

Access and Participation Plan

2020-21 to 2024-25

Spurgeon's College

1. Assessment of Performance

Spurgeon's College is a confessional Higher Education Provider (HEP) whose core activity is training men and women for Christian mission, ministry and leadership in the contemporary world. Today the College continues to prepare candidates for ordination to Baptist ministry within the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB). It also trains pastors from other denominations and those called to Pioneer Ministry and Missional work in its ministerial formation programmes.

While there are over 700 students enrolled on its validated and non-validated programmes there were fewer studying at HE-level in 2018-19. The profile of students on undergraduate programmes in 2018-19 can be summarised in access and participation terms as follows:

POLAR4 quintile 1	15%	(26/176)
IMD deciles 1 & 2	19%	(32/167)
Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic	38%	(67/177)
Young (less than 21 on entry)	N ¹	(N/179)
Reporting disability	N	(N/178)

Spurgeon's College (College) was not registered with the Office for Students (OfS) when the current edition of the *Access and Participation Data Dashboard* was released. The Dashboard does not list the College. As a consequence it does not provide any statistics which describe the performance of the College. Following accepted practice in the Higher Education (HE) sector the College does not publish 'small numbers.'² The College has not, therefore, declared the number aged 18-20 on entry to the College or the number reporting disability in 2018-19 (see above). It is the reason why the College has not declared the number of entrants during the four-year period, 2015-16 to 2018-19 inclusive, who were distance learners and classified themselves 'Black' (see below) or provided a breakdown of entrants between the various categories of deprivation (IMD), participation (POLAR4), age, and disability.

A more detailed explanation of the College's approach to evaluating its number sets is as follows:

- To evaluate Access to Higher Education, by comparing the recruitment of entrants from low income areas with the recruitment of entrants from high income areas, the College would have to divide its records between the five categories of the Index of Multiple Deprivation for England (IMD). A set of 125 entrants, permanently resident at postcodes recognised in England, would allow us to report 25 entrants per quintile if the distribution was uniform. If, however, a smaller proportion of entrants were recruited from one of these categories, e.g. 10% from quintile 1, the count would be only 12.5. The number set, of entrants necessary to report counts of 25 or more, would comprise twice as many entrants, i.e. 250 or more).

¹ This follows the OfS dataset practice of suppressing figures below 25, labelling them 'N'. ² See footnote 1.

- To evaluate Continuation, by comparing the proportion of students from low income areas who proceeded from one level to another with the proportion of students from high income areas who proceeded from one level to another, the College would have to divide its records between the five categories of deprivation. It would expect to have about twice as many students at levels 4 and 5 as entrants to level 4. 250 students uniformly distributed across five categories would allow the College to report 50 students per quintile. If, however, 90% of one of these groups continued in Higher Education, this would mean that 10% did not. The College cannot declare that 5 members of a group of students opted not to continue. To report student number counts of 25 or more, the set of data has to comprise five times the number of students, i.e. 1,250 or more.
- To evaluate Attainment, by comparing the proportion of students from low income areas who were awarded an Upper Class degree (1 or 2:1) with the proportion of students from high income areas who were awarded an Upper Class degree, the College would have to divide its records between the five categories of deprivation. The College does not expect to have more graduates than entrants (125). If, however, 80% of graduates obtained an Upper Class degree, this would mean that 20% obtained a Lower Class degree. As noted above, the College cannot declare that 5 members of a group exited with a Lower Class degree. To report student number counts of 25 or more, the set has to comprise five times as many graduates, i.e. 625 or more.
- To evaluate Progression, by comparing the proportion of alumni from low income areas who were in highly skilled employment with the proportion of alumni from high income areas who were in highly skilled employment, the College would have to divide its records between the five categories of deprivation. The College does not expect to have more alumni, in any year, than entrants (125). If, however, 90% of alumni were in highly skilled employment, this would mean that 10% were not. As noted above, the College cannot declare that 2.5 of a group of alumni were not in highly skilled employment. To report student number counts of 25 or more, the set has to comprise ten times as many alumni, i.e. 1,250 or more.

The College combined available records for a four-year period, i.e. our contribution to the *AP Student Record* for 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, and 2018/19. It also combined counts across all 'First Degree' and 'Other Undergraduate' programmes in Theology regardless of mode of study. Many of the counts, however, are still too small to be declared.

Entrants to 'First Degree' (2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19) can be summarised in access and participation terms in the following table:

Entrants				
	Full-time	PT ²	Distance Learners (DL)	Total
Black ³	29	28	N	
All Ethnic	70	64	85	219

² Part-time, not including distance learners.

³ Students who identify as Black students.

Groups ⁴				
	41%	44%		

Spurgeon's College is classified by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) as an Alternative Provider. Like other such providers, the College began submitting data to HESA recently. The *Dashboard* is therefore unable to provide statistics for the academic years prior to that of our first dataset (2015-16). Moreover, the *AP Student Record* which the College submits does not include every item from the longstanding *Student Record*. It does not provide, for example, information on whether or not an entrant was a 'care leaver', etc.

The remainder of Section 1 presents the data for the last four years (2015-16 to 2018-19) as follows:

- The College does not report counts of fewer than 25 individuals or provide descriptive statistics on groups containing fewer than 25 members.⁶
- The College has had very few 'young' (less than 21) entrants to its HE programmes. The numbers involved are so small, they cannot be declared. The assessment of performance is therefore restricted to those who were 'mature' (21 or over) on entry.
- The College has endeavoured to reproduce the indicators which were used in the *Access & Participation Data Dashboard*. We report: the percentage of entrants who belonged to various under-represented groups; the percentage of students who continued from one level of study to another (but restricted our attention to those on full-time programmes); the percentage of graduates who obtained an Upper Class degree (1 or 2:1); and the percentage of alumni who were in highly skilled employment (categories 1-3 of the Standard Occupational Classification) six months after exiting with an award (but did not include further study at a higher level as an alternative to highly skilled employment).
- The College has employed an RAG traffic light system in its assessment of performance. In this APP:
 - Green indicates that the College is performing better than the average for the HE Sector.
 - Amber indicates that the College's performance does *not* differ appreciably from that of the Sector.
 - Red indicates that the performance of the College is worse than average and that steps are required to correct the shortfall.
 - Where it is not possible to assess the direction and size of any difference, we have not ventured an opinion.

1.1 Higher Education participation, household income, or socio-economic status

Data on disadvantaged students are obtained from the POLAR4 and IMD (Indices of Multiple Deprivation) classifications of postcodes.

Access

⁴ Ethnicity only recorded where students are on designated courses.

The proportion of entrants to Spurgeon’s College who were drawn from low income areas (19%: Q1, IMD) did *not* differ appreciably from the proportion of entrants who were drawn from high income areas (18%: Q5, IMD). This is satisfactory.⁷

Mature Entrants on a first degree pathway	HE in England (2015-2018) ⁸	HE at Spurgeon’s (2015-2019) ⁹
IMD, F/T & P/T, Q5		18%
IMD, F/T & P/T, Q1	24%	19%
RAG		A
POLAR4, F/T & P/T, Q5		28%

⁶ See, OfS, Technical algorithms for institutional performance measures: Access and participation indicators, methodology and rebuild descriptions: https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/4465a31e80ca-4df9-be75-a51caa031f51/ofs-ap-data_methodology_rebuild-instructions.pdf

⁷ The gap of +1 percentage point was rated Amber.

⁸ This figure is for entrants 19 years and over.

⁹ This figure is for entrants 21 years and over.

POLAR4, F/T & P/T, Q1	12%	12%
RAG		R

The proportion, however, of our entrants drawn from low participation neighbourhoods (12%: Q1, POLAR4), was substantially lower than the proportion who were drawn from high participation neighbourhoods (28%: Q5, POLAR4). This is *not* satisfactory.⁵ Performance in improving access will be monitored against PTA_1.

Entrants training for Christian ministry are often preparing for a second career and are therefore likely to reside in neighbourhoods where the uptake of higher education has historically been high. This hypothesis, however, requires further analysis. The College will examine this relationship and report the results to the meeting of the APP Monitoring Group scheduled to be held in Summer 2020.

Entrants eligible for student loans (2015-16 to 2018-19) were not entitled to full funding of their fees, if they accepted a place at Spurgeon’s College. We think that this might have proven a greater disincentive for applicants from Q1 than for applicants from Q5. Unfortunately, the College does not hold records on applicants that would allow the confirmation or refutation of this notion. If the first hypothesis is correct, our comparison of Q1 and Q5 ought to be restricted to entrants who have never been in higher education; if the second, the shortage of entrants from Q1 in the past should improve in 2020-21 and the years that follow without requiring any change in practice.

⁵ The gap of -17 percentage points was rated Red. Performance in improving access will be monitored against PTA_1.

Success

Continuation

The proportion of full-time students from low income areas who continued their studies from one year to another (87%: Q1, IMD) was not significantly ($P \geq 0.05$) lower than the proportion of fulltime students from high income areas who continued their studies from one year to another (100%: Q5, IMD). This is satisfactory.⁶ (The gap of -13 percentage points was rated Amber.)

Students on a first degree pathway	HE in England (2015-2018)	HE at Spurgeon's (2015-2018)
IMD, F/T, Q5		100%
IMD, F/T, Q1		87%
RAG		A
POLAR4, F/T, Q5		96%
POLAR4, F/T, Q1		100%
RAG		A

The proportion of full-time students from low participation neighbourhoods who continued their studies from one year to another (100%: Q1, POLAR4) was not significantly ($P \geq 0.05$) higher than the proportion of full-time students from high participation neighbourhoods who continued their studies from one year to another (96%: Q5, POLAR4). This is satisfactory.⁷ Attainment

The proportion of Upper Class degrees (1 or 2:1) awarded to graduates from low participation neighbourhoods (55%: Q1, POLAR4) was *not* significantly ($P \geq 0.05$) lower than the proportion of Upper Class degrees awarded to graduates from high participation neighbourhoods (69%: Q5, POLAR4). This is satisfactory.⁸

Graduates (successfully completed level 6)	HE in England (2015-2018)	HE at Spurgeon's (2015-2019)
IMD, F/T & P/T, Q5	82%	90%
IMD, F/T & P/T, Q1	63%	39%
RAG		R
POLAR4, F/T & P/T, Q5	81%	69%
POLAR4, F/T & P/T, Q1	72%	55%

⁶ The gap of -13 percentage points was rated Amber.

⁷ The gap of +4 percentage points was rated Amber.

⁸ The gap of -15 percentage points was rated Amber

RAG		A
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The proportion, however, of Upper Class degrees awarded to graduates from low income areas (39%: Q1, IMD) was significantly ($P < 0.05$) lower than the proportion of Upper Class degrees awarded to graduates from high income areas (90%: Q5, IMD). This is *not* satisfactory.⁹ We have a shortfall to eliminate among mature graduates of 51 percentage points, but our performance will be monitored in securing a 54 percentage point improvement regardless of age (PTS_1).

The College surmises that graduates from low income areas are more likely to class themselves as 'BAME' than 'White' and that graduates from high income areas are more likely to class themselves as 'White' than 'BAME'. The relationship, therefore, between attainment and ethnicity confounds the relationship between attainment and income. This hypothesis requires confirmation. If it is correct, and it will be analysed in the academic year 2020-21, then our efforts to improve attainment among 'Black' graduates (Section 1.2) provide the most direct method of improving the attainment of graduates from low income areas.

Progression to employment

The proportion of alumni from low income areas (83%: Q1, IMD) in highly skilled employment was *not* significantly different ($P \geq 0.05$) from the proportion of alumni from high income areas (100%: Q5, IMD) in highly skilled employment. This is satisfactory.¹⁰

Alumni from First Degree pathway	HE in England (2015-2017)	HE at Spurgeon's (2015-2017)
IMD, F/T & P/T, Q5	74%	100%
IMD, F/T & P/T, Q1	66%	83%
RAG		A
POLAR4, F/T & P/T, Q5	72%	100%
POLAR4 F/T & P/T Q1	67%	100%
RAG		A

The proportion of alumni from low participation neighbourhoods (100%: Q1, POLAR4) in highly skilled employment was *not* significantly different ($P \geq 0.05$) from the proportion of alumni from high participation neighbourhoods (100%: Q5, POLAR4) in highly skilled employment. This is satisfactory.¹¹

Most of the programmes the College offers are vocational. Consequently, entrants are often already engaged, at some level, in the line of work they wish to pursue on exiting. In addition, College students spend an appreciable part of their degree programme or pathway on

⁹ The gap of -52 percentage points was rated Red. Performance in improving success will be monitored against PTS_1.

¹⁰ The gap of -17 percentage points was rated Amber.

¹¹ The gap of 0 percentage points was rated Amber.

placement preparing for future employment. The percentage points reported in the section may also be due in part to the small numbers of alumni enumerated. The DLHE survey¹² only provides information about the alumni of 2015-16 and 2016-17, i.e. for only two years of the four of interest.

1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students

Access

The College recognises its distance learners do not show the same distribution between ethnic groups as those attending College in person. For example:

- The proportion of full-time entrants to Spurgeon’s College who were drawn from BAME ethnic groups (54%) was significantly ($P < 0.05$) higher than the proportion of full-time entrants to the Sector from these groups (30%). This is very satisfactory.¹³
- The proportion of part-time entrants to Spurgeon’s College (not including distance learners) who were drawn from BAME ethnic groups (55%) was significantly ($P < 0.05$) higher than the proportion of part-time entrants to the Sector from these groups (30%). This is very satisfactory.¹⁴
- The proportion of entrants to distance learning at Spurgeon’s College who were drawn from BAME ethnic groups (12%) was *not* significantly different ($P \geq 0.05$) from the proportion of entrants to distance learning in the Sector from these groups (14%). This is satisfactory.¹⁵¹⁶

Mature Entrants to First Degree	HE in England (2015-2018)	HE at Spurgeon’s (2015-2019)	RAG
BAME, F/T	30%	54%	G
BAME, P/T ²¹	30%	55%	G
BAME, DL	14%	12%	A
BAME, F/T & P/T	28%	38%	G

The College has combined the records for the four years regardless of mode of study because of small student numbers. The proportion of our entrants drawn from BAME ethnic groups (38%) was significantly ($P < 0.05$) higher than the proportion of entrants to the Sector from these groups (28%). This is satisfactory.¹⁷

¹² Destination of Leavers from Higher Education.

¹³ The gap of +24 percentage points was rated Green.

¹⁴ The gap of +25 percentage points was rated Green.

¹⁵ The gap of -2 percentage points was rated Amber.

¹⁶ Part-time, not including distance learners.

¹⁷ The gap of +9 percentage points was rated Green.

The College recruits a significant proportion of its entrants from the Black community. While the College trains ministers for the Baptist Union of Great Britain, it is also privileged to train ministerial candidates from the Black Majority Church in London.

Success

Continuation

The proportion of ‘BAME’ students who continued their studies from one year to another (89%: BAME, ETHNIC) was not significantly ($P \geq 0.05$) lower than the proportion of ‘White’ students who continued their studies from one year to another (94%: White, ETHNIC). This is satisfactory.¹⁸

Students on a first degree pathway	HE in England (2015-2017)	HE at Spurgeon’s (2015-2018)
White, F/T		94%
BAME, F/T		89%
RAG		A

The figure for Spurgeon’s College combines data for three academic years and Levels 4, 5 and 6. This approach has been adopted because the number of students not continuing is very small. The reason there is no figure in the HE in England column is because that data is not been combined in the manner used by the College. The data does suggest for College students, however, that the continuation rate for BAME students is good compared with the overall continuation rate for the College.

Attainment

The proportion of Upper Class degrees (1 or 2:1) awarded to graduates from BAME ethnic groups (16%) was significantly lower ($P < 0.05$) than the proportion of Upper Class degrees awarded to graduates from White ethnic groups (87%). This is *not* satisfactory.¹⁹ We have a shortfall to eliminate of 71 percentage points among mature graduates from BAME ethnic groups, but our performance will be monitored in securing a 79 percentage point improvement among Black graduates regardless of age (PTS_2).

Graduates from Level 6	HE in England (2015-2018)	HE at Spurgeon’s (2015-2019)
Ethnic, F/T & P/T, White	78%	87%
Ethnic, F/T & P/T, BAME	63%	16%
RAG		R

¹⁸ The gap of -5 percentage points was rated Amber.

¹⁹ The gap of -71 percentage points was rated Red.

Combining The College's contributions to the *AP Student Record* for 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19 *regardless of mode of study* has allowed us to establish that the difference in attainment cannot be attributed to random variation, i.e. chance. More importantly, it has allowed the College to assess whether these differences in outcome have any basis in factors suggested by anecdote, stereotype, and impression.

- Some of our students combine study with active involvement in ministry, and others combine study with active ministry *and continued employment*. There is reason to think that the latter group experience particular difficulty in managing the demands on their time. The College has found that members of the latter group were less likely to obtain an Upper Class degree than members of the former and that students from Black ethnic groups were more likely to belong to the latter group than to the former. This appears to account for the largest part of the historical difference in attainment.
- Some of the strategies adopted by students are counter-productive and are capable of explaining how systematic differences arise when assignments are marked anonymously. Like most HE providers, a 'late submission' incurs a penalty related to the period of time involved. This means that the mark student is awarded, following a 'late submission', may be much less than the eventual submission was considered to deserve. A 'nonsubmission' is penalised by capping which means that the mark awarded may be much less than the re-submission was considered to deserve. In addition, 'academic malpractice' attracts various penalties which often mean that the student is awarded much less than the submission would otherwise have warranted. Some of these occurrences are common among students from Black ethnic groups than among students from White ethnic groups. They account for a substantial part of the historical difference in attainment.

The number of graduates during the four years with a designated 'First Degree' allowed the College to compare the attainment of students from Black ethnic groups with the attainment of students from White ethnic groups. It did not, however, allow it to reproduce the comparison for Asian and minority ethnic groups. Our impression is that attainment among these graduates may not be as poor as among graduates from Black ethnic groups.

Progression to employment

The proportion of alumni from BAME groups (88%) in highly skilled employment was *not* significantly different ($P \geq 0.05$) from the proportion of alumni from White ethnic groups (93%) in highly skilled employment. This is satisfactory.²⁰

Alumni from First Degree pathway	HE in England (2015-2017)	HE at Spurgeon's (2015-2017)
Ethnic, F/T & P/T, White	72%	93%
Ethnic, F/T & P/T, BAME	66%	88%
RAG		A

1.3 Mature Students

²⁰ The gap of -5 percentage points was rated Amber.

The median age of entrants to a validated undergraduate pathway was 42.5. This means that half our students were aged 42.5 or over, and that many more were 21 years or over, on entry. Had we studied 250 entrants (see Section 1) and been able to report that 25 or more of them were young, the proportion of entrants who were young would have been 10% (or more) and the proportion of entrants who were mature would have been 90% (or less). The College is not in a position to report the totals, therefore, alongside the proportion which was 'mature' without reporting the proportion which was 'young' (less than 21 years on entry) and publishing counts of fewer than 25 entrants (or students, or graduates, or alumni).

Students at Spurgeon's College do not have the age profile or distribution as the HE Sector. The analysis in Sections 1.1 and 1.2 is of students who were 21 years or over on entry. This means that the analysis of entrants above reflects a student body that was mature on entry and is concentrated upon an internal rather than external comparison.

1.4 Students with disabilities

The College cannot report the number of entrants over four years of the *AP Student Record* who reported disability without publishing a count of fewer than 25.

The proportion of students with disability who continued their studies from one year to another (80%: with disability) was not significantly ($P \geq 0.05$) lower than the proportion of students without disability who continued their studies from one year to another (93%: without disability). This is satisfactory.²¹

The proportion of Upper Class degrees awarded to graduates who reported disability (47%) was not significantly lower ($P \geq 0.05$) than the proportion of Upper Class degrees awarded to graduates who did not report disability (64%). This is satisfactory.²²

The proportion of alumni who reported disability and were in highly skilled employment (86%) was *not* significantly different ($P \geq 0.05$) from the proportion of alumni who did not report disability and were in highly skilled employment (91%). This is satisfactory.²³

1.5 Care leavers

The College has had no self-declared care leavers in the last four years. We are aware that care leavers seeking access into higher education face substantial challenges and that contextual admission offers are an appreciated element in assisting those facing significant life transitions.²⁴ The College has noted that the one of the Recommendations, arising from the Pathways Report, is that providers should consider using the term 'care experienced' to make support more widely available and to include those over the age of 25. As the median age of entrants to the College is 42.5, it is unlikely that the number of 'care experienced' students that self-declare will be statistically reportable. Nevertheless, the College will pay particular attention to any student that self-declares as 'care experienced' on their application form and ensure that it discusses appropriate measures to enable the student to fulfil their academic potential in their chosen undergraduate pathway. The College will action the recommendations of the Pathways

²¹ The gap of -13 percentage points was rated Amber.)

²² The gap of -17 percentage points was rated Amber.

²³ The gap of -5 percentage points was rated Amber.

²⁴ University of Sheffield, Pathways to University from Care, <https://sites.google.com/sheffield.ac.uk/pathwaysproject/home>

report in an individually tailored manner. For example, 'care experienced' students will have and be introduced to, a designated 'named contact' and the Learning Support Committee and Learning Resources Committee will ensure that a tailored package of support is available throughout their educational pathway.

1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

The College has considered the effect of income, participation, and ethnicity on access, continuation, attainment, and progression, and we have done so allowing for age.

- In our analysis, we found that the attainment of mature graduates from 'BAME' ethnic groups was significantly lower than the attainment of mature graduates from 'White' ethnic groups. (We divided our mature graduates between two classes of degree and two categories of ethnicity, i.e. four subgroups.)
- In our analysis, we found that the attainment of mature graduates from low income areas was significantly lower than the attainment of mature graduates from high income areas. (We divided our mature graduates between two classes of degree and five quintiles of deprivation, i.e. into 10 subgroups.)

When, however, we attempted to divide our mature graduates between two classes of degree, two categories of ethnicity, and five quintiles of deprivation, i.e. into 20 subgroups, we found that the counts are too small to report.

Our initial assessment is that the proportion of graduates who belonged to 'BAME' ethnic groups and were drawn from low income areas was larger than the proportion of graduates who belonged to 'BAME' ethnic groups and were drawn from high income areas. This relationship will be examined and the results reported to the meeting of the APP Monitoring Group scheduled to be held in Summer 2020.

The College, however, cannot examine the combined effects of deprivation and ethnicity on the attainment of our mature graduates until it has sufficient data to populate the subgroups. We will review the relationship when the *AP Student Record* for 2019-20 has been signed-off, and the results will be reported to the meeting of the APP Monitoring Group scheduled to be held in Summer 2021.

The College is aware of the significance and importance of this issue.²⁵ It has considered how some background characteristics can combine and overlap in ways which potentially could influence outcomes. The small student numbers, however, on our validated academic programmes and pathways means that when the College analysed its data, employing an intersectional approach, we discovered that there are no groups of sufficient size to render an analysis of intersections of disadvantage statistically valid. The College will continue to monitor this matter and its Diversity and Equal Opportunities Group will keep this important issue under review.

1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

²⁵ A CFE Report, by L Bowes et al., 'Understanding progression into higher education for disadvantaged and under-represented groups,'

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/c54f/256278257220002643a1117d363e84137e0e.pdf>

Other groups where there are known barriers to higher education include:

- Carers
- People estranged from their families
- People from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- Refugees
- Children from military families

The College has no identifiable populations of sufficient size of any of the groups listed above to allow valid analysis at this time. This finding is not statistically surprising. The decline in students studying Theology and Religious Studies has been significant. Of the 2.3 million students in UK higher education institutes, only 10,000 are on a Theology and Religious Studies pathway.²⁶ Spurgeon's College is a confessional Baptist College that forms, educates and trains women and men for ordained Baptist and non-Baptist Christian ministry. There is a direct relationship between UK Baptist and non-Baptist Evangelical Churches seeking ministers and the number of students taking a validated pathway at the College. The groups mentioned immediately above, therefore, are not included in the strategic measures presented below, least the focus of those measures be broadened and their impact lessened.

Nevertheless, national data indicates the particular challenges faced by members of these different groups.²⁷ Every student taking a validated pathway at the College receives a supportive, inclusive and successful approach to admissions; this means that if the College identifies representatives of any of the disadvantaged groups listed above during admissions, it ensures that once accepted they are supported in a way which is appropriate to the challenges they face.

In its 2019-2020 APP, the College identified projects related to children from military families, refugees, care leavers and White male students (18-20 year olds) from areas of low higher education participation. The College will continue to work with other partners in these areas but this is beyond the scope of this plan.

2. Strategic aims and objectives

Our assessment of performance has revealed areas where the College is certainly providing equality of opportunity for key underrepresented groups and our strategic aims and objectives reflects the College's determination to address areas where our performance has been assessed and being not satisfactory. The College is committed to improving its performance in regard to ensuring that individual background has no profound impact on the ability to access, succeed in, and progress from higher education through providing equality of opportunity and outcomes for all students across all stages of the lifecycle.

2.1 Target groups/stages

The median age of students taking a validated pathway at the College is 42.5. As noted in section 1 Assessment of Performance, most of the student body at Spurgeon's is made up of mature students (≥ 21 years on entry). The College also recruits a significant proportion of its

²⁶ The British Academy, Theology and Religious Studies provision in UK Higher Education, <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/theology-religious-studies-provision-uk-higher-education>

²⁷ Office for Students, "A to Z of Effective Practice in Access and Participation".

<https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/theology-religious-studies-provision-uk-higher-education>
<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/evaluation-and-effective-practice/a-to-z-of-effective-practice-in-access-and-participation/>

entrants from the 'Black' community, which means that the overwhelming majority of its student body is disadvantaged by one or more definition. The data in section 1 can be presented in diagram form in the following manner.

RAG rating	Access	Success		Progression
		Continuation	Attainment	
IMD-E	A	A	R	A
POLAR4	R	G	A	A
Ethnicity	G	A	R	A
Disability	N	N	N	N

As noted above, Green indicates that the College is performing better than the average for the HE Sector and that Amber indicates that the College's performance does *not* differ appreciably from that of the Sector. Red, however, indicates that the performance of the College is worse than average and that steps are required to correct the shortfall. While the College continually strives to improve every aspect of its provision, the following aims are specifically designed to address those areas that have been identified as Red.

Aim 1	Improve access for entrants from low participation neighbourhoods
Aim 2	Reduce the gap in upper degree classification for graduates from low income areas
Aim 3	Significantly reduce the gap in upper degree classification for 'Black' graduates

In addition, the College recognises the diverse challenges faced by other groups who experience barriers in higher education. While the projects that the College has been engaged in are not statistically reportable, the College will continue its work in regard to these groups. For example, the College will continue to engage with the local authority in improving access for students from the borough into higher education. However, the continued likelihood of very low numbers of students taking a validated programme at the College, the aims of this plan are focused on the areas that not only address the identified gaps in performance but will have the greatest impact relative to our context.²⁸

2.2 Aims and Objectives

Aim 1	Improve access for entrants from low participation neighbourhoods
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The College is aware that the low rate of recruitment from low participation neighbourhoods (Q1 of POLAR4) is a matter of national concern.²⁹ This aim is aligned with the OfS' Key Performance Indicator 1.³⁰

The number of students taking a Theology and Religious Studies HE programme nationally has fallen. The niche market that the College serves makes addressing this specific gap particularly challenging. Major Christian denominations are seeking to increase the number of people

²⁸ OfS, 'Regulatory Advice 6: How to Prepare your Access and Participation Plan,' p43, p46.

²⁹ WONKHE, 'In Praise of POLAR' <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/in-praise-of-polar/>

³⁰ See OfS, Participation performance measures, <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/measures-four-success/participation-performance-measures/>

coming forward to train for ordained Christian ministry.³¹ These projects may result in a broader demographic in ministerial recruitment and students on HE validated pathways.

Although the BUGB holds information on students preparing for Baptist ministry, it does not record information on the socioeconomic background of applicants. In other words, the socioeconomic background of applicants has no bearing on a person’s call to ordained Baptist ministry because it is not considered relevant. The College is a participant in the BUGB project exploring how ministerial education is funded in the 21st century; this project was authorised by the Baptist Union Council in 2019. The College has a member on this committee and will make representations to the committee that specifically addresses student recruitment from low participation neighbourhoods.

The objective of addressing the gap in recruitment for students from low participation neighbourhoods will take time to resolve. Change will require active engagement with the College’s national denominational body regarding funding for ministerial training.

The objectives in the following table are based upon the aggregation of four years data across all modes of study. This approach was necessary to provide robust numbers. In the accompanying Target & Investment Plan, however, the College is obliged to set targets for each academic year. The College believes that the aim presented is a stretching objective.

	Academic Year	
Entrants	2015-19	2024-2025
POLAR4 ³⁷	17 pp	0 pp

Table: Closing the gap in recruitment between Q5 and Q1 of POLAR4 (percentage points)

Aim 2	Reduce the gap in upper degree classification for graduates from low income areas
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90% of students at Spurgeon’s are either not eligible or do not seek student loan funding. One reason why this number has historically been high is that ministry formation, training and education is a second, third or fourth career. This means that a number of students at the College already have an undergraduate Certificate, Diploma or Bachelor’s Degree, which also means that they are ineligible for student support if on an undergraduate programme or pathway. Further analysis is required to determine the relationship between students possessing undergraduate qualifications and attainment in terms of an upper class degree. The College will examine this relationship and report the results to the meeting of the APP Monitoring Group scheduled to be held in Summer 2021.

The College had identified the need to strengthen its academic support of disadvantaged students. (See measures 5 – 8 below). Internal research has also identified that there is a relationship between successful outcomes and financial pressures faced by students. The College will carefully analyse how targeted financial support may be used to improve successful

³¹ Baptist Union Council, <https://www.baptist.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=240163> See also, The Church of England, ‘Church of England announces up to £155m investment in mission and ministry over the next three years’ <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/church-england-announcesps155m-investment-mission-and-ministry-over-next>

student outcomes, while ensuring that grade inflation does not occur, and report the results to the meeting of the APP Monitoring Group scheduled to be held in Summer 2021.

The aim in the following table is both an ambitious and realisable objective.

	Academic Year		
Graduates	2015-19	2024-2025	2028-29
IMD-E ³⁸	54 pp	28 pp	1 pp

Table: Closing the gap in attainment between Q5 and Q1 of IMD-E (percentage points)

Aim 3	Significantly reduce the gap in upper degree classification for 'Black' graduates
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The College has conducted a 'deep dive' statistical analysis into this issue to determine if empirical evidence could be identified that would enable the College to proactively address this attainment gap. The findings of this statistical analysis were presented to the Diversity and Equal Opportunities Group, which is Chaired by a Governor and whose members include the Principal and Chief Operating Officer. The Equality Act 2010, which offers protection across a number of 'protected characteristics,' is central to the College's approach to its educational provision, and its principles are an integral of College life and embedded within this plan.

The College believes that a number of practical issues in addressing this attainment gap for 'Black' students can be targeted through strengthening the College's provision in its Learning Support. For example, 'Black' students who have not received sufficient induction into the

³⁷

We plan to increase the proportion of new entrants recruited from low participation neighbourhoods. Had 45 more of our entrants been recruited from Q1 over 2015/19, there would have been no gap to close between Q5 and Q1.

³⁸

We want more of our graduates from low income neighbourhoods to obtain an Upper Class degree. Had 10 more of our graduates from low income neighbourhoods (Q1 of IMD-E) obtained an Upper Class degree (2015/19), there would have been no gap to close. We expect that efforts to improve attainment among 'Black' graduates will benefit graduates from Q1 of IMD-E, but we do not expect to see the full effect on attainment in 2022/23 when the class of 2020/21 exits from the full-time 'First Degree' programmes.

conventions of academic English find themselves facing malpractice/poor practice panels which normally lead to mark penalties. The statistical analysis identified that students who receive two occurrences of mark penalties do not achieve an upper class degree. Other practical issues were identified by the statistical analysis.

The College has already taken measures to strengthen its academic support to all students. Study skills are now a compulsory component for all new level 4 students regardless of background. It will, however, take several years to see the results of this particular measure in the College's statistics. Nevertheless, the College has set itself a nine-year objective to eradicate this particular attainment gap. In terms of this APP, the College has a stretching goal to significantly address this gap in performance 2020-25.

	Academic Year
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Graduates	2015-19	2024-2025	2028-2029
'Black' ³²	79 pp	39 pp	0 pp

Table: Closing the gap in attainment between 'White' graduates and 'Black' graduates

3 Strategic measures

3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

Overview

The College's *Mission, Vision, Values, Aims and Objectives* in conjunction with its *Strategic Plan*, provide a clear and concise guide to what the College will look like and achieve by 2028. The College's vision is:

- To cultivate a creative learning environment allowing every student to develop spiritually, academically, emotionally and socially.
- To deliver a relevant, structured curriculum tailored to training men and women for mission, ministry and leadership for all who wish to deepen their understanding of the Scriptures and theology.
- To develop the College's position, in the global and diverse city of London, as a research-led, experience-based, centre of excellence delivering positive outcomes for students.
- To maintain the highest professional and ethical standards in every area of College life.

As a Christian Higher Education Theological College our values are directly drawn from and aligned with biblical principles and are inculcated into every element of College life. In particular:

- We believe in the inherent moral equality, dignity and worth of every individual.
- We value the unique distinctiveness of each member of the College community.
- We celebrate the richness of being a diverse and inclusive community.
- We believe that as a community meeting daily for worship we must be careful to listen to God and discern his will and purpose.
- We will promote the general wellbeing of all members of the student community and College staff.
- We are committed to assisting every student in reaching their potential.

We believe that the College's *Mission, Vision, Values, Aims and Objectives* are embedded throughout the institution and in its approach to delivering excellence in higher education. Our

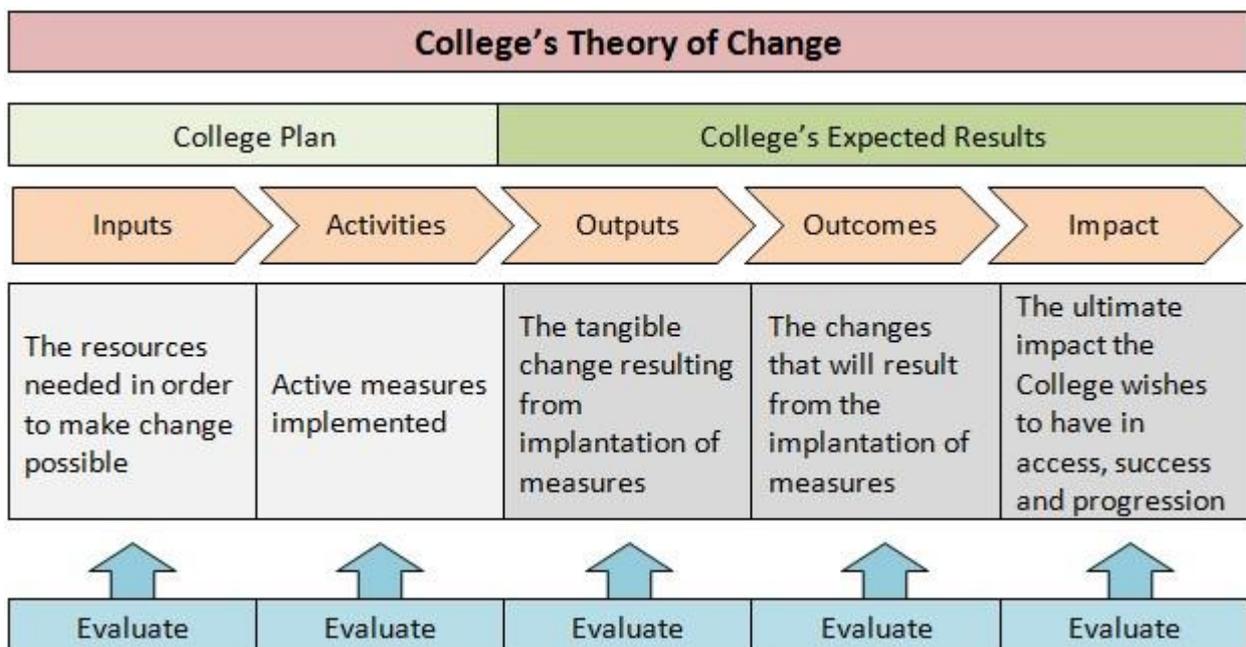
³² The College wants more of its 'Black' graduates to obtain an Upper Class degree. If it is assumed that all of the relevant initiatives were fully operational throughout 2020/21, there are circumstances in which it is not possible to correct – at level 6 – damage done at level 5. If the relevant initiatives yield their full benefit on the overall mark of the degree only if they are in place throughout levels 4, 5 and 6, we do not expect to see the full effect on the attainment of students on full-time programmes until 2022/3 when the first students have completed levels 4, 5 and 6. The College does not expect to see the full effect on the attainment of students on part-time programmes until 2025/26, and we do not expect to see the full-effect on the attainment of students on distance learning programmes until 2029/30. We propose to examine the effect of initiatives in 2020-21 on the distribution of marks at the close of level 4 and on the frequency of late submission, non-submission, and academic malpractice. The results will be presented to the APP Monitoring Group at its meeting in Summer 2022.

value of celebrating the rich, diverse and inclusive nature of our community, where we want every student, regardless of background, to reach their potential, is particularly relevant to Access and Participation.

The College, thus, has a clear, internal rationale for its commitment to the widely shared ambition of addressing exclusion, including for its commitment to meeting the requirements and general duties of the Public Sector Equality Duty and its own Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policy.

The College uses a theory of change methodology to provide the underlying rationale for its main strategic measures through which it expects these to enable strategic aims and objectives. The College has run and delivered multiple change projects, which have made and are making a significant contribution to life and work of the College. They have been and are being delivered on time, on budget and against anticipated expectations. We expect that the strategic measures identified in this plan will eliminate the gaps in performance identified in section 1.

The College’s theory of change is represented in the following chart. It represents a simple logic model to describe the College’s plan and the results it expects, especially in terms of impact.



The College considers that the collective impact of the measures, described in section 2, will deliver the outputs, outcomes and impact anticipated. This will be evaluated and assessed using robust processes and will draw upon quantitative and qualitative evidence as appropriate.

Alignment with other strategies

As part of the College’s institutional commitment to professionalism in learning and teaching in higher education, it funded 80% of its faculty to apply for Fellowships in Higher Education Academy in the summer of 2019. The Fellowships in the College cover the full range of awards up to and including Principal Fellow. The College invested in this measure so that its faculty can

continue to engage with a broad understanding of effective approaches to learning and teaching support as a key contribution to high quality student learning. We believe that the UK Professional Standards Framework is a globally-recognised framework for benchmarking success within HE teaching and learning support. The College anticipates that this will have a direct casual impact on Aims 2 and 3 of this plan.

The College has also continued its redesign of its undergraduate curriculum to ensure that delivers ‘a positive experience for all our students; meets their expectations and training needs; and helps them to fulfil their individual potential.’ We have been deliberate in our intention to be inclusive in our new undergraduate curriculum. As a Baptist College we have worked closely with the Ministries Team at the BUGB to ensure that as one of the main employers of our graduates, the new curriculum was closely aligned with the BUGB Marks of Ministry.⁴⁰

In preparation for applying for Taught Degree Awarding Powers in 2020, the College redesigned and implanted in 2019 a new Academic Governance Framework. Embedded within this new framework are the robust mechanisms set out in the College’s 2019 APP which are necessary to monitor the delivery of the College’s APP.

In 2019 the College’s Access and Participation Monitoring Group (APPMG) was created to oversee the work of the newly created Access and Participation Working Group (APPWG). In the new Academic Governance Framework, the APPMG reports to the College’s Diversity and Equal Opportunities Group. Inclusion is a core element of our College-wide ethos. The APPWG is chaired by one of the College’s two Vice Principals; the APPMG and the Diversity and Equal Opportunities Group are chaired by Governors and function as sub-groups of the Board of Governors and report directly to the full Board. This approach ensures that the College’s Access and Participation Plan is embedded at the highest level of the College and guarantees that Access, Participation and Progression is fully and naturally integrated throughout the whole institution.

The embedding and implementation of the College’s Access and Participation Plan is one of the College’s key strategic objectives. The Senior Executive is working on a set of Key Performance Outcomes (KPO) and Key Performance Indicators (KPI). The following table describes critical KPOs and KPIs in regard to Aims 1,2 and 3 of this plan.

KPO	Objective
<p>1 By 2024-5 we shall see student undergraduates at our London and Birmingham locations increase by 5% based on 2018-19 numbers.⁴¹</p> <p><i>Related KPI:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ This increase, particularly as a result in Birmingham and surrounding area should see an increase in the absolute numbers of students from all disadvantaged groups. 	Aim 1

KPO	Objective
<p>1 The College anticipates that by 2021 it will have secured Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAPs) and expects that it will continue to</p>	Aim 2&3

⁴⁰ BUGB, Ignite: Final Report (2015), <https://www.baptist.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=163522>

⁴¹

This academic year was selected as the reference point for this figure because the student intake for the academic year 2019-20 was low because its application for registration was refused by the OfS in August 2019. This has a direct impact on student numbers.

<p>grow in the quality of its academic delivery, reflected in the award of TDAPs (external benchmarking), including NSS and TEF metrics.</p> <p><i>Related KPI:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the current average across all NSS groups • Improve attainment statistics for IMD and BAME groups in accordance with the APP, while maintaining or improving continuation, attainment statistics for all groups. 	
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Strategic measures

The strategic measures described reflect the detailed analysis of the College’s performance and subsequent discussions among the senior executive, lecturing and professional staff and College student representatives. The following 8 measures have been deliberately targeted to close the gaps identified in section 1 and achieve the 3 aims identified in section 2.

Measure 1: Increasing the provision of targeted bursaries and scholarships

Relates to: Aim 1 access socioeconomic

Measured by: POLAR4 IMD BAME

Spurgeon’s College has for many years operated a number of bursary schemes for students. Some of these are privately funded (from trusts or individuals). Students are able to apply for these bursaries and such applications are considered by the Bursary Committee. Ministerial students can also apply for Baptist Union (BU) bursaries.³³ We recognise the need to promote bursaries and scholarship schemes providing cash or fee waivers on our College website for the benefit of applicants as well as to continue to give full information on our internal, virtual learning platform (Moodle) for active students.³⁴ In 2020-25 Spurgeon’s College will offer the following:

Financial support investment forecast (£)		Academic year				
		2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Bursaries and scholarships (including accommodation discounts and other institutional services)	Students with household residual incomes up to £25,000	£6,000.00	£6,280.00	£6,366.00	£6,556.00	£6,753.00
Fee Waivers (including free or discounted foundation years)	Students with household residual incomes up to £25,000	£4,000.00	£4,120.00	£4,244.00	£4,370.00	£4,502.00

³³ Baptist Union (BU) bursaries are ‘means tested’ in regards to income and expenditure.

³⁴ This is in line with the expectations expressed by the Higher Education Policy Institute 2014 <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/37NationalBursaryfull.pdf> : “The director of OFFA was therefore encouraged to be ‘robust in expecting more, in financial support and outreach activity, from institutions whose records suggest they have furthest to go in securing a broadly-based intake of students’. In its guidance to institutions, OFFA advised that it expected the ‘majority’ of financial support targeted at underrepresented groups to be offered as cash or as fee waivers”.

Awards of up to £1000 may be given to a student in each year of their higher education programme or pathway. Bursary applications are considered according to the College's Bursary Policy by the Bursaries Committee; this is available on the College's website.³⁵ Application forms for bursaries are available to students via the College's VLE Moodle platform under the tab 'Finance/Finance Information'. Details regarding the application date for a bursary is detailed in the College's Bursary Policy and application form. All bursaries are means tested with reliance placed upon the integrity of students to provide accurate financial information. Students may also seek advice in completing a bursary application form from their Pastoral Tutor or the College Chaplain. Student applicants are informed personally of the decision regarding their application and any amount awarded.

Receipt of a financial award in one year will have no impact on decisions in subsequent years.

The College will build up sufficient statistical evidence to analyse the specific impact of its use of bursaries moving forward in the lifespan of this and succeeding plan(s). The first results will be evaluated by the APP Monitoring Group summer 2021. The College will consider utilizing the OfS financial support evaluation toolkit (see below 3.3).

Measure 2: Opening a regional academic centre in partnership with a global partner

Relates to: Aim 1 access socioeconomic

Measured by: POLAR4 IMD

In 2019 Spurgeon's College entered into a partnership with BMS World Mission.³⁶ In September 2019 the College launched its Lay Ministry programme at BMS Birmingham. Spurgeon's is also expecting to offer an increased range of courses in Birmingham from September 2020, and has plans to offer its full range of courses from September 2021. This strategic move is significant for a variety of reasons; a major reason is that Government figures demonstrate that the IMD data for Birmingham is ranked as the 7th highest of all English local authorities, in terms of proportions of highly deprived neighbourhoods.⁴⁶ The College has proactively engaged with a range of Church leaders in the Birmingham area, including the Heart of England Baptist Association and the East Midlands Baptist Association. We anticipate that the College will attract students from the City of Birmingham and the surrounding area in increasing numbers over the next two to three years. This increase in student numbers is likely to affect the IMD access data for the College positively and make a significant contribution to achieving Aim1. The College has therefore made a commitment of substantial resources to this measure, including recruiting staff to deliver the Lay Ministry programme, creating a quality theological library, the recruitment of associate tutors and the significant commitment of the College's fulltime staff to deliver this measure. The increased focus upon the College's partnership with BMS, is complementary to its on-going partnership with the London Baptist Association (LBA). The College will continue to work with the LBA, the largest Association in the BUGB, to ensure students from IMD (LPN) can access ministerial training and formation in a similar fashion to students from POLAR4, Q5 neighbourhoods.

Measure 3: Increased marketing

Relates to: Aim 1 access socioeconomic

Measured by: POLAR4 IMD

The College plays a significant role within the life of the BUGB. It is the only College within the Baptist denomination that sought and received registration in the Approved (fee cap) category.

³⁵ https://www.spurgeons.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Documents/Policies_Procedures/Bursary_Policy_.pdf

³⁶ Baptist Mission Society. ⁴⁶

Birmingham City Council, Deprivation in Birmingham Analysis of the 2019 Indices of Deprivation, https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/2533/index_of_deprivation_2019

Historically, eligible students at Alternative Providers (AP) like Spurgeon's have only been able to apply have a portion of their student tuition fees covered by a student loan from the Student Loans Company, with eligible students having to source the remaining element of their student fees from other sources. There is no doubt that this placed significant financial strain on students and possibly acted as a substantial barrier to students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The College's ability to advertise that eligible students will be able to apply for a student loan that will cover their full tuition fees from the Student Loans Company may act as a mitigating factor in attracting students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The College intends to focus on explaining this within the BUGB and the wider Christian community, especially in Birmingham and the surrounding areas. While the new spend on this measure will be relatively low, and will relate to staffing at high profile Christian resource exhibitions and marketing material, the potential impact could be important.

Measure 4: Promotion of level 3 educational provision in targeted areas

Relates to: Aim 1 access socioeconomic

Measured by: POLAR4 IMD

The College currently offers and is creating further non-validated level 3 awards. Some of this provision is delivered at our hubs in Cambridge and Birmingham. The College is exploring with a Regional Baptist Association the prospect of opening a hub in the East Midlands. As part of its wider strategy to encourage students into higher education, the College will continue to promote these courses within disadvantaged communities. The investment will take the form of six days in the annual workload plan of one of the College's senior staff and of additional resourcing to facilitate this measure.

Measure 5: Introduction of a summer school

Relates to: Aim 2/3 success

Measured by: attainment BAME IMD

The median age of students at the College is 42.5. For the overwhelming majority of mature students their enrolment on a programme of study at Spurgeon's is their first time in either full or part time academic study, in some cases, for over 20 years. The introduction of a summer school is a practical step to begin a wide ranging approach to address the 'success' attainment gap for BAME students identified above. The introduction of a summer school allows prospective students to become familiar with their academic surroundings before the intensity of the academic year commences; it will also be a less pressurised opportunity to introduce prospective students to the various disciplines necessary to succeed in higher education. This measure will also enable BAME students for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL) to meet with faculty members who can assist with the practical matters arising from EAL. The College anticipates that this measure, in combination with measures 6,7 & 8, will be successful in closing the 'success' attainment gap. The College's research will continue in this area to understand in increasing detail the attainment gap identified earlier in this APP. The College's professional statistician will continue to refine the analysis already undertaken in conjunction with a graduated broadening of the research parameters to facilitate greater scrutiny and evaluation by APP Monitoring Group.

Measure 6: The use of Panopto

Relates to: Aim 2/3 success

Measured by: attainment BAME IMD

The College invested heavily in 2019 installing Panopto, a video lecture recording and capture software widely used both in business and universities, along with the necessary professional quality IT equipment. The College has ensured that the Panopto software is integrated with its Moodle platform so that lectures are available in its virtual learning environment. One of the

benefits of the introduction of this capacity within the College is that viewing recorded material provides more opportunities for interaction during class time. Students can preview course material in their own time before or after their class. Panopto allows students to undertake specific word searches in recorded lecture where a PowerPoint presentation has been used. The facility will enable students, already under other significant time pressures (outlined earlier), to access a specific section of the lecture rather than re-watching the entire lecture. This is also likely to be of significant value to students for whom English is an additional language. Anecdotal feedback from students has already confirmed this academic resource adds greatly to student learning, especially among BAME students.

Measure 7: Enhanced Learning Support

Relates to: Aim 2/3 success

Measured by: attainment BAME IMD

The College introduced a Learning Support Department several years ago. It has taken the decision, in light of its analysis of its performance, to enhance its learning support provision by 50% to support students from an IMD and BAME background. The college is committed to ensuring all its students succeed on an appropriate course of study and recognise that some students will require learning support to assist them to achieve. Learning support has a number of broad aims, including to:

- Enable access to the curriculum for learners who are disempowered in participating because of various needs
- Assist students to succeed
- Improve the quality of service to students

In consultation with the Learning Support Coordinator and Learning Support Committee, the uplift in support to students will be available to students on Level 5 and 6, on a case-by-case basis.

Measure 8: Enhanced Study Skills

Relates to: Aim 2/3 success

Measured by: attainment BAME IMD

The College’s ‘deep dive’ statistical analysis into the question of why BAME students are statistically less likely to achieve an upper class degree, revealed that there are a number of practical issues involved in this attainment gap. For example, if there was a significant reduction in the number of mark penalties for non/late submissions and a significant reduction in the number of mark penalties for malpractice/poor practice, the current attainment gap would be substantially reduced. The College takes the view that its objective to see a 50% reduction in this attainment gap by 2024-25 is a stretching objective. This measure to enhance the College’s offer of skills will directly target the very practical issues identified as being major contributors to this attainment gap. This measure will involve providing additional academic support, in the form of four half-hour study support sessions in individual tutorials with Learning Support or teaching staff, for level 4 students who are identified by the College as having struggled with meeting their submission deadlines or have been identified as demonstrated malpractice/poor practice in an assignment. For students already in receipt of help from the Learning Support Department, this will be additional to the services funded by that allowance. The additional sessions will be tailored to either focusing on practical issues and or additional advice on good academic practice in regard to referencing and how to avoid plagiarism.

3.2 Student consultation

Representatives of the College’s Student Body, reflecting different categories of disadvantage within the student body, meet with the College Principal and senior staff to discuss the College

APP. This group of students provided a range of opinions, backgrounds, and perspectives, allowing for a cross section of the student body to be represented in this area of consultation and partnership. Students, therefore, have played a significant role in discussing the College's performance and in articulating the strategic aims and objectives of this APP in the light of the statistical evidence in section 1 (above). They assisted the College Principal in drafting the strategic measures (above), specially shaping measures 2-8 to achieve aims 2 and 3 of this APP.

The student representatives recognised the specific challenges for potential students from LPNs especially for those considering ministerial formation, education and training. One student representative commented that accessing HE would not have been possible had they not been able to rely on external sources of financial support, not associated with the student support available for the majority of HE students. The students felt that the planned bursaries and fee waivers would make a positive contribution in reducing the access gap for potential students from LPNs. The student representatives reviewed the initial 'draft' measures to address identified gap in 'success' and suggested a number of changes, which have been incorporated in the current plan. The student representatives said that they thought the College's APP was informative and thought that the changes made to the strategic measures would make a positive contribution in address the identified gaps.

At Spurgeon's College students play an essential and vital role within the organisational life of the College. For example, Student involvement was deliberately woven into the new Academic Governance Framework of this College. The College's experience is that the Student Body are always keen to participate in the life of the College in a wide range of formal committees, including the College Council. Two representatives of the Student Body are members of the Diversity and Equal Opportunities Group and will be fully involved in the evaluation and monitoring of the implementation of the College's Plan.

3.3 Evaluation strategy

The College believes that its evaluation strategy is robust for an intuition of its size and has the capability to evaluate the implementation of this plan. For example, it has a very clear understanding of its strategic context. We appreciate the extent to which an evaluation culture is supported and prioritised as demonstrated in the support given to improving access for students and where staff (professional and lecturing) understand the importance of evaluation. The College is rapidly developing its skills and statistical evidence base to undertake a range of evaluations.

The College has a long history of designing its programmes and pathways in response to evidence. The development of a new pathway within its BA programme is underpinned by a comprehensive analysis of need from within the theological sector and has provided a set of clear objectives for what the College is seeking to achieve. It also undertook a survey among nationally ordained ministers as part of its review of its Masters' programmes. The number of new potential students that might enrol on these new programmes or pathways is likely to be relatively small, when compared to a larger institution, nevertheless, the College has a clear understanding of how outcomes and impacts of these new (potential programmes / pathways) will be measured. It will continue to strengthen its approach to delivering an evidence-led strategy through effective governance, maintaining a supportive culture to optimise the expertise across the institution by linking research and practice together.

The evaluation of individual activities and financial support packages will be undertaken primarily by the College's Access and Participation Plan Monitoring Group (APPMG), supported by the

Academic Board, Quality Assurance Committee, Admissions Committee, and the Equality and Diversity Monitoring Group. The APPMG will provide an annual monitoring and evaluation report that will be examined by the Principal and Heads of Departments. This report will focus on two tasks:

- (i) the provision of empirical evidence on which the senior management and Board can evaluate whether the College is on track to meet its stated targets, ambitions and goals.
- (ii) an evaluation of the measures being used to support the College's access and participation goals. In particular the report will:
 - highlight what measures are working well in closing the gaps
 - offer suggestions about what could be improved
 - be informed by new external research into effective measures and their implementation
 - be informed by internal research into the effectiveness of the institution's activities which support access and participation
 - offer recommendations on the basis of its findings about any innovations and consolidation activities required in terms of future practice.

The Principal and Heads of Departments report directly to the College's Board of Governors bimonthly. The Board will not only receive a report from the Chair of the APPMG twice a year but Principal and Heads of Departments will report on the on-going progress of the implementation of the College's strategic measures to address the gaps in performance identified in this APP. Research, evidence and evaluation will underpin our priorities, evaluate our practice and provide a platform to champion our positive impact and promote best practice.

In order to ensure that the evaluation of strategic measures is robust and impact-focused, evaluative reports for each measure will be produced according to the expectations of OfS's "Evaluation Self-Assessment Tool" and "Financial Support Evaluation Toolkit". (One of the early stages of the implementation of the College's Access and Participation Plan, for 2020-25, will be the application of the Evaluation Self-Assessment Tool to the arrangements agreed as part of that plan.)

3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

We recognise that delivering transformational change requires a strategic vision with a range of complementary approaches, endorsed by College leadership through effective governance and embedded at all levels across the institution. College Governors are deeply committed to our ambitious approach to access and participation and will support and monitor progress on an annual basis, including deep-dive monitoring through the Audit and Risk Committee. The Governors will examine the impact of the plan on a six month cyclical basis. The student representatives on the APPMG will be expected to submit a parallel commentary, to confirm, challenge or comment on any parts of the report from the APPMG, and to raise any relevant issues with the chair of the APPMG or with a member of the Audit and Risk Committee.

Performance will be evaluated by means of:

- the ongoing collection of data in relation to the access, success and progression of students from target groups, mapped against national and sector statistics to evaluate our performance

- the ongoing collection of student views through (i) the unit, end of year and end of course evaluation forms; (ii) exit interviews and end of year interviews conducted by College tutors
- where relevant to specific targets, the results of the financial support evaluation survey
- where relevant to specific targets, the views collated from collaborative partners and researchers and partner schools and Colleges regarding the impact of targets and measures

The Audit and Risk Committee will provide objective, independent monitoring of performance against the plan on a regular basis, with the opportunity to raise any concerns to the Board of Governors quarterly, and included their evaluation in their annual summary report to the Board of Governors. The committee does not have delegated authority to act independently since Access and Participation is a responsibility of the whole Board of Governors. Rather, it is the Board of Governors as a whole which is responsible to ensure that plans are properly executed, that strategic goals in this area are attained, and that appropriate actions are taken so that any weaknesses are addressed.

4. Provision of information to students

The provision of clear and accessible information, advice and guidance is a key component of the College's approach to widening participation and student recruitment. The College will ensure that information regarding fee levels and funding support is available to applicants at the earliest stage possible. Fee levels are available on our website and in offer letters. Additionally, course fee information will be available via UCAS course search and this information will be highlighted at College open days. Details of the annually revised fees are published to students at least three months before the start of each academic year. All of this will be compliant with Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) requirements.

The Student Body at Spurgeon's are involved in the activities of the College in widening participation, retention and student success, and the College welcomes their involvement in the activities and in the evaluation of the successful implementation of our 2020-2025 plan. Student Representatives will be asked to draw students' attention to the APP and the Student-Staff Liaison Committee will also ensure that at least annually the gathered student body will have opportunity to feedback ideas and concerns relating to the access and participation agenda of the College. The minutes of such meetings will be made available on the VLE platform (Moodle).

The College's Access and Participation current statement and plan for 2019-20 are published on the College's public website in readily findable locations. In addition, the statement and plan are included within the on the College's VLE for all relevant students. Information about financial support available, the eligibility conditions for their receipt, including any requirements to share financial information, and procedures for application will be published on the website, for potential applicants, and the VLE, for students. (In accordance with the 2019-20 plan, there were no financial packages requiring details to be published before 2019-20.)

Appendix

Variation request to access and participation plan for 2023-24

To address the new priorities for access and participation as set out by the Office for Students, the College would like to request the below variation to our approved access and participation plan. The College considers this request to be realistic and appropriate considering our size, locality, and resources.

Aim

Improve access to further & higher education for entrants from underrepresented groups (URG's) within the local and surrounding areas by developing partnerships with local schools & organisations to deliver attainment raising activities.

Description

The College is committed to providing equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups (URG's) and our key aims reflect our intention to address areas where we think we can make improvements. Therefore, the College will seek to develop and build upon both short and long-term strategic partnerships with local schools & organisations that are aimed at improving access and attainment among underrepresented groups within the College's local community of Croydon and the surrounding areas. These partnerships will assist us in addressing priority B as set out by the OfS to develop, enhance & expand partnerships with schools and other local and national organisations, to help raise the pre-16 attainment of young people from URG's across England.

We aim to develop one to two key partnerships with local schools or local organisations that focus on diverse pathways into and through higher education and also to help raise attainment among pre-16 school children. We would look to build upon existing relationships, such as the study skills sessions we introduced in 2022 for local sixth form students. As a higher education provider, we understand that the transition from school to higher education can be a positive but demanding experience for students. The series of study skills sessions we provide in partnership with a local secondary school, will help students gain an understanding of what is expected of them in an academic and a practical sense as an undergraduate student. We are also talking to a local Youth Development group about setting up workshops to encourage young people to explore different paths to education, professional training, and leadership skills.

The College is aware that the issue of raising attainment is of great importance as there is a link between attainment in schools/ colleges and access to higher education. Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO) an independent hub for higher education professionals to access research, toolkits, and evaluation guidance to eliminate equality gaps recently produced a working paper. It provides an overview for attainment raising activities and shows where there is evidence that they may be beneficial.³⁷ As well as this there are other sector reports showing the benefits of attainment raising activities.

³⁷ Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO), Typology of attainment-raising activities conducted by HEPs: Rapid Evidence Review, working paper: updated June 2022, <https://s33320.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/TASO-attainment-raisingtypology-and-rapid-evidence-review.pdf> [Accessed 22 June 2022].

To gauge the usefulness of our study skills sessions we will collect anonymous student feedback and make changes where appropriate. As well as this we will explore whether we can use unique learner numbers (ULN) to see how many attendees went into higher education and, if possible, how successful they are.

Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees

*course type not listed

Inflationary statement:

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

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

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Theology (Church-based)	£9,073
First degree	Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Theology (College-based)	£9,073
First degree	Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Theology (Open option)	£7,980
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	Certificate of Higher Education in Theology (Church-based)	£9,073
CertHE/DipHE	Certificate of Higher Education in Theology (College-based)	£9,073
CertHE/DipHE	Certificate of Higher Education in Theology (Open option)	£7,980
CertHE/DipHE	Diploma of Higher Education in Theology (Church-based)	£9,073
CertHE/DipHE	Diploma of Higher Education in Theology (College-based)	£9,073
CertHE/DipHE	Diploma of Higher Education in Theology (Open-option)	£7,980
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

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

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

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

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Theology (Church-based)	£5,083
First degree	Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Theology (College-based)	£5,083
First degree	Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Theology (Open option)	£3,990
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	Certificate of Higher Education in Theology (Church-based)	£5,083
CertHE/DipHE	Certificate of Higher Education in Theology (College-based)	£5,083
CertHE/DipHE	Certificate of Higher Education in Theology (Open option)	£3,990
CertHE/DipHE	Diploma of Higher Education in Theology (Church-based)	£5,083
CertHE/DipHE	Diploma of Higher Education in Theology (College-based)	£5,083
CertHE/DipHE	Diploma of Higher Education in Theology (Open-option)	£3,990
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

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

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*

Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Targets and investment plan

2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: Spurgeon's College

Provider UKPRN: 10006093

Investment summary

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

Note about the data:

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

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

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Total access activity investment (£)	£11,430.00	£11,750.00	£11,708.00	£11,994.00	£12,287.00
Access (pre-16)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Access (post-16)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Access (adults and the community)	£11,430.00	£11,750.00	£11,708.00	£11,994.00	£12,287.00
Access (other)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Financial support (£)	£59,000.00	£59,890.00	£60,605.00	£61,426.00	£62,265.00
Research and evaluation (£)	£9,953.00	£9,953.00	£10,153.00	£10,356.00	£10,563.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Higher fee income (£HFI)	£50,068.00	£65,330.00	£61,329.00	£61,329.00	£61,329.00
Access investment	5.5%	5.4%	5.8%	6.4%	7.0%
Financial support	5.0%	5.3%	5.7%	5.9%	6.0%
Research and evaluation	5.9%	5.9%	6.3%	6.4%	6.5%
Total investment (as %HFI)	16.4%	16.5%	17.8%	18.7%	19.6%

