

Trafford and Stockport College Group (TSCG) Access and Participation Plan 2026-27 to 2029-30

Introduction and strategic aim

Overview of TSCG

Welcome to Trafford and Stockport College Group's (TSCG) fourth Access and Participation Plan (APP). Two of the earlier plans being published under the College's previous name "Trafford College Group", and during a period when the College changed structure through college mergers.

We are a general Further (FE) and Higher Education (HE) provider serving the communities in two distinct local authority areas of Stockport and Trafford, the most prosperous of the Greater Manchester city region. We are a civic partner and educator with a strong sense of place and service to our communities.

In 2007, North and South Trafford Colleges merged, becoming Trafford College, and in 2018 joined Stockport College to form the Trafford and Stockport College Group (TSCG). In May 2021, Cheadle and Marple Sixth Form College joined the Group, which now operates from 5 campuses, employs over 900 colleagues, serves around 5,500 young people, 6,000 adults across further and higher education and 1,500 apprentices. With an average, over recent years, of 250 HE students, we are a small HE provider. The majority of HE students, 90%, study at our University Centre Stockport, and 10% at the Stretford campus, both attracting students from Greater Manchester.

TSCG was judged to be a 'Good Provider' by Ofsted in November 2022, described in the resulting Ofsted Report as one where learners 'talk about the highly inclusive and supportive environment that provides a safe and positive place to learn'. Our commitment to improving the quality of education, experience and outcomes for our HE students is reflected in our voluntary submission to the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), in 2023, which was awarded Bronze. The TEF submission with its emphasis on enhancing student experience and outcomes for all students, aligns with the objectives of this APP. We aim to continuously improve the student experience, offer high levels of academic support and foster an inclusive culture that encourages students from diverse backgrounds to thrive during study and as they progress.

The TEF Panel Statement reports that "the student academic experience is typically high quality, and there are some very high-quality features, which include very high-quality teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are effective in supporting students' learning, progression, and attainment. The panel also found very high-quality support for staff professional development, and the promotion of excellent academic practice. Student outcomes are typically high quality, and there are some very high-quality features including very high rates of continuation, completion and progression for the provider's students and courses".

The College's Strategic Aim and Purpose

Our Strategic Plan 2024-2030 sets out our mission: to 'elevate skills, shape futures and transform lives'. The College's strategic priorities, which are key to ensuring that we are successful in our sustained efforts to widen access and participation include, for example, "aiming to provide civic leadership to positively influence our communities", ensuring "equality, diversity and inclusion is at the heart of what we do", providing "a curriculum that delivers the skills our economy needs – locally, regionally and nationally" and in doing so, we will ensure that those from underrepresented groups benefit from the delivery of an exceptional student experience, are encouraged, have access to our high quality technical and skills-based curriculum and are supported to continue, achieve their qualifications and progress to positive destinations".

Contributing to the Greater Manchester City Region

As detailed in the Strategic Plan (2024-2030), the College's vision is to "lead the way for a city region where everyone has the education and skills to succeed in life and work" and as articulated in our mission, we seek to "elevate skills, shape futures and transform lives". We recognise that in striving to "unlock the potential for the successful futures of students, employers, local communities and our staff, the promotion and commitment to equality and opportunity lies at the heart of what we do, and who we are".

We are part of the Greater Manchester (GM) city region, which has "become one of the most economically diverse city-regions in the UK" and aims to have "inequalities reduced in all aspects of life" (GM Industrial Strategy, 2019). GM has a diverse economy with strong sectors including digital, health, advanced manufacturing, and creative industries. Census (2021) reports that 4.8% of businesses in GM are "high growth" (where the average growth in employment exceeded 20% between 2018 and 2023). In Stockport 4.5% of businesses are considered high growth and in Trafford 6.4%. The 2023 UK Business Count (ONS) reports that across both boroughs there are 105 large, 400 medium and 2175 businesses. The rates of employment of those aged 16-64, are 75.2% in Stockport and 75% in Trafford, both exceeding that of GM (71.9%) (ONS, 2024).

Our critical role in supporting this economic landscape and "equipping the people who live in GM with appropriate skills, both 'hard' and 'soft', to participate, to advance, and to adapt in a rapidly evolving world of work" is outlined in our Employer and External Stakeholder Responsive Strategy 2024-30. To successfully fulfil our role, we are highly responsive to the needs identified in the GM Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), which identifies the key skills needs across the region and emphasises the importance of collaboration among educational institutions, employers, and local authorities. We also contribute to the maintenance of a "fairer city region" and the uplifting of social mobility by driving the Government's mission to "break down barriers to opportunity".

Context of Access and Participation – pockets of lower HE participation, lower L4+ achievement and deprivation - the case for widening access and participation

We are a HE provider within GM where between 40 and 45% of young people progress to higher education at 18, slightly below the national average of 48%. However, POLAR4 data indicates that within Stockport the HE participation rates are less consistent between subdistricts, with for example, central areas such as Brinnington sitting in quintile(q) 1, indicating low participation. Trafford shows higher overall HE participation rates, particularly in areas like Timperley and Hale, which fall into qs 4 and 5.

We serve communities where the proportion of adults of working age who have HE qualifications is above the England average of 43.2%. The Annual Population Survey (2022) reports that 46.7% of adults in Stockport and 54.9% in Trafford have a higher education qualification. However, within that promising overall picture lie communities suffering from high levels of deprivation and the often-associated negative impacts on education participation and success.

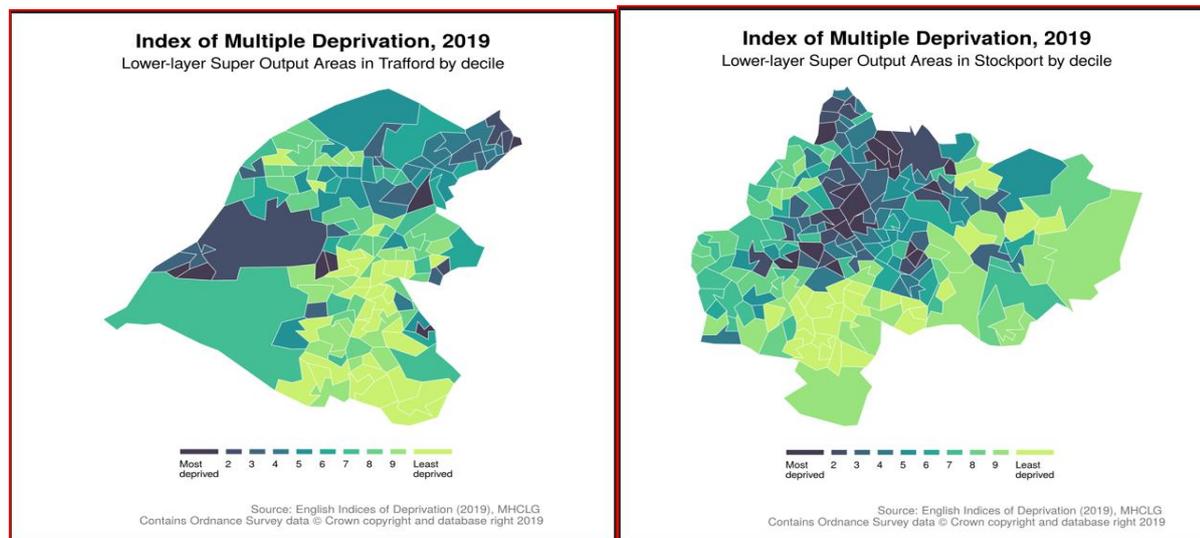
The 2019 Indices of Deprivation ranked Trafford as 191 out of 317 local authority districts in England (where a rank of 1 is the most deprived authority in England) and Stockport as 130. Whilst Trafford remains the least deprived authority in GM by this measure, and Stockport is within only the third most deprived national quintile, there are some particularly deprived districts such as Bucklow-St. Martins, Partington and Old Trafford in Trafford, and Brinnington and Edgeley in Stockport, where communities experience challenges around economic wellbeing and the resulting effects upon education of young people. The proportion of Trafford Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) ranked in the 10% most deprived in England has increased from 2.9% (4/138) in 2015 to 5.1% (7/138) in 2019 and in Stockport the proportion is higher remaining at 8.9% (17/190) (unchanged from 2015). The two infographics below (figure 1), for Trafford and Stockport, provide a visual representation of the distribution across each of the national deprivation deciles. The presence of darker shaded localities with higher levels of deprivation, against an overall lighter shade of lower levels, is evident for both boroughs.

Figure 1 – presents two maps comparing the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for 2019 across two local authority areas: Trafford (left) and Stockport (right). Each map is divided into Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs), which are small geographic areas used for statistical purposes. The colours indicate national deprivation deciles, ranking areas from most deprived (dark blue) to least deprived (light green) based on the IMD.

Dark blue = most deprived 10% nationally.

Light green = least deprived 10% nationally.

Intermediate shades represent areas in between.



The selective education system that still operates in Trafford, and the highly competitive landscape in Stockport, also contributes to many of the younger students enrolling with the College, from more disadvantaged backgrounds, having not benefited as fully as would be expected from their earlier education. This context drives our vision of being truly inclusive for our local communities, one that strives to encourage and support these students to progress and succeed in HE.

An example of our effective partnership working aimed at those more deprived local communities where opportunity is less visible, and attainable, for young people (and HE participation rates are below average for the region) is our work as a member of the Greater Manchester Colleges Group (GMCG). This aims to enhance social mobility, provide equitable access to education (not only with us but at other providers across the city, region and country) and the opportunity for students to become graduates with the skills to contribute to the local economy. Working with the Greater Manchester Higher programme, and the Uni Connect programme, we employ an Outreach Officer, who, working together with the Schools Liaison Team, host school children from deprived areas on taster days and summer schools, engaging those who might not otherwise consider HE. We support young people to make informed choices, providing information and advice to students and staff in local schools and sixth form colleges where HE participation is comparatively low.

Trafford and Stockport College Group's HE portfolio

Our curriculum at level 4 and above is diverse, flexible, vocational and skills focused. The key subject areas Early Years, Health, Computing, Engineering, Construction, Teacher Education and Creative Arts. Our portfolio includes full and part time provision, combining traditional Higher National provision, Higher Level apprenticeships, Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs), with Higher Education Validated (HEV) undergraduate courses including Foundation Degrees, one-year Top Ups, and Certificates in Higher Education. Our Duty to Review requires that our HE provision is reviewed annually, and ensures that our offer is relevant, meets the needs of the LSIP, and is also aligned to national policy priority areas. The annual review also ensures that the HE provision offers opportunities for internal progression from, for example, the suite of Access to HE Diplomas available at the College and remains relevant to our commitment to widening access and participation within our catchment area, by offering a range of diverse and flexible pathways and modes of study for students to study and progress. Our HEI partners Sheffield Hallam University and The University of Huddersfield are supportive of our aims, and we work collaboratively to ensure that our choice, marketing and delivery of validated programmes, serves to widen access and promote success for our students.

In line with national trends of declining numbers, TSCG is no exception. However, we are actively exploring innovative approaches to increase engagement and strengthen our offer to employers and external stakeholders. Our Higher Education and Skills Strategy (2025-2030) aims to reverse this trend, increase the HE student population to approximately 500 by 2030, and take targeted actions to attract students from disadvantaged backgrounds (see the “Objectives” and “Interventions” section). Our Higher Education and Skills Strategy specifies the targeting and engagement with areas of low HE participation rates and non-traditional HE students. This includes “targeting and engagement of students from cold spots” and providing opportunities for “employees to gain accreditation for higher level learning through part time and bespoke routes”.

Our Higher Education and Skills Strategy 2025-2030 presents our commitment to widening participation and increasing access to lifelong learning opportunities through an inclusive and enabling approach. For each of the six objectives that underpin the strategy, we set out approaches that are aligned to our proposed intervention strategies, including, for example, increased provision of flexible learning pathways, featuring modular offerings to support learners who may face barriers to education of time, family commitments, finance, knowledge and confidence. In seeking to transform student experience and outcomes, we intend to further develop and strengthen support services, recognising their importance for students from non-traditional and underrepresented backgrounds who may require more assistance in transitioning to HE.

HE Student Profile

Our most recent HE student profile headlines, as outlined by the TEF Size and Shape data dashboard, APP data dashboard, and internal College data, appear in ‘Annex A”, suggest we are an inclusive College, representative of our locality and in some ways quite different to the sector.

Risks to equality of opportunity

Annexe A provides the full investigation of our access, continuation, completion, attainment, and progression data, which has led to the identification of FOUR specific risks to equality of opportunity detailed below (access, continuation and completion for the named student groups). Four-year objectives addressing these inequalities appear in the “Objectives” section below.

Annexe A also explains in greater detail the challenges associated with small volumes of data (and small student numbers), including acknowledgement of our reduced curriculum offer over the past years and our changed context since our first merger in 2018, including a reduction in student numbers following the cessation of some validation arrangements with partner universities. Whilst the OfS APP Data Dashboard has been a helpful data source with respect to access, the identification of risks to equality of opportunity for some student groups entering HE, continuation, the investigation of the success of students progressing from their first year of study to a second (or completing a one year course), and completion of study, it has been less helpful, due to small student numbers, in examining possible risks at the later lifecycle stages (attainment/ progression).

Where the APP Data Dashboard has been used, as recommended by the OfS APP Guidance, 4- and 2-year aggregate values have been considered a more reliable indicator of the risk to equality of opportunity, than the comparison of annual data, due both to small data volumes and changes in the curriculum offer over recent years. All the data quoted in this section is drawn from the OfS APP Data Dashboard unless otherwise indicated. OfS TEF 2023 indicators have been used, and referenced, and provide another picture. The analysis has also been augmented by reference to our internal College HE student data including data up to, and including, year 2023/24.

The challenges of small data volumes for the later stages of the student lifecycle journey are explained further in the final paragraphs of this section including the absence of any identifiable gaps in the attainment life cycle stage, and the absence of data for progression, which from other [TEF] sources has been recognised as a “very high-quality feature” of our performance.

ACCESS - Full and Part Time

We have identified only ONE risk to the equality of opportunity for people accessing HE at the College Group (relevant to full time study). Annexe A explains that we attract students to our full and part time study from many underrepresented groups and our analysis of other student data, such as prior qualifications, provide further evidence of an inclusive and diverse provider.

Our majority, white, full- and part-time student populations are of a similar proportion to the overall sector. Whilst the proportion of students identifying as of Asian and mixed ethnic origin exceed the overall sector average, the proportion of students identifying as black is below the sector average, and due to the number being very small is not reportable in all incidences. However, as explained in Annexe A, this situation is not dissimilar to the local population breakdown, and the proportion of the population identifying as black for the two local boroughs within the College catchment area. As a college that recruits almost exclusively locally this, in the College's context, is therefore NOT considered a risk to equality of opportunity of access for this student group.

PTA1 – We will address the risk to equality of opportunity of access to full time HE studies at the College for **students from the least represented [HE] communities**. This is demonstrated by the significantly lower percentage of full-time students (15.1% - 2-year average) **recruited from TUNDRA Quintile (Q) 1, the least represented quintile in HE**, compared with the higher percentage of students (27.9%) who access full time study from the most represented TUNDRA Q5, a significant gap of 12.8pp. The 4- year average shows a similar gap of 11pp. See table below.

FULL TIME TUNDRA – under 21	T&SCG 2-year average (%)	T&SCG 4-year average (%)	T&SCG Most recent 2022/23 (%)	Sector 2-year average (%)
Q5 - Most	27.9	27.9	35.7	30..0
Q4	14.0	14.0	N/A	23.3
Q3	30.2	25.0	25.0	18.8
Q2	12.8	16.2	10.7	15.6
Q1- Least	15.1	16.9	21.4	12.4
Equality Gap @TSCG	12.8pp	11.0pp	14.3pp	

Whilst this is not dissimilar to the access equality gap between TUNDRA quintiles 1 and 5 across the sector (indeed slightly smaller), our ambition to reduce this gap is synergetic with our strategic plan to increase the number of young full-time students progressing internally at the College, attract students from local feeder schools, and contribute to the reduction of the gap seen in HE participation in pockets of our local boroughs of Trafford and Stockport compared to national data.

Evidence suggests that this is partly influenced by prior educational experience and attainment (OfS Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) Risk 1), partly by the perception of HE as being 'something for others' (OfS EORR Risk 3), less visible role models with experience and success in HE (OfS EORR Risk 2) , less knowledge than elsewhere in the country of the opportunities and support, and some anxiety about tuition, living costs and associated debt (OfS EORR Risk 1).

CONTINUATION

We have identified only ONE risk to the equality of opportunity for students continuing their higher education (from year one to two or achieving a one-year qualification). Annexe A provides full details of the analysis of the continuation performance of students from different groups. The analysis explains that there is some indication of less strong continuation performance of full time Asian students, younger full time students (under 21), those full time students reporting a disability, students identifying as male, those who were previously eligible for Free School Meals, part time mature (+21 years) students, and part time students from the most deprived communities [compared to the least] but that the analyses are often based on very small student numbers and/or the performance is still good in the sector context (higher than sector averages and above TEF benchmarks) and are NOT considered risks to equality of opportunity. A number of these, as indicated in Annexe A, will however, be monitored internally.

Full time

PTS1- The **continuation** rates for **full time** students from the **most deprived communities (IMD Quintiles 1 and 2)**, compared with those from less deprived communities are a little confusing and inconsistent. The 2- and 4-year aggregate data for full time students from the most deprived IMD Q (1) show only 77.1% and 78.9% (respectively) of the population continuing their study but this is actually higher than the least deprived IMD Q (5), but lower than all the other quintiles, and lower than the sector average for IMD Q 1 (2-year average 83.5%, 4-year average 83.5%). Whilst this is a confused data picture overall, this does indicate a risk to the equality of opportunity for students from the most deprived areas in continuing their studies.

Using weighted average data drawn from the 2-year average, the College has identified that a 6.3pp continuation equality gap exists between the College's 2-year average for IMD quintiles 1 and 2 (77.9%) and IMD quintiles 3,4 and 5 (84.2%). This is gap of almost twice that which existed in the 4-year average and represents a worsening continuation performance in more recent years for students from the most deprived quintiles. TEF 2023 indicators show a gap of 3.5pp between the continuation rates for full time students from IMD Q 1 and 2 compared to those from IMD Q3/5 and would support the judgement that a risk to equality of opportunity is evident for this group of students at the continuation stage in their lifecycle. See table below.

FULL TIME – CONTINUATION - IMD Deprivation Quintiles	T&SCG 2-year average (%)	T&SCG 4-year average (%)	TEF 2023 averages	Sector 2-year average (%)
Q5 – Least	59.4	74.7	NA	92.8
Q4	91.1	87.2	NA	90.6
Q3	88.2	83.5	NA	88.4
Q2	79.2	76.9	NA	85.4
Q1- Most	77.1	78.9	NA	83.5
Q3-5 – Least	84.2	81.7	81.6	
Q1&2 – Most	77.9	78.1	78.1	
Equality Gap @TSCG	6.3pp	3.6pp	3.5pp	

Evidence suggests that this is influenced by prior educational experience and attainment, less readily available academic (OfS EORR Risk 6), personal (OfS EORR Risk 7), and mental health support (OfS EORR Risk 8) away from college than that available for groups of less economic deprivation, and limited access to learning resources outside college (OfS EORR Risk 11). Additionally, this group has suffered more than others from the impacts of the pandemic's restriction and cost pressures (OfS EORR Risk 9), the more recent cost of living crisis years, which in many cases has led to increased employment hours (part and full time) outside of college reducing the volume and quality of study hours (OfS EORR Risk 10).

Part time

NO risks to the equality of opportunity for part time students relating to continuation are identified.

COMPLETION

We have identified only TWO risks to the equality of opportunity for students completing their HE study at the College. Annex A provides full details of the analysis of the completion performance of students from different groups and explains that there is some evidence of a lower level of successful completion performance for younger (than 21 years) full-time students but that is based on small student numbers and will be monitored internally. A formal objective will not be set. Annex A, also explains that whilst there is some indication of a lower level of completion of study for non-white, mature, and female part time students and those reporting a disability, the actual level of performance is still better than sector averages and TEF benchmarks for these groups and in two incidences is based upon small student numbers, and accordingly we do NOT consider these risks to the equality of opportunity for students and no objectives will be set.

Full time

PTS2- Full time students from the most **deprived communities (IMD Q 1)** appear to be less successful than students from the least deprived communities at **completing** their study. The 2- and 4-year aggregate data for full time students from the most deprived IMD quintile 1 shows only 73.1% and 73.8% (respectively) of the population completing their study whilst those students from the least deprived IMD Q5 successfully complete their study at a much higher rate (2-year average 87.8% and 4-year average 85.1%). These completion rates for full time students from the most deprived quintile IMDQ1 are also significantly below the sector 2 and 4-year averages (-8.4pp and -7.8pp respectively). Accordingly, we recognise a risk to the equality of opportunity for full time students from the most deprived communities of not successfully completing their studies. A completion gap is recognised between full time students from the most deprived communities (IMD Q1) and those from the least deprived (IMDQ5) of 14.7pp for the 2-year average and 11.3pp for the 4-year average. TEF 2023 indicators support this assertion and show a gap of 8.8pp between the completion rates for full time students from IMD Q1 and 2 compared to those from IMDQ3/5 (both are “broadly in line” with TEF benchmark). See table below.

FULL TIME – COMPLETION- IMD Deprivation Quintiles	T&SCG 2-year average (%)	T&SCG 4-year average (%)	TEF 2023 averages	Sector 2-year average (%)
Q5 – Least	87.8	85.1	NA	92.3
Q4	83.8	80.8	NA	90.2
Q3	79.2	78.9	NA	87.7
Q2	77.8	71.8	NA	84.3
Q1- Most	73.1	73.8	NA	81.5
Q3-5 – Least (TEF)			81.8	
Q1&2 – Most (TEF)			73.0	
Equality Gap @TSCG	14.7pp	11.3pp	8.8pp	

Evidence suggests that this group is influenced by similar factors that affect their continuation and persist in their ongoing years of study including prior educational experience and attainment, less readily available academic (OfS EORR Risk 6), personal (OfS EORR Risk 7), and mental health support (OfS EORR Risk 8) away from college than that available for other groups, and limited access to learning resources outside college (OfS EORR Risk 11). Also, this group has suffered more than others from the impacts of pandemic restrictions and cost pressures (OfS EORR Risk 9), and from the recent cost of living crisis years, which has led for many to increased employment hours outside college reducing the volume and quality of study hours (OfS EORR Risk 10).

Part time

PTS3- Part time students from the most **deprived communities (IMD Q1)** appear to be significantly less successful than students from the least deprived communities at **completing** their study. The 2- and 4-year aggregate data for part time students from the most deprived IMD Q1 shows only 59.3% and 68.1% (respectively) of the population completing their study whilst those students from the least deprived IMD Q5 successfully complete their study at a much higher rate (2-year average 80.6% and 4-year average 86.7%). This indicates an inequality gap of 21.3pp and 18.6pp on the 2 and 4-year average respectively, which has widened more recently. However, these completion rates for part time students from the most deprived IMDQ1 are above the sector 2 and 4-year averages (+3.7pp and +12.9pp respectively). Considering the large difference in completion rates, and the worsened recent trend, we recognise a risk to the equality of opportunity for part time students from the most deprived communities (IMD Q1) in completing their studies.

This analysis is supported by TEF 2023 indicators showing a gap of 11.0pp between the completion rates for part time students from the most deprived IMD Q1 and 2 compared to those from IMDQ3/5 (the IMDQ1/2 being “broadly in line” with TEF benchmark whilst the performance of students from the least deprived (IMDQ3/5) being “materially above” benchmark). See table below.

PART TIME – COMPLETION - IMD Deprivation Quintiles	T&SCG 2-year average (%)	T&SCG 4-year average (%)	TEF 2023 averages	Sector 2-year average (%)
Q5 – Least	80.6	86.7	NA	64.3
Q4	88.3	88.5	NA	63.0

Q3	77.3	82.6	NA	59.7
Q2	83.2	82.9	NA	57.2
Q1- Most	59.3	68.1	NA	55.6
Q3-5 – Least (TEF)			86.0	
Q1&2 – Most (TEF)			75.0	
Equality Gap @TSCG	21.3pp	18.6pp	11.0pp	

Evidence suggests that the performance of this group is influenced by similar factors to those influencing full time students, and outlined on the previous page, in respect also of a risk to equality of opportunity in completing study. Additionally, prior educational experience may have been some time in the past, and different in character from HE Study. This part time study group has also suffered more than others from the impacts of the pandemic's restrictions and cost pressures and during the most recent cost of living crisis years, this has led, for these part time students who study alongside work, to increased employment hours reducing the volume of time available for study, and a reduction in the quality of study hours, and in some cases a lower capacity of their employer to support their employees with their work-based study (OfS EORR Risk 10).

Whilst the volume of student data means that we cannot be certain, it is very likely that there are intersections of disadvantage between some groups in relation to continuation and completion, for example – between students from the most deprived communities, those who identify as male, non-white ethnic minority groups, and younger students. Therefore, the objectives and associated interventions below are likely to have broader impacts than just to those groups identified.

ATTAINMENT

Full and Part time

NO risks to the equality of opportunity for attainment for full and part time students are identified.

As explained in Annex A, the OfS APP Data Dashboard only investigates situations and students studying for a Full Honours Degree qualification and the relative performance of student groups in achieving first class or upper second-class honours classifications. Accordingly, for us, where most students study "other" undergraduate awards upon which classifications/grades such as Distinction/Merit are gained, the number of students subject to analysis of attainment is very small.

Whilst there is a suggestion of some inequalities of opportunity for full time students reporting disabilities this is based on a very small student numbers and is less reliable for objective setting.

Annex A also explains that the majority of the our qualifications (eg HNC/Ds and Foundation Degrees) lead to the award of higher grades such as Merit and Distinction and that an analysis of any potential risks to equality of opportunity for students studying these grades has been undertaken (including the analysis of the 2 objectives, in this respect, set in the 2022/23 APP). This analysis showed an improved performance for several targeted groups, an inconsistent performance amongst some groups, but also the overriding challenge to the reliability of analysis by the small volume of data. An example is a suggestion of some inequality of opportunity for female part time students (compared with males) to achieve Merit/Distinction grades (compared with male contemporaries). This based on very small student numbers, is insufficiently reliable to recognise a risk, or set formal objectives, and will be monitored internally.

PROGRESSION

Full and Part Time

We have NOT identified any risks to the equality of opportunity for full and part time students in connection with their progression from study to employment or further study. The volume of data here is limited by three factors, the timing of the data collection source, the Graduate Outcomes Survey ,18 months, after completion of study, a survey response rate which at best across the sector is only between 50 and 60% and our small overall student population at this lifecycle stage.

Whilst there may be some suggestion of inequality of opportunity for full time female students, and those reporting a disability, as explained in Annex A, these are based on very small student number and are less reliable. The TEF 2023 Panel considered the 'progression' indicators for full-

time and part-time students to provide evidence that there are “typically very high rates of successful progression, and that overall, this is a very high-quality feature.”

Objectives - including Access and participation objectives aimed at specific student groups

The earlier Introduction and Strategic Aim Section explained how our HE offer currently provides students with diverse and flexible pathways, including full and part time provision of HNC/Ds, Foundation, and Top Up degrees, HTQs, and higher apprenticeships. Modular offerings are planned and will further diversify the offer providing students with more flexible career pathways. The Whole Provider Approach Section explains our strategy to support students with a range of needs, including the improvement of their mental health, how this is implemented, has been embedded within this APP, and will continue to meet the needs of the HE student population.

Our majority 16–18-year-old and Adult Education and Training focus, and small HE student population, restricts our opportunity to support schools to raise pre-16 attainment. However, as the Introduction and Strategic Aim section explained, we will continue to work as part of the Greater Manchester Uni Connect partnership, and with our partner secondary schools to raise awareness, understanding and available pathways for students, aged 15 and 16, and with our own internal younger, 16-18 student population, who do not have equal opportunity, nor support or experience, to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence required to access and succeed in HE.

We will maintain our existing partnerships to support our widening participation objectives, with educational partners Sheffield Hallam University, University of Huddersfield, 200+ partner schools, local government partners Greater Manchester CA, Trafford Council, Stockport Metropolitan BC, 3rd sector organisations, eg. Muslim Arts and Culture Festival, and 1,500+ employers.

We have set ourselves the following FOUR objectives to address risks to the equality of opportunity for specified student groups, identified in the similarly named section above, at the identified stages in the student life cycle. The section further below entitled “Intervention strategies and expected outcomes” will explain how we intend to achieve these objectives.

PTA1 We will address the risk to equality of opportunity for **full time students from the least represented communities [in HE] in accessing HE (TUNDRA Q1)** demonstrated by the significantly lower percentage of students (15.1% - 2-year average) recruited from TUNDRA Q 1, compared with the higher percentage of students (27.9%) who access full time study from the most represented TUNDRA Q 5. We will eradicate this access equality gap between TUNDRA Qs 1 and 5 (12.8pp – 2-year average) over the 4-year APP period. See table below.

Target description	Baseline Year (2yr avg.)	Equality Gap (pp)	Milestone years (pp)			
			2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
PTP1 – to improve access opportunities to full time study, at TSCG, for students from the least represented [HE] participation communities (TUNDRA Q1)	2022/23	12.8	9.6	6.4	3.2	0

PTS1 – We will eradicate the **continuation gap between full time students from the most deprived communities (IMD Q1 and 2) and from the least deprived communities (IMD Q 3,4 and 5)**. Using weighted average data drawn from the 2-year average, we will adopt as an objective the eradication, over the 4-year period of this APP of the 6.3pp continuation equality gap that exists between the College’s 2-year average for IMD Q1 and 2 and IMD Q 3,4 and 5. See table below.

Target description	Baseline Year (2yr avg.)	Equality Gap (pp)	Milestone years (pp)			
			2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
PTS1 – to eradicate the continuation equality gap between full-time students	2021/22	6.3	4.7	3.1	1.5	0

from the most deprived communities – IMD Q 1 and 2 and those from the least deprived communities 3,4 & 5						
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PTS2 -We will significantly reduce, during the 4-year period of this APP, the **completion gap between full time students from the most deprived communities (IMD Q1) and from the least deprived communities (IMD Q5)**. The completion gap as indicated by the OfS APP Data Dashboard data (2-year aggregate data) is 14.7pp. We will aim to reduce this by 10.0pp to 4.7pp, by the end of the 4-year cycle. See table below.

Target description	Baseline Year (2yr avg.)	Equality Gap (pp)	Milestone years (pp)			
			2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
PTS2 – to reduce the completion equality gap between full time students from the most deprived communities – IMD Q 1- and those from the least deprived communities – IMD Q5	2018/19	14.7	12.2	9.7	7.2	4.7

PTS3 -We will significantly reduce (by more than a half), during this APP period, the **completion gap between part time students from the most deprived communities (IMD Q1) and from the least deprived communities (IMD Q5)**. The completion gap as indicated by the OfS APP Data Dashboard (2-year aggregate data) is 21.3pp. We will aim to reduce this by 11.3pp over the 4-year APP period to 10pp, and the remainder to be addressed in the next APP period. See table below.

Target description	Baseline Year (2yr avg.)	Equality Gap (pp)	Milestone years (pp)			
			2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
PTS3 – to reduce the completion equality gap between part time students from the most deprived communities – IMD Q1- and those from the least deprived communities – IMD Q 5	2018/19	21.3	18.5	15.7	12.9	10.00

Intervention strategies and expected outcomes

Intervention strategy 1: Promoting Access and Aspiration for Full Time students from Communities with Lower Levels of HE Participation

Objectives and targets (see Objectives for full details and planned 4-year milestones)

PTA1 We will eradicate the access equality gap between TUNDRA Q1 (the least represented quintile in HE) and Q5 (the most represented) (12.8pp – 2-year average) over the APPs 4-years.

Risks to equality of opportunity

PTA1 – This objective will address the risk to equality of opportunity of access to full time HE studies at the College for students from the least represented [HE] communities. This is demonstrated by the significantly lower percentage of full-time students (15.1% - 2-year average) recruited from TUNDRA Q1, the least represented quintile in HE, compared with the higher percentage of students (27.9%) who access full time study from the most represented TUNDRA Q5, a significant gap of 12.8pp. The 4- year average shows a similar gap of 11pp.

Related objectives and targets and risks to equality of opportunity

The Interventions table below contains planned TSCG financial support and HE Skills Workshops which will also be relevant to objectives PTS1 and PTS2 aiming to close equality gaps in continuation and completion for full time students from more deprived communities IMD Qs1 and 2.

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
<p>Internal [TSCG] HE pathways promotion and progression [from FE to HE] in a safe, familiar and local environment</p> <p>[Enhanced existing activity]</p>	<p>Enhance awareness within TSCG of [internal] progression routes from FE to HE courses (L3-L4).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-Staff Collaboration: Key staff from curriculum and enabling functions to actively shape the campaign, contribute expertise to refine messaging and outreach. • Target Marketing: Based on staff consultation, marketing materials will be developed to better represent HE provisions, emphasising industry links, a range of support (finance, study, and personal) and flexible delivery to attract at-risk students. • [Internal] Outreach Initiatives: Ongoing FE classroom visits to engage prospective HE students. • Careers staff professional development to uplift quality and effectiveness of guidance on HE provisions. • HE representatives (curriculum and enabling) present at all TSCG HE and employment events to increase visibility and support informed decision-making. <p>Financial support availability (SFE) and TSCG financial support package to be actively promoted.</p>	<p>Staffing – Time allocation for FE and HE staff to deliver classroom visits, Open Days, and career guidance sessions.</p> <p>Marketing Materials – Printing and distribution costs for course guides, posters, and digital content creation.</p> <p>Technology & Digital Engagement – Costs for social media promotion, video content, and virtual events.</p> <p>Student Support Services – Additional guidance sessions on finance, applications, and academic expectations.</p> <p>TSCG Financial Support Package (Bursaries and Hardship Fund) – see FIT for total values and Provision of Information for Students section of APP for eligibility and detail</p>	<p>Increased HE Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher recognition of HE pathways among TSCG FE learners <p>Higher [internal] FE to HE progression rates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth in the number of FE students applying for TSCG HE courses. • Reduction in gaps for full time TUNDRA Q1 students. <p>Reduction in Perceived Barriers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearer understanding of financial support options and flexible learning routes. • Improved student confidence in HE readiness <p>Better Tracking & Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established metrics to monitor student progression trends over time. <p>Data-driven improvements to future progression initiatives</p>	

<p>Pre-Enrolment Events (New)</p>	<p>To ensure new (internal TSCG) and continuing HE students are financially, personally and academically prepared for their course, with a focus on non-traditional HE learners (TUNDRA Q1).</p> <p>Events will be offered both in person and virtually to maximise accessibility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing – Student finance advisors, academic staff, and student support teams delivering workshops and guidance. • Marketing & Communication – Promotion through emails, posters, student portals, and virtual invitations to ensure high attendance • Technology & Digital Engagement – IT access for students to check and complete finance applications on-site and remotely • Exploration with applicants during pre-enrolment stage their access to IT resources, and where appropriate, the provision of borrowed equipment to provide early access to enrolment, and induction activity • Student Support Services – 1:1 finance check, academic prep workshops, and wellbeing resources available both in person and online. • Funding considerations – Venue, printed guides, digital platform access, refreshments, and welcome packs. 	<p>Financial Readiness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher percentage of students with confirmed student loans, employer - to- pay and self-funded arrangements in place before course start. • Higher percentage of students with tuition and maintenance payments by end of term one. <p>Course Readiness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved awareness of academic expectations, digital learning tools, and study resources. <p>Belonging & Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased student confidence through early engagement with tutors, peers, and support staff. <p>Improved continuation rates of IMDQ1&2 students</p> <p>Identified support gaps for continuing students, reducing withdrawal risks</p>	
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<p>HE Skills Workshops – Online Event (New)</p>	<p>Will be designed for non-traditional HE students who may struggle with academic writing and research due to the vocational nature of their Level 3 courses or time away from education.</p> <p>Workshops delivered pre-enrolment (Summer) will continue over the student lifecycle will cover research and referencing, academic writing, and the use of AI and technology to support learning and provide to non-traditional entrants with less experience of HE study the confidence to enter and be successful in their HE programmes</p>	<p>Staffing – HE tutors, study skills advisors, and digital learning specialists to deliver workshops.</p> <p>Technology & Digital Platform – Online hosting via MS Teams or a VLE platform, with recorded sessions for flexible access.</p> <p>Marketing & Communication – Targeted invitations sent to incoming and continuing HE students, particularly those from vocational backgrounds or with study gaps.</p> <p>Student Resources – Digital handbooks, video tutorials, and interactive learning materials on referencing, writing techniques, and AI tools.</p> <p>Funding considerations – Development of online resources, staff time, and digital platform maintenance.</p>	<p>Improved Study Readiness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased confidence in academic writing, research, and referencing. • Technology-Enhanced Learning Greater awareness and use of AI and digital tools to support independent learning. <p>Higher Continuation & Success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in academic struggles linked to poor study skills. • Increased engagement and assignment success rates. <p>Easing of Confidence, Stress & Mental Health Barriers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower anxiety about assessments and academic expectations. • Reduced stress levels contributing to improved attendance and performance 	<p>Intervention Strategies 2&3</p>
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Total 4-year cost of activities for intervention strategy – £24,600 – excluding Access and Evaluation Investment shown on Fees Investment and Targets workbook

Summary of evidence base and rationale (see also Annex B for student consultation responses)

In the absence of targeted intervention, students from backgrounds that have less experience of HE participation (where parents, siblings, friends and neighbours have not studied at HE level) may face significant barriers in understanding and accessing HE opportunities. A lack of clear information about course structure, financial support, and career prospects can result in students feeling uncertain about their next steps, which can discourage progression and allow misconceptions about affordability, accessibility, or suitability for HE study to develop.

To address these risks, this intervention focuses on embedding HE awareness within FE at our TSCG settings through cross-staff collaboration, tailored marketing materials, and direct engagement with careers teams and teaching staff. In-reach efforts, including classroom visits and representation at HE and employment events, ensure that students receive timely and relevant information. By providing more realistic and accessible information about HE provisions, this strategy aims to reduce confusion, increase confidence in decision-making, and ultimately lead to higher progression rates for students from TUNDRA Q1 backgrounds. At the core of this intervention is the aim to embed clear and accessible information about HE options within the current studies of our FE learners.

The student consultation exercise undertaken to inform this APP's aims, objectives and interventions found that 88% of L3 students from relevant communities agreed that early intervention support with completing student finance applications would be helpful for accessing HE and 72% agreed that support with HE preparation activities before the start of course would be helpful.

Evaluation (see Annex B for more detail including a table about methods and publication)

Evaluation will necessarily be of types 1 and 2 - narrative and empirical nature - with exploration and scrutiny of engagement of applicants/enrollers, and staff, with the intervention activities both at qualitative and quantitative level. With the context of our small student numbers, significant amounts of the qualitative investigation can be undertaken by individual interview, student focus group, and more widely by survey.

Evaluation of activity at the outset of this APP cycle will focus on evaluating by quantitative and qualitative method at intervention activity level, trying to establish, for example, the volume of student/applicant engagement with an activity, and by engagement with the student/applicant an evaluation of the quality of the engagement and the impact on them. As the APP cycle progresses, and more overarching data becomes available as to the impact of the interventions on the broad strategy, then evaluation at that higher level will commence.

Intervention strategy 2: Promoting Success for Full Time Students from Economically Deprived Communities to Continue and Complete [their studies]

Objectives and targets (see Objectives section for full details and planned 4-year milestones)

PTS1 – We will eradicate the continuation gap between full time students from the most deprived communities (IMD Q1 and 2) and from the least deprived communities (IMD Q 3,4 and 5). Using weighted average data drawn from the 2-year average, the College will adopt as an objective the eradication, over the 4-year period of this APP of the 6.3pp continuation equality gap that exists between the College's 2-year average for IMD Q 1 and 2 and IMD Q 3,4 and 5

PTS2 -We will significantly reduce, during the 4-year period of this APP, the completion gap between full time students from the most deprived communities (IMD Q1) and from the least deprived communities (IMD Q 5). The completion gap as indicated by the OfS APP Data

Dashboard data (2-year aggregate data) is 14.7pp. We will aim to reduce this by 10.0pp to 4.7pp, by the end of the 4-year cycle.

Risks to equality of opportunity

PTS1- The continuation rates for full time students from the most deprived communities (IMD Q 1 and 2), compared with those from less deprived communities are a little confusing and inconsistent. The 2- and 4-year aggregate data for full time students from the most deprived IMD quintile (1) show only 77.1% and 78.9% (respectively) of the population continuing their study but this is actually higher than the least deprived IMD quintile (5), but lower than all the other quintiles, and lower than the sector average for IMD Q 1 (2-year average 83.5%, 4-year average 83.5%). Whilst this is a confused data picture overall, this does indicate a risk to the equality of opportunity for students from the most deprived areas in continuing their studies.

Using weighted average data drawn from the 2-year average, the College has identified that a 6.3pp continuation equality gap exists between the College's 2-year average for IMD Q 1 and 2 (77.9%) and IMD Q 3,4 and 5 (84.2%). This is gap of almost twice that which existed in the 4-year average and represents a worsening continuation performance in more recent years for students from the most deprived quintiles

PTS2- Full time students from the most deprived communities (IMD quintile 1) appear to be less successful than students from the least deprived communities at completing their study. The 2- and 4-year aggregate data for full time students from the most deprived IMD Q 1 shows only 73.1% and 73.8% (respectively) of the population completing their study whilst those students from the least deprived IMD Q 5 successfully complete their study at a much higher rate (2-year average 87.8% and 4-year average 85.1%). These completion rates for full time students from the most deprived quintile IMD1 are also significantly below the sector 2 and 4-year averages (-8.4pp and -7.8pp respectively). A completion gap is recognised between full time students from the most deprived communities (IMD Q1) and those from the least deprived (IMDQ5) of 14.7pp for the 2-year average and 11.3pp for the 4-year average.

Related objectives and targets and risks to equality of opportunity

Objective PTS3 focuses on our aim to reduce, by 11.3pp over the 4-year period of this APP, to 10pp, (and the remainder to be addressed in the next APP period), the completion gap recognised for part time students from the most deprived communities (IMD Q1 and 2) compared with those from the least deprived communities (IMD Q 3-5). Intervention Strategy 3 seeks to address this risk and explains planned activity.

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
Mentoring & Support <i>(New)</i>	<p>We will establish a peer mentoring system to foster a sense of community, belonging, and academic support. The involvement of alumni will be explored.</p> <p>Higher-level students will be matched with lower-level students to provide guidance, advice, and first-hand experience of navigating HE.</p>	<p>Staffing – Student services team to coordinate the mentoring programme.</p> <p>Peer Mentoring Programme – Peer mentors and alumni support for Level 4 students transitioning to Level 5.</p> <p>Monitor progress using assessment records, engagement with mentoring and support opportunities and measurement of attainment.</p> <p>Funding considerations – Mentor training, incentives (certificates, small stipends), and event logistics.</p>	<p>Stronger Sense of Belonging & Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased student satisfaction and confidence in their HE journey. Improved social and academic integration and collaboration. <p>Higher Continuation and Completion %</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better support networks, reducing isolation for first-year students. Increased engagement and motivation to continue to the next level <p>Greater awareness of progression routes and career pathways</p>	Intervention Strategy 3

<p>Academic Support and Awareness Raising Campaign</p> <p>(New to promote existing support service below)</p>	<p>1-2-1 academic and pastoral support to be timetabled across all programmes to all students</p> <p>Raising awareness of the one-to-one academic support available to all HE learners, including help with understanding assessment outcomes, developing drafts, using sources for research, and receiving feedback on drafts.</p> <p>While widely available and successful for engaged students, uptake could be higher due to lack of awareness.</p>	<p>Academic and Pastoral tutorials to be timetabled across all programmes and for all students and will include Progress Checkpoints –meetings at key points in the academic year to discuss progress and challenges.</p> <p>Staffing – HE academic support tutors available for scheduled and drop-in sessions.</p> <p>Marketing & Awareness Campaign – Targeted messaging via emails, posters, social media, and course Teams groups.</p> <p>Student Testimonials & Case Studies – Showcasing student success stories from using the support service.</p> <p>Online Booking & Accessibility – Clear, user-friendly booking system for academic support.</p> <p>Monitor engagement and attendance at academic support sessions; measurement of student experience via feedback</p> <p>Funding – Printing, digital marketing, and potential incentives for student engagement.</p>	<p>Increased Uptake of Academic Support Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More students accessing 1:1 support for assessments and coursework. • Higher engagement with research and referencing resources. <p>Improved Academic Confidence & Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased ability to meet assessment criteria and apply academic skills. • Higher rates of coursework completion and achievement. <p>Easing of Academic Anxiety & Stress</p> <p>Reduced stress linked to uncertainty around assessments and expectations</p>	<p>Intervention Strategy 3</p>
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<p>HE Academic Support Officer (ongoing)</p>	<p>Providing 1:1 appointment-based academic support to all HE students, regardless of disability status.</p> <p>This ensures equitable access to academic guidance, addressing barriers related to learning needs, time management, and assessment strategies</p>	<p>Study Skills & Organisation: Assistance with time management, assessment structuring, academic writing, research techniques, and feedback interpretation.</p> <p>Online Booking & Drop-in Options: Simplified scheduling system for students to access support flexibly.</p> <p>Funding Considerations: Budget allocation for Disability Support Officer/HE Academic Support Officer staffing, accessibility resources, and training costs for additional support interventions.</p> <p>This role will also co-ordinate the following (not of direct relevance to this Intervention)</p> <p>Specialist Staffing: Disability Support Officer available for 1:1 appointments.</p> <p>Referral Pathways: Direct referrals to Educational Psychologists for assessment of learning needs.</p> <p>Pre-enrolment events to further support those with a disability, or potential disability, to support completion of DSA paperwork and gain earlier access to support?</p> <p>Assessment Support: Advice on extension requests and mitigating circumstances procedures.</p> <p>DSA Guidance: Support with the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) application process.</p> <p>progression and impact assessments.</p>	<p>Increased Academic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students better equipped to structure assignments, conduct research, and develop academic skills. <p>Higher Continuation and Completion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early academic interventions reduce withdrawal risks due to learning challenges. <p>Easing of Academic Anxiety & Stress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in stress linked to assessment expectations and deadlines. <p>Improved Accessibility & Engagement:</p> <p>More students from diverse learning backgrounds accessing academic support</p>	<p>Intervention Strategy 3</p>
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<p>Financial Support offer to be extended to all levels of study (full and part time)</p> <p>(Enhancement of existing activity)</p>	<p>Financial support availability (SFE) and TSCG financial support package to be actively promoted to levels of students (new and continuing)</p>	<p>Student Finance Check-Ins – One-to-one support offered with HE support staff for budgeting and Funding queries.</p> <p>Bursaries – extended to be available to students at all levels of study.</p> <p>TSCG Financial Support Package (Bursaries and Hardship Fund) – see FIT for total values and Provision of Information for Students section of APP for eligibility and detail</p> <p>Hardship Fund Awareness Targeted communication and awareness of Hardship Fund Bursary for major life impacting events and how to apply for funds</p> <p>Emergency Hardship Fund Small, rapid-response financial support for students at immediate risk.</p> <p>Funding considerations – Funding for hardship grants and staff support.</p>	<p>Reduced Withdrawal Due to Financial Stress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More students securing financial aid before critical points in the year. • Increased awareness of available Funding options. <p>Improved Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students feel financially secure, allowing focus on academic success. <p>Greater opportunity to participate in course related events that required financial contribution.</p>	<p>Intervention 3</p>
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<p>HE Skills Workshops – Online Event (New)</p>	<p>Will be designed for non-traditional HE students who may struggle with academic writing and research due to the vocational nature of their Level 3 courses or time away from education.</p> <p>These workshops continue and support those delivered pre-enrolment (Summer) and will cover research and referencing, academic writing, and the use of AI and technology to support learning and provide to non-traditional entrants with less experience of HE study the confidence to successfully continue and complete their programmes of study</p>	<p>Staffing – HE tutors, study skills advisors, and digital learning specialists to deliver workshops.</p> <p>Technology & Digital Platform – Online hosting via MS Teams or a VLE platform, with recorded sessions for flexible access.</p> <p>Marketing & Communication – Targeted invitations sent to incoming and continuing HE students, particularly those from vocational backgrounds or with study gaps.</p> <p>Student Resources – Digital handbooks, video tutorials, and interactive learning materials on referencing, writing techniques, and AI tools.</p> <p>Funding considerations – Development of online resources, staff time, and digital platform maintenance.</p>	<p>Improved Study Readiness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased confidence in academic writing, research, and referencing. Technology-Enhanced Learning Greater awareness and use of AI and digital tools to support independent learning. <p>Higher Retention & Success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in academic struggles linked to poor study skills. Increased engagement and assignment completion rates. <p>Easing of Confidence, Stress & Mental Health Barriers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower anxiety about assessments and academic expectations. <p>Reduced stress levels contributing to improved attendance and performance</p>	<p>Intervention Strategy 3</p>
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<p>Exploration of Flexible Study Options – Virtual & Blended Learning Pilot and Curriculum Content and Assessment Review to increase the accessibility of HE learning to those with less experience. (New)</p>	<p>Developing virtual courses and digital learning elements and reviewing curriculum content and assessment methodology for existing HE courses to support non-traditional students, particularly those in employment, with caring responsibilities, facing health challenges and those with less experience of higher learning.</p> <p>The aim is to improve continuation and completion rates for students facing barriers to attendance, and those with less experience of HE, with the long-term goal of integrating flexible delivery into all HE courses and ensuring that, where possible curriculum content and assessment methodology, provide accessible opportunity for non-traditional and underrepresented groups.</p>	<p>Technology & Digital Infrastructure – Investment in online learning platforms, digital resources, and virtual classrooms.</p> <p>Curriculum Development – Piloting online and blended delivery options in select HE courses.</p> <p>Curriculum Content and Assessment Review to increase the accessibility of HE learning to those with less experience.</p> <p>Student Engagement & Feedback – Collecting student input on preferred flexible learning formats.</p> <p>Funding considerations – Platform licensing, staff training, and content development.</p> <p>Student outcomes and engagement will be compared between virtual and traditional learners through course completion rates, attendance tracking, and feedback surveys. Staff and student input on usability and effectiveness of flexible learning will inform future provision.</p>	<p>Pilot - (date and measurement to inform future provision)</p> <p>Increased Continuation & Completion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer withdrawals due to attendance barriers. • More students engaging with courses through flexible study options. <p>Greater Accessibility for Non-Traditional Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working students, carers, and those with health conditions can continue their studies. <p>Long-Term Expansion of Virtual Learning</p> <p>Successful pilot leads to wider adoption across HE courses.(longer term)</p>
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Total 4-year cost of activities for intervention strategy – £368,408 – excluding Financial Support and Evaluation Investment shown on Fees Investment and Targets workbook

Summary of evidence base and rationale (see Annex B - student consultation responses)

Continuation and completion of study in HE is strongly influenced by personal, financial, and academic challenges, particularly for students from more deprived communities and non-traditional learner profiles. Research highlights that students who struggle with academic expectations, financial insecurity, and a lack of belonging are at higher risk of withdrawal (OfS, 2023). IMD Q1 & Q2 students have higher non-continuation rates, particularly in institutions without structured academic and pastoral support. Non engagement with academic support services tend to lead to struggles with coursework completion and assessment expectations ([HEPI, 2023](#)). Financial insecurity is a leading cause of withdrawal from HE, with students from low-income backgrounds disproportionately affected (NUS Cost of Living Report, 2023). We shall respond to this with an extension of financial support to subsequent years of study (not just the first year).

Evaluation (see Annex B for more detail including a table about methods and publication)

Evaluation will necessarily be of a type 1 and 2 - narrative and empirical nature with exploration and scrutiny of engagement of students with the intervention activities both at qualitative and quantitative level. With a small cohort in comparison to the sector, significant amount of the qualitative investigation of impact and application of the OfS “Financial Support Toolkit” can be undertaken by individual interview, student focus group, and more widely by survey.

Evaluation of activity at the outset of this APP cycle will focus on evaluation, at intervention activity level, trying to establish, the volume of student engagement, and by engagement with students the quality of the engagement and the impact on them. As the APP cycle progresses, and more overarching data becomes available as to the impact of the interventions more broadly, then intervention level evaluation will commence, along with the evaluation of longer-term plans to develop more flexible study programmes.

Intervention strategy 3: Promoting Success for Part Time Students from Economically Deprived Communities to Complete [their studies]

Objectives and targets (see “Objectives” for full details and planned 4-year milestones)

PTS3 -We will significantly reduce (by more than a half), during the 4-year period of this APP, the completion gap between part time students from the most deprived communities (IMD Q1) and from the least deprived communities (IMD Q5). The completion gap as indicated by the OfS APP Data Dashboard (2-year aggregate data) is 21.3pp. We will aim to reduce this by 11.3pp over the 4-year period to 10pp, with the remainder to be addressed in the next APP period.

Risks to equality of opportunity (see Risks to Equality of Opportunity, for full details).

PTS3- Part time students from the most deprived communities (IMD Q1) appear to be significantly less successful than those from the least deprived communities (IMDQ5) at completing their study. The 2- and 4-year aggregate data for part time students from IMD Q1 indicates an inequality gap of 21.3pp and 18.6pp respectively, and one that has widened more recently. Whilst these completion rates are above the sector 2 and 4-year averages (+3.7pp and +12.9pp respectively) considering the large difference in completion rates, and the worsened recent trend, we recognise this as a risk to the equality of opportunity for relevant part time students.

Related objectives and targets and risks to equality of opportunity

Objective PTS2 focuses on our aim to significantly reduce the completion gap between full time students from the most deprived (IMDQ1) and least deprived communities (IMD Q5). The completion gap as indicated by the OfS APP. Data Dashboard data (2-year aggregate data) is 14.7pp. We will aim to reduce this by 10.0pp to 4.7pp, by the end of the 4-year cycle. Intervention Strategy 2 explains the relevant planned activities.

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
<p>Raising awareness and increasing engagement of PART TIME students with the support services offered [also to full time students]</p> <p>(New)</p>	<p>Raising awareness and increasing engagement with the support services offered [also to full time students] and described in Intervention Strategy 2 (see table of intervention strategies on pages 16-20 for full details)</p> <p>Support services include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision of financial support • and improving financial awareness • academic support • Academic Support Officer • individual and pastoral support via tutorials (remote option with employer involvement to be developed) • mentoring support • skills workshops 	<p>Marketing & Awareness Campaign – Targeted messaging via emails, posters, social media, and course Teams groups.</p> <p>Student Testimonials & Case Studies – Showcasing student success stories from using the support service.</p> <p>Online Booking & Accessibility – Clear, user-friendly booking system for academic support.</p> <p>Development of virtual/online tutorial option including employer involvement (adopting some of the characteristics of the apprenticeship employer review, where relevant)</p> <p>Funding – Printing, digital marketing, and potential incentives for student engagement.</p> <p>Monitor engagement and attendance at academic support sessions; measurement of student experience via feedback</p>	<p>Increased Uptake of Academic Support Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More students accessing 1:1 support for assessments and coursework. • Higher engagement with research and referencing resources. <p>Improved Academic Confidence & Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased ability to meet assessment criteria and apply academic skills. • Higher rates of coursework completion and achievement. <p>Easing of Academic Anxiety & Stress</p> <p>Reduced stress linked to uncertainty around assessments and expectations</p>	<p>Intervention 2</p>

<p>Exploration of Flexible Study and Academic Support Options – Virtual & Blended Learning Pilot and Curriculum Content and Assessment Review to increase the accessibility of HE learning to those with less experience. (New)</p>	<p>Developing virtual/online courses and digital learning/academic support elements and reviewing curriculum content and assessment methodology for existing HE courses to support non-traditional students, particularly those in employment, with caring responsibilities, facing health challenges and those with less experience of higher learning.</p> <p>The aim is to improve completion rates for part time students facing barriers to attendance, and those with less experience of HE, with the long-term goal of integrating flexible delivery into all HE courses. courses and ensuring that, where possible curriculum content and assessment methodology, provide accessible opportunity for non-traditional and underrepresented groups.</p>	<p>Technology & Digital Infrastructure – Investment in online learning platforms, digital resources, and virtual classrooms.</p> <p>Curriculum Development – Piloting online and blended delivery options in select HE courses.</p> <p>Curriculum Content and Assessment Review to increase the accessibility of HE learning to those with less experience.</p> <p>Student Engagement & Feedback – Collecting student input on preferred flexible learning formats.</p> <p>Funding considerations – Platform licensing, staff training, and content development.</p> <p>Student outcomes and engagement will be compared between virtual and traditional learners through course completion rates, attendance tracking, and feedback surveys. Staff, student and employer (where relevant) input on usability and effectiveness of flexible learning will inform future provision.</p>	<p>Pilot - (date and measurement to inform future provision)</p> <p>Increased Continuation & Completion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer withdrawals due to attendance barriers. • More students engaging with courses through flexible study options. • Increased employer involvement and support (where relevant) • Greater Accessibility for Non-Traditional Students • Working students, carers, and those with health conditions can continue their studies. • Long-Term Expansion of Virtual Learning <p>Successful pilot leads to wider adoption across HE courses</p>	<p>Intervention Strategy 2</p>
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Total 4-year cost of activities for intervention strategy – £68,000 – excluding Financial Support and Evaluation Investment shown on Fees Investment and Targets workbook

Summary of evidence base and rationale (see also Annex B – including student consultation responses)

Part time students spend less time at the College [than full time students], and most study courses of shorter duration [than full time students], restricting their ability to access the range of support available, and have less formal (and informal) contact time with their lecturers.

Most part time students are mature and for many they return to study several years after their school/college experience, which for some was less successful, and are less aware and willing to engage with our wider support services.

For those from the most deprived communities (IMDQ 1 and 2) the absence of essential learning aids at home, including space, learning materials and computer access adds extra challenges. This group has also suffered more than others from the impacts of the pandemic's restrictions and cost pressures, and from the most recent cost of living crisis years, which in many cases for these part time students, who study alongside work, has led to increased employment hours reducing the volume and quality of study hours, and in some cases a lower capacity of their employer to support them with their work based study.

Our focus of this intervention will be four-fold, for immediate impact an uplift in the awareness of part time students of the range of support services available and how to access them, and an extension of financial support to subsequent years of study (not just the first year). As a longer term ambition we will explore how to make academic and personal support available more flexibly for students spending less time with us, and with busy lives, and how to deliver core programmes of study more flexibly, including how to take full advantage of employer support and learning at work.

With the introduction of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) and Pearson HN Flexi, there is a growing recognition that non-traditional learners require more adaptable study models to successfully complete their HE qualifications while managing external responsibilities (Department for Education, 2023).

Evidence from Pearson HN Flexi (2023), particularly relevant to our environment where the HNC/D offer is an important part of our offer and attractive to many part time students, and their employers/prospective employers indicates that: blended and modular learning increases course completion rates among non-traditional students: stackable, credit based HE pathways, such as those in the LLE framework, allow students to progress at a manageable pace, reducing withdrawal rates and virtual and part-time study options enhance engagement for students with employment, family, or health-related barriers to full-time education.

Evaluation (see Annex B for more detail including a table about methods and publication)

Evaluation will necessarily be of a type 1 and 2 - narrative and empirical nature - with exploration of engagement of students with the intervention activities both at qualitative and quantitative level. With a small cohort in comparison to the sector, significant amount of the qualitative investigation can be undertaken by individual interview, student focus group, and more widely by survey. The qualitative aspects of the OfS "Financial Support Toolkit" will be utilised as part of the means of evaluating the impact of financial support.

Evaluation of activity at the outset of this cycle APP will focus on evaluating by quantitative and qualitative method at intervention activity level, trying to establish, for example, the volume of student engagement with an activity, and by engagement with student the quality of the engagement and the impact on them and their performance.

As the APP cycle progresses, and more overarching data becomes available as to the impact of the interventions on the broad strategy, then evaluation at higher level will commence. The evaluation of the longer-term ambitions to develop more flexible learning support and programmes of study is more likely, by necessity, only to commence near the end of this APP cycle.

Whole provider approach

Whilst the number of students falling within the scope of this plan is small, we are committed to an inclusive and holistic approach to widening participation across all our provision, and to providing equitable opportunities to all students and particularly to those from underrepresented groups. Our values are “ambitious, collaborative, inclusive, respectful and resilient”.

Our Strategic Priority 6: “Providing civic leadership to positively influence our communities and the objective to ensure that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is at the heart of what we do, with the pro-active advancement of equality of opportunity and ensuring all our stakeholders have a voice”, is delivered through the EDI Strategy. Our approach to widening participation aligns with the College’s mission, core values and strategic goals. It is a shared and institution-wide priority. The EDI Policy (March 2023) demonstrates how as an organisation we celebrate and value the diversity of students and employees. In our Policy Statement, we undertake to “increase access and participation to learning and employment for specific groups and underrepresented groups in our community to close equality gaps”. We monitor the profile of our staff and students, using data to measure progress, identify trends and inform EDI action plans. We review and report annually on progress against EDI objectives which are published in the Diversity and Inclusion Report.

We neither employ a ‘top down’ or ‘bottom up’ approach to widening access and participation; rather the structures, policies, strategies and initiatives adopted are ‘integrated’ so that all parts of the College have their part to play. We are subject to the statutory requirements detailed in s149 of the Equality Act 2010 regarding the Public Sector Equality Duty and s158 concerning our positive action requirements as an employer and education provider. Procedures and protocols supporting the EDI Policy include, for example, the Bullying and Harassment Procedure, HE Fitness to Study Procedure and HE Mitigating Circumstances Procedure. Equality impact analysis is applied to minimise adverse impacts of policies/decisions on protected and underrepresented groups.

Our EDI governance structure ensures accountability and provides a clear pathway for implementing the college’s EDI strategy, involving stakeholders at all levels. Governors are responsible for ensuring that equality is incorporated into the Strategic Plan, for ensuring the implementation of the EDI Strategy and for the scrutiny of equality monitoring data, impact assessments and progress on equality objectives. The Chief People Officer is executive lead for EDI, chairs the EDI Committee which provides oversight on the EDI strategy. An appointed link governor for EDI reports on progress to the Board.

With specific regard to this APP, the role of senior leadership in driving the whole provider approach is instrumental. The HE Curriculum & Quality Committee’s (HEC&Q) terms of reference includes making recommendations to the Board of the Corporation on the review and renewal of policies and where agreed, recommend to the Board for approval. This includes the APP. The Vice Principal (Apprenticeships and Adult Skills), and the Head of Higher Education, are members of the HEC&Q Committee and the HE Management Committee, which comprise representatives of senior leadership and curriculum. Members receive reports of annual progress and impact in the annual HE Self Evaluation document and on a termly basis, progress updates on the HE Quality Improvement Plan, which sets specific objectives and targets aligned to the APP. The Head of Higher Education is a member of the EDI Committee and will work with members to ensure that the implementation, monitoring and review of the plan takes place.

The College’s APP Working Group, which has co-ordinated the compilation of this APP renewal, comprises representatives from across the College Group including the enabling services such as Admissions, Finance, MIS, as well as Student Support and Curriculum. Our commitment to widening access and participation is embedded across all institutional policies, procedures and strategies including those relating to teaching, learning and assessment, admissions, recruitment, marketing, student support, employability and curriculum planning. Whilst much of this activity and

service takes place online, all staff are aware of the specific needs of our HE students. We aim to foster an inclusive and supportive campus culture that values diversity and promotes equity, so that students can thrive academically and socially as outlined in the Higher Education and Skills Strategy.

The success of our whole provider approach relies on managers and staff embracing and living College Group values. The EDI Policy outlines the responsibility of managers to create a positive, inclusive culture and contribute to procedures and processes associated with the promotion of equality of opportunities. Staff are expected to implement policies and procedures with sensitivity to issues associated with equality, diversity and inclusion and challenge prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviours. Commitments and initiatives which include creating a supportive and nurturing working environment, fostering a sense of belonging and embedding a 'One College Group' Culture, are delivered through the People and Culture Strategy and the Organisational Development Plan, monitored by the Resources Committee. Staff development and training is led and delivered by the Quality Team through a weekly programme of CPD, sharing of resources and guidance on the staff internet is designed to equip everyone with the knowledge and skills to promote inclusion and support students from underrepresented groups.

Improving access, success and progression for underrepresented students is a priority across all areas of the College Group, at all levels, in all curriculum areas and at all campuses. Teams including those working in admissions, customer services, careers, work experience, learner services, library services, inclusion, financial services and employer partnerships, work collaboratively to support all students including our HE learners. Student support services are accessible, inclusive and integrated into the academic journey so that students feel supported at every stage, with the aim of securing the best possible outcome for all students.

The University Centre (at Stockport College) provides the specialist support services required by our HE students, including student finance, the operation of the formal student voice function, and the administrative and other arrangements arising out of our HEI partnerships.

Our whole provider approach to supporting students on programme is underpinned by the adoption of inclusive teaching practices and curriculum design ensure that our learning environments support the success of students. Whilst the Ofsted Inspection of November 2022 did not directly review the experience of HE students, the subject of this APP, its report explained that "across the College learners and apprentices enjoy learning at TCG. They talk about the highly inclusive and supportive environment that provides a safe and positive place to learn. They behave respectfully in class, displaying positive attitudes towards each other. Learners celebrate cultural differences and say that they are proud to present the College in the community."

Our Quality and Learner Support teams offer staff development to support the adaptation of teaching and assessment methods that cater for diverse learning needs. Curriculum teams are mindful that course content, delivery and assessments are inclusive, diverse and relevant to the experiences of underrepresented groups, monitored by verification and standardisation practices. The Employer Partnership Team works with curriculum staff and employers to provide a range of opportunities for students with the aim of integrating employability initiatives as well as encouraging employer-led curriculum design. These activities we consider to be effective in reducing risks to equality of opportunity that may arise from limited choice of course type and progression from HE.

Student consultation

Our engagement with students to inform, drive and improve student experience, performance and outcomes (at all stages of the lifecycle and for all student groups) is robust, effective, and timely.

We do not have a formal Student Union but our process of consultation with students is strong, regular and multi-faceted, providing the opportunity for them to be active partners in shaping their experience and learning. Our engagement contains aspects of a formal nature, via student consultation meetings, with every programme having an elected student representative attending termly course-based meetings and contributing to the creation of a termly Student Voice Report. Those student representatives studying on a course delivered in partnership will also provide feedback to partner institutions and receive support and training from them. Student representation

is present also at our deliberative committee meetings (as part of the College quality cycle explained in the “Evaluation” section).

We are very aware that only a minority of students are eligible for the National Student Survey (NSS) – on average just 40 students in each of the academic years 2023 and 2024. The average response rate of 66% is pleasingly in line with benchmark and over those two years 92% of students (broadly in line with benchmark) have responded positively to the question – “During your studies how free did you feel to express your ideas, opinions and belief”. To ensure a much wider capture of student views and feedback three internal surveys – a start of course survey, mid-year survey and end of course survey, designed similarly to the NSS and responded to via the College’s virtual learning environment (VLE) – are promoted to provide the opportunity for all HE students to give detailed and timely feedback. This is analysed and discussed at course and deliberative committees, explained in the “Evaluation” section, and a “you said, we did” response published.

With a small student body in sector terms, and small group sizes, there are many more opportunities than in other settings to gather informal student feedback, and suggestions for improvement. These opportunities are valued and encouraged. Feedback gathered this way about the workings of the current APP, support for students, and suggestions for further development have been very helpful to the thinking of the APP Working Group, made up of curriculum and student support staff, tasked with writing this APP renewal.

The functions of the formal student engagement process have also been used to gain input to the review of the current APP, the planning of the new APP, and obtaining feedback upon those plans.

Some bespoke and targeted engagements, via online survey, with HE students sharing the characteristics of the APP objective target groups (IMD quintiles 1 and 2) has been particularly helpful to gather feedback on our APP plans and obtain fresh ideas from the specific group to be supported to improve their continuation and completion rates. A wider survey of FE students studying a range of L3, and Access to HE courses, has been informative for our planning of activities aimed to uplift access for students from the least HE participative group. Details of the student feedback received and how it has been used to help design the intervention strategies within this APP, in annex B.

As the APP cycle progresses the monitoring and evaluation of impact will involve student consultation and feedback via the various committees outlined in the “Evaluation” section. The monitoring of APP outcomes and impact will be made available to students at course level, via programme management meetings, and will be published on the student accessible VLE

Evaluation of the plan

We have been effective in the oversight of our HE provision, student performance and outcomes, and response to their feedback. We have also been effective in our application of our university partners’ and awarding bodies’ quality, and academic standards, requirements, and the ongoing monitoring of the college’s compliance with the OfS Conditions of Registration, and the QAA Quality Code. In 2023, the College made a voluntary application to the Teaching Excellence Framework (its student numbers being below the mandatory number for application) and was awarded Bronze. We have also been active contributors to the evaluation of the Greater Manchester Higher Programme, delivered via the Uni Connect network

With the intention of understanding the scale of further development of the evaluation skills required for effective future monitoring of APP performance, and informing the approach to be taken, we have taken advantage of the OfS Evaluation Self-Assessment Tool. The outcomes - strategic context (12/24), programme design (13/18), evaluation design (2/9), evaluation implementation (7/20) and learning from evaluation (8/22) – indicates that we have, overall, “emerging” evaluation practice, and “below minimum” practice of the evaluation of implementation. This was consistent with our own assessment, and whilst this is our fourth published APP, partly understandable given the impacts of the pandemic, the recent staffing changes and impact of mergers, the context of a college with a much smaller HE student population, and resource, compared with other providers.

However, we recognise the need to uplift the level of this activity, the increased focus and requirement for full evaluation and understanding of the effectiveness and impact of APP activity, the need for collaborative working and for publication of evaluation (as the APP cycle progresses the evaluation commentary will be placed on an appropriate part of our website, and for students within an accessible part of the virtual learning environment).

This exercise, and engagement with OfS publications has, and will continue to provide us with a clear understanding of the internal processes and practices to be developed, the skills and knowledge required of those staff involved, and the type of external assistance and collaboration that will be helpful. We recognise that TASO Evaluation Guidance, the OfS planned Higher Education Evaluation Library, and the OfS's "Using Standards of Evidence" publication will continue to be vital to the staff development of evaluation skills required. The use of the qualitative aspects of the OfS "Financial Support Toolkit" will be further developed for the evaluation of the impact of financial support, which has until now been exclusively financial and student data centric (lacking student user input).

With our very small current HE student population, and even with our ambitions for an increase over the life of the APP, statistical analysis will remain subject to a greater level of uncertainty than in other settings. Some of the planned interventions will also be new, and it is likely that in the early years of this APP cycle evaluation activity will mostly be limited to OfS type 1 – narrative evaluation – examining how the theory of change adopted has been applied and the justification for planned interventions fulfilled. The evaluation will look to consider how individual interventions have been delivered and engaged with by applicants, students, staff and others (in quantitative terms, and with qualitative, person sourced contributions). We will explore the extent to which planned inputs have been successfully delivered and outputs achieved. During the latter years of the APP cycle we will explore OfS type 2 evidence – empirical data. The small student number challenge, and the inherent difficulty of the unreliability of statistical data will not support the use OfS type 3 – evaluation of causality –within this APP cycle. Working with others, partner universities (and specifically Sheffield Hallam University, leaders in APP evaluation) and others GMColleges, Association of Colleges (AoC), QAA, and AdvanceHE, consideration of this will be given for the future. Firmly founded sector-based evaluation of causality, is likely to be a more effective route.

We also recognise, that with the volumes of student data small, qualitative research and evidence gathered directly from students (individually and via groups) will be of most significance, and the dangers recently articulated (November 2024) by the Director of Fair Access and Participation (John Blake) of 'evaluation fatigue' will require carefully planning of student involvement.

The APP Working Group, which was formed to create this APP, and which was explained earlier in the Whole Provider Approach section, will be re-constituted to facilitate the activities to evaluate its impact. Findings will be overseen by the HE Curriculum and Quality Committee, which includes students, senior management and governor representation. Annually a summary report will be shared with our EDI Committee, and reference will be made in our published annual EDI Report.

Provision of information to students

We will, in accordance with our published HE Admissions Policy, continue to publish clear, accessible and timely information on our website for existing and prospective students about the fees that we intend to charge and the financial support available (via the College, and Student Finance England). Relevant web pages will be referenced in a range of communications, and printed media, as the most up to date source of information and advice. We currently publish (as hard copy and electronically) an HE Prospectus detailing all courses offered (including tuition fees), which has helpful sections - "student support and funding your degree", and "how to apply". We provide timely and accurate information to relevant organisations/ agencies e.g. Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), the Student Loans Company.

Our "HE Admissions Policy" explains in the Pre-admissions section (S3.1) that "TSCG aims to provide clear, accurate and transparent information about its programmes, that are appropriate to

the needs of prospective applicants, in both internal and external publications regardless of the medium (i.e. printed, audio-visual, world wide web, etc.) enabling them to make choices in an informed manner. The main sources of information on entry requirements can be found on the TSCG Website, TSCG Prospectus, Course leaflets, UCAS website, at Open events.” S7; explains that “Applications for full-time undergraduate programmes can be made through UCAS”, and S8.2, that “applications for part time programmes are received via the TSCG website. Paper application forms are available upon request.” S10 – Fees and Funding – says we “publish tuition fees on the website. Applicants will also be able to access information about additional financial support on those pages. TSCG reviews its tuition fees annually”. S3 explains; “TSCG welcomes applications from students with a learning difficult and/or disability. It is very important, however, that applicants with a disability make this known to TSCG when applying so that reasonable adjustments can be assessed. The requirements of the Equality (2010), Race Relations (Amendment) (2000) Acts and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act 2001 were considered in drafting this policy. Students with disabilities should refer to guidance on the Disabled Students Allowance as they may be eligible for specialist non- medical help (NMH) to support their study”.

Financial Support - We will provide 3 types of bursaries and an emergency assistance fund.

<p>Elevate Bursary - This bursary is available to students stepping up internally from L3 study at the College to an eligible HE course (BA/BSc, FdA, HNC/D, PGCE/CertEd.) The bursary will be £750 for full time students and £375 for part time students and will be payable in termly instalments. This will be available in the first year of study only. In addition to earlier study at the College (within the previous 3 academic years), students will need to meet ONE of the other of the following criteria: live in a postcode classified as within TUNDRA Q1, be the first of their family to enter HE, and/or have a household income of below £30,000.</p>
<p>Opportunity Bursary – this bursary is available to students at any point of their study and is designed to support those from more deprived situations to successfully continue and complete their HE studies. This bursary is available to students studying at any level on an eligible HE course (BA/BSc, FdA, HNC/D, PGCE/CertEd.) The bursary will be £750 for full time students and £375 for part time students and will be payable in termly instalments. Successful applicants will need to meet BOTH of the following criteria: live in a postcode classified as within IMDQ1/2 and have a household income of below £30,000 per annum.</p>
<p>Independence Bursary -This bursary is available to students who have left local authority care within the 3 years prior to enrolling on an eligible HE course (BA/BSc, FdA, HNC/D, PGCE/CertEd.). The bursary is for £1,000 (full time- £500 part time) in each year of study recognising the additional financial pressures this group of students are likely to face and will be payable in termly instalments.</p>

Students will only be eligible for ONE of the above bursaries in any one year of study. Bursaries will be available to students who have “Home” status and, where applicable, have applied, and fully utilised, the available funding from the national funding body (eg. Student Finance, England).

We will use data provided by applicant organisations to assist with the identification of potential beneficiaries, but all applicants will be required to apply by completing an application form. On receipt of an application to study, or on enrolment to a second or third year of study, a student will be advised of the financial support available to them and invited to submit a bursary application. If residing in a qualifying postcode, they will be advised in writing of their eligibility.

Emergency Assistance Fund – this recognises that unexpected issues arise that impact upon study. This hardship fund, titled to emphasise its purpose, will support students in emergencies that create hardship, providing financial support, via individual application on a case-by-case basis.

This renewed APP for 2026/27-2029/30, once approved, will be published on the college website for the duration of the study of students affected by the plan (alongside an accessible summary). The current APP sits within the “Office for Students” subsection of “TSCG Information” domain.

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

Trafford and Stockport College Group (TSCG) is, as described in the TEF 2023 Panel Statement “a large further education college, with a small higher education provision”. Indeed, the higher education provision has reduced since the College mergers of 2018 and 2021 (the Introduction and Strategic Aim section explains our ambition to regrow this).

In the analysis of the key risks to the equality of opportunity we have been mindful that our data contains limitations, complexities and uncertainties which are common when analysing small datasets.

The investigation has been informed by reference to the following data sources.

- The OfS APP Data Dashboard
- The OfS TEF 2023 Data Dashboard
- The OfS TEF Shape and Size Data Dashboard (2023 and 2022)
- The College’s TEF 2023 Written Submission
- The TEF 2023 Panel Statement
- The College’s current APP covering the period 2022/23-2026/27
- The OfS Student Outcomes Data Dashboard
- And the College’s own student data records sourced from college ILR returns, facilitated through the college’s MiS system.

Whilst the OfS APP Data Dashboard has been a helpful source of data with respect to access, the identification of risks to equality of opportunity for some student groups entering HE, continuation, the investigation of the success of students progressing from their first year of study to a second (or completing a one year course), and completion of study, it has been less helpful, due to small student numbers, in examining potential risks at the later stages of the student life cycle journey (attainment, and progression).

Where the APP Data Dashboard has been used, as recommended by the OfS, 4- and 2-year aggregate values have been considered a more reliable indicator of the risks to equality of opportunity due both to data volumes and quite significant changes in the curriculum offer over recent years and during/after merger.

We collect and report our HE student data via our ILR. Internal data college for the years up to and including 2023/2024, has also been used to identify risks to the equality of opportunity for students.

The analysis also draws significantly upon 2023 TEF indicators, comparison to benchmarks, the TEF Data Dashboard and the TEF 2022 and 2023 Shape and Size of Provision Dashboard, the OfS Student Outcomes Data Dashboard and the contents of the summary of the 2023 TEF panel assessment of the College. These provide a helpful and more up to date picture of the College, particularly since the date of the College mergers in 2018 and 2021.

Due to the small student numbers, it has not been possible, or appropriate, to explore intersections of student characteristics or disaggregate into smaller groups.

TSCG, like many general further education colleges, has in student volume terms, and qualification type and level, a very different HE provision to the sector overall. Where appropriate we have used the OfS APP Data Dashboard’s “all undergraduate” and “other undergraduate” level of view when comparing to the sector.

Whilst we recognise that our core course offer to adults and 16–18-year-old students is different in terms of level, duration, accreditation and outcomes, and that the student experience is also different, reference has been made to wider college student data and performance, where it is significant and synergetic with the analysis of, HE student performance (eg. ethnic make-up of overall College student population).

We have applied the principles of the OfS' sector wide Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) to our own context, offer and student characteristics.

The 2022/23-2026/27 APP, of which this is a renewal, identified 12 objectives aimed at specific student groups at different points in the lifecycle – 1 x Access, 5 x Continuation, 5 x Attainment and 1 x Progression. In the context of a small FEC HE Provider this seems a large number, both in terms of the reliable identification of so many risks due to small student numbers, for example with Attainment targets, and the availability of resources in the College context to address such a wide range and number of objectives. At the time of writing the 2022/23 APP the College had recently experienced a merger, and there were some historic difficulties with the quality of delivery at one college campus. It seems likely that this historical data and a concern to demonstrate an intent to address the past difficulties led to an unusually large number of objectives, for the College context, being set.

The number of risks to equality of opportunity identified at the time of writing this APP are less (4) than in the previous APP for several reasons. Student numbers have reduced which means that reliable judgement of the recognition of risks has become even more difficult than previously (and much less straight forward than for larger providers such as universities). Whilst Access for full time students from areas of lower HE participation (TUNDRA rather than POLAR sources now used), and Continuation of students from the more deprived areas – IMD quintiles 1 and 2 – remain as ongoing, the other 2022/23 targets are discontinued due to, in some cases, improved student performance, and the closing/eradication of gaps, and in some, such as those addressing Continuation and Attainment for BAME students due to very small student numbers, and quite different levels of performance of ethnic groups within the overall BAME category.

The TEF 2023 Panel Judgment suggests a strong overall performance - "student outcomes are typically high quality, and there are some very high-quality features. Very high-quality features include: - very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses - very high rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses". Whilst the statement did further explain that "this does not apply to all student groups" the overall judgement does not suggest, nor indicate, that we should be recognising many student groups with risks to equality of opportunity at different stages in the lifecycle, nor setting ourselves many specific APP objectives.

Where it has been considered that an absence of student data may lead to a failure to identify a risk to the equality of opportunity, other evidence, significantly student and staff consultation, has been used along with other college-based data, such as uptake of student services, to ensure no student group, nor lifecycle situation is overlooked.

The main source of data used below is the OfS APP Data Dashboard, where other sources such as TEF indicators, and internal college data, is used those sources are identified.

Trafford and Stockport College Group Headline Higher Education Context

The TEF 2023 Panel Statement described the College.

- "a large further education college, with a small higher education provision.
- Many students are drawn from local areas with lower rates of participation in higher education,
- and 75 per cent of students are mature,
- with an average age of 27.
- Students often work and care for families alongside studying.
- In 2020-21, just over a quarter (27.4 per cent) of students declared a learning difficulty or disability, which the provider states is significantly above the sector average of 15 per cent".

Full time students, at 41% of the overall student population, represent a similar proportion as part time students and a significantly lower proportion than the sector.

- Students from the more deprived communities are well represented with the proportion of students from the most deprived IMD quintile, 1, being the largest (2-year average 38.6%, 4-year 35.7%) which exceeds the sector representation.
- Mature students are the majority population (2-year average 61.3% and 4-year average 69.4%) which is more than double the representation across the sector.
- The percentage of students reporting a disability (2-year average 29.3% and 4-year average 29.1%) is approaching double the representation in the overall sector.
- The percentage of students eligible for Free School Means (2-year average 27.5% and 4-year average 28.8%) is significantly higher than the sector average.
- The College has a majority white full time student population (2-year average 62.5%, 4 year-average 68.9%) which is a similar profile to the overall sector and not dissimilar to the composition of the local population.
- The percentage of students with an Asian background (2-year average 21.9% and 4-year average 15.1%) and those of mixed ethnicity (2-year average 9.4% and 4-year average 11.3%) both exceed the overall sector representation.
- The proportion of black students is small, not reportable on an annual or 2 or 4-year average, and is therefore below the sector. However, this data relates only to 18-year-old students, part of the minority young student population, which is very small in volume and not dissimilar to the local population.

Part time students, at 43% of overall student population, represent a slightly higher proportion than full time students, and is a significantly higher proportion than the sector.

- Part time students from the more deprived communities are also well represented with the proportion of students from the most deprived IMD quintile, 1, being the largest (2-year average 28.6%, 4-year 25.1%) which exceeds the sector representation.
- Unsurprisingly mature students are the majority part time student population (2-year average 86.8% and 4-year average 85.8%) and like the sector.
- The proportion of part time students reporting a disability (2-year average 13.2% and 4-year average 13.3%) is significantly below the proportion of full-time students reporting a disability at the College but only slightly below the sector average.
- The very small number of non-white students restricts the reporting of student data. The situation is however recognised to be like that of the full-time population and be a match to the local population.

Higher Apprentices represent the remainder of the HE student population (16%).

The Summary TEF 2023 Panel Statement judged that;

- “Student outcomes are typically high quality, and there are some very high-quality features.
- Very high-quality features include: • very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider’s students and courses • very high rates of successful progression for the provider’s students and courses”.
- Although “this does not apply to all student groups.”

ACCESS Context and Risks to Equality of Opportunity

Full time – 41% of the overall college student population at this lifecycle stage.

- Students from the more deprived communities are well represented with the proportion of students from the most deprived IMD quintile, 1, being the largest (2-year average 38.6%, 4-year 35.7%) which exceeds the sector representation (2-year average 23.2% and 4-year 22.5%).
- Mature students are the majority population (2-year average 61.3% and 4-year average 69.4%) which is more than double the representation across the sector (2-year average 28.5% and 4-year 28.9%).
- The percentage of students reporting a disability (2-year average 29.3% and 4-year average 29.1%) is approaching double the representation in the overall sector (2-year average 17.9% and 4-year 17.4%).
- The percentage of students eligible for Free School Means (2-year average 27.5% and 4-year average 28.8%) is significantly higher than the sector average (2-year average 18.0% and 4-year 18.4%). We acknowledge that this relates to a relatively small group of the minority young student population.
- The College has a majority full time white student population (2-year average 62.5%, 4 year-average 68.9%) which is a similar profile as to the overall sector (2-year average 65.7%,4-year average 65.3%) and not dissimilar to the composition of the local population.
- The percentage of students with an Asian background (2-year average 21.9% and 4-year average 15.1%) and those of mixed ethnicity (2-year average 9.4% and 4-year average 11.3%) both exceed the overall sector representation (Asian - 2-year average 18.1% and 4-year average 17.6%) (Mixed ethnicity- 2-year average 5.9% and 4-year average 5.6%).
- The proportion of black students is small, not reportable on an annual or 2 or 4-year average, and is therefore below the sector (2-year average 8.2% and 4-year average 7.8%). However, this data relates only to 18-year-old students, part of the minority young student population (2-year average 38.7% and 4-year average 30.6%) and is very small in volume.
- We do NOT consider that any of the above factors represent a risk to the equality of opportunity for non-white students in gaining access to HE. Indeed, as a heavily locally recruiting provider (93% full time,79% part time – source TEF Shape and Size of Provision Dashboard) the non-white student population is not dissimilar (proportionally) to the two local boroughs of the College's catchment – Stockport 2021 Census reports 7.3% of its population as “Asian classification”, 1.2% as “black”, 2.6% as “mixed” and 1.6% as “other” and Trafford 2021 Census reports 12.6% of its population as “Asian classification”, 3.4% as “black”, 3.8% as “mixed” and 2.5% as “other”.

Part time – 43% of the overall college student population at this lifecycle stage.

- Part time students from the more deprived communities are also well represented with the proportion of students from the most deprived IMD quintile, 1, being the largest (2-year average 28.6%, 4-year 25.1%) which exceeds the sector representation (2-year average 20.6% and 4-year 20.5%).
- Unsurprisingly mature students are the majority part time student population (2-year average 86.8% and 4-year average 85.8%) and is very much in line with the sector (2-year average 88.2% and 4-year average 87.7%).
- The proportion of part time students reporting a disability (2-year average 13.2% and 4-year average 13.3%) is significantly below (-15.4pp and -16.1pp respectively) the proportion of full-time students reporting a disability at the College and below the sector average, but by a much smaller amount (2-year average 7.3pp and 4-year 6.0pp). Whilst this appears to represent some level of risk to the equality of opportunity for part time students with a disability in accessing HE at the College, we consider that the success achieved in supporting full time students to report disabilities (for both 2 and 4-year average some 11.0pp above the sector average) contributes to an unhelpful comparison with a much smaller part time student population who all have access to the same level of information, advice

and guidance when applying, enrolling and studying as the larger full time population. It is also worthy of note that a significant proportion of part time students study for only one year, which may inhibit the opportunity, potential and diagnosis timeframe to explore support needs. Most part time students are successfully functioning employees, studying alongside work, and the overall continuation and completion TEF Indicators demonstrate a slightly above benchmark performance (a similar situation for both students who report and do not report a disability). We will NOT set a formal APP objective but monitor internally, using internal data about the take up of advice, guidance and support services.

- The commentary above about access of full-time non-white students is relevant also to the part time access situation where very small volumes of students restrict reporting of exact numbers.

Recognised Risks to the Equality of Opportunity for ACCESS to Higher Education

We have identified only ONE risk to the equality of opportunity for people accessing HE at the College and have set an objective for this APP period as outlined in the “Objectives” section of the main body of the APP.

PTA1 – We will address the risk to equality of opportunity of access to full time HE studies at the College for students from the least represented HE communities. This is demonstrated by the significantly lower percentage of full-time students (15.1% - 2-year average) recruited from TUNDRA quintile 1, the least represented quintile in higher education, compared with the higher percentage of students (27.9%) who access full time study at the College from the most represented TUNDRA quintile 5, a significant gap of 12.8pp. The 4- year average shows a similar situation with a gap of 11pp.

Whilst this situation is not dissimilar to the access equality gap between TUNDRA quintiles 1 and 5 across the sector, our ambition to reduce this gap is synergetic with our strategic plan to increase the number of young full-time students progressing internally at the College, attract students from local feeder schools and contribute to the reduction of the gap seen in HE participation in its local boroughs of Trafford and Stockport compared to national HE participation.

CONTINUATION Context and Risks to Equality of Opportunity

Full time

- The number of non-white full-time students studying and continuing is small and for most ethnic subgroupings not reportable. However, Asian students may be less successful in continuing their studies (2 -year average 83.3% and 4-year average 78.8%) than white students (2-year average 82.5% and 4-year average 82.2%). The more recent 2-year average is based upon an even smaller [than 4-year average] population of students (30) and we consider is too small upon which to draw a conclusion and set an objective. TEF 2023 indicators show a 3.4pp gap between full time Asian students and white students, both are broadly in line with TEF benchmark and again is based on a small four-year student population of Asian students (50). Accordingly, we will monitor this situation internally but NOT set a formal APP target.
- Younger full-time students (under 21 years) appear to be less successful than their mature (+21-year-old) students at continuing their study. The 2- and 4-year aggregate data for full time younger students shows only 70.7% and 74.5% (respectively) of the population continuing their study whilst mature students successfully continue their study at a higher rate (2-year average 83.6% and 4-year average 81.5%). These continuation rates are also significantly below the

sector 2 and 4-year averages. TEF 2023 indicators show under 21-year-old students continuing at the rate of 74.6% (broadly in line with TEF benchmark) but 7.3pp below that for 21–30-year-olds and 6.4pp below the performance of 31 and + year olds. However, this continuation gap for younger full-time students is predicated on the minority full time population and represents the performance of a small number of students and we consider a less reliable indicator. Accordingly, we will monitor this situation internally but NOT set a formal APP target.

- Full time students reporting a disability appear to be less successful than those students not reporting a disability at continuing their study. The 2- and 4-year aggregate data for full time students reporting a disability shows only 74.1% and 77.4% (respectively) of the population continuing their study whilst students not reporting a disability successfully continue their study at a higher rate (2-year average 82.1% and 4-year average 80.5%). These continuation rates are also very significantly below the sector 2 and 4-year averages. TEF 2023 indicators show students reporting a disability continuing at the rate of 77.4% (broadly in line with TEF benchmark) but 3.1pp below that for those not reporting a disability. The number of students in the more recent 2-year average is small (60) and represents the performance of a small number of students and is considered a less reliable indicator. Accordingly, we will monitor this situation internally but NOT set a formal APP target.
- There is some evidence that full time students eligible for Free School Meals continue their studies, in the most recent data (2-year average 65.2%, 4 year average 75.7%), at a lower rate than those who were not (2-year average 76.0%, 4 year average 75.6%) but this is based upon a very small student population of students (20), is significantly different from the period previously where there is a larger data set and is too small upon which to draw a conclusion and set an APP objective.
- TEF2023 indicators (covering a preceding 4-year period) appear to indicate that full time male students are less successful in continuing their study than females. TEF 2023 data shows that 82.8% of female students continue (broadly in line with the TEF benchmark) whilst only 72.8% of male students continue their study, broadly in line with TEF benchmark, representing a potential 10pp gap and an apparent risk to the equality of opportunity for full time male students in continuing their study. However, more up to date internal College data suggests an improved and different situation. In 2022/23 the gap between the full time male and female continuation rate had halved to 5.8pp, and by 2023/24 the gap had disappeared with full time males continuing their study at a very slightly higher rate (+0.77pp) than female students. We recognise that the TEF 4-year aggregate data does include evidence of some pre-merger challenges for students and considers that the improved situation of the past 2 years is a more reliable indicator of the comparative performance of male and female students and therefore an APP objective will NOT be set. The situation will be monitored internally.

Part time

- Part time mature students (+21-year-olds) appear to be less successful than younger students at continuing their study. The 2- and 4-year aggregate data for part time mature students shows only 76.4% and 77.1% (respectively) of the population continuing their study whilst younger students continue their study at a higher rate (2-year average 91.2% and 4-year average 89.0%). However, these continuation rates for part time mature students are significantly above the sector 2 and 4-year averages (+14.8pp and +14.0pp respectively). The very high continuation rate for younger part time students is also very significantly above the sector average and is predicated on a very small number of students (30). TEF 2023 indicators show under 21–30-year-old students continuing at the rate of 79.8% (“materially above” TEF benchmark) but 9.2pp below that for under 21-year-olds (89%) and the performance of 31+ year olds is lower at 74.0%, a large 15pp

below the under 21-year-old performance but “broadly in line” with TEF benchmark. Whilst there is some statistical evidence of a gap between the two-age group of students the continuation rates for mature students significantly exceeds the sector averages and TEF benchmarks, and we consider that the very small young part time population, and its success, is misleading in comparative terms, and an APP objective will NOT be set.

- Part time students from the most deprived communities (IMDQ1) appear to be less successful at continuing their study (2-year average 68.1%) than part time students from the least deprived communities (IMDQ5) (85.7%), representing an inequality gap of 17.6pp. However, the continuation performance of our part time students from the most deprived community – IMDQ1 – exceeds the sector average by 11.3 pp, and this analysis is based upon a small student population. We consider that the very small part time population, and its success compared to the sector, has provided a misleading piece of comparison, and an APP objective will NOT be set.

Recognised Risks to the Equality of Opportunity for CONTINUATION of Study from year one to two (or successful award qualification)

We have identified only ONE risk to the equality of opportunity for continuation of study from year one to two (or successful award qualification) and have set an objective for this APP period as outlined in the “Objectives” section of the main body of the APP.

PTS1- The continuation rates for full time students from the most deprived communities (IMDQ1), compared with those from less deprived communities are a little confusing and inconsistent. The 2- and 4-year aggregate data for full time students from the most deprived IMD quintile (1) show only 77.1% and 78.9% (respectively) of the population continuing their study but this is actually higher than the least deprived IMD quintile (5), but lower than all the other quintiles, and lower than the sector average for IMD quintile 1 (2-year average 83.5%, 4-year average 83.5%). Whilst this is a confused data picture overall, this does indicate a risk to the equality of opportunity for students from the most deprived areas in continuing their studies. Using weighted average data drawn from the 2-year average, we have identified that a 6.3pp continuation equality gap exists [for full time students] between the College’s 2-year average for IMD quintiles 1 and 2 (77.9%) and IMD quintiles 3,4 and 5 (84.2%). This is gap of almost twice that which existed in the 4-year average and represents a worsening continuation performance in more recent years for students from the most deprived quintiles. TEF 2023 indicators show a gap of 3.5pp between the continuation rates for full time students from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 compared to those from IMD3/5 and would support our judgement that a risk to equality of opportunity is evident for this group of students at the continuation stage in their lifecycle, and an APP objective has been set and appears in the Objectives section of the APP..

COMPLETION Context and Risks to Equality of Opportunity

Full time

- There is some evidence of full-time non-white students being less successful in completing their studies although those rates are based upon small numbers of students. The 4-year average for full time black student completion is only 62.8%, compared to 77.1% for white students (both are significantly lower than the sector averages). However, the full-time black student population is too small for the more recent period for comparative data to be publishable. Full time Asian students (2-year average 79.3%, 4-year average 76.6%) complete their studies at a slightly lower rate than white students (2-year average 77.1%, 4-year average 81.4%) although all these completion rates are significantly below the sector average. The

number of students within the relevant black and most recent Asian populations are 40 and 30 respectively and we consider are too small for this to be reliable data upon which to find a risk to equality of opportunity and set an APP objective. TEF2023 indicators show that Asian students are almost as successful as white students in completing – a difference of just 0.5pp – and is “materially above TEF benchmark (albeit from a small student population (90)).

- Full time young students (younger than 21-years) appear to be less successful than mature students at completing their study. The 2- and 4-year aggregate data for full time young students shows only 73.2% and 75.9.% (respectively) of the population completing their study whilst mature students complete their study at a higher rate (2-year average 81.7% and 4-year average 76.8%). These completion rates for young students are also significantly below the sector 2 and 4-year averages. However, this comparison is predicated upon a much smaller volume of students than the equivalent mature full time student population. TEF 2023 indicators show a more similar completion performance of all the different age groups – under 21-year-olds 76.3%, 21–30-year-olds 76.7% and 31+ year olds 76.8% - and all are “broadly in line with benchmark”. Accordingly, we will NOT set ourselves an APP objective.
- TEF 2023 indicators suggest that over the 4-year period preceding full time male students appear to have been less successful in completing their study than females. The indicators show that 79.7% of female students complete (broadly in line with the TEF benchmark) whilst only 70.8% of male students complete their study, broadly in line with TEF benchmark, but representing an 8.9pp gap in equality of opportunity, which is of concern. However, more up to date internal College data suggests an improved and different situation. In 2022/23 the gap between the full time male and female completion rate had reduced by more than two thirds to 2.5pp, and by 2023/24 the gap had reduced further with full time males continuing their study at a rate only 1.8 pp below that of full-time female students. We recognise that the TEF 4-year aggregate data does include evidence of some pre-merger challenges for students and consider that the improved situation of the past 2 years is a more reliable indicator of the comparative performance of male and female students and therefore an APP objective will NOT be set, and this completion situation will be monitored internally.

Part time

- There is some evidence of non-white part time students being less successful in completing their studies although those rates are based upon small numbers of students. The 4-year average for part time black student completion is only 76.0%, compared to 83.1% for white students (both are significantly lower than the sector averages). The part time black student population is too small for the more recent period for comparative 2-year data to be publishable. Full time Asian students (2-year average 58.2%, 4-year average 62.3%) complete their studies at a significantly lower rate than white students (2-year average 79.1%, 4-year average 83.1%) The number of students within the relevant black and Asian populations are 40 and 70 respectively and we consider are too small for this to be reliable data upon which to find a risk to equality of opportunity and set an objective. Additionally, it is worthy of note that the completion rates for these two-part time ethnic minority groups match or are better than the sector averages. TEF 2023 indicators suggest completion rates for Asian (62.3%) and black (76.0%) which are lower than those for white students (83.1%) but are based on very small student numbers (70 and 30 respectively). Accordingly, we will NOT set ourselves an APP objective.
- Part time mature students (+21-years) appear to be less successful than younger students at completing their study. The 2- and 4-year aggregate data for part time mature students shows 75.1% and 79.9.% (respectively) of the population completing their study whilst young part time students complete their study at a higher rate (2-year average 81.1% and 4-year average 84.3%). These completion

rates for mature students are however very significantly above the sector 2 and 4-year averages (+18.4pp and 22.6pp). TEF 2023 indicators show 21–30-year-old students continuing at the rate of 80.5% (“broadly in line with” TEF benchmark) but 3.8pp below that for under 21-year-olds (84.3%), the performance of 31+ year olds is slightly lower at 79.3%, 5pp below the under 21-year-old performance, but “materially above” TEF benchmark. This set of data is somewhat contradictory and part time mature students do appear to complete their studies at a better rate than those of a similar age in the sector. An APP objective will NOT be set.

- There is some evidence that part time students reporting a disability appear to be less successful than those students not reporting a disability at completing their study. The 2- and 4-year aggregate data for part time students reporting a disability shows only 75.0% and 75.8% (respectively) of the population completing their study whilst students not reporting a disability successfully complete their study at a higher rate (2-year average 77.1% and 4-year average 81.7%). However, these completion rates for students reporting a disability are very significantly above the sector 2 and 4-year averages. Bearing in mind the number of students in the 2-year average is relatively small (60), the gap has reduced, and the performance is significantly above the sector we will not recognise a completion gap and risk to equality of opportunity, nor set an APP objective. TEF 2023 indicators show students reporting a disability completing at the rate of 75.8% (broadly in line with TEF benchmark) but 5.7pp below that for those not reporting a disability. The completion rate for part time disabled students is based on a small number of students (90), performance for those not reporting a disability which has been calculated on a much larger population (1,000).
- Part time female students appear to be less successful in completing their study than males. TEF indicators (covering a 4-year period) show that 82.8% of male students complete (materially above the TEF benchmark) whilst only 78.7% of female students complete their study, (1.8 pp above but considered “broadly in line with TEF benchmark”), but representing a 4.1pp gap to equality of opportunity which may require the setting of an objective. The completion performance of part time female students at the College was still better than the sector and up to date internal data for 2022/23 and 2023/24 suggests that any such gap has disappeared.

Recognised Risks to the Equality of Opportunity for COMPLETION of Study

We have identified only TWO risks to the equality of opportunity for people completing higher education study at the College and have set objectives for this APP period as outlined in the “Objectives” section of the main body of the APP.

- PTS2- Full time students from the most deprived communities (IMDQ1) appear to be less successful than students from the least deprived communities at completing their study. The 2- and 4-year aggregate data for full time students from the most deprived IMD quintile 1 shows only 73.1% and 73.8% (respectively) of the population completing their study whilst those students from the least deprived IMD quintile 5 successfully complete their study at a higher rate (2-year average 87.8% and 4-year average 85.1%). These completion rates for full time students from the most deprived quintile IMD1 are also significantly below the sector 2 and 4-year averages (8.4pp and 7.8pp respectively). Accordingly, we recognise a risk to the equality of opportunity for students from the most deprived communities of not successfully completing their studies. A completion gap is recognised between students from the most deprived communities (IMD Q1) and those from the least deprived (IMDQ5) of 14.7pp for the 2-year average and 11.3pp for the 4-year average. TEF 2023 indicators support this assertion and show a gap of 8.8pp between the completion rates for full time students from IMD Q 1&2 compared to those from IMDQ3/5 (both are “broadly in line” with TEF benchmark). An objective to address this is included in the “Objectives” section of the main body of this APP.

- PTS3- Part time students from the most deprived communities (IMDQ1) appear to be significantly less successful than students from the least deprived communities at completing their study. The 2- and 4-year aggregate data for part time students from the most deprived IMD quintile 1 shows only 59.3% and 68.1% (respectively) of the population completing their study whilst those students from the least deprived IMD quintile 5 successfully complete their study at a much higher rate (2-year average 80.6% and 4-year average 86.7%). This indicates an inequality gap of 21.3pp and 18.6pp on the 2 and 4-year average respectively, and one that has widened more recently. However, these completion rates for part time students from the most deprived quintile IMD1 are above the sector 2 and 4-year averages (+3.7pp and +12.9pp respectively). Considering the large difference in completion rates, and the worsened recent trend, we recognise a risk to the equality of opportunity for part time students from the most deprived communities (IMD Q1) in successfully completing their studies and an APP objective has been set.
- This analysis is supported by TEF 2023 indicators which show a gap of 11.9pp between the completion rates for part time students from the most deprived IMD Q1 and 2 compared to those from IMDQ3/5 (the IMDQ1 and 2 being “broadly in line” with TEF benchmark whilst the performance of students from the least deprived communities (IMDQ3/5) being “materially above” TEF benchmark).

ATTAINMENT Context and Risks to Equality of Opportunity

We have NOT identified any risks to the equality of opportunity for full and part time students in connection with attainment, nor set any APP objectives.

The OfS APP Data Dashboard only investigates situations and students studying for a Full Honours Degree qualification and the relative performance of student groups in achieving first class or upper second-class honours classifications. Accordingly, for the College Group, where most students study “other” undergraduate awards upon which classifications/grades such as Distinction/Merit are gained, the available/published data is restricted to a very small number of student groups. Whilst there is a suggestion of some inequalities of opportunity for full time students reporting disabilities (see below) this is based on a very small number of students and is insufficiently reliable for APP objective setting.

- Full time students who report disability appear to be less successful in attaining higher degree classifications. The 2- and 4-year aggregate data for full time students reporting a disability shows only 58.3% and 66.0% (respectively) achieving a high grade compared to the higher achievement of those that do not report a disability (2-year average 71.9% and 4-year average 69.7%). These attainment rates are also significantly below the sector averages for this group. However, the 2-year average, and most recent data, is based only on 20 students and the 4-year data on 50 students. We recognise that there is an indication of an inequality of opportunity here, but because of the unreliability caused by the very small student numbers, will monitor the situation internally but will NOT set an APP objective.

The 2022/23-2026/27 APP, of which this is a renewal did investigate, and set objectives, in respect of risks to the equality of opportunity for BAME and Disabled students in achieving higher grades (ie Merits and Distinctions) which are a feature of a large proportion of the College’s HE qualifications (eg. HNC/Ds, and Foundation Degrees).

Investigation of internal data for the most recent academic years (up to 2023/24) does not indicate any gap in achieving higher grades for disabled students, indeed full-time students declaring a disability have achieved a larger proportion of higher grades than those who did not report a disability. The number of students categorised as BAME is overall very small and the performance of students from different ethnic subgroups has varied from year to year and between groups – for example, 100% of full time students identifying as black (in 2023/24) achieved a Merit/Distinction but the number of students in that subgroup was just 3, whilst students identifying as Asian (both full and part time) appear in some years to attain less higher Merit/Distinction grades (2023/24 part time only 17%) but the year before 75% achieved such grades (much higher than the proportion achieved by white students), and these percentages are all calculated on an annual student population of single figures.

Overall, our investigation of higher grade (Merit/Distinction) performance did not identify any risks to equality of opportunity which were supported by suitably reliable volumes of data. However, female students studying part time do appear to receive a lower proportion of high (Merit/Distinction) grades than male students (2022/23 a gap of 42 pp and 2023/24 a gap of 35pp) but the female part time student population is very small (average 14 per year) and casts doubts on the reliability of the data and in the College's context the availability of resources to set a formal APP objective. This will be monitored internally.

PROGRESSION Context and Risks to Equality of Opportunity

We have NOT identified any risks to the equality of opportunity for full and part time students in connection with their progression from study to employment or further study nor set itself any objectives.

The volume of data here is limited by three factors, the timing of the data collection source, the Graduate Outcomes Survey, 18 months, after the completion of study, a survey response rate which at best across the sector is only between 50 and 60% and the small size of the College's overall student population at this lifecycle stage.

Whilst there may be some suggestion of inequality of opportunity for full time female students, and those full-time students reporting a disability, as explained below, most are based on very limited volumes of data and are less reliable.

The TEF 2023 Panel Statement said - "Taken together the panel considered the 'progression' indicators for full-time and part-time students to provide evidence that there are typically very high rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses, and that overall, this is a very high-quality feature."

- Full time students reporting a disability may experience a risk to equality of opportunity in progressing from their study. The 2-year average for this group of students (the 4-year average is not publishable) shows 65.4% of students reporting a disability successfully progressing from study, whereas the average for the same period for students not reporting a disability is 80% and the sector average is 81%. Whilst this gap appears significant this is predicated upon a student number of 30, with a survey take up of 42.9%, and thus a response from perhaps just 10/12 students. The 2-year average for students not reporting a disability is based a larger number (70) but with a similarly low survey take up rate of 46.8% and thus responses from say 30/32 students. Whilst there is a superficial indication of some inequality of opportunity for full time students reporting a disability the volume of actual responses to the Graduate Outcomes Survey is so

small that any judgment may be less reliable. We will monitor the situation internally but will NOT set an APP objective.

- There is some indication that full time female students are less successful in progressing from their study than males. TEF indicators (covering a 4-year period) show that 79.2% of male students successfully progress but only 71.9% of female students. Both performances are materially above the TEF benchmark and are based on a relatively small student population (which is further eroded by the survey % uptake). This situation will be monitored internally and will not be formally recognised as a risk to equality of opportunity nor an APP objective set.

Annex B: Further information that sets out the rationale, assumptions and evidence base for each intervention strategy that is included in the access and participation plan

The rationale for our planned activities which will be included within the three Intervention Strategies are based upon the following and draw not only from feedback and commentary from HE students but also other learners, including adults on Access to HE courses, and 16–18-year-olds studying at the college, and aspiring to progress to HE.

The principles of successful practice and support applied across the College in our provision of education and learning to all our students have also informed the planning here.

The College's APP Working Group, which has co-ordinated the compilation of this APP renewal comprises representatives from across the College Group including the enabling services such as Admissions, Finance, MIS, as well as Student Support and Curriculum and have drawn upon their own experiences of working with those aspiring to HE, and those studying HE, and the feedback they have received.

With a small student body in sector terms, and small group sizes, we have many more opportunities, than in other settings, to gather informal student feedback, and suggestions for improvement. These opportunities are valued and encouraged. Feedback gathered this way about the workings of the current APP, support for students, and suggestions for further development have been very helpful to the thinking of the APP Working Group.

The functions of the formal student engagement process have also been used to gain input to the review of the current APP, the planning of this new APP's activity/interventions, and obtaining feedback upon those plans.

Some bespoke and targeted engagements, via online survey, with HE students sharing the characteristics of the APP objective target groups (IMD quintiles 1 and 2) has been particularly helpful to gather feedback on our APP plans and obtain fresh ideas from the specific group to be supported to improve their continuation and completion rates. A wider survey of FE students studying a range of L3, and Access to HE courses, has been informative for our planning of activities aimed to uplift access for students from those communities with the least experience of HE participation. Those responses relevant to each of these three Intervention appear later in this Annex.

This being a renewal of an earlier APP, some of the intervention activities continue from the earlier version. Where we feel them to have had positive impact eg. the role and work of the HE Academic Support Officer, and others, continue, but with enhancements/extensions. Some feedback from students and our evaluation of impacts has suggested the need for change, eg. the extension of financial support (bursaries) to students at all levels of study not just the first year.

We have applied the Sector Based Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) to our own context. This appears in the main body of the APP and later in this Annex.

We have also applied an understanding of our catchment area, and the economic, social, and educational backgrounds of potential students which appears in the main body section, "Introduction and Strategic Aims".

Intervention strategy 1: Promoting Access and Aspiration for Full Time students from Communities with Lower Levels of HE Participation

In the absence of targeted intervention, students from backgrounds that have less experience of HE participation (where parents, siblings, friends and neighbours have not studied at HE level) may face significant barriers in understanding and accessing HE opportunities. A lack of clear information about course structure, financial support, and career prospects can result in students

feeling uncertain about their next steps, which can discourage progression and allow misconceptions about affordability, accessibility, or suitability for HE study to develop.

To address these risks, this intervention focuses on embedding HE awareness within FE at our TSCG settings through cross-staff collaboration, tailored marketing materials, and direct engagement with careers teams and teaching staff. In-reach efforts, including classroom visits and representation at HE and employment events, will ensure that students receive timely and relevant information. By providing more realistic and accessible information about HE provisions, this strategy aims to reduce confusion, increase confidence in decision-making, and ultimately lead to higher progression from FE to HE rates for students from TUNDRA Q1 backgrounds. At the core of this intervention is the aim to embed clear and accessible information about HE options within the current studies of our FE learners.

Whilst this situation is not dissimilar to the access equality gap between TUNDRA quintiles 1 and 5 across the sector (indeed slightly smaller), our ambition to reduce this gap is synergetic with our strategic aim to increase the number of young full-time students progressing internally at the College, attract students from local feeder schools and contribute to the reduction of the gap seen in HE participation in pockets of our local boroughs of Trafford and Stockport compared to national HE participation. This builds upon the experience that we have of working with over 200 partner schools via the Greater Manchester Learning Network, our work undertaken within the College each year with 16-18 year old students and more mature Access to HE students, who aspire to progress to HE, and recognises that our attention to the opportunity for progression internally to HE, and how it might benefit a significant number students, has been less a strong focus than it could and should have been.

Evidence suggests that inhibitions to students accessing HE from communities with lower levels of participation are partly influenced by actual prior educational experience and attainment (OfS (EORR) Risk 1), but also partly by the perception of higher education as being “something for others”(OfS EORR Risk 3), less visible role models with experience and success in higher education (OfS EORR Risk 2) , less knowledge than in other communities of the opportunities and support, and some anxiety about tuition and living costs and the associated debt (OfS EORR Risk 1).

The student consultation exercise undertaken to inform this APP’s aims, objectives and interventions found that 88% of L3 students from relevant communities agreed that early intervention support with completing student finance applications would be helpful for accessing HE, 72% agreed that support with HE preparation activities before the start of course would be helpful and 96% agreed that financial support (bursaries) would be helpful.

The table below lists, under thematic headings, student consultation responses from the question posed in the survey - “What additional support or changes would make it easier for people to access Higher Education”? Some of these responses have influenced the planning of interventions, including those about accessibility and flexibility of enrolment will influence our operational behaviour.

Student Consultation Responses by Theme from question - “What additional support or changes would make it easier for people to access Higher Education”?
Theme 1: Financial Support <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial support• Increased scholarships and grants• Flexible loan repayment options• Tuition subsidies• Living allowances• An additional form on enrolment to identify financial support eligibility
Theme 2: Accessibility and Flexibility <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flexible enrolment days/times• Flexible hours (more than one day to choose from)• Home studying options• Options for online learning for locally unavailable courses

- Later start time

Theme 3: Information, Guidance, and Transparency

- More promotion in schools
- Creating more awareness through marketing and outreach
- Mobile open days in different areas
- Taster sessions
- Clear insights into what Higher Education entails
- More transparency of course details before enrolment
- Opening events to discuss opportunities, pathways, and suitable courses
- Talk with tutors about career outcomes and alternative course recommendations

Theme 4: Academic and Practical Support

- Space out assignments to reduce academic pressure
- One-to-one support
- Career advice and planning
- Sample of course content provided in advance
- Forms/platforms for students to share resources (e.g., book recommendations, cross-referencing websites)
- Apprenticeship or internship opportunities for practical learning

Theme 5: Mental Health and Wellbeing

- Mental health support services
- Easier access to mental health and wellbeing support outside of university hours
- Support tailored specifically for students with disabilities (e.g., ADHD)
- Improved awareness among staff about students with disabilities, reducing stigma

Theme 6: Campus Environment and Social Integration

- More social activities and events to encourage community building
- Encouraging passion and interest-driven engagement

Theme 7: Student Experience and Course Delivery

- Improved time management in course delivery
- Enhanced quality of lesson delivery
- Updating and improving computing and IT facilities

Theme 8: Other (General Feedback)

- Satisfaction with current support ("standard of support is very high")
- Positive comments about friendly staff and good existing support
- General dissatisfaction or unclear responses ("too much to answer," "Unsure")

Intervention strategy 2: Promoting Success for Full Time Students from Economically Deprived Communities to Continue and Complete

Continuation and completion of study in higher education (HE) are strongly influenced by personal, financial, and academic challenges, particularly for students from more deprived communities and non-traditional learner profiles. Research highlights that students who struggle with academic expectations, financial insecurity, and a lack of belonging are at higher risk of withdrawal (Office for Students, 2023).

IMD Q1 & Q2 students have higher non-continuation rates, particularly in institutions without structured academic and pastoral support. Students who do not engage with academic support services are more likely to struggle with coursework completion and assessment expectations ([HEPI, 2023](#)).

Financial insecurity is a leading cause of withdrawal from HE, with students from low-income backgrounds disproportionately affected (NUS Cost of Living Report, 2023). We shall respond to this with an extension of financial support to all years of study (not just the first year).

Evidence suggests that this group of full time students from the more deprived communities, attempting to continue their studies, is negatively influenced by prior educational experience and attainment, less readily available academic (OfS EORR Risk 6), personal (OfS EORR Risk 7), and

mental health support (OfS EORR Risk 8) away from college than that available for groups of less economic deprivation, and limited access to learning resources outside college (OfS EORR Risk 11). Additionally, this group appears to have suffered more than others from the impacts of the pandemic's restriction and cost pressures (OfS EORR Risk 9), the more recent cost of living crisis years, which in many cases has led to increased employment hours (part and full time) outside of college reducing the volume and quality of study hours (OfS EORR Risk 10).

Evidence also suggests that this group of full-time students, having successfully continued, but attempting to complete their study, is influenced by similar factors that affect their continuation, and persist in their ongoing years of study.

The student consultation exercise undertaken to inform this APP's aims, objectives and interventions found that in respect of academic support needs, flexible learning opportunities and peer mentoring and support;

- 64% agreed that 1:1 support and support groups would be helpful for being able to continue and complete their studies.
- 74% agreed that blended learning options would be helpful for being able to continue and complete their studies.
- 51% agreed that having a peer mentor would be helpful for being able to continue and complete their studies.
- 66% agreed that "drop-in sessions or support groups/staff" would be helpful
- 72% agreed that workshops on a range of "academic skills including, for example, time management, critical thinking and exam preparation" would be helpful

The table below lists, under thematic headings, student consultation responses from the question posed in the survey - "What additional support or changes would make it easier for people to access Higher Education"? Some of these responses have influenced the planning of interventions, some such as those about organisation, structure and communication will influence our operational behaviour.

Student Consultation Responses by Theme from question – "What additional support or changes would help students to stay on track and continue with their studies"?
<p>Theme 1: Academic Skills and Study Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops on effective studying, time management, note-taking, and exam preparation. • Online/training videos on common applications (Word, PowerPoint, assignment structuring, Harvard referencing). • Clear timeline of when assignments will be set. • Support for recapping lessons or assignment details (online or pre-recorded resources). • Providing audio extracts of key content for multitasking students. <p>Theme 2: Mental Health and Wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated mental health day once a month to prevent burnout, including wellbeing activities. • Support mentor specifically for stress and time management. • Incorporating mindfulness and stretching sessions during class. • Teacher training to proactively notice mental health concerns. <p>Theme 3: One-to-One and Personalised Feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular weekly teacher feedback on student performance. • One-to-one personalised academic support. <p>Theme 4: Social Interaction and Community Building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trips and social activities outside the classroom. • Days dedicated to learning combined with fun/social activities. • Promoting socialisation opportunities for stronger peer relationships and study motivation. <p>Theme 5: Organisation, Structure, and Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear calendar showing exam schedules throughout the year.

- Planner providing an overview of the course timeline and milestones to enhance motivation.
- Maintaining consistency with time management plans.

Theme 6: Staff Approachability and Supportiveness

- Teachers being encouraging, supportive, friendly, and approachable.
- Listening actively to student feedback about lessons and acting on it.

Theme 7: Accessibility and Flexibility

- Online access for coursework and resources from home.
- Evening classes available for flexible attendance.

Theme 8: General Positive Feedback

- Satisfaction with existing support mechanisms (e.g., assessment deadline extensions).
- Importance of timely and adequate support systems already in place.

Student Consultation Responses by Theme from question – “What additional support or changes would help students successfully complete their course and prepare for their future”?

Theme 1: Career and Employment Support

- Help in finding part-time work (effective implementation of JobClub).
- Careers support post-course completion.
- Networking events.
- Digital portfolio building workshops.
- Real-world project experience in the students' field of study.
- Work experience placements.
- Career advisor sessions for guidance on further study or employment.

Theme 2: Academic Skills and Employability Preparation

- Workshops on CV writing and interview preparation.
- Personal statement preparation for university applications.
- Provision of timelines showing course content and structure clearly by term.
- Use of real-world examples in teaching to enhance understanding and relevance.

Theme 3: Health, Wellbeing, and Motivation

- Ensuring and prioritising student health and wellbeing.
- Motivational activities and speeches to encourage persistence and goal-setting.
- Awareness-building sessions to highlight global disparities and promote gratitude and motivation.

Theme 4: Feedback, Communication, and Listening

- Requesting more frequent student feedback and genuinely listening to student concerns.
- Addressing issues around teaching quality and academic integrity concerns explicitly raised by students.

Theme 5: One-to-One and Personalised Support

- More consistent one-to-one academic and career support.
- Structured personal sessions to discuss career and study progression during class hours.

Theme 6: Attendance and Engagement

- Emphasis on regular attendance as crucial to success.
- Clear communication of the importance of active engagement in the course for successful completion.

Theme 7: Transparency and Authenticity

- Ensuring advertised support (like JobClub) matches actual provision and expectations.
- Authentic communication about what support or resources are realistically available.

Theme 8: General Comments

- Requests for additional generic "More support" without specific detail.

- General positive or vague remarks ("Ask for more information," "The best advice I was ever given...").

Intervention strategy 3: Promoting Success for Part Time Students from Economically Deprived Communities to Complete [their studies]

Our part time students (of all types) make less use of the student support services (academic and other) than their full-time contemporaries and have less formal (and informal) contact time with their lecturers.

Part time students spend less time at the College [than full time students], and most study courses of shorter duration [than full time students], restricting their ability to access the range of support available. Most part time students are mature and for many they return to study several years after their school/college experience, which for some was less successful, and are less aware and willing to engage with our wider support services.

For those from the most deprived communities (IMDQ 1 and 2) the absence of essential learning aids at home, including space, learning materials and computer access adds extra challenges. This group has also suffered more than others from the impacts of the pandemic's restrictions and cost pressures, and from the most recent cost of living crisis years, which in many cases for these part time students, who study alongside work, has led to increased employment hours reducing the volume and quality of study hours, and in some cases a lower capacity of their employer to support them with their work based study.

Our focus of this intervention will be four-fold, for immediate impact an uplift in the awareness of part time students of the range of support services available and how to access them, and an extension of financial support to subsequent years of study (not just the first year). As a longer term ambition we will explore how to make academic and personal support available more flexibly for students spending less time with us, and with busy lives, and how to deliver core programmes of study more flexibly, including the investigation of how to take full advantage of employer support and learning at work.

Evidence suggests that the performance of this group of part time students attempting to complete their study is influenced by prior educational experience and attainment, less readily available academic (OfS EORR Risk 6), personal (OfS EORR Risk 7), and mental health support (OfS EORR Risk 8), away from college than that available for other groups, and limited access to learning resources outside college (OfS EORR Risk 11). Additionally, this group has suffered more than others from the impacts of the pandemic's restrictions and cost pressures (OfS EORR Risk 9), and in the most recent cost of living crisis years, which in many cases for these part time students, who study alongside work, has led to increased employment hours reducing the volume and quality of study hours, and in some cases a lower capacity of their employer to support their employees with their work based study (OfS EORR Risk 10).

The table above in respect of Intervention 2, which lists, under thematic headings, student consultation responses from the question posed in the survey - "What additional support or changes would make it easier for people to access Higher Education" has influenced also the planning of interventions for part time students from the most economically deprived communities, and our ambition to uplift completion rates.

Additional responses from the student consultation exercise undertaken to inform this APP's aims, objectives and interventions, found that in respect of assistance to successfully complete study: 70% agreed that support with career preparation would be helpful for course completion: 82% agreed that support with work-based opportunities would be helpful for course completion and 77% agreed that support with improving employment circumstances would be helpful for course completion.

Evaluation

Evaluation will necessarily be of a type 1 and 2 - narrative and empirical nature - with exploration and scrutiny of engagement of students (and staff) with the intervention activities both at qualitative and quantitative level. With a small cohort in comparison to the sector, significant amount of the qualitative investigation can be undertaken by individual interview, student focus group, and more widely by survey.

The qualitative aspects of the OfS “Financial Support Toolkit” will be utilised as part of the means of evaluating the impact of financial support.

Evaluation of activity at the outset of this cycle APP will focus on evaluating by quantitative and qualitative method at intervention activity level, trying to establish, for example, the volume of student engagement with an activity, and by engagement with students/applicants their perception of the quality of the intervention activity and the impact on them and their performance.

As the APP cycle progresses, and more overarching data becomes available as to the impact of the interventions on the broad strategy, then evaluation at that higher level will commence. The evaluation of the longer-term ambitions, for example, to develop more flexible learning support and more flexible core programmes of study is more likely, by necessity, only to commence near the end of this APP cycle.

Intervention strategy 1: Promoting Access and Aspiration for Full Time students from Communities with Lower Levels of HE Participation

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Internal [TSCG] HE pathways promotion and progression [from FE to HE] in a safe, familiar and local environment	<p>Increased HE Awareness</p> <p>Higher [internal] FE to HE progression rates</p> <p>Reduction in Perceived Barriers</p> <p>Better Tracking & Evaluation</p> <p>Data-driven improvements to future internal (FE-HE) progression initiatives</p>	Narrative (type 1) at outset and Empirical (type 2) upon availability of evidence of, for example, engagement by students and staff	<p>Latter stages of APP cycle.</p> <p>Findings will be placed on an appropriate part of our website, and for students within an accessible part of the virtual learning environment</p>
Pre-Enrolment Events	<p>Financial Readiness</p> <p>Course Readiness</p> <p>Belonging & Engagement</p> <p>Improved continuation rates of IMDQ1 students</p> <p>Identified support gaps for continuing students, reducing withdrawal risks</p>	Narrative (type 1) at outset and Empirical (type 2) upon availability of evidence of, for example, engagement by students and staff	<p>From year 2 of APP cycle.</p> <p>Findings will be placed on an appropriate part of our website, and for students within an accessible part of the virtual learning environment</p>
HE Skills Workshops – Online Event	<p>Improved Study Readiness</p> <p>Higher Continuation & Success</p> <p>Easing of Confidence, Stress & Mental Health Barriers</p> <p>Reduced stress levels contributing to improved attendance and performance</p>	Narrative (type 1) at outset and Empirical (type 2) upon availability of evidence of, for example, engagement by students and staff	<p>From year 2 of APP cycle.</p> <p>Findings will be placed on an appropriate part of our website, and for students within an accessible part of the virtual learning environment</p>

Intervention strategy 2: Promoting Success for Full Time Students from Economically Deprived Communities to Continue and Complete

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Mentoring & Support	Stronger Sense of Belonging & Community Higher Continuation and Completion % Greater awareness of progression routes and career pathways	Narrative (type 1) at outset and Empirical (type 2) upon availability of evidence of, for example, engagement by students and staff	From year 2 of APP cycle. Findings will be placed on an appropriate part of our website, and for students within an accessible part of the virtual learning environment
Academic Support and Awareness Raising Campaign	Increased Uptake of Academic Support Services Improved Academic Confidence & Performance Easing of Academic Anxiety & Stress Reduced stress linked to uncertainty around assessments and expectations	Narrative (type 1) at outset and Empirical (type 2) upon availability of evidence of, for example, engagement by students and staff	From year 2 of APP cycle. Findings will be placed on an appropriate part of our website, and for students within an accessible part of the virtual learning environment
HE Academic Support Officer	Increased Academic capability Higher Continuation and Completion: Easing of Academic Anxiety & Stress: Improved Accessibility & Engagement: More students from diverse learning backgrounds accessing academic support	Empirical (type 2) (as continuing activity and evidence will be available)	From year 2 of APP cycle. Findings will be placed on an appropriate part of our website, and for students within an accessible part of the virtual learning environment
Financial Support offer to be extended to all levels of study (full and part time)	Reduced Withdrawal Due to Financial Stress More students securing financial aid before critical points in the year. Increased awareness of available Funding options. Improved Engagement Greater opportunity to participate in course related events that required financial contribution.	Empirical (type 2) (as continuing activity and evidence will be available)	From year 2 of APP cycle. Findings will be placed on an appropriate part of our website, and for students within an accessible part of the virtual learning environment
HE Skills Workshops – Online Event	Improved Study Readiness Higher Continuation & Success Easing of Confidence, Stress & Mental Health Barriers Reduced stress levels contributing to improved attendance and performance	Narrative (type 1) at outset and Empirical (type 2) upon availability of evidence of, for example, engagement by students and staff	From year 2 of APP cycle. Findings will be placed on an appropriate part of our website, and for students within an accessible part of the virtual learning environment
Exploration of Flexible Study Options – Virtual & Blended Learning Pilot	Successful pilot leads to wider adoption across HE courses Increased Continuation & Completion Greater Accessibility for Non-Traditional Students Long-Term Expansion of Virtual Learning	Narrative (type 1) at outset and Empirical (type 2) upon availability of evidence of, for example, engagement by students and staff (likely at latter stage of APP cycle)	Latter stages of APP cycle. Findings will be placed on an appropriate part of our website, and for students within an accessible part of the virtual learning environment

Intervention strategy 3: Promoting Success for Part Time Students from Economically Deprived Communities to Complete [their studies]

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
Raising awareness and increasing engagement of PART TIME students with the support services offered [also to full time students]	<p>Increased Uptake of Academic & Financial Support Services</p> <p>Improved Academic Confidence & Performance</p> <p>Easing of Academic Anxiety & Stress</p> <p>Reduced stress linked to uncertainty around assessments and expectations</p>	Narrative (type 1) at outset and Empirical (type 2) (as continuing activity and evidence will be available)	<p>From year 2 of APP cycle.</p> <p>Findings will be placed on an appropriate part of our website, and for students within an accessible part of the virtual learning environment</p>
Exploration of Flexible Study and Academic Support Options – Virtual & Blended Learning Pilot	<p>Successful pilot leads to wider adoption across HE courses</p> <p>Increased Continuation & Completion</p> <p>Greater Accessibility for Non-Traditional Students</p> <p>Long-Term Expansion of Virtual Learning</p>	Narrative (type 1) at outset and Empirical (type 2) upon availability of evidence of, for example, engagement by students and staff (likely at latter stage of APP cycle)	<p>Latter stages of APP cycle.</p> <p>Findings will be placed on an appropriate part of our website, and for students within an accessible part of the virtual learning environment</p>

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This document is called the Investment Summary and comprises Tables 6b and 6d. It is about how Trafford and Stockport College Group plans to invest money between the years 2026 and 2030. The goal is to support students in accessing education, help them stay on their courses, provide financial support, and fund research.

For Access and Participation Activities: Every year, the college will spend about twenty-four thousand pounds on activities that help students access and participate in education. This amount stays the same each year.

In terms of overall investment: The college will invest in three main areas:

1. Access and Participation Activities – This starts at one point one million pounds in 2026, and rises slightly to one point two million pounds by 2030.
2. Financial Support for Students – This includes bursaries and other help. It also starts at one point one million pounds in 2026, and increases to one point two million pounds by 2030.
3. Research and Evaluation – This is a smaller amount, about twenty-four thousand pounds each year, and it stays the same.

So in terms of total planned investment, each year, the college expects to spend around two point three million pounds in 2026, rising to two point four million pounds by 2030.

The Targets section of the Fees, investments and targets summary sets out the college's targets for improving access, success, and progression for students over the next four years.

Table 5b refers to Access and Attainment Targets which focuses on improving access for full-time students from communities with lower levels of participation in higher education. The college is tracking underrepresentation by area, using something called TUNDRA, which divides areas into quintiles. The goal is to close the gap between students from the most underrepresented areas, called TUNDRA quintile 1, and those from the least underrepresented areas, quintile 5. As at the baseline year 2022-23, the gap is 12.8 percentage points. The plan is to reduce this gap gradually over four years: Down to 9.6 points in 2026-27, 6.4 points in 2027-28, 3.2 points in 2028-29, and finally zero by 2029-30.

This means by 2030, the college aims to completely remove the access gap for full-time students from these communities.

Table 5d relates to Success Targets. There are two main success targets: The first is to Improve Continuation Rates for Students from Deprived Areas. This target focuses on students from areas with high deprivation. The goal is to reduce the gap in continuation rates between these students and others. In 2018-19, the gap was 21.1

percentage points. The college plans to reduce this gap to 18.6 points in 2026-27, 15.7 points in 2027-28, 12.9 points in 2028-29 and 10 points by 2029-30.

The second success target is to promote success for part-time students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This target also relates to students from deprived areas. The aim is to reduce the gap in completion rates for these students by more than half during the plan period. The baseline gap is 21.1 percentage points, and the milestones match the same reductions as the first target: down to 18.6, then 15.7, then 12.9, and finally 10 points by 2029-30.