



ICON College of Technology and Management Access and Participation Plan (APP) 2022/23 – 2026/27

ICON College of Technology and Management is an independent Higher Education provider in East London, offering Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) across its four departments (Business and Management, Health and Social Care, Information Technology, and Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Management) and Bachelor Degrees validated by Falmouth University in Business and Management, Computing and Tourism and Hospitality. We have 1200 Higher Education students studying on full-time programmes. The College received a Silver Award in the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework, in recognition of its performance consistently above benchmark for all student groups.

Our Access and Participation Plan (APP) sets out our commitment to widen access to students from under-represented groups, and to continue to ensure they experience inclusive and high-quality Higher Education with the same high levels of continuation, attainment, completion and progression to employment and further study as in the wider student population.

The APP has been developed in consultation with all College stakeholders (students, staff and Governors) and will be kept under review by the Board of Governance, which has overall responsibility for its implementation.

1. Assessment of Performance

We have analysed our performance in relation to access, continuation, attainment and progression to meaningful employment and further study for the following groups of underrepresented home undergraduates¹, in relation to a relevant comparator group:

- Students from the most deprived areas, measured by the English Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)², quintile 1, compared with students from the most advantaged areas (quintile 5);
- Students from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME)³ groups, compared to White students;
- Mature students⁴ compared to young students; and
- Students with disabilities, compared to students with no known disabilities.

We also examined some intersections of disadvantage, and report on students who are both BAME and from IMDQ1 groups.

The analysis is based on the Office for Students (OfS) Access and Participation Data Dashboard, published 7 May 2020 and last updated 24 March 2022. In the OfS data, attainment is measured by the achievement of a level 6 qualification. ICON College did not offer Level 6 courses until the 2020-21 academic year so data for attainment in these terms will not be available until data for

¹ This focus is determined by the Office for Students (OfS). We also examine our international students, but this is not reported in the APP.

² There is insufficient data available about ICON students from POLAR4 quintiles.

³ We acknowledge that this a contested term, and where possible we refer to specific ethnic groups. OfS data uses this categorisation, and as a small provider it is not always possible to break the data down further due to the small numbers.

⁴ Mature students are defined as those aged 21 or over on 31st August of the year of entry to HE. Young students are those aged under 21 on entry to HE.

2020-21 is released. Data on the progression of our students to highly-skilled employment and further study is limited due to small numbers, but we have analysed the evidence available with respect to socio-economic status (IMD) and ethnicity. We have also drawn on internal College data about attainment, and we have identified some gaps, especially in relation to attainment and progression, and will be looking to further develop our knowledge about our students through surveys and qualitative research.

1.1 Assessment of performance

Table 1: Summary assessment

Lifecycle stage	Access	Continuation	Attainment	Progression
Target group				
IMD	Commitment to monitor and increase	Yes	Commitment to monitor attainment outcomes	No
BAME	Yes	Yes	Asian students	No
Mature	No	No	No data	No data
Disabled	Yes	No data	No data	No data
Care leavers	Yes	No data	No data	No data
IMD/BAME	Yes	Yes	No data	No data

Key: Yes = underperformance or gap; No = no underperformance or gap. The dark blue shading indicates that a target has been set.

The College has had no self-declared care leavers in the last five years, or students from other groups known to experience barriers (carers, people estranged from their families, people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, refugees and children from military families).

Based on this analysis, presented in more detail below, we have set ourselves eight targets.

1.2 Higher Education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

1.2.1 Access

The majority of our entrants are mature students so our analysis for this section focuses on data from the English Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD, 2019) rather than the POLAR4 (Participation of Local Areas) categories of local area participation, as this is based on young entrants.

Table 2 presents data on deprivation over the most recent five years of data currently available. This analysis shows the following trends:

- Students from the two most deprived quintiles (IMDQ1&2) are over-represented at ICON College compared to students from the least deprived quintiles (IMDQ4&5): 57% compared to 21% in 2020-1.
- The proportion of students from the most deprived areas (IMDQ1) dropped by just 1 percentage point between 2016-17 (22%) and 2020-21 (21%).
- At the same time, the proportion of students from the second most deprived areas (IMDQ2) dropped from 44% to 36% (this compares to a slight drop from 25.5% to 24.7% for 'All English HE Providers')
- The College will consider how to attract more students from the most deprived areas; and how to ensure the downwards trajectory for the IMDQ2 areas does not continue. This however is a commitment rather than a target as our recruitment of students from IMDQ1 and IMDQ2 is above the proportional level (i.e. 20% per quintile), and recruitment from IMDQ1&2 accounts for 57% of our students.

Table 2: Proportion of Entrants (Full-Time or Apprenticeship: 'Other Undergraduates') at ICON College in each IMD 2019 Quintile (with Statistics for 'All English HE Providers' in Brackets for Comparison)

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20⁵	2020-21⁶
IMDQ1 (most deprived)	22.0% (27.1%)	22.0% (27.6%)	18.0% (27.7%)	21.0% (27.9%)	21.0% (28.4%)
IMDQ2	44.0% (25.5%)	42.0% (25.8%)	42.0% (25.2%)	40.0% (24.4%)	36.0% (24.7%)
IMDQ3	24.0% (19.2%)	23.0% (18.9%)	24.0% (19.1%)	23.0% (19.0%)	23.0% (18.9%)
IMDQ4	7.0% (15.4%)	9.0% (15.3%)	12.0% (15.5%)	11.0% (16.2%)	13.0% (15.5%)
IMDQ5 (least deprived)	3.0% (12.8%)	4.0% (12.3%)	4.0% (12.6%)	4.0% (12.4%)	8.0% (12.5%)

Source: OfS APP data May 2020 (updated March 2022)

1.2.2 Success: Non-continuation

The data on student continuation one year after commencement show that, for the most recent year for which data are available (2019-20) continuation rates for IMD quintiles 1 and 2 are generally lower than quintiles 3, 4 (although not for IMDQ5) over this period. This is consistent with the picture when looking at 'All English HE Providers'. Meaningful continuation data for young entrants (POLAR4 categories) are not available due to low numbers. These data are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Continuation Rate of Entrants (Full-Time or Apprenticeship: 'Other Undergraduates') at ICON College in each IMD 2019 Quintile (with Statistics for 'All English HE Providers' in Brackets for Comparison)

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
IMDQ1 (most deprived)	85.0% (78.7%)	79.0% (78.2%)	89.0% (76.5%)	86.0% (78.2%)	87.0% (80.9%)
IMDQ2	93.0% (80.1%)	83.0% (79.6%)	87.0% (77.4%)	88.0% (80.5%)	86.0% (83.7%)
IMDQ3	91.0% (82.4%)	84.0% (82.3%)	89.0% (81.0%)	90.0% (84.2%)	90.0% (85.4%)
IMDQ4	80.0% (82.9%)	DP (85.1%)	95.0% (83.6%)	92.0% (85.6%)	89.0% (86.5%)
IMDQ5 (least deprived)	N (85.3%)	DP (85.1%)	90.0% (85.8%)	85.0% (87.5%)	DP (87.2%)

Source: OfS APP data May 2020 (updated March 2022)

DP= The information has been suppressed for data protection reasons (the sample is small, so individuals could potentially be identified)

N= The data have been suppressed as there are fewer than 25 students in the population

The College therefore has a target to improve the continuation rate of students from IMDQ1 compared to IMDQ4.

1.2.3 Success: Attainment

The OfS dataset contains no attainment data for HND students, but an analysis of internal data (Table 4) suggests no statistically significant variation between IMD quintiles for measures of

⁵ Data in this column are correct as per OfS APP data, although total is 99%.

⁶ Data in this column are correct as per OfS APP data, although total is 99%.

'good' attainment (Merit or Distinction). The relatively low numbers in this analysis amplify the effect of marginal differences between quintiles and inhibit the extent to which meaningful conclusions can be drawn. We therefore commit to continue to monitor the differential attainment of students from IMDQs.

Table 4: Attainment of Entrants at ICON College in each IMD 2019 Quintile, 2018-9 and 2019-20.

	2018-19				2019-20			
	Fail	Pass	Merit	Distinction	Fail	Pass	Merit	Distinction
IMDQ1	1%	73%	21%	4%	1%	79%	15%	4%
IMDQ2	6%	74%	17%	4%	0%	90%	9%	1%
IMDQ3	6%	75%	14%	5%	1%	85%	14%	0%
IMDQ4	3%	74%	21%	3%	0%	81%	19%	0%
IMDQ5	13%	81%	6%	0%	0%	93%	7%	0%
Population (rounded)	20	340	80	15	5	400	55	5

Source: ICON College internal data

1.2.4 Progression to employment or further study

The College's progression performance according to IMDQ data (Table 5) shows that in the most recent year for which data are available, 2016-17, students from the lowest quintiles (Q1 and Q2) perform better than students from higher quintiles, although comparative data relate only to IMDQ3. The data for 2015-16 show the same pattern (although the progression rates are lower for all three compared with 2016-17). This opposite is true when looking at the statistics for 'All English HE Providers', where we see that IMDQ3 students perform better than those in the two lowest quintiles during the same period.

Meaningful progression data for young entrants (POLAR4 categories) are not available for ICON College due to low numbers.

Table 5 Proportion of Students (Full-Time or Apprenticeship: 'Other Undergraduates') from ICON College Going into Highly Skilled Employment or Higher-level Study in each IMD 2019 Quintile (with Statistics for 'All English HE Providers' in Brackets for Comparison)

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
IMDQ1 (most deprived)	N/A (74.6%)	N/A (73.0%)	N/A (R)	57.0% (65.1%)	77.0% (68.7%)
IMDQ2	N/A (76.8%)	N/A (72.7%)	N/A (68.6%)	55.0% (65.9%)	81.0% (68.5%)
IMDQ3	N/A (78.4%)	N/A (72.9%)	N/A (70.3%)	45.0% (68.4%)	75.0% (70.6%)
IMDQ4	N/A (76.7%)	N/A (74.1%)	N/A (71.4%)	N (68.9%)	DP (71.7%)
IMDQ5 (least deprived)	N/A (77.2%)	N/A (75.5%)	N/A (71.6%)	DP (72.0%)	R (71.3%)

Source: OFS APP data May 2020 (updated March 2022)

N/A= No data available

DP= The information has been suppressed for data protection reasons (the sample is small, so individuals could potentially be identified)

N= The data have been suppressed as there are fewer than 25 students in the population

R= The provider participated in the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey but has not met the response rate threshold (for progression indicators only)

1.3 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students

1.3.1 Access

Data relating to the participation of students from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Groups (BAME) are presented in Table 6; these include the proportion from each group and in total. This shows that BAME students are under-represented compared to White students, and the proportion of BAME students has decreased from 37% to 9% between 2016/17 and 2020/21. In 2020-21, the figure for 'All English Providers' for total BAME entrants was 24.6%. The College has therefore set itself a target to halt this decline, and increase the participation of BAME students.

Table 6: Entrants by Ethnicity (Full-Time or Apprenticeship: 'Other Undergraduates') at ICON College⁷ (with Statistics for 'All English HE Providers' in Brackets for Comparison)

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Asian	9.0% (11.5%)	10.0% (11.4%)	6.0% (10.6%)	8.0% (10.5%)	5.0% (10.0%)
Black	28.0% (12.4%)	15.0% (13.3%)	9.0% (12.0%)	4.0% (9.2%)	4.0% (9.6%)
Mixed	DP (3.4%)	1.0% (3.4%)	1.0% (3.5%)	1.0% (3.1%)	DP (3.4%)
Other	DP (2.1%)	1.0% (1.9%)	0.0% (1.9%)	1.0% (1.9%)	DP (1.6%)
BAME total	37% (29.4%)	27% (30.0%)	16% (28.0%)	14% (24.7%)	9% (24.6%)
White	63.0% (70.6%)	73.0% (70.0%)	84.0% (71.9%)	87.0% (75.2%)	91.0% (75.5%)

Source: OFS APP data May 2020 (updated March 2022)

N/A= No data available

DP= The information has been suppressed for data protection reasons (the sample is small, so individuals could potentially be identified)

N= The data have been suppressed as there are fewer than 25 students in the population

R= The provider participated in the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey but has not met the response rate threshold (for progression indicators only)

1.3.2 Success: Non-continuation

Table 7 shows the College's performance with regards to the continuation of students from different ethnic groups. While there has been noticeable improvement in the continuation rates of our Asian students, and fluctuating performance for White and Black students, overall BAME students have consistently lower rates of continuation than White students (an average of 77.5% of BAME students continued, compared with 89% of White students), we will work to eradicate the gaps between BAME and White students (this gap also exists when we look at the national picture, but is less pronounced).

⁷ Not all percentages add up to 100% due to rounding (this also applies to the national data 2018-19, 2019-20 & 2020-21)

Table 7: Continuation One Year After Commencement (Full-Time or Apprenticeship: 'Other Undergraduates') for ICON College Students by Ethnicity (with Statistics for 'All English HE Providers' in Brackets for Comparison)

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Asian	82.0% (81.3%)	70.0% (78.9%)	85.0% (73.9%)	85.0% (76.4%)	85.0% (81.6%)
Black	90.0% (76.6%)	82.0% (74.6%)	87.0% (70.9%)	79.0% (75.6%)	70.0% (78.1%)
Mixed	DP (76.9%)	N/A (75.0%)	DP (76.3%)	DP (75.0%)	DP (81.6%)
Other	DP (79.0%)	DP (79.0%)	DP (75.0%)	DP (78.0%)	DP (79.0%)
BAME Average*	86.0% (78.5%)	76.0% (76.9%)	86.0% (74.0%)	82.0% (76.3%)	77.5% (80.1%)
White	90.0% (83.2%)	86.0% (83.8%)	89.0% (83.6%)	90.0% (85.1%)	89.0% (85.6%)

Source: OFS APP data May 2020 (updated March 2022)

N/A= No data available

DP= The information has been suppressed for data protection reasons (the sample is small, so individuals could potentially be identified)

N= The data have been suppressed as there are fewer than 25 students in the population

R= The provider participated in the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey but has not met the response rate threshold (for progression indicators only)

*This figure was calculated by averaging the figures for progression for BAME categories where available

1.3.3 Success: Attainment

The OfS dataset contains no attainment data for HND students. An analysis of internal attainment data (Table 8) shows the proportions of students from different ethnic groups that achieved a “good outcome” (Merit or Distinction) in 2018/19 and 2019/20 respectively. In both years students from the Black group showed a higher rate of attainment in this analysis, and Asian students have a lower rate of attainment, although the total student numbers in the Black and Asian categories are significantly lower than the White category making the percentage disproportionately sensitive to small changes in absolute values. In light of these data, we will target the improvement of Asian student attainment.

Table 8 HND Merit/Distinction for Asian, Black and White Ethnic Groups at ICON

	2018/19			2019/20		
	Percentage	Total with Merit/Distinction	Population (rounded)	Percentage	Total with Merit/Distinction	Population (rounded)
White	16%	47.2	295	13%	46	355
Black	37%	40.7	110	17%	11	65
Asian	8%	3.2	40	12%	5.4	45

Source: ICON College internal data

1.3.4 Progression to employment or further study

The College has limited data on destinations after leaving (Table 9) but what data there are suggests Black and Asian students out-perform White students. The sample sizes for ICON are relatively small in this analysis so no definitive conclusions can be drawn. We commit to undertake further work to explore the progression outcomes of our BAME students. This work will start in 2022-23 and the internal data collection and research will be completed by the end of 2023/24; full data on progression will be available in the APP dashboard in 2028.

Table 9: Progression into Highly Skilled Employment or Higher-Level Study (Full-Time or Apprenticeship: 'Other Undergraduates') of ICON College Students by Ethnicity (with Statistics for 'All English HE Providers' in Brackets for Comparison)

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Asian	N/A (76.5%)	N/A (72.0%)	N/A (71.9%)	60.0% (62.3%)	N (67.3%)
Black	N/A (77.3%)	N/A (76.3%)	N/A (R)	67.0% (66.2%)	83.0% (71.6%)
Mixed	N/A (77.0%)	N/A (75.0%)	N/A (R)	DP (R)	DP (71.0%)
Other	N/A (77.0%)	N/A (R)	N/A (R)	N (69.0%)	R (R)
BAME Average	N/A (77.0%)	N/A (74.4%)	N/A (71.9%)	63.5% (65.8%)	83.0% (70.0%)
White	N/A (76.6%)	N/A (73.4%)	N/A (69.8%)	35.0% (68.8%)	70.0% (69.9%)

Source: OFS APP data May 2020 (updated March 2022)

N/A= No data available

DP= The information has been suppressed for data protection reasons (the sample is small, individuals could potentially be identified)

N= The data have been suppressed as there are fewer than 25 students in the population

R= The provider participated in the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey but has not met the response rate threshold (for progression indicators only)

1.4 Mature⁸ students

1.4.1 Access

The College has specialised in the mature student market in recent years and has consistently recruited over 95% of our intake from this group (Table 10). This is a much higher proportion than the 64.7% of mature students recruited by 'All English HE Providers' in 2020-21.

Table 10: Proportion of Mature (21 and Over) and Young (under 21) Students (Full-Time or Apprenticeship: 'Other Undergraduates') at ICON College (with Statistics for 'All English HE Providers' in Brackets for Comparison)

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Mature (21 and over)	96.0% (61.3%)	96.0% (62.2%)	98.0% (64.0%)	95.0% (63.1%)	95.0% (64.7%)
Young (under 21)	4.0% (38.7%)	4.0% (37.8%)	2.0% (36.0%)	5.0% (36.9%)	5.0% (35.3%)

Source: OFS APP data May 2020 (updated March 2022)

1.4.2 Success: Non-continuation

The College is proud of its continuation rates for mature students (Table 11). Our mature students have consistently enjoyed a continuation rate between 85% and 90%. The limited data we have suggest that our mature students continue at a higher rate than our young students, and mature students nationally.

⁸ Throughout this analysis, Mature students are defined as those aged 21 or over on 31 August of the year of entry to the programme. Young students are those aged under 21.

Table 11: Proportion of Mature (21 and Over) and Young (under 21) Students Continuing One Year After Commencement (Full-Time or Apprenticeship: 'Other Undergraduates') at ICON College (with Statistics for 'All English HE Providers' in Brackets for Comparison)

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Mature (21 and over)	90.0% (81.3%)	84.0% (81.6%)	89.0% (78.8%)	89.0% (81.6%)	88.0% (84.0%)
Young (under 21)	N (80.9%)	N (80.9%)	85.0% (81.7%)	N (83.4%)	80.0% (84.4%)

Source: OFS APP data May 2020 (updated March 2022)

N= The data have been suppressed as there are fewer than 25 students in the population

1.4.3 Success: Attainment

Given our small numbers of young students we have limited data available to compare their attainment with that of mature students, and the OfS data does not include details on the attainment of HND students. The internal data available for young and mature students is presented in Table 12. This identifies that mature students are more likely to achieve a Merit or Distinction than young students. We will monitor comparative attainment by age in future years.

Table 12: HND Merit/Distinction for Mature students at ICON

	2018/19			2019/20*		
	Percentage	Total with Merit/Distinction	Population (rounded)	Percentage	Total with Merit/Distinction	Population (rounded)
Young	6%	1	18	0	0	24
Mature	10%	77	747	7%	44	647

* Excluding results for 112 students who enrolled in June 2020

Source: ICON College internal data

1.4.4 Progression to employment or further study

With regards to progression, we only have limited data available, and we are not able to compare the progression of mature students with young students (Table 12). We note that in 2016-17 our mature students had a progression rate of 78%, which is a significant improvement from the previous year, and more in-line with national data.

Table 12: Proportion of Mature (21 and Over) and Young (under 21) Progressing into Skilled Employment or Further Study (Full-Time or Apprenticeship: 'Other Undergraduates') from ICON College (with Statistics for 'All English HE Providers' in Brackets for Comparison)

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Mature (21 and over)	N/A (81.2%)	N/A (79.8%)	N/A (75.3%)	56.0% (70.1%)	78.0% (72.8%)
Young (under 21)	N/A (73.3%)	N/A (68.9%)	N/A (66.5%)	DP (65.6%)	R (67.3%)

Source: OFS APP data May 2020 (updated March 2022)

N/A= No data available

DP= The information has been suppressed for data protection reasons (the sample is small, individuals could potentially be identified)

N= The data have been suppressed as there are fewer than 25 students in the population

R= The provider participated in the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey but has not met the response rate threshold (for progression indicators only)

1.5 Disabled students

1.5.1 Access

The data in Table 13 suggest that the College has a very low proportion of students with disabilities compared with the wider sector. For the five years of data analysed it is consistently around one or two percent of the entrants. The numbers are too small to draw any conclusions around different types of disability.

Table 13: Proportion of Students Reporting a Disability (Full-Time or Apprenticeship: 'Other Undergraduates') at ICON College (with Statistics for 'All English HE Providers' in Brackets for Comparison)

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Disability Reported	DP (13.9%)	2.0% (14.3%)	2.0% (15.6%)	1.0% (16.8%)	2.0% (16.8%)
No Disability Reported	DP (86.1%)	98.0% (85.7%)	98.0% (84.4%)	99.0% (83.2%)	98.0% (83.2%)

Source: OfS APP data May 2020 (updated March 2022)

DP= The information has been suppressed for to data protection reasons (the sample is small, individuals could potentially be identified)

In addition to the actual performance in recruiting students with disabilities we think there are potentially issues around the extent to which the declaration of disabilities – and subsequent data capture and assurance – provide an accurate picture of the situation.

The College will therefore set itself a target to improve the access of students with all types of disabilities, and to improve disclosure of disabilities and access to support.

1.5.2 Success and progression

The analysis of continuation and progression data for students with disabilities is unavailable due to data protection issues stemming from the small numbers involved. As the numbers of students with declared disabilities increase, we will monitor the continuation, attainment and progression of these students in comparison to students without a declared disability at the College.

1.6 Care leavers and care-experienced young people

To date ICON College has not collected data on whether students are care leavers or care experienced, and therefore is not in a position to assess its performance for this group at present. The College is, however, familiar with the external quantitative and qualitative evidence describing the experiences of care leavers and indicating the challenges faced by them in all stages of the lifecycle.

In summary, care leavers and care experienced young people are much less likely to access higher education, and the sector evidence finds that they have a lower rate of continuation than students who have not been in care. Being care experienced also correlates with lower attainment rates, although not necessarily progression into highly-skilled employment or further, higher-level, study. Care leavers experience a range of challenges across the student lifecycle, including insufficient attainment in school to facilitate access, lack of appropriate guidance, advice and role models to encourage progression to HE, low aspirations or concerns about the cost of studying in higher education, difficulties accessing financial support, and securing affordable, year-round accommodation (including lacking a parental guarantor).

We will be using the quantitative evidence, in particular the headline figures provided, for example, by the OfS⁹ to enable us to begin to assess our own performance. We will do this at all stages of the lifecycle (Access, Success – both continuation and attainment - and Progression) from September 2022. We will use the NNCEL recommended definition on our College application documents and in our annual student enrolment and re-enrolment forms. We will use our outreach, induction, personal tutoring and student services to encourage students to disclose their needs and receive support which will include financial assistance.

1.7 Intersections of disadvantage

We have examined various intersections of disadvantage: sex and deprivation, ethnicity and IMD, and age and ethnicity. With regards to sex and deprivation ICON College performs well; we have identified gaps in our performance in relation to ethnicity and IMD, but there is insufficient College data to examine age and ethnicity.

1.7.1 IMD and Ethnicity: Access

Table 14 shows the intersection between ethnicity and IMD. It identifies that there is a gap in the number of non-White students from IMDQ1&2 that are being recruited compared with White students from IMDQ1&2 (and compared to the sector), therefore increasing the number of BAME students from IMDQ1&2 is a target.

Table 14: Access Proportions: Intersection of Deprivation Quintile (IMD 2019) and Ethnicity (Full-Time or Apprenticeship: ‘Other Undergraduates’) for Students at ICON College (with Statistics for ‘All English HE Providers’ in Brackets for Comparison)

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Quintiles 1 & 2 & all ethnicities except White	31.0% (21.5%)	22.0% (22.2%)	13.0% (20.8%)	10.0% (18.2%)	7.0% (17.8%)
Quintiles 1&2 & White	35.0% (30.8%)	41.0% (30.9%)	47.0% (31.9%)	51.0% (34.2%)	50.0% (35.2%)
Quintiles 3,4 or 5 & all ethnicities except White	7.0% (8.3%)	5.0% (8.1%)	3.0% (7.4%)	3.0% (6.8%)	2.0% (6.8%)
Quintiles 3, 4 or 5 & White	27.0% (39.5%)	32.0% (38.8%)	36.0% (39.8%)	36.0% (40.9%)	41.0% (40.2%)

Source: OfS APP data May 2020 (updated March 2022)

1.6.2 IMD and Ethnicity: Continuation

Analysis of continuation rates for this intersection, IMD and ethnicity (Table 15) demonstrates that there is a continuation gap of 14 percentage points between BAME students from IMDQ1&2 (76%) and White students from IMDQ3,4&5 (90%) (and there is a gap compared to the sector). ICON College will aim to reduce this gap.

⁹ OfS (2021) “Consistency needed – Care experienced students and higher education” Insight 8, April 2021.
Bristol: OfS
©ICTM

Table 15: Continuation Rates: Intersection of Deprivation Quintile (IMD 2019) and Ethnicity (Full-Time or Apprenticeship: 'Other Undergraduates') for Students at ICON College (with Statistics for 'All English HE Providers' in Brackets for Comparison)

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Quintiles 1 & 2 & all ethnicities except White	89.0% (78.2%)	80.0% (75.9%)	86.0% (72.2%)	82.0% (74.8%)	76.0% (79.3%)
Quintiles 1&2 & White	92.0% (81.5%)	83.0% (81.6%)	88.0% (81.4%)	89.0% (82.9%)	88.0% (83.9%)
Quintiles 3,4 or 5 & all ethnicities except White	90.0% (79.6%)	N (78.5%)	85.0% (74.8%)	80.0% (79.3%)	DP (82.0%)
Quintiles 3, 4 or 5 & White	86.0% (84.5%)	88.0% (85.4%)	91.0% (85.3%)	91.0% (86.9%)	90.0% (87.0%)

Source: OfS APP data May 2020 (updated March 2022)

1.8 Other groups experiencing barriers in Higher Education, including Care Leavers

The College does not at present have students from other groups where there are known barriers to Higher Education including care leavers and care experienced students, carers, people estranged from their families, people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, refugees and children from military families. We believe that the strategic aims, objectives and measures being implemented in this APP will contribute to diversifying our student population and ensuring their success, but we are not setting any targets for these groups in this APP as our work is still emergent and we are developing our capacity.

1.9 Data and evidence

OfS APP dashboard data are not available for certain target groups, or in relation to attainment, where the data are limited in certain areas, e.g., progression. We have utilised internal attainment data for our HND students, but again we face limitations due to numbers. We also lack institutional data (surveys and qualitative evidence) that we can draw upon. We propose to improve our internal data and evidence collection to help us better assess our performance, understand our students' experiences and improve their outcomes.

2. Strategic aims and objectives

2.1 Strategic aims

Self-assessment of our performance has highlighted our areas of strength but also identified areas for improvement. We have used it both to refine our strategic aims and objectives, and to set new targets where we consider we are under-performing or where gaps have emerged between different student groups. Our strategic aims are to:

- i. Increase attainment to support access to HE by groups that are under-represented nationally and in the College;
- ii. Deliver a high quality and inclusive learning experience and eliminate gaps between groups in relation to continuation, attainment and progression;
- iii. Improve our understanding of our students by collecting and monitoring more data and thoroughly researching the student experience;
- iv. Evaluate our interventions and use this learning to improve our impact, and also to share our learning with the wider HE sector.

2.2 Target groups

Based on the assessment of our performance summarised in Table 1 (page 2) above, we have set ourselves the following targets:

- a. To increase the proportion of BAME students accessing Higher Education at ICON College.
- b. To increase the proportion of entrants to ICON College that disclose a disability.
- c. To increase the proportion of students from IMD1&2/BAME groups entering the College.
- d. To eliminate the continuation gap between students from the most deprived areas (IMD Q1) and less deprived areas (IMDQ4¹⁰).
- e. To reduce the continuation gap between Black students and White students.
- f. To eliminate the continuation gap between Asian students and White students.
- g. To increase the attainment of Asian students.
- h. To reduce the continuation gap between IMDQ1&2/BAME and IMDQ3,4&5/White students.

In addition, we commit to:

- i. Collect data about whether or not students are care experienced and ensure that our outreach, induction, personal tutoring and student services encourage disclosure and provide support.
- j. Improve the College's capacity to collect and analyse data and qualitative evidence about the experience and outcomes of students from target groups, to address any gaps and by 2026/27 to evaluate the effectiveness of our interventions.
- k. Monitor the success (continuation and attainment) of disabled students and by 2026/27 to take action if it varies from non-disabled students.
- l. Monitor the success and progression of mature students as the number of young students increases.
- m. Understand more about the progression outcomes of our students, to ensure they progress to graduate employment or further study at a higher level, and that there are no gaps between our target groups. This work will be completed by 2026/27.

2.3 Aims and objectives

2.3.1 Access for students who are under-represented at the College

Aim: To increase the proportion of students accessing Higher Education at ICON College from groups who are currently under-represented.

Objectives:

- To increase the proportion of BAME students accessing Higher Education at ICON College by 2026/27.
- To increase the proportion of disabled students (who disclose a disability) entering Higher Education at ICON College by 2026/27.
- To increase the proportion of students from IMD1&2/BAME groups by 2026/27.

2.3.2 Equity in continuation

Aim: To eliminate gaps in continuation rates between groups and promote equity.

Objectives:

¹⁰ This is the highest continuation rate by IMD quintiles.

- To eliminate the continuation gap between students from the most deprived areas (IMDQ1) and IMDQ4¹¹ by 2026/27.
- To reduce the continuation gap between Black students and White students by 2026/27.
- To eliminate the continuation gap between Asian students and White students by 2026/27.
- To reduce the continuation gap between IMDQ1&2/BAME and IMDQ3,4&5/White by 2026/27.

2.3.3 Equity in attainment

Aim: To ensure that there are no awarding gaps between student groups.

Objective: To increase the attainment of Asian students.

2.3.4 Data, research and evaluation capacity

Aim: To improve the College's capacity to collect and analyse data and qualitative evidence about the experience and outcomes of students from target groups, and to evaluate the effectiveness of our APP interventions.

Objectives:

- To support students to disclose relevant information about disability, care and other characteristics (immediately and ongoing).
- To improve the College's internal data system and data processing capacity by the end of 2022/23.
- To collect qualitative evidence about the attainment and progression of students from target groups by the end of 2023/24.
- To develop our evaluation skills and capacity, moving from narrative evaluation evidence to empirical enquiry evaluation in relation to our interventions by 2026/27.

2.3.5 Success of disabled students

Aim: To ensure disabled students have a high-quality learning experience and achieve equitable outcomes.

Objective: To monitor the success (continuation and attainment) of disabled students and to take action if it varies from non-disabled students by 2026/27.

2.3.6 Progression of students from all target groups

Aim: To understand more about the progression outcomes of our students, to ensure they progress to graduate employment or further study at a higher level, and that there are no gaps between our target groups.

Objectives:

- To undertake qualitative research into the progression of our students, and to analyse the data in relation to our target groups, 2023/24.
- To work to ensure positive graduate outcomes for our graduates by embedding employability skills and employment opportunities into our curriculum and providing targeted central services, 2026/27.
- To evaluate the impact of these career and employability interventions overall and in relation to each of our target groups 2026/27.

¹¹ This is the highest continuation rate by IMD quintiles.

The following section provides more detail about the strategic measures, activities, and evidence that we have drawn upon to select these approaches and why we think they are likely to achieve our aims, objectives and targets. Further details of the relationship between our strategic measures, activities, short-term benefits, medium-term outcomes and longer-term impact, and validation evidence are provided in Table 16.

3. Strategic measures

Our vision is to be an inclusive, high-quality, and independent London-based Higher Education provider, operating from our own campus within five years and progressing towards the attainment of degree awarding powers. Our mission is to:

- Provide accessible Higher Education for students aligned to socio-economic requirements and employability.
- Raise and widen educational participation in East London and beyond.
- Equip students with marketable skills for effective and rewarding careers.
- Offer an educational experience that maximises student support, thus ensuring students reach their full potential.

3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

The College is committed to a whole provider strategic approach to widening access and success. In this section we set out our overarching theory of change and strategic measures, alignment with institutional policies, and our infrastructure we have designed to implement our APP. We then detail our specific strategic measures, our student consultation, how we will monitor progress, and our evidence and evaluation strategy.

Theory of change

Our strategic approach to our APP is summarised in Diagram 1.

Diagram 1: ICON College Strategic Approach and Theory of Change



Our institution-wide approach incorporates strategic partnerships, inclusive policies, a range of embedded and specialist services (full details below) and a variety of Strategic Measures through which we aim to:

- Work in partnership with schools, pupil referral units, local authorities, community organisations and other education providers to provide outreach work to raise aspirations, increase attainment and prepare students to progress to Higher Education. This work will involve trained student ambassadors, and access to our facilities and learning resources.
- Develop and deliver an extended Induction with greater emphasis on developing community and belonging, helping students, families and communities understand more about Higher Education, and creating a safe space to disclose disabilities and additional needs and to access support.
- Deliver inclusive learning, teaching and assessment consistency across all parts of the College in line with our new strategy, and introduce new measures to increase attainment and improve equity.
- Introduce a more proactive approach to personal tutoring within a curriculum that is relevant to all students, through which tutors develop a relationship with their students and are able to enable them to fulfil their potential and access centralised services as appropriate, including additional academic skills support and assistance from the new Disability Officer.
- Embed employability skills and employment experiences into the curriculum for all students, and provide centralised careers services tailored to engage and meet the needs of students from our target groups.
- Provide financial support to students from low-income households.

These strategic measures are evidence-informed; crucially by feedback from our students, and have their approval and support. They are underpinned by internal monitoring, and formative and summative evaluation. We are developing our capacity to collect and interrogate our data, to monitor our performance, to evaluate our impact using a theory of change approach, and to disseminate our learning through publication, conferences and other routes.

We are highly committed to enabling a diverse population to access our College, to experience inclusive, high quality learning and to progress into meaningful employment and further study. The process of assessing our performance and developing our APP has reinforced the College's commitment to student diversity and success. It has stimulated us to reflect on our current situation and plan strategic changes to enable us to deliver this programme of work and achieve the targets we have set ourselves. Our current evaluation capacity is at the narrative level, and we aspire to the empirical enquiry level by the end of this APP period (2026/27).

Alignment with other strategies

Strategic plan

The College has a new Strategic Plan which has been developed to ensure that College is well governed and managed; has a culture focused on widening participation and student success; offers high quality education and qualifications that result in progression to meaningful employment; and provides the resources to achieve our goals. Its main aims are to:

- Maintain and enhance the quality of teaching and learning and the student experience as a whole.
- Offer access and opportunity to all, particularly groups of people presently under-represented in Higher Education.
- Maintain financial sustainability and provide investment for new College premises.
- Manage and govern the College effectively, ensuring the involvement of staff and students, thereby giving confidence to all stakeholders.
- Develop a more collegiate culture through an academic partnership that offers delegated authority as we aim to achieve taught degree-awarding powers.

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy

The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (2021-25) has been developed to align with our APP goals and targets. It explicitly recognises the needs of a diverse student population, and embeds the inclusivity principles set out in the 'Framework for Student Access, Retention, Attainment and Progression developed by Advance HE¹². Delivering a high-quality learning experience, which ensures the continuation and success of all of our students, eliminates attainment gaps, and facilitates meaningful progression for all students, is at the heart of this strategy. It recognizes the contribution of all staff, academic departments and professional services to the student experience. The College is embedding employer-led, challenge-based teaching and learning, through partnerships and collaborative activity with employers, alumni, industry and community organisations.

In 2019 the College was awarded Silver in the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) in recognition that most of our students achieve excellent outcomes, with the Panel making specific reference to our pastoral support and guidance system which is available to a diverse range of students, allowing them to engage fully with their studies to fulfill their academic

¹² Framework for Student Access, Retention, Attainment and Progression; Advance HE available at <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/downloads/Student%20access%2C%20retention%2C%20attainment%20and%20progression%20in%20higher%20education%20framework.pdf>

potential. The Panel also expressed its satisfaction with the College's academic support and rates of progression to employment, highly-skilled employment or further study for this group of students. The College will build upon this success and further enhance the quality of all students' learning experience.

Equal opportunities policy

ICON College is fully committed to, and conforms with the requirements of the Equality Act (2010). The College ensures that it neither directly nor indirectly discriminates against staff or students on any grounds in employment or student recruitment, and we monitor our performance. In relation to students, our Equal Opportunities policy and equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) measures are embedded in the APP, and this, and our wider work ensure that students with protected characteristics are able to access and succeed at ICON College. Specifically, on student admissions, the College is committed to ensuring that its selection, admissions and enrolment procedures actively promote equality and fairness. Students with a protected characteristic (as defined by the Equality Act 2010) will not, when they are applying for, or undertaking one of our qualifications, be disadvantaged in comparison to students who do not share that characteristic. We are increasingly aware of, and alert to, the intersection of under-represented groups with protected characteristics, and how this deepens disadvantage, and prompts the College to take further action. For example, sexual orientation may impede students from engaging or accessing support, and wider issues of discrimination and hate crime may impact on students' learning and success. The experience of students with protected characteristics, and how they intersect with our APP target groups will be explored through our qualitative and survey research.

The College ensures that our EDI policy and our APP align and interact. The equal opportunity statement in the policy underpins how we intend to implement the APP ensuring that we focus on fair and equal practices. The Management Board will report to the Board of Governance on how the equal opportunities policy impacts on our APP and this requires continuous monitoring, particularly in the light of the Equality Act 2010 and its emphasis on students with protected characteristics. We are confident that the College's policy contributes to the fulfilment of our APP objectives by:

- Ensuring the fair selection of students for admission or staff for jobs without regard to marital status, race, ethnic origin, colour, religion, sexual orientation, social background or other irrelevant distinction.
- Promoting widening participation and fair access to further and Higher Education for BAME, disabled students and disadvantaged students.
- Providing a supportive working and learning environment which enables disabled staff and students to achieve their full potential and making reasonable adjustments where necessary.
- Delivering an inclusive learning environment free from discrimination, harassment, or victimisation where all members of the College community are treated with respect and dignity.
- Incorporating protected characteristics, and their intersection with APP target groups, into our qualitative and survey research about equity in the student experience.

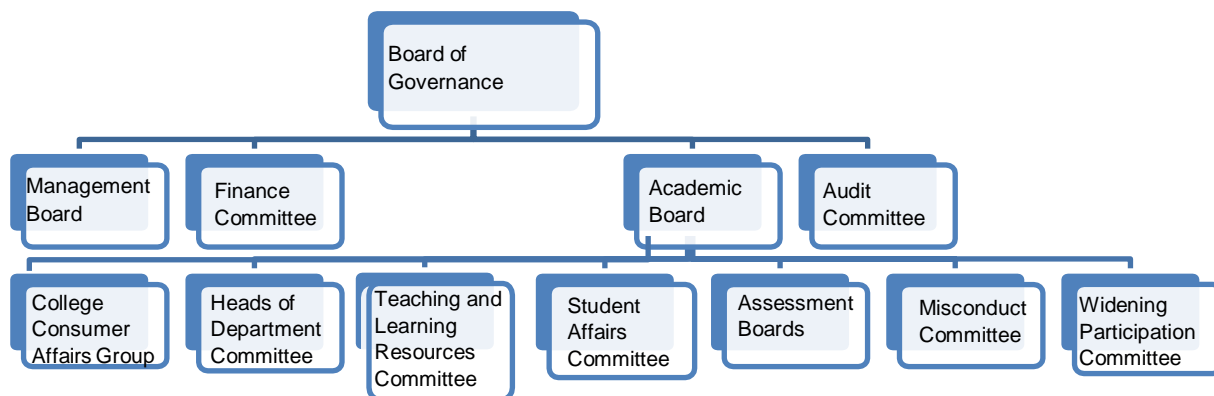
The policy requires the College to have a Widening Participation and Fair Access Manager covering equal opportunities. Over the course of the next year, the College will develop its data collection capabilities in line with the needs of our equal opportunities policy and the APP.

APP Management: Governance, financial and human resources and data infrastructure

Governance and management: we set up a unified governing body in 2020 with external membership, created an Audit Committee and established a Management Board. The Board

comprises two BAME members and three female members, one of whom is a retired academic with extensive experience of widening participation work in East London. This gives the Board the ideal composition to advise, consider and oversee our widening participation work, and each member has been actively engaged in ensuring that the approach reflected in our APP is conducive to ensuring student success. The APP Panel appointed by the Academic Board will be responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the process and its effectiveness. The Panel will meet monthly and report to the Academic Board periodically. The Management Board is responsible for the implementation of the APP and will coordinate the various groups responsible, including the Widening Participation Committee (WPC) and College Data Analysis Team (CDAT). Student representatives are on both the WPC and Academic Board, and have the opportunity to raise issues directly with these groups and to confirm or challenge any parts of the evaluation and review of the APP. Progress against APP targets will be reported at each meeting of the Board of Governance, and the Board will ensure that the resources in the Investment Plan have been made available. The Audit Committee will annually review risks relating to the APP. The Governance structure is shown in Diagram 2.

Diagram 2: ICON College Governance Structure



Financial sustainability: Our financial forecasts demonstrate viability and sustainability. The College intends to acquire our own premises in five years' time. Those premises will be tailored for our diverse student needs in particular to ensure that students with disabilities have all the physical resources and facilities needed to enable them to achieve the same levels of success as other students. This will include ramps, audio visual equipment and mentoring and support staff.

New investment in widening participation: The College committed additional funds to this area in 2020-21. These will be significantly augmented by our first OfS grant (recurring) for student access and success.

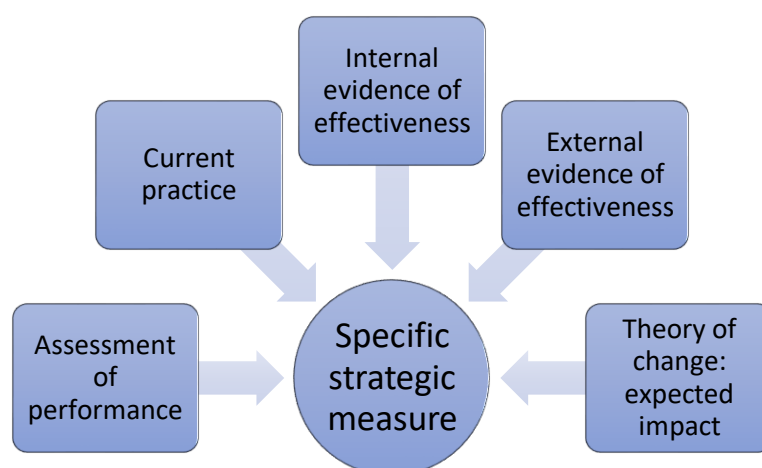
New, fully resourced, staff development strategy for academic and support staff: This will involve a training needs assessment, a new approach to Induction, a more rigorous annual appraisal system and staff development events aimed at changing our organisational culture so that we can succeed with younger, more diverse students many of whom will have particular needs and entitlements.

Data infrastructure: We are reviewing our student data system needs and how we can collect and analyse information about our students and our potential students. This includes a review of our approach to the capture of student disability data, drawing on best practice and expertise from the HE sector, with a view to ensuring the College achieves a high rate of declaration for all types of disabilities. We are investing in systems, expertise and human resources to develop our data capabilities to assist us to assess our performance and prioritise activities that will support disadvantaged students throughout their studies and on to graduate employment.

3.2 Specific strategic measures

Our specific strategic measures provide details of how we will achieve our strategic measures identified above in our theory of change. We also provide information about the evidence used to select the most appropriate activities to achieve our aims, objectives and targets. As is shown in Diagram 3, we have developed our specific strategic measures by considering our assessment of our performance, current practice, internal evidence of effectiveness, external evidence of effectiveness and our theory of change.

Diagram 3: How we developed our specific strategic measures



3.2.1 Outreach: Aspiration, attainment and preparation

We commit to (a) contribute to collaborative outreach activities in London to support access to Higher Education in general by students from all under-represented groups; and (b) to deliver a pilot programme of outreach, attainment and preparatory activities to support students that are underrepresented at ICON College to aspire to, be qualified for, and access our Higher Education provision.

To date we have allocated resources to widening access outreach work and made new appointments of experienced staff to work in the field. We are in the process of signing partnership arrangements with local schools, and have signed agreements with one local authority (Tower Hamlets Parent and Family Support Services) and community organisations (Inner London Football League), and we are discussing further collaboration. We have had an initial conversation with Linking London about contributing to wider collaboration in London.

We will recruit and train ICON student ambassadors to work with students from local schools, pupil referral units and the Tower Hamlets community to develop awareness and understanding about Higher Education, to raise attainment and support them to apply to Higher Education. The ambassadors will be trained about disabilities and support, and this will be embedded into our outreach work. Our outreach programme will include providing access to our computing facilities and learning spaces in evenings and weekends to provide a quality learning opportunity, as we know that lack of access to a quiet place to study can impact negatively on pre-HE attainment. The ambassadors will also be able to assist with some generic learning skills, such as revision and time management. This new initiative will be developed and delivered in partnership with the Parent and Family Support Service of London Borough of Tower Hamlets, three other local boroughs, and the Inner London Football League. It will be evaluated using our theory of change, drawing on mixed methods research design, by our external evaluator. Our indicative theory of change, indicators and verification evidence are shown in Table 16, but this will be developed as the details of this new initiative are worked out with our partners and our student ambassadors.

Rationale

To date our outreach work has focused on awareness raising about HE provision at ICON College in the local area. We recognise that we need to do more to achieve our access targets. Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups are strongly represented in the local population, and many are from IMDQ1&2¹³, and so we will focus on these areas.

Student ambassadors and mentors provide an effective way to assist students to develop confidence to enter HE and navigate the system, especially for students who lack familiarity with and family experience of HE¹⁴. “The relationship with student ambassadors and mentors was key to increase knowledge and awareness of Higher Education, confidence, motivation and attitudes towards education for Aimhigher Plus disadvantaged learners”¹⁵; this will be particularly relevant to students who are from BAME and IMDQ1&2/BAME groups. Research also points to the value of mentors to improving disabled students’ access¹⁶. ‘Closing the gap’ between school or college and HE, was also found to be an effective way of increasing applications from disabled students, this involves bringing students into Higher Education spaces to encourage familiarity and confidence amongst students, and to assist staff to be more aware of the needs, opinions, hopes and fears of potential students with disabilities¹⁷. The impact of mentoring is increased by the number of sessions and the quality of the relationship¹⁸; the latter is enhanced by mentors from similar backgrounds (i.e. BAME, low socio-economic and disability) when they also act as role models¹⁹. Furthermore ‘expert mentors’, who assist with the process of accessing HE, have been found to be effective at supporting students to access high-tariff institutions²⁰. We will adapt this model to support students from BAME and IMDQ1&2/BAME backgrounds, and disabled students, to select appropriate courses, make applications, apply for financial support and enrol at ICON College. We are therefore confident that working locally, using mentoring by trained ambassadors recruited from the target groups and adapting and customizing the mentoring model, will be an effective strategy to increase the participation of students from under-represented groups, especially from BAME groups, those who are both from BAME groups and IMDQ1&2, those with disabilities and care leavers. Providing details of our bursary scheme, and providing access to our students as mentors or ambassadors and our resources, will increase confidence of students from all of these groups that they can both access and succeed in HE and beyond.

Timeline

This work has already started, with formal partnership arrangements being set up. The pilot initiative will commence in 2022/23, and it will be evaluated fully during this year. Revisions will be

¹³ Office for National Statistics Annual Population Survey 2018

¹⁴ David Robinson and Viola Salvestrini (2020) The impact of interventions for widening access to Higher Education. A review of the evidence. London: Education Policy Institute

¹⁵ Aimhigher West Midlands: Impact case studies—Full report. (2019). Aimhigher West Midlands.

¹⁶ Impact Associates, (2009) Supporting progression of disabled learners to Higher Education. Manchester: Aimhigher Greater Manchester.

¹⁷ Taylor, Margaret. (2004). Widening participation into Higher Education for disabled students. Education + Training. 46. 40-48. 10.1108/00400910410518214.

¹⁸ O’Sullivan, K., Mulligan, R., Kuster, M., Smith, R., & Hannon, C. (2017). A college focused mentoring programme for students in socio-economically disadvantaged schools: The impact of mentoring relationship and frequency on college-going confidence, application efficacy and aspirations. Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning, 19(2), 113–141.

¹⁹ Ibid O’Sullivan et al 2017; Koshy, V., & Smith, C. (2019). The Urban Scholars Programme: Evaluation Summary. Brunel University London; Jeavans, E., & Jenkins, S. (2017). Shattering Stereotypes Pilot Project 2016/17: Final Evaluation Report. SSEPnet: South East Physics Network Outreach.

²⁰ Causeway Education. (2019a). Access Champions: Interim Evaluation Report. Causeway Education. Causeway Education. (2019b). Progression Specialist Mentoring: Pilot Programme Evaluation. Causeway Education.

made to the ambassadors' outreach programme, and it will be rolled out in subsequent years, with ongoing evaluation taking place to ensure that it is meeting its objectives and contributing to our APP targets.

3.2.2 Extended Induction

For the past ten years ICON College has provided compulsory Induction for all new students at the beginning of each semester (September and February). Induction is intended to familiarise students with institutional processes, rules and regulations of validating bodies, learning and teaching resources and student support services, and time is devoted to developing academic writing and study skills. In order to close the gaps in continuation and attainment of students from under-represented groups are successful (IMDQ1, BAME and disabled students in particular), we will further develop our Induction programmes to provide more emphasis on:

- interaction and the development of the student community and sense of belonging
- developing academic confidence and skills
- encouraging students to feel safe and disclose disability and care experience
- mental health, financial and employment issues, and other support needs.

We will offer:

- Pre-entry session academic skills session and social lunch with ambassadors and peers to build a network of support, and familiarise students and their families with the expectations of academic study.
- Project work during Induction to enable students to work in groups and get to know each other and staff, become familiar with the environment, improve study skills and build confidence.

The impact of the new Induction activities will be evaluated using our theory of change, short, medium and longer-term indicators of success and verification evidence as summarised in Table 16; these will be reviewed and revised to maximise the effectiveness of our evaluation.

Rationale

It is widely accepted that Induction promotes good student retention and success²¹. According to Thomas 2012²² Induction activities have an impact on success through: a) socialisation and formation of friendship groups, which provide a support network and promote social integration; b) informing expectations of HE and helping students to be effective learners by developing their confidence and their academic skills; and c) developing relationships with members of staff, allowing students to approach them subsequently when they need to. An effective Induction actively engages students rather than being a passive process of providing information, and it extends over a longer time period than a few days. The activities should allow students to make friends, get to know the academic staff, understand the expectations of the institution, department and programme and develop academic skills²³. Induction processes should be inclusive of disabled students, and provide information on support services as students may not have disclosed impairments at the application or enrolment stages²⁴. We will therefore develop an extended induction that includes a focus on developing community and belonging, and a safe

²¹ Moore, J., Sanders, J., & Higham, L. (2013). Literature review of research into widening participation to Higher Education [Report to HEFCE and OFFA]. AimHigher Research & Consultancy Network; Harvey, L. and Drew, S. with Smith, M. (2006) The first year experience: a literature review for the Higher Education Academy. York: Higher Education Academy.

²² 2012 'What works? Facilitating an effective transition into Higher Education', *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, 14, Special Issue, pp.4-24

²³ Ibid Thomas 2012

²⁴ Harrison, M., Hemingway, L., Sheldon, A., Pawson, R. and Barnes, C. (2009) Evaluation of Provision and Support for Disabled Students in Higher Education : a report to HEFCE and HEFCW. Leeds: Centre for Disability Studies and School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds.

space for disclosure; the pre-entry activities will target students from groups that are under-represented at the College. By specifically encouraging and monitoring the engagement of Black students and Asian students, and students from the most deprived areas in the extended induction model, we intend this measure to help us narrow eliminate our continuation gaps.

Timeline

This work builds on our existing induction work, adding a pre-entry induction event, and embedding activities to build community and belonging amongst cohorts. These new elements will be introduced in 2022/23, and evaluated during this year. Changes to the interventions will be made for 2023/24, and the work will then be evaluated again if necessary to ensure that the extended induction work is contributing to our aims, objectives and targets as anticipated.

3.2.3 Inclusive learning, teaching and assessment, fostering belonging, independence and success in HE and beyond

To improve student success, particularly continuation rates, ICON College has developed a new learning, teaching and assessment strategy (2021-25), with input from students, and which explicitly recognises the needs of a diverse student population; it embeds the inclusivity principles set out in the 'Framework for Student Access, Retention, Attainment and Progression developed by Advance HE'²⁵. We commit to introduce observation to ensure that inclusive learning and teaching is happening consistently across the College, and will introduce additional measures if these are required. The College ensures that assessment tasks provide every student with an equal opportunity²⁶ to demonstrate their achievement of learning outcomes through inclusive design wherever feasible and through individual reasonable adjustments as required on a case-by-case basis. During this APP we will introduce further proven measures to support assessment – 'fit to submit' checklists²⁷ and an assignment unpacking activity²⁸ - to ensure there are no attainment gaps between student groups. We will evaluate these interventions, and monitor the performance of our target groups, especially students from IMD Q1 and Q2, BAME students, disabled students and care leavers. We will introduce an attendance monitoring system, which will provide the capacity to pro-actively reach out to students on an individual basis. We will also undertake further qualitative research to explore the gaps relating to IMDQ1&2 students and BAME students.

Rationale

Learning, teaching and assessment are central to improving student continuation and attainment, and eliminating gaps between student groups²⁹, especially by promoting student engagement and

²⁵ Framework for Student Access, Retention, Attainment and Progression; Advance HE available at <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/downloads/Student%20access%2C%20retention%2C%20attainment%20and%20progression%20in%20higher%20education%20framework.pdf>

²⁶ ICON College Equal Opportunity Statement.

²⁷

https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjnjJ36_1AhXMEcAKHUgWDbYQFnoECAMQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fuodpress.files.wordpress.com%2F2015%2F05%2Fpres-s-fit-to-submit-assignment-checklist-pdf.pdf&usq=AOvVaw3HCgImLFcjACq1smcvyBel

²⁸ Cureton, D, Groves, M, Day, P and Williams, C (2017) Supporting student success: strategies for institutional change. University of Wolverhampton. London: Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

²⁹ Crozier, G. and Reay, D. (2008) The Socio-Cultural and Learning Experiences of Working Class Students in HE: ESRC Full Research Report. Swindon: Economic and Social Research Council; David, M., Bathmaker, A., Crozier, G. et al. (2009) Widening Participation Through Improving Learning. London and New York: Routledge; Roberts, S. (2011) Traditional practice for non-traditional students? Examining the role of pedagogy in Higher Education retention. Journal of Further and Higher Education, 35(2), 183-199.

developing a sense of belonging³⁰. Socio-economic status, ethnicity and disability can impact on students' belonging and identity in HE³¹; socio-economic status, ethnicity and disability can have a particularly significant effect on belonging³², and this can impact on academic confidence, well-being and success. Inclusive teaching takes into account the experiences and outcomes of different student groups and deliberately and proactively addresses these issues at the design and development stage of teaching, rather than reacting to individual circumstances as they arise³³. It embraces curriculum design, curriculum delivery, assessment and institutional culture and structure (e.g. values, commitment, organisation of learning and institutional processes)³⁴. Inclusive learning empowers all student to engage, belong and succeed; Marginson³⁵ states that equity is achieved through inclusion. Many students find assessment challenging, in particular, assignment briefs are often viewed as unclear and this reduces students' ability to engage effectively with the tasks³⁶, resulting in lower rates of submission and lower grades, amongst some equity groups, including socio-economic status, BAME and disabled students. Assisting students to engage effectively with the assessment process will make a major contribution to achieving equality of outcomes.

Successful implementation of attendance monitoring systems has shown in other institutions that it is an effective tool to identify students who are not engaging with their studies and require additional support. Anecdotally we know that those students are disproportionately from under-represented groups. We anticipate that attendance monitoring will successfully identify students from our target groups who may not have the social and cultural capital to pro-actively seek out support. Encouraging students to access available support sooner will increase progression or continuation. A key criterion for ultimate success will be the observable impact on continuation rates of under-represented groups. We expect that our academic support, personal tutoring and welfare support combined with attendance monitoring and the embedding of resilience building tools within the academic curriculum will be the key factors in closing the gaps in continuation for students from IMDQ1, BAME, IMDQ1&2/BAME, disabled students and care experienced students.

We expect that our approach to inclusive learning, teaching and assessment and the embedding of resilience building tools within the academic curriculum will be key issues for students from IMDQ1, BAME, IMDQ1&2/BAME, disabled and care experienced students, and help us narrow and eliminate continuation and attainment gaps.

Timeline

The new strategy is already in place and being delivered. Student attendance monitoring will be introduced from September 2022. Peer observation of teaching will be introduced from February in

³⁰ Thomas, L. (2012a) Building student engagement and belonging in Higher Education at a time of change: final report from the What Works? Student Retention & Success programme. London: Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

³¹ Thomas, L., Hill, M., O' Mahony, J. and Yorke, M. (2017) Supporting student success: Strategies for institutional change. What works? Student retention and success programme. Final report. London: Paul Hamlyn Foundation

³² Stuart, M., Lido, C. and Morgan, J. (2011): Personal stories: how students' social and cultural life histories interact with the field of Higher Education. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 30(4), 489-508

³³ Hockings, C. (2010) *Inclusive learning and teaching: a synthesis of the research*. York: Higher Education Academy; May, H and Bridger, K (2010) *Developing and embedding inclusive policy and practice in Higher Education*, York: Higher Education Academy

³⁴ Ibid Hockings 2010

³⁵ Marginson, S. (2011). Equity, status and freedom: a note on Higher Education. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 41 (1): 23-36

³⁶ Oldham, S & Dhillon, J 2012, *Student voices: perceptions of learning, assignments and achievement*, DISA Briefing Paper 12, Disparities in Student Attainment project funded by HEA.

2023, and student feedback will be collected during this semester. Qualitative research into the experience of students from our target groups (IMDQ1, BAME, and IMDQ1&2/BAME) will be undertaken during 2022/23. This will feed into the new assessment interventions that will be introduced from September 2023, and evaluated during 2023/24.

3.2.4 Personal tutoring

Our inclusive learning, teaching and assessment strategy is supported by our personal tutoring system and attendance monitoring. ICON College allocates a personal tutor to every student, and students and tutors are expected to meet once per semester. The role of a Personal Tutor incorporates academic, professional and pastoral elements. We commit to:

- Develop a more proactive model of personal tutoring to increase attendance and effectiveness of personal tutoring on student success.
- Provide tutors with further training on being proactive and on how to deal with students with special needs, such as disabled (dyslexia, mental health, etc.) students, care leavers, etc.
- Provide additional academic support for students who are at risk of non-completion or under-achievement (informed by our increased attendance monitoring).
- Monitor uptake and evaluate impact.

Rationale

Personal tutoring was identified as an effective way to improve student success in Higher Education and beyond³⁷. The What Works? programme found that effective personal tutoring can be understood to have the following characteristics: a) proactive rather than relying on students finding and accessing tutors; b) early meetings with students; c) students have a relationship with the tutor and the tutor gets to know the students; d) structured support with an explicit purpose; e) embedded into the academic experience and based at school or faculty level; f) strong academic focus; g) identifying students at risk and providing support and development; h) linked to student services, students' union and peer mentoring or similar peer scheme to provide pastoral and social support and referring students for further support where appropriate. Our proactive model will build in these features of effective practice, and be designed to support students from IMDQ1, BAME, IMDQ1&2/BAME, disabled and care experienced students.

We expect that our approach to personal tutoring combined with attendance monitoring and follow up will be key issues for students from IMDQ1, BAME, IMDQ1&2/BAME, disabled and care experienced students and help us narrow and eliminate the continuation and attainment gaps identified for these groups.

Timeline

Additional academic support for students who are at risk of non-completion or under-achievement (informed by our increased attendance monitoring) will be introduced in September 2022. During 2023 we will develop our more proactive personal tutoring model, and train tutors, for implementation from September 2023. During 2023/24 it will be evaluated in-depth, and revisions made as necessary in 2024/25.

3.2.5. Student academic and pastoral support

The College is committed to embed academic and professional development into the curriculum, together with academic, professional and pastoral support through personal tutoring. Personal tutors refer students to College services for additional support, but other staff can also refer

³⁷ Ibid Thomas 2012 and Thomas et al 2017; Lochtie, D., McIntosh, E., Stork, A., and Walker, B. (2018). 'Effective personal tutoring in Higher Education'. Nantwich: Critical Publishing.

students, and students can self-refer. The College will expand its central support services, raise awareness and normalise use of support, and increase wider staff training. The College is introducing additional academic support for students from target groups, including but not limited to disabled students, and introducing two Student Academic Career & Employment Advisors. We are also putting in place in-house staff training for teaching and administrative staff as they provide academic and pastoral support to groups of students with specialist needs, including care experienced students.

Rationale

It is widely acknowledged that well-being services are essential to support the continuation and success of some students in Higher Education. US research on Student Support Services for students from targeted groups (low income and first in family) found that these services had a measurable impact on student retention, transfer (to four-year degrees) and completion³⁸. UK evidence has found that students who declare a disability and access support have better outcomes than disabled students who do not declare a disability and access support.

We therefore expect that our approach to student academic and pastoral support will contribute to the success of students from IMDQ1, BAME and IMDQ1&2/BAME groups, disabled and care-experienced students, and help us narrow and eliminate the continuation and attainment gaps identified.

Timeline

These additional support services will be introduced during 2022/23, and will be fully in place to complement our more proactive personal tutoring by the start of 2023/24. Training for tutors and other staff will be delivered during 2022/23.

3.2.6 Employability and progression

We commit to improve student employability by embedding work-related experience into the curriculum, and developing courses with explicit employability outcomes. We have appointed a strategic lead for careers and employability, and established the College's Employer Forum, which will assist in identifying placements and employment opportunities. We will also develop and formalise the student alumni network and use it as a source of placements and employment for our students and graduates. All students, including underrepresented groups, have access to career counselling at the College. To expand this service, the College has recruited Academic Careers and Employability Networking Managers. The College has also established the Centre for Research and Enterprise Development (CRED) to provide free advice to SMEs and local unemployed people. We will survey our students about their progression outcomes, and evaluate the impact of our curricular and central employability initiatives.

Rationale

National data suggests that graduates from non-traditional groups are disadvantaged in the labour market³⁹. The same report also argues that embedding employability into the curriculum can benefit all students and is regarded as best practice. Employability of students from widening participation backgrounds can also be supported by innovative and targeted approaches, although there is little empirical evidence to suggest what works. At the moment we have limited data about the progression of our students and so understanding more about this is essential, before developing more targeted interventions. We are confident that by introducing these measures,

³⁸ Chaney, B. (2010) National Evaluation of Student Support Services: Examination of student outcomes after six year. Washington DC: US Department of Education

³⁹ Ibid Moore *et al* 2013, p108

undertaking further research into progression (see section 3.2.9), and evaluating and refining our interventions (see section 3.4) we will understand and improve the progression of students targeted in this APP.

Timeline

Centralised careers and employability support will be fully operational by December 2022. Employability skills will be embedded into the curriculum from 2023/24, and work-related experiences and opportunities will begin to be embedded from this year, but will be completed by 2026/27. We will begin collecting qualitative and survey data about our students' progression experience in autumn 2022.

3.2.7 Financial support

We will offer financial support for students, based on financial need, targeted at those from the most deprived backgrounds. Students with a household income⁴⁰ up to £15,000 per year will receive a £1000 bursary per year (for up to 3 years of a full-time undergraduate award, subject to ongoing eligibility), and students with a household income from £15,001 to £25,000 will receive £800 per year (for up to 3 years of a full-time undergraduate award, subject to ongoing eligibility). We will offer supplementary bursary awards of £300 to students who are also from one or more of our priority groups (disabled students, low socio-economic group (IMDQ1&2), ethnic minority or care experienced). Additional financial support will be available through the College Hardship Fund; a standard award is made where there is a calculated shortfall between income and expenditure, and a non-standard award can be made for exceptional and unexpected costs, including IT equipment and living costs, to enable students to successfully complete their course.

Rationale

There is mixed evidence about the impact of financial support on access in particular. We will offer financial support as we are keen to ensure that students from low income and lower socio-economic groups can access and survive in HE; our students are highly supportive of the provision of financial support to students in need. The available evidence⁴¹ indicates that bursaries have more impact on continuation and attainment than access. In particular, living in London is expensive and a bursary can reduce the need to work or pay for equipment such as a laptop to help students to engage more in their learning, persist and attain better. Analysis of the use of our hardship funds showed that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds were often unable to continue and complete their studies without access to financial support, particularly to cover the cost of equipment such as laptops, and to assist with living costs (food, rent and utilities). We anticipate that student hardship will increase as a result of increased food, travel and fuel costs, which will hit low income groups in London particularly harshly. We have set our bursaries at a level that is similar to other London HEPs, but there is some institutional evidence that bursaries of £2000 have a greater impact on continuation. As part of our evaluation of our financial support we will review whether bigger bursaries would have a greater impact on student success. Students also experience unexpected financial costs, and the hardship fund can assist with this, and promote continuation rather than withdrawal for financial reasons (this is demonstrated by our current analysis). We will evaluate the impact of our financial support using the OfS survey and interview tools, and we will consider if additional support such as money, advice or mentoring, is also required to maximise the positive impact of the financial support.

⁴⁰ Household income is based on parents' income for young students.

⁴¹ Bowes, L., Thomas, L. and Moreton, R. (CFE and Edge Hill University) (2013) Formative Evaluation of the National Scholarship Programme: Summary of year one findings. Bristol: HEFCE

Drawing on the available evidence base we expect that the provision of bursaries will encourage students from lower socio-economic/low income backgrounds to consider HE study, and crucially will support them to succeed. Our financial support will specifically contribute to improving the continuation rates of students from IMDQ1 and IMDQ1&2/BAME students in particular, and eliminate the gaps in continuation rates.

Timeline

Our financial support will be available from the start of the academic year 2022/23, and throughout the duration of this APP. We will conduct annual evaluation of our financial support, utilizing the OfS financial support evaluation tools. In the first year we will undertake qualitative research with students to better understand how our financial support package is working and how it can be improved.

3.2.8 Improving the access, success and progression of disabled students

Our priority is to increase the number of disabled students within the College by increasing recruitment, but also encouraging disclosure of disabled students. We are confident that our inclusive learning, teaching and assessment strategy (Williams et al 2019), together with our proactive personal tutoring and student academic and pastoral support, and central careers services will support disabled students to be successful and progress. We will monitor their progress, and involve disabled students in the co-creation of additional support as required. We commit to:

- Employ a full-time Disability and Pastoral Care officer who is trained to deal with the issues of disabled students, including the assessment of disability allowance applications.
- Undertake an Equality Impact Assessment to review the accessibility of our campus, learning, and institutional processes.
- Specifically raise awareness of our disability support through our outreach, admissions and Induction processes, through the training of staff and mentors, and to ensure disabled students access our College to become familiar and gain confidence in the opportunities and support we offer to them.
- Provide a proactive approach to the disclosure and support of disabled students
- Ensure teaching, learning and assessment is inclusive and embeds reasonably adjusted measures, including in the use of learning technology.
- Monitor the access, continuation, attainment and progression of disabled students and work with students through the co-creation of additional support as required.
- Overall, we will embed a whole provider approach.

Rationale

Our current approach is not resulting in students disclosing disabilities. We therefore need to be more proactive in our work and employ specialist staff, and we will embed disability training and the lessons from our Equality Impact Assessment into our outreach work. The Disabled Students Commission⁴² recommends that many of the adjustments for disabled students are mainstreamed⁴³, and this aligns with our inclusive learning, teaching and assessment strategy, our extended induction and personal tutoring. We therefore need to ensure these interventions are implemented effectively for our students and staff.

⁴² Disabled Students' Commission (2021) *Disabled Students' Commission Annual Report 2020-2021: Enhancing the disabled student experience*. York: Advance HE

⁴³ Matthew Williams, Emma Pollard, Helena Takala and Ann-Marie Houghton (2019) *Review of Support for Disabled Students in Higher Education in England Report to the Office for Students by the Institute for Employment Studies and Researching Equity, Access and Participation*. Brighton IES

Timeline

We are in the process of recruiting a full-time Disability and Pastoral Care officer, and this post holder will undertake an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) of our campus, learning, and institutional processes during 2022/23. They will input into the training of staff about disclosure and support for disabled students prior to the start of the new academic year (2022/23), and annually. New training about induction in 2022 and personal tutoring in 2023 will be developed with input from this post holder, and delivered on an ongoing basis. They will also input into our training for outreach ambassadors, prior to them beginning working in 2022/23. From 2023 they will work to embed best practices into processes across the institution, drawing on the findings of the EIAs. The experience of disabled students will be evaluated in 2024/25 and 2025/26 specifically.

3.2.9. Improving the College's capacity to collect and analyse data and qualitative evidence about the experience and outcomes of students from target groups

We recognise that there are gaps in our data, much of this is due to small numbers, but also about the data we have collected about our students (e.g. disabled and care experienced students). We therefore have specific strategic measures to improve our capacity to collect and analyse data about our students and to collect and analyse qualitative and survey evidence.

Timeline

We have undertaken an analysis of our data systems, and we are building a data bank/warehouse allied to our student information system to provide insights into the access, continuation, retention, attainment and progression of our students. This includes adding new information gathering clauses into our application and enrolment forms, and encouraging disclosure through outreach, induction, personal tutoring and student services. We will recruit additional staff to complement our capacity to undertake the additional data analysis. We will have the system fully operational and capacity in place by September 2022. This will coincide the first cohort of undergraduate honours students, and thus, data will be available internally from January 2023 for access, December 2023 for continuation, December 2025 for attainment and December 2026 for progression. We anticipate that this data will be available in the Access and Participation Data Dashboard as follows: access - March 2024; continuation - March 2025; attainment – March 2027; progression - March 2028. Data will be available for each of our target groups, however the data will be suppressed if the number in a particular group is too small.

The CDAT will begin collecting qualitative evidence during 2022/23, and this evidence will feed into internal progress review and annual impact reports from this year onwards. In our objectives and specific strategic measures, we have identified research priorities to be completed by 2026/27 or earlier.

3.3 Student Consultation

A student panel (composed of elected student representatives) has been established, and members of the panel have been consulted by the Chair of the Widening Participation Committee about the development, implementation and evaluation of the APP. The last meeting was held in February 2022, and involved 12 students from different socio-economic, ethnic and (dis)ability backgrounds. In advance of the meeting students were sent a summary version of the APP. At the meeting the students discussed the APP and voiced their opinions on a wide range of topics contained in the APP. The students were very complementary about the APP, and in particular the valued the commitment to diversity and support and the provision of financial support to encourage students to enter Higher Education at ICON College, and to enable them to successfully complete their studies. No suggestions or recommendations were made to change the APP.

ICON College has developed an effective approach to student voice and representation. Student representatives are elected per class, and there are 50 representatives in total; diversity is encouraged in the advertising, and subsequently monitored. The current representatives include students from lower socio-economic groups, BAME groups and with disabilities. Every elected representative is trained to enable them to understand the role and how to undertake it effectively. The training takes place each semester, shortly after the elections, (this reflects the fact that there are two intakes per year). The half-day training explains the representative system, role, duties and responsibilities and ways of collecting feedback from peers. Case studies are discussed to enable student representatives to consider how they will react to different scenarios.

From the pool of elected representatives, fifteen become main members of College committees (Board of Governance (1), Academic Board (1), Teaching, Learning and Resources Committee (2), Student Affairs Committee (4) and Widening Participation Committee (3), Prevent Duty (1), and College Consumer Affairs Group (3)). We ensure that the 3 student members of the Widening Participation Committee identify as being from one of our APP target groups. The representatives attend committee meetings and share information feedback from the meetings via the VLE forum with the other student representatives, who share the information with their constituents (class members). The process works similarly in reverse: class representatives collect feedback from their peers, and share this with subject committees and College committees.

The College's representation system has been commended by QAA in all reviews; this is reflected in the NSS survey, where the more recent overall student satisfaction rate was 87.2%, placing the College amongst the top institutions in the country for student satisfaction. All College students are eligible to and encouraged to become members of the National Union of Students. The College is keen to support the establishment of a students' association. In 2019/20 a team of five student representatives began the process of establishing a students' association, but after 3 meetings the team decided against it. In 2022/23 we will again encourage our student representatives to set up a student association, and we will provide support for the process; ultimately however this is the decision of the students.

3.4 Evidence and evaluation Strategy

The College is committed to evidence and evaluation. In developing this APP, we have utilised internal evidence and effective practice from across the sector, and we have identified areas where more data and evidence are required. At this stage our self-assessment indicates that we have narrative evaluation capacity. We aim to develop our evaluation skills and capacity and to make greater use of evaluation in our work, to move the College from narrative evaluation user to an empirical enquiry evaluation institution by 2026/27. The CDAT will lead on this work, supported by an external evaluator, and overseen by the Academic Board.

We have developed an overarching theory of change (presented above, diagram 1), and for each of our specific strategic measures we have identified short-term benefits, medium-term outcomes and longer-term impact. The longer-term impact indicators align with our access, continuation, attainment and progression targets in relation to specific student groups, and we are committed to maintaining performance in all other areas. Indicative verification evidence sources have also been identified. This is shown in Table 16 below. The operational team responsible for each specific strategic measure with work with the external evaluator, students and partners (if appropriate) to develop the theory of change, indicators and evidence before the evaluation plan is finalised (and signed off by the external evaluator and Academic Board). The internal team will then undertake the evaluation work, with oversight from the external evaluator; they will report twice yearly on progress and impact, and the information will be used formatively within teams to improve practice and outcomes. We envisage using the evaluation evidence to refine and develop our specific strategic measures as they are described in this document. This approach to our evaluation will develop our capacity, and ensure that the findings from the evaluation work are

utilised to inform ongoing improvements to our widening participation work, whilst also identifying what is working or not working and why. We will actively disseminate these findings both within the College, with partners and in the wider HE community by contributing to events, articles and blogs and other opportunities to share our learning.

Evaluation priorities

The CDAT will work with an external evaluator to evaluate our progress towards our APP targets. During this APP our evaluation priorities are:

- Evaluation of our outreach activities to improve aspiration, access and attainment (2022/23 and 2023/24)
- Evaluation of our extended Induction (2022/23 and 2023/24)
- Evaluation of our attainment interventions (2024/25)
- Evaluation of our financial support (annually)
- Evaluation of our employability and careers interventions (2025/26)

The starting point for each of these evaluations will be our overarching theory of change, and Table 16 below. Collaboratively staff and students will develop a theory of change specifically for each of the evaluation priorities, and agree short-term, medium-term and longer-term impact indicators, and sources of evidence to test and verify the indicators.

The evaluation process will draw on action research models, and adjust interventions in response to emerging evidence. In addition, we will disseminate our findings within the College and more widely to ensure that we learn from this process – even in the event that the findings show that certain interventions are not working in the ways we anticipated.

Table 16: Theory of change for Specific Strategic Measures

Specific strategic measures	Activities	Short-term benefits	Medium-term outcomes	Longer-term impact	Validation evidence
Outreach, attainment and preparation through partnerships with schools, pupil referral unit, local authorities and football club	Access to ICON College Computing and learning resources at weekends and after school. Trained student ambassadors work with students about (a) subject contents and (b) participation in Higher Education	Provide a suitable study space with access to computers and other learning resources and trained ambassadors Increase quality study time Raise awareness, confidence and motivation about HE	Improved level 3 attainment Increased applications to HE	Increased participation in HE by students from target groups Increased disclosure of additional needs	Feedback from participants School/College data ICON student data
Induction	Extended Induction	Get to know peers and staff Develop academic confidence	Sense of community and belonging Submission and passing	Improved continuation Improved attainment	Induction feedback and quiz Student survey Institutional data

		Understand about college and validating institutions processes Know about support Feel safe to disclose support needs	first assignment Engaging with support on offer within the College	Gaps between student groups eliminated	
Inclusive learning, teaching and assessment	Introduce additional assessment interventions. Monitoring consistent implementation of actions identified in strategy. Monitor and research the experience of students from target groups	Students better understand assessment requirements. All staff deliver inclusive learning, teaching and assessment. Better understanding of why student continuation and attainment gaps	Submission rate and grades improve. Improved delivery of LTA strategy and/or introduction of further interventions if required	Continuation and attainment improve and gaps decrease.	Module feedback Qualitative feedback on assessment interventions. Student satisfaction surveys Institutional data
Personal tutoring and attendance monitoring	Proactive personal tutoring model introduced Additional training of personal tutors Additional academic support for students from the target groups	Staff deliver personal tutoring curriculum that is relevant and engaging for students Staff are better able to work inclusively with all students Students from target groups gain additional academic skills	Students attendance and engagement in personal tutoring increases Students make better use of academic, pastoral, professional and financial support available within the College Student submission and attainment rates improve	Continuation, attainment and progression improve, gaps between student groups eliminated	Qualitative or survey feedback from students. Feedback from staff Attendance data Usage data from other College services Institutional data
Student academic and pastoral support	Additional central services Training for teaching and administrative staff	Students make greater use of support available Staff develop skills to support and refer students	Students feel supported and have greater confidence in their ability to succeed	Continuation, attainment and progression improve, gaps between student groups eliminated	Feedback from students via survey Institutional data

		for additional support	Submission and attainment rates increase		
Progression activities	Monitoring outcomes of students Curriculum Central careers services	Student groups with poorer progression rates identified. All students, including targeted students develop career and employability skills through the curriculum. Students from target groups access and benefit from central services.	Students continue to engage with curricular and co-curricular opportunities to develop employability skills.	Students progress into graduate jobs; no gaps between different groups.	Institutional records/reports Student and staff feedback including qualitative and surveys Student outcomes survey.
Disabled students	Employ and train staff EIA of accessibility of learning, teaching and assessment and campus Embed disability into outreach and preparation activities Develop proactive approach to disclosure Ensure staff deliver inclusive academic experience with reasonable adjustments and use of technology Monitor the access, continuation, attainment and	Staff understand more about disability issues and their responsibilities Students realise the support available especially if they disclose The campus and the curriculum is reviewed changes made as necessary	Staff change practices and become more inclusive. Students have a fully and positive experience.	Access, continuation, attainment and progression gaps are closed	Staff feedback Disabled students' feedback Observation of teaching Student survey data

	progression of disabled students and work with students through the co-creation of additional support as required				
Financial support	Bursaries and hardship funds	Students feel supported by the College (psychological impact) Students engage in less paid employment	Students engage more fully with learning and wider student experience. Students worry less about money issues.	Improvements in continuation and attainment. Gaps close between student groups.	OfS financial support evaluation tools, institutional data.

3.5 Monitoring progress and remedial action

We have developed a detailed action plan for the delivery of the APP, which will be overseen by the Management Board; responsibility for monitoring the APP lies with the Academic Board, and will be undertaken by the APP Panel. The Management Board and the Academic Board will report to the Board of Governance on delivery and progress. Delivery of the plan involves staff and managers from across the College, and much of the work is embedded into the mainstream delivery of the work of the College. We will ensure the continuous monitoring of APP activities against the Action Plan via a standing item on the Academic Board agenda with relevant staff and students invited to attend for this. APP will be a standing item on the agenda of the Board of Governance, who will scrutinise the monitoring; and at least annually the evaluation reports. At each Board of Governance meeting, we will report on our progress against our APP plan using a 'RAG risk register'; any areas of the plan rated as red will be investigated (see below); the Board of Governance meets five times per academic year. APP evaluation reports will be shared with the Board of Governance annually, and these will contribute to a formal review of progress (or otherwise) in meeting of our APP targets.

If any areas this plan are identified as worsening, or lacking sufficient progress to meet our stated aims, objectives, and targets (i.e., a red RAG risk score), the Board of Governance will direct the institution to take appropriate action to ensure that this trend is reversed. This will include undertaking further analysis to understand the reasons behind the performance, and the redirection of resource to ensure that the targets outlined within this plan are met within the desired timescales. For example, resources may be used to better understand why targets are not being met, to fund additional staffing or activities, or other appropriate actions to enhance efforts to meet targets.

3.6 Mechanisms to utilise evaluation outcomes to influence practice and inform decision-making

Not only will the evaluation evidence be monitored by the Academic Board and the Board of Governance, and changes made to address any lack of progress towards achieving targets, but the evaluation evidence will also be used for continual improvements to practice. Each of the teams delivering the specific strategic measures will be involved in the evaluation process, which

will enable them to draw upon the findings in a formative way throughout the year, and make adjustment to practices.

There will be an annual away day in June each year to review the evaluation findings in relation to each of the specific strategic measures, and to identify:

- (a) changes and improvements to existing practices
- (b) new activities that need to be added in (and recommendations will be made to and seriously considered by the Board of Governance for additional resources)
- (c) activities or approaches that need to either be scrapped or fundamentally reconceptualised (resources for more in-depth evaluation will be made available if necessary)
- (d) any policy, process or data issues within the College that need to be addressed to contribute to achieving the APP targets.

A report of the away day, covering these four topics will be presented at the next meetings of the Management Board, Academic Board and Board of Governance; this will inform financial planning and decision making for the next academic year.

4. Provision of information to students

The College publishes full information regarding its provision and fees on its website and in the College prospectus. Fees are transparent and contribute to minimising barriers to access, participation and progression. The Board of Governance, supported by the Admissions Team, ensures that information within the Student Access Agreement is regularly monitored to ensure accuracy.

Pre-contract information is sent to all students to ensure that applicants are clear about the fees they will be charged for the duration of their studies and reflects the contents of the Student Protection Plan. This information is drawn from the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) best practice guidelines and supported by our policy on consumer law and the student. Pre-contract information is also available on our website. Terms and conditions of the student contract are made available to students at enrolment and covered during the Induction period. The contract information provides a link to the ICON College Refund and Compensation Policy, which is also available on the website. The APP is now a regular feature of each Induction programme, and the College collects feedback on the student contract during Induction and draws on this feedback to continuously improve the offer.

We will ensure that prospective, new and returning students are made aware of the financial support available to them from ICON College and from other national sources; and we will ensure that students, especially those from under-represented target groups (such as the disabled and economically underprivileged segments) are fully informed about the eligibility criteria for fee waivers, bursary scheme, and the hardship fund, and the need to share personal financial information.

The Information we will provide about financial support will be aimed at potential entrants as well as our new and returning students. It will include eligibility criteria, support levels, the method of assessment and the sharing of personal financial information and will be available on our website for all students. We will update the ICON website with a prominent banner headline "STUDENT FINANCIAL SUPPORT". This will pull together information about financial support available to students from all sources including student loans, how to apply, how they work and how and when they are repaid. We will specially highlight details of the eligibility criteria for financial support from the College and how to apply. The College will have in place designated financial support for specific groups of underrepresented students. These will be labelled clearly together with eligibility

criteria, encouraging eligible students to apply. Availability of these bursaries and scholarships will in future also be highlighted on the application form for admission (UCAS) at the initial stage.

Financial support information will also be embedded into and made available at key points during students' engagement with the College, including outreach and pre-entry work led by the College internally and in schools and the community. It will feature in College marketing materials, in the response to student enquiries, in Open Days and visits and throughout our application, enrolment and induction processes as well as in the personal interactions between students and their personal tutors and student service staff. In particular, detailed next steps will be shared through regular correspondence with prospective students and via UCAS throughout the application process. Training on fees and financial support will be provided by the College to all staff involved in recruitment, admissions, enrolment, induction, personal tutoring and student services.

Financial support applications are based on the student loan application. It is therefore important that students grant permission to Student Finance England to share personal and financial information with ICON College. Eligible students will automatically receive the bursaries set out in the APP (section 3.2.7). If students have not applied for financial support from Student Finance England and wish to be considered for ICON bursaries, they will be required to supply household income information to ICON directly which may delay the process while the financial information is verified.