

ACCESS & STUDENT SUCCESS

ANNUAL REPORT

2022/23



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS



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Our Access and Student Success Strategy ensures all students, regardless of background, can access, benefit from, and thrive at the University of Leeds. It emphasises our commitment to giving students the best chance to achieve their goals. This report provides a snapshot of some of the work from the past year as we strive to provide our students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences that are valuable in the workplace or further study.

Access and student success is intricately aligned with our overarching [University Strategy ‘Universal Values, Global Change’](#) which emphasises a values-driven approach, leveraging research and education to address global challenges, reduce inequalities, and drive societal change. Our Access and Student Success Strategy complements this by focusing on creating an inclusive environment that attracts, develops, and retains students and staff from diverse backgrounds. By doing so, we’re ensuring that the University’s commitment to social justice, reducing inequalities, and achieving UN Sustainable Development Goals is reflected not only in research and collaboration but also in equitable student access and success. Together, these strategies collectively foster global citizens and leaders who can make a positive impact.

Our approach to delivering meaningful change connects excellence with equity. Collaborations with local educational institutions and the internal review of admissions processes to address unconscious bias are proactive steps towards creating a more inclusive academic environment. These efforts are complemented by the ‘Curriculum Redefined’ programme, and the larger education strategy, that has made substantial progress in redefining educational programmes to ensure they are meaningful and aligned with students’ future aspirations.

Integrating staff diversity targets into institutional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and our expansion of the ‘100 Black

Women Professors Now!’ initiative further exemplifies the University’s dedication to fostering an environment where diverse voices are heard and valued. Together, these actions contribute to a strategic approach that delivers new standards for student success and institutional excellence.

Looking ahead, we will continue to do our utmost to provide new starters and our existing students with the richest and most rewarding experiences possible while ensuring the University attracts, excites and retains high-quality students from a wide range of backgrounds.

Professor Jeff Grabill

Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Student Education,
University of Leeds



Access

National Outreach

- Nationally, **718** schools/colleges and **54,095** learners were engaged through various activities.
 - **702** learners from years 11 - 13 engaged with our [Reach for Excellence](#), [Thomas Transition](#), and [Realising Opportunities](#) programmes.
 - **3,696** students were engaged in [IntoUniversity activities at the three Leeds centres](#).
- Approximately, **300** current undergraduate and postgraduate students contributed to outreach activities by working as mentors, tutors, hosts and ambassadors.
- Following completion of the [Go Higher West Yorkshire 'Care to Go Higher programme'](#), participants reported an average **48%** increase in their confidence across nine key topics relating to care experience and higher education and how to support care-experienced young people considering higher education.

Community Outreach

- Our [Lifelong Learning Centre \(LLC\)](#) worked with **2,143** adults and further education learners, and **790** school age learners. They:
 - engaged with **937** adults who are recent returners to learning within the region. This is an increase of **566** learners in comparison to the previous year.

- delivered aspiration-raising activities with **723** adults studying in further education at levels 2 or 3.

- supported **1,273** adult and school-aged learners with preparing for transition into higher education, including the practicalities of applying to university.

- The LLC also worked with a total of **48** local community/ voluntary organisations and statutory/further education college partners. This included: **25** voluntary & community groups; **5** statutory sector organisations eg. Leeds City Council, skills and employment networks and job centres and guidance networks; **3** adult education organisations; **6** further education colleges and **9** schools/ sixth forms.
- The LLC delivered **119** events in community settings, further education colleges, on campus and online. This included a 3-day adult learner summer school and 2 eight-week [Jumpstart courses](#).

Contextual Admissions

- [Access to Leeds \(A2L\)](#) entrants made up **19%** of our UK undergraduate intake. Overall, there were **7,882** A2L eligible applicants to the University of Leeds.
- [Realising Opportunities](#) recruited **110** Year 12 students to cohort 14 of the programme, and **212** Year 13 students from cohort 13 applied to the University of Leeds for 2023/24 entry.

Progression between years

Curriculum Redefined

- **100** programmes have been redefined and are now live within our curriculum. Another **600** programmes are due to be redefined in 2024/25.
- **75** 'transformative educators' are now in post, who have dedicated time to support innovation and exploration within [Curriculum Redefined](#).
- We engaged over **800** students in feedback, workshops and events to collaborate in course re-design.

The Plus Programme

- **5,072** undergraduate and **274** postgraduate students enrolled onto [the Plus Programme](#).
 - **1,932** of these students were from the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Quintile, **144** of these students were care experienced and **48** were estranged.
 - There were **456** undergraduate means-tested scholars, **150** Leeds Masters Scholars and 10 Sanctuary Scholars.

- Plus Programme students are more likely to remain on course:
 - The continuation rate for engaged undergraduate Plus Programme students was **5.5%** higher than the University average for home undergraduates.
 - The continuation rate for engaged PGT Plus Programme students was **1.66%** higher than the University average for home PGTs.
- The Plus Programmes activities meet genuine needs:
 - We reached **62.23%** of undergraduate Plus Programme students with at least one intervention.
 - We helped **21.95%** of estranged students with at least three interventions.
 - **82.04%** of PGT Plus Programme students accessed at least one intervention, and **27.55%** accessed three or more.

The Middle Ground Network

- By the end of the 2022/23 academic year, the Middle Ground Network had **169** registered students who self-identified as 'younger mature'.
- **40%** of network members attended at least one event over the academic year and **18%** of members had some form of sustained engagement with the network.

Foundation Years

- Out of **205** entrants registered to LLC Foundation Year programmes in 2022/23, **170 (83%)** either progressed to the next year or completed their programme:
 - **66%** of entrants were from Index of Multiple Deprivation Quintile 1 or 2.
 - **31%** of entrants were mature.
 - **47%** of entrants were minority ethnic.

Progression beyond higher education

Global Opportunities

- **239** delegates attended our inaugural University of Leeds Undergraduate Research Conference featuring **118** student presenters from all seven faculties.
- **230** students participated in the Global Leadership Forum, which serves as a platform for cross-disciplinary collaboration and knowledge exchange, connecting University of Leeds students with industry leaders and experts from around the world to address global challenges.

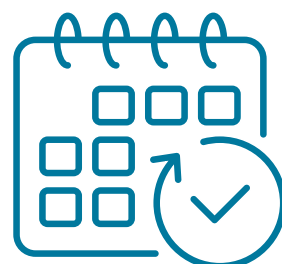
The Careers Service

- Within the Careers Service, there was:
 - **10,909** instances of 1:1 support to students.
 - **3,519** instances of student engagement with our Careers Curriculum.
 - **14,792** instances of student engagement with support tools such as CV Checker, practice interviews and/or psychometric tests.

- Via collaborations with the Plus Programme:
 - **95** Plus Programme students enrolled onto upReach's various programmes, such as RISE, Investment Springboard, Tech500, and Law Springboard.
 - **147** Plus Programme students were successfully matched with a mentor on a variety of leading mentoring programmes.
- We ran **380** apprenticeships which retained **93%** of students from ethnic minority backgrounds, **85%** of mature students and **93%** of learners with learning difficulties/disabilities.

Postgraduate Diversity

- **13** students completed Student Research Experience Placements on topics related to the Access and Student Success Strategy.



At Leeds, student voices underpin all that we do and the longstanding partnership between the University and the Student's Union facilitates progressive student representation across programmes of study and initiatives. As part of this collaboration, we are constantly evaluating our work, with input from students, to drive continuous improvement.

[This commitment to student voice directly contributes to our institutional KPI6A.](#)

Leeds University Union

FACULTY OFFICERS

The University has actively incorporated the new role of faculty officer into its existing student voice structures. Each faculty now has two paid officers - one undergraduate and one postgraduate taught officer. The Leeds University Union (LUU) takes responsibility for recruiting, training, and managing these officers. In their respective faculties, faculty officers are set to play a crucial role in representing the student voice.

A faculty officer's main role is to amplify the student voice at both faculty and institutional levels. They actively engage in Faculty Taught Student Education Committees, provide updates from their school reps, and offer valuable student insights on educational matters. They also provide concise updates to the University Senate, ensuring representation of faculty-specific perspectives at the highest governance levels.

Through their leadership, faculty officers have enhanced student-led aspects of the representative system. The increased student-to-student interaction has enabled representatives at all levels to better understand student opinions in their areas. This tiered network of representatives promotes efficient communication between students and staff.

While the faculty officer role isn't specifically focused on liberation issues, it's noteworthy that half of the post holders are international students, collectively representing a diverse range of students within our university community, demonstrating the University's commitment to inclusivity and diversity.

LIBERATION AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENT NETWORK

The [Liberation and International Student Network \(LISN\)](#) is a new initiative launched by the LUU. This volunteer programme provides a platform for 14 students to represent their diverse and often under-represented communities, including those identifying as LGBTQ+, Asian, black, female, disabled, working-class, and/or international students. Operating with an intersectional approach, LISN advocates for student voice and representation.

Aligned with the Access and Student Success Strategy, LISN focuses on the continuation and elevation of student voice as a strategy enabler. A key objective of LISN is to enhance participation and representation of often marginalised student groups within democratic student engagement, thereby fostering a stronger sense of belonging, community, and opportunity for these students at the University.

In its inaugural term, LISN members actively contributed to [LUU's Better Forums](#) policymaking process, engaged in research on student views and experiences of drugs and alcohol, and organised a cultural quiz night during [LUU's Winter World Unite Festival](#). This event, attended by 58 students, provided an opportunity to learn about diverse cultures, sample different foods, and see their community represented in LUU's events programme. Notably, three of the five National Union of Students Liberation representatives for 2024 were drawn from the LISN network, demonstrating these students' commitment to participating in local and national decision-making processes related to student voice.

LISN serves as a dynamic new avenue to amplify diverse student voices on campus. It's anticipated that both LUU and University teams will engage with the network on various projects, research endeavours, campaigns, and decision-making processes, as it continues to evolve into a key resource across the institution.

Find out more about [Student Voice at LUU: Student Voice - Leeds University Union \(luu.org.uk\)](#)



Student Involvement Project

Launched in the 2020/21 academic year, the Student Involvement Project (SIP) aims to further embed student voice in the work of [Student Success](#). Through listening rooms and acting as student representatives, students take a leading role in providing insights to guide actionable policy and institutional change.

In 2022/23, listening room and focus group participants provided invaluable 'lived experience' data speaking to key issues affecting higher education. These included mental health and wellbeing, a sense of belonging, and the aftermath of COVID-19. We found that mental health was a particular concern, intersecting with the pressures of self-directed academic learning and a lack of a sense of belonging, especially among Widening Participation (WP) students.

We compiled student insights and linked them to existing research to construct a compelling case for institutional change. Additionally, we gathered students' recommendations to guide potential activities. These recommendations encompass:

- greater diversity among staff
- creating an online forum for staff and students to discuss assessment feedback
- integrating careers advice into courses from the outset
- raising awareness among students about apps like Umii
- facilitating enhanced contact with personal tutors or a university 'mentor'.

To take these recommendations forward, in 2023/24 there are plans to recruit 18 access and success advisors who will take part in training, deliver student-led themed groups and contribute to a staff and student steering group.



Student Advisory Boards

FACULTY OF ARTS HUMANITIES AND CULTURE STUDENT ADVISORY BOARD

The Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Culture (AHC) Student Advisory Board amplifies under-represented student voices and enhances faculty understanding of their challenges. It advises on equality and diversity in education and informs decision-making. The board, consisting of 10–12 members, complements student reps' work.

In 2022/23, the board met seven times with a focus on trans-awareness, decolonisation, barriers to postgraduate study, inclusivity in welcome and transition work, and academic personal tutoring experiences. Board members also examined the impact of gender on student experience, the working-class student experience and produced a poster highlighting intersectionality.

Members of the Student Advisory Board have expressed positive experiences, stating, "I've really had an excellent time with the board," and "I've LOVED being a part of the Student

Advisory Board." They felt they were making a difference, especially for marginalised students. They appreciated the board as a safe and inclusive space, where they felt comfortable sharing their experiences.

Members also appreciated the board's supportive operation, stating, "Hybrid meetings have enabled me to attend when I wouldn't have been able to in person," and "I think the usage of the Teams chat works really well... It's a place for members who may be a bit anxious during the meeting with regards to expressing their thoughts."

They valued the reimbursement for their work, reflecting the Board's ambition to boost student voice, and gained valuable insights and skills, with one member saying, "This experience has allowed me to employ and build upon skillsets," and another noting the unique insight gained from being around other under-represented groups.

LEEDS UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL TAUGHT STUDENT ADVISORY BOARD

The Leeds University Business School (LUBS) Taught Student Advisory Board comprises undergraduate and postgraduate students who represent their peers. They offer feedback, insights, and suggestions to improve the student experience at LUBS. Their role is to ensure that all students' needs and concerns are acknowledged, fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Members of the board report a sense of achievement and belonging. Both in-person and online meetings fostered trust and rapport among them. They contribute to resources that have raised awareness of the needs of the diverse student body and provide practical advice for more inclusive teaching practices.

Their involvement has played a crucial role in considering the various circumstances and backgrounds that impact students' engagement and achievement, which has informed the faculty's student education strategy. Furthermore, their feedback has directly influenced key initiatives:

- **Website enhancement:** Feedback on branding, promotion, and content of the student website has been taken on board and will be implemented into a new approach.
- **Management community hub:** Feedback on the management community hub has been incorporated into initial plans, with hopes of trialling it this year.
- **Course costs report:** Student feedback on additional course costs has contributed to an institutional report, informing the project's next steps.
- **Skills@Library resources:** Efforts have been made to share more Skills@Library resources with students, particularly those related to dissertations.
- **Group assessment insights:** Feedback on group assessment has been shared with the faculty, influencing work on central tasks related to group assessment.
- **Academic Personal Tutoring (APT) provision:** Feedback on APT provision will inform faculty APT policy.



MATURE STUDENT ADVISORY BOARD

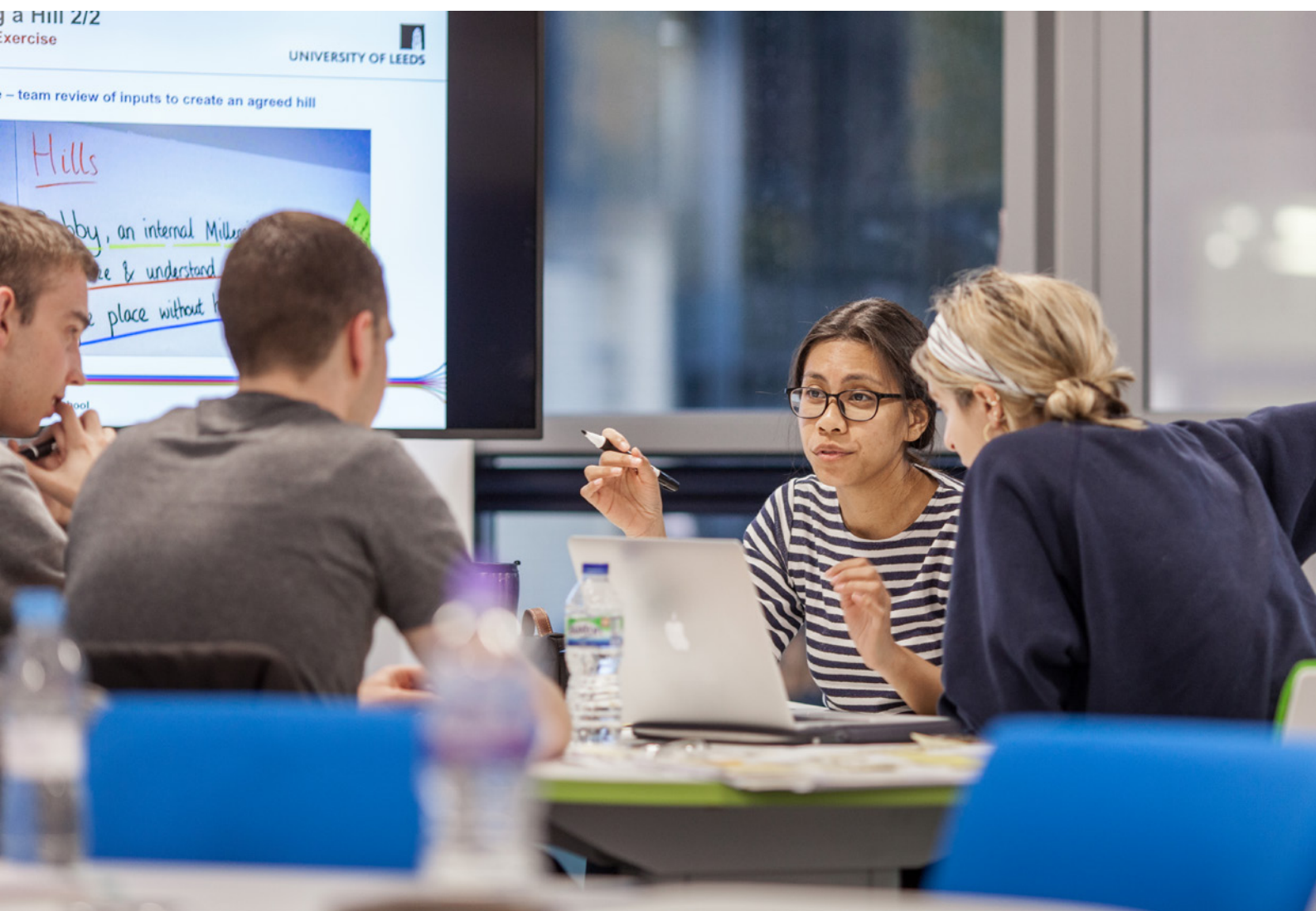
The Mature Student Advisory Board (MSAB), facilitated by the Lifelong Learning Centre, amplifies the voices and profile of mature students. Comprising 15 members from various faculties, the award-winning board, recognised with the LUU Partnership Award, informs service development, maximises engagement, and enhances the mature student experience at the University of Leeds.

In 2022/23, the MSAB achieved several milestones including the launch of the Middle Ground Network, expanding cross-institutional collaborations, and creating a mature student academic skills resource.

MSAB members expressed overwhelmingly positive sentiments:

- 93% believed their involvement positively impacted mature student experiences, emphasising the MSAB's role in fostering a supportive environment for expressing opinions.
- 93% found their time on the board enjoyable, reflecting overall satisfaction and fulfilment.
- 86% agreed their views had been listened to, highlighting the board's commitment to valuing diverse perspectives.

Members express pride in being part of the MSAB and desire to continue their involvement for another year: "I loved attending the meetings and listening to amazing ideas, the passion to make a change, and the freedom to express opinions. [The staff-chairs] are very involved, passionate, and supportive about the purpose of the board; therefore, it was great to feel valued."



At the University of Leeds, we have a wealth of experience attracting students through our approaches to student outreach, nationally recognised Access to Leeds scheme, Lifelong Learning Centre and foundation programmes. We continue to develop and improve these, evolving an admissions policy that allows fair opportunity to study at all levels across the University.

During the 2022/23 academic year, we achieved significant milestones. Our focus was on narrowing the access gap between students from IMD Quintile 1 (Q1) and Quintile 5 (Q5) backgrounds.

Additionally, we successfully increased the representation of postgraduate researchers from ethnically-minority backgrounds, contributing to our institutional KPI9B*.

*Internal data

Delivering sustained and evidence-based outreach

LEEDS TO SUCCESS

Leeds to Success is a sustained outreach programme that supports students in Years 7 to 11 to develop independent learning skills and knowledge related to higher education. The programme aims to foster a sense of belonging in academic environments and make universities, such as Leeds, an accessible option. By exposing students to research, study, and transferable skills not traditionally part of the school curriculum, we aim to increase access, continuation, and attainment at universities.

Our phased introduction of year groups allows us to test, evaluate, and improve our bespoke workshops in real-time. The programme's first pilot phase was launched in the 2022/23 academic year, involving three schools and 75 students from Year 7 and Year 9 cohorts. In the current academic year (2023/24), we initiated the second pilot phase, including Year 8 and Year 10 cohorts, and expanded to four schools with 217 enrolled students. Our goal is to commence the final pilot phase next academic year, incorporating a Year 11 cohort and further expanding to other participating schools.

LEEDS FUTURES

Leeds Futures actively works to break down barriers, provide targeted support, and empower under-represented learners on their journey toward higher education. Leeds Futures programmes cater to students from Year 12 through Year 13, spanning the entire calendar year. These programmes address the recruitment needs of specific subject areas while aligning with our broader strategic goals.

During 2022/23, Leeds Futures programmes underwent significant strategic changes to create a more cohesive post-16 offering. In response to the challenges posed by COVID-19 and lockdowns, we focused on positively impacting students by delivering outreach activities both directly and online. Programme participants now benefit from a blend of online and on-campus experiences, combining synchronous and asynchronous work. These programmes also incorporate subject-specific elements, catering to students' unique interests.

Leeds Futures collaborates with other programmes and provides sessions on study skills, skills development, student finance, and higher education knowledge. Throughout the 2022/23 academic year, session delivery was streamlined by integrating Education Outreach, Access to Leeds, and the Plus Programme. This approach enhanced our ability to consistently target and prioritise students, aligning with the Access to Leeds criteria. Additionally, it facilitated the development of a unified Leeds Futures website landing page, standardised application processes, and coordinated deadlines the teams. Furthermore, a single pre- and post-evaluation form was implemented to ensure consistency across all programme components.



Programme breakdown:

In the context of under-represented learners, the following participation rates were observed across different subject areas:

- Social Sciences: On average, 55% of participants came from Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Quintile 1 or Quintile 2.
- Arts: 47% of participants came from IMD Quintile 1 or Quintile 2.
- Medicine: 65% of participants came from IMD Quintile.
- Dentistry: 63% of participants in the Dentistry strand were also from IMD Quintile.

Student feedback

Students responded positively to Leeds Futures programmes. They described History Futures as “very informative and eye-opening,” and appreciated the opportunity to explore new areas of history. The English Futures programme was deemed “enlightening and beneficial,” providing valuable insights into university life and affirming students’ decision to study English. Dentistry Futures participants expressed a sense of security in their understanding of the field and valued the camaraderie with peers applying for the same course.



Spotlight: Political Futures

Political Futures was established in 2020/21 to support the access pillar of the Access and Student Success Strategy, specifically to aid the School of Politics and International Studies (POLIS) with recruiting more Widening Participation (WP) students.

Over its three cycles, Political Futures has evolved from an open programme, where all applicants were accepted, to a programme targeted at WP students, particularly those falling into Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Quintile 1.

Despite potential overall declines in numbers, the proportion of students participating from under-represented groups has increased over time: 15% of the 2020/21 cohort were from IMD Q1 whilst 28% of the 2022/23 cohort were from IMD Q1.

Consequently, this programme directly impacts the admissions process for POLIS and the recruitment of WP students. POLIS has committed to making guaranteed offers to students on the programme who apply to join the school in September 2025. Out of participants who completed Political Futures between 2020–2022, 21 have applied to the University of Leeds, 90% of whom have received offers to study.

Political Futures aims to engage with and recruit more IMD Q1 Year 12 students. Recognising students' commitment and enthusiasm, POLIS offers guaranteed offers to participants who meet specific requirements. By participating in the programme, completing assignments, collaborating with academics and current students, and visiting campus (to foster a sense of belonging), students gain a comprehensive understanding of studying in POLIS and at the University. This informed choice-making process expands their subject knowledge and builds transferable skills.

UNIVERSITY TECHNICAL COLLEGE LEEDS AND LEEDS MATHEMATICS SCHOOL

An attainment gap persists between school students from disadvantaged backgrounds and their more advantaged counterparts, even into higher education and employment. This gap limits their opportunities and progression. To address this challenge, we have collaborated to establish two schools in Leeds.

1. University Technical College (UTC) Leeds - Opened in 2016, UTC Leeds is sponsored by the University. We closely engage with the senior leadership team to ensure that students have ample opportunities to participate in our outreach programmes. Specifically tailored opportunities are designed and delivered for UTC Leeds students, recognising their specialisation in engineering and advanced technology. Given the critical role of mathematics attainment in various STEM fields, we emphasise it within our work. Our sustained outreach activities and regular school visits provide students with opportunities to apply their learning.

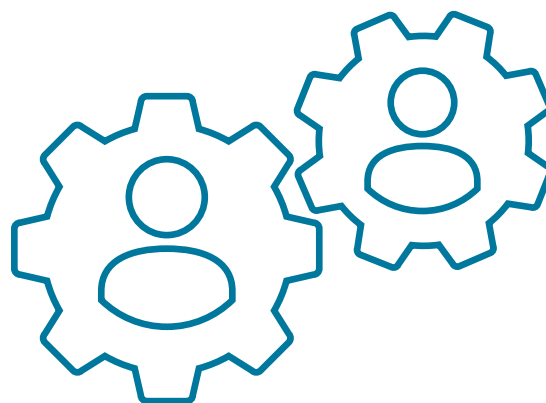
2. Leeds Mathematics School - Opened in September 2023, building on evidence of attainment and representation gaps in mathematics, the University has partnered with GORSE Academies Trust to establish a specialist mathematics school in Leeds. Through our sponsorship, we support not only curriculum learning and enrichment opportunities for students via sustained outreach activities but also staff development and school governance. Additionally, we contribute to the development and delivery of a broader outreach programme for schools in the region.

Our partnership with the UTC and the Leeds Mathematics School plays a pivotal role in enhancing the University's regional socio-economic impact.

By working closely with these schools, we actively contribute to our institutional KPI1B, which aims to increase our positive influence within the local community.

WITH INSIGHT - BLACK HERITAGE MENTORING

The power of positive role models and being able to see oneself represented in an environment are key elements for developing a sense of belonging. Trust is also essential when providing meaningful support and encouraging young people to aim high with their goals. With Insight ran the 'Insight2Uni' mentoring programme to help black heritage young people to unlock their potential through mentorship. Working in partnership with the organisation, we were able to match 40 Year 12 black heritage students from schools across Yorkshire with 20 black heritage University of Leeds student mentors. The first programme ran from March to December 2022 and mentees received advice about securing a place at a leading university as well as insights into student life at Leeds.



Impact

Of the 27 mentees who responded to the end-of-programme survey, 66% applied to the University for 2023 entry. As a result of the mentoring experience, there was an 88% increase in those reporting that they understood what the UCAS process involved and a 52% increase in those stating they knew how to make an informed choice about what to study.

Importantly, mentees felt their mentors were relatable and that they were well-matched. They were able to talk openly about their feelings and share concerns. For example, one mentee said, “Troubles that I see myself having were also troubles that they (mentor) had, and I was reassured that I was overthinking because it’s alright to feel that way.” Another said, “Having a mentor to talk to about how they overcame the application process and advice about uni life really helped.”



Future

The positive and supportive relationships created by this collaborative mentoring project have been beneficial for all involved. One of our mentees said, “The other black students who also had the same mentality to aim high [which] was inspiring.” We are continuing the partnership to support further cohorts of black heritage students and are ensuring that those who progress to Leeds benefit from our on-course support, including enrolling them on the Plus Programme.

GO HIGHER WEST YORKSHIRE

[Go Higher West Yorkshire \(GHWY\)](#), a consortium of 13 diverse HE providers, collaborates to reduce inequalities in access to, success in, and progression from higher education. Hosted by the University, it delivers the Office for Students Uni Connect programme, which aims to increase the number of young people from under-represented groups in England who pursue higher education.

Over the last 12 months, GHWY’s Uni Connect piloted an innovative attainment-raising programme across five schools. ‘Think and Go Higher!’ offered five in-school sessions and a campus visit to one of GHWY’s higher education members.

During the past academic year, the programme successfully delivered four collaborative taster days, providing learners from Year 10 to 12 with impartial careers information across various industry sectors. These sessions highlighted different pathways to careers within those sectors.

Other key achievements include collaborating with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority to create new resources aimed at developing confidence in the five ‘essential’ digital skills outlined by the government. Additionally, GHWY launched a monthly podcast to share information, advice, and guidance on higher education progression and future options for target learners.

Find out more about GHWY’s major successes and upcoming projects in its [2022/23 annual report](#).

EVOLVING ADMISSIONS POLICIES

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF ACCESS TO LEEDS

Since 2003, our [Access to Leeds](#) contextual admissions scheme has enabled over 10,000 UK undergraduates to register at the University. This scheme is part of our commitment to widening participation, supporting access, and improving outcomes for students from less-represented backgrounds.

[Importantly, Access to Leeds’ nationwide reach contributes to our institutional KPI1B, which aims to increase the University’s national socio-economic impact.](#)

In its first year, Access to Leeds received 92 applications and registered 25 students. By 2023, nearly 8,000 applicants to Leeds were eligible for the scheme, and over 1,000 students were accepted onto degree programmes, constituting 18% of the undergraduate cohort.

Within various professions, thousands of Access to Leeds entrants serve as advocates. Among them are Liv Powell and Kieran Launder, who currently work with Access to Leeds entrants who have advanced to the Plus Programme.

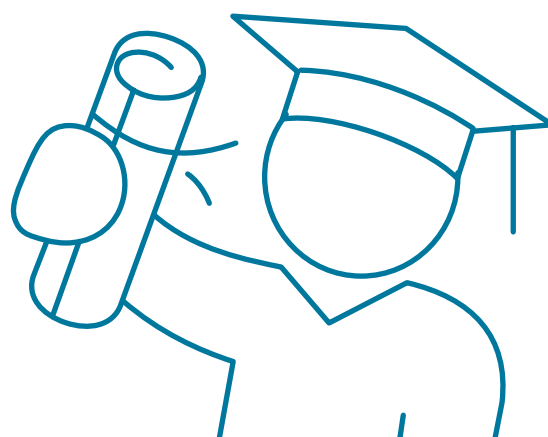
Liv Powell completed her BA in International History and Politics, followed by an MA in Modern History, after applying through Access to Leeds. She now draws on her personal experiences to support students, saying, “I love having full-circle moments when I can advise students who’ve come through Access to Leeds based on my first-hand experience.”

The Access to Leeds team collaborates closely with the Plus Programme to develop and refine programme content, providing tailored transition support. This ensures participants are better prepared to begin higher education, fostering a sense of belonging from the point of application.

The attainment of students eligible for Access to Leeds is comparable to the overall undergraduate cohort, with 90% achieving a first or 2:1 in 2022.

Despite his prior lack of confidence in pursuing higher education, Kieran Launder graduated with First-Class Honours in English Literature and went on to study an MA in Writing for Performance and Publication. He said, “I was a high achiever but didn’t think I was the kind of person who would belong in a university setting.” Finding Access to Leeds reassured him, and he added, “The scheme showed me I was capable of coming to the University.”

In his current role, Kieran says: “My own experience means I’m acutely aware of the pressures different groups of students’ face. This feeds into the work I’m doing as I try to be the most approachable, friendly and empathetic person I can be in my role.”



POSTGRADUATE CONTEXTUAL ADMISSIONS

As part of our involvement in the [Yorkshire Consortium for Equity in Doctoral Education \(YCEDE\)](#), we introduced a range of support and opportunities to applicants from under-represented groups. During the 2022/23 academic year, we delivered information sessions and workshops to demystify doctoral study and help prospective postgraduate researchers make strong applications to their programmes of choice.

We also coordinated the delivery of nine ring-fenced research internships across the University's seven faculties. We expanded the YCEDE Advocacy Programme to connect prospective postgraduate researchers with academic

mentors and awarded three ring-fenced Leeds Opportunity Research Scholarships (LORS). The LORS application process was redesigned to ensure greater transparency for applicants and consideration of intersecting barriers during candidate assessment and selection.

Furthermore, we collaborated with the University's Doctoral College to explore augmenting our internal admissions processes. Our goal is to promote equity and diversity by addressing unconscious bias in postgraduate researcher recruitment and acknowledging the barriers experienced by applicants from under-represented groups.

[This work contributes to our institutional KPI9D, which focuses on the diversity of ethnicity and domicile origin among postgraduate researchers.](#)

Providing flexible learning opportunities

THE LIFELONG LEARNING CENTRE

FOUNDATION YEARS

Our ambitious [Curriculum Redefined programme](#) provides dedicated time and space to review and redefine our learning programmes. This has included refreshing the foundation year curriculum, embedding inclusive pedagogies, increasing formative feedback, reducing summative assessment, and ensuring students acquire the necessary skills for success in their chosen degrees.

In 2022/23, we introduced the new academic mentor role to each programme to provide dedicated tailored support to students. Academic mentors complement academic personal tutoring and enable early intervention when staff have concerns about progress or engagement. They proactively connect students with support and resources both in the Lifelong Learning Centre and across the University. The new role of academic mentors has allowed us to run additional academic events this year, in addition to the efforts by programme teams and our student support team.

Furthermore, with a strong focus on student voice and co-creation, highlights have been working by student interns to develop a welcome and transition guide. Three student interns were recruited to explore interns' lived experiences. Interns conducted focus groups and a research survey for students who have progressed from our foundation year. This collaborative effort resulted in a co-created transition event and a transition guide, based on feedback, along with further recommendations for future initiatives.

MATURE STUDENT ACCESS

We have consistently delivered events to support progression into higher education for adult learners, including those studying in further education on healthcare courses and

Access to HE Diplomas (A2HE). Our sessions have covered topics such as application processes and student finance workshops for colleges, including Leeds City College, Kirklees College, Barnsley College, and Northern College. Throughout the past academic year, we have continued to strengthen mutually beneficial partnerships with further education staff, ensuring they are regularly updated with key information about UCAS applications, entry requirements at Leeds, and student finance.

During the first semester, our efforts expanded to include adult learner groups studying Levels 1 and 2 Health and Social Care within Leeds City College. These sessions and support focused on raising aspirations, creating awareness of alternative routes into healthcare professions, and providing signposts to available support for mature learners at the LLC.

Additionally, we collaborated with the School of Healthcare and Educational Engagement to deliver a bespoke admissions event specifically for A2HE healthcare learners. Our input during the initial development of the event, particularly considering the needs of mature learners, was valuable. Leveraging our longstanding partnerships with regional further education institutions, we shared information about the event.

Furthermore, we have been exploring the potential inclusion of A2HE qualifications in the Access to Leeds (A2L) scheme. As part of a trial running in the 2023/24 academic year, we are considering including healthcare degree courses (such as nursing, midwifery, and social work) in the A2L scheme. The LLC has collaborated with the A2L team and colleagues in the School of Healthcare and Educational Engagement to address practical considerations related to inclusion and to share information with key further education partners.

At Leeds, we are committed to reducing inequalities in higher education at every stage of the student journey. All students should feel they belong, are valued, and are supported to thrive academically so they can achieve their unique goals and fulfil their potential.

We reached our non-continuation milestone in 2022/23 on our way to reducing the gap in non-continuation for postgraduate-taught ethnically-minoritised students to 2.5% in 2025 and eliminating non-continuation entirely by 2035, contributing to our institutional KPI9B.

*Internal data

Fostering a sense of belonging

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Providing an inclusive education is key to addressing differential attainment and continuation rates within our student community. As it represents a significant shift from the standard pedagogic development and delivery model, support for educators becomes essential. We have created training, guidance, and resources to assist educators in transforming their pedagogy and introducing inclusive curricula.

The review of Inclusive Learning and Teaching (ILT) by the ILT Advisory Board has resulted in 10 high-level recommendations to meet the institutional ILT baseline standards. These recommendations are being implemented by relevant teams, including the Equality and Inclusion Unit and the Digital Education Service. Involving School Academic Leads for Inclusive Pedagogies is also crucial for the successful implementation of these recommendations.

The Curriculum Redefined programme presents an opportunity to drive progress at the institutional level and significantly scale up new approaches. Wherever feasible, inclusive education has been incorporated into guidance and expectations related to module reviews and the support offered to those in the first tranche of the programme. This large-scale adoption will allow us to evaluate and review impact, leading to a better understanding of what works and where continuous improvements can and should be made.

Find out more about Inclusive Teaching and Learning at Leeds: [Home - Inclusive Teaching \(leeds.ac.uk\)](https://leeds.ac.uk/home-inclusive-teaching)

CURRICULUM REDEFINED

Curriculum Redefined (CR) is a key strategic vehicle for delivering the Student Education Strategy, aimed at providing a transformative, research-based educational experience for students from diverse backgrounds. Through this initiative, students develop the knowledge and skills they need to be successful and make a positive impact in the world.

Importantly, Curriculum Redefined also contributes to our institutional KPI4A, ensuring that graduates feel their work is meaningful, important, utilises what they have learned, and aligns with their future plans.

Curriculum Redefined made some major steps forward in 2023. 100 programmes have been redefined and are now live within our curriculum. Another 600 programmes are due to be redefined in 2024/25. Additionally, 75 'transformative educators' are now in post, who have dedicated time to support innovation and exploration within Curriculum Redefined.

The active involvement of students in the design phase of their courses and modules is a deeply embedded principle within Curriculum Redefined. We have refreshed and re-embedded the principles of the University of Leeds curriculum into all new and impending programmes, empowering students to have their say in the curriculum and preparing them to be global citizens. We engaged over 800 students in feedback, workshops and events to collaborate in course re-design. Every school across the University has developed an action plan for change.



SPOTLIGHT ON THE FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND CULTURES

In the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures (AHC), a group of 19 'transformative educators' have significantly influenced the shape and direction of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, designing and contributing to modules, developing educational resources, and diversifying assessment practices. This work is aligned with institutional priorities such as student belonging, experiential learning, and developing digital/professional literacies.

In response to student consultations, assessment practices within redefined modules have been adapted to better address student needs. Changes encompass inclusive assessments for those with disabilities, emphasising skills, and developing assessments which reflect the current cultural moment.

Impact and success have been measured through student survey responses and the growing reputation of AHC's transformative educators. They have presented a manifesto at the House of Lords, been invited to speak at events and pursue leadership opportunities, and develop funded interdisciplinary research networks, such as the AHRC Female Desire research network.

[Find out more about reshaping education within arts, humanities and cultures](#)

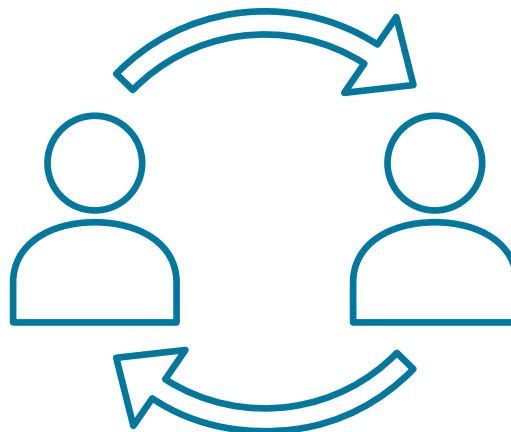
STUDENT CONTACT AND ENGAGEMENT SUPPORT

The University has developed its use of learner analytics in recent years, helping us to understand student engagement at an individual level, spotting trends such as absences and when work isn't completed. Our engagement monitoring platform shows when students engage at regular touchpoints, such as logging into the virtual learning environment or using their library card. A decreasing number of interactions with university services can indicate the students who may be facing potential challenges and flag those who might benefit from some additional support.

Using this system, we piloted a support scheme where dedicated university staff reach out to students who are identified as low engagers. They discuss how they are getting on, whether they have any academic or pastoral problems, and put them in touch with services that can help.

Rather than academics, our student engagement callers are typically graduates recruited for their communication skills and understanding of the student experience. They spend as long as necessary on the phone with a flagged student – over an hour sometimes, depending on the student's needs.

Data from a 2022/23 pilot suggests that students who spoke to a caller were more likely to continue to be registered on their course in Semester 2 and almost three-quarters had no further engagement issues three weeks after their call.



Following the pilot project's success, there are plans to expand the approach to all schools across the University. Our aim is for this service to become a key strategy for supporting student progression at Leeds.

I BELONG I MATTER SURVEY

Our goal is to work together with students to build a community where every student feels they truly belong. Belonging sits at the heart of our Access and Student Success Strategy and is woven into our institutional goals. To measure progress and identify areas for improvement, we developed a crucial tool: the I Belong I Matter survey. This serves as a key vehicle to assess progress, guiding us towards a more inclusive and supportive academic environment.

In the academic year 2022/23, the survey focused on student wellbeing, loneliness, and psychological distress. It also provided a platform for students to express their confidence in academic skills and voice their excitement or worries about embarking on their university journey.

Data collected from the 2022/23 survey highlighted common concerns and barriers faced by students during their initial months. This valuable information informed supportive activities during the welcome period and throughout the early months of the academic year.

Our commitment extends beyond a single survey cycle. We continue to follow both the 2022/23 cohort and the fresh cohort starting in 2023/24. As we gather more data, we'll develop a nuanced understanding of how students' sense of belonging evolves over time. This knowledge will shape projects aimed at fostering stronger connections.

Through follow-up analysis, we'll explore patterns associated with specific student characteristics. By doing so, we aim to support currently marginalised and minoritised students, empowering them to flourish and thrive.

THE MIDDLE GROUND NETWORK

Younger mature students make up 67% of mature undergraduates at the University of Leeds, and often don't actively engage in mature student support activities. Feedback from this group underscores the challenges they face in connecting with peers of a similar age, significantly impacting their sense of belonging and overall student experience.

The Middle Ground Network emerged in response to student feedback and was inaugurated in December 2022 by the Lifelong Learning Centre, in collaboration with the Student Success Unit and Leeds University Union. Co-creation of the network involved student interns as 'Engagement Coordinators' who were recruited from the University's younger mature student body.

Created with students, for students, the network enhances social interaction among younger mature students, both in-person and virtually. It helps to shape an understanding of their needs and preferences and informs staff support to boost their sense of belonging and improve advocacy for the group.

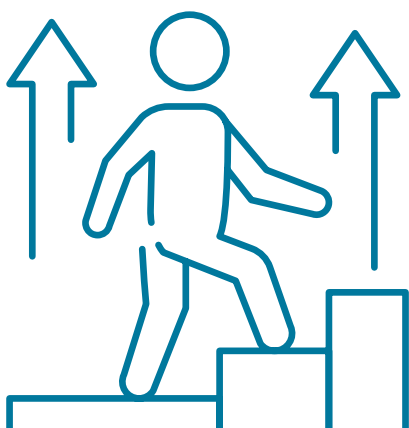
Within the mature student community, students can self-identify as being younger mature students and register to join the Middle Ground Network. By the end of the 2022/23 academic year, the network had 169 registered students, 40% of whom had attended at least one event over the academic year, and 18% of whom had had some form of sustained engagement with the network.

A variety of events were run throughout the year in different spaces and at different times to cater for everyone's timetables and commitments. On average, following each Middle Ground Network event:

- 96% of students said they felt participation had strengthened their sense of belonging at the University,
- 83% said they'd keep in touch with students they had met.

The Middle Ground Network has successfully achieved its goal of enhancing the sense of belonging for younger mature students at Leeds. Pre- and post-engagement surveys have revealed significant improvements:

- 21% increase in students feeling a sense of belonging and being part of the student community.
- 76% acknowledged the network's positive impact on their sense of belonging.



FACULTY OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH – SCHOOL OF MEDICINE MBCHB BLACK MENTORING SCHEME

After noticing a lack of representation of doctors from black/black-heritage backgrounds, Shakeela Brown, a first-year medical student, suggested a black mentoring scheme during a School of Medicine EDI Student Council. During 2022/23 Shakeela led the scheme's development and rollout.

The mentoring scheme involves doctors of black/black-heritage backgrounds mentoring current black/black-heritage medical students. Co-created by students, NHS doctors, and Professor Bridgette Bewick, it aims to empower and inspire students and facilitate a sense that they belong in medicine.

Both the doctors and students involved gave highly positive feedback on the scheme, with students praising 'inspirational' mentors for their honesty and transparency.





Enabling student access to academic skills development

STUDENT SUCCESS STANDS

Student Success Stands were launched at the University in March 2023, inspired by a similar scheme ran at Michigan State University. Located in halls of residence, the Students' Union, and library spaces, the Student Success Stands aimed to demystify the 'hidden curriculum' and encourage student engagement. Staff talked with students about various topics, with a particular focus on those at a higher risk of leaving university.

The initiative was well-received, with students highly rating the usefulness of their interactions and reporting increased confidence. Many students gained new information they would have been unlikely to find otherwise.

The pilot initiative proved successful, leading to further refinement for implementation in the 2023/24 academic year. Going forward, the focus will be on enhancing engagement with specific groups of students, while also fostering connections between the stands and other institutional areas.

Find out more about the Plus Programme's work through their [2023 annual report](#).

Supporting smooth transitions

PREPARE FOR POSTGRAD

Prepare for Postgrad is an online resource available to incoming home-rated postgraduate taught students that aims to help navigate the transition into a Masters programme. The guide offers information, guidance, and signposting about different areas of the postgraduate experience, including how it differs to undergraduate study, and the

services available at Leeds to support postgraduates in budgeting, time management, and wellbeing.

Every year, hundreds of students utilise the resource, including those from under-represented backgrounds. 20% of students who engaged with the resource went on to become part of the Plus Programme, a scheme for students from different Widening Participation backgrounds.

Our aim is for all students to be offered opportunities to create and achieve their own goals after they graduate. While each student brings their own idea about what success means to them, not all will have the necessary tools at their disposal to achieve their ambitions. The University has a strong track record in supporting progression beyond higher education, and we work to deliver consistent and inclusive activities throughout the university lifecycle to support students make decisions about their future.



Supporting students to be active decision-makers about their future

STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES AND FUTURES STRATEGY

Sitting alongside the Access and [Student Success Strategy](#), our [Student Opportunities and Futures Strategy \(2022–2025\)](#) outlines our holistic approach to enabling, empowering, and enhancing student opportunity and career prospects through all aspects of the student experience. Our students will develop a clear understanding of the necessary values, attributes, behaviours, skills and knowledge needed to achieve their aspirations.

The strategy encapsulates work designed to ensure that:

- 1) students are supported to define and reflect upon what success means to them and to then take personal responsibility for identifying the attributes, skills and behaviours they wish to develop,
- 2) we provide a diverse range of expert information, advice and guidance to all students and graduates through a range of events, support meetings and resources,
- 3) we provide opportunities for students to build awareness of the ways in which they can make a difference and develop as global citizens through local, national and international opportunities to work, study and build their own networks and professional relationships,
- 4) our students can access enterprise and entrepreneurial opportunities across the University and provide an ecosystem for enterprise learning both within and beyond the curriculum.

The five strategic principles of the Student Opportunities and Futures Strategy are:

- **Student autonomy**, supporting students to define for themselves what a successful and healthy future looks like and to provide them with the tools and resources to achieve their potential.
- **Delivery in partnership**, a cross-institutional approach to student employability pulling in academic and non-academic contributors such as the Students' Union, student careers placements, and our business start-up centre (Spark).
- **Equitable access and opportunity** ensuring that all students can benefit, and under-represented groups are a key priority.
- **Sense of belonging**, allowing students to be a part of both our decision-making and the creation of opportunities, and to explore possible futures with like-minded individuals from within and outside Leeds – towards developing a supportive lifelong community.
- **Being industry- and data-informed**, our work across Leeds strives to be evidence-led.

Through this strategy, we work to empower a meaningful and healthy attitude to future progression for all our students.

LEEDS CAPABILITIES FRAMEWORK

A key enabler of the Student Opportunities and Futures Strategy is the Capabilities Framework. This supports programmes to design academic experiences which incorporate our three core literacies (academic, digital, professional) and their underpinning skills. It helps students to develop as successful scholars and prepares them to enter the world of work, further study or other planned activities.

An essential element of the Capabilities Framework is the Leeds Skills Matrix which enables programmes and teams to consider which skills are most relevant to their discipline, whilst recognising the different contexts within which those skills can be transferred and applied. It helps our students to recognise, surface and articulate the skills value of their degree by helping them to develop the right skills in the right way and at the right time.

The Leeds Skills Matrix is a three-layer approach:

Layer 1: Integrating academic, digital and professional literacies into curriculum design.

Layer 2: Ensuring that the specific knowledge, understanding and skills necessary for each subject/discipline is integrated into curriculum design.

Layer 3: The surfacing skills process, which helps to establish whether the 'right' skills are being developed and assessed and whether students are recognising their progress in skills development.

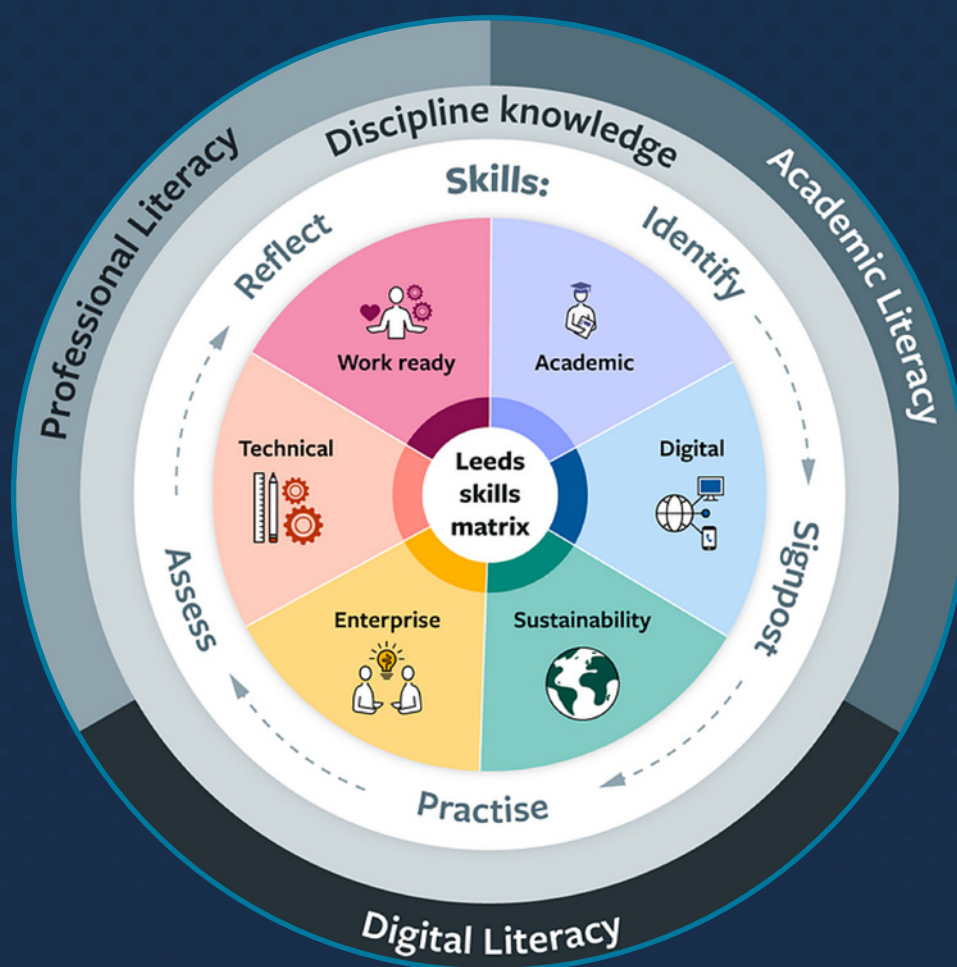
Stage 1 - Identify: Each programme will develop and publish an agreed list of appropriate programme-level skills and build these into module and programme learning outcomes.

Stage 2 - Signpost: A clear and consistent method is adopted by programmes to signpost students to the skills that they are developing, including where, when and how.

Stage 3 - Practise: Students are regularly supported to reflect on their skills development through learning activities that provide opportunities to practise their skills.

Stage 4 - Assess: Skills are consistently and authentically assessed throughout a student's programme of study.

Stage 5 - Reflect: Students are provided with opportunities within the curriculum to formally and informally reflect upon their current skillset and future development needs.



THE CAREERS SERVICE

In the academic year 2022/23, the Careers Service Employability and Progression Assistants (EPAs) dedicated their efforts to creating and implementing a diverse array of employability-related activities. These initiatives were specifically tailored for Plus Programme and Widening Participation students.

The overarching objective was to heighten awareness of the Careers Service and its online platform, MyCareer. By doing so, they aimed to provide valuable careers advice and guidance to students. These endeavors were geared toward enhancing student employability, promoting retention, and contributing to overall academic success.

The EPAs sit in the Careers Mentoring and Widening Participation team, which aims to provide an inclusive and accessible offer for equitable progression through a mix of online and in-person activities. Webinars were recorded and in-person events were offered at different times and days throughout the year. Additionally, tailored digital resources were created for bespoke groups, informed by research carried out by the EPAs. Examples of the tailored support delivered by EPAs included online and in-person appointments for students who had recorded a career readiness statement of 'not started thinking', along with a regular newsletter and resources.

By introducing under-represented students to a range of opportunities available at the University of Leeds, including vacancies, internships, career mentoring schemes, employability workshops and resources, insight days and LinkedIn Learning, the EPAs supported this group to discover, develop and refine their career plans and actions.

New initiatives included a pilot developed for care experienced and estranged students. This consisted of an informal drop-in session to discuss questions, along with regular newsletters, skills workshops, and access to an alumni mentor. In addition, we supported students applying for a Student Research Experience Placement, delivering application support workshops, sharing guidance and tips on how to articulate skills and experiences into the 'essential criteria' section of the application form.

Linking closely with alumni volunteers and external organisations to connect students with relatable role models, foster connections, enhance professional skills and facilitate knowledge exchange, the team delivered a series of workshops in conjunction with the Transform Society. This included preparing for an assessment centre, and guidance on building transferrable skills. The EPAs also worked with the EY Foundation who delivered a virtual business challenge and bespoke networking events.

Alongside this, the team delivered a range of career mentoring schemes, including schemes with PwC in Leeds, and a scheme exclusively for Plus Programme postgraduate taught students.

Find out more about the [Careers Service at Leeds](#).

THE TURING SCHEME

The Turing Scheme is the UK's global programme for studying, working and living abroad and offers transformational opportunities for students' personal and professional development.

Part-funded by the UK Government, the University of Leeds also contributes a significant amount of institutional funding to the scheme. The scheme supports students to undertake a compulsory study or work placement year abroad. In addition, students on an optional study or work year abroad identified as coming from under-represented backgrounds will receive Turing Scheme funding to support their international experiences. Activities supported by the Turing Scheme and the University in 2023/24 include:

- study placements abroad
- work placements abroad
- postgraduate research placement abroad
- summer schools
- medical electives
- volunteering abroad.

The latest Graduate Outcomes survey data reveals a significant 10.5% increase in graduate-level employment among students who studied or worked abroad, compared to non-mobile graduates. This positive trend is even more pronounced for under-represented participants, with a 14.5% higher likelihood of positive graduate destinations.

Feedback from Leeds students who participated in the Turing Scheme showed that 89% and 80% of participants, respectively, agreed their international experience increased their chances of getting a "new or better job". Below are the percentages of participants from the second year of the Turing Scheme who agreed their international experience improved specific employability skills:

- cultural awareness: 91%
- problem-solving: 88%
- independent learning: 87%
- planning and organisation: 84%
- increased job prospects: 80%
- teamwork: 79%
- analytical skills: 79%
- better able to take on work tasks with high responsibility: 81%
- developing and executing ideas: 76%
- clearer career aspirations: 64%.

The Turing Scheme will soon be delivering opportunities in collaboration with over 300 partners worldwide and has exchange partnerships with 39 of the QS top 100 Global Universities (QS Rankings 2024).

CREATIVE LIFE STORIES IN THE FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND CULTURE

[Creative Life Stories](#) is a valuable initiative aimed at supporting students who face barriers in pursuing careers within the creative and cultural industries. By demystifying these career paths, the project provides practical support and insights to under-represented students. Through short videos, blog posts, and interviews, they showcase diverse pathways from university entry to professional life.

The project also hosts Creative Life Stories Connections events, creating a platform for creatives to engage informally with fellow students. These events inspire both undergraduates and postgraduates from various backgrounds, including working-class families, the LGBTQ+ community, neurodiverse individuals, those with chronic illnesses, and minoritised ethnic groups. Its goal is to encourage exploration of creative and cultural careers.

One student who attended the Exploring Creative Life Stories workshop expressed their gratitude for the experience:

“Thank you to Aimen Mahmood and the Creative Careers team at the University of Leeds for putting together a wonderful workshop. It was an empowering and eye-opening experience to discuss and network with a diverse array of individuals like myself from under-represented minority backgrounds, and to learn about the support that the arts receive from independent and local council projects... Coming away from the session, I’ve decided to finally start putting together my poetry portfolio, and spend the summer doing more creative projects”.



At Leeds, we are focused on delivering high-level evaluation of the University's activity across the student lifecycle so we can embed an evidence-based, inclusive approach to our work in access and student success.



Listening to our students

STUDENT RESEARCH EXPERIENCE PLACEMENTS

The Educational Engagement-funded and Leeds Institute for Teaching Excellence-delivered [Student Research Experience Placement](#) scheme ran for the third year in 2022/23, with 13 students undertaking a six-week research project in collaboration with a supervisor. Projects funded through the scheme focus on access and success; applications are particularly welcomed from students who can bring personal perspectives from currently under-represented groups at the University (including, but not limited to people who experience racism, mature students, care leavers, Access to Leeds and Plus Programme students). Placement opportunities are communicated via the Plus Programme and the Yorkshire Consortium for Equity in Doctoral Education.

Potential applicants are offered support at the pre-application stage, including a scheme briefing session, a Careers Service-run application guidance session and the opportunity to receive feedback on a draft application (offered on a limited basis by the Careers Service).

The placements include further optional funding for student researchers to be paid for any post-placement dissemination of research to relevant stakeholders, including groups within the University. This supports the adoption of research recommendations into evidence-based decision-making.

The 2023 projects have been shared widely including one student discussing their research findings at national and international conferences. Six other students have shared their findings within the University via presentations to the Belonging and Success Research Group, Student Success Conference and Student Education Conference as well as through conversations with staff who can use students' research findings to inform practice in their roles.

Further examples of impact from previous years include the adoption of recommendations by a university working group from a project investigating faith and student success, and a report from a project on widening participation in postgraduate study, which helped to shape a sector-wide strategy blueprint on the same topic.

Find out more about [the Student Research Experience Placement Scheme](#).

REVERSE MENTORING

In the academic year 2022/23, two reverse mentoring schemes were delivered on campus. The evaluation and further development of our institutional-level Educational Engagement scheme were completed in 2021/22.

The LITE Fellowship Scheme ran throughout the year, with 19 students from under-represented backgrounds mentoring Academic Personal Tutoring leadership staff across 19 different disciplines. It was introduced by Rachael O'Connor, an academic lecturer in the School of Law and funded by the LITE Catalyst Fund.

Also delivered by Rachel O'Connor, the Michael Beverley Innovation Fellowship scheme took place in 2023, involving 12 School of Law students from under-represented backgrounds. The students served as mentors or expert support buddies for senior members of the legal profession. This scheme is supported by two student research assistants from under-represented backgrounds.

Both projects had a significant impact on students and staff, enhancing students' sense of belonging and improving staff understanding of how to effectively support under-represented students. The dissemination of findings has also influenced practices both on campus and externally. Notably, the team behind the EE 21/22 project submitted an article to the British Educational Research Journal, solidifying Leeds' position as a leader in this field.



Cultivating and celebrating a diverse community

INCREASING STAFF DIVERSITY

In July 2023, staff diversity targets from the Access and Student Success Strategy were incorporated into the [institutional Equity, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) KPIs \(KPI3C\)](#). The Autumn 2023 [EDI implementation plan](#) includes specific actions aimed at delivering progress in this area and increasing staff diversity.

During the academic year 2022/23, there were modest increases in staff diversity:

- The proportion of minoritised ethnic professional services staff rose from 12.0% in July 2022 to 13.2% in July 2023.
- The proportion of minoritised ethnic professorial staff remained steady at 8.5%.
- Notably, the proportion of minoritised ethnic female professorial staff increased from 2.5% to 2.9% and, in the same period, the percentage of female professors increased from 28.5% to 30.6%.

This increased representation is crucial for fostering a sense of belonging among minoritised ethnic students and ensuring that all students benefit from being taught and supported by individuals from diverse backgrounds.

100 BLACK WOMEN PROFESSORS NOW!

[100 Black Women Professors Now!](#) is a systemic change programme aimed at increasing the representation of black women across the academic pipeline and accelerating their career advancement. Launched in 2021, when there were only 35 black women professors in the UK, this initiative seeks

to dismantle barriers and biases faced by black academic women. It challenges institutional assumptions and addresses fundamental societal inequalities.

Initially targeting black women academics at Grade 9, the programme expanded in 2022/23 to include seven women at Grades 7 and 8, as well as six postgraduate researchers. Notably, in November 2022, Lisa-Dionne Morris from the School of Mechanical Engineering became the first graduate of professor at the University of Leeds. The programme continues in 2023/24 with a cohort of postgraduate researchers.

[100 Black Women Professors Now!](#) also contributes to our [institutional KPI3D](#), which emphasises increased engagement with leadership development to propel our strategy, culture, and values forward.

RACE EQUALITY CHARTER

[University of Leeds officially joined the Race Equality Charter \(REC\) in August 2023](#). The REC is a national accreditation awarded by AdvanceHE that assesses higher educational institutions based on their commitment and progress toward race equity. A Race Equality Charter Self-Assessment Team (REC SAT) has been organised, co-chaired by Dr Kendi Guantai (University Dean for EDI) and Professor Jeff Grabill (Deputy VC Student Education), with staff and student representation. The REC SAT will analyse institutional data over the years to understand gaps, identify good practices, and create a roadmap for institutional change toward racial equity over the next three years with the goal of submitting for a bronze award.



Evaluating and sharing our work



GO HIGHER WEST YORKSHIRE COLLABORATIONS

Collaborative working for access and participation activity has been supported by our engagement with other local higher education providers through Go Higher West Yorkshire (GHWY).

GHWY convenes several groups and networks, providing staff with opportunities to work alongside and learn from colleagues across multiple higher education providers, including HE in FE, specialist providers, a conservatoire, and universities across all higher education mission groups. Bringing these stakeholders together has helped identify common issues across higher education, providing a more complete picture of the challenges faced. As a result, a range of tangible outputs have been developed to facilitate positive outcomes for students from under-represented groups. Examples include a transition pack to support disabled students transitioning into higher education, and a systematic review of evidence examining the barriers and enablers for higher education entry by students from black, Asian, and minoritised ethnicities.

BELONGING AND SUCCESS RESEARCH GROUP

The [Belonging and Success Research Group](#) expanded its membership and reach throughout the 2022/23 academic year with a current membership of 84. Academic and professional services staff, along with student researchers and invited external speakers, have shared their work with a growing and engaged audience during informal bi-monthly meetings. The research group showcases innovative methodologies and avenues for investigating the concept of a sense of belonging. Additionally, the group actively seeks to expand its scope by establishing connections with external organisations and fostering a research culture.

Network members regularly present their work at the Student Education Conference and the Student Success conferences at the University and nationally and internationally. Currently, the network is in its early stages of community development and is exploring ways to assist new researchers to translate their research into tangible outcomes.

STUDENT SUCCESS CONFERENCE

The inaugural 2022 [University of Leeds Student Success Conference](#) successfully convened stakeholders, colleagues, and students from a range of diverse higher education HE institutions. The conference served as a platform to share research and best practices on student success. It featured papers covering various themes, including student and staff co-creation, student voice, sense of belonging, curriculum design, and data utilisation for actionable change. The conference was fully booked, with a substantial waiting list, and the feedback received was overwhelmingly positive.

STUDENT SUCCESS FORUMS

The Student Success Forums bring together staff and students from across the institution to discuss access and student success. They stimulate discussion, collaboration and action by enabling reflection on practice and policy. In 2022/23 there were forums covering a range of themes, including:

- access and transitions for minoritised and under-represented groups
- decolonisation
- diversity in PhD study
- exploring strategies to enhance student progression
- developing an equity approach to social mobility.

Most of the events were conducted online, with a total of 591 attendees over the year. The feedback received was generally positive, with participants appreciating the opportunity to network with colleagues across the institution and gain insights from external perspectives on student success.

The University of Leeds is making significant progress in implementing our Access and Student Success Strategy. Through a comprehensive framework of strategies, which span student education, digital transformation, and beyond, we take an expansive approach to enhancing progression into higher education and future outcomes. We remain focused on tackling structural disadvantages and celebrating the diversity within our university community.



I take immense pride in contributing to this commitment at the University of Leeds. It's very much a part of our institution's history and will continue to shape our future. The report offers just a snapshot of our ongoing efforts.

At the core of all the case studies presented lies the theme of partnership. This includes the importance of collaborating with communities, working alongside our students, fostering connections within the institution, and engaging with external organisations.

I want to emphasise our collaboration with students and the value we place on understanding their lived experiences and expertise. We are immensely grateful to all students who have contributed to enriching the university experience and improving outcomes. The positive impact of our Students' Union, including its executive team, serves as a powerful example of this collaborative spirit. Whether it's innovative initiatives like establishing the Liberation and International Student Network or developing new outreach programmes, we're consistently placing students at the heart of our initiatives for change.

It's this cooperative and clear approach that has significantly influenced our local, national, and international engagement. We recognise that we can't solve these problems alone. The progress we've made owes much to our efforts across the institution, with partnerships such as Go Higher West Yorkshire; schools and colleges; organisations such as the Turing Scheme and the wider sector.

As we look ahead, our focus remains on advancing the implementation of the Access and Student Success Strategy. Our Curriculum Redefined programme, along with our efforts to maximise progression between academic years, will contribute to achieving our ambitious targets in this area.

Lastly, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all our colleagues and students both within the University of Leeds and beyond for their unwavering support. Their willingness to share expertise, insights, and experiences has been invaluable.

Louise Banahene

Director of Educational Engagement and Student Success,
University of Leeds



**Many thanks to everyone at
the University of Leeds who helped to produce
this report.**



**If you would like to discuss any content of the
report, please get in touch by emailing
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