INTRODUCTION

Here at the University of Leeds we welcome talented students who have the potential to succeed at university regardless of their educational or personal background. We have a long and proud history of supporting access to a university education for under-represented groups.

Our partnership with IntoUniversity provides intensive and targeted support to some of the most disadvantaged communities in the City, in Harehills and Beeston. Meeting some of the school students and volunteers in IntoUniversity, and hearing part of their graduation stories, was a powerful reminder of the depth of talent and eagerness to learn among school children of all backgrounds. Other highlights of the last year for me were always involving meeting remarkable students. Through the StandAlone Pledge, the University has made a clear commitment to welcome and support estranged students, and an evening event led by some of our estranged students, with candid reflections on their own journeys, was insightful and moving. At other events I was able to meet some of our mature students enabled to return to education through the work done by the Lifelong Learning Centre, and hear about the challenges and opportunities to enhance employability. The spirit of partnership working and the deep commitment to this hugely important agenda is inspiring and impressive.

We are very proud of the work we have done to address access and student success and are particularly pleased with our focus on research and evaluation to ensure an evidence-based approach and to inform the development of a more inclusive curriculum. As part of our Student Success Project we are testing a range of approaches and learner analytics to enhance student support and system development to help create an environment where students have the greatest chance of being successful in their studies and post-graduation.

Professor Tom Ward
Deputy Vice-Chancellor:
Student Education

This Annual Report provides a snapshot of some of the important work undertaken by colleagues over the past year to ensure we continue to widen access and maximise outreach and success. Student case studies throughout provide some of the faces and stories behind our work, because student access, outreach, retention and success cannot be reduced to data, targets and statistics. The numbers are certainly important, but really this is about the life-changing experiences of individual students.

This is an interesting and exciting time for the University of Leeds as we work to implement our new evaluation framework. Research has continued to further understand the intersections of disadvantage between groups in order to further develop our approach to evaluation, and we are looking forward to enhancing our activity by embedding a robust evidence-based theory of change approach across all widening participation initiatives.

In 2018 we were extremely honoured to win the Student Social Mobility Award, supported by the Social Mobility Commission, after being nominated by final year student Melanie Graves who came to the University through our Access to Leeds Scheme. Our Access to Leeds scheme has grown from strength to strength over the past 16 years and we are proud of our excellent track record in helping high achieving students access the University through one of the largest contextual admissions schemes at a national level.

We are also very aware that the journey for these students does not stop once they arrive at University. We want to ensure that the outcomes of students from these particular groups are positive and wide reaching by proving an additional layer of support to students who have entered the University through specific access routes. Through our National Education Opportunities Network (NEON) award winning Plus Programme we continue to engage with students whilst they are on-course to ease transition, develop their networks and provide opportunities to enhance employability.

Working in collaboration with academics and professional staff, as well as students and the Student Success team, we are using business intelligence analytics to enhance student support and system development to help create an environment where students have the greatest chance of being successful in their studies and post-graduation.

Our sector leading Progression to Postgraduate Taught Study Project, funded by the Office for Students, has enabled us to push the boundaries on research and practice. Key themes emerging from our two year study (working in collaboration with four other research-intensive universities) highlighted areas of work we need to address within the wider sector to support under-represented students to make informed decisions about further study and, for those opting to progress, improving the transition into Masters level study. This coming year our Prepare for Postgrad online course will be embedded into wider institutional activity for the future.
TARGETS, MILESTONES AND PROGRESS

Our interventions across each stage of the student lifecycle are directed by both internal and external data, consultations with beneficiaries and key influencers and sector level research.

Social mobility is embedded in the strategic plan for the University of Leeds with a commitment to attracting and retain students from diverse backgrounds, equipping them to succeed in a competitive global market and to make a difference.

Our Educational Engagement strategy 2016 – 2020 specifically aims to:

- Ensure targeted and sustained engagement to attract and retain taught students;
- Narrow the gaps in access, retention and student success through systematic support for students at every stage and in all aspects of their learning journey;
- Ensure an evidence-based approach through a robust approach to research, evaluation and monitoring.

This year saw the approval of our first 5-year Access and Participation Plan which will be monitored by our sector regulator the Office for Students (OfS) on an ongoing basis. We have designed our 5 year targets to be stretching and ambitious, yet realistic and achievable, with the sole aim of delivering on our commitments.

Towards the end of 2018/19 we developed and shaped our plans to ensure we can demonstrate continuous improvement against our Access and Participation Plan aims and objectives. 2019/20 will set out plans for transforming how we monitor our progress and engagement of our students in the development of and monitoring of our Plan from 2020/21. The work will ensure we can fully demonstrate the impact of activity; our investment in future, present and past students; our local communities and ourselves in order the shape and enhance our achievements year on year.

Whilst this report looks at only a sample of our work in some depth the following map provides an overview of our Educational Engagement programme with links available to find out more.

KEY OUTPUTS DURING 2018/19

- 96,403 learners were engaged in Educational Engagement activity
- 2,384 adults were engaged in educational and community activity
- 736 current UG and PG students contributed to outreach activity working as mentors, tutors, hosts, and ambassadors
- 745 talented young people engaged with our Reach for Excellence, Thomas Transition, and Realising Opportunities programmes
- 3,192 scholars/vulnerable students were supported through a series of bespoke targeted retention, success and progression measures
- 2,528 students applied through Access to Leeds with 891 registering on University programmes, exceeding our annual target by 12%
- 78% of all Access to Leeds graduates over the last 4 years have completed with a first class or upper second class degree
- 145 EPQ events have been delivered within schools and colleges across UK
- 542 schools and colleges nationally were engaged with through a variety of activity
- 1,130 students engaged in Excellence Hub activity through subject taster events, IAG Conferences and workshops
- Over 6,000 students across East and South Leeds have been benefitted from the IntoUniversity programme since our partnership began in 2014.

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OUTREACH, RAISING ASPIRATION AND AWARENESS

National Outreach
Our Educational Engagement teams work across the UK with schools and colleges to raise awareness of, and aspirations towards higher education. We offer an extensive programme of talks, workshops and enrichment events for primary and secondary school learners through to post-16 students.

We are passionate about offering young learners the opportunity to explore different subject areas through our subject specific outreach teams which incorporate the arts, health sciences, social sciences and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines.

Our research and study skills support programme provides post-16 learners with access to a range of activities and resources to excel in their research assignments. They also learn valuable academic skills to help in their current projects and prepare them for university.

Go Higher West Yorkshire (GHWY)
Go Higher West Yorkshire is a consortium of HE providers working together to ensure that higher education in all its forms is open to all who can benefit, regardless of background. The core aim of the partnership is to connect partners to improve access to, success in and progression from higher education, for those from under-represented groups.

The University of Leeds are the lead institution for the network, and host to the central team who is responsible for delivering and co-ordinating collaborative activity, facilitating the sharing of learning and good practice across the partnership, undertaking research and supporting partners to evaluate their work.

National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP)
The University of Leeds deliver the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) in West Yorkshire. NCOP works to identify and address issues around progression to higher education for young people living in areas where progression is lower than might be expected.

Phase one of the programme began in January 2017 and ran until July 2019. It aimed to support the government’s social mobility goals by rapidly increasing the number of young people from underrepresented groups who go into higher education.

Building on phase one, phase 2 began in August 2019 and supports two main strands of activity:

- Targeted higher education outreach within the local areas where we can have the most impact (these are the same areas targeted under phase one)

- Outreach hubs within the 29 local partnerships with cross-England coverage to help schools and colleges access the higher education outreach they need and provide a platform for wider collaboration.

Thank you so much! I had such a great time at Linguastars. I’d always questioned if languages were for me but now I know that they definitely are. I’d love to one day attend Leeds Uni and hopefully help and inspire younger linguists how you and the student ambassadors did.

YEAR 12 LINGUASTARS PARTICIPANT

Go Higher West Yorkshire (GHWY)

This year’s Linguastars Residential provided 75 year 12 students with an opportunity to experience what it is like to study languages at the University of Leeds.

Learners took part in a series of engaging and interactive workshops designed to provide a taster of studying languages at university and to explore career opportunities available to graduates. Participants also had the opportunity to discover new languages and explore language related workshops such as film studies, linguistics and translation studies as well as meet our current languages students, stay overnight in our student accommodation and join in with social activities to provide a rounded experience of university life.

Aims
To provide students from across the UK, with an introduction to student life at the University of Leeds.

Target Groups
Year 12

We currently offer 4 residentials through our subject specific outreach teams which enable students take part in a range of lectures and workshops including a variety of projects to gain experience of research and study skills. Our residents are carefully designed to support the UCAS application process and provide opportunities for participants to speak to directly with admissions staff and academics to gain an understanding of undergraduate degree programmes and entry requirements.

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YEAR 12 LINGUASTARS PARTICIPANT

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The pre and post evaluation provided evidence that there was a gain in learners’ knowledge of university including how they learn, university life, the range of courses on offer and further career paths. The comments following our post evaluation report were overwhelmingly positive, a high proportion of students made reference to future study intentions, specifically languages, career opportunities and awareness of HE study options.

I just wanted to say a massive thank you to you and everyone else at Leeds who were involved in Linguastars. The experience was incredible and has definitely made me want to apply here to study a degree in Spanish in the next few years.

YEAR 12 LINGUASTARS PARTICIPANT
We are delighted with the positive impact he has had on our children’s confidence and attainment in Maths. Our children look forward to their sessions and bring their learning back into the classroom.

KAREN LONEY, YEAR 6 TEACHER

The Tutor Trust is a registered charity aiming to transform one-to-one tuition and helping to tackle educational inequality. The Leeds Office of the Tutor Trust is based in our Careers Centre which presents an invaluable opportunity for our student community to increase their employability prospects and give something back to the city.

At Leeds we have been working with the Trust since September 2015 to support disadvantaged pupils by supplying schools with university student tutors. During the 2018/19 academic year, we have delivered 4,000 hours of tuition.

Whingate Primary School in Leeds is a long-term partner of Tutor Trust and Jake Fowler has been working with the School for the past four years. This year, he visited the school each Wednesday to work with twelve Year 6 pupils who were aiming to achieve Age-Related Expectations in Year 6 Maths SATs but who were a little below where they needed to be. Jake said: “This is my fourth set of Year 6s at Whingate and the job never gets stale. The teachers are friendly and supportive and the children are a pleasure to work with. Nearly all of them I tutor have gone on to pass their SATs. Every year I have received a thank you card and it has never failed to move me.”

With their hard work and support from their teachers along with extra help from Jake, all twelve tutees reached the benchmark in Maths, with one even achieving Greater Depth.

In 2018/19 we began a new trial activity with Tutor Trust. Tutoring in maths and English was delivered to the Year 11 cohort of students in three of our Thomas Transition Programme schools. This intervention aims to boost Key Stage 4 attainment and the wider programme supports students in making informed choices about progression to post-16 study and ultimately, to research intensive higher education destinations.

The Brilliant Club is an award-winning charity that recruits, trains and pays doctoral and post-doctoral researchers to deliver programmes of university-style teaching. These are delivered to small tutorial groups of high-performing pupils in schools that serve communities with a low participation rate in Higher Education.

Our Tutors are placed in a school to work with groups of pupils, delivering a series of tutorials that take them beyond the curriculum and help to develop knowledge, skills and ambition necessary to secure places at top universities.

Over the course of this academic year we have placed 22 academic researchers in schools across the region to work with 600 high performing pupils. These pupils saw shifts in their metacognition, motivation and self-efficacy in line with or exceeding national averages. We were also pleased to see the sizeable shifts in University Readiness. There was a 27% shift in pupils’ belief in the standard of their written work (compared to 19% nationally), an 11% shift in their confidence in talking about their work with a university teacher (compared with 2% nationally) and a 25% increase in those knowing how and why people study at the university (compared to 17% nationally).

At the Launch and Graduation trips over the course of the year, we have hosted over 1,000 pupils on campus (more than twice the number who visited in 2017/18). We have been particularly encouraged to read the pupils’ comments throughout the year, describing positive experiences they have had during their campus visits.

It was very informative and it helped me with my confidence in myself – it taught me not to give up.

KEY STAGE 4 PUPIL, ST ANNE’S ACADEMY

I thought it was good as we had an amazing tutor and I learned lots about the university on the tour that I didn’t know. Some things made me reconsider thinking about university.

KEY STAGE 4 PUPIL, SHELLY COLLEGE
ACCESS TO LEEDS

Target Groups  Year 13, Mature Learners

Aims  Alternative admissions scheme guaranteeing special consideration for WP students who are able to demonstrate their potential to succeed through other means than grades alone.

Our distinctive contextual admissions scheme, Access to Leeds, looks at applications to the university holistically, and guarantees special consideration for students applying from across the UK whose personal circumstances may affect their ability to demonstrate their talent through grades alone.

Access to Leeds was first established sixteen years ago to ensure fair access to the university for students from less privileged backgrounds. It was the first of its kind and remains the largest in the country, growing rapidly year on year to expand this successful widening participation project.

The Office for Students has stated that reversing the decline in entry into higher education among mature students and especially those from less privileged backgrounds is a vital part of ensuring more equality in access to higher education.

Foundation years are becoming an important tool in the sector to address this, and to widen participation in general. Foundation years have grown exponentially in the higher education sector, as HESA data clearly demonstrates that providers of foundation years have made very significant progress over the past decade in improving the proportion of students progressing in the following year within their registered HEI.

At the University of Leeds we understand the role foundation years play in supporting the recruitment and preparation of students from widening participation backgrounds. Our Foundation Years continue to be a key pathway for applicants of all ages who have the potential for success at the University but who may not have had the opportunity to achieve of the required qualifications.

This provision delivered predominantly by the Lifelong Learning Centre (LLC) is part of the University’s commitment to widening participation. Designed to complement the Access to Leeds route, foundation years provide intensive rigorous support for learners to develop the academic skills and knowledge required for successful progression and achievement in undertaking honours degree. The LLC programmes are:

- BSc Interdisciplinary Science
- BSc Earth & Environmental Sciences
- BSc Business Studies
- BA Arts & Humanities
- BA Interdisciplinary Studies (PHE) (part-time)

Our admissions strategies for the widening participation foundation years have achieved consistent levels of engagement from target constituencies over the years with roughly 59% of students from low participating postcodes and 89% falling into one or more of the widening participation categories.

Given our widening participation remit where non-continuation is nationally viewed as an issue, 82% of our full-time foundation year students progressed onto degree programmes. 82% of our part-time programme, with 100% mature students, also progressed. Adult learners typically face additional challenges that are external to the demands of study. LLC support continues for these students throughout their degree studies in order that they have every opportunity to attain the best possible outcomes.

The School of Medicine has continued to work hard to develop their nationally renowned work experience programme, with increased engagement year on year. The programme is run in partnership with the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP), local GP surgeries and Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust to give local students access to high quality placements in primary care.

By linking admissions directly with the medical profession, the programme helps students develop specific core skills and make informed career choices by providing short-term placements with clinical teams. A pre placement workshop is facilitated by the admissions team to help prepare students for their placement experience, with a post placement workshop facilitated by current students helping to maximize the transferable skills they have developed and to allow reflection on how their skills can help them in their pathway to their chosen career.

This year, Dr. Gail Nicholls, Associate Professor in Primary Care and Director of Admissions for the School of Medicine, received an award at the NEON Awards for her Contribution to Widening Access. Since 2016, she has led the expansion of the GP Work Experience Programme across 20 medical schools across the UK. The programme now has 1,000 participants on placement, all of which have experienced high quality work experience using the model that Dr Nicholls created. She said: “I am delighted to receive this award on behalf of our team in the School of Medicine and our local General Practitioner (GP) partners who inspire the next generation of GPs by providing them with high quality work experience opportunities. I am grateful to the Royal College of General Practitioners, the Medical Schools Council and my colleagues across the country who are working year on year to expand this successful widening participation project.”

Since 2003, when just 35 students took part in the scheme, Access to Leeds has helped over 6,000 students achieve their place on undergraduate courses at the University of Leeds. Our research proves that participation in our pre-entry module, delivered via distance learning to 1,500 students per year, contributes to students remaining on their course, and that their academic attainment remains broadly in line with the rest of the undergraduate cohort.

In December 2018 the scheme was awarded ‘Highest Impact University Initiative’ by the Student Social Mobility Awards, after being nominated by Melissa Graves, a former Access to Leeds participant.

Access to Leeds students are automatically eligible for support from the Plus Programme (see page 14) whilst on course at Leeds which has been designed to support student success and progression for WP students.
In November 2018 we officially launched our StandAlone pledge, together with Leeds University Union, outlining our commitment to supporting estranged students who are studying without the support of a family network.

A key development for this year has been the creation of a package of accommodation support for estranged students, which includes a guaranteed place in University residences for 365 days a year, as well as a waiver of the security deposit until their student loan is received. Over the last 12 months, the team have been able to support estranged students with a number of common reoccurring issues, namely mental health support and financial support.

Meegan Worcester is in her 2nd year of her BSc Sustainability and Environmental Management degree. Meegan moved to the UK with her mother and brother because of a difficult situation at home. Shortly after arriving in the UK, Meegan’s mother passed away, leaving Meegan sleeping in her brother’s living room in his university accommodation.

A supportive teacher at college encouraged Meegan to apply for University. After visiting Leeds during an Open Day, Meegan knew she wanted to study here. When she was awarded a scholarship, she knew that Leeds saw her potential and studied even harder.

Moving into her new halls was a difficult experience for Meegan. After her brother left, she saw parents dropping off their children saying things like “If you need anything call me”, and “I’ll pop down next week, just to see how you are”. She felt awkward having to explain her situation to her new flat mates.

Receiving an email from the Plus Programme was a much needed and welcome relief. It detailed all the events happening, from pub quizzes to hikes in Malham, and they were all free. Meegan signed up for as many as possible and made some close friends in those first few weeks.
Students worked in small groups to design and build their own robotic buggies with the ability to perform set tasks. This involved learning the mathematical equations to calculate speed, velocity, distance, time and acceleration as part of the process.

Orla told us that: “My role as an EOF has built my confidence, improved my ability to think quickly on my feet and allowed me to gain experience working with schools. I enjoy working with young people and encouraging them to consider a career path in the STEM subjects; particularly in engineering. I particularly enjoyed working on the Discover Robo Maths Project as I could design sessions that followed on from previous work, and the students could actually see the development of their designs over the weeks.”

Working closely with David Hayer, Head of Maths at UTC Leeds, students further developed their maths skills with these sessions running parallel to the current maths curriculum being taught. The project also developed students’ employability skills including communication, team working and problem solving.

Student Summar Khurshid, aged 15, wants a career in aerospace engineering. She said: “I chose UTC Leeds because I’ve got a big interest in engineering and I can specialise in that subject here as well as taking GCSEs. I really like this project because it’s practical and fun.”

Student Ammer Masud, aged 14, wants a career in computer hardware engineering. He added: “I’m really happy here. I’ve learnt a lot in just a few months. I’m really enjoying this project because it’s relevant to the career that I want to work in.”

Our specially trained Post-graduate Educational Engagement Outreach Fellows (EOF) work as part of our highly motivated, professional team to support our school liaison work with young people and their teachers by delivering a range of progression enhancement activities both on and off campus.

Our Student Success Team have been working closely with Student Success Academic lead Dr Nina Wardleworth to support the LITE project ‘Decolonising the Curriculum at Leeds’ which has seen the development of a series of initiatives to enable academic colleagues to redesign their modules and programmes based on inclusive curriculum design principals and to work closely with students to make substantial and lasting changes to learning and teaching. This work supports our institutional Student Success framework to incorporate curriculum and learning alongside the more extra-curricular work of the student success project.

As well as working closely with the LITE executive officers, a series of student Diversity Ambassadors, one for each faculty, were recruited in September 2019 and trained to promote the student voice in the decolonising process. Our Diversity Ambassadors will run drop-in sessions for students to discuss concerns relating to their curriculum and take these concerns to staff-student forums and the newly appointed School Academic Leads in Inclusive Practice (SALIPs).

By December 2020, we plan to introduce an Inclusive curriculum design framework including a toolkit, case studies and baseline standards to be published and implemented over the next 12 months.

Dr Wardleworth’s work runs alongside the Inclusive Teaching Practice LITE project led by Jenny Brady, which promotes good practice in inclusive learning and teaching methods, in recognition of our diverse student population and the variety of their learning styles and needs.

A Sense of belonging is key to achieving student success and we are also working closely with Dr Bridgette Betewick and her LITE project ‘Pedagogical wellbeing and the Leeds curriculum’ which is exploring the views and lived experiences of students across the university. Students are responding to questions about how the University might improve ‘sense of belonging’, the Student Success project will use this intelligence to advise on, adapt and implement future activity and interventions.

We are also working closely with Dr Andrew Mearman and Dr Ruth Payne’s ELIXIR project ‘Exploring Links between induction, exit and retention’. Literature on the transition to university shows the links between student success and early sense of belonging, sensible expectations, clear academic identity and good relationships with members of academic staff. This project aims to agree principles to underpin induction at Leeds, a proper structure for induction that supports colleagues and a repository for induction resources. The Student Success Officers will work closely with this project, producing a review of induction in each faculty and supporting implementation of additional activity.
MEASURING IMPACT

National guidance and institutional commitments require that we carry out research to identify 'what works' and 'for whom' when participants engage with our interventions. At Leeds, we utilise the expertise of our academic researchers and employ external consultants to carry out robust qualitative and quantitative research, taking into account multiple measures of disadvantage. We also provide opportunities for current Post-graduate students to carry research projects to investigate the impact of various interventions and pre-entry pathways on retention, completion and student success.

During 2018/19 we commissioned an external audit of our approach to evaluation which highlighted many areas of good practice. As a result of the review, we have changed our approach to monitoring evaluation plans to ensure that we are delivering continuous improvement.

We have built on our 2017/18 in-depth review of our schools level outreach activity in order to refine both our target groups and types of activity we deliver for 2020/21 onwards.

We also collaborate with external partners in order to contribute to normalising the Plus Programme and WP student who had expressed anxiety to support progression. The project was funded by the Office for Students. Part of the project saw the use of a unique pre-arrival online course, which included modules focusing on key skills and allowing space to reflect on activity and learnings. Case study style videos provided information on current Masters students and academic staff, and Postgraduate Ambassadors were employed to offer peer support for incoming students.

The project was evaluated using Randomised Control Trials (RTO) and qualitative analysis. Findings demonstrated that students using the module were more likely to register and continue on their Masters programme. Students felt that enhanced their academic skills, improved their understanding of what Masters level learning would entail and prompted them to consider their lifestyle and wellbeing at Masters level. And they also felt more confident and supported during their studies.

The Prepare for Postgrad course has now been embedded within the pre-arrival offer for incoming home Masters students at Leeds. Core outcomes and learnings from the project are also now being taken forward at a sector level through the newly formed NEON Widening Participation in Postgraduate study network. Jointly chaired by the Universities of Leeds and Manchester.

Outcomes:

- Contribution to sector evidence on non-financial factors influencing progression to PGT and challenges faced by BAME/POCAL U1 and G2 students.
- New and refined communication available for students.
- Greater understanding of the efficacy of interventions for the target groups in increasing awareness of, progression to, and persistence in PGT study.

RESULTS

The behaviourally-informed emails to Plus Programme students significantly increased students’ click-through rate (a primary outcome) and email opens (a secondary outcome). We also saw a weekly significant 3.1 percentage point increase in average event attendances per student, from 12.4 to 15.5 attendances per hundred students. All outcome measures showed a consistent, if small, positive directional trend. If rolled out to all 3,000 Plus Programme students, we would expect this intervention to drive about 90 more event attendances per term.

Following these findings we are planning to continue to send the treatment emails and text messages used in the trial. Specifically we will use three approaches incorporated into the treatment communications:

- Addressing students’ belonging anxieties by indicating that it is normal to worry about fitting in, but this tends to pass
- Reducing choice overload around support on offer by streamlining emails and grouping events by theme
- Sending text message reminders about events with messages that normalise concerns about belonging at university and to reduce choice overload and help students to navigate university support services, were designed to test on students.

We tested these emails and text messages against business as usual emails using a randomised controlled trial design in which students were randomly assigned to receive different emails.

INCREASING ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PLUS PROGRAMME

The Plus Programme offers a range of activities and workshops designed to ease the transition to higher education, promote student success and support employability or progression to further study for underrepresented students. As part of the team’s continuous drive to improve the support we offer, the team looked at ways to increase participation.

To understand what might be inhibiting students from engaging with the Plus Programme we commissioned the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) to review how behaviourally informed communications could be used to increase engagement.

A set of behaviourally-informed emails and text messages, to normalise concerns about belonging at university and to reduce choice overload and help students to navigate university support services, were designed to test on students.

We tested these emails and text messages against business as usual emails using a randomised controlled trial design in which students were randomly assigned to receive different emails.

PROGRESSION

EMPLOYABILITY AND PROGRESSION INTERNS

In support of the University’s strategic aim to reduce the disparity of graduate outcomes between Access to Leeds and Non-Access to Leeds students, a one-year pilot initiative was introduced this year to:

- Increase awareness of employability support (Information, Advice and Guidance)
- Promote engagement with opportunities to support progression
- Provide targeted, individual support to final year Plus Programme and WP student who had experienced anxiety around career planning and requested additional employability support.

Nine Graduate Employability and Progression Interns (EPAs) were recruited in February 2019 to play an active role in improving the employability of students, particularly those from underrepresented groups.

The work of the EPAs has made a real impact on employability outcomes for our students and graduates. Our EPAs been working across the University (including Student Careers, Educational Engagement, Leeds University Union and various Faculties and Schools) to provide information on various support services across the University and externally, to ensure they have the necessary skills to succeed in a competitive graduate labour market.

In addition, our Internships were designed to enhance the employability of students, particularly those from underrepresented groups. The Internships were focused on these areas and were selected based on the needs of our students and graduates. The Internships were designed to enhance the employability of students, particularly those from underrepresented groups.

PROGRESSION

PREPARE FOR POSTGRAD MODULE

Target Groups

Home PGT offer holders from BAME backgrounds.

Aims

To ease the transition to further study by offering access to pre-arrival information, building sense of community and enhancing existing skills.

Widening Participation into Postgraduate Study is an emerging area of work. For two years between 2017 and 2019, the University of Leeds collaborated with four other research-intensive universities to trial interventions aiming to increase progression to further study, with a focus on two groups known to be underrepresented in postgraduate study: Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students, and students from areas of low participation. The project was funded by the Office for Students.

Part of the project saw the use of a unique pre-arrival online course, which included modules focusing on key skills and allowing space to reflect on activity and learnings. Case study style videos provided information on current Masters students and academic staff, and Postgraduate Ambassadors were employed to offer peer support for incoming students.

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- Greater understanding of the efficacy of interventions for the target groups in increasing awareness of, progression to, and persistence in PGT study.

BIT Evaluation

25,000 Plus Programme students were randomly allocated to receive treatment/control communications.

TREATMENT

Adapted communications

CONTROL

Business as usual communications

Any event registration

Primary outcome measures:

- Any event registration
- Any event attendance
- Any click through
- Secondary outcome measures:

- Avg event registrations
- Avg event attendances
- Avg click throughs
- Email opens

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Following these findings we are planning to continue to send the treatment emails and text messages used in the trial. Specifically we will use three approaches incorporated into the treatment communications:

- Addressing students’ belonging anxieties by indicating that it is normal to worry about fitting in, but this tends to pass
- Reducing choice overload around support on offer by streamlining emails and grouping events by theme
- Sending text message reminders about events with messages that normalise concerns about belonging at university and to reduce choice overload and help students to navigate university support services, were designed to test on students.

We tested these emails and text messages against business as usual emails using a randomised controlled trial design in which students were randomly assigned to receive different emails.

INCREASING ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PLUS PROGRAMME

The Plus Programme offers a range of activities and workshops designed to ease the transition to higher education, promote student success and support employability or progression to further study for underrepresented students. As part of the team’s continuous drive to improve the support we offer, the team looked at ways to increase participation.

To understand what might be inhibiting students from engaging with the Plus Programme we commissioned the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) to review how behaviourally informed communications could be used to increase engagement.

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WIDENING PARTICIPATION ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

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