Attainment Policy
1. **Purpose/Abstract**

The purpose of this policy is to eradicate inequity within the University, whether deliberate, implicit or structural, which contributes to unequal degree outcomes between different groups of students. This policy demonstrates the University’s commitment to uphold anti-discriminatory practice in order to enact the commitments of the strategic framework in transforming students’ lives ‘regardless of age, background or location’. A key measurable outcome of the successful implementation of this policy will be the elimination of awarding gaps at the University, which include those stated in our Access and Participation Plan (APP) submitted to the Office for Students (OfS). However, this policy goes beyond meeting a regulatory requirement and demonstrates our moral obligation as an institution to the success of all students. This policy applies to students on all modes of study; students studying at all levels of study (foundation year, access, undergraduate, postgraduate taught, postgraduate research and Apprenticeships).

This policy aims to be sector-leading in that it is not restricted to one area of the institution; it recognises that the success of University of Derby students is dependent on the sum of its parts. All areas of the institution have a role to play and therefore the requirement of policy implementation applies to all staff; the use of ‘we’ throughout this policy is in recognition of this.

2. **Introduction**

The OfS (2019) defines attainment gaps as relating to underrepresented groups of students in higher education who: ‘are less likely to achieve the same results compared with their peers’. The OfS has set targets to

- Eliminate the absolute gap (the gap caused by both structural and unexplained factors) in degree outcomes (1sts or 2:1s) between white students and black students by 2030-31.
- Eliminate the gap in degree outcomes between disabled students and non-disabled students by 2024-25.

The University’s contribution to the achievement of these targets is integral to our strategic goals to improve social mobility and to ensure our institutional promise that ‘higher education should be equitable, inclusive and open to all who have the ambition and desire to learn and progress’ (University Strategic Framework 2018-30).

This policy takes an anti-discriminatory stance; the institution’s language, systems and processes cannot disadvantage University of Derby students. It is imperative that our institutional environment provides all University of Derby students an equitable chance of success, this does not mean ‘providing the same’ but recognises the diverse nature of our student body, its complex characteristics, intersections, strengths and needs. In all aspects of our work accessibility, inclusivity, diversity and equity must be demonstrated.

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2 https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance#overview
3 Part-time, full-time, online, short courses, work is being undertaken with FE for future consideration.
Attainment gaps should be considered as ‘awarding gaps’ to acknowledge a non-deficit approach to understanding differential attainment outcomes for students in protected characteristic groups and disadvantaged socio-economic groups. We fully reject a deficit model\(^5\) and acknowledge that structural change is required to eliminate gaps.

The evidence base for this policy includes a background paper including data on awarding gaps; a literature review (Robinson & Delgado-Fuentes, 2018) completed for the OfS funded Addressing Barriers to Student Success (SAP 2) project, which collates discussion and research on awarding gaps. These are available on request from the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching.

The policy statement and Strategic Action Plan (see appendix 1) are based on the principles recommended by Universities UK and National Union of Students to implement effective change within institutions\(^6\). A detailed implementation plan will be developed for colleges and professional services, led by the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT).

3. **Scope**

This policy applies to all HE staff and students across all colleges and departments of the University of Derby\(^7\).

4. **Responsibilities**

Accountability sits at institutional, departmental and subject level; it requires all staff to understand gaps and take responsibility for role-specific activities to eliminate awarding gaps. The alignment of this policy, the Access and Participation Plan, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, and the Learning and Teaching Strategy will secure a whole institution approach, requiring partnership working between colleges, departments and students to eliminate unequal outcomes. The Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) and the Centre for Student Life will support colleagues to develop implementation plans and associated evaluation frameworks. Senior Leadership teams will be required to ensure the implementation plan is actioned.

The Strategic Insights and Planning team and the Centre for Quality Assurance will provide regular data updates to inform the progress of actions; monitored through College/School Quality Enhancement Committees.

The Social Mobility team has oversight of this policy and will report progress through the deliberative structures from Programme Committee meetings to College/School Quality Enhancement Committee meetings and the Academic Quality and Development Committee (ADQC) and to Academic Board.

\(^5\) Deficit models assume the student is lacking and this is the reason for their lower attainment.

\(^6\) Strong leadership; Conversations about race and culture (gender, socio-economic status, heteronormativity, disability); (Racially) diverse, inclusive environments; Evidence and analysis; What works. (UUK, 2019)

\(^7\) Further work to be undertaken with Further Education and partners to establish expectations.
Every area of activity within the policy will create an implementation plan that will have an associated theory of change model of evaluation\(^8\) that accompanies it, to ensure that the impact of the activity is understood.

Several University Committees share responsibility for the monitoring and governance of student success, experience and outcomes:

- The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, and its sub-groups, ensure that new evidence and analysis continues to inform our practice and will ensure that this policy remains a living document.

- The Student Experience and Learning and Teaching Committee is responsible for learning and teaching strategy and student experience.

- The Academic Development and Quality Committee is responsible for the maintenance of quality and standards, and the enhancement of student learning opportunities.

5. **Policy Statement**

- We will eliminate awarding gaps between different groups of students\(^9\) as set out by the Office for Students, and in the institution’s Access and Participation Plan.

- Our institution does not and will not tolerate statements and/or actions from any member of the University community that are contrary to equity and inclusion.

- Leaders will demonstrate and promote equity and inclusion within their own teams and across all areas of the University of Derby\(^10\).

- Policies and practices on recruitment, selection and promotion of staff will demonstrate equity and create/sustain a diverse workforce that reflects the demographic of the student body.

- Staff will complete mandatory and continuous professional development in equity, inclusion and accessibility issues.

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\(^9\) The degree attainment gap is the difference in ‘top degrees’ - a First or 2:1 classification - awarded to different groups of students. Advance HE (2019)

\(^10\) The Leadership Foundation identified a correlation between ‘inclusive leadership and student academic productivity motivation and wellbeing’ (Moss et al, 2018:5 ); this model of leadership is demonstrated through visibility of the senior leadership team to create an ‘emphasis on belonging and connection with the university’s culture’ (Moss et al, 2018:5) Moss,G. Sims,C. McDuff, N. & Tatam, J. (2018) The Impact of Academic Leadership Behaviours on BME Student Attainment.
• The University’s decolonised\textsuperscript{11} and diverse curriculum values a wide range of frameworks, traditions and knowledges from across the world.

• The University’s curriculum design model will support wellbeing and success for all students, acknowledging the principles of the ‘University Mental Health Charter’\textsuperscript{12} and the University’s Wellbeing framework.

• Academic practice is rooted in principles of equity, diversity and inclusion informed by performance and progress data.

• Physical and online spaces are designed for inclusivity and to ensure accessibility and engagement is possible for all students.

• All digital content, including online websites and teaching materials, are accessible in accordance with Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

• Marketing materials will align with equity requirements and represent the student body and the diverse nature of the University.

• The Social Mobility unit will oversee, monitor and evaluate changes to pedagogic practice to understand what works to ensure sustained improvement, sharing best practice across the institution.

6. Policy Implementation

Due to the nature of this policy, implementation plans for colleges and professional services require different and specific approaches to ensure they are fit for purpose. A Theory of Change approach will be applied for evaluation purposes and we recommend a students-as-partners approach to co-create the implementation plans.

7. Related Documentation

• Access and Participation Plan 2020-21 to 2024-25 - this sets out how we will improve equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education\textsuperscript{13}.

• Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2017-21) - this sets out how we intend to meet our statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{11} Decolonising is about rethinking, reframing and reconstructing the current curriculum so it doesn’t always elevate one voice, one experience, and one way of being in the world. It is about considering how different frameworks, traditions and knowledge projects inform each other, how multiple voices can be heard, and how new perspectives emerge from mutual learning (definition, SOAS decolonise).

\textsuperscript{12} Hughes, G. & Spanner, L. (2019). The University Mental Health Charter. Student Minds: Leeds

\textsuperscript{13} https://www.derby.ac.uk/about/governance/office-for-students/

\textsuperscript{14} https://staff.derby.ac.uk/sites/docs/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?srcourcedoc=/sites/docs/ppfg/PLCY-Equality-Diversity-Inclusion.docx&action=default&DefaultItemOpen=1
• Learning and Teaching Strategy (2020-30) - this will set out the process of curriculum design and the pedagogic principles of the institution.\textsuperscript{15}

• The University Wellbeing Framework will identify the ways that the institution can support student wellbeing\textsuperscript{16}.

8. References


9. Appendices

• Appendix 1: Strategic Action Plan

10. Equality Analysis

It is mandatory for all major policies to complete an equality analysis. This is important to ensure due consideration has been taken when developing policy on whether a policy affects a group or an individual.

\textsuperscript{15} In development
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