

## 2019-20 access and participation plan

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## 2019-20 access and participation plan

### Assessment of current performance

#### Assessment of current performance ±introduction

The University of Law is committed to providing high quality education to a diverse community of students. Historically we were known for our postgraduate law courses, for students aiming for careers as solicitors or barristers, but our offer has diversified both in terms of the nature of courses (undergraduate and non-law options) and in modes of provision (additional part-time and online modes as well as full-time, face-to-face tuition).

It is important to put the University of Law into further context. We operate from eight campuses and have partnerships with several other universities to deliver postgraduate courses on their premises. Our undergraduate courses are run from seven of these campuses and have grown significantly over the last five years. Nonetheless they still represent a small proportion of the 8 Q L Y H U V L W \ ¶ V W R W D O V W X G H Q W Q X P E H U V

The University is a welcoming and inclusive environment where onward progression and career success are vitally important for all our students. Indeed the professional practice backgrounds of the teaching staff, the expertise from professional colleagues in the Careers Service and inclusion of an employability programme in the undergraduate curriculum is testament to this commitment. Our employability statistics<sup>1</sup> have consistently exceeded 90% even though the population size means that small numbers can skew the statistics. We focus on professional education and are proud of our differentiating ethos.

Our outstanding provision of Higher Education has been evidenced by securing Gold Award in the Teaching Excellence Framework and a commendation in the findings from the Quality Assurance Agency review in 2017. We are committed to investment in our systems, activities and associated staff development to enhance performance of underrepresented groups within the context of our overall strategic objectives, specifically preparing students for the professional workplace, whether in law or other work.

#### Assessment of current performance ±understanding our data

The University of Law started offering an undergraduate degree in 2012, enrolling 111 students in 2012 on a two year accelerated degree. Although we have increased the number of undergraduate degrees offered, enrolling over 500 students in September 2017, our overall undergraduate student numbers are relatively low. Our broader strategic aim over the next five years is to increase our undergraduate student body. We are basing our analysis on three year rolling averages, in line with the approach taken elsewhere, eg in the TEF, to identify gaps of equality of opportunity in relation to access, success and progression.

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Board reviewed and revised our Widening Participation and Access Strategy in 2017. That working party, which included the Student Association President, reviewed our internal data and sector benchmarks where available; it concluded that the University should focus on four underrepresented and disadvantaged groups in terms of socio-economic background, ethnicity, age and disability. These were selected because we wanted to use the opportunity of this Plan to reduce identified gaps in access, success and progression for these groups. In addition, because we have complete datasets we can reliably check our progress against our current position and targets.

Since then, the OfS has published its guidance, setting out the expected underrepresented groups for 2019-20 Access and Participation Plans, which align with those we identified. We have

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<sup>1</sup> Derived from the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey  
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subsequently looked at, and include as far as possible, data relating to care leavers although as an Alternative Provider we were not required to collect and report on a range of data, including care leavers, so our data is incomplete.

In our data analysis we have measured groups as follows:

- x POLAR 3 (sub-grouped by quintile)<sup>2</sup>;
- x ethnic background (sub-grouped as: Asian or Asian British, Black or Black British,

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Number of underrepresented groups	# students	% of students	# students	% of students
0	392	28.0%	392	28.0%
1	680	48.5%	1010	72.0%
2	278	19.8%		
3	43	3.1%		
4	<10	0.6%		
5	<5	0.1%		
Total	1402			

As seen in the table above, about 25% of our students fall into more than one underrepresented group. Where students belong to more than one underrepresented group, it is most likely that they are BME in combination with another underrepresented group.

Looking at POLAR 3 quintiles, in particular, u VLQJ WKH PHWKRG RORJ\ RI + (3, ¶ V UHF we have investigated the distribution RI VWXGHQWV ¶ 32/\$5 TXLQWLOHV

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We have also reviewed our data by campus. There are some regional variations, which will be addressed in our next Plan for 2020/21.

We currently offer online degrees over four or six<sup>6</sup> years; by 2019 we will have a broader offering of online degree options, which we believe will enhance access.

Gaps in access, success and progression :

A table setting out our access, success and progression data for our selected underrepresented groups is on the following page. This table is used as a reference point in analysis and narrative throughout this document. Where the denominator is less than 10<sup>7</sup>, percentages have been suppressed.

We will invest in data analytics to capture more accurately the existing activity and interventions to support under-represented groups. Once in place in 2018/19, we will derive information to make more informed decisions in 2019/20, allowing an interim review of impact in 2021/22 with completion data available in 2022/23.

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<sup>6</sup> Our current six year programme is available only as a solicitor apprenticeship

<sup>7</sup> Following consideration of the HESA approach, ie suppression of numbers where the denominator is <22.5, we concluded that this would be inappropriate because of our small numbers leading to an inability to set publicly declared targets. [We are happy to discuss this further with the OfS].

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	# entrants	Withdrawal rate	Entrants 2014-2016		Completing students 2015-2017				Completing students 2014 - 2016	
			# completing year 1	Continuation rate	# completed	Pass rate	# passing students	% of passes at 1st or 2:1	# DLHE responses	% in GWoFS
POLAR										
1	134	9.7%	118	84.7%	34	91.2%	31	45.2%		

Access:

Looking at the data by gender, Polar Quintile and ethnic background, the following table shows the percentage of students in each Polar Quintile for each ethnic group, split by gender.





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Separately, we aim to increase the percentage of 1<sup>st</sup>/2:1 outcomes across the university as a whole. Our 1<sup>st</sup>/2.1 rate, albeit for small cohorts, has been around 50%, significantly lower than the sector (c65% for Law). Through feedback from external examiners, and more engagement in the undergraduate sector, we have concluded that while design of the LLB was benchmarked against the FHEQ descriptors, expectations may have been unduly high regarding student learning and assessment, although this was difficult to measure given the small graduating cohorts on accelerated courses. Following an extensive curriculum review from 2014-2015, involving students, staff and externals, we have evened out student workload, including a semesterised structure, we introduced level 4 modules specifically aimed to ease transition into higher education, and developed an enhanced range of option modules at levels 5 and 6. We have retained our practice and professional focus. These enhancements to our course will allow the overall cohort to realise grade improvement and achieve a 1<sup>st</sup>/2.1 rate of 65%, an increase of 15%; targets for underrepresented groups will take that overall increase into account also.

### Access ambitions

Our ambition is to build on our already diverse and inclusive community, encouraging application and enrolment from a broader range of students from underrepresented groups.

### Access targets:

We have now subscribed to the UCAS contextual data service and should therefore be able better to analyse our cohorts in more detail in future. This is part of and critical to delivery of our overall strategy. Broadly speaking, however, we are attracting a diverse body of students, across the range of targeted underrepresented groups. Our most significant gap is for white male students from Polar Q1, being 5.6% of male students and 1.7% of our whole student body.

We will therefore target White British males from lower socio-economic groups. In 2017 we had an enrolment of 10. We aim to triple or better this over the next five years. Regarding care leavers, which is a specific OfS target group, although we attract a higher proportion of care leavers than the proportion enrolled in the sector as a whole, our numbers are small. Because of the importance of this group we have decided to set ourselves a target to increase enrolment of care leavers.

Access	Sub-group 2017	Target for 2022/23
White British Males from lower-socio economic groups (currently measured by POLAR 3 Q1)	10 students enrolled	38 students enrolled
Care leavers	<10 students enrolled	20 students enrolled

Looking at gender overall, 65% of our students are female, which is in line with the subject of law nationally but higher than across all subjects. We will consider whether we should set targets for recruitment of male students generally, in addition to the specific target outlined above. We will be setting specific campus targets for increasing student access from groups underrepresented locally. We will undertake this exercise in 2018/19 with a view to including access targets by campus in our 2020 Access & Participation Plan.

### Strategies and measures to support access:

Our Domestic Student Recruitment (DSR) team already undertake a significant outreach programme as well as welcoming individuals and schools to our campuses. We provide early career guidance as well as an insight on our practice-focused style of teaching.

We have tended to focus on schools/colleges in the state sector. Campuses have relationships with local schools, Sixth Form and FE colleges in each of the seven regions. They are now being given some particular targets relating to making relationships including sustained outreach with schools and colleges in Polar Q1 areas, with a greater proportion of students underrepresented in higher education.

Marketing campaigns will support our strategic work with schools and colleges in POLAR 1 areas by using ACORN data, the consumer and household classification system. In addition, we will



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reach target groups through alternative contact routes such as community groups, housing associations, sports groups and charities. Similar campaigns will support work with mature learners where their current study patterns might mean that traditional outreach work struggles to engage them effectively. \$ Q X P E H U R I X Q L Y H U V L W L H V K D Y H V X F F H V V I X O O \ X V H throughout the student journey. In terms of recruiting students from a diverse background, that includes ensuring that our materials and website illustrate our diverse community. This has been discussed by the Student Association Parliament and received widespread support, particularly from the BME Officer.

Where possible, campuses liaise with other local bodies, for example our Birmingham campus has recently started working with the Social Mobility Foundation, Aim Higher West Midlands and West Midlands Care Leaver network. We are setting targets for all campuses to increase this activity.

With an increased national focus on accelerated degrees, and the opportunity for students to obtain a loan to cover all tuition, we intend to focus recruitment for accelerated degrees on career changers and returners to education as in our experience to date these profiles are the most likely to want to complete their degree in a short timeframe. People returning to education can be hard to reach, relying more on social media than traditional sources of advice. We are already providing some support services through online platforms. We have recently developed our social media policy to allow greater local level and other targeted content and interaction.

In addition to an increased focus on care leavers, feedback from campus personal tutors is that we have a significant number of carers. With improved data capture to support our understanding, we intend to focus on carers in a future Plan.

We currently offer a range of online resources designed to help students with transition to HE. These are being further developed and we intend to offer sessions on campus, with first invitations going to students from underrepresented groups. As a specific initiative to bridge transition, we are investigating a Foundation Year to be run by City and Islington College, with students then moving to our Bloomsbury campus in Year 1.

To embed the importance of progression into the workplace, even before students enrol with us, we will hold an Employability EanCelit



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do so. We will also develop our face to face and online support for students and invest in bespoke

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Critical to our pastoral system is the personal tutor, assigned to every student from their first day. The role currently involves following up on attendance as well as monitoring academic performance, providing guidance and advice on issues relating to the course, basic careers questions and personal issues the students may be facing. This longer-term relationship generates

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strengths-based approach to widening participation students in higher education, Sebastian  
Krutkowski, (2017)<sup>9</sup> which sets out approaches to ease the transition of students into higher





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Our Birmingham campus has, for example, established an employability prize of work experience sponsored by a local firm. We are encouraging all campuses to obtain similar sponsorship and offer specific opportunities for underrepresented groups. The legal qualification landscape will change significantly over the next few years and we must ensure that we adapt our programmes and delivery to ensure that students are well placed to progress. In particular, there is concern that the proposed changes will disadvantage some underrepresented groups and we, with other providers, will need to work with the regulators actively to challenge this.

\$OWKR XJK %0( LV UHODWLYHO\ ZHOO UHSUHVHQWHG LQ VROLFLV diversity<sup>11</sup> and our ambition is to work with the sector to reduce gaps in the workforce. For example, although women make up 48% of all lawyers in law firms, only 33% are partners, with only 29% at the largest firms. People with disabilities are not well represented, with only 3% of all groups reporting a disability, 2% of partners.

We work with a number of law firms to help them achieve their corporate soc2all achihachid(ng)3t , 2% of 5860





### Progression group

Remit: to identify, track, monitor and analyse initiatives intended to increase progression of students from underrepresented groups, both short and longer term. To monitor delivery of activities and initiatives set out in the APP and report progress to WP&A Committee; to facilitate analysis and evaluation leading to continuous improvement.

### Equality and diversity

The University has a well-established Diversity Policy. It is due for review. This review will be undertaken alongside an Equality Impact Assessment, scheduled to be undertaken in 2018. We anticipate that the resulting output will be an Equality and Diversity Policy and a separate Equality and Diversity Strategy, currently embedded in our overall University Strategy, which will align with our Access & Participation Plan and be compliant with the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Academic Board's WP&A Committee will oversee this work, led by the Deputy Academic Registrar.

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- x Targeted marketing campaigns

### Student success

Many of our student success initiatives blend with activities within the access and progression areas. In summary our activities and measures to support student success are:

- x Investment in Student Support and Wellbeing Services, particularly at our non-London campuses
- x Staff training and development
- x Specific initiatives to improve continuation and completion

### Progression

The University is proud of its strong record of employment and progression activities, embedded throughout the whole student lifecycle.

In summary our activities and measures to support progression are:

- x Better targeting of employability support to underrepresented groups
- x Work with employers to improve diversity in the sector as a whole

### Evidence-led approach

A key feature of our strategy is to improve our data collection, both contextual data for our applicants and enrolled students, but also of relevant on-course data that can be used to monitor progress of underrepresented groups. We are currently evaluating learner analytics solutions, with a view to purchasing and embedding our chosen solution during 2018/19. By 2019/20 we should therefore have in place more robust learner analytics to support delivery of our plan, but intend to continue our investment during 2019/20 under this Plan. Analysis of qualitative and quantitative evidence will inform evaluation of the impact of activities and initiatives, to enable us to drive continuous improvement in our provision and outcomes for our students.

### Contextual information

We have now subscribed to the UCAS contextual data service and will therefore be able better to analyse our cohorts in more detail in future; this is part of and critical to delivery of our overall strategy. We are updating our online enrolment procedure to ensure we capture additional data on underrepresented groups, to ensure that we have complete datasets.

### Financial support and Hardship fund

Sector experience suggests that financial support through year 1 undergraduate bursaries is not an effective use of funding. We are therefore extending our hardship fund to offer more support to undergraduate students who experience specific financial problems during their course.

We have allocated £43,537 to financial support for 2019/20, of which £8,537 is allocated (pro rata) to infrastructure costs associated with delivering the APP, with £35,000 allocated to the hardship fund. Our experience is that funding students at a point of crisis can have a direct impact on their decision not to withdraw from a course, but to continue with their study. As part of this APP, we will ensure that continued tracking of students in receipt of this funding enables us effectively to monitor their longer term success and progression and hence the longer term impact of that spend.

## Investment

### Investment levels

The University currently has a high/high to medium proportion of students from underrepresented groups and as such it plans to invest 18.2% of



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information designed to improve access, student success and progression for target groups and  
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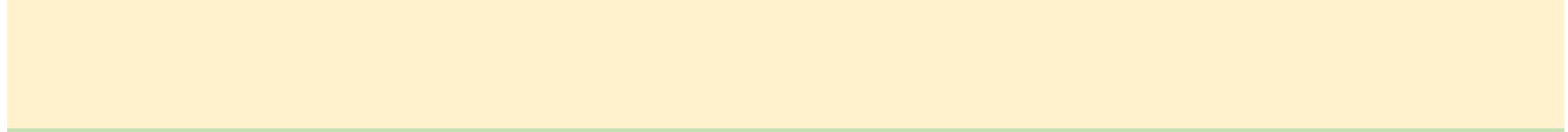
### Communicating progress made against the access and participation plan

Progress against this plan will be communicated to prospective and current students via the website. The Student Association, which is deeply embedded into our whole-institution approach, will also be central to communication with students.

### Equality and Diversity

In developing the provisions of this access and participation plan the University has given due regard to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. As such the initiatives and measures in this plan are designed to provide support to students from low-participation and underrepresented backgrounds.

The University hosts both its Equality and Widening Participation and Diversity Strategy on its  
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University is demonstrating its commitment to Equality and Diversity by supporting and hosting  
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Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£9,250
Foundation degree		*
Foundation year / Year 0		£9,250
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		*
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		£11,100
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*

Franchise 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		*

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£6,935
Foundation degree		*
Foundation year / Year 0		*
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		*
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*





2018-19 2019-20 2020-21 2021-22 2022-23

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