2019-20 access and participation plan monitoring

Provider impact report

This impact report summarises the progress made by Yeovil College against targets, objectives and written commitments set out in its 2019-20 access and participation plan. This document is a summary of information submitted by the provider to the OfS. This document is a self-report by the provider only and does not indicate any OfS assessment of compliance.

1. Ambition and strategy

Yeovil College's ambition and strategy as detailed in the 2019-20 access and participation plan:

Yeovil College University Centre is a small higher education provider based within a medium-sized general Further Education College in South Somerset. Our 2019-20 Access and Participation Plan (APP) made clear our commitment to recruiting students from a broad and diverse community, who have the potential to succeed and benefit from higher education. It also outlined our ambition to support all learners, especially those from 'higher risk' groups, to remain on their programme and fulfil their potential, and to produce graduates who are able to progress appropriately in order to contribute to local, regional and national economies. The 'Ambition and Strategy' section of our 2019-20 APP was characterised by a large amount of very granular information. This included great detail around demographics of student who might fall into scope of this APP work, alongside a large number of very specific examples of activity which had already been completed, or would be undertaken in future, to support these students to access, succeed in, and progress from, higher education. We will seek to summarise this ambition and strategy below.

Based on the POLAR profile of the local area, skills needs articulated by local employers and trends in student diversity in the college, priority groups for 'Access' strand activities in 2019/20 were people from socio-economically disadvantaged groups, especially young males, and mature applicants. Alongside this, there was clear ambition that 'Access' initiatives would continue with a range of other groups, including those from BAME backgrounds, disabled students, and those moving into Higher Education from non-traditional academic backgrounds. The development of new collaborative relationships heavily informed the strategic direction of 'Access' work in the College's 2019-20 Plan, including a newly forged partnership with our local UniConnect consortium (or NCOP, as it was at the time), alongside participation in a European Social Fund project focussed on mature student access to HE in Somerset. Whilst the work of these initiatives is outside of the scope of this monitoring return, this increased engagement with widening participation work, and the potential for learning it brought, were important to the character and strategy of the 2019-20 APP we laid out. In order to strategically implement this 'Access' ambition, our APP outlined a range of measures, including:

- Raise aspiration and awareness of HE opportunities.
- Providing IAG around progression options, including the provision of specific information to those with identified need (e.g. disabled students).
- Improving the transition support available for prospective students, especially those from non-traditional backgrounds.
- Enhancing strategic collaborations with feeder institutions.

Our ambitions around student success and progression were very much aligned to the Strategic Plan of the College. The College's highly personalised approach to pastoral care, ensuring each learner is able to access the appropriate support to realise their potential, characterised the strategy for this work. It was identified that whilst a whole host of students might fall into 'higher risk' groups, it was essential to take an individualised approach to identify the specific challenges which students were facing and what support could be put in place to ensure they were empowered to succeed. A range of strategies to implement this support were identified, including reasonable adjustments to assessments, access to counselling provision, workshops around academic skills (i.e. referencing), and provision of pastoral care. Work to support student transitions was also picked up within this strand, in order to ensure learners could meet increased academic demands as they progressed through the years of their programme, as well as building employability skills to confidently transition to the workforce upon graduation. Providing financial support to those experiencing unavoidable financial hardship was a key element of the outlined strategy to ensure student retention and success.

Engagement with our student body was key to the strategy of our 2019-20 Access and Participation Plan. This included engagement through our formal student representation mechanisms, as well as continuing to improve the student-staff partnership and encourage student participation in consultations and feedback opportunities.

2. Self-assessment of targets

The tables that follow provide a self-assessment by Yeovil College of progress against the targets approved in its 2019-20 access and participation plan.

Please note the tables contain only a summary of target milestones approved in 2019-20 access and participation plans. Full information can be found in **Table 8a – statistical targets and milestones** and **Table 8b – Other milestones and targets** of Yeovil College's 2019-20 access and participation plan.

Any optional commentary provided against the targets is given in Annex B.

Statistical targets and milestones

Reference Number (lifecycle stage)	Description	Baseline year	Baseline data	2018-19 milestone	2019-20 milestone	Units of target	Comparison year	Actual performance in comparison year	Target self-assessment
T16a_01 (Access)	Reduce gender disparity / gap between young (18-21) FT learners.	2015-16	39.88% Male	43%	45%	Percentage	2019-20	54	Expected progress
T16a_02 (Progression)	Enhance progression levels to appropriate destinations within 6 month review of completion of studies for students from low income households; particular ethnicities; mature; disabled; care leavers	2015-16	84%	89%	90%	N/A (see description / commentary)	2019-20		Limited progress
T16a_03 (Access)	Increase ratio of BAME learner profile within the College's HE population	2015-16	2.7%	2.9%	3.0%	Percentage	2019-20	5.9	Expected progress
T16a_04 (Access)	Increase the proportion of learners internally progressing from Access to HE programmes	2015-16	2.17%	8.0%	10.2%	Percentage	2019-20	4.2	Limited progress
T16a_05 (Access)	Improve internal progression from College HE to appropriate and relevant HE through innovative curriculum design	2015-16	12%	25%	27%	Percentage	2019-20	37.7	Expected progress
T16a_06 (Access)	Maintain level of recruitment of learners from LPNs in accordance with POLAR3	2015-16	60%	62%	62%	Percentage	2019-20	55	Limited progress
T16a_07 (Access)	Increase entrants to Part-Time programmes	2015-16	74	89	95	Headcount	2019-20	54	No progress
T16a_08 (Student success)	Maintain positive retention practice across FT and PT learners	2015-16	95%	95%	96%	Percentage	2019-20	87	Limited progress

T16a_09 (Access)	Increase progression of mature students	2015-16	58%	95%	96%	N/A (see description / commentary)	2019-20		Limited progress
T16a_10 (Access)	Raise attainment in school for students from low higher education participation	2015-16	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A (see description / commentary)	2019-20		Limited progress

Other milestones and targets

Reference Number (lifecycle stage)	Description	Baseline year	Baseline data	2018-19 milestone	2019-20 milestone	Units of target	Comparison year	Actual performance in comparison year	Target self-assessment
T16b_01 (Access)	Increase number of young learners accessing HE Month Activities (November) to provide aspirational WP alongside other Colleges, Employers and HEIs in supporting the South Somerset / Dorset and surrounding area	2015-16	4000	5000	5200	Headcount	2019-20	3000	Limited progress
T16b_02 (Access)	Commence HE Month for Adults in line with community / Festival of Learning	2015-16	0	300	400	Headcount	2019-20	1628	Expected progress
T16b_03 (Access)	Employer Roadshows - incorporating activity alongside WBL and Employer Engagement	2015-16	8 sessions	9	12	Other	2019-20	2-22	Limited progress
T16b_04 (Other/Multiple stages)	Development of flexible curriculum to enhance modes of learner study / opportunity	2015-16	0	4	6	Other	2019-20	10	Expected progress
T16b_05 (Student success)	Enhance Personal Development Planning and progression through Peer-Mentoring sessions; explore eMentoring with university partner (UoG)	2015-16	0 sessions	15	25	N/A (see description / commentary)	2019-20	25	Expected progress
T16b_06 (Multiple)	Learner Transitions - continue to develop and supporting using electronic resource	2015-16	12 users	65	85	Headcount	2019-20	101	Expected progress
T16b_07 (Access)	Increased level of Mature learner entry through non-traditional means, including working with university partners to design taster and workshop events.	2015-16	5.43%	6.8%	7.2%	Percentage	2019-20	14	Expected progress

T16b_08 (Access)	Increase the number of adult learners engaged with the aspirational Future Forwards outreach event held during the Festival of Learning (Adults). This includes aspirational workshops across collaborations with HEIs, FECs and Industry. The event is planned and organised through partnership between Yeovil College and the South Somerset 14-19 Partnership.	2015-16	150	225	300	Headcount	2019-20	567	Expected progress
T16b_09 (Access)	Sustained outreach in Yeovil Town Centre	2016-17	2	20	25	Other	2019-20	0	No progress

3. Investment commitments

3.1. Access and participation investment for the last audited year

Please note that some differences in predicted vs actual spend may be due to reporting differences between academic and financial years.

Financial year	2019-20		
	Predicted spend (£)	Actual spend (£)	Difference (ppt)
Access investment	£37,000.00	£32,891.92	-11%
Financial Support	£13,000.00	£13,000.00	0%

4. Action plan

Where progress was less than expected Yeovil College has made the following commitments to increase the rate of progress against their targets.

Reference Number	Steps that will be taken in the future to make expected progress against target
T16a_02	We are continuing to develop the progression support available for YCUC learners. This includes appointing a dedicated Level 6 qualified careers advisor to provide targeted support to our HE learners, alongside their ongoing access to a dedicated careers & employer engagement department within the College. Our investment in a distinct careers platform will transform our ability to track student engagement with careers initiatives. Moving forwards, we are exploring how to capture interim employment data at Graduation, as part of a plan to establish more robust alumni communication mechanisms, so we can more readily extend careers support to our recent graduates.
T16a_04	This is not a target area for the College in our 20/21 - 24/25 APP. We are aware that having specific targets around internal progression would likely create a conflict of interest around our commitment to provide robust and impartial support to our L3 learners, versus our commitment to achieving our APP targets. We are also aware that access for mature students is very strong at Yeovil College University Centre, and whilst we are committed to continuing excellence in this area, our targets are focussed on gaps areas for access in future. We have now implemented a specific 'Access to Social Work' programme in order to make our BSc (Hons) Social Work degree (delivered under franchise

from the University of Gloucestershire) more accessible to a wider range of students, as we have identified an emerging need in this area.

T16a_06	This remains a target area for Yeovil College University Centre moving forwards. Bringing consistency to the proportion of new starts from Polar4 Quintile 1 postcodes is a target in our 20-21 onwards APP. We are continuing to collaborate with our local UniConnect consortium in order to share best practice and learn how to best improve HE progression for young people from low-participation areas.
T16a_07	This is a somewhat misleading target, as it is using PT entry as a proxy for successful mature student access provision. Whilst the absolute numbers of PT entrants have decreased at Yeovil College, our mature access rates are very strong. The OfS dashboard shows 45% of new entrants were 21+ in 2019-20, compared to a sector average of 30.2% (data taken from OfS dashboard – March 2021). As a College, we have seen a move away from PT provision in favour of flexible FT provision. Therefore, moving forwards, we will no longer set targets around PT entry, as we recognise that this is not an effective measure of successful engagement with mature students in our particular context. As detailed extensively in our 20/21-24/25 APP, this is not a target area for us moving forwards, as our Access targets are focussed on areas with identified gaps, although we will of course continue to monitor our performance in all areas to ensure continued strength.
T16a_08	In line with the commitments in our 20/21 - 24/25 Access & Participation Plan, we are taking targeted steps to eliminate retention gaps for mature students and learners with dyslexia. We are currently monitoring this data regularly, as well as engaging in a very exciting and robust programme of action research projects to improve mature student retention and attainment. We have undertaken a literature review, and staff are now completing targeted research across three key areas to identify practical steps that can be taken to improve mature student retention.
T16a_09	Please see target T16a_02. Information and rationale are consistent for both of these targets.
T16a_10	We are continuing to work flexibly and innovatively with local schools to ensure students are motivated and engaged in learning in such a way as to achieve their potential. As outlined in our 20-21 onwards APP this includes a range of both operational and strategic measures. At this current moment, it is more vital than ever to maintain morale in a cohort of young people who have not had the usual educational touchstones to demonstrate their skills.

T16b_01	Substantial work is underway for HE month 2021, which will now take place in the Summer, rather than its historical window in the Autumn. Extensive planning between schools, employers, education providers and the local authority should see this digital event be bigger and better than ever.
T16b_03	We remain committed to our ongoing relationships with employers on both an operational and a strategic level. We have already undertaken a range of work in this area in the 2020-21 academic year, including training with all of our employer-facing staff so that the are able to best articulate up-to-date information about our HE provision.
T16b_09	We are currently involved in an exciting project, in collaboration with a range of local agencies, to create an art trail through Yeovil town centre. A number of our FdA students are currently working on live briefs with local employers to create work which will be displayed around the town, both to increase awareness of local HE opportunities in the Creative Industries, but also to brighten up the town centre. The hope is that these will be medium-term installations, so will have lots of time to positively reinforce the message around local HE opportunities.

5. Confirmation

Yeovil College confirms that:

Student engagement
Have you worked with your students to help them complete the access and participation plan monitoring student submission?
Yes
Have you engaged with your student body in the design, evaluation, and monitoring of the plan?
Yes

Verification and sign off	
Yeovil College has confirmed that the information included in this impact report is accurate, that it has been compiled in line with OfS guidance, and that it is being submitted on behalf of the governing body of the provider.	
Yes	
Accountable officer sign off	
Name	Mark Bolton
Position	CEO and Principal

Annex A: Commentary on progress against targets

Yeovil College's commentary where progress against targets was less than expected.

Target reference number: T16a_02
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
In line with our Plan, we provided learners with a range of progression support to facilitate a successful transition into further study or the working world upon graduation. Over the course of the year, cohorts engaged in a range of course-appropriate careers-related activities, including guest speaker sessions with alumi and industry professionals, completing employer-set briefs, or undertaking assignments which required reflection on professional experience gained during work placement. Alongside this, all students had access to a suite of online careers resources, which were made more readily available through the creation of a dedicated online 'Student Help Zone', and the opportunity to book in 1:1 Careers Advice. Targeted progression support was provided to certain learners (e.g. students with a DSA in the final year of a course) but small sample sizes mean further explanation of activities undertaken would make individual students identifiable. It is worth noting that the diversity of our cohorts means that our careers provision is inherently designed to be accessible and impactful for a broad range of WP students. The majority of our students are mature learners, we have a high proportion of disabled learners, and the geography of the College means that we take a number of learners from disadvantaged postcode areas. Our careers support is tailored to this – whilst individual learners may require bespoke support, our careers provision as a whole is inclusive and appropriate for learners from underrepresented groups. For example, we don't prioritise promoting schemes designed for young people with the geographic and financial mobility to move to a large city and work in a low-paid internship over other types of more inclusive support. We promote a range of employability and careers-related support and focus on allowing students to build skills and experience in roles they may already hold, wherever possible. Each term, every course holds a Programme Team Meeting, which student representatives from each cohort attend. One of the set questions which all student representatives are asked to report on in the meeting is the quality of careers and personal development planning support they are receiving – this gives us detailed programme-specific student feedback three times per year, allowing us to be responsive to what learners are finding helpful, and any areas for improvement they suggest. These examples of activity undertaken are underpinned by our whole-institution approach. We have a larger-than-usual proportion of apprentices, given the size of our College, and this relationship with employers significantly informs our character. This is perhaps well illustrated by the fact that, in October 2020, our Principal and CEO Mark Bolton won the "Outstanding Contribution by an Individual" award at the Yeovil Chamber of Commerce's Business Awards, in recognition of the College's outstanding engagement with employability and the business community during 2019-20. In September 2019, the College won an AOC Beacon Award commendation for 'Innovation in Careers and Enterprise' in recognition of the significant strategic priority given to careers, employability and progression across our whole institution and how our engagement with employers enhances our learners' understanding of the world of work.
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
During 2019-20, we invested in a distinct careers platform, which will transform our ability to track student engagement with careers initiatives moving forwards. This will raise aspiration, increase our ability to implement cross-faculty initiatives and encourage interdisciplinary careers planning. This platform will allow students to engage with a range of careers and

employability related initiatives at a pace which suits them and build a 'digital passport' of careers and employability skills over their time with the College.

Target reference number: T16a_04

How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?

The progress made in this area is reflective of the changing profile of both the Access to HE and the HE provision at Yeovil College, not of a lack of success in supporting those on Access programmes to progress into university-level study. The vast majority (78%) of the College's Access provision in 2019-20 was around Health (Science / Nursing / Midwifery), and therefore there were not appropriate routes for these learners to progress to HE within Yeovil College - students instead applied to other HE providers who offered a more appropriate range of degree-level programmes to suit their career aspirations (i.e. Nursing or Allied Health Professions). It is also noticeable that our progress with contextual offers for mature students (T16b_07) means that some mature students are able to progress directly into a YCUC programme without having to undertake an Access course and extend their educational journey by a further year.

It is worth noting that whilst this target comes under the 'mature' strand, limited progress does not correlate to a lack of progress around access for mature students. In 2019/20, 45% of our new HE learners were 21 or over at the start of their programme, compared to a sector average of 30.2% (data taken from OfS dashboard – March 2021). Our access for mature learners is a real strength of our HE provision. It is also worth noting that when looking at our 'Access to HE (Social Science)' programme, where there are a number of viable progression routes to HE at Yeovil College, the internal progression data is well above the target, with 18.8% of students progressing to a HE programme at Yeovil College University Centre. Students on Access programmes receive a robust range of support to ensure they are empowered to make a positive and well-informed decision about progressing to study at Level 4 and above. In line with the College's commitment to the Gatsby Benchmarks, this advice and guidance is impartial, and doesn't favour internal progression at YCUC over other routes. The Access course has an entire module focussed on HE progression. Access to HE students received a significant amount of targeted support around UCAS applications and the HE admissions process in 2019-20, as well as sessions with external providers and other HEIs in order to broaden their horizon around HE progression. Further support for those who didn't apply or didn't secure a place initially is in place. This support includes robust regular monitoring in order to check application status, offer status and acceptance status, and appropriate supportive interventions are implemented for any learners who are not successful in receiving offers initially.

Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?

In line with our commitment to the Gatsby Benchmarks, our progression support for Access to HE students is robust and impartial. In 2019-20 this HE progression offer included attending masterclass around studying as a mature student with a Student Ambassador from another HEI, so we could ensure students were receiving exposure to a whole range of educational opportunities, not just internal progression.

Target reference number: T16a_06

How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?

A range of activity was undertaken in order to maintain our robust levels of recruitment for students from low participation areas. This included our continued commitment to strategic partnership with local schools with Quintile 1 and 2 catchment areas, and our leadership of the South Somerset 14-19 Careers Partnership in order to ensure all young people can access robust IAG and aspirational activities around post-18 destinations. We delivered a range of outreach with schools and Colleges in LPNs. We also met our commitment to develop a productive working relationship and engage proactively with our local NCOP in order to facilitate their engagement with schools in our local area and contribute to a national picture of improved outreach in LPNs. Whilst the work of UniConnect of course falls outside of the scope of this plan, our engagement with the programme, at all levels from administration through to our Principal sitting on the Board of our local consortium, illustrates our whole-institution commitment to outreach with young people from LPNs.

Whilst 55% represents a slight dip when compared to the target proportion for this year, this proportion is stable and within five percentage points of our baseline, in line with our target to 'maintain' levels in this area. This also represents a significantly larger proportion of Q1 and Q2 entrants than the sector-wide average of 27.9% (data taken from OfS dashboard – March 2021).

As a proportion of income, we invested more in Access than we had forecast. Whilst this is a cash-terms dip, the investment plan was based on a maximum threshold of £7,500 for FT degree students, when the actual fee charged to new entrants was £7,008, or less than this for continuing students who remained fixed on the fee they enrolled with. Similarly, whilst PT students were approved up to a fee level of £5,000, £4,672 was the highest PT fee charged, again with many students on a lower fee than this as they remained fixed with the fee they enrolled with. We also recruited fewer students than forecast in the APP.

Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?

We used data from our local UniConnect partnership which identified concerns around cost as the biggest barrier to HE progression for LPN students to create a targeted mythbusting campaign around 'You Don't Have To Be Rich To Go To Uni'.

As COVID changed our outreach mechanisms and meant our capacity to run events in local communities was limited, we strengthened our geographically-targeted work through a public messaging campaign. This included paying for billboards and displaying banners in Quintile 1 and Quintile 2 areas with targeted campaigns raising awareness about HE study and promoting our suite of HE outreach activities. We also undertook a number of sponsorship campaigns with local radio stations in order to increase awareness in the community of our HE offer and encourage people to engage with our WP outreach activity. There was a higher cash investment in this area than in previous years.

Target reference number: T16a_07

How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?

We engaged in a range of provision to promote our part-time programmes, as well as working with employers to design accessible provision, and regular consultation with learners around the accessibility of timetabling. In line with target T16b_04, we exceeded our commitment to

restructure curriculum in order to offer a range of flexible part-time provision, including programmes where a Level 5 qualification can be completed part-time over three years, and evening-only part-time teaching. Whilst these measures meet the commentary for success outlined in col. P, our full-time provision still increased in popularity whilst uptake for our part-time offer declined. Application data was monitored regularly and overseen by the Higher Education Management and Strategy Group, alongside the provision of reports to the Senior Management Team and Corporation, as appropriate.

Whilst this target uses increased PT entry as a proxy for success with recruiting mature students, it's important to note that in 2019/20, 45% of our new HE learners were 21 or over at the start of their programme, compared to a sector average of 30.2% (data taken from OfS dashboard – March 2021). We engaged in extensive outreach to promote our part-time provision to mature students, detailed in Col. W.

Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?

We engaged in extensive outreach to promote our provision to mature students, including the Higher Edge programme, targeted radio sponsorship of awareness-raising campaigns on a station whose demographic is predominantly mature, and focussed mythbusting campaigns about returning to study as an adult.

As part of our outreach activity in 2019-20, we ran targeted mythbusting campaigns around HE jargon. This included tackling the often-held misconception that 'full-time' study requires 40 hours of 9-5 attendance each week (much like a 'full-time' job or 'full-time' childcare). This campaign was designed to empower mature students to engage with HE in a meaningful way and bust the myth that you need to put the rest of your life on hold in order to study. However, upon reflection, this campaign may have served to diminish PT numbers, as prospective students discovered that a flexibly timetabled FT programme was just as achievable alongside work and caring responsibilities. Indeed, we have a fantastic case study of a mature student who started off on a PT programme as a tentative step back into education, and quickly discovered that they both loved learning, and found the workload more manageable than anticipated alongside a young family, and quickly transferred to the FT route. We did not have any students making the opposite step from FT to PT.

Target reference number: T16a_08

How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?

2019-20 saw continued delivery of the robust level of pastoral support outlined in our Access & Participation Plan. Our institutional culture, informed by our mission to "maximise potential for all", means that all work is undertaken in a learner-centred way. Our learners enjoy a very high level of personalised support, through both support staff and our comprehensive network of tutorial provision and academic staff availability.

2019-20 also saw full spend on bursary and hardship funding (something that the College has not historically achieved).

As per target T16b_06, 2019-20 saw the introduction of the YCUC Student Help Zone – an online resource on our Virtual Learning Environment, designed to be a one-stop-shop for all support needs in order to support all learners with the transition into HE, as well as progressing students with the transition to the next level of study. This resource was heavily informed by student feedback, from the point of design through to continual improvements post-launch.

Retention data was monitored quarterly by the Higher Education Management and Strategy

Group, including looking at breakdowns by demographic and by faculty in order to identify any emerging trends. The Course Review process was undertaken 5 times across the academic year in order to monitor the progress of all learners, identify any at risk of non-retention, and compare this data to institution-wide demographic data including WP groups. This data is followed up on a departmental level, with support put in place as required for students identified as high or medium risk of non-completion. This ability to cross-reference data against all 10 WP characteristics in 2019-20 represented a huge step forwards for the College in terms of our data infrastructure and our ability to analyse WP trends in real-time across the year.

Despite this extensive commitment to student support, we achieved an in-year retention rate of 87%. Whilst not as high as our target level, we recognise that the context of the academic year must be taken into account. We saw a small, but not insignificant, number of students choose to suspend or leave their studies for a range of COVID-associated reasons, including poor health, increased caring responsibilities, increased workload pressures, or employers no longer allowing time off for study. In all cases, we worked hard to support students to make a well-informed decision in their own best interests, in line with OfS guidance to ensure that options around suspension and deferral were made clear to students. This involved both looking at learner wellbeing, as well as looking at whether students felt they would be able to engage with their programme of study in a way that they would find satisfying. We are confident that in these situations students were not withdrawing owing to a lack of support - over half of our students are mature and a huge number of students who were balancing work and caring responsibilites achieved fantastic outcomes last year. However, there were still some cases where it was not possible, or was not in a student's best interests, for them to continue studying whilst the impact of the pandemic was being felt. Whilst sector-level data is not yet available to measure how the impact of COVID-19 was felt at Yeovil College compared to other providers, and whether the demographic makeup of our students might have affected this, we will engage with this data, once available, to see if there is any learning to be taken.

Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?

Prior to the pandemic, 2019-20 saw the creation of the YCUC Student Voice Officer post. This is a position for a current student, focussed on improving the quality of student experience. The role covers three core areas; increasing the sense of student belonging, ensuring a range of appropriate enrichment activity is available, and listening to and advocating for the view of students.

2019-20 saw unprecedented levels of student support, as in light of COVID-19 a robust package of support measures for students were implemented. This included introducing evening sessions for both academic and pastoral tutorial for students who were unable to engage with support in the daytime owing to work, care or home-schooling commitments. Our newly appointed Student Voice Officer led on the development of an online student support forum via social media, so that learners could still feel connected and supported by peers when they were at home, as well as using this forum to regularly signpost helpful resources around a range of areas including mental health.

In light of COVID, the Higher Education Manager began emailing all students weekly, signposting all support that was available, and providing a readily available avenue for students to request and access support.

Retention data was monitored regularly, including looking at gaps for specific groups, at both a strategic and operational level. There was also further extensive, and unplanned, work to secure retention rates in 19/20 around apprentices and employer-sponsored students whose employers faced severe financial impact due to COVID. Substantial work was undertaken across the College, including with higher and degree apprentices, to support employers to retain apprentices during the pandemic, and also to support any learners who did lose their

apprenticeships to secure new roles with companies who were willing to sponsor the continuation of their studies or facilitate the resumption of the apprenticeship.

Target reference number: T16a_09

How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?

Please see target T16a_02. Information and rationale are consistent for both of these targets, as they are both focussed on 'progression' of students into appropriate destinations. Whilst this target is more specific in focus, T16a_02 outlines our approach to mature students well.

Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?

Please see target T16a_02. Information and rationale are consistent for both of these targets.

Target reference number: T16a_10

How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?

As per the statement made by the Secretary of State for Education on 23rd March 2020 (UIN HCWS176), the Government have not published any school-level assessment data for the 2019-20 academic year. Therefore, there is not data which can be used to measure this outcome in any way that would give strong confidence in correlation around engagement with outreach and attainment in local secondary schools. However, we did continue to maintain our robust offer of engagement with local schools including workshops, talks and taster sessions (albeit with much of this taking place digitally, not on-site). We also maintained our strategic commitment to partnership with our local schools, both through our leadership of the South Somerset 14-19 Careers Partnership, and through the work of our Director of Schools Partnerships and Innovation, who sits on our Senior Management Team.
Substantial work has been undertaken to increase aspiration and attainment in local schools, including assemblies from our CEO and Principal about ambition raising. This has been coupled with an overhaul of FE admissions processes, in line with feedback from our feeder schools, focussed on entry criteria aligned to students achieving their school-set target grades, rather than just the minimum entry criteria specified by the awarding bodies. Feedback from local schools has been resoundingly positive about the impact this has had upon motivation and ambition for Year 11 students.

Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?

In addition to planned work, during the pandemic, the College launched our 'YC Edge' programme in the summer term. This was a targeted initiative designed to support Year 11s in local schools who were struggling with motivation and to continue engaging with learning once government had announced that calculated grades would be used. Over 750 Year 11s from local schools took part in a term of e-learning to prepare them for Level 3 study, so that learners remained in good study habits and continued to make positive educational progress - using preparing for Level 3 study as an aspirational destination to aim for, when the incentive of GCSE exams to study for was removed. We received a range of commendation for this initiative, and are seeing longer-term impacts, including many learners who engaged in this work making better-than-expected progress in their FE programmes this year. Alongside this, we provided a suite of genuinely impartial CEIAG for students from local schools who were

struggling to decide upon the next steps to take. Students could access 1:1 advice from fully qualified careers advisors to help them to plan their post-GCSE steps.

Target reference number: T16b_01

How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?

We maintained our commitments to all of the strategic collaborations which make HE Month possible, across school, employer, and local authority partnerships. However, in 2019 this event took place on a slightly smaller scale than in previous years for a range of reasons. The intention was that this intervention would then be supplemented by a range of HE tasters offered as part of 'Experience Week' in July. However, due to COVID, the planned week of on-site activity couldn't take place and we were too early on in the pandemic in terms of the exponential upskilling of staff and the lead-in time required for digital events to be able to run this wholly online. Whilst young people were very welcome to participate in the Higher Edge suite of online taster sessions, we are conscious that most would have instead chosen to engage in the 'YC Edge' work put together in order to prepare for Level 3 study, rather than HE tasters.

It is important to recognise that 3000 students is still a very positive outcome, however, it is not as high as our target.

Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?

In addition to the commitments in our plan, we collaborated with Next Steps South West, our local UniConnect consortium, to support and facilitate their engagement with HE Month in 2019-20. This enriched the experience of students participating in this event, as they benefited from a strategic collaboration between employers, colleges, HEIs and the UniConnect consortium.

Target reference number: T16b_03

How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?

In the first part of the year we made good progress in this area. Two very successful roadshow events were held with large local employers where YCUC staff spent the day based in a canteen-style space and fielded a range of queries from employees around local HE study. However, understandably, the COVID-19 pandemic hit this work substantially in the second part of the year. We had planned to focus this work in the Spring-Summer time as that would be a suitable timeframe for people to apply for September start. When it became evident that on-site visits were not sensible, we adapted our approach (as detailed in col. W). We are seeing the positive outcomes of this work in a variety of ways, including both individuals who met with us during these roadshow events having subsequently enrolled for a HE course with us, as well as an increasing number of employers taking on higher or degree apprentices with us.

These examples of activity undertaken are underpinned by our whole-institution approach to employer engagement. We have a larger-than-usual proportion of apprentices, given the size of our College, and this relationship with our business community significantly informs our character. This is perhaps well illustrated by the fact that, in October 2020, our Principal and CEO Mark Bolton won the "Outstanding Contribution by an Individual" award at the Yeovil

Chamber of Commerce's Business Awards, in recognition of the College's outstanding engagement with employability and the business community during 2019-20.

Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?

Whilst on-site visits were not feasible during the pandemic, we engaged with employers in other ways. Our Employer Engagement team sent targeted letter communications out to twenty employers highlighting potential HE routes which would likely be of use to their workforce. This meant that we engaged with more than our original target number of employers, although via a slightly different method.

We were also at the heart of the inception of 'M-Hub' – a collaboration of local employers across the manufacturing sector. This network is focussed on best practice sharing across a whole range of areas, including initiatives around building talent pipelines at all levels, including graduate positions. Our role in this collaboration will support long-term engagement with a range of employers and the continued profile-raising of routes to upskill employees through local HE study in order to facilitate the long-term success of a manufacturing base in South Somerset.

Target reference number: T16b_09

How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?

It is self-evident that it was not appropriate for us to go and stand and hand out information packs in the town centre in the Spring of 2020, as had been initially planned. However, we found a range of alternative ways to engage in local and geographically-grounded outreach, as outlined in col. W.

We also engaged in a number of paid-for social media promotions in order to raise the profile of the University Centre and local HE. We put together a series of mythbusting resources to raise awareness of how college-based HE works.

Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?

In line with target T16a_06, we continued with a targeted campaign in low-participation-areas, utilising banners and billboards in Quintile 1 and 2 areas, including in Yeovil Town Centre. In order to engage with mature students, we undertook targeted local radio sponsorship of a show whose primary listenership are mature people. There was a higher cash investment in this area than in previous years.

Annex B: Optional commentary on targets

Yeovil College's commentary on any of the targets listed in .

Reference Number	Optional commentary
T16a_01	
T16a_02	We have self-assessed as 'limited progress' as we have met our commitments in this area, however, do not yet have access to statistical data to identify whether we have met the specified milestone. This in no way relates to a lack of commitment to monitoring, or a lack of ambition around evaluation. There is no progression data available on the OfS dashboard owing to small sample sizes, and the most recent data available from HESA pertains to the 2017/18 cohort, which is outside of the scope of this plan as these learners had already graduated by the time the APP was published. In the absence of Graduate Outcomes data, we took the decision to not collate our own interim data in this area in order to minimise the risk of confusion for students. Were we to have contacted all students to ask about their 6 month post-graduation outcomes, we felt there would be a substantial risk that this would undermine messaging around Graduate Outcomes, and potentially reduce engagement with Graduate Outcomes as learners believed they had already given this information, and thereby reduce the quality of this important national dataset. We were very aware that the impact of COVID-19 would make statistical comparisons unreliable - primarily because of a lack of standardised methodology to capture 2019-20 data in a way that would facilitate meaning comparisons with data collected through DLHE from previous years. Therefore, were we to have taken the decision to collect interim data, not only would it have potentially undermined the quality of the Graduate Outcomes data, but given the above complexities and our very small sample sizes, we would not have been able to make any meaningful or statistically robust comparison to previous data. We have discussed this rationale with students, who are in agreement with our decision making here.
T16a_03	
T16a_04	
T16a_05	
T16a_06	
T16a_07	
T16a_08	We have self-assessed as 'limited progress' in this area owing to the substantial work undertaken, exceeding the commitments of our Access and Participation Plan, to ensure all learners were well-supported to remain on their programme of study. Whilst it will take far more time to analyse sector-wide trends and identify how COVID impacted upon retention of various learner groups, we are confident that the robust support available mitigated the potential for COVID to adversely impact upon student retention and success.

T16a_09	Please see target T16a_02. Information and rationale are consistent for both of these targets.
T16a_10	
T16b_01	-
T16b_02	Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the format of this initiative had to change, with our 'Higher Edge' programme being launched as a socially-distanced and COVID-secure alternative to a month of on-site activities. 'Higher Edge' was an interactive experience where people could learn more about HE study, watch videos of academic staff, and participate in taster activities across all 11 areas of HE provision at the College. To promote this initiative to prospective mature students we invested in social media promotion, a print campaign of billboards across the local area, and sponsorship of a local radio show with a predominantly mature listenership. The levels of engagement we were able to achieve with an online-only event were significantly greater than we would have achieved on-site, and have informed our strategy for mature student outreach moving forwards, even when on-site events are permitted to return.
T16b_03	-
T16b_04	In 2019/20 we had 10 different 'flexible' delivery programmes - either 'evening-only', delivering a FT course through a condensed 1 day per week timetable, or delivering a condensed PT route with 120 credits over 18 months rather than 2 years.
T16b_05	These 25 sessions were able to happen pre-lockdown. In addition to this, during the pandemic our Student Voice Officer (a current HE student employed to represent learners and enhance the student experience) led work to create a student group on social media, so learners could still access wellbeing and moral support, whether as a group or through a direct message, as an alternative to the in-person peer mentoring offered on-site.
T16b_06	-
T16b_07	-
T16b_08	As already mentioned in T16b_02, HE Month for Adults was adapted in light of COVID-19 and rebranded under the 'Higher Edge' banner as an online-only event. In line with this, on-site Future Forwards workshops were replaced by a suite of pre-recorded talks and video workshops. We discovered that far more people engaged with pre-recorded informational videos than we would typically expect at an on-site event, and so will continue to explore this format moving forwards, perhaps as a bridging step to build confidence before attending an on-site event. We are still developing and refining our tools for tracking engagement and evaluating outcomes for online events, but for the purposes of this target we have measured engagement with our flagship aspirational talk for mature students.
T16b_09	-