

Access and
Participation Plan
2022-2026

CONTENTS

Introduction	3
1. Assessment of Performance	4
2. Strategic Aims and Objectives.....	8
3. Strategic Measures.....	11
4. Evaluation Strategy	19
5. Monitoring	21
6. Information to Students.....	22
7. Financial Support.....	23

INTRODUCTION

The Trafford College group (TCG) is a large general Further Education College based in Greater Manchester, with a history of services to the community and technical excellence. As it stands today the Group has been nearly 15 years in the making. In 2007, North and South Trafford College merged into one college for the borough. In 2018, Stockport College merged with Trafford College to form 'The Trafford College Group' (TCG). Then, in May 2021, Cheadle and Marple Sixth Form College joined TCG. The Group provides a broad curriculum offer, meeting the needs of many student groups across the local area and wider sub-region. This offer includes academic, adult education, apprenticeships, commercial programmes, higher education and technical and professional courses. Each year, we welcome over 5,000 young people, 4,000 adults, 1500 apprentices and around 400 higher education students to study with us.

TCG is committed to widening access and participation in Higher Education (HE), ensuring that individuals with the potential to benefit from HE have the opportunity to do so. HE is central to our ambitions to act as catalyst for change and provide a transformative educational experience. '*Unlocking potential and fostering success*' remains our purpose by providing the highest quality of education and training to all our students and employers through an inclusive and career focused curriculum.

A key strategic goal continues to be raising attainment, aspiration and progression for young people and adults to secure meaningful and sustained employment opportunities. TCGs wide range of degree level programmes support a variety of aspirations, circumstances and abilities. It means that everyone, whatever stage of life they are at, has the chance to pursue their career goals, contributing to such a diverse student population. In our HE context, students are predominately drawn from our immediate local communities. They are mature students, often working with caring responsibilities (average age 27 years old) and enter HE with a range of qualification backgrounds. Most students are drawn from the more deprived areas of our communities. Over 30% of our HE student population are part time and almost exclusively sponsored by their employers.

1. ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE

The Office for Students (OfS) has provided higher education institutions with data to support the assessment of performance across the student lifecycle (Access, Success, Attainment and Progression). HE data is also provided to cross reference our performance in comparison to the sector enabling us to successfully target actions to specific areas of the student lifecycle for underrepresented groups. Unless otherwise stated our assessment of performance is based on the OfS dataset with reference to our own data.

Student life Cycle	Definition	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Access	Students entering Higher Education	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Continuation	Students who remain in HE after one year of study	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Attainment First Degree	Level 6 students achieving a 2.1 or above	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Attainment Other UG	Students on other UG programmes achieving a Merit or above	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	
Progression	The progression rate of students entering highly skilled employment or further study, 6 months after leaving HE	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17

1.1 HE Participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

1.1.1 **Access:** At TCG, Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Quintile 1 students made up the greatest percentage of full-time undergraduate students in 2019-20 (37%) compared to Quintile 5 (15%). The entrance of students from IMD_Q1 at TCG is 16% higher than the average higher education institution in England. The gap between the most and least deprived in year 5 remains high at -22.0pp. The percentage of part time from IMD_Q1 has also been consistently higher than those from IMD_Q5 and is 4% higher than the sector average. This shows that TCG is proactively engaging with students from low social economic status groups. Therefore, no action is required.

The percentage of the Group's young full-time undergraduate students from Low Participation Neighborhoods (POLOAR4 PQ) is higher than the sector average but has seen a steady decline over time: the gap between P_Q1 and P_Q5 has decreased from -8.0pp in year 1 to 10.00pp in year 5 suggesting P_Q5 now outnumber P_Q1 students. A similar trend is also present in TCGs part time entrance. A target to reduce these gaps by 2026 has been set.

1.1.2 **Success:** Many aspects of the OfS dataset has been suppressed for data protections reasons. We have combined students from IMD_Q1 and IMD_Q2 (IMD_Q1&2) and IMD_Q3, Q4 and Q5 (IMD_Q3-5). In year 5, the percentage of full time TCG undergraduates from IMD_Q1&2 remained lower than those from IMD_Q3-5, the gap between the two groups being 5.0pp. There is no difference in continuation between the two groups on first degree programmes however the gap is persistent with students from IMD_Q1&2 on other undergraduate programmes. This means that students from the highest area of deprivation currently have a higher attrition rate than students from the least area of deprivation. Retention for IMD 1 and 2 is 85% and IMD 3 to 5 is 90%. Further analysis shows that this seems to be an area within Foundation Degrees and Higher Nationals, as opposed to BA students (first degrees).

The proportion of young full-time undergraduate students from low participation neighborhoods PQ1 who remained in higher education after one year is significantly less than those from PQ5. Overtime the aggregated measure shows the gap between the two groups is 12.0pp (aggregated across the last 5 years). Therefore, continuation rates from students from the lowest socioeconomic status and those from the lowest HE participation needs to be addressed, although the data shows that the gap is not significant.

1.1.3 **Attainment:** The OfS dataset only focuses on students on first degree programmes which only takes into consideration a smaller proportion of students at TCG. We have used our internal data to assess the gaps and changes over time for other undergraduate students. These programmes relate to Foundation Degrees and Higher Nationals. We define attainment on other undergraduate programmes as attaining a 'distinction' or 'merit' grade criteria.

We have combined students from IMD_Q1 and IMD_Q2 (IMD_Q1&2) and IMD_Q3, Q4 and Q5 (IMD_Q3-5). The percentage of full time undergraduate students from IMD_Q1&2 who attained a 2.1 or above degree classification has been lower than students from IMD_Q3-5 in all previous five years and although not significant, it is an area we will continue to monitor. Students from IMD_Q1 on other undergraduate programmes have higher attainment than those from IMD_Q5 with a current gap of -4.2pp.

Attainment of full-time first-degree students achieving a 2.1 or above is lower for students from P_Q1 than those from P_Q5; aggregated across the last 5 years, the attainment gap between the two groups is 10.0pp. Attainment for students from P_Q1 on other undergraduate programmes has fluctuated from a gap of 7.9pp in 2016/17 to -1.7.pp in 2019-20. Although the gap has now been eliminated, this is an area we will continue to monitor.

1.1.4 **Progression:** Our progression data is limited to draw meaningful analysis and our intelligence and insight is an area of focus across the life of this plan which is further discussed in the strategic measures section. The percentage of full time TCG undergraduates who progressed to highly skilled employment or further study was 1% lower than those from IMD_Q5 in year 5.

Progression data over the past 5 years for full time TCG students from low participating neighborhoods P_Q1 was higher than for those students from P_Q5, and students from P_Q2 had better progression rate than any other quintile. There is also a noticeable difference when looking at other undergraduate programmes with an aggregated average over 5 years of -20.0pp between P_Q1 and P_Q5.

1.2 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students

- 1.2.1 **Access:** The sector level data suggest that students from an ethnic minority now represented 31.1% of full time undergraduate new entrances (2019-20) compared to 17% at TCG. The access rate of BAME students is fairly balanced over the past 5 years and is above our local demographic population where the vast majority of students are drawn from. We note from our OfS dataset that we had a significant increase of Asian students accessing TCG in year 2, however, this relates to a sub-contractual agreement with the entire cohort being exclusively Asian. The percentage of Asian students accessing TCG has declined within the past 5 years and increasing this will be an area of focus.
- 1.2.2 **Success:** The continuation rates of BAME students has improved year on year, and in year 3 and 4 BAME students were more likely to remain in higher education after one year than white students. However, this performance decreased in year 5, which presents a 10.0pp different in continuation rates between BAME and White students. Over the last three years the continuation rates of Asian students were higher than any other ethnicity group of students (86%), however Black students have a lower continuation rate (75%) compared to a 84% for white students.
- 1.2.3 **Attainment:** The percentage of BAME students achieving a 2.1 or above has been consistently lower than white students over the past 3 years and, although improvements have been made over the last 5 years, the current gap is still 11.0pp. BAME students on other undergraduate programmes also see lower attainment than their peers. Over the previous 4 years the gap has lessen from 14.0pp to 11.00pp. A target has been set to eliminate this gap.
- 1.2.4 **Progression:** There is a -1.0PP difference between the progression rate of BAME and white students on full time undergraduate programmes in the latest data available. Progression for BAME students on other undergraduate programmes is higher than white students, with Asian students outperforming all ethnicity groups.

1.3 Mature Students

- 1.3.1 **Access:** The proportion of mature students at TCG is different to the sector average. The average access rate over 5 years for mature students is 74.3% compared to 28.4% for the sector and this rate has been stable over this period. The percentage of mature students has also increased over this time with the largest increase in the 21 to 25-year-old age bracket. This suggests that there are no gaps in mature students accessing provision at TCG. Therefore, no action is required.
- 1.3.2 **Success:** Full time mature undergraduate students (aged 21 and over) at TCG have higher continuation rates on average across the previous 5 years than young students and in year 5 the gap was currently at -5.0pp. This suggests that age is not a factor in full time provision. In contrast, part time young students (18-21 years old) have better continuation than part time mature students with a gap of 12.0pp, the gap becomes larger when looking at mature students in the age bracket of 31-40 years old and 40+. A target has been set to eliminate the gap.

1.3.3 **Attainment:** Aggregated across the last 3 years, the data suggests that young students are more likely to achieve a 2.1 or above than mature students with a current gap of 7.0pp. When age group is broken down, the gap between young students and students aged 26-30 is the largest. Mature students have better attainment on other undergraduate programmes than young students with a current gap of -31.0pp.

1.3.4 **Progression:** Progression for full time mature students is higher than young students in year 5 of the data and is roughly in line with the sector for mature students on other undergraduate programmes. This is also a similar picture for part time mature students.

1.4 Disabled Students

1.4.1 **Access:** The percentage of full time disabled students accessing TCG has been higher than the sector in each year and whilst this has been relatively stable from year 1 to year 4, there has seen a sizeable increase in year 5 of 10% which represents 27% of new entrants to TCG in comparison to 16.6% for the sector. The percentage of students declaring a sensory, medical or physical disability has more than doubled from year 1 to 5 (4% to 10%). This demonstrates impact in our aim to offer an inclusive environment and the effectiveness of information, advice and support provided for students with a disability in enabling access.

1.4.2 **Success:** The continuation levels of full-time undergraduate students with a disability compared to those without has been lower. We also note that students who have cognitive or learning difficulties have seen the poorest continuation (80% compared to a sector average of 89%). Across the 5-year period, whilst there has been an improvement from 12.0pp to 9.0pp, the gap remains and although not significant, we are mindful that with a year on year increase of disabled students, action is required to address this.

1.4.3 **Attainment:** Aggregated across the last 3 years, the attainment gap of full-time undergraduate students with a disability attaining a 2.1 or above and those without a disability is 12.0pp, suggesting that further intervention is required to narrow the gap. Students with a disability on other undergraduate programmes also have lower attainment than those without a disability, although there has been a year on year improvement with the gap narrowing from 19.1pp in 2017/18 to 10.7pp in 2019/20. We will set a target to eliminate the attainment gap between these cohorts.

1.4.4 **Progression:** Aggregated across the last 5 years, full time undergraduate students with no disabilities have continued to progress to higher skilled employment or further study at a faster rate (53%) than those with a disability (40%) although the progression between disabled and non-disabled students on other undergraduate programmes remains balanced. There is 1.0pp difference between disabled and none disabled students on part time provision.

2. STRATEGIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 One of TCGs strategic aims is to become an anchor institution for our communities to support and continue to raise aspirations ensuring that every student who chooses to study with us develops the skills, knowledge and attributes to progress to meaningful and sustainable employment. TCG has a long history of welcoming high levels of underrepresented groups of students, however, we recognise that further work is needed in the later part of the student journey. We understand that every student's journey is different, and it is often at the intersection of managing home, work and life that students may not achieve their full potential. Therefore, based on our assessment of performance and the underrepresented groups identified we have set high, ambitious targets for the lifespan of this plan.

2.2 Access

2.2.1 **Target 1:** Reduce the access gap between TCG students from P_Q1 and P_Q 5

Target	Target Description	Baseline Year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones				
				2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
	To improve the access opportunities of TCG full time 18 years' old students from P_Q1	2019-20	10.0pp	9.0pp	8.0pp	7.0pp	6.0pp	5.0pp

2.2.2 **Target 2:** to improve the access opportunities for people from the Asian community.

Target	Target Description	Baseline Year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones				
				2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
	To increase the number of students on HE programmes from the Asian community	2019-20	4%	5%	6%	7%	8%	8%

2.3 Continuation

Based on our assessment of performance, our primary target groups for continuation are full time students from IMD_Q1, BAME students, Part time mature students and students declaring a disability with a particularly focus on cognitive or learning difficulties.

2.3.1 **Target 3:** Eliminate the continuation gap between students from IMD_Q1 and IMD_Q5 on full time first degree programmes

Target	Target Description	Baseline Year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones				
				2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
	Reduce to zero the percentage point difference in continuation between students from IMD_Q1&2 AND IMD_Q3-5	2018-19	5.0pp	4.0pp	2.0pp	1.0pp	0.0pp	0.0pp

2.3.2 **Target 4:** Eliminate the continuation gap between students from BAME students and white students

Target	Target Description	Baseline Year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones				
				2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
	Reduce to zero the percentage point difference in continuation between BAME and White students	2018-19	10.0pp	8.0pp	6.0pp	4.0pp	2.0pp	0.0pp

2.3.3 **Target 5:** Reduce continuation gap between part time mature and young students

Target	Target Description	Baseline Year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones				
				2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
	Reduce the percentage point difference in continuation between par-time mature and young students.	2018-19	12.0pp	10.0pp	8.0pp	6.0pp	4.0pp	2.0pp

2.3.4 **Target 6:** Reduce continuation gap between full time students with a disability and those without

Target	Target Description	Baseline Year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones				
				2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
	Reduce the percentage point difference in continuation between disabled and non-disabled students	2018-29	9.0pp	8.0pp	7.0pp	6.0pp	5.0pp	4.0pp

2.4 **Attainment**

Based on our assessment of performance, our primary target groups are students on first degree programmes from areas of deprivation (IMD_Q1) and students from low participating neighborhoods (P_Q1). We will also continue to narrow the attainment gap for BAME students and enhance our support offer for students declaring a disability. We will not set a specific measure for mature students but will continue to monitor.

2.4.1 **Target 7:** Reduce attainment gap between full time students from IMD Q1 and IMD Q5

Target	Target Description	Baseline Year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones				
				2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
	Reduce to zero the percentage point difference between first degree students from IMD_Q12 and IMD_Q345 achieving a 2.1 and above.	2019-20	5.0pp	4.0pp	3.0pp	2.0pp	1.0pp	0.0pp

2.4.2 **Target 8:** Reduce attainment gap between full time students from P_Q1 and P_Q5.

Target	Target Description	Baseline Year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones				
				2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
	Reduce the percentage point difference between first degree students from P_Q1 and P_Q5 achieving a 2.1 and above.	2019-20	10.0pp	9.0pp	8.0pp	7.0pp	6.0pp	5.0pp

2.4.3 **Target 9:** Reduce attainment gap between full time BAME students and White Students

Target	Target Description	Baseline Year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones				
				2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
	Reduce the percentage point difference between first degree students from BAME and White students achieving a 2.1 and above	2019-20	10.0pp	9.0pp	8.0pp	7.0pp	6.0pp	5.0pp

Target	Target Description	Baseline Year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones				
				2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
	Reduce the percentage point difference between other UG students from BAME and White students achieving a Merit or above	2019-20	10.0pp	9.0pp	8.0pp	7.0pp	6.0pp	5.0pp

2.4.4 **Target 10:** Reduce attainment gap between full time disabled students and those without

Target	Target Description	Baseline Year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones				
				2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
	Reduce to zero the percentage point difference between first degree disabled and non-disabled students achieving a 2.1 and above.	2019-20	12.0pp	10.0pp	8.0pp	6.0pp	4.0pp	2.0pp

2.5 Progression

Based on our assessment of performance, our primary target group is students declaring a disability. We will not set a specific measure for students from areas of deprivation (IMD_Q1) or low participating neighborhoods (P_Q1) but will continue to monitor.

2.5.1 **Target 11:** reduce the progression gap between full time disabled students and those without a declared disability.

Target	Target Description	Baseline Year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones				
				2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
	Reduce the percentage point different between first degree disabled students and non-disabled students progressing to highly skilled employment or further study	2016-17	13.0pp	11.0pp	9.0pp	7.0pp	5.0pp	3.0pp

3. STRATEGIC MEASURES

3.1 Whole Strategic Approach

3.1.1 TCGs mission is to *provide the highest quality of education and training to all our students and employers through an inclusive and career focused curriculum*. We aim to do this by developing our students' futures and preparing them for whatever they choose to do, ensuring our curriculum offer is aligned to meet the needs of our communities, industry and future skills needed. We aim to consistently deliver outstanding outcomes for our students. We recognise that our student body is becoming more diverse. Access and Widening Participation is integral to the TCG purpose, vision, mission, values and Strategic Plan. We strive to ensure that people in our communities with a desire to benefit from higher education have the opportunity to do so. We value and celebrate the diversity of our students, and staff, and our Equality and Diversity Statement 2021-2023 details our commitment as a Group to respect and value differences in age, disability (including physical and mental impairment), gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation – the protected characteristics specified in the Equality Act 2010. Our key objectives in relation to equality and diversity are:

- 1) To be open and available to all sections of the community and maintain a reputation as a provider in whose activities all individuals, staff or student are encouraged to fully participate.
- 2) Inclusive where individuals' differences are respected and where employees and students are treated on their merits and where everyone has a fair opportunity to fulfil their potential.
- 3) Mindful of legal responsibilities and:
 - Aim to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation by ensuring that equality and diversity principles are embedded into all provision, services and procedures.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people that share protected characteristics by removing or minimising disadvantages, making reasonable adjustments, responding to individual needs and by encouraging participation in public life.
 - Foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics by consolidating effective partnerships with key stakeholders.
 - Ensure that all suppliers/contractors working on behalf of TCG follow Equality & Diversity Policy principles.
 - Pay due regard when making decisions or taking actions, assessing the impact or implications and making reasonable adjustments for people with protected characteristics.
 - Monitor equality and diversity in the recruitment of employees and ensure that CPD is inclusive and includes equality issues both directly and indirectly.
 - Publish data annually so that others can judge TCG's effectiveness in meeting duties.
 - Develop and publish specific and measurable equality objectives.

3.2 Other Strategic Measures

TCG will continue to take a collaborative approach to removing barriers for different individuals where this allows us to offer more nuanced or holistic support. Through our innovative Community Partnership model, TCG has strong relationships with a range of community and third sector organisations. This enables us to support underrepresented groups within the community setting, supporting trusting and meaningful interventions. We will continue to engage these organisations to enrich the support we can offer to our students.

In addition to the above, over the lifespan of the plan, TCG will have a refocus on the higher education curriculum offer we deliver. In line with the government ambitions reflected in the “Skills for Jobs” White Paper and the higher technical education reform, TCG will develop a flexible, accessible range of higher technical and professional programmes that lead to higher level study and employment. We aim to expand our higher and degree apprenticeship offer in areas such as Construction, Digital and Engineering to support the economic growth of Greater Manchester and support the career aspirations of our students.

Access & Participation Plan

Student Lifecycle	Problem to Address	Output	Outcomes	Impact
Access	<p>Access gap between PQ_1 and PQ_5 students.</p> <p>Increase the % of Asian students accessing the College.</p>	<p>Work with our FE students to promote progression opportunities including higher technical qualifications and higher apprenticeships.</p> <p>Establish stronger links with schools and colleges with a high proportion of PQ_1 and Asian students.</p> <p>Continue our engagement with Uni Connect in delivering subject taster sessions and curriculum enrichment activities.</p> <p>Provide IAG sessions for schools, colleges and community organisations around HE progression.</p>	<p>Number of applications received from students from PQ_1 and the Asian community.</p> <p>Number of learners attending taster sessions and enrichment opportunities.</p> <p>Conversion rate of students applying and enrolling onto TCG HE programmes.</p>	<p>Reduce the gap between PQ_1 and PQ_5 students.</p> <p>Increase the number of Asian students accessing the College.</p>
Success	<p>Continuation Gap between IMD_Q1 and IMD_Q5.</p> <p>Continuation Gap between BAME and white students.</p> <p>Continuation Gap between part time mature and young students.</p> <p>Continuation Gap between disabled and non-disabled students.</p>	<p>Undertake evaluation to understand the impact of the current support interventions that are in place to support students, in particular where we see the biggest gaps by our assessment of performance.</p> <p>Strengthen referral processes between Information, Advice & Guidance, HE Study+ and our Disability Services to ensure that identified students at risk of non-continuation are given timely, targeted advice about additional support and reasonable adjustments that they can access to help manage during their studies.</p> <p>Review the current tutorial system and approach to providing every individual student with an identified Personal Tutor to further improve academic and pastoral support.</p> <p>Deliver more inclusive and integrated study support which is embedded into course curricula such as study skills sessions.</p>	<p>Outcome from evaluation of current student intervention.</p> <p>Number of referred students accessing student support.</p> <p>Smarter targets from tutorials.</p> <p>Deduction in withdrawals for non-academic reasons.</p>	<p>Reduction in non-continuation rates in students identified in assessment of performance.</p>
Attainment	<p>Attainment Gap between IMD_Q1 and IMD_Q5.</p> <p>Attainment Gap between P_Q1 and P_Q5.</p> <p>Attainment Gap between BAME and white students.</p> <p>Attainment Gap between disabled and non-disabled students.</p>	<p>Undertake evaluation to understand the reasons in attainment gaps for students identified in our learning, teaching and assessment.</p> <p>Using a range of student voice activities to understand the experience of these students and issues that need to be addressed.</p> <p>Create a study skills session accessible to all students.</p>	<p>Understand the gaps in performance and provide further interventions where necessary.</p> <p>Strengthen our student engagement activities with students allowing them to become active partners in their learning.</p> <p>Increase engagement with study skill sessions.</p>	<p>To remove barriers to study where they exist for underrepresented groups.</p> <p>Reduce gaps for students identified.</p>

Student Lifecycle	Problem to Address	Output	Outcomes	Impact
Progression	Progression Gap between disabled and non-disabled students.	<p>Review approaches to employability to further enhance and improve where necessary.</p> <p>Provide further support for students in employability activities such as researching, CV writing and interview skills.</p> <p>Embedding credit bearing employability modules into all HE programmes by 2025.</p> <p>Further support our employer engagement activities with HE students through placements, industry talks and workplace learning.</p>	<p>Understand where further enhancements are required to support student progression.</p> <p>Engagement to and from students with employability activities.</p> <p>Ensure the embedding of employability into the curriculum.</p> <p>Level of employer engagement.</p>	Increase the progression rate of students progressing into highly skilled employment with a particular focus on disabled students.

3.3 Specific Measures to address Access Gaps-

Target Groups for Access:

- From Polar4 Q1 studying Full time
- BAME Students studying Full time

To address the targets outlined in Section 1.1, TCG will build stronger relationships with primary and secondary schools, sixth forms, colleges, HE providers and community settings to raise the aspiration of young people. We will enhance our collaborations with schools and centers whose catchment areas fall within POLAR4 1&2. We will also work directly with pupils and parents to build confidence and expectation by highlighting the positive outcomes from higher education. We will directly engage the parents of our FE students in college activities and will improve communications with them by introducing automated updates and electronic access to our student tracking system. Through these activities, by 2025, we will increase access to full time HE from POLAR4 Quintile 1 and BAME Communities.

The TCG School Liaison Team already supports young people in making informed choices about their future. The team pro-actively provides information and advice about study routes and pathways. It will increase its work through engagement within the wider community. We are also working closely with Children's University to develop a Stockport's Children University in partnership with Stockport Council and it is hopeful that this will be in place by September 2022, facilitating clear links with TCG and investing in young people, some of which will come from the most disadvantaged postcodes in the area.

The Greater Manchester Higher (Uni Connect) data provides analysis of students who are capable of progressing to higher education but who experience barriers to doing so. This intelligence is already facilitating interventions to support participation. Through the Uni Connect outreach hubs, we will enhance this work in order to support widening access for the under-represented groups across our region. We will make increasingly better use of available data through our analytics developments and will share details of outreach opportunities. In time, specific aims will be developed from this work as we gain insight from a much wider information set including regional outreach mapping and countywide data on HE progression.

We are additionally already involved in a national funded project to raise the profile of the newly reformed Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) across the region in the subject area of Digital. We will further enrich our work with employers. This work will encourage wider access to apprenticeships and part time courses from under-represented groups.

TCG launched the 'College Ready' programme in 2019-20 delivered by our Student Engagement and Inclusion Teams, targeting disadvantaged and hard to reach young people from our communities. The programme prepares prospective students to transition into our future education programmes. We intend to replicate this for our new higher education intake from August 2022 and cover a range of preparation skills such as time management, research and referencing skills, academic writing and resilience tools. We will ensure that applicants that are young students from PQ_1 and the students from Asian community are prioritised.

Recent changes in TCGs operational structure now means that HE programmes are located within the same curriculum areas as our FE provision to reflect the synergy between subjects, and these are directly operationally managed by Head of Studies which will provide clearer progression between our FE and HE provision.

Over 6,000 young people from level 1-3 choose to study with us on Further Education study programmes and apprenticeships. A scholarship project was completed in December 2020 which highlighted that many FE students chose not to remain in college after level 3, due to a lack of information on progression opportunities and the course options that are available to them. A clear curriculum mapping was completed in the summer of 2021 identifying the progression opportunities from level 3 to 4 and areas where further development is needed. Targeted interventions will therefore be enhanced to ensure that these students receive the support and guidance needed to facilitate progression into HE. We will ensure that FE students from P_Q1 and BAME students are prioritised. TCG has also introduced T-Levels in 2021 which will provide progression to Higher Technical Qualifications by 2025. We will improve the engagement with parents of FE students in the progression of their children.

3.4 Specific Measures to address Success Gaps-

Target Groups for Success:

- Students from IMD_Q1&2
- Asian Students
- Part time mature students
- Disabled Students

To address the targets outlined in 1.2, TCG will develop a range of measures to ensure all students that choose to study remain and succeed from Higher Education. We will focus these interventions on the students above.

Student group feedback and analysis has revealed that students choose to study with TCG because classes fit in with home/work life along with smaller class sizes and personalised contact with tutors and support teams. On-programme support is a strong focus for TCG. It incorporates our student partnership framework, bringing together teaching and enabling teams holistically to support continuation and progression. The planned enhancement in data intelligence and insight will provide staff with early intervention indications.

Alongside our study programmes, the student support team also offer HE Study+. From 2022 HE Study+ will be further developed to provide a programme of positive interventions to assist students through key milestones on their HE journeys such as progression between levels. We understand that some students leave due to reasons beyond the control of TCG and there is a clear need for HE Study+ to embed not only academic skills but to also provide support around health and wellbeing to improve continuation.

We are committed to addressing the inequities that exist in our HE population and we will support this by further enhancing our staff CPD. We recognise that there is no one solution and a multi faced approach is required, by increasing the visibility of the issues through leadership and staff development and having a shared understanding across all staff. We will use our enhancements in activities and evaluate their impact in open, honest and sometimes challenging conversations, recognising the success of a college is everyone's responsibly. Active engagement with good practice and emerging evidence will allow us to continuously improve the desired outcomes we are trying to achieve in student success.

3.5 Specific Measures to address Attainment Gaps- Target Groups for Attainment:

- Students from IMD_Q1
- Students from P_Q1
- Students from BAME
- Disabled Students

TCGs Student Partnership Strategy recognises that inclusive practice, values and diversity actively enhance the learning experience. Acknowledging good practice in these areas is an integral element in TCG HE teaching observations. We will create a CPD offer that includes inclusive practice and drive achievement to enhance attainment for under-represented groups of students. *Students as partners* through our Student Partnership Strategy is built on a culture of mutual respect and partnership. The Strategy is an integrated and collaborative approach to supporting students in achieving positive outcomes through an attractive and engaging curriculum that maximises student success and achievement. Our teaching and support services work holistically across the student lifecycle to enable this

We will gain deeper understanding of our curriculum design through effective evaluation, ensuring that our Higher Education provision is well-designed and staff understand inclusion. Both of these are key factors in ensuring that students are able to succeed, and we require curriculum and teaching to be at the highest standard and inclusive and accessible to all. TCG has set focused CPD opportunities that will be implemented systematically over the lifespan of this plan as well as continuing to fund scholarly projects which investigate and apply good practice in reducing the gaps which we have identified.

Differential outcomes are monitored at programme level during periodic reviews and termly at programme review boards. However, to further support these activities we will introduce new metrics to better understand students' starting points and ensure a consistent approach to regular setting and monitoring of targets which will hopefully support timely and effective academic, pastoral and learning support. We expect this approach to contribute to reducing all the differential gaps that have been identified in this plan.

3.6 Specific Measures to address Progression Gaps-

Target Groups for Progression:

- Disabled Students

We acknowledge that progression to highly skilled employment is less than expected as evident in our most recent TEF data set. We are clear that a whole provider approach is required to support the progression of our students. As defined in the Skills for Jobs White Paper, the skills demands of the future will require more than just the acquisition of knowledge and skills; and addressing this will involve strengthening our partnerships with employers and sector bodies to identify and deliver the specific skills required to meet regional labour market demand. TCG is also part of a Greater Manchester Higher Technical Qualification in digital project, and we aim to develop this further by 2025 in the areas of construction, engineering, health and business. TCG has high ambitions to be at the forefront of higher technical education ensuring student progression into meaningful and sustainable employment.

We recognise that in order to achieve the increase of student progression into highly skilled employment, we will need to focus particular attention to those groups identified. For some students there may be other factors that are related to progression that need to be better understood.. We will develop and enhance support in areas where evidence shows that it can make a genuine impact on successful outcomes. We will proactively promote to specific groups with bespoke targeting, where this is identified as the most effective approach to improve outcomes.

TCG has developed a new Higher Skills Strategy and an Employer Responsive Strategy to ensure that our students are able to fulfil their potential both now and in the future. Our ambition is for our curriculum to be transformed to 'careers' not 'courses' and we will achieve this by creating an employer driven curriculum ensuring all undergraduate provision programmes deliver applied learning experiences. From 2022 all programmes will include credit bearing employability activities at each level of the programme. By 2024 every student will have credited work experience in every level of their course.

We are also developing our alumni activity to ensure effective communication with our students beyond graduation. This is to ensure we can raise the profile of our higher education provision using our own graduates as role models but also to increase the response rates of the newly reformed graduate outcome surveys to have a positive impact on progression as we provide ongoing support including opportunities for further study and employability.

4. EVALUATION STRATEGY

4.1 The Strategic Context

Our self-assessment suggests that we are 'emerging' in all sections of evaluation and evidently there is a need to further enhance our evaluation approach to support our intended activities and interventions. We regularly report on equality measures including age, gender, ethnicity, IMD, POLAR quintiles, qualification types through our schedule of committees.

We will further embed our Access and Participation Targets into the workings of our Equality and Diversity Committee which will provide a cross-college focus to widen student access and participation, improve student retention and progression, and achieve improved education and employment outcomes for all students. It provides strategic leadership in identifying and implementing programmes of work, activities, and initiatives that support student access, progression, and outcomes; and monitors and evaluates progress in these areas. In addition, specific target groups identified in this plan will be regularly monitored through the Group's committees, including Academic Boards and HE working groups.

Our research and evaluation is evidenced through our annual research and scholarship staffing allocation and in recent years we have commissioned research projects aligned to access and participation such as "*BAME Level 3 students HE decision*" and "*I forget to remember to forget; The Cognitive Impact of SEND on learning*". Across the lifespan of the plan a range of staff drawn from the relevant areas across the College Group will be provided with training and development in evaluation skills. We will proactively engage with expert advice and support for more complex aspects of work, for example working with our strategic university partners; many of whom have substantial experience and expertise in widening participation. Research and evaluation is shared internally at our teaching and learning conference and through the scholarship review journal.

We will proactively engage with the OfS evaluation toolkit for December 2021 to evaluate our performance and allow us to review and assess our effectiveness, ensuring our evaluation is robust and evidence led.

To support us to further understand where continuous improvements need to be addressed, we will ensure our data collection is sufficiently rich and this will also be supported by our intentions in section 3 data intelligence.

4.2 Evaluation Design

A mixed model of evaluation is already adopted for some activities and interventions from previous access and participation plans including feedback, focus groups and quantitative data. However, to strengthen our approach within the lifespan of this plan, a range of factors need to be considered to determine which type of evaluation is most appropriate and can demonstrate meaningful impact. We will ensure that, as a minimum, narrative evaluation is included in all activities and interventions.

4.3 Evaluation Implementation

We are committed to enhancing our evaluation approach and to use evidence-informed research to identify and inform our developments in widening participation. To support our aims and understand why and how differential outcomes occur, the Equality and Diversity Committee will be responsible for the implementation of our evaluation approach and will identify how data collection requirement will measure outcomes and the impact of our intended activities. This will be led primarily through a standard evaluation plan template and will ensure that evaluation is at the heart of our activities and intervention from an early stage. As the plan progresses this will be reviewed and refined. Teaching and support team members who are involved will be supported in their role of evaluation, monitoring and dissemination. We already work closely with other local further education colleges and universities and in due time we look forward to sharing our learning, leading to reduced differential outcomes and improved experiences and success for all.

4.4 Learning

There is a desire for continuous improvement to be deeply embedded into our college activity, culture and practices. Our ambition throughout the lifespan of this plan is to strengthen our evaluation programme which will enable evidence-based research for dissemination and share good practice throughout our organisation and beyond. We will ensure that new activities are developed in a way that allows a research based approach to support effective evaluation. Our reporting structure allows sharing with partner stakeholders such as Uni Connect and our strategic university partners. Internally, evaluation is considered and reflected at a number of committees such as our HE and E&D Committees, which will be further supported by the intended enhancements in evaluations to allow members to have a deeper understanding. Ongoing conversations throughout the lifespan of the plan and indeed activities and interventions, will ensure that changes and further enhancements can be made whilst these are ongoing, in order to improve them.

5. MONITORING

The TCG Corporation Board is ultimately responsible for monitoring the Access and Participation Plan and in 2019-20 the Group made improvements to its formal reporting structure and implemented the Higher Education Curriculum and Quality (HE C&Q) Committee, a subcommittee of the Corporation Board which engages in the ongoing monitoring and progress made against the Plan, which is a standing item at all meetings. At an operational level, a range of deliberative and executive committees provide assurances to the HE C&Q and the Board. These committees already regularly report on a range of data and cohort analysis, including ongoing attendance, retention and achievement across a range of under-represented groups.

The Deputy Principal and Head of HE and Higher Skills will lead on this plan, which is ultimately approved by the Accountable Officer and the Corporation Board. Students as partners are at the heart of our Student Partnership Strategy and students are members on all HE College deliberative committees, as well as providing membership on the HE Curriculum and Quality Committee, enabling opportunity for direct student feedback. We will ensure that there is a strategic focus on student voice that is more representative and will seek to gauge the views of underrepresented groups of students to ensure we capture feedback from all parts of our student community.

Activities within the Plan will be embedded into our normal operational practices and, during this process, should progress against targets be less than expected we may enhance or change our approach to address under performance in a more effective manner.

6. INFORMATION TO STUDENTS

TCG is committed to ensuring that information to students is clear and transparent; we provide this in a timely and accurate way to allow prospective students to make informed choices about their education options. This information includes fees and financial support available to them either from the TCG or national sources such as the Snowdon Trust for disabled students. In our most recent QAA review it was confirmed that the approach to Information, Advice and Guidance is in line with Consumer Protection Obligations.

All regulations, policies and procedures and the access and participation plan is available on our Website under <https://stockport.ac.uk/university-level/important-information/> and current students can also obtain these via the VLE.

Annual reviews of all regulations, policies and procedures are conducted and approved by our HE Curriculum and Quality Committee. We review and reserve the right to increase fees on an annual basis up to the maximum amount allowed by law or government policy. Fee increases do not apply to current students who remain on the current fee set at the point of offer.

All financial and academic support schemes are also available on our website and discussed with prospective students throughout the application process including at open days and interview events. The student support teams also promote these through induction, group and one to one sessions. We also target our application-based schemes to priority groups to encourage take-up to maximise impact.

7. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

TCG has for a number of years offered a one-off non-repayable first year bursary to students with a household income of £25,000 or less and in 2019-20 this was amended to students from IMD 1 and Polar 1. Bursary recipients confirmed that this influenced their decision making, and this is apparent with older students who are more debt adverse, many of whom are working alongside study with caring responsibility. Recipients also concluded that the bursary supported them during the first year and should continue. There are also higher retention rates of students that received the bursary to those that didn't, suggesting bursary recipients have better outcomes than those without.

Therefore, we will continue to develop new financial support schemes throughout the lifespan of this plan. The bursaries are designed to encourage an increase in application and enrolment but also to support students during the first year of study with the aim of positively impacting on continuation. We will also subscribe to the full service of Student Finance England which will provide greater information on student household income, supporting the Group in dealing with financial awards more effectively.

1. **Aim Higher Bursary**

This bursary is designed to support internal progression from Level 3 to a full-time higher education programme. A finance bursary of £500 per year will be issued, providing a student has successfully completed a level 3 programme at TCG and progresses to Level 4 within the same calendar year. An additional £250 (first year only) will also be provided if students exceed their overall target grade for their level 3 qualification.

2. **Step up Bursary**

This bursary is available to any student with a household income of £25,000 or less. The bursary will be £500 for the first year of study only. A maximum of 100 bursaries are available. If more applications are received than bursaries available, a further filter will be used according to IMD and Polar with a preference for those from underrepresented groups.

3. **BAME Bursary**

This bursary is available to any new entrant from a BAME background. The financial bursary of £500 per year will be issued.

4. **Care Leaver Bursary**

This bursary is available to students who have left local authority care within the 3 years prior to enrolling at TCG. The financial bursary is £1,000 in each year of study to recognise the additional financial pressures this group of students are likely to face when they progress into Higher Education.

In addition to this, TCG also plans to invest £20,000 into an 'opportunity fund'. The fund is designed to support students with employability opportunities throughout their programme. This may include for example, attending conferences or CPD sessions and travel costs to and from work placements. A grant of up to £500 will be available and students will be prioritised based on eligibility criteria.

Our hardship grant will also continue recognising that there will be occasions when issues arise that impact upon study which had not been planned for. Our hardship fund is designed to support students in emergencies that create particular hardship, providing financial support via individual applications and on a case by case basis.