# **Annex B: Further information that sets out the rationale, assumptions and evidence base for each intervention strategy included in the access and participation plan.**

**Intervention Strategy 1: Knowledge and Skills**

Several activities within this knowledge and skills intervention strategy are delivered in collaboration with Aspire Higher Uni Connect, utilising their attainment raising funding. Should the Uni Connect funding end, our capacity to deliver this intervention strategy will be reduced.

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| **Activity descriptor** | **Rationale / Justification** | **Evidence Base** |
| **1. UNI Club.** An eight-week year 9 attainment raising programme, led by UON postgraduate students additionally developing HE skills including; research, study skills and independent learning.  **2.** **Reading Warriors** - Two work streams. (i) A literacy programme with our partner primary and secondary schools to develop pupils’ reading age. This is an education phase programme to improve attainment and develop a sense of community with older pupils supporting younger pupils. (ii) Year 12’s are trained as Reading Warriors to work with year 8 and 9 pupils to develop reading age, oracy and improve educational access through improvements in literacy.  **3.** **Saturday Club.**  Collaborating with local arts practitioners including Northampton Film Festival and national partners The British Film Institute, to deliver a 20-week programme to Key Stage 4 pupils, including two visits to London museums and art galleries to enhance the cultural capital and awareness of opportunities in the sector with participants.  **4.** **Lego Club.** Working with Key Stage three pupils, focusing on skill development and a greater depth of knowledge surrounding careers in engineering. Funding has previously been precured from Cummins Engineering Ltd’s community fund and enabled the purchase of Lego robots and engineer expertise through their staff input into the club.  **5. Revision Boost.** Multiple interventions in collaboration with external partners, to boost male pupil’s GCSE maths grades from 3 to 4 and 4 to 5. Targeted at schools with low Progress and Attainment 8 scores. GCSE maths learning resources developed by the Widening Access Team will support this project.  **6. Primary SPARK Award.** A six-month social impact programme to develop self-efficacy including teamwork, communication, empathy, project planning and presentation skills.  Ten target IMD Q1/2 primary schools year 1 – 6 pupils.  **7. Primary School Oracy Programme.** Working in collaboration with Noisy Classroom in the development of enhanced oracy and debating skills programme for Key Stage 2 pupils.  **9. Primary Law Taskmaster.** In collaboration with Warwick University who have developed this train the trainer programme. UON law students will be trained to deliver a series of workshops to year 5 pupils to develop knowledge in law, understand career and progression opportunities as well as self-efficacy skills in 4 partner primary schools.  **11**. **Project Party.**  Collaboration with the UON Events, Tourism and Hospitality subject area, working in partner schools to develop event management skills over a three-month period (project planning, communication and teamwork) during the development of end of year prom celebrations. | The activities within this intervention strategy (targeted towards IMDQ1/2, male, GEM and Asian pupils) were designed to make the most of our partnership working, including schools, other HEIs and third sector organisations, as well as provide long-term multi-touch point activities to support attainment raising.  Additionally, they will directly address the risk of knowledge and skills by familiarising pupils with the following:   * Career routes * University environment * Exploring aspirations * Creating expectations * Develop a sense of belonging | Previous evaluations have identified that longer and more in-depth programmes such as T**he National Saturday Club, Lego Club, Project Party, UNI Club and Reading Warriors** result in higher levels of skill development as well as better transition to HE either immediately or within two years of engagement.  **Educational attainment of boys** - House of Commons Library <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2024-0043/CDP-2024-0043.pdf>  **Annex A** – Girls outperform boys in key stage 2 and key stage 4 exams, this is reflected in Northamptonshire with the gap between girls and boys being bigger than the national average.  **Gap between cohorts at GCSE** - Department for Education – <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/key-stage-4-performance>  **1000 disadvantaged pupils miss out on top grades** – Sutton Trust  <https://www.suttontrust.com/news-opinion/all-news-opinion/1000-disadvantaged-pupils-miss-out-on-top-grades/>  [**Disadvantage gap - The Education Policy Institute**](https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Covid19_2021_Disadvantage_Gaps_in_England.pdf)  <https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Covid19_2021_Disadvantage_Gaps_in_England.pdf>[/](https://www.suttontrust.com/news-opinion/all-news-opinion/1000-disadvantaged-pupils-miss-out-on-top-grades/)  Key qualitative responses from the county Head of 6th Form Network indicate that aspiration and attainment, are lacking amongst their young people. The increasing number of non-specialist and cover teachers delivering lessons within schools is leading to a knowledge and skills gap in areas of disadvantage across our county which the activities within this intervention strategy will address. |
| **8. Widening Access design, delivery and evaluation workshop.** Delivered across the academic year, workshops designed to support academic colleagues design, deliver and evaluate targeted widening access programmes effectively. | This activity is designed to develop the delivery of quality interventions through our widening access design, delivery and evaluation workshops. This will not only help develop capacity but also develop advocates within our academic and professional teams to enable our offer of quality skills and knowledge-based interventions to be expanded beyond the Access and Participation Plan commitments, impacting positively on the regularity of interventions our schools are offered. | Activities led by academic and professional services colleagues currently require significant support from the Widening Access Team to quality assure and deliver impactful outcomes. |
| **10. Drama in Action.** UON lecturer and students model teaching practices in the performing arts subjects to targeted schools.  School teaching staff gain continued professional development (CPD) and year 11 pupils are supported in learning new drama techniques mapped to GCSE curriculum, focused on raising pupil attainment at GCSE. | The impact of this high quality CPD opportunity for specialist and non-specialist staff in schools was requested by our partner schools to develop staff knowledge and skills which will directly impact on those of the secondary school pupils. | Northamptonshire school subject specialist staff request  Subject GCSE grades in academic year 2023/24  **The effects of high-quality professional development on teachers and students** - Education Policy Institute – <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/the-effects-of-high-quality-professional-development-on-teachers-and-students/> |

**Intervention Strategy 2 - Information and Guidance**

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| **Activity descriptor** | **Rationale / Justification** | **Evidence Base** |
| **1.** **UCAS/UKUS Fair.** A multi-HE institution fair based at UON.Keynote speakers and HE conference hall gives 2500 pupils a chance to understand routes into Higher Education. | Providing post 16 pupils with the opportunity to access a UCAS fair at a central geographical position within the county, allowing for greater access and attendance from pupils within the county of Northamptonshire. This will enable pupils to attend that have never had the opportunity before. | UCAS discovery exhibitions data - <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/university-events-and-open-days/ucas-discovery-exhibitions>  What are UCAS fairs and why should you go – WhatUni - <https://www.whatuni.com/advice/applying-to-uni/what-are-ucas-fairs-why-should-you-go/54477/> |
| **2.** **Living Room Lectures webinar programme.** An annual programme of webinars to support an improved understanding of Higher Education including; student finance, accommodation, student life, Counselling and Mental Health Team, subject tasters, employability, how clearing works and enrolment. | Living room lecture webinars are a keyway to engage with pupils in this cost-of-living crisis, but specifically for UON with its traditional widening access cohorts from low socio-economic areas of the country. Enabling pupils who may be first-generation to university, with their family members, access at no cost to a series of webinars which enable students to have an insight into university life that suits their financial needs. | **All-Party Parliamentary Group for Students – Cost of Living inquiry:** UCAS submission  <https://www.ucas.com/file/709801/download?token=FKOek9oY#:~:text=on%20open%20days-,Almost%20two%20in%20five%20prospective%20applicants%20domiciled%20in%20the%20UK,open%20days%20due%20to%20cost>. |
| **3.** **Annually review and monitor EDI considerations and reasonable adjustments for open days and discovery days.** A review of event communications and web content specifically highlighting our support for APP target cohorts.  **6.** **Annual review of university Taster Days.** A review of pre-event communications and booking information with specific consideration given to how we support visiting students with additional needs such as neurodiversity and physical disabilities and highlighting specific support services for students from underrepresented cohorts that may provide barriers to HE. | To align with our disability objective of encouraging students to disclose any additional needs they may have, these opportunities clearly highlight key HE transition and student success information as well as taster opportunities to experience HE with limited barriers for those students with additional needs. We want to be able to provide opportunities for all pupils so that they get the best experience out of open/taster/discovery days as well as through communications we provide to them prior to these experiences. | **Enhancing the disabled student experience** – Advance HE- <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/disabled-students-commission-annual-report-2020-2021-enhancing-disabled-student> Reflections from within the UON marketing and admissions teams identified a need to improve the existing information used to support students with disabilities make decisions about when and how to attend taster days at the University. |
| **4.** **Careers in** **STEAM Northants.**  An annual science, technology, engineering, arts and maths focused careers exhibition based at UON.  Workshops, keynote speakers, experiences and careers conference give 2500 partner school pupils from year 6-13 a chance to see the impact of STEAM subjects on the world and understand routes into and out of Higher Education. | Qualitative and contextual feedback from our partner school's points to low aspirations and awareness of HE in pupils in both primary and secondary schools in the county. Our Careers in STEAM Fair, is an opportunity for our IMD partners schools to engage in a STEAM careers show case fair that they would not have the opportunity to attend if it was not delivered by UON. As part of our previous APP this opportunity is ongoing and has grown exponentially with school bookings filling in one afternoon annually.  3,000 external visitors  42 schools (primary and secondary)  50 external companies exhibited or presented  28 UON STEAM subjects represented  Schools commentary about this opportunity centres round its relevance, communication and quality, impact and follow-up activities to embed career awareness. | **Big Bang STEM Careers Fair** - <https://www.thebigbang.org.uk/news/raising-aspirations-in-stem/>  **The importance of STEM outreach** – Enginuity.org -  <https://enginuity.org/news-events/the-importance-of-stem-outreach>  **Career Events, what works?** - CEC -  <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/media/u0yf5btt/careers-enterprise-what-works-report-careers-events.pdf> p.19 specifically |
| **5.** **First-Generation to university.** Introduction and delivery of Student Life Sessions delivered in schools and colleges by current student ambassadors that are first generation into Higher Education sharing their experiences and journey to Higher Education. Review current sessions to ensure all language and content is inclusive to those that may come from this group. Sessions are also included on UON campus visits. | A significant proportion of our students are from the most socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and are also first generation to university. With the limited social capital that students from these backgrounds have this activity is key to the development of students’ confidence and awareness as well as the intention of demystifying HE for them. To better support pupils at access, we are developing a bespoke first-generation workshop in schools and colleges led by student that are themselves first-generation to university. It is key to provide information and guidance from someone who has been through the process themselves with UON and enable school pupils to identify someone like them as successful in HE. | **Supporting first-generation students into Higher Education -** THE -  <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/spotlight/supporting-firstgeneration-students-higher-education> |
| **7. School teaching staff continued professional development (CPD).**  **7(i)** **Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) School Lead Network.**  The development of best practice, knowledge development and shared resources to support the attainment and skill development of EPQ pupil cohorts in schools.  **7(ii)** **County Head of 6th Form Network.** In collaboration with UCAS and The Widening Access Team  Head of 6th form teaching staff continued professional development network. | Our EPQ and County Head of 6th Form Network are two key CPD opportunities for colleagues in the county. Both offer regular opportunities to meet and share best practice as well as engage in workshops led by sector professionals including professional bodies (Ofsted/ASCL/school improvement partner) local authority colleagues or charities. The impact of these high quality CPD opportunities on specialist staff in schools is apparent by their regular attendance and engagement as well as their changed practice. Information and guidance provided by UCAS and exam boards is key to the information and guidance that is provided to staff which directly impacts on secondary school pupils. | This has been requested from Northamptonshire school subject specialist staff  Subject GCSE grades in academic year 2023/24  **The effects of High-quality professional development on teachers and students** - Education Policy Institute– <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/the-effects-of-high-quality-professional-development-on-teachers-and-students/> |
| **8(i) Care Leavers Higher Education Experience Day.** Providing care leavers with the opportunity to spend a day visiting campus to receive tailored advice and support.  Sessions include HE Life talks by current students, financial guidance and support and application guidance.  **8(ii)** **Bridging Futures programme for Care Leavers.**  An annual programme of interventions collaborating with the Northamptonshire Virtual Schools, Northampton College and the Widening Access Team to develop and support an improved understanding of Higher Education for up to 50 care leavers. This will include Higher Education life workshops, employability skill development, visits to campus and interactions with UON undergraduate students to develop familiarity with Higher Education.  **8(iii)** **Care Leavers and Estranged students’ arrival support package.** Single point of contact at UON for all care levers and support package of resources in place to welcome care leavers and estranged students onto campus during welcome weekend. | This is a priority for UON and the Office for Students.  6% of care leavers are in Higher Education aged 19 and at UON care leavers represent 1.2% of our level 4 undergraduate cohort. They have low continuation metrics/high withdrawal rates in the HE sector and at UON and this programme seeks to address this.  Imposter syndrome is common in care experienced students and lack of family networks and social capital is a barrier to accessing Higher Education. Pupils from a care background also have a lower sense of belonging.  This three-point programme helps care leavers from our largest further education college understand Higher Education, experience a day on campus and be supported in their transition to UON with the identification of a UON key contact for Care leavers to support them throughout their undergraduate study with us. | **Care Experienced students and looked after children** - Office for students - <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/effective-practice/care-experienced/>  **Encouraging Care leavers into Higher Education** <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/encouraging-care-leavers-into-higher-education/>  **6 times less likely** – UPP Foundation <https://upp-foundation.org/six-times-less-likely/>  **Building belonging -** Advance HE - <https://wonkhe.com/wp-content/wonkhe-uploads/2022/10/Building-Belonging-October-2022.pdf>  **Arrival day is a milestone that’s complicated for care leavers** – WonkHE  <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/arrival-day-is-a-milestone-thats-complicated-for-care-leavers-2/>  Cotton, D. R., Nash, T., & Kneale, P. (2017). Supporting the retention of non-traditional students in Higher Education using a resilience framework. *European Educational Research Journal*, *16*(1), 62-79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904116652629> |

**Intervention Strategy 3 - Perceptions of Higher Education**

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| **Activity descriptor** | **Rationale / Justification** | **Evidence Base** |
| **1. Care Leavers “Adversity to University”** **programme.** In collaboration with University of Chichester and the UPP Foundation, this programme seeks to work with care leavers through an existing module created and tested by University of Chichester to help them consider university as an educational route. | This is a priority for UON and the Office for Students.  6% of care leavers are in Higher Education aged 19 and at UON care leavers represent 1.2% of our level 4 undergraduate cohort. They have low continuation metrics/high withdrawal rates in the HE sector and at UON and this programme addresses this.  Imposter syndrome is common in care experienced students and lack of family networks and social capital is a barrier to accessing Higher Education. Students from a care background also have a lower sense of belonging.  The programme will be delivered in collaboration with University of Chichester and The UPP foundation and seeks to address care leavers sense of belonging throughout the programme | **From Adversity to University –** University of Chichester - <https://upp-foundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Bridging-module-toolkit-UofC-and-UPP.pdf>  **Care Experienced students and looked after children** - Office for students - <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/effective-practice/care-experienced/>  **Encouraging Care leavers into Higher Education** <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/encouraging-care-leavers-into-higher-education/>  **6 times less likely** – UPP Foundation <https://upp-foundation.org/six-times-less-likely/>  **Building belonging -** Advance HE - <https://wonkhe.com/wp-content/wonkhe-uploads/2022/10/Building-Belonging-October-2022.pdf>  Cotton, D. R., Nash, T., & Kneale, P. (2017). Supporting the retention of non-traditional students in Higher Education using a resilience framework. *European Educational Research Journal*, *16*(1), 62-79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904116652629> |
| **2.** **Tackling Futures - Key Stage 3 Focused Boys Project.** Working in collaboration with University of Bedfordshire to compare the inputs, outcomes and impacts of a bespoke project for boys in year 7 and 8 to develop self-efficacy and effective study practices. | Males are less represented in HE than females.  At UON male students make up 36% of our cohort compared to 64% female cohort as a 4-year average.  Fear of failure for male students is an ongoing issue for us at UON and one that manifest in our male students being less likely to ask for help from our learning development teams and all other student support services. Resolving these issues in a key stage 3 setting, pre-access point, is crucial to the development of patterns of behaviour for our male students.  This project focuses specifically on boys, working collaboratively with University of Bedfordshire to address self-efficacy and confidence will identify and share best practice through its evaluation. | **Working-Class Boys and Progression to Higher Education** Dr Alex Blower <https://heprofessional.co.uk/edition/dancing-with-the-elephant-in-the-room-working-class-boys-and-progression-to-higher-education>  **Educational attainment of boys** - House of Commons Library <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2024-0043/CDP-2024-0043.pdf>  **Exploring learning development from the perspective of black males -** UON Learning Development team - <https://pure.northampton.ac.uk/en/publications/exploring-learning-development-from-the-perspectives-of-black-stu> |
| **3.** **Primary** **Ignite Your Future Programme.** A year 6 programme of multiple interventions across the academic year, delivered by a diverse range of student ambassadors, focuses on providing information on progression to Higher Education and an insight into careers, including workshops in school and on campus. | Early engagement with children in primary schools is essential to personal growth, the avoidance of misconceptions surrounding HE and supports aspiration. Our multiple intervention programme, delivered by Student Ambassadors, addresses the various progression routes to HE, insights into careers and highlights student life. The diversity of our student ambassadors within this programme supports the children to identify themselves as someone who can aspire to and be successful within Higher Education. | **Why we start working with students from age 7** – IntoUniversity - <https://intouniversity.org/why-we-exist/why-we-start-working-with-students-from-age-seven/>  **What influences the decisions school leavers make?** UCAS - <https://www.ucas.com/file/435551/download?token=VUdIDVFh>  **I saw myself** - Yuki Hazlewood <https://equaliteach.co.uk/i-saw-myself/> |
| **4. Black Leaders Programme.** A programme of workshops during the first semester led by Black trainers. This programme examines concepts of community, identity, and leadership from the viewpoints of racialised students encouraging them to explore how to leverage their personal power to foster supportive relationships that cultivate a sense of belonging and community. | To empower Black undergraduate students early on in their transition to level 4 courses with the confidence, sense of belonging and mattering to become resilient leaders and role models to other Black students at UON within a safe space which the literature identifies as crucial.  The programme is designed to promote an improved sense of belonging and confidence in approaching student services at UON to impact on their outcomes and award and support the closure of our award gap. | **Grit Future leaders programme** - DANCOP <https://www.teamdancop.co.uk/case-studies/future-leaders/>  **Exploring learning development from the perspective of black males -** UON Learning Development team - <https://pure.northampton.ac.uk/en/publications/exploring-learning-development-from-the-perspectives-of-black-stu>  **The Grit Effect:** Frontiers in Psychology - [Eskreis-Winkler, L., Shulman, E. P., Beal, S. A., & Duckworth, A. L. (2014). The grit effect: Predicting retention in the military, the workplace, school and marriage. Frontiers in Psychology, 5(36), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00036.](https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00036/full) |
| **5. Representative Student Ambassador Programme.**  The development and recruitment of a student ambassador team that represents the university population inclusive of underrepresented cohorts. | The development of a wider cohort of student ambassadors that reflect our student cohort at UON is key. Being seen, is essential to encourage underrepresented cohorts into HE from our widening access partner schools, whether in the county or further afield. Currently male students within our Student Ambassador Team are underrepresented and we can develop this to support increased male post 16 students accessing university at UON. | **I saw myself** - Yuki Hazlewood <https://equaliteach.co.uk/i-saw-myself/>  **Diverse students need bespoke personal tutoring** - WonkHE  <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/diverse-students-need-bespoke-personal-tutoring/>  **Ten actions lecturers can take to boost black students’ belonging – Dr Patrice Seuwou** - <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/ten-actions-lecturers-can-take-boost-black-students-belonging> |

**Intervention Strategy 4: Academic Support**

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| **Activity descriptor** | **Rationale / Justification** | **Evidence Base** |
| **1. Enhancement of the Integrated Foundation Year (IFY).** Our IFY currently supports 280 students with their transition into Higher Education. The majority of the IFY cohort form part of our APP target cohorts. As the IFY is not a new feature of our delivery, the enhancement of it is an ongoing activity that will be collaborative across the university with a variety of stakeholders including students. | The Integrated Foundation Year (IFY) serves as a critical bridge for students transitioning into Higher Education at UON. Enhancing the IFY is vital for several reasons, especially considering the demographic it supports, including a significant number of students from APP target cohorts who tend to have a lower sense of belonging. As it stands, students who enrol via our IFY, continue at a lesser rate compared to those who start at level 4 and this is a gap we are addressing. The enhancement aims to improve the sense of belonging, deliver a connected experience, develop resilience and confidence, and ensure long-term positive outcomes for our IFY students. | **Sense of belonging as a predictor of intentions to persist among African American and White first-year college students**’ - Hausmann, L. R. M., Schofield, J. W. and Woods, R. L. (2007), -Research in Higher Education, Vol. 48(7)  **Supporting student success: strategies for institutional change, What Works? Student Retention & Success programme’ -** Thomas, L., Hill, M., O’Mahony, J. and Yorke, M. (2017) , Paul Hamlyn Foundation report. Available at - <https://lizthomasassociates.co.uk/downloads/2017/Summary%20report.pdf>  **Supporting resilience in first year of university: Curriculum, consideration and cooperation -** Woolf, Zemits, B., Janssen, A., & Knight, S. (2019) . Journal of Academic Language and Learning, 13(1), A108-A123. Available at - <https://journal.aall.org.au/index.php/jall/article/view/505>  Curtis, E. et al., 2017. Open to critique: predictive effects of academic outcomes from a bridging/foundation programme on first-year degree-level study. *Assessment and evaluation in higher education*, 42(1), pp.151–167.    Dampier. G et al. Avoiding the Deficit Model and Defining Student Success: Perspectives from a New Foundation Year Context.  *Journal of the Foundation Year Network*, Volume 2(2019), pp. 41-52    Parks, S & Seal M. Pedagogy as Transition: Student Directed Tutor Groups on Foundation Year. *Journal of the Foundation Year Network*, Volume 2 (2019), pp. 7-20.    Sanders, L. & Daly, A., 2013. Building a successful foundation?: The role of Foundation Year courses in preparing students for their degree. *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, 14(1), pp.42–56.    Sanders, L.D., Daly, A.P. & Fitzgerald, K., 2016. Predicting Retention, Understanding Attrition: A Prospective Study of Foundation Year Students. *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, 18(2), pp.50–83. |
| **2. Enhancing the Integrated Learner Support Model.** Proactive support across all stages of undergraduate study to develop effective study skills and wellbeing. This is the development of an existing intervention as a collaboration across faculties and professional service teams. | Integrated Learner Support delivers a supportive student experience by ensuring that all our taught students are aware of and can access the full range of support services that the University provides. This is achieved by delivering in-curriculum introductions to these support areas and meeting the students where they are, reducing barriers to having to seek them out when they are needed. We are expanding this activity to enable level 4 students to access support within their halls of residence accommodation to ensure that there are multiple access points to this support for the students. | **Improving student retention through enhanced academic and pastoral support: A Case Study -** Sharp, E., Wray, R., & Maxwell, R. (2020). Innovative Practice in Higher Education, 4(1), 39-56 - <http://journals.staffs.ac.uk/index.php/ipihe/article/view/196>  **Our explanation of the ILS offer -** <https://mypad.northampton.ac.uk/lte/integrated-learner-support/> |
| **3. Enhancing and Embedding our Quality Assurance (QA) and Engagement Processes.** Enhancing our existing QA process to include APP demographic data in conjunction with NSS and student outcome data to identify courses where quality improvements are needed to ensure a joined-up approach to interventions that supports institutional, TEF and APP objectives. | The enhancement and embedding of quality assurance (QA) processes are crucial for maintaining and improving the educational standards and student outcomes at UON. This will include better representation within internal quality assurance processes. Currently, different sets of data are looked at in isolation leading to disconnected action plans. By incorporating APP demographic data alongside National Student Survey, Teaching Excellence Framework and student outcome data, we can adopt a more joined-up approach to quality assurance resulting in holistic action plans that provide a robust response to any areas of improvement affecting outcomes for students. |  |
| **4. Development of resilience and GRIT**18 **through tutorial development and delivery.** An annual enrolment questionnaire to identify each students’ levels of confidence, resilience and self-efficacy. Subsequent development and delivery of student workshopstargeted at programmes with accumulative scores below our threshold. | Progression and continuation rates are a challenge for all HE institutions. Duckworth et al’s (2007) seminal research relating to retention found that grit was positively correlated with academic success and retention. Grit is described as a non-cognitive trait of passion and perseverance for long term goals (Duckworth et al. 2007). As an institution, we propose to use the 5-minute self-reported survey to calculate individual grit scores which then can be used to offer inventions to students.  Research conducted by UON’s Learning Development Team has shown that attending a Learning Development tutorial can increase the retention rates of students with low grit by 6% and those with high grit 10%. Actively targeting students with Learning Development tutorials has demonstrated a link with continuation and retention. | [Eskreis-Winkler, L., Shulman, E. P., Beal, S. A., & Duckworth, A. L. (2014). The grit effect: Predicting retention in the military, the workplace, school and marriage. Frontiers in Psychology, 5(36), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00036.](https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00036/full)  **Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals -** Duckworth, A. L., Peterson, C., Matthews, M.D. & Kelly, D.R. (2007). *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 92(6),* 1087- 1101 - <http://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.92.6.1087>  **The impact of grit scores and interventions upon retention and progression -** Mansfield, S., Rice, P. Cramphorn, I & Coulson, K (2024) - In European First Year Experience Conference, Copenhagen 2024  Cotton, D. R., Nash, T., & Kneale, P. (2017). Supporting the retention of non-traditional students in Higher Education using a resilience framework. *European Educational Research Journal*, *16*(1), 62-79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904116652629> |
| **5. Timetabling optimisation.** Introduction of block timetabling to be more responsive to our student demographics and needs will enable them to better engage in their learning. | Introducing block timetabling at UON aligns with feedback received from students indicating that a condensed scheduling of timetables will better meet student needs, improve engagement and allow them to balance study, work, and personal commitments. This approach attracts students with a variety of obligations, making Higher Education more accessible and affordable by reducing travel costs. Sector consultants at Iter Consulting have shared with us that predictable schedules enhance student satisfaction, particularly for those with disabilities and our justification is that it will lead to better continuation rates, and overall student success. This initiative demonstrates UON's commitment to flexible, inclusive education. | **'Timetabling Proposal' -** Iter Consulting (2024) , University of Northampton. [Internal Document]. |
| **6. Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) Steering Group.** A new development led by our Head of Learning and Teaching enhancement, in collaboration with faculty executives and learning and teaching professionals to develop management, impact and evolution of the existing PAT model. | We have a Personal Academic Tutoring Policy that we are proud of but, we accept through reflection that the implementation of a consistent approach to Personal and Academic Tutoring is needed. To achieve this, a Steering Group focuses on the enhancement of the process is necessary. It will seek to embed minimum standards of personal tutoring and provide guidance on how to deliver a model that is responsive to diverse student needs as we seek to address the complex and multifaceted underlying factors that contribute to the gaps we see across the student life cycle. This includes looking at the diversity of our PTs, their training needs, and how that mechanism is informed by our wider system integration work. (Gabi et al. 2024)  The PAT Steering Group will also consider implementation of recommendations from research and project outcomes recommendations for the PAT system and community of practice | **“An intentional transformation of PT is needed to align tutoring practice with contemporary principles of equity and racial literacy. For PT to be effective, it must be proactive, inclusive and responsive to diverse student groups' unique needs and experiences”** pp.16 (Gabi et al., 2024). **Can the role of a personal tutor contribute to reducing the undergraduate degree awarding gap for racially minoritised students? -** British Educational Research Journal.  Gabi, J., Braddock, A., Brown, C., Miller, D., Mynott, G., Jacobi, M., Banerjee, P., Kenny, K. & Rawson, A. (2024). Can the role of a personal tutor contribute to reducing the undergraduate degree awarding gap for racially minoritised students? *British Educational Research Journal*, 00, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3999>  Lochtie, D., McIntosh, E., Stork, A. and Walker, B. (2018) *Effective personal tutoring in higher education.*  London: Critical Publishing.    McFarlane, K. (2016) Tutoring the tutors: Supporting effective personal tutoring. *Active Learning in Higher Education.* 17(1), pp.77–89.  McIntosh, E. (2018) The 4 step tutorial pathway – A model of early intervention and transitional support to facilitate resilience and partnership working in personal tutoring. In: *UK advising and tutoring (UKAT) conference*, Derby, 27 March 2018.    Tett, L., Cree, V., Mullins, E. and Christie, H. (2017) Narratives of care amongst undergraduate students. *Pastoral Care in Education*. 35 (3), pp.166-178    Thomas, L. (2012) *Building student engagement and belonging in Higher Education at a time of change: Final report from the What Works? Student retention and success programme.*  London: Paul Hamlyn Foundation.    Walker, B. W. (2022). Tackling the personal tutoring conundrum: A qualitative study on the impact of developmental support for tutors. *Active Learning in Higher Education.* 23(1), pp.65-77. |
| **7. Implementation of Universal Design for Learning** **Model.** Reflected within ourLearning and Teaching Strategy. This will improve and optimise teaching and learning for students based on scientific insights into how humans learn. | Universal Design for Learning (UDL) recognises, celebrates and accommodates diversity in learning & teaching through the key principles of *Representation* (presenting information and content in a variety of ways), *Engagement* (ensuring learners’ interests and learning preferences are captured through multiple ways of engaging with the materials) and *Action and Expression* (enabling learners to demonstrate their learning through a range of assessment experiences) (Merry, 2018). Learning & Teaching at UON will celebrate accessibility and inclusivity through the adoption of UDL. UDL can be regarded, in addition to widening access and participation in learning and assessment activities for all, as pivotal in addressing digital poverty (e.g. by providing a variety of ways to access materials) (Merry, 2021) as well as supporting students with disabilities (through its flexibility) (AHEAD, nd). | **AHEAD** (n.d) - [The UDL Framework Explained - AHEAD](https://www.ahead.ie/udl-framework)  **Developing Teaching Practice with Universal Design for Learning Educational Developments Issue 19.3: 16-19 -** Merry, K. L (2018) - [publications\_240\_Educational-Developments-19.3-CORRECTED.pdf (seda.ac.uk)](https://www.seda.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/publications_240_Educational-Developments-19.3-CORRECTED.pdf#page=16)  **Universal Design for Learning: an antidote to digital poverty -** Merry, K. L (2021) - [Universal Design for Learning: an antidote to digital poverty | Advance HE (advance-he.ac.uk)](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/news-and-views/universal-design-learning-antidote-digital-poverty) |
| **8. Targeted student Mentoring.** Professional and Peer-to-Peer mentoring opportunities inclusive of an alignment to our Empowering Black Professionals Working Group. | We have a long history of delivering successful peer mentoring initiatives at the University of Northampton as evidenced by the substantial amount of literature. This activity represents an evolution of this work to include professional mentors and provide a central Community of Practice within which these various schemes will be managed and coordinated as we know they positively impact on student outcomes.  A key focus with both the peer and professional mentoring options is that there will be a diverse pool of mentors. This work is an action from our Empowering Black Professionals Working Group being led by our Vice Chancellor in conjunction with our APP Award Gap Working Group being led by our Head of APP co-chaired by one of our Black Student Advocates. | **Working outside the box: breaking down barriers with a Learning Development Peer Mentor scheme -** Thomas, S., & Mansfield, S. (2022). Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education, 25. - https://doi.org/10.47408/jldhe.vi25.971, <https://doi.org/10.47408/jldhe.vi25.971>  **Mentoring at the University of Northampton. Abstract from Northampton Learning and Teaching Conference 2015, Northampton -** Swinton, K. (2015). Available - <https://pure.northampton.ac.uk/en/publications/mentoring-at-the-university-of-northampton>  **Exchanging experience: a peer-assisted learning approach to mentoring -** Shepherd, L. (2019). Available at - <https://pure.northampton.ac.uk/en/publications/exchanging-experience-a-peer-assisted-learning-approach-to-mentor>  **Peer mentoring during the transition to university: assessing the usage of a formal scheme within the UK -** Collings, R. M., Swanson, V., & Watkins, R. (2016) - Studies in Higher Education, 41(11), 1995-2010. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2015.1007939>  **The impact of peer mentoring on levels of student wellbeing, integration and retention: a controlled comparative evaluation of residential students in UK Higher Education -** Collings, R. M., Swanson, V., & Watkins, R. (2014). Higher Education, 68(6), 927–942. Article 6. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-014-9752-y> |
| **9. Whole provider approach continued professional development days.** Up to 5 days across the academic year to engage all colleagues with training and information. | This is a means by which we will share both information and training opportunities for all university staff, leading to better outcomes for our students. Sharing information, best practice, research outcomes and training is a challenge for any large institution, however through this new activity we aim to address this with support from our digital and communications teams. | **How to create an APP** – WonkHE - <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/how-to-create-an-access-and-participation-plan/>  **Regularly share data that speaks to our current position and practice that moves us closer to our desired outcomes while celebrating staff efforts.** Nadya Zhexembayeva for Harvard Business Review in June 2024 states that “Reports such as the [World Uncertainty Index](https://worlduncertaintyindex.com/), the [Pulse of Change](https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insights/pulse-of-change), [the WEF Global Risk Report,](https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-risks-report-2024/) and others can facilitate the necessary transition from the “change is rare” mindset to the “continuous reinvention” mindset. Even better: Reports are spaced out throughout the year, so you have a perfect reason to come back to the conversation on a regular basis to assure sustainability. Our goal is to utilise this approach with our communications about the APP. |
| **10. APP Advocates and Ambassadors programmes.** To encourage engagement in the APP.  (i) Our Advocates programme supports staff with an interest in EDI in understanding the purpose of the APP and their role in delivering a successful whole provider approach.  (ii) Our Ambassador programme supports staff to deliver an APP project by funding their time to research or deliver a micro-intervention that enhances our learning of what works in APP at UON. | Our APP Advocates Programme has transformed almost 40 staff members from various departments across the University into influencers, bringing the APP to life. This initiative has enhanced the internal profile of the APP and highlighted cross-institutional expertise, thereby increasing our capacity to research, understand, and deliver on equality of opportunity.    Our Advocates Programme supports staff with a keen interest in EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) and coaches them to develop specialist knowledge in the APP. Participants gain a clear understanding of how they can use their roles to positively influence the progress of the APP both locally and institutionally. They share their learnings with their wider teams and participate in special interest groups and conferences, creating a tangible ripple effect that fosters a whole-provider approach.    We have expanded this model to include our APP Ambassador Programme. It was developed in response to common feedback from staff, who indicated they had ideas that could contribute to our APP but lacked the time to implement them. To address this, we created the APP Ambassador Programme, to act as a catalyst by providing staff with the time and resources to deliver a micro-intervention that informs our institutional innovation in equality of opportunity - effectively purchasing 225 hours (30 days) of their time to plan, deliver and evaluate their projects.  A key criterion of this work is the commitment to develop an evaluation plan for each project and present findings at both external and internal forums, including our APP Conference. | “The interviews with the participants (n=7) indicated that the APP Advocates sessions were very successful and also very beneficial for the staff who took part. The participants were impressed by how well prepared and organised each session was, and they learnt from each session and gave feedback to their own departments/service areas. There were some improvements suggested by the participants but they mainly about having more time to discuss after each presentation or whether to have lunch or not instead of the content of the sessions. All the participants who took part in the interviews asked the researcher if these sessions were going to continue as they stated that they would like there to be more sessions in future. As can be seen from the quotes all in all the sessions were welcomed by the staff at the University of Northampton.”  Karlidag-Dennis, E. (2023). A review of the 2023 APP Advocates Series. Institute for Social Innovation and Impact, University of Northampton. |
| **11. Robust Communications Plan.** Development of a clear communication plan, that enables all stakeholders to engage, react to and impact on the outcomes of targeted students within this intervention strategy. | A robust communications plan is essential in ensuring the effectiveness of any intervention strategy aimed at improving the outcomes of APP targeted cohorts. Essentially, intervention strategies are change plans and we are taking a change approach that facilitates clear, consistent, and purposeful communication among all stakeholders, including students, university staff, and external partners. Effective communication ensures that all parties are informed, engaged, and able to contribute to the success of the interventions.  **Improved Student Outcomes:** Clear communication helps students understand the interventions available to them, how to access resources, and the benefits they offer. This awareness is crucial for students to fully engage with and utilise the support mechanisms provided, thereby enhancing their access to academic support.  University staff play a critical role in the implementation of intervention strategies. A well-defined communications plan ensures that staff members are fully informed about the interventions, understand their roles, and can effectively support targeted students.  **Feedback Mechanism:**  A robust communications plan incorporates mechanisms for feedback from students and staff. This feedback is invaluable in assessing the effectiveness of interventions, identifying areas for improvement, and making necessary adjustments to better meet the needs of targeted students. | Gilani, D. (2024). Student attitudes and preferences towards communications from their university – A meta-analysis of student communications research within UK Higher Education institutions. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2024.2344234> |

**Intervention Strategy 5 – Personal Support**

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| **Activity descriptor** | **Rationale / Justification** | **Evidence Base** |
| **1. Embed student voice further into university strategy, policy decision making practices.** Northampton Students’ Union will lead this development of a UON student voice strategy that encourages the proactive collection of information and a clear response to student voice to effectively improve student outcomes. As reflected in the UON Strategy 2023-27. | Our UON Strategy states: *“We will achieve the best possible student experience by fostering a culture of collaboration with students. We will capture the student voice and feedback combined with other forms of evidence and data to adapt and improve our students' experiences of studying at the University.” (pp.14)*  The rationale is that we cannot create a meaningful Personal Support intervention strategy without those for whom the support is personal, being in the room. Students feel their most empowered and greatest sense of belonging when they see their contributions shape their experiences in real-time (OfS), that’s why this activity is imperative for us. By virtue of the APP being a whole-provider approach, that means students must be represented at all layers of the organisation including strategically and operationally. | **UON Strategy:** [**https://www.northampton.ac.uk/about-us/governance-and-management/our-strategy/**](https://www.northampton.ac.uk/about-us/governance-and-management/our-strategy/) **Conversations about race -** Office for Students - <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/effective-practice/conversations-about-race/> |
| **2. Trust Guidelines.**  Implementing Trust as a core tenet of our staff and student interactions, in response to student feedback and in line with our UON Strategy 2023-27. | This activity was created directly with student representatives. Trust is not inherent in Higher Education (Sybing, 2019) and low engagement from students, particularly, male students could be attributed to mistrust. Student Equality Consultants created Trust Guidelines as a how-to-guide for staff on building trust with students during the development of this APP. The guidelines outline core principles of trust including transparency, accountability, integrity, compassion and respect and provide clear examples of where and how trust has been built so this can be replicated. Additionally, the document advocates for the creation of a Trust Champion who can maintain the standard of practice that promotes trust and ultimately the guidelines serve as the foundation for Personal Support because with trust comes engagement. | **Trust Gap in Higher Education -**  <https://www.insidehighered.com/opinion/blogs/higher-ed-gamma/2023/06/02/trust-gap-higher-education>  Yeager, D. S., Purdie-Vaughns, V., Garcia, J., Apfel, N., Brzustoski, P., Master, A., Hessert, W. T., Williams, M. E., & Cohen, G. L. (2013). Breaking the cycle of mistrust: Wise interventions to provide critical feedback across the racial divide. Journal of Experimental Psychology: General. doi: 10.1037/a0033906  Sybing, R. (2019) “Making Connections: Student-Teacher Rapport in Higher Education Classrooms: Student-teacher rapport in Higher Education classrooms”, Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 19(5).  Lambrinidis, G. (2014). Supporting online, non-traditional students through the introduction of effective e-learning tools in a pre-university tertiary enabling programme. Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 36(3), 257–267. https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2014.899053  Ghosh, A.K., Whipple, T.W. and Bryan, G.A., 2001. Student Trust and Its Antecedents in Higher Education. Journal of Higher Education, 72(2), pp.113-134.    Lambrinidis, G. (2014). Supporting online, non-traditional students through the introduction of effective e-learning tools in a pre-university tertiary enabling programme. Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 36(3), 257–267. https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2014.899053    Sako. M (2008) Price, quality and trust inter-firm relations in Britain and Japan. Cambridge University Press.    Payne, A. L., Stone, C., & Bennett, R. (2023). Conceptualising and Building Trust to Enhance the Engagement and Achievement of Under-Served Students. The Journal of Continuing Higher Education, 71(2), 134–151. |
| **3. Profile development of personal support services.** Profile development activities to highlight the positive impact UON personal support services can provide to students. This activity compliments the development of a communication strategy with students which is outlined in the academic support intervention strategy. | We believe in our professional services offering and are confident that most of the building blocks for effective Personal Support are in place but our Financial Support Evaluations have shown us that there is work to do in raising the profile of what is on offer here so students know the support that is available and appropriate for them, and are confident in when and how to access it.  “Professional services staff play an essential role in supporting learner success, both during students’ time at university and following graduation. Yet if teams do not have sufficient institutional influence, there is a risk that their work will go unrecognised or fail to have meaningful impact.” (Toogood, 2024) | **Becoming a professional (services) influencer.** Toogood, C. (2024) - Wonkhe - <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/becoming-a-professional-services-influencer/>  **Financial Support Evaluation Access and Participation Plans -** Karlidag-Dennis, E, Maher, M, and Hazenberg, R. (2024). <https://www.northampton.ac.uk/about-us/governance-and-management/management/equality-and-diversity/access-and-participation-plans/> |
| **4. Student Career Coaches.** Frontline student career and employability coaches targeting APP target cohorts to remove barriers to engagement and support better progression into graduate roles. | This new development of student career coaches is in response to the personal experiences, student feedback and research of the Director of Student Futures at several UK universities (Staffordshire, Gloucestershire and Liverpool) Originating in the University of Nevada, USA the programme shows how peer education helps students on both sides of the coaching relationship, giving both the opportunity to learn collaboration and problem-solving skills. Students can be incredible resources for one another when it comes to making career plans and decisions. This is especially true for formative professional experiences, such as internships and part-time jobs. Students will support other students to source and secure these experiences through existing on-campus know-how and coaching techniques.  Moving to a peer to peer drop in model is designed to meet students’ needs on their own terms. Drop-in conversations with other students are far more casual and accessible than appointments in offices with professional Careers Advisors. | **Examples of successful implementation:**  **University of Nevada**  <https://www.unr.edu/career/about/career-mentors>  **Liverpool University Careers Coaches** <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/careers/career-support/> |
| **5. Care Leavers Employability Support.** New initiative to support care leavers (CL). In collaboration with our Unitemps franchise team and careers consultants. We will support CL’s to obtain a sustainable job to support their life while at UON, complimented by employability skill development through 1-1 appointments. | This opportunity is a key aspect of the wrap-around support model we have in place to support Care Experienced students across the students’ lifecycle to remove their barriers to access and participation within Higher Education. We are guided by leading national body, NNECL who advocate for:  “Preferential access to work experience/employability initiatives”  “Named careers contact and regular engagement throughout programme of study”. | **EORR and Care Experience** - NNECL -<https://hubble-live-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/nnecl/file_asset/file/899/NNECL_mapping_EORR_and_Care_Experience.pdf>  Cotton, D. R., Nash, T., & Kneale, P. (2017). Supporting the retention of non-traditional students in Higher Education using a resilience framework. *European Educational Research Journal*, *16*(1), 62-79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904116652629> |
| **6. Diversifying work experience opportunities.** Diversify our provision of work experience opportunities outside standard course requirements.  These would meet the needs of our diverse range of students, and we commit to these being paid opportunities that would be funded by external organisations or our Opportunities Fund. | We have always been an advocate of paid work experience opportunities at UON, which will continue with this activity. Our students need opportunities from a variety of paid work experiences, to enable them to develop their CVs as well as expand their social, cultural and economic capital, allowing them to be more successful when applying for graduate roles. By diversifying our work experience opportunities our APP target cohorts will benefit within the jobs market through increased knowledge development, self-efficacy and awareness. | **Applying Diverse Work Experiences in the Job Search** – Bravanti - <https://bravanti.com/been-there-done-that-putting-diverse-experiences-to-work-in-the-job-search/>  **Diverse Work Experience vs. Highly Specialized: The Pros and Cons**  <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/diverse-work-experience-vs-highly-specialized-pros-withrow-msf/> |
| **7. Development and implementation of a Career Registration Survey.** Administered annually at student enrolment point to understand the career intention and progress for all students with particular focus on APP target cohorts. | Administered to all undergraduate students at the start of each academic year, the careers registration survey will support the alignment and focus of employability input across the institution, impacting positively on continuation and graduate outcomes. Understanding the career intention for our students is crucial to be able to support them well into appropriate and quality graduate roles. Career registration data will be visible to our new student career coaches on our data platform, providing the context for drop-in conversations. | **Where are you right now? Using careers registration to support employability in Higher Education** - Advance HE <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/where-are-you-right-now-using-careers-registration-support-employability-higher> **First Year Student Career Readiness Survey, Research Report** - AGCAS  <https://www.agcas.org.uk/knowledge-centre/b671b272-c0fe-40b4-85dd-1c19b529ddd6> |
| **8. Student Ambassador (SA) Programme evaluation.** A collaborative evaluation of our Student Ambassador Programme with the University of Bedfordshire. | Working with the University of Bedfordshire this partner collaboration evaluation programme is designed to discover if working as a SA impacts positively on self-efficacy, mental health, continuation and award for our undergraduate students. This links into the development of our diverse SA pool of students (Intervention strategy – Perceptions of HE). By working collaboratively as two universities the pool of students will be larger and enable us to show more robust and significant results, which we can use to adapt practice and target communication and cohorts to future recruitment cycles. The collaboration also allows us to compare and identify best practice within the two programmes and develop best practice to impact the SA programmes outcomes. | **Impact of Engineering Ambassador Programs on Student Development** – Oregan State University - <https://www.jmu.edu/stemcenter/_files/publication-3.pdf> |
| **9. Financial Support Package.** Our financial support package supports APP target cohorts, identified as having the largest barriers to equality of opportunity at UON. | Qualifying students can apply for financial support that is designed to support their access, continuation and award at specific times across their student lifecycle.  Automatic allocation of funds is a key development for us within this APP and one which is designed to ensure our support is proactive.  Our Opportunities Fund is designed to be responsive to the needs of all qualifying students so that they can ask for funding support that will enhance their continuation, award and graduate outcomes. While there will be specific examples of what students can apply for to give context to the fund, the adaptable nature of the fund is key to its success. | **Our APP Financial Support Evaluation 2022/23 by the** Institute of Social Innovation and Impact demonstrates the impact of our current financial support package and evidence informed recommendations for enhancement. [**https://www.northampton.ac.uk/about-us/governance-and-management/management/equality-and-diversity/access-and-participation-plans/**](https://www.northampton.ac.uk/about-us/governance-and-management/management/equality-and-diversity/access-and-participation-plans/)  Research suggests that combining financial support with close monitoring of educational engagement can help reduce withdrawals ([Newman-Ford et al., 2010](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1474904116652629#bibr31-1474904116652629)). Bursaries alone have been found to enhance retention of low-income students ([Carson, 2010](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1474904116652629#bibr6-1474904116652629); [Harrison and Hatt, 2012](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1474904116652629#bibr19-1474904116652629)) [cited in Cotton et al (2017)]  **Financial Support – Office for Students -** [**https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/f13b11cb-3eb7-4594-b272-bba4fc4c82fe/topic-briefing-financial-support.pdf**](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/f13b11cb-3eb7-4594-b272-bba4fc4c82fe/topic-briefing-financial-support.pdf) |

**Intervention Strategy 6 – Mental Health**

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| **Activity descriptor** | **Rationale / Justification** | **Evidence Base** |
| **1. Achievement of the Mental Health Charter Status.** Embedding a whole provider approach to mental health and wellbeing, working with Student Minds to implement the Student Minds [‘Principles for Good Practice’](https://www.studentminds.org.uk/uploads/3/7/8/4/3784584/191202_summary_leaflet_01.pdf), create lasting cultural change to become a place that promotes the mental health and wellbeing of all members of the University community.  Developing an increased whole provider understanding of students who may face additional challenges due to structural, personal or cultural inequalities and formulate tailored interventions to accelerate their success. | The University Mental Health Charter will enable us to adopt a whole provider approach to mental health and wellbeing. Following the development of our EORR this is a key area for focus within this APP. The Charter becomes a framework under which wellbeing is a vehicle for continuous improvement across the students’ lifecycle. With referrals to our mental health and counselling services increasing year on year (Annex A) and reflected across the sector, working hand in hand with our students to achieve and deliver this charter is crucial to its success. | **University Mental Health Charter** - Student Minds **-** [**https://hub.studentminds.org.uk/university-mental-health-charter/**](https://hub.studentminds.org.uk/university-mental-health-charter/)**Step change: Mentally Healthy Universities - whole university approach** – UUK **-** <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/features/stepchange-mentally-healthy-universities/whole-university-approach#:~:text=A%20whole%20university%20approach%20recommends,the%20core%20mission%20of%20universities>. |
| **2. Mental Health and ASSIST level 3 to 4 transition support.**  This activity is a combination of new and existing activities.  **New:** Development of a clearly defined and communicated transition support offer to students transitioning to university with declared needs.  Support level 3 – level 4 transition with a wellbeing passport identifying key support workers and an induction into university services.  Transition workers will work closely with the Schools and Colleges Liaison Team to ensure year 13 students in Northamptonshire are aware of the support available at UON.  **Exisiting:**  We host Autism Taster Days for students who share a diagnosis of a social/communication difficulty prior to arrival; the Taster Day provides an opportunity for new students to experience the campus environment; receive familiarisation and orientation with the teaching spaces, including quiet routes and areas; understand timetables; tours of halls of residence; meet with Autism Specialist Mentors; receive introductions to other Student Services teams as well as the Student’s Union and associated sports and societies. Online alternatives to the Autism Taster Day for students unable to attend are available.  Applicant visits and appointments with ASSIST for students disclosing complex or multiple conditions, typically including members of the course team and Residential Life (if residing in Halls); the appointment includes the creation of Academic Inclusion Reports (AIRs), which outline the reasonable adjustments required to support the student, and guidance on how to apply for Disabled Student’s Allowances (DSA) - if applicable.  Applicant visits and/or online appointments arranged for applicants disclosing a mental health difficulty, to discuss concerns about transition, and to consider any reasonable adjustments that might be required to enable study. These can then feed into AIR’s.  UON’s Mental Health Service endeavours to link with current health care providers to try and ensure continuity of care, and medical evidence to support DSA applications. | Student transition between all educational stages presents various challenges. The transition from a post 16 setting to Higher Education is one of these especially when you add the need of mental health and wellbeing support. Enabling a student from a post-16 setting to bring a mental health passport with them, containing their existing wellbeing support network and effective strategies, will enable us to understand, support, and react to the needs of individual students in a more timely manner. This activity will give confidence to students transitioning to UON that we are aware of their needs and requirements, enabling them to start and continue their studies with us more smoothly. | **Student mental health and transitions into, through and out of university: student and staff perspectives** - Journal of Further and Higher Education - <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/0309877X.2021.1875203>  **Supporting disabled students: a blueprint for transition support** – TASO - <https://taso.org.uk/research/current-projects/what-works-to-reduce-equality-gaps-for-disabled-students-in-higher-education-he/supporting-disabled-students-a-blueprint-for-transition-support/> |
| **3. Operationalise the Suicide Safer Framework.** In line with UUK Guidance for Prevention, Intervention and Postvention | The Suicide Safer Framework is an important aspect of our Learning, Library and Student Services Operational Plan. It is imperative for us, as part of the HE sector, to do all we can to reduce the number of student suicides every year whilst at university. We are engaging fully with UUK resources to ensure that we have processes and understanding in place across the whole institution to support students when they need us most. | **Suicide Safer Universities** – UUK - <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/sites/default/files/field/downloads/2021-07/guidance-for-sector-practitioners-on-preventing-student-suicides.PDF> |
| **4. Developing learnings from ManSpace.** Since academic year 2023/24, we have developed, delivered and evaluated ManSpace – a space for men to talk. Aimed at removing the stigma around male mental health, we will use this evaluative work to inform the development of our counselling and mental health support and improve access to services. | ManSpace is a talking and listening club designed specifically for male-identifying students at UON. It is a safe space for open conversations, where participants can share their thoughts, experiences, and challenges, facilitated by our professional counselling team.  University life can be overwhelming, and sometimes just having someone to talk to can make all the difference. Whether it is academic stress, personal challenges, or simply wanting to connect with like-minded peers, ManSpace has the space for male students to express themselves.  We recognise that there are other APP target cohorts that may benefit from their own dedicated safe space and we will take our learnings from ManSpace to develop them with the guidance of our student representatives. | Ruqia Osman - WonkHE - [A manifesto for Black mental health should matter to HE](https://wonkhe.com/blogs/a-menifesto-for-black-mental-health-should-matter-to-he/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Wonkhe%20Monday%20Briefing%20-%203%20June&utm_content=Wonkhe%20Monday%20Briefing%20-%203%20June+CID_7d38a4d838147f5962f1fd4b68223690&utm_source=Email%20marketing%20software&utm_term=A%20new%20black-led%20coalition%20sets%20out%20the%20action%20needed%20to%20improve%20the%20mental%20health%20of%20black%20people)  **The importance of informal safe spaces - THE -**  <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/how-create-sense-belonging-black-students-majority-white-academy>  Blog on why culturally competent mental health support is vital for black students in London – we have used this as a lens to view ManSpace. It is clear that there is a need for culturally competent mental health support and we will seek to learn more about how we can apply this effectively at UON.  <https://www.good-thinking.uk/blog/why-culturally-competent-mental-health-support-is-vital-for-black-students-in-london> |
| **5. Proactive Check-In.** To follow up with students applying for Mitigating Circumstances to ensure that their wellbeing is in a good place and that they are getting the support they need. | This activity is a direct response to UON research that showed us that:  “Students want to feel supported – need to offer more support/scaffolding than currently – including proactively reaching out to students.” (Curtis et al)  We know that mitigating circumstances may be symptomatic of a wellbeing issue for students so staging these check-ins will allow us to support students in their time of need. | **Tell me what you want, what you really, really want: What students want from their university experience -** Curtis, T., Loddick, A, King, S. (2023) - PURE, University of Northampton. <https://pure.northampton.ac.uk/en/activities/tell-me-what-you-want-what-you-really-really-want-what-students-w> |

**Intervention Strategy 7 - Data and systems integration**

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| **Activity descriptor** | **Rationale / Justification** | **Evidence Base** |
| **1. APP integration into our IT Strategy Board.** Ensuring the needs of APP target cohorts is a priority at all key decision points with representation from key stakeholders across the University. Objectives will include: Establishing itself as the only data strategy board across the organisation. Gate keeping which processes should be supported by which platforms. Agree universal mechanisms to capture data. Development communication across the institution for clarity and consistency. | Our staff consultation has shown the need for an established centre for all data needs in the organisation which serves as an authority to streamline our processes as this would increase staff confidence in the data that is available.  Student feedback has highlighted the need for systems to act as a facilitator on how best to deliver a joined-up approach across our services for an efficient experience, so students don’t have to retell their story each time they encounter a support service. This can be particularly problematic for students with disabilities. | A study on disabled students' experiences of self-advocating at university:  Bruce, C. and Aylward, M.L., 2021. Disability and Self-Advocacy Experiences in University Learning Contexts. *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, *23*(1).  [https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/4c50/39904ff99540dce6730a8693beffec42a2b3.pdf](https://url.uk.m.mimecastprotect.com/s/EBocCm2QJTAgGJ1sGzYkz?domain=pdfs.semanticscholar.org)  Disabled students' views on how they are expected to self-advocate, and the ableism surrounding this:  Woolf, E. and de Bie, A., 2022. Politicizing self-advocacy: Disabled students navigating ableist expectations in postsecondary education. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, *42*(1). [https://bhacjournal.org/index.php/dsq/article/view/8062](https://url.uk.m.mimecastprotect.com/s/KcbLCnYrKfKPQOlsJr1oE?domain=bhacjournal.org)  This study specifically looked at autistic students' experiences with self-advocacy and how students with social and communication differences may find self-advocacy more challenging:  Santhanam, S.P. and Wilson, K., 2024. A Comparison of Autistic and Non-Autistic College Students' Perceived Challenges and Engagement in Self-Advocacy. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, pp.1-14.  [https://pubs.asha.org/doi/abs/10.1044/2024\_AJSLP-22-00381](https://url.uk.m.mimecastprotect.com/s/RwSyCovQLFBgJqluVC2tg?domain=pubs.asha.org)  Self-advocacy difficulties from a mental health perspective, specifically focusing on anxiety:  Hasman, A. and Matlock, C., 2021. Students with Anxiety Disorders: Self-Advocacy, Daily Life Activities, and Meaningfulness of the College Experience. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, *34*(4), pp.331-348.  [https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1342736](https://url.uk.m.mimecastprotect.com/s/R81qCpRQMcvVPMQiGsY5i?domain=eric.ed.gov) |
| **2. Develop the Data Governance Working Group.** The group’s aim is to improve data use processes through the addition of: The assignment of a member of the BIMI unit to support all services with APP data needs.  Triangulating data on who our APP target cohorts are and the risks they are exposed to. Representation from the SU to ensure Student Pulse insights are captured effectively. | We have identified an inconsistent approach to collection, analysis and use of data within departments across the organisation and this culminates in avoidable challenges when trying to investigate the risks our APP target cohorts are exposed to. Therefore, this activity will seek to resolve these inconsistencies by providing support, guidance and training for teams on central processes that support our whole provider approach to APP data collection, analysis and use. | **The role of students information systems in HE** – Claster.com  <https://www.classter.com/blog/edtech/the-role-of-student-information-systems-in-higher-education/>  **Data Transformation Strategy** – Office for Students – Our approach will be similar to the OfS:  “At the OfS, we recognise the importance of harnessing the power of data to drive our strategic initiatives and achieve our digital and corporate vision. Unfortunately, due to the outdated tools and technology we have limited capacity to adopt advanced data practices such as data science, management of big data, machine learning or artificial intelligence.”  <https://ofsleaders.officeforstudents.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/129/2024/01/Data-Transformation-Strategy-V2.0-1.pdf>    aims to address these issues by reducing data processing time, eliminating duplication, and enabling easier access to accurate, up-to-date information. By implementing a unified data governance framework and enhancing data sharing capabilities, we can support our strategic initiatives more effectively and ensure continuity of service, ultimately improving the student experience.  [Supporting student success: strategies for institutional change.](https://lizthomasassociates.co.uk/downloads/2017/Summary%20report.pdf)  Professor Liz Thomas et al (2017)  “While suitable data needs to be available, it is also necessary for staff to be supported to use this data to improve student retention and success. It is recommended that a process of change is deliberately designed, taking account of structures, roles and ways of working, and proactively engaging staff, students and managers at all levels, drawing on the enthusiasm of champions.” pp. 20 |
| **3. SITS Implementation and Roll Out.** SITS is our new student records system and will function as the single point of truth concerning UON students. SITS will be integrated with our different systems so the information they hold on students will be consistent across platforms. | **What is the new student record system (SRS) and why are we changing?**    The current SRS, (QL) is no longer suitable. The information the University holds about our students and their journey isn’t just held in one system, there are many systems in use. The new SRS is one system which replaces the others, making it a much smoother experience for our students and staff. Called SITS, and used by many universities in England, the system replaces QL - combining a database and a student portal where students can access information and support.    **SITS will bring other benefits as well**   * Future-proofed – helping everyone to operate more efficiently. * Enhances the student experience and enable self-serve. * More efficient administration of student life. * Quicker processes - supporting staff in their daily activities. * Automation of key functions. * Improve student engagement with the University. * Support student retention. | **HESA Data Steering Group -** <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/innovation/data-landscape> |
| **4. Value Added Platform Development.** We will develop a new value-added platform, supported with advice and guidance from University of Hertfordshire who developed a similar platform several years ago. This will ensure that we are able to effectively capture the value added by UON courses, benchmarking ourselves against the sector. | Value added (VA) is an approach to closing the award gap that has worked at several institutions and has been celebrated by the OfS.  Through the monitoring of student progress, we can identify and articulate the value we add clearly. The platform will enable us to have conversations with staff at programme level about student progress that will be key to student success, aligning with our quality assurance processes to embed accountable planning for quality enhancement. | **Value added tracking** - Office for students - <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/effective-practice/case-study-kingston-university/> **Using the Value-Added Score to challenge the BME attainment gap –** Office for students **-** [**https://closingtheattainmentgap.co.uk/value-added/**](https://closingtheattainmentgap.co.uk/value-added/) |