**Cardiff University Widening Participation Strategy: Development of the strategy**

1. **Purpose of the WP strategy**

The University’s Widening Participation (WP) strategy sets out our strategic ambitions for widening participation across the following areas: aspiration raising; fair recruitment and admissions; support for students from under-represented or vulnerable groups; and evaluation and monitoring. The draft strategy is attached at Annex A. This version of the strategy includes the measures that will be used to measure our success. The measures which relate to the Strategic Equality plan (measures f-h) were agreed by the Equality and Diversity Committee on 20th April 2016. Further information on how these measures will be used and our performance to date is attached at Annex B.

The University’s WP strategy needs to be in place in time for submission of the 2017/18 fee and access plan to Council on 23rd May 2016. It is important that we gain agreement for the WP strategy because activities in the University’s 2017/18 fee and access plan[[1]](#footnote-1) will draw from the strategy.

1. **Development of the WP strategy**

The WP strategy has been developed by the Widening Participation coordinating group, chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Experience and Academic Standards (PVC SEAS). Members of the WP coordinating group are from professional services and have responsibility in the areas of outreach, recruitment, admissions, supporting students, and monitoring and evaluating WP activity. An earlier draft of the strategy was considered by the PVC SEAS’s Deans group. The admissions and recruitment group have been consulted.

The WP strategy sits within the University’s Education and Students Way Forward strategy. We will need to ensure that the WP strategy is aligned with the University’s refreshed Way Forward strategy from 2017/18 which is being developed and approved during 2016/17. The WP strategy also aligns with the University’s Strategic Equality Plan and will align with the developing employability strategy.

To inform the groups that will be targeted as part of the WP strategy the coordinating group has reviewed evidence on progression and success of under-represented groups in HE, and reviewed our performance against our previous WP targets. The group reviewed key findings from the Access to Higher Education in Wales report about the progression of Welsh-domiciled students into HE (analysis carried out by WISERD)[[2]](#footnote-2). It also reviewed research findings about the limitation of area-based measures for identifying disadvantage[[3]](#footnote-3). Finally, priority actions for the WP strategy are aligned with the Strategic Equality Plan; actions for which were selected on the basis of the findings from WISERD analysis about the progression through HE and attainment of UK undergraduate students with protected characteristics at Cardiff University. Further information on this work, as well as a description of the principles underpinning our selection of target groups, and data on our performance against previous and proposed indicators is attached at Annex B.

1. **Example activities to deliver the strategy**

We are currently putting together an implementation plan for the WP strategy, for the years 2015/16-2017/18. Major new activities include:

* A review of bursaries: Over the next ten months (particularly once the Welsh Government’s Diamond Review has reported) there will be a full review of the value and impact of the University’s student financial aid to ensure that actions and resources are targeted most effectively to widen participation.
* A reviewed and revised contextual admissions policy including using for the first time indicators of educational disadvantage.
* Targeting outreach activities using new indicators of socio-economic disadvantage (eligibility for free school meals).
* Further work to improve the availability and use of data on students from our identified under-represented backgrounds, for example tracking the progression of these students through their time at Cardiff University.

Continued outreach and student support activities include:

* [Step Up to University](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/about/our-profile/our-values/university-for-all/raising-aspirations/step-up-programme), Cardiff University’s flagship outreach programme. Step Up Plus builds on the original scheme to offer a more intensive programme of support to students who have achieved 6 GCSEs including English and Maths, or have an autistic spectrum disorder, or are a care leaver.
* [Confident Futures](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/about/our-profile/our-values/university-for-all/raising-aspirations/first-campus-activities) and the [Discovery Project](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/about/our-profile/our-values/university-for-all/raising-aspirations/first-campus-activities), which provide a programme of mentoring and support for children age 14-19 with a background in care and autism respectively. Two day residential summer schools are also provided for young people from these groups, funded by [First Campus](http://www.firstcampus.org/).
* The [Higher Education (HE) Roadshow](http://www.highereducationroadshow.co.uk/) is delivered in partnership with Cardiff Met and is targeted at Challenge Cymru schools and schools with a high proportion of communities First pupils. The Roadshow delivers interactive presentations to pupils in years 9-11, reinforced by online material and ‘[Uni Inspiration Day](http://www.highereducationroadshow.co.uk/event/uni-inspiration-3/)’ events on campus, which introduces pupils to a wide range of subjects at University level.
* Student Financial Aid: The University makes available and widely promote a clear Home/EU undergraduate student financial aid offering that is easy to understand and access.
* Live Local Learn Local provides access to free of charge courses in Community First areas in Cardiff and the surrounding areas, focused on those living in areas where university participation rates are low.
* Through the Strategic Equality Plan Action Plan, and as a result of analysis of Cardiff University data which shows there are differential outcomes for some groups of our students, we will take action to improve the progression through university of students who are from BME groups, who are male, and who are disabled. We will also take action to improve the attainment of male students and BME students.
* Cardiff University’s [Peer mentoring scheme](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/study/campus-life/facilities-and-services/student-support/mentor-scheme) supports first year students’ transition into Higher Education.

1. **ASQC is invited to:**
2. Approve the WP strategy attached at Annex A.
3. Note the paper at Annex B which describes work undertaken and planned to determine our indicators of success, to use data to target our WP activities, and to develop our evidence base.

**Annex A**

**DRAFT Cardiff University Widening Participation Strategy**

Cardiff University is committed to recruiting the brightest students from all levels of society.

Through our widening participation activity we are helping to break down barriers to a university education, and dispel the myth that access to a Russell Group university, such as Cardiff University, is the preserve of a privileged elite. Our commitment to supporting students from underrepresented groups is grounded in our proud history as a civic university, benefitting the city of Cardiff and Wales more widely. We work with more than 300 schools and colleges in disadvantaged areas across Wales to raise aspirations, broaden awareness and promote the benefits of higher education. More than 3,000 sixth form students benefit each year from our general widening participation programmes. In 2014/15 we had the second highest number of students from low participation areas in Wales.

Our widening participation strategy builds on our successes and addresses the recruitment, retention and progression of students from a wide variety of groups traditionally under-represented in higher education. These include people from ethnic minority groups, from disadvantaged communities, and people with disabilities.

**Vision**

We will recruit the brightest students with a particular focus on under-represented groups and provide opportunities for them to realise their potential at undergraduate and postgraduate level.

**Four Key Ambitions**

1. **Raising aspirations**

**Our ambition:** To raise aspirations and promote higher education to traditionally under-represented groups.

**We will:**

* Deliver an effective and sustainable programme of activity to raise aspiration and attainment, drawing on evidence of successful practices.
* Work with regional partners to deliver collaborative initiatives to raise aspiration to higher education.
* Focus activity in areas of traditionally low participation in higher education.
* Continue to identify under-represented groups to understand, and work to remove, their barriers to higher education, success and progression into employment or further study, including access to the professions.
* Provide accessible and clear information about flexible access and progression routes into HE, including a framework to support occasional study, to encourage participation of those from under-represented groups.

Outcome indicators:

1. Percentage of students from Communities First cluster areas or the bottom quintile of the lower super output areas in the Welsh index of multiple deprivation (All modes, levels and years of study).
2. Percentage of full-time undergraduates from low-participation neighbourhoods (LPN) (POLAR data).
3. **Fair recruitment and admissions**

**Our ambition:** To operate a system of recruitment and admissions that is fair, transparent and inclusive.

**We will:**

* Apply our contextual admissions policy to assess applicants’ attainment potential in the context of the social and educational disadvantages they may have experienced.
* Be responsive to national curriculum developments.
* Provide clear, accurate and timely financial information and advice to support applicants’ decision making.
* Provide a range of financial support measures aimed at removing financial circumstances as a barrier to study among those with the potential to succeed at Cardiff.
* Ensure our recruitment and admissions processes enable under-represented groups to access HE through clear, flexible access and progression routes, including through a framework to support occasional study.

Outcome indicators:

1. Percentage of students from Communities First cluster areas or the bottom quintile of the lower super output areas in the Welsh index of multiple deprivation (All modes, levels and years of study).
2. Percentage of full-time undergraduates from low-participation neighbourhoods (LPN) (POLAR data).
3. **Supporting students**

**Our ambition:** To provide high quality, effective, timely and comprehensive support to students from transition into higher education and the achievement of successful outcomes.

**We will:**

* Provide access to advice and support on a wide range of personal, financial and academic matters which enable the student to make their own decisions about their learning and their future.
* Provide measures which help people who face crises or additional obstacles during their studies, such as financial hardship.
* Recognise the specific needs of different groups of students and develop tailored support services to meet their needs, particularly focussing on those who face specific obstacles to success.
* Seek to enable student success and enhance the employability and transferable skills of students from all backgrounds.  This will be tailored, when required, and responsive to effective referral.

Outcome indicators

1. Percentage of first degree full time entrants no longer in HE following year of entry. (Young entrants from low participation neighbourhoods and mature entrants with no previous higher education qualification).
2. Non-progression rates for male students, BME students, and disabled students.
3. Attainment gap (the difference between undergraduate students achieving a first/2:1) between: males and females and between BME and white students (UK fee status students only).
4. The proportion of male and female students studying non-traditional subject choices at Cardiff University.
5. **Research and evaluation**

**Our ambition**: To continue to develop an evidence informed approach to our widening participation strategy, plans and activities.

**We will:**

* Continue to monitor and evaluate our widening participation activities to ensure they are effective and have the intended impact on identified groups.
* Monitor the composition of our student body and our progress against targets for access retention and progression into employment and further study.
* Celebrate and promote successes in our widening participation work.

**Annex B**

**Cardiff University Widening Participation Strategy: Identification of target groups and indicators**

1. **Summary**

On 2 March 2016 the WP coordinating group reviewed national and Cardiff University evidence on under-represented groups, to inform the University’s WP strategy. The PVC SEAS gave a steer about the target groups and work to explore using additional indicators of disadvantage to help target our WP activity and to measure our success in reaching under-represented groups in HE. The draft note of that meeting is attached at annex A.

Previously the University’s WP indicators were influenced by HEFCW’s corporate strategy targets and associated fee plan targets. We now have the opportunity to choose our own indicators which best reflect our strategic ambitions and enable us to monitor and evaluate our WP progress, including through our fee and access plans.[[4]](#footnote-4)1

This paper:

* Proposes key measures for the WP strategy (which will also be proposed as targets in the 2017/18 fee and access plan).
* Explains the ongoing work to explore new indicators of socio-economic and educational disadvantage that could be used to target WP activity and in policies such as contextual admissions and bursaries.
* Explains our strategic aim for reaching and supporting vulnerable groups.
* Suggests further work is required to understand progression of under-represented groups to postgraduate study/employment.

1. **Principles underpinning selection of indicators and use of data.**

* To have a limited number of indicators to monitor progress against our WP strategic aims; contributing to widening participation of under-represented groups from Wales and more widely.
* We acknowledge the limitation of area-based measures (e.g. as found by Taylor et al, 2013[[5]](#footnote-5)2) so we will aim to broaden the range of indicators we use to measure our success, and to target our WP activities.
* A broader range (‘basket’) of indicators is a more robust way of judging success in reaching and recruiting groups under-represented in HE. In particular, we wish to explore using indicators of educational disadvantage (currently we only use indicators of socio-economic disadvantage), as well as explore using additional measures of socio-economic disadvantage.
* Indicators that are aligned to other reporting we do or are likely to do in the future.
* Indicators that are relevant and suited to the Cardiff University’s mission.
* Indicators that measure where we are targeting our efforts rather than what can be measured.

**Strategic ambition:** **Raising aspirations and Fair recruitment and admissions**

1. **Indicators of socio-economic disadvantage.**

The indicators in this section are proposed as indicators of the success of our WP strategy and as targets in our 2017/18 fee and access plan.

Representatives from Strategic Planning, Marketing and Student Recruitment, and Admissions met during March 2016 to review the two measures of socio-economic disadvantage currently used in our fee plan, namely:

* Percentage of students from Communities First cluster areas or the bottom quintile of the lower super output areas in the Welsh index of multiple deprivation.
* Percentage of students from low-participation neighbourhoods (LPN) (POLAR data).

**Proposed** **measure/indicator 1:** **Communities First/WIMD**

(**RETAIN same CF/WIMD measure)**

Table 1 below shows the University’s performance against the **Communities First/WIMD measure**. Our 2015/16 and 2016/17 targets are still ambitious given the trend, however we have the second largest Communities First/WIMD cohort in Wales, and we are ranked 6th out of 9 institutions in Wales for the proportion of these students overall. (2013/14 HESA data).

*Table 1: Percentage of students from Communities First cluster areas or the bottom quintile of the lower super output areas in the Welsh index of multiple deprivation (All modes, levels and years of study).*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year | 11-12 | 12-13 | 13-14  *fee plan* | *14-15*  *fee plan* | *15-16 fee plan* | *16-17*  *fee plan* | *17-18*  *fee & access plan* |
| Target | N/A | N/A | 16.8% | 17% | *17.5%* | *17.5%* | *TBC\** |
| Actual | 16.8% | 16.4% | 16.6% | 17% | *N/A* | *N/A* | *TBC* |

*\*2017/18 fee and access plan targets are currently under consideration*

**Rationale for keeping the same CF/WIMD measure**

Retaining this measure would demonstrate our commitment to a Welsh Government priority. We want a measure which demonstrates our performance in reaching and recruiting students from disadvantaged areas in Wales.

The Communities First/WIMD measure uses Welsh Government postcode data so is aligned with publicly available information.

Even if HEFCW stopped calculating performance against this target, the University would be able to source the data needed to continue to monitor our performance against this target.

**Proposed measure/indicator 2: To remain within the statistically significant range from the sector benchmark for the percentage of full-time undergraduates from low-participation neighbourhoods (LPN) (POLAR data).**

**(CHANGE low participation measure)**

Table 2 below shows the University’s performance against the *current* measure of performance in recruiting students from low-participation neighbourhoods (LPN) (this measure uses POLAR data for all modes, levels and years of study). We perform well against this measure: we have seen an upwards trajectory since 2011/12 to 2013/14 and based on estimated 2014/15 data we expect to exceed the 2015/16 target early in 2014/15. In addition, Cardiff University has the second largest UK LPN cohort in Wales. We are ranked 9th out of 9 HEIs for proportion of these students overall.

**Rationale for proposing using a different LPN measure:**

Although we perform well against the current measure (as described in the preceding paragraph) the *current* LPN measure includes POLAR data for all modes, levels and years of study. It is known however that POLAR data is not relevant for postgraduate students. This is also a more complex measure than any of the standard HESA widening participation performance indicators (WP PIs) which we could instead use. Therefore if HEFCW stop measuring and calculating performance against this measure, it could be difficult for us to collect the information accurately.

Table 3 below shows the University’s performance against an *alternative* measure of performance in recruiting students from LPN (this measure uses POLAR data for full-time, undergraduate students). This is the measure that we propose using instead. Though our performance has historically been slightly above or below the sector benchmark, the variance is not statistically significant in any cases. Most recently, in 2014/15 we were above the benchmark, with 9.6% of our students against a sector benchmark of 8.7%.

By contrast if we use one of the standard HESA WP PIs as an indicator of our success we would have a cross-border measure that we can use to benchmark our performance against UK-wide HEIs, including against universities with a more similar student body to Cardiff University.

*Table 2:* (Current measure not to be retained) *Percentage of UK students recruited from UK LPNs (POLAR data for all modes, levels and years of study)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year | 11-12 | 12-13 | 13-14 | *14-15* | *15-16* | *16-17* |
| Target | N/A | N/A | 21.2% | *21.6%* | *22%* | *22.5%* |
| Actual | 20.6% | 21.2% | 21.9% | *23% (e)* | *N/A* | *N/A* |

*e = estimated performance (internal data)*

***Table 3 Young full-time first degree entrants from low participation neighbourhoods.***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | CU (%) | Sector benchmark (%)[[6]](#footnote-6) | Variance |
| 2009/10 | 7.4 | 6.9 | 0.5 |
| 2010/11 | 7.5 | 7.2 | 0.3 |
| 2011/12 | 6.5 | 7.4 | - 0.9 |
| 2012/13 | 7.9 | 8.3 | - 0.4 |
| 2013/14 | 7.6 | 8.4 | - 0.8 |
| **2014/15** | **9.6** | **8.7** | **0.9** |

*HESA WP PI Table T1a*

*POLAR 3 data*

*Variance is not statistically significant*

*Table 4 Mature full-time first degree entrants from low participation neighbourhoods & with no previous HE qualification*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | CU (%) | Sector benchmark (%) | Variance |
| 2009/10 | 12.7 | 11.5 | +1.2 |
| 2010/11 | 10.9 | 7.8 | +3.1 |
| 2011/12 | 11.7 | 9.1 | +2.6 |
| 2012/13 | 11.4 | 11.4 | 0 |
| 2013/14 | 13.7 | 12.5 | +1.2 |
| **2014/15** | **16.5** | **14.0** | **+2.5** |

*HESA WP PI Table T2a*

*POLAR 3 data*

*Variance is not statistically significant*

*It should be noted that the numbers are small and therefore will be subject to greater variation from year to year.*

**Strategic ambition: Fair recruitment and admissions**

1. **Additional indicators of socio-economic disadvantage**

Free school meals

Marketing and Student Recruitment have been reviewing the data available on free school meal eligibility. More work is needed to explore using this data to target schools for our outreach work.

We would recommend that *take up* of free school meals is not a suitable measure at the level of individuals and therefore to be used in our contextual admissions policy, because robust individual level data is not available (the only available individual-level data is self-declared on the UCAS form, which is known not to be a robust data source.

However *eligibility* for free school meal index data is available by school (the proportion of students eligible for free school meals). We currently work with schools based on their proportion of students from Communities First cluster areas. Communications and Marketing have mapped schools with high proportion of eligibility for free school meals against schools with high proportion of students from Communities First clusters to ensure that we are not missing any schools that have a low proportion of students from Communities First clusters, but high proportion of students eligible for free school meals. Mapping has been limited to schools in Wales because our outreach work needs to continue within the same budget envelope.

1. **Indicators of educational disadvantage**

We have identified two ways of using information about educational disadvantage:

* Fair admissions, by making contextual admissions on the basis of an individuals’ educational as well as socio-economic background; and
* To explore using this data to target outreach work.

Desk-based research identified that other Russell Group Universities were using school performance data (at GCSE and A level) in their contextual admissions policies. We have obtained this data for England, and are in contact with Welsh Government, Northern Ireland and Scotland to obtain similar data.

There are a number of issues that will need to be addressed:

* Given the datasets will not be the same across UK regions, we will need to agree how we will ensure fair treatment and comparability.
* Definition of lowest performing schools e.g. 40% lowest performing schools
* How to cater for regional differences in data e.g. may need to apply lowest x% by UK region rather than lowest x% for UK as a whole (may disadvantage some Welsh applicants)
* Some schools will only have GCSE data (where they do not have sixth forms and students have gone to FECs for A levels). This is an issue that other universities will have dealt with, for example Manchester publish a list the schools/FECs that they treat differently in their contextual admissions policy, and show whether they’re using L2 (GCSE) or L3 data (A level).
* Cleanse schools lists and ensure consistent with UCAS / SIMS schools lists

In addition there will be a further practical and system needs to be addressed for using this data in a contextual admissions policy, which will be considered in a separate paper.

**Strategic ambition:** **Supporting students**

**Proposed measure/indicator 3: Percentage of full time first degree entrants no longer in HE following year of entry.**

**3a Young entrants from low participation neighbourhoods.**

**3b Mature students with no previous higher education qualification.**

**(ADDITIONAL RETENTION MEASURE)**

**Table 5 below shows our success in retaining young students from low participation neighbourhoods studying for a first degree, showing the percentage who have left the university after one year. Data is available from 2009/10 to 2012/13. Over this period our performance trend has remained relatively stable.**

**Table 6 below shows our success in retaining mature students with no prior experience of HE. Our performance against this measure has fluctuated, though the smaller numbers of students involved will make this fluctuation more likely.**

*Rationale for proposing using these retention measures:*

We have not previously had specific retention measures for our WP strategy. Selecting these two measures will allow us to monitor **our performance in retaining young students from low participation backgrounds or mature learners with no previous experience of HE (in both cases studying full time), and to benchmark our performance against similar institutions and across UK borders.**

The WP coordinating group suggested that the progression of part-time students was also monitored, however HESA data non-completions is not available for part-time young students from low participation neighbourhoods or part-time mature students with no previous HE qualification.

***Table 5*** *Young full time first degree entrants from low participation neighbourhoods no longer in HE following year of entry****.***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | CU (%) | Sector benchmark (%) | Variance |
| 2009/10 | 3.9 | 5.7 | - 1.8 |
| 2010/11 | 6.5 | 4.7 | 1.8 |
| 2011/12 | 4.0 | 4.5 | - 0.5 |
| 2012/13 | 3.8 | 4.1 | - 0.3 |

*HESA WP PI Table T3b*

*POLAR 3 data*

*Variance is not statistically significant*

***Table 6*** *Mature full time first degree students with no previous higher education qualification no longer in HE following year of entry****.***

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | CU (%) | Benchmark (%) | Variance |
| 2009/10 | 12.9 | 12.7 | 0.2 |
| 2010/11 | 8.3 | 10.4 | - 2.1 |
| 2011/12 | 5.6 | 9.9 | - 4.3 |
| 2012/13 | 8.0 | 11.8 | - 3.8 |

*HESA WP PI Table T3c*

*POLAR 3 data*

*Variance is not statistically significant*

**Benchmark year for indicators**

**For all of the proposed measures/indicators our benchmark year will be 2014/15; the last year for which we have HESA data available at the time of finalising our WP strategy and fee and access plan.**

1. **Vulnerable groups[[7]](#footnote-7)4**

We commit to continuing to remove barriers to students from vulnerable groups accessing HE, succeeding once here and going into further study or good employment. We will review our evidence to focus our actions within discipline areas and in Schools that our evidence indicates have the best opportunity to improve.

We do not wish to set ourselves recruitment targets for these groups because we want to remove barriers to entry and ensure the success for *all* groups of students, whereas targets for only *some* of the groups would not reflect this broader aim. In addition, the numbers of students involved are small. Therefore normal statistical variation would mean that monitoring progress would be difficult.

One way we will measure our success is through successful delivery of the work experience programme as part of HEFCW’s GO Wales project, to reduce the number of students leaving HE who are at risk of becoming ‘Not in Education, Employment or Training’ (NEET). The target cohort is students aged 18 to 24 years who are at risk of becoming NEET because they face particular barriers to employment. Barriers include:

• disabilities or work limiting health conditions

• BME backgrounds

• caring responsibilities

• left care themselves

• less affluent backgrounds (measured by low participation neighbourhood)

Indicators (by March 2019 when the programme ends):

Participants (receiving advice and guidance): 456

Participants undertaking work experience: 380

Participants at reduced risk of becoming NEET\*: 304

*\* evidenced by Employability Rating outcomes*

1. **Student success: progression into further employment or postgraduate study.**

We intend to carry out analyses to understand patterns of progression to further study and employment and how these differ for different student groups.

1. **Strategic Equality Plan: action plan priorities**

The Widening Participation strategy will include indicators drawn from the Strategic Equality Plan (Objective 2): *To attract and retain the brightest students from a diversity of backgrounds by providing an inclusive and supportive learning and teaching environment.* The following issues/areas for action were agreed by the Equality and Diversity Committee in April 2016.

**Issue/area for action:** Progression of students (focus on Year 1).  Addressing the non-progression of students from Year 1 for all protected characteristics but with particular focus on ethnicity, male students, and disabled students (with a link to learning and teaching/ curriculum and also to the changes with Disabled Students Allowance)

**Overall measureable outcome:** Male students:A measurable reduction in non-progression rates for male students bringing the non-progression gap closer to the UK benchmark of 2.1% (currently 5%). BME students – the CU non-progression gap of 4.3% between BME and white students is currently close to the UK benchmark of a 3.9%. The measureable outcome will be to aim to meet and exceed the UK benchmark. Disabled students- A measurable reduction in non-progression rates for disabled students bringing the non-progression gap closer to the UK benchmark of 1.4% (currently 2.7%)

**Issue/area for action:** Addressing differential attainment for some protected characteristic groups – focus on male students and BME students who are less likely to attain a good (1st or 2.1) degree. Link into looking at Year 1 average marks to see if differential attainment is present at an early stage.

**Overall Measureable Outcome:** A measurable reduction in the attainment gap for male students and BME students, taking into account year 1 average marks, which is more in line with the attainment outcomes for female students and other ethnic groups. Gender – Reduction in the attainment gap between males and females which is currently 7.5% to bring it in line with (or lower than) the benchmark attainment gap of 5.2%. Ethnicity – the attainment gap for Cardiff University is currently lower than the UK benchmark of a 15.2% attainment gap between BME and white students (CU non-progression gap 14.5%) therefore the measureable outcome will be to aim for a reduction in the attainment gap for BME students brining it closer to the attainment outcomes for white students.

Note: Attainment gap is measured as the difference between Undergraduate students achieving a first/2:1. For Ethnicity this is measured for UK fee status students only.

**Issue/area for action:** Student Admissions – Addressing the balance of males and females relating to subject choice with particular emphasis on subject choices that have a very low percentage of male participants (e.g. Healthcare, Psychology and Social Sciences) and subject choices that  have a very low percentage of female participants (e.g. Computer Sciences, Physics and Engineering)

**Overall Measureable Outcome:** A measurable increase in the proportion of male and female students studying non-traditional subject choices at Cardiff University\*. This objective will also link to measurable outcomes from the Widening Participation strategy.

\* Data indicates that Cardiff University data on subject choices for males and females is very similar to the UK data on subject choices (ECU statistical report 2015) with a gender split of around an 80:20 male/female students (Computer Sciences, Physics and Engineering) and around 80/20 female/male students (Healthcare, Psychology and Social Sciences) in internal and benchmark data.

1. Fee and access plans are the means by which a higher education (HE) provider enters the regulatory system in Wales. Under the HE (Wales) Act 2015, a provider with a fee and access plan approved by HEFCW becomes a ‘regulated institution’ and is eligible for Welsh Government financial support for its undergraduate courses. Fee and access plans sets out the regulated institution’s commitment to investing a proportion of its fee income in a range of activities to secure equality of opportunity for groups under-represented in HE and the promotion of HE. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Rees G, Taylor C, Davies R, Drinkwater S, Evans C, Wright C. (2015) 'Access to Higher Education in Wales: A Report to the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales' <http://www.wiserd.ac.uk/research/publications/wiserd-publications/reports/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Taylor, C., Rees, G., Sloan, L., & Davies, R. (2013) ‘Creating an inclusive HE system? Progression and outcomes of students from low participation neighbourhoods at a Welsh University’ *Contemporary Wales*, 26, 138-161. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 1 Our fee and access plan targets will be aligned with our strategic ambitions and, in this way, provide assurance that we are committed to the progress we are expecting to make. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 2Taylor, C., Rees, G., Sloan, L., & Davies, R. (2013) ‘Creating an inclusive HE system? Progression and outcomes of students from low participation neighbourhoods at a Welsh University’ *Contemporary Wales*, 26, 138-161. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 3 The sector benchmarks are determined by HESA and take account of the entry qualifications of a HE provider’s students, the subjects they studied, and their age. Further information available on the HESA website: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/benchmarks> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 4 Vulnerable groups include care leavers, students with ASD, asylum seekers, refugees, carers, forces veterans, estranged students, first in the family to enter HE. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)