**WIDENING ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN 2020/21 - 2022/23**

**Institutions are required to submit information under each of the headings below. Please see the guidance notes for help in completing this return.**

* 1. Please provide a high level outline of your institution’s Widening Participation policy in Higher Education and how this fits in with the institution’s strategic direction.

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| Queen’s University is committed to providing its students with an educational experience that is commensurate with the best universities in the world. It is also committed to ensuring that those who have the ability to benefit from such an education should have an opportunity to do so, irrespective of: socio-economic background, disability, ethnicity, political opinion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, or age.Widening Participation, Equality and Diversity is a key component of Queen’s Corporate Plan (2016-21) and a key strand in Queen’s Education Strategy (2016‑21). Priorities identified include:* Fully integrating Widening Participation in the culture and working practices of the University.
* Offering an education portfolio which provides a range of routes to learning, and supports student progression and success.
* Ensuring that students have the opportunity to engage in delivering outreach activity.
* Delivering, in partnership with the Students’ Union, initiatives to promote inclusivity and diversity.
* Making a real difference to the lives of those most disadvantaged in Northern Ireland (NI) through working in partnership with communities as evidenced through the work of the Centre for Evidence and Social Innovation. For further information on Queen’s work in this area please visit[*Centre for Evidence and Social Innovation*](http://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/cesi/zones/)*.*

The University’s Widening Participation Framework identifies two key thematic priorities, reflecting the student lifecycle (outlined in more detail in Section 1.4):* Pre-Entry Outreach and Flexible Access to Higher Education.
* Supporting Transition, Retention, Attainment, and Employability.

Thematic Priority One: Pre-Entry Outreach and Flexible Access to Higher Education* Further expand the degree options and number of places on the Pathway Opportunity Programme, providing an alternative access route to Queen’s.
* Continue to develop the Queen’s Academy to deliver, in partnership with identified schools and FE colleges in Northern Ireland, a progressive programme of engagement and support with targeted pupils to achieve the necessary qualifications to access Higher Education.
* Further develop attainment raising interventions within the Junior Academy programmes.
* Pilot additional primary school interventions, building on the successful Professor Fluffy Programme.
* Enhance the information, advice and guidance available to pupils, schools and parents on widening participation opportunities to Higher Education.
* Introduce the Brilliant Club to develop the sustainability of widening participation opportunities that were delivered within the Research Councils UK (RCUK) Schools University Partnership Initiative (SUPI) project, involving early career and doctoral researchers working with post-primary schools to enhance the pupil learning experience and aspiration, and promote awareness of research.
* Review and further develop the University’s Access Programme as a route to higher education for Adult Learners in collaboration with Belfast Metropolitan College, as part of the Belfast City Deal.
* Contribute to the development of initiatives in partnership with FE to progress current apprenticeships to HE as relevant.
* Assess the potential for the introduction of targeted scholarships for Widening Participation entrants.
* Recruit and train volunteer student and graduate ambassadors as role models to raise ambition of young people from under-represented groups.
* Develop a model and practice of evidence based practice.

Thematic Priority Two: Supporting Transition, Retention, and Attainment * Enhance the support package for students entering the University from Widening Participation cohorts, including the ongoing development of peer mentoring and individual learning support through the Learning Development Service.
* Enhance the provision of advice and guidance to Widening Participation entrants on the range of support and assistance available, including access to bursaries and scholarships, to enable a positive transition to University life.
* Provide a range of student wellbeing support to ensure students are supported throughout their student journey.
* Further promote the provision of dedicated services for the support for students with disabilities.
* Further promote the provision of support for care experienced young people including the £1,440 bursary (£1,000 plus low income bursary at 10% of fees) for those who meet the criteria, which was introduced in 2015-16.
* Provide support to ensure positive employability outcomes for Widening Participation cohorts.
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* 1. What is your view of the success record of your institution in relation to recruitment, retention and progression for Widening Participation students?

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| Queen’s has a good record in recruiting students from low-income backgrounds. 26% of Queen’s students are from the lowest household income category, and some 44% of our students have a family income below £41,500 (the cut off for DfE maintenance grants). We continue to make progress in improving access for disabled students. Approximately 11% of full-time undergraduate students are identified as having a disability, and this figure has grown annually. Student ProgressionQueen’s has enhanced the student experience, with a particular emphasis on improving student transition, retention and attainment.  Considerable success has been achieved in terms of student retention, as demonstrated by the HESA Performance Indicators on “non-continuation”, with dropout rates being well below the NI average.

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| **HESA PI** | **2013-14** | **2014-15** | **2015-16** | **2016-17** | **NI average** |
| 1st Year Dropout rate | 4.5% | 4.4% | 4.3% | 4.6% | 6.4% |
| Overall Dropout rate | 7.4% | 8.1% | 8.7% | 8.1% | 9.9% |

EmployabilityAnnual performance indicators are published by HESA on the employability of students and Queen’s recorded excellent results for the 2016-17 graduates, with 96% in employment or further study. This measure has now been replaced by a new “Graduate Outcomes” survey, with the first results due in spring 2020. Queen’s has a comprehensive Employability Framework and the Corporate Plan 2016-21 includes a target of 95% for student employability.

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| **Measure** | **2012-13** | **2013-14** | **2014-15** | **2015-16** | **2016-17** |
| Students Employed (inc. further study) | 93.8% | 94.6% | 93.5% | 94.4% | 96.0% |

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* 1. Please outline the Widening Participation aims, objectives and targets for the next 3 years for your institution.

*You will need to provide details on key target groups within Access to Success, anticipated expenditure and the measures of success – your response should include a description of your approach to targeting, as well as the areas targeted for improvement over the next 3 years. You may wish to add to the projection tables below to report on your own institution’s specified target groups if not already included in Access to Success.*

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| In developing Widening Participation aims, objectives and targets, it is important to note the following points relating to the Northern Ireland context:* The 2015-16 budget resulted in unprecedented cuts to the funding of higher education in NI.  This has resulted in a phased reduction in the overall number of full-time, undergraduate places in NI institutions (the MaSN).
* Data from UCAS shows that 36% of NI domiciled students are exported to GB, a rise of 4% since 2014-15. This outflow of talent will undermine the Executive’s ability to deliver on a Programme for Government and a sustainable model of HE funding is required to allow NI universities to reduce the number of local students studying in other parts of the UK.
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**1.3 (a) TARGETS**

You will note that the tables numbered (i) to (vi) below have been pre populated with your institution’s average enrolment for the last 3 years. You are now required to insert numerical targets for each of the groups identified across the 3 years 2020/21 – 2022/23. These groups are regarded as being under represented in Access to Success.

1. Group: **MDM Quintile 1**

Outcome: **To increase participation of those from NI MDM Q1**

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| **AVERAGE** (based on 3 years 2015-2018) | **Targets/Outcome** |
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| **3 Year Average** | **NUMBER OF STUDENTS** | **2020/21** | **2021/22** | **2022/23** |
| **1673** |  |  |  |
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1. Group: **Students with a Disability**

Outcome: **To increase the number of students who declare a disability**

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| **AVERAGE** (based on 3 years 2015-2018) | **Targets/Outcome** |
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| **3 Year Average** | **NUMBER OF STUDENTS** | **2020/21** | **2021/22** | **2022/23** |
| **1477** |  |  |  |

1. Group: **Students with a Disability**

Outcome: **To increase** **the number of students in receipt of DSA**

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| --- | --- |
| **AVERAGE** (based on 3 years 2015-2018) | **Targets/Outcome** |
| **3 Year Average** | **NUMBER OF STUDENTS** | **2020/21** | **2021/22** | **2022/23** |
| **845** |  |  |  |

1. Group: **Young Males from Quintile 1**

Outcome: **To increase participation of young males from NI MDM Quintile 1**

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| --- | --- |
| **AVERAGE** (based on 3 years 2015-2018) | **Targets/Outcome** |
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| **3 Year Average** | **NUMBER OF STUDENTS** | **2020/21** | **2021/22** | **2022/23** |
| **450** |  |  |  |

1. Group: **Adult Learners**

Outcome: **To increase the number of adult learners participating in HE**

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| --- | --- |
| **AVERAGE** (based on 3 years 2015-2018) | **Targets/Outcome** |
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|
| **3 Year Average** | **NUMBER OF STUDENTS** | **2020/21** | **2021/22** | **2022/23** |
| **4395** |  |  |  |

1. Group**: Number of** **Care Experienced enrolments**

Outcome: **To increase the number of enrolments for those from a care background**

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| --- | --- |
| **BASE YEAR**  | **Targets/Outcome** |
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| **2016/17** | **NUMBER OF STUDENTS** | **2020/21** | **2021/22** | **2022/23** |
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* 1. List below the key programmes/projects financed from additional student fees that will contribute towards your institution’s performance.

(Please refer to the appropriate section of the guidance notes before completing.)

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| Queen’s Widening Participation programmes reflect the integrated learner-centred framework, our work recognising that widening access and participation must be addressed at different phases of the ‘student lifecycle’. **STUDENT LIFECYCLE MODEL*** Raising awareness and aspirations (from primary school age upwards, including adults).
* Better preparation/pre-entry support (raising attainment to enable transition from school/FE College/Access courses to higher education).
* First steps in higher education (including induction programmes and transition support on course).
* Moving through the degree programme (supporting students in a holistic way, both their academically and personally).
* Student success (achievement and preparation for work and/or further study).

Ten programmes are presented below against this student lifecycle model and aligned with the priorities of the Queen’s Widening Participation Framework.Thematic Priority One: Pre-Entry Outreach and Flexible Access to Higher Education**RAISING AWARENESS AND ASPIRATION**1. **Primary School Programmes**

 The successful **Professor Fluffy** Programme with its message of aspiration to Higher Education will be reviewed with a view to developing a partnership approach to engagement that will involve key stakeholders and the strong influencers in the pupils’ future decisions about Higher Education both during in-school visits and on-campus activity days, e.g. parents, community leaders and head teachers. This is achieved through:* A focus on schools located in areas of high deprivation in the Greater Belfast Area
* A combination of classroom delivered activities and on-campus activity days
* Developing a collaborative partnership approach to delivery if appropriate

 The **Reading Together Programme** is a partnership project with the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (SEHSCT). Looked After Children, and Care Leavers are Widening Participation target groups, as it is widely recognised that children in care have lower levels of educational achievement and are significantly less likely to enter Higher Education.  Reading Together aims to raise the literacy levels of children in care aged 9-11 years by providing one-to-one paired reading and homework support for one hour per week from a student at Queen’s University (Student Mentor). * Support will take place on a weekday, immediately after and within each child’s school.
* Each child will receive a minimum of eight support sessions.
* Student Mentors are current undergraduate or postgraduate students at Queen’s.

 The programme has additional funding from the SEHSCT, a private donor, and the Caterpillar Foundation though the collaborative working relationship with the Queen’s Development and Alumni Department. 1. **Queen’s Junior** **Academy**

 The Queen’s Junior Academy comprises the Junior Academy Sports Programme and Junior Academy. **Junior Academy Sports Programme** aims to introduce pupils to Higher Education through sport.  The programme targets young males in Year 8 providing a progressive programme through to Year 10 and had been designed to develop communication, leadership and teamwork skills.  In Year 10 participants have the opportunity to complete a Level 1 Qualification in Sports Leadership accredited by Sports Leaders UK. Forty places are offered each year to Year 8 pupils.             Sports Leaders qualifications provide a starting point for learners who wish to develop their leadership skills.  The practical qualification allows learners to demonstrate their ability to lead others in sport and helps set the foundation for future sports and career development.  Pupils attend six learning sessions including a one-hour practical session where they deliver a sports activity to younger pupils in their respective schools.  To complete the qualification, participants demonstrate the ability to lead others, communicate effectively, and work as part of a team.  Pupils are required to complete a portfolio of evidence and deliver a one-hour practical session.           The **Junior Academy Programme** is designed to introduce pupils to Higher Education and life at university.  Each year participating schools have the opportunity to nominate up to five pupils to take part in the progressive programme from Year 9 -Year 12.  Each year approximately 100 young people are nominated in Year 9 to take part in the programme which aims to raise awareness of Higher Education and the opportunities available by developing academic skills and supporting attainment.             This is achieved through a progressive programme of engagement: * In Year 9 - Participants attend a Welcome and Orientation event at Queen’s University where they are offered an insight into university life including campus and Queen’s Elms accommodation tours.  Pupils also gain insight into university life by having the opportunity to work with Student Ambassadors on a range of campus challenges.
* In Year 10 - Pupils gain knowledge of the variety of subjects offered by Queen’s University by taking part in three faculty based taster days.  Pupils attend lectures, workshops, and complete tasks set by academic staff supported by student ambassadors.  Pupils gain information on the importance of GCSE selection and subject specific requirements needed for certain courses.
* Year 11 and 12 offer GCSE support in the form of study skills sessions delivered by the Learning Development Service including: How to Study, Revision Techniques, and Time Management.  Pupils also attend Master Classes in English and Mathematics to support GCSE attainment.

 **BETTER PREPARATION/PRE-ENTRY SUPPORT**1. **Queen’s Outreach to Schools and the Community**

 The Queen’s Outreach to Schools and the Community Programme aims to raise awareness and ensure that the costs and benefits of Higher Education are readily understood so pupils can identify the relevance of Higher Education to their own lives and consequently, this will encourage and support quality applications from pupils across NI.  This is achieved through:* Delivery of talks to Year 12-14.  These include both general information about Higher Education and Queen’s, and academic talks from a range of Queen’s subject areas.
* Participation in Career Conventions in collaboration with Area Learning Communities.
* Development of an enhanced online Undergraduate (UG) prospectus and related resources to meet the information needs of prospective pupils.
* Development of a careers teachers’ website as a resource for careers teachers to avail of current information.
* Provide tailored information for young people with disabilities through booklets supported by dissemination workshops in Schools.
* Engagement in a programme of outreach to key contacts in the community.

**The Queen’s Senior Academy and Social Mobility Business Partnership Programme**The Queen’s Senior Academy will deliver a comprehensive and progressive programme of support which aims to raise attainment and increase the number of entrants to Higher Education from targeted Widening Participation backgrounds. This is achieved through:* Over 50 places available each year on the 18-month programme.
* A targeted approach in collaboration with NI-wide schools and FE colleges, to ensure those ‘most able and least likely’ are nominated to the Senior Academy.
* A targeted approach with NI Social Care Trusts to ensure nominations of young people in care.
* Further engagement and promotion with parents/carers around the benefits and facts of continuing further education and university prior to finding a job.
* An intensive programme combining on-campus activity and master classes hosted by Queen’s University staff, including members of the Learning and Development and Wellbeing teams. Master classes focus on stress management, effective study skills and revision and technique.
* 30 Hours subject specific tuition in up to two A-level subjects.
* Information and guidance sessions hosted by Queen’s University on the UCAS application process, to ensure informed course selection and career development planning.
* An opportunity to get a taste of student life by spending a day with a current student at Queen’s University, including attendance at classes and going for lunch within the University area.
* Residential experience at Queen’s University Belfast to increase knowledge and awareness of the student experience and the opportunity to gain an insight into life at the University.
* During the residential, completing subject specific projects and show-casing findings through a presentation.
* Developing their communication, team work, research, analytical and presentation skills through project completion and presentation.
* Ongoing evaluation to inform the development of the Senior Academy.
* Past Senior Academy students at Queen’s University are employed as Student Ambassadors, who assist in the hosting of events and provide information and guidance to participants on student life.

 **Social Mobility Business Partnership - SMBP**  Queen’s University Belfast is partnering with the Social Mobility Business Partnership (SMBP), a charity dedicated to supporting students from low income backgrounds wishing to pursue a career in business, legal or accountancy professions. This is a new initiative to NI and the insight and skills training programme and coaching service began on 9 May 2019. Senior Academy participants will be encouraged to apply for this programme which offers:* Provision for up to 30 local students in year 13, with access to a unique, week-long, work insight and skills programme.
* Access to ongoing support from virtual coaches who will be on hand to provide assistance with CVs, filling in application forms, and interview preparation.
* Resilience training provided in conjunction with QUB and Ulster Rugby.
* Advice from QUB on student finance including dispelling myths and corroborating facts.
1. **Pathway Opportunity Programme**

 The Pathway Opportunity Programme delivers a structured series of events, designed to aid progression to Queen’s University, including admissions guidance and support. Participants take part in a series of workshops, masterclasses and seminars, delivered either on campus or online via our Virtual Learning Environment. Participants complete an assignment based on work completed during a week-long residential summer school. The programme includes:* A province wide targeting of year 13 students who are most capable but least likely to attend university based on multiple deprivation measures including those with disabilities and those who are Care experienced, regardless of type of post-primary school attended (secondary, grammar, etc.).
* Online and on-campus subject specific coursework working with university lecturers and postgraduates to expose the students to university level academics while increasing their enthusiasm and motivation to study their particular subject at university.
* Online Academic Skills programmes to better prepare the students to attain the necessary A-Level grades to attend university as well as prepare them for university level academic study.
* Raising of knowledge about and awareness of university life and the entire application process through on-campus workshops and seminars.
* Residential experience at Queen’s to increase knowledge and awareness of the student experience and the opportunity to gain an insight into university life.
* Students who complete the programme received a guaranteed conditional offer onto courses within their Pathway subject and, based on their assessed coursework, may receive a reduced offer of one or two A-Level grades (or equivalent).
1. **Access and Open Learning**

 Queen’s aims to increase the numbers of mature students progressing from Open Learning and Access courses to undergraduate study at Queen’s.  This is achieved through:* Promotion of Open learning courses as a taster of Queen’s to adult learners and provision of support for those with special support needs and/or disabilities to ensure that engagement with learning is a positive experience that will increase the possibility of those participating of exploring options that will lead to further engagement with Higher Education.
* Work with education providers at community level to explore awareness raising opportunities to promote Higher Education.
* Delivery of a range of access programmes that provide entry level qualification to Queen’s. These are designed for those who do not have A levels and have been out of full-time education for more than two years, and are delivered at Further Education (FE) Colleges across Northern Ireland.
* Work with education providers at community level to explore awareness raising opportunities to promote Higher Education.
* Review of the existing access programmes in 2019-20 to ensure currency and relevancy undertaken through a Periodic Review process underpinned by internal and external expertise on programme design and content.
* Development of a new Access pathway aligned to the regional City Deal initiative’s pillar on employability and skills development - the initial pilot will focus on Digital Skills.

Thematic Priority Two: Supporting Transition, Retention and Attainment and Employability1. **Transition Support Programme**

The Transition Support Programme aims to ensure that a diverse student body settles successfully into University and becomes fully engaged in the Queen’s student experience. The Transition Support Programme normally includes the following but is adapted every year based on evaluation of the previous year and emerging student needs:* Disability Services “Offer Holder” information event, to inform prospective students who have disclosed a disability on the range of supports available both internally and through external funding, alongside how to register, etc.
* The Vice-Chancellor’s meet the ‘Parents/Guardian’ event to increase awareness of support and help ease transition.
* Academic-based induction delivered at subject level and incorporating meetings with staff, current students, peers, personal tutors and finding out more about the course and relevant support.
* Student Wellbeing lead on a central programme introducing students to the “Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing” to encourage students to take personal responsibility for managing their mental health and wellbeing during their time at Queen’s.
* Student-led University-wide programme of welcome offering support to target groups including:
	+ Mature student induction event and ongoing networking events;
	+ Care-experienced students’ academic induction event;
	+ Direct entry to Level 2 and 3 Transition Support Programme;
	+ Induction and transition support for students with Asperger’s and ASD.
	+ Transition workshops for students entering from Senior Academy or Pathway Opportunity Programme.

Each of these activities will cover elements of learning in higher education, raising awareness of support available, and provide an opportunity to socialise with other students:* School-based peer mentoring providing transition support to new students.
* Programme based peer assisted learning to help student as appropriate with academic content/skills.
* Promotion of student support through promotional materials such as: leaflets, flyers, information boards, and website resources such as: on-line self-management resources, videos, blogs, student interns, workshops, and group-work sessions.

**ON COURSE SUPPORT**1. **Academic Support Framework**

The aim of the Academic Support Framework is to ensure students’ progress through their course and attain a degree classification reflective of their academic potential. The framework combines generic support with a range of specialist academic and related supports based on student needs. The framework is evaluated on an ongoing basis and innovative methods of support are developed and piloted to ensure support reflects the changing environment of learning and the needs of a diverse body of students. The Framework includes:* Personal Tutors, who provide an enhanced academic tutoring system to support the increased retention of our students. Each new undergraduate student is assigned a personal tutor who meets with the student up to two times a year. The personal tutor is key to guiding the student through their academic study by providing feedback on their academic performance and signposting students to additional relevant support if appropriate e.g. Learning Development Service (LDS) and to relevant development opportunities.
* Learning Development Service (LDS) which offers academic skills support through one-to-one meetings, workshops and online resources.
* Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) developed as an innovative approach to students supporting students in specific areas of academic content.
* Disability Services supports students who disclose a disability or long-term condition to access a range of “in-course” and funded supports. The nature and type of support provided varies and is tailored to meet individual student requirements. Once registered with the service their allocated Disability Officer will support the student to develop an Individual Student Support Agreement which outlines all supports and reasonable adjustments that a student is entitled to. The Disability Officer then liaises with all appropriate areas to put support in place. Each academic School has a Disability Adviser who assists in the arrangement of reasonable adjustments within their School to support the students’ learning and assessment.
* Disability Services also assists students with applications for funded support such as Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA).
* The Examinations Office makes arrangements for reasonable adjustments in examinations e.g. additional time, rest breaks, individual rooms, scribes/readers and use of a PC, and use of the ‘green room’ to accommodate students.
* Additional support to enhance accessibility to Library and information resources is provided and assistive technology is available on computers throughout the University.
* Disability Drop-in facility runs three days a week during term time to support students with any queries regarding registration or supports available.
1. **Wellbeing Support Programme**

The aim of the Wellbeing Support Programme is to ensure that students are supported appropriately when personal difficulties or complex situations arise and that this support enables students, if possible, to continue with their course of study. The support is both generic and specialist and is reviewed and enhanced as new needs become evident or as innovative approaches are implemented. Support includes:* Student Wellbeing Team, which provides co-ordination of support to students identified with complex difficulties, including personal and family issues, financial difficulties and emerging mental health concerns.
* “Daily drop-in” facility during term time to ensure students experiencing any difficulties of an academic or personal nature have access to timely, short-term focused support.
* A specialist service focusing on promoting “Safe and Healthy Relationships” across campus offers 1:1 support, advice and guidance to students impacted by sexual misconduct, hate crime, bullying or harassment. A team of advocates working across campus have been trained as an additional level of support to students reporting and responding to disclosures.
* A diverse range of workshops and events are delivered throughout the year under the “Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing” framework to encourage students to take personal responsibility for managing their mental health and wellbeing.
* Student Advice Centre which offers one-to-one guidance on budgeting and finance.
* Residential Life Team which is part of the University’s Accommodation provision and provides access to a range of social events.
* Asperger’s Support Network, which provides students with Asperger’s with ongoing support, connection with peers and skills development.
* Student Counselling Service provides free face-to-face counselling support to students and is available at a range of locations across NI. Students also have 24 hour access to a counselling helpline.
* University Health Centre which provides health care that is accessible and responsive to the needs of students.
* OMNI - all in for mental health campaign, recognises the role of all across the University in supporting students’ wellbeing.
* Hardship Fund which provides discretionary financial help for students who get into financial difficulty during their course.
* Crèche facilities which are open to all full-time students.

**STUDENT SUCCESS**1. **Employability and Further Study**

The University seeks to ensure that undergraduate students from under-represented groups have access to opportunities for Information Advice and Guidance, mentoring, work experience, placements or internships, as part of the University’s commitment to improving the employment prospects of its undergraduates. This is achieved through a range of pre-entry and on-course activities, including:* Developing and enhancing the information, advice and guidance to students and teachers.
* Running an Internship programme. There is bursary support available to enable students to undertake short one or two week internships (£100 per week to cover travel and subsistence) or work experience during their summer vacation. These students would not otherwise be able to undertake these opportunities without this financial support. Other awards of up to £750 are available to fund travel to International Placements/study abroad
* Expanding of Business Mentoring Scheme by developing a strand targeted at students from WP backgrounds. The scheme seeks to bridge the gap between education and industry. The scheme helps students to develop skills as well as build networks and connections with business professionals. The business mentors are from a range of employers thus providing a valuable opportunity for our students and strengthening links between graduate employers and the University. All students who join the University via the Queen’s Academy, Pathway Opportunities Programme, or who are identified as WP Schools/Colleges will have the opportunity to apply for the Business Mentoring Scheme to potentially aid their access to a variety of professions.
* Provision of one-to-one support and workshops during the summer post-graduation. To support student progression to further study, the University seeks to provide clearer, relevant, comparable information about the choices available, the costs involved and the funding available. This is achieved through enhanced and targeted information (paper and online).
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* 1. Please provide a short summary of how your activities link to the key actions within Access to Success.

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| All activities mapped to Queen’s Widening Participation Framework have been written to reflect the key actions of the Access to Success Strategy.The activities seek to engage with key cohorts identified by the Access to Success Strategy for inclusion in future widening participation support initiatives:* Low participation neighbourhoods (areas of high deprivation);
* Disability (physical, sensory or learning);
* Young males;
* Adult returners;
* Care experienced.

This is achieved by highlighting the above as required entry criteria for our pre-entry programmes in addition to ‘first in family’ and ‘experience as a carer’. |

* 1. How do you plan to communicate information on the availability of financial and other assistance to students?

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| Queen’s will continue to ensure that prospective students and their parents have all the information they need to make an informed decision about the commitments they will be making, financial and other, if they come to study at Queen’s. This information is made available on the University’s Website and in its printed Prospectus and other publications. The Queen’s Senior Academy and Pathway Opportunity programme’s include a student finance awareness presentation from Advice SU, ensuring that participants are made aware of the financial support available to them at Queen’s and how to access information relating to other institutions.Additionally, students have access to professional advice and information services to help them to make the best use of the resources available to them during their time at Queen’s. Advice SU provides advice on a range of issues, including: loans, tuition fees, bursaries, the Support Fund, scholarships, Social Security Benefits, and budgeting skills. This advice is also available to prospective students at the pre-entry stage. Disability Services provides information on support available.We work on an ongoing basis with students, prospective students and their parents/carers in the development and focus of our messages and our choice of information channels and to determine which information is of most importance to prospective students.The provision of advice and information on financial support is a shared responsibility for all within the University who work directly with students, particularly Finance, Students’ Union, Admissions and Recruitment and Outreach Officers. Advice SU provides expert advice in this area. |

* 1. How do you plan to monitor progress against the targets and the achievement of outcomes?

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| The University Operating Board approved the Widening Access and Participation Plan and will monitor its progress throughout the year.The Supporting Student Attainment Action Group (SSAAG) will monitor the retention and success measures.SSAAG has representation from senior management and the Students’ Union.As described in 1.3, the primary measures relating to Widening Participation will continue to be focused on:* Disadvantaged backgrounds;
* Household income;
* Disability;
* Young males;
* Care experienced.
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* 1. Please provide an additional evaluation on how you think your institution is performing or provide us with relevant documents in line with section 1.8 of the guidance document.

*(Full details on how to complete this section are in the guidance notes)*

In order to ensure consistency across institutions we would ask that you use the Kirkpatrick Model for this exercise. The concept is that individual institutions will learn from this self-evaluation and obtain evidence to influence future widening participation activity and plans. You may evaluate the institution’s widening participation activity as a whole, or evaluate individual projects.

The following sub headings should help focus your response. The Department expects that most institutions will be able to evaluate widening participation activity to at least Level 3 (as below).

**Level 1 Evaluation - Reactions**

*What participants thought and felt about the programme*

Maintaining and improving the quality and effectiveness of our outreach programmes is paramount so participants are asked to provide an evaluation at the end of every event/activity to get their thoughts on the programme - how it went and how relevant it was to them. These evaluations / feedback forms are designed to be age specific for the pupils/students. For primary school pupils it takes the form of anonymously answering questions shown on the screen using our electronic Personal Response (PRS) clickers at the end of the programme followed by a paper questionnaire completed back at their school in the days following the programme. For post primary school participants the pupils/students are asked to complete a short evaluation sheet and/or asked to complete a survey online after the event. In addition, feedback is sought from teachers both verbally and via online surveys.

An example follows of a post-event questionnaire from a Queen’s Senior Academy event which had the following quantitative and qualitative results, among others:

**How would you rate the event overall**?

**What part of the event did you find the most relevant and useful?**

*“The Senior Academy pushed us out of our comfort zone and made us interact with others, it was really educational and an enjoyable experience and allowed me to widen my knowledge on University.”* Senior Academy student.

**Junior Academy**

Pupils attending Mathematics Masterclass in 2017-18 were asked to complete a post event questionnaire, 84% agreed or strongly agreed that the workshop material was useful and 85% agreed or strongly agreed that their knowledge had improved by attending.

**Open Learning**

The programme is evaluated in a number of ways. All new courses are evaluated by students as well as a sample of established courses. Internal and external moderation is also carried out to ensure that high quality provision is maintained.

**Retention and Progression Interventions**

First and second year surveys provide ongoing feedback from students on the quality of their learning experience. Student support initiatives are evaluated regularly and developed in collaboration with students.

**Level 2 Evaluation - Learning**

*The resulting increase in knowledge or capability*

To demonstrate an increase in knowledge or understanding due to our outreach programmes, the participants complete a survey before the first event and after the last event focusing on the objectives of the programme. These are anonymous but the aggregate across all the pupils gives an evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme. In addition, the post-event survey includes a series of short open-ended questions for qualitative evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme.

As an example, our 2017-2018 Professor Fluffy programme had the following result:

For the objective of raising awareness of Higher Education, the pupils were asked “Do you know what life is like at university?”. Between the pre and post survey the number of pupils answering “yes” or “yes definitely” more than doubled from 20% in the pre survey to 52% in the post survey.

*“The programme has changed my mind by helping me imagine what life at university would be like.”* P7 pupil

*“My thoughts on university are clearer now as I know what it is.”* P7 pupil

*“I think that the programme certainly enlightened my class about university life, the clubs/societies available to all, what accommodation is available and the types of courses on offer. I think it met the objective of raising aspirations well. Teaching in a socially deprived area, I find that my pupils sell themselves short. They were able to see that university is for people from all areas, not just more affluent ones.”* P7 Teacher

As another example, the **Reading Together Programme** uses both qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the programme. An ‘Elementary Reading Attitude Survey’ (ERAS) and the ‘Neale Analysis of Reading Ability Test’ (NARA) is conducted with each pupil; each of these tests is conducted twice, once before the mentoring sessions and once afterwards.

**Level 3 Evaluation - Transfer**

*Behaviour - extent of behaviour and capability improvement and implementation/application*

This level of evaluation has been more difficult to measure as there are many aspects to the programme. Measuring behavioural change specifically related to the programmes is complex. To address this, Queen’s University WPU is involved in ongoing work with the Russell Group Widening Participation Group and the National Education Opportunities Network. Some qualitative evaluation student comments do hint at the impact of the programmes on “transfer”:

*“The programme has left an impact on me, as I have experienced first-hand what university life can entail and have confirmed that university life is definitely for me. The programme was very beneficial for me in regards to a course in computer science and has given me more of an “even playing field” when considering what courses I will be choosing for the future as I have a better insight to computer science.”* Pathway student

*“The programme has influenced my present as I have been so much more motivated in school to do well and to be able to achieve the grades I need to get into university. And it’s influenced my future as before the programme I wouldn’t have imagined I would be in the position I am now with offers from 5 universities, especially QUB!.”* Pathway student

In addition, teachers’ comments also give weight to the transfer that occurred:

“Helped an already excellent student become more focused.”

“Enhanced their personal responsibility.”

“Increased confidence.”

“Developed key skills of use at University and beyond.”

“Motivation to pursue their chosen career path.”

**Level 4 Evaluation- Results**

*Results - the effects resulting from performance*

Each programme is reviewed to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme at meeting its aims and objectives - getting results. Some of these results are more subjective and come from pre/post checks and surveys, such as the following example from our Schools University Partnership Initiative (SUPI) which has an objective to increase aspiration in the pupils/students to progress to Higher Education:

**As a result of the event today I am more likely to think about going to university?** (Percent of students with each response)

Other results are more objective and are tied to receiving qualifications or actually applying onto higher education courses. For example:

* Out of 27 pupils on the Junior Academy Sports programme, 24 (or 89%) successfully completed their Level 1 qualification: Sports Leaders UK Certificate.
* Out of 43 students completing the Pathway Opportunity Programme, 35 (81%) applied to Queen’s University and the remainder are either resitting a year in school and will be applying the following year, or have applied to other establishments of higher education.

**Open Learning Evaluation**

An example of innovative practice in evaluation would be a co-research project with Tess Maginess led with Open Learning students. In the project, older students and young Master's students became co-researchers - conducting interviews, literature review, editing, creative documenting, and assisting with logistics and project planning. Students also participated in a special series of courses on the theme of ageing. The research was published as a book; *Enhancing the Wisdom and Wellbeing of Older Learners: A Co-Research Paradigm*. (London: Routledge, 2016). This evaluation tool would be of use to any educational programme, but especially programmes involving adult learners. It would also be relevant to those working in formal and informal educational settings to widen participation for older people and for those working in educational gerontology and allied fields.