

APP (Access and Participation Plan) Jargon buster

This guide runs you through key terms used throughout access, widening participation and student success agendas. Please contact Anne-Marie Henderson (Director of Student Success and Engagement), if you would like to discuss these agendas further.

Before you delve into the details of the guide, here are some handy links to skip ahead.

- OFS information: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/>
- OFS Access and Participation Plans: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/access-and-participation-plans/>
- Reading Access and Participation Plans: <https://www.reading.ac.uk/ready-to-study/study/student-access-participation-plans.aspx>
- OFS A_Z: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/access-and-participation-glossary/>

A

Access and Participation Plan (APP)

Access and participation plans are produced by higher education providers and approved by the [Office for Students](#) (OfS). They set out how providers will sustain or improve equality of opportunity for students. The OfS provides clear and helpful guidance [on access and participation plans](#).

An approved APP is a condition of registration with the Office for Students and allows providers to charge fees above the basic level. From 2020 onwards, APPs will be reviewed every three to five years. See [Reading Access and Participation plans](#) for more information about the University's APP agendas.

APP targets

[Ambitious and long-term targets](#) set by individual institutions and approved by the OfS to reduce and ultimately eliminate four inequality gaps

- The gap in entry rates at higher tariff providers between the most and least represented groups
- The gap in non-continuation between the most and least represented groups
- The gap in degree outcomes between white and black students
- The gap in degree outcomes between disabled and non-disabled students

All universities and colleges set out their plans in accordance to the four sector-wide targets and [key performance measures](#) outlined by the OfS, to address gaps in equality in their own institution and to capture the impact and progress of their work. See [Reading Access and Participation plans](#) for more about the University's APP targets. The first plans will be in force from 2020-2021. Each year, all institutions need to submit and publish an impact report on the outcomes they have achieved including progress towards their target and commitments.

Access

It typically refers to activities and programmes of targeted outreach with schools, colleges and employers to ensure underrepresented groups have equal and equitable opportunities to enter higher education.

Attainment

Attainment refers to the higher education outcomes achieved by students, such as the classes of degree awarded.

Attainment gaps

The differences in degree outcomes (firsts or 2:1s) between underrepresented groups and their peers.

B

BAME

BAME stands for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and has evolved as an umbrella term to refer to all ethnicities except White ethnic groups in the UK, including Arab, Asian (Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani and other Asian backgrounds) and Mix Heritage (White & Asian, White & Black African, White & Black Caribbean and other Mixed racial backgrounds). It is widely recognised and used to identify discrepancies in access, success and progression between different ethnic groups. The limitation of this definition tends to result in the assumption that minority ethnic students are a homogenous group.

C

Carers

Young people aged 14-25 care, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support.

Care leaver

It broadly refers to any adult who has spent time in care as a child (i.e. under the age of 18) as defined by [the Care Leavers Association](#). The [focus of the University](#) is on full-time home undergraduate students aged under 25 years old who has been in local authority care since they were 14 years old. Additional support is provided for this cohort once they are at the University. The OfS publishes [information, evidence and resources](#) for this cohort.

Care Experienced

Any child and young people who has been or is currently in care or from a looked after background at any stage of their life, no matter how short, including adopted children who were previously looked after.

[At the University](#) care experienced students are defined as those home full-time undergraduates under 25 years old who have been in Local Authority care for 3 months since the age of 14. A comprehensive support package for this cohort is available at the University.

Contextual admissions

An undergraduate admission offer made on the basis of additional information through contextual factors to provide context for individual applicants' applications and educational achievement.

Universities and colleges use contextualised admissions differently and must be transparent about their reasons for doing so. At the University as indicated at the [course application](#), from 2019 onwards, a student will be flagged if they meet of one of the following contextual information:

- Live in an area with low participation in higher education (defined as POLAR quintiles 1&2)
- Live in an area with high levels of deprivation (defined as IMD quintiles 1&2)

- Have declared a disability on their UCAS form
- Have participated in our Reading Scholars programme

Continuation

Continuation refers to the students who are progressing into their following year of study at the same institution, or continued their studies but at a different institution, or received a higher education qualification. The OfS publishes [continuation patterns of undergraduates](#) over the past years. This allows institutions to monitor and compare their continuation rates at the sector level.

D

Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs)

Disabled Students' Allowances are government grants available to UK students who experience extra costs because of a disability. Please note that not all students recorded as known to have a disability will receive DSAs. See the government's guide to [DSAs](#).

E

Estranged students

A group of young adults aged 18-24 who have unstable, minimal or no contact with their parents and /or lack the support of their wider family networks. The OfS offers [evidence and key factors](#) of this group. See the [Essentials](#) for the support available for this cohort at the University.

Ethnicity

The social group a person belongs to, and either identifies with or is identified with by others, as a result of a mix of cultural and other factors including language, diet, religion, ancestry and physical features traditionally associated with race. Ethnicity is a subjective decision as to which category a person places themselves in and therefore does not infer any physical and social characteristics such as religion, country of origin etc. The HESA publishes [details of the HE student ethnicity record over past years](#) where institutions' ethnicity categories of students are based.

H

Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT)

[HEAT](#) is a national database system to keep a record of the young people who have taken part in outreach activities. HEAT track is non-profit making service and it is founded, governed and funded by members through subscription. It allows members to monitor and evaluate longer-term impacts of their outreach activities on assisting students progression into higher education.

I

English IMD (Index of Multiple Deprivation)

The [English Index of Multiple Deprivation](#), unlike POLAR which is a UK wide measure, relates only to England. It is calculated from a combination of seven domains to classify areas in England by level of deprivation:

- Income deprivation
- Employment (i.e. those excluded from work by unemployment, ill health, family circumstances)
- Health and disability

- Education, skills and training (this is divided into 2 sub-domains- lack of attainment among children and young people, and lack of skills qualifications among the adult population)
- Barriers to housing and services
- Living environment (based on quality of housing stock and environmental quality), and
- Crime

It is presented as five quintiles, where quintile 1 contains the most deprived 20 per cent of the English population, and quintile 5 the least deprived 20 per cent. See the [infographic](#) for expanded information.

Intersections of characteristics

It means bringing several different factors together into consideration to better understand inequalities. These factors include among others: gender, race, disability, age, class and religion. For example, disabled mature students, focusing on the inequality experience of the students at the 'intersection' of disability and age.

K

Key Performance Measures (KPMs)

The metrics set out by and for the OfS to achieve and against which to make evaluative judgements of its performance, working with students, providers and others. These [KPMs](#) reflect OfS's aim to eliminate four equality gaps over time.

M

Mature students

Home undergraduate students who are aged 21 or over, at the start of their course, are defined as mature students. Postgraduate students are defined as mature when they begin their programme of study aged 25 or over.

N

NCOP

The National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP), now known as Uni connect, is an OfS funded project which aims to increase the progression of young people from disadvantage backgrounds to higher education.

Non-continuation

Students who start their course in a particular year are leaving their provider early without completing their studies. The [HESA](#) publishes the non-continuation rates of undergraduate entrants, alongside other two [UK performance indicators](#) (widening participation in higher education and graduate outcomes) annually. These datasets are useful to monitor the sector and institutional performance and to inform strategic decisions against priority areas.

O

Outreach

Outreach refers to programmes or activities are designed to raise awareness, aspirations and attainment, working with schools to help underrepresented groups to apply to higher education.

P

POLAR (Participation of Local Areas)

POLAR is a classification based on rates of young participation in higher education aged 18 or 19 across the UK. The classification organises students into one of five quintiles on the basis of their home postcode, where each quintile represents 20 per cent of the UK young cohort. The quintiles are ordered from quintile 1 (those areas with the lowest rate of participation) to quintile 5 (those areas with the highest rate of participation).

There have been several iterations of POLAR over the years. POLAR4 is the most recent iteration of POLAR. It is used by providers for targeting outreach on schools in quintile1 and for evaluating institutional performance in terms of actual recruitment. The OfS provides more information on [POLAR4 classification](#).

Broadly speaking, POLAR and IMD, alongside the individual level of characteristics (e.g. National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NSSEC), free school meals (FSM), Higher Education Heritage) are commonly used indicators to identify disadvantaged groups.

Progression

The term typically refers to progression into employment following graduation, including highly skilled employment and higher further study. Universities are required to report on their success in getting students into good employment once they have completed their studies, particularly improving the progression rates from underrepresented groups and closing the progression gaps between widening participation students and other students.

Protected characteristics

The characteristics include the following:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

It is unlawful to discriminate against someone because of a protected characteristic. The [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) offers further details about protected characteristics.

S

Student lifecycle

The stages that a student's progression through their higher education journey- access to higher education, success during higher education and progression from higher education. The term can be better understood by referring to [Reading Access and Participation Plans](#).

Success

Students success in higher education is traditionally defined as year-over-year retention with a 3- or 4-year degree programme. It is part of the whole student lifecycle and addresses the barriers that prevent students from continuing and therefore succeeding in higher education.

In APP, the measures for Success typically include non-continuation rates, retention rates and attainment gaps from underrepresented groups.

T

Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF)

A scheme for assessing, recognising and rewarding high-quality teaching at universities and colleges, as well as student outcomes in terms of graduate-level employment or further study. Universities are awarded a rating of Gold, Silver or Bronze based on a basket of factors such as student satisfaction, retention rates and employment outcomes. It provides information to help prospective students choose where to study. See the [OfS guide to the TEF](#) for further details.

U

Underrepresented students

Groups of students who often make up only a small proportion of the student population in higher education. The current [OfS advice](#) on who is belonging to underrepresented groups is as follows:

- students from areas of low higher education participation, low household income or low socioeconomic status
- some black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students
- mature students
- disabled students
- care leavers
- carers
- people estranged from their families
- people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- refugees
- children from military families.

Unexplained gaps

Some of the factors that contribute to the non-continuation and attainment gaps are structural, such as entry qualification, subject of study or age of students. However, once such structural factors are taken into account, there remain significant unexplained differences which are referred to as unexplained gaps.

Uni Connect

[Uni Connect](#), formerly the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP), is a nationwide network of universities, colleges and other local partners working in partnership to deliver sustained outreach to young people in areas where higher education participation is unexpected low.

W

Widening participation (WP)

Widening participation to higher education is a key strategy for the social equality agenda. WP traditionally focuses on increasing access to higher education of people from disadvantaged groups.

It evolves towards a holistic focus and typically addresses all stages of student life journey, from pre-entry support for students from underrepresented groups through to successful completion and entry into next phase of work or education.

Higher education institutions rely quite heavily on [the national widening participation performance indicators](#) provided by Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) to determine and benchmark their performance and make valuable sector level comparisons.

Widening participation students are those students who are under-represented in higher education because they are subject to various forms of disadvantage. The OfS offers a set of [criteria for this cohort](#).

Whole provider approach

A whole provider approach requires alignment and consistency across the institution to create an inclusive approach which all students benefit from, irrespective of their position in the provider.