

# Plymouth Marjon University

## Access and Participation Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29

### 1. Introduction and Strategic Aim

Plymouth Marjon University is a widening participation university through and through. Our mission is to end inequity through life-changing teaching, learning, research and knowledge exchange. The success of students from all backgrounds is our first institutional priority. This is achieved through an exceptional focus on high quality teaching and student experience, which means we are ranked Gold in the Teaching Excellence Framework for Student Experience and Silver for Graduate Outcomes, and Gold overall.

The University was founded over 1839-41, as two radically progressive institutions. Our founders saw the societal problem of entrenched poverty and acted to change it, founding colleges to offer disadvantaged young people a full, enriching education, to train them to be teachers, and thus to break the cycle of poverty. They were ridiculed for their goals: James Kay-Shuttleworth, the founder of St John's College, wrote in his autobiography, *"To teach a pauper child to write was regarded ... as not simply preposterous but dangerous"*. (Bloomfield, 1961.) Rev. Derwent Coleridge, who founded St Mark's College, responded to the outrage with a mock apology for the College's *"inconvenient excellence"* in training up those less disadvantaged, vowing never to teach 'down', only 'up'. (Coleridge, 1862.)

St John's College in Battersea, and St Mark's College in Chelsea merged in 1923, and in 1973 moved to Plymouth. The campus sits in an area of high social deprivation, with most of Plymouth being in the lowest quintile of higher education participation (see Annex 1) and the South West being the second-lowest rate in England of 18-year old progression to higher education. At all school levels, Devon and Cornwall have higher than national average attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.

The University has around 3500 students, with around 55% of these studying on our Plymouth campus and the rest being in partner institutions. Around 80% of our students are undergraduates and 20% postgraduates. Our Apprenticeships at both undergraduate and postgraduate level are growing quickly.

We are a locally-focused institution, with the vast majority of our students from the South West, and few international students. We prioritise local workforce needs and aspirations, with our focus on public services, professional and community sectors, and with most of our students studying within teaching and education, sport, or health and wellbeing. We work strategically with partners and employers such as schools, MATs, professional sports teams, the NHS and the police service to develop and deliver these programmes, to offer placements and excellent graduate employment prospects: the national Graduate Outcomes survey shows that Marjon graduates have a higher proportion of positive graduate outcomes (97% in activities which are not unemployment compared to 94% nationally) and significantly more likely than national graduates to find their current activity is meaningful (52% strongly agree vs 42% national HEPIs).

We are hugely proud to work with our students who come from a wide range of backgrounds which are under-represented in higher education. We consistently welcome far higher proportions (than national average) of mature students, disabled students, and students who are from more disadvantaged postcodes, less likely to move into higher education and we are proud that we offer them an excellent education.

We consistently rank in the Top 10 in the country in the National Student Survey, associated league tables, and other student surveys such as the WhatUni Student Choice Awards, for elements such as student support, teaching and learning, student experience and graduate prospects. Assessment and Feedback, Academic Support and Student Voice are rated as materially above benchmark in the Teaching Excellence Framework (Office for Students, 2022a).

185 years after our founding, that spirit of “inconvenient excellence” still drives us. **Our Values**, redeveloped in 2016-17 from a 1983 university prayer, reflect these themes, stating “*We encourage potential and possibility*”; “*We empower people to be the best they can be*”; “*We are student-centred, making a difference to individuals and society*”. 96% of our staff agree “*I understand the University’s Values*” (Plymouth Marjon University Staff Survey, 2022). They are one of the most important reasons for choosing to work at Marjon, and are included in every interview for new members of staff.

**Our over-arching strategic aim with respect to equality of opportunity** is encapsulated in our Mission, to end social inequity through life-changing teaching, learning, research and knowledge exchange, and detailed in the Marjon 2030 Strategic Plan, to be published in Autumn 2024.

**Our Vision**, described in our new Strategic Plan, Marjon 2030, which will be published in Autumn 2024, states: “*Our vision is to be a beacon of opportunity and possibility, a generous, thoughtful and ethical partner of choice, and a role model for sustainable living and working, accessible and relevant for the people of Plymouth, the region and beyond.*”

## 2. Risks to Equality of Opportunity

This section describes the risks our students face in reaching their goals: their risks to equality of opportunity. We use the Office for Students definitions: *A **risk to equality of opportunity** occurs when the actions or inactions of an individual, organisation or system may reduce another individual’s choices about the nature and direction of their life. An **indication of risk** refers to the way in which a risk might impact a student group in a manner that is visible in data.*

In order to identify these risks, we first reviewed our data, which identified 29 key risk indicators. The data review is summarised in Annex 1, and is built from data sources including dashboards from the Office for Students: the [Access and Participation Data Dashboard](#) (Office for Students, 2023), the [Student Outcomes Data Dashboard](#) (Office for Students, 2022b), the [TEF data dashboard](#), (Office for Students, 2022), [Graduate Outcomes data](#) (HESA, 2024), the National Student Survey, (Office for Students, 2024); internal Marjon Student Experience Survey; data on usage of services; service feedback; UCAS data including the Student Decision Survey for the last three years; local employment data including strategic analysis from the LEP and Plymouth

City Council, health data including on mental health from the NHS. Data was disaggregated where that was possible and in most cases was aggregated to give four-year or two-year averages. These were enhanced by qualitative discussions with expert staff, and students with lived experience, and a call for open comments from students.

### **Summary of assessment of performance**

The 29 key risk indicators from the data review described are data points that imply a particular group may have a risk to their equality of opportunity. To prioritise the most pressing risks for students, we ran six workshop groups in which students and staff aimed to identify the key risks. They discussed and scored the 12 key risks from the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register: how they manifest, what it feels like for students, how **likely** they are for our population, and the severity of the **impact** if they manifest. The resulting risk assessments (x 6) were scored and prioritised in a risk assessment matrix (see Annex 1, page 18).

Plymouth Marjon University is a small university, and we could not tackle all 29 key risk indicators, or the risks behind them. Stage 2 of our approach then involved working in groups set by life stage to prioritise and build understanding of the most critical data indicators to tackle, as well as understanding the key underlying risks. We recognise that with small data sets statistical uncertainty will be present. We therefore also considered that we need to focus on data which backs up the lived experiences of large numbers of students and are evidently ongoing core issues for students. These included:

- For students from backgrounds of higher deprivation, gaps in access, and in continuation, completion, attainment and graduate outcomes.
- A gap in attainment for students with cognitive and learning difficulties.
- A gap in graduate outcomes for students with multiple impairments.

In the discussions, when comparing the risk indicators to the risks that might cause them, the risks for students tended to be grouped into themes and scored together. The themes were:

- **Risk Theme 1: Cost pressures:** Personal finance is a significant barrier to a student's success.
- **Risk Theme 2: Pre-university or outside university support and transition:** students may have background experiences which bring additional barriers to success.
- **Risk Theme 3: Belonging, mental health and personal support:** students may struggle to connect with peers or academics due to feelings of belonging, their mental health or stretched resources.
- **Risk Theme 4: Curriculum Design and offer:** courses may not be designed to suit students with more complex lives.

Below is a summary of each Risk Theme, but in Annex A, each risk theme is explained in detail, along with the range of indicators which are evidencing the risk and the groups which these risks are most likely to impact.

Following this work on Risk Themes, the risk indicators and underlying Risk Themes were used to inform the intervention strategies, alongside a detailed review of sector evidence.

The summary of the assessment of performance is available in Annex A.

Risk category	Risk Description and how this manifests	Equality of Opportunity Risk Register
<p><b>Risk Theme 1: Cost pressures:</b> Personal finance is a significant barrier to a student's success.</p>	<p><b>Student groups who are most affected at Marjon:</b> First in family, Students from low-income households, Disabled students, Mature students, Commuter students, Service children, Care experienced students, Estranged students, Students with parental responsibility, All ethnic groups, All religions, All sexual orientations and genders, young carers.</p>	<p><b>Risk 10</b> Cost pressures</p>
<p><b>Risk theme 2: Pre-university or outside university support and transition:</b> students may have background experiences which bring additional barriers to success</p>	<p><b>Student groups who are most affected at Marjon:</b> First in family, Students from low income households, Disabled students, Mature students, Service children, Care experienced students.</p>	<p><b>Risk 1</b> Knowledge and Skills  <b>Risk 2</b> Information and Guidance  <b>Risk 3</b> Perception of Higher Education  <b>Risk 4</b> Application Success Rate  <b>Risk 5</b> Limited Choice of course type and delivery mode  <b>Risk 9</b> Ongoing impact of coronavirus</p>
<p><b>Risk theme 3: Belonging, mental health and personal support:</b> students may struggle to connect with peers or academics due to feelings of belonging, their mental health or stretched resources</p>	<p><b>Student groups who are most affected at Marjon:</b> Students from low-income households, Disabled students, Mature students, Commuter students, Black, Asian, Mixed or other ethnicities</p>	<p><b>Risk 6</b> Insufficient academic support  <b>Risk 7</b> Insufficient personal support  <b>Risk 8</b> Mental Health  <b>Risk 9</b> Ongoing impacts of coronavirus  <b>Risk 12</b> Progression from Higher Education</p>
<p><b>Risk theme 4: Curriculum Design and offer:</b> courses may not be designed to suit students with more complex lives</p>	<p><b>Student groups who are most affected at Marjon:</b> First in family, Students from low-income households, Disabled students, Mature students, Care experienced students, Carers, Parents</p>	<p><b>Risk 5</b> Limited Choice of course type and delivery mode  <b>Risk 10</b> Cost pressures</p>

### 3. Strategic Objectives

We have set strategic objectives based on the most significant indicators of risk at a provider level, directly informed by the data and refined through extensive consultation. These are summarised here, with targets. The indicators of risk and the risks they are based on are mapped in the next section, Strategic Interventions.

Objective	Target(s)
<p><b>Objective 1:</b> Plymouth Marjon University will increase the proportion of entrants from IMD Quintile 1 in each year of the plan until it equals the proportion of IMD quintile 5 entrants, by supporting schools to improve attainment at Level 2 and by delivering tailored Information, Advice and Guidance, through making it easier to earn and learn, and through reducing the impact of income as a barrier to application or attendance.</p>	<p><b>Target PTA_1</b> To increase the proportion of students entering Marjon from IMD quintile 1 to 15% by the end of the plan.</p>
<p><b>Objective 2:</b> Plymouth Marjon University will close gaps in completion rates by 2030 for students from most deprived and least deprived areas, which have accelerated or emerged during the cost of living crisis, through a new curriculum framework, better mental health and financial support, better use of data to intervene, and a timetable which enables students to earn and learn.</p>	<p><b>Target PTS_1:</b> To close the gap in completion rates between students from most deprived and least deprived areas to 0pp by end of the plan. (Risk indicator 9)</p> <p><b>Target PTS_2:</b> To close the persistent gap in completion, averaging 11pp over four years, between male students from more deprived areas (as measured by Index of Multiple Deprivation) and female students from more deprived areas. (Risk indicator 10)</p>
<p><b>Objective 3:</b> Plymouth Marjon University will close gaps in attainment by 2030 for students from lower household incomes and students with cognitive and learning differences, through embedding skills in the curriculum, through better use of data and through more inclusive assessment and teaching.</p>	<p><b>Target PTS_3:</b> To close the attainment gap for students from the most disadvantaged background (IMD Quintile 1) compared to Quintile 5 to 0pp by end of the plan.</p> <p><b>Target PTS_4:</b> To close the attainment gap for students with a declared cognitive and learning difficulty compared to no disability declared to 0pp by end of the plan.</p>
<p><b>Objective 4:</b> Plymouth Marjon University will close the gaps in graduate outcomes by 2030 for students who experience disadvantage in the graduate employment market, namely students from lower income households and students with multiple impairments, through developing information and guidance, embedding graduate skills in the curriculum and working closely with employers.</p>	<p><b>Target PTP_1:</b> To close the gap in graduate outcomes for students from disadvantaged backgrounds measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation.</p> <p><b>Target PTP_2:</b> To close the graduate outcomes gap for disabled students with multiple impairments compared to no disability declared.</p>

#### 4. Intervention Strategies and expected outcomes

Intervention strategy title	<b>1. ACCESS</b>
Key Risk Indicators	The proportion and number of students from the most deprived areas (as measured by Index of Multiple Deprivation) has reduced over the last four years, against the sector trend. In 2021, 12.2% of entrants came from IMD Q1 compared to 15.3% in 2017, and compared to Q5 students at 17.2% of intake in 2021. See Annex 1 page 4 for more detail.
Risks to equality of opportunity	<p><b>Risk Theme 1: Cost pressures:</b> Personal finance is a significant barrier to a student’s success. Students from lower socio-economic groups may be unable to access university engagement opportunities due to financial scarcity, obligations linked to work and caring responsibilities, and mental health challenges. <i>(EORR linked risks: cost pressures, information and guidance, insufficient personal support, insufficient academic support, perception of HE, mental health, ongoing impact of coronavirus)</i></p> <p><b>Risk Theme 2: Pre-university or outside university support and transition:</b> students may have background experiences which bring additional barriers to success. Students from lower socio-economic groups, including those eligible for free school meals, are likely to attain at a lower level than their more advantaged peers, creating negative effects on future progression to higher education.<sup>1</sup> (Rapid Evidence Review, Office for Students, 2022). <i>(EORR linked risks: cost pressures, information and guidance, insufficient personal support, insufficient academic support, perception of HE, mental health, ongoing impact of coronavirus)</i></p> <p><b>Risk Theme 4: Curriculum Design and offer:</b> courses may not be designed to suit students with more complex lives. Limited choice related to course type and delivery mode may negatively impact on students from lower socio-economic groups due to the added complexities of work, caring responsibilities and insufficient wider support. <i>(EORR linked risks: Limited choice of course type and delivery mode, Progression from higher education)</i></p>
Objective(s)	<b>Objective 1:</b> Plymouth Marjon University will increase the proportion of entrants from IMD Quintile 1 in each year of the plan until it equals the proportion of IMD quintile 5 entrants, through working with schools to address risks to knowledge about HE and attainment, through making it easier to earn and learn, and through reducing the impact of income as a barrier to application or attendance.
Targets	<b>Target PTA_1:</b> To increase the proportion of students entering Marjon from IMD quintile 1 to 15% by the end of the plan.

Related objectives and targets	Objectives 2, 3, and 4 all relate to IMD Q1 students. Targets PTS_1, PTS_2, PTS_3, and PTP_1 all relate to IMD Q1 students.
Investment	<b>£2.497m</b> across the course of the Plan

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
1. Supporting attainment-raising among students from lower socio-economic groups	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Delivery of national curriculum-aligned activities designed to support attainment-raising among students in key stages 2 to 5 and among mature learners at Level 3. Activities to include, but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children’s University activities at key stage 2</li> <li>• FutureMe activities at key stage 3</li> <li>• Marjon Endeavour (Easter Revision School) at key stage 4</li> <li>• Subject specific interventions at key stage 5</li> <li>• (All existing)</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Provide national curriculum-aligned activities to students following pathways in subjects allied to sport and exercise sciences in our capacity as a new BASES (British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences) Outreach Hub. (New)</li> <li>3. Continue to work in partnership with Next Steps South West (Uni Connect) to deliver pre-16 attainment-raising activities in local schools. (Existing)</li> <li>4. Support school governorship within Plymouth through partnering with Governors for Schools (New)</li> </ol>	<p>Staff: <b>£422K</b> over course of the plan, from Outreach and Student Recruitment team and academic time to support attainment-raising.</p> <p>Non Staff expenditure: <b>£96K</b> over course of the plan</p>	<p>Increased meta-cognition, confidence and university expectations and knowledge.</p> <p>Improvement in grades pre and post activity.</p> <p>Increased enrols within sport pathways directly through the BASES Outreach Hub.</p>	No
2. Information, Advice and Guidance for prospective students, parents, teachers and	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a new Marjon Teacher Alumni network to provide information, advice and guidance to pre- and post-16 students. (New)</li> <li>2. Develop an Ambassadors into Schools programme, to provide inspirational information, advice and guidance through Marjon students and alumni within their former schools and colleges. (New)</li> <li>3. Deliver a Year 12 Summer School to provide HE-transition support. (Existing)</li> <li>4. Continue to develop accessible information, advice, guidance and campaigns</li> </ol>	<p>Staff: <b>£597K</b> over course of the plan, from Outreach and Student Recruitment team and academic time to support.</p>	<p>Increased awareness of through-routes to university from influencers.</p> <p>Increased</p>	No

influencers	<p>targeted at parents and carers (Existing)</p> <p>5. Continued partnership with the Western Vocational Progression Consortium (WVPC) to support the delivery of Career Pilot and Life Pilot to under-privileged students in the South West region. (Existing)</p> <p>6. To continue to work in collaboration with the Devon Virtual Schools to provide dedicated Information, advice and guidance to care-experienced young people. (Existing)</p> <p>7. Work with specific communities within Plymouth such as BAME communities, refugee communities and the Job Centre. (Existing)</p> <p>8. Deliver continuing professional development for advisors through an annual HE Advisors' Conference. (Existing)</p> <p>9. Support regional higher skills needs through offering accessible continuing professional development opportunities. (Existing)</p> <p>10. Continue to share financial information, (e.g. NHS bursary support, and apprenticeship options) with schools and employers. (Existing)</p> <p>11. Through our Marjon 2030 strategy, use strategic partnerships to change the narrative around HE and ensure that "skills development" is seen as higher level as well as levels 2-3, through PCC, Skills Board, Chamber of Commerce, Job Centre partnerships. (Existing)</p>	Non Staff expenditure: <b>£268K</b> over course of the plan	applications from students who apply from lower income households.	
3. Expanding and promoting diverse and flexible pathways and provision	<p>1. Increase apprenticeships, part-time and flexible courses to enable more students to earn and learn. Review Foundation Year possibilities. Work with local employers and FE providers, including partnerships with the Skills Board, LEP and Chamber of Commerce, to develop new programmes which result in professional work and meet skills needs, including CPD opportunities for people in work to access HE. (Existing)</p> <p>2. Ensure a through-route for students from FdA to PhD level. (New)</p> <p>3. Develop contextual offers for all levels. (New)</p>	80% of activity costs allocated here: Staff: <b>£854K</b> over course of the plan, to develop new programmes and apprenticeships. Non-Staff expenditure: <b>£173K</b> over course of the plan for marketing new courses.	Pathways from Foundation level to PhD in all specialisms. Graduate outcome gaps close. Increase in % of students in graduate-level work.	Yes, with IS4
4. Financial support	Described in Intervention Strategy 2, activity 4. (p.12)	10% of activity costs of IS2, activity 4. <b>£11K</b>	Increase in enrols from IMDQ1	Yes, with IS2, IS3, and IS4.

		staff, <b>£76K</b> non staff expenditure over course of plan		
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All activity in this strategy has been developed based on evidence-based assumptions and uses sector evidence alongside consideration of our internal context and data. The evidence and background to these intervention strategies can be found in Annex B. Each Intervention Strategy either has a Theory of Change or it is in development. Evaluation will include process and outcome evaluation using pre/post comparison, surveys or focus groups with an annual impact report to summarise findings published on our dedicated Access and Participation Plan webpage. Some activities will be evaluated and published separately, namely those around our Curriculum Framework.

## Evaluation of Intervention Strategy 1: Access

	Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
1	Supporting attainment raising	Increased meta-cognition, confidence and university expectations and knowledge. Improvement in grades pre and post activity. Increased enrols within sport pathways directly through the BASES Outreach Hub.	Pre and post event feedback, confidence and attainment, application, offer and enrol rates to higher education from summer school, Easter Revision School and Scholars. (Type 1 and 2)	Annually in impact report from January 2027
2	Information Advice and Guidance pre-entry	Increased awareness of through-routes to university from influencers. Increased applications from students who apply from lower income households.	HEAT tracker OfS dashboard (Type 1 and 2)	Annually in impact report from January 2027
3	Expanding diverse pathways	Pathways from Foundation level to PhD in all specialisms. Graduate outcome gaps close. Increase in proportion of graduates in graduate-level work	Graduate outcomes on new programmes and apprenticeships compared to university average (Type 1 and 2)	Annually in impact report from January 2027

Intervention strategy title	<b>2. SUCCESS – CONTINUATION AND COMPLETION</b>
Key Risk Indicators	<p>There is a persistent gap in completion, averaging 13.2pp over four years, between students from most deprived and least deprived areas, as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation.</p> <p>There is a persistent gap in completion, averaging 11pp over four years, between males from more deprived areas and females from more deprived areas, as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation. See Annex 1 page 4 for more detail.</p>
Risks to equality of opportunity	<p><b>Risk Theme 1: Cost pressures:</b> Personal finance is a significant barrier to a student’s success. Students need to spend more time in paid work and thus have less time to spend on studies: <i>(EORR risks: Cost pressures, mental health, insufficient personal support (particularly financial), choice of course type and delivery mode.)</i></p> <p><b>Risk Theme 2: Pre-university or outside university support and transition:</b> students may have background experiences which bring additional barriers to success. Students enter higher education less prepared. <i>(EORR risks: Ongoing impact of coronavirus (both on attainment and social skills/ confidence).)</i></p> <p><b>Risk Theme 3: Belonging, mental health and personal support:</b> students may struggle to connect with peers or academics due to feelings of belonging, their mental health or stretched resources. Students have a less enriching higher education experience due to having less extra-curricular free time and feel they belong less. <i>(EORR risks: Information and guidance, Perception of higher education, mental health)</i></p>
Objective(s)	<b>Objective 2:</b> Plymouth Marjon University will close gaps in completion rates by 2030 for students from most deprived and least deprived areas, which have accelerated or emerged during the cost of living crisis, through a new curriculum framework, better mental health and financial support, better use of data to intervene, and a timetable which enables students to earn and learn.
Targets	<p><b>Target PTS_1:</b> To close the gap in completion rates between students from most deprived and least deprived areas to 0pp by end of the plan. (Risk indicator 9)</p> <p><b>Target PTS_2:</b> To close the persistent gap in completion, averaging 11pp over four years, between male students from more deprived areas (as measured by Index of Multiple Deprivation) and female students from more deprived areas. (Risk indicator 10)</p>
Related objectives and	<p>Objectives 1, 3, and 4 all relate to IMD Q1 students.</p> <p>Targets PTA_1, PTS_3, and PTP_1 all relate to IMD Q1 students.</p>

targets	
Investment	<b>£1.646m</b> across the course of the Plan

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
1. Curriculum framework	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Transition pedagogy: implement transition pedagogy guidelines to support students through their journey, including a first year immersive experience.</li> <li>2. Learning Design: implement principles of learning design as programmes are validated, which include block scheduling, and engaging, high-impact educational experiences.</li> </ol>	Staff: <b>£226K</b> over course of the plan, from Personal Development Tutor time	Improvement in continuation and completion rates for students from IMD Q1-2, and male students from IMD Q1-2.	Yes, with IS3
2. Digital and Data	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use data to identify risks to continuation, including academic failure, in advance and trial different approaches to intervening to support continuation with individual students. (New)</li> <li>2. Use data to identify macro-level risks to continuation and intervene at course or student group level. (New)</li> <li>3. Introduce new data sharing protocols to improve support for students. (New)</li> </ol>	<p>50% of activity costs allocated here.</p> <p>Staff: <b>£55K</b> over course of the plan, from academic support and professional services systems and process development</p> <p>Non-staff expenditure: <b>£46K</b> estimated in systems.</p>	Improvement in continuation for students from IMD Q1-2 and male students from IMD Q1-2. Reduction in students leaving due to academic failure. Closing of attainment gaps.	Yes, with IS3
3. Mental health	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue to develop our whole university approach to promoting good mental health and supporting mental ill health through:</li> <li>2. Mental Health Working Group with cross-university and student</li> </ol>	Staff: <b>£713K</b> over course of the plan, from professional services including members of	No gap in continuation, completion or progression for	No

	<p>membership (Existing)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Sharing of KPIs and risk management at MHWG and at Governors (Existing)</li> <li>4. Retention and Engagement Action Group to address barriers to retention (Existing)</li> <li>5. Annual Student Wellbeing and Support Survey to understand service levels (Existing)</li> <li>6. Mental Wellbeing Communications Planning Group (New)</li> <li>7. Developing a partnership with the NHS and other Plymouth Universities (New)</li> <li>8. Essentials skills (such as personal organisation training) embedded in the curriculum (New)</li> <li>9. Curriculum Review introducing a wellbeing approach to pedagogy and assessment (New)</li> <li>10. Rolling out considerate communications training and reviewing all standardised pieces of communication (New)</li> </ol>	<p>Mental Health Working Group, Chaplaincy, PDTs, comms, and Student Wellbeing and Support.</p>	<p>students with declared mental ill health.</p> <p>Increased satisfaction with student wellbeing and support services in annual survey.</p> <p>A focus on mental health and wellbeing is evidenced in strategies, policies and decision making.</p>	
4. Financial support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Launch a philanthropic and fundraising campaign to provide funds directly to support students from less advantaged backgrounds. (New)</li> <li>2. Continue to offer food bank <i>Marjon Provides</i> larder, tea and toast, partnership with Devon and Cornwall Food Action, warm spaces, and communal cooking spaces and interview wardrobe to support. (Existing)</li> <li>3. Continue to offer funding or application support (e.g. to Turing) to enable placements, experiences and qualifications to enhance employability. (Existing)</li> <li>4. Redevelop our <i>Wellness Pass</i> offering free physical activity for all students (New)</li> </ol>	<p>70% of financial support costs allocated here.</p> <p>Staff: <b>£76K</b> across course of the plan, from administering funds, Chaplaincy, and philanthropic development</p> <p>Non staff expenditure: <b>£529K</b> over the course of the plan for direct financial support.</p>	<p>Closing of the completion, attainment and graduate outcomes gaps for students from IMD Q1.</p> <p>Increase in enrols from IMD Q1.</p> <p>A reduction in the proportion of students who leave for financial hardship reasons.</p>	Yes, with IS1, IS3, IS4

All activity in this strategy has been developed based on evidence-based assumptions and uses sector evidence alongside consideration of our internal context and data. The evidence and background to these intervention strategies can be found in Annex B. Each Intervention Strategy either has a Theory of Change or it is in development. Evaluation will include process and outcome evaluation using pre/post comparison, surveys or focus groups with an annual impact report to summarise findings published on our dedicated Access and Participation Plan webpage. Some activities will be evaluated and published separately, namely those around our Curriculum Framework.

## Evaluation of Intervention Strategy 2: Success

	Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
1	Curriculum framework: a) transition pedagogy and b) learning design	Increased continuation and completion rates, closing of gaps for students from IMD Q1-2, and male students from IMD Q1-2 vs female students from IMD Q1-2.	Outcome evaluation. (Type 1 and Type 2) Internal retention data; OfS dashboard; cause of withdrawal; and continuation outcomes. Qualitative impact evaluation on interventions including staff, Programme Leads, Timetable, and student perspectives.	In impact report from January 2027. Internal: Shared at Teaching and Learning Conference, at School Days, within TeachTime CPD sessions. External: on website. At conferences and in blogs as appropriate.
2	Digital and data	Improvement in continuation for students from IMD Q1-2 and male students from IMD Q1-2. Reduction in students leaving due to academic failure. Closing of the target attainment gaps.	Process and outcome evaluation. (Type 1 and Type 2) Internal retention data; OfS dashboard; cause of withdrawal; and continuation outcomes. Process evaluation of new processes: review with staff and affected students.	In impact report from January 2027. Annual mental health and wellbeing report to be published on our website and internal communications channels, from Mental Health Working Group.

3	Mental health	No gap in continuation, completion or progression for students with declared mental ill health. Steady +70%) or increasing satisfaction with Student Wellbeing and Support services	Outcome evaluation. (Type 1 and Type 2) OfS data dashboard for closing of gaps. Student Wellbeing and Support annual survey	In impact report from January 2027. Annual mental health and wellbeing report to be published on our website and internal communications channels, through Mental Health Working Group.
4	Financial support	Closing of the completion, attainment and graduate outcomes gaps for students from IMD Q1. Increase in enrolls from IMD Q1. A reduction in the proportion of students who withdraw for financial hardship reasons.	Process and outcome evaluation. (Type 1 and Type 2) OfS financial support toolkit (survey and interview tools) OfS data dashboard for closing of gaps. Internal data and OfS data dashboard for reviewing increases in enrolls. Internal data for reasons for withdrawal.	In impact report from January 2027

### Intervention strategy 3: ATTAINMENT

Intervention strategy title	<b>3. ATTAINMENT</b>
Key Risk Indicators	There is a gap in attainment between students from the most deprived and least deprived backgrounds. See Annex 1 page 4. There is a gap in attainment between students with cognitive and learning difficulties and non-disabled students. See Annex 1 page 7.
Risks to equality of opportunity	<b>Risk Theme 1: Cost pressures:</b> Personal finance is a significant barrier to a student's success. At least 75% of Marjon students have to juggle study and work, and so are less able to focus on attainment. (EORR risks: Cost pressures, Choice of course type and delivery mode, Mental health.)

	<b>Risk Theme 2: Pre-university or outside university support and transition:</b> students may have background experiences which bring additional barriers to success. These risks related to return on investment from study being less clear, with fewer contacts and less guidance to get to higher paid jobs. <i>(EORR risks Progression from Higher Education, Knowledge and skills; Information and guidance; Perception of HE; Insufficient academic support; Insufficient personal support.)</i>
Objective(s)	<b>Objective 3:</b> Plymouth Marjon University will close gaps in attainment by 2030 for students from lower household incomes and students with cognitive and learning differences, through embedding skills in the curriculum, through better use of data and through more inclusive assessment and teaching.
Targets	<b>PTS_3:</b> To close the attainment gap for students from the most disadvantaged background (IMD Quintile 1) compared to Quintile 5 to 0pp by end of the plan. <b>PTS_4:</b> To close the attainment gap for students with a declared cognitive and learning difficulty compared to no disability declared to 0pp by end of the plan.
Related objectives and targets	Objectives 1, 2, and 4 all relate to IMD Q1 students. Targets PTA_1, PTS_1, PTS_2, and PTP_1 all relate to IMD Q1 students. PTP_2 relates to students with multiple disabilities, which may include students with a cognitive and learning difficulty targeted in PTS_4.
Investment	<b>£1.57m</b> across the course of the Plan

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
1. Curriculum framework	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Model of Educational Gain: implement a framework to support the Model of Educational Gain in which students work towards Marjon Attributes through curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities.</li> <li>2. Pedagogic Principles: implement pedagogic principles through our Programme validation processes, through the PG Certificate in Academic Practice, and through CPD and staff training.</li> </ol>	Staff: <b>£1,382K</b> over course of the plan from Programme Leaders embedding curriculum framework into current programmes, and refocused positions of Deans of Student Success with remit to embed	Closing of the gap in attainment for students from IMDQ1 and for students with cognitive and learning differences.	Yes, with IS2 and IS4

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Inclusive Assessment: revise assessment principles to build in broad, flexible and inclusive assessment.</li> <li>4. Peer Assisted Learning: pilot a PAL model for specific target modules to improve attainment.</li> <li>5. Curriculum Connected Research, introducing pedagogical research, and curriculum-based disciplinary research with student involvement</li> </ul>	Curriculum Framework.		
2. Digital, data and technology	See Intervention Strategy 2, Activity 2 (p.11)	50% of costs of IS2 Activity 2 allocated here. Staff: <b>£55K</b> non-staff expenditure: <b>£46K</b> , both over course of plan	See IS2, p.11	Yes, with IS2
3. Financial support	See intervention Strategy 2, Activity 4. (p.12)	10% of activity costs of IS2, Activity 4. Staff: <b>£11K</b> , non-staff expenditure <b>£76K</b> , over course of plan	See IS2, p12	Yes, with IS1, IS2, IS4

All activity in this strategy has been developed based on evidence-based assumptions and uses sector evidence alongside consideration of our internal context and data. The evidence and background to these intervention strategies can be found in Annex B. Each Intervention Strategy either has a Theory of Change or it is in development. Evaluation will include process and outcome evaluation using pre/post comparison, surveys or focus groups with an annual impact report to summarise findings published on our dedicated Access and Participation Plan webpage. Some activities will be evaluated and published separately, namely those around our Curriculum Framework.

### Evaluation of Intervention Strategy 3: Attainment

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
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1	Curriculum framework: 1) MEG, 2) Pedagogic principles; 3) Assessment; 4) Peer Assisted Learning 5) Curriculum Connected Research	Closing of the gaps in attainment for students with cognitive and learning differences and for students from IMD Q1.  Reduction in proportion of students leaving due to academic failure.  Improvement in NSS scores for assessment and feedback	Process and outcome evaluation, Type 1 and Type 2  MEG: Assessment outputs for Marjon Award. (Type 2 evaluation) Level 4 pre-entry survey and end of course survey on Educational Gain. Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), Learning Strategies and Metacognitive Strategies Subscale.  Pedagogic principles: Qualitative research with Programme Leads, PDTs, Registry, Quality, students.  Assessment: Internal data on reasons for leaving. NSS data on assessment and feedback. Process and stakeholder feedback from academic and Quality colleagues.  Peer Assisted Learning: Comparison to prior module results, closing of attainment gaps on module (type 2) Graduate Outcomes data in OfS dashboard by equity group.  Curriculum connected research: Quality of research outputs in REF2028. Process and stakeholder feedback from academic colleagues and students.	In impact report from January 2027.  Internal: Shared at Teaching and Learning Conference, at School Days, within TeachTime CPD sessions.  External: on website and at conferences and in blogs as appropriate.
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## Intervention strategy 4: GRADUATE OUTCOMES

Intervention strategy title	<b>GRADUATE OUTCOMES</b>
Key Risk Indicators	There is a gap in graduate outcomes between students from the most deprived and least deprived backgrounds. (See Annex 1 page 33-35)  There is a gap in graduate outcomes between disabled students with multiple impairments and non-disabled students. (See Annex 1 page 37)
Risks to equality of opportunity	<b>Risk Theme 1: Cost pressures:</b> Personal finance is a significant barrier to a student's success. Students may be unable to attend interviews, or afford interview clothing, do unpaid work experience in the relevant field, or spend time networking. ( <i>EORR risks: Cost pressures, Mental health.</i> )

	<p><b>Risk Theme 2: Pre-university or outside university support and transition:</b> students may have background experiences which bring additional barriers to success. Students from backgrounds of multi-generational poverty may find it harder to get industry contacts, or to find support to apply for more highly skilled jobs. Students may experience discrimination including those with complex disabilities. <i>(EORR risks: Information and Guidance, insufficient personal support, knowledge and skills, Mental Health, perception of higher education, progression from higher education.)</i></p>
Objective(s)	<p><b>Objective 4:</b> Plymouth Marjon University will close the gaps in graduate outcomes by 2030 for students who experience disadvantage in the graduate employment market, namely students from lower income households and students with multiple impairments, through developing information and guidance, embedding graduate skills in the curriculum and working closely with employers.</p>
Targets	<p><b>Target PTP_1:</b> To halve the gap in graduate outcomes for students from disadvantaged backgrounds measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation.</p> <p><b>Target PTP_2:</b> To close the graduate outcomes gap for disabled students with multiple impairments compared to no disability declared.</p>
Related objectives and targets	<p>Objectives 1, 2, and 4 all relate to IMD Q1 students.</p> <p>Targets PTA_1, PTS_1, PTS_2 and PTS_3 all relate to IMD Q1 students.</p>
Investment	<p><b>£0.710m</b> across the course of the Plan</p>

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?
1. Personal and academic support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer graduate skills online via platforms such as LinkedIn Learning. (New)</li> <li>Support students to access the best employers through digital support systems such as</li> </ol>	<p>Staff: <b>£98K</b> over course of the Plan for developing Careers Inspiration sessions and platform development.</p>	<p>Closing of the graduate outcomes gap for students from IMDQ1 and Q2 backgrounds.</p> <p>Increased progression rates to</p>	<p>No, though it may impact positively on IS1, 2 and 3.</p>

	Handshake and promoting jobs. (Existing) 3. Develop Careers Inspiration sessions to ensure more students understand potential roles and relate them to their studies (New)	Non staff expenditure: <b>£68K</b> over course of the plan for systems.	graduate study or employment. Higher levels of job satisfaction, measured by Graduate Outcomes survey.	
2. Student opportunities	1. Continue to offer high quality employment opportunities to students, with specific focus and encouragement for students from more disadvantaged and under-represented backgrounds. (Existing) 2. Review our application methods to make them more inclusive. (New) 3. Continue to offer a wide range of opportunities for students to partner with staff, including Student Reps, involvement on specific committees and curriculum-connected research partnerships. (Existing/ developing)	Staff: <b>£193K</b> over course of the Plan for recruitment and management of student positions, including liaison and coaching with voluntary roles.	Closing of the graduate outcomes gap for students from IMDQ1 and Q2 backgrounds. Increased progression rates to graduate study or employment.	No, though it may impact positively on IS1, 2 and 3.
3. Specific support for students with multiple impairments	1. Develop advice on disclosure for students. (New) 2. Publish information for employers on funding support for access for disabled employees. (New) 3. Help students to identify employers who are disability friendly. (New)	Staff: <b>£8K</b> over the course of the Plan for developing and updating advice and employer liaison.	Closing of the graduate outcomes gap for students with multiple impairments.	No, though it may impact positively on IS1, 2 and 3.
4. Financial support	1. See intervention Strategy 2, Activity 4. (p.12)	10% of activity costs of IS2, Activity 4. Staff: <b>£11K</b> , non-staff expenditure <b>£76K</b> , over course of plan	See IS2, p.12	Yes, with IS1, IS2, IS3
5. Expanding provision	6. See Intervention Strategy 1, Activity 3 (p.8)	20% of activity costs of IS1, Activity 3 allocated here: Staff: <b>£214K</b> over course of	See IS1, p.8	Yes, with IS1

		the plan, to develop new programmes and apprenticeships. Non-Staff expenditure: <b>£43K</b> over course of the plan for marketing new courses.		
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All activity in this strategy has been developed based on evidence-based assumptions and uses sector evidence alongside consideration of our internal context and data. The evidence and background to these intervention strategies can be found in Annex B. Each Intervention Strategy either has a Theory of Change or it is in development. Evaluation will include process and outcome evaluation using pre/post comparison, surveys or focus groups with an annual impact report to summarise findings published on our dedicated Access and Participation Plan webpage. Some activities will be evaluated and published separately, namely those around our Curriculum Framework.

## Evaluation of Intervention Strategy 4: Graduate Outcomes

	Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
1	Personal and academic support	Closing of the gaps in graduate outcomes. Increased progression rates. Higher levels of job satisfaction.	Process and outcome evaluation, Type 1 and Type 2 Systems (LinkedIn Learning and Handshake): usage by different groups, feedback, and graduate outcomes data from users. (Type 2) Careers Inspiration sessions: attendance by different groups, feedback (Type 2) Graduate Outcomes gaps from OfS data dashboard (Type 2) Job satisfaction in Graduate Outcomes Survey (Type 2)	In 2028, users of new systems starting with us in 2024 will be completing the Graduate Outcomes Survey, with reporting in 2029. We will publish findings on any graduate outcome differences in our annual impact report from January 2030 on our website.

2	Student opportunities	Access to Student Colleague roles reflects the demographic make-up of on-campus student body.	Evaluation will focus on short-term results of improving the accessibility of our application methods, through reviewing the application success rates of students from different backgrounds and through qualitative feedback from interviewers and interviewees. (Type 2 evaluation)	We will publish a summary of our findings by December 2025 on our website.
3	Specific support for students with multiple impairments	Increase in progression rates and closing of the progression gap.	Process and outcomes evaluation, Type 1 and Type 2 Progression rates and closing of gap reported via OfS dashboard. (Type 2) Pre and post qualitative feedback from students and Futures team. (Type 2)	Students in Year 3 as the Plan starts will be completing the Graduate Outcomes survey in 2026 with reporting in 2027. We will publish findings on any graduate outcome differences in annual impact report from January 2028 on our website.

## Our Whole Provider Approach

### Our Whole Provider Approach student experience

Access and participation activities and improvements are embedded across the institution. Our **Access and Participation Action Group** has been running since 2019 with representation from admissions, student recruitment, marketing, library, student wellbeing and support, employability, academic representation from every school and student representatives.

Our Access and Participation Action group has set objectives and target activities over the last five years and delivered over 190 improvements and interventions to support equality of opportunity. These range across the whole student lifecycle, from improving quality of information, advice and guidance for parents from non-HE backgrounds, to delivering timetabling improvements to support mature students, to improving the welcome for disabled students, to introducing all first years to the employability team in their first six weeks. These have now become “business as usual” and are embedded improvements for all students, driven by a focus on equity groups. These also include some significant projects such as recruiting **Marjon Change Makers** to inform us of key issues for inequality, developing and delivering a **Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy**, and developing a **graduate outcomes framework** for student employees which subsequently supported our Teaching Excellence Framework submission.

Further information about achievements during the 2020-2024 APP cycle will be published in an end of Plan impact report in 2025.

### Our institutional and senior leadership commitment

Our Strategic Plan “Marjon 2030” will be published in late 2024. This includes our institutional mission “**to end inequality through life-changing teaching, learning, research and knowledge exchange.** Our vision is “**to be a beacon of opportunity and possibility; accessible and relevant for the people of Plymouth and beyond.**” Our Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor bring experience from eight different widening participation institutions, which have included experience chairing and leading many social inclusion or widening participation projects. Our Dean of Learning and Teaching; our Dean of Research and Knowledge Exchange and our Dean of Place and Social Purpose have over 50 years of research experience between them into social inclusion issues, and have published extensively on these, and bring their knowledge to our strategic approach. (See Annex B references for information.)

Our **committee and key meeting structures** are carefully designed to ensure there is intersection and representation across groups, meaning access and participation questions are raised at the highest levels, as illustrated below. Our Access and Participation Plan is led by our Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Success, whose role covers much of the student lifecycle, from outreach to employability, outside the academic experience. Our Deputy Vice-Chancellor leads all academic teaching, research and knowledge exchange, international development and partnership areas, including our Marjon 2030 curriculum review which has at its core a focus on supporting equity groups. Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee is led by our Director of People and Culture.

Ensuring representation of access and participation plan at key strategic groups	Students	VC	DVC	Pro V-C Student Success	Director of People and Culture (or rep)	Quality and Academic standards	Outreach, WP and Student Recruitment	Inclusion and student support	Library and skills	Employability
Access and Participation Action Group	x	x		x		x	x	x	x	x
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee	x			x	x			x		
Athena Swan Self-Assessment Team					x			x		
Mental Health Working Group	x			x	x			x		
Student Experience Council	x			x		x		x	x	x
Marjon Student Colleague Working Group	x			x	x		x			x
Retention and Engagement Action Group	x			x		x		x	x	
Regulations and Process Review Group				x		x		x		
Teaching, Learning and Academic Quality Committee	x		x	x		x			x	
Academic Strategy, Planning and Partnerships Committee	x		x	x		x	x			
University Leadership Group	x	x	x	x	x					
Executive Leadership Team	x	x	x	x	x					
Senate	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	x
Board of Governors (present)	x	x	x	x	x					

Progress on our Access and Participation Plan is governed through Senate, who receive two reports each year, and Board of Governors, with two reports each year. Our Student Experience Council also receives these reports.

The Plan is supported by our research function and by our Head of Data and Information Planning.

### Alignment of our policies and processes

The Plan pays due regard to our obligations under the Equality Act 2010. Our Access and Participation Strategies directly feed into other strategies to achieve our published equality objectives. Through the mechanisms of the committee structures above, the Access and Participation Plan feeds into the following strategies, plans, policies and procedures:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy; plus annual action plan which includes APP priorities, and annual Equality Report, through the involvement of several members of the Access and Participation Action Group (APPAG) in the EDI Committee.
- Teaching Excellence Framework, through cross-representation on APPAG
- Marjon 2030 Strategic Plan.
- Curriculum Framework Review for Marjon 2030, (detailed in Intervention Strategies 2 and 3).
- Academic processes and policies, through cross-group working in the Regulations and Process Review Group and the Teaching, Learning and Academic Quality Committee.
- Curriculum development, including of Level 4 and 5 provision and apprenticeship provision, in the Academic Strategy, Planning and Partnerships Committee.

- Campus Development Plan, particularly through the involvement of the Head of Estates in the Mental Health Working Group.
- Athena Swan Self-Assessment Team, through cross-involvement of staff working on the APP.
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which is led by the PVC Student Success alongside the APP, and has representation from student representatives, estates, people team, student wellbeing and support, and academic schools.
- Collections Policy, through the Head of Library's involvement in EDI and in APPAG.
- Marketing and Student Recruitment Strategy.
- Policy and procedures for transgender, gender diverse and non-binary staff and students.
- Student Employment Ethos, principles and procedures, through cross involvement in the Marjon Student Colleagues Working Group.
- Staff recruitment procedures, such as our application process and anonymised selection processes, Disability Confident status and Mindful Employer status.
- Staff performance processes, having implemented a change to our annual performance reviews to include a section about living our Values.

## **Staff and student engagement and partnership in WP/WPA**

### **a. Leadership and management**

Staff and students frequently work together as partners at Marjon on widening participation and inclusivity. Managers at all levels understand, promote and are driven by inclusivity. **Programme Leads** consider inclusivity in their annual programme reports, reviewing gaps by target group and setting in place action plans for improvement. At revalidation stage, all programmes must review student lifecycle gaps by demographic and APP target group.

**Assessments** are set to be inclusive, with wide ranging alternative assignments set. Through **school meetings**, there are opportunities to share and discuss issues related to equality and diversity, and a number of academics are involved with these issues as part of their research.

**Our Values**, which have inclusivity at their core, are recognised and appreciated by staff, with 96% of staff agreeing "*I understand the University's Values*".

**Policies and procedures** have a wide range of considerations for equity groups, with student representation on committees to ensure these are considered and regularly refreshed.

Our **Annual Student and Staff Awards** have a focus on Values with all awards being associated with one Value and many awards which recognise and reward inclusive practice.

### **b. Development and training:**

We ensure staff and students are educated and updated on inclusivity issues in several ways.

**Our Values** are embedded into our curriculum, ensuring students consider not only what they learn but how they will deliver in their future roles and consider equity groups. Academic schools value and emphasise the role of social justice through their provision, for example through **placement activity** in which students engage in active participation in wider disadvantaged communities. Many students on our health or sport programmes gain experience in our **on-campus clinics**, which give students experience in supporting diverse and often disadvantaged communities in Plymouth.

Our **Teaching and Learning Policy** has a strong focus on inclusivity, including through learning communities, flexibility of study mode, a focus on individualised personal development and our varied pedagogic approaches.

Our **TEF 2022 submission** describes our social learning paradigm which is tailored for our mix of students and disciplines; with high proportions of students who are mature, disabled or first in family to attend higher education.

Our **Inclusivity Toolkit** has contributions from staff and students.

In order to mitigate against discriminatory behaviour which can be a key barrier to belonging, since 2021, students have had to take an obligatory **Behavioural module** before enrolling, educating them to ensure key groups can feel they belong, particularly focusing on sexism and racism. In 2023 we added an **Upstander Training** intervention for key student roles, including sports team captains, society leadership and Resident Student Assistants. We are pleased that in our 2022-3 Student Experience Survey, 78% of Marjon undergraduates agreed “*Marjon feels like a safe place*” and that figure was 89% for students identifying as LGBTQ+. (Note it was 76% for disabled students, which immediately prompted additional work on physical campus accessibility.) In the same survey, 82% of disabled students, and 73% of LGBTQ+ students agreed that “*My confidence has grown at Marjon*” compared to 71% of undergraduates. This demonstrates the impact of our work to develop a welcoming, inclusive environment for students from some key equity groups.

55 members of staff have been Mental Health First Aid trained, many are Suicide Assist trained, and every year, up to 14 Resident Student Assistants are trained in Mental Health First Aid.

Our commitment to and respect for supporting others is shared by students across Marjon, with the most important driver for their future career, stated by 94% of students, being “*I want to help others in my job*”. (Student Experience Survey, 2023.)

### **c. Partnership working with students and staff**

Our goal is that staff and students are confident to propose and initiate inclusivity improvements, driven by our *Student Success logic model* from our current [Access and Participation Plan](#), (p.14). This proposes that in order for students to succeed, they must both feel they belong, and we must remove their barriers to opportunity. In order to do this, we must have a proactive cycle of feedback, with students confident to give feedback or to resolve issues themselves, and staff encouraging this, and acting on it. In this way students are encouraged to help us create change which suits their needs. Students can suggest changes and improvements anonymously through our Chatback function, through which we have answered or resolved over 1000 questions since its launch in 2018. Student Reps can bring issues through two key routes: Student Voice Panels where they partner with their Programme Lead and key academics, and the Student Experience Council where they bring broader issues. They also raise issues through the Students’ Union. We also receive feedback on inclusivity issues through our staff Open Ideas channel.

Examples of our success with this goal of raising and resolving issues through partnership working are:

- Student Ambassadors, particularly those on education courses, co-creating and delivering activities for our outreach activities with schools.
- A student member of our Mental Health Working Group creating a campus improvement plan in partnership with physically disabled students to identify and prioritise actions to improve accessibility. This has been shared with four different committees resulting in improvements to accessible accommodation.

- Change Maker student roles running projects from 2019 onwards specifically reporting on inclusivity issues, working in partnership with a member of staff, and sharing their findings and proposals to senior managers at the conclusion of their project.
- Student Colleagues presenting to Board of Governors, sharing their experience.
- Student Welcome Team Ambassadors developing new processes for our student Welcome.
- A Covid Support Team with mainly student staff, designing the process for supporting students with covid or isolating.

Our success in creating this environment is shown in improvements in our Student Experience Survey: in 2021, 54% of students agreed that *“I feel part of a community of staff and students”* and two years later, in 2022-23, this had increased to 64%. For our Marjon Student Colleagues, this response is 88%.

#### **d. Communication**

Two new SharePoint sites were developed in 2020 (one for staff, one for students) to ensure all information can be searched for easily. Communication to students about news or activities is presented through a variety of inclusive media to maximise engagement (SharePoint, email, social media, posters, digital screens, lecture visits and an app). Communication with students about co-curricular, extra-curricular and social activities aims to be inclusive and encouraging, for example one major change being to present all Welcome Week activities together (academic, sport, Chaplaincy socials, SU socials, learning groups etc) which increased attendance. There are opportunities for improving communication through introducing a platform. This includes consented sharing of individual student needs, making it easier to book meetings with staff, and introducing learning analytics and associated automated communications, nudges and staff instructions.

#### **Our use of data and evidence**

Our use of data is a key area for strategic development and investment, which will be enabled by the introduction of a CRM system in 2025. Currently, academic teams use programme reports and responses to NSS, PTES and UKES data to review splits (linked to TEF), which then enable action plans to be proposed. This ‘hard’ data is complemented by qualitative judgments and information linked to academics’ knowledge of the student body, with actions then planned.

Mechanisms are in place to review and learn from APP work, with Key Performance Indicators and “gaps” in performance updated each year with the release of the dashboard. Each of our current Access and Participation Plan projects is reviewed each year at the Access and Participation Action Group, with data splits reported, to show whether we know it is working and what conclusions can be drawn so far. This review template is consistent for each project and is drawn from the Office for Students Evaluation Toolkit. The overall conclusions are shared with key groups, particularly Senate and the Board of Governors, to ensure learnings are spread more widely, meaning up to date WP-related data and evidence are informing strategic decisions at the highest level and day-to-day decision-making at the local level.

#### **Our commitment to review, develop and evaluate our Whole Provider Approach**

As part of the process of preparing our APP, we have reviewed our Whole Provider Approach, drawing on previous and current research, and practice from across the sector. The key development area we have identified is at the intersection between **communication** and **use of data**.

Our area of development will be to improve information sharing and communication across the university to support equity groups. The reason for this is it is a key student need and area of feedback, for example:

- There is no systemic way to track and share confidential information, meaning students must repeat information many times.
- There is no learning analytics in place to prioritise resource to students most at risk.
- Accessibility of rooms is manually managed, meaning students with accessibility issues sometimes experience issues.

We will do this through these key activities, which are detailed in the Intervention Strategies:

- Introduce systems which can track attendance, attainment and engagement.
- Trial and roll out processes to engage and support “at risk” students through nudges, different forms of contact and different “prescriptions” of activity.
- Review all communications through the lens of Considerate Communications.

## **Student Consultation**

Students have been consulted on this plan through:

1. Involvement of one of the elected Student Union Officers in the Access and Participation Action Group (ongoing).
2. An open call for sharing of experiences and involvement in workshops.
3. Calls for sharing of ideas for the Marjon 2030 strategy which ran concurrently to this consultation.
4. Discussions at two Student Experience Council meetings with Student Course Reps.
5. Sharing of the draft plan on the Marjon information platform MyMarjon.
6. Involvement in other related committees, for example the Mental Health Working Group.

## **Evaluation of the Plan**

### **Strategic context**

As part of reviewing our evaluation, we used the OfS Evaluation Self-Assessment Tool (Office for Students, 2023c) which has identified areas of strength and for improvement. We initially used this Tool in 2019 to write our evaluation plan.

Monitoring, evaluation and oversight of the plan’s activities is embedded at various levels in the University. As with projects in our current Plan, each intervention strategy will be reviewed annually, with a structured and templated review, shared with the Access and Participation Action Group. APPAG will review the data, the delivery, the impact, the outcomes and the proposed changes or learnings for the coming year. Twice a year, the activities, impact and outcomes are reported to Student Experience Council, Senate, and Board of Governors, who hold the Executive Leadership Team responsible for the delivery of the Plan.

Through the use of the Evaluation Tool, we have identified that in this Plan we will further develop the sharing of contextual learnings (rather than just gaps, targets and outcomes) to ensure our activities can be learned from.

Area	Score	Key Strengths	Key weaknesses	Future commitment
Strategic context	19/24 – Emerging	Evaluation activity is consistently embedded, including common protocols for evaluation and strong links across the institution to APP activity.	Capacity for data evaluation needs improving, through consistent training across all teams	Improve to Advanced through improvement in data evaluation capacity.
Programme Design	16/19 – Advanced	Programmes are designed to meet clear, evidence-informed objectives, specifying deliverables and the outputs and impact-based outcomes measured.	Benchmarking measures could be improved to compare across sector	Maintain high score
Evaluation design	4/9 – Emerging	Programme evaluation is designed in line with OfS expectations with a clear audience	Audience is relatively narrow. Evaluation plans are in place but resources to deliver it are stretched.	Improve score to Advanced through better evaluation resource planning.
Evaluation implementation	15/20 Emerging	Data planning and methodologies are in place, with some partnerships in place.	Formal risk analysis is not in place, and resource planning and budget are stretched.	Improve score to Advanced through better evaluation resource planning.
Learning from evaluation	20/22 Advanced	Annual reports acknowledge limitations, triangulate findings, clearly share learnings and impact to date, and identify improvements and focus points for the following year.	Detailed project findings could be shared more widely and informally internally, (outside committees), and externally. Committee reports outside our APPAG are focused on end targets and activities delivered, not sharing learnings from each project.	Maintain high score and share findings of projects more widely.

### **Design activities**

Each of our Intervention Strategies has a Theory of Change and evaluation plan finalised before the strategy begins. Each individual activity has process evaluation included to ensure it is landing and working well, with most activities also including outcome evaluation. Each strategy will develop a theory of change to be published on our Access and Participation website, before the activities begin.

### **Design evaluation**

For each activity, the University will complete an evaluability assessment (Davies, 2022)

to finalise data to be collected before the activity starts, during the activity and after completion. Process evaluation data will be triangulated from multiple sources, for example from academic staff, professional services staff and students to understand impact. Because several of our activities will focus on small cohorts, we will use TASO's evaluation guidance for small cohorts. (TASO, 2024). The evaluation team is experienced in this and in the 2020-2025 Access and Participation Plan, one activity was evaluated as part of TASO research into methodologies for small-n cohorts.

### **Implementation of the evaluation plan**

Evaluation plans will be submitted through our Ethics Committee over the course of 2024-25, before the Plan starts. This will lay out how data will be stored, collected and analysed. Process reviews will be developed and peer-reviewed through an APP evaluation group across internal departments and including academic expertise: this will be a targeted group to report to the Access and Participation Action Group. For our Access intervention, we participate in HEAT tracking in order to understand longitudinal data and impact.

### **Learning from and sharing findings**

#### **Internally**

- We will share annual progress of each intervention strategy through our Access and Participation Action Group (existing)
- Progress towards targets, and delivery of activity, through Senate, Student Experience Council and Board of Governors. (Existing, but to share more contextual learnings not just outcomes)
- We will create a SharePoint page about Access and Participation, making it visible to both staff and students, with updates posted here twice a year. Updates will include core learnings as well as updates on outcomes. (New)
- Evidence from our Curriculum Framework review will be shared within academic schools and TeachTime CPD sessions, within learning lunches, and within our annual Teaching and Learning conference.

#### **Externally**

- We will develop a web page detailing the plan, by August 2025. We will add in case study evaluation reports in accordance with the timeline in the intervention strategies, from December 2025.
- We will also complete an annual report into the overall achievements of the Plan from December 2027.
- Evidence from our Curriculum Framework review will be shared in blogs, academic papers and at conferences as appropriate.
- We aim for pieces of research from our Curriculum-Connected Research to be published in peer-reviewed papers and to be submitted to REF.
- We will also submit to the OfS repository as this is formed.

### **Using the OfS Standards of Evidence**

In each Intervention Strategy, we have listed the OfS Standards of Evidence which we will meet. We will not evaluate every activity, but at least one activity in each Strategy will be evaluated. This evaluation will be Type 2 – empirical enquiry. We will not be able to use control groups as we do not intend to

withhold services to some students. We will however collect qualitative and quantitative evidence in order to demonstrate a difference or change to what might otherwise have happened.

## Provision of information to students

Students will be provided information on tuition fees and available financial support on our website, under [www.marjon.ac.uk/feesandfunding](http://www.marjon.ac.uk/feesandfunding). This will be highlighted in the prospectus or associated written literature and at Open Days. Information on financial support is made available at [www.marjon.ac.uk/student-life/student-support-/student-funding-advice/](http://www.marjon.ac.uk/student-life/student-support-/student-funding-advice/). The University will ensure that continuing students continue to receive the financial support that was advertised to them when they applied for their course. The refund and compensation policy is available on our website at: [University strategies & policies | Plymouth Marjon University](#).

## References main plan

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## Annex A: Assessment of Performance

### Contents of this section

- Overview of approach to data review
- Outcomes data review, by life stage and student group
- Additional data
- Assessment of **risks to equality of opportunity** and how this relates to risk indicators
- Summary of **risk indicators** correlated with underlying likely risks experienced by our students

### Overview of approach

The assessment of performance took place between September 2023 and April 2024. The Office for Students' Access and Participation Data Dashboard was used to identify key gaps in performance which may indicate a risk to equality of opportunity (Risk Indicators) (Office for Students, 2023a). This was supplemented by internal dashboards, particularly around retention, where the OfS Data Dashboard is less recent. We also reviewed student data, particularly self-scoring data from our Student Experience Survey which gives indicators of belonging and confidence, and data from focus groups.

The data review identified **29 risk indicators**. Key risk indicators were shared with six groups made up of staff and students. The groups then considered how these indicators interact with the key national risks from the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (Office for Students, 2023b) completing a risk assessment process of *likelihood* and *impact* of each risk, to give us an average risk score for each risk. Many of the discussions included a thread around our specific geography in the South West, identifying some additional risk indicators around our rural and coastal place.

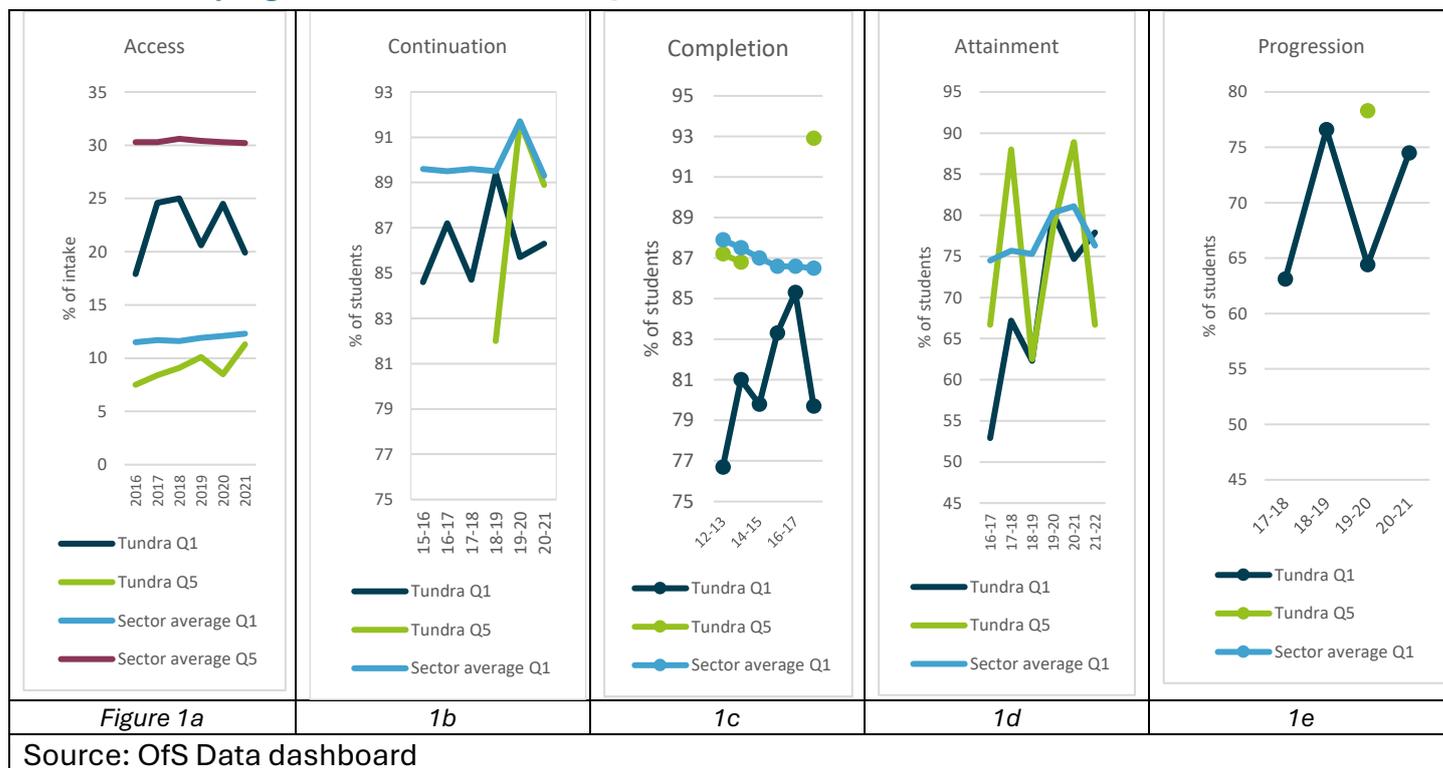
The results were relatively consistent, and the conversations alongside tended to group the 12 risks in the EORR into **four Risk Themes**. These themes covered all of the 29 risk indicators that had been identified.

It was recognised that we could not work on objectives to cover 29 risk indicators or targets, so a process of prioritisation was run, through four workshops based on each stage of the student journey.

The four Risk Themes were worked into **four Objectives**, and then into our **four Intervention Strategies** and **seven Targets**.

## Outcomes data review, by lifestage and student group

### Low progression to HE: Tundra Quintile 1



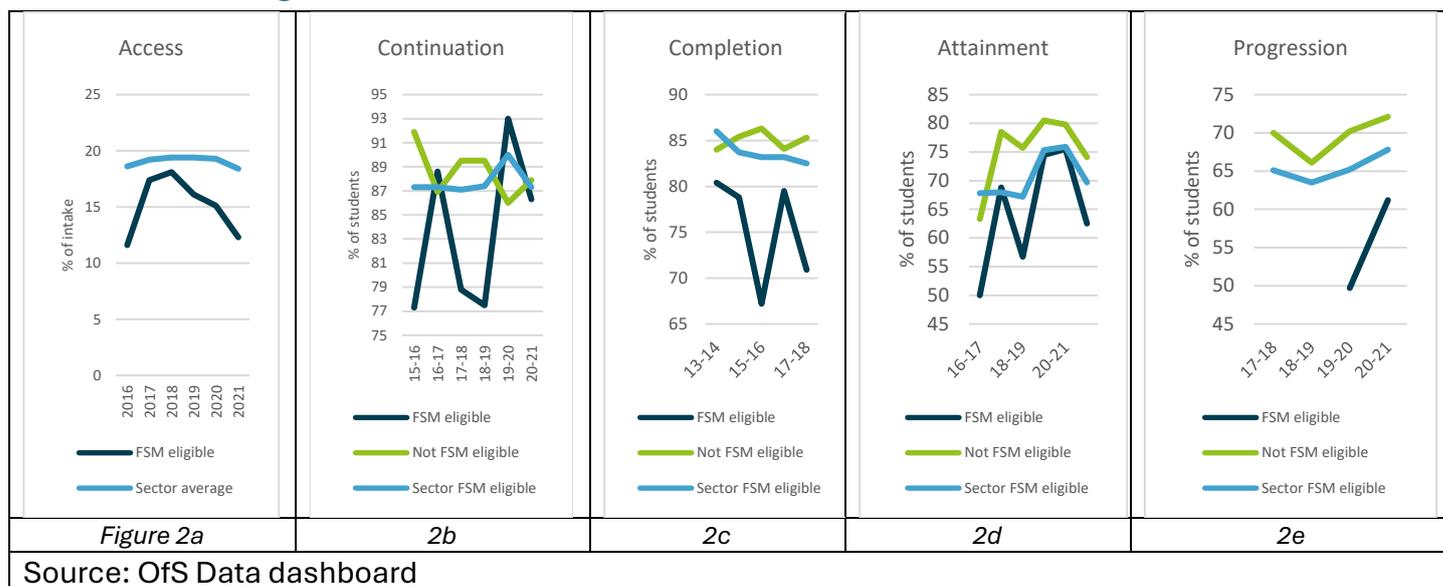
Source: OfS Data dashboard

The above graphs (figure 1a-e) show data for students from the lowest participation in HE postcodes, (Tundra Q1) compared to those from higher participation postcodes (Q5). Previous Access and Participation Plans have used POLAR4 as the measure of participation in Higher Education. The OfS is now using TUNDRA as the measure of progression to HE from an area.

Key risk indicators are:

1. On average over the last four years, 22.7% of entrants to Marjon came from the lowest quintile of HE participation, Tundra Q1. 9.7% came from the highest participation quintile, Q5. This is different to the sector, where just over 30% of students come from Q5, representing a very strong success story.
2. Continuation rates for students from Tundra Q1 are increasing. Q5 numbers are erratic, but the four-year average shows students from Q5 are continuing at around 3.1pp higher than those from Q1. **(Risk Indicator (RI) 1: There is a 3.1 percentage point gap (four-year average) in continuation for students from lowest participation in HE postcodes compared to the highest.)**
3. Completion rates for students from Tundra Q1 are also increasing. Q5 numbers have data missing for 3 out of 6 years, but the four-year average shows a gap of 13.3pp: Q1 average is 81.7% and Q5 is 95%. **(Risk Indicator (RI) 2: There is a 13.3 percentage point gap (four-year average) in completion for students from lowest participation in HE postcodes compared to the highest.)**
4. Attainment rates for students from the lowest participation areas of Tundra Q1 have significantly improved. The four-year gap is now 0.5pp, compared to a gap in 2017-18 of 20.8pp.
5. Progression rates for students from the lowest participation areas are below Quintile 5, though due to low numbers this is only visible in the four-year averages, which are 69.8% for Q1 and 81.6% for Q5. **(Risk Indicator (RI) 3: There is an 11.6 percentage point gap (four-year average) in progression for students from lowest participation in HE postcodes compared to the highest.)**

## Socioeconomically disadvantaged groups Students eligible for Free School Meals



Source: OfS Data dashboard

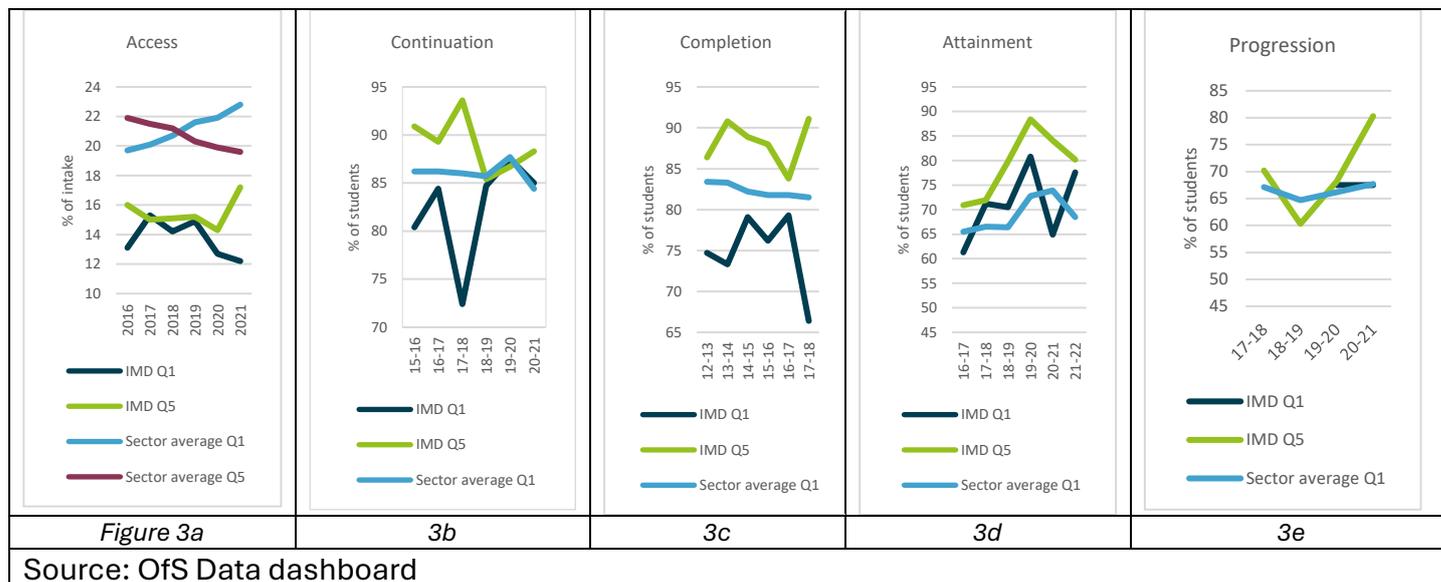
The above graphs (figure 2a-e) show data for students previously eligible for free school meals at any time in the six years up to the completion of Key Stage 4, compared to the sector average for the same group, and those not eligible at Marjon.

Key risk indicators are:

- There has been a reduction in the proportion of entrants eligible for Free School Meals entering the University (Figure 1a), from 18.1% of entrants in 2018, down to 12.3% of entrants in 2021. This compares to a sector 4-year average of 19.2% of students eligible for Free School Meals. **(Risk Indicator (RI) 4: In 2021 12.3% of students entering Marjon were eligible for free school meals, a reduction from 18.1% in 2018.)**
- There is a significant gap in completion rates: the four-year average completion rate for students eligible for Free School Meals is 73.2% compared to 85.3% for those not eligible. The FSM rate is also lower than the sector average. There has also been a historic gap in continuation. Internal data shows this is returning. **(Risk Indicator (RI) 5: There is a 12.1 percentage point gap (four-year average) in completion for students eligible for Free School Meals.)**
- There is a decreasing, but still persistent gap in attainment rates: the four year average attainment (first or 2.1) rate for students eligible for Free School Meals is 68.4% compared to 77.6% for those not eligible. The FSM rate is also lower than the sector average. **(Risk Indicator (RI) 6: There is a 9.2 percentage point gap (four-year average) in attainment for students eligible for Free School Meals.)**
- There is a progression gap: despite some data being too small to report, the four-year average progression rate into *higher level, professional, managerial, further study, or other positive outcomes* for students eligible for Free School Meals is 63.7% compared to 70% for those not eligible. The FSM rate is also lower than the sector average. **(Risk Indicator (RI) 7: There is a 6.3 percentage point gap (four-year average) in progression for students eligible for Free School Meals.)**

## Socioeconomically disadvantaged groups

### Students from Index of Multiple Deprivation Q1 and Q2



Source: OfS Data dashboard

The above graphs (figure 3a-e) show data for students from most deprived areas, using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD Q1) compared to least deprived areas (Q5).

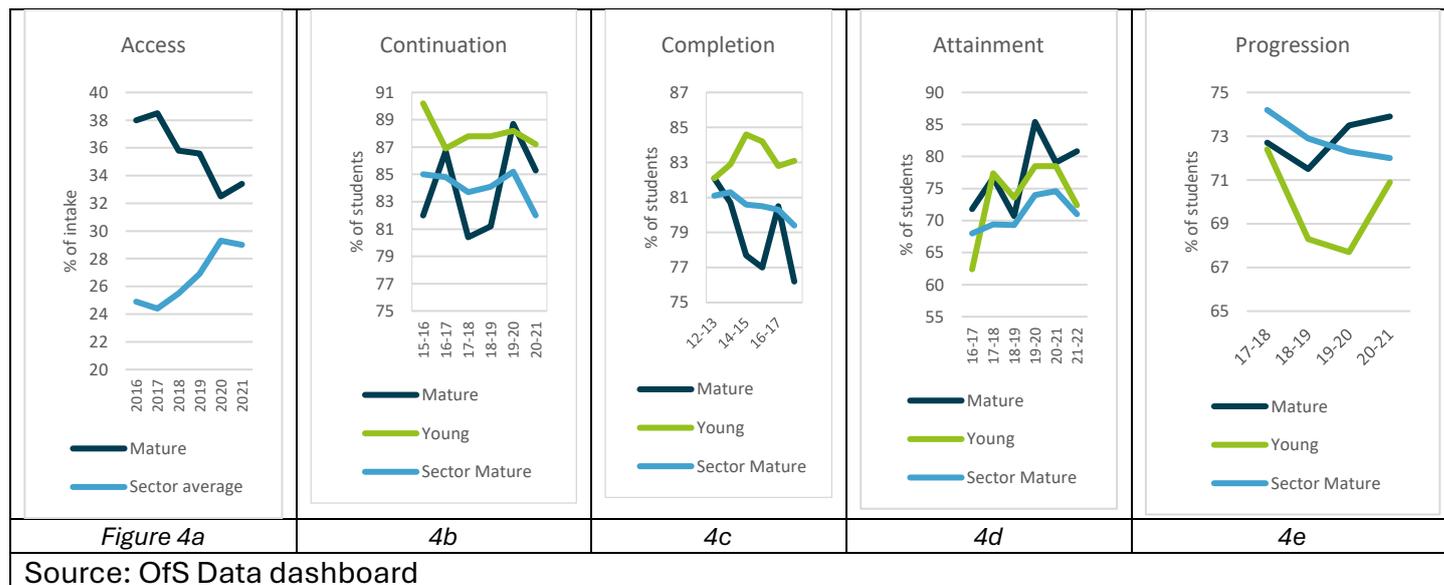
Key risk indicators are:

- On average over the last four years, 13.5% of entrants to Marjon came from areas of highest deprivation, IMD Q1. 15.4% came from the lowest deprivation quintile, Q5. This ratio is changing, with fewer students coming from high deprivation areas in 2021 than in 2017. The sector also has a higher proportion of students from the most deprived areas, and this is increasing, meaning Marjon intake is against the sector trend. This indicates a risk to equality of opportunity for the most deprived students accessing HE. **(Risk Indicator (RI) 8: The proportion of students from the most deprived areas has reduced over the last four years, against the sector trend. In 2021, 12.2% of students came from IMD Q1 compared to 15.3% in 2017.**
- Continuation rates for students from the most deprived areas have increased, and are in line with sector completion rates for IMD Q1 students. The gap compared to Q5 has mostly closed.
- Completion rates for students from the most deprived areas are significantly lower at 74.8% (four-year average) than those from least deprived areas at 88%. **(Risk Indicator (RI) 9: There is a persistent gap in completion, averaging 13.2pp over four years, between students from most deprived and least deprived areas.**
- When looked at by the intersection of sex and deprivation, we see that male students from IMD Q1 and 2 have a persistent gap in completion. **(Risk Indicator (RI) 10: There is a persistent gap in completion, averaging 11pp over four years, between males from more deprived areas and females from more deprived areas.**
- There is a 10pp attainment differential between students from more deprived areas and least deprived areas. 73.3% of IMDQ1 students achieved 1<sup>st</sup> and 2.1 grades over four years, compared to 83.3% of IMDQ5 students. Q1 students are attaining similarly to the Q1 sector average, however. By intersection of sex and deprivation, we can see this is driven by consistently high performance from

most advantaged female students from IMD 3,4 and 5, and lower grades from male students. **(Risk Indicator (RI) 11: There is a gap in attainment of 10pp over four years between students from most deprived and least deprived areas.**

15. There is a two year gap in progression between most deprived (67.5% average) and least deprived students (74.3% average), driven by an improvement in the last two years for least deprived students. **(Risk Indicator (RI)12: There is a gap in progression of 6.8pp over two years between students from most deprived and least deprived areas.**

## Mature students



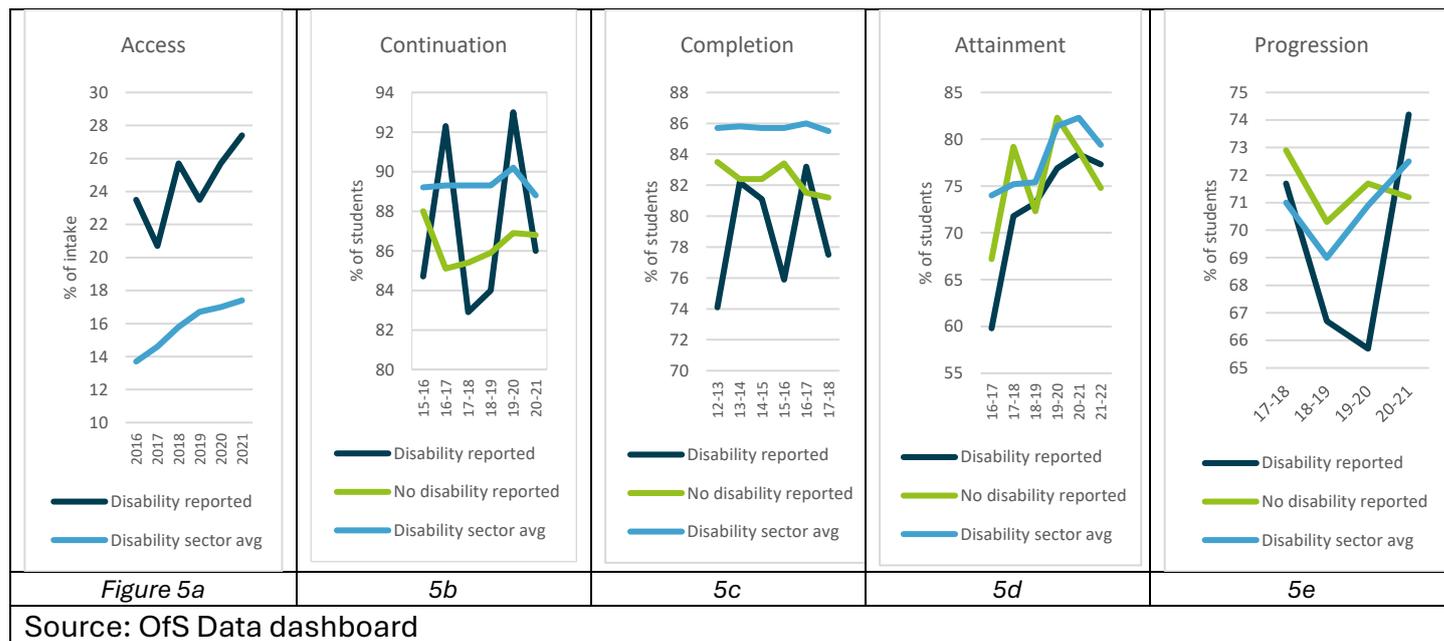
Source: OfS Data dashboard

The above graphs (figure 4a-e) show data for mature students compared to young students, and the English HE sector average for mature students.

Key risk indicators are:

16. Whilst there has been a reduction in the proportion of mature entrants to Marjon, down to 33.4% in 2021, this remains well above the sector average (29% in 2021) and does not indicate a significant risk. This will however be watched and reviewed.
17. There is an ongoing gap in continuation rates for mature students, with an average four-year continuation rate of 83.7% compared to 87.7% for young students. In three out of the last six years, however, the mature continuation rate is higher than the sector average. **(Risk Indicator (RI) 13: There is a 4.0 percentage point gap (four-year average) in continuation for mature students compared to young students.)**
18. There is also a gap in completion rates: the four year average completion rate for mature students is 77.7% compared to 83.7% for young students. The completion rate for mature students is also consistently lower than the sector average. **(Risk Indicator (RI) 14: There is a 6.0 percentage point gap (four-year average) in completion for mature students compared to young students.)**
19. The attainment rate for mature students does not indicate a risk: the four-year average attainment rate is 79.1% for mature students compared to 75.9% for young students. This is also well above sector average for mature students.
20. The progression rate for mature students also does not indicate a risk: the four year average progression rate is 73.1% compared to 70.0% for young students. In the last two years this is above the sector mature average.
21. At a course level, we can see that there is a significant risk in the School of Health, where mature student continuation has decreased significantly in our latest internal data for 2022-23. This may be a one-off year, but we are reviewing this regularly and will continue to focus on retention at School level within our Plan.

## Disabled students



Source: OfS Data dashboard

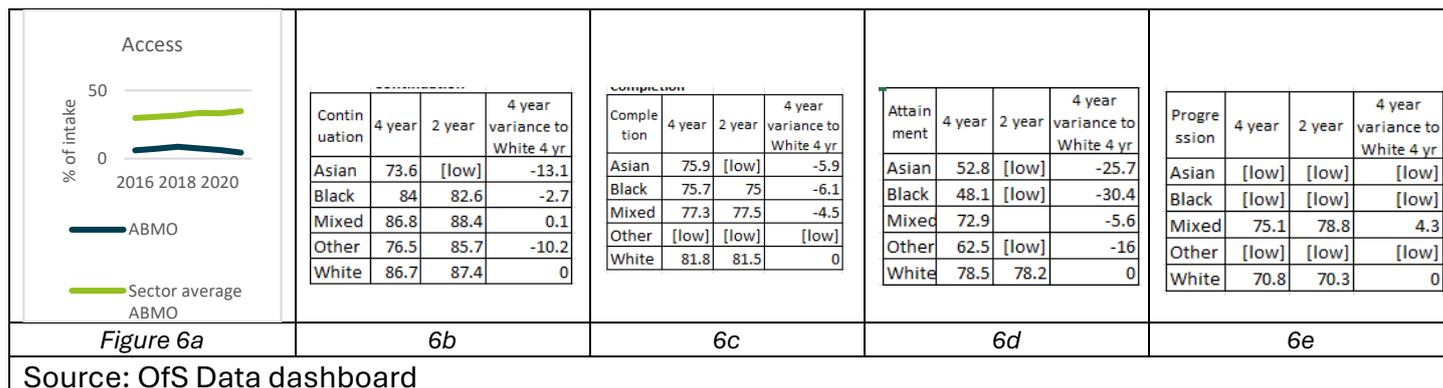
The above graphs (figure 5a-e) show data for students registered with a disability compared to those who are not, and the English HE sector average for students registered with a disability.

Key risk indicators are:

22. Proportions of students entering Marjon with a reported disability are growing, and remain consistently higher than sector. This does not indicate a risk to access.
23. Continuation for students with a reported disability fluctuates significantly. At a macro level, this does not indicate a risk, with the four year average continuation being higher for disabled students (at 86.4%) than for non-disabled students (86.2%). However there are risks when reviewed in more detail.
  - a. Internal retention data shows the most recent year of 2022-23 with a gap opening up.
  - b. Disability by type is most effectively reviewed with four-year averages. Compared to non-disabled students at **86.2%** four-year average retention, these show:
    - i. positive results or little to no gap for students with cognitive and learning difficulties at **86.0%**; multiple impairments **90.5%**; sensory, medical or physical impairments **92.5%**.
    - ii. a negative gap for students with mental health conditions at **82.8%** (though this has rapidly improved, and the two-year average is a positive gap) and social or communication impairment at **80.4%**. This last data point does not have sufficient data in any year to report, and therefore whilst it indicates a risk, it is not of sufficient impact or robustness to indicate a priority for a full intervention strategy.
24. There is a consistent gap in completion for students with a reported disability, with a four-year average completion rate of 79.4% compared to 82.1% for non-disabled students. **(Risk Indicator (RI) 15: There is a 2.7 percentage point gap (four year average) in completion for disabled students compared to non-disabled students.)**

- a. The latest year above shows results for students starting in 2017. Internal data also shows an ongoing gap for students starting in both 2019 and 2020.
  - b. Reviewing completion rates through the lens of disability by type is again most effective using four-year averages. Compared to non-disabled students at **82.1%** four-year average completion, these show:
    - i. positive results or little gap for sensory, medical or physical impairments **84.3%** and cognitive and learning difficulties at **81.7%**
    - ii. a negative gap for students with social or communication impairment at **78.6%**, students with multiple impairments at **75.3%**; and students with mental health conditions at **72.4%** (although this has rapidly improved, and the final year is a positive gap).
  - c. These data indicate some underlying detail for Risk Indicator 14.
25. Attainment of students with a reported disability has significantly improved and the two year average is now 1pp above the average for non-disabled students (77.9% two-year average for disabled students, vs 76.9% two year average for non-disabled students).
- a. When disaggregated into type of disability, however, is it clear that there are gaps. The four-year average attainment for non-disabled students is 77.2%.
    - i. There is a positive gap (i.e. higher performance) for students with mental ill health (80.3%) and multiple impairments (82.1%)
    - ii. There is a negative gap for students with cognitive and learning difficulties (72.9%).  
**(Risk Indicator (RI) 16: There is a 4.3 percentage point gap (four-year average) in attainment of students with cognitive and learning difficulties compared to non-disabled students.)**
    - iii. There is a negative four-year gap, but positive two-year average (i.e. improving results) for students with Sensory, medical or physical impairments, with no individual year being robust enough to report, and there is no data reportable for students with social or communication impairments. For these reasons these are not proposed to form specific intervention strategies.
26. Progression of students with a reported disability has significantly fluctuated, probably due to low reporting numbers. In the latest data it was higher than non-disabled students, and higher than the sector average. However on looking at disability by type, is it clear that there are gaps. The four-year average progression rate for non-disabled students is 71.6%.
- i. There is a positive gap (i.e. higher performance) or no discernible gap for students with cognitive and learning difficulties (74.8%) and students with mental health conditions (71.4%) Students with sensory, medical or physical impairments have a very small gap, with a 69.3% progression rate over four years.
  - ii. There is a negative gap however for students with multiple impairments (58.1%)  
**(Risk Indicator (RI) 17: There is a 13.5 percentage point gap (four-year average) in progression of students with multiple impairments compared to non-disabled students.)**

## Ethnicity



The above graphs and tables (figure 6a-e) show data for entrants by their ethnicity. Because there is a very low proportion of non-White students, data is best viewed using 4 year or 2 year averages.

Key risk indicators are:

27. The proportion of students entering Marjon who are not White is low, having reduced from 8.7% in 2018 to 4.4% in 2021. This could indicate a risk to equality of access for students who are not White. **(Risk Indicator (RI) 18: There is a low and decreasing proportion of students entering Marjon who are not White, with 95.6% of entrants in 2021 being White.)**
28. There are some continuation gaps for students from global majorities compared to White students, with a gap over four years of 13.1pp for Asian students and 10.2pp for Other ethnicities. **(Risk Indicator (RI) 19: There is a gap over four years in continuation for Asian students of 13.1pp and 10.2pp for Other ethnicities, compared to White students.)**
29. There are some completion gaps for students from global majorities compared to White students, with a gap over four years of 5.9pp for Asian students, 6.1pp for Black students and 4.5pp for Mixed race students. **(Risk Indicator (RI) 20: There is a gap over four years in completion for Asian students of 5.9pp, for Black students of 6.1pp, and for Other ethnicities of 10.2pp, compared to White students.)**
30. There are also some attainment gaps: a gap of 25.7pp for Asian students, 30.4pp for Black students, 16pp for Other ethnicities and 5.6pp for Mixed race students, over four years, compared to White students. **(Risk Indicator (RI) 21: There is a gap over four years in attainment for Asian students of 25.7pp, for Black students of 30.4pp, and for Other ethnicities of 16pp, and for Mixed race students of 5.6pp, compared to White students.)**
31. Data is too small to see any progression gaps.

## Additional data

In this section we share additional data (outside the Office for Students' dataset) which we have considered in evaluating the risks our students face.

### Differences in experience for equity groups

32. Our current Access and Participation Plan involves offering additional support to students to help them in their academic work, pastoral and career work. These are generally designed with various access options; a one-to-one, conversation or face-to-face option, and an online or "self-serve" option. A review of use of these services shows us that this is helpful in appealing to different groups, but some groups are barely accessing these services at all:
  - a. Disabled students are either equally likely or more likely (than non-disabled students) to choose one-to-one, conversation or face-to-face options. These include AIM study skills group or individual tutoring, or one-to-one careers appointments.
  - b. Non-disabled students are more likely than disabled students to choose online, self-serve options such as Studiosity writing feedback, and online careers advice.
  - c. Mature students are far more likely than young students to access all forms of support.
  - d. Female students are far more likely than male students to access any form of support.
33. The Teaching Excellence Framework data dashboard (Office for Students, 2022a) shows that:
  - a. whereas the University is materially above benchmark for *Teaching on my Course* for students with no disability, it is in line with benchmark for disabled students.
  - b. Male students are materially above benchmark for *Teaching on my Course* and *Academic Support* which may imply that issues with male student retention are more pragmatic, societal and systemic than classroom or teaching-based.
  - c. IMD Q1-2 and Free School Meal students are scoring more materially above benchmark for *Teaching on my Course* than their more advantaged peers.
  - d. There are no significant indicators that imply there are issues for ethnic minority students.
  - e. On Assessment and Feedback there are some small gaps for students eligible for Free School Meals and Disabled students, on both of which a higher proportion of the more advantaged group falls materially above benchmark, potentially showing that inclusive and clear assessments could be required.
34. The National Student Survey 2023 shows some gaps in results for equity groups. (Office for Students, 2023c). In particular:
  - a. IMD Q1 students rate several aspects of the course worse than all other IMD quintiles, most notably organisation and management, fairness of marking and giving feedback.
  - b. Students with cognitive and learning difficulties mark staff less strongly at explaining things, as well as marking the organisation of the course lower.
  - c. Students with sensory, medical and physical impairments score organisation, marking, and the balance of independent and directed study less highly.
  - d. Male students score similarly to female students except for on the balance of directed and independent study where they score lower.
  - e. There are no significant trends in NSS scores for young vs mature students apart from slightly lower scores for organisation and learning resources.

35. In our Student Experience Survey 2021, we found a strong correlation between positive feelings of belonging and finding the intellectual challenge of the course appropriate. This means we recognised and shared that intellectual challenge is a key measure of belonging. In the same survey 2022-23, 71.1% of Disabled students found the intellectual challenge “the right amount” compared to 86.26% of non-disabled students. (Plymouth Marjon University, 2023). There are higher proportions finding it both too hard and too easy. (Note that disabled students were more likely to agree the **amount** of work was appropriate.)
36. On their Personal Development Tutor, 55.56% of disabled students agree that “they understand me and my needs” compared to 66.48% of non-disabled students, a gap of -11pp. There is little gap on how positively they have scored pastoral, academic and group working support, so this gap is about personal needs, not general support.
37. Considering someone they work most closely with, 81.87% of non-disabled students agree that “they do a good job for me” compared to 68.89% of disabled students, a gap of -13pp.
38. In extra-curricular work, disabled students are very active. They are more likely to:
  - a. be a course rep, (22% vs 9% of non-disabled)
  - b. regularly volunteer (13.6% vs 6.6% non-disabled)
  - c. be in a club or society, (49% vs 40% non-disabled)
  - d. work because they find their job fulfilling (42% vs 31% non-disabled)
  - e. find extra-curricular elements of their course above their expectations: levels of confidence-raising, transferable skills, exposure to workplaces and job application skills.
39. In asking about confidence in various transferable skills, disabled students did not differ a great deal to non-disabled students. However, 44% of disabled respondents were “confident they could apply for a stretching job”, compared to 58.8% of non-disabled students, a gap of 14.8%.

**Risk Indicator (RI) 22: IMD Q1 students score the NSS lower on several measures, demonstrating there is a risk to them enjoying a fulfilling student experience, with a subsequent risk in retention, completion and attainment.**

**Risk Indicator (RI) 23: Disabled students are less likely to find the intellectual challenge of their degree appropriate, and this represents a risk to feelings of belonging, with some risk to attainment.**

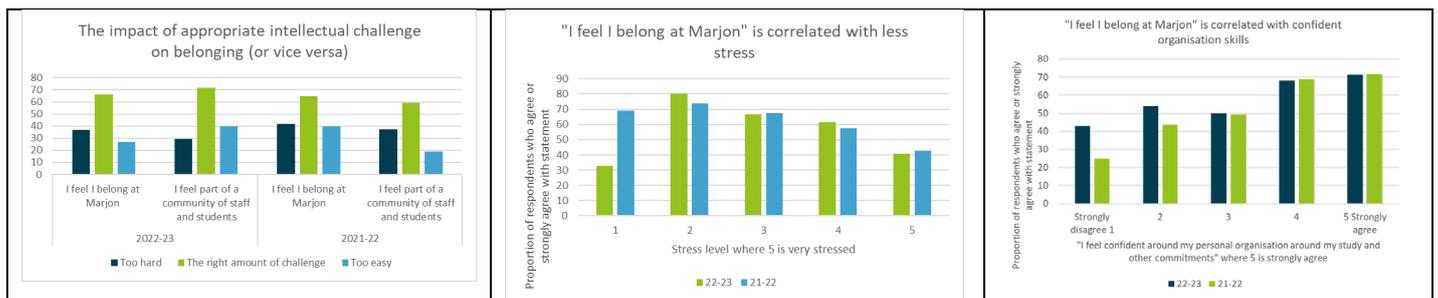
**Risk indicator (RI) 24: Disabled students are active in their extra-curricular activities but are finding some elements of their academic work lacking in understanding their needs and appropriate support.**

**Risk indicator (RI) 25: Despite good extra-curricular activity and work experience, disabled students are less confident applying for a stretching job than non-disabled students.**

### **Feeling of belonging, stress and mental health**

40. Entrants to Marjon declaring a mental health condition have increased from 4% in 2026 entry to 9.1% in 2021 entry. (Office for Students, Access and Participation dashboard, 2023a.)

41. Nationally, there are persistent gaps in continuation, completion and progression for students with a declared mental health condition (Office for Students, 2023a). Marjon has seen the continuation gap close, with no gap on the two-year average, and saw the completion gap close in the most recent year of data (2017-18) but there was a previous gap evidenced on the APP dashboard. We do need to remain vigilant to the potential gaps increasing again here, particularly with the feedback from our students about the way poverty and financial stress exacerbates (or causes) mental ill health.
42. The WonkHE/ Pearson *Building Belonging in Higher Education* report finds that “low mental health is linked to other negative survey responses across every aspect of university life”. (Blake, S., Capper, G. and Jackson, A. 2022, p.7)
43. Our Student Experience Survey (Plymouth Marjon University, 2023) finds similar results, finding that:
- Higher levels of stress correlate to lower belonging
  - Higher levels of agreement that the intellectual challenge of the course is appropriate correlate with higher belonging; conversely feeling that it is either too hard or too easy correlates with lower belonging.
  - Higher levels of agreement on *I feel confident in my personal organisation skills around study and other commitments* correlates to higher levels of belonging.



44. 57% of our students say they experience high levels of stress (level 4 and 5 where 5 = very stressed). This increased from 51% in 2021-2. (Plymouth Marjon University, Student Experience Survey, 2023.)
45. Main causes of stress are *studies in general* (75% of students), *financial worries* (51% of students), *personal relationships* (45% of students) and *future career or getting a job* (36% of students)
46. Financial worries as a cause of stress increased from 29% of students to 51% of students over two years.
47. In terms of belonging by different groups, our Student Experience Survey allows us to compare belonging measures across some key equity groups.
- First in family to attend higher education students** feel in the main very similar to all undergraduate students. There are some small negative variances on “I feel suitably supported” (-4pp) and “My views and opinions are valued” (-3.7pp), but all other variances are with 2.5pp and many are positive.
  - Disabled students** state some very positive results compared to the general undergraduate population of students. “My confidence has grown at Marjon, (+11.6pp), “I feel part of a community of staff and students” (+5.7pp), “I can relate to the Marjon Values (+4.1pp) but there are negative variances on “I settled in quickly” (-19.5pp) and “I feel suitably supported” (-7pp). “I feel I belong at Marjon” has 46.7% of disabled students *strongly* agreeing, compared to 33.5% of non-disabled students.

- c. **LGBTQ+ students** feel high levels of belonging, with all nine belonging questions scoring higher than the general population. **89.4%** agree Marjon feels like a safe place (11.7pp above all responses); **73.7%** feel part of a community of staff and students (8.3pp above all responses); **71.1%** feel Marjon challenges prejudice and inequality (8.9pp above all responses); 71% feel suitably supported (+12.9pp above all responses) and 73.7% feel their views and opinions are valued (+12.8pp above all responses).
- d. Our conclusion from this is that our work on belonging is working extremely well for equity groups, but we have more to do on the welcome and settle-in for disabled students and in ensuring suitable wide-ranging support for disabled students.
- e. A better predictor for risk of belonging, as noted in 42 above, could be understanding a student’s organisation skills, levels of stress and match with the intellectual challenge of their course.

**Risk Indicator (RI) 26: Our support services are supporting female, mature and disabled students relatively well, but young students and male students are accessing support less, which combined with lower attainment rates indicates a risk to equality of opportunity.**

**Risk Indicator (RI) 27: There is a significant variance for disabled students on how quickly they settled in, representing a risk to belonging and to retention in their first few weeks.**

**Geographical factors**

- 48. Research shows that schools located in places isolated by rural or coastal locations can experience significant challenges in teacher recruitment and retention, cultural isolation and expectations and opportunities for young people. (Ovenden-Hope & Passy, 2019).
- 49. The percentage of children in Plymouth meeting the expected standard at the end of primary school has declined post-pandemic. It is now ahead of the South West and England benchmarks, but this may show an ongoing impact of coronavirus coming through young cohorts.

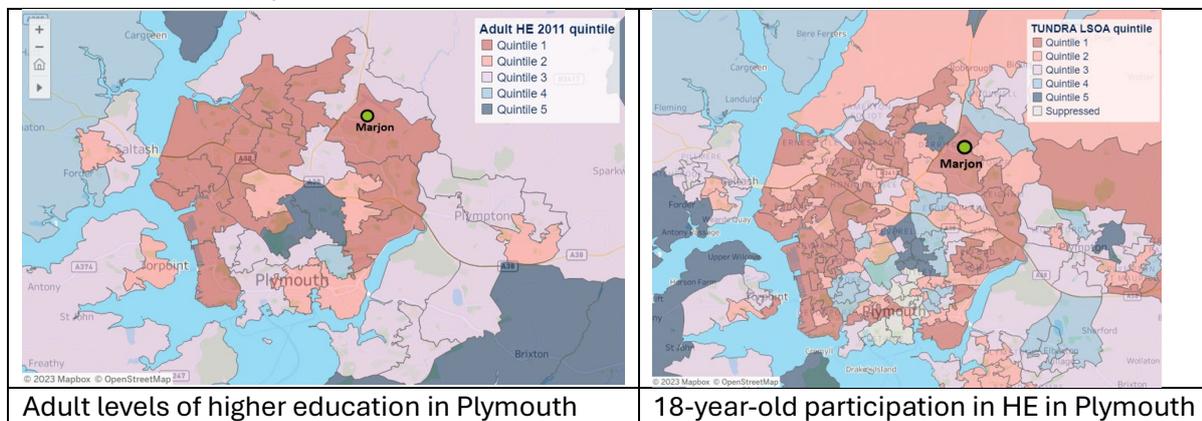
Percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths (combined) for 'Key stage 2 attainment by region and local authority' in England, Plymouth and South West between 2016/17 and 2021/22 (No normal exams in 2019-21 due to Covid-19 pandemic)							
		2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
South West	Plymouth	60%	63%	64%	no exam	no exam	59%
	South West	60%	63%	64%	no exam	no exam	57%
England		62%	65%	65%	no exam	no exam	58%

[School Attainment.pdf \(plymouth.gov.uk\)](https://www.plymouth.gov.uk/school-attainment)

- 50. At Key Stage 4, Plymouth has generally scored lower than the national average, but “*Last year (2021), we have for the first time achieved better than the national average KS4 attainment 8\* and basis English and Maths pass rates.... This year’s (2022) outcomes of Attainment 8 and Progress 8 were historically best in Plymouth since the accountability measures were introduced in 2014.*” (Plymouth City Council, 2022).
- 51. National research consistently points to the attainment gap. For Devon, the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers at the end of secondary school is 19.5 months, and for

Cornwall, 21.5, higher than the national disadvantage gap of 18.8 months. In Plymouth, the gap is improving significantly, and was at 18.9 months in 2022, an improvement of 5.5 months since 2019, which is the strongest Local Authority improvement in the country (Education Policy Institute, 2024).

- 52. One of our target areas, Torbay, is in the higher three Local Authorities for the gap widening across school phases, with a gap by the end of secondary school of 27.7 months for disadvantaged children.
- 53. The attainment gap is persistent at Foundation Stage and end of primary school. Whilst Plymouth’s improvement is good cause for cheer, for many of our prospective students, both in Plymouth and in our wider catchments, persistent poverty will be a key factor in school attainment and their ability to reach higher education.
- 54. The South West has the second lowest rate of 18-year-old HE participation in England at 31.2%, with only the North East lower. (UCAS, 2024).
- 55. The Marjon campus is located in a catchment with very low Higher Education participation. (Office for Students, 2022b):



**Risk Indicator (RI) 28: The Marjon campus sits in a geographical area with extensive coastal and rural isolation, deprivation of opportunity, and low participation in higher education. This represents a risk to access.**

- 56. Place also matters for graduate outcomes. The Office for Students’ Insight Brief “Place Matters: Inequality, Employment and the Role of Higher Education” (Office for Students 2021) maps the outcomes for students by area and shows that students in Plymouth are graduating into some of the lowest outcomes in the country. As the report states: “There are more well-paid graduate jobs in London and the south east of England, meaning that those who do not want to move to these areas because of family and caring responsibilities, and connection with their local community, have fewer opportunities.” (p. 4) This is a challenge identified in workshops by our *Futures* team that they hear about regularly: graduates who cannot move location, looking for graduate-level work in locations which are isolated from many opportunities.

Figure 3: Map of Longitudinal Education Outcomes quintiles

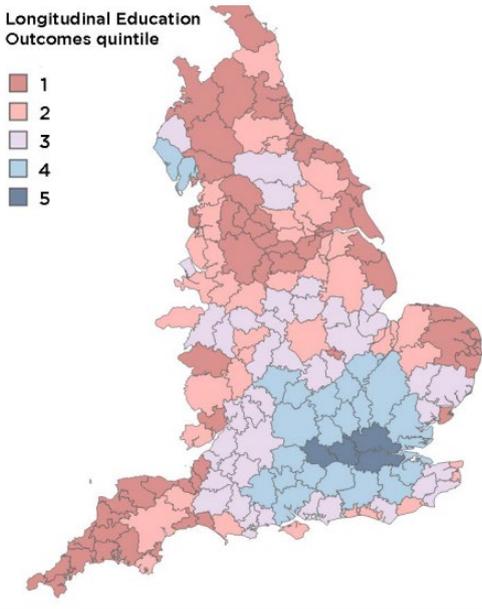
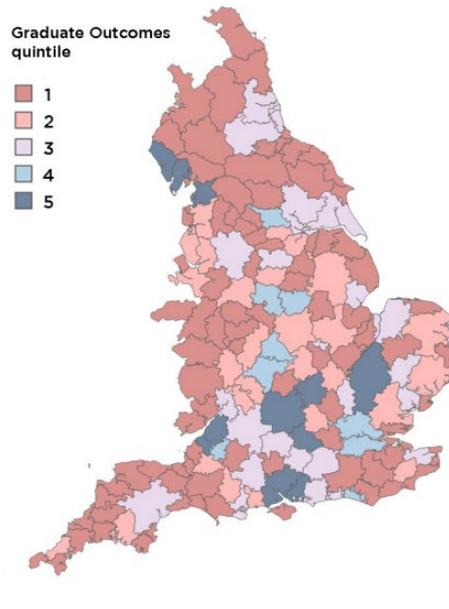


Figure 4: Map of Graduate Outcomes quintiles



57. Despite the geographical challenges, the national Graduate Outcomes survey (HESA, 2024) does however show that Marjon graduates have a higher proportion of positive graduate outcomes (97% in activities which are not unemployment compared to 94% nationally) and significantly more likely than national graduates to find their current activity is meaningful (52% strongly agree vs 42% national HEPs); to find it fits with their future plans (43% strongly agree vs 38% national HEPs) and to be using what they learnt in their degree (39% strongly agree vs 29% national HEPs). This means that they are proportionately happy in their outcomes.

### Changing financial situation for students

58. Nationally, students are struggling more with finances, and this is identified as the number one risk to equality of opportunity at Marjon.

59. In England the Maintenance Loan is now the lowest in real terms in seven years and falls short of covering estimated national student living costs by £439 a month – up from £340 a month the previous year. (Brown, L. 2022)

60. The maximum Maintenance Loan is £9978 for students living away from home, outside London. At Marjon, a first year in our halls would pay £5566, including a £820 dining in card. On the maximum Maintenance Loan, that would leave £4412 left for the year (£367/ month).

61. The threshold for the maximum Maintenance Loan has been frozen at £25,000 since 2008, meaning far fewer students qualify, and more are expected to be funded by their families.

- a. At Marjon, there were 325 students on the maximum Maintenance Loan in 2021, but 251 in 2022, a reduction of 23% in one year, with the most significant reduction (c.-50 students) amongst mature students.

62. A recent HEPI report summarises various sector research and reporting into the cost of living crisis for students (Freeman, 2023): “...around half of students now saying they have financial difficulties”. (Office for National Statistics, 2023, cited in Freeman, 2023) One-quarter of students regularly go without food and those in London and from marginalised communities, such as disabled, estranged

or care-experienced students, are more likely to report that they do so<sup>ii</sup> (Russell Group Students' Union, 2023 cited in Freeman, 2023). Other data suggest one-in-ten students have used a food bank<sup>iii</sup> (Brown, L. 2022 cited in Freeman, 2023). More than half have stopped taking part in extracurricular activities because of the cost of doing so<sup>iv</sup> (Russell Group Students' Unions, 2023; Carter, 2023; Freeman, 2023). The crisis appears to be weighing on applicants' minds as well, with up to a third now considering living at home". (Shao, 2023 cited in Freeman, 2023).

63. At Marjon, feedback from our student consultations is that their households cannot afford to support them (although the government is expecting them to). A student living on campus, from a household with two full time workers bringing in c.£50,000 between them (i.e. two relatively low salaries) would receive £6412 maintenance loan, leaving them with just £70/ month to live on, unless they work, or their family can find budget to support them. Students often tell us how emotive it can be when a parent's partner's income is expected to fund their studies, even if they barely know the partner and they live away from home.
64. Students told us they are working longer hours in order to support the significant cost increases in the family home, and this is backed up in our quantitative survey.

### **Students are working long hours in paid work**

65. The HEPI/ Advance HE Student Experience Survey demonstrates that 55% of students are now in paid work; a figure that was slowly rising from 35% to 42% between 2015 and 2020, but has since risen rapidly. (Neves, J. *et al.*, 2024).
66. At Marjon, our own Student Experience Survey 2022-3 shows 75% of our students are in paid work, with a further 10% looking for work or between jobs. (In Spring 2021, mid-lockdowns, 44% were currently in paid work with 15% actively seeking work, i.e. already an outlier then.)
67. 30% of Marjon students work more than 16 hours a week (two shifts) and 18% work more than 20 hours a week, meaning that alongside a full-time degree they have very little time for extra-curricular activities, volunteering, or any relaxation.
68. We have heard directly from students that they are missing classes in order to take up paid work. The HEPI report quotes the Office for Students' Access and Participation Plan Risk Register stating that half of undergraduate students report that they missed classes in 2022/23 to do paid work. (Office for Students, 2023)
69. Finances have become the second biggest cause of stress for our students (after their studies in general): finances were named as a main cause of stress for 51% of students this year, up from 29% in 2021. (Plymouth Marjon University, Student Experience Survey 2023).
70. The number of hours that "working students" work has not really changed since 2021. 55% (of our students who work) work fewer than 10 hours per week, and this is unlikely to affect their studies (and indeed should be helpful for future employability). But there are *many more students* working, and of those working, they are doing it for more financially-driven reasons: of those students who work, 72% agree that *I work because I need the money to support me at university*, up from 57% in 2021. 43% agree *it is hard to balance my studies and my job*, up from 37% in 2021.
71. The key differences vs 2021 are the numbers working, (85% in or seeking work, vs 59% two years ago) and in the impact and positivity of that work. The anecdotal feedback is that for a sizeable minority of students, "*even with the amount of work I do, I just can't manage.*" In short, for more students, paid work is now less an opportunity to develop experience, but instead an absolute necessity and chore which impacts significantly on their studies.

### **Hardship funds are insufficient to cover the funding gap**

72. Hardship funds make a significant difference to students and help them to stay studying. In a 2023 survey to those who had received hardship funds, 59% of students said before applying, they had “considered withdrawing from university due to financial difficulties”. Since receiving the award only 14% said they had since considered withdrawing or interrupting.
73. If they had not been successful in getting the award, they were asked what their options would have been to resolve their difficulties (most considered multiple options). 50% said withdrawing from studies, 45% said working more hours, 41% said borrow from friends or family; 36% said interrupting; 27% said using personal loans or credit cards.
74. Around 1/3 of applications to the University Hardship Fund cannot be supported. The students now in most financial need are those who need to live at home as they cannot afford accommodation, who get little government or family support, and need to fund almost all their costs of commuting, living and studying through paid work.
75. Increasing numbers of our courses require very long hours of work on placements and so they cannot manage paid work as well. This particularly impacts health and teaching courses and can lead to drop-out.
76. In the UCAS Student Decision Survey this year to our applicants, when they are asked about what the critical factors were in making their decision about which university to choose, “incentives to make firm choice” have increased as an **extremely important** factor - from 11% in 2021, to 13% in 2022, to 15% in 2023.

**Risk Indicator (RI) 29: Increasing numbers of students are in paid work, (75%, with another 10% between jobs) and 43% agree *it is hard to balance my studies and my job*. Several data points imply this represents a risk to retention and attainment.**

## Assessment of Risks to Equality of Opportunity faced by our students

29 risk indicators are identified above. These key risk indicators have been shared at various discussion points and committees from September 2023 to March 2024.

To consider how these data points might indicate most pressing risks for students, we ran six workshop groups to ask students and staff to identify the key risks. They were presented with the OfS dashboard risk indicators (i.e. the hard outcomes-based indicators) as part of these workshops.

They then discussed and scored the 12 key risks from the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register: how they manifest, what it feels like for students, how **likely** they are for our population, and the severity of the **impact** if they manifest.

The resulting risk assessments (x 6) were scored and prioritised in a risk assessment matrix. A clear outlier risk of **cost pressures** was seen as the single biggest risk to equality of opportunity for our students, with other risks scored as below:

Results of Key Risks to Equality of Opportunity workshops	Sum of groups		
	Likelihood	Impact	Total
Risk 10: Cost pressures	3.0	3.0	9.0
Risk 7: Insufficient personal support	2.3	2.7	6.3
Risk 8: Mental health	2.2	2.8	6.3
Risk 12: Progression from higher education	2.2	2.4	5.6
Risk 1: Knowledge and skills	2.3	2.2	5.2
Risk 2: Information and guidance	2.0	2.2	4.7
Risk 11: Capacity issues	2.0	2.4	4.6
Risk 3: Perception of higher education	2.2	1.8	4.3
Risk 6: Insufficient academic support	1.8	2.3	4.3
Risk 5: Limited choice of course type and delivery mode	2.0	1.5	3.5
Risk 9: Ongoing impacts of coronavirus	1.4	1.8	2.6
Risk 4: Application success rates	1.2	2.0	2.5

In the discussions, risks tended to be grouped into themes and scored together. The themes were, broadly as listed below, with some overlap of EORR risks:

- Risk Theme 1: Cost pressures (EORR risk 10)
- Risk Theme 2: Pre-University support and transition (EORR risks 2, 3, 4, 9)
- Risk Theme 3: Belonging, mental health and personal support (EORR risks 5, 6, 7, 8, 9)
- Risk Theme 4: Curriculum Design and offer (EORR Risks 4, 10, 11 and 12)

Below, the 29 risk indicators from the data review are shared, with the comparison of which risks (in groups 1-4 as mentioned above) might be a cause of the risk indicator data. The risks, within the Risk Themes above, are then detailed.

### Additional detail on Risk Themes

Risk category	Risk Description and how this manifests	Equality of Opportunity <a href="#">Risk Register</a>
<p><b>Risk Theme 1:</b>  <b>Cost pressures:</b>                      Personal finance is a significant barrier to a student’s success.</p>	<p><b>Risk indicator:</b> Since the cost-of-living crisis, students from more socially and economically disadvantaged groups are experiencing gaps in outcomes across the life stages. The proportion of the intake eligible for free school meals is reducing at Marjon, and students from areas of higher deprivation have lower access rates, continuation rates, lower attainment rates and lower rates of good graduate outcomes than more economically-advantaged students.</p> <p><b>Risk:</b> The EORR suggests that this indication of risk may be caused by sector-wide risks relating to cost pressures, including undertaking more paid part-time work, financial concerns causing poor mental health and students having to support families.</p> <p><b>Manifestation of this risk:</b> Potential applicants experiencing multi-generational poverty face limited access to information and guidance, inability to attend open days, limited ability to focus on grades due to paid work and unsuitable home conditions, and resource challenges within schools. With only 31% of 18 year olds entering HE, potential applicants may be led to believe that university is not for “people like them”. With slim resources, not all students will get equal access to HE advice and resources. Potential applicants may experience a very strong regional strategic focus on Levels 1-3 “skills” and a belief that university is not vocational or skills-based. Both mature and young students increasingly say they struggle to face the long-term debt, and the time off full-time earning, as the low wages in the South West means they need all family members earning to support their family home. Students may also increasingly already be in significant debt. Current students face a complex balance of needing to work increasing hours in paid work, both to support themselves and their families back home, rendering them less able to focus on and enjoy studies, or to take part in enriching extra-curricular experiences. Students also have less experience within their</p>	<p><b>Risk 10 – Cost pressures</b></p>

	<p>support network to call upon for applications advice for both university and the graduate job market.</p> <p><b>Student groups who are most affected at Marjon:</b> First in family, Students from low-income households, Disabled students, Mature students, Commuter students, Service children, Care experienced students, Estranged students, Students with parental responsibility, All ethnic groups, All religions, All sexual orientations and genders, Young carers.</p>	
<p><b>Risk theme 2: Pre-university or outside university support and transition:</b> students may have background experiences which bring additional barriers to success</p>	<p><b>Risk indicators:</b> Marjon has lower than average proportions of students eligible for Free School Meals and students from ethnic minorities. Marjon also has some very high proportions of disabled students, mature students and students from postcodes less represented in higher education, and for these students there are some gaps in outcomes. There is lower continuation, completion and attainment for students from less financially privileged backgrounds, and for mature students.</p> <p><b>Risk:</b> These indications of risk may relate to perception of (and expectations for) higher education, and insufficient personal and academic guidance in the period prior to higher education and during the transition into higher education. There may also be some risk from ongoing impacts of coronavirus as students impacted by covid, by lockdowns, by lost learning or by low attendance at school progress into higher education.</p> <p><b>Manifestation of this risk:</b> Students making large sacrifices to study (seeing that each hour could be an hour earning) need higher levels of certainty that it will pay off (financially) and this is increasingly difficult in our specialisms of public services, professional and community sector roles. Staff in both schools and universities need to work strategically to ensure students can see the longer-term picture, that prospective students can plan for a return on their investment and every aspect of university is “worth it”.</p> <p><b>Student groups who are most affected at Marjon:</b> First in family, Students from low income households, Disabled students, Mature students, Service children, Care experienced students.</p>	<p><b>Risk 1</b> Knowledge and Skills <b>Risk 2</b> Information and Guidance <b>Risk 3</b> Perception of Higher Education <b>Risk 4</b> Application Success Rate <b>Risk 5</b> Limited Choice of course type and delivery mode <b>Risk 9</b> Ongoing impact of coronavirus</p>
<p><b>Risk theme 3: Belonging,</b></p>	<p><b>Risk indicators:</b> Numbers of students with mental ill health, both diagnosed and including less medical issues such as loneliness or short-term depression, are increasing. Whilst Marjon has very high levels of</p>	<p><b>Risk 6</b> Insufficient academic support</p>

<p><b>mental health and personal support:</b> students may struggle to connect with peers or academics due to feelings of belonging, their mental health or stretched resources</p>	<p>belonging from most under-represented groups, there are still gaps for students who are commuters or who are less able to 100% commit to the university experience. There is a gap in attainment for students with cognitive and learning difficulties, and gaps in progression into graduate level jobs for students with multiple disabilities, and students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.</p> <p><b>Risk:</b> Evidence suggests that this is caused by ongoing impacts of coronavirus, insufficient academic or personal support, and mental health, as well as recognised longer-term impacts of austerity and social media.</p> <p><b>Manifestation of this risk:</b>  Students who are first in family into higher education or from disadvantaged backgrounds may not be able to prioritise, or be financially able to take part in, extra-curricular activities.  Whilst study skills support for those with cognitive and learning difficulties is well-regarded, some students may not ask for or take up pastoral or academic support due to mental ill health, stigma, lack of feeling of belonging.  As complex needs increase but without more funding, capacity of staff and funding may be limited to those in most extreme need, (for example welfare, funding) meaning some students do not gain support. Students with multiple impairments find that some employers do not understand how to apply for access support, or they discriminate. Some students with long-term illnesses where symptoms fluctuate find that work is too inflexible. Students do not know which employers are disability-friendly, and the best way to manage the process of disclosure of disability is not always clear.</p> <p><b>Student groups who are most affected at Marjon:</b>  Students from low-income households, Disabled students, Mature students, Commuter students, Black, Asian, Mixed or other ethnicities</p>	<p><b>Risk 7</b> Insufficient personal support  <b>Risk 8</b> Mental Health  <b>Risk 9</b> Ongoing impacts of coronavirus  <b>Risk 12</b> Progression from Higher Education</p>
<p><b>Risk theme 4: Curriculum Design and offer:</b></p>	<p><b>Risk indicators:</b> Students from IMD quintile 1 have lower completion and attainment rates, than those from more privileged backgrounds. Mature students have lower completion rates than younger students.</p>	<p><b>Risk 5</b> Limited Choice of course type and delivery</p>

<p>courses may not be designed to suit students with more complex lives</p>	<p><b>Risks:</b> Evidence suggests this can be caused by systemic higher education issues such as the course design and offer being unsuitable and inflexible for more complex lives.</p> <p><b>Manifestations of this risk:</b> Students from under-represented groups experience practical and systemic barriers to access and success which are easier to overcome for more privileged students. Potential applicants have working or caring responsibilities, but there may be no flexible, part-time, evening, work-based or apprenticeship option available. The course structure and timetable may not suit students with other responsibilities, for example assessments coinciding, or timetables not being set firmly in advance. The assessments or teaching may not be sufficiently inclusive for students from equity groups, and students may not find the curriculum or reading list to be robustly diverse. The curriculum design may not enable students to develop a strong enough connection to their peers to get support when they need it.</p> <p><b>Student groups who are most affected at Marjon:</b> First in family, Students from low-income households, Disabled students, Mature students, Care experienced students, Carers, Parents</p>	<p>mode <b>Risk 10</b> Cost pressures</p>
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Summary of risk indicators detailed above, mapped to key groups of risks, ordered by lifestyle.

Risk Indicator	Indication of risk	Student characteristics	Lifestage	Risk group 1: Cost pressures	Risk group 2: Pre-University support and transition	Risk group 3: Curriculum Design and offer	Risk theme 4: Belonging, mental health and personal support
ACCESS							
4	In 2021 12.3% of students entering Marjon were eligible for free school meals, a reduction from 18.1% in 2018.)	Free School Meals Socio-economic	Access	x	x		
8	The proportion of students from the most deprived areas has reduced over the last four years, against the sector trend. In 2021, 12.2% of students came from IMD Q1 compared to 15.3% in 2017.	Index of Multiple Deprivation Q1 Socio-economic	Access	x	x		
18	There is a low and decreasing proportion of students entering Marjon who are not White, with 95.6% of entrants in 2021 being White.	Ethnicity	Access		x	x	x
28	The Marjon campus sits in a geographical area with extensive coastal and rural isolation, deprivation of opportunity, and the second lowest participation in higher education in England. This represents a risk to access.	Socio-economic	Access	x	x		
29	Increasing numbers of students are in paid work, (75%, with another 10% between jobs) and 43% agree <i>it is hard to balance my studies and my job</i> . Several data points imply this represents a risk to all lifestages.	Socio-economic	Access Continuation Completion Attainment Progression	x	x		

Risk Indicator	Indication of risk	Student characteristics	Lifestage	Risk group 1: Cost pressures	Risk group 2: Pre-University support and transition	Risk group 3: Curriculum Design and offer	Risk theme 4: Belonging, mental health and personal support
<b>RETENTION AND COMPLETION</b>							
1	There is a 3.1 percentage point gap (four-year average) in continuation for students from lowest participation in HE postcodes compared to the highest.	TUNDRA Q1 Socio-economic	Continuation	x		x	x
2	There is a 13.3 percentage point gap (four-year average) in completion for students from lowest participation in HE postcodes compared to the highest	TUNDRA Q1 Socio-economic	Completion	x		x	
5	There is a 12.1 percentage point gap (four-year average) in completion for students eligible for Free School Meals.)	Free School Meals Socio-economic	Completion	x			
9	There is a persistent gap in completion, averaging 13.2pp over four years, between students from most deprived and least deprived areas.	Index of Multiple Deprivation Q1 Socio-economic	Completion	x		x	
10	There is a persistent gap in completion, averaging 11pp over four years, between males from more deprived areas and females from more deprived areas.	IMD Q1-2 male	Completion	x		x	x
13	There is a 4.0 percentage point gap (four-year average) in continuation for mature students compared to young students.)	Age	Continuation	x			x
14	There is a 6.0 percentage point gap (four-year average) in completion for mature students compared to young students.)	Age	Completion	x			x
15	There is a 2.7 percentage point gap (four-year average) in completion for disabled students compared to non-disabled students.)	Age	Completion			x	x
19	There is a gap over four years in continuation for Asian students of 13.1pp and 10.2pp for Other ethnicities, compared to White students.)	Ethnicity	Continuation			x	x
20	There is a gap over four years in completion for Asian students of 5.9pp, for Black students of 6.1pp, and for Other ethnicities of 10.2pp, compared to White students.	Ethnicity	Completion			x	x
22	IMD Q1 students score the NSS lower on several measures, demonstrating there is a risk to them enjoying a fulfilling student experience, with a subsequent risk in continuation, completion and attainment.	IMD Q1	Continuation Completion Attainment	x	x	x	x

23	Disabled students are less likely to find the intellectual challenge of their degree appropriate, and this represents a risk to feelings of belonging, with some risk to attainment.	Disability	Continuation Attainment			x	x
24	Disabled students are active in their extra-curricular activities but are finding some elements of their academic work lack in understanding their needs and appropriate support, representing a risk to continuation and attainment.	Disability	Continuation Attainment			x	x
27	Disabled students are 19pp less likely to say that they settled in quickly, representing a risk to belonging and to retention in their first few weeks.	Disability	Continuation		x	x	

Risk Indicator	Indication of risk	Student characteristics	Lifestage	Risk group 1: Cost pressures	Risk group 2: Pre-University support and transition	Risk group 3: Curriculum Design and offer	Risk theme 4: Belonging, mental health and personal support
ATTAINMENT OF GOOD DEGREES							
6	There is a 9.2 percentage point gap (four-year average) in attainment for students eligible for Free School Meals.)	Free School Meals Socio-economic	Attainment	x		x	
11	There is a gap in attainment of 10pp over four years between students from most deprived and least deprived areas.	Index of Multiple Deprivation Q1 Socio-economic	Attainment	x		x	
16	There is a 4.3 percentage point gap (four-year average) in attainment of students with cognitive and learning difficulties compared to non-disabled students.)	Disability	Attainment			x	
21	There is a gap over four years in attainment for Asian students of 25.7pp, for Black students of 30.4pp, and for Other ethnicities of 16pp, and for Mixed race students of 5.6pp, compared to White students.	Ethnicity	Attainment			x	x
22	IMD Q1 students score the NSS lower on several measures, demonstrating there is a risk to them enjoying a fulfilling student experience, with a subsequent risk in retention, completion and attainment.	IMD Q1	Continuation Completion Attainment	x	x	x	x
23	Disabled students are less likely to find the intellectual challenge of their degree appropriate, and this represents a risk to feelings of belonging, with some risk to attainment.	Disability	Continuation Attainment			x	x
24	Disabled students are active in their extra-curricular activities but are finding some elements of their academic work lack in understanding their needs and appropriate support, representing a risk to continuation and attainment.	Disability	Continuation Attainment			x	x
26	Young students and male students are accessing support less than female, mature and disabled students, which, combined with lower attainment rates for young, male students indicates a risk to equality of opportunity.	Age Gender	Attainment		x	x	x

Risk Indicator	Indication of risk	Student characteristics	Lifestage	Risk group 1: Cost pressures	Risk group 2: Pre-University support and transition	Risk group 3: Curriculum Design and offer	Risk theme 4: Belonging, mental health and personal support
PROGRESSION AFTER UNIVERSITY							
3	There is an 11.6 percentage point gap (four-year average) in progression for students from lowest participation in HE postcodes compared to the highest.	TUNDRA Q1 Socio-economic	Progression			x	
7	There is a 6.3 percentage point gap (four-year average) in progression for students eligible for Free School Meals.	Free School Meals Socio-economic	Progression	x		x	
12	There is a gap in progression of 6.8pp over two years between students from most deprived and least deprived areas.	Index of Multiple Deprivation Q1 Socio-economic	Progression	x		x	
17	There is a 13.5 percentage point gap (four-year average) in progression of students with multiple impairments compared to non-disabled students.	Disability	Progression			x	
25	Despite good extra-curricular activity and work experience, disabled students are less confident applying for a stretching job than non-disabled students, representing a risk to progression.	Disability	Progression			x	x

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## **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.**

### **Intervention Strategy 1: Access**

1. Our activities here cover raising attainment; information, advice and guidance; and expanding provision.
2. Research by TASO for the Office for Students highlights the extent to which socio-economic disparities play a significant role in influencing educational outcomes and future progression to higher education. (TASO, 2023a). Strong underpinning evidence exists, therefore, in support of university-led efforts to reduce gaps in pre-16 attainment among students from lower socio-economic groups. In light of these findings, we intend to deliver a hybrid model of localised outreach, which combines national curriculum-aligned and study skills projects and activities with targeted AIG, delivered at key decision-making and transition points in the pre-application phase of the student lifecycle. Schools and colleges will be identified according to relevant TUNDRA, IMD and Progress 8 datasets, and according to relevant findings and recommendations from Plymouth City Council’s Education and Children’s Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.<sup>v</sup> By supporting attainment-raising amongst target learners within the local community; by delivering well-tailored advice, information and guidance and by removing those financial barriers, which prevent prospective students from engaging with campus-based opportunities, we will contribute to an increase in higher education progression among disadvantaged students during the life of the plan.
3. TASO’s review of evidence of Foundation Years finds no strong evidence for the effectiveness of foundation year programmes, but strong anecdotal evidence. (TASO, 2021). It finds that the cost can be off-putting, that ensuring belonging to the campus is important, and some evidence that Foundation programmes support good continuation into full degree programmes. We are exploring options with local organisations to increase the opportunities for students who are not yet academically ready for HE to understand the routes available to access our programmes.
4. TASO’s review of evidence of Information, Advice and Guidance for pre-entry students (TASO, 2023b) finds that IAG impacts those students who were on the margin of applying for HE, and is therefore most effective when combined with mentoring, coaching and role-modelling, summer schools and multi-intervention outreach. Our strategy therefore combines multiple approaches to ensure that potential students gain a wide-ranging experience of Marjon. One study (Burgess et al., 2021) found that up to 5 or 6 engagements was effective.
5. Wakeling and Mateos-González, in their 2021 Sutton Trust report “*Inequality in the highest degree? Postgraduates, prices and participation*” highlight that inequality remains at postgraduate level: “We find differences in progression rates to higher degrees across several different socioeconomic characteristics: graduates from less privileged backgrounds appear to be less likely to progress than their better-off counterparts.” The report also highlights the gap in earnings: “The postgraduate premium in the UK is slightly lower than the OECD average, with

holders of a master's or a doctoral degree earning around 20 percent more than their undergraduate counterparts." (Wakeling & Mateos-González, 2021). For this reason, part of our strategy around access to flexible courses includes ensuring there is a clear route for each degree, from Foundation stage through to PhD. Increasing the availability of postgraduate programmes to students from all backgrounds is critical to regional social mobility.

6. This Intervention Strategy also includes a core strand of financial support. We recognise that there is increasing anecdotal evidence that bursaries are a key part of allowing prospective students to access higher education and that concerns about the cost of living are putting off prospective students from choosing higher education.

## Intervention Strategy 2: Continuation and Completion

7. Our activities here cover support for transition; learning design; use of digital and data to improve the student experience and improve retention; mental health; and financial support.

### Curriculum framework: a) transition pedagogy

8. Transition into higher education is known to be challenging and there is evidence to suggest that, for students with equity characteristics, this transition can be particularly difficult. This is for several reasons: higher education culture reflects that of the middle classes (Devlin, 2013; Li and Jackson, 2018) and is therefore unfamiliar territory for equity students; equity students are less likely to have access to resources (Meuleman et al., 2015), or to financial support (Pollard, 2018), or professional networks (Peach et al., 2016), all which impact on their engagement and employment prospects (Jackson & Collings, 2018). Marjon students present mixed equity characteristics who would benefit from a supported, structured, and purposive transition experience, and thus transition requires special consideration when thinking through a new curriculum framework.
9. Student transition into higher education has been well documented in the last fifteen years (Birbeck, McKeller and Kenyon, 2021; Gravett, Kinchin and Winstone, 2020; Harris-Reeves, Pearson and Massa, 2022; Kift, 2009; Lizzio, 2006; Nelson, Creagh, Kift and Clarke, 2014; Smith, Hodgkin and Young 2022). Through these studies, transition has become a recognised pedagogic approach; 'an intentional and proactive approach to the first-year experience that "seeks to mediate the reality of commencing cohorts diverse in preparedness and cultural capital' (Kift 2009, p.12). Selected models for transition success have been considered, including:
  - Lizzio (2006) focuses on the student experience and identity development, highlighting key social and academic variables or 'senses' that predict first year satisfaction, engagement, and retention: connectedness, capability, resourcefulness, purpose and academic.
  - Kift (2009) presents some first-year curriculum principles: supporting students through transition, recognising diversity, designing teaching approaches and resources to support students, engagement of students in collaborative and creative learning in and out of

class, strategies for promoting assessment success, and evaluation and monitoring mechanisms that enable teachers to identify students at risk.

- Smith et al (2022) consider transition challenges related to academic knowledge, competences and identity; being and belonging at university, and digital access and student engagement.

10. Current research has recognised, however, that there are numerous transitions throughout the higher education journey. These include the entry to Levels 5 and 6, as well as transitions into placements, internships, and graduate employment. These transition points can influence student satisfaction, achievement, and retention in like ways to the Level 4 transition, and there is merit in implementing strategies to recognise, internalise and mitigate these impacts.
11. There is correlational evidence that entry to higher education is a critical point for disabled students, making transition support highly important. Safer et al. (2020) found disabled US college students who used support services targeted to them were more likely to persevere and perform better, especially if they used services during their first term at university.<sup>vi</sup>
12. Within our own research, we have seen that whilst disabled students have high levels of belonging, engagement and confidence, they have lower agreement on “I settled in easily”. (Student Experience Survey 2022-23, see Annex 1 para 47b).
13. The proposed approach considers past research and proposes a model suitable for this University, to be trialled and rolled out from 2025.

#### **Curriculum framework: b) learning design**

14. This section considers how our programmes are delivered and how we avoid barriers to success for students, particularly from equity groups. These barriers can include, for example, a timetable that is spread throughout the week or frequently changing, meaning paid work or caring responsibilities are harder to incorporate; digital poverty and literacy; and how online and offline learning are used to maximum benefit of students. These could alleviate barriers such as cost of commuting or difficulties working.
15. This section of our Curriculum Review therefore outlines suggestions for optimal learning design and offers the ‘how to’ or operational side of designing and delivering effective learning experiences for our students. To support fair and equitable participation in learning experiences for all our students, the design process is underpinned by several curricular and strategic expectations across the University:
  - The Marjon Learning Environment includes high-quality physical and online spaces, supported by appropriate technology and learning materials.
  - Informed by Universal Design for Learning (UDL, CAST) principles, all learning experiences are inclusive and equitable.
  - Characterised by engaging and high-impact educational practices.
  - Programme Teams have flexibility and responsibility to design learning activities that best suit their students and the needs of the programme.

- Operational aspects of the University (such as Academic Calendar, Timetabling, Estates, Computing Services) work in a timely manner to support the design of learning experiences.

16. Traditionally, most Marjon learning activities happened on campus. During the pandemic, these mostly shifted online. In the post-pandemic world, according to the Beyond Blended framework proposed in the JISC report by Beetham and MacNeil (2023), there are good reasons to offer a diverse ecology of learning in our curriculum offer. These include improving digital literacy, mirroring industry practices, and acknowledging the challenges of cost of living and commuting to campus. All modes of participation should offer the same high-quality learning experience to all students, recognising that pace and presence are key to engagement.

17. Block delivery is when curriculum content is delivered one or two modules at a time, taking place over a short period with summative assessment normally concluded before the next module begins. The benefits of block delivery for students are listed within a QAA report on Evaluating the Impact of Block Delivery (see <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/membership/collaborative-enhancement-projects/learning-and-teaching/evaluating-the-impact-of-block-delivery> for comprehensive and current synopsis of Block in the UK sector), which include:

- There is evidence that block delivery has benefits for students including timekeeping, promoting belonging, knowledge acquisition, assessment performance, student satisfaction, and engagement, and that benefits are greater for students from widening participation backgrounds.
- Block simplifies the number of activities students manage contributing positively to time management, which is one of the most cited factors contributing to students' consideration of leaving university without completing their studies.
- Block scheduling allows for extended class periods, potentially enabling sustained exploration of topics and immersive learning experiences.
- Many professional environments operate on project-based and extended work sessions. Block scheduling can help students acclimate to these settings, enabling the transition from academic to professional life.

18. This section of our activities therefore involves creating clear guidance around block delivery.

## Digital and data

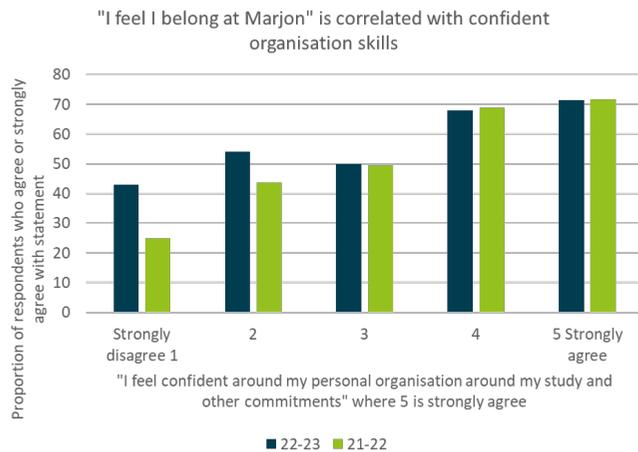
19. This strand focuses on the use of data and digitalised systems to support student retention, completion and attainment. In this stream of work, we will explore the key flags which highlight risk to individual student success; we will pilot different methods to intervene (e.g. student-led interventions vs academic-led vs student support-led); and we will review which interventions are most effective and are most appropriate and appreciated.

20. This strand is driven by The Mental Health Higher Education taskforce which is reviewing approaches to Wellbeing Analytics and identification of students at risk. As a smaller HEI, the costs of a full Wellbeing Analytics system are prohibitive, but we believe that we can use data much better in a low cost way to identify and support students. ([Identification of students at-risk \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/100000/identification-of-students-at-risk.pdf))

21. We will also explore how we can use data to highlight and intervene with key student groups at risk, either by demographic or by cohort and course.

## **Mental health**

22. Nationally, numbers of students declaring a mental health condition have increased from 33,500 in 2014-15 (1.79% of students), to 119,480 in 2021-22 (5.4% of students). The proportion was 4.89% in 2019-20, so the main growth predates the pandemic, but is still growing:  
<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-15>
23. The TASO “Rapid Review to support the development of the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register” summarises groups who are most likely to declare a mental health condition, which include: lower socio-economic status; women; mature students. These are groups which are highly represented in our student body. Possibly reflecting this, we have a significantly higher rate of mental health declaration than the sector: 7.9% of our students have a mental health condition compared to 4.9% in the sector. (Access and Participation data dashboard, Office for Students).
24. Our activity focuses on continuing the successful work of our Mental Health Working Group, which has good representation across the University and good interest from students. We have been part of the Student Minds’ Mental Health Charter, to network with other practitioners and learn from best practice. We are also active contributors to AMMOSSHE discussions on mental health support in order to learn from best practice.
25. Much of our work around mental health focuses on belonging; helping people (both staff and students) to settle in, find connections, and feel seen, heard and recognised. The WonkHE report: [Building Belonging in Higher Education: Recommendations for developing an integrated institutional approach \(wonkhe.com\)](https://www.wonkhe.com/reports/building-belonging-in-higher-education-recommendations-for-developing-an-integrated-institutional-approach) highlighted that there is a correlation between poor mental health and low levels of belonging. In our Student Experience Surveys (21-22 and 22-23) we see a strong correlation between levels of stress and “I feel I belong at Marjon”: low stress levels correlate with high belonging, and vice versa. Our Theory of Change therefore incorporates belonging and connection with a focus on reducing stress.
26. Our Curriculum Framework includes embedding essential skills such as personal organisation into the curriculum, after our finding in our Student Experience Surveys 2021-22 and 2022-23 in which we saw a correlation between “belonging” and “confidence in organisation skills”. This correlation was highlighted in 2022 and steps were taken through the Access and Participation Action Group to offer more organisation skills training. In 2022-23 the correlation persists; but is improving with those who score themselves lowest in organisation skills feeling markedly higher levels of belonging than this group did in 2021-2. For this reason, organisational skills will be part of our curriculum framework, so that the training is not just accessed by the keenest students, but is recognised as essential for all students.



27. A key new activity is working closely with the two other universities in Plymouth to engage the NHS in providing clear pathways and support for students. This reflects several reviews and case studies in other cities in which these partnerships have been shown to be successful:
- The Royal College of Psychiatry published this report in May 2021 which explains some of the issues and recommends a partnership approach: [Mental Health of Higher Education Students \(CR231\) \(rcpsych.ac.uk\)](https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/CR231)
  - Two Office for Students reports describe insights into this:
    - i. [Insights on joined up working between higher education and healthcare professionals on student mental health, based on a ten-month action learning set project \(officeforstudents.org.uk\)](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/insights-on-joined-up-working-between-higher-education-and-healthcare-professionals-on-student-mental-health-based-on-a-ten-month-action-learning-set-project)
    - ii. [Collaborative approaches between higher education and the NHS to support student mental health - Office for Students](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/collaborative-approaches-between-higher-education-and-the-nhs-to-support-student-mental-health-office-for-students)
  - The [Higher Education Mental Health taskforce](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/94844/nhs-he-partnerships-project-proposal) includes NHS partnership working as a key solution, described in the publication [NHS-HE Partnerships – Project Proposal \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/94844/nhs-he-partnerships-project-proposal)
28. These reports highlight some specific complexities for the student population which are often outside the remit of universities to resolve, and the evidence shows they can be improved by partnership working. These apply whether they are mature students not moving home, or students physically changing location and/ or turning 18. These issues are recognised across all three universities in Plymouth where collectively we believe a partnership approach could significantly help, and they include:
- Transitioning from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services to adult services
  - Transitioning from one location / NHS provider/ GP to another
  - In some cases, moving countries or towns, managing homesickness and cultural issues, which can include for example, issues around “belonging in” a university.
  - From 2024, more international students are managing without family support due to visa changes.
  - Taking control of their data and medical decisions age 18, without their parents being involved
  - Lack of clarity on who can provide support – e.g. NHS frequently say they are still studying therefore high functioning, therefore not high risk enough to get any NHS support.
  - Students can be discharged to university services with no sharing of information to inform the university (for example after a suicide attempt)

- Students must repeat information which can be distressing multiple times across both their university and the NHS services.
- Care can be duplicated due to not knowing what services are being accessed.
- Managing stress from studies, deadlines, group working and pressures due to the high costs
- Managing stress from living independently, getting on with flatmates
- Referrals from university support services can be made to inappropriate NHS services (and vice versa)
- Finding medical evidence from GPs can be too complex which is required before students can be put forward for Disability Students' Allowance assessments.

## Financial support

29. A number of financial concerns inhibit disadvantaged students' continuation through university to complete their programme, including: a) debt aversion among young people from working-class backgrounds is far more likely to deter them from applying to university than students from other backgrounds and to require a clearer line to return on investment; b) financial concerns with studying in universities further away can lead to 'undermatching' for high-attaining disadvantaged students as they are less likely to attend a high tariff Russell Group university inhibiting regional social mobility; and c), increases in the cost of living and its negative impact of higher education students, (Bolton & Lewis, 2024) with a report by the OfS in 2023 suggesting that almost one in five students had considered dropping out of university or college because of rises in the cost of living. (Office for Students, 2023c) and campus attendance also dropping due to travel cost concerns. (Office for National Statistics, 2023). Studies suggest that high percentages of students are significantly concerned about their finances and cutting spending on essentials such as food and energy bills as well as non-essentials such as social spending. A 2023 HEPI report (Freeman, 2023) summarises various sector research and reporting into the cost-of-living crisis for students:

“...around half of students now saying they have financial difficulties. [Office for National Statistics, 2023]. One-quarter of students regularly go without food and those in London and from marginalised communities, such as disabled, estranged or care-experienced students, are more likely to report that they do so. (Russell Group Students Unions, 2023). Other data suggest one-in-ten students have used a food bank. (Brown, 2022). More than half have stopped taking part in extracurricular activities because of the cost of doing so. The crisis appears to be weighing on applicants' minds as well, with up to a third now considering living at home.” (Shao, 2023).

30. These findings from across the sector resonate strongly within the Plymouth Marjon context. In our focus groups with students, cost of living was universally considered the biggest risk to equality of opportunity, having a significantly negative impact on the student experience for the vast majority of our population. Many students live in the local area, with their decision to study locally driven by financial constraints.

31. Our Student Experience Survey 2022-3 shows 75% of our students are in paid work, with a further 10% looking for work or between jobs. 30% of our students work more than 16 hours a week (two shifts) and 18% work more than 20 hours a week, meaning that alongside a full-time degree of c. 35 hours, they have very little time for relaxation, volunteering, and extra-curricular activities.

Commuter students tend to work in paid work for much longer hours than students who live on campus, which anecdotally is because they are also too financially constrained to consider living on campus.

32. We have heard directly from student representatives and academics that students are missing classes in order to take up paid work. The Office for Students' Risk Register states that half of undergraduate students report that they missed classes in 2022/23 to do paid work. (Office for Students, 2023b)
33. Finances have become the second biggest cause of stress for our students (after their studies in general): finances were named as a main cause of stress for 51% of students in 2022-23, up from 29% in 2021. (Student Experience Survey 2022-23).
34. The National Student Survey 2023 shows that IMD Q1 students rate several aspects of the course worse than all other IMD quintiles, most notably organisation and management, fairness of marking and giving feedback, demonstrating there is a risk to them enjoying a fulfilling student experience, with a subsequent risk in retention, completion and attainment.
35. This is impacting on student outcomes. We are seeing a significant gap in completion rates: the four-year average completion rate for students eligible for Free School Meals is 73.2% compared to 85.3% for those not eligible, leaving a 12.1 percentage point gap (four-year average) in completion for students eligible for Free School Meals. The FSM rate is also lower than the sector average. There has also been a historic gap in continuation, and internal data shows this is returning. Completion rates for students from the most deprived areas (IMDQ1) are significantly lower at 74.8% (four-year average) than those from least deprived areas at 88%, leaving a persistent gap in completion, averaging 13.2pp over four years, between students from most deprived and least deprived areas. When looked at by the intersection of sex and deprivation, we see that male students from IMD Q1 and 2 have a persistent gap in completion.
36. In all our focus groups, financial hardship was considered the most significant risk factor for students. It is important to note this is not just seen as affected a small proportion of students, for example care-experienced students, but the vast majority of the student population.
37. Some of the most significant changes are that hardship is affecting far more students who live in the family home, who also receive less maintenance grant. Hardship also affects apprentices significantly, and those working whilst studying.
38. The ONS report "Cost of Living and Higher Education Students, England: 30 January to 13 February 2023" states that: "More than three-quarters (78%) of students were concerned that the rising cost of living may affect how well they do in their studies; more than one-third (35%) of students reported they are now less likely to do further study after their course has completed."
39. Our financial support will focus on evaluating our hardship fund success and beginning a process to bring in philanthropic giving to increase funds. Currently, we have no income from philanthropy, which is unusual for most universities. We recognise the significant need of our students and that in a university with an unusual level of hardship, there is less funding per student in need.

40. Although not a causal link, overall, evidence points to the effectiveness of ‘needs-based’ financial support for disadvantaged students’ retention. Financial support is more effective when is targeted rather than universal. For such support to be effective, there is a clear need for appropriate bursary design, allocation and consideration of institutional context. Using data from 22 English universities, Murphy and Wyness (2016) have found that the decentralised nature of the bursary systems creates inequalities in bursary receipt. Indeed, universities with a higher proportion of disadvantaged students have to spread their resources amongst more students, limiting the amount that each student can get. On the other side, disadvantaged students with high A-level grades generally obtain larger bursaries since they are more likely to attend universities with more resources and a lower proportion of disadvantaged students.
41. Financial support is not proven to be effective on its own: for this reason, we will accompany it with a revised approach to academic tutoring - although studies comparing the impact of different strategies and financial support are not common, one study has found higher impact of faculty (not peer) mentoring support and retention and completion. Importantly, this is also a finding from a meta-analysis study. (Sneyers & De Witte, 2018)

### Intervention Strategy 3: Attainment

42. The activity in this section focuses on our work under the cover title of the Marjon Curriculum Framework. Two elements of this are already described within Intervention Strategy 2: Learning Design and Transition Pedagogy. This section focuses on give other elements of this plan: the Model of Educational Gain; introducing pedagogic principles to our teaching; assessment; peer assisted learning; and introducing curriculum-connected research.
43. The Marjon Curriculum Framework recognises the Office for Students’ (OfS) claim that ‘curriculum design, pedagogic approaches and resources are all of central importance in maximising students’ learning outcomes (Fung, 2024, p.37)’, and is designed to raise the profile of skills that underpin social justice and graduate success in an uncertain modern world. It recognises, celebrates, and builds upon the Marjon legacy of inclusivity and equality to spotlight the critical need for an equity-based curriculum to tackle disadvantage and mental health and enable Marjon student success. The Framework is informed by extant research from the USA, UK, and Australia, and has emerged from partnered discussions with the Marjon academic, professional services, and student community.
44. In 2018-19 the OfS reported that students who were eligible to receive free meals when they were at school had a lower rate - 13.0 percentage points - of achieving a first or upper-second class degree than students who were not eligible and were less likely to progress to highly skilled employment compared to students who were not on FSM.<sup>vii</sup> At Marjon, there is a decreasing, but still persistent gap in attainment rates: the four-year average attainment (first or 2.1) rate for students eligible for Free School Meals is 68.4% compared to 77.6% for those not eligible. This leaves us with a 9.2 percentage point gap (four-year average) in attainment for students eligible for Free School Meals, which is better than sector but significant. The FSM attainment rate is also lower than the sector average. This gap appears prior to university: in 2022, 47% of pupils eligible for FSM achieved a standard pass in both English and Maths GCSE compared to 75% of pupils not eligible. This was an attainment gap of around 28 percentage points. (Francis-Devine et al., 2023)

45. Given that prior attainment is a key predictor of future success, this Intervention Strategy 3: Attainment is supported by our Intervention Strategy 1: Access, in which we will focus efforts on creating a more seamless student journey from schools and college to Marjon in aspects of learning that have proven to have the highest impact. The OfS has outlined a number of activities universities can employ to support schools in raising attainment, including intervention related to meta-cognition and self-regulation. (Office for Students, 2022b).
46. There is also some evidence to suggest that disadvantaged pupils are less likely to use metacognitive and self-regulatory strategies without being explicitly taught these strategies. (Education Endowment Foundation, 2021). TASSO has also identified metacognitive strategies at both school and university to contribute significantly to attainment and thinking skills a strong predictor of academic achievement. Further, a growth mindset is positively related to attainment, with that relationship being stronger for students facing academic setbacks. (Thompson et al., 2022)
47. Some research indicates that an effective way of delivering academic skills support to students is by embedding those skills directly into module-level teaching (e.g. Gunn et al, 2011; Hill et al, 2010). When support is supplied by an ancillary service, many students do not benefit adequately from it (Wingate, 2006). They may worry they will be seen as failures, or they may be unable to self-diagnose and self-refer, or they may simply be unaware of the help available. These issues are particularly acute for students who sit within the Widening Participation remit, and this may well contribute to the attainment gap (Goldingay, Sophie et al, 2014).
48. This research is reflected at Marjon: we have a successful and popular series of study skills sessions which tend to be taken up by mature, female students. For some time, we have tried to attract younger, male and harder to reach students. A core part of our Curriculum Model is to embed these skills into the Curriculum.
49. Our Embedded Skills model is informed by ‘best practice’ recommendations (e.g. Bohemia et al; 2007; McWilliams et al, 2014). Foregrounding the constructive alignment of teaching, learning and assessment outcomes (Biggs and Tang, 2011) the Enhancement Team work collaboratively with academic colleagues to ensure that the interventions use appropriate discipline conventions and discourses (Lea and Street, 1998; Wingate and Tribble, 2012)

### **Curriculum framework: 1) Model of Educational Gain**

50. Educational gain, as described by Fung (2024) in her report for the Office for Students (OfS), refers to the measurable improvement in knowledge, skills, work-readiness, and personal development that students achieve during their higher education journey (Table 1). It extends beyond traditional metrics such as course completion and progression rates, encompassing broader aspects like personal growth and readiness for the professional world. This concept helps universities assess and enhance their teaching practices to better support student success, and enhances students’ understanding of, and self-efficacy in, their progress in higher education.

Component	Detail
Academic development	Such as gains relating to the development of subject knowledge as well as academic skills, for example critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, academic writing, and research and referencing skills
Personal development	Such as gains relating to the development of student resilience, motivation and confidence as well as soft skills, for example communication, presentation, time management, and networking and interpersonal skills.
Work readiness	Such as gains relating to the development of employability skills, for example teamworking, commercial awareness, leadership and influencing.

Table 1: TEF Guidance on Educational Gain (OfS 2022:31)

51. Marjon students already develop a rich array of subject and transferable skills and attributes through their Marjon degree programme, co, and extra-curricular activities. However, their ability to recognise, ‘surface’, and articulate their skills, particularly their transferable skills and attributes to employers, can be lacking (Futures, Curriculum Café). To mitigate this, and to form the basis for the Marjon articulation of educational gain, the Marjon Model of Educational Gain (MEG) has been developed and revised in partnership with Marjon staff and students (Figure 1). The MEG has several functions. It supports students in their personal and professional development, it provides a way to communicate externally the distinctiveness of a Marjon education and provides a structure to evidence educational gain for institutional and regulatory reporting.
52. The MEG design recognises that students develop gains across multiple curriculum domains (formal, extra and co), and suggests that in addition to disciplinary expertise, Marjon students gain across eight Attributes that are specific to the Marjon context (Table 2). Graduate attribute frameworks are common in higher education: they enhance employability, promote lifelong learning, and align education with industry needs. The Marjon Attributes are context-specific, grounded in our history of social justice and cognisant of our students’ characteristics. Prioritising these nine attributes in student development can support well-rounded, capable, and resilient future professionals.



53. The Marjon Attributes and associated skills have been informed by the following sources:
- Original TEF version of MEG attributes

- Partnered discussions with Marjon staff, students and the Student Union
- Marjon Student Colleague Skills Framework, run as part of the Access and Participation Plan Marjon Student Colleagues project, 2020-2025
- QAA benchmark statements
- Global Skills Taxonomy
- Local and regional social and economic drivers (e.g. Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership)
- National government strategies (Industrial, Data, Net Zero, etc.)
- Various 'future of work' reports (e.g. Future of Skills, 2023)

54. The Marjon Attributes will be relevant to all Marjon programmes of study. Academic staff will be expected to develop, at (re)validation, clear articulation of where and how students develop each attribute using learning outcomes and assessment as vehicles for this (with the recognition that attributes will feature to different extents dependent on programme). There are skills associated with each Attribute, with guidance on how they can be developed using the Pedagogic Principles and associated educational practices that have been shown to have the highest impact on student learning (Kuh, 2008). Programmes will include at least one high-impact educational practice in each Level.

### **Curriculum framework: 2) Pedagogic Principles**

55. Education is undergoing radical transformation in the 21st century with definitive shifts from content-based to skills-based curricula and from teacher-centred to learner-centred pedagogy (Singaram, Mayer & Oosthuizen, 2023; Krause, 2022). These changes are set within a wider context of disruptive forces, including the reconfiguration of post-pandemic society, the escalation of generative artificial intelligence, and the challenges and opportunities presented by the ongoing environmental emergency. These trends call for pedagogies that are enabling and responsive and underpin the focus of the third Curriculum Feature; pedagogic principles.

56. The identification of collective Pedagogic Principles that aligned with the university's current and aspirational practices were strongly supported in the partnered discussions with academic and professional services colleagues at Marjon. There was recognition that the inclusion of these; Caring & Inclusive, Flexible, Experiential & Reflective, Critical, Creative and Active & Collaborative, speaks to Marjon's values, underpin and support the central tenets of the Model of Educational Gain, and are reflective of, and responsive to, wider demand for more collaborative and creative skills worldwide (WEC, 2021).

### **Curriculum framework: 3) Inclusive Assessment**

57. Doing well in assessment is critical to students' sense of belonging, their perception of the university experience, retention status, and attainment and employment outcomes. Academic success validates students' efforts, boosting their confidence and overall satisfaction leading to a more positive university experience. Strong academic performance can also foster a sense of belonging. When students excel, they are more likely to engage in academic and social activities, building connections within the university community. This engagement helps them feel integrated and valued, strengthening their emotional ties to the institution which is a recognised

factor in student success (Nash, 2020; QAA 2021). In turn, retention rates are closely linked to both satisfaction and belonging (Gibbs, 2010).

58. Conversely, assessment is the single most stressful educational experience students are likely to have whilst at university and this is usually compounded for students with equity characteristics common in Marjon students. As mental health presents the highest safeguarding risk to our university community, we have an opportunity to place mental health and wellbeing central to the design and delivery of our assessments. Pressure on academic and professional services staff to support students with disabilities and mental health concerns continues to increase.
59. In addition, national changes to the funding for students with disabilities are being proposed, and the onus is likely to shift towards universities ensuring their needs are met through inclusive curricular practices rather than personalised support, as currently stands.
60. In tandem with these recognised benefits of positive experiences of assessment, there are local drivers for assessment reform. Moving forward, formal curriculum assessment will support the MEG by assessing subject knowledge (Disciplinary Expertise), but also explicitly recognising and assessing the seven other Marjon Attributes within the subject offer. There is a recognised institutional need to increase authenticity in assessment, reduce the assessment, marking and feedback load, and to have clear parameters for embedding AI use in assessment. Addressing these collective issues presents an opportunity to promote assessment practices that are reliable, inclusive and authentic.

#### **Curriculum framework: 4) Peer Assisted Learning**

61. Peer assisted learning (PAL) has been described as ‘the development of knowledge and skills through active help and support among status equals or matched companions’ (Carr et al., 2016). PAL has value for both the student leader in developing mentoring and communication skills and the student beneficiaries in receiving tailored support from students on advanced stages of the same course. PAL schemes are common across the HE sector (Ashwin, 2002; Keenan, 2014), and are of particular value in supporting transition and continuation for students with widening participation characteristics (Keenan, 2014; Nortcliffe et al., 2019).
62. Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) is student-to-student academic support. PAL can be formalised in a university through a recognised scheme with financial reimbursement and/or be offered more informally through pedagogical interventions within programmes, such as vertical learning.
63. This analysis is around the formalised form of PAL. The role of these trained PAL leaders is not to teach, but to facilitate collaborative learning. In this, students from Levels 5 and 6 are trained to become PAL leaders who facilitate group discussions typically with students from Level 4 or 5, which support academic topics, but also learning strategies more generally. PAL leaders are trained in appropriate communication and facilitation skills, and examples are available from universities across the UK.

64. There is evidence that PAL has value for both the PAL leader, who develops mentoring and communication skills (Williams and Reddy, 2016), and the student beneficiaries, who receive tailored support from students on advanced stages of the same course (Zhang and Maconochie, 2022). In addition, studies have consistently reported positive correlations between participation in PAL, successful transition, and enhanced retention. (Crowley-Cyr and Hevers 2021; Dixon and Gudan, 2000; Keenan, 2014; Lim, et al., 2016; Tibingana-Ahimbisibwe et al., 2020; Woolrych et al., 2020), particularly for students with widening participation characteristics (Keenan, 2014; Nortcliffe et al., 2019).
65. There is some compelling evidence of the benefits of PALS schemes for both PAL leaders and beneficiaries. Williams and Prida (2016) undertook a scoping review in healthcare education on the impact of PAL on student performance. In this, PAL leaders showed the most significant improvement in objective outcomes. All included studies that focused on the performance outcomes of PAL leaders found the role improved academic performance using objective and measurable outcomes (Iwata et al., 2014; Knobe et al., 2010; Peets et al., 2009; Perry et al., 2010; Williams and Fowler, 2014). Capstick and Hurne, (2004) surveyed PAL leaders in Bournemouth University to ascertain perceived benefits which included skills development (particularly communication skills and self-confidence), revision of first year material to underpin second year studies, enjoyment, useful for placements, jobs, and CVs, and demonstrating a wider involvement in university (fostering belonging).
66. Numerous studies have reported correlations between participation in PALS and enhanced retention. (Crowley-Cyr and Hevers 2021; Dixon and Gudan, 2000; Keenan, 2014; Lim, et al., 2016; Tibingana-Ahimbisibwe et al., 2020; Woolrych et al., 2020). Capstick and Hurne, (2004) reported that PAL participants had a significantly lower withdrawal rate on course compared with non-participants. There are other institutional benefits such as cost efficiency and reputation building.
67. In considering student beneficiaries, Abedini et al., 2013; Blank et al., 2013, Burke et al, (2007), Perkins et al., (2002) and Zhang, and Maconochie (2022), all used control groups and concluded statistically significant enhancement of attainment outcomes for PALS participants. In the Capstick and Hurne, (2004) study, first year students reported that participation had value for adjusting to university life, studying and culture, the informality and opportunity for openness afforded by PAL sessions, the cooperative aspects of PAL sessions, having the value of the PAL Leaders' perspective, understanding course subject matter, assignment completion, awareness of course direction and expectations, developing study skills, and developing confidence with the course. This last point about confidence building is critically important in the PMU context where many of our students are from lower POLAR groups and are often the first to attend university, making confidence building key to retention.
68. At Marjon, this manifests in increased demand for student support services and personal tutoring. Yet despite institution-wide efforts to meet demand, the situation is critical: our counselling waiting list, for example, is the longest it has ever been. In this context, PAL could potentially provide tailored support for students identified as requiring additional support, and potentially ease pressure on student support services and personal tutors. There are existing PAL

type activities at Marjon, but these are not yet standard or embedded. Therefore, introducing a PAL scheme is proposed.

### **Curriculum framework: 5) Curriculum Connected Research**

69. Curriculum Connected Research (CCR) aligns the Marjon 2030 core business of *student success; research and knowledge exchange; and place and social purpose* to generate curriculum-based opportunities for impactful staff-led, student-informed research activity and outputs. Marjon is in the process of submitting for Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP) and has been pursuing staff development in research activities as part of that intention (PMU, 2020-25). The results of this are becoming evident. In 2021, Marjon made its inaugural REF submission with good results for the University, and in 2022, 42% of salaried staff were returned to HESA as active in 'Research and Advanced Scholarship Engagement' (PMU KPIs, 2022). However, early career researchers are struggling to gain experience, and established researchers funding, as Brexit, the cost-of-living crisis, and reduction of resource in real terms across the sector makes research funding difficult to secure. This situation is compounded by institutional idiosyncrasies, including the numbers of 'pracademic' staff from vocational backgrounds with limited research experience, and limited internal resources resulting in academic contribution and deployment structures prioritising teaching. In these circumstances, 'Curriculum Connected Research' offers possibilities for research and impact capacity building for academic staff with minimal funding through optimising research activity within core curriculum activity.
70. Curriculum Connected Research is an addition to staff subject focused research. It is an umbrella term for curriculum-based staff led research activity which has potential impact for students, the discipline, the institution and partners. Curriculum Connected Research constitutes departmental/ institutional specified pedagogic, and discipline-based longitudinal research projects.
71. Pedagogic (or higher education) research: Pedagogic research aims to enhance learning outcomes, through the investigation of teaching methods, high-impact educational practices and student experience. It focuses on understanding how students learn best, exploring diverse instructional strategies, and evaluating educational tools and technologies. The goal is to improve teaching effectiveness across various educational settings and contribute to the academic and practical understanding of educational processes. Pedagogic research involves the systematic investigation into various aspects of teaching methods, curriculum design, student engagement, and the effectiveness of instructional strategies, contributing new knowledge and insights to the field of education. It typically involves rigorous data collection, analysis, and interpretation to draw meaningful conclusions. The emphasis in pedagogic research is on advancing the theoretical understanding of teaching and learning practices, and to improve teaching effectiveness across various educational settings. Pedagogic research is distinct from the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), in which educators use research methods to investigate their own teaching practice/ student experience and use the results to make informed changes. The objective of pedagogic research is to inform a broader audience that exists beyond the local context of the work. Therefore, it is important to note that although all SoTL is pedagogic research, not all pedagogic research is SoTL. Pedagogic research is

academic-led but involves students either as co-researchers, participants (if using participatory methods), or respondents. High quality pedagogic research is usually based on pilot work, multi-site/case and multi-cohort. Marjon has sector-leading pedagogic expertise and innovation in several academic fields including but not exclusively education, sport, and health. Working with PSRBs and universities with similar offers to identify pedagogical enquiry with significant impact implications for institutions/ defined subject areas, and using pedagogic research methodologies to evidence these impacts has value for Marjon students, academics, and the sector.

72. Curriculum based disciplinary research: Curriculum based disciplinary research aligns disciplinary based research activities with pedagogic experiences for students. It has a dual focus enabling robust research data for staff outputs whilst providing highly engaged learning experiences for students which contributes to their developing disciplinary expertise. The focus on disciplinary rather than interdisciplinary research projects here is deliberate to recognise the focus on curriculum led opportunities. This is not to deter from the possibility of interdisciplinary projects but to recognise the nature of the Marjon offer and the limitations of Curriculum Connected Research. Curriculum based disciplinary research is academic led but involves students in specified role for example, as a student researcher, data generator, or data analyst. It should be tested through a pilot, can be single or multi case and should be longitudinal to best demonstrate impact. Marjon demonstrates sector leading innovation in several academic fields including, but not exclusively, education, sport, and health and it has strong, sustained partnerships with associated local and national organisations. Working with partners and cognate disciplines to identify impactful disciplinary based research projects, which can be partly delivered through curriculum initiatives has value for Marjon student, academics, and partner organisations.

## Intervention Strategy 4: Graduate Outcomes

73. The activity within this Intervention Strategy focuses on personal and academic support; developing positive student leadership opportunities; and specific support for students with multiple and complex disabilities.
74. OfS data shows that those from disadvantaged backgrounds who have graduated from higher education are less likely to graduate with a first or upper second class degree, and less likely to progress into graduate-level employment than their more advantaged peers.<sup>viii</sup> Graduates who were previously eligible for Free School Meals who attained a first degree and postgraduates' median earnings are lower than non-FSM five years after graduation by 10.0% - the gap has decreased by 3.0 percentage points compared to the 2014/15 tax year but it is still substantial.
75. Within Marjon, there is also a progression gap: despite some data being too small to report, the four-year average progression rate into higher level, professional, managerial, further study, or other positive outcomes for students eligible for Free School Meals is 63.7% compared to 70% for those not eligible. This leaves us with a 6.3 percentage point gap (four-year average) in

progression for students eligible for Free School Meals. The FSM rate is also lower than the sector average. We also see a two-year gap in progression between most deprived (IMDQ1) (67.5% average) and least deprived (IMDQ5) students (74.3% average). There has been an improvement over the last two years for most advantaged students, not matched by most deprived students. This leaves a gap in progression of 6.8pp over two years between students from most deprived and least deprived areas.

### **Personal and Academic Support (Handshake, Careers Inspiration, LinkedIn Learning)**

76. A core part of this strategy is around our Curriculum Framework, in particular bringing transferable graduate-level skills into the curriculum. This is because we have found over the last five years that our skills training tends to be taken up far more by female than male students and by mature rather than young students; meaning that the groups that have the biggest gaps in attainment are not taking these up.
77. Our past analysis has also shown how important attainment is in graduate outcomes, and that a poor degree result may have a more negative effect for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Our previous analysis under our Access and Participation Plan 2020-2025 showed that for our students from disadvantaged backgrounds, if they didn't get a first or a 2.1, they were significantly less likely to get into graduate-level jobs than either those from disadvantaged backgrounds who did get a first or a 2.1, or those from privileged backgrounds who didn't get a first or 2.1. For those who don't have privilege to support them, a lower degree result does appear to correlate strongly with lower-level jobs, meaning that within our Theory of Change, helping students to gain the skills to achieve a good result is critical to their graduate social mobility.
78. A meta-analysis study found that employability interventions are more effective when they include at least one of six specific components—namely, teaching job search skills, improving self-presentation, boosting self- efficacy, encouraging proactivity, promoting goal setting, or enlisting social support—than interventions that do not have one such component. Further, a systematic review on career interventions for university students identified information on the world of work, career self-management skills such as adaptability and flexibility and ability to reform plans in a rapidly changing employment world as key aspects to effectively support all students' sustainable career paths irrespective of their development stage. (Soares et al, 2022.) Lastly, research has shown that networking behaviours and connections contribute to university students' career success<sup>ix</sup>. (Brown et al, 2019; Jokisaari & Vuori, 2011; Spurk et al, 2015.) All of these elements are to be included in our intervention strategy, including teaching job search skills.
79. Our Curriculum Review includes a significant element of work-based and placement learning. TASO's review of work experience interventions finds that, "Work experience is the most-well evidenced employability intervention, with six quantitative studies showing a strong association with better graduate outcomes. These outcomes include a higher probability of being invited to interview, a higher salary and a lower likelihood of unemployment from at least six months after graduation." (TASO, 2023.)

## Student Opportunities (Reps, MSCs, accessible applications)

80. Since 2020, we have run a **Marjon Student Colleagues** project, which has identified very high levels of belonging, feeling of community, feeling supported and listened to, and feeling Marjon is a safe place, amongst those students who work for Marjon compared to the general population.
81. External evidence shows that belonging is a strong indicator of student retention and success, for example, the WonkHE report: [Building Belonging in Higher Education: Recommendations for developing an integrated institutional approach \(wonkhe.com\)](https://www.wonkhe.com/reports/building-belonging-in-higher-education-recommendations-for-developing-an-integrated-institutional-approach). (Blake et al, 2022). We recognise therefore that working for Marjon, or being engaged in other ways are critical to increasing belonging, support and retention, and hopefully graduate outcomes.
82. In 2022-24 we have tested a **Marjon Student Colleague Skills framework, and in a Leavers' Survey:**
- a. 50% had used it for their personal development; 30% were aware of it but didn't use it; 20% didn't know about it.
  - b. 100% felt it had at least a **positive impact** on their future careers; 40% felt it had a **significant positive impact**.
  - c. 90% were **satisfied** and 80% were **very satisfied** with the **transferable skills** they gained for their future careers.
83. We also found that in their responses, Student Colleagues appear to be slightly more privileged than other students, and we recognise an issue with our application process which may be a barrier to application for those from less privileged backgrounds. We have put in place methods to support students to apply but these have had mixed results, and so we now want to review the accessibility of the process itself.
84. Our work here will focus on improving application rate success, and continuing to find opportunities to engage with students to support their personal development. We will translate our current Marjon Student Colleagues Skills framework into the Model of Educational Gain to ensure it reflects curriculum work.

## Specific support for students with multiple impairments

85. Leonard Cheshire, in its report "Reimagining the workplace: disability and inclusive employment" highlights the stark employment gap for disabled people, who have an overall employment rate of just 53.1%, and states that a core reason is "a barrage of damaging stereotypes. Our research shows that there is an enduring expectation among employers and colleagues that they will not be able to do their job as well as a non-disabled person. This stigma is a major barrier to the aspirations, skills and talent of disabled people being fully realised." (Leonard Cheshire, 2019)
86. The ACGAS Disability Task Force has highlighted valuable work in this area, including the Buckland Review of Autism Employment (Buckland, 2024) which states that 'autistic people face the largest pay gap of all disability groups, receiving a third less than non-disabled people on average' and that 'only around 35% of autistic employees are fully open about being autistic, with 1 in 10 not disclosing to anyone at work.' The report shares information on how employers can make reasonable adjustments. The Task Force also shares information such as a guide to psychometric tests for disabled and neurodivergent applicants. (AGCAS, 2024)

87. At Marjon, we have a strong record of supporting disabled students to achieve: we have closed overall gaps in continuation to Year 2 (though not for completion), for attainment and for graduate outcomes for disabled students compared to those without a declared disability. However a gap remains for students with multiple impairments within the workplace. Whilst the evidence is there are strong societal challenges here, our Theory of Change includes a belief that we can challenge stereotypes outside Marjon, as we have successfully done within Marjon.
88. Despite disabled students showing very high levels of extra-curricular activity and involvement, (Annex 1, para.38) and high levels of growth in their overall confidence and belonging (Annex 1, para.47b), in our Student Experience Survey 22-23, 44% of disabled respondents were “confident they could apply for a stretching job”, compared to 58.8% of non-disabled students, a gap of 14.8% (Annex 1, para.39).
89. Our focus groups highlighted key issues including the complexity of working when managing a long-term condition which may flare up at different times; the lack of knowledge employers have about accessible workplaces; and the difficulty of deciding when or whether to disclose disability. All of these issues are highlighted as concerns by employers in the Leonard Cheshire report. These are areas where we could provide better advice and could make a difference.

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# 2025-26 fee information

Provider name: University of St Mark & St John

Provider UKPRN: 10037449

## Summary of 2025-26 course fees for new entrants

\*Course type not listed by the provider as available to new entrants in 2025-26. This means that any such course delivered to new entrants in 2025-26 would be subject to fees capped at the basic fee amount.

### Inflation statement

Subject to the maximum fee limits set out in Regulations we will increase fees each year using RPI-X

**Table 1a - Full-time course fee levels for 2025-26 new entrants**

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree		N/A	£9,535
First degree	Military Sport	N/A	£9,535
Foundation degree		N/A	£9,535
Foundation degree	Work Based Learning	N/A	£6,186
Foundation year/Year 0 (classroom based)	*	N/A	*
Foundation year/Year 0 (non-classroom based)	*	N/A	*
HNC/HND	*	N/A	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	N/A	*
Postgraduate ITT		N/A	£9,535
Accelerated degree	*	N/A	*
Sandwich year		N/A	£1,905
Turing scheme and overseas study years	*	N/A	*
Other	*	N/A	*

**Table 1b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2025-26 new entrants**

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Sub-contractual provider name and additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree	Beat Media Group Limited - Journalism (News Associates)	10028240	£9,535
First degree	Bristol School of Acting Ltd - Acting (BSA)	10090019	£9,535
First degree	City of London College (CLC) Ltd - Business (CLC College)	10085717	£9,535
First degree	LONDON ACADEMY FOR APPLIED TECHNOLOGY LTD - Business (LAAT)	10089090	£9,535
First degree	Results Consortium Limited - Business (Results Cons)	10023871	£9,535
First degree	Screenology C.I.C. - Film (Screenology)	10084788	£9,535
First degree	UK College of Business and Computing Ltd - Business (UKCBC)	10022021	£9,535
Foundation degree	Exeter College - Football	10002370	£9,535
Foundation degree	Exeter College - Health (Exeter College)	10002370	£9,535
Foundation degree	MLJ - SAFETY, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL LIMITED - Football (MIT Skills)	10004400	£9,535
Foundation year/Year 0 (classroom based)	City of London College (CLC) Ltd - Business with Foundation Year (CLC College)	10085717	£5,760
Foundation year/Year 0 (classroom based)	LONDON ACADEMY FOR APPLIED TECHNOLOGY LTD - Business (LAAT)	10089090	£5,760
Foundation year/Year 0 (classroom based)	Results Consortium Limited - Business with Foundation Year (Results Cons)	10023871	£5,760
Foundation year/Year 0 (classroom based)	UK College of Business and Computing Ltd - Business with Foundation Year (UKCBC)	10022021	£5,760
Foundation year/Year 0 (non-classroom based)	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	Results Consortium Limited - Business (Results Cons)	10023871	£9,535
CertHE/DipHE	UK College of Business and Computing Ltd - Business (UKCBC)	10022021	£9,535
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	Bristol School of Acting Ltd - Theatre (BSA)	10090019	£11,440
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Turing scheme and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*

**Table 1c - Part-time course fee levels for 2025-26 new entrants**

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:
First degree		N/A	£7,145
Foundation degree		N/A	£7,145
Foundation degree	Work Based Learning	N/A	£3,093
Foundation year/Year 0 (classroom based)	*	N/A	*
Foundation year/Year 0 (non-classroom based)	*	N/A	*
HNC/HND	*	N/A	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	N/A	*
Postgraduate ITT		N/A	£7,145
Accelerated degree	*	N/A	*
Sandwich year	*	N/A	*
Turing scheme and overseas study years	*	N/A	*
Other	*	N/A	*

**Table 1d - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2025-26 new entrants**

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Sub-contractual provider name and additional information:	Sub-contractual UKPRN:	Course fee:

First degree	Beat Media Group Limited - Journalism (News Associates)	10028240	£7,145
First degree	MLJ - SAFETY, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL LIMITED - Sport (Mit Skills)	10004400	£7,145
First degree	Results Consortium Limited - Business (Results Cons)	10023871	£7,145
First degree	Screenology C.I.C. - Film (Screenology)	10084788	£7,145
First degree	UK College of Business and Computing Ltd - Business (UKCBC)	10022021	£7,145
Foundation degree	*	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0 (classroom based)	*	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0 (non-classroom based)	*	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	Results Consortium Limited - Business (Results Cons)	10023871	£7,145
CertHE/DipHE	UK College of Business and Computing Ltd - Business (UKCBC)	10022021	£7,145
Postgraduate ITT	*	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*	*
Turing scheme and overseas study years	*	*	*
Other	*	*	*