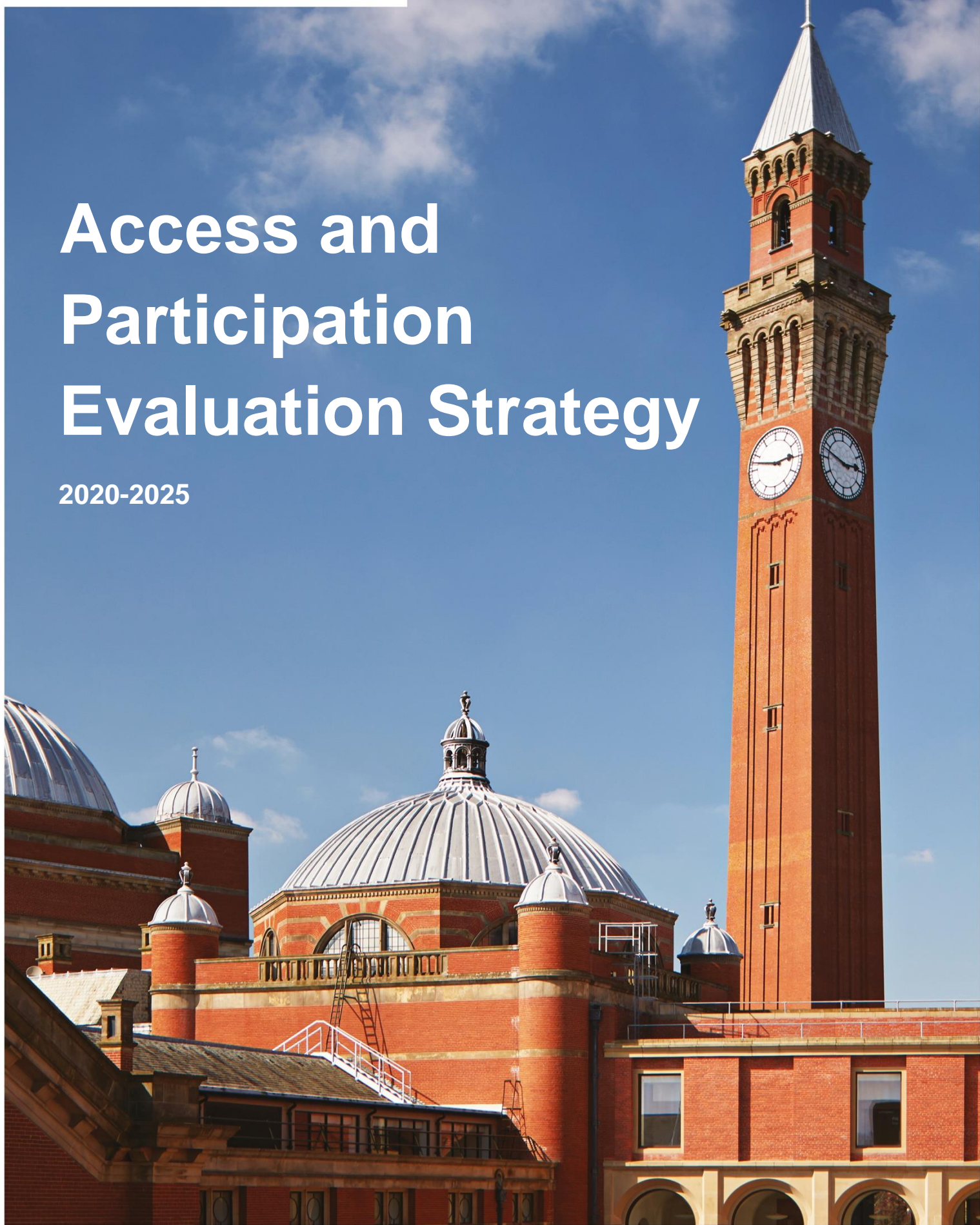




UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

# Access and Participation Evaluation Strategy

2020-2025



# Introduction

Our Access and Participation Plan (APP) Evaluation Strategy sets out our strategic direction and our approach to measuring progress and evaluating the impact of interventions to meet our APP targets over the next five years. It is comprehensive and covers each element of the student lifecycle, including financial support and collaborative partnerships.

Our Strategy reinforces our commitment to evidence based practice in access and participation, and facilitating a culture of learning and continuous improvement. It demonstrates an evidence-based approach to the delivery of the aims and objectives outlined in our Plan, and a commitment to embed a comprehensive evaluation framework across the full student lifecycle.

This Evaluation Strategy is informed by our learning from completing the Office for Students (OfS) self-assessment toolkit and our experience and expertise in evaluating the impact of outreach and widening participation. The key objectives of this strategy are to:

- Provide a framework for producing high quality evidence-based monitoring and evaluation information to support learning, improvement, innovation, accountability and strategic decision-making.
- Ensure engagement with our academic community whose specialist research in these areas is invaluable in exploring and developing cutting-edge approaches and sharing practice across the sector.
- Continue to generate robust evaluation evidence to improve fair access and participation in higher education by understanding what we do, identifying how and why specific approaches work, and identifying where improvements can be made to increase the effectiveness of our policies and interventions.
- Provide robust evidence to support strategic decision-making and allocation of resources.
- Provide a framework for the evaluation of our APP work over the next 5 years.

This strategy contains the following sections:

- **Section 1: Strategic context.** Sets out our strategic approach to evaluation.
- **Section 2: Our approach to evaluation.** This Section includes:
  1. Our strategic approach
  2. Our strategic objectives
  3. Birmingham Scholar Theory of Change
  4. Programme design
  5. Evaluation design and implementation
  6. Evaluation levels and standards
  7. Evaluation learning.
- **Appendix:**
  - A. Theory of Change for each key component of the Birmingham Scholar:
    - Outreach and Access – Pathways to Birmingham
    - Success – Pathways through Study
    - Progression – Pathways to Employability
  - B. Birmingham Scholar Evaluation Framework
  - C. Birmingham Scholar Evaluation Plan.

# 1. Strategic Context

The University of Birmingham has a longstanding commitment to evaluating the impact of our Outreach and Access interventions, and to improving our evaluation practice. Our evaluation approach is based on developing an overarching Theory of Change (ToC) for the Birmingham Scholar with detailed nested ToC models for each of the key areas of the WP lifecycle as set out in our Access and Participation Plan. The nested ToC for each key area of the Birmingham Scholar are (see Appendix A for ToCs):

1. **Outreach and Access.** The ToC represents our planned work and shared understanding of how we believe our work will achieve our intended short, medium, long term outcomes and how the Pathways to Birmingham component of the Birmingham Scholar ToC will meet the access related APP targets.
2. **Success.** The Pathways through Study ToC is an overarching cross-institution framework comprising nested Theories of Change from six key areas of academic support activity across the University: each of our five Colleges and our Academic Skills Centre. The ToC demonstrates how the outcomes from these six areas will support Birmingham Scholars to achieve their full academic potential and thus close the success gaps identified in our APP.
3. **Progression.** The ToC illustrates how we intend to support transition towards the desired graduate outcomes of all our students as well as addressing the cohorts of students we believe to be in most need of additional support to gain highly-skilled employability.

This evaluation strategy will be implemented and monitored by the APP Evaluation Working Group. Membership of the Group includes evaluation leads for access, student success and progression, professional services colleagues as well as academic specialist. The Evaluation Working Group reports to our Student Access and Progress Committee, chaired by the PVC Education.

Our evaluation work is guided by the following evaluation principles that underpin our approach to planning and conducting quality evaluations:

- **Strategic, useful and timely.** They will have a clear purpose linking to the strategic evaluation questions set out in this Strategy and reporting will be timed to inform internal and external performance reporting and to inform decision making at both the strategic and programme delivery level.
- **Systematic but proportionate.** The size, complexity and investment of the intervention will guide the level of evaluation for each intervention. The evaluation design should be systematic yet reflect what is realistic to achieve within time and budget constraints and the contribution the evaluation will make to answer the strategic evaluation questions.

- **Planned at the outset of an intervention.** Evaluation is most effective when it informs the planning of an intervention to ensure they are robustly evaluated. This includes defining questions the evaluation will seek to answer, identifying the outcomes and impact the intervention is intending to achieve, how these will be measured, identifying baselines and what data will be collected.
- **Shared.** The learning, knowledge and understanding gained through the evaluation of widening participation interventions will be shared with relevant stakeholders to contribute to the knowledgebase in the field.

## 1.1 Evaluation Culture and Skills

We have had a dedicated Outreach and Access Evaluation post since 2012. This role has been key in embedding robust evaluation processes; increasing evaluation knowledge and skills; developing a culture of evaluation and continual improvement across our Outreach and Access work; and is working to embed effective evaluation practices across the student life cycle. In early 2020 we created a new post, Student Success Officer, to co-ordinate the Pathways through Study activity, establish and implement the Birmingham Scholar programme and lead on the evaluation of attainment-raising interventions across the University. The Careers Network has sophisticated evaluation processes and an evaluation strategy which have been developed over the past three years ensuring evaluation is at the heart of service improvement and innovation. This work is led by Careers Network's Assistant Director – Operations and Enhancement and Careers Network's Data Analyst.

We are further developing our evaluation practice and have implemented the following:

- In January 2020 we established the APP Evaluation Working Group with membership including evaluation leads for access, student success and progression, as well as academic representation from our specialist research centres. The purpose of the group is to implement and monitor this Evaluation Strategy.
- Our Outreach Evaluation Officer has delivered and will continue to deliver ToC and evaluation workshops to develop evaluation capacity across our APP work. This includes:
  - Workshops on ToC and evaluation to colleagues involved in the delivery of our APP.
  - Facilitating ToC development workshops to support colleagues working across the University to apply a theory of change to all core APP work.
  - Delivery of planning and evaluation training to enable delivery staff to develop logic models and evaluation frameworks for ToC interventions.
- We have developed and are implementing a new evaluation framework (based on the ToC) across all our APP interventions. All our Outreach and Access programmes have in place updated bespoke detailed logic models and evaluation frameworks that link to achieving our APP outcomes and targets. We are implementing this framework across the other areas of the student life cycle.
- We will increase collaboration with our academic colleagues to undertake in-depth evaluations of our APP work to understand the impact of our initiatives and contribute

to sector knowledge. For example in 2020 we have been successful in securing TASO funding for the evaluation of our Outreach Forward Thinking multi-intervention progressive programme. We will work with academic colleagues with specialist knowledge in this field to undertake the evaluation.

We will continue to disseminate learning from our evaluative work to contribute to the sector evidence base. We recently published the findings of the evaluation of our Academic Enrichment Programme, which applied the Theory of Change approach, in the British Education Research Journal<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/berj.3556>

## 2. Our Approach to Evaluation

This section sets out our approach to evaluating our progress against our strategic objectives and evaluating the impact of the Birmingham Scholar. It also sets out how we will build on our existing evaluative work and expertise and enhance our evaluation practice. It includes:

- Our strategic approach including objectives and targets
- Our Birmingham Scholar ToC
- Programme design including rationale, activities and outcomes
- Evaluation design and implementation including our outcomes based approach to monitoring and evaluation and evaluation levels and standards.

Our plans for evaluation over the next five years are to:

- Implement this Evaluation Strategy across the University
- Continue to build the evidence base of our work to support evidenced based decision making and development of interventions
- Embed the new ToC evaluation framework across all our Birmingham Scholar interventions
- Strengthen links with our academics to undertake impact evaluations of our (resource) intensive and key programmes
- Continue to contribute to sector knowledge on impact of access and participation interventions
- Continue to pilot and deliver innovative interventions based on learning from evaluations on 'what works'.

### 2.1 Our Strategic Approach

Our approach is underpinned by our new Birmingham Scholar Framework. This framework sits across the full applicant and student lifecycle and provides an umbrella structure for targeted, personalised interventions to support those applicants and students, primarily from less-advantaged/under-represented backgrounds, who may be in need of further help (in addition to the suite of support available for all students) to progress and complete their course successfully. The Birmingham Scholar framework includes a commitment to scale up existing and proven successful activities (for example our Academic Skills Centre and our Access to Careers programme) as well as developing new initiatives in support of our targets and ambitions.

#### **Ambition**

Our ambition is that students with the potential to succeed at the University of Birmingham have the opportunity to gain access, achieve their full academic potential and progress successfully to their chosen careers or further study. We have held this ambition since our creation in 1900, and throughout our history have sought to provide leadership, innovation, and a realistic, evidence-based approach to student access and participation.

## Target groups

We are aware that, as in the wider society, there is work to do to achieve the ambition of equality of opportunity and outcome. The assessment of our performance has highlighted that there are differential outcomes across the student lifecycle between some student groups. We are also aware that in order to achieve the most significant impact we need to adopt a targeted and focussed approach to our interventions and support; an approach that remains true to, and reflective of, our civic values, our institutional context and identity, as well as the values and priorities of our whole student body.

We have taken a data-led approach to identifying the target groups and priorities, informed by (i) the Office for Students' Key Performance Measures, (ii) assessment of our current performance and (iii) our broader institutional strategic priorities. We have identified the following target groups for each stage of the student lifecycle:

Student lifecycle stage	Target groups
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• POLAR4 Quintile 1 applicants</li><li>• Pathway to Birmingham candidates (based on a basket of measures of disadvantage which includes students who live in areas of low progression to higher education; who are first generation entrants to higher education; who have a household income that is below the national average; who have a disability and are in receipt of a personal independence payment; and/or who are estranged from parents or guardians).</li></ul>
Success (attainment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students of Black and Asian ethnicity</li><li>• Students with a reported disability</li><li>• Students from Polar 4 Quintile 1.</li></ul>
Progression (highly-skilled employability)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Black students; plus other ethnic minority groups where there is evidence of disadvantage in achieving graduate employability</li><li>• Locally-domiciled students who joined the University via our Pathway to Birmingham programmes</li><li>• Students with a reported disability to ensure positive levels of graduate employability are maintained.</li></ul>

## 2.2 Strategic Objectives

Our Access and Participation Plan 2020-2025 sets out our key strategic objectives that are underpinned by targets agreed with the Office for Students (OfS):

**Strategic Aim 1:** *To continue to expand, develop and broaden the reach of our proven outreach initiatives to widen access to higher education.*

### Targets:

1. To increase the proportion of our intake of students with multiple measures of disadvantage to 10% by 2025, as measured by the percentage of our entrants that are admitted through our Pathways to Birmingham scheme.

2. To reduce the gap between the number of students we admit from the most (P4Q5) and least (P4Q1) represented groups to a ratio of 5:1 (from 7.4:1) by 2025.
3. We also have an additional objective to contribute to sector targets by increasing the number of students participating in our post 16 outreach activities who then progress to other universities and are committed to support 500 Pathway to Birmingham students each year to enrol at other UK HEIs. This reflects and recognises the important role that our outreach activities play in widening participation in higher education more broadly amongst under-represented groups.

**Strategic Aim 2:** *In addition to our institutional APP objectives we also have objectives through our collaborative partnerships*

**Targets:**

4. To increase the proportion of Realising Opportunities (RO) students<sup>2</sup> accessing a research intensive university, within two years of becoming 'HE ready' and completing their Post-16 studies, by 12 percentage points (to 54%) by 2025.
5. To increase the percentage of Polar 4 Q1 learners engaged on AimHigher West Midlands programmes

**Strategic Aim 3:** *To support student success through an inclusive and supportive environment which enables all students to reach their potential.*

6. Reduce the gap in degree outcomes (1st or 2:1) for our Black and Asian students (as compared to their White peers) to 5% by 2025, and to eliminate or reduce to a non-significant level in the longer-term.
7. Reduce the gap in degree outcomes (1st or 2:1) for our P4Q1 (as compared to their P4Q5 peers) to a non-significant level by 2025.
8. Ensure that any gap in degree outcomes (1st or 2:1) between disabled students and other students remains non-significant.

**Strategic Aim 4:** *To support our students to progress to employment by supporting them to develop the personal and social capital they need to make an informed choice about their futures.*

9. Reduce the highly-skilled employability gap for our locally-domiciled P2B students to 3% by (from 9.5%) 2025.
10. Reduce the highly-skilled employability gap for our Black students to 2% (from 7.9%) by 2025.

These higher level targets are supported by additional departmental level targets across the three areas of the student lifecycle based on each theory of change (ToC). The additional targets will help us to monitor progress to achieving the above strategic objectives.

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<sup>2</sup> RO uses a robust targeting criteria and all RO students are from groups underrepresented in higher education

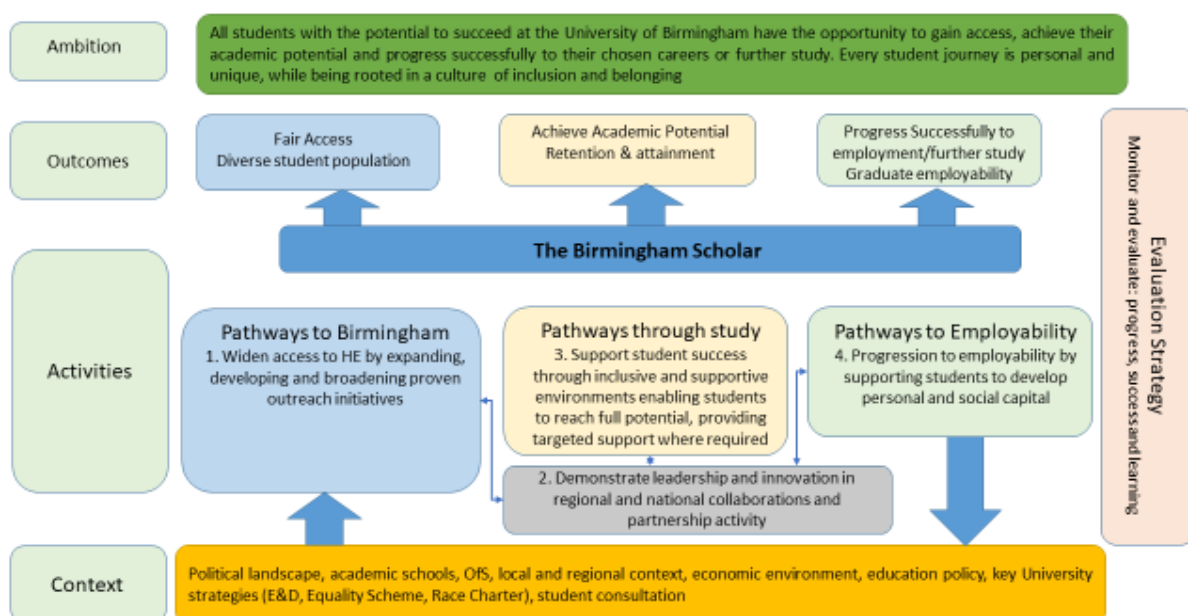


## 2.3 Birmingham Scholar Theory of Change

Figure 1 outlines the Theory of Change (ToC) underpinning the Birmingham Scholar Framework. The overarching changes we are seeking to embed as part of our ambition are (i) fair and equitable access to the University resulting in a diverse and well-qualified student population, and (ii) equality of opportunity for all our students to achieve their full academic potential and to successfully realise their post-University ambitions. The Birmingham Scholar framework has three main components aligned to the stages of the student lifecycle and the aims and objectives outlined in this Plan: Pathways to Birmingham (Aims 1 and 2), Pathways through Study (Aim 3) and Pathways to Employability (Aim 4).

Applicants to the University via Pathways to Birmingham will automatically become Birmingham Scholars when they join the University. Other students displaying key characteristics of disadvantage (aligning with, but not limited to, our target groups outlined above) will be identified by and flagged in our Personal Academic Tutoring system, and invited to join the Scholars programme. Importantly, students can become a Birmingham Scholar at any point in their student journey, as and when our evidence indicates an issue or need. The flexibility of our framework to target those in most need of support, underpinned by our use of intersectional indicators of disadvantage, will enable us to most effectively address the gaps outlined in our self-assessment.

**Figure 1: Birmingham Scholar Theory of Change**



This overarching framework is supported by 'nested' Theory of Change for each stage of the lifecycle that are presented in Appendix A.

## 2.4 Programme Design

In this section we set our Birmingham Scholar Outcomes Framework that describes our work and rationale, our interventions and intended outcomes as well as the evidence that has informed our work.

### **Our Approach and Activities**

Our Birmingham Scholar ToC is based on three key strands: Pathways to Birmingham, Pathways through Study, and, Pathways to Employability. Figure 2 below presents our Birmingham Scholar Outcomes Framework, which sets out our rationale, key activity, and intended outcomes under the three student lifecycle stages.

At every stage of our Birmingham Scholar Framework we recognise that every student journey is personal and unique, while being rooted in a culture of inclusion and belonging. We aim to embed this approach in all three strands of our Scholar activity.

### **Access & Outreach**

Our Access and Outreach activities are focussed on achieving six key outcomes that we have identified: raising aspirations; developing knowledge and understanding of higher education; developing subject specific knowledge and supporting subject choice; information advice, guidance around making future plans and preparing for higher education; supporting attainment of students; and, access to higher education, research intensive universities and the University of Birmingham.

Our approach to outreach and access activity is underpinned by a firm commitment to the delivery of targeted and sustained outreach programmes which research shows are the most effective in widening participation to higher education. Our comprehensive suite of access and outreach activities supports sector-wide progression as well as progression to research-intensive universities and the University of Birmingham. Our on-going programme of monitoring and evaluation generates rich data that we have collated over many years. This data feeds into our cycle of in-depth impact evaluations. Our evaluation work helps us generate evidence on the impact of our work, understand why and how outcomes are or are not being achieved, and how we can further improve the effectiveness of our interventions.

### **Success**

Our activity to support and enhance student success is delivered both centrally via our sector-leading Academic Skills Centre and locally within each of our five Colleges. We will provide inclusive and targeted interventions to support the specific cohorts identified in our APP to progress through study and achieve degree outcomes at a rate equitable with their peers. Our Enhanced Personal Academic Tutoring System is a central component of our Pathways through Study framework. Personal Tutors provide ongoing front-line support; signposting students to support tailored to their specific needs, and referring students in the target groups covered in our APP onto the Scholars programme at any point in their student journey. Once students become Scholars they will then have access to additional personal tutoring and individualised academic skills support, events held exclusively for our Scholar community, such as the annual Birmingham Scholar Forum, and a range of online student support and

engagement activities designed to foster a sense of belonging and inclusion as part of the Birmingham Scholar community.

Tracking the engagement and the attainment of Scholars is central to our evaluation strategy for the Pathways through Study strand, and as such we will develop a system of real-time reporting for the attendance and assessment outcomes of Scholars, enabling us to measure the impact of our activities and interventions. Importantly, this will also enable 'at risk' students to be more easily identified by Personal Tutors and thus to be added onto the Scholars programme, ensuring we reach those students that are most in need of support.

## **Progression**

Many of the interventions we provide in relation to employability are specifically aimed at improving employability for students from less advantaged backgrounds. Our performance trajectory to date underlines the value and impact of this investment and we will continue to develop our support to build on past successes.

We have identified that Black and locally-domiciled students who have joined the University through our Pathways to Birmingham schemes benefit from additional support to achieve their potential. Our evaluation activity has shown that these cohorts in particular face challenges both in developing employability skills and competencies while studying, and in entering the job market on graduation. Our experience shows that some of these students are not engaging with the on-campus employability activities or support, and they are also less likely than other student groups to move to different geographic areas to seek appropriate jobs. This analysis is supported by research<sup>3</sup> which suggests that less advantaged students are not always aware of the importance of extracurricular activities in securing employment, and consequently tend to de-prioritise social and enhancement activities. For some students, there will also be additional pressures on their time that make engagement more challenging. For Black students in particular, a lack of role models and examples of relatable graduate success stories exacerbates a lack of engagement and 'belongingness'. The Birmingham Scholar Pathways to Careers Programme will provide P2B, and our target group of ethnic minority students, with a facilitated route into engagement with employability activity, access to opportunities that enhances social capital and develop skills employers want, and individual careers support entering into the graduate market.

## **Financial Support**

The provision of financial assistance underpins each of our strategic aims, from supporting our targeted recruitment activity, to supporting student performance by reducing financial anxiety, to unlocking access to opportunities and experiences which might otherwise be unattainable. Our ambition is to ensure that the full 'Birmingham experience' is available to all of our students and we offer a range of targeted financial support packages to facilitate this.

In the last year we have undertaken a thorough evaluation of the impact and benefit of these awards. We commissioned independent consultants to undertake detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis of the impact of financial support. As part of the evaluation, we consulted with more than 2000 award recipients. Our evaluation recognised the positive impact financial

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<sup>3</sup> Bathmaker et al (2008)

support has on students during their studies but also highlighted that financial support alone does not fully address the challenges faced by our students. The conclusions from our evaluation have informed a remodelling of our bursary package with a more specific focus on the target groups identified as part of this plan, and have underpinned the development of our Pathways to Birmingham framework.

## Data

We use our internal data to identify access gaps to our own institution. Our data shows that whilst we have made considerable progress in attracting applicants from under represented backgrounds, e.g. our intake through Access to Birmingham increased by 8.9% in 2018, we still have more to do. For 2019 entry, A2B entrants increased significantly from 378 to 497 representing 9% of the home first-degree intake.

The A2B applicant and entrant cohort is an incredibly diverse one. According to the England and Wales 2011 census data, the West Midlands representation across ethnic group is broadly 10.8% identifying as Asian, 3.3% identifying as Black, 2.4% identifying as mixed or multiple, and 82.8% identifying as White.

The A2B applicant population identifies as 56% Asian, 9% Black, 4% mixed or multiple, and 24% White. Compared to the Office for National Statistics analysis of Birmingham's 15 to 24 year olds, the A2B gender split is slightly more weighted toward female applicants at 61% (compared to 50.1%) female and 39% (49.9%) male. Local outreach data also shows that BAME students are well represented in our programmes and activities, but that there is greater participation by females. Throughout our programmes we will continue to focus on increasing participation by males.

Our data also shows that in 2018 for students from the bottom 40% of postcodes, we have seen an increase of 20% in students for female BME students, but a fall of just over 9% in the male BME and white female intake with the white male intake static and the lowest number. We will therefore continue to focus on increasing engagement amongst lower socio economic males and lower socio-economic white females.

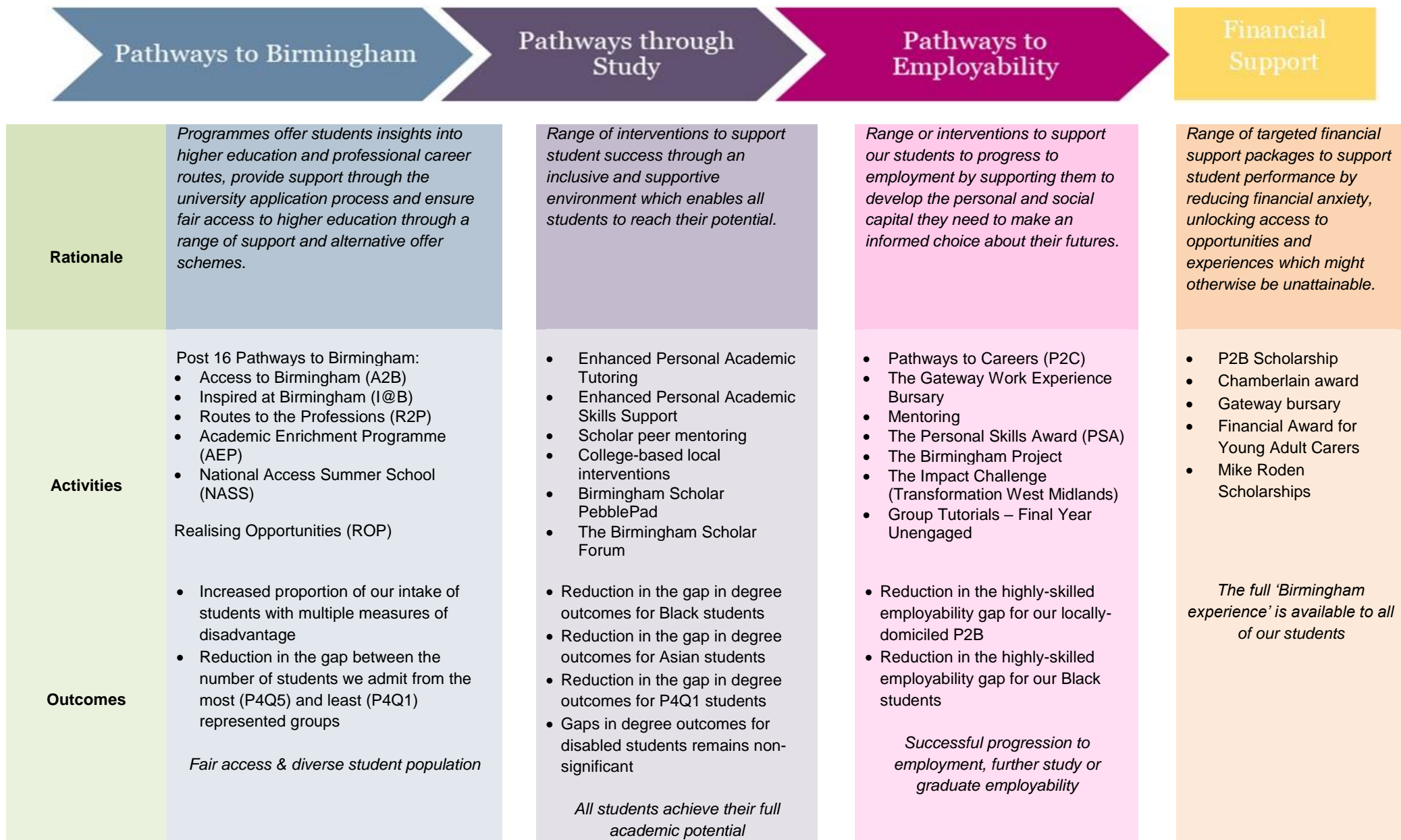
Our Polar 3 Q1 intake for 2018 is 352 UK first degree entrants out of an intake of 5445 (6.46%) and a small decline of 26 students and 6.6% of intake in 2017. This compares to a total England intake of 11.4% and a West Midlands intake of 13.2%. Following targeted activity our P3Q1 intake through A2B in 2018 increased 85% from 55 to 102 students, and 27% of the intake

The most recent data released by the OfS on progress towards our APP success (attainment) targets show that our gap for good honours degree attainment between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 has decreased by 6% pts from 9% in 2017/18 to 3% in 2018/19, and the gap between Asian and White students has also decreased, by 2% pts from 12% in 2017/18 to 10% in 2018/19. This means we have already made significant progress towards achieving our APP milestones for these target groups.

However, our attainment gap for Black students has increased by 4% pts from 16% in 2017/18 to 20% in 2018/19. Good honours attainment for Black students is now 72% compared to 92% for their White peers. Our disability attainment gap has also widened slightly, by 2% pts from 3% in 2017/18 to 5% in 2018/19.

We will strive to build on our successful work underpinning the reduction in our P4Q1 and Asian attainment gaps to drive similar improvements for our disabled and Black students.

**Figure 2: Birmingham Scholar Outcomes Framework**



## 2.5 Evaluation Design & Implementation

In this section we set our approach to designing and undertaking evaluations. We share our six step Outcomes Based Monitoring and Evaluation approach, our Evaluation levels and standards matrix, our Evaluation Framework and Evaluation Plan. Together these set out how we will measure and evidence progress against targets and the impact of our work.

### Outcomes Based Monitoring and Evaluation

We have adopted an outcomes based approach to monitoring and evaluating our APP activity which helps us to systematically track progress against achieving our targets and outcomes as set out in our APP. This approach helps us to focus on demonstrating whether we are achieving our outcomes rather than just focussing on delivering activities. Evaluations should also be built into a programme's design from the outset and reflect the needs of a robust evaluation. We have developed evaluation strategies for each area of the student lifecycle that feeds into this overarching APP Evaluation Strategy.

We have implemented the following six step outcomes based monitoring and evaluation approach across the student lifecycle:

1. **Assessment / review of current situation.** Undertake needs assessment to understand current situation, problem and issues, identify target groups.
2. **Develop ToC / logic model.** Set goals, desired short, intermediate and long term outcomes. Set out activities that will be delivered in order to achieve the outcomes.
3. **Develop an evaluation framework.** The framework will include:
  - a) *Selecting key indicators.* To measure progress and achievement of outcomes.
  - b) *Establishing baseline data.* To identify the current situation against which future change and progress will be assessed.
  - c) *Selecting targets.* To set out what level of change can be achieved on achieving the outcomes and to support planning for continuous improvement.
  - d) *Data collection.* Selecting appropriate data collection tools based on the indicators and identifying the timing of when data will be collected.
4. **Undertake in-depth Evaluations.** To assess the effectiveness and efficiency of our work, impact on participants, and to support learning and decision making.
5. **Reporting and using findings.** To effectively communicate and disseminate internally and externally, the findings and learning from evaluations and inform strategic decision-making.
6. **Review monitoring and evaluation approach.** Continuously review our approach for monitoring and evaluation to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose and generates robust, high quality evidence.

All our intensive programmes will have developed individual detailed logic models and evaluation frameworks that set out the programme goals, activities, outputs, expected short-term, intermediate outcomes and longer-term impact. The logic models are then used to develop bespoke evaluation frameworks for each programme and set out the key questions to answer, targets to track progress against outcomes, indicators and data collection methods, sources of data and timing of collection. Based on the evaluation framework, bespoke data collection tools will be developed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data to measure progress against targets and outcomes. The logic models and evaluation frameworks will be reviewed and updated annually.

This ongoing monitoring and evaluation of our interventions generates rich data that will feed into our cycle of in-depth impact evaluations, and enable us to undertake in-depth longitudinal studies. The ongoing programme monitoring and evaluations help us to keep track of progress against targets and outcomes whilst our in-depth evaluations help us to generate evidence of why and how outcomes are or are not being achieved, what impact our work is having on participants and how we can further improve their effectiveness and support decision-making.

## **Evaluation Methods**

Evaluation methods will be selected based on the evaluation questions and selecting the most appropriate methods depending on the aims of the evaluation and resources available. Our evaluation specialists will advise on selecting the most appropriate evaluation and data collection methods for each evaluation. However, in the majority of evaluations we will adopt a mixed-methods methodology – integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods. A mixed-methods methodology strengthens the reliability and validity of data and findings, and extends our understanding through which outcomes and impacts are achieved by comparing information obtained from different methods of data collection.



## 2.6 Evaluation Levels and Standards

Figure 3 sets out our Evaluation Levels and Standards matrix. It shows the minimum type and level of evaluations we conduct for each of our activity type.

**Figure 3: Evaluation Levels and Standards matrix**

Activity intensity levels	Evaluation Level	Standards of Evaluation Evidence
<p><b>Low</b> Low impact, one off engagement, smaller budget, addressing short term outcomes</p>	<p>Light touch logic model and evaluation framework</p>	<p><b>Type 1: Narrative</b> - <i>minimum for all low intensity activity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All activities have developed a light touch logic model and evaluation framework</li> <li>• Activities are developed based on established published research</li> <li>• At a minimum activity and engagement is monitored</li> <li>• Some activity may use feedback and evaluation forms</li> </ul>
<p><b>Medium</b> Not particularly complex programme, sustained engagement over a shorter timeframe</p>	<p>Detailed logic model and evaluation framework and internal evaluations</p>	<p><b>Type 2: Empirical enquiry</b> - <i>minimum for all medium intensity activity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All programmes have developed detailed logic models and evaluation frameworks and identified outcome targets</li> <li>• Evaluation evidence is collected from a range of sources and methods which include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Pre and post questionnaire</li> <li>○ Qualitative and quantitative evidence over multiple cohorts</li> <li>○ Tracking students</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Monitoring and evaluation mainly undertaken by programme teams with support from internal evaluation specialist staff.</li> </ul>
<p><b>High</b> Complex multi intervention programmes with sustained progressive engagement</p>	<p>Detailed logic model and evaluation framework and in-depth internal / external evaluations</p>	<p><b>Type 2: Empirical enquiry</b> - <i>minimum for all high intensity activity.</i></p> <p><b>Type 3: Causality</b> <i>may be considered for some interventions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As above plus:</li> <li>• Depending on aim of evaluation, in-depth evaluations will be undertaken by internal evaluation specialists; joint evaluations with academics or external evaluations will be commissioned. Methodologies may include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Longitudinal studies</li> <li>○ Using benchmarks and comparison groups</li> <li>○ experimental or quasi-experimental design</li> <li>○ Evaluations published in academic papers.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## **Birmingham Scholar evaluation framework and Evaluation Plan**

Appendix B presents our Birmingham Scholar evaluation framework. It sets out our outcomes and targets, identifies current baseline and the indicators on how we will measure progress and success and against our targets. We will use a combination of evidence from our programme level monitoring and evaluations and in-depth evaluations to understand the effectiveness and impact of our work.

Appendix C sets out our evaluation plan for the next three years for our in-depth evaluations across all areas of the Birmingham Scholar. We plan to share learning from the evaluations with the sector and contribute to the knowledge base of the field. This evaluation plan will be reviewed annually by the APP Evaluation Working Group and updated as new evaluations are agreed.

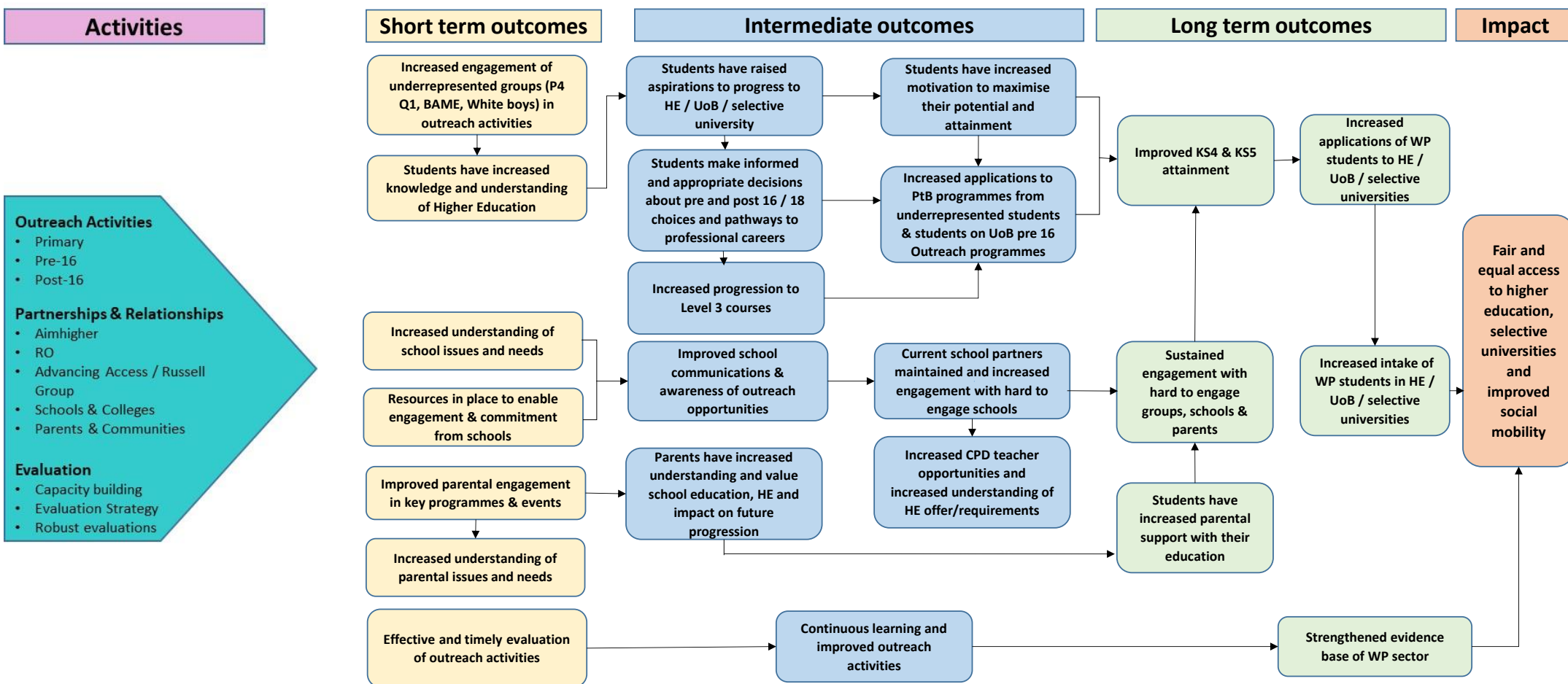
### **2.7 Evaluation Learning**

Learning and findings from our evaluation will be shared both internally (decision making, continuous improvement) and externally (what works and how / doesn't work) through:

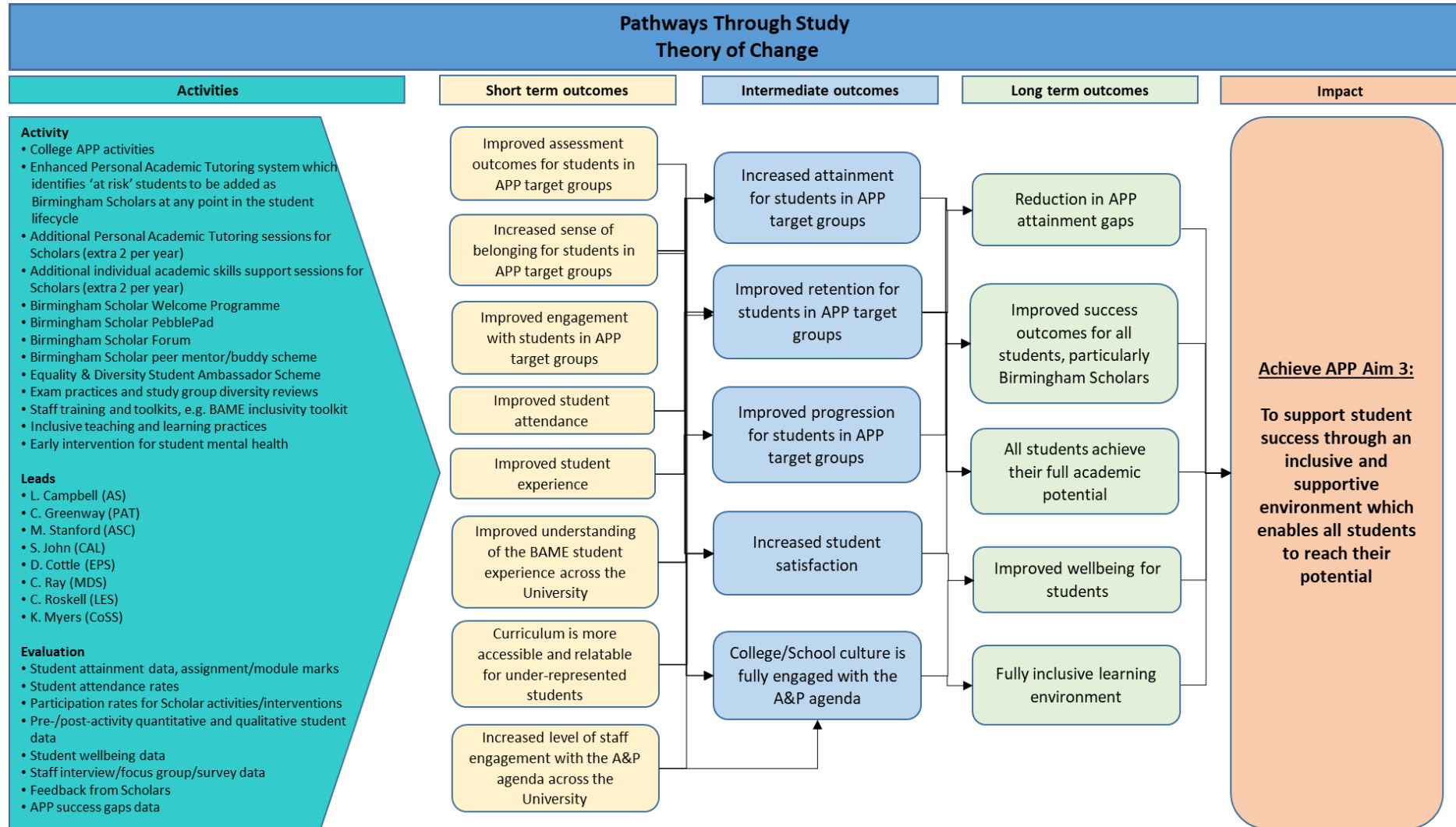
- Our APP Evaluation Working Group
- Our Student Access and Progress Committee
- Departmental sharing – team meetings, support decision making, learning and improvement
- Externally through published papers, contributing to calls for evidence and policy papers, presenting at conferences / forums.

# Appendix

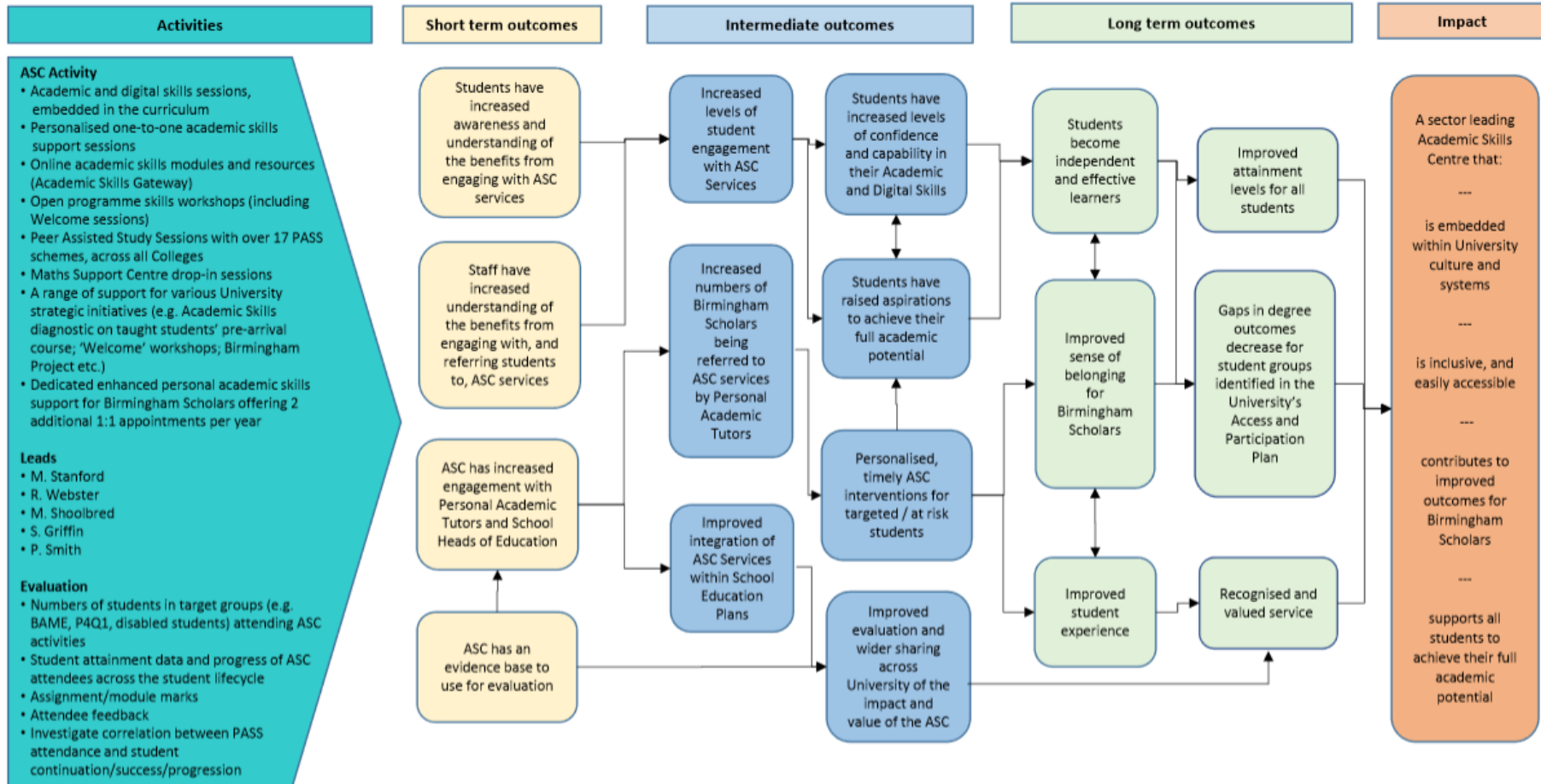
## Appendix A1: Outreach & Access Theory of Change



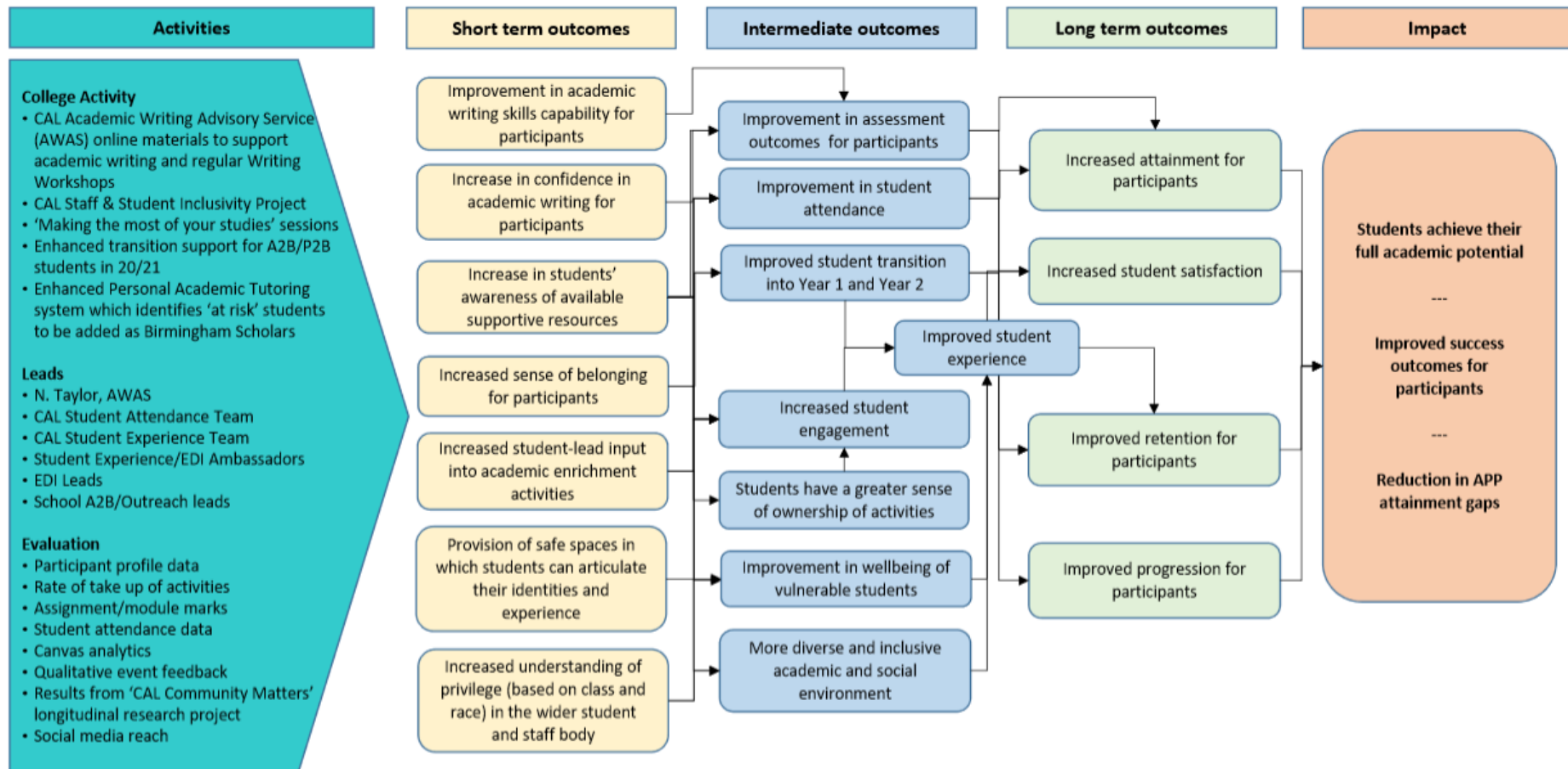
## Appendix A2: Pathways Through Study Theory of Change and nested Theories of Change



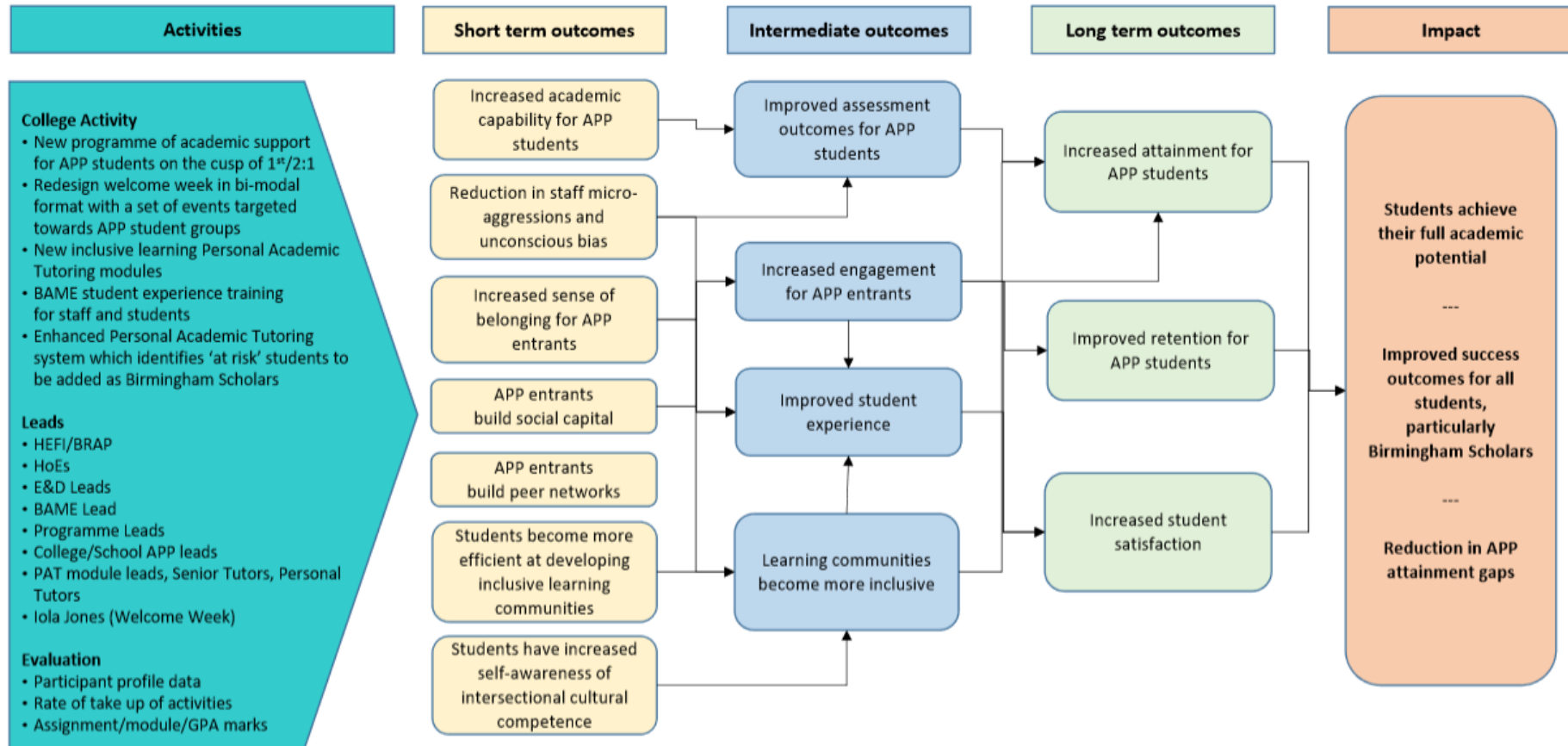
## Academic Skills Centre Theory of Change



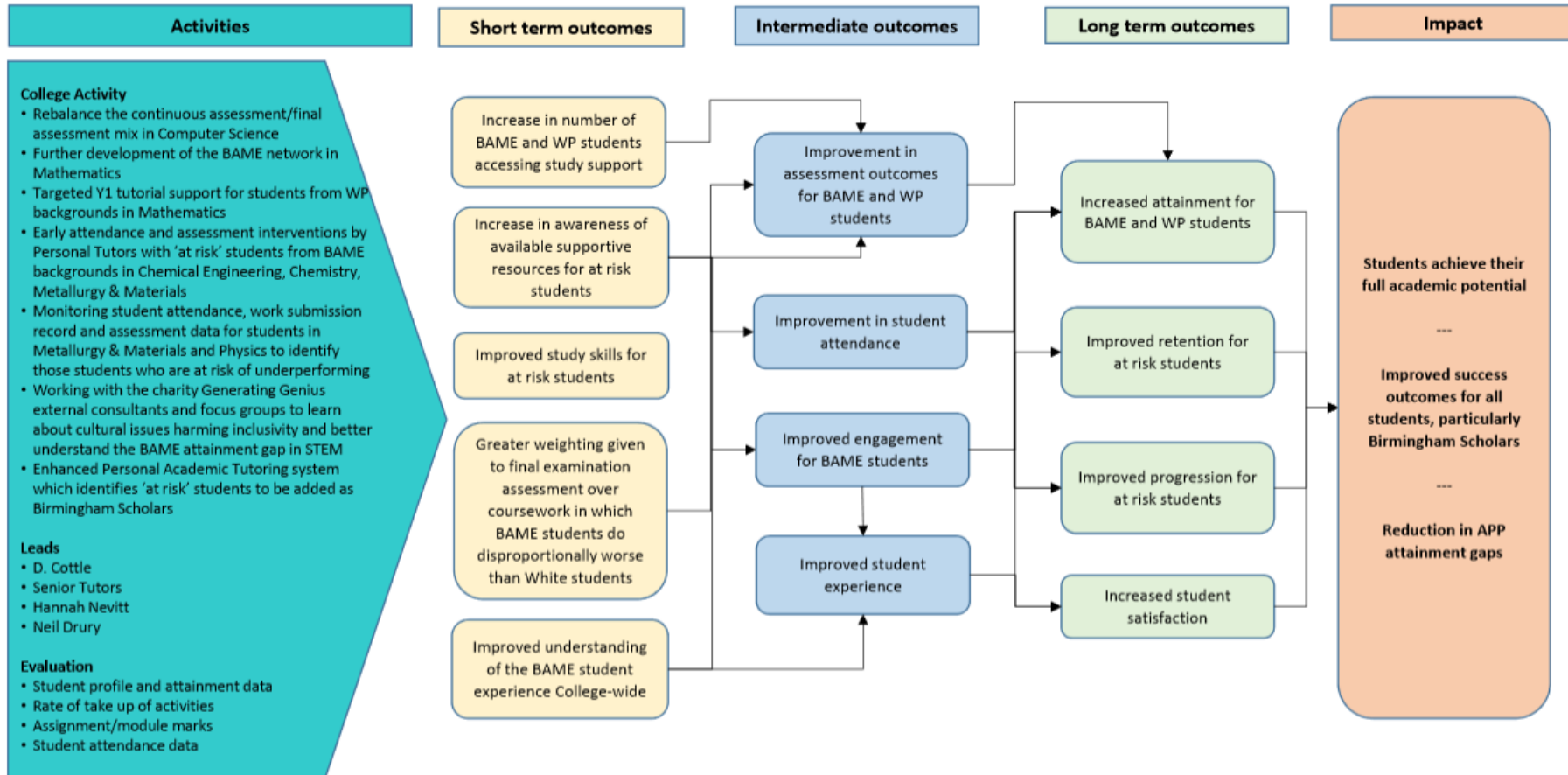
## College of Arts & Law Success Theory of Change



## College of Social Sciences Success Theory of Change

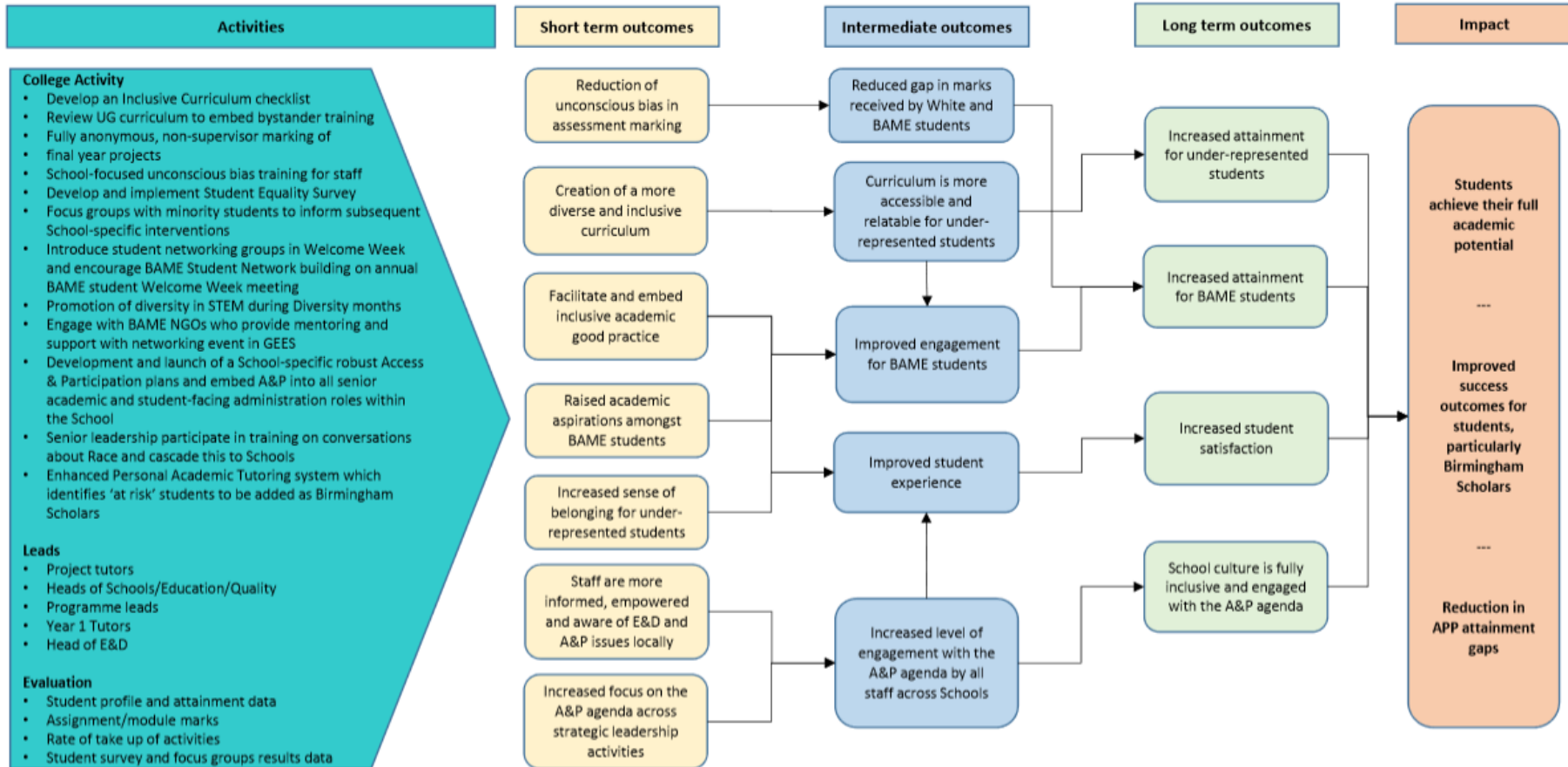


## College of Engineering & Physical Sciences Success Theory of Change

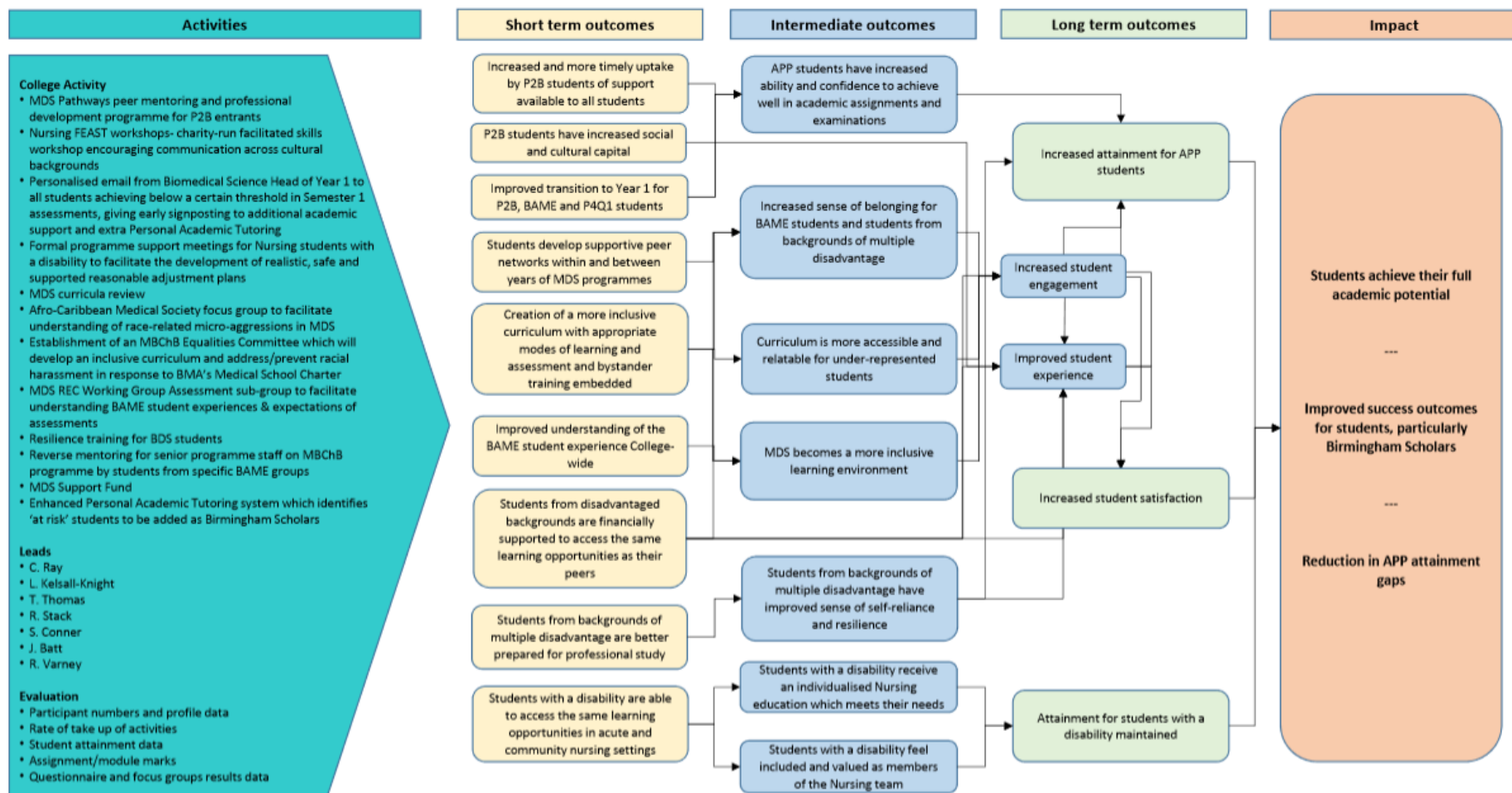




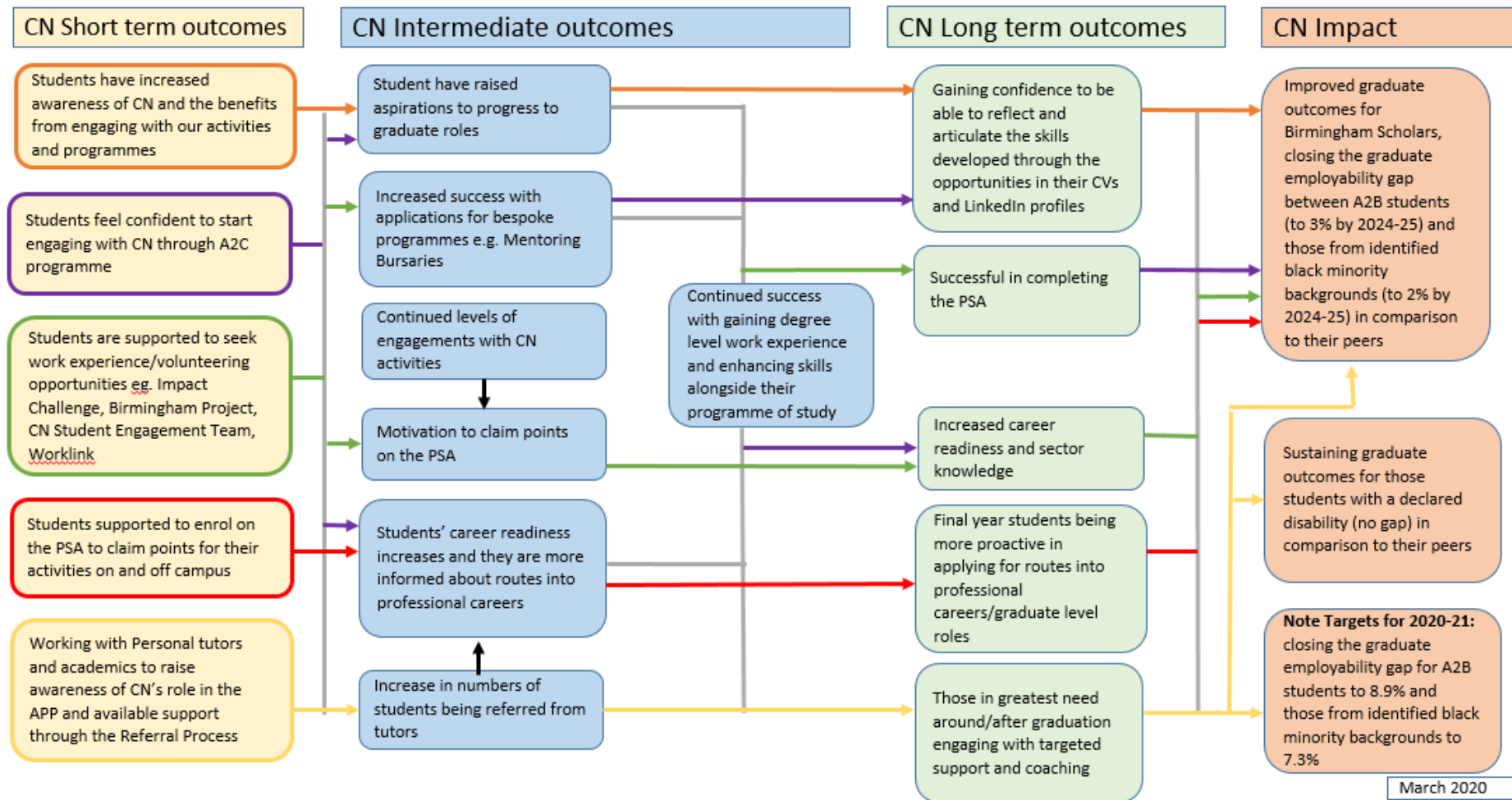
## College of Life & Environmental Sciences Success Theory of Change



## College of Medical & Dental Sciences Success Theory of Change



### Appendix A3: Pathways to Progression Theory of Change



## Appendix B: Birmingham Scholar Evaluation on Framework

Pathways to Birmingham targets			
Strategic Aims / Outcomes	Indicators	Baseline	Targets
<b>Aim 1:</b> To continue to expand, develop and broaden the reach of our proven outreach initiatives to widen access to higher education.	% PtB students entering UoB	6.2%	To increase the proportion of our intake of students with multiple measures of disadvantage to 10% by 2025 (percentage of our entrants that are admitted through our Pathways to Birmingham scheme).
	% P4Q1 and Q5 students entering UoB	P4Q5:Q1 ratio 7.4:1	To reduce the gap between the number of students we admit from the most (P4Q5) and least (P4Q1) represented groups to a ratio of 5:1 by 2025.
	Number of PtB students entering HE	2018 entry 378 2019 entry 510	To increase the number of students participating in our post 16 outreach activities who then progress to other universities. (500 Pathway to Birmingham students each year to enrol at other UK HEIs).
<b>Aim 2:</b> To continue to demonstrate leadership and innovation in regional and national collaborations and partnership activity.	% RO students entering a research intensive university	42%	To increase the proportion of Realising Opportunities (RO) students accessing a research intensive university, within two years of becoming 'HE ready' and completing their Post-16 studies, by 12 percentage points (to 54%) by 2025.
	% P4 Q1 learners engaged on Aimhigher West Midlands programmes	24.1% 240 students.	To increase the percentage of Polar 4 Q1 learners engaged on Aimhigher West Midlands programmes.

Pathways to through Study targets			
<b>Aim 3:</b> To support student success through an inclusive and supportive environment which enables all students to reach their potential	% Black students achieving 1 <sup>st</sup> or 2:1	75.3% 15.7% gap	To reduce the gap in degree outcomes (1st or 2:1) for our Black students (as compared to their White peers) to 5% by 2025, and to eliminate or reduce to a non-significant level in the longer-term.
	% Asian students achieving 1 <sup>st</sup> or 2:1	78.5% 12.5% gap	To reduce the gap in degree outcomes (1st or 2:1) for our Asian students (as compared to their White peers) to 5% by 2025, and to eliminate or reduce to a non-significant level in the longer-term.
	% P4Q1 students achieving 1 <sup>st</sup> or 2:1	80.9% 9.1% gap	To reduce the gap in degree outcomes (1st or 2:1) for our P4Q1 (as compared to their P4Q5 peers) to a non-significant level by 2025.
	% disabled students achieving 1 <sup>st</sup> or 2:1	85.6% 2.6% gap	To ensure that any gap in degree outcomes (1st or 2:1) between disabled students and other students remains non-significant.
Pathways to Progression targets			
<b>Aim 4:</b> To support our students to progress to employment by supporting them to develop the personal and social capital they need to make an informed choice about their futures	% P2B students progressing to highly-skilled employment	9.5%	To reduce the highly-skilled employability gap for our locally-domiciled P2B students to 3% by 2025.
	% Black students progressing to highly-skilled employment	7.9%	To reduce the highly-skilled employability gap for our Black students to 2% by 2025.

**Appendix C: Birmingham Scholar Evaluation Plan – 2020-2023 (reviewed annually)**

Evaluations	Focus	Completion Date
<b>Pathways to Birmingham</b>		
Forward Thinking Programme / TASO	<p>The aim of the evaluation is to two-fold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To improve our understanding of how to evaluate multi-intervention outreach programmes and,</li> <li>• To assess the effectiveness and impact of the Forward Thinking programme on participants.</li> </ul>	2022
Evaluation of Attainment Raising interventions	<p>The aim of the study is to evaluate the impact of our raising attainment interventions on the attainment of students participating in the programmes.</p> <p>The key research questions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does tutoring at A level have an impact on academic attainment? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Does the quantity and timing of tutoring (number of sessions and duration) effect the level of impact?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Is one method of tutoring more effective than others?</li> <li>• What are student’s perceptions of the tutoring?</li> </ul>	2021
Routes to the Professions programme	<p>To conduct a summative evaluation of R2P reporting on the cohorts who have completed the programme. The evaluation will assess the impact of the programme on participants and will seek to answer the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does the programme effectively reach students’ underrepresented in the professions?</li> <li>2. Do participating students develop non-academic capabilities / skills that are important for accessing and studying the professions?</li> <li>3. Do participating students progress to studying courses related to the professions and progress to professional careers?</li> </ol>	2021/22

Pathways to Success		
Enhanced Personal Academic Tutoring	Initial evaluation of EPATS will centre around the attainment levels pre-and post- referral to the Scholar programme: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How many students are being referred by Personal Academic Tutors as new Scholars?</li> <li>2. What is the change in the attainment level of Scholars before and after being added onto the programme?</li> <li>3. What no. and % of Scholars become no longer 'at risk' after joining the programme?</li> </ol>	2021
Birmingham Scholar Welcome Programme	To be evaluated by collecting overall student participant numbers and pre/post-event questionnaires about HE knowledge, preparedness, inclusion, students' concerns about joining etc.	2021
Enhanced Personal Academic Skills Support /Academic Skills Centre	Methods of evaluating the impact of ASC activities will vary according to the different types of activities held, e.g. group workshops vs 1:1 appointments, but will seek to answer the following key research questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What students use the ASC?</li> <li>2. How much do these students use the ASC?</li> <li>3. What kind of support do these students get from the ASC?</li> <li>4. What is the ASC attendance rates of Scholars?</li> <li>5. Which ASC service has the most impact on students' attainment?</li> <li>6. Do students' assignment grades improve after accessing the ASC?</li> <li>7. If so how much and is this linked to how much support they receive?</li> <li>8. Do students' module outcomes improve after accessing the ASC?</li> <li>9. What is the students' level of satisfaction with the service?</li> </ol>	2021
The Birmingham Scholar Forum	To be evaluated by collecting student attendance numbers and pre-/post-event questionnaires on feelings of belonging within the Scholar community and Scholars' views on how the programme is working for them so far.	2021

<b>Pathways to Progression</b>		
Pathways to Careers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All P2C events/ activities</li> <li>• Impact Challenge</li> <li>• Group tutorials</li> </ul>	The aim of the evaluation is to two-fold: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To improve our understanding of how to engage students, who face disadvantages in HE, in employability from the start of their degree course</li> <li>• To assess the impact of engagement in employability activity on students' career readiness and graduate outcomes.</li> </ul>	2021/22
CN Programmes <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gateway bursary</li> <li>2. Mentoring</li> <li>3. PSA</li> <li>4. Bham Project</li> </ol>	The aim is to evaluate the impact of work experience, mentoring, and extra-curricular activity on the career readiness of students and their graduate outcomes, and  To understand how participation in these activities builds social capital for students  The key research question is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does work experience and mentoring enhance a student's professional networks and create opportunities they would not otherwise have access to?</li> </ul>	2021/22
<b>Financial Support</b>		
Access Awards Evaluation	Objective of the evaluation is to provide a benchmark for the new version of the Chamberlain Award being introduced for 2020. The aim of the analysis is to ascertain if the Chamberlain Award has a demonstrable impact on progression (from one year of study to the next), retention (drop-out rates) and attainment (degree outcomes).  Key questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do the awards improve retention rates?               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Progression from 1st to 2nd year</li> <li>b. Repeating years – do they finish on time?</li> <li>c. Drop-out rates</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Do the awards help to level the playing field in terms of attainment – how do their degree outcomes compare to the comparator group?</li> </ol> The evaluation work seek to answer two key questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does our finance package help to recruit students?</li> <li>2. Does our financial package help to retain students?</li> </ol>	2021/22





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