy of both UCS bursary schemes in June 2018 to assess their impact on the promotion of access, success and progression.

The plan above provides detailed information on the success and progress measures for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly young males.

In terms of mature students, whilst the initial measures are related to access, once recruited, the measures of success and progress will be statistical comparisons against the benchmark of younger students.

Similarly, the in-year and progress destination measures for 18-year old land-based students, digital students and those participants from local sixth form colleges will be reported on, in the same way that milestones for those with disabilities and from disadvantaged backgrounds currently are.

Success and progress of those from military families will be monitored and reported in an identical manner.

6. Investment

UCS's higher fee income (HFI) is projected to be £734,080 in 2019/20, based on the learner recruitment assumptions.

UCS will invest £403,000, which equates to 54.9% of HFI. The relative investment in access, success and progression is 19.3%, 17.7% and 1.1%, respectively. An additional 16.8% of HFI will be invested in financial support.

The level of investment is positioned to remain relatively stable, assuming stability in learner numbers, however the proportion of spend will be adjusted to reflect the focus on success (rather than access, which has dominated the spend in previous years).

Looking ahead, UCS will review whether additional might be made to target additional support for care leavers, carers, people estranged from their families to promote participation, success and progression from these groups.

Having reflected on the balance of investment between access, success and progression activities, UCS is planning to shift the emphasis of these proportional amounts, resulting in some considerable movement from the 2018-19 access agreement. As articulated within the strategy, and aligning our approach with the guidance articulated by the Director of Access, UCS has reviewed its targets and re-aligned them in favour of success. Our performance has been successful in increasing participation from under-represented groups (see analysis in Section 1) and whilst this activity will continue, we will focus additional resources (particularly in light of poor continuation rates experienced in 2016-17) on success. It is apparent that student support (both academically and pastorally) is key to overall retention and achievement for our students.

Overall, the investment represents spend that is directly attributable to improve the participation, success and progression of underrepresented groups, as explained in the previous section and with a strategic focus on those disadvantaged socioeconomically (many of whom are first generation entrants to Higher Education), those with disabilities, mature students and, as a new initiative, children from military families.

7. Provision of information to students

In compliance with QAA 'Good practice guide on publishing information for prospective undergraduate students', information for students on the fees and financial support available will be detailed in the College prospectus and on the College website. Case studies will be used to illustrate the aggregate costs of their tuition if they are successful in gaining a place. Illustrations of the net costs of studying on their courses will be provided, including estimates on the cost of living for students living on and off campus.

The prospectus and website will also advise prospective students of the targeted support that will be given to them to study on Higher Education courses and achieve their qualifications. UCS prides itself on the high standards of academic and pastoral support given to students.

Admissions, Course Tutors and the Marketing team will provide information regarding the fee level and financial support available at Careers Events, Taster Days and Viewing Days. This will be in addition to the many off site marketing events attended throughout the year.

Information regarding the fees and the financial support available through UCS will be sent to the students with their offer of a place. The Finance and Fees Booklet, provided to all students, will include information about the fees, financial support and who to ask for more information.

The Student Administration Support Team provides guidance to students on the fees and financial support available. The team are happy to discuss financial arrangements before starting a course and are available on site for students whilst on their course.

Disability Specialist Support Tutors provide guidance on eligibility and application for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) to enable students to access specialist study support and mentoring to support their studies. Students who require a diagnostic assessment to submit for DSA support are invited to apply for bursary funding to cover the cost of the assessment. Students already in receipt of a bursary or hardship funding are provided with a diagnostic assessment at no cost to themselves.

UCS has considered the equality and access issues of introducing fee waiver and are confident that this development will assist eligible students in engaging with UCS's higher education offer.

For current students the Access and Participation Plan will be summarised into bullet points and published through the Higher Education e-learning platform (HE4U) and within Course Handbooks. The summary version will be outlined during induction and group tutorials and a weblink provided to the full version. For prospective students, the summary version will be made available through the website on the Student Support page <https://www.sparsholt.ac.uk/university-centre/support-resources-higher-education/> and at Course Information days, Offer Holders days, and in the Student Support office.

Appendix A

Lifecycle stage	Main target category	Description	Baseline data	Baseline year	Target %	Progress to date, by academic year					Performance summary
						2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	
Access	Socio-economic	Improve participation financially disadvantaged students	46%	2013-14	50%		46%	52%	58%	73%	a) Overall target met/exceeded
Access	Socio-economic	Improve participation from disadvantaged areas	8.3%	2013-14	13%	5.7%	4.5%	11.6%	13.3%	13.80%	a) Overall target met/exceeded
Access	Mature	Improve the proportion of age 25+	23.3%	2013-14	30%	16.8%	23.3%	25.7%	13.2%	11.60%	e) Performance is below baseline
Access	Disability	Improve the proportion of students with physical and/or learning disability	9.3%	2013-14	15%	6.2%	9.2%	10.8%	10.9%	13.30%	b) Yearly milestone met
Student Success	Multiple	Achieve in-year Year 1 retention for students within the target groups	83.6%	2013-14	90.0%	87.1%	83.6%	90.9%	95.2%	79.80%	e) Performance is below baseline
Student Success	Multiple	Improve attendance rates of students from the target groups	92.5%	2013-14	92.5%	91.1%	92.5%	91.8%	90.8%	87.80%	d) No progress made against baseline
Student Success	Disability	Close the gaps in retention for students with disabilities/ learning difficulties	8%	2013-14	2%		8%	-0.8%	0.1%	14%	e) Performance is below baseline

* course type not listed.

Full-time and part-time course fee levels for 2019-20 entrants.

Please enter inflationary statement in the free text box below.

In line with the College's TEF Silver award, the College will increase fees in 2019-20 in line with government guidance.

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	All subjects	£9,250
Foundation degree	Veterinary Nursing	£6,600
Foundation degree	All other subjects	£9,250
Foundation year / Year 0		*
HNC / HND	All subjects	£4,500
CertHE / DipHE		*
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*
Franchise full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		*
Foundation degree		*
Foundation year / Year 0		*
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		*
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*
Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£4,625
Foundation degree		£6,150
Foundation year / Year 0		*
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		*
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*

Table 8a - Statistical targets and milestones relating to your applicants, entrants or student body

Reference number	Stage of the lifecycle (drop-down menu)	Main target type (drop-down menu)	Target type (drop-down menu)	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target? (drop-down menu)	Baseline year (drop-down menu)	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
								2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	
T16a_01	Other/Multiple stages	Low income background	Other statistic - Socio-economic (please give details in the next column)	Improve the baseline proportion of financially disadvantaged students receiving full or partial state support, participating in our higher education courses (Source: College Data)	No	2013-14	46%	50%	50%	51%	51%	51%	
T16a_02	Access	Low income background	Other statistic - Socio-economic (please give details in the next column)	Improve the baseline proportion of higher education students from disadvantaged areas (Source: College Data)	No	2013-14	8.3%	12%	13%	15%	16%	16%	The College's growth in numbers of students from Polar 3 Quintile 1 postcodes has slowed down in the last 2 years. The target for 2022-23 has therefore been maintained at the 2021-22 rate.
T16a_03	Access	Mature	HESA T2a - (Mature, full-time, all undergraduate entrants)	Improve the baseline proportion of higher education students age 25+ (Source: UCAS Data)	No	2013-14	26%	30%	30%	31%	31%	31%	The College's numbers of mature students has dropped in the last 3 years, mainly due to a consistent decline in part-time recruitment. This trend is being addressed by the development of on-line resources and recruitment to our Access to Land-Based Studies targeting adult career changers with a look to them joining our HE cohort a year later. The target for 2022-23 is therefore maintained at 2021-22's level.
T16a_04	Access	Disabled	Other statistic - Disabled (please give details in the next column)	Improve the baseline proportion of students with physical and/or learning disability in higher education courses (Source: UCAS Data)	No	2013-14	9.3%	14%	15%	15%	15%	15%	The College's improvement in recruitment of disabled students has not been as rapid as had been hoped, so although recruitment continues to improve and the target is still appropriate, we have slowed the pace of improvement via the milestones to better reflect progress to date.
T16a_05	Student success	Other (please give details in Description column)	HESA T3a - No longer in HE after 1 year (All, full-time, first degree entrants)	Achieve in-year Year 1 retention for students within the target groups (Source: College Data)	No	2013-14	74.0%	87.5%	90.0%	91%	93%	93%	The College's in-year retention rates have already exceeded the 90% target set for 2019-20, due to improved pastoral and in-class support.
T16a_06	Student success	Other (please give details in Description column)	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	Improve attendance rates of students from the target groups (Source: College Data)	No	2013-14	90%	92.0%	92.5%	92.5%	93%	93%	
T16a_07	Student success	Disabled	Other statistic - Disabled (please give details in the next column)	Meet the College targets, set out in its Single Equality Scheme, to close the gaps in retention for groups of students with either disabilities or learning difficulties	No	2013-14	8%	2%	2%	2%	0%	0%	The college has developed a Single Equality Scheme to reduce gaps in performance between students from minority groups and the wider cohort, and this activity has been successful in improving the retention for disabled HE students to be within the original target set. The differential of 0%, if not a negative value, is now an achievable target.
T16a_08	Access	Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)	HESA T1a - Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3) (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	Increase the proportion of young level 3 land-based students from POLAR3 quintile 1 and 2 who progress to full-time HE	No	2015-16	20%	24%	26%	28%	30%	30%	
T16a_09	Progression	Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)	Other statistic - Progression to employment or further study (please give details in the next column)	Increase the proportion of students from POLAR3 quintile 1 and 2 who progress from Foundation Degree to BSc Top-Up	No	2015-16	61%	63%	64%	65%	66%	67%	
T16a_10	Success	Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)	HESA T3b - No longer in HE after 1 year & in low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR 3) (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	Decrease the proportion of young full-time students from POLAR3 quintile 1 and 2 who are no longer in HE after 1 year	No	2016-17	42%	20%	20%	18%	16%	16%	
T16a_11	Access	Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)	HESA T1b - Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3) (Young, full-time, undergraduate entrants)	Increase the numbers of young full-time entrants from POLAR3 quintile 1 and 2 neighbourhoods	No	2016-17	19	25	26	27	28	30	
T16a_12	Access	Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)	HESA T1b - Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3) (Young, full-time, undergraduate entrants)	Increase the numbers of young full-time male entrants from POLAR3 quintile 1 and 2 neighbourhoods	No	2016-17	4	8	9	10	11	12	

