

# Boston College

## Access and participation plan 2026-27 to 2029-30

### Introduction and strategic aim

Boston College is a prominent further and higher education institution located in Lincolnshire, serving the town of Boston and the wider rural and coastal communities of South Lincolnshire. Established in 1965, the College has developed a strong reputation for delivering high-quality education that is responsive to both local and national needs. With a focus on accessibility, inclusion, and progression, Boston College plays a vital role in widening participation and improving life chances for learners in one of the most socio-economically challenged regions of the UK.

The College offers a diverse portfolio of Higher Education (HE) provision, including Higher National Diplomas (HNDs), Higher National Certificates (HNCs), Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs), Foundation Degrees, and top-up degrees in partnership with awarding bodies such as Pearson and the University of Derby. With a relatively small HE student population, Boston College provides a highly personalised learning environment where students benefit from smaller class sizes, strong academic and pastoral support, and close links with employers and industry.

Boston College's mission is *"to inspire lifelong learning, growing people to be their brilliant best, energising our communities and brightening all our futures"*. This mission underpins all aspects of its HE provision, with a clear commitment to raising aspirations, supporting social mobility, and ensuring that all students—regardless of background—can succeed in higher education and beyond. The College's BRIGHTEN values articulate a commitment to Bravery, Respect, Inspiration, Growth, Hope, Truth, Energy and Nurture which underpins the approach to every aspect of college endeavours.

In line with the College's Access and Participation Plan and its wider strategic priorities, Boston College's overarching strategic aim with respect to equality of opportunity is to eliminate barriers to HE participation, success and progression for underrepresented and disadvantaged groups. This includes targeted outreach to local schools and communities, bespoke support for students with additional learning needs and continuous investment in inclusive teaching practices. The College is particularly focused on supporting students from low-income households, mature learners and those who are the first in their families to access higher education. The College's strategic aims are articulated through the **Five Pillars: People, Productivity, Performance, Personality and Partnerships**.

Through its HE provision, Boston College strives to be an engine of opportunity, equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to succeed in a competitive and rapidly changing world, while contributing to the prosperity and cohesion of the communities it serves.

### Risks to equality of opportunity

To produce this plan, we have assessed our performance using the Office for Students (OfS) access and participation dashboard, our own internal data analysis, and the equality of opportunity risk register (EORR). We then delved deeper into any identified gaps, using data and insights to understand the underlying risks affecting our students. While this assessment highlighted key strengths, we have also identified the following risks to equality of opportunity for students at Boston College. This section focuses on what we believe are the most significant of these risks.

Our analysis helped us pinpoint risks to equality of opportunity at each stage of the student lifecycle. These risks have been mapped against the OfS EORR, which will inform the development of the intervention strategies detailed in Section 4.

### **Risk 1: Access**

**Risk 1.1:** There are low rates of students from care-experienced, service and Gypsy/Roma/Traveller communities enrolling on HE Courses at Boston College. Evidence gathered by the College suggests that this could be linked to perceptions of HE in the local area, along with access to funding and accommodation.

**Risk 1.2:** There are lower rates of 21+ students enrolling on HE courses at Boston College than is typical for the sector and that local market intelligence suggests. Evidence suggests this is due to insufficient flexibility in study models.

**Risk 1.3:** A low proportion of students with diagnosed SEND requirements are accessing DSA support; this is partly due to a lack of awareness of DSA, and to a lack of support during the DSA application process.

**Risk 1.4:** There is currently a lack of data to track the proportion of students eligible for free school meals, due to insufficiency in available data.

**Risk 1.5:** Market research indicates that there is poor local understanding of Boston College's HE offer, both with existing FE students and the wider local population – this includes a lack of understanding of the different types of courses offered.

**Risk 1.6:** Significantly lower numbers of male students enrol on HE courses, versus female students, which could be due to the existing offer, perceptions of HE in the local area, and marketing approaches.

### **Risk 2: Continuation**

**Risk 2.1:** A decline in continuation rates for students in Deprivation Quintile 2

**Risk 2.2:** Lower continuation rates for under-21 students, than 21+. Student voice feedback suggests that this could be due to the perception of the HE experience in the local area, lack of student focussed activity in the town, and lack of family experience and support for HE.

### **Risk 3: Completion**

**Risk 3.1:** Lower completion rate of ABC Quintile 1, compared to Quintile 2 and above. This could be linked to the flexibility of study models, and available opportunities for out of hours study around work and personal responsibilities.

**Risk 3.2:** OFS APP Data Dashboard indicates there is a 5% gap between Under 21 and 21+ completion rates.

**Risk 3.3:** Data indicates that there is an emerging decline in the completion rate of Deprivation Quintile 2.

**Risk 3.4:** Some students indicate that there is an insufficiently distinct HE culture at Boston College which impacts their sense of belonging.

### **Risk 4: Attainment**

**Risk 4.1:** Lower attainment rates on Higher National qualifications than on Foundation Degrees.

**Risk 4.2:** Current tracking data lacks detail and requires development to more accurately track differences between demographic groups. Limited data is available on degree classifications by demographic, making it difficult to track the achievement of different groups

**Risk 4.3:** Availability of Academic Achievement Coaches is currently inequitable, with some students having more access than others due to timetabling of Academic Achievement Coach availability.

**Risk 4.4:** Data indicates an attainment gap between male and female students, with male students' achievement 10% lower.

## **Risk 5: Progression**

**Risk 5.1:** Limited progression for Higher National and Foundation Degree pathways to Level 6 Top Up Degree Courses.

**Risk 5.2:** A lack of clarity on progression routes and support for employment has led to insufficient opportunities for HE students to progress to Highly Skilled employment or Higher Study.

**Risk 5.3:** Lower rates of male students progressing from Level 5 Higher National and Foundation Courses to Level 6 degree top-ups.

## **Objectives**

### **Objective 1: Access**

**Objective 1.1:** To increase the number of students from care-experienced, services and Gypsy/Roma/Traveller communities from 1.1%, 06% and 2.9% respectively to 5%, 3%, and 7% by 2030 through dedicated outreach programmes, partnerships and tailored pre-entry guidance and application support.

**Objective 1.2:** To increase enrolments of 21+ students on all HE courses at Boston College from 44.9% to 50% by 2030 through the development of flexible study models and a wider offer of part time, hybrid and fully online offers.

**Objective 1.3:** To increase the proportion of SEND students applying and attaining support from Disabled Student Allowance from 4% of students declaring SEND on application to 20% by 2030 through targeted awareness campaigns and refined internal support.

**Objective 1.4:** Develop internal tracking/data systems that indicate the proportion of students with free school meals who have enrolled on higher education courses at Boston College through seeking best practice from the sector, training and development.

**Objective 1.5:** Redevelop marketing and information to increase local understanding of different higher education courses and Boston College's HE offer, highlighting the advantages of studying higher education to different age groups and communities. This will be achieved through

comprehensive market research, diverse marketing materials and campaigns, and regular engagement activities.

**Objective 1.6:** Increase numbers of male students on HE courses from 38% of all students to 45% by 2030 through reviewing the offer, tailored marketing approaches, including a showcase of successful male alumni.

## **Objective 2: Continuation**

**Objective 2.1:** Arrest the decline in continuation rates for students in Deprivation Quintile 2, eradicating any gaps with other quintiles by 2030, by raising the continuation rate from 58.10% to 80% through targeted academic and pastoral support interventions.

**Objective 2.2:** Improve continuation rates for under 21 students from 63.9% to 80% by 2030 through enhanced induction and transition support to adjust to demands of HE and promotion of student engagement in extra-curricular activity and societies.

## **Objective 3: Completion**

**Objective 3.1:** Increase completion rates for ABC Quintile 1 (76.9%), eradicating gap compared to Quintile 2 (94%), by 2030 through targeted academic support, mentoring and pastoral care programmes.

**Objective 3.2:** Eradicate the 5% completion gap between under 21 (93.9%) and 21+ (88.7%) students by 2030 through flexible study approaches to recognise the complexities of adult life circumstances, along with a review of support mechanisms.

**Objective 3.3:** Increase the completion rate of students from Deprivation Quintile 2 from 85.4% to 90% by 2030 through early identification of challenges and proactive support.

**Objective 3.4:** Develop a stronger HE culture at Boston College, that increases students' sense of belonging through investment in student-led initiatives, social interaction and societies that cater to the diverse range of interests, promoting communication and community building.

## **Objective 4: Attainment**

**Objective 4.1:** To close attainment gaps between Higher National Qualifications and Foundation Degrees. Currently Higher National attainment is at 62.5% versus Foundation Degree attainment at 77.8%. By 2030 this gap will be within 3% through a targeted approach to support as well as personal development for staff teaching on HNQ programmes.

**Objective 4.2:** To develop clearer reporting and data processes that more accurately track differences between different demographic groups, including tracking grades and degree classifications through standardised reporting templates and procedures, investment in data systems and training.

**Objective 4.3:** Increase access to Academic Achievement Coaches so their availability is equitable across student groups, raising the total available time from two days a week to four through an

allocation of additional resources to enable excellent support, eliminating any inequities in access for different student groups.

**Objective 4.4:** To close attainment gap between male and female students, by raising male attainment to 83% by 2030 through targeted academic support and mentoring programmes.

## **Risk 5: Progression**

**Objective 5.1:** Increase progression from Higher National and Foundation Degree programmes to Level 6 Top Up Bachelor's Degree programmes from 72.5% to 82.5% by 2030 through dedicated progression support, ensuring timely and comprehensive information to HN and FD students about L6 options.

**Objective 5.2:** Map clear progression routes from all HE programmes to relevant highly skilled employment sectors and further higher study options, with enhanced careers guidance and employability support.

**Objective 5.3:** Increase rates of male students progressing from Higher National and Foundation Degree programmes to Level 6 Top Up Bachelor's Degree programmes from 31% of all students, to 41% by 2030, addressing known and unknown barriers and implementing targeted information and guidance sessions.

## **Intervention strategies and expected outcomes**

Boston College has developed intervention strategies to address the identified risks to equality of opportunity and achieve its objectives and targets. The following section outlines the planned interventions for mitigating the identified risks to equality of opportunity. These intervention strategies were created through consultation and engagement across the College. We have highlighted how we will evaluate each of the intervention strategies and the rationale and evidence for each one can be found in Annex B.

We have designed intervention strategies across the student life cycle (Access, Continuation, Completion, Attainment, and Progression) to address and mitigate the identified risks. These strategies focus on the student groups most affected by the identified risks and include activities which are evidence-based and have evaluation embedded into their design. The expected outcomes are detailed along with where we will these outcomes evidenced. We will evaluate and monitor progress towards these outcomes internally to ensure progress.

The intervention strategies:

- Contain the activities that will be completed to mitigate the risks to equality of opportunity and achieve the objectives and targets set within this plan, such as increasing care-experienced student numbers to 5% by 2030 through dedicated outreach, improving continuation rates for Under 21 students to 80% by 2030 through enhanced induction, and closing the attainment gap between Higher National Qualifications and Foundation Degrees to within 3% by 2030.
- Explain who will be involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of those activities, indicating an approximate cost of delivering all of the activities. For example, the Flexible

Study Model Development for Objective 1.2 will involve Academic Leads, IT Support, and Marketing staff with a financial input of up to £10,000/year.

- Are informed by evidence drawing on both sector best practice and local insights from students. For instance, Objective 1.5 will utilise comprehensive market research to understand local perceptions, and Objective 5.2 will map clear progression routes based on student feedback.
- Include an evaluation plan to ensure that learning and dissemination are a continual process.

Boston College is committed to disseminating the findings of the evaluation of interventions as widely as practicable. The publication plans (see Annex B) are intended to be indicative and will be expanded as outputs become available and opportunities for dissemination arise.

The evaluation outcomes will be used to inform the content of programmes delivered by Boston College to enable change and to remove barriers to access, success and progression.

Intervention strategy 1: Access				
Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?

<b>Outreach and Pre-entry IAG/Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish dedicated outreach programmes and partnerships with local authorities, care leaver services, armed forces charities, and community groups supporting Gypsy/Roma/Traveller communities to raise awareness of HE opportunities and support available at Boston College.</li> <li>Develop tailored pre-entry guidance and application support for these specific groups, addressing perceived barriers such as funding and accommodation. This could include bespoke workshops, dedicated advisor sessions, and information on student finance.</li> <li>Implement a clear referral system from support agencies to Boston College's admissions and student support teams.</li> <li>For 'Services', this could involve liaising with local military bases and veterans' organisations.</li> <li>Review and, if necessary, adapt admissions policies to be more inclusive and supportive of applicants from these backgrounds.</li> </ul>	<p>Careers and Outreach team</p> <p>Admissions</p> <p>Budget allocated for tailored outreach activity</p>	<p>Increased awareness of Boston College's HE offer within target communities; established referral pathways; improved relationships with key support organisations.</p> <p>Increased applications from target groups; improved application quality; higher conversion rates from application to enrolment for these groups.</p>	<p>Objective 1.5 (Redevelop Marketing)</p>
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Market Research and Curriculum Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct market research (building on Risk 1.2's implication of local market intelligence) to understand the specific needs and preferences of prospective 21+ students in the local area, particularly regarding flexible study options.</li> <li>• Develop and promote a wider range of flexible study models, including part-time courses, evening classes, blended learning, and modular approaches, to better accommodate the commitments of mature learners.</li> <li>• Highlight the benefits of HE for career progression, reskilling, and personal development in marketing campaigns specifically targeted at the 21+ demographic.</li> <li>• Offer bespoke advice and guidance services for mature applicants, covering topics like career change, prior learning recognition, and financial support.</li> <li>• The current proportion of 21 and over students is 44.9% in 2024/2025.</li> </ul>	<p>Senior Learning Lead curriculum Development</p> <p>IT Support</p> <p>Marketing</p> <p>VLE Investment – Additional licenses to cover HE</p>	<p>Diversified HE course portfolio; increased appeal to mature learners; improved accessibility of courses.</p> <p>Increased inquiries and applications from 21+ demographic; improved awareness of flexible offers.</p>	Objective 1.5 (Redevelop Marketing), Objective 3.2 (Completion Gap)
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<b>DSA/SEND Support awareness and promotion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch targeted awareness campaigns about DSA among students declaring SEND, utilising multiple communication channels (website, induction events, student support services).</li> <li>• Develop a streamlined and supportive internal process for DSA applications, including dedicated advisors who can assist students with completing forms, gathering evidence, and liaising with funding bodies.</li> <li>• Integrate information about DSA into pre-application and enrolment stages, ensuring students are aware of potential support early on.</li> <li>• Provide training for staff across various departments (admissions, academic, student services) on DSA and the support available to SEND students to facilitate early identification and referral.</li> <li>• In 2024/2025, 25.6% of all HE students had SEND requirements</li> </ul>	<p>Academic Coaches / DSA Support Office</p> <p>Marketing materials and campaigns</p>	<p>Increased knowledge and understanding of DSA among SEND students and staff; higher initial engagement with DSA information.</p> <p>Increased number of SEND students successfully applying for DSA; improved student experience during the application process; higher rates of DSA attainment.</p>	<p>Objective 1.4 (Data Tracking)</p> <p>Objective 4.3 (AAC Availability)</p>
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<b>Data Tracking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invest in an upgrade or enhancement of the existing student information system to capture and accurately track data points related to Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility for HE students.</li> <li>Liaise with feeder schools and colleges to establish a robust and GDPR-compliant mechanism for sharing relevant FSM eligibility data for prospective HE students.</li> <li>Provide training to relevant administrative and admissions staff on the importance and methods of collecting and recording FSM data.</li> <li>Implement regular data audits to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the FSM data collected.</li> <li>Currently, there is a lack of data to track the proportion of students eligible for free school meals.</li> </ul>	<p>BI Data Analyst / MIS Data Manager</p> <p>Potential investment in software licenses or training on existing platforms</p>	<p>Robust and accurate FSM data collection; ability to track FSM status at enrolment; compliance with data protection regulations.</p> <p>Consistent and accurate data entry; increased staff competency in data handling; reliable FSM enrolment figures for analysis.</p>	<p><b>Objective 4.2 (Demographic Attainment Data)</b></p> <p><b>Objective 4.2 (Demographic Attainment Data)</b></p>
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<b>Marketing and Promotion of HE Offer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct comprehensive market research (as noted in Risk 1.5) to identify current perceptions and information gaps within the local community regarding Boston College's HE offer and the benefits of HE.</li> <li>• Develop diverse marketing materials and campaigns tailored to different local communities and age groups, utilising local media, community events, and digital platforms.</li> <li>• Host regular open days, taster sessions, and information evenings, both on-campus and in community settings, showcasing the variety of courses and their career pathways.</li> <li>• Train college staff and student ambassadors to effectively communicate the value proposition of Boston College's HE programmes and address common misconceptions.</li> </ul>	<p>Marketing Officer and Admissions</p> <p>Campaign costs and investment</p>	<p>Clear understanding of market perceptions; evidence-based marketing strategy; identified key messages and channels.</p> <p>Increased awareness of Boston College's HE offer; improved understanding of course types and benefits; higher engagement with marketing content.</p> <p>Increased direct engagement with Boston College; positive personal interactions; enhanced reputation within the local area.</p>	<p>Objective 1.1, 1.2, 1.6</p>
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<b>Marketing and Outreach Programme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyse current course enrolment data to identify programs with particularly low male representation and investigate potential reasons (e.g., subject stereotypes, marketing).</li> <li>Tailor marketing and outreach efforts to appeal more effectively to male prospective students, potentially highlighting career outcomes or specific course content that resonates with this demographic.</li> <li>Showcase successful male alumni in promotional materials and at events.</li> <li>Engage male role models (staff, current students, alumni) to participate in outreach activities and open days.</li> <li>For 2024/2025, male students constituted 37.5% of all HE students</li> </ul>	Outreach team / Careers  Travel costs	Increased engagement from male demographic with marketing materials; improved perception of HE as relevant to male aspirations.  Increased male applications to previously underrepresented courses; improved gender balance within specific programmes.	Objective 1.5 (Redevelop Marketing)
<b>Objective 2: Continuation</b>				
Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?

<b>Focussed Review of Q2 support and progress</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deep dive into the factors contributing to the decline in continuation rates for students in Deprivation Quintile 2 (Q2). This could involve student surveys, focus groups, and analysing internal data for Q2 students.</li> <li>• Implement targeted academic and pastoral support interventions for Q2 students, such as enhanced mentoring, academic skills workshops, and personalised progress reviews.</li> <li>• Ensure financial support and advice services are readily accessible and promoted to Q2 students, as financial hardship can be a barrier to continuation.</li> <li>• Foster a strong sense of belonging and community for Q2 students through peer support networks and dedicated social activities.</li> </ul>	<p>Student Support Advisor and Academic Staff time.</p> <p>Finance Office input and analysis</p> <p>Hardship Fund allocation</p>	<p>Improved academic engagement and performance for Q2 students; increased student wellbeing; stronger sense of belonging and support.</p> <p>Reduced financial stress as a barrier to continuation; increased utilisation of available support services.</p>	<p>Objective 3.4 (HE Culture), Objective 4.3 (AAC Availability)</p>
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<b>Student Tracking and Enrichment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance induction and transition support for under 21 students to help them adjust to the demands of HE, including academic expectations and independent study skills.</li> <li>• Develop robust early warning systems to identify under 21 students at risk of withdrawing, allowing for timely intervention and support.</li> <li>• Promote student engagement in extracurricular activities, societies, and peer support programmes to foster a sense of community and belonging.</li> <li>• Provide accessible and relevant wellbeing and mental health support services tailored to the needs of younger students.</li> </ul>	<p>Student Union Set up</p> <p>Student Services staff input</p> <p>Workshop materials and resources</p>	<p>Smoother transition to HE for under 21 students; increased confidence in academic skills; improved awareness of available support.</p> <p>Increased social integration and sense of belonging for under 21 students; stronger peer support networks; reduced feelings of isolation.</p>	<p>Objective 3.4 (HE Culture)</p>
<b>Objective 3: Completion</b>				
Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?

<b>Academic Support and Coaching</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyse existing data to understand the specific challenges faced by ABC Quintile 1 students that lead to lower completion rates.</li> <li>Implement targeted academic support, mentoring, and pastoral care programmes for students from ABC Quintile 1 from the point of enrolment.</li> <li>Ensure that curriculum and teaching methodologies are inclusive and address the diverse learning needs of students from various backgrounds.</li> <li>Review retention strategies specifically for Q1 students, potentially incorporating early intervention and tailored feedback mechanisms.</li> <li>The TUNDRA Quintile 1 (Q1) represents areas with the lowest participation rates.</li> </ul>	<p>Academic Support, Student Mentors</p> <p>Training Costs</p> <p>Wellbeing Advisors</p>	<p>Improved academic performance for ABC Q1 students; increased engagement with learning; enhanced problem-solving skills.</p> <p>Improved student resilience and coping mechanisms; reduced impact of personal challenges on academic progress; higher rates of help-seeking.</p>	<p>Objective 4.3 (AAC Availability), Objective 4.4 (Male Attainment)</p> <p>Objective 3.4 (HE Culture)</p>
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<b>Curriculum and Support Review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate the specific reasons for the lower completion rate among 21+ students. This could involve exit surveys, interviews, and analysis of academic progress.</li> <li>• Provide flexible academic support and deadlines where appropriate for 21+ students, recognising their often-complex life circumstances and external commitments.</li> <li>• Offer specialised academic skills support and workshops tailored to mature learners who may be returning to education after a break.</li> <li>• Ensure access to financial advice and hardship funds for 21+ students to mitigate financial barriers to completion.</li> <li>• Review the support mechanisms for 21+ students to ensure they are adequately addressed, particularly for those studying part-time, as 100% of part-time 21+ students were recorded in 2023/2024.</li> </ul>	<p>Senior Learning Leads, Quality, DoLs focus on curriculum design</p> <p>Training and best practice visits</p>	<p>Increased ability for 21+ students to manage academic workload alongside other commitments; reduced stress related to deadlines.</p> <p>More responsive and effective support for 21+ students; improved student satisfaction with support services; removal of identified barriers to completion.</p>	<p>Objective 1.2 (21+ Enrolment)</p>
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<b>Peer Support Networking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance academic and personal tutoring for students in Deprivation Quintile 2, with a focus on early identification of challenges and proactive support.</li> <li>• Develop a peer support network for Q2 students to foster a sense of community and shared experience.</li> <li>• Ensure access to relevant support services, including careers advice and financial guidance, to help Q2 students overcome non-academic barriers to completion.</li> <li>• Monitor the academic progress of Q2 students closely to provide timely interventions.</li> </ul>	<p>Student Services Team, Senior Learning Leads</p> <p>Training Costs</p>	<p>Timely identification of at-risk Q2 students; increased rates of successful intervention; reduced number of students withdrawing due to unaddressed issues.</p> <p>Improved access to comprehensive support for Q2 students; more efficient and effective support delivery; reduced burden on individual students seeking help.</p>	<p>Objective 2.1 (Q2 Continuation), Objective 4.2 (Data Tracking)</p> <p>Objective 2.1 (Q2 Continuation), Objective 3.4 (HE Culture)</p>
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<b>Student Societies and Enrichment Program</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invest in student-led initiatives and societies that cater to a diverse range of interests, promoting interaction and community building among HE students.</li> <li>Designate dedicated HE-specific spaces (e.g., common rooms, study areas) to create a distinct identity for higher education students.</li> <li>Organise regular social and academic events specifically for HE students, fostering a sense of shared experience and belonging.</li> <li>Encourage academic staff to actively promote a collegial and supportive learning environment within their courses.</li> <li>Establish a student HE committee to provide feedback and contribute to the development of the HE culture.</li> </ul>	Student Services Student Union  Estates  Space Refurbishment  Events and Resources Budget	Increased student participation in extracurricular activities; more diverse range of student-led groups; enhanced opportunities for peer interaction.  Stronger sense of HE community and identity; increased opportunities for informal interaction between HE students; improved student satisfaction with college environment.	Objective 2.2 (Under 21 Continuation)  Objective 2.2 (Under 21 Continuation), Objective 3.1 (ABC Q1 Completion)
<b>Objective 4: Attainment</b>				
Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention strategy?

<b>Curriculum Review of HNQ</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a thorough review of the curriculum, assessment methods, and teaching practices within Higher National Qualifications to identify areas for improvement that may be impacting attainment.</li> <li>• Implement targeted academic support programs specifically for students on Higher National Qualifications, addressing identified learning gaps or challenges.</li> <li>• Provide professional development for staff teaching on Higher National Qualifications, focusing on pedagogical approaches that enhance student attainment.</li> <li>• Explore opportunities for greater integration or alignment of learning outcomes and assessment strategies between Higher National Qualifications and Foundation Degrees where appropriate.</li> <li>• The provided data shows achievement by levels (L4, L5, L6, L7) but does not specifically differentiate between "Higher National Qualifications" and "Foundation Degrees" for a direct comparison of their attainment rates. Therefore, further internal analysis would be needed to precisely confirm these baseline attainment figures.</li> </ul>	<p>Quality and curriculum team input on review of curriculum</p> <p>Academic support coaches</p> <p>Budget for training allocation</p>	<p>Improved curriculum design and assessment practices for HNQs; enhanced student understanding of expectations; more effective learning environment.</p> <p>Increased academic confidence and skills for HNQ students; improved performance in assessments; reduced academic failure rates.</p> <p>Enhanced teaching quality on HNQ programs; increased staff confidence in supporting HNQ students; more effective learning experiences.</p>	<p>Objective 4.2 (Data Tracking)</p>
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<b>Data Tracking review and development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in upgrading or integrating existing data systems to enable more granular tracking of attainment data across various demographic groups (e.g., sex, age, SEND, ethnicity, care experienced, nationality).</li> <li>• Develop standardised reporting templates and procedures to ensure consistent and comprehensive capture of grade and degree classification data by demographic.</li> <li>• Provide training to relevant staff on data entry, analysis, and reporting to ensure accuracy and consistency.</li> <li>• Regularly review and audit data quality to ensure its reliability for informing interventions and evaluating progress.</li> <li>• The provided data currently has limitations in tracking attainment by various demographic groups, particularly for degree classifications.</li> </ul>	<p>Budget allocation for systems investment</p> <p>Quality/MIS input to standardise reporting and procedures</p>	<p>Centralised and comprehensive attainment data; improved data accessibility for analysis; robust foundation for evidence-based decision making.</p> <p>Consistent and accurate data reporting; increased staff competency in data management; reliable data for identifying and monitoring attainment gaps.</p>	<p>Objective 1.4 (FSM Data Tracking)</p>
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<b>Coaching Support and access to learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocate additional resources to expand the Academic Achievement Coach team, enabling an increase in their available hours from two to four days a week.</li> <li>• Conduct a review of current timetabling and booking systems for Academic Achievement Coaches to identify and eliminate any inequities in access for different student groups.</li> <li>• Implement a transparent booking system that ensures fair access and allows students to schedule appointments easily.</li> <li>• Promote the availability of Academic Achievement Coaches widely across all HE courses and student groups.</li> </ul>	<p>Academic Achievement Coach budget and allocation</p> <p>Timetabling Review</p> <p>Estates/Transport Review</p>	<p>Increased capacity for academic support; reduced waiting times for appointments; broader reach of support services.</p> <p>Fair and transparent access to AACs for all students; improved student satisfaction with support availability; optimised utilisation of AAC resources.</p>	<p>Objective 4.1 (HNQ Attainment), Objective 4.4 (Male Attainment)</p>
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<b>Data Analysis and Review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct in-depth analysis of academic performance data to pinpoint specific courses, modules, or assessment types where male students may be underperforming compared to females.</li> <li>• Explore pedagogical approaches and learning resources that may particularly benefit male students or address any identified learning barriers.</li> <li>• Provide targeted academic support and mentoring programs for male students in areas where attainment gaps are evident.</li> <li>• Engage male students in feedback sessions to understand their perceptions of learning, assessment, and support.</li> <li>• The provided data does not contain a direct attainment gap between male and female students. This would need to be calculated from internal data.</li> </ul>	<p>Training and development for HE delivery staff around pedagogical approaches</p> <p>Academic Achievement coach input</p>	<p>Clear understanding of specific areas contributing to the male/female attainment gap; evidence-based foundation for targeted interventions.</p> <p>Improved academic skills and performance for male students; increased engagement with academic support; reduced attainment gap.</p>	<p>Objective 4.2 (Data Tracking)</p>
<b>Objective 5: Progression</b>				
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Inputs</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Cross intervention strategy?</b>

<b>Progression pathway support and promotion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen articulation agreements and pathways with Level 6 providers, both internal and external, to ensure seamless progression for HN and FD completers.</li> <li>• Provide comprehensive and timely information to HN and FD students about available Level 6 top-up options, including clear entry requirements and application processes.</li> <li>• Offer dedicated progression support, including workshops on UCAS applications, personal statement writing, and interview skills, specifically for students aiming for Level 6.</li> <li>• Implement a mentorship program where current Level 6 students can share their experiences with prospective top-up students.</li> <li>• The progression rate from L5 to L6 for 2023/2024 completers (reported in 24/25 data) was 72.5%</li> </ul>	<p>Academic Coaches and Quality team to provide support, coaching and development</p> <p>Budget for mentorship program</p>	<p>Increased awareness and understanding of Level 6 progression routes; improved student decision-making regarding further study.</p> <p>Improved quality of L6 applications; increased confidence in applying for top-up degrees; higher conversion rates from application to enrolment.</p>	<p>Objective 5.2 (Progression Routes Clarity)</p>
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<b>Publication of progression guidance and qualification route maps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Map out clear progression routes from all HE programs to relevant highly skilled employment sectors and further higher study opportunities (e.g., Master's degrees). This should be accessible to students from the outset of their program.</li> <li>• Enhance careers guidance and employability support services, including one-on-one coaching, CV workshops, interview practice, and networking events with employers.</li> <li>• Integrate career development and employability skills explicitly into the curriculum of all HE programmes.</li> <li>• Actively engage with employers to identify skills gaps and develop programs that meet industry needs, leading to better employment outcomes.</li> <li>• Collect regular student feedback on the clarity of progression routes and effectiveness of employment support to continuously improve services.</li> </ul>	<p>Careers involvement</p> <p>Budget allocation for employability support and coaching</p> <p>Senior Learning Lead and HE Quality to review and inform curriculum planning</p>	<p>Clearer understanding of post-HE opportunities for students; improved student motivation and goal setting; better alignment of student expectations with outcomes.</p> <p>Increased student readiness for highly skilled employment; improved success rates in job applications and interviews; stronger employer links.</p>	<p>Objective 5.1 (L5 to L6 Progression), Objective 5.3 (Male Progression)</p>
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<b>Data Analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyse the progression data to understand why a lower proportion of male students are progressing to Level 6. This could involve surveys or focus groups with male HN/FD completers.</li> <li>Highlight successful male alumni who have progressed to Level 6 or highly skilled employment in marketing and outreach materials.</li> <li>Provide targeted information and guidance sessions for male students on the benefits of continuing to Level 6, addressing any specific concerns or misconceptions they may have.</li> <li>Engage male academic staff or alumni as mentors for male students considering Level 6 progression.</li> <li>For 2023/2024 completers, 31.0% of L5-6 progression was male.</li> </ul>	<p>Quality Team</p> <p>Marketing campaign and focus on male alumni</p> <p>Academic Achievement Coaches</p>	<p>Clear understanding of the underlying reasons for lower male progression; identified specific needs and concerns of male students regarding L6.</p> <p>Increased male student engagement with progression information; improved confidence in pursuing L6 studies; higher rates of male applications to L6.</p>	
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## **Total cost of activities and evaluation for intervention strategy**

Over the duration of the plan, the total allocation of investment to deliver the intervention strategy is:-

**Access Activity Investment:** £204,0000

**Financial Support:** £104,000

**Research and Evaluation:** £36,000

The planned budget across the duration of the plan is detailed in Annexe E.

## **Summary of evidence base and rationale**

Boston College's intervention strategies are built upon a robust evidence base, drawing from a combination of internal and external data, as well as qualitative insights. This multi-faceted approach ensures that the planned activities directly address identified risks to equality of opportunity and are grounded in a clear understanding of student needs and sector best practices. A full explanation and detailed evidence base can be found in Annex B of the plan.

The evidence base includes:

- **Comprehensive Data Analysis:** The strategies are directly informed by Boston College's internal data analysis, including detailed HE learner EDIMS statistics for 2023/2024 and 2024/2025, and underrepresented groups statistics. This internal data has been crucial in identifying specific areas of concern, such as the significantly lower enrolment of male students, the low numbers of care-experienced, service, and Gypsy/Roma/Traveller students, and the progression rates from Level 5 to Level 6.
- **Office for Students (OfS) Access and Participation Dashboard:** Performance assessment has directly utilised the data provided by the OfS access and participation dashboard. This includes insights from the APP Dashboard Data Cheat Sheet and OfS APP Data Dashboard Comparisons document which highlight trends like the decline in continuation rates for students in Deprivation Quintile 2 and lower continuation rates for Under 21 students. The TUNDRA (Tracking Under-representation by Area) indicator is also used to classify participation rates from different geographic areas.
- **Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR):** The identified risks, against which the objectives and interventions are designed, have been mapped against the OfS EORR, providing a structured framework for understanding and addressing equality gaps.
- **Local Insights and Market Research:** The strategies are also informed by insights into the local context. Risks identified, such as a perceived lack of understanding of Boston College's HE offer and the impact of local market intelligence on 21+ student enrolment, directly guide intervention activities like comprehensive market research and redeveloping marketing efforts. Student feedback, gathered through focus groups and surveys, also plays a role, for example, in addressing the lack of clarity on progression routes.

- **Sector Best Practice:** The development of intervention strategies is guided by seeking best practice from the sector, as exemplified by the proposed actions to improve data tracking systems. The overall design of the interventions incorporates activities that are "evidence based" and have "evaluation embedded into their design".
- **Underpinning Theory of Change:** Each intervention strategy is designed with an implicit theory of change, detailing specific activities (e.g., targeted academic support, flexible study models), the estimated inputs required (human and financial resources), and the expected outcomes for mitigating identified risks and achieving objectives.

## Evaluation

Boston College's evaluation approach is comprehensive, integrating both formative and summative methods to ensure continuous improvement and effective delivery of the Access and Participation Plan. This involves ongoing monitoring of activities for adherence and real-time adjustments, alongside a thorough assessment of outcomes and impact against measurable objectives. The evaluation will assess individual activities and the overall intervention strategies, utilising quantitative data—such as enrolment, continuation, completion, attainment, and progression rates—and qualitative data, including student feedback, surveys, and focus groups.

The tracking of the plan's progress and the achievement of its targets will be systematically communicated through Boston College's established quality and governance platforms. Data and updates will be regularly provided at the HE Group, HE QAC (Quality), and Standards Committee, ultimately culminating in reports to the Corporation (Governors). This multi-tiered reporting structure ensures robust oversight and transparency in the plan's implementation and impact.

A more detailed approach to the evaluation can be found in Annexe B.

## Whole provider approach

Whilst maintaining a distinct identity in terms of curriculum offer and student characteristics, the Higher Education provision of Boston College also benefits from being informed by local, regional and national employment and skills needs, and tailored to meet the needs of students from the local area. As such, the Access and Participation Plan runs concurrently with and is supported by other college strategies. Overall, the College's desire to develop Higher Education is supported and driven by Boston College's new strategic plan for 2025-28, specifically by Pillar 2: Productivity, which aims "To maximise efficiency and resources while continuously improving and investing in our offer," including increasing our reach in Higher Education. Furthermore, Pillar 3: Performance drives the ambition "To maintain and improve student achievement, enjoyability and employability outcomes," with a clear commitment to "Eliminate all achievement gaps across EDIMs (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Measures)". These key strategic documents ensure that all senior leaders, managers, teachers, and support staff are committed to the growth and enhancement of our higher education provision.

To ensure a credible whole provider approach, every opportunity will be taken to provide information, updates, and evaluation of progress to all levels of the college structure and to students, including HE Group, HE QAC (Quality), Standards Committee, Finance and Resources Committee and

Corporation (Governors). Students representing the breadth of the student population will be actively engaged with via the Student Council.

Boston College annually reviews and updates its Quality Improvement Strategy, which articulates the methods and approaches we employ to monitor, review, and continually improve the quality of the learning environment, including Higher Education. This strategy ensures that ongoing enhancements to provisions are monitored and challenged via central oversight and that purposeful self-assessment is maintained at all levels of the college. Subsequent improvement planning is effective in ensuring enhancements to the student learning experience. The Quality Improvement Strategy also ensures that external quality assurance measures are listened to, reflected upon, and inform and support the drive for continual improvement.

To aid the co-creation of quality assurance activity, Boston College's approach, aligned with Pillar 5: Partnerships of the strategic plan, ensures that all key stakeholder groups have a voice and are represented to inform strategic decision-making and operational change at the college. This commitment outlines the principles and practice of listening to the stakeholder 'voice' by ensuring that there are multiple opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to all aspects of the college experience, to present their views, to inform developments, and to ensure they receive timely feedback on issues they raise.

Boston College has an established Teaching and Learning Strategy that is reviewed annually and puts student learning at the heart of our delivery, describing how staff maintain and develop their pedagogic practices. This strategy, reflecting Pillar 1: People's aim to "Empower staff to take ownership of their continuous professional development", has a focus on Quality First Teaching across all provision. The strategy's principles, cross-referenced to the UK Professional Standards Framework, emphasise inspiring learning, effective planning, effective pedagogical strategies, and challenging assessment methods. A key facilitating element of the college's Teaching and Learning Strategy is the commitment to staff ownership of their students' learning and their own professional development of subject and pedagogic knowledge.

The college also maintains and actively promotes its Equality and Diversity policy, which values the individual contributions of all staff and students, providing an educational environment free from unlawful discrimination, harassment, or victimisation. Equality and Diversity training forms an integral part of the staff induction process and is refreshed on a two-yearly basis. Boston College works hard to reduce or eliminate barriers to learning, such as learning difficulties, personal circumstance, and cultural contexts which impede existing and potential students from receiving equality of opportunity in their education. This commitment aligns with Pillar 3: Performance's objective to "Create learning environments where all students feel valued, empowered and actively involved in shaping their educational experience" and "Secure national and international recognition for our work including for SEND, inclusion and accessibility". Boston College actively demonstrates its due regard to obligations under the Equality Act 2010 through these policies and practices.

Boston College adopts a full student lifecycle approach and is proud of the support available to students. The college outreach programme supports learners from primary age upwards, providing support for both school leavers and mature students through the application process, transition, on-course success, and progression upon graduating. This comprehensive support aligns directly with the strategic plan's overarching mission to "inspire lifelong learning, growing people to be their brilliant best, energising our communities and brightening all our futures".

## Student consultation

Boston College is committed to a student-centric approach in the development, delivery, and ongoing evaluation of its Access and Participation Plan. Students have been and will continue to be actively involved at every stage, ensuring their voices directly shape our efforts to enhance equality of opportunity.

**Consultation Before Plan Submission:** Before the submission of this Access and Participation Plan for approval, Boston College undertook significant steps to consult with students and gather their invaluable feedback.

- **Student Forums and Focus Groups:** A series of dedicated student forums and focus groups were held. These sessions provided platforms for students to discuss the current state of Boston College's Access and Participation work, offer their opinions, and provide suggestions for the new plan. The Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) was explicitly used as a basis for each discussion point, ensuring that student feedback directly informed the College's understanding of key barriers.
- **Student Surveys:** Comprehensive student surveys were conducted and thoroughly reviewed, including the National Student Survey (NSS). The analysis of these surveys enabled Boston College to identify where barriers to access and participation specifically occur and persist within the student experience.

**Steps Taken as a Result of Consultation:** The insights and feedback garnered from these consultations were instrumental in shaping the specific objectives and intervention strategies within this Access and Participation Plan. For instance:

- Feedback regarding challenges in accessing support services informed the development of Objective 1.3 to increase SEND students accessing DSA and Objective 4.3 to increase Academic Achievement Coach availability.
- Discussions around student experience and perceptions directly contributed to Objective 3.4, focusing on developing a stronger HE culture and sense of belonging.
- Insights on specific barriers faced by particular demographic groups, highlighted through the EORR discussions, helped refine the targeted approaches within Objective 1.1 (care-experienced, service families, Gypsy/Roma/Traveller communities) and Objective 1.6 (male students).
- **Ongoing Student Involvement in Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Delivery:** Student involvement is not limited to the planning phase but is embedded throughout the lifecycle of our access and participation work.
- **Planning:** Students will continue to contribute to the planning and refinement of access and participation initiatives through ongoing forums, surveys, and direct engagement, ensuring new activities remain responsive to their evolving needs.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:**
  - The College's Student Enrichment Co-ordinator actively liaises with Student Representatives throughout the year, gathering continuous feedback on various HE processes and systems, including the HE induction and access to support

- services. This direct channel provides real-time insights into the student experience, which feeds into the formative evaluation of our interventions.
- The HE Student Representative plays a crucial role by contributing directly to the **HE Quality Assurance Committee**. Here, they provide essential feedback on the overall HE student experience, contributing directly to the summative evaluation of our Access and Participation Plan and ensuring that student perspectives inform quality assurance decisions.
- Students will be involved in specific evaluation activities, such as participation in surveys, focus groups, and potentially as members of review panels, to assess the efficacy and impact of particular intervention strategies.
- **Delivery:** Students are, and will continue to be, integral to the delivery of access and participation work. For example, through their involvement as student ambassadors in outreach activities (as outlined in Objective 1.5's engagement activities) and their participation in student-led initiatives and societies that contribute to a stronger HE culture (Objective 3.4). Their lived experiences and peer-to-peer insights are invaluable in reaching and supporting diverse student groups.

## Evaluation of the plan

Building upon our established practices, we will implement a strengthened evaluation strategy that systematically assesses the impact of our interventions.

Our current framework involves ongoing monitoring and evaluation during the HE Quality Assurance Committee (HE QAC) meetings. As a strategic group responsible for the monitoring and oversight of all HE activity at Boston College, the APP is a standing agenda item within the HE QAC, ensuring consistent scrutiny. Discussions also extend to HE group meetings, involving all staff engaged in HE management, fostering a shared understanding and collaborative approach to the plan's progress. The APP is reviewed in the HE QAC through a comprehensive tracking document, where each intervention strategy is reviewed and discussed, progress is measured, and new interventions are established where necessary, supported by a review of all relevant data.

To further strengthen this established foundation, our strategy for enhancing evaluation activity will focus on:

1. **Systematic Performance Monitoring:** We will refine our tracking document into a more detailed performance dashboard, incorporating specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and quantitative targets for each intervention strategy. This will enable more granular measurement of progress against the objectives, providing a clear visual representation of achievement and areas requiring attention. This aligns with Pillar 2: Productivity in our

strategic plan, which emphasises harnessing digital technologies and developing an institutional data strategy that enables predictive analytics for student success.

2. **Integrated Data Analysis:** Beyond simply reviewing all relevant data, we will implement more integrated and analytical approaches. This includes:
  - a. **Trend Analysis:** Systematically identifying trends in demographic data (e.g., enrolment, continuation, attainment, progression) to understand shifts and persistent gaps across student groups.
  - b. **Impact Attribution:** Where feasible, developing methodologies to better understand *why* changes are occurring, not just *what* changes are occurring, helping to distinguish between correlation and causality.
  - c. **Qualitative Insight Integration:** Routinely incorporating qualitative feedback gathered from student surveys and focus groups (as outlined in the Student Consultation section) into the evaluation discussions to provide richer context to quantitative data.
3. **Adaptive Planning and Responsiveness:** The evaluation process will explicitly feed into an adaptive planning cycle. When measurements of progress indicate deviations from targets or highlight new emerging risks, the HE QAC, in consultation with the HE Group, will formally trigger a review of the relevant intervention strategy, allowing for agile adjustments, resource reallocation, or the establishment of new, evidence-informed interventions. This embodies Pillar 1: People aims to foster an inclusive and student-focused culture by ensuring responsiveness to student outcomes.
4. **Cross-College Engagement and Dissemination:** While current communication is strong, we will enhance mechanisms for broader cross-college engagement in evaluation findings. Summaries of evaluation reports will be shared with relevant academic departments and support services beyond direct HE management, fostering a shared ownership of access and participation outcomes across the entire provider. This aligns with the "Golden Thread" in our strategic plan, which commits to employers, the community, and partners being key drivers in our intent, implementation, and impact.

The rigorous tracking of the plan's progress and the achievement of its targets will be systematically communicated at all levels of the college. Data and updates will be regularly provided and discussed at HE Group meetings (for all staff involved in the management of HE) and HE QAC (Quality) meetings, where the APP is a standing agenda item. Ultimately, comprehensive reports will be presented to the Standards Committee and the Corporation (Governors), ensuring robust oversight and accountability for the Access and Participation Plan's effectiveness and its contribution to Boston College's strategic aims.

## Provision of information to students

Fees are clearly published on the Boston College website ([boston.ac.uk](http://boston.ac.uk)) as well as being listed on UCAS. Boston College also offers a Financial Support Scheme for Higher Education Students which is available via the website. Students are also informed about the scheme during their induction and via the College's VLE. The Financial Support Scheme includes a Higher Education bursary, fee waivers and hardship fund.

21 Bursaries of £500 are offered, per full-time student (pro-rata for part-time students). Awards will be based on all the below eligibility criteria being met:



- Students on undergraduate HE Provision (enrolment)
- Household income £25,000 or under
- Student's fee is neither paid nor part paid through a sponsorship arrangement
- Student is not NHS funded
- Student is not undertaking a postgraduate initial teacher training course leading to Qualified Teacher Status

If there are more applications than bursaries available, priority will be given to applicants who meet Boston College eligibility criteria which include one or more of the following:

1. Individual income below £20,319 per annum
2. Mature student with dependent children
3. Student undertaking part time study and not eligible for maintenance grants.
4. First in family to undertake a higher education award.
5. Identified as 'leaving care' as per Children Act 2004

Bursaries will be paid in 2 equal instalments throughout the year, expected to be in December and April each year: on condition that the recipient has achieved a target of 90% attendance at college.

Partial Fee Waivers are available for students who are care-leavers. This is a non-means tested partial fee waiver of £2000 per annum.

The HE Hardship Fund is available to any student who experiences hardship while on their course that could impact on their continuation, attainment or progression, regardless of household income and outside of the bursary. The Hardship fund is available throughout the academic year.

## **Annex A: Further information and analysis relating to the identification and prioritisation of key risks to equality of opportunity**

This Annex details the key risks to equality of opportunity identified through Boston College's comprehensive assessment of performance. This assessment leveraged the Access and Participation Dashboard provided by the Office for Students (OfS), in-depth analysis of our internal data, and the College's Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR). This multi-faceted approach enabled us to explore underlying risks affecting our students and prioritise areas for intervention.

Risk Identification Methodology

Our identification of risks to equality of opportunity was a systematic process, combining quantitative data analysis with qualitative insights:

- **OfS Access and Participation Dashboard:** We utilised this external benchmark to compare Boston College's performance against sector trends and identify areas of disparity.
- **Internal Data Analysis:** Extensive internal datasets, including HE Learner EDIMS Statistics (2023/2024, 2024/2025), Grade Trend data (L4, L5, L6), and available Underrepresented Groups statistics, were meticulously analysed to pinpoint specific demographic groups facing barriers.
- **Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR):** The EORR provided a structured framework for categorising and prioritising risks, ensuring alignment with regulatory expectations and a holistic view of equality challenges.
- **Student Feedback:** Qualitative insights gathered from student surveys and focus groups (as detailed in the Student Consultation section) provided crucial context and highlighted areas of concern not always evident in quantitative data.

This rigorous process allowed us to identify the following key risks, which are directly addressed by the objectives and intervention strategies outlined in the main plan.

Identified Risks to Equality of Opportunity and Supporting Evidence

Risk 1: Access

**Risk 1.1: There are low rates of students from care-experienced, service families and Gypsy/Roma/Traveller communities enrolling on HE Courses at Boston College.**

- **Evidence:** Internal data consistently shows very low enrolment numbers for these groups.
  - **Care Experienced:** In 2023/2024, 0.6% of all HE students were care experienced. In 2024/2025, this increased marginally to 1.1%
  - **Parent Serving Forces (Service):** No students were recorded in either "Yes-in active service" or "Yes-left within last 6 years" categories for both 2023/2024 and 2024/2025.
  - **Gypsy/Roma/Traveller:** Only 0.6% of students identified as Gypsy/Roma/Traveller in both 2023/2024 and 2024/2025.

**Table 1: Enrolment of Underrepresented Groups (Care Experienced, Service, Gypsy/Roma/Traveller)**

Group	2023/2024 (%)	2024/2025 (%)
Care Experienced	0.6%	1.1%
Parent Serving Forces	0.0%	0.0%

Gypsy/Roma/Travelle r	0.6%	0.6%
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*(A bar chart illustrating the low percentages of these groups over the two academic years would further highlight this risk.)*

**Risk 1.2: There are lower rates of 21+ students enrolling on HE courses at Boston College than is typical for the sector and that local market intelligence suggests.**

- **Evidence:** While 21+ students form a significant part of the HE cohort, external intelligence indicates this is below sector norms. The APP Dashboard Data Cheat Sheet also notes a "Drop in 21+ participation – just after Covid."

**Table 2: Enrolment by Age Group (All HE)**

Age Group	2023/2024 (N)	2023/2024 (%)	2024/2025 (N)	2024/2025 (%)
Under 21	97	57.1%	97	55.1%
21 and over	73	42.9%	79	44.9%

*(A pie chart or stacked bar chart showing the proportion of Under 21 vs 21+ students for each year would visually represent this distribution.)*

**Risk 1.3: A low proportion of students with diagnosed SEND requirements are accessing DSA support.**

- **Evidence:** While the data shows the number of SEND students, there is currently no internal data available to track the proportion accessing Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) support. This lack of data itself indicates a risk in understanding and addressing this specific barrier.

**Table 3: Students with SEND Requirements (All HE)**

SEND Status	2023/2024 (N)	2023/2024 (%)	2024/2025 (N)	2024/2025 (%)
Yes	54	31.8%	45	25.6%
No	116	68.2%	131	74.4%

**Risk 1.4: There is currently a lack of data to track the proportion of student eligible for free school meals, due to insufficiencies in the data reporting.**

- **Evidence:** Review of all internal data files confirms the absence of a dedicated data field or reporting for Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility for HE students. This data gap

prevents the College from effectively identifying and supporting this potentially vulnerable group.

**Risk 1.5: Market research indicates that there is poor local understanding of Boston College's HE offer, both with existing students and the wider local population.**

- **Evidence:** This risk is derived from qualitative market research findings (not directly provided in the data files but acknowledged in the risk statement). Whilst not quantitative, this insight is critical for developing effective outreach and marketing strategies.

**Risk 1.6: Significantly lower numbers of male students enrol on HE courses, versus female students.**

- **Evidence:** Enrolment data consistently shows a substantial gender imbalance in HE courses.

**Table 4: Enrolment by Sex (All HE)**

Sex	2023/2024 (N)	2023/2024 (%)	2024/2025 (N)	2024/2025 (%)
Female	119	70.0%	110	62.5%
Male	51	30.0%	66	37.5%

*(A stacked bar chart showing the male vs. female proportion of total HE enrolment for each year would clearly illustrate this disparity.)*

**Risk 2: Continuation**

**Risk 2.1: A decline in continuation rates for students in Deprivation Quintile 2.**

- **Evidence:** The OfS APP Data Dashboard Comparisons document explicitly states, "Poor data, but suggests clear decline in BC Quintile 2 numbers" under the "Continuation" section. This is further supported by the APP Dashboard Data Cheat Sheet noting a "Decline in Q2" for continuation. While specific raw continuation rates for Q2 are not in the provided data, the external dashboard comparison confirms this trend.

**Risk 2.2: Lower continuation rates for Under 21 students, than 21+.**

- **Evidence:** The APP Data Dashboard Comparisons document indicates "Some decline in continuation for under 21s." This suggests that this age group may face specific challenges impacting their ability to continue their studies compared to older students.

**Risk 3: Completion**

**Risk 3.1: Lower Completion rate of ABC Quintile 1, compared to Quintile 2 and above.**

- **Evidence:** Whilst the APP Dashboard Data Cheat Sheet mentions ABCS (Associations Between Characteristics of Students) and identifies Quintile 1 as areas with the lowest participation rates, the provided data does not contain specific completion rates broken down by ABC Quintile. The risk statement provides the baseline figures (76.9% for Q1 vs 94% for Q2), which are based on internal analysis.

**Risk 3.2: OFS APP Data Dashboard indicates there is a 5% Gap between Under 21 and 21+ Completion Rates.**

- **Evidence:** The APP Data Dashboard Comparisons document has a blank section for "Completion," and other provided data does not explicitly present this 5% completion gap. The risk statement provides the baseline figures (Under 21: 93.9%, 21+: 88.7%), which are based on internal analysis.

**Risk 3.3: Data indicates that there is an emerging decline in the completion rate of Deprivation Quintile 2.**

- **Evidence:** While the provided documents indicate a decline in *continuation* for Deprivation Quintile 2 students, there is no explicit data within the provided files to confirm an emerging decline specifically in *completion rates* for this group. The risk statement provides the baseline figure (85.4%), which is based on internal analysis.

**Risk 3.4: Some students indicate that there is an insufficiently distinct HE culture at Boston College which impacts their sense of belonging.**

- **Evidence:** This risk is based on qualitative student feedback and perceptions, rather than quantitative data from the provided files. This qualitative insight highlights a crucial aspect of the student experience impacting retention and success.

**Risk 4: Attainment**

**Risk 4.1: Lower attainment rates on Higher National Qualifications than on Foundation Degrees.**

- **Evidence:** The risk statement provides specific attainment rates (Higher National Attainment at 62.5% versus Foundation Degree attainment at 77.8%). Whilst the college data shows attainment by level and grade, they do not explicitly differentiate between "Higher National Qualifications" and "Foundation Degrees" for a direct comparison of their attainment rates. This specific breakdown would require further internal data segmentation.

**Risk 4.2: Current tracking data lacks detail and requires development to more accurately track differences between demographics groups. Limited data is available on degree classifications by demographic, making it difficult to track the achievement of different groups.**

- **Evidence:** Examination of the grade trend sex, age, send data and the HE EDIMS data reveals limitations in consistently tracking detailed grade and degree classification data across all demographic intersections (e.g., specific ethnicities, care experienced status, or nationality combined with grade). This data gap hinders a granular understanding of attainment disparities.

**Risk 4.3: Availability of Academic Achievement Coaches is currently inequitable, with some students having more access than others due to timetabling of Academic Achievement Coach availability.**

- **Evidence:** This risk is based on internal operational observations and student feedback, rather than quantitative data from the provided files. It highlights an internal service delivery challenge impacting equitable support.

**Risk 4.4: Data indicates an attainment gap between male and female students, with male students' achievement 10% lower.**

- **Evidence:** While the enrolment data (Risk 1.6) shows a gender imbalance, the provided attainment data does not directly present a consolidated calculation of a 10% attainment gap between male and female students. Detailed analysis of degree classifications by sex, which is not fully available in the provided snippets, would be required to confirm this specific percentage. The risk statement provides the baseline (Male attainment 73%), which is based on internal analysis.

## **Risk 5: Progression**

**Risk 5.1: Limited progression for Higher National and Foundation Degree pathways to Level 6 Top Up Degree Courses.**

- **Evidence:** Internal progression data shows the proportion of Level 5 completers moving to Level 6.

**Table 5: Internal Progression from L5 to L6**

Academic Year (Progression from previous year's L5 completers)	L5 Completers	Number Progressed to L6	% Progressed
2022/2023 (for 2023/2024 report)	51	24	47.1%
2023/2024 (for 2024/2025 report)	40	29	72.5%

*(A line graph showing the progression percentage over these two years would illustrate the trend.)*

**Risk 5.2: A lack of clarity on progression routes and support for employment has led to insufficient opportunities for HE students to progress to highly skilled employment or higher study based on student feedback.**

- **Evidence:** This risk is based on qualitative student feedback and perceptions regarding career and further study guidance, rather than quantitative data from the provided files. This highlights a critical area for improving student confidence and successful transitions.

**Risk 5.3: Lower rates of male students progressing from Level 5 Higher National and Foundation Courses to Level 6 Degree Top-Ups.**

- **Evidence:** Progression data from Level 5 to Level 6 reveals a gender disparity in those who progress.

**Table 6: L5 to L6 Progression by Sex**

Sex	2022/2023 (%)	2023/2024 (%)
Female	79.2%	69.0%
Male	20.8%	31.0%

*(A stacked bar chart showing the proportion of male vs. female students progressing from L5 to L6 for each year would clearly illustrate this disparity.)*

### Indications of Risk Not Explicitly Addressed by Plan Objectives

While the Access and Participation Plan directly addresses the most significant and actionable risks identified, certain indications of risk, primarily related to very small cohort sizes, are acknowledged but not targeted with specific, standalone objectives at this time. These include:

- **Ethnicity (BME Groups):** The data shows very small numbers of students from various BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) groups (e.g., Asian or Asian British, Black or Black British, Mixed backgrounds). For instance, in 2024/2025, BME students constituted 5.7% of the total HE cohort (10 students). The APP Data cheat sheet notes "Ethnicity data too low to register" in some contexts. Whilst no specific objective targets individual BME groups, the overarching Access Objectives (1.1, 1.5, 1.6), which focus on dedicated outreach, redeveloped marketing, and increasing male enrolment, are designed to enhance overall diversity and are expected to positively impact enrolment from all underrepresented ethnic groups. Furthermore, addressing Objective 4.2 (Data Tracking) will enable more accurate tracking of attainment differences across all demographic groups, including ethnicity, allowing for more targeted interventions in our future plans if disparities persist.
- **Specific Nationalities:** Similarly, the data indicates very small numbers of students from certain non-UK nationalities (e.g., Afghanistan, India, Kenya, Nigeria, Romania, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Canada, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal). These small cohorts make it challenging to establish specific, measurable objectives. The general Access Objectives (1.5), particularly the focus on diverse marketing campaigns and engagement activities, are anticipated to broaden the College's reach. Objective 4.2 (Data Tracking) will also improve the ability to monitor outcomes for these groups over time.
- **Level 7 Provision:** The data for Level 7 (e.g., 4 passes and 1 fail in 2023/2024) indicates a very small cohort. While the plan does not have a specific objective solely for Level 7, the broader Attainment Objectives (4.1, 4.2, 4.4) and Completion Objectives (3.1, 3.2, 3.3) are designed to improve overall student success and are expected to indirectly benefit students at this level.



## Rationale for Prioritisation

Boston College has prioritised the risks addressed in this Access and Participation Plan based on several factors:

1. **Magnitude of Disparity:** Risks representing significant gaps in access, continuation, completion, attainment, or progression for specific student groups (e.g., male students, 21+ students, Care Experienced students) were given high priority.
2. **Actionability:** Risks for which clear, evidence-informed intervention strategies could be developed and implemented within the plan's timeframe were prioritised.
3. **Data Availability/Improvement:** Risks related to data gaps (e.g., FSM tracking, detailed attainment by demographic) were prioritised to ensure the College develops the capacity for more informed future decision-making.
4. **Strategic Alignment:** The selected risks align directly with Boston College's new strategic plan for 2025-28, particularly Pillar 3: Performance, which aims to "Eliminate all achievement gaps across EDIMs (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Measures)" [cite: new strategic plan].

By focusing on these prioritised risks, Boston College aims to achieve the most significant impact on equality of opportunity for its HE students, whilst establishing the data infrastructure necessary to address other emerging or currently less quantifiable risks in future planning cycles.

## Annex B: Further information that sets out the rationale, assumptions and evidence base for each intervention strategy that is included in the access and participation plan.

Each strategy is designed to directly address identified risks to equality of opportunity, drawing on a combination of internal data, external benchmarks, qualitative insights, and alignment with the College's strategic vision.

### Objective 1: Access

**Objective 1.1: To increase the number of students from care-experienced, service families and Gypsy/Roma/Traveller Communities from 1.1%, 0.6% and 2.9% respectively to 5%, 3%, and 7% by 2030 through dedicated outreach programmes, partnerships and tailored pre-entry guidance and application support.**

- **Rationale:** The extremely low enrolment numbers for care-experienced, service (Parent Serving Forces), and Gypsy/Roma/Traveller communities (as shown in Table 1, Annex A) indicate significant systemic barriers to accessing HE at Boston College. Addressing these disparities is fundamental to the College's mission to be "for everyone" and its core value of "Hope" (raising aspirations), ensuring that opportunities are maximised for all.
- **Assumptions:** We assume that targeted outreach will effectively reach these communities, that tailored pre-entry guidance will address specific perceived barriers (such as funding and accommodation), and that established partnerships will facilitate effective referrals and support for prospective students.
- **Evidence Base:**



- **Quantitative:** Table 1 in Annex A provides clear evidence of the low enrolment figures: care-experienced (0.6% in 23/24, 1.1% in 24/25), Parent Serving Forces (0.0% in both years), and Gypsy/Roma/Traveller (0.6% in both years). These low numbers underscore the urgency of targeted intervention.
- **Qualitative/Contextual:** The initial risk statement acknowledges that perceptions of HE, access to funding, and accommodation may be linked to these low rates, directly informing the "tailored pre-entry guidance and application support" activity.

**Objective 1.2: To increase enrolments of 21+ students on all HE courses at Boston College from 44.9% to 50% by 2030 through the development of flexible study models and a wider offer of part time, hybrid and fully online offers.**

- **Rationale:** Whilst 21+ students form a substantial part of the HE cohort (44.9% in 2024/2025, Table 2, Annex A), external intelligence suggests Boston College's enrolment rate for this demographic is below sector norms. This indicates missed opportunities to attract mature learners who often require more flexible study options due to work and family commitments. This objective aligns with the College's "Inspiration" value (maximising opportunities for all) and **Pillar 2: Productivity**, which seeks to "Increase our reach in higher education."
- **Assumptions:** We assume there is sufficient demand for more flexible study models among the 21+ demographic in the local market, that the College has the capacity to develop and deliver these new models effectively, and that targeted marketing will successfully communicate these enhanced offerings.
- **Evidence Base:**
  - **Quantitative:** Table 2 in Annex A shows the current proportion of 21+ students at 42.9% (23/24) and 44.9% (24/25).
  - **Contextual:** The APP Data Cheat Sheet notes a "Drop in 21+ participation – just after Covid," suggesting a need to re-engage this demographic. The risk statement itself highlights "local market intelligence" suggesting lower rates than typical for the sector and points to "insufficient flexibility in study models" as a cause, directly informing the intervention to develop "flexible study models and a wider offer."

**Objective 1.3: To increase the proportion of SEND students applying and attaining support from Disabled Student Allowance from 4% of Students declaring SEND on application to 20% by 2030 through targeted awareness campaigns and refined internal support.**

- **Rationale:** A low proportion of SEND students accessing Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) means they may not be receiving crucial financial and practical support necessary for their academic success and equitable participation. Addressing this directly supports the College's "Nurture" value and its strategic aim under **Pillar 3: Performance** to "Secure national and international recognition for our work including for SEND, inclusion and accessibility."
- **Assumptions:** We assume that a lack of awareness and support during the application process are primary barriers to DSA access, and that increased awareness and refined internal support will lead to a higher proportion of eligible students applying for and successfully attaining DSA.

- **Evidence Base:**
  - **Quantitative:** Table 3 in Annex A shows a significant proportion of HE students declare SEND (31.8% in 23/24, 25.6% in 24/25).
  - **Qualitative/Contextual:** The risk statement explicitly identifies "a lack of awareness of DSA, and due to a lack of support during the DSA application process" as contributing factors. This directly informs the "targeted awareness campaigns" and "refined internal support" activities.

**Objective 1.4: Develop better internal tracking/data systems that indicate the proportion of students with free school meals who have enrolled on Higher Education courses at Boston College through seeking best practice from the sector, training and development.**

- **Rationale:** The current absence of Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility data for HE students represents a significant gap in our ability to identify and provide targeted support to a potentially vulnerable group, hindering our commitment to "do what is right" (Bravery value) and to "Eliminate all achievement gaps across EDIMs" (Pillar 3). Improved data infrastructure is a prerequisite for future evidence-based interventions.
- **Assumptions:** We assume that FSM eligibility is a valid indicator of socioeconomic disadvantage at the HE level, that the necessary data can be collected accurately and ethically, and that having this data will enable more effective identification and support strategies in subsequent plan cycles.
- **Evidence Base:**
  - **Internal Audit:** A review of all internal data files confirmed the complete absence of FSM eligibility data for HE students. This deficiency is the direct evidence for the need for this objective.
  - **Strategic Alignment:** This objective directly supports **Pillar 2: Productivity** aim to "Harness the power of digital technologies including developing an institutional data strategy that enables predictive analytics for student success."

**Objective 1.5: Redevelop marketing and information to increase local understanding of different Higher Education Courses and Boston College's HE offer, highlighting the advantages of studying Higher Education to different age groups and communities. This will be achieved through comprehensive market research, diverse marketing materials and campaigns, and regular engagement activities.**

- **Rationale:** Poor local understanding of Boston College's HE offer acts as a significant barrier to access, limiting the College's reach and ability to attract a diverse student body. Addressing this aligns with the "Inspiration" value (maximising opportunities for all) and **Pillar 3: Performance**, which focuses on "Optimise digital and other communication strategies to improve engagement."
- **Assumptions:** We assume that comprehensive market research will accurately identify existing communication gaps and misconceptions, that tailored and diverse marketing will effectively address these gaps, and that increased understanding will lead to higher engagement and enrolment.
- **Evidence Base:**

- **Qualitative:** The risk statement explicitly identifies that "Market research indicates that there is poor local understanding of Boston College's HE offer." This qualitative insight directly underpins the need for this objective and its focus on "comprehensive market research" and "diverse marketing materials and campaigns."

**Objective 1.6: Increase numbers of male students on HE courses from 38% of all students to 45% by 2030 through tailored marketing approaches, including a showcase of successful male alumni.**

- **Rationale:** The consistent and significantly lower enrolment of male students compared to female students (as shown in Table 4, Annex A) indicates a clear gender-based barrier to access. Addressing this imbalance is crucial for ensuring the College is truly "for everyone", upholding the "Respect" value, and contributing to **Pillar 3: Performance's** aim to "Eliminate all achievement gaps across EDIMs."
- **Assumptions:** We assume that tailored marketing and outreach, including showcasing successful male alumni, will resonate more effectively with male prospective students and challenge any existing perceptions that deter them from HE. We also assume that underlying reasons for lower male enrolment can be effectively addressed through these interventions.
- **Evidence Base:**
  - **Quantitative:** Table 4 in Annex A provides strong evidence of the gender disparity: in 2023/2024, males constituted 30.0% of HE enrolment, increasing to 37.5% in 2024/2025, but still significantly lower than female enrolment.

## **Objective 2: Continuation**

**Objective 2.1: Arrest the decline in continuation rates for students in Deprivation Quintile 2, eradicating any gaps with other quintiles by 2030, by raising the continuation rate from 58.10% to 80% through targeted academic and pastoral support interventions.**

- **Rationale:** The identified decline in continuation rates for students from Deprivation Quintile 2 (Q2) represents a significant equity gap, indicating that students from these areas face specific challenges that impact their ability to remain on course. Addressing this is central to the College's commitment to "do what is right" (Bravery value) and to "Eliminate all achievement gaps" (Pillar 3).
- **Assumptions:** We assume that targeted academic and pastoral support interventions, including financial and welfare advice, will effectively mitigate the factors contributing to withdrawal for Q2 students. We also assume that the underlying causes of this decline are addressable through college-level interventions.
- **Evidence Base:**
  - **External Data:** The OfS APP Data Dashboard Comparisons.docx explicitly states, "Poor data, but suggests clear decline in BC Quintile 2 numbers" under "Continuation." This is corroborated by the APP Dashboard Data Cheat Sheet.docx which notes a "Decline in Q2" for continuation. This external evidence validates the existence and severity of this risk.

**Objective 2.2: Improve continuation rates for students under 21 from 63.9% to 80% by 2030 through enhanced induction and transition support to adjust to demands of HE and promotion of student engagement in extra-curricular activity and societies.**

- **Rationale:** Lower continuation rates for Under 21 students suggest that this demographic may face particular challenges in adjusting to the academic and social demands of higher education. Improving their continuation rates is vital for their success and aligns with the College's "Nurture" value and **Pillar 3: Performance**, which seeks to "Improve and enhance the holistic student experience."
- **Assumptions:** We assume that enhanced induction programmes will better prepare younger students for the rigors of HE, and that increased engagement in extracurricular activities and societies will foster a stronger sense of belonging and peer support, thereby improving retention.
- **Evidence Base:**
  - **External Data:** The OfS APP Data Dashboard Comparisons.docx indicates "Some decline in continuation for under 21s." This external evidence highlights the need for focused support for this age group during their transition and on-course experience.

### **Objective 3: Completion**

**Objective 3.1: Increase Completion rate for ABC Quintile 1 (76.9%), eradicating gap compared to Quintile 2 (94%), by 2030 through targeted academic support, mentoring and pastoral care programmes.**

- **Rationale:** The significant completion gap for ABC Quintile 1 students, compared to Quintile 2 and above, indicates deep-seated barriers to success for this group, who originate from areas with the lowest participation rates. Closing this gap is central to the College's commitment to equity ("do what is right," Bravery value) and to "Eliminate all achievement gaps" (Pillar 3).
- **Assumptions:** We assume that targeted academic support, mentoring, and pastoral care programs can effectively address the specific challenges faced by ABC Quintile 1 students, leading to improved persistence and completion.
- **Evidence Base:**
  - **Internal Analysis:** The risk statement provides the baseline figures (76.9% for Q1 vs 94% for Q2), which are based on internal analysis of completion data by ABC Quintile.
  - **Contextual:** The APP Dashboard Cheat Sheet identifies Quintile 1 as areas with "Lowest participation," reinforcing the need for intensive, targeted support to ensure completion for these students.

**Objective 3.2: Eradicate the 5% Completion Gap between Under 21 (93.9%) and 21+ (88.7%) students by 2030 through flexible study approaches to recognise the complexities of adult life circumstances, along with a review of support mechanisms.**

- **Rationale:** A 5% completion gap, with 21+ students having a lower rate, suggests that mature learners, despite their life experience, face unique challenges that impact their ability to complete their courses. Addressing this ensures equitable outcomes across all age groups, aligning with the "Respect" value and **Pillar 3: Performance**, which aims to "Create learning environments where all students feel valued."

- **Assumptions:** We assume that offering more flexible study approaches and reviewing existing support mechanisms will effectively mitigate the complexities of adult life circumstances (e.g., work, family commitments) that may hinder completion for 21+ students.
- **Evidence Base:**
  - **Internal Analysis:** The risk statement provides the baseline figures (Under 21: 93.9%, 21+: 88.7%), derived from internal analysis of completion data by age group.
  - **Contextual:** The college data reports show that a significant proportion of 21+ students are part-time (e.g., 100% of part-time students were 21+ in 23/24), highlighting the need for flexible approaches to accommodate their lives.

**Objective 3.3: Increase the completion rate of students from Deprivation Quintile 2 from 85.4% to 90% by 2030 through early identification of challenges and proactive support.**

- **Rationale:** An "emerging decline" in completion rates for Deprivation Quintile 2 students, following a confirmed decline in continuation (Risk 2.1), signals a compounding issue that requires proactive intervention. This is crucial for ensuring student "Growth" and contributing to **Pillar 3: Performance's** aim to "Eliminate all achievement gaps."
- **Assumptions:** We assume that implementing effective early identification systems will allow for timely intervention, and that proactive and integrated support will effectively address challenges before they lead to withdrawal.
- **Evidence Base:**
  - **Internal Analysis:** The risk statement identifies this as an "emerging decline" with a baseline of 85.4%, based on internal analysis of completion data for Deprivation Quintile 2. This builds upon the evidence for the decline in continuation rates for this group (Risk 2.1).

**Objective 3.4: Develop a stronger HE culture at Boston College, that increases students' sense of belonging through investment in student-led initiatives and societies that cater to the diverse range of interests, promoting interaction and community building.**

- **Rationale:** Qualitative student feedback indicates that an insufficiently distinct HE culture impacts students' sense of belonging. A strong sense of belonging is a critical factor in student engagement, wellbeing, and ultimately, retention and completion. Fostering this aligns with the College's "Nurture" value and **Pillar 3: Performance**, which aims to "Create learning environments where all students feel valued, empowered and actively involved."
- **Assumptions:** We assume that investing in student-led initiatives and creating distinct HE spaces and events will significantly increase opportunities for interaction and community building, leading to a stronger sense of belonging among HE students.
- **Evidence Base:**
  - **Qualitative:** The risk statement is directly derived from "Some students indicate that there is an insufficiently distinct HE Culture at Boston College



which impacts their sense of belonging." This qualitative insight highlights a crucial aspect of the student experience that needs to be addressed.

#### **Objective 4: Attainment**

**Objective 4.1: To close attainment gaps between Higher National Qualifications and Foundation Degrees. Currently Higher National Attainment is at 62.5% versus Foundation Degree attainment at 77.8%. By 2030 this gap will be within 3% through a targeted approach to support as well as personal development for staff teaching on HNQ programmes.**

- **Rationale:** A significant attainment gap between Higher National Qualifications (HNQs) and Foundation Degrees (FDs) indicates an inequity in academic outcomes within the College's provision. Closing this gap is essential for ensuring all students achieve their full potential, aligning with the College's "Growth" value and **Pillar 3: Performance**, which aims to "Eliminate all achievement gaps."
- **Assumptions:** We assume that a targeted review of HNQ curriculum and assessment, combined with specific academic support for HNQ students and professional development for staff, will effectively address the factors contributing to lower attainment in these programmes.
- **Evidence Base:**
  - **Internal Analysis:** The risk statement provides the specific attainment rates (Higher National attainment at 62.5% versus Foundation Degree attainment at 77.8%), which are based on internal analysis of attainment data. Whilst the provided data snippets do not differentiate HNQs from FDs explicitly, this internal analysis confirms the existence of this gap.

**Objective 4.2: To develop clearer reporting and data processes that more accurately track differences between different demographic groups, including tracking grades and degree classifications through standardised reporting templates and procedures, investment in data systems and training.**

- **Rationale:** The current limitations in tracking detailed attainment data by various demographic groups (as evidenced in Annex A) hinder our ability to accurately identify and address specific attainment gaps. Improved data infrastructure is foundational to evidence-based decision-making and aligns with the College's "Truth" value and **Pillar 2: Productivity**, which emphasises "developing an institutional data strategy that enables predictive analytics for student success."
- **Assumptions:** We assume that investment in data systems and comprehensive staff training will enable accurate, consistent, and granular tracking of attainment data across all relevant demographic intersections. We also assume that having this improved data will lead to more precise identification of disparities and more effective targeted interventions in the future.
- **Evidence Base:**
  - **Internal Audit:** Examination of the college data reports (Annex A) reveals limitations in consistently tracking detailed grade and degree classification data across all demographic intersections. This deficiency is the direct evidence underpinning this objective.

**Objective 4.3: Increase availability of Academic Achievement Coaches to ensure availability is equitable across student groups, raising the total available time from two days a week to four through an allocation of additional resources, enabling excellent support and eliminating any inequities in access for different student groups.**

- **Rationale:** Inequitable access to Academic Achievement Coaches (AACs) creates an unfair advantage for some students and a barrier for others, directly impacting their ability to achieve their full academic potential. Ensuring equitable access aligns with the College's "Respect" value and **Pillar 3: Performance**, which aims to "Create learning environments where all students feel valued."
- **Assumptions:** We assume that increased resource allocation will allow for the expansion of AAC availability, that an equity audit will successfully identify and rectify any existing access disparities, and that equitable access to AACs will positively impact student attainment across all groups.
- **Evidence Base:**
  - **Internal Observation/Feedback:** The risk statement is based on internal operational observations and student feedback, highlighting an existing inequity in access to AACs. This qualitative evidence directly informs the need for increased resources and an equity audit.

**Objective 4.4: To close attainment gap between male and female students, by raising male attainment to 83% by 2030 through targeted academic support and mentoring programmes.**

- **Rationale:** A confirmed attainment gap between male and female students represents a significant equality issue that requires direct intervention to ensure equitable academic outcomes for all genders. This aligns with the College's "Respect" value and **Pillar 3: Performance**, which aims to "Eliminate all achievement gaps."
- **Assumptions:** We assume that a detailed analysis will accurately pinpoint the specific factors contributing to the male/female attainment gap, and that targeted academic support and mentoring programmes can effectively address these identified challenges.
- **Evidence Base:**
  - **Internal Analysis:** The risk statement provides the baseline (male attainment 73%), which is based on internal analysis of attainment data by sex. While the full calculation is not in the provided snippets, the existence of this gap is acknowledged and forms the basis for this objective.

## **Objective 5: Progression**

**Objective 5.1: Increase progression from Higher National and Foundation Degree programmes to Level 6 Top Up Bachelor's degree programmes from 72.5% to 82.5% by 2030 through dedicated progression support, ensuring timely and comprehensive information to HN and FD students about L6 options.**

- **Rationale:** Whilst progression rates from Level 5 to Level 6 have shown improvement, ensuring a high rate of progression to Level 6 is crucial for student success and aligns with the College's mission to "grow people to be their brilliant

best" and **Pillar 3: Performance**, which aims to "ensure all students make exceptional progress to achieve positive destinations."

- **Assumptions:** We assume that providing clear, timely, and comprehensive information about Level 6 options, coupled with dedicated progression support, will effectively encourage and enable more Higher National (HN) and Foundation Degree (FD) students to pursue Bachelor's degree top-ups. We also assume that sufficient Level 6 opportunities (internal and external) exist to accommodate increased progression.
- **Evidence Base:**
  - **Quantitative:** Table 5 in Annex A shows the progression rates from L5 to L6: 47.1% in 2022/2023 and 72.5% in 2023/2024. While the trend is positive, the target of 82.5% indicates a continued need for focused intervention.

**Objective 5.2: A lack of clarity on progression routes and support for employment has led to insufficient opportunities for HE students to progress to highly skilled employment or higher study based on student feedback. To address this, clear progression routes to be mapped from all HE programmes to relevant highly skilled employment sectors and further higher study options, with enhanced careers guidance and employability support.**

- **Rationale:** Student feedback indicates a lack of clarity regarding progression routes to highly skilled employment or further higher study. This uncertainty can limit students' post-HE opportunities and impact their career trajectories. Providing clear pathways and robust support is vital for student success and employability, aligning with the College's "Growth" value and **Pillar 3: Performance**, which aims to "Develop students to be work-ready with the necessary skills to thrive."
- **Assumptions:** We assume that systematically mapping and communicating clear progression routes will significantly improve student understanding and confidence in their post-HE options. We also assume that enhanced careers guidance and employability support will directly translate into improved outcomes for highly skilled employment or further study.
- **Evidence Base:**
  - **Qualitative:** The risk statement explicitly identifies that this issue is "based on student feedback," highlighting a crucial qualitative insight into a barrier to successful progression.

**Objective 5.3: Increase rates of male Students progressing from Higher National and Foundation Degree programmes to Level 6 Top Up Bachelor's degree programmes from 31% of all students, to 41% by 2030 through a thorough understanding of why a lower proportion of male students are progressing to L6 and implementing targeted information and guidance sessions.**

- **Rationale:** The data reveals a significantly lower rate of male students progressing from Level 5 to Level 6 compared to female students (as shown in Table 6, Annex A). This indicates a specific gender-based barrier to higher-level study that needs direct intervention to ensure equitable progression outcomes for all. This aligns with the College's "Respect" value and **Pillar 3: Performance**, which aims to "Eliminate all achievement gaps."



- **Assumptions:** We assume that a thorough understanding of the underlying reasons for lower male progression will inform effective interventions. We also assume that targeted information and guidance sessions, tailored to address these specific barriers, will encourage and enable more male students to pursue Level 6 top-ups.
- **Evidence Base:**
  - **Quantitative:** Table 6 in Annex A provides clear evidence of the disparity in L5 to L6 progression by sex: in 2023/2024, male students constituted 20.8% of those progressing, increasing to 31.0% in 2023/2024, but still significantly lower than female progression.

# Fees, investments and targets

## 2026-27 to 2029-30

Provider name: Boston College

Provider UKPRN: 10000812

### Investment summary

A provider is expected to submit information about its forecasted investment to achieve the objectives of its access and participation plan in respect of the following areas: access, financial support and research and evaluation. Note that this does not necessarily represent the total amount spent by a provider in these areas. Table 6b provides a summary of the forecasted investment, across the four academic years covered by the plan, and Table 6d gives a more detailed breakdown.

#### Notes about the data:

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.

Yellow shading indicates data that was calculated rather than input directly by the provider.

In Table 6d (under 'Breakdown'):

"Total access investment funded from HFI" refers to income from charging fees above the basic fee limit.

"Total access investment from other funding (as specified)" refers to other funding, including OfS funding (but excluding Uni Connect), other public funding and funding from other sources such as philanthropic giving and private sector sources and/or partners.

**Table 6b - Investment summary**

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Breakdown	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30
Access activity investment (£)	NA	£50,000	£51,000	£51,000	£52,000
Financial support (£)	NA	£22,000	£32,000	£42,000	£52,000
Research and evaluation (£)	NA	£9,000	£10,000	£11,000	£12,000

**Table 6d - Investment estimates**

Investment estimate (to the nearest £1,000)	Breakdown	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30
Access activity investment	Pre-16 access activities (£)	£6,000	£6,000	£6,000	£6,000
Access activity investment	Post-16 access activities (£)	£44,000	£45,000	£45,000	£46,000
Access activity investment	Other access activities (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
<b>Access activity investment</b>	<b>Total access investment (£)</b>	<b>£50,000</b>	<b>£51,000</b>	<b>£51,000</b>	<b>£52,000</b>
Access activity investment	<i>Total access investment (as % of HFI)</i>	15.9%	14.3%	12.8%	11.8%
Access activity investment	<i>Total access investment funded from HFI (£)</i>	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000	£31,000
Access activity investment	<i>Total access investment from other funding (as specified) (£)</i>	£20,000	£21,000	£21,000	£21,000
Financial support investment	Bursaries and scholarships (£)	£15,000	£20,000	£25,000	£30,000
Financial support investment	Fee waivers (£)	£5,000	£10,000	£15,000	£20,000
Financial support investment	Hardship funds (£)	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000
<b>Financial support investment</b>	<b>Total financial support investment (£)</b>	<b>£22,000</b>	<b>£32,000</b>	<b>£42,000</b>	<b>£52,000</b>
Financial support investment	<i>Total financial support investment (as % of HFI)</i>	7.0%	9.0%	10.5%	11.8%
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (£)	£9,000	£10,000	£11,000	£12,000
Research and evaluation investment	<i>Research and evaluation investment (as % of HFI)</i>	2.9%	2.8%	2.8%	2.7%

# Fees, investments and targets

2026-27 to 2029-30

Provider name: Boston College

Provider UKPRN: 10000812

## Targets

Table 5b: Access and/or raising attainment targets

Aim [500 characters maximum]	Reference number	Lifecycle stage	Characteristic	Target group	Comparator group	Description and commentary [500 characters maximum]	Is this target collaborative?	Data source	Baseline year	Units	Baseline data	2026-27 milestone	2027-28 milestone	2028-29 milestone	2029-30 milestone
1.1 To increase the number of students from Care Experienced, Services and Gypsy/Roma/Traveller Communities from 1.1%, 06% and 2.9% respectively to 5%, 3%, and 7% by 2030 through dedicated outreach programmes, partnerships and tailored pre-entry guidance and application support.	PTA_1	Access	Intersection of characteristics	Other (please specify in description)		There are low rates of students from Care Experienced, Service and Gypsy/Roma/Traveller communities enrolling on HE Courses at Boston College. Evidence gathered by the college suggests that this could be linked to perceptions of HE in the local area, along with access to funding and accommodation.	No	The access and participation dashboard	2023-24	Percentage	1.1%, 0.6%, 2.9%	2%, 1%, 3%	3%, 2%, 4%	4%, 2%, 5%	5%, 3%, 7%
1.2 To increase enrolments of 21+ Students on all HE courses at Boston College from 44.9% to 50% by 2030 through the development of flexible study models and a wider offer of part time, hybrid and fully online offers.	PTA_2	Access	Age	Mature (over 21)		There are lower rates of 21+ students enrolling on HE courses at Boston College than is typical for the sector and that local market intelligence suggests. Evidence suggests this is due to insufficient flexibility in study models.	No	Other data source (please include details in commentary)	2023-24	Percentage	44.9%	46%	47%	49%	50%
1.6 Increase numbers of Male students on HE courses from 38% of all students to 45% by 2030 through tailored marketing approaches, including a showcase of successful male alumni.	PTA_3	Access	Sex	Male	Female	Significantly lower numbers of Male students enrol on HE courses, versus Female Students, which could be due to the existing offer, perceptions of HE in the local area, and marketing approaches.	No	Other data source (please include details in commentary)	2023-24	Percentage	30%	33%	37%	42%	45%
2.1 Arrest the decline in continuation rates for students in Deprivation Quintile 2, eradicating any gaps with other Quintiles by 2030, by raising the continuation rate from 58.10% to 80% through targeted academic and pastoral support interventions.	PTA_4	Raising attainment	Tracking Underrepresentation by Area (TUNDRA)	TUNDRA quintile 2	TUNDRA quintile 3, 4 and 5	A decline in continuation rates for students in Deprivation Quintile 2	No	The access and participation dashboard	2023-24	Percentage	58.10%	64%	67%	75%	80%
2.2 Improve continuation rates for Under 21 students from 63.9% to 80% by 2030 through enhanced induction and transition support to adjust to demands of HE and promotion of student engagement in extra-curricular activity and societies.	PTA_5	Raising attainment	Age	Young (under 21)		Lower continuation rates for Under 21 students, than 21+. Student voice feedback suggests that this could be due to the perception of the HE Experience in the local area, lack of student focussed activity in the town, and lack of family support for HE.	No	The access and participation dashboard	2023-24	Percentage	63.9%	68%	72%	76%	80%
4.4 To close attainment gap between Male and Female students, by raising Male attainment to 83% by 2030 through targeted academic support and mentoring programmes.	PTA_6	Raising attainment	Sex	Male	Female	Internal Data indicates an attainment gap between Male and Female Students, with Male students' achievement 10% lower.	No	Other data source (please include details in commentary)	2023-24	Percentage	70%	74%	77%	80%	83%
	PTA_7														
	PTA_8														
	PTA_9														
	PTA_10														
	PTA_11														
	PTA_12														

Table 5d: Success targets

[illegible]

### Table 5e: Progression targets

[illegible]