

<b>Committee:</b>	Education Committee
<b>Title of paper:</b>	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion report on Access (UG and PG) and UG Continuation
<b><u>Classification:</u></b>	Restricted to Education Committee members, University and Students' Union staff
<b>Action required:</b>	For information and discussion
<b>Paper sponsor(s):</b>	Professor Madeline Eacott, Pro-Vice -Chancellor Education
<b>Paper author(s):</b>	Dr Antonia D C D'Souza, Education Data Insight Officer
<b>Date of paper:</b>	02/03/2022

<b>1.</b>	<b>Purpose of the report</b>
<p>The purpose of this report is to present findings from the latest analysis of equality and diversity data. It looks at University of Essex data to identify student groups who may be at risk or disadvantaged to address continuing or emerging inequalities in student access, progression, and success. This report should support the Education Committee in setting the priorities for 2021-22 and beyond in relation to equality and diversity matters, to ensure that every student can achieve their potential. The report also supports the institution in understanding its direction and performance of Key Performance Indicator (KPI-6) which is used in the Strategic Planning cycle to understand and address attainment gaps.</p>	

<b>2.</b>	<b>Executive summary</b>
<p>The Education Committee may wish to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The likelihood of receiving an offer in 2021/22 for our Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught cohorts decreased across all groups compared the previous year.</li> <li>• Undergraduate registration rates for those from low participation neighbourhoods (Q1 + 2, POLAR 4) have increased by 3.1% since 2020/21.</li> <li>• Broadly, and across all student characteristics the continuation rate has decreased slightly from the highest levels in recent years that were seen in the 2019-20</li> </ul>	

academic year. However, the 2020-21 continuation rates across all groups remain ahead of 2017-18 and 2018-19 academic years.

- The Continuation rate gap has increased by 2% between males and females since 2019/20, this is accounted for by the male continuation rate decreasing in 2020/21 by 3%.

### **3. Resource implications (financial and staffing)**

N/A

### **4. Legal and regulatory considerations**

Equality monitoring is a statutory requirement. In May 2018 the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) was replaced by the EU General Data Protection Regulations – Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR). The withdrawal of the UK from the EU will be completed, with new rules, taking effect on 1 January 2022 and changes in legislation will still apply for a period of time. In summary, some of the terminology and definitions of protected characteristics will be changed. Explicit consent to use, analyse and report such data will still be required. The impact of these changes on Equality and Diversity monitoring will need to be considered in due course.

### **5. Equality impact assessment**

The paper seeks to improve understanding of equality issues across the student lifecycle and highlight areas where further action might be needed to address apparent or potential inequality or areas of concern. All undergraduate and postgraduate applications to the University are considered in line with the University's admissions policies, which includes fair access.

### **6. Consultation undertaken/required**

James Lewis, Deputy Head of Planning and Data Insight

Dr Jill Holliday, Director of Academic Services and Deputy Academic Registrar

Mandy Chetham, Director of Admissions

Lucy Murray, Director of Outreach

Professor Madeline Eacott, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education

<b>7.</b>	<b>Environmental impact and considerations</b>
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There is no known or potential impact of the report on the environment or impact on the delivery of the University's Sustainability Sub-Strategy.

<b>8.</b>	<b>Analysis of risk</b>
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Student Retention is included in the risk register and the Access Agreement, linked to the University's ability to charge fees above the basic fee (currently £6,000).

<b>9.</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
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1. Education Committee is asked to note that continuation rates for students in protected groups have fallen back from the improvements achieved in 2019-20 and should consider actions to address this.

## **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Paper**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. As a public body, the University has a specific duty under the Equality Act 2010 to:
  - a. Remove or minimise disadvantage for people due to their protected characteristics.
  - b. Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
  - c. Encourage people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.
2. Performance in supporting disadvantaged and protected student groups is currently monitored through the Access and Participation Plan and the Teaching Excellence Framework which use a defined set of widening participation (WP) measures.
3. The protected groups considered in this report include age, disability, sex, ethnicity, and participation of local areas (POLAR4). The Equality Act 2010 also defines the following protected characteristics which are not considered in this paper: Gender reassignment, Marriage and Civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, and sexual orientation.
4. To ensure the representation of students accurately, the data used in this report is self-declared. No changes or alterations have been made to the base data as the demographics used are Protected Characteristics.

### **REPORT STRUCTURE / APPROACH**

5. The report will provide a summary of the findings by protected characteristics at institutional level, for Undergraduates and Postgraduates (where applicable) across the following lifecycle stages:
  - a. Access (application, offer rates and new registrations)
  - b. Progression (continuation rates and fail and withdrawal rates)
  - c. Attainment gaps will be highlighted for each characteristic in the Progression and Success stages.
6. Continuation rate: UK students who leave before 1st December in their first academic year are excluded, as are part-time students who leave their programme of study within 50 days of commencement. It shows the first degree entrants who are still active at the University the year after they entered, and have not left before 1st December of the second year (this is a proxy calculation of that used by HESA in defining non-continuation rates as set out in HESA PI table 3a). The year refers to the entry cohort for that academic year.

7. It should be noted that the Access data in this report generally includes the full student population (excluding partners) so will not match other values shown in other reports (such as the TGUG, ARC, TEF) due to differences in source data, population and/or methodology. This will also include data published by external organisations, such as HESA and UCAS. For example, when HESA calculates the measures regarding continuation, they include students who transfer to other institutions, but that information is not known locally.
8. Total student populations may differ per characteristic for each metric due to the exclusion of unknown, refused or 'other' data.
9. Percentage points provided will be prefixed with a '+' or '-', to indicate an increase or decrease respectively.

## ACCESS STAGE – undergraduate

### 10. Observations:

- a. For 2021 entry, the undergraduate offer rate for all applicants decreased by 3.6% overall. This can be attributed to the fact that there was an overall decrease in applications to the University in 2021 entry of 3.2% overall.
- b. It should be noted that there is variation in the % application to offer rate between departments; for the majority of areas, the application to offer rate at undergraduate level is around 80 to 90%. Departments that have a lower offer rate include East 15 and HSC, where there are compulsory selection interviews for entry and a limit on the number of students able to register for each course. This results in a higher rejection rate and lower offer rate than other departments, where numbers are not restricted. The characteristics listed below do not form part of the selection or decision making process in determining whether an offer can be made.
- c. The offer likelihood has decreased for all groups shown in the tables below in 2021/22
- d. There is little difference in the proportions of new registrations except for POLAR4 where new registrations for Q1+2 have increased by 3.1 percentage points from 2020/21 to 2021/22 (Table 4).[For background and context, the percentage of POLAR 4 Q1+2 has steadily increased over the last 5 years, indicating the University continued commitment to ensuring fair access. Outreach activity targets schools with high percentages of POLAR Q1 students]
- e. Grading changes (due to COVID) had a positive impact for Widening Participation students (many of whom are Q1 and 2), and applications/acceptances have increased nationally.
- f. The proportion of new registrations for Black and White students have decreased while Asian and Arab students have seen a 4.3 percentage point increase from 2020/21 to 2021/22 (Table 5).

Academic Year	Mature				Young			
	Applications Submitted		Offers made	Offer Likelihood	Applications Submitted		Offers made	Offer likelihood
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2017/18	4,320	19.8%	2,531	58.6%	17,497	80.2%	14,724	84.2%
2018/19	4,630	20.4%	2,876	62.1%	18,099	79.6%	15,339	84.8%
2019/20	4,537	19.3%	2,976	65.6%	18,954	80.7%	16,306	86.0%
2020/21	5,198	23.7%	3,503	67.4%	16,708	76.3%	14,477	86.6%
2021/22	5,876	27.8%	3,699	63.0%	15,267	72.2%	13,135	86.0%

**Table 1:** Undergraduate Access stage over 5 years, using Age. (Data source: internal source)

Academic Year	Declared Disability				No Disability Declared			
	Applications submitted		Offers made	Offer likelihood	Applications submitted		Offers made	Offer likelihood
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2017/18	1,739	8.0%	1,309	75.3%	20,078	92.0%	15,946	79.4%
2018/19	1,924	8.5%	1,483	77.1%	20,805	91.5%	16,732	80.4%
2019/20	2,233	9.5%	1,802	80.7%	21,258	90.5%	17,480	82.2%
2020/21	2,124	9.7%	1,730	81.5%	19,782	90.3%	16,250	82.1%
2021/22	2,392	11.3%	1,893	79.1%	18,751	88.7%	14,941	79.7%

Table 2: Undergraduate access over 5 years, using Disability. (Data source: internal source)

Academic Year	Female				Male			
	Applications submitted		Offers made	Offer likelihood	Applications submitted		Offers made	Offer likelihood
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2017/18	11,761	53.9%	9,068	77.1%	10,056	46.1%	8,187	81.4%
2018/19	12,504	55.0%	9,778	78.2%	10,225	45.0%	8,437	82.5%
2019/20	13,090	55.7%	10,539	80.5%	10,398	44.3%	8,741	84.1%
2020/21	12,464	56.9%	10,035	80.5%	9,436	43.1%	7,940	84.1%
2021/22	11,930	56.5%	9,239	77.4%	9,202	43.5%	7,587	82.4%

Table 3: Undergraduate access over 5 years, using Sex. (Data source: internal source)

Characteristic	2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22	
	New Registrations		New Registrations		New Registrations		New Registrations		New Registrations	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Mature	449	11.4%	555	12.6%	572	12.2%	873	19.4%	716	20.0%
Young	3,481	88.6%	3,854	87.4%	4,120	87.8%	3,632	80.6%	2,871	80.0%
Disability Declared	495	12.6%	595	13.5%	686	14.7%	716	16.0%	529	15.0%
No Disability Declared	3,428	87.4%	3,804	86.5%	3,986	85.3%	3,773	84.0%	2,997	85.0%
Female	2,025	51.5%	2,242	50.9%	2,527	53.9%	2,499	55.5%	1,965	54.8%
Male	1,899	48.3%	2,163	49.1%	2,159	46.0%	1,999	44.4%	1,616	45.1%
POLAR4 Q1+Q2	864	30.2%	927	29.2%	1,051	32.8%	1,100	34.0%	1,000	37.1%
POLAR4 Q4+Q5	1,408	49.2%	1,609	50.7%	1,503	46.9%	1,428	44.2%	1,145	42.5%

Table 4: Undergraduate new student registrations over 5 years, split by characteristic. (Data source: internal source)

Characteristic	2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22	
	New Registrations		New Registrations		New Registrations		New Registrations		New Registrations	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Asian &amp; Arab</b>	824	21.4%	960	22.4%	972	21.2%	790	17.8%	752	22.1%
<b>Black</b>	731	19.0%	772	18.0%	882	19.3%	927	20.9%	656	19.3%
<b>Mixed</b>	227	5.9%	254	5.9%	252	5.5%	275	6.2%	194	5.7%
<b>Other</b>	78	2.0%	82	1.9%	89	1.9%	77	1.7%	56	1.6%
<b>White</b>	1,984	51.6%	2,218	51.7%	2,386	52.1%	2,361	53.3%	1,747	51.3%

**Table 5:** Undergraduate new student registrations by Ethnicity (Data source: internal)



## CONTINUATION PROGRESS STAGE (Undergraduate cohort 2020/21)

### 11. Observations:

- a. Continuation decreased for all groups except Ethnicity unknown and other in 2020/21.
- b. The continuation gap increased by 2 percentage points for sex from 2019/20 to 2020/21
- c. The continuation gap between Black and White students changed from +2.1 in 2019/20 to -0.8 in 2020/21 showing that Black students are now continuing at a very similar rate to White students, having previously continued at a higher rate than White students.

Characteristic	2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21	
	Continuation		Continuation		Continuation		Continuation		Continuation	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
<b>Mature</b>	90.0%	270	84.6%	301	84.8%	364	88.9%	393	87.0%	623
<b>Young</b>	88.0%	2,048	87.1%	2,136	86.1%	2,292	89.0%	2,386	87.2%	2,158
<b>Declared Disability</b>	90.0%	305	83.9%	366	84.8%	423	88.1%	502	85.6%	518
<b>No Disability Declared</b>	88.0%	2,012	87.2%	2,065	86.1%	2,225	89.1%	2,266	87.5%	2,253
<b>Female</b>	90.4%	1,144	89.1%	1,260	88.7%	1,345	90.0%	1,490	89.0%	1,591
<b>Male</b>	86.2%	1,172	84.3%	1,173	83.3%	1,308	87.9%	1,286	84.9%	1,185
<b>POLAR4 Q1+Q2</b>	87.4%	659	87.1%	734	86.9%	786	89.3%	913	87.2%	941
<b>POLAR4 Q4+Q5</b>	88.6%	1,178	86.4%	1,202	85.5%	1,346	88.2%	1,291	87.3%	1,225

**Table 6:** Undergraduate UK student continuation rates over 5 years, split by characteristic. (Data source: internal source)

Characteristic	2016/17	2018/19	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
<b>Age</b>	2.0%	-2.5%	-1.3%	-0.1%	-0.2%
<b>Disability</b>	2.0%	-3.3%	-1.3%	-1.1%	-1.9%
<b>Sex</b>	4.1%	4.8%	5.4%	2.1%	4.1%
<b>POLAR4</b>	-1.2%	0.7%	1.4%	1.1%	0.0%

**Table 7:** Continuation percentage point difference between characteristic levels over 5 years.

Characteristic	2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21	
	Continuation		Continuation		Continuation		Continuation		Continuation	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
<b>Arab &amp; Asian</b>	88.9%	295	86.6%	349	89.3%	376	86.8%	321	86.3%	258
<b>Black</b>	88.8%	540	87.4%	575	85.9%	603	91.1%	719	86.9%	711
<b>Mixed</b>	87.0%	147	80.5%	153	85.8%	182	85.9%	177	84.9%	185
<b>Other</b>	93.5%	43	82.5%	47	78.7%	48	84.1%	53	84.2%	48
<b>Unknown/ Information Refused</b>	75.5%	37	76.4%	42	66.2%	47	89.8%	44	94.7%	36
<b>White</b>	88.3%	1,256	87.9%	1,271	86.2%	1,400	89.0%	1,465	87.7%	1,543

**Table 8:** Undergraduate student continuation rates over 5 years, split by Ethnicity Detailed. (Data source: internal source)

## ACCESS STAGE (Postgraduate Taught Cohort 2020/21)

### 12. Observations:

- a) For 2021 entry, the postgraduate taught offer rate for all applicants increased by 30.7% overall. This can be attributed to the fact that there was an overall increase in PGT applications to the University in 2021 entry of 31.7% overall (and includes new provision that commenced in January 2021).
- b) For 2021 entry, the % application to offer rate for PGT entry was 71% overall. As above, it should be noted that there is variation in the % application to offer rate between departments, with E15, HSC, SRES and ISER having a lower application to offer rate for 2021 entry - again, largely because there are compulsory selection interviews for entry and a limit on the number of students able to register for each course. This results in a higher rejection rate and lower offer rate than other departments, where numbers are not restricted. The characteristics listed below do not form part of the selection or decision making process in determining whether an offer can be made.
- c) The offer likelihood has decreased across all groups from 2020/21 to 2021/22.
- d) The proportion of new registrations increased for Mature, No disability declared, Male and POLAR4 Q4+5 students.
- e) The proportion of new registrations decreased by 14.3 percentage points for White students in 2021/22 while Arab and Asian new registrations increased by 14.9 percentage point. Very little change was seen for Black students (-0.2 percentage points). This is likely to be a result of the large increases in PGT applications and offers for international applicants, especially from certain markets.

Academic Years	Mature				Young			
	Applications Submitted		Offers made	Offer Likelihood	Applications Submitted		Offers made	Offer likelihood
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2017/18	6,975	51.2%	3,570	51.2%	6,655	48.8%	4,079	61.3%
2018/19	6,749	49.0%	3,628	53.8%	7,019	51.0%	4,998	71.2%
2019/20	7,534	50.1%	4,390	58.3%	7,518	49.9%	5,838	77.7%
2020/21	9,944	54.0%	7,209	72.5%	8,467	46.0%	7,163	84.6%
2021/22	15,141	60.0%	10,511	69.4%	10,115	40.0%	8,192	81.0%

**Table 9:** Postgraduate taught Access stage over 5 years, using Age. (Data source: internal source)

Academic Years	Declared Disability				No Disability Declared			
	Applications submitted		Offers made	Offer likelihood	Applications submitted		Offers made	Offer likelihood
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2017/18	426	3.1%	213	50.0%	13,204	96.9%	7,436	56.3%
2018/19	395	2.9%	219	55.4%	13,373	97.1%	8,407	62.9%
2019/20	498	3.3%	295	59.2%	14,554	96.7%	9,933	68.2%
2020/21	649	3.5%	482	74.3%	17,762	96.5%	13,890	78.2%
2021/22	786	3.1%	536	68.2%	24,470	96.9%	18,167	74.2%

Table 10: Postgraduate taught Access over 5 years, using Disability. (Data source: internal source)

Academic Years	Female				Male			
	Applications submitted		Offers made	Offer likelihood	Applications submitted		Offers made	Offer likelihood
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2017/18	5,976	43.8%	4,540	59.3%	7,653	56.2%	3,108	52.0%
2018/19	6,494	47.2%	4,736	65.3%	7,250	52.8%	3,877	59.7%
2019/20	7,412	49.4%	5,334	70.1%	7,605	50.6%	4,868	65.7%
2020/21	9,969	54.3%	6,525	77.7%	8,401	45.7%	7,817	78.4%
2021/22	13,985	55.5%	8,207	73.2%	11,219	44.5%	10,463	74.8%

Table 11: Postgraduate taught Access over 5 years, using Sex. (Data source: internal source)

Characteristic	2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22	
	New Registrations		New Registrations		New Registrations		New Registrations		New Registrations	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Mature	562	36.6%	493	30.2%	554	34.4%	782	35.4%	1,094	39.7%
Young	974	63.4%	1,138	69.8%	1,055	65.6%	1,430	64.6%	1,665	60.3%
Disability Declared	141	9.2%	124	7.6%	149	9.3%	208	9.4%	184	6.8%
No Disability Declared	1,395	90.8%	1,505	92.4%	1,457	90.7%	1,996	90.6%	2,527	93.2%
Female	945	61.5%	910	55.8%	916	56.9%	1,111	50.2%	1,241	45.0%
Male	590	38.4%	718	44.0%	690	42.9%	1,096	49.5%	1,512	54.8%
POLAR4 Q1+Q2	214	33.4%	209	33.1%	220	36.2%	242	30.7%	167	29.9%
POLAR4 Q4+Q5	309	48.2%	263	41.7%	259	42.6%	382	48.4%	273	48.9%

Table 12: Postgraduate taught new registrations over 5 years. (Data source: internal source)

Characteristic	2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22	
	New Registrations		New Registrations		New Registrations		New Registrations		New Registrations	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Asian & Arab	468	31.6%	589	37.2%	586	38.0%	1,033	48.2%	1,703	63.1%
Black	135	9.1%	153	9.7%	155	10.1%	196	9.1%	241	8.9%
Mixed	72	4.9%	68	4.3%	75	4.9%	78	3.6%	77	2.9%
Other	41	2.8%	50	3.2%	65	4.2%	44	2.1%	65	2.4%
White	766	51.7%	725	45.7%	661	42.9%	792	37.0%	614	22.7%

**Table 13:** Postgraduate taught new registrations over 5 years. (Data source: internal source)

## Recommendations

13. Education Committee is asked to note that continuation rates for students in protected groups have fallen back from the improvements achieved in 2019-20 and should consider actions to address this.

**Name of paper author: Dr Antonia D C D'Souza**

**Role: Education Data Insight Officer**

**Date of paper: 02/03/2022**