

RNN Group

Access and participation plan

2021-22 to 2025-26

Introduction

The RNN Group was formed as a result of a merger between Rotherham College and North Nottinghamshire College in February 2016 and a further merger with Dearne Valley College in February 2017. Within the RNN Group, the University Centre Rotherham (UCR) is the location where the group delivers the majority of its Higher Education qualifications. The RNN Group is one of the largest providers of education in the area, with main sites in the East Midlands and the Sheffield City Region (SCR), meeting the training and education needs of thousands of employers, adults and school leavers every year. The Group works closely with the SCR, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), organisations representing the business community, trade bodies, local authorities, voluntary sector, higher level skills groups across the region and national government to provide the best solutions to the economic needs of the areas in which it serves. The number of HE learners for 2019/20 was less than 600 and as a General Further Education College, accounted for approximately 7.5% of the total group numbers.

1. Assessment of performance

As a growing provider of higher education, and one which delivers its HE largely through HNCs, HNDs and Foundation degrees we data set that has grown over the past five years. As such much of the data from the past five years is suppressed in the interests of preventing the identification of individual students. The analysis below therefore represents a summary and analysis of our publicly available data via the OfS Data Dashboard and TEF4 metrics, the most recently available national data and supplemented with a growing amount of internally collected and analysed data and outlined in the APP for 2020/21. Wherever possible, it also includes the trends over time, contextualised as much as possible for a growing HE provider serving the East Midlands and the Sheffield City Region.

1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

Access

It is widely recognised that there is a sector wide challenge in meeting the Office for Student's (OfS's) ambition that future generations should have equal opportunities to access and succeed in higher education (HE), and to achieve successful and rewarding careers.

Examination of the POLAR4 and Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD(2019)) data maps for the East Midlands and the Sheffield City Region district show very similar pictures with a few areas of relatively high participation and low deprivation but predominantly areas of low participation and high deprivation.

In 2019-20 76% of full-time RNN Group Higher Education (HE) students came from areas in POLAR4 Q1 and Q2. 8% of students came from POLAR4 Q4 areas with numbers from POLAR4 Q5 areas so small that the data is suppressed. Whilst the gap in access between POLAR4 Q5 and Q1 areas cannot be established due to data suppression it is over -30%, i.e. more than 30% more

students come from POLAR4 Q1 areas than POLAR4 Q5 areas. This position is reflective of the catchment areas for the RNN Group, but there has been a slight decrease in the proportion of students from POLAR4 Q1 and Q2 areas over the past five years (down from 85% in 2015/16). However, this remains an extremely positive position compared to the national figures, where 17.7% more learners come from POLAR4 Q5 areas than POLAR4 Q1 areas.

The 2019-20 data for part-time RNN Group HE students is not available but in 2018-19 75% of students came from areas in POLAR4 Q1 and Q2, only 10% came from POLAR4 Q4 areas and the number from POLAR4 Q5 areas is so small that the data is suppressed. Whilst the gap in access between POLAR4 Q5 and Q1 areas cannot, therefore, be established due to data suppression it is over -30%, i.e. more than 30% more part-time students came from POLAR4 Q1 areas than POLAR4 Q5 areas. Given the relatively small number of students it is difficult to identify trends over time although the proportion of part-time students coming from areas in POLAR4 Q1& 2 appears to be increasing slowly from 68% in 2015-16. This is an extremely positive position compared to the national figures, where 2.4% more students came from POLAR4 Q5 areas than POLAR4 Q1. Internal data for part-time students in 2019/20 indicates 77% of part-time students came from POLAR4 Q1 and Q2 areas, in line with, if not increased from 2018/19.

This contrasts with the IMD(2019) data where, in 2019-20, 56% of our full-time students came from areas in IMD(2019) Q1&2 and 44% from areas in Q3-5. Whilst the proportion of students from IMD(2019) Q1 and Q2 areas has declined since 2015-16, this in comparison to the national average where, over the same period, less than 43% of students come from areas in IMD(2019) Q1&2.

The data indicates that the RNN Group recruits overwhelmingly from areas of low HE participation and high deprivation and is performing better than the national average in these areas.

Free School Meals (FSM), a means-tested benefit, can also serve as an indicator of those from low income families. Since 2006, nationally, those who received FSM have consistently had lower entry rates to HE than those who did not receive FSM. In 2019-20 25% of our full-time students had been eligible for FSMs at KS4 compared to 17.6% nationally. Clearly there is a significant gap, both at RNN Group and nationally and we will seek to improve access for this group of students going forward.

Success – Non-continuation

The most recent OfS data indicates that, nationally, there is a statistically significant, 4.8% gap in continuation rates between full-time students from POLAR4 Q1 areas and Q5 areas, with the former continuing at a rate of 89.6% and the latter at 94.4%. In that year RNN Groups students from POLAR4 Q1 areas continued at a rate of 85% - below the national average. Due to the small numbers the OfS continuation for RNN Group students from POLAR4 Q5 areas is suppressed limiting the ability to do a meaningful comparison, or gap analysis.

Consideration of internal RNN Group data for full-time students indicates that continuation rates by POLAR4 quintile for 2019/20 are as follows:

POLAR4 Quintile	1	2	3	4	5
Continuation Rate	82%	84%	87%	94%	67%

(RNN – ILR data)

This shows that students from POLAR4 Q1 areas are still continuing at a lower rate than the national average. However, undertaking a gap analysis indicates that the gap in continuation rate between students from POLAR4 Q5 and Q1 areas is -15%. This indicates that RNN Group HE students from POLAR4 Q1 areas are continuing at a higher rate than those from POLAR4 Q5 areas in significant contrast to the national picture.

However, consideration of the intersection between POLAR4 and ethnicity in our internal data shows that BAME students living in POLAR4 Q1 areas continue at a rate of 74% compared to BAME students living in POLAR4 Q5 who continue at a rate of 100%. This is clearly a noticeable gap, but based on only one years' data and a small POLAR4 Q5 dataset. Therefore this will be monitored and will become an area of priority should a trend be established.

Due to small numbers the continuation data for part-time students by POLAR4 quintile has been suppressed limiting the ability to do a meaningful comparison, or gap analysis.

The most recent OfS data indicates that, nationally, there is a statistically significant 8% gap in continuation rates between full-time students from IMD(2019) Q1 areas and Q5 areas, with the former continuing at a rate of 85.9% and the latter at 93.9%. In that year RNN Groups students from IMD(2019) Q1 areas continued at a rate of 84%, slightly below the national average. Due to the small numbers the OfS continuation for RNN Group students from IMD(2019) Q5 areas is suppressed limiting the ability to do a meaningful comparison, or gap analysis.

Due to small numbers the continuation data for part-time students by IMD(2019) quintile has largely been suppressed limiting the ability to do a meaningful comparison, or gap analysis.

Success – Attainment

The most recent OfS data indicates that, nationally, there is a statistically significant 8.8% gap in attainment between full-time students from POLAR4 Q1 areas and Q5 areas, with the former attaining good honours degrees at a rate of 80.0% and the latter at 88.7%.

Similarly, consideration of IMD(2019) quintiles shows an 15.2% difference in attainment between students from Q1 areas and Q5 areas with the former attaining good honours degrees at a rate of 74.2% and the latter at 89.4%.

Due to small numbers, the RNN group data by POLAR4 and IMD(2019) quintiles is largely suppressed limiting the ability to use this data to do a meaningful comparison, or gap analysis and identify statistically significant gaps.

However, internally collected data analysed by POLAR4 quintile for 2019/20 are shown below.

POLAR4 Quintile	1	2	3	4	5
Attainment Rate	50%	64%	50%	80%	100%

(RNN – ILR data)

Based on this data, students from POLAR4 Q5 areas are attaining at 100% whereas, students from POLAR4 Q1 areas are attaining at 50% showing a 50% attainment gap.

Therefore, we will set a target to close the gap in degree outcomes between students from POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 areas. (PTS_1).

Progression to employment or further study

The most recent OfS data indicates that, nationally, there was a statistically significant 6.0% gap in progression between full-time students from POLAR4 Q1 areas and Q5 areas, with the former progressing at a rate of 68.8% and the latter at 74.8%.

Similarly, consideration of IMD(2019) quintiles shows an 7.0% gap in progression between students from Q1 areas and Q5 areas with the former progressing at a rate of 69.1% and the latter at 76.1%.

Due to small numbers, the RNN group data by POLAR4 and IMD(2019) quintiles is suppressed limiting the ability to use this data to do a meaningful comparison, or gap analysis and identify statistically significant gaps.

However, based on the TEF4 metrics, 98.9% of RNN Group's students from POLAR4 Q1&2 areas progressed into Employment or Further study compared to 100% of students from POLAR4 Q3,4&5 areas. This gap is unlikely to be statistically significant.

In contrast, when considering progression into Highly skilled employment and further study, 67.4% of students from POLAR4 Q1&2 areas progressed compared to only 54.5% of students from POLAR4 Q3, 4&5 areas. This shows that RNN Group students from POLAR4 Q1&2 areas are more likely to progress into highly skilled employment and further study than students from POLAR4 Q3, 4&5 areas

It is noteworthy that many of RNN Group students are already employed in their chosen sector and studied a sub-Bachelor's degree level qualification in Engineering (HNC, HND), Childhood Studies (FD), Learning Support (FD), and Certificate in Education (Cert Ed). The majority of these students continued in their existing employment upon completion of their qualification and while they may have experienced increased responsibility, may not necessarily have changed roles.

1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

Access

At the RNN Group, data from the OfS Access and Participation dashboard indicates that in 2019-20 90.0% of our full-time students were White, 6.0% were Asian, 2.0% were Black and numbers of students from Mixed or Other ethnic backgrounds were so small that the data is suppressed. This is in contrast to the national position where 67.4% of students were white, 14.7% were Asian, 10.5% were Black, 5.1% were from Mixed backgrounds and 2.4% were from Other backgrounds. Over the past five years there has been a slow, but steady increase in the proportion of students from non-white backgrounds accessing HE nationally.

However, internal data at the RNN Group indicates that 14% of our full-time students in 2019-20 were classified as BAME. The Group now holds disaggregated data for a number of BAME groups, but the number of students in each one of these groups is too small to be reported with the exception of "Other White" and 'Pakistani', both of which make up 4% of the overall student population.

In line with the OfS data, this demonstrates a significant gap in access between students from and white and non-white ethnic backgrounds. However, whilst our proportion of White students is above the national average, it is below the proportion of white students in the local population (91.9% according the census data for Rotherham), evidencing that the RNN Group has a higher proportion of BAME students than in the local population from which it recruits.

Success – Non-continuation

The most recent OfS data indicates that, nationally, there are statistically significant differences in continuation between students from a White background when compared to students from Asian, Black, Mixed and Other backgrounds. Continuation rates range from 90.2% for white students to 84.9% for black students.

Due to small numbers, the RNN Group continuation rate data by ethnicity is suppressed limiting the ability to use this data to do a meaningful comparison, or gap analysis and identify statistically significant gaps.

Similar to the national picture, analysis of internal RNN Group continuation rates data shows that continuation rates for BAME students have historically been lower than for non-BAME students. In 2019-20, the continuation rate was 72% for BAME students, compared to 90% for White British students a deficit of 18%. In addition, the only two disaggregated groups of BAME students that had a significant population (“Other White”/ “Pakistani”), both had continuation rates of 68%.

Consideration of the intersection between sex and ethnicity in our internal data shows that the continuation rate male BAME students is even lower at 54%.

Therefore, closing the gap in continuation rate between BAME and White British students will be a key aim, as part of this plan, with a specific focus on male BAME students. (PTS_2).

Success – Attainment

The most recent OfS data indicates that, nationally there are statistically significant differences in attainment rates between students from a White background when compared to students from Asian, Black, Mixed and Other ethnic backgrounds.

The gap in attainment rate between students from White ethnic backgrounds compared to students of all ethnicities except White has reduced slowly from 15.0% in 2015-16 to 10.2% in 2019-20. However the size of the attainment gap varies significantly between different ethnic backgrounds, with the largest gap in 2019-20 between White and Black students of 18.4%. This has reduced steadily from slightly (from 24.7% in 2015-16).

At the RNN Group, small numbers mean that our OfS data is suppressed, limiting the ability to use this data to do a meaningful comparison, or gap analysis and identify statistically significant gaps. However, internal data shows that attainments rate for BAME students are below those of non-BAME students, by 17%.

Therefore, work is needed to close the gap in degree outcomes between BAME and White British students and this will constitute a clear aim over the next 5 years (PTS_3).

Ethnicity	Attainment rate in 2019-20
BAME	40%
White British	57%

(RNN – ILR data)

Progression to employment or further study

The most recent OfS data indicates that, nationally, progression rates range from 69.3% for Black students to 74.0% for White students. These rates have been increasing for students of all ethnicities since 2012-13, and the progression gap between students from a White background and from all ethnicities except white have been falling in this period.

Due to small numbers our OfS data is suppressed, limiting the ability to use this data to do a meaningful comparison, or gap analysis and identify statistically significant gaps. However, TEF4 data shows that progression into employment or further study for full-time BAME students is 91.7%, compared with 99.3% for their White counterparts. However, this trend is reversed when considering the proportion of BAME students who progress into highly skilled employment or further study, with 83.3% of BAME students progressing, compared to 62.8% of White students. This is a positive position for RNN Group BAME students and exceeds national progression rate for BAME students in this category, which is 70.5%.

1.3 Mature students

Access

Mature students have distinct characteristics, typically presenting with different qualifications and applying to, and accepting places at, providers closer to home. They also tend to apply later in the cycle and to a smaller range of courses.

Our internal data shows that the majority (69%) of RNN Group's students are mature. Latest data from the OfS Data dashboard shows that 40.0% of our full-time students were Mature, a figure that has fluctuated between 40.0% and 46.0% over the past five years. Internal data indicates that this figure is 59.0%, and we will investigate the difference in the data sets going forward. Both sets of figures show that we are recruiting a higher proportion of mature full-time students than the national average, at 30.2%.

In contrast, 85.0% of our part-time students, in 2019-20, were mature. This figure has generally increased over the past five years, up from 62.0% in 2015-16, and is now only slightly below the national average at 87.1%.

Given the comparison with the national data, we do not consider that improving Access for mature students is an area of high priority for the RNN Group.

Success – Non-continuation

Latest data from the OfS Data Dashboard, for 2018-19, shows that the continuation rate gap between Mature and Young full-time students was 1.0%, with Mature students continuing at a rate of 85.0% and Young students continuing at a rate of 86.0%. This gap has been $\pm 1\%$ since 2016-17.

Internal data suggests that the continuation rate for full-time Mature students in 2019-20 was higher than for Young students, with Mature students continuing at a rate of 90% and Young students continuing at a rate of 88%.

Our position compares favourably to that shown on the OfS Data dashboard which shows that nationally there is a statistically significant 8.0% gap in continuation rate between Mature (21 and over) and Young (under 21) full-time students, a gap that has generally increased over the past 5 years.

For part-time students, the latest OfS dashboard data shows that the continuation rate was 80%. Due to small numbers there is no data for Young students, making a gap analysis impossible, but in 2016/17 Mature learners continued at a 5.0% higher rate than Young students. Internal data for part-time students in 2019-20 showed that Young students continued at a rate of 83% and Mature students continued at a rate of 92%.

Again our position compares favourably to the national picture which shows a 6.6% gap in continuation rate between Mature and Young full-time students.

Given the comparison with the national data, and that generally Mature students at the RNN Group continue at higher rates than Young students we do not consider that improving continuation rates for mature students is an area of high priority.

Success – Attainment

Due to small numbers, there is limited attainment rate data for full-time students at the RNN Group by age, limiting the ability to use this data to do a meaningful comparison, or gap analysis and identify statistically significant gaps.

Internal data for 2019-20 shows that the attainment rate for full-time Mature students was 57%, exceeding that of Young students by 11%. Whilst this data shows that our Mature students have a higher attainment rate than our Young students work is underway to improve attainment rates for all students to moved towards the national averages.

There is very limited attainment data for our part-time mature students, with only 6 part-time students completing a BA or BSc in 2019/20. All of these achieved a good honours degree.

Progression to employment or further study

Due to small numbers, there is limited progression rate data on the OfS Data dashboard for full-time students at the RNN Group by age, limiting the ability to use this data to do a meaningful comparison, or gap analysis and identify statistically significant gaps.

However our TEF4 data shows that the progression rate to employment or further study for all RNN Group students is very high at 99% for full-time students and 100% for part-time students.

When considered by age, progression rates for Young students are 99% and 98.3% for Mature students. Progression rates into highly skilled employment and further study are 66% for Young students and 61.7% for Mature students.

This figure from the TEF4 data, related to 82 part-time students who were already in employment, with the majority achieving promotion or an increase in status within existing employment, meaning that their own perception of highly skilled employment may not reflect the expectations of the data collected.

1.4 Disabled students

Access

According to the latest OfS dashboard data, which concurs with internal data, the proportion of full-time students reporting a disability at the RNN Group in 2019-20 was 25%. This figure has generally increased over the last five years, and exceeds the national average of 16.6%.

After 2 years of decline, the proportion of part-time students reporting a disability at the RNN groups, has returned to 20%, 0.7% above the national average rate for part-time students reporting a disability.

Based on internal data, the main disability types recorded were as follows:

- Mental Health – 4%
- Asperger's Syndrome – 2%
- Mobility disability – Less than 1%
- Hearing impairment – Less than 1%

Improving access for disabled students to part-time courses was a target of the previous APP, which at this stage looks to have been successful. However, it will remain a target for this APP until a longer-term trend can be identified.

Therefore, to reduce the gap in participation between students reporting a disability and students not reporting a disability, the target to increase participation of part-time students reporting a disability will remain (PTA_1).

Success – Non-continuation

According to the latest OfS dashboard data, the continuation rate for full-time students reporting a disability at the RNN Group in 2019-20 was 80%, compared to 88% for students not reporting a disability. Whilst these rates are both below the national average, the gap in continuation rates between students reporting a disability and students not reporting a disability is not statistically significant. Over the past five years continuation rates for students reporting a disability have fluctuated whilst those for students not reporting a disability have generally increased.

Internal retention data show that the retention rate for full-time students reporting a disability at 84% is 5% below the retention rate for the students who had not reported a disability. Analysis of retention by disability type revealed that for students who disclosed a mental health related disability the retention rate was only 67%, showing a 17% gap between those reporting a mental health related disability and those not reporting a disability.

Therefore, there is a need to close the gap in continuation, between students reporting a mental health disability and students not reporting a disability (PTS_4).

Success – Attainment

Due to small numbers, there is no attainment rate data on the OfS Data dashboard for full time students reporting a disability at the RNN Group, limiting the ability to use this data to do a meaningful comparison, or gap analysis and identify statistically significant gaps.

Internal data shows that the overall achievement rate in 2019-20 for students reporting a disability was 86%, which is 2% below that for students not declaring a disability. The attainment for our students who have reported a disability was 45%, 2% higher than that for students who have not reported a disability.

Therefore, there is no evidence to show that students who report a disability at the RNN Group are less likely to attain than students who do not report a disability. However, the attainment rate of 45%, is significantly below the attainment rate for students reporting a disability nationally, which stands at 82.3%.

Progression to employment or further study

Due to small numbers, there is no progression rate data on the OfS Data dashboard for full-time students reporting a disability at the RNN Group, limiting the ability to use this data to do a meaningful comparison, or gap analysis and identify statistically significant gaps.

However, our TEF4 data for full time RNN students reporting a disability demonstrates 100% of students' progress into employment or further study, compared to 98.4% of students who do not report a disability. The national benchmark for this group is 91.9%. In addition, the figure for progression into highly skilled employment or further study for students who declare a disability is 78.1% compared to 60.9% for students who do not declare a disability. The national average from TEF4 data for students reporting a disability, progressing into highly skilled employment or further study is 68.6%. Both sets of TEF4 data demonstrate positive progression rates for students at the RNN Group disclosing a disability, compared to national benchmarks.

1.5 Care leavers

The RNN Group now collects data on care leavers but with such small numbers quantitative analysis would be difficult and unlikely to be publishable. The Care Leaver numbers are higher within the wider FE population across the RNN Group and these students will be targeted for specific intervention in relation to accessing higher education.

Therefore, a target within this APP will be increase the number of care leavers entering higher education, specifically by targeting internal Care Leaver students studying at level 3.

1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

The RNN Group have developed a new academic and vocational assessment, recording and monitoring procedure which enables the capturing and recording of student progress data at aggregate and ground level at key points throughout the academic year. This enables analysis of

intersections of multiple student characteristics and timely support to be implemented for those students who require it. This disaggregation of student characteristics allows for a greater understanding of patterns in disadvantage to emerge. RNN Group recognises that often intersections of certain characteristics – such as socio-economic background, ethnicity and disability - can compound to create greater challenges in accessing and performing in higher education. As part of this APP, intersections have been explored and included in the aims and objectives identified in this plan. From this analysis, a number of intersections of disadvantage have been identified. These are mainly around continuation rates, more specifically BAME students from POLAR4 quintiles 1 and 2, male BAME students and students disclosing a mental health disability.

1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

We currently do not have our own data, and national data for the following groups is not available:

- Carers
- People estranged from their families
- People from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- Refugees
- Children of military families
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity

We will review our data capture and management systems to ensure that our systems and staff capture the required information for reporting, monitoring and evaluation purposes on an, at least, qualitative basis.

2. Strategic aims and objectives

As part of the overarching RNN HE strategy, the group continues to be committed to widening participation within the region and acknowledges full engagement and commitment to the Equality Act 2010. The proportion of the local population with a level 4 or above qualification is 10% below the national average. Whilst the Group will target all under-represented groups, there is a clear commitment to target and support groups from areas of low Higher Education participation, BAME students, students from low-income backgrounds and students declaring a disability. Due to some very small data samples for certain groups, the plan will address the broader target groups, but there will be a specific focus on BAME students from areas of low HE participation, male BAME students and students expressing a disability relating to mental health.

2.1 Target groups

1. Students from low-participation neighbourhoods:
 - i. to close the gap in degree outcomes between students from POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 areas
2. BAME students:
 - i. close the gap in continuation rates between BAME and White British students
 - ii. close the gap in attainment rates between BAME and White British students
3. Disabled students:
 - i. to increase the proportion of part-time students reporting a disability
 - ii. to close the gap in continuation rates between students reporting a mental health-related disability and students not reporting a disability
4. Care Leavers:
 - i. to increase number of care leavers entering HE at RNN

2.2 Aims and objectives

The RNN Group has an integrated approach towards Access, Success and Progression in relation to its HE population. Our overriding commitment to inclusion forms part of our core values, with a clear commitment to valuing and celebrating individuality and providing everyone with the chance to achieve their full potential. As part of the Higher Education Self-Evaluation process, Access, Success and Progression of under-represented groups, as identified by the Office for Students, is reported and reviewed, as well as identifying any intersections of disadvantage. In terms of accessing HE at RNN, the Group has traditionally recruited a large proportion of students from areas of low HE participation and socio-economic deprivation, at levels significantly above the national averages as reported by the Office for Students and other agencies. The Group has an all-encompassing approach to widening participation, with an inclusive approach to offering good quality HE provision for the local communities it serves. The HE student profile across the group is non-traditional, with particular focus on areas with low participation, lower socio-economic groups, mature students and students who declare a disability. The Group therefore adheres to the ethos that geography and economic status should not be a barrier to accessing HE or completing a HE qualification. The Group offers access to higher education for those who are not geographically mobile, for whatever reason. In terms of success and progression, the Group employs a range of support measures for all students, but with a specific focus on students from under-represented groups, who face unique challenges in achieving success with their HE studies. The strategic aims and objectives will be achieved by continuing to offer provision within the locale to those demographic groups, identified in

OfS strategic objective 2. RNN Group is also committed to hearing feedback from all under-represented groups which could contribute to their perception of the overall higher education experience and inform our approach to access and participation. This will ensure we mitigate any concerns surrounding their experience, value for money or teaching quality that may impact on continuation and progression rates as identified in the OfS KPMs. In setting our targets all stages of the student life-cycle have been considered.

In addition to the aims and objectives set out above in relation to our target groups, and the targets set out in the tables below, we plan to:

- Play a leading role in facilitating and delivering HE aspirational activities within local schools, working closely with HEPPSY (NCOP) and adopting the legacy from HEPPSY activity.
- Internally track student progression after completion of their programme. This will provide an internal database of progression outcomes, which will supplement Graduate Outcomes data.

In setting our targets we have considered all stages of the student lifecycle for key target groups.

We aim for the following proportions of students from our target groups:

Year	Part-time students declaring a disability	Number of care-leavers of HE programmes
Year 1: 2021-2022 entry	21%	7
Year 2: 2022-2023 entry	22%	8
Year 3: 2023-2024 entry	23%	9
Year 4: 2024-2025 entry	24%	10
Year 5: 2025-2026 entry	25%	11

Our targets for continuation and attainment in our target groups over a five-year period are shown below:

Year	BAME: White Continuation gap	Reporting a mental health related disability: Not reporting a disability Continuation gap
Year 1: 2021-2022	16%	14%
Year 2: 2022-2023	12%	11%
Year 3: 2023-2024	8%	8%
Year 4: 2024-2025	4%	4%
Year 5: 2025-2026	0%	0%

Year	POLAR4 Q1: POLAR4 Q5 Degree Outcomes gap	BAME: White British Degree Outcomes gap
Year 1: 2021-2022	40%	14%
Year 2: 2022-2023	30%	11%
Year 3: 2023-2024	20%	8%
Year 4: 2024-2025	10%	4%
Year 5: 2025-2026	0%	0%

3. Strategic measures

The RNN Group is committed to investing in key projects and activities related to improving access to HE, as well as supporting learners from a range of backgrounds, through the student lifecycle. As the RNN Group already works closely with South Yorkshire NCOP (HEPPSY), the creation and implementation of bespoke Access activities are quite well developed. For all groups, the strategic measures are outlined below.

3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

Overview

The RNN Group's vision is to become one of the UK's leading College Groups. We aim to deliver outstanding technical and professional education and training, whilst at the same time helping businesses to succeed and grow thereby transforming the lives of students and communities. The RNN Group' ethos is that it has the responsibility to raise the aspirations of individuals within local communities and enable them to shape and develop a better future. As the catchment areas of the RNN Group have traditionally included areas of low levels of HE participation and aspiration, the RNN Group actively addresses this situation and enhances recruitment undertaken through Higher Education outreach activity with a range of partners and through a range of activities. The aim is to provide educational, professional and academic opportunities, which are accessible to all members of the local community and in particular to those from disadvantaged areas and areas of low HE participation. The Group is committed to widening participation, improved attainment and social inclusion, at both FE and HE level and there is a drive within the Group to make this a cross-college strategic priority. The APP will be monitored, reviewed and evaluated throughout the 5-year period, at Executive level, along with a number of widening participation initiatives at FE level.

Due regard has been given to the Equality Act 2010, with the impact of the RNN Group's planned activities on students with protected characteristics, as well as students from the minority groups identified. Equality and Diversity is embedded throughout all our programmes at both FE and HE. This takes the form of regular curriculum meetings which address a range of issues for students and where issues around Equality and Diversity are high on the agenda. Additionally, Equality and Diversity forms an integral part of the RNN Group's Teaching Learning and Assessment process, which all staff take part in.

Alignment with other strategies

The HE Learning and Teaching Strategy, along with the annual Self Evaluation Document, demonstrate a strong commitment to both Widening Participation and Outreach work. The proportion of students who emanate from areas in POLAR4 Q1 and Q2 is testament to the outreach work the Group has instigated in the local community. The University Centre Rotherham building continues to be a focal point for HE provision within the town and is testament to the Group's strategy and commitment to providing access to university level education for students who may have traditionally experienced barriers to accessing Higher Education. The Group's Learning and Teaching strategy also recognises the commitment to an outstanding learning experience for all students, along with student centred learning and inclusive learning through the promotion of equality of opportunity. This approach maximises success for all learners, regardless of background. As part of the Group's response to COVID-19, it has taken a social inclusion approach to the provision of distance learning and on-line teaching, through its approach to supporting students who are experiencing digital poverty. In addition, a substantial amount of work

has taken place to upskill teaching staff in distance learning teaching and ensuring the inclusion of under-represented groups.

Inequalities in achievement rates are monitored closely as part of the Self-Assessment process and where particular issues arise, these are addressed as part of the Quality Improvement Process. Equality Impact Assessments are monitored and measured by the Equality and Diversity group, which considers the performance of HE students, as well as the wider student community across the Group. Going forward, it is the intention that the Access and Participation Plan will form an ongoing agenda item on the Equality and Diversity Group, which will provide another level of scrutiny against the commitments made in the plan. In addition, the HE Learning and Teaching Committee address Equality and Diversity issues as a matter of course and they are embedded in all working practices relating to HE.

The RNN Group's Widening Participation and Equality & Diversity strategies align and work together to ensure compliance and sensitive understanding in relation to the Equality Act 2010. Although employability underpins the Group's ethos, a specific HE employability policy needs to be developed to clarify the Group's commitment to employability within our provision to drive student progression particularly in those areas highlighted above.

Strategic measures

Access

Continue to increase the University Centre Rotherham as the focal point for HE within the locale. The 'UCR' continues to gain status within Rotherham as the centre for local university level education that is accessible to students from a wide range of backgrounds and particularly students who would not normally access HE for a variety of reasons. In addition, the UCR continues to be the focal point for outreach and widening participation activity in the area. This is particularly pertinent within Rotherham, with its low rates of HE participation and high levels of deprivation. This is in line with the OfS Effective Practice guidance and OfS KPM 1, regarding the ambition that future generations from areas of low HE participation and socio-economic status, should have equal access to HE. This resource not only provides an opportunity for potential students from deprived areas to gain locally available information regarding progress into HE, but is also the only local venue for accessing HE. This will allow us to continue to provide a viable HE option for students from POLAR4 Q1 and Q2 areas, students with high levels of deprivation and students with disabilities, by providing a geographically local HE resource to help increase the proportion of the local population with a HE qualification from 17.4%, to the national average of 27.4%. The UCR continues to be represented at local employer forums and within the Sheffield City Region, to highlight its role as a provider of higher skills and qualifications within the region. This HE specific resource is part of the long-term strategy for the Group and will be in place for the duration of this APP and beyond.

Further develop the outreach and engagement infrastructure across the RNN Group. The Group has recently employed a HE Achievement Coach, with a specific responsibility for supporting students of all backgrounds, but with a focus on students from the target groups identified in this APP. This role will provide support for students identified in the APP throughout the student lifecycle. This role, alongside the recruitment and widening participation team, will target students from under-represented groups at a range of 'raising aspiration and participation events' in local schools and colleges aimed at breaking down barriers to HE and familiarising students with the potentials for studying HE locally, in line with the OfS Effective Practice guidance.

These workshops and tasters are targeted at schools within the local catchment area, where the majority of students are from POLAR4 Q1 and Q2 areas or a significant number of their students are classified as BAME. These activities are targeted at year 9 to year 12 groups and it is intended that these activities will improve access for the target groups identified earlier in the plan. A full cycle of events is already in place for the coming academic year. In the short-term, the Group will continue with existing projects, but with a view to developing longer-term projects where there has been evidence of effective impact. The Group has a number of collaborative strategic relationships with schools and sixth form colleges throughout Rotherham and Bassetlaw, which enables us to build on our widening participation work. The cycle of events will continue over the course of the plan, with increasing activity envisaged where the activity has proved beneficial in achieving the targets set.

Work collaboratively with HeppSY (South Yorkshire NCOP). The work of HeppSY, within the Group has contributed significantly to the outreach work, in terms of progression to HE for our FE students and specifically, those from areas where progression to HE is low and BAME students. HEPPSY Higher Education Advisers, who have been located within the Group, have worked closely with Progress Tutors to implement the good practice that has been developed over the lifetime of the project and which now underpins the careers advice and guidance that is provided to all our level 3 students, in terms of impartial advice regarding progression into HE. This approach allows for the provision of impartial advice regarding the benefits of HE and overcoming barriers of progressing into HE, focussing specifically on students from POLAR4 Q1 and Q2 areas, while the Group will focus on providing information regarding access to HE from a local perspective. Strategically, the Group is represented at HEPPSY network meetings and on the HEPPSY board meeting, at CEO level, helping the Group to inform widening participation strategy across the region. This project is due to be completed in 2021, but a widening participation legacy has been built into the work carried out by the HEPPSY HE Advisors, as a long-term approach.

Success

Student Progress Review (SPR). This process is designed to identify students who are at risk of non-continuation, or not achieving their programme. Students who are at risk are identified at two points in the academic year, based on attendance, assessment and programme leader observations. This process has received further investment, with the employment of a HE Achievement Coach, with a specific remit to target students from under-represented groups, as identified by the OfS, throughout the student lifecycle. This is specifically the case for BAME students, where there is evidence of higher levels of non-continuation. The role is able to provide both academic and pastoral support for at risk students. Experience has shown that this process is of particular benefit to students from non-traditional backgrounds, who have found the transition into HE particularly challenging and where, according to the OfS Effective Practice guidance, significant gaps in success are most likely to be found. Specific support is identified for students, where English is not their first language, or where students have non-physical disabilities, through our Learning Support Practitioners. Furthermore, the OfS Effective Practice guidelines indicate that students progressing to HE, with BTEC qualifications, are also more likely to demonstrate significant gaps in success. This is particularly significant, as 80% of the RNN Group's full-time HE students' progress internally from our FE provision, which is predominately made up of BTEC qualifications or equivalent. This strategy of supporting students with both academic and pastoral support is a long-term commitment and will span the full cycle of the plan. The continued development of the Group's accurate data collection capabilities means that we are able to disaggregate data, specifically around BAME students and students who declare a disability. This

has allowed for targeted interventions to be made for specific groups, such as students who report a mental health disability. As identified in the OfS Effective practice guide, this group of students is significantly less likely to continue on their programme, which is also reflected in our own assessment of performance. The Group has invested in a 24 hour/ 7 days per week support platform for students who are experiencing anxiety or stress related issues, with a specific focus on mental health issues. As part of the Student Progress Review process, the HE Achievement Coach, accesses specific mental health CPD to enable support for students identifying such issues. As is being experienced nationally, mental health issues have become much more prevalent during the COVID-19 pandemic and targeted support around this group is a particular priority. The Mental Health and Wellbeing Group comprising membership of the University of Hull and partner FE colleges delivering HE are collaboratively working to share good practice and deliver enhanced mental health and wellbeing support to students, teaching and support staff. This has proved to be a useful resource in helping staff to support students, particularly during the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Provision of summer schools. During the COVID-19 lockdown period, the Group implemented an on-line summer school for all prospective new HE students, with the intention of preparing students from a non-traditional background for the challenges of HE study. These were provided for all learner groups, who have progressed from a non-traditional background into HE, such as those from an FE background with predominantly BTEC qualifications, a group who have significant continuation gaps, according to the OfS Effective Practice guidance. By preparing new students for the academic demands of HE study, it is intended that gaps in continuation and attainment rates should narrow for students from POLAR4 Q1 and Q2 areas and for students from low income backgrounds, who may not have the social and cultural capital in place to succeed in HE. This was identified in the DiSA project, carried out by the University of Wolverhampton. Part of the role of the summer schools, was to raise participation, expectation and aspirations in relation to HE study. This strategic measure is also intended to support students with multiple barriers and intersections of disadvantage. If proved successful, it is intended to make these summer schools more accessible to part-time students who are in employment, utilising evenings and weekends.

Addressing digital poverty. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Group has made a clear strategic commitment to addressing digital poverty among students who are experiencing some degree of socio-economic deprivation. Where students face digital poverty issues, the Group have responded quickly to provide students with the necessary IT requirements to allow them to fully engage with on-line teaching and learning and this approach to digital poverty will continue, throughout the lifetime of the plan. Any students experiencing digital poverty are now provided with the required IT hardware or software to support them with their studies to ensure that there is no impact on the academic performance of any group of students as a result of deprivation or other factors.

Utilising the group tutorial model. This model has been approved as a strategic support tool to raise attainment and improve continuation. With a specific focus on the early stages of study it embeds and reinforces academic study skills, particularly for students who may have progressed from a non-traditional background. This model allows programme tutors to identify specific needs in students and provides them with the opportunity to share knowledge, understanding and effective experiences of HE. Interventions of this nature have been found to be particularly effective for year 1 students, according to AdvanceHE (*Woodfield (2014) – Undergraduate retention and achievement across the disciplines*), where non-continuation rates have historically been the highest. This model supports all learners, but it is expected that this model will narrow

continuation and attainment gaps for students from Low HE participation areas, students reporting a disability, BAME students, and students who have followed a non-traditional path to HE study. Later in the academic year, additional sessions are used to embed employability, as outlined by the OfS Effective Practice guidance, which highlights the importance of embedding employability in extracurricular activity, as well as within the curriculum. This will allow students to explore sector specific employment opportunities and the related skills required to address student perceptions of *highly skilled employment* and improve progression rates, notably for the target groups of students having reporting a disability and from low participation neighbourhoods. This allows the Group to identify specific obstacles faced by individual learners as outlined in the OfS guidance, Identifying Effective Approaches to access, succession and progression. This model has been particularly effective at FE level and has now been rolled out across our HE provision. This model will continue through the lifecycle of this plan and will be in place throughout the lifetime of the plan.

Inclusive curriculum design. We are working with our key stakeholders, including our validating university partners, to incorporate inclusivity into curriculum design to ensure opportunities are accessible to all. All modules are reviewed annually to ensure they are relevant to the aspirations of the student population. In addition, programmes are reviewed every four years to ensure the curriculum and teaching is as relevant and inclusive as possible, allowing them to adapt to the shifting demographic of students and address the barriers identified in accessing, succeeding progressing into further study or highly skilled employment over time. Our validating universities support the development of programmes that are specific to the needs of the local community and in line with the characteristics of our student population. A relevant and inclusive curriculum will contribute to the narrowing of continuation and attainment gaps for students from Low HE Participation neighbourhoods, BAME students and students reporting a disability.

Bursary. The Group offers a bursary of up to £250 to full-time students, which is able to be used to support the funding of learning materials and resources, to assist with studies. The bursary is paid on a sliding scale, with £250 awarded to 1st year students, £150 to 2nd year students and £100 to 3rd year students. The bursary is intended to support students from the under-represented groups identified as part of this APP. This bursary will be available to students from POLAR4 Q1 and Q2 areas, BAME students, Care Leavers and students who have reported a disability. To qualify for the bursary, the eligible students are required to have 90% attendance at the end of semester 1, after which time the bursary will be released to the student. However, mitigation can be considered if external factors are affecting a student's attendance. It is intended that the vast majority of students will be able to access the bursary, as 77% of the Groups HE students are from POLAR4 Q1 and Q2 areas. The RNN Group is committed to supporting all of our students in accessing the resources they need to achieve at all levels of their study and it is anticipated that this bursary will assist with continuation and attainment rates for the groups identified. Over the lifetime of this APP, the impact of this bursary on each of the groups identified will be evaluated to determine the effectiveness of this bursary in enabling the students identified to succeed in their studies. Qualitative research indicates that all students who have received the bursary have found it beneficial, but more quantitative research is required to determine whether this strategic measure impacts on the overarching aims and objectives of the APP. Attendance has and will include on-line attendance, so that the bursary can be paid in the event of further COVID-19 restrictions into 2021-22. Continuation was in excess of 90% for all students who received this bursary in 2019-20. The impact of this bursary on the under-represented groups identified will be monitored and the analysis used to inform future APP's.

Provision of a HE Hardship fund. The hardship fund is designed to overcome participation and financial barriers. This will support those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (many of whom are also BAME students), as well as mature students to overcome the financial barriers of accessing HE and is intended to be used to cover travel costs or any resources and books for their studies. Accessing the HE Hardship Fund is evaluated on a case by case basis. However, priority is given to students who have reported a disability, students with children, especially lone parents and care leavers, as well as the target groups identified as part of the APP. This fund supports students experiencing financial barriers which make these students susceptible to non-continuation. This fund has been utilised during previous years, where students have been able to access up to £400, one-off payments, and this will continue for the lifetime of the plan. The impact of providing financial support needs further evaluation, based on direction from the OfS financial toolkit, so that the true impact of financial support can be evaluated. Due to the small size of our HE provision, a statistical approach, utilising data from a number of years will be needed, to ensure that this measure is a worthwhile long-term investment. Qualitative feedback from students indicates that the Hardship Fund is valued by students, particularly at a time of vulnerability, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic.

High quality CPD. Providing HE staff with opportunities to enhance their teaching, learning and assessment and improve the student experience will continue. The RNN Group provides a number of training and development days throughout the year. Themes include: building inclusivity into the curriculum, supporting learners with mental health needs, providing pastoral care, and understanding intersectionality and disadvantage. We also utilise peer observations to allow staff to share best pedagogical practice across different teams, ensuring all teaching is equally inclusive to ensure all learners within target groups are supported in their studies, which in turn, contributes to improved continuation and attainment rates. Through the development of an inclusive approach to teaching and learning, continuation and attainment rates for the specific groups identified in this plan are expected to improve.

3.2 Student consultation

HE students are represented strategically at all levels, including on the RNN Group Governing Body. Previous Access and Participation Plans have been shared with our Higher Education Student Voice Committee which has provided feedback to help inform the latest version of our APP. The group meets each semester and the APP is now a standing agenda item. Membership is annually reviewed to ensure ongoing representation of students from a range of backgrounds to help inform the APP. Students from a range of backgrounds, including the target areas identified above, participated in activities and research to develop this Access and Participation Plan. These activities are co-ordinated by the HE Achievement Coach, who has specific responsibilities for promoting and embedding the HE Student Voice into all elements of the student lifecycle. Students are also able to contribute to staff forums, where students are able to discuss the proposed action points directly with the staff developing the plan, as well as an anonymous suggestion box, which was employed as a means to overcome any barriers posed by the need to attend meetings or lack of confidence in voicing more critical view-points. The HE Bursary for first year students was identified as an area of good practice, with students highlighting that a model of providing IT equipment or other resources, would be particularly beneficial to students who were facing financial barriers.

3.3 Evaluation strategy

The RNN Group strategic evaluation process is designed to meet the requirements of the HE SED process. HE evaluation at RNN Group level is led by the Head of HE and the Deputy CEO, as well as being externally validated through a review and development process with external peers and internal SLT representatives. Evaluation of the APP is an integral part of this process and is reported to the Governing Body.

Our evaluation strategy will be reviewed, using the OfS Self-Assessment tool as guidance to structure and implement and will follow the sub-headings identified by the tool as follows.

- Strategic Context
- Programme design
- Designing impact evaluation
- Implementing evaluation
- Learning from evaluation

Strategic context

The APP will become a standing item on both the termly meetings of the Teaching and Learning Group, attended by Programme Managers and the termly Quality and Standards Group, attended by HE stakeholders across the Group. Outcomes and evaluation of the plan will be reported to SLT and Executive meetings on a regular basis, which in turn will report to the Governors. Evaluation of the APP will utilise qualitative feedback, but will be data enhanced, ensuring an evidence led approach to evaluation, linking closely to the effectiveness of the strategic measures identified. This evaluation of the measures implemented will lead to short-term and long-term modifications and amendments to the strategic measures, with a clear focus on achieving the overarching aims and objectives within the APP. Further input will be sought from the close work the Group carries out with HEPPSY (NCOP), at both network and board level.

The progress and evaluation of the APP over its lifecycle will form an integral part of the Group's strategic drive to address widening participation and social inclusion for both FE and HE and will contribute to KPI's for all HE staff.

The magnitude and scope of this APP, means that evaluation will be escalated to SLT level and at governance level, on an annual basis.

Programme design

Programme design will be overseen by the HE team and monitored through KPI's. Historically, access and participation programmes across the Group, have developed out of an understanding of the local population characteristics, which consists of high proportions of students from areas of low HE participation and high deprivation. Qualitative feedback and evaluation on all such activity will be used to inform and modify future programmes. Existing programmes will be evaluated, with a specific focus on the target groups identified as part of the plan, expanding beyond the characteristics of just HE participation and deprivation. For example, the outcomes of Student Progress Reviews will be analysed in terms of student success for all target groups and modifications made to programmes, informed by this evaluation.

In terms of activity designed to support continuation for our target groups, these programmes of activity have been designed based on methods of support to assist learners from a variety of backgrounds through the various stages of the student lifecycle. Evaluation of participation activities is primarily based around continuation and attainment data. In terms of evaluating the

success of our participation programmes, a focussed evaluation strategy will be put in place, which analyses continuation and attainment data at an intersectional level. In addition, qualitative feedback from the students themselves will be used to articulate the usefulness of the tutorial programme, for example. Such feedback has been used to inform the Student Progress Review process, where students expressed an appreciation of the extra layer of support provided through this process.

Programme Design will draw on external research regarding barriers to access and success for students from minority groups. Any developments or changes to programme design will be discussed at Quality and Standards and Teaching and Learning group meetings and presented to the Senior Leadership and Executive Teams.

Designing impact evaluation

The Group acknowledges that it needs to improve its evidence base for evaluating interventions. As well as quantitative evaluation based around data analysis, further evaluation will be sought from all the strategic programmes identified. For programmes where academic staff play an integral part evaluation and analysis of qualitative feedback will be sought at the termly Teaching and Learning Group meetings, which are attended by all teaching staff on HE programmes. Additionally, student feedback will be sought to inform further evaluation of any programme. This would be particularly beneficial for tutorial programmes for example, or where financial support has been provided. Evaluation of financial support would play an integral part of any evaluation strategy, so the value for money of a particular programme can be assessed thus informing future investment towards financial support. The theory of change model will be implemented, as a core component of the evaluation design strategy and used to push any changes required. Additionally, feedback from the HEPSSY research and development team will be sought to evaluate any impacts that collaborative programmes may have had.

The evaluation strategy will focus specifically on performance against the aims, objectives and targets identified in the APP.

Implementing evaluation

Within the HE team, responsibility for outreach and student success falls with the Head of HE. However, within the team there is a HE Achievement Coach. Responsibility will be given to this role to implement evaluation strategies, focussing on research into established practice within the Access and Participation arena. This role will consider a range of feedback from staff and students, along with quantitative data analysis. A combination of both the previous academic research around access and participation, along with feedback on current practice, will then feed into an annual review of APP, as part of the Quality and Standards Group, which meets on a termly basis. This forum involves all internal HE stakeholders and will have responsibility for determining a coherent and accountable APP for each academic year.

The termly evaluation and proposed amendments to the Group's programme of activity will form part of the Quality and Standards committee, which is held as a sub-committee of the Board of Governors. This approach will help bring the APP into focus at governance level.

Learning from evaluation

A strategic evaluation will be put in place for each element of the APP programmes. Areas of the programme which have been identified as successful will be maintained and possibly extended, whereas programmes that are not achieving the required targets will be reviewed, amended or ceased. Performance of each programme will be tied in closely with the aims, objectives and targets which have been identified as part of the APP. Based on this evaluation it is intended that the strategic measures will evolve, where necessary, to enable the Group to meet the targets set, including the introduction of new strategic measures.

3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

As outlined above, Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) are produced during the self-evaluation process and monitored throughout the year. QIPs begin with, but are not restricted to, the target areas identified in this Access and Participation Plan. For example, one area of QIP targeting, will be around widening participation activity and will be measured by recruitment rates for a wide range of student groups identified within this APP, including disaggregated groups. Additionally, targets have been traditionally set for continuation and attainment within our HE provision. As part of this process, individual targets will be set for groups of students from POLAR4 Q1 and Q2 areas, BAME students, students reporting a disability and mature students, which forms part of the HE Self Evaluation Document (SED).

Progress against achievement of the targets and objectives outlined in the Self Evaluation Document and this Access and Participation Plan will be reviewed at all levels: HE team meetings; SLT meetings and Governing Body – Quality and Standards meetings, which ultimately feed into full Governance meetings. These meetings are attended by the Chair of Governors, the Board of Governors (including the student governor), the Principal and wider Executive body. Specifically, at governance level, performance against strategic aims, set out in both the SED and the Access and Participation Plan, will be reviewed throughout the academic year. The HE SED feeds into the overall group QIP, which is reviewed at Governance level. Through this, any shortcomings or decline in performance are identified early, allowing for prompt intervention to counter any adverse impact on students, particularly those identified as target groups in the APP. Progress against the APP and the Target and Investment Plan is now a standing agenda item during the half-termly student voice meetings. The Head of Higher Education and the Deputy CEO will be accountable for any lack of progress at each of these updates.

4. Provision of information to students

The RNN Group believes in transparency between itself and its students. The RNN Group publishes its strategic aims for widening participation on its website along with previous Access and Participation Plans, QAA reviews and its Higher Education Strategic Plan.

The RNN Group will continue to provide clear financial support and information to all current and potential future students via its website and other social media channels. In addition, a prospectus is printed with financial information that is provided to the local primary and secondary schools in the region and is available at each RNN Group campus.

Fee levels for all programmes are available online and via UCAS to give potential students the information they need prior to making a decision regarding their application to study with the RNN Group or elsewhere.

As a small HE provider, we are in a fortunate position where we have the opportunity to build relationships with prospective students and can therefore, provide bespoke support to those students who need it.

This Access and Participation Plan will be available to all current and potential students via the RNN Group College websites.

5. Appendices

Appendix 1: Targets (tables 2a, 2b and 2c in the targets and investment plan) and Investment summary (tables 4a and 4b in the targets and investment plan)

Appendix 2: Fee summary (table 4a and 4b in the fee information document)

Appendix 3: Variation to the existing Access and Participation Plan

Appendix 4: Summary of 2021- 2025-26 Access and Participation Plan

Appendix 3 - Variations to the existing Access and Participation Plan

Below is a summary of how the RNN Group is addressing the priorities highlighted by the Office for Students in the Access and Participation Plan variation request.

Priority A

A summary of the 2021-22 to 2025-26 Access and Participation Plan has been included as Appendix 4.

Priority B

As part of the existing Access and Participation Plan, a strategic measure is to continue to develop the outreach and engagement activity that takes place with local schools, colleges and our own Further Education students. The RNN Group has around 400 FTE higher education students and so has limited capacity to direct resources into raising attainment within local schools. However, the RNN Group continues and will continue its work to raise the aspirations of school and college children within the local area. The RNN Group works extensively with our own Further Education students and with local schools through the HEPPSY partnership, as part of the Uni Connect programme to raise aspirations into higher education, which in turn encourages the raising of attainment. The RNN Group has now employed its own HEPPSY Engagement Officer, through the Uni Connect programme, with a view to raising aspirations to higher education, not only within local schools, but also from the RNN Group's own Further Education student population. This includes raising the aspirations of our students, as part of the student tutorial entitlement and co-ordinating visits to a wide range of other universities and higher education institutions nationally, in addition to the higher education opportunities that are available within the RNN Group. The University Centre Rotherham is used to host a number of HE widening participation activities for local schools, to help raise the aspirations of local school age children and give the message that potential students from a range of under-represented groups can access higher education within Rotherham, regardless of background, with a flexible and affordable higher education offer. Activities will include the hosting of school graduation events and course tasters that will highlight the opportunities to progress into employment after graduation. School taster activities also highlight the benefits of taking higher or degree apprenticeships, as an alternative to conventional higher education courses. This includes working to raise the aspirations of local school children, by offering the taster activities in the schools themselves.

It should also be acknowledged that as a FE college, the RNN Group offers a curriculum to its FE students, which aims to raise the attainment of students prior to progressing into higher education, from both a vocational and an English and Maths perspective, as well as having a key focus on developing knowledge, skills and behaviours to support progression into higher education.

Priority C

The existing Access and Participation Plan addresses how students from under-represented groups are supported to continue and achieve on their programme. This is supported through the inclusive curriculum design which addresses the needs of the local community and employers and is developed through a curriculum planning process that is informed by Labour Market Intelligence

and through the Student Voice mechanism, including module and programme feedback. In addition, the utilisation of the range of support mechanisms that have been identified as part of the existing Access and Participation Plan will continue to support students from under-represented groups. These include the provision of summer schools and study skills support for students from non-traditional backgrounds to help develop the academic skills required to succeed in higher education. Our Student Progress Review model identifies the appropriate support for students who are at risk and will support them to continue with their studies and to attain the best possible classification profile, through targeted support. As part of this process, we will capture and monitor the knowledge, skills and behaviours of all students, including wider employment skills that will be required to help students progress into their chosen sectors. All students will have an individualised tutorial entitlement provided with their academic tutor, which will provide additional targeted support.

Priority D

In addition to the traditional curriculum offer, the college is committed to providing a curriculum which is flexible and will enable students from a wider range of backgrounds to access higher education. This will include increasing the range of higher and degree apprenticeships and Higher Technical Qualifications that the RNN Group already delivers. These programmes will address local employment market demand which is endorsed by employers, and will ultimately enhance positive progression for all students, as well as students from under-represented groups. In addition, the college is investing in a Higher Level Skills curriculum which will focus on the development of more short-courses, as identified as part of the Department of Education's Lifelong Loan Entitlement proposal. These courses will enable students to access flexible higher education courses, in a range of priority areas, such as Engineering, Construction, Green Industries, Healthcare and Digital Technology. These flexible courses will be designed to complement a student's personal circumstances and in doing so, make higher education more accessible to students from all backgrounds, including from the under-represented groups identified in the plan.

Summary of 2021-22 entrant course fees

*Course type not listed by the provider as available to new entrants in 2021-22. This means that any such course delivered to new entrants in 2021-22 would be subject to fees capped at the basic fee amount.

Inflationary statement:

We will not raise fees annually for 2021-22 new entrants

Table 4a - Full-time course fee levels for 2021-22 entrants

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£6,900
Foundation degree		£6,900
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND		£6,900
CertHE/DipHE		£6,900
Postgraduate ITT		£6,900
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Table 4b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2021-22

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

Table 4c - Part-time course fee levels for 2021-22 entrants

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£4,400
Foundation degree		£3,450
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND		£3,450
CertHE/DipHE		£3,450
Postgraduate ITT		£3,450
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

Table 4d - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2021-22

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

Targets and investment plan

2021-22 to 2025-26

Provider name: RNN Group

Provider UKPRN: 10005534

Investment summary

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

Note about the data:

The figures in Table 4a relate to all expenditure on activities and measures that support the ambitions set out in an access and participation plan, where they relate to access to higher education. The figures in Table 4b only relate to the expenditure on activities and measures that support the ambitions set out in an access and participation plan, where they relate to access to higher education which is funded by higher fee income. The OfS does not require providers to report on investment in success and progression and therefore investment in these areas is not represented.

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

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Total access activity investment (£)	£54,000.00	£54,000.00	£54,500.00	£54,100.00	£55,100.00
Access (pre-16)	£8,400.00	£8,400.00	£8,500.00	£8,400.00	£8,600.00
Access (post-16)	£38,300.00	£38,300.00	£38,600.00	£38,300.00	£39,000.00
Access (adults and the community)	£7,300.00	£7,300.00	£7,400.00	£7,400.00	£7,500.00
Access (other)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Financial support (£)	£45,000.00	£45,000.00	£45,000.00	£45,000.00	£45,000.00
Research and evaluation (£)	£3,000.00	£3,000.00	£3,000.00	£3,000.00	£3,000.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HF%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HF)	Academic year				
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Higher fee income (£HF)	£317,520.00	£323,400.00	£328,545.00	£334,425.00	£341,775.00
Access investment	17.0%	16.7%	16.6%	16.2%	16.1%
Financial support	14.2%	13.9%	13.7%	13.5%	13.2%
Research and evaluation	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%
Total investment (as %HF)	32.1%	31.5%	31.2%	30.5%	30.2%

