# DCG
# Access and Participation Plan (APP)

**2021-22 to 2025-26**

## 1. Assessment of performance

1.1.    The following assessment of performance demonstrates DCG's achievements and challenges towards delivering equality of opportunity through access, success and the progression of students, identified as stages of the student lifecycle. Primarily, we have used the Office for Students (OfS) data dashboard to perform our assessment, utilising other data sources where available.

1.2.    DCG includes: four colleges, delivering KS5, Adult, HE, Apprenticeship & KS4 education; a nursery; community learning venues across the City; Services to Business including in-company levy apprenticeships and leadership and management commercial training and two subsidiary companies.

1.3.    We do not have degree awarding power but work closely with HEI partners: University of Derby (UoD), Sheffield Hallam University (SHU), The Open University (OU), The University of Sheffield, alongside a portfolio of Pearson Higher National Programs. DCG shares the HE civic provision of higher education for the city of Derby with the University of Derby. Higher Education provision is a small subset of provision with an average 500 higher education students per academic year. HE provision is shared between three colleges, the Roundhouse, Joseph Wright Centre and Broomfield Hall.

1.4.    We deliver a range of foundation degrees, higher nationals and level 6 top up years, utilising a mixture of part, and full-time delivery. We also have an expanding number of higher level and degree apprentices. Students are drawn from the city and surrounding Derbyshire area (72% over the last 4 years) and the remaining 28% from surrounding Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Staffordshire (based on DCG student postcode enrolments from 2015 to 2018). The demand for progressing students from level 3 drives course development. As we continue to grow our higher education portfolio, we continue to invest in our data capabilities specifically for HE purposes. This premise was recognised in the previous APP and continues to act as a central theme throughout this APP.

1.5.    With an improved perspective on central data gathering and analytics, we are better able to fully interpret the student lifecycle and identify current or emerging gaps in access, success or progression. We can now see the necessary steps in order to place appropriate intervention to narrow these gaps as we progress through the time duration of this APP.

1.6.    For this APP, we need to also acknowledge that we are still in the midst of a global pandemic with the medium- and longer-term effects on access and participation within higher education relatively unknown at this point. We have experienced significant disruption to our initial plans, with focus being on supporting students in the move to online and blended learning, ensuring students and staff are safe, and that the quality and standards of higher education are upheld within this difficult time. We have not yet fully evaluated the impact of new and emerging barriers such as digital poverty, financial hardship, personal and work disruption due to Covid-19. We will continue to work closely within the constraints of government guidelines to return as quickly as possible to a planned student and academic experience. We will be working closely with our HEI partners to ensure students continue to be supported within these times. Whilst our fundamental principles of our APP have not changed, there may be new and unknown barriers that we will need to take account for that are not yet identified within this plan.

1.7.    Central to DCG's strategy is the focus on increasing social mobility for students. As an Opportunity Area (OA), Derby benefits from additional support and activity to support the progression of young people. Principally, DCG is closely associated with the local area UniConnect, known as DANCOP (Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Collaborative Outreach Program)[1], which sees investment in staff to work with NCOP students to access HE. DCG is an active member of DANCOP; we represent at the steering group, have representation on the governing board and have a team of staff running funded via DANCOP predominantly focussed on in-reach activity. DANCOP is designed to complement existing HE progression outreach. It provides a range of additional support, some of which is delivered through third party providers, and measures in schools to increase uptake of existing HE progression outreach. Derby City's inclusion within the Opportunity Area scheme facilitates

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[1] https://www.teamdancop.co.uk/

collaboration between the two projects in that area. Due to the limited lifespan of the project, as a partnership we have not devised a collaborative outcome focussed target as it would not cover the lifespan of this APP.

**2. Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status**

**Access**

2.1    The review of data demonstrates a shift in applicants from Polar4 Quintiles. The proportion of applicants from Quintiles 1 and 2 compared to 3, 4 and 5 (areas of least vs highest progression to HE has fluctuated.  With an update in 19/20 data recently added on the 11th of March 2021 to the OfS data dashboard, this presents 23pp difference. Currently this is not demonstrating as a statistically significant difference with the OfS data dashboard. We previously identified that the consistency of applicants from Quintiles 1, 2 and 3 as inconsistent. We will still be setting the objective to increase the consistency of applications from Q1 and 2 order to sustain the positive level of applications for the areas of least participation and reduce the gap to less than 5pp in the next 5 years. Data for part time is non-conclusive at this time but will be monitored in a similar fashion to the full-time students.
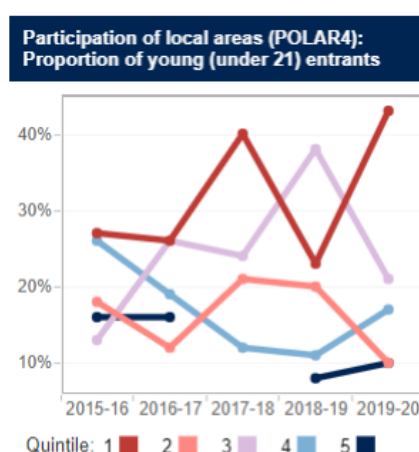


| Polar 4 Quintile (Access) | 16/17 | 17/18 | 18/19 | 19/20 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1,2 | 53% | 43% | 61% | 38% |
| 3,4,5 | 48% | 57% | 36% | 61% |
| Gap | 5pp | 14pp | 25pp | 23pp |

Table source: OfS Data Dashboard – Access, Full Time or Apprenticeship (POLAR4 proportion of entrants]

2.2    The OfS data dashboard does not present data on POLAR4 for other stages of lifecycle for the student. We have utilised our own data to evaluate retention and pass which are equivalated to continuation and outcomes.

**Continuation**

2.3    When reviewed by retention, the most recent year (19/20) indicates that students from POLAR4 Quintiles 1 and 2 (89.65%) are retained at a better rate when compared to their counterparts in Q3,4 and 5 (84%). Whilst we ensure that we monitor for any downward trend for the retention of students from Q1 and 2, we will currently take no action in this area.

| POLAR4 Quintile (Retention %) | 17/18 | 18/19 | 19/20 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1, 2 | 81 | 78.6 | 89.65 |
| 3,4,5 | 88.8 | 85.5 | 84 |
| Gap | 7.8pp | 6.9pp | 5.66pp |

Table source: DCG Data Dashboard: January 2021 – Retention by POLAR4 Quintile]

**Attainment**

2.4     When pass rates are compared between Q1 and 2 with 3, 4 and 5, there is again very little different based on POLAR4 data with a gap of 3.5pp in 19/20 with students from Q1 and 2 achieving at a rate superior to those in Q3, 4 and 5. The aggregated 3-year average demonstrates pass rates by Q1 – 2 as 94.9% and Q3,4,5 as 92.9%. We will take no action in this area.

| Polar 4 Quintile (Pass %) | 17/18 | 18/19 | 19/20 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1, 2 | 94.1 | 93.7 | 96.9 |
| 3, 4, 5 | 92.6 | 89.6 | 93.4 |
| Gap | 1.5pp | 4.1pp | 3.5pp |

Table source: DCG Data Dashboard: January 2021 – Pass by POLAR4 Quintile]

**Progression**

2.5     In the OfS data dashboard, data is inconclusive. Data regarding progression within DCG is highlighted as a required improvement aspect.  There is not the annual DLHE data set available and Graduate Outcomes is significantly lagged. We will be undertaken our own sampling of students after they have completed their course with us to establish progression routes or destination for this characteristic.

## 3.   Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students (BAME)

**Access**

3.1.    The OfS Data Dashboard presents currently does not present data related to student diversity. According to our own data since 17/18, data suggests that our diversity is decreasing and continues to do so which is of course disappointing. Since we published our first APP (2020/21 onwards) we have significantly raised the profile related to the recruitment of diverse students. To demonstrate the commitment to this challenge we have undertaken the following outlined actions within the last academic year (19/20).

3.2.    We will continue to report those who are ethnically diverse as a whole group compared to White British at this time without any further disaggregation. This is due to currently small representation in this category meaning any further disaggregation into their specific ethnic groups across the student lifecycles would not be informative or significant as numbers are not statistically meaningful.   As we continue to increase our diversity within our student population, we will expect to carry out further disaggregation as groups improve in representation and we are able to make meaningful evaluations. We will monitor and act when required.

3.3.    The commitment to target diversity has been adopted as a central 5-year KPI for the DCGs HE Strategy, embedding this ethos within the DCG's approach to higher education.  Due this, all courses were reviewed at the end of 19/20 for their student diversity distribution and targeted to improve areas where there were imbalances in representation. This will continue to be a discussion point for course reviews which occur twice an academic year.

3.4.    All course areas have been required to review their online and in print marketing material to ensure that all images represent a diverse student body. The central marketing team also have a clear objective to ensure that all HE courses have a diverse image base.

3.5.    We have established a regular Widening participation Committee who are targeted to address the objectives that are set within this and previous APPs.  This committee has representation from a cross organisational population including Curriculum, Marketing and Inclusion and is chaired by the Vice Principal.

3.6.    We have appointed a BAME Mentor for 20/21 who is working with students at Levels 2 and 3 to support students aspirations and progression. The mentor is targeted to work with 50 students from ethnically diverse communities community within DCG to mentor, raise aspirations, evaluate barriers to learning, and support them with their next steps with a view to undertake higher learning. With the students they have worked with so far, attendance has improved, and the students are exploring university options.

3.7.    Evidence suggests however that we have yet to see an impact of this work as we have a significant gap of 82pp. We attribute this to timing of the approval of the 20/21 APP which meant we have not yet had a full recruitment cycle to impact on or see the results in the following years recruitment trends, and the possible disruption of CV19 impacting on ethnic minorities in a way which we had previously not identified causing a disruption to the 20/21 intake beyond what could have been reasonably predicted.   We plan to continue with the above stated actions to target this aspect with the expectation that time is required in order to see the impact of the actions we have taken.   Our initial plans included

the roll out of further unconscious bias training of which had proved a successful intervention in The Bridge Project[2] however more recent evidence suggests that unconscious bias training is not a preferred method to educate employees[3]. We will look to consider alternative options of employee and external employer training in raising awareness of diversity.

| Ethnicity (%) | 17/18 | 18/19 | 19/20 | 20/21 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ethnically diverse | 12 | 11 | 10 | 9 |
| White British | 88 | 89 | 90 | 91 |
| Gap | 76pp | 78pp | 80pp | 82pp |

Table Source: DCG HE Data Dashboard January 2021, Access of students by Ethnicity

**Continuation**

3.8. According to the OfS Data Dashboard, there is no representative data for continuation when reviewing gaps between student groups or ratios between student groups when exploring ethnicity. When reviewing the DCG measure of retention over the last 3 years, there has been a positive trend of retention of ethnically diverse vs White British with currently a gap of only 2pp. We will take no action in this area.

| Ethnicity (%) | 17/18 | 18/19 | 19/20 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ethnically diverse | 78% | 80% | 85% |
| White British | 86% | 83% | 87% |
| Gap | 8pp | 3pp | 2pp |

Table Source: DCG HE Data Dashboard January 2021, Retention by ethnicity

**Attainment**

3.9. According to DCG data (taken from "ProMonitor"), students who are White British pass on average at a rate of 92.7%, (17/18, 18/19, 19/20) compared to ethnically diverse students who pass at a rate of 90.3%. It noted however that the population is very small and accounts for 74 students compare 575 White British students over the last three years. This data demonstrates there is an emerging gap between the attainment of White British compared to ethnically diverse students of which we will set a target against.

| Academic Year | 17/18 | | 18/19 | | 19/20 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Criteria | Number of leavers | % Pass | Number of leavers | % Pass | Number of leavers | % Pass |
| White British | 167 | 96.2% | 224 | 87.9% | 184 | 94% |
| Ethnically diverse | 23 | 100% | 31 | 87.5% | 20 | 83.3% |
| Gap | - | 3.8pp | - | 0.4pp | - | 10.7pp |

Table Source: DCG HE Data Dashboard BAME/Not BAME pass since 17/18 – 19/20

**Progression**

3.10. According to the OfS Data Dashboard, there is no data to report when reviewing progression by ethnicity for DCG. Utilising data and information from a HESA for Higher Education Leavers Statistics 2016/17[4], a higher percentage of ethnically diverse leavers were unemployed compared to the sector average. Currently our own progression data is limited. There is not the annual DLHE data set available and Graduate Outcomes is significantly lagged. We will be undertaken our own sampling of students after they have completed their course with us to establish progression routes or destination.

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[2] ABSS project - Gateshead College - Office for Students
[3] Developing-delivering-effective-anti-bias-training-Challenges-.pdf (behavioralpolicy.org)
[4] https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/28-06-2018/sfr250-higher-education-leaver-statistics-activities

## 4    Mature compared to Young students.

### Access

4.1.    According to the OfS Data dashboard, the number of mature students compared to young differs for full time has narrowed in the last year (18pp in 17/18 compared to 10pp in 18/19) which is positive, indicating that our Full-Time offer is equally accessible by mature and young students.  The Part Time offer indicates a spikey profile, with the proportion of Young decreasing and the proportion of Mature increasing from 17/18 to 19/20 respectively.  This is moving more towards the national picture which suggests that the within the part time sector, it is predominated by the Mature population (around 87% for the last 5 years) compared to the Young (which is around 12% representation). This is likely due to young people investing into full time higher education before moving into a career, rather than choosing to work part time and study part time. This is not an area we will be focussing on as we feel we have good representation of mature learners on the Full-Time mode and that our part time representation of Young students is greater than the national picture (27.6% over the last 5 years, compared to an average of 12% for the sector).

### Continuation

4.2.    Continuation rates within Full Time for young and mature students presents with no significant gaps (90% and 91% respectively). For Part Time students, data is less reliable but suggests continuation rates of 90% for Young and 82.6% for Mature. However, there is no significant difference indicated by the OfS Data Dashboard.  We will not be taking any action in this area.

### Attainment

4.3.    The OfS Data Dashboard does not present any data for the attainment of students achieving a first or upper second-class degree when analysing by age category (comparing young to mature learners). When reviewing DCG data utilising ProMonitor, the attainment rates (utilising only 'pass' as an indicator), the average gap is 4.1pp with at times mature students outperforming young, and vice versa. Due to this, we will take no action regarding attainment in young v. mature populations.

| Young  Vs  Mature pass (%) | 17/18 | 18/19 | 19/20 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Young (<21) | 95.5% | 95.7% | 93.3% |
| Mature (>21) | 92.8% | 89.5% | 96.8% |
| Gap | 2.7pp | 6.2pp | 3.5pp |

Table Source: DCG HE Data Dashboard January 2021, Attainment by Age band (Young V Mature)

### Progression to employment or further study

4.4.    According to the OfS data dashboard, progression for young compared with mature presents no significant gaps for Full Time (for 16/17 progression rates for both Mature and Young is at 65%). For Part Time study, the data indicates that our Mature students' progress at a rate of 66.6% compared to young at 75%. This is not indicated as statistically significant.

## 5    Students with a disability

5.1. In our previous APP (2020/21), we had identified that we needed to improve our knowledge of our students with respect to disability.  This still remains a high priority for us to note, the data that allows evaluation of students with a disability access, success attainment and progression is minimal, making the disaggregation into other sub-groups impractical.  It is also the preference at DCG that we do not refer to disabled students but prefer the "person first" terminology of "students with a disability"[5]. Therefore, throughout the rest of the document we will use the language we see as appropriate, positive and inclusive.

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[5] https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/sites/default/files/DR%20UK%20We%20Belong%20Report_0.pdf

**Access**

5.2. According to the OfS Data, we have managed to improve the gap between students with a disability (14%) and students without a disability (86%) by 2pp compared to the previous year for Full Time study. However within our Part Time provision, we have increased the gap between students with and without a disability by 1pp (students without a disability 88%, students with a disability 12% compared to the previous year of 87% and 15% respectively).  According to our own data sources, this is reflective within our own data set that the gap between access of students studying with a disability and those without is widening. We are disappointed by this result has have been taking steps to improve both the knowledge of our students in this respect and the opportunities for students to tell us of any inclusion needs.  We have embedded inclusion resources into our central student Hub and in the last year targeted work to enable sharing of disability and inclusion needs through the application and interview process. An Inclusion Coordinator with responsibility for engaging with HE teaching teams is in place.

| Students with a or without a disability (%) | 17/18 | 18/19 | 19/20 | 20/21 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Students with a disability | 11.62 | 10.72 | 9.03 | 8.73 |
| Students without a disability | 88.38 | 89.28 | 90.97 | 91.29 |
| Gap | 76.76 | 79.08 | 81.94 | 82.56 |

Table Source: DCG HE Data Dashboard January 2021, Access of students with or without a disability

**Continuation**

5.3. According to the OfS data dashboard, only students without a disability is reported with a 3% range for Full Time students and a 10% range for Part Time Student over the last 5 years.   When we review our own data sources for retention (as opposed to continuation) we see that there is the average gap of 4.7pp over a three-year period, with the most recent gap being 1.8pp between the retention of students with a disability and students without a disability. However, as this area within the OfS data dashboard is under-represented, we will set an action to ensure that continuation for students with a disability compared to those without a disability is within a 5% gap, with an aim to achieve 90% continuation in both groups.

| Disability and Retention (%) | 17/18 | 18/19 | 19/20 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Students with a disability | 81.8% | 77.1% | 85% |
| Students without a disability | 86.5% | 83.6% | 86.8% |
| Gap | 4.7pp | 6.5pp | 1.8pp |

Table Source: DCG HE Data Dashboard January 2021, Retention of students with or without a disability

**Attainment**

5.4. According to the OfS Data Dashboard, the attainment rates are not reported. According to our own HE Data Dashboard, the pass rates of students with a disability has been improving on average over the last 3 years. There is a narrowing gap between the pass rates of students with a disability and students without a disability, with a positive difference in 18/19 where students with a disability were more likely to pass compared to students without. It is noted that the population of those studying with a disability compared to students without a disability over the last three years is 77 and 586 respectively.  Our commitment to ensuring students have equal opportunity means although we have a small gap in this area, we will set a target with the aim to review attainment in closer detail between these two populations.  Currently, students with a disability are under-represented, therefore as we work to improve access in this area, it is expected that we will need to ensure equity in this phase of the lifecycle also.

| Disability Vs. Attainment (% Pass) | 17/18 | 18/19 | 19/20 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Students with a disability | 83.3% (22) | 96.3% (35) | 94.1% (20) |
| Students without a disability | 94.6% (171) | 91% (226) | 95.1% (189) |
| Gap | 11.3pp | 5.3pp | 1pp |

Table Source: DCG HE Data Dashboard January 2021, Pass% of students disability vs. no disability

**Progression to employment or further study**

5.5. According to the OfS Data Dashboard the proportion of students with a disability progressing into highly skilled employment or further study compared to students without a disability is not reported. Our own data

related to progress to employment or further study will be developed in order to identify if there are any gaps or emerging trends in this area.

## 6 Deprivation (2019)

### Access

6.1    According to the OfS Data dashboard, there is a gap within access from deprived areas (quintiles 1 and 2) for FT students (20pp and increasing), and a gap for part time students (32pp and increasing). This might be due to the increased recruitment to our engineering and professional construction courses which is more predominately driven by employers which may be less accessible to students from areas of deprivation.  Due to this, we will continue to take action to improve access of students from Q1 and Q2.

| IMD (2019) Quintile | 16/17 | 17/18 | 18/19 | 19/20 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q1, 2 | 30% | 41% | 24% | 40% |
| Q 3, 4, 5 | 70% | 59% | 78% | 60% |
| Average gap | 40pp | 18pp | 54pp | 20pp |

Table Source: OfS Data Dashboard Deprivation2019 Proportion of Entrants for FT study (%)

| IMD (2019) Quintile | 16/17 | 17/18 | 18/19 | 19/20 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q1, 2 | 40% | 44% | 37% | 34% |
| Q 3, 4, 5 | 61% | 56% | 62% | 66% |
| Gap | 21pp | 12pp | 25pp | 32pp |

Table Source: OfS Data Dashboard Deprivation2019 Proportion of Entrants for PT study (%)

### Continuation

6.2    Minimal data is presented within the OfS data dashboard for students from deprivation quintiles for continuation for either full or part time study.  Reviewing our own internal data source from a retention perspective, over the last 3 years in most quintiles our retention has improved apart from those in quintile 5 which has reduced (from 91.9% to 86.9% from 17/18 to 19/20 respectively). In all other quintiles, retention has improved with minimal gaps between quintiles 1, 2, 3 and 4 in 19/20 (all between the range of 82.9% and 86.9%). Retention in quintiles 3, 4 and 5 is slightly stronger (88.4%) compared to quintiles  1 and 2  (84%) demonstrating a gap of 3.9pp. This will be monitored but not targeted at this point.

### Attainment

6.3    Minimal data is presented within the OfS data dashboard for students from deprivation quintiles for attainment for either full or part time study. Reviewing our own pass data with respect to deprivation quintiles, all pass data during 19/20 is between 91.05% and 97.85%. Quintiles 1 and 3 out-perform quintiles 2, 4 and 5. Quintiles 1, 2 and 3 all have upward trends, compared to 4 and 5 which should a slight decline over the last year.  Due to this, we will not set any targets in this area.

| IMD (2015) Quintile | 17/18 | 18/19 | 19/20 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 94.45 | 87.25 | 96.45 |
| 2 | 90.55 | 87.1 | 91.9 |
| 3 | 94.75 | 89.05 | 97.85 |
| 4 | 91.45 | 92.05 | 91.05 |
| 5 | 86.85 | 94.25 | 93.35 |
| Average gap between Q1 and 2, and 3,4,5 | 3.35 | 5.35 | 3.2 |

Table Source: DCG HE Data Dashboard Pass by IMD (%)]

### Progression

6.4    Minimal data is presented within the OfS data dashboard for students from deprivation quintiles for progression for either full or part time study. This will form part of our commitment to improving our own progression data.

## 7    Care leavers

**7.1**    The OfS Data Dashboard does not contain any institutional or sector level information for this group of students.  Data from the Department of Education (17/18)[6] demonstrates that around 6% of all care leavers between the ages of 19-21 were in higher education in 2019.

**7.2**    According to internal data at DCG, over the last three years we have had <5 students who were care leavers enrolled at the provision 18/19 and 19/20 all of whom had positive outcomes.  We will continue to monitor for the entry of students who are care leavers and follow their continuation, attainment and progression.

7.3    As we have a very small number of care leavers we cannot conduct a meaningful analysis over the different phases of the lifecycle.  We will ensure that care leavers however are monitored at each stage of the student lifecycle and will compare their performance and experience with normative values.

7.4    We will ensure that their identity is protected with respect to GDPR (2018).  We are not planning to set a target related to care leavers as we do not evaluate that there are any issues that need addressing.  however, any monitoring or reporting of students in this subsection will be anonymised so as students cannot be identified. Any student numbers where a group is less than five will be displayed as <5 without a specific number provided so as to protect identity.


## 8    Intersections of disadvantage

**Access**

8.1    Using the OfS Data Dashboard, when comparing areas of deprivation and ethnicity, minimal data points exist for ethnically diverse students. However white students from Q1, Q2 are proportionally below students from Q3,4,5, suggesting two aspects to review:
8.1.1    The total number of ethnically diverse students' needs to improve as we have already recognised.
8.1.2    Compared to previous APPs, there has been a positive impact on the number of students from Quintiles 3, 4 and 5 applying which is present in both PT and FT populations, which has proportionally impacted those applying from quintiles 1 and 2 which can be expected.  This is still an area we will be focussed on to ensure that access for students from areas of deprivation remains a priority on our agenda.
8.1.3    We predict that as we work to increase diversity within our student population, we will revisit this metric to review for any gaps emerging between different quintiles and students from different ethnic backgrounds.



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6    https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2017-to-2018

8.2 Using the OfS Data Dashboard, comparison of males females from POLAR4 Quintiles 1 and 2, compared to 3,4,5 demonstrate some narrowing over the last 4 years with gaps decreasing for all areas. This is an area we will not set any targets and are comfortable that the data suggests we have no barriers to access in the context of males/females from different Polar4 quintiles.
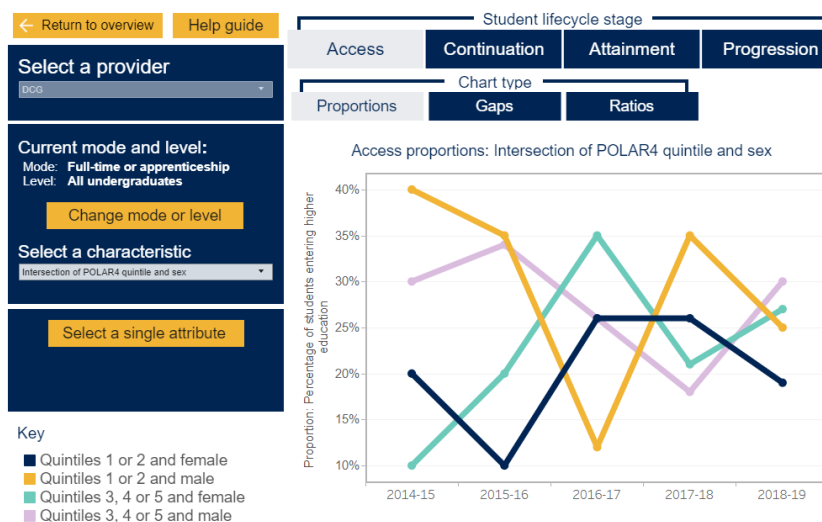


## Continuation

8.3 According to the OfS Data Dashboard, there are no statistically significant intersections within continuation. This is most likely due to the lack of data as opposed to them not being present. We will consider this in our overall commitment to improvement our data analytics.

## Attainment

8.4 According to the OfS Data Dashboard there are no statistically significant intersections within attainment. This is most likely due to the lack of data as opposed to them not being present. We will consider this in our overall commitment to improvement our data analytics.

## Progression

8.5 According to the OfS Data Dashboard there are no statistically significant intersections within progression. This is most likely due to the lack of data as opposed to them not being present. We will consider this in our overall commitment to improvement our data analytics.

## 9 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

9.1 Our current data and small cohort size indicates that we have not identified other singularly identifiable groups of students who are experiencing barriers to education. We will continue to review our own position through feedback mechanisms such as student groups, student surveys, focus groups along with review of any concerns, complaints or individual student contact that may indicate of a group that are experiencing barriers to higher education. Given the most recent events within the last year related to the global pandemic, we are open to identifying new and possibly previously unrepresented groups that may experience barriers. In our most recent, those that experience significant and sudden change in personal circumstances (i.e. extrinsic influence) within the academic year creates barriers that were previously unidentified when they enrolled (unlike barriers related to POLAR4 Quintile, IMD descriptors, age, disability and ethnicity which have in most instances been present since the start of their educational journey), however this is an observation that we have only identified recently with the potential to affect and impact all students.

## 10 Strategic aims and objectives

10.1    Following the assessment of performance of DCG throughout the student lifecycle, we require an approach that combines an overarching commitment with specific targets that address areas of performance that we need to improve alongside monitoring commitments. Continued commitment to our data capabilities is evident.

10.2    Our focus remains on impacting the access stage of the student lifecycle along with monitoring emerging trends where our numbers rise (and we are able to better interrogate meaningful data sizes) and where statistical significance may start to be present.  The above evaluation demonstrates that there are no significant gaps within continuation (as equivalated by DCG as retention where there is no information the OfS dashboard and we have our own data sources captured as retention and not continuation) and outcomes (as interpreted by as a pass, and not differentiated to classification of degree), but we do acknowledge that we have a lack of information surrounding progression which is both absent on the OfS Data Dash board and within our own data capturing. Therefore, our overarching commitment to improving our data capabilities remains and will be expanded on in more detail below.

10.3    **Overarching commitment [1]: DCG aims improve the data capture, measuring and monitoring of its Higher Education students.**

10.3.1  Within the last year, our focus on our own data capabilities has improved which has impacted on our knowledge and ability to evaluate our student data. As demonstrated in our evaluation here, our abilities have improved considerably throughout the last year with the progress our own HE Data Dashboard that we can use to both monitor performance and interrogate trends. We have identified areas to improve which include the capturing and then analysis of progression data, developing our own gathered 'retention' and making it comparable to the OfS's standard term of 'continuation' and further development related to the capture of outcomes data. As our qualifications range from undergraduate degree classifications (1st, 2(1) etc..) to Pass, Merit and Distinction, with some courses using a 'Pass only' method, we have yet to establish a methodology to make this fully comparable within the full student population and the sector. We will have also a particular focus on the collection and analysis of data related to 'Progression' of our students. With the absence of the Destination of Leavers in Higher Education (DLHE) data set and the new release of the Graduate Outcomes experimental data set, we recognise that we need to rely on our own methods of collection and evaluation in order to fill the gap of information in this instance.

10.4    **Overarching commitment [2]: DCG aims to monitor and improve the consistency of applications from students in POLAR4 Q1 and Q2**

**10.4.1**  Applications from POLAR4 Q1 and Q2 do remain inconsistent. This remains as a target to improve the consistency of applications from these POLAR4 areas. Most recent data demonstrates we have a gap of 23pp between Polar4 quintiles 1 and 2 compared to 3, 4 and 5.  It remains a target therefore that we will seek to improve consistency from Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR 4 Q1 and Q2) and reduce the gap between 1 and 2 compared to 3, 4 and 5 to less than 5pp.

**10.4.2**  Target group: Polar4 Quintiles 1 and 2.

## 11  Targets

11.1    **Target 1:  Access ethnically diverse students**

11.1.1  In the last year in terms of our own data, we have not made sufficient progress in improving our ethnic diversity. However, since the 2020/21 APP was published, we have taken significant action as described above in our evaluation. Coupled with the possible unknown impact of the pandemic, we will be retaining this as a key action and focus for our APP moving forwards. We are truly committed to improving our diversity not just within the HE student population, but within DCG. Our aim also remains to move towards being more representative of the city diversity (25% ethnic diversity). We retain the aspiration to make headway within this area and so therefore aim to achieve a diversity representation of ethnically diverse students to a minimum of 21% in the next 5 years. In previous iterations, our aim was for linear improvement, however it is likely that our improvements will be initially slow with great acceleration towards the end of the 5-year period.  Within the last year, the impact of CV19 has slowed our initially expected progress in this area. The work of the current Widening

Participation Committee however have been actioning a range of interventions in the last 6 months which are predicted to make a stronger impact in years 2 and 3 onwards as the work gathers momentum.

11.1.2 Target group: Ethnically diverse students

## 11.2 Target 2: Access for full time students from deprivation quintiles

11.2.1 Aim: to reduce the gap in access of students from deprivation quintiles 1 and 2 compared to quintiles 3, 4 and 5. We have made some improvement in this aspect with FT  For this APP, we aim to reduce the gap between the students accessing higher education from quintiles 1 and 2 compared to 3, 4, 5. Within a year since the last publication of our APP (2020/21 – 2024/25) we have made some improvements within our FT provision, moving Q1 and Q2 representation from 32% to 36% (within our FT population). We seek to build on this by setting the target to continue to reduce the gap to 14% or less in the next 5 years. Developing from our last APP target, we are removing the specific target for males from deprivation quintiles but broaden this to all students from deprivation quintiles.  In targeting males, we had the potential to increase any gap between males and females that might have developed. For this reason, we will treat all genders equally.

11.2.2 Target group: Deprivation quintiles 1 and 2

## 11.3 Target 3: Access of students with a known disability

11.3.1 Aim: Previously we set monitoring targets related to the students with a disability within our population. Given the improvements in our data capabilities, we are now at a position to set clear targets. We aim to improve the percentage representation of students accessing DCG higher education courses with a known disability to above 20%. We need to work hard to reverse our current trend (as identified by our own data) within the student population. We seek to improve this in all aspects provision (full and part time).

11.3.2 Target group: Students with a disability.

## 11.4 Target 4. Continuation of students with a disability

11.4.1 Aim. We aim to have a continuation rate that as minimal gaps between students without a disability. Within our 2020/21 APP evaluation our continuation rates are 88% (FT) and 78% (PT) for all students (therefore approximated to 83%), we aim in the next 5 years that continuation rates for all students is 90% with 0.5 or less percentage points between the population of students with a disability and no disability.

11.4.2 Target group. Students with a disability.

## 11.5 Target 5. Attainment of students with a disability

11.5.1 Aim. We aim to have attainment rates of students with a disability that has a less than a 5% gap between students with a disability and students without a disability. Currently the OfS data dashboard does not present any data on this and our own Dashboard presents with little to no discernible gap. However, our internal data is reviewing pass data only. We aspire to be able to review the data using the similar methodology to the OfS. We will therefore plan to interrogate attainment data vs. inclusion need with much more detail, with the aim to have less than a 3% gap between the sub populations

11.5.2 Target group. Students with a known disability.

## 11.6 Target 6. Reduce the attainment gap of students from underrepresented groups.

11.6.1 Aim. We are using Pass data to compare ethnically diverse students that pass to White British who pass, currently the pass rates vary over the last 3 years (17/18, 18/19,19/20). With under representation within this demographic already, we feel it is prudent to target this area as it is combination with targeting increased representation. Therefore, a target to reduce the gap to 3pp or less over the next 5 years will ensure that we are working hard to identify and reduce any potential barriers to attainment within the diverse student groups.

11.6.2 Target group. Ethnically diverse students

## 12  Monitoring commitments

**12.1**     As highlighted throughout our assessment of performance, there are a range of areas that we are not setting targets but are committing to monitor and will set targets at a later date if more detailed analytics highlights any significant gaps or emerging trends. The monitoring commitments also expands the focus of APP from access to encompass all areas of the student lifecycle.  We will monitor these characteristics over the period of the next 5 years, and at any point where we recognise that there is a trend forming that might impact negatively on access and participation, a new target will be set accordingly.

**12.1.1**  Outcomes of students from POLAR4 Quintiles 1 and 2

**12.1.2**  Continuation (retention) of students from IMD quintiles 1 and 2

**12.1.3**  Continuation (retention) of ethnically diverse students

**12.1.4**  Outcomes/Attainment of ethnically diverse students

**12.1.5**  Progression of students from POLAR4 Quintiles 1 and 2, IMD Quintiles 1 and 2, ethnically diverse students

## 13  Strategic measures

**13.1**     DCG is committed be a part of the OfS's goal of ensuring equal opportunity for all students. Our own abilities to monitor out students has improved through consistent embedding in all of our HE systems and processes. We are combining this with our commitment to widening participation agenda which features as core items for our 2020 – 2025 strategy.  In doing this, we have made commitment to the APP a DCG priority and ensuring it features highly on all cross departmental agendas.

**13.2**     **Strategic Approach 1: Higher Education Data**

**13.2.1**  As identified, a key theme remains within our APP is to increase the knowledge and capabilities around data, monitoring and analytics within the organisation. We have made progress within the last year to improve this, and have further plans identified within this APP to build on those development phases. We plan to have this as a key theme for the early phase of the plan (year 1 and 2) with minor works being carried up in years 3, 4 and 5 when the data is more demonstrably robust and any adaptations as required by the sector e.g. if Free School Meals are added as an indicator through the OfS's data dashboard, we will work to include this in our data dash board as soon as possible and embed into the evaluation processes discussed throughout this plan.

13.2.2  During 19/20, we reviewed the data needs and have now a HE Data Dashboard that allows us to interrogate the data to a much more detailed level. During the next academic year, we plan therefore to improve the alignment between the DCG metrics and those that the OfS are working with so that we can ensure both transparency and cross utilisation for both DCGs needs and that of the regulatory requirements for monitoring and reporting. We will continue with a small but transient working group that will meet to review the current data capabilities and work with future projects to improve this area and mould to the current and changing needs.  This will provide the central point of data that can be accessed by the main driving committees that take the responsibility for the APP linked KPIs, predominately the WP Committee. The WP Committee reports to the HE Assurance Board, which reports to the HE Executive Board and subsequent HE Academic Board with Governor representation which in turn reports to the Corporation.

13.2.3  It is expected that this strategic approach will provide significant contribution to the management of all other strategic approaches that will be undertaken as part of this APP. We have improved our data profile by the end of 19/20 as expected, but in doing this have also identified a wider remit which we will continue to work on for the end of 20/21.  Our particular focus for the next 2 years is on the progression stage of the lifecycle which is where we will concentrate our efforts in data capture and analysis.

**13.3**     **Strategic Approach 2: Increasing access to** ethnically diverse of **students**

**13.3.1** The cultural diversity of DCG is currently predominantly white British with very little variation in recent years. DCG aims to increase the range of diversity within its HE population to better represent the local demographic, promoting equality and equity in access to higher level study. This is now a central KPI for the 2020 - 2025 HE strategy as we have encapsulated the principles of the APP into all higher education provision. We plan to take most interventions in year 1 and 2 of this plan with monitoring and minor adjustments in years 3, 4 and 5 in response to evaluation. Based in review, significant interventions will be reviewed and replaced if required, as per our evaluation strategy.

**13.3.2** DCG has established a Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (DIB) Steering Group in order to enact the corporate strategy and champion social mobility in both employees and students. The aim of the group is to challenge diversity and to ensure the staff population meets the student population and those within the community. Gender stereotypes are being challenged and the group are taking positive action under the Equality Act. It is expected that this increased awareness and activity at a wider organisational level will have positive impacts throughout the whole of the organisation.

**13.3.3** At an organisational level, the WP Committee will review the targets on a regular basis and be a focal point of driving activity related to increasing diversity within the student body. Although in the last year we have taken actions to support this, we are yet to see the impact. This group will remain responsible the measurement of impact which will be reported to HE Assurance Board, HE Strategic Board and HE Academic Board.

**13.3.4** In working towards this, we will review the application process to ensure that all points of decision a fair, free from bias and promote equal opportunity. Where evidence is found that suggests bias may exist or improvements could be made, the WPC will review and suggest appropriate interventions, as guided by current literature and evidence from other establishments.

## 13.4 Strategic Approach 3: Improving access from deprivation and POLAR4 Quintiles.

**13.4.1** A number of targets are linked to improving access for deprivation and POLAR4 quintiles. This is a key mission of DCG to ensure education is accessible to students from a range of deprived areas and those least likely to progress to higher education. The city is profiled as experiencing significant deprivation and has significant wards where progression to HE is low. Therefore, DCG has an opportunity to positively impact on this. We have established KPIs that reflect this as part of our 5-year strategy. From the knowledge and understanding gained from projects such as UniConnect[7], we will utilise this approach to identify students least likely to attend due to deprivation metrics, combine with evidence-based research and select or design interventions that will target this specific group. It is expected that actions taken to influence these characteristics will take place throughout all years of the plan. Our current prolife in this area is 'spikey' so it is likely that we will have to keep making adjustments each year to take forward the most successful interventions.

**13.4.2** Our HE Data now has the capability to identify these students in order for improved monitoring. This is shared with our Marketing Team who are able to target students appropriately. This is driven and monitored via the WP committee. Each course is monitored for students within POLAR4 and IMD quintiles in order to review the performance at a granular level.

**13.4.3** Our Academic Study Support Coaches provide group, individual and bespoke tutorials and training sessions that address good academic practice, research and academic literacy skills to all students following initial skills evaluation. This provides the necessary support and guidance once students are enrolled. Within the last year, we have centralised this function and brought other organisational support mechanisms into an easy to access location for students (360Hub). This demonstrates our commitment to academic study support. The impact of this practice is being continually monitored and will underpin the student lifecycle whilst at DCG. The impact is reported to the HE Academic Board and the continual development of this forms part of an underpinning strategy to positively impact students from deprived and low participation areas. As highlighted by Haggis and Pouget (2019)[8] students often suffer from the fundamental concepts of managing workload and key study skills. We will develop this function, reach and impact of our Academic Study Support program over the next 2 –

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[7] Uni Connect - Office for Students
[8] https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/1356251220144798a?needAccess=true

3 years. Currently we are planning to encourage engagement with this function prior to enrolment to allow students the opportunity to see what they will have access to when they join their program.

13.4.4   We will utilise currently published research to understand the barriers that are faced by students from low socio-economic backgrounds and deprived areas that will guide the intervention development, combined with our Marketing Team to develop appropriate strategies which can be measured through impact.

13.4.5   We design and develop programs in partnership with other HEIs; in doing so, it will be a requirement that all new programs will be evaluated against the stages of the student lifecycle and the 5 groups (POLAR4, IMD, age, disability and ethnicity) where in much the program must be evaluated as to the likely to impact and subsequent mitigating activities on the subgroups to ensure that no barriers are created.

**13.5     Strategic Approach 4: Improving the student lifecycle via the impact of inclusive environments.**

**13.5.1**   We have a considerable commitment to ensuring in inclusive environment for all students. We have included within our own 5-year strategy KPIs that support all phases of lifecycle of students with inclusion needs.  Due to this, within the last year we have integrated the central Inclusion Team into a range of HE specific committees in order to gain their input, influence and drive where improvements can be made.  We are working therefore to raise the profile at information advice and guidance stage to positively influence students decision at application. Our aim is to ensure that applicants to DCG feel comfortable and confident in telling us of their inclusion needs.  We aim to ensure that from application stage right to any point within their course, they can tell us of their inclusion need and we can response with the right help, advice and support for them.  It is expected that interventions will take place throughout all years of this plan related to this strategic approach. Concepts in inclusive practice are influenced by regular research outputs; it is expected that we will need to ensure that we are able to remain reactive and flexible in order to make the most of new knowledge. The impact of improvements in inclusive practices will be reviewed every year at both course and strategic level in order to best influence the actions in this area.

**13.5.2**   In the last year, we have embedded discussions around inclusion and developing an inclusive approach to teaching in HE within our own staff training program as led by our HE Advanced Practitioners.  Our Academic Coaches are upskilling within this area and we are developing stronger relationships between our HE program leads and the inclusion team.
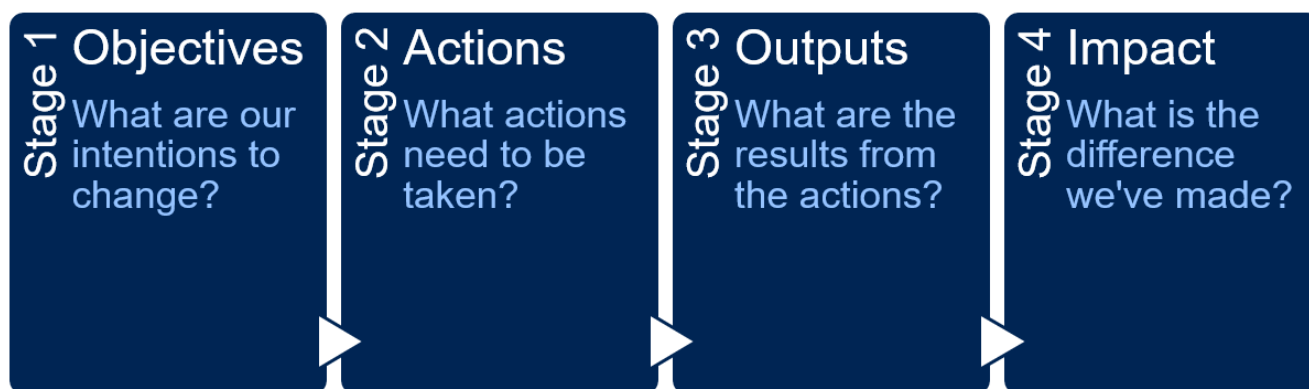
**13.5.3**   By embedding central KPIs that focus on targeting gaps in access for students with inclusion needs, we aim to ensure this remains at the forefront of our discussions within all contexts.  The knowledge of inclusion needs is embedded at course level where it is evaluated twice per academic year with a panel review process. This is fed into the committees that monitor higher education performance within DCG.

**13.5.4**   Our targets that support inclusivity are also driven through our WP Committee where we have organisational representation. Within the last year, the team have worked to improve the effectiveness of the application process where an inclusion need is highlighted. We have invested into the use of "Cognassist" for all higher-level students so that they can access the tools and resources usable for up to level 7 study.

## 14  Theory of Change

**14.1**     DCG will adopt a simple Theory of Change model that accounts for objectives, actions, outputs, impact. The Widening Participation Committee (WPC) will utilise this to inform the implementation,

monitoring and evaluation of the APP.

| Stage 1 | Objectives | Stage 2 | Actions | Stage 3 | Outputs | Stage 4 | Impact |
|---------|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| | What are our intentions to change? | | What actions need to be taken? | | What are the results from the actions? | | What is the difference we've made? |

14.2    The WPC have been and will continue to use the APP as guiding document to address the specified targets, along with acknowledging the monitoring requirements that are outlined within this document.  The WPC will scope out the range of necessary interventions required to positively influence the target as set out in the APP. The interventions will be evidenced based, based either on practice from within other similar environments, evidence from literature, or evidence from activities learned from other active working groups (e.g. DCG has been involved with The BRIDGE project which was a research program that aimed to investigate why there are low numbers of women, people from disadvantaged backgrounds, ethnic minority groups, people with disabilities, mature and part-time students enrolling on construction-related degree courses).  We will also look to pilot interventions where possible on a small scale before full adoption within DCG. Small scale pilots might not always be an appropriate approach due to the initial size of the starting population of higher education students at DCG.  The WPC will set the timeframes for the inventions against the targets as stipulated within the APP and communicate these to the HE Academic Board for discussion and information and will take a risk-based approach when prioritising implementation. Following the launch of the intervention, the WPC will monitor and evaluate the success on a regular basis. Any highlighted negative impact on the narrowing of the gap will be evaluated, reviewed and stopped if necessary, with the learning impact noted for future reference. Any learning or new understanding will be disseminated by the group to the most appropriate audience, either internally or externally e.g. via the Association of Colleges. Where additional resources are required, the WPC will recruit internally for staff members to act as a champion for the agreed intervention.

14.3    **2020 – 2025 Higher Education Strategy.** Now in action, the 2020 – 2025 HE Strategy which serves under the DCG corporate strategy, takes the key targets of the APP to be central KPIs, and embodies the principles of widening participation and how this translates into an operational context. This will communicate the overall strategic measures that will be adopted by higher education, as approved by the corporation. The KPIs that will drive the HE Strategy forward will be directly linked to the APP and utilise this document as the basis for the strategy.  We plan that it will encompass a range of principles addressing our pedagogical approach to teaching, learning and assessment that meets ours and our HEI partner's needs, covers the requirements for inclusive approaches to teaching, equality and diversity, expectations for teachers and students, physical and virtual learning space, academic study support, student voice, engagement with external employers or stakeholders, professionalism and academic sustainability (a non-exhaustive list). Development of this will be keep the principles of widening participation, and therefore the APP at its core, although will not specifically link to the individual targets (i.e. they will not be mentioned as specifically as they are within this APP) but will address the core themes required to address them.

14.4    **HE Governance structure:** There are a range of boards and committees in place to provide oversight of HE at DCG and ultimately the APP. All committees share an aspect of underpinning activity that supports the APP as it's embedded within the HE Strategy. Progress on these aspects are reported regularly throughout the committee structure

14.5    **HE Academic Board.** The HE Academic Board is chaired by a DCG Governor and will receive reports on the performance against the APP along with other business related to higher education provision at DCG. Its main role is to review the strategic options, curriculum planning in the context of business intelligence for higher education provision. The group oversee strategic enactment and

operations by monitoring the performance along with approving higher education planning, performance monitoring cycles and mechanisms.

14.6 **HE Operational Board**. Meeting 5 to 6 times per academic year, the HE Operational Board is comprised of a variety of Heads and Managers throughout DCG. Alongside other receiving reports on the central business, this board will receive reports against the APP, discuss and approve action where required.

14.7 **Higher Education Teaching and Learning Enhancement Committee**. This group is responsible for impacting on the enhancement of teaching and learning for HE students at DCG. They will inform and enact the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy which will be informed by aspects of the APP as described above. They will focus on aspects such as student and teacher engagement, high quality teaching and learning, assessment practice and professional competencies. They will likely address most aspects of the student lifecycle particularly the continuation, attainment and progression of students and it is planned will take a significant interested in the utilisation of outcomes for students to inform of the areas for future improvement. This will be linked to the identification of any new themes or gaps that might be emerging.

14.8 **Higher Education Quality and Standards Committee.** This group is responsible for maintaining quality standards throughout HE at DCG. It is not envisaged that this group will have a significant input or influence over the APP but may be influenced later by the HE Widening Participation Committee.

14.9 **Higher Education Widening Participation Committee**. This will be the main sub-group responsible for the development of activities and measurement of impact using the theory of change to enact the APP. This group will also be responsible for greater understanding and implementation of strategies to raise awareness of individual learning needs. This committee will likely influence other committees along with providing HE Academic and Executive board with any required information and reporting. Currently, DCG operates an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy which is an overarching approach to both further and higher education via the Social Model of Disability. A significant proportion of the monitoring requirements that we have identified throughout this APP relate to the access, continuation, attainment and progression of students studying with a disability. It is therefore planned that this committee is the mechanism through which we aim to develop our approach to Inclusive Practice with regards to how inclusive practice should be interpreted and implemented within the higher education context at all stages of the lifecycle. We will utilise evidence published in the sector, for example 'Inclusive Teaching and Learning in Higher Education as a route to Excellence'[9] and best practice where it has been highlighted from other institutions. Based on output from this group and the implementation of the APP, the articulation of inclusive practice will be included within the Higher Education Strategy (section 3). It is planned that part of the outputs over the next five-year period will be driven by approaches to access and participation to drive new policies that will formalise DCGs approach to inclusivity within its HE provision.

## 15 Staff and Student consultation

15.1 The HE Student Governor was consulted with on the relevancy of the proposed targets and the approach that is evidenced within this APP. They commented that the analysis appeared to be a fair evaluation of the current student experience, and that the targets highlighted are appropriate. They fed-back that the focus on the disability characteristics would be supported and seeing greater awareness raising of this throughout the student lifecycle in order to provide appropriate support would be welcomed. They also confirmed the evaluation of ethnicity was a fair and appropriate approximation and relevant to have targets in this area. They agreed that the need to focus on better understanding of progression information would be welcomed by the student body, and that this would have positive impacts for both current students and DCG's connection with employers.

15.2 The HE Staff Governor was consulted with on the relevancy of the proposed targets and the approach that is evidenced within this APP. They were in support of the actions identified and satisfied that considerations into the intersections of disadvantage have been considered now and will continue to be reviewed in the future. They were clear of the impact that the small data sets have

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[9]

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/587221/Inclusive_Teaching_and_Learning_in_Higher_Education_as_a_route_to-excellence.pdf

on the ability to evaluate performance, but also satisfied that this APP demonstrates a clear commitment to data improvement, and the APP is embedded at all levels throughout the organisation by its integration into the HE Strategy. They have recommended that further work is required to ensure that teachers are aware of the APP and how it influences at an operational level, and the importance of widening participation at student level. This will be actioned moving forwards.

## 16 Evaluation strategy

**16.1** The Higher Education Department at DCG is committed to ensuring that the activities and interventions put in place have the greatest possible impact on the student experience and the student lifecycle. We will evaluate these actions, interventions and strategies that support the APP in order to develop the service, inform strategic planning and ensure that we are having an impact on the gaps identified.

## 17 Strategic Context

**17.1** DCG is committed to widening participation and therefore the APP has been embedded as part of our main strategy in order to articulate the focus of the activities and interventions that will be implemented moving forwards. There are already a number of excellent activities and agendas that are in operation at DCG that target and aspire children in the local area from schools and colleges. This activity however is principally based in the aspiring of young children and adults to attend college in its wider context, at first as an FE provider and then as an HE provider; currently disaggregation of where these activities are targeting purely higher education learners has not be carried out. The Higher Education Widening Participation Committee now has that primary focus will be to enact activities and interventions that will support the APP. It will be through this mechanism that the reporting and dissemination of information regarding widening participation and the progress of the APP will be channelled.

## 18 Program Design

**18.1** It is expected that the majority of actions or interventions that will be put in place will have started during 19/20 and be continuing on through to 20/21 and beyond. The choice of intervention will be based on published research and any institutional evidence where it exists where extrapolation may be able to take place as described in the strategic approaches. The activities and interventions will be piloted in small scale when required, or if appropriate rolled out across all provision. Either pilot or full interventions will be monitored and reviewed via the governance structure as described within this document. If they are evaluated and concluded as to not making any impact, they will be adjusted or stopped. It must be noted at this point, it is expected the volume and number of interventions that can be implemented may be small due to the current resource of the team that will enact the APP and the relative size of the higher education provision. There is not a dedicated widening participation team for the higher education provision at DCG, but it is embedded in the core principles and practice so that all employees contribute to progress within the APP. In the last year, we have worked tirelessly to raise the awareness of the importance of access and participation by including it in all aspects of our provision and this will continue. Due to this, we have started to see a true engagement to the mission and are excited with the continued engagement. We will continue to strive to meet the targets we have set ourselves by incorporating them into our 'standard practice' and encouraging open and challenging conversations between colleagues about the APP.

**18.2** The OfS's self-assessment tool highlighted that in terms of program design, DCG will benefit from having a stand- alone approach to impacting on widening participation activities for its higher education provision; one of which is devolved from the FE approach. There are many aspects that are not developed to design, implement or evaluate only for higher education students but serve the purpose of DCG. This mirrors the commitment to develop a better standpoint for data analytics that relate to higher education provision at DCG. Key priorities for DCG are to ensure that all interventions designed have key designed outcomes and areas of planned impact along with identified performance indicators and mechanisms to capture the necessary data. We see that in developing our Strategy alongside the APP, we have clearly set our expectations of key outcomes and KPIs in the areas of focus.

18.3 Moving forward, we will strengthen our planning of future programs by ensuring that full consideration is given against our current access and participation plan in the justification and design of the program. This includes adding to our process that already includes gathering of market intelligence,

seeking sector and industry feedback, feedback from current and prospective students, taking into account subject benchmarks and considerations of academic quality. Alongside this, we will add an impact assessment against the APP characteristics to ensure that new programs have had an appropriate level of consideration and mitigation regarding possible barriers for any student characteristic; it will require the program team to present their strategy for how the students are recruited and supported throughout the student lifecycle. As standard, the program will enter the cycle of implementation, monitoring, evaluating, review and reflecting as part of the management of all higher education programs at the college which is part of both the Business Planning process, and the HE course performance monitoring process. As an example, it will be expected that new programs have evaluated how the course will be marketed to attract a diverse range of students, how the content is described and what imagery is utilised; any improvements will be articulated through a course action plan. Our marketing team also work with each program area to ensure that the geographical targeting can raise awareness where progression to HE is low.

18.4 The following gives examples of actions we have in place or are planning in support of our APP. For programs already in the portfolio, it is a requirement that they review their own marketing and update to represent a wide range of student characteristics. We are embedding reviews of teaching materials with respect to representation and working via our Advanced Practitioners to understand and embed inclusive practices within teaching methods. This is evaluated through our observation of teaching and learning process. Our Inclusion Team are also working with our curriculum teams to ensure the website is compliant with accessibility criteria, and to produce a bespoke higher education inclusion handbook to assist students prior to application; we are planning to launch this for September 2021. We already utilise Coganssist to provide support for students with inclusion needs which is open for all staff and students within DCG on higher level programs. We monitor engagement with Cognassist and review the impact on final outcomes.

## 19  Evaluation design

19.1 In the last 6 months where we have aligned our strategy and our APP, we have seen a strengthening in the commitment to APP activity. We believe this alignment is both appropriate and effective. Due to the small size of DCG, we will be keeping inventions relatively simple and straightforward with the aim of influencing a relatively small population (i.e. The total higher education population is currently not greater than 500 students). The Widening Participation Committee will strive to answer the following basic questions which will be reported via the committee structures and boards to the Governing Body at appropriate times throughout the academic year.

19.1.1  How has the intervention contributed towards the APP targets (or commitments to monitoring)?
19.1.2  What is the scale of the impact?
19.1.3  How has the gap identified in the APP been impacted?
19.1.4  Are there any negative/unintended consequences that have occurred as a result of the intervention?

## 20  Evaluation implementation

20.1 We have a continued to focus our data capabilities to support monitoring and evaluation. Within the last year we have rolled out the use of our central HE Data dashboard as part of the mechanism of evaluation and will continue to use this to underpin our efforts. Within this, we have also continued to identify further improvements that will aid our understanding which we will continue to work on.

20.2 DCG currently utilises some data from external sources, but this is currently not routinely reviewed in relation to our higher education students in an integrated format. Moving forwards, we will be looking to integrate external data sets with our own in order to have more impact with our data analytical capabilities. Examples of this include the most recent Graduate Outcomes.

## 21  Learning

21.1 Although the Widening Participation Committee has the primary responsibility for communicating any learning that has taken place as part of any interventions or activities that have been deployed, it is also part of the main HE strategy so learning will be shared and disseminated at all opportunities that arise. However, we do recognise that where there is an opportunity to share this more widely with the academic community at DCG we will take it. Where possible, we will seek to share our findings with any regional or national networks that particularly bring colleges that have HE in FE together in

order to disseminate findings or lessons learned. It is likely that the starting point of this will be via the Association of Colleges[10].

## 22  Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

**22.1**     As highlighted above, the Widening Participation Committee will take ownership of the implementation of the plan and will monitor the day to day activity against the plan and any identified interventions. The committee will provide regular updates to the HE Executive Board which in turn informs the HE Academic Board which ultimately informs the Governing Body at DCG. Any areas identified of not making enough progress against the plan can be discussed throughout each one of these mechanisms.

**22.2**     Progress against the plan will be reviewed through a multilayer approach to a continual self-evaluation process which creates a report that is updated on a regular basis and circulated to senior post holders throughout the academic year.

22.2.1   Regular strategic challenge meetings which monitor activity and progress against KPIs of which the APP targets are included. These happen three times throughout the academic year with the CEO and leadership team. The end of cycle report requires a review of impact.

22.2.2   Higher Education Academic Board. These happen four times per academic year where updates against the KPIs are provided to Governors, CEO and leadership team, along with staff and student governor representation. These also provide an opportunity to challenge the rate of progress against the plan.

22.2.3   HE Executive Board happens five times per academic year, involving the senior leadership team, CEO and college representation from a range of departments including Services for Students, IT, Management Information Systems, Curriculum. The APP targets are presented and discussed at this board with updates received from the Widening Participation Committee.

**22.2.4**   A course review of courses happens twice a year for all of the higher education academic programs. Within these, there is discussion in detail with APP concepts, including recruitment discussions related to the key characteristics as outlined in the APP and knowledge and understanding of students with inclusion needs. Currently retention and performance is not disaggregated at course level due to low levels of representation impacting on the quality of evaluation. However as representation improves as predicted, then courses will review student performance by the different characteristics to ensure any disparity of performance can be analysed and targeted at course level.  Actions are set and reviewed at the next course review for impact.

**22.2.5**   The end of the year culminates in a Self-Evaluation Document (SED) that draws all aspects of the HE provision together in an annual review. This includes the review of the KPIs of which the APP targets are included. This gives and overall annual reflection on the performance and impact throughout the year, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement, along with setting targets for the next academic year.

22.2.6   We currently have a number of established ways for engaging with students e.g. Programme Committee Meetings, standard student surveys throughout the academic year, Lunch with the Leadership, Focus Groups, the NSS (for applicable students) and ad hoc or pulse surveys to get feedback on new or emerging issues (i.e. we utilised this with changing pandemic situation).  We focus on ensuring we have a high participation and engagement to ensure that the view of students are well represented and ensure we have student views from underrepresented groups.  We will plan to embed a student engagement mechanism that both raises awareness of the APP, gain feedback on the progress against targets, interventions and gather student views on improvements or updates to our actions.   We will ensure that students from underrepresented groups are included in these mechanisms.

22.2.7   Where there is a worsening or stagnation of progress against a milestone, this will trigger a review and evaluation of the current interventions in place.  The outcome will result in changes to the strategic measures, interventions or resources, updated via the Theory of Change across the lifespan of the plan.

## 23  Provision of information to students

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[10] https://www.aoc.co.uk/

**23.1**   DCG provides information on fees, costs and financial support primarily on our website[11] , and also through a printed prospectus, face to face meetings, interviews, leaflets, social media, open days and through responding to individuals by either email or phone.  Student Support Advisers will provide applicants and current students with information, advice and guidance relating to a range of topics such as starting their course, finance, welfare advice and student loans. Course teachers speak with applicants in depth about the courses, the content and opportunities it may provide them.

**23.2**   Any courses that have additional costs, field trips or resource requirements are clearly stipulated on the course page(s) on the website alongside being discussed at interview and open days.

**23.3**   We provide timely information to UCAS and SLC about our current fees, which is mirrored on our webpages and within our Fees Policy which is published on the website.

## 24  Appendix

**24.1**   The OfS will append the following items from the fees and targets and investment documents when an access and participation plan is published:
1. Targets (tables 2a, 2b and 2c in the targets and investment plan)

2. Investment summary (tables 4a and 4b in the targets and investment plan)

3. Fee summary (table 4a and 4b in the fee information document)

**Data sources used throughout this document:**

- OfS access and participation dataset from the data dashboard (predominately)

- Internal data created from ILR analysis and ProMonitor within DCG

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[11] https://www.derby-college.ac.uk/university-higher-education-undergraduate