

The Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA)

Access and participation plan (APP)

2020-21 to 2024-25 (including 2023-24 variation)

1. Assessment of performance

Our assessment of performance and identification of any gaps in access, success and progression from the five main underrepresented groups can be found below. Because of our small numbers, unless otherwise stated, we have looked at the aggregated data for groups rather than splitting further into subgroups within these categories.

In some cases, the OfS access and participation datasets provides insufficient data¹ from which to ascertain conclusions regarding our performance and the gaps between underrepresented and non-underrepresented groups. In these cases, we have used additional forms of data such as UCAS or internal data, or evidence around our sector specialisms to supplement assessments on performance.

There are regularly fluctuations in our data outcomes so, in one year, we may perform above a sector average and then in the next year we drop down again. We attribute this to being small. In only one dataset – access, mature entrants - is there a constant pattern of increase/decrease across the past five years (though in other cases, some probable trends appear). As we have such a small student intake, one or two students can have a major impact on percentage differences. This can make it more difficult to analyse our data and make definitive assessments on our performance.² In assessing progression outcomes, we also note further caution in interpretation where there is only a partial DLHE response rate from such small populations.

1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

We have chosen to review students from POLAR4 quintile 1 (P4Q1) neighbourhoods, which we assess to be the most suitable measure of underrepresentation in higher education participation for us in this category. For access and non-continuation, we have also identified and referenced gaps for those from IMD quintile 1.

Access

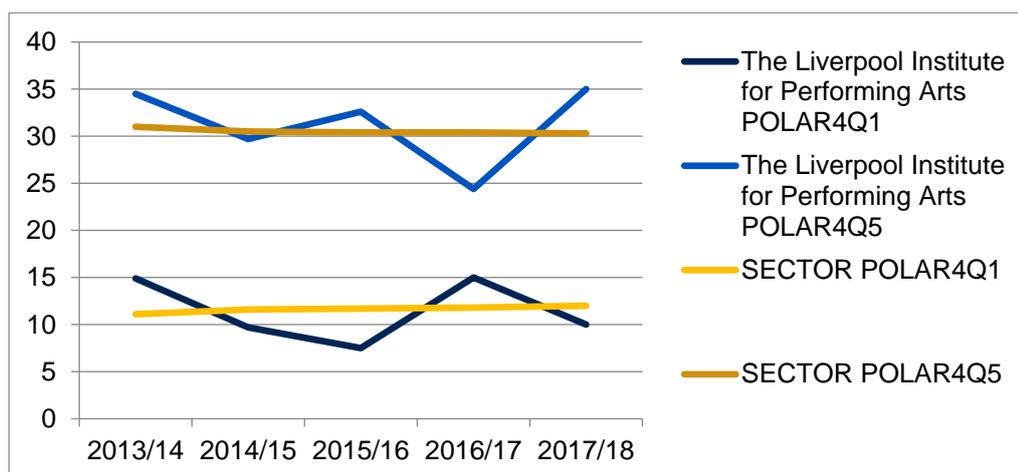


Figure 1: Proportion of POLAR4 quintile 1 and quintile 5 entrants by year of entry, OfS Access & Participation dataset

Figure 1 shows our proportions of P4Q1 entrants. We have experienced fluctuations over the past five years in our P4Q1 entrants. However, if we take an average from across the last 5 years, our intake of

¹ Our population numbers are smaller than the minimum population sizes used on the OfS dashboard for a number of characteristics: here, we have therefore examined underlying data rather than utilising this dashboard. Rounding and suppression has also been applied which can affect the accuracy of datasets.

² The HESA website states: "Where the number of students within a specified population at an HE provider is small the values of the indicator could be very variable and should be interpreted with care".

Q1 students (11.42%) is roughly equivalent but marginally below the sector average (11.64% sector average).³ As a national recruiter, we feel this is a suitable initial comparator measure.

Our gap between the proportions of P4Q5 and P4Q1 entrants (Figure 1) is also largely equivalent to the current sector average: just slightly below a 3:1 ratio. For two of the five years in question, our gap is described as not being statistically significant. When considering other POLAR4 quintiles, our Q1 and 2 intakes combined is higher than the sector average (and therefore a lower gap). We often recruit a higher proportion of quintile 2 students against quintile 3.

To provide some further context around gaps within the sector for our subject specialisms, equality data provided by OfS for the proportion of UK domiciled entrants between 2013/14 and 2016/17 to courses within 'creative arts and design', where 10 of 11 of our degree courses sit on UCAS, shows a gap of nearer 4:1 (36%-36.6% for P4Q5 compared to 9.5%-9.9%) for P4Q1 during these years. Our percentage intake of P4Q1 learners also appears to be better or comparable to other institutions of similar size and specialism.⁴ Therefore, we judge the gap is low for courses within our specialist context, though recognise that there is a material gap for P4Q1 students (which widened in 2017/18 to 25 percentage points). We still feel one of our priorities should be to increase the levels of P4Q1 students, so we keep reducing the gap and to confirm a more constant positive trajectory by reducing the fluctuation in entrant patterns.

There is also a gap between IMDQ1 entrants compared to those from IMDQ5 (see Figure 2).

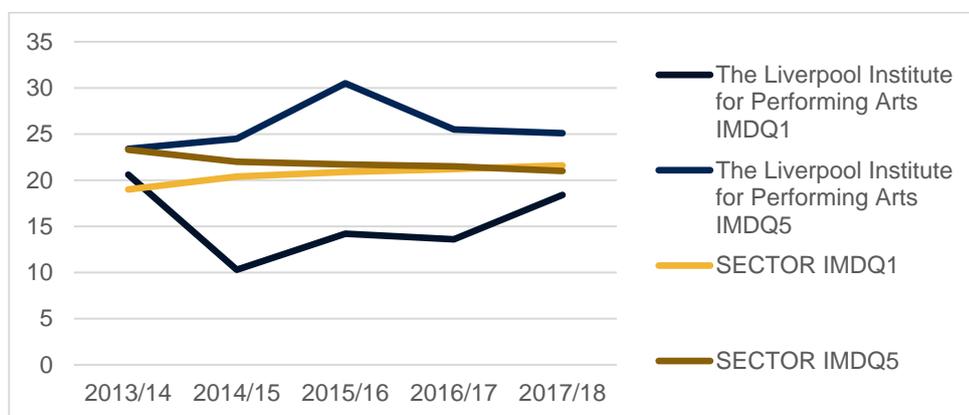


Figure 2: Proportion of IMD quintile 1 and quintile 5 entrants by year of entry, OfS Access & Participation dataset

This gap is lower than for POLAR4 students and appears to have narrowed between 2016/17 and 2017/18. It is currently 7 percentage points. We will, therefore, focus effort on reducing this gap.

Success

Non-continuation:

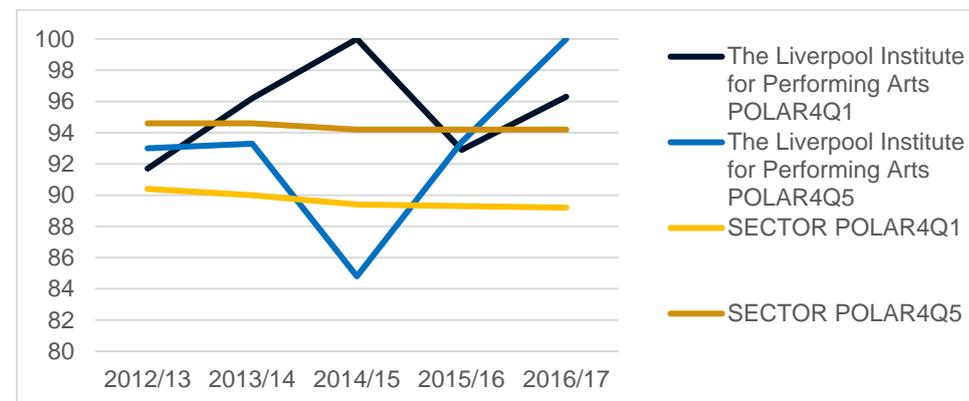


Figure 3: Proportion of POLAR4 quintile 1 and quintile 5 entrants who continue after first year of study, OfS Access & Participation dataset

³ When comparing POLAR3 and POLAR4 data across these five years, there appears to be fewer POLAR4 WP applicants/entrants across the years compared to using POLAR3, so our performance has lessened once the updated POLAR4 measure is applied. However, both datasets are demonstrating the same trends.

⁴ For this, we have looked at OfS dashboard data for Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance, Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, and Royal Northern College of Music.

Non-continuation after first year of study for our P4Q1 students is lower than the sector average and has been across the last five years. Continuation for P4Q1 students is constantly within 2% of our institutional average and was higher than the continuation rates for our P4Q5 students and our institutional average during two of the past five years. From this data, we cannot find a noticeable trend and, more importantly, gap for underrepresented students. Therefore, we would assess our performance as good in this area - though with a note of caution that there has been a slightly higher rate of withdrawals from over the past two years since 2014/15, which we intend to monitor.

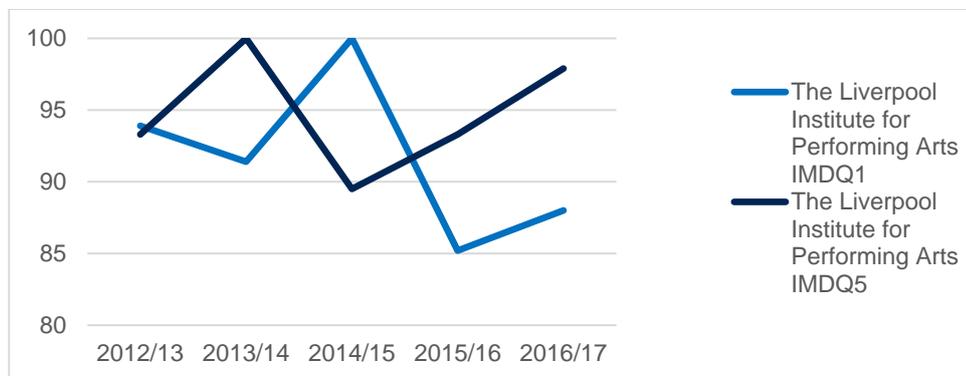


Figure 4: Proportion of IMD quintile 1 and quintile 5 entrants who continue after first year of study, OfS Access & Participation dataset

A similar pattern can be seen for IMDQ1 students, however the gap in rate of withdrawals from over the past two years since 2014/15 shows a clearer gap in non-continuation (approx. 10%) than for P4Q1. We will look at measures to reduce this gap.

Attainment:

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Attainment rate – 1 st and 2:1 awards, P4Q1 (%)	Not available	85.7	92.3	86.7	Not available
	Sector: 69.4	Sector: 70.8	Sector: 72.1	Sector: 73.1	Sector: 74.6
Attainment rate – 1 st and 2:1 awards, P4Q5 (%)	88.9	92.3	96.4	83.3	91.1
	Sector: 79.4	Sector: 81.3	Sector: 81.7	Sector: 83.4	Sector: 84.1

Table 1: Attainment rate comparison for P4 quintiles 1 and 5 (LIPA), OfS Access & Participation dataset

Data on attainment for P4Q1 students is only available for three of the five years provided within the OfS datasets. When looking at gaps, for two out of three of these years a lower percentage of students from P4Q1 achieved a first or 2:1 award, compared to P4Q5 students. When we previously analysed our internal datasets⁵ from 2013/14 to 2016/17 for POLAR3 Q1 students against the student population as a whole, we also identified that there was a trend towards a slightly lower percentage of students from P4Q1 achieving a first or 2:1. Therefore we tentatively assess that there may be a slight gap here in terms of attainment between the most and least represented P4 groups.

Progression to employment or further study

Using internal data and utilising OfS dataset methodology to establish proportion of SOC 1-3, we have identified the following percentages of students progressing into highly skilled employment or higher level study:

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	5 year average
Institutional %	72	72.5	72.8	81.3	77	75.12
P4Q1 %	83.3	80	76.9	72.2	69.2	76.32
P4Q5 %	84.1	70.3	75	82.9	81.3	78.72

Table 2: Progression rate comparison for POLAR4 quintiles 1 and 5 graduates

There may be a marginal gap overall in progression for P4Q1 students compared to those from P4Q5. P4Q5 students outperform P4Q1 students in this area during three of the five years and across the five

⁵ This assessment can be found in our 2019/20 Access and Participation Plan.

years as an average. However, P4Q1 students have a higher progression rate for two years and the progression rate for this group as an average is higher than the institutional average benchmark, so this gap is not quite as clear cut. What is more identifiable from the data is that there has been a decline in progression rates for P4Q1 students across the most recent two years (2015/16 and 2016/17 graduates). The reduced outcomes in these two years sway the five-year average significantly and cannot be viewed alongside a similar drop in institutional attainment rates. Therefore, we have concluded that this is an area which we will need to keep a further eye on and respond accordingly if we see evidence of a continuing trend.

1.2 Ethnicity

We have used black, Asian and minority ethnic students / students of colour (i.e. non-white) as the comparative group, although we recognise that some ethnic minority groups are more underrepresented at higher education level than others and experience different barriers to and within HE. To further split our ethnicity data into separate ethnic backgrounds would have led to some ethnicity categories having a statistically insignificant number. This broader use is also comparable with the methodology used by the Department for Sport, Media and Culture to assess the ethnicity findings of workers within the creative arts,⁶ which we have used to contextualise our performance.

Access

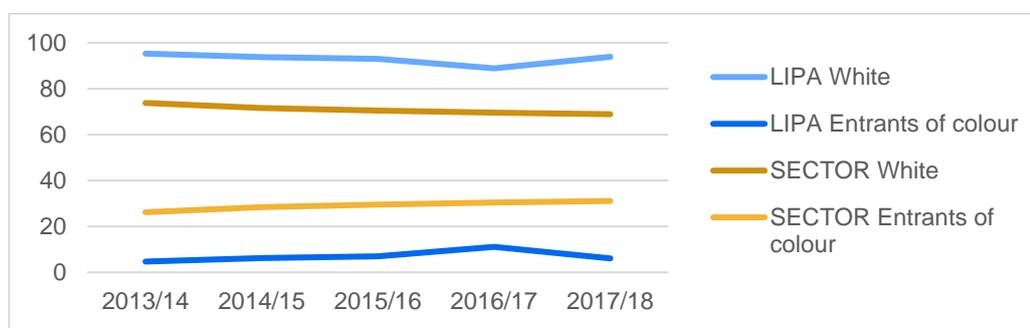


Figure 5: Comparison of white and entrants of colour by year of entry, OfS Access & Participation dataset

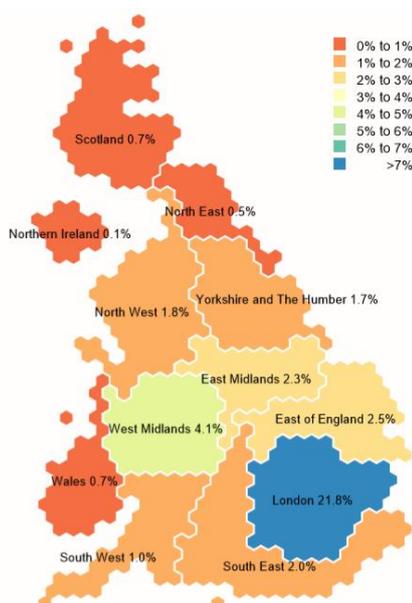


Figure 6: Map of the percentages of the young population of black ethnic groups living in the UK (UCAS, 2019c)

Our performance in relation to access of black, Asian and minority ethnic students is definitely below the sector average. Though there was an increase in our black, Asian and minority ethnic entrants from 4.7% to 11.1% between 2013/14 and 2016/17, Figure 5 shows that our gap between white entrants and entrants of colour remains wide. The sector average gap between white and entrants of colour is roughly 3:1. Our gap on average for the past five years is around 13:1. In 2017/18, this was even higher: 15.5:1.

However, this gap should be considered within the context of our specialism and geographic location of applicants. Current employment for those from ethnic minority backgrounds in the performing arts industry itself shows poor representation for this group. 6.6% of all those in music and the performing and visual arts were black, Asian or from an ethnic minority (2015 DCMS data). In addition, whilst we recruit from across the UK, the highest proportion of our applicants come from the North West and regions in closer proximity to us. The North West has only 1.8% of national black ethnic students in the area (UCAS, 2018), compared to London with over 20%.

When assessing our UCAS applications between 2013/14 and 2017/18, we received 9% of applications from students of colour and of our offers made, 8% were to applicants from this background.⁷ Therefore, when considered against actual intake, it is clear that the main gap exists in encouraging applications from these groups (rather than necessarily in conversion).

⁶ <https://www.thestage.co.uk/news/2016/number-of-bame-performing-arts-professionals-up-by-60-since-2011/>

⁷ In each case, ethnicity data for roughly 1% of applicants is unknown.

When we do look at further breakdown by ethnicity, most of our non-white entrants come from a mixed background. Below 2% of our UK students are from black or Asian backgrounds⁸ representing a huge gap, even when compared to our wider context. There is clearly a further gap when it comes to these ethnic groups.

Success

Non-continuation: Whilst we currently recruit a low number of students of colour, the withdrawal rate from this group at our institution is low. In most years, where we have data, continuation rate for our students of colour is 100%. Therefore, we assess our performance in this area to be good with no obvious gap.

Attainment: Data on attainment for students from ethnic minorities is only available for one of the five years provided within the OfS datasets (2014/15). Internal data has therefore been used to assess our performance in this area.

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Attainment rate – 1 st and 2:1 awards, Students of colour (%)	100	82.3	100	100	100
Attainment rate – 1 st and 2:1 awards, White (%)	86.8	89.7	94.7	83.8	92.3

Table 3: Attainment rate comparison for students of colour and white students (LIPA), OfS/internal data

From Table 3, we have identified that attainment rates for students of colour are high (often 100%) and close to or exceeding our institutional average. There is no significant gap between the performance of white and students of colour, with students of colour regularly outperforming their white counterparts.

Because of the small numbers there is scope within our data for variation. In 2014/15, black, Asian and ethnically diverse students amongst all WP and non-WP groups, had the lowest percentage of first or 2:1 awards. In 2015/16, they had the highest amongst all WP and non-WP groups, with no discernible change to the course provision or level of support offered.

Progression to employment or further study

Using internal data and utilising OfS dataset methodology, we have identified the following percentages of students progressing into highly skilled employment or higher level study:

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	5 year average
Institutional %	72	72.5	72.8	81.3	77	75.12
Graduates of colour %	90	66.7*	100	100	83.3	88
White %	75	74.6	69.2	78.4	67.5	72.94

*Lower than 50% response rate

Table 4: Progression rate comparison for graduates of colour and white graduates

Percentages are based on small populations but our black, Asian and minority ethnicity graduates typically progress onto high skilled employment - with higher progression rates than white students for four out of the past five years. We do not believe that there is a gap at this stage of the student lifecycle.

1.3 Mature students

Access:

We have a lower proportion of mature students than the national average. Our percentage of mature learners has been slowly growing from 2013/14 to 2017/18 (from 9% to 14%) though.

⁸ A London Higher 2016 report suggests that Asian young people are less likely to study arts subjects when they are from higher participation areas. This may contribute further to an explanation of the low numbers of applications to LIPA from Asian applicants over the years.

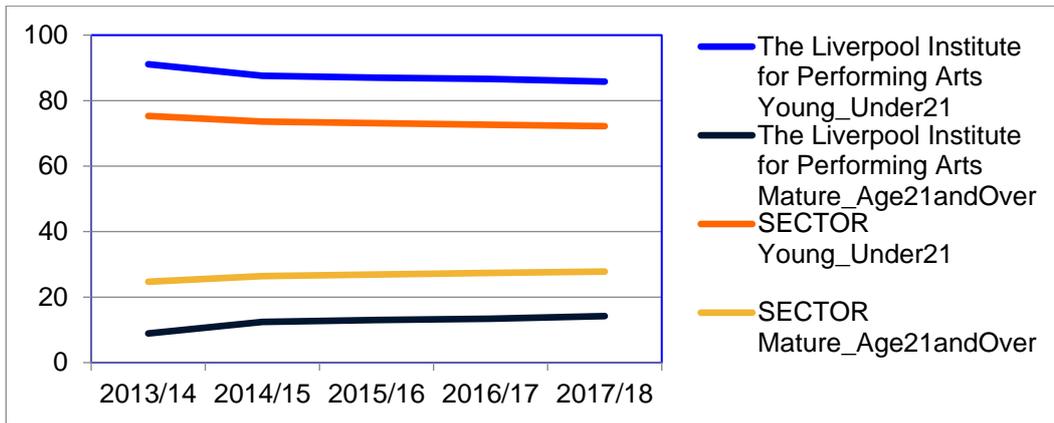


Figure 7: Comparison of mature v young entrants by year of entry, OfS Access & Participation dataset

According to UCAS, mature students are typically drawn to a small range of courses, with subjects allied to medicine, education and social studies as the most popular (UCAS, 2019d). Given that we are a specialist institution in performing arts and making performance possible subjects, we are arguably faced with a more difficult task in terms of promoting some of our courses to mature learners, in comparison to institutions with more varied courses or other specialisms. Currently around 9% of our UCAS applications come from mature learners.

There is variation in mature entry by course. Our Management degree typically receives a high number of entrants. In 2017/18, 11 of 29 entrants to this course were aged over 21. Some students who gain work experience within lower-level roles then recognise that further study may help them progress further in industry. It is also the course that we offer with, arguably, the most assured route into full-time, highly skilled employment.

We do not currently offer part-time courses or apprenticeship options. The nature of our teaching and assessment – which is directed towards performances and realised projects – means that, certainly for the majority of our programmes, this is not easily compatible with a part-time study option. This may act as a barrier for some older students. In addition, low earnings within the sector may not be attractive for those seeking career progression which includes a salary increase: a career in the performing arts is a lifestyle choice.

When breaking down the ages of our mature learners since 2013/14 further, at least two thirds (often more) each year are aged between 21 and 25. The ambition of some students who wish to go to drama school/specialist vocational training and reapply to competitive performance courses until they are successful, rather than a natural appeal to older students, will play a part in this. Our UK BA (Hons) Acting intake includes between 5 and 7 mature Acting students (for each of the past five years): all aged between 21 and 25.

In summary, our mature student intake is proportionally below the sector average but contributed to by our specialisms and the way we teach our courses. We have shown recent improvements but there remains a gap in access for post-25 students.

Success

Non-continuation:

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	5 year average
Young %	95.5	96	91	93	96.7	94.44
Mature %	93.3	94.1	81.8	100	100	93.84

Table 5: Continuation rates for young & mature students after first year of study, OfS A&P data

The average continuation rate after first year of study for mature students (93.84%) is marginally lower than for young students (94.44%) during the five-year period 2012/13 to 2016/17, but this relates to a small population of mature learners. With the exception of 2015/16 where four students withdrew, our actual non-continuation of mature students after first year of study was no more than one mature student withdrawal per year. Between 2016/17 and 2017/18, all mature students continued beyond their first year of study. We do not therefore think that there is a gap for mature students at our institution in terms of non-continuation.

Attainment:

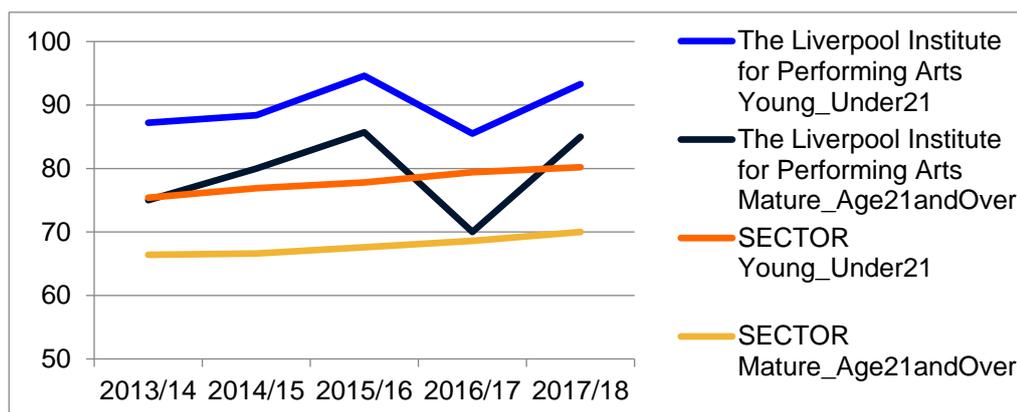


Figure 8: Percentage of students (Level 6) who attain 1st or 2:1 degree classification (mature v young), OFS Access & Participation dataset

Both our young attainment rate and our mature attainment rates are on average 10%+ higher than the sector average. However, within this context, there is a gap in attainment between young and mature students as can be seen from Figure 8. This is an area where further efforts are required to reduce the gap.

Progression to employment or further study

Using internal data and utilising OfS dataset methodology, we have identified the following percentages of students progressing into highly skilled employment or higher level study:

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	5 year average
Institutional %	72	72.5	72.8	81.3	77	75.12
Mature %	88.9	75*	87.5	64.3	60	75.14
Young %	77.2	73	68.9	79.7	70.8	73.92

*Lower than 50% response rate

Table 6: Progression rates comparison for mature and young graduates

There are variations between performance of young and mature students from DLHE returns in 2012/13 to 2016/17. Response rates from mature students tended to be low compared to other groups. When comparing a five-year average, our mature students (74.14%) had better progression rates into high skilled employment than younger students (73.92%). Therefore, we do not believe there is a gap in progression for our mature learners, though again we note that the latest two years of data shows a drop in progression outcomes for this group which we'll need to monitor carefully.

1.4 Disabled students

We have included all recognised disabilities. However, dyslexia, dyspraxia and other specific learning difficulties are particularly common among our student body.

Access

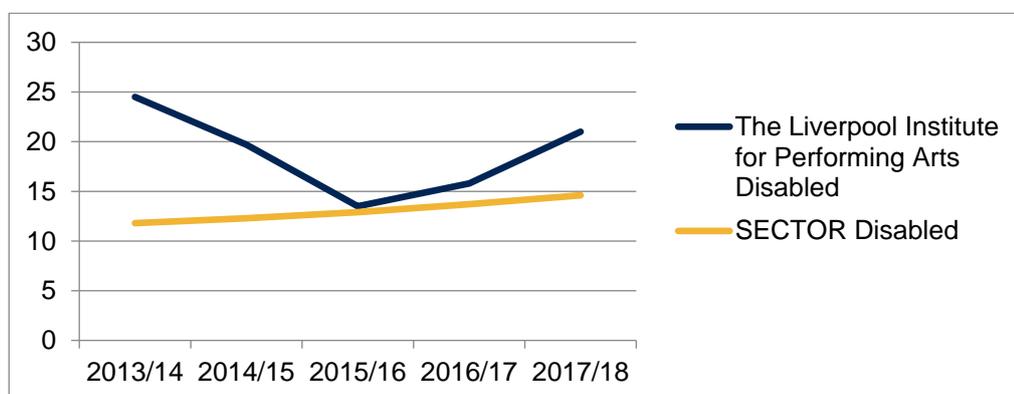


Figure 9: Comparison of disabled entrants (LIPA v sector), OFS Access & Participation dataset

We have a higher than sector average proportion of disabled students. These students regularly make up around a fifth of our student body. The vast majority of our disabled learners have cognitive or learning

difficulties such as dyslexia (roughly 75% of our disabled learners), followed by an increasing proportion of students with mental health conditions.⁹

This is perhaps to be expected. Creative arts and design is one of the UCAS subject groupings with the highest proportion of DSA students (13.6% in 2016/17), roughly 2/3 higher than the average for all students. A high number of people with such disabilities is a facet of performing arts and can have a positive effect on creative output.

Our overall assessment, as such, is that there is no overall gap in access for disabled learners. Indeed this is the underrepresented group from which we regularly receive the highest proportion of students. However we recognise that underneath this there are some disabilities – in particular those relating to physical impairments - which are relatively poorly represented at our institution.¹⁰

Success

Non-continuation:

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	5 year average
Disabled %	100	95.7	91.4	100	90.9	95.6
No known disability %	94	95.8	89.5	93	98.3	94.1

Table 7: Continuation rates for young & mature students after first year of study, OfS A&P data

We have not identified a gap in non-continuation after first year of study for disabled students. For four out of the past five years, the continuation rates were higher for this group compared to those with no known disability. In 2012/13 and 2015/16, there were no withdrawals from any of our disabled students. However, we have noted a significant drop in continuation of disabled learners in 2016/17 in contrast to high continuation rates for those with no known disability in this year: we will therefore review whether any factors which impacted upon withdrawals in this year can be further reduced moving forwards.

Attainment:

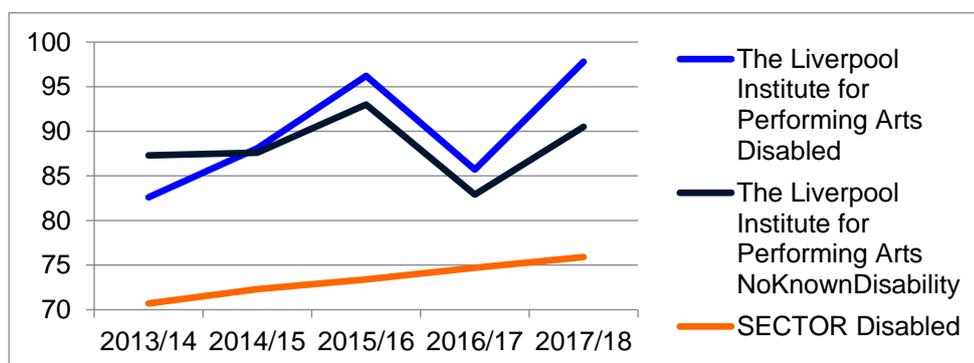


Figure 10: Percentage of students (Level 6) who attain 1st or 2:1 degree classification (disabled v no known disability), OfS Access & Participation dataset

Figure 10 shows that there is no gap for attainment between our students with disabilities and those without. Our disabled learners regularly outperform non-disabled students when it comes to attainment of 1st or 2:1 degrees. They also achieve well above the sector average for disabled learners (typically over 20% higher). Many of the learning difficulties that such a high proportion of our students face are known to support creativity, and this may contribute towards a tendency, alongside hard work and positive application, to more naturally succeed on our courses.

Progression to employment or further study

From the OfS dataset, we have identified the following percentages of students progressing into highly skilled employment or higher level study:

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	5 year average
Institutional %	72	72.5	72.8	81.3	77	75.12

⁹ The proportion of our student body with a declared mental health condition rose to 6% in 2016/17 and 2017/18. In previous years it was typically nearer 2%.

¹⁰ Around 30% of disabled applicants over the past seven years are from these groups, so there is certainly a higher level of interest in our subjects than our intake suggests. A relatively low proportion therefore progress through our selection process. Further analysis and evidencing in this area will be recommended internally.

Disability %	78.6	70.6*	66.7	87.5	74.1	75.5
No disability %	74.4	74.7	71.4	76	66.7	72.64

*Lower than 50% response rate

Table 8: Progression rate comparison for disabled graduates and those with no known disability

For three out of the five years between 2012/13 and 2016/17, the proportion of our disabled students progressing onto highly skilled employment or higher level study was better than those with no known disability. This was also the case when looking at a five-year average (75.5% v 72.64%). We do not believe that there is a gap at this stage of the student lifecycle for disabled learners.

1.5 Care leavers

Access, success and progression: The number of care leavers studying with us across the last five years has been below the data reporting threshold.¹¹ Because of our small numbers, it is not possible to interrogate data to assess our performance at any stage of the student lifecycle for care leavers. This data would not be statistically significant and could identify individuals. In addition, our UCAS data has not previously allowed us to see care leaver status so we are unable to assess the number of applications we typically receive from care leavers against those that we offer places to.

The national study 'Moving On Up' (Harrison, November 2017) reports that the national average for care leavers in HE (by the age of 23) is 12%. Previous estimates had suggested nearer 6%. Our own small numbers suggest that additional work towards access is advisable so we will continue to develop work in this area.

1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

Drawing strong conclusions from intersections of disadvantage is difficult given our small population. We have previously set targets around white male P4Q1 intake. This largely matches our P4Q1 entrant data, as we have a relatively small black, Asian and minority ethnic population anyway. A high proportion of our mature entrants are traditionally from P4Q1 areas, tied in part to current participation rates within Liverpool. This suggests that measures to support P4Q1 students across the student lifecycle will also aid outcomes for some other groups.

1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

Due to our size, we have chosen not to assess any other groups who experience barriers as there is insufficient evidence available from the datasets provided. We have less than 5 students who are either: carers; estranged from their families; travellers; refugees; or children from military families, though we welcome applications from these. Any internal assessment would be based on interpreting actions/circumstances of individuals rather than those of a homogenised group of students. We do however recognise that there are barriers for people from these groups to accessing and succeed in higher education and will over the duration of this APP and beyond continually review whether any additional focus around these groups is needed.

¹¹ Given our size and specialism, we are unsure whether this is below average or not, without appropriate adjusted benchmarks.

2. Strategic aims and objectives

2.1 Target groups

Our assessment of performance has identified gaps between the highest represented and lowest represented groups in the following areas:

	POLAR4 Q1 Gap?	People of colour Gap?	Mature Gap?	Disabled Gap?	Care leavers Gap?
Access	Yes *	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Non-continuation	No	No	No	No	No
Attainment	Yes	No	Yes **	No	No
Progression	No	No	No	No	No

* Our average gap between P4Q1 and P4Q5 entrants is comparable to the sector, but within the further context of fluctuations in performance against consecutive years. We are keen to increase our P4Q1 entrants and establish a more consistent pattern of improvement in this area.

** There is a definite gap in attainment rates between our young and mature learners. However, both groups attain well above the sector average and as such our mature attainment rates are good within this context.

Our strategic planning and investment of resources, therefore, prioritises these groups at the appropriate stage of the student lifecycle.

We recognise that some previous measures attributed to access and participation funds have been integral to supporting inclusive mainstreamed provision and ensuring limited gaps within other areas: in particular, non-continuation and progression. Where affordable, we intend to retain these initiatives also.

The biggest gap we have identified is around access to our institution for learners of colour. Improvements in this area are a priority. There are also gaps at the access stage around entrants from LPNs and mature learners. There is no overall gap for disabled learners and as such, this is not an area we propose to put significant focus into at the access stage: however we do recognise that a number of disabilities are still underrepresented and will continue to work with the sector and local organisations in supporting relevant access activities for students with these types of disabilities. With care leavers, there is insufficient data around gaps due to small numbers. The emphasis is, therefore, directed towards efforts to encourage more care leaver entrants.

We have also identified some gaps in attainment for P4Q1 students and between mature/young students. These groups may face greater barriers around attainment because of previous educational experience or due to time spent out of education, so may need additional support around more academic elements of the course.

We have not identified specific gaps for underrepresented groups around non-continuation or progression. We intend to continue providing mainstreamed measures to support all students in these areas, whilst monitoring that these measures are developed and promoted with a consideration of underrepresented cohorts. Our assessment suggests that this would be an appropriate course of action.

2.2 Aims and objectives

Our admissions policy states “our purpose is to provide learning for people who want sustained work in the arts and entertainment economy”. We want to recruit and develop suitable students from all backgrounds and with a range of qualifications and experiences who have the greatest potential to benefit from the specialist vocational training that we offer. We want the students who study with us to succeed within this environment and thereafter. Our aim will be to reach more people from underrepresented groups with the potential to benefit from our training. Our access strategy will focus upon both providing outreach which fosters greater interest in the arts (i.e. raising aspirations, awareness and achievement) and skills development (i.e. attainment) in these subject areas whilst also looking to improve our entrants

from WP groups through seeking and identifying targeted groups of high-quality learners who already wish to explore future careers within our specialisms and engaging further with them.

Widening participation within the field of professional theatre and music training has always been difficult. Interest in the performing arts needs to be nurtured early and sustained over a long period. This means that, for some disciplines, it is much more difficult to meet entry standards and gain entry to a small and specialist institution, such as ours, without significant practice, often starting from a young age. This will most readily affect those who have had limited opportunity to access the arts. This is one of the intentions behind our foundation of the LIPA Primary School (and now High School). The number of young people embarking in GCSE-level creative arts study and above has been impacted further by government policy changes and funding cuts around arts education over the past decade, which again are most likely to limit access to these subjects within school for the most disadvantaged. These factors have contributed to fewer students studying arts subjects and fewer arts teachers in schools than before. Both our outreach work (such as sessions with targeted partner schools/colleges) and the wider activities of our LIPA Learning Group – which involves a Multi Academy Trust and an out of school performing arts academy – aim, to a large degree, to redress the current reduction in creative opportunities for young people locally and support skills development across performing arts and backstage subject areas.

In order to improve our gaps in access, we recognise a need to adopt a dual approach to geographical priority. We attract applications from across the UK. Our highest proportion of applications, including those from POLAR Q1 neighbourhoods (about a quarter), are received from students from the North West and as such we believe our regional outreach is important (coupled with a moral commitment to contribute to aspiration raising, plus improving attainment where we can add value and supporting employability skills within the local region). We are also keen to strategically widen our reach and travel beyond Liverpool, where appropriate, to engage with target groups. For example, in order to encourage entry from a higher proportion of black and ethnic minority students, we feel will need to develop links and new activity further afield.¹²

We intend to set the following three targets, which we feel are ambitious within this context, around reducing our gaps in access for students from the groups identified:

Target 1	Target group:	Black, Asian and minority ethnic students	Lifecycle stage:	Access
Target description:	Reduce the gap in participation by almost a half (to at least 7:1 ratio).			
Timescales:	Intention to achieve this within 5 years but may require a longer timeframe			
Additional comment:	We intend to reduce this ratio significantly to 7:1 by 2024/25 (increasing our overall black, Asian and minority ethnic entrants to 12.5%). This will include focus on encouraging more applications from black and Asian students, though we haven't set specific targets for these separate ethnicity groups.			

Target 2	Target group:	Students from LPNs (P4Q1)	Lifecycle stage:	Access
Target description:	To increase the proportion of P4Q1 students at our institution and reduce fluctuations in student numbers from this group (i.e. to provide a clearer trajectory). This is reflected in a target of reducing the ratios between P4Q1 and P4Q5.			
Timescales:	Reduce the ratio to 2.5:1 within 5 years and limit fluctuations so we can be sure of impact			
Additional comment:	Improving entrant numbers for P4Q1 students has been a focused target in previous access commitments. Though 2017/18 was a poor year for entrants from this group, we have already put in place some strategies around this			

Target 3	Target group:	Mature students	Lifecycle stage:	Access
Target description:	To increase the percentage of mature students to 18% by 2024/25. This reflects an almost 30% improvement on our current intake.			
Timescales:	By 2024/25, with annual milestones			

¹² Though we also anticipate that conversion of applicants may be harder for some students from underrepresented groups the further we go, as they may wish to study more locally.

We have not set specific outcome targets for care leavers but will commit during these years to look for more opportunities to work with LAC groups to support access to higher education.

For all of our objectives in the very long term (i.e. beyond the five year period) we aspire to reduce gaps even further. We will, therefore, keep our gaps and targets under careful review as we progress through the next five years.

We intend to also set ambitions around student success to reduce the gaps in attainment rates for P4Q1 and mature students. Over the next five years, we want to ensure that the gap in percentage attainment rates of 1st or 2:1 qualifications for P4Q1 students compared to P4Q5 students is reduced further to at least 2% or better. The attainment rates for mature students, which is nearer a 10% gap, we want to reduce to a gap of 3% or better by 2024/25. Within ten years, we aspire to eradicate the gaps in attainment.

Our non-continuation rates for P4Q1 students have traditionally been low, but we identified a risk in our assessment that there might be a gap in this area (and for IMDQ1) during 2015/16 and 2016/17. We intend to continue to monitor these rates and will consider setting related targets if a clear gap is apparent.

We do not intend to include a current target relating to progression outcomes in our APP as we have not identified any gaps at this stage of the lifecycle.¹³

Finally, we have always seen our most intensive outreach projects as assisting our own access targets but equally importantly as contributing to the national picture in terms of raising awareness of higher education, particularly around the performing arts. Our two-year progression programme for Year 10/11 students typically recruits between 50-80 students annually and all participants must meet at least one eligibility criteria for under-representation at HE level. Our Get Set residential summer school is targeted at students from P4Q1 neighbourhoods, ethnically diverse learners and those with experience of being in care. This project gives an insight into what it might be like at a specialist performing arts provider and helps students to develop their self-preparation skills and confidence for auditions/interviews. Not all participants from these projects will progress on to LIPA for a variety of reasons including wishing to study at a different geographical location or not reaching the required standard at one of our auditions/interviews. Moving forward, we fully intend to evaluate our contribution towards raising HE progression rates for underrepresented students nationally, but at this stage, are unsure whether setting formal targets would be appropriate. We track participants from these projects through the HEAT service. When we have at least two years of HEAT data for each project, we intend to identify if gaps exist (for example, whether progression to HE from summer school participants (P4Q1) is lower in comparison to other groups (such as P4Q5 or all non-P4Q1 students) within the sector;¹⁴ if this is the case, we will then look to set some formal targets in our future Access and Participation plans which we can work towards.

We make these targets with caution as there is a risk that improvement to entrants in one area might negatively affect others. One of the ways we feel this could be reduced is ensuring some work is targeted at students from multiple groups, such as mature learners from black or ethnic minority backgrounds or low participation neighbourhoods. This is considered within our strategic measures.

We similarly recognise that there is a risk that improvements in access from groups where there is an identified lower track record of student success, if at the same time our student success measures do not have the intended effect, may lead to marginal declines in these areas. There may also be an increase in the uptake of our student support services. If this is the case, we will consider what appropriate resources are required and may need to further review delivery plans within our capacities and budgets.

¹³ The performing arts industry was also disproportionately affected by measures utilised to combat the spread of Covid-19 – with performance venues closed and live events unable to take place for a long period during the pandemic. We recognise that further analysis of progression outcomes during this period will be impacted, and datasets will need to be treated with caution accordingly.

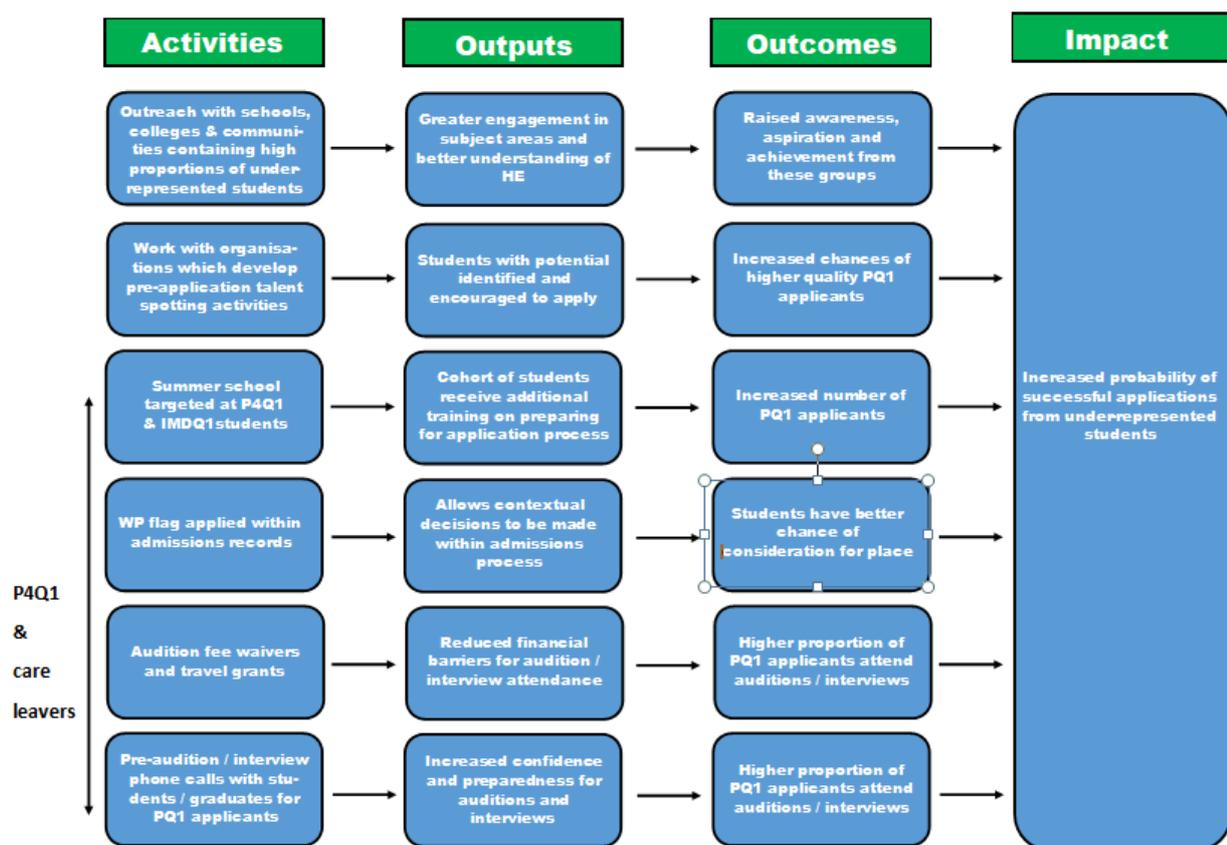
¹⁴ In the case of Get Set, we should receive progression data within two years' of participation in this project.

3. Strategic measures

The majority of our identified gaps are at the access stage of the student lifecycle. Between 2020/21 and 2024/25 we plan to offer a range of access measures aimed at raising the proportions of entrants from identified target groups. Because of the nature of our specialisms, some outreach (particularly at pre-16 level) will be delivered more widely to identify those with the interest and aptitude to progress further. At post-16 level, this will be further targeted to specific groups. With the cohorts that we work with in schools/college, each year there is variation in the numbers of students who have the capabilities of progressing to a competitive provider; but our work still contributes to helping them progress into the wider HE sector, so we identify this as a positive output of our work.

Our admissions policy is focused on selecting students who demonstrate the greatest potential to benefit from vocational learning, regardless of background. Reduced previous experience and preparation support for some applicants can act as a barrier. Our outreach intends to give greater opportunity in these areas, though some barriers to this are wider societal issues. As such, a key facet of our fair access includes contextual consideration and measures which may not directly impact on result (i.e. successful entry – particularly for our most competitive courses) but remove/reduce additional earlier barriers which may impact upon considering applying to a specialist institution in the first place such as cost, understanding of the guidelines and lack of confidence. We plan to explore closer working with the HE sector (both local and similar specialists) and organisations which promote diversity within the arts to address areas where we feel collaboration would be more beneficial and cost-resource appropriate – such as work with ethnic minority communities and care leavers. We have also identified that a course by course approach to assessing where greatest potential for improvements lie rather than a one-size fits all model may be beneficial.

Our outcomes chain for this theory of change around access is described below:



We believe, and datasets suggest, that once with us, underrepresented students more often than not are successful at other stages of the student lifecycle and that our approach ensures that students from underrepresented groups are supported to successfully participate on their courses and achieve good quality outcomes. However, we recognise a need to regularly review our provision and make sufficient changes to ensure this is continually the case.

3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

Overview

The responsibility for implementing much of our access and participation work has traditionally resided within our WP team (part of the Marketing & Student Recruitment department). This has been because our greatest challenges have been, and continue to be, around access. As there has been a greater shift of focus towards other elements of the student lifecycle in recent years, further efforts have been made towards developing a deeper whole institutional approach and embedding a growing culture of understanding. We have a community and culture of teaching staff who care about their students. Our students work collaboratively as a mini production house. Our portfolio brings together, in one institution, all the disciplines necessary to create and present the performing arts. Actors, musicians, community drama practitioners and dancers collaborate with designers, technicians and managers in an environment where the collective aim is to succeed and thrive.

Awareness of our access commitments and inclusivity is an important part of our CPD for staff. Our Access & Schools/Colleges Liaison Manager works closely with our Personnel team so that sessions focusing on fair access and inclusivity are on offer to staff during our annual Professional Development week, which staff across all university services (and from across various stages of the student lifecycle) are involved in.¹⁵ In 2019, an update on our APP commitments will be compulsory for all staff involved in teaching or supporting students/applicants. We plan to run this annually.

Staff are further invited to contribute to WP initiatives or put forward representatives to do so. Since 2016, we have offered an internal staff bidding fund, managed by the Access & Schools/Colleges Liaison Manager, for staff who want to propose new activities for working with underrepresented groups. Our Applied Theatre and Community Drama degree staff and students also work with a range of underrepresented community groups, in turn raising awareness of how theatre can be a powerful tool for change. We welcome school and college groups to suitable public performances across all disciplines with a policy of complimentary tickets to shows in our larger theatre for such organised groups.

Alignment with other strategies

Our APP aligns with our general equality and diversity commitment to advance equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and foster good relations between those who share protected characteristics and those who don't. Each year, we undertake a detailed internal review to ensure we meet our obligations in relation to the Equality Act 2010. We publish, via our website, detailed information relating to the make-up of our applicants, entrants, WP project participants and staff (so that our progress is transparent and visible), together with our equality objectives for the coming year and where responsibility for achieving these objectives lies within the institution. This regular monitoring of applications, enrolments and retention helps us to assess the impact of our policies, including progress against targets, and informs future activity. We believe that this approach is proportionate given the relatively small size of the institution. The purpose of our undergraduate teaching is sustained work. Our strategic aims in terms of Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy are to: enable the development of students as independent, engaged and autonomous learners; deliver teaching excellence aligned to professional expertise and work; progress an ongoing focus on work through discipline specific and generic skills; enhance our focus on delivery, assessment and feedback that fosters deliberate practice; pioneer the use of technology and digital practices to provide our graduates with employment advantages and enhance overall achievement; and proactively embed an international context.

Our mainstreamed curriculum design is inextricably linked to progression outputs, which we generally evidence via the outcomes of the DLHE and the Graduate Outcomes survey alongside our own survey of graduates four years after they have left us. As such, our strategies for employability and progression are combined with these aims. This curriculum arrangement is allied with industry and work-related input, so that aspiring practitioners are sensibly educated about the realities of the economies they wish to work in and get grounded practical advice and the related skillsets to succeed. Our most recent QAA Review (2015) identified good practice in this area: *"The strategic approach to the use of deliberate and collaborative interdisciplinary practice, which prepares students for long term employability*

¹⁵ For example, in 2019 there were sessions on gender diversity, mental health first aid and inclusive teaching design around disabled learners.

(Enhancement and Expectation B4)". We take a student-centred approach to quality enhancement, placing their needs, perspectives and prospects at the heart of our activity. Our current TEL strategy is a prime example of how we continually enhance teaching and learning excellence in a way that meets student needs (including those from key underrepresented groups) across the student lifecycle. Developments include a new online admissions portal for applicants; tools for swifter, more thorough assessment feedback; access to greater online learning resources and incorporation of greater virtual performance spaces, including live streaming and digital file sharing.

Our current Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy has been written to cover all students in representation, monitoring and review as part of a whole student body approach, rather than with separate considerations for different groups. This is supplemented by considerations at course level. Our programmes are established in line with sector standards and operated in line with the regulatory framework and relevant policies of our awarding body (LJMU). LJMU monitor and review our provision regularly to ensure quality and standards. Our high proportion of international students also assures an approach aimed at a diverse group of learners. Our undergraduate provision is due to be revalidated and relaunched for 2023. This will include an emphasis on making enhanced use of TEL, increased collaboration between disciplines, improving support during the transition of students into Higher Education and introducing greater inclusivity in assessment. We also plan to audit our strategies regularly during this 5-year cycle to ensure those which relate to our teaching practices place sufficient focus upon reducing the gaps at the later stages of the student lifecycle for underrepresented groups.

Our admissions policy aims to select upon ability and potential, rather than purely upon educational achievements. Qualification entry requirements, particularly for our performing courses are set relatively low. In theory, this lowers the initial barrier to selection to auditions/interviews for students from more disadvantaged backgrounds and with more challenging educational experiences. We welcome students from a range of qualification routes; just over half of our 2018 English entrants entered with BTEC qualifications. We take a considered approach to prior learning and prior experiential learning. We will continue to ensure clear and transparent entry criteria are displayed on our website and in other materials in timely and accessible form.

Strategic measures

Access

Our approach to widening access between 2020/21 and 2024/25 comprises of both activity we have historically delivered to support fair access and newer initiatives seen as necessary as a result of our assessment of performance. We intend to continue our established Year 10/11 progression framework, which is aimed at young people within Liverpool and Greater Merseyside from a range of backgrounds where there is evidence of barriers to HE progression. Eligibility to participate in this programme is currently inclusive of all key OfS underrepresented groups (except for mature).¹⁶ The programme aims to help participants develop practical subject skills and gain a greater understanding of career paths within the creative and performing arts. It contributes towards raising awareness and aspiration towards HE in general within the arts¹⁷ and helps us to also identify and develop students, who may then progress onto our post-16 programmes for further support and subsequently apply to LIPA.

Encouraging a greater number of successful P4Q1 entrants is an area we have focused on since 2011; we will build on what we can evidence has worked so far. This includes our residential Get Set summer school for Year 12 learners from P4Q1 neighbourhoods. This residential helps to give students an insight into university life and understand how to effectively self-prepare for applications to institutions like ourselves. We believe this is starting to make the impact we hoped. From Get Set 2018, we received 8 students who were successful at application and accepted their place (from 45 participants).^{18 19}

¹⁶ Participants who receive/have received free school meal or are first generation HE are also eligible.

¹⁷ In December 2016, we contacted participants by phone who had previously taken part in Year 10, 11 or 12 activities (the majority from the Year 10/11 programme) as they reached Year 1 HE age to establish destination outcomes. Of the 98 responses (38% reached), 54% (53 of 98) of those contacted were in HE – 22.5% higher than the UK average for 18 year olds at the time. Two also entered HE study at LIPA. For more recent participant groups, we have switched to tracking outcomes through use of HEAT and are awaiting first cohort data.

¹⁸ We anticipate that a high proportion progressed onto HE with the support of this programme but are awaiting relevant HEAT tracking data.

¹⁹ We intend to also extend eligibility for this summer school to students from IMD quintile 1 postcodes to similarly support efforts to reduce our entrant gap in this area.

Participants who complete the Year 10/11 progression framework or Year 12 Get Set summer school are entitled to a guaranteed audition or interview should they choose to apply to us in the future. This arrangement shows how we value the commitment of students taking part in these programmes, how keen we are to encourage students from diverse backgrounds to study with us and how important we feel it is to provide them with an opportunity to demonstrate their ability and potential at the application stage.

We will likewise continue to deliver targeted outreach work – including workshops, careers fair support, and inbound visits – to schools/colleges within P4Q1 neighbourhoods or with high proportions of P4Q1 learners. We currently work with nine school partners and ten college partners annually, with whom we deliver mutually arranged bespoke programmes, as well as offering more limited sessions to a wider group of schools and colleges. This activity aims to further raise awareness of our courses and provide clearer information on our admissions processes to this group, as well as promoting Get Set and other projects to potential applicants. Our workshop sessions also focus on supporting skills development within our subject areas – either through developing participant knowledge and instilling and reinforcing practical techniques or through raising competence and confidence in ‘live’ situations which are used for assessment purposes within the performing arts (such as mock auditions or putting high-quality portfolios together). Whilst it is already the case for the bespoke support we provide some of our pre-16 partner schools (for example, supporting GCSE students with project work), in line with the new priorities expected by Higher Education providers to support attainment, we intend to work closely with more of our school partners to better ensure that sessions are aligned with curriculum priorities and attainment needs of these individual schools and their learners from 2023/24 onwards.²⁰ We also intend to look at ways that we can assist in supporting our local UniConnect partnership with their future planned attainment raising and skills development activities within the Merseyside region.

For P4Q1 applicants, several fair access initiatives remain embedded into our admissions processes which aim to reduce barriers for applicants from this group. We also intend to extend these to applicants from a care background for the duration of this plan and beyond. These include:

Removal of audition fees and travel grants to reduce the barrier of cost to attending selection events.

At the access stage for performing arts, low income can act as a significant barrier to attending a single audition, or multiple auditions (which increases the likelihood of successful application). We have now made the decision to remove all audition fees for applicants from the 2023 entry application cycle onwards to reduce costs for applicants. We previously offered audition fee waivers to targeted applicants. We also will continue our practice of offering travel grants to P4Q1 applicants to lessen the barrier this can create. We feel offering this to P4Q1 applicants rather than low income applicants is the most practical strategy as it reduces our applicants’ need to provide and our need to collect and assess financial evidence. We anticipate a likely overlap in many (but not all) cases between low income and low participation neighbourhoods.

Pre-audition/interview preparation support phone calls.

All degree applicants from a P4Q1 postcode, who are invited to audition/interview, will receive a phone call from a LIPA student or graduate prior to their selection event. This is intended to help demystify the selection process, raise confidence and provide an opportunity for them to ask questions. This initiative also aims to remind applicants about the travel grant that they are entitled to access.

Contextual consideration at the admissions stage.

Each P4Q1 applicant is flagged within our admission system. If a flagged applicant meets educational requirements, they are considered for an audition/interview. This flag also informs audition panel staff that the student may have had contextual access to lower support or opportunities within the arts, which should be considered within assessment of their potential. In the later stages of selection, our staff are trained to give priority to a flagged student if they are considering two equal candidates for a place, in recognition that they are likely to have had to overcome more barriers to show a similar level of capability.

These measures combined with scheduling auditions at more accessible times, have assisted in increasing the proportion of P4Q1 applicants who attended an audition from 52% in 2013/14 to 83% in 2016/17 and 2017/18. Additional procedures in 2020/21 (which include providing audition/interview guidelines on our website earlier in the admission cycle and the introduction of an online admissions portal) should benefit all applicants. From 2020/21, we moved to a self-tape submission, rather than an

²⁰ We are also currently in the process of exploring other ways that we can align with curriculum support, such as looking at whether at least one Acting public performance each year can be based on an approved GCSE set text, which could be aimed primarily at local schools as audiences.

in-person audition, for the first stage of selection to our Acting degrees (with no audition fee for this initial stage). We found that it enabled applications from individuals we wouldn't otherwise have connected with, which reflected positively in the diversity of our entrants and continued this in 2021/22. We will be returning to primarily in-person audition events from 2022/23 – with audition fees removed – but will continue to annually review our recruitment and admissions approaches to ensure we are still reaching those from diverse groups.

We believe greater collaboration is going to be key to effective practice moving forward. Working with collaborative partners at the access stage offers students more diverse and sustained engagement experiences with the performing arts than our own capacity and resources can solely allow. Particularly for younger age groups, this wider engagement with the arts can start a journey which is necessary before we promote the opportunity to continue in this area through university level study and help us to identify youngsters most engaged in our subject areas. Liverpool is a plentiful and exciting city for engaging with the performing arts, with a number of theatres and other arts organisations within walking distance. We intend to work with the Empire and Everyman theatres for one of our projects. Locally we have developed links with music hubs to complement music education programmes in these boroughs and feel these are strong networks to continue with. We are also engaged with the local Cultural Educational Partnerships to support their agenda ensuring that all young people can access and benefit from a range of arts and cultural opportunities. We remain committed to wider work with schools/colleges in the local region through outreach partnership relationships with a number of schools/colleges and the Merseyside Uniconnect partnership, Shaping Futures. The new associated outreach hub will supplement signposting to our provision.

Work with external regional and national organisations - coupled with enhanced outreach – is an important part of our strategic measures to support more applications and entrants from black, Asian and minority ethnic learners, mature learners and those from care backgrounds. We are exploring partnerships with several charitable organisations. These work to raise awareness of drama school progression to predominantly students from ethnically diverse backgrounds and already have strong representation and relationships among these communities. Where we have attempted to run previous events ourselves aimed at black and ethnic minority learners, we have had limited success without partner input for a number of reasons. Alongside this, we plan to deliver more subject taster workshops in carefully targeted areas outside of Liverpool with high proportions of ethnically diverse learners to encourage more entrants of colour to consider our courses.

For mature students the lack of relevant Access to HE courses can be a barrier to finding larger groups of potential applicants, who are immediately considering HE in our subject areas as a next step. However, we try to work effectively with those which do exist. Growing links with Playing Up! (Access to HE in Theatre Arts run by the National Youth Theatre) extended to piloting external auditions for participants at their venue for 2019 entry. If assessed as successful, we will look to continue this practice in subsequent years. Our Acting staff also regularly deliver workshop sessions with a small number of national Foundation Arts schools, with high numbers of mature learners.

We intend to approach local providers and/or national similar specialists around a further outreach project for care leavers.

The above initiatives are particularly pertinent for our Acting courses. We plan to explore similar partnerships with organisations directed towards film-making and technical theatre arts, but these are at earlier stages. Some courses, due to their subject area, structure, or requirements, tend to have greater potential to recruit students from certain underrepresented groups. For example, we believe that the subject of management may be more attractive to mature students (and post-25 students, in particular) than some of our other subjects. Therefore, we plan to direct certain activity for underrepresented groups on a course-by-course basis rather than using a wider approach. We will do so where evidence suggests a more likely positive return per course on investment. We intend to identify staff members to act as Widening Participation Champions per course to support our efforts in recruiting a diverse cohort to their discipline as well as helping ensure they have successful outcomes. They can also help us recruit more positive student role models from targeted groups.

Many of the initiatives above, while predominantly focused on one target group, include students with multiple WP characteristics. This should, therefore, help us to meet multiple entrant targets more efficiently.

We are also exploring suitable arts organisations outside of our region to partner with to enable us to provide regional audition/interview workshops to help increase students' confidence and sense of preparedness for their Higher Education auditions/interviews.

Our training is dictated by the needs of the industry we serve, and this informs our thinking about the type of training pathways that we offer. From 2023 entry, we will be offering some new CertHE courses (replacing our private Foundation Certificates). These CertHE courses will be eligible for student loans for most learners, which we believe makes them more accessible for students from underrepresented groups, particularly in the current economic climate. We are also undergoing a process to discontinue our foundation year provision on our music courses and will be reviewing the option of introducing a CertHE in this area in the longer term.

LIPA are currently undertaking a bid for Taught Degree Awarding Powers, which, if successful, will allow us greater autonomy to consider if there are appropriate alternative ways of structuring any current or new provision beyond 2024/25.

Finally, we have exceptional links with the LIPA Primary and High School and LIPA Sixth Form College. These two free schools were set up by LIPA, opening in September 2014 and September 2016 respectively. From 2022/23, these have been reorganised into a Multi-Academy Trust arrangement; before then, they were incorporated into our existing governance and organisational structure through our Learning Group. In 2021, we received permission for significant change to extend the age range of the primary school through to the age of sixteen²¹, now giving learners the opportunity to study under the LIPA banner and ethos from the age of four into Higher Education. We believe that close working with these by our widening participation team, current students and Higher Education staff puts us in a unique position for achieving learner attainment and progression outcomes.

Some widening participation resources are put towards providing staff cover to allow LIPA Primary staff to visit local nurseries in P4Q1 areas of Liverpool, and to offering new Reception entrants and their parents an induction day at our Higher Education campus to support transition: whilst the local authority process is ultimately responsible for admissions to LIPA Primary school, as the school is based in a disadvantage area of Liverpool, we do try to contribute towards who might consider this as a primary school choice. We arrange for current students/graduate workshop leaders to deliver a number of curriculum focused sessions within the LIPA Primary School which utilise their subject skills and expertise – either through running direct subject sessions (e.g. running a dance activity) or through taking a creative approach to exploring a curriculum theme. Some previous examples include Acting graduates delivering sessions exploring recycling and the impacts of plastics on the ocean through a series of role-playing games and creating a song or Theatre and Performing Design graduates supporting study of Ancient Egypt by making Egyptian headdresses with pupils.

Attainment and progression rates for learners at LIPA Sixth Form College are continually high. In 2021 the Level 3 UAL pass rate for 2021 was 99.7%, 89% of students achieved high grades of merit or distinction and 86% of students went onto Higher Education, professional training or employment. Whilst LIPA Sixth Form College applications are considered equally against other applicants, the LIPA Sixth Form College is now the provider from which we receive the highest number of applications annually, which shows how important this relationship is for us. 30% of LIPA Sixth Form College students went on to enrol at LIPA for 2021 entry. Our widening participation team facilitate a range of activities throughout the year, such as mock auditions and portfolio support sessions to supplement college work towards attainment and progression outcomes. In addition, we regularly visit our sixth form college to promote current activities, such as our summer schools, and offer bespoke opportunities to those from targeted groups.

Student success

Our assessment of gaps leads us to conclude that we should continue with our investment in our mainstreamed strategies for student support. We have a highly developed student support culture and a strong track record of providing a comprehensive range of individually tailored and flexible support for students. This was highlighted in our QAA report in 2015. We employ a range of approaches to ensure that students are engaged with their studies. We are committed to providing appropriate support systems

²¹ Now renamed The LIPA Primary and High School

and services to identify and help those experiencing difficulties with study, so that all students achieve and reach their potential.

We offer an in-house open-referral student support service. The proportion of students with support needs is high, reflecting the high proportion of performing arts learners, who work visually, aurally and kinaesthetically and often discover language issues, such as dyslexia. During 2015/16, staff identified 351 students (43%) with long-term needs. Any students with diagnosed support needs have their needs recorded in a Student Support Document (SSD), circulated confidentially to relevant teaching staff. On top of this, we buy in access to specialist welfare services from Liverpool John Moores University, that are aimed at supporting and retaining students; in particular this is intended to provide necessary support during weekends and vacation periods, when our staff are not available.

In terms of proactive support measures, all new students participate in a comprehensive induction programme. This consists of a week-long programme of activities with their discipline intended to emphasise a personalised approach to learning and support, interwoven with whole year sessions. Learning Guidance Tutor support is available for all students, with a minimum entitlement to three meetings per year. This is currently under review with the intention of making further improvements. We will continue to develop our peer mentoring scheme, which started in 2017, to provide supplementary peer to peer support. We also monitor student attendance closely. If a student's attendance falls below a certain level, this can be a warning flag that a student may not achieve student success and relevant staff contact the individual student to encourage them to improve attendance and to identify any steps that we can take to further support them.

We are continuously looking at inclusive course design and teaching and are investing in new systems to assist in these areas and invest annually in professional development activities for our staff to encourage best practice in inclusive teaching. We are currently going through a period of significant investment towards TEL. We are planning to appoint new Heads of School in 2022 to lead on curriculum development as we undergo a process of applying for Taught Degree Awarding Powers. To provide a clearer process for reviewing and ensuring that students have positive experiences with us, our new Registrar established a Student Experience Committee in 2022. This also aims to allow us to respond more quickly to student input around experience and encouraging students to provide this more confidently.

In addition, to support identified gaps in attainment, we intend to offer some extra activity, such as study skills support sessions and/or mentoring throughout the year intended for P4Q1 and mature students. These will be trialled from 2019/20 (as per our last access plan), and following this pilot year, if effective, continued into the five years of this plan. A staff member will be designated responsibility for building up relationships and actively communicating this offer to students from these groups to encourage attendance, as well as monitoring uptake.

Progression

We plan to continue with a whole institutional approach in this area, with progression outcomes a highly embedded focus into our curriculum design as previously described. We have sustained links with employers as evidenced by the fact that we provide placement and/or showcase opportunities, depending on the type of course, to ensure effective exposure to employers. All disciplines run masterclasses that bring in well-established practitioners and all disciplines run annual *See Me Now* conferences, when graduates return to speak with current undergraduates and relate experiences and lessons learned from professional work. These opportunities are open to all class groups, but we intend to seek ways to make these more appealing to those from disadvantaged backgrounds (e.g., inviting diverse speakers with relatable experiences and messages). Our new provision of a MA in Creative Technologies & Performance from 2019/20 will give some of our students a direct pathway to progress into postgraduate level study. Our new PG courses also provide an opportunity for students to choose to take up higher level study with us.²²

Financial support

We are keen to ensure that the cost of university does not act as a barrier for students wishing to study here. This can also be evidenced by our commitment to removing audition fees and offering travel grant support. Between 2020/21 and 2024/25 we intend to offer a LIPA bursary of £560 (annual, cash award) to all of our students from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, who can demonstrate that

²² Our graduates are currently offered a £1000 discount on course fees, should they choose to study a MA with us.

they are in receipt of the full maintenance loan allowance.²³ Eligible students will receive this bursary in February each year, provided they are still in attendance. We anticipate that about 30% of our UK students each year will be eligible for this bursary package, based on previous years' experience. Evidence from a survey of 2nd and 3rd year students (100 responses), conducted in December 2017 and using the OfS financial survey toolkit, confirmed that while the bursary was not pertinent to students deciding to study with us, it has been useful for continued study and reducing non-continuation rates. 28 out of 31 bursary recipients who participated in this survey agreed that the bursary allowed them to be able to concentrate on their studies without worrying about finances. Students on our courses are, at certain periods, involved in evening work to support performances and major projects. This bursary assists lower income students in avoiding part-time jobs while here, which may restrict their ability to participate in all elements of their course. We will continue to evaluate the impact of our financial support.

We will also offer a £1,000 Care Leaver bursary (annual, cash award) to students, who are under 25 and who can demonstrate that they have been in care prior to their 16th birthday for a period of six months or more. This bursary is offered in recognition that care leavers may need assistance towards their accommodation costs for vacation periods. Bursaries are awarded to qualifying full-time UK undergraduates for each year of their course of study with us (subject to satisfactory learning progress).

Bursaries are also available to support final year Management students on their three-month placement. These will be available to mature students, care leavers and students whose home postcode is from P4Q1 and who demonstrate the need for additional financial support in order to access their preferred placement. Awards will be valued at up to £1,000, with up to two in total. The aim of this bursary is to support the additional costs of the placement (e.g., rent and travel if they chose to carry out the placement outside of Liverpool) to ensure that this does not restrict students into taking less beneficial placement opportunities, which can impact upon future progression opportunities.

Our decision to award these bursaries is informed by a bi-annual feedback survey from our learners, as well as continued review of cost as a reason for students who withdraw from studying with us. We reserve the right to review this support and revisit the amount or possible numbers awarded of these bursaries if there are major changes to higher education funding or fee levels.

3.2 Student consultation

A consultation event with students was run in May 2019 to review our APP prior to submission. Students who self-identified as being from one of the five underrepresented groups that we have chosen to focus on were invited to comment on our plan in its current form and feed in further ideas. From this, we felt assured that the students agreed with our conclusions about gaps and we received positive feedback about the strategic measures identified in the plan. Although no access gap had been identified for disabled students, the students wanted us to ensure that we put measures in place to encourage more students with disabilities (other than learning differences) to apply. This has been incorporated in to the APP. We received pointers about providing specific types of information to students at various stages in the recruitment and student lifecycle, which we can implement for 2020 entry (e.g., information that would help mature learners with children). There was a concern expressed about student support services being stretched. This is something that is already being considered by the institution. To ensure continued student involvement in monitoring our future access and participation activity, a new student steering group has been subsequently set up (now comprised of several elected Student Officers). It is intended that this group will meet once a term with the Access & Schools/Colleges Liaison Manager and will be tasked to provide a student-led eye on monitoring our APP commitments, feeding back areas of concern around access and participation from the student body and providing input into any new/developing initiatives in this area. Our Student Officers were consulted around the 2023/24 variations to this plan. Students can also comment on our plan or discuss working with the Widening Participation team via wp@lpa.ac.uk. In addition, a key feature of our outreach work is delivery by trained graduates. They can draw from their experiences of study with us alongside the realities of working within the performing arts economies post-graduation. Importantly, we also work closely with these graduates to design and assess the content of our outreach sessions, ensuring they are evidence-led and developed by practitioners with relevant insight.

²³ Eligibility criteria may be reviewed if there are changes to Student Finance thresholds or types of support.

3.3. Evaluation strategy

We recognise the importance of commitment to evaluation to ensure our activities are effective and cost-effective, as well as identifying what does not work. Use of the OfS's evaluation tool has identified that much of our current practice meets good practice guidelines. We anticipate that a longer-term APP and assurance of a more consistent monitoring return will assist in securing and embedding clearer focus on evaluation as part of wider strategy. We have developed an evaluation matrix, that plots the evaluation strategy across all our outreach projects. This is currently used by our widening participation practitioners and other associated staff. We invested in HEAT in 2015 and use of HEAT for participant tracking and further evaluation tasks forms a key part of our evaluation strategy, in particular helping us to identify if our most intensive outreach activities²⁴ are leading to strong progression outcomes. We hope that a longer period of using the HEAT database will lead to efficiencies in our monitoring and evaluation. Because of the year groups for those inputted into HEAT, student data return and evidencing through this method is currently in the early stages. Subscription to HEAT represents a significant investment for us (approx. 5% of our committed access spend, outside of staff salaries), showing our commitment to demonstrating the beneficial impact of our WP and fair access work over a longer period. We combine this tracking on our intensive programmes with attitudinal benchmarking and questions, which identify if we are meeting key knowledge/experiential aims for each programme. We've recently been working to ensure the language and layout of these forms are more student friendly. These approaches - combined with monitoring of participant characteristics - also allow us to identify if projects have been more effective for particular underrepresented groups against others. For low intensity activities, basic information about the schools/colleges involved, year groups and number of participants are collected and inputted into HEAT. We also collect feedback from teachers, participants and/or delivery staff. This helps us to retain a fuller picture of what we have cumulatively offered schools over time and to work with them to assess what has been most effective. From 2023/24, we plan to collect greater feedback from these parties on the impact of outreach activities on attainment raising outcomes rather than a previous focus which primarily looked at awareness and aspiration raising impacts.

The use of bespoke evaluation is more integrated into design of outreach activities than success/progression activities where we more typically examine evidence from external (e.g. DLHE) and internal systems (e.g. graduate tracking survey 4 years after graduation; annual student service review). One of the benefits of being a small institution is that many of our teaching staff have a strong understanding of outcomes as they have a lot of contact with the students. Our student support service activity is reviewed at regular intervals by experienced and qualified professionals and we use elements of this review. Because of our focus on sustained employment and evidencing success in this area, we recontact students four years after graduation for further evidence of successful progression outcomes – and typically reach about 80%. We plan to ensure that evaluating the success of additional activity to support attainment for students from underrepresented groups is integrated into the role of the assigned staff member coordinating this approach.

The widening participation team has a more deeply embedded culture of strategic evaluation using OfS frameworks than other institutional areas responsible for the delivery of access and student success activities across the student lifecycle. WP staff undertake PD training opportunities, which include evaluation; this is part of regular team discussion, covered individually for new projects, is on the agenda during the annual team planning day, and further team meetings have subsequently taken place to review evaluations. Throughout the duration of this plan, we plan to conduct knowledge transfer activities with staff responsible for overseeing and delivering the student experience to increase their awareness of OfS evaluation methodologies and evidencing amongst other departments. We are conscious that we may benefit from a more consistent institutional approach to evaluation and evidencing in non-access areas.

LIPA is a vocational institution without a research culture, so we can't access academic staff/postgraduates who could support research around WP. For example, we would be interested in exploring the use of focus groups and case studies but do not have in-house expertise in these areas. In some cases, to gain the right expertise, we may need to utilise external consultancy and have included these costs within our strategic planning, including to allow for further recommendations around external review of evaluation in 2023/24. Similarly, we welcome the Evidence and Impact Exchange to provide greater sector evidence and practice, from which we can develop our capabilities. We create and circulate reports around evaluation internally. Dissemination reflects positively on our governance structure design

²⁴ For our Year 10/11 progression framework, Get Set and one-day Get Ready event, we use the HEAT service to track participants. For new projects which we deem to be similarly intensive, we will take a similar approach.

- though we think there may be more scope for instituting more discussion in these forums to assist the future design of evaluation strategy. Sharing of evidence externally is not an area currently considered within our evaluation matrix. Using our current links with other national similar specialism practitioners, we plan to explore the possibility of helping develop a practitioner discussion network around sharing good practice in research and evaluation. We have had conversations around this already within the GuildHE network and with an informal network for widening participation leads at performing arts providers.

3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

Progress against our access and participation targets is reported to our institutional Teaching & Learning board, Equality & Diversity committee and Institute Quality committee. The Access & Schools/Colleges Liaison Manager sits on each of these groups and widening participation/fair access is a standing item. This gives opportunity to discuss and highlight developments and probe challenges. High level reports on Access and Participation are prepared for our Council. The Access & Schools/Colleges Liaison Manager, alongside our Director of Marketing/Student Recruitment and Director of Higher Education, will have primary responsibility for monitoring progress. Our annual milestones act as our first marker towards achievement, yet progress can be addressed at earlier stages. If there are wider concerns about our progress, these will be advanced through our committee structure – the next stage being a Senior Management board, which meets at least once a month. Our newly established WP student group will feed into monitoring our plans: This will be a standing item at each meeting and will ensure further student investment, involvement and contribution in this monitoring process.

4. Provision of information to students

We are committed to publishing clear, accessible and timely information for applicants and students about the fees we intend to charge and the financial support that we offer. We will publish our full APP, as well as a shorter summary document, on our website. We will also publish information for applicants and students on our fees and financial support on our website. This information will also be communicated to prospective students during relevant events, such as open days. In April, a detailed fact sheet will be sent to all students who have accepted places on our degrees. Information on fees and financial support will also be provided when we send out enrolment information to new entrants in August each year (after A-level results). For returning students, information on fee and financial support arrangements will be publicised on our intranet and sent out in March/April and in August before students are due to re-enrol. We will provide such information to UCAS and SLC as they reasonably require to populate their applicant-facing web-services.

5. Appendix

**Access and participation plan
Fee information 2020-21**

Provider name: The Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts

Provider UKPRN: 10003945

Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflationary statement:

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

Table 4a - Full-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	N/A	£9,250
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	N/A	£9,250
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Table 4b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Table 4c - Part-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Table 4d - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Targets and investment plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: The Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts

Provider UKPRN: 10003945

Investment summary

The OfS requires providers to report on their planned investment in access, financial support and research and evaluation in their access and participation plan. The OfS does not require providers to report on investment in student success and progression in the access and participation plans and therefore investment in these areas is not recorded here.

Note about the data:

The investment forecasts below in access, financial support and research and evaluation does not represent not the total amount spent by providers in these areas. It is the additional amount that providers have committed following the introduction of variable fees in 2006-07. The OfS does not require providers to report on investment in success and progression and therefore investment in these areas is not represented.

The figures below are not comparable to previous access and participation plans or access agreements as data published in previous years does not reflect latest provider projections on student numbers.

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Total access activity investment (£)	£298,000.00	£307,034.00	£314,174.00	£316,307.00	£319,470.00
Access (pre-16)	£138,924.00	£143,092.00	£145,954.00	£147,414.00	£148,888.00
Access (post-16)	£157,456.00	£162,273.00	£166,518.00	£167,174.00	£168,845.00
Access (adults and the community)	£1,620.00	£1,669.00	£1,702.00	£1,719.00	£1,737.00
Access (other)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Financial support (£)	£134,793.00	£144,730.00	£148,816.00	£149,987.00	£149,987.00
Research and evaluation (£)	£19,554.00	£20,141.00	£20,544.00	£20,749.00	£20,957.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Higher fee income (£HFI)	£2,292,155.00	£2,471,085.00	£2,542,040.00	£2,563,635.00	£2,563,635.00
Access investment	13.0%	12.4%	12.4%	12.3%	12.5%
Financial support	5.9%	5.9%	5.9%	5.9%	5.9%
Research and evaluation	0.9%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%
Total investment (as %HFI)	19.7%	19.1%	19.0%	19.0%	19.1%

