

DERBY COLLEGE GROUP (DCG)
Access and Participation Plan 2026-27 to 2029-30

Introduction and Strategic Aim

The Access and Participation Plan (APP) outlines Derby College Group's (DCG) commitment to improving equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups in higher education (HE). DCG is ambitious in delivering exceptional education, creating opportunities that transform lives for students and consequently the community as a whole. The students are at the heart of the plan, so that each individual has the opportunity to access, succeed in, and progress beyond higher education and fulfil their potential. Each individual should have an equality of opportunity irrespective of demographic. Bridging the gap in inequality, so that no student, is disadvantaged is at the forefront of DCG planning. The plan aims to enhance access, success, and progression for diverse student populations through targeted initiatives and strategic improvements, thereby enabling social mobility. This is the fourth Access and Participation Plan (APP) created by DCG, which outlines its mission and intention to support underrepresented groups gain access to, succeed in and progress from HE to positive outcomes. This is a renewal of the most recent APP published in 2020/21, and which reference will be made to, in this plan.

DCG has reach and influence in providing specific HE provision to the communities it serves and its position in the marketplace remains stable. To achieve this position, cultural change has been paramount, including a relentless determination to continually improve all aspects of student experience, inspire aspiration and improve outcomes, through monitoring and measuring performance against a range of key performance indicators (KPIs) and benchmarks. Its strategic ambitions and mission remain resolutely focused on providing:

- educational excellence, by focussing on student success
- championing social mobility, by removing barriers and enhancing opportunities
- enabling economic prosperity by fostering employer collaborations and skill development

(DCG Higher Education Strategy 2020-2025)

In addition, DCG emphasises:

- Provision of accessible education opportunities for all backgrounds
- Enhancement of regional employability through targeted HE programmes
- Focus on skills gaps with employer driven curriculum planning

(DCG Access and Accountability Plan 2025)

Now, more than ever, DCG must continue to create accessible education opportunities that inspire students to widen their horizons. DCG aims to predict and serve the needs of business and civic communities by forecasting workforce requirements and co-creating, with employers, educational partners and awarding

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institutions, education programmes that prepare students for the next phase of their lives either within the workplace or higher degrees.

HE is offered at DCG, to provide students with a successful progression route from Level 3, including T Levels, technical, academic, vocational and technical programmes. DCG has a strong, current and accessible Level 3 provision with multiple opportunities for all students, of all ages and backgrounds to enable social mobility. The HE curriculum offers niche opportunities to provide students with the opportunity to access provision otherwise unavailable in the locality e.g. Animal and Equine, and evidence confirms that without these opportunities students would not have progressed to a higher-level opportunity and subsequently may have a limited life chance. Likewise, DCG's part-time provision, for example, Level 4 in Professional Construction, offers higher level study to employed students who are often mature and live in the Derby area. Similarly, Engineering offers a Level 6 programme for employed students enabling them to progress from Level 5 (Foundation Degree or HND) at DCG, thereby supporting an improved life chance and higher-level skill attainment.

The importance of the above is further highlighted as there are significant economic disparities within the City of Derby, Derbyshire County and East Midlands region which DCG serves. Derby has some outstanding economic assets and benefits from a strong advanced manufacturing base. However, over half the local authority areas across the East Midlands, including Derby City, have been identified as areas with the worst opportunities for social progression for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Derby is a city designated as a social mobility 'cold spot' by the Government, even though Derby presents as a city with a high manufacturing base and high wages, there are areas of high deprivation. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) rank Derby as the 67th most deprived local authority in England, with 16% of Derby's wards among the most deprived ten per cent in the country, and this was reflected in March 2022 where Derby City was identified as one of 24 Priority Education Investment Areas. In consequence, DCG strives to remove barriers to learning and to break the links between a student's background and improve life chances and social capital.

DCG recognises the importance of the diversification agenda as set out by the Office for Students (OfS). The HE programme offer acknowledges this, through the range and flexibility of provision, with alternative pathways, professional, full-time, part-time, apprenticeships and Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs). Higher level skills and the development of employability, knowledge and skills, for improvement of life chances is a major consideration and a focus for the plan. With this in mind DCG's flexible provision offers programmes at Level 4, 5, and 6 part-time and full-time: Level 4 Higher National Certificates over two years, Level 5 full-time foundation degrees and at Level 6, a one year full-time programme as a progression opportunity for foundation degrees and higher national certificates in Engineering. Land-based also offers a part-time route for foundation degrees and the Level 6 top up if required.

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DCG makes a strong contribution to the local and national skills gaps and priority areas (Ofsted, 2024). Leaders and managers engage effectively with employers and other relevant stakeholders to understand the needs of local, regional, and national economy and plan their curriculum accordingly:

- DCG was the lead institution for the Strategic Development Fund Pilot and is now working with other colleges and employers in the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA). Priority curriculum include, digital, modern methods of construction and electrification of the automotive industry, which impact on future curriculum offers, ensuring there are relevant opportunities for future HE students.
- DCG is a member of the East Midlands Institute of Technology in partnership with local and regional universities (University of Derby and Loughborough University), Loughborough College, and seven anchor employers, leading on curriculum development within Higher Technical Education at Level 4 and 5, to improve and develop our curriculum for future life opportunities for students, locally and regionally.
- DCG was a first adopter of T levels and is now one of 160 colleges that continue to deliver and develop T Levels. It was also, one of 70 colleges that developed an HTQ in 2023/24 and beyond. The development of HTQs and Higher and Degree Apprenticeships in STEM enable opportunities for professional upskilling, in addition to the delivery of short programmes and micro-credentials.

DCG is one of 36 colleges that works with the land-based membership professional body, Landex. It facilitates, peer reviews and feeds back commenting on good practice, changing industry practices, and also facilitates CPD opportunities. The last Landex Peer Review Report (June 2024) identified good practice in the peer and buddy system used for formative assessment. In HE observation they remarked on high industry specific terminology, clear support plans and students leading initiatives to support those with mental health needs. In student voice feedback, students particularly identified the benefit of support through the HE Academic Support Coaches.

DCG Student Access, Attainment and Progression

In 2023 DCG made a submission to the OfS under the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). The overall award was silver, with a gold for student outcomes and silver for student experience. DCG was amongst the very few general FE colleges with a HE provision, to acquire gold for student outcomes. DCG's emphasis is on teaching excellence so that our students have a highly positive experience, complete and progress to a positive destination. DCG's HE provision is vocational and models itself as 'a centre of vocational and technical excellence' with the dual professional as a focus. Employers inform course design so that the course content is highly relevant for employers and makes a positive contribution the skills needs of local and regional employers. Teaching excellence is achieved by ensuring that teachers have, and maintain, industry expertise and experience, exploiting links with industry. DCG's approach to the 'dual professional' was rated as outstanding in the TEF feedback. There are dedicated CPD opportunities for developing pedagogical excellence and a firm focus of application of industrial practice to current HE pedagogy. Consistently high-

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quality teaching and industry expertise is at the heart of our approach to delivering teaching excellence. Strong employer engagement contributes to a highly positive academic experience for students and pedagogical approaches are firmly aligned to the nature of the provision. Highly effective teaching is rooted in authentic, real-world approaches where theory and practice are blended expertly. Approaches draw on the students' experience as a valued resource. There is a firm focus on developing the knowledge, industry skills and wider skills needed for career development.

The vast majority of DCG HE students, studying full-time, progress from Level 3 and scaffolded approaches in teaching, support the transition to Level 4. As confidence and academic skills develop, approaches that foster autonomy are adopted. Part-time students bring a wealth of work-related experience, and this is utilised in teaching, particularly where elements of peer teaching and peer mentoring are appropriate. Teaching excellence is achieved and evidenced through a tailored students' learning approach, utilising individual student characteristics to effectively promote learning, continuation, completion and progression. Excellent (and improving) completion rates and degree outcomes demonstrate that students are stretched to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential. This includes a firm focus on employability and wider skills, the skills and attributes identified as crucial in future career progression.

Some of DCG targeted strategies to enhance student success include marketing and outreach and multifactorial support for underrepresented students. The TEF (2023) identified outstanding completion and pass rates in HE provision with students continuing to the final year of the course generally completing with attainment above the OfS B3 numerical thresholds (Annex A). Also, progression outcomes are strong, with the majority of students progressing with positive outcomes to relevant employment or higher-level study. Student outcomes were considered as outstanding and therefore rated as gold in the TEF (2023) (Annex A).

DCG has high aspirations for its community and its vision, mission, strategic ambitions and values embody these. Enactment of DCG's strategy will ensure that its students' beliefs in what they might achieve in life are transformed during their journey, enabling them to use their excellent education and skills experience as a catalyst for success in work and life. This, in turn, will result in the generation of an effective, agile talent pipeline for our employers and greater social justice, mobility and capital for our students, communities, region and nation. This is achieved and underpinned by our commitment to teaching and learning excellence, strong student support and excellent relationships with all stakeholders together with a student-centred approach is the focus. DCG continues to create accessible education opportunities that inspire students to widen their horizons and be equipped with a high-level skill set necessary for improving life chances.

Overall DCG will continue to meet their responsibilities in access and participation by embedding widening access, tailored support and interventions, financial support, partnerships and collaboration and securing a safe and inclusive learning environment which is in line with DCG's Quality of Education Core Strategy, and articulates the use of a research informed approach to continuously innovate and improve the quality of teaching to secure the best possible life chances for students, a commitment to close attainment and

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satisfaction gaps whilst continually raising standards for all, together with a curriculum that is current, in context and supports regional prosperity. Additionally, a strategic priority that aligns with the APP is 'to strengthen inclusion and equality in curriculum design and teaching and learning, so that all students can access the curriculum and achieve positive outcomes.' DCG will continuously innovate curriculum design to meet the emerging needs of students and stakeholders as identified in the APP. DCG's robust policies in Equality of Opportunity and Accessibility underpin the DCG ethos of inclusion and accessibility for all students irrespective of background, situation or need.

HE Provision

There are approximately 13,000 students enrolled at DCG (including students on full cost and HE programmes). Of these 6,500 are 16 - 18, studying on a range of programmes including A levels, vocational, technical (including T levels), 5,500 adult students studying from entry level to level 6. The number of students on HE courses (level 4 and above including higher and degree apprenticeships) is relatively small (4.5%) but highly valued and viable and provides a progression route particularly for students who may not choose or are able to access a more traditional University. In addition, HE DCG part-time students (30%) are generally from local/regional industries who have family ties within the region. Higher and degree apprentices account for circa 44% of the HE student population and are usually mature and employed, by local companies studying on day release. Part-time students account for circa 24% of the HE population and again these are employed and usually mature students. HE is delivered at The Roundhouse (Vocational and Technical campus) and Broomfield Hall (full-time student campus (Land-based and Leisure education)). DCG offers Level 4 to Level 7 qualifications, including Higher National Certificates/Diplomas (HNC/HND), higher and degree apprenticeships, foundation degrees, and top up Level 6 degrees, professional courses (Certificate in education and Post Graduate Certificate in Education) in collaboration with the University of Derby, Sheffield Hallam University, and Pearson Awarding Body.

In 2024/25, DCG enrolled 524 (2023/24 589) students in HE programs, including

- 251 (2023/24 250) Office for Students (OfS) funded students. Of the 251 OfS funded.
- 228 (2023/24 264) higher and degree apprentices, all in employment and sponsored by employers.
- 45 (2023/24 75) additional Level 4 and 5 professional programs funded via Advanced Learner Loans, EFSA, or full cost.

In 2024/25 67 fewer students (11%) were enrolled in the small HE provision that DCG offers (11%). 45% of these are from 'other HE courses' and are accounted for as a strategic rationalisation.

A commitment to disadvantaged students is at the heart of the HE provision, particularly as 33% of 16-year-olds in Derby are classified as disadvantaged, and 29% of DCG's student body (16 - 18-year-olds) are designated as disadvantaged. DCG's challenge continues to inspire these students to believe in their potential and progress to higher levels of learning at Level 3 and beyond thereby unlocking social mobility

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and economic well-being. DCG's focus is particularly on supporting disadvantaged groups which is critical for the city's overall educational outcomes.

The HE curriculum offers niche opportunities to provide students with the opportunity to access provision otherwise unavailable in the locality e.g. Levels 5 and 6 in Animal/Zoo Management and Equine. Evidence confirms that without these provisions students would not have taken up a higher-level opportunity and subsequently may have had a limited life chance. These programmes are highly successful in access (from DCG Level 3) continuation, completion and progression (85%) to related employment or higher-level study (foundation degree to Level 6 top up). Given that circa 60% of the cohort are from disadvantaged areas (IMD Q1 and 2) in the city and county, these programmes offer opportunities to students who would have not the life chance to experience higher level study. Likewise, DCG's part-time provision, for example, Level 4 Professional Construction, offers higher level study for employed students who are often mature with a base in the Derby area. Similarly, Engineering offers a Level 6 programme for employed students enabling them to progress from Level 5 (Foundation Degree or HND) thereby offering an improved life chance and higher-level skill attainment. The majority of students pursuing Professional Construction or Engineering courses are higher and degree apprentices (80%) who are locally employed evidencing a strong collaboration between DCG and local employers, with DCG working with these stakeholders to facilitate their specific needs for skills and opportunities e.g. the BEng Level 6 delivered in a part-time mode over 12 months rather than two years. Completion and pass rates are very high (100%).

Demographic and Socioeconomic Context

DCG serves Derby City, which faces significant socio-economic challenges. Derby City's 'Rising Cost of Living Strategy 2022-2025 gives insight into our immediate, potential student population that DCG draws on for higher education:

- Population: 261,400 (ONS Census 2021)
- 26% from Black or minority ethnic communities compared to 18.3% in England (2021 census)
- 19.9% disabled population compared to 17.7% of the population in England identifying as disabled (2021 census), a significant increase from previous years attributed to the classification broadening and including mental health conditions
- Ranked 67th most deprived authority in England, from 317 local authorities (two tier and single tier).34% of its neighbourhoods fall within the most deprived 20% nationally.
- 16.4% of households in fuel poverty compared to 13% in England.
- 29% of children (0-15 years) are in low-income families compared to 19% in England

Source: Home-Office for National Statistic, Disability, England and Wales – Office for National Statistics, Derby City Council: local authority assessment – Care Quality Commission, Key Statistics for Derby – Derby City Council, Key Statistics for Derby- Derby City Council all accessed 4th March 2025

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DCG also draws on the county of Derbyshire, particularly for the fulltime Broomfield Hall, HE provision, (Land Based, Criminology and Sport) where many of the HE cohort progress from DCG level 3 (Broomfield Hall). The demographics for Derbyshire According to the 2021 Census are:

- The population is predominantly White, with 96.3% (approximately 765,296 people) identifying as such.
- There are 14.6% of households in the county in fuel poverty which is lower than the city and above national statistics.
- The number of people with a disability is 20%, which is higher compared to regional and national averages.
- The remaining 3.7% (around 29,338 people) represent various ethnic minority groups.

These figures indicate that Derbyshire's ethnic diversity is lower than the national average for England, where 81% identify as White, 10% as Asian, and 4% as Black.

Source: Home-Office for National Statistic

Consequently, the demographics of the city and the County confirm the diversity of the DCG student population and DCG's intentions for its influence on the curriculum offer for HE and the resulting APP.

As progression to positive student outcomes is a key driver to, HE at DCG and up to date skills are required for the local and regional workforce, DCG aligns it's HE provision with local and national labour market needs. For demographic analysis, most of the employers DCG work with, and therefore form the basis of the part-time apprenticeship cohort, are City based employers. Key areas of focus include:

- **Professional Construction and Engineering:** Expected job growth of 6 - 7% in chartered surveyors and construction project management roles.
- **Employer Partnerships:** Strong collaborations with companies such as Rolls-Royce, Tomlinson and other local architects, to ensure industry-relevant curriculum.
- **Work Experience and Skills Development:** Integration of real-world projects and employer-led initiatives through Employer Skills Boards (ESBs).

Curriculum planning, is underpinned by skills need and the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP): Ensuring HE courses align with employer needs, Employer Boards and Skills Matrices: Mapping skill demands to curriculum offerings e.g. HTQ development: New Level 4 - 5 courses in Quantity Surveying, Architecture, Engineering and digital to address skill shortages, Occupational Standards Mapping: Aligning qualifications with industry benchmarks through formerly IFATE (Institute for Apprentices and Technical, Education) and now Skills England.

Overall DCG's HE provision has a specific intent serving a diverse and disadvantaged student population, reflecting the college's commitment to supporting underprivileged communities by providing opportunities for higher level study. DCG has a highly supportive learning environment, and students have access to, and use,

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dedicated HE Academic Support Coaches to develop their academic skills, presentation skills and confidence. No student is left behind. Inclusion specialists, coaches and teachers ensure that all students with a disability/difficulty continue and achieve in line with their peers. The student voice evidences the high regard students have for the wide and readily available range of outstanding academic support available to them. Multiple student voice opportunities are provided, engaged with, and actions for improvement are taken. Overall satisfaction in both the NSS and the Internal Quality Survey is generally above sector average, and students have confirmed, annually, their satisfaction with the quality of teaching and assessment practices experienced on their course. DCG is committed to providing a high-quality teaching and learning experience, aligned to student needs and characteristics and employer requirements, extending opportunities for all students, irrespective of background to promote social mobility. Proactive collaboration with students, employers and HEIs has led to consistently outstanding, and improving, continuation and completion rates. The majority of students who undertake the DCG HE journey, continue, complete, achieve and are likely to achieve high grades, progressing to employment or securing promotion opportunities within their employment and making a positive contribution to businesses they work within. Educational gain in higher level skills development enables students to reach higher attainment and improve life chances. Students enjoy their learning, strive for higher level attainment and becoming industry ready upon attainment of their programme.

RISKS TO EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

DCG has recognised the challenges and restrictions of the small volumes of data available for analysis from the OfS dashboard and local data (Annex A). DCG presents as low risk in respect of the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR), with generally a limited number of gaps in student demographics and where gaps occur these are usually small.

Therefore, the DCG APP for 2026 will focus on continued and improved support strategies, so that gaps continue to be reduced and remain insignificant. It will also focus on objectives and subsequent intervention strategies that will have a primary impact on the DCG HE student population i.e. full-time students. These students are, generally, transitioning from DCG Level 3 provision having sometimes entered at Level 2. They are less mature, have difficulties in the family home and are usually first-time members of their family to access higher education study. There are many success stories where students who have not met their potential in schools, and are from a disadvantaged background, enrol on level 2, acquire GCSEs in maths and English and progress through Levels 3, 4, 5 and 6, particularly in land-based and criminology programmes. The part-time cohort (Professional Construction, Engineering HNC and the PGCE/Certification in Education) are employed, mature, professional and with more stability. They are a smaller part of DCG provision and employer led. Objectives around this group of students would not be so impactful. However, as a point to note, all of the part-time students have exactly the same equality of opportunity at DCG in respect of support mechanisms to ensure they succeed. Careful monitoring of all students groups will continue through the embedded HE performance monitoring, Programme Monitoring Reviews, Academic Coach

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activity, robust data collection and student voice (student surveys, Focus groups, Programme Committee Meetings) and governance of APP activity.

DCG is mindful that disadvantages are dynamic e.g. there is an increasing population of students with mental health and well-being challenges which need to be supported and addressed to secure continuation, completion and progression as evidenced by the NSS (Appendix A). The number of declared mental well-being issues is small but on programme the students, particularly as there are a high number (circa 60%) from deprived areas, may have family commitments within their home and need a constant monitor for well-being, to enable success with high attainment and opportunities for progression. Hence a specific objective has been set which seeks to address mental health and well-being challenges. Similarly, the number of students with a declared disability/difficulty is small and there are insignificant gaps in attainment compared to the overall student population. With this in mind, the intervention strategies in place serve to support these groups of students as evidenced through the TEF (gold for student outcomes, silver for student experience). There will be a continued investment as to how we support and enable these groups of students to access, continue, complete and progress, particularly considering the changing and challenging times now encountered by disadvantaged students.

For the full-time provision, where students progress from DCG's Level 3 courses e.g. Land-based, Criminal Justice, and Sport, students usually take up part-time employment to assist finances in the family home so that they can pursue their higher-level study. Students recognise the high-quality teaching experienced and value this as an essential for their HE journey. Many students are under confident, and teachers are well placed to ensure that these students are supported. Students comment on the value of having a familiar teacher and being able to draw on their confidence to inform and enhance their own, resulting in students being able to challenge themselves, present their best work and succeed. With this in mind, and to reduce barriers to success, appropriate intervention strategies will be included e.g. a dedicated Learning Support specialist, CPD opportunities to staff to raise awareness for all HE teachers and managers within the Higher Education Teaching and Learning Enhancement Programme (HETLEP). The HETLEP develops HE teachers' knowledge and skills, and teacher behaviours in utilising inclusive teaching practices to further promote equality of opportunity and contribute to widening access participation.

Annex A of the APP entitled "Further Information and Analysis" (pages 31-41) provides the full investigation of DCG's access, continuation, completion, attainment, and progression data, and reference to sources, which has led to the identification of 4 specific risks to equality of opportunity for student groups, detailed below, and the setting of four-year APP objectives to address these inequalities which are articulated in the later section entitled "Objectives" (pages 12-22).

Annex A also explains in greater detail the challenges associated with small volumes of data (and small student numbers), including acknowledgement of a reduction in student numbers in more recent years.

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Whilst the OfS APP Data Dashboard has been a helpful source of data with respect to access, the identification of risks to equality of opportunity for some student groups entering HE, continuation, the investigation of the success of students progressing from their first year of study to a second (or completing a one year course), and completion of study, it has been less helpful, due to small student numbers in examining potential risks at the later stages of the student life cycle journey (attainment, and progression).

Where the APP Data Dashboard has been used, as recommended by the OfS APP Guidance, four and two-year aggregate values have been considered a more reliable indicator of the risk to equality of opportunity, than the comparison of annual data, due both to small data volumes and changes in the curriculum offer over recent years which can lead to significant fluctuations in data from year to year,. All the data quoted here in this section is drawn from the OfS APP Data Dashboard unless otherwise indicated. OfS TEF 2023 indicators have been used in Annex A, and referenced, to provide another, and more up to date picture, and the analysis has also been augmented by reference to DCG's internal college HE student data which includes data up to, and including, academic year 2023/24.

The four most significant risks to equality of opportunity appear below and relate to access, continuation and completion for the named full-time student subgroups at the specified stages of the lifecycle.

The final paragraph explains that Annex A recognises several student groups and situations where there is some indicator of risk to equality of opportunity, but that the small volume of data makes such a judgement less statistically reliable, and in some cases, albeit that a comparative situation between student groups is less favourable it is still above external benchmarks.

PTA1 – DCG recognises that students from ethnic minority communities are currently significantly underrepresented within its full-time HE student population and will address the risk to equality of opportunity of access to full-time HE studies for these groups.

The two and four-year aggregate data for students accessing full-time HE at DCG shows a significant majority population of students identifying themselves as white, of 94.8%, and 95.4% respectively. The breakdown of the very small student population from different ethnic minorities is not available. This very small representation of full-time students from ethnic minority groups is very different from the sector overall (where the white majority is much lower at 67% and 65% for the two and four-year aggregates respectively), and from many providers.

DCG recruits mainly locally, and this profile of full-time student population is more like the local population (see Introduction and Strategic Aim section – pages 6-7 for detail), where the City of Derby population is 25% black and ethnic minority, but the County of Derbyshire has a very significant white majority population of 96.3%.

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PTS 1 - Full-time students reporting a disability appear to be less successful than those students not reporting a disability, at continuing their study. The two and four-year aggregate data for full-time students reporting a disability shows only 75.6% and 80.9% (respectively) of the population continuing their study whilst students not reporting a disability successfully continue their study at a higher rate (two-year average 88.6% and four-year average 91.2%). This represents a risk to equality of opportunity and indicates an equality gap for students reporting a disability [compared to those who do not] of 13 percentage points for the more recent two-year average of 13 pp and 10.3 pp for the four-year average, a worsened situation. This continuation rate is also below 90% which is DCG's ambition for all HE full-time students. This situation will be address by an APP objective.

PTS2 - Full-time students from the most deprived communities (IMD quintiles 1 and 2) appear to be less successful than those students from the less deprived communities (IMD quintiles 3-5) in continuing their study. Based on a weighted average calculation of both the four-year and two-year averages, the continuing rates for students from the most deprived communities are 86.7% and 83.1% respectively, some 3.8pp and 4.5pp below that of the continuation rates for students from the least deprived communities. This continuation rate is also below 90% which is DCG's ambition for all HE full-time students.

All of this is evidence of a risk to equality of opportunity for full-time students from the more deprived communities and will be addressed by an APP objective.

PTS3 – Full-time students with mental health challenges report that they are less aware, and confident, of the support available, which appears, albeit from limited data, to potentially have a negative impact upon their success in completing study and a risk to the equality of opportunity.

Internal “pass” data, a proxy for completion, indicates that students with mental health difficulties are less successful in completing their studies compared with students reporting no disability, and those reporting other disabilities. However, it is acknowledged that these annual rates, whilst an indicator of an inequality gap and a risk to equality of opportunity, are based on very small numbers of students completing their studies and are considered a less good basis upon which to base future objectives.

Student feedback, informally via tutors, and formally via PCMs, from student representatives at deliberative committees, internal college surveys and NSS is consistent in an expression of an insufficient awareness, access and confidence of students in the mental health and wellbeing services available from the College. DCG considers that this is a more helpful and potentially impactful basis for the establishment of an APP objective than completion rates, although internally the College's quality processes will closely monitor completion (and other success rates) for students with mental health difficulties.

DCG's satisfaction response percentage to the NSS question - “How well communicated was information about your university/college's mental health wellbeing support services?” -has dropped quite dramatically

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between 2022/23 and 2023/24 (by 16 pp from 79% to 63%) and is significantly below the sector average (79%). DCG's PTS3 APP objective will look to address this risk to equality of opportunity and the 16-pp gap between the College's student satisfaction and the sector.

Annex A details other student groups, at different stages in the lifecycle, particularly part-time students and those at the later stages of the lifecycle - attainment and progression - where, from the data, there is "some" indication of a risk to equality of opportunity, but also where the data is based on small student numbers, is less statistically reliable, and on some occasions, where the performance of a student group whilst being less good than a comparative group is still better than external (OfS) benchmarks. These situations will be monitored internally through the duration of the APP, but no formal APP objective be set.

Additional areas of focus could include but is not limited to mature students accessing full-time programmes, students with caring responsibilities applying for full-time courses and recognising the difficulty in influencing the proportion of ethnically diverse part-time students (apprentices) through development of employer relations and engagement activities.

Results from the graduate outcomes survey indicate a high level of progression (OfS data) which is an upward trajectory. DCG data for progression, for the last three years evidence that over 90% of full-time students progress to a positive outcome after completion of the qualification.

However, as the provision develops, a HTQ focus, there will be an increasing requirement for career opportunities and collaboration with employers. This will seek to secure excellent progression rates (EORR 12) by ensuring access and time to undertake extra-curricular activities. Hence ensuring an equality of opportunity for disadvantaged, full-time students in achieving higher levels of job satisfaction and progression into higher skilled employment.

Progression objectives have been considered but with the lack of substantial and definitive data from graduate outcomes, this will be included as an ambition /strategic aim. With a robust careers support service at DCG, supporting all students progressing from DCG, to employment or higher-level qualifications, it is recognised that a definitive HE focus would be beneficial. This, and continued embedding of employability and opportunities for career education, within curriculum plans the monitoring of graduate outcomes, will continue to be a strategic aim over the next four years.

OBJECTIVES

The DCG Access and Participation Plan was reviewed in 2022. During this review DCG added an appendix document which outlined actions to ensure it was meeting these priorities. The foci have not significantly changed apart from the focussing on aspects of the student life cycle (access, success and progression) with

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new priorities in light of data intelligence, student voice and quality monitoring, embedded as a key feature of the new DCG APP:

1. Access for ethnically diverse students.
2. Continuation for full-time students from deprivation quintiles (IMDQ 1 & 2).
3. Continuation for full-time students with a declared disability.
4. Completion for full-time students with a mental health/ well-being challenge.

DCG sets itself the following four objectives (1 x Access, 2 x Continuation and 1 x Completion) to address risks to the equality of opportunity for student groups at the named stages in the student life cycle, identified in the “Risks to Equality of Opportunity” section above.

PTA1 - DCG will address the risk to equality of opportunity of access to full-time HE studies at DCG for students from ethnic minority communities who, presently, are significantly underrepresented, by increasing the % of non-white/ethnically diverse students enrolled to full-time HE programme (as reported on the OfS APP data dashboard) by 16 pp. from the current 5% to 21% over the lifetime of this APP.

Target description	Baseline Year (2yr avg.)	% of non-white/ ethnically diverse students enrolled	Milestone years (pp)			
			2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
PTA1 – to address the risk to equality of opportunity of access to full-time HE studies at the College for students from ethnic minority communities who, presently, are significantly underrepresented,	2022/23	5.0	9.0	13.0	17.0	21.0

Table 1 – Target **PTA1** – 4-year milestones

PTS1 – DCG will address the risk to equality of opportunity for full-time students who report a disability to continue their studies, by eradicating the continuation gap of 13pp (shown by the APP data dashboard) between full-time students reporting a disability, and those that do not, over the four-year period of this APP and aim that by the end of this period, such students [with a disability] will continue their studies at the rate of 90%, in line with the ambition for all HE full-time students.

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Target description	Baseline Year (2yr avg.)	Equality Gap (pp)	Milestone years (pp)			
			2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
PTS1 – DCG will address the risk to equality of opportunity for full-time students who report a disability to continue their studies, by eradicating the continuation gap of 13pp (shown by the APP data dashboard) between full-time students reporting a disability, and those that do not	2021/22	13.00	9.00	6.00	3.0	0 (matching a planned continuation rate of 90% for all full-time students)

Table 2 – Target PTS1 - 4-year milestones

PTS2 – DCG will eradicate the continuation gap between full-time students from the most deprived communities (IMD Quintile 1 and 2) and from the least deprived communities (IMD Quintile 3, 4 and 5). Using weighted average data drawn from the two-year OfS APP data dashboard average, the College will adopt as an objective the eradication, over the four-year period of this APP of the 4.5pp continuation equality gap that exists between the College’s two-year average for IMD quintiles 1 and 2 and IMD quintiles 3, 4 and 5 and aim that by the end of this four-year period such students from these most deprived communities will continue their studies at the rate of 90%, in line with the ambition for all full-time HE students.

Target description	Baseline Year (2yr avg.)	Equality Gap (pp)	Milestone years (pp)			
			2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
PTS2 – DCG will eradicate the continuation gap between full-time students from the most deprived communities (IMD Quintile 1 and 2) and from the least deprived communities (IMD Quintile 3,4 and 5).	2021/22	4.5	3.5	2.0	1.0	0 (matching a planned continuation rate of 90% for all full-time students)

Table 3 – Target PTS2 - 4-year milestones

PTS3 - DCG will address the risk to equality of opportunity for students with mental health difficulties of succeeding in, and completing their study, over the four-year period of this APP, by eradicating the current 16pp gap between the College’s (NSS) student satisfaction with the communication and availability of mental health and wellbeing services, and the overall sector, and by the end of that period at least match it.

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Target description	Baseline Year (2yr avg.)	Equality Gap (pp)	Milestone years (pp)			
			2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
PTS3 - DCG will address the risk to equality of opportunity for students with mental health difficulties of succeeding by completing their study. Eradicating the current 16-pp. gap between the College's (NSS) student satisfaction with the communication and availability of mental health and wellbeing services, and the overall sector, and at least matching it	2023/24 (NSS)	16.0	12.0	8.0	4.0	0 (at least matching the NSS sector average)

Table 4 – Target PTS3 - 4-year milestones

Annex A details other student groups, at different stages in the lifecycle, particularly part-time students and those at the later stages of the lifecycle - attainment and progression - where, from the data, there is “some” indication of a risk to equality of opportunity, but also where the data is based on small student numbers, is less statistically reliable, and on some occasions, where the performance of a student group whilst being less good than a comparative group is still better than external (OfS) benchmarks. These situations will be monitored internally through the duration of the APP but no formal APP objective be set.

The section further below, entitled “Intervention strategies and expected outcomes,”, will explain how DCG intends to achieve these objectives.

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

There are four identified intervention strategies to mitigate risks to equality of opportunity evidenced through the assessment of HE performance of the student lifecycle (ANNEX A). one for Access, three for student success (continuation and completion).

INTERVENTION STRATEGY 1:

INTERVENTION STRATEGY 1 (PTA1): INCREASE THE PROPORTION OF ENROLMENTS FROM FULL-TIME ETHNICALLY DIVERSE APPLICANTS (ACCESS)

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This strategy aims to mitigate the effects of Risk 1 (Knowledge and Skills), Risk 2 (Information and Guidance and Risk 3 (Perception of HE) thereby facilitating achievement of Objective 1.

PTA1 DCG will address the risk to equality of opportunity of access to full-time HE studies at the College for students from ethnic minority communities who, presently, are significantly underrepresented, by increasing the % of non-white/ethnically diverse students enrolled to full-time HE programme (as reported on the OfS APP data dashboard) by 16pp. from the current 5% to 21% over the lifetime of this APP.

DCG PROGRAMME OF INTERVENTION STRATEGIES: ACTIVITIES INPUTS AND OUTCOMES

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	INPUTS	OUTCOMES	CROSS INTERVENTION STRATEGY
1. Widen marketing of HE programmes Pre-entry (Objective 1, risk 1 and 3)	Target students pre-entry in schools, college and employment through improved inclusive marketing material, social media, employers and dedicated HE marketing representative	Marketing HE specialist	HE programmes reach wider audience of potential HE students to increase applications of ethnically diverse students.	N/A
2. Monitoring of applications; (Objective 1 risk 1,2 and risk 3)	Support the application process through advice and guidance (initial IAG HE specific and curriculum teams) to ensure the relevant knowledge and skills are apparent for applicants to progress to application and interview and that decisions are fair and free from bias and promote equality of opportunity	Marketing HE specialist MIS support IAG support Curriculum team support	Applications identified through demographics and followed up for additional support if necessary.	N/A
3. Increase transition activities for level 3 students to prepare them for higher education study	Develop transition days for level 3 students to improve the knowledge and skills required for higher education study	Curriculum teams HE Academic Coaches Careers	Students acquire the knowledge and skills required for higher level study and recognise the support mechanisms in place	N/A
4. Monitor Enrolment for students who are under confident in the process.	Intervene with support from curriculum teams and careers specialists (a dedicated HE Careers specialist to engage with	Marketing HE specialist MIS support IAG and careers support Curriculum team support Curriculum team specialist	Demographic overview of all applications through MIS in the short term. Interventions to improve applications and following	N/A

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Objective 1, Risk 2 and 3)	all curriculum teams) for support for under confident applicants		enrolments from ethnically diverse students to improve in long term to achieve 21 % by year 4.	
5. Work with employers to raise awareness of the value of a diverse workforce (Objective 1 Risk 1, 2 and 3)	Scope and target employers who work in collaboration with DCG to encourage a diversity of apprenticeship opportunities for underrepresented groups through ESBs and marketing opportunities Explore the mechanisms that may influence widening participation in HE	Director of Employer Partnerships, commercial and Business Management VP Student Experience	Raise awareness of underrepresented groups in HE provision with employers	N/A
TOTAL INVESTMENT OVER 4 YEAR PLAN	£ 220,000			

INTERVENTION STRATEGY 2: IMPROVE CONTINUATION RATES FOR FULL-TIME STUDENTS WITH DECLARED DISABILITIES

This strategy aims to mitigate the effects of Risk 5 (limited choice of course type and delivery mode), Risk 6 (insufficient academic support), Risk 7 (insufficient personal support) and Risk 10 (cost pressures) thereby facilitating achievement of Objective 2.

PTS1 – DCG will address the risk to equality of opportunity for full-time students who report a disability to continue their studies, by eradicating the continuation gap of 13pp (shown by the APP data dashboard) between full-time students reporting a disability, and those that do not, over the four-year period of this APP and aim that by the end of this period, such students [with a disability] will continue their studies at the rate of 90%, in line with the ambition for all HE full-time students.

DCG PROGRAMME OF INTERVENTION 2 STRATEGIES (PTS1): ACTIVITIES INPUTS AND OUTCOMES

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	INPUTS	OUTCOMES	CROSS INTERVENTION STRATEGY
1. Dedicated HE inclusion specialist Objective 2 risk 5,6,7 and 10	Awareness raising of disabilities/ difficulties encountered in curriculum area identified through	Dedicated HE inclusion specialist Curriculum teams	Curriculum teams identify students requiring support. Students may self-declare. The dedicated inclusion specialist will work closely	N/A

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	enrolment and with collaboration with the inclusion specialist. Support tailored to individual needs through a referral process.	HE Advanced Practitioner for CPD External specialists for CPD	with curriculum teams to individually plan tailored student support. Plans will be reviewed on a termly basis.	
2. CPD organised for awareness raising with staff teams Objective 2 risk 7	CPD activities to raise awareness of difficulties/disabilities students in higher education can present and strategies for supporting them	Inclusion specialists HE Advanced practitioner	HE teams are aware of difficulties/disabilities and strategies/ referral points to access for student support	N/A
3. Dedicated DSA specialist Objective 2 risk10	Students identified on enrolment for potential support. Interviews with DSA specialist and support in completion of application.	Dedicated DSA specialist	Applications identified in a timely manner so that support is in place at the beginning of the student journey	N/A
4. HE Academic Coach activity. Objective 2 Risk 6	Students with disability/difficulty identified through enrolment and on-programme through regular review. Regular HE Academic Support Coach input to secure continuation and completion.	HE Academic Coaches Curriculum team	HE Academic Coach activity to include strategies to support students with disabilities/difficulties and improve/maintain continuation/completion rates	IS 3 IS 4
5. Personal Support Objective 2 Risk 7	Additional personal support identified through team and/or student referral	Dedicated personal tutor who liaises with student and other agencies to support student for referral if necessary	Personal difficulties identified in the short term for action and support in long term of student life cycle to enable continuation, completion and progression	IS 2 IS 3 IS 4
6. Explore delivery modes of HE courses relevant to Disability/difficulties Objective 2 Risk 5 (long term intervention strategy)	Alternative modes of delivery for students with disabilities/difficulties to remove barriers for success	Curriculum Team Edtech support	Facilitate access to students with difficulties/disabilities to improve continuation and completion through course delivery design/development and curriculum planning	IS 2 IS 3 IS4
7. Expand the targeted student support and bursary/hardship fund over the four-year period, by at least the minimum of published inflation per year Objective 2 risk 6, and 7	Ensure sufficient funds are available for students on programme to support and enable success through continuation and completion	Finance HE Team	Disadvantaged students are identified, supported to continue, complete and progress Students meeting criteria for support and/or hardship are financially supported to continue and complete.	IS 2 IS 3 IS 4

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8. Peer mentoring support Objective 2 risk 7	A peer/buddy mentoring system utilising student from higher years and levels as appropriate to support continuation of students	Curriculum Team HE Academic Coaches Peer mentors	Students are supported in continuation through peer mentoring system. Peer mentors are developed to support students to continue through levels and course	IS 2 IS 3 IS 4
TOTAL INVESTMENT OVER 4 YEAR PLAN	£ 144,000			

INTERVENTION STRATEGY 3 (PTS2): ENANCE SUPPORT TO IMPROVE CONTINUATION RATES FOR FULL-TIME STUDENTS FROM DEPRIVED AREAS IMD Q1 AND 2

This strategy aims to mitigate the effects of Risk 6 (Insufficient academic support), Risk 7 (Insufficient Personal Support) and Risk 10 (cost pressures) thereby facilitating achievement of Objective 3.

PTS2 – DCG will eradicate the continuation gap between full-time students from the most deprived communities (IMD Quintile 1 and 2) and from the least deprived communities (IMD Quintile 3, 4 and 5). Using weighted average data drawn from the two-year OfS APP data dashboard average, the College will adopt as an objective the eradication, over the four-year period of this APP of the 4.5pp continuation equality gap that exists between the College’s two-year average for IMD quintiles 1 and 2 and IMD quintiles 3, 4 and 5 and aim that by the end of this four-year period such students from these most deprived communities will continue their studies at the rate of 90%, in line with the ambition for all full-time HE students.

DCG PROGRAMME OF INTERVENTION STRATEGIES: ACTIVITIES INPUTS AND OUTCOMES

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	INPUTS	OUTCOMES	CROSS INTERVENTION STRATEGY
1. Expand the targeted student support and hardship fund for students on programme. Objective 3 risk 6,7 and 10	Ensure sufficient funds are available for students on programme to support and enable success	Finance HE Team	Disadvantaged students are supported to continue, complete and progress	IS 2 IS 3 IS 4
2. Student bursary/ hardship support funds to increase over the four-year period: at least in line with annual inflation per year. Objective 3 risk 6,7 and 10	Student financial support schemes offered by DCG on enrolment and attendance of HE course increased to facilitate higher level of funding for students with	Finance HE Team	Students meeting criteria for support and/or hardship are financially supported to continue and complete.	IS 2 IS 3 IS 4

	difficulties of continuation.			
3. HE Academic Coach activity. Objective 3 Risk 6	Students from deprived/disadvantaged areas identified through enrolment and on-programme through regular review. Regular HE Academic Support Coach input to secure success	HE Academic Coach	HE Academic Coach activity to include strategies to support students from deprived areas and improve continuation rates	IS 2 IS 3 IS 4
4. Personal Support Objective 3 Risk 7	Additional personal support identified through team and/or student referral	Dedicated personal tutor who liaises with student and other agencies to support student	Personal difficulties identified in the short term for action and support in long term of student life cycle to enable continuation, completion and progression	IS 2 IS 3 IS 4
5. Explore delivery modes of HE courses relevant to Disability/difficulties Objective 3 Risk 5 (long term intervention strategy)	Alternative modes of delivery for disadvantaged students to enable success.	Curriculum Team Ed Tech	Facilitate access to disadvantaged students to improve continuation and completion through course design/development and curriculum planning	IS 2 IS 3 IS 4
6. Peer mentoring support Objective 3 risk 6,7 and 10	A peer/buddy mentoring system utilising student from higher years and levels as appropriate to support continuation of students	Curriculum Team HE Academic Coaches Peer mentors	Students are supported in continuation through peer mentoring system. Peer mentors are developed to support students to continue through levels and course	IS 2 IS 3 IS 4
TOTAL INVESTMENT OVER 4 YEAR PLAN	£ 132,000			

INTERVENTION STRATEGY 4 (PTS3): STRENGTHEN MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL BEING RESOURCES TO REDUCE THE GAP IN LEVEL OF STUDENT SATISFACTION REGARDING PROVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH/WELL-BEING SUPPORT (NSS) FOR FULL-TIME STUDENTS

This strategy aims to mitigate the effects of Risk 8 (Mental Health and wellbeing) thereby facilitating achievement of Objective 5. Other risks addressed are Risk 5 (limited choice of course type and delivery mode), Risk 6 (Insufficient academic Support), Risk 7 (Insufficient academic support) and Risk 10 (cost pressures).

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PTS3 DCG will address the risk to equality of opportunity for students with mental health difficulties of succeeding in and completing their study, over the four-year period of this APP, by eradicating the current 16pp. gap between the College’s (NSS) student satisfaction with the communication and availability of mental health and wellbeing services, and the overall sector, and by the end of that period at least match it.

DCG PROGRAMME OF INTERVENTION STRATEGIES: ACTIVITIES INPUTS AND OUTCOMES

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	INPUTS	OUTCOMES	CROSS INTERVENTION STRATEGY
1. HE Academic Coach activity. Objective 4 Risk 6 and 8	Students with declared mental health/well being identified through enrolment and on-programme through regular review. Regular HE Academic Support Coach input to secure continuation	HE Academic Coach (mental health/wellbeing specialist)	HE Academic Coach activity to include strategies to support students with declared and developed mental health/well-being difficulties and improve completion rates	IS 2 IS 3 IS 4
2. Personal Support Objective 4 Risk 7 and 8	Additional personal support identified through team and/or student referral	Dedicated personal tutor who liaises with student and other agencies to support student	Personal difficulties identified in the short term for action and support in long term of student life cycle to improve completion	IS 2 IS 3 IS 4
3. Dedicated inclusion specialist to work with students referred for mental health and well-being challenges Objective 4 Risk 8	A dedicated HE mental health/resilience/well-being coach to refer challenged students to for referral to more specialist agencies.	Mental Health/Resilience/well-being Coach HE curriculum teams HE tutors	Students challenged with mental health/resilience/well-being issues are supported to continue in their higher-level studies.	N/A
4. Explore delivery modes of HE courses relevant to Mental health and Well-being Objective 4 Risk 5 and 8 (long term strategy)	Alternative modes of delivery for students with mental health/well-being issues to enable success.	Curriculum Team Ed Tech Team	Facilitate access to students with difficulties/disabilities to improve completion and completion through course delivery design/development and curriculum planning	IS 2 IS 3 IS 4
5. Expand the student support and hardship fund	Ensure sufficient funds are available for students	Finance HE Team	Facilitate access to students with mental	IS 2 IS 3 IS 4

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for students on programme Objective 4 risk 6,7, 8 and 10	on programme to support and enable success		health/well-being issues to improve completion	
6. Student bursary/support funds to increase over the four-year period and at least in line with annual inflation per year. Objective 4 risk 6,7, 8 and 10	Student financial support schemes offered by DCG on enrolment and attendance of HE course increased to facilitate higher level of funding for students with difficulties of continuation.	Finance HE Team	Students meeting criteria for support and/or hardship are financially supported to complete	IS 2 IS 3 IS 4
7. Awareness training for HE community (staff and support) on mental health and well being Objective 4, risk 8	Develop a CPD programme for raising awareness of mental health and wellbeing issues within the HE community to include identifying students who are challenged and mechanisms for referral	HE Resilience Coach	Students with mental health and well-being issues are supported and have access to strategies to complete (and progress)	N/A
8. Peer mentoring support Objective 4 risk 7 and 8	A peer/buddy mentoring system utilising students from higher years and levels as appropriate to support continuation of students	Curriculum Team HE Academic Coaches Peer mentors	Students are supported in continuation through peer mentoring system. Peer mentors are developed to support students to continue and complete through levels and course	IS 2 IS 3 IS 4
TOTAL INVESTMENT OVER 4 YEAR PLAN	£ 176,000			

Summary of evidence base, rational and evaluation plan:

The activities within the Intervention Strategies Plans will be evaluated using, empirical and narrative methodologies. Much emphasis will be placed on additional student voice evidence as given the small size of the student population, the strong relationships with tutors, teachers and HE support staff, thereby enabling student feedback to be gathered informally and therefore contributing to the more mechanistic student voice processes already in place.

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Causal evaluation will not be employed as a methodology for evidence and impact. The size and scope of HE at DCG is too small and finances are limited and therefore goes beyond the scope of this APP.

Each activity will be triangulated utilising data analysis, student voice and curriculum team review. Comparisons to previous years access will be utilised. More detailed evaluation can be found in Annex B.

WHOLE PROVIDER APPROACH

There is a strong governance structure for HE at DCG. Senior leadership, an external HE governor, staff and student governors attend HE Academic Board where assessment against performance, progress towards strategic KPIs, OfS compliance and risk analysis is scrutinised. Teaching and learning is a focus and there is an opportunity to discuss themes which emerge through the observation process and through the formal quality enhancement processes. The HE Boards provide challenge to ensure that teaching and learning continues to be of the highest quality with outcomes for student experience and completion evidencing excellence. Data is a focus both quantitative and qualitative with strong attention to disadvantaged/underrepresented and disabled students, to ensure that their experience and outcomes have parity with the whole HE community. There are three HE committees that inform the Academic Board: Teaching, Learning and Scholarship, Widening Participation and Academic Quality and Standards.

DCG operates a whole College approach to improving equality of opportunity, which is articulated through its Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy. This policy applies to all our current and prospective students and apprentices, Governors and staff working at DCG on a paid or voluntary basis, external examiners, consultants, guests and contractors who visit our campuses. The policy is implemented through our Cross-college Widening Participation Committee, HE Senior Leadership/Academic Board and Curriculum Performance Committee which draws membership from all levels of the organisation, including the student body. These provide the HE community with a space to meet to discuss issues affecting the whole student experience from the information they receive, resources available to them, classroom, workshop and learning space activity, course content and design, assessment, policies and quality procedures and practice. Reports on activities and decisions that need to be made on spend for resources take place at committee and are then taken to Academic Board so that there is a two-way process between leaders and practitioners. Widening participation reviews the APP and facilitates the implementation of the action plan and reviews APP targets and explores strategies to improve and reach under-represented students at DCG through clear communication with numerous KS4 provisions and sixth forms within the D2N2 region, joining of community groups that are underrepresented, and bespoke case study profiles on successful students. The impact of strong governance has been wide ranging and includes activities such as the establishment of new HE spaces and resources including essential digital resources in Land-based and Engineering to upskill students' digital skillsets, statistical packages to enhance data analysis and mathematical skills, and new facilities in Animal Care to enhance real-life practical industry experience. Also, expanding and refining academic support roles, reviewing and setting up mechanisms to support the development of HTQ's, Higher and

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Degree Apprenticeships and micro credentials offered within pathways to support those individuals working in industry and compliment their current skillset.

All significant DCG Policies and decision-making processes are impact assessed to ensure that due regard is had in eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between everyone who may have a protected characteristic and those who do not. The Widening Participation Committee oversees the APP and is responsible for its implementation and evaluation, recommending actions to take forward if required. All curriculum areas are involved in this committee, along with support and have active input into any consultation process that is pertinent to APP.

This commitment is underpinned by targets that are shaped by evidence and aligned with other strategic priorities and are part of the KPIs which are reviewed at HE SLT/HE Academic Board. Our mission statement firmly roots these values and states that “We positively change people's lives and add value to the social and economic wellbeing of our communities”. For example, DCG’s actions aligned to equality, diversity and inclusion, such as links to the Curriculum Design and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Frameworks as well as complementing business and community engagement. The APP aligns with DCG’s core pedagogic frameworks that commit to inclusive curricula and practice so that students from all backgrounds are engaged and supported to succeed.

DCG’s Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework highlights the importance of creating a sense of belonging and sense of purpose amongst students as well as building their self-efficacy and resilience. This includes building strong networks of support to facilitate student engagement with their curricula as well as extra-curricular activities, and creating meaningful connections that provide access to the necessary advice, guidance and support at the right times in their individual learner journeys. Inclusion is recognised as everyone’s responsibility and is included in mandatory training for staff. This training is complemented through access to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) networks for colleagues and students to participate in the co-creation and evaluation of institutional policy and practice. A full student lifecycle approach has been adopted in this plan, where support begins pre-entry and extends to progression. Opportunities exist, and will be expanded through this plan, for a diverse range of students to act as role models and the Student Voice.

Module and programme level actions and outcome monitoring is managed within core quality assurance mechanisms with upward monitoring through the academic governance committees and processes. College Access and Participation Groups have responsibility for ensuring that actions are completed and outcomes monitored and evaluated effectively.

Objectives are ratified by the College’s Governing Body. Our suite of Intervention Strategies are firmly linked to these objectives, most notably through our aim to diversify our talent and enhance our community by attracting and recruiting a wide range of students and staff— those that have the DCG is an inclusive and

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neurodivergent friendly College and we aim to improve the experiences of neurodivergent students through three of our intervention strategies which promote flexible learning, training for staff, additional support and activities to promote a greater sense of belonging. The College is committed to invest in all students and recognises the need to particularly focus and develop our programmes of activities around the under-represented HE student groups identified in the APP. Our Intervention Strategies seek to address multiple risks to the student lifecycle including access, continuation, completion and progression.

DCG has a continuing professional development programme specifically for HE curriculum and support staff. This enables the HE community to share good practice, support student concerns and take HE pedagogy forward. The current versions of all attendant policies and approaches can be found on our website. In developing its Access and Participation plan, DCG has sought equal representation from all areas of the College including students. DCG expects full participation in activities to further progress towards our intervention strategies. DCG recognises that the activities that are required to meet its intervention strategies may change in response to evaluation activity, engagement with students or outcomes from our annual review; but the conceptual basis for access, continuation and participation will not.

STUDENT CONSULTATION

Student voice and student feedback underpins every aspect of the higher education experience. Time is built into courses to allow reps to discuss and gather student feedback, concerns and praise to take to the relevant forums. The minutes of each meeting are published and accessible to all students on the programme. In addition to the National Student Survey (NSS), DCG conducts its own HE Internal Quality Survey that mirrors the questions and themes within the NSS and is open to all HE students on all Level 4 and above HE regulated programmes and underpins the continuous improvement expected at DCG for higher education.

Summary of National Student Survey Data (NSS) from the most recent NSS headlines, published in 2024, demonstrates a positivity measure of +4pp for teaching on my course, assessment and feedback +14pp, academic support + 4pp, student voice +3pp, freedom of expression +10pp. The areas to address are mental wellbeing services -16pp, learning resources -5pp. The response rate at DCG was 60% compared with 74% for the sector and was completed by 42 students. DCG has committed to ongoing spend and additional funding to support and enhance resources in bespoke areas, including but not limited to, Digital, Land-based, Engineering and Construction. Academic support is particularly high and reinforces DCG's excellent support for its HE students. The NSS data mirrors the TEF Data Dashboard and internal HE quality surveys. Continuous improvement plans have been implemented for IT for example with Virtuality Rooms (VR), interactive learning resources and the implementation of industry equipment, particularly in Sport and Land-based. Attendance, continuation, completion and progression on these programmes is high with significant high grades evidenced, particularly at Level 6, supporting an excellent student experience with an opportunity to achieve at the highest level.

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Due to the size of our cohort, DCG has not asked students to produce a separate student submission but have ensured that students have been actively involved in every phase of the design of this APP. After the initial assessment of performance, groups of student representatives, including students from each of the underrepresented groups, identified, were canvassed through focus group activity and questionnaire. Focus groups and the questionnaire reviewed: Accessibility and Application Process, Barriers to Learning, Academic Support, Pastoral Support Continuation and Career Support, Cost of Living.

A wider student population was given the opportunity to communicate through a Microsoft form with subsequent analysis (Annex A). This includes all student representatives and students in receipt of financial student support at DCG. These students came from a cross-section of course areas and levels, from students who had progressed from DCG FE courses and those from other institutions. As much student representation has been included in the development of intervention strategies utilising the focus groups and Microsoft form analysis. These consultations have informed key objectives and interventions. Interventions included: Increase Staff Training (neurodiversity), Improve Communication, Personalised Support and Extra-Curricular Opportunities.

Further student opinion has been gained from national student surveys (NSS) and internal HE quality surveys, together with feedback from regular programme committee meetings that include programme student representatives which are minuted with actions to address.

Overall, the analysis (Annex B) evidences a strong student voice that identifies with the strategies and interventions offered within this plan. The report highlights the importance of student feedback in shaping the APP. It emphasises the need for targeted interventions to address barriers to learning, improve academic and pastoral support, and enhance career guidance and financial assistance.

EVALUATION AND MONITORING

DCG is committed to ensuring that the activities and interventions put in place have the greatest possible impact on the student experience and the student lifecycle. Overall student outcomes are outstanding with completion rates of over 95% over the last three years and progression, to positive outcomes circa 85 -90% (PowerBi data). Evaluation of these actions will ensure that, interventions and strategies supporting the APP, informs strategic planning and impacts on any gaps identified.

The HE risk register, has APP compliance, as a risk is reviewed termly and reports to senior leadership and governance through academic board and audit committee. Mitigations are embedded to ensure challenges are met by DCG as and when they present so that access and participation continues as a primary focus for HE at DCG.

A detailed evaluation plan of each intervention strategy and individual activities is available in Annex B.

In summary, evaluation of progress will be measured through:

- **Data analysis** (internal data via Power BI and external data from the OfS dashboard)
- **Student feedback** (through Student Voice mechanisms and course reviews)
- **HE Programme Performance Review** (through curriculum area review three times per academic year)
- **Institutional governance oversight** (to track progress and refine strategies as needed)

The basis of the evaluation plan will draw on narrative and empirical methodologies. Causal evaluation will understandably be out of the scope of this APP and DCG will rely upon reference and application to sector-based research. It would be appropriate to acknowledge that, with the volumes of past and future student data being small, in real terms, and in a sector context, qualitative research and evidence gathered directly from students (individually and via groups) will be of most significance, whilst quantitative data analysis will remain relatively small scale, certainly in the early years of the APP cycle. Informal student feedback will be important, valuable and readily available, compared to other settings, and as such will provide a strong evidence base to move forward on. In recognition of this, the comments of John Blake, OfS Director of Fair Access and Participation, (November 2024) are pertinent and appropriate in that there are dangers of 'evaluation fatigue' and as such DCG will ensure a careful planning of student involvement to avoid overload of individuals and cohorts.

DCG continues to align its strategy to the APP and has strengthened robust monitoring and evaluation processes the commit evidencing the commitment to APP activity, evidencing that it has been appropriate and effective. Due to the small size of DCG, interventions will be maintained as relatively simple and straightforward with the aim of influencing and impacting on a relatively small population. Progress against the plan will be through a multilayer approach, from strategic to course level, together with a continual self-evaluation process which creates a report that is updated on a regular basis (tri-annually) and circulated to senior post holders throughout the academic year. If a worsening or stagnation of progress is evidenced against a milestone, there will be a review and evaluation of the current interventions in place. The outcome will result in changes to the strategic measures, interventions or resources, and updated via the 'Theory of Change' ethos, across the lifespan of the plan.

The Widening Participation Committee (WPC) is a key driver in this process and will strive to evaluate intervention contributing towards APP targets (or commitments to monitoring), the scale of the impact, the impact on the gap identified in the APP, and any negative/unintended consequences that have occurred as a result of the intervention. This committee reports to senior leadership and governance through the strong governance cycle implemented at DCG, where actions are noted and implemented through course teams, with monitoring and evaluation back to the WPC, thereby ensuring the cycle of monitoring and evaluation is completed.

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DCG will continue to monitor progress towards targets outlined in the objectives and intervention strategies, through DCG data and applicable data provided by other external organisations such as the Office for Students.

DCG will continue to refine and develop its data collection to ensure collection of the most informative data, that reflects the HE student population, as well as providing regular analysis to DCG management and other organisations responsible for monitoring Higher Education institutions.

Students will continue to provide feedback and updates through the Student Voice process (NSS, internal quality surveys, focus groups and PCM representation), which are monitored and evaluated. A robust course review monitoring process will be continued and together will work with agencies within the college, such as marketing and finance. DCG will continue to work with partner HEIs, University of Derby and Sheffield Hallam University, through communication and development opportunities, to continue to develop expertise in access and participation. It will also continue to work with external agencies such as, the Association of Colleges (AoC) and HE Associates as an ambition for continual improvement and enhanced expertise. The availability of the OfS self-evaluation diagnostic toolkit will be beneficial to ensure the DCG APP is on track and meeting timeline requirements for the support of our identified student populations. The toolkit is a useful self-diagnostic facility which will enhance APP evaluation for current status, progress and identify future ambitions. At present the diagnostic identifies DCG as 'emerging' in respect of APP evaluation and implementation, with a good strategic context and learning from evaluation, to take forward (Annex B).

As evidenced by the OfS diagnostic, DCG's strategic context is well placed to oversee evaluation methods and strategies by drawing on the expertise of all senior leaders from finance, curriculum, student support and other committees to ensure the adherence of OfS standards and compliance. This is confirmed by the TEF outcomes, where the college was rated as a strong, HE provider overall. There is also a strong evidence base in respect of the Theory of Change informing relevant and appropriate programme design. This is informed by literature and DCG research on local knowledge through a strong employer collaboration., ensuring that the strategic direction of HE at DCG is appropriate and relevant to the changing local and regional requirements. DCG's skills development was appraised in a recent OFSTED review (November 2024) as strong, indicative of DCG strategic direction in terms of skill development for Derby and Derbyshire's local young people.

Evaluation of individual HE programmes is already embedded and improving, with regular reviews of each curriculum area. This includes an appraisal of the curriculum offered through data, student voice and team activity. With APP a focus, managers are expected to be aware of APP data and any emerging impact or challenges. This ensures that accountability for the successful implementation and evaluation of the plan reaches programme level where challenges can be the addressed timely. In addition, a mid-year and end of year review of HE performance is written and evaluated by senior leadership and governors through the strong governance channels (whole provider response). APP has a number of recognised KPIs for regular

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review through governance channels and this will include the new objectives set in this APP. There is opportunity for staff development through the HE budget, with a dedicated HETLEP (Higher Education Teaching and Learning Enhancement programme), supported through the Head of HE and the HE Advanced Practitioner, staff are developed in access and participation, along with new HE pedagogies and challenges to HE programme, serving to form a HE community for all DCG HE teachers and support which is an essential facet for a small provider and is highlighted as a strength in HEI partner activities.

Plans for achieving a robust impact may be subject to external forces and/or the macro environment. To mitigate any factors beyond DCG control there will be a robust implementation and evaluation process through the regular review of the HE risk register.

DCG is mindful of the need for publication of the outcomes of its APP evaluation activity. As the APP cycle progresses the evaluation commentary will be placed on an appropriate part of the College's website, and for students within an accessible part of the virtual learning environment.

More detailed evaluation activities can be seen in Annex B (pages 42-70).

STUDENT INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

The college is committed to providing clear and accessible information to all prospective and current students, detailing exactly what they will have to pay and what financial support will be in place for the duration of their course. This includes arrangements for bursaries and loans and grants provided by national funding authorities. The College will also provide updated fees information to UCAS and SLC, in a timely manner, in order for these important external sources of information to provide the most up-to-date applicant-facing web content.

DCG provides information on fees, costs and financial support primarily on our website, and also through a printed and web-based prospectus, face to face meetings, interviews, leaflets, social media, open days and through responding to individuals by either email or phone. Student Support Advisers will provide applicants and current students with information, advice and guidance relating to a range of topics such as starting their course, finance, welfare advice and student loans. Course teachers speak with applicants in depth about the courses, the content and opportunities it may provide them.

Any courses that have additional costs, field trips or resource requirements are clearly stipulated on the course page(s) on the website alongside being discussed at interview and open days.

DCG provide timely information to UCAS and SLC about current fees, which is mirrored on the DCG webpages and within the Fees Policy which is also published on the website.

DCG ensures transparency in financial information and provides various financial aid options:

- **Tuition fees loans through SFE**
- **Other funding options:** employer sponsorship, Disabled Students Allowance

As a small provider with limited resources, financial assistance is limited to a student bursary/support fund that is available for application on an annual basis for all years of HE studies, following enrolment and when the student is on programme. Information is given to each HE student through individual letter together with the application process. Applications are reviewed by a panel, Head of HE, Director of Higher Technical Education, and HE administrator. To qualify for consideration the applicant must have a household income of less than £25,000 per annum and be enrolled on an undergraduate degree, foundation degree, or Higher National Certificate course as a full-time student and paying directly or by fee loan the full tuition fee for the course, have UK home status for student funding purposes and are eligible to receive a tuition fee loan from the national student finance service (SFE). Criteria are utilised to score the application: disabilities/difficulties not covered by DSA, reside in an area of deprivation (IMD 1 & 2), travel difficulties, caring responsibilities in the familial home (most DCG students live at home). Students meeting a criterion will receive £500 to a maximum of £2000, depending on the number of criteria agreed. The overall payment agreed is divided into three termly payments.

In addition, there is an annual hardship fund for students who are experiencing exceptional hardship. Application is through a form (available on the HE Hub) where the applicant outlines the reason for an immediate payment which is then forwarded for verification by their tutor and reviewed by Head of HE and Director of Higher and Technical Education.

The APP and the summary APP are published on the DCG website within the HE dedicated space which is available for all students and other interested parties.

Annex A: Further information and analysis relating to the identification and prioritisation of key risks to equality of opportunity Derby College Group (DCG)

This Annex (A) to the main body of DCG's APP provides additional information and analysis, which is linked and pertinent to the identification and analysis of key risks to the equality of opportunity for students (and student groups) across the various stages of the student lifecycle that are recognised in the APP section entitled "Risks to Equality of Opportunity". In accordance with OfS Regulatory Advice 6, the Annex does not contain a full assessment of DCG's performance but does include further explanation to that in the named main body section above, of the approach DCG has taken in conducting the assessment of its performance linked to the indicators of risk and the recognition of risks to equality of opportunity for different student groups at different lifecycle stages.

The analysis has been informed by reference to the following data sources:

- The OfS APP Data Dashboard
- The OfS TEF 2023 Data Dashboard
- The OfS TEF Shape and Size Data Dashboard (2023 and 2022)
- DCG's TEF 2023 Written Submission
- DCG's TEF 2023 Panel Statement
- DCG's current APP covering the period 2021-22 – 2025-26
- DCG's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement– Our Vision 2025
- The OfS Student Outcomes Data Dashboard
- DCGs own student data records sourced from college ILR returns, facilitated through the college's MIS system, Power BI HE Data Base
- DCG's Internal Student Survey data
- National Student Survey (NSS) data
- And HESA Graduate Outcomes

DCG is, as described in the TEF 2023 Panel Statement, "a further education college providing higher education at two of its four campuses across Derby". The Introduction and Strategic Aim section (pages 1 - xx) of the main body of this APP provides further detail of its HE student offer, profile and priorities.

When considering the data available DCG has recognised that compared with other providers within the sector, the College has small HE student numbers which may mean that intersectional or disaggregated analysis is limited and/or that high levels of statistical uncertainty may be present. DCG has accordingly been

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mindful that its data contains limitations, complexities and uncertainties which are common when analysing small datasets.

Whilst the OfS APP Data Dashboard, which provides both sector and provider specific data, has been a helpful source of data with respect to access, the identification of risks to equality of opportunity for some student groups entering HE, continuation, the investigation of the success of students progressing from their first year of study to a second (or completing a one-year course), and completion of study, it has been less helpful, due to very small student numbers, in examining potential risks at the later stages of the student life cycle journey (attainment, and progression). Indeed, for these two later lifecycle stages there are groups of students for which no DCG data is available. Some of the data in the APP Data Dashboard is also quite dated. Please see the table below for detail:

OfS Indicators	Timescales	2017-2023		2016-2022		2013-2019		2017-2023		2017-2022	
		Access	Continuation	Completion	Attainment	Progression					
Mar-25											
	TUNDRA	Data Available	No DCG Data	Limited DCG Data	No DCG Data	No DCG Data	No DCG Data	TUNDRA			
	IMD	Data Available	Limited DCG Data	Limited DCG Data	No DCG Data	No DCG Data	IMD				
	Ethnicity	No DCG Data	Limited DCG Data	Limited DCG Data	Limited DCG Data	Limited DCG Data	Ethnicity				
	Age	Data Available	Limited DCG Data	Limited DCG Data	Limited DCG Data	Limited DCG Data	Age				
	Disability	Data Available	Limited DCG Data	Limited DCG Data	Limited DCG Data	Limited DCG Data	Disability				
	ABC's	Data Available	Limited DCG Data	Limited DCG Data	No DCG Data, No Sector Data	No DCG Data	ABC's				
	FSM	Data Available	Limited DCG Data	Limited DCG Data	No DCG Data, No Sector Data	Limited DCG Data	FSM				

Where the APP Data Dashboard has been used as a source of data, in accordance with OfS Guidance Regulatory Notice 1, published 7 December 2023, subsection 59, pages 10 - 11, four- and two-year aggregate values have been used, and have been considered a more reliable indicator of the risks to equality of opportunity than the analysis of annual data, due to the small data volumes and student numbers which can lead to annual percentage data which is prone to inconsistency and significant shifts from year to year.

DCG collects and reports its HE student data via its ILR. Internal DCG data for the years up to, and including 2023/2024, has also been used to identify risks to the equality of opportunity for students.

The analysis also draws, as a secondary source of data, upon 2023 TEF indicators, comparison to benchmarks, the TEF Data Dashboard and the TEF 2022 and 2023 Shape and Size of Provision Dashboard, the OfS Student Outcomes Data Dashboard and the contents of the summary of the 2023 TEF panel assessment of the College. These provide additional evidence to help support hypotheses of risks to equality of opportunity and/or confirm that apparent inequalities are less clear with the benefit of additional data.

Due to the small student numbers, it has not been possible, or appropriate, to explore intersections of student characteristics/risks to equality of opportunities or disaggregation into smaller groups.

DCG, like many general further education colleges, has in student volume terms, and qualification type and level, a very different HE provision to the sector overall. Where appropriate DCG has used the OfS APP Data

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Dashboard's its "all undergraduate" and "other undergraduate" level of view has been used when comparing with the sector.

Whilst it is recognised that DCG's core course offer to adults and 16–18-year-old students is different in terms of level, duration, accreditation and outcomes, and that the student experience is also different, reference has been made to wider college student data and performance, where it is significant and synergetic with the analysis of, HE student performance (e.g. ethnic make-up of overall DCG student population).

DCG has applied the principles of the OfS' sector wide Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) to its own context, offer and student characteristics. This has assisted in supporting hypotheses of risks to equality of opportunity where data volumes are small and statistical uncertainty arises.

Where it has been considered that an absence of student data may lead to a failure to identify a risk to the equality of opportunity, other evidence, significantly student and staff consultation, has been used along with other college-based data, such as uptake of student services, to ensure no student group, nor lifecycle situation has been overlooked.

The 2021/22 - 2025/26 APP, of which this is a renewal, identified four objectives aimed at specific student groups at different points in the lifecycle with three for Access, and two for Success.

The number of risks to equality of opportunity, and associated objectives, identified at the time of writing this 2026/27 - 2029/30 APP, is four, all in relation to full-time students, and broadly cover the same student groups as in the previous APP, but on two occasions at different lifecycle points. The very small volume of student data available in connection with part-time students has restricted the ability to recognise with certainty any risks to equality of opportunity. The following analysis does however explore a small number of situations where there is a suggestion of risk, but which will be monitored internally.

The TEF 2023 Panel Judgment suggests a strong overall performance – DCG was awarded silver overall and gold for Student Outcomes. The TEF Panel Statement explained that "Student outcomes are typically outstanding quality". The full wording of the Statement appears below. This overall judgement does not suggest, nor indicate, that DCG will recognise many student groups with risks to equality of opportunity at different stages in the lifecycle, nor set itself many specific APP objectives.

DCG's Higher Education Context

The TEF 2023 Panel Statement described DCG's HE as having:

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- “Around 220 full-time and 170 part-time undergraduate students in 2020/21. Almost all (98.6 per cent) of higher education courses are one and two-year courses. 15 per cent of full-time and 11.6 per cent of part-time students have a disability.
- The majority of students are over the age of 21.65 per cent of students come from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and over 50 per cent are local to the area prior to studying at the college”
- Up to date student numbers for 2023/24 and 2024/25 appear on page 5 of the Introduction and Strategic Aim section.

The Summary TEF 2023 Panel Statement judged that “Outstanding quality features” included:

- outstanding rates of continuation and completion for the provider’s mix of students, due to tailored and detailed support,
- outstanding rates of successful progression,
- and highly effective collaboration with local employers to develop courses and offer placements.”

FULL-TIME STUDENTS

ACCESS

Recognised Risks to the Equality of Opportunity for ACCESS to Higher Education

DCG has identified only one risk to the equality of opportunity for people accessing full-time HE at the College and has set an objective for this APP period as outlined in the “Objectives” section of the main body of the APP.

PTA1 – Students from ethnic minorities appear to suffer from a risk to equality of opportunity in accessing full-time HE studies at DCG. Students at DCG from ethnic minority communities are significantly underrepresented compared with the national context, and the student population is very largely white.

The two and four-year aggregate data for full-time students accessing full-time HE at DCG shows a significant majority white population of 94.8% and 95.4% respectively. The breakdown of students from individual ethnic minorities is not available. This very small representation of full-time students from ethnic minority groups is very different from the sector overall (where the white majority is 67% and 65% for the two and four-year aggregates respectively) and from many providers. The sector two and four-year averages show that the proportion of black students is 8% for both periods and 18% and 17% respectively for Asian students.

DCG recruits mainly locally, and this profile of full-time student population is more like the local population (see Introduction and Strategic Aim section – pages 5 - 8 for detail) where the City of Derby population is 25% black and ethnic minority, but the County of Derbyshire has a very significant white population of 96.3%.

However, more up to date internal College data shows a rise in the percentage of the non-white/ethnically diverse HE full-time student population to 15% in 2023/24. DCG’s 2025 EDI Report identifies a larger figure, of 28%, of the wider College population (younger, students, adults and Level 1 - 3 apprentices) as non-white/ethnically diverse.

CONTINUATION

Recognised Risks to the Equality of Opportunity for CONTINUATION of Study from year one to two (or successful award qualification)

DCG has identified two risks to the equality of opportunity for full-time students continuing their study from year one to two (or successfully achieve the award/qualification) and has set an objective for each of these for this APP period as outlined in the “Objectives” section of the main body of the APP.

PTS 1 - Full-time students reporting a disability appear to be less successful than those students not reporting a disability at continuing their study. The two and four-year aggregate data for full-time students reporting a disability shows only 75.6% and 80.9% (respectively) of the population continuing their study whilst students not reporting a disability successfully continue their study at a higher rate (two-year average 88.6% and four-year average 91.2%). This indicates an equality gap for students reporting a disability [compared to those who do not] of 13 pp for the two-year average and 10.3 pp for the four-year average, a worsened situation in more recent years.

		Continuation %	Student Numbers
Reporting disability	Two-year average	75.6%	40
No disability	Two-year average	88.6%	170
Equality Gap	Two-year average	13.0pp	

		Continuation %	Student Numbers
Reporting disability	Four-year average	80.9%	90
No disability	Four-year average	91.2%	400
Equality Gap	Four-year average	10.3pp	

Source; OfS APP data dashboard

TEF 2023 indicators show full-time students reporting a disability continuing at the rate of 80.9% (broadly in line with TEF benchmark) but 10.3pp below that for those not reporting a disability. The continuation performance of students not reporting a disability was outstanding, and materially above benchmark, at 91.2% (benchmark 81.9%).

DCG’s internal data, partly influenced by small student numbers, shows an inconsistent performance from year to year. The most recent year’s data (2023/24) shows 84.8% of full-time students reporting a disability continuing, compared to an overall College performance of 89.7% and a gap of 4.9pp, but the preceding year 2022/23 shows 86.5% of full-time students with a disability continuing which was 0.5% higher than the College average. However, 2021/22 witnessed a much less successful year for full-time students with a disability – only 66.7% continued which was 2.7pp below the overall college average (itself an unusually low level of performance, partly influenced by the impact of the pandemic).

Whilst the number of full-time students reporting a disability in the more recent two-year and four-year averages are small (40 and 90 respectively), the TEF indicators demonstrate a comparison to an admittedly outstanding performance by full-time students not reporting a disability, the size of the equality gap, the more recent worsening position, internal College data showing an inconsistent performance, and the presence of a similar situation at the time of writing the previous APP, leads us to setting a formal APP objective (PTS1) to address this risk to equality of opportunity.

PTS2 - Full-time students from the most deprived communities (IMD quintiles 1 and 2) appear to be less successful than those students from the less deprived communities (IMD quintiles 3 - 5) at continuing their study. Based on a weighted average calculation of both the four-year and two-year averages, the continuation rates for full-time students from the most deprived communities are 86.7% and 83.1% respectively, some 3.8pp and 4.5pp below that of the continuation rates for students from the least deprived communities.

IMD quintile		Continuation %	Student Numbers	
1	Four-year average	86	90	
2	Four-year average	87.5	80	
1 and 2	Subtotal		170	86.7%
3	Four-year average	90.7	110	
4	Four-year average	90.3	90	
5	Four-year average	90.4	110	
3-5	Subtotal		310	90.5%
IMD quintile		Continuation %	Student Numbers	
1	Two-year average	83.3	40	
2	Two-year average	82.9	40	
1 and 2	Subtotal	166.2	80	83.1%
3	Two-year average	87.2	50	
4	Two-year average	87.8	40	
5	Two-year average	87.8	50	

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3-5	Subtotal	262.8	140	87.6%
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Source; OfS APP data dashboard

TEF 2023 indicators show full-time student from more deprived communities (IMD quintiles 1 and 2) continuing at the rate of 86.7% (materially above TEF benchmark) but 4.0pp below that for those from the least deprived communities (IMD quintiles 3 - 5) (also materially above TEF benchmark).

Whilst DCG recognises that the continuation rates for all full-time students are above benchmarks it wishes to acknowledge that both the OfS APP data dashboard two and four-year averages and TEF indicators demonstrate full-time students from more deprived communities (IMD quintiles 1 and 2) continuing well, but less well, than their counterparts from the less deprived quintiles (IMD quintiles 3 - 5) and will accordingly set an APP objective (PTS2) to address this risk to equality of opportunity.

COMPLETION

Recognised Risks to the Equality of Opportunity for COMPLETION of Study

DCG has identified only ONE risk to the equality of opportunity for full-time students with a mental health disability attempting to complete their study, and has set an objective for this APP period, as outlined in the “Objectives” section of the main body of the APP.

PTS3 – Full-time students with mental health challenges report that they are less aware, and confident, of the support available, which appears, albeit from limited data, to potentially have a negative impact upon their success in completing study.

Internal College “pass” data, a proxy for completion, indicates that full-time students with mental health difficulties are less successful at completing their studies compared with students reporting no disability and those reporting other disabilities. DCG recognises that its completion rates are historically high, as recognised in TEF 2023, and above benchmarks, and therefore any comparison to those can be unrealistic. In the past three years (2021/22 - 2023/24) “pass” rates for students reporting mental health challenges have been 89%, 90% and 80% respectively, which are 7, 9, and 16 percentage points below the “pass” rate for students reporting other disabilities. However, it is acknowledged that these annual rates are based on very small numbers of students completing their studies and are considered a less good basis upon which to articulate a future objective.

Student feedback, informally via tutors, and formally via PCMs, from student representatives at deliberative committees, internal college surveys and NSS is consistent in an expression of an insufficient awareness, access and confidence of students in the mental health and wellbeing services available from the College.

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DCG considers that this is a more helpful and potentially impactful basis for the establishment of an APP objective than completion rates, although internally the College’s quality processes will closely monitor completion (and other success rates) for full-time students with mental health difficulties.

DCG’s satisfaction response percentage to the NSS question in the table below has dropped quite dramatically between 2022/23 and 2023/24 (by 16pp.) and is significantly below the sector average. DCG’s PTS3 APP objective will look to address the 16pp. gap between the College’s student satisfaction and the sector (this having quadrupled from 4pp in 2022/23).

NSS question 26	2022/23	2022/23	2023/24	2023/24	Gap
	DCG	Sector	DCG	Sector	DCG/Sector
“How well communicated was information about your university/college’s mental health wellbeing support services?”	79%	75%	63%	79%	16pp

Source; NSS data 2022/23 and 2023/24

ATTAINMENT Context and Risks to Equality of Opportunity

DCG has NOT identified any risks to the equality of opportunity for full-time students in connection with attainment, nor set any APP objectives.

The OfS APP Data Dashboard only investigates situations and students studying for a Full Honours Degree qualification and the relative performance of student groups in achieving first class or upper second-class honours classifications. Accordingly, for DCG, where most full-time students study “other” undergraduate awards upon which classifications/grades such as Distinction/Merit are gained, the available/published data is restricted to a very small number of student groups.

Whilst there is a suggestion of some inequalities of opportunity for younger full-time students, compared with mature students (a gap of 9pp over the four-year average and similar over the two-year average), and for full-time students reporting a disability, compared to those not, (a gap of 10.5 pp over the four-year average – no data available for the more recent two-year average), this is based, in both cases, on a very small number of students (younger students four-year just 50 and two-year an even smaller 30, and the number of student reporting a disability just 30) and is insufficiently reliable for APP objective setting.

Similarly, there is an apparent 11pp gap between the attainment of full-time students from the most deprived IMDQ1 community, and IMDQ2, the second least deprived community, but this is based on a very small student population (40 and 30 respectively) over the four years of the average and is insufficiently reliable for

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any APP objective setting. The volume of data and students has reduced in more recent years, and the two-year average is not reported.

PROGRESSION Context and Risks to Equality of Opportunity

DCG has NOT identified any risks to the equality of opportunity for full-time students in connection with their progression from study to employment or further study nor set itself any APP objectives.

The volume of data here is limited by three factors, the timing of the data collection source, the Graduate Outcomes Survey, 18 months, after the completion of study, a survey response rate which at best across the sector is only between 50 and 60% and the small size of the College's overall full-time student population at this lifecycle stage.

Whilst there may be some suggestion of inequality of opportunity for full-time younger students, compared to mature students (41.3% compared to 59.8% progression and a gap of 18.5pp), those full-time students from the most deprived communities (IMDQ1) compared with the least deprived (IMDQ5) (39.4% compared with 63.6% and gap of 24.2 pp), as explained below, both are based on very limited volumes of data and are insufficiently reliable for APP objective setting. The young students' pool/denominator of 80, with a response rate [to Graduate Outcome survey] of just 37%, therefore represents a response over four years from just 30 students, and a "most deprived" student pool/denominator of only 30 students, with a response rate of 33.7%, and therefore represents a response over four years from just 10 students.

The "Introduction and Strategic Aim" section of the main body of the APP (pages 1-12) explains DCG's intention to uplift careers/further study and progression support for its HE students which will impact on all students, and student groups, and contribute towards the eradication of any small gaps in equality of opportunity for groups which may exist, but which cannot with certainty be identified.

PART-TIME STUDENTS

Context and suggestion of risks to equality of opportunity

Whilst DCG's provision of part-time HE studies on a proportional, and % [of students] basis, exceeds the sector and is a further example of its diversification of available pathways, the number of students accessing, succeeding and progressing from part-time students is very small. TEF Size and Shape data dashboard reports 160 part-time students in 2022/23, reduced from 190 4 years earlier.

Accordingly, whilst DCG identifies below the suggestions of some risks to equality of opportunity for part-time student groups at some lifecycle stages the evidence is insufficiently reliable upon which to base formal APP objectives and will be monitored internally.

DCG also, in recognising the OfS guidance contained in the APP template (January 2025), considers that due to “its size and context” these indications of risks to a much smaller [part-time] than full-time student population, and one that has reduced recently, are beyond “its capacity” to address [directly] in this APP.

It should also be noted that all the suggestions of a risk to equality of opportunity for the following part-time student groups, at different lifecycle stages, will, in practice, benefit from the impact of interventions outlined in the similarly titled section of the main body of the APP aimed at matching full-time students.

- Access – reporting a disability – the four-year (13%) and two-year (14%) averages suggest that part-time students either experience less disabilities than full-time students (18% and 20% respectively) or are less successful or active in reporting them.
- Continuation – deprivation- the four-year average shows 68.2% of part-time students from the most deprived quintile (IMDQ1) continuing their study but 75.3% of students from the least deprived community (IMDQ5) continuing, a gap of 7.1pp, but the more recent two-year average shows a much smaller gap of just 1.1pp. Both averages are based on very small student numbers (four-year IMDQ1 just 70 students and two-year average an even smaller 30 students).
- Continuation - age - the four-year average shows 81.7% young (under 21) part-time students continuing their study but only 69.9% of mature students continuing, a gap of 11.8pp, the more recent two-year average shows a similar gap of just 11.6pp (although the two-year comparative average for young students is based on a very small number of students (30). The TEF 2023 data seems to indicate that there may be an underlying risk to equality of opportunity for mature students, with only 62% of those over 31 years continuing their studies, 20pp less than those of younger years (under 21 - 82.2% and 21–30-year-olds – 82.3%). The continuation performance of the more mature (+31-year-old) students is 12.5pp below benchmark and was considered by TEF as “materially below benchmark”.
- Continuation – disability - the four-year average shows just 62.5% of part-time students reporting a disability continuing their study but 73.6% of students not reporting a disability continuing, a gap of 11.1pp, However, the four-year average is based a student population of only 40 students reporting a disability over those years, and the more recent two-year average is not reported due to a still smaller student population.
- Completion – part-time students from the most deprived communities (IMD quintiles 1 and 2) appear to be less successful than those students from the less deprived communities (IMD quintiles 3 - 5) at completing their study (see table below) Based on a weighted average calculation of both the four-year and two-year averages, the completion rates for part-time students from the most deprived communities are 85.2% and 76.6% respectively, some 5.0pp and 10.8pp below that of the completion rates for students from the least deprived communities. The much bigger equality gap for the more recent two-year average, is, however, based on a small student population, which is proportionately smaller than that of the longer and earlier period.

IMD quintile		Completion	Student Numbers	
1	Four-year average	83	90	
2	Four-year average	87.7	80	
1 and 2	Subtotal	170.7	170	85.2%
3	Four-year average	86.7	100	
4	Four-year average	90.9	90	
5	Four-year average	92.3	130	
3, 4 and 5	Subtotal		320	90.2%
IMD quintile		Completion	Student Numbers	
1	Two-year average	73	40	
2	Two-year average	81.3	30	
1 and 2	Subtotal	154.3	70	76.6%
3	Two-year average	84.4	30	
4	Two-year average	89.7	40	
5	Two-year average	87.3	60	
3, 4 and 5	Subtotal	261.4	130	87.4%

Source; OfS APP data dashboard

No risks are recognised for the two latter lifecycle stages, attainment and progression because of the type of courses studied e.g. HNC/D offering Pass/Merit grades, and not Firsts no Upper Seconds, in the case of attainment, and the collection of data methodology (in the case of progression) which restricts the availability of data. These difficulties are explained fully in respect of full-time students above and is a heightened difficulty in the case of part-time students where the student numbers are even smaller.

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.

The importance of the DCG APP is recognised and with this in mind, there will be emphasis and resource on monitoring and evaluation. DCG has analysed HE performance (Annex A), consulted with students and staff (Student consultation, Widening Participation Committee section 1), and conducted a literature review (Annex B). The literature review provides a rationale and a further underpinning evidence approach to enable appropriate intervention strategies (Section 1) to be identified for this APP.

DCG strategic context is one where an evaluation context is supported and prioritised, including extensive evaluation across all programme areas at: programme, team and senior leadership level. There are regular meetings scheduled at programme and strategic levels on HE performance enabling opportunities for conversations regarding access and widening participation. Evaluation occurs on a regular basis particularly through the driver, the Widening Participation Committee (WPC). Access and Participation and the evaluation of strategies from interventions are agenda items on all programme monitoring reviews, HE senior leadership and HE academic board meetings. In consequence support, culture and skills at strategic level are strong. Senior leaders are mindful of the embedding of a widening participation culture and ethos as a whole college, and particularly in the DCG HE community as evidenced by small gaps and a commitment to students particularly from under privileged/disadvantaged backgrounds or those with mental health and disability challenges.

In respect of Evaluation Design the method of Evaluation must be proportionate to the activity and appropriate for the purpose of measuring impact. DCG evaluation plans are in line with the standard of evaluation expected by the OfS. Student success is clearly monitored across all demographics and triangulated through quantitative and qualitative analysis and evaluation, using data capture (Power Bi), data analysis and evaluation, student voice analysis and evaluation and specific methodologies appropriate to each intervention activity. DCG is mindful of the necessity for strong, reliable data collection so that evaluation methodology can be reliable and inform on impact and alert programme leaders, team managers and HE performance monitoring of any possible risks with mitigations in place to address and reduce such risk factors.

DCG recognises that despite its significance to the College, and to the provision of higher learning opportunities (particularly to its adult learners), its past and current HE student population is small. Given that the full-time provision of HE at DCG serves to offer an equality of opportunity to students from areas of deprivation where these students may be the first in the family to participate in higher level study the opportunities available and the success that these groups achieve is to be commended. Underpinning this is the research on child poverty which indicates that: it is a strong indicator for families living in poverty. According to the government report in 2024 (Child poverty: Statistics, causes and the UK's policy response), one of the key factors driving child poverty is a lack of parental qualifications. Namely, no or low levels of parental qualifications have a strong correlation to long-term worklessness and low earnings. These factors

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in themselves also perpetuate future child and family poverty. There are a number of relative influencing factors on future poverty, but Parental Qualifications are among the most influential. Regarding child poverty, DCG has concerning statistics as outlined in section one. The interventions that have been identified relate to the full-time provision where there is evidence of high mental health and wellbeing challenges together with financial constraints and an expectation of contribution to the family unit through caring responsibilities or additional monies.

The negative impact of poverty on educational performance, which is also supported through the student consultation process and student voice, identifies the pressures of 'cost of living' as an impact on study. The evidence also supports the effect of on students from areas of deprivation (IMDQ 1 and 2) and students who are the first of their families to access higher education, feel under confident and anxious regarding transition to higher level studies. This therefore supports the approach for transitioning underrepresented groups to full-time HE study and supporting those students from areas of deprivation in continuation and completion through HE Academic Support Coaching and peer mentoring.

Although DCG has a diverse student population within the 16- 19-year-old, study programmes, with ethnically diverse populations approaching the city statistics, higher education has remained on a static trajectory, (circa 15 -17%) and 11 percentage points below city representation for the proportion of ethnically diverse. With this in mind and further literature review the challenges and barriers to access requires further investigative study, as outlined in objective/intervention strategy 1.

The availability of a limited but available DCG student HE specific bursary and hardship scheme also serves to support identified groups (student information section). As those students from areas of deprivation and those with disabilities, have limited financial means in the main, despite being able to access student tuition and maintenance loans. The intervention strategies put in place will continue to support these students through continuation on programme and ultimately lead to success and progression.

The review of literature further highlights the need to address mental health, well-being and resilience challenges, as evidenced in the student voice and student consultation. Hence, there is strong rationale to include this as an objective with the requisite intervention strategies to ensure and secure continuation and success within this particular group.

The OfS self-evaluation toolkit evidence DCG as emerging with a strong strategic ambition and good for learning from evaluation. This demonstrates that evaluation findings and results are used to inform practice through reflection, sharing and dissemination, translating into adjustments or innovation in practice. Hence, DCG analysis and evaluation is informed of the current status, and future ambitions can then be articulated in the objectives, with intervention strategies utilised to address and improve the access and participation for students.

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The rationale for planned activities for the four Intervention strategies identified are based upon the following principles and draws not only from feedback and commentary from HE students but also other stakeholders including Level 3 students aspiring to progress to HE, employers, staff, support, management, governance structure, partner HEIs and awarding bodies:

1. The principles of successful practice and support already applied across DCG in its provision of education and learning to all its students.
2. Feedback from higher education students about their enquiry and application experiences, their subsequent induction and study experiences and support for progression.
3. The recognition from feedback from students during consultation, and in exploring the College's EORR, including adult learners (higher and degree apprentices) and those from underrepresented groups having specific support needs and learning preferences resulting from a gap since prior study, past learning experiences, the ease/difficulty of accessing learning and other resources outside colleges, and financial challenges faced in their own, and their families lives, worsened by the recent cost of living crisis.
4. Student feedback and recommendations, from contributions in recent focus group activity, programme committee meetings for each HE course, university revalidation events, TEF 2023 outcomes and recommendations, focussing on:
 - Facilities in terms of spaces to study outside of the classroom
 - Continued, flexible academic support
 - Study Skills sessions to develop academic writing
 - Student Voice – mental health and well-being support strategies for early intervention
 - Course changes and communication
 - Personal and financial support
5. An understanding of DCG catchment area and the economic, social, and educational backgrounds of potential students.

The key supportive strategies that DCG employs and have evidence of impact, to reduce equality of opportunity risk, which will be maintained, developed and continued in the articulated intervention strategies are:

HE Academic support coaching for skills development at DCG is an integral component of the HE curriculum and HE community. Delivered as flexible and personalised academic skills development for HE students, across all the provision. HE academic support coaching, develops academic skills, learning behaviours and confidence in working at Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7. During 2023/24, Academic Coaches facilitated more than 414 personalised one to one tutorials, 72 workshops and 50 inductions. Engagement and participation are increasing year on year with 2023/24 seeing a 10% increase in student activity and for

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2024/25 this is continuing to grow. Engineering students engaged significantly in one-to-one tutorials and workshops, particularly at Level 6 (BEng Top Up), and this has contributed to their strong completion rate and high degree outcomes ((97%). Workshops focus on academic skills development in, for example, academic writing, critical thinking, research, literature reviews and reflective practice.

Academic Coaches monitor educational gain by measuring higher level skill development. Coaches and students track their progress, identify skill gaps and are able to work on improvement strategies in order to facilitate improved quality of assessments, employability skills and life skills overall. Student feedback on the impact of one-to-one tutorials and workshops was very positive, as evidenced by feedback surveys, PCMs, Internal Quality Surveys and an external HEI Quality review with Sheffield Hallam University. Pearson also commented favourably on the student support in Standards Verification Reports. The value of dedicated HE Academic Coaches has been recognised by partner institutions and is referenced as a strength in HEI reports, validations, HEI quality reviews and external examiner/moderator reports. It is also recognised by all stakeholders as a key driver in the success of HE at DCG in terms of the student experience and student outcomes.

Peer Mentoring Scheme. Following a successful Action Research project on peer mentoring in Criminal Justice, (2022/2023), to enhance and support the continuation of Level 4 students to Level 5, a further pilot was implemented in subsequent years. The aim of the peer mentoring scheme was to develop a learning community, deepen mentor and mentee engagement with programme materials, develop autonomous learning and study skills, and build student employability attributes. Positive outcomes for progression for further study (continuation) has been a focus for the mentors. For example, 100% of mentees on Level 4 provision (criminology and animal management) progressed to Level 5 and became mentors. One mentor studying at Level 6 successfully secured employment in the police and commented that the experience of mentoring had provided him with the skill set required to successfully complete and engage with the interview process. Mentees on their respective programmes continued and, many in 2023/24, are keen to be mentors of new students. This Peer Mentoring Scheme has been implemented in 2023/24 in Teacher Training and Equine with a view to expand and embed across the whole HE provision. Further investment in this process to support DCG students from disadvantaged areas (IMDQ 1 and 2) would be beneficial to student success and consequent progression.

Mentoring and counselling schemes raise aspirations and demystify HE pathways. Although evidence on direct enrolment impact is still emerging, these services are strongly associated with improved student confidence and preparedness for future employment.

Support for Students with a Disability. Learning support is of high quality, leading to good outcomes for supported students. At interview, students are advised that support is available. If in scope for Disability Student Allowance (DSA) these are informed on processes on how to access the support. Mechanisms are in place to secure positive outcomes for students include, for example, development of person-centred

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teaching support plans that are designed to support and guide HE teaching staff with strategies for differentiation and inclusivity, advice and support with applications for DSA, assistive software/technology training, both face-to-face and remotely, to students who do not meet the criteria for the DSA award, and population of the HE dedicated platform (360 Hub) with resources that support and advise students on managing their disability. The gap for continuation and completion between students with a disability and those without is apparent, evidencing a supportive inclusive learning environment for all students irrespective of any disability declared or not.

HE Bursary and Hardship Funds Bursaries are offered on a means tested application system to support attendance, success and progression at DCG and encourage wider facilitation of external work placements within curriculum programmes. This small fund serves to support students from low-income households, first time students to HE, disabilities other than DSA, mental health and well-being, caring responsibilities. Hardship is for immediate emergency events that may impact a student's accessibility to their higher-level studies.

The availability of additional funding through, bursary/hardship has continued to be a key factor in the high continuation and completion evidenced over the last three years at DCG. Students articulate a positive response to bursary and hardship support. Eligible students are counselled to application, particularly the hardship fund, as and when challenges are encountered on programme. The full-time cohort with circa 60% from deprived areas and families of low income are particularly supported to access and succeed in higher levels of programme study, which they may not have been able to access if this funding was not available. These students have the opportunity to achieve and, usually at a higher level than may be expected or anticipated.

Evidence indicates that clear, well-publicised bursaries and incentives boost enrolment among disadvantaged students, especially when eligibility and application processes are straightforward.

A Dedicated Learning Support specialist has continued to be assigned to the HE community. This specialist works with programme teams at interview, induction and at any point in the student journey when a need is evidenced. Dedicated CPD was also delivered to all HE teachers and managers within the HETLEP programme, to develop HE teachers' knowledge and skills, and teacher behaviours in utilising inclusive teaching practices to further promote equality of opportunity therefore contributing to widening access participation.

Mental Health and Well-being support is a clear challenge for this APP. The recent literature and student and staff voice have evidenced an increase in challenge for completion of HE study for some students, particularly those from disadvantaged/deprived backgrounds. Mental health and well-being support is therefore identified as a high risk for equality of opportunity and with this in mind strong intervention strategies are proposed to address this.

The evaluation of the plan's activities:

Evaluation reports will be shared via a dedicated 'Teams' site for internal consultation and evaluation. Evaluation activities will be presented to the Widening Participation Committee. A summary will be published on the website in a dedicated APP section for external access and dissemination to partners and relevant stakeholders.

Evaluation of the planned intervention strategies evidences a strong theme in respect of EORR risks namely, 6 (insufficient academic support), 7 (insufficient personal support) and 10 (cost pressures). These risks are identified in three of the four objective intervention strategies. This reflects the HE community that DCG serves, and its resultant HE population. DCG identifies as an institution that provides improved life chances and opportunities to students from deprived/disadvantaged areas who would have difficulties in continuing, completing and progressing from a more traditional provider.

EVALUATION DETAIL FOR INTERVENTION STRATEGIES 1 -4

INTERVENTION STRATEGY 1 (PTA1): INCREASE THE PROPORTION OF ENROLMENTS FROM FULL-TIME ETHNICALLY DIVERSE APPLICANTS (ACCESS)

This strategy aims to mitigate the effects of Risk 1 (Knowledge and Skills), Risk 2 (Information and Guidance) and Risk 3 (Perception of HE) thereby facilitating achievement of Objective 1:

PTA1 DCG will address the risk to equality of opportunity of access to full-time HE studies at the College for students from ethnic minority communities who, presently, are significantly underrepresented, by increasing the percentage of non-white/ethnically diverse students enrolled to full-time HE programme (as reported on the OfS APP data dashboard) by 16pp. from the current 5% to 21% over the lifetime of this APP.

Evidence Base:

One of the primary concerns at DCG is the gap between applications and enrolments for students from ethnically diverse backgrounds. While there is a healthy proportion of applications from these groups, they do not always convert into enrolments. The reasons for this trend need further investigation, but potential barriers include a lack of access to clear and inclusive information about courses, financial constraints, and the need for additional guidance during the application process.

The data indicates that those ethnically diverse students who do enrol at DCG exhibit strong continuation and completion rates. This suggests that the primary challenge is at the access stage rather than in continuation and completion.

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Supporting those studying Level 3 qualifications to make choices about further study is associated with improving local skill and qualification levels and enabling access for students from underrepresented groups.

Local intelligence data and DCG data evidence a low take up of ethnically diverse students on full-time programmes hence interventions need to be in place. This is reflective of the literature on black/ethnic young people entering higher education e.g. The Sutton Trust – 25 Years of University Access (October 2023), where long term trends in the student life cycle have been analysed and evaluated and show that at black young people have a high overall entry rate but gaps at still exist at some institutions. In addition, the Education Policy Institute (EPI) – Access and participation in HE in 2022/23 (June 2024) Presents progression rates to higher education by a range of characteristics, including ethnicity, highlighting those Black/African/Caribbean students’ progress at lower rates than some other groups. Similarly Advance HE – Race Equality Charter (REC) (Updated for 2023/24) evaluated a sector-led framework and self-assessment tools to help institutions identify and address barriers facing Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff and students.

At DCG there is a strong success rate for ethnically diverse students once enrolled and on programme but there appears to be a barrier at the initial stage of the student lifecycle which needs further investigation and support.

Based on the underpinning evidence and strategies that have been evidenced in the literature together with strategies utilised at DCG for other programmes of study, a series of activities have been developed that support PTA1. These activities will seek to address the challenge of the identified risks. Each intervention has been chosen carefully, with methodologies that enable, evaluation.

DCG PROGRAMME EVALUATION OF INTERVENTION STRATEGIES: ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

ACTIVITY	OUTCOMES	METHODS OF EVALUATION	SUMMARY OF PUBLICATION PLAN
<p>1.Widen marketing of HE programmes Pre-entry (Objective 1, risk 1 and 3)</p> <p>Target students pre-entry in schools, college and employment through improved inclusive marketing material, social media, employers and dedicated HE</p>	<p>HE programmes reach wider audience of potential HE students to increase applications of ethnically diverse students.</p> <p>(medium term)</p>	<p>This will include both type 1 (narrative) and Type 2 (empirical enquiry) evaluation standards.</p> <p>e.g.</p> <p>The tracking of application data via UCAS and Derby direct application process will track and record application rates for ethnically diverse students compared to white British.</p> <p>Follow ups will include</p>	<p>Evaluation reports will be shared via a dedicated ‘Teams’ site for internal consultation and evaluation. A summary will be published on the website in a dedicated APP section for external access and dissemination to partners and relevant stakeholders.</p>

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<p>marketing representative</p>		<p>conversions to enrolments. Student feedback on application process.</p>	
<p>2. Monitoring of applications; (Objective 1 risk 1, 2 and risk 3) Support the application process through advice and guidance (initial IAG HE specific and curriculum teams) to ensure the relevant knowledge and skills are apparent for applicants to progress to application and interview</p>	<p>Increase of applications from ethnically diverse students Reduction in perceived barriers. Improved tracking and evaluation Data driven improvements to future internal and external progression initiatives (Medium term)</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>As above</p>
<p>3. Increase transition activities for level 3 students to prepare them for higher education study Develop transition days for level 3 students to improve the knowledge and skills required for higher education study</p>	<p>Increase of applications for ethnically diverse level 3 students at DCG Improve knowledge and skills required for application process Improve confidence levels for transition to higher level study Improved data collection, analysis and evaluation for ethnically diverse students (short/medium term)</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>As above</p>
<p>4. Monitor Enrolment for students who are under confident in the process. Objective 1, Risk 2 and 3) Intervene with support from curriculum teams and</p>	<p>Increase in conversion of application to enrolment Improved data collection, analysis and evaluation for ethnically diverse students Improved demographic overview of all</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>As above</p>

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<p>careers specialists (a dedicated HE Careers specialist to engage with all curriculum teams) for support to under confident applicants</p>	<p>applications through MIS in the short term</p> <p>Interventions to improve applications and following enrolments from ethnically diverse students to improve in long term to achieve 21 % by year 4.</p> <p>(medium/long term)</p>		
<p>5. Work with employers to raise awareness of the value of a diverse workforce (Objective 1 Risk 1, 2 and 3)</p> <p>Scope and target employers who work in collaboration with DCG to encourage a diversity of apprenticeship opportunities for underrepresented groups through ESBs and marketing opportunities</p> <p>Explore the mechanisms that may influence widening participation in HE</p>	<p>Improved awareness of underrepresented groups in HE provision in the workplace</p> <p>Improved data collection, analysis and evaluation of ethnically diverse students sponsored by employers</p> <p>(long term)</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>As above (a fully evaluation of impact of employer engagement may occur in the latter part of the APP cycle)</p>

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INTERVENTION STRATEGY 2 (PTS1): IMPROVE CONTINUATION RATES FOR FULL-TIME STUDENTS WITH DECLARED DISABILITIES/DIFFICULTIES

This strategy aims to mitigate the effects of Risk 5 (limited choice of course type and delivery mode), Risk 6 (insufficient academic support), Risk 7 (insufficient personal support) and Risk 10 (cost pressures) thereby facilitating achievement of Objective 2.

PTS1 – DCG will address the risk to equality of opportunity for full-time students who report a disability to continue their studies, by eradicating the continuation gap of 13pp (shown by the APP data dashboard) between full-time students reporting a disability, and those that do not, over the four-year period of this APP and aim that by the end of this period, such students [with a disability] will continue their studies at the rate of 90%, in line with the ambition for all HE full-time students.

Evidence Base:

Although students with declared disabilities are low there is a gap which needs to be addressed, as evidenced by: DCG enrolment data, DSA applications, On programme data (Power BI), Student voice, Staff and student consultations, Bursary/hardship applications.

The literature underpins and confirms that students with disabilities/difficulties are less likely to continue and succeed compared to students without. E.g. Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), “Turning the Tables” (2019), reviews the barriers that disabled students face in higher education and how institutions are or are not meeting their legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010. In addition, Thomas, (2012), reviews ‘Building student engagement and belonging in Higher Education at a time of change’ includes findings related to inclusive learning environments and how disabled students engage with HE.

Fuller (2004), presents findings from a survey of disabled students at a UK university, highlighting institutional barriers such as inflexible teaching methods and inadequate support services. The study emphasizes the need for staff development and institutional commitment, which is appropriate for an intervention strategy.

In addition, there are numerous publications that recognise the importance of removing barriers, improving support and attitudes, to enable students with a disability/difficulty to succeed in HE as well as informing pedagogy and institutional strategies.

Based on the underpinning evidence and strategies that have been evidenced in the literature together with strategies utilised at DCG for other programmes of study, a series of activities have been developed that support PTS1. These activities will seek to address the challenge of the identified risks. Each intervention has been chosen carefully, with methodologies that enable, evaluation.

DCG PROGRAMME EVALUATION OF INTERVENTION STRATEGIES: ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

ACTIVITY	OUTCOMES	METHODS OF EVALUATION	SUMMARY OF PUBLICATION PLAN
<p>1. Dedicated HE inclusion specialist Objective 2 risk 5,6,7 and 10</p> <p>Awareness raising of disabilities/ difficulties encountered in curriculum area identified through enrolment and collaboration with the inclusion specialist. Support tailored to individual needs through a referral process. CPD organised for awareness raising with staff teams.</p>	<p>Early identification of students with disabilities</p> <p>Early identification of eligible students for DSA</p> <p>Early intervention of support strategies for individual students</p> <p>Improved continuation through additional support from appropriate agencies</p> <p>Improved curriculum team knowledge of personal intervention strategies required</p>	<p>This will include both type 1 (narrative) and Type 2 (empirical enquiry) evaluation standards e.g. analysis of student life cycle</p> <p>Inclusion specialist engagement.</p> <p>Disability/difficulties support analysis on student continuation and completion will be monitored through the student life cycle.</p> <p>The continuation and completion of students eligible for additional support will be compared with students not requiring additional support and reported on.</p>	<p>Evaluation reports will be shared via a dedicated 'Teams' site for internal consultation and evaluation. A summary will be published on the website in a dedicated APP section for external access and dissemination to partners and relevant stakeholders.</p>

	<p>Improved staff awareness of difficulties/disabilities</p> <p>(short/medium term)</p>		
<p>2. CPD organised for awareness raising with staff teams</p> <p>Objective 2 risk 7</p> <p>CPD activities to raise awareness of difficulties/disabilities students in higher education can present and strategies for supporting them</p>	<p>Awareness raising for staff so that intervention strategies can be deployed earlier in the life cycle of the student</p> <p>Improve continuation and completion leading to success</p> <p>(medium term)</p>	As above	As above
<p>3. Dedicated DSA specialist Objective 2 risk10</p> <p>Students identified on enrolment for potential support. Interviews with DSA specialist and support in completion of application.</p>	<p>Applications identified in a timely manner so that support is in place at the beginning of the student journey</p> <p>Improved continuation and completion of students identified</p> <p>Improved data collection</p> <p>(short term)</p>	As above	As above
<p>4. HE Academic Coach activity. Objective 2 Risk 6</p> <p>Students with disability/difficulty identified through enrolment and on-programme through regular review. Regular HE Academic Support Coach input to secure continuation and completion.</p>	<p>Improved HE Academic Coach activity to include strategies to support students with disabilities/difficulties</p> <p>Improve/maintain continuation/completion rates</p> <p>(short term)</p>	As above	As above
<p>5. Personal Support Objective 2 Risk 7</p> <p>Additional personal support identified</p>	<p>Personal difficulties identified in the short term for action and support</p>	As above	As above

<p>through team and/or student referral</p>	<p>(short term)</p> <p>In long term of student life cycle to enable continuation, completion and progression</p> <p>(long term)</p>		
<p>6. Explore delivery modes of HE courses relevant to Disability/difficulties Objective 2 Risk 5</p> <p>Alternative modes of delivery for students with disabilities/difficulties to enable access to courses and success.</p>	<p>Development of different delivery models through course design to improve accessibility</p> <p>Improved curriculum planning to facilitate access through different modes of study</p> <p>Facilitate access to students with difficulties/disabilities to improve continuation and completion</p> <p>(long term)</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>As above (a full evaluation of impact on delivery mode may occur in the latter part of the APP cycle)</p>
<p>7. Expand the targeted student support/bursary and hardship fund over the four-year period, by at least the minimum of published inflation per year Objective 2 risk 6,7 and 8</p> <p>Ensure sufficient funds are available for students on programme to support and enable access, continuation and completion</p> <p>Student financial support schemes offered by DCG on</p>	<p>Bursary and hardship funds for students are sustained and accessible</p> <p>Application procedures are clear and straight forward</p> <p>Disadvantaged students are identified, supported to continue, complete and progress</p> <p>Continued financial support to support student life cycle</p> <p>Reduction of the 13pp continuation gap over</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>As above</p>

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<p>enrolment and attendance of HE course increased to facilitate higher level of funding for students with difficulties of continuation and completion.</p>	<p>the 4-year period so that continuation Improves to 90% in line with other students</p> <p>(short/medium and long term)</p>		
<p>8. Peer mentoring support Objective 2 risk 7 A peer/buddy mentoring system utilising student from higher years and levels as appropriate to support continuation of students</p>	<p>Students are supported in continuation through peer mentoring system.</p> <p>Peer mentors are developed to support students to continue through levels and course</p> <p>Mentees progress to mentors</p> <p>Activity in peer mentoring increases across the levels 4 to 5, 5 to 6</p> <p>(medium/long term)</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>As above (a full evaluation of impact of peer mentoring may occur in the latter part of the APP cycle)</p>

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INTERVENTION STRATEGY 3 (PTS2): ENHANCE SUPPORT TO IMPROVE CONTINUATION RATES FOR FULL-TIME STUDENTS FROM DEPRIVED AREAS IMD Q1 AND 2

This strategy aims to mitigate the effects of Risk 6 (Insufficient academic support), Risk 7 (Insufficient Personal Support) and Risk 10 (cost pressures) thereby facilitating achievement of Objective 3.

PTS2 – DCG will eradicate the continuation gap between full-time students from the most deprived communities (IMD Quintile 1 and 2) and from the least deprived communities (IMD Quintile 3, 4 and 5). Using weighted average data drawn from the two-year OfS APP data dashboard average, the College will adopt as an objective the eradication, over the four-year period of this APP of the 4.5pp continuation equality gap that exists between the College's two-year average for IMD quintiles 1 and 2 and IMD quintiles 3, 4 and 5 and aim that by the end of this four-year period such students from these most deprived communities will continue their studies at the rate of 90%, in line with the ambition for all full-time HE students.

Evidence Base:

DCG has a high proportion of full-time students from low socio-economic backgrounds (approximately 60%). Many of these students live within the familial home, have casual part-time employment, which can create additional financial and time management pressures. In addition, many are expected to take part in any caring responsibilities within the family home.

Despite strong support mechanisms in place at DCG, cost pressures and mental health issues remain key factors in students deciding to withdraw or fail to complete their courses. Addressing these risks requires comprehensive financial support strategies and enhanced student well-being services.

As evidenced by: DCG enrolment data on-programme data (Power Bi) Student Voice, Staff and student consultations, Bursary/hardship applications.

The literature underpins and supports the intervention strategies and combine robust quantitative data on deprivation-based participation gaps with evidence-informed frameworks and practical tools to guide widening-participation strategies. E.g. Social Mobility Commission – State of the Nation (2023), People and Place annual report which analyses social mobility “by place,” with dedicated sections on educational progression for those from the most deprived areas. Additionally, the HE Professional, A Guide to Using Area-Based Measures for Improving Equality of Opportunity provides a practical guide for WP practitioners on leveraging POLAR4 and similar measures to target outreach and support activities. Further texts are useful

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in revealing persistent under-representation of students from the lowest participation areas, despite overall access gains.

Relative risk metrics from the Educational Policy Unit (EPI) 2024, reveal the scale of under-representation (e.g., Q1 areas are now 1.96 times less likely to progress than Q5, down from 2.85 in 2009-10).

In summary, effective intervention strategies for widening higher-education access among young people from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 combine precise targeting, evidence-based objectives, multi-tiered support measures, rigorous evaluation, and strong partnerships. Area-based participation data and relative risk analyses identify priority localities and quantify participation gaps. Strategic planning uses these diagnostics to set SMART objectives tied to specific IMD gaps and local “drivers” of mobility. Intervention portfolios typically include financial assistance, mentoring and role-model schemes, tailored information and guidance, summer schools, and contextual admissions processes, each drawn from robust evidence reviews. Continuous improvement relies on clear evaluation frameworks and ongoing data monitoring.

In practice, as with other providers, DCG will integrate these elements into their Access and Participation Plan by linking diagnostics to objectives, embedding evidence-based interventions, and committing to transparent evaluation and continuous refinement. Over time, this multi-layered approach will drive measurable gains in access, success, and progression for students from IMD quintiles 1 and 2.

Based on the underpinning evidence and strategies that have been evidenced in the literature together with strategies utilised at DCG for other programmes of study, a series of activities have been developed that support PTS2. These activities will seek to address the challenge of the identified risks. Each intervention has been chosen carefully, with methodologies that enable, evaluation.

DCG PROGRAMME EVALUATION OF INTERVENTION STRATEGIES: ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

ACTIVITY	OUTCOMES	METHODS OF EVALUATION	SUMMARY OF PUBLICATION PLAN
<p>1. Expand the targeted student support and hardship fund for students on programme.</p> <p>Objective 3 risk 6, 7 and 10</p> <p>Ensure sufficient funds are available for students on programme to support and enable</p>	<p>Bursary and hardship funds for students are sustained and accessible</p> <p>Application procedures are clear and straight forward</p> <p>Disadvantaged students are identified,</p>	<p>This will include both type 1 (narrative) and Type 2 (empirical enquiry) evaluation standards e.g. analysis of student life cycle</p> <p>Financial support analysis on student continuation and completion will be</p>	<p>Evaluation reports will be shared via a dedicated ‘Teams’ site for internal consultation and evaluation. A summary will be published on the website in a dedicated APP section for external access and dissemination to partners and relevant stakeholders.</p>

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<p>access, continuation and completion</p>	<p>supported to continue, complete and progress</p> <p>Continued financial support to support student life cycle</p> <p>Reduction of the continuation gap over the 4-year period so that continuation Improves to 90% in line with other students (short/medium and long term)</p>	<p>monitored through student applications to the DCG student support and hardship funds.</p>	
<p>2. Student bursary/support funds to increase over the four- year period: at least in line with annual inflation per year. Objective 3 risk 6,7 and 10</p> <p>Student financial support schemes offered by DCG on enrolment and attendance of HE course increased to facilitate higher level of funding for students with difficulties of continuation.</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>As above</p>
<p>3. HE Academic Coach activity. Objective 3 Risk 6</p> <p>Students from deprived/disadvantaged areas identified through enrolment and on- programme through regular review. Regular HE Academic Support Coach input to secure success</p>	<p>Improved HE Academic Coach activity to include strategies to support students from deprived areas</p> <p>Improve/maintain continuation/completion rates (short term)</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>As above</p>

<p>4. Personal Support Objective 3 Risk 7 Additional personal support identified through team and/or student referral</p>	<p>Personal difficulties identified in the short term for action and support</p> <p>In long term of student life cycle to enable continuation, completion and progression</p> <p>(short term)</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>As above</p>
<p>5. Explore delivery modes of HE courses relevant to Disability/difficulties Objective 3 Risk 5 (long term intervention strategy)</p> <p>Alternative modes of delivery for disadvantaged students to enable success.</p>	<p>Development of different delivery models through course design to improve accessibility</p> <p>Improved curriculum planning to facilitate access through different modes of study</p> <p>Facilitate access to students with difficulties/disabilities to improve continuation and completion</p> <p>(long term)</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>As above (a full evaluation of impact on delivery mode may occur in the latter part of the APP cycle)</p>
<p>6. Peer mentoring support Objective 3 risk 6,7 and 10</p> <p>A peer/buddy mentoring system utilising student from higher years and levels as appropriate to support continuation of students</p>	<p>Students are supported in continuation through peer mentoring system.</p> <p>Peer mentors are developed to support students to continue through levels and course</p> <p>Mentees progress to mentors</p> <p>Activity in peer mentoring increases</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>As above (a full evaluation of impact on peer mentoring may occur in the latter part of the APP cycle)</p>

	across the levels 4 to 5, 5 to 6 (medium/long term)		
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INTERVENTION STRATEGY 4 (PTS3): STRENGTHEN MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL BEING RESOURCES TO IMPROVE COMPLETION RATES FOR FULL-TIME STUDENTS

This strategy aims to mitigate the effects of **Risk 8 (Mental Health and wellbeing)** thereby facilitating achievement of Objective 4. Other risks addressed are Risk 5 (limited choice of course type and delivery mode), Risk 6 (Insufficient academic Support), Risk 7 (Insufficient academic support) and Risk 10 (cost pressures).

PTS3 DCG will address the risk to equality of opportunity for students with mental health difficulties of succeeding in, and completing their study, over the four-year period of this APP, by eradicating the current 16pp gap between the College’s (NSS) student satisfaction with the communication and availability of mental health and wellbeing services, and the overall sector, and by the end of that period at least match it.

Evidence Base:

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DCG has a high proportion of full-time students from low socio-economic backgrounds (approximately 60%). Many of these students live within the familial home, have casual part-time employment, which can create additional financial and time management pressures. In addition, many are expected to take part in any caring responsibilities within the family home.

Despite strong support mechanisms in place at DCG, cost pressures and mental health issues remain key factors in students deciding to withdraw or fail to complete their courses. Addressing these risks requires comprehensive financial support strategies and enhanced student well-being services.

As evidenced by: DCG enrolment data, on-programme data (Power BI), Student Voice, Staff and student consultations, bursary/hardship applications.

The literature review underpins the challenges of mental health and well-being for students in higher education. It recognises the need for investment to support these students to enable them to have the same equality of opportunity experienced by their peers. With this in mind the inclusion and recognition of this intervention strategy is a necessity and requires activities that promote and allow continuation and completion by this particular group of students. The literature also confirms that the sector as a whole is realising that investment into student mental health and wellbeing needs to be increased due to an increased demand. Some universities (University of Wales, Greenwich University, for example) have increased their respective mental health budgets by 400 – 600%. DCG has seen an increase in students seeking mental health support (NSS 2023), and the intervention strategies outlined need to address this. The Institute for Employment Studies (IES) in its review of 'Supporting Students with Mental Health Issues', (2023) highlights the crucial role of academic staff and other HE services in supporting students with mental health problems. It emphasizes the importance of communication, education, and guidance in creating a supportive environment, which is also reflected in the DCG intervention strategies for this objective.

Based on the underpinning evidence and strategies that have been evidenced in the literature together with strategies utilised at DCG for other programmes of study, a series of activities have been developed that support PTS3. These activities will seek to address the challenge of the identified risks. Each intervention has been chosen carefully, with methodologies that enable evaluation.

DCG analysis and evaluation of this group identifies specific issues and challenges which are addressed below.

DCG PROGRAMME EVALUATION OF INTERVENTION STRATEGIES: ACTIVITIES INPUTS AND OUTCOMES

ACTIVITY	OUTCOMES	METHODS OF EVALUATION	SUMMARY OF PUBLICATION PLAN
<p>1. HE Academic Coach activity. Objective 4 Risk 6 and 8</p> <p>Students with declared mental health/well being identified through enrolment and on-programme through regular review. Regular HE Academic Support Coach input to secure continuation</p>	<p>Improved HE Academic Coach activity to include strategies to support students with mental health/wellbeing challenges</p> <p>(short term)</p> <p>Improve student satisfaction rates on mental health/wellbeing support/services to match sector level (NSS)</p> <p>(long term)</p>	<p>This will include both type 1 (narrative) and Type 2 (empirical enquiry) evaluation standards e.g. analysis of student life cycle. Analysis of student performance</p>	<p>Evaluation reports will be shared via a dedicated 'Teams' site for internal consultation and evaluation. A summary will be published on the website in a dedicated APP section for external access and dissemination to partners and relevant stakeholders.</p>
<p>2. Personal Support Objective 4 Risk 7 and 8</p> <p>Additional personal support identified through team and/or student referral</p>	<p>Personal difficulties identified in the short term for action and support in long term of student life cycle to enable completion and (progression)</p> <p>Improve student satisfaction rates on mental health/well-being support/services to match sector level (NSS)</p> <p>(short/medium/long term)</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>As above</p>
<p>3. Dedicated inclusion specialist to work with students referred for mental health and well-being challenges Objective 4 Risk 8</p>	<p>Early identification of students with disabilities</p> <p>Early identification of eligible students for DSA</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>As above</p>

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<p>A dedicated HE mental health/resilience/well-being coach to refer challenged students to for referral to more specialist agencies.</p>	<p>Early intervention of support strategies for individual students</p> <p>Improved continuation through additional support from appropriate agencies</p> <p>Improved curriculum team knowledge of personal intervention strategies required</p> <p>Improved staff awareness of difficulties/disabilities</p> <p>Improve student satisfaction rates on mental health/well-being support/services to match sector level (NSS)</p> <p>(short/medium term)</p>		
<p>4. Explore delivery modes of HE courses relevant to Mental health and Well-being Objective 4 Risk 5 and 8 (long term strategy)</p> <p>Alternative modes of delivery for students with mental health/well-being issues to enable success.</p>	<p>Facilitate access to students with difficulties/disabilities to improve completion through course delivery design/development and curriculum planning</p> <p>(long term)</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>As above (xx)</p>
<p>5. Expand the student support and hardship fund for students on programme Objective 4 risk 6,7, 8 and 10</p> <p>Ensure sufficient funds are available for students</p>	<p>Bursary and hardship funds for students are sustained and accessible</p> <p>Application procedures are clear and straight forward</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>As above</p>

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<p>on programme to support and enable success</p>	<p>Disadvantaged students are identified, supported to complete and (progress)</p> <p>Continued financial support to support student life cycle</p> <p>Reduction of the continuation gap over the 4-year period so that completion Improves to 90% in line with other students</p> <p>(short/medium and long term)</p>		
<p>6. Student bursary/support funds to increase over the four-year period and at least in line with annual inflation per year.</p> <p>Objective 4 risk 6, 7, 8 and 10</p> <p>Student financial support schemes offered by DCG on enrolment and attendance of HE course increased to facilitate higher level of funding for students with difficulties of continuation.</p>	<p>Disadvantaged students are identified, supported to complete and (progress)</p> <p>Continued financial support to support student life cycle</p> <p>Reduction of the continuation gap over the 4-year period so that completion Improves to 90% in line with other students</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>As above</p>
<p>7. Awareness training for HE community (staff and support) on mental health and well being</p> <p>Objective 4, risk 8</p> <p>Develop a CPD programme for raising awareness of mental health and wellbeing issues within the HE</p>	<p>Awareness raising for staff so that intervention strategies can be deployed earlier in the life cycle of the student</p> <p>Improve completion leading to success</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>As above</p>

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community to include identifying students who are challenged and mechanisms for referral	(medium term)		
<p>8. Peer mentoring support Objective 4 risk 7 and 8</p> <p>A peer/buddy mentoring system utilising student from higher years and levels as appropriate to support continuation of students</p>	<p>Students are supported in completion through peer mentoring system.</p> <p>Peer mentors are developed to support students to complete through levels and course</p> <p>Mentees progress to mentors</p> <p>Activity in peer mentoring increases across the levels 4 to 5, 5 to 6</p> <p>(medium/long term)</p>	As above	As above

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Fees, investments and targets

2026-27 to 2029-30

Provider name: DCG

Provider UKPRN: 10001919

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	£35,000	£37,000	£37,000	£38,000
Financial support (£)	NA	£70,000	£72,000	£74,000	£76,000
Research and evaluation (£)	NA	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£11,000

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 (£)	£7,000	£8,000	£8,000	£8,000
Access activity investment	Post-16 access activities (£)	£28,000	£29,000	£29,000	£30,000
Access activity investment	Other access activities (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Access activity investment	Total access investment (£)	£35,000	£37,000	£37,000	£38,000
Access activity investment	<i>Total access investment (as % of HFI)</i>	13.5%	13.9%	13.6%	13.6%
Access activity investment	<i>Total access investment funded from HFI (£)</i>	£0	£0	£0	£0
Access activity investment	<i>Total access investment from other funding (as specified) (£)</i>	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	Bursaries and scholarships (£)	£60,000	£62,000	£63,000	£65,000
Financial support investment	Fee waivers (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Financial support investment	Hardship funds (£)	£10,000	£10,000	£11,000	£11,000
Financial support investment	Total financial support investment (£)	£70,000	£72,000	£74,000	£76,000
Financial support investment	<i>Total financial support investment (as % of HFI)</i>	27.0%	27.1%	27.2%	27.2%
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (£)	£10,000	£10,000	£10,000	£11,000
Research and evaluation investment	<i>Research and evaluation investment (as % of HFI)</i>	3.9%	3.8%	3.7%	3.9%

