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**2 0 2 1**  
**IMPACT**  
**REPORT**

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# Impact summary

OVER THE LAST SIX YEARS WE HAVE WORKED WITH

**739**  
participants

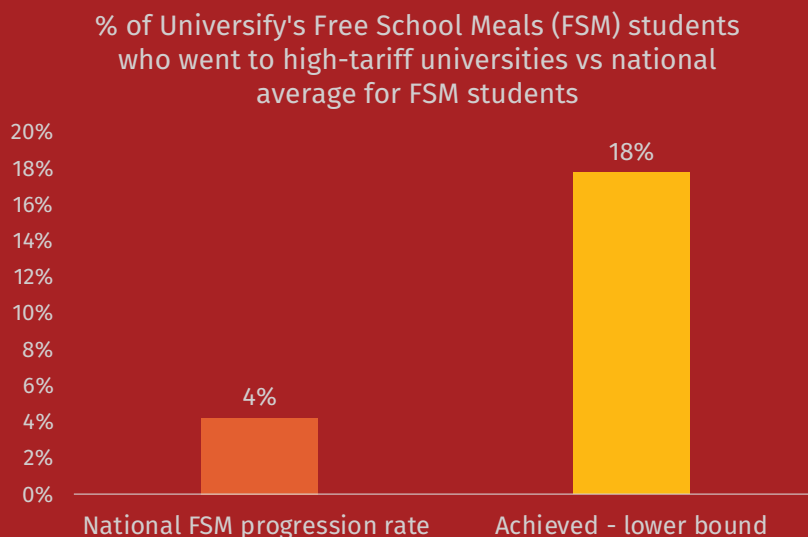
from

**138**  
partner schools

with the  
help of

**277**  
volunteers

INCREASED SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS TO UNIVERSITY COMPARED TO A TAILORED BENCHMARK



**4x**

Universify students  
eligible for Free School  
Meals progressed to high-  
tariff universities at a rate  
four times higher than the  
national average

WE HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO IMPROVED GCSE ATTAINMENT



**88%**

of teachers agreed that Universify benefitted student attainment at GCSE

**800+**

coaching sessions  
completed in 2020-21

**1/4**

Cost per Universify student  
progressing to university is  
up to 25% of other provision

# Foreword

2021 can sometimes feel best summarised in two words: adapting, again. 2021 was another year disrupted by COVID-19 - and again, these disruptions were detrimental for education. There were more school closures, more exam cancellations, and even more uncertainty for students and their futures. Again, Universify had to adapt and provide online alternatives for our Spring and Summer residentials. And again, 2021 emphasised how important programmes like Universify are in tackling educational inequality which has worsened over the pandemic.

But it was encouraging to see that notwithstanding this continued disruption, Universify participants again achieved success in university admissions and at GCSE. Our third cohort had increased progression rates to university, while teachers at partner schools agreed more than ever that the programme benefitted students' GCSE attainment.

Excitingly, this year we have access to new data allowing us to better understand our impact in supporting young people from underrepresented backgrounds most at risk of not fulfilling their potential through education. Students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) nationally have some of the lowest progression rates to university. Our data shows that FSM-eligible Universify alumni progress to high-entry tariff universities at rates four times higher than the national average. We can also see the measurable impact of coaching in developing the invaluable problem-solving and communication skills that equip students for future success in education and employment.

The disruption from the pandemic has also brought opportunity: we have taken advantage of the Government Kickstart scheme to provide employment opportunities for four young people. While developing their own skillsets to improve long term employability, these fixed-term team members are helping Universify build our growing evidence of success so we can focus on meeting the increasing need and demand for our work.

So perhaps it is better to think of 2021 as a year that brought optimism. The vaccine offered a light at the end of the pandemic tunnel – and allowed us to look forward with great anticipation to returning to in-person residentials in Spring 2022, including in Cambridge for the first time. I am proud of the resilience of the Universify team, volunteers and tutors and the ongoing impact Universify's year-long programme continues to create, and delighted to celebrate the success of our students.

**Mary Nicholson, Chair of Trustees, Universify Education**

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# Executive summary

WE HAVE INCREASED ACCESS TO TOP UNIVERSITIES FOR YOUNG ADULTS FROM DISADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS.

## CREATING A FAIRER SOCIETY THROUGH EDUCATIONAL EQUALITY

Universify Education is a charity that exists to create a fairer society by furthering educational equality. We do this by increasing access to the life changing opportunity of university – a vehicle for social mobility – for young people from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds. In evaluating Universify's year-long programme, we have found that:

- 4X more Universify participants eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) went to high-tariff universities than the national average
- 2X more Universify participants progressed to university compared to a tailored benchmark
- Universify participants were significantly more likely to apply to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge according to independent analysis by UCAS
- Our cost per outcome is up to 75% less than other provisions

Our fifth annual impact report highlights that our programme is empowering young people to fulfil their potential through education, regardless of their background.

## CONTINUING TO CREATE IMPACT ONLINE

For a second year, the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to exacerbate existing educational inequalities. Again, we have adapted and refined our work online, and are pleased to see that even during the pandemic our programme continues to equip participants with the tools and belief to attain excellent GCSE grades, access top universities, and improve invaluable life skills.

In 2021 our cohort size grew again as we supported over 180 participants from across the country. Even

with a larger cohort our programme continues to help participants to overcome the key barriers – low aspirations, feeling out of place at university, and lower GCSE attainment – that they face in applying to highly-selective universities.

We saw ongoing positive short-term impact. Student aspirations increased by 27% points in the number of participants who were 'fairly likely' or 'very likely' to apply to a highly-selective university at the end of the online summer programme. 88% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that Universify's programme benefitted their student's GCSE attainment. We fostered a greater understanding of university, with word associations showing a reduction in negative connotations to university and in the belief 'university isn't for people like me'. With three cohorts of university entrants, we can see that these short-term impacts are the bedrock for longer-term outcomes.

## UNIVERSIFY ALUMNI JOIN OUR MISSION TO TACKLE EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY

Universify alumni are becoming role models and champions for educational equality. Our alumni volunteered as coaches, supporting participants following in their footsteps in the 2021-22 programme. They also applied to and were selected for the Fair Education Alliance's Youth steering group, a new youth engagement group for the nationwide alliance of over 250 organisations, to help shape the youth-led strategy for collective action to further educational equality.



## **SUSTAINABLY MEETING THE GROWING NEED FOR OUR WORK**

We want to build on what we have learnt from 2021 and the increasing need for our work that the pandemic has created. To do this we have set ourselves the following objectives:

1. Further enhance our in-person programme with the best aspects of the online courses to maximise our impact
2. Further enable sustainable growth that matches the growing demand for our work through diversified income streams
3. Further build partnerships to grow beyond Oxford and Cambridge by 2024.

While these objectives are ambitious, the challenge of educational inequality is greater than ever. We look to 2022 with confidence in our growing track record and an eagerness to do more to create a society where every young person can fulfil their potential through education, regardless of their background.



# Oghale's Universify story, from attending the Universify Programme at St Hugh's College, Oxford, to becoming a university student at St Hugh's.

'IT HELPED ME GAIN CONFIDENCE IN NOT ONLY MY ACADEMIC ABILITY, BUT ALSO IN MYSELF TO EVEN THINK THAT I COULD APPLY'



*In 2018, I was given the opportunity to take part in the Universify programme. The experience was phenomenal for me. As a Year 10 student at the time, I hadn't been lucky enough to consider the extensive variety of further education, outside of the conventional subjects we explored in school. So, when the programme gave me the option to do so, I was more than excited! In particular, I enjoyed having Philosophy taster classes, which opened my eyes to the key issues and arguments of the discipline. I had been so inspired that I decided to read further into the subject and found true interest and happiness in doing so.*

*Almost four years on from the programme, I am an Undergraduate at the University of Oxford, studying Psychology and Philosophy at St Hugh's College. I feel as though Universify prepared me for the application, the workload and fitting in at university in general. The programme gave me the chance to interact with people from across the country and make friends that I still have even to this day. It helped me gain confidence in not only my academic ability, but also in myself to even think that I could apply. Overall, I had gained a holistic insight into the options that I had after finishing school, which has helped lead to my success as an academic. Universify has helped myself and so many others and for this, I highly recommend it!*



**Oghale Erikigho, Cohort 3 Universify participant and first year student at St Hugh's College, Oxford, where Oghale participated in the Universify programme in 2018.**

# Who we are

INCREASING ACCESS TO EDUCATION SO STUDENTS CAN REACH THEIR FULL ACADEMIC POTENTIAL REGARDLESS OF BACKGROUND.

## WHY DO WE EXIST?

Universify Education aims to create a fairer society by empowering young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to fulfil their potential through education.

A young person's background (economic, social, ethnic, family background and geographic background) disproportionately determines the opportunities they have to fulfil their potential through education. Therefore, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to miss out on the life-changing opportunity of going to university. Underrepresentation in higher education limits social mobility and is to the detriment of society, as graduates disproportionately take up decision-making roles in society without being representative of that society, reinforcing existing inequalities.



*The Universify course for me has been life changing, I feel it has given me a platform to reach for my goals from, as well as being highly informative about universities as a whole.*

**Cohort 6 participant.**

## WHAT WE DO

Our mission is to improve social mobility by giving young people the skills, knowledge, and belief to fulfil their potential and access university regardless of their background. We do this by running an intensive, year-long programme for students from non-selective state schools starting in the summer of Year 10 (aged 14-15).

Our programme consists of three elements:

1. A week-long summer residential at a highly-selective university
2. Monthly online coaching with a Universify volunteer coach
3. 3-day GCSE revision residential in the spring of Year 11

## WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT

We work with students early in the process of making decisions about their futures and, crucially, before they sit their GCSEs, where poor grades can limit future opportunities. By intervening sooner to raise aspirations and attainment, we provide



more young people with the chance to fulfil their potential.

Our programme provides a multi-pronged, intensive intervention. The two residentials allow participants to experience university life so that they can decide whether university is the right step for them. Coaching provides personalised ongoing support to sustain aspirations and develops the autonomy and self-esteem needed for young people to fulfil their potential. Lastly, intensive GCSE revision ensures that our programme helps to boost academic attainment.



## Our intensive, transformative year-long programme

### SUMMER PROGRAMME

The summer programme introduces participants to university through

- Academic taster sessions
- University Q&As
- Group project to design a dream university
- Confidence building and team games

*See page 20 to read about the impact of the summer programme on Cohort 6.*

### MONTHLY COACHING SESSIONS

Monthly coaching sessions bridge the gap between our summer and spring residentials. Participants develop the goal setting and problem solving skills they need to pursue their chosen path.

*See page 23 for more about the impact of coaching on Cohort 5.*

### SPRING PROGRAMME

Participants return in spring for

- GCSE revision classes
- Additional academic taster sessions
- Careers fair and post-16 programmes
- Self-reflection and group activities

*See page 17 for the impact of the 2021 spring programme for Cohort 5.*



"It made going to university seem like a much more achievable goal, and it cleared up so many questions I had. I learnt about the application process, and experienced many subjects, meaning that now I know what some possible courses feel like."

**Universify participant from cohort 6**



"I do attribute a lot of my GCSE success and my ability to make the right choices for the future to coaching and I feel as though coaching really helped to cultivate my potential."

**Universify participant from cohort 5**



"My Maths skills definitely improved with the intensive revision sessions... which meant that I exceeded my expectations of the grade I could achieve at GCSE."

**Universify participant from cohort 5**



## THEORY OF CHANGE

Our Theory of Change outlines how our programme has been designed to equip young people with the belief, knowledge, tools, and skills to make and fulfil more informed decisions about their future.

Universify's Theory of Change was originally designed based on input from the sector to make sure Universify's work complements the existing provision for young people. As part of Universify's

annual strategy, using our annual impact evaluation data and feedback from Universify beneficiaries, we review our Theory of Change to ensure our work and activities continue to best meet the needs of the students we support to maximise our impact.

# Universify's theory of change

### Background

Students from certain geographical, ethnic, socio-economic, and class backgrounds are less likely to apply successfully to highly-selective universities and high-demand courses. Barriers include low aspirations, limited attainment, understanding of higher education, lack of support and reliable information, and feeling out of place in a university environment.

### Problem

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are under-represented in higher education, particularly at highly-selective universities.

### Activities

Residential summer course. Admissions support.  
Spring revision residential. Support at university.  
Academic coaching.

### Intermediate outcomes

Improved understanding of highly-selective university, and how to get there for participants.  
Improved subject knowledge and critical thinking skills.

### Outcomes

Increased aspiration and attainment.  
Increased knowledge of university admissions.  
Increased feeling of being 'at home' at university.  
Improved confidence and resilience.  
Participants are able to make an informed decision about university.

### Final goal

Increase in students from disadvantaged backgrounds making successful applications to universities and highly-selective universities.

### Further goal

Higher Education — particularly highly-selective universities — is representative of the UK population.  
People are able to make informed decisions about their future.

### Enabling factors

Participants form a supportive group and develop cohort expectations of progress.  
Participants respond positively to challenge of being 'out of their comfort zone' and in a new environment.  
Schools support participants aspirations and decisions through increased understanding of university.

## ADAPTING OUR PROGRAMME IN THE SECOND YEAR OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

We continued to run our programmes online in 2021 for the health and well-being of participants, volunteers, and staff<sup>1</sup>

### SPRING PROGRAMME 2021

With the UK in its third lockdown and schools returning to online learning during our 2021 spring courses, we condensed the spring course into two days online across two weekends. The first day focused on GCSE support. As public exams were cancelled again, we gave our participants a choice in whether they would prefer to focus on catching up on subject content, exam skills, or looking at A Level content. The second day was future-focused with university taster sessions and a careers fair to rebuild motivation for the future.

### SUMMER PROGRAMME 2021

Although we had hoped to find a way to deliver the summer programme safely in person, we took the decision to stay online following a thorough investigation of the possibility of creating a safe in-person programme.<sup>2</sup>

Participants took part in a group work project to design their dream university, a wide range of university taster sessions, Q&A sessions with volunteers and admissions tutors, and played group games to cultivate a cohort feel over 5 days online in the summer.<sup>3</sup> Having refined our online spring and summer 2020 programmes, feedback on our 2021 summer online programmes was very positive once again.

<sup>1</sup> We explain how we moved our programmes online in a safe, impactful, and accessible way in more depth in the 2020 Impact Report.

<sup>2</sup> The potential risk to the health and wellbeing of participants, volunteers, and staff was too high given rising Covid-19 rates and self-isolation orders in Oxford and Cambridge at the time.

<sup>3</sup> We report on this further in the section, 'What we've learnt'.

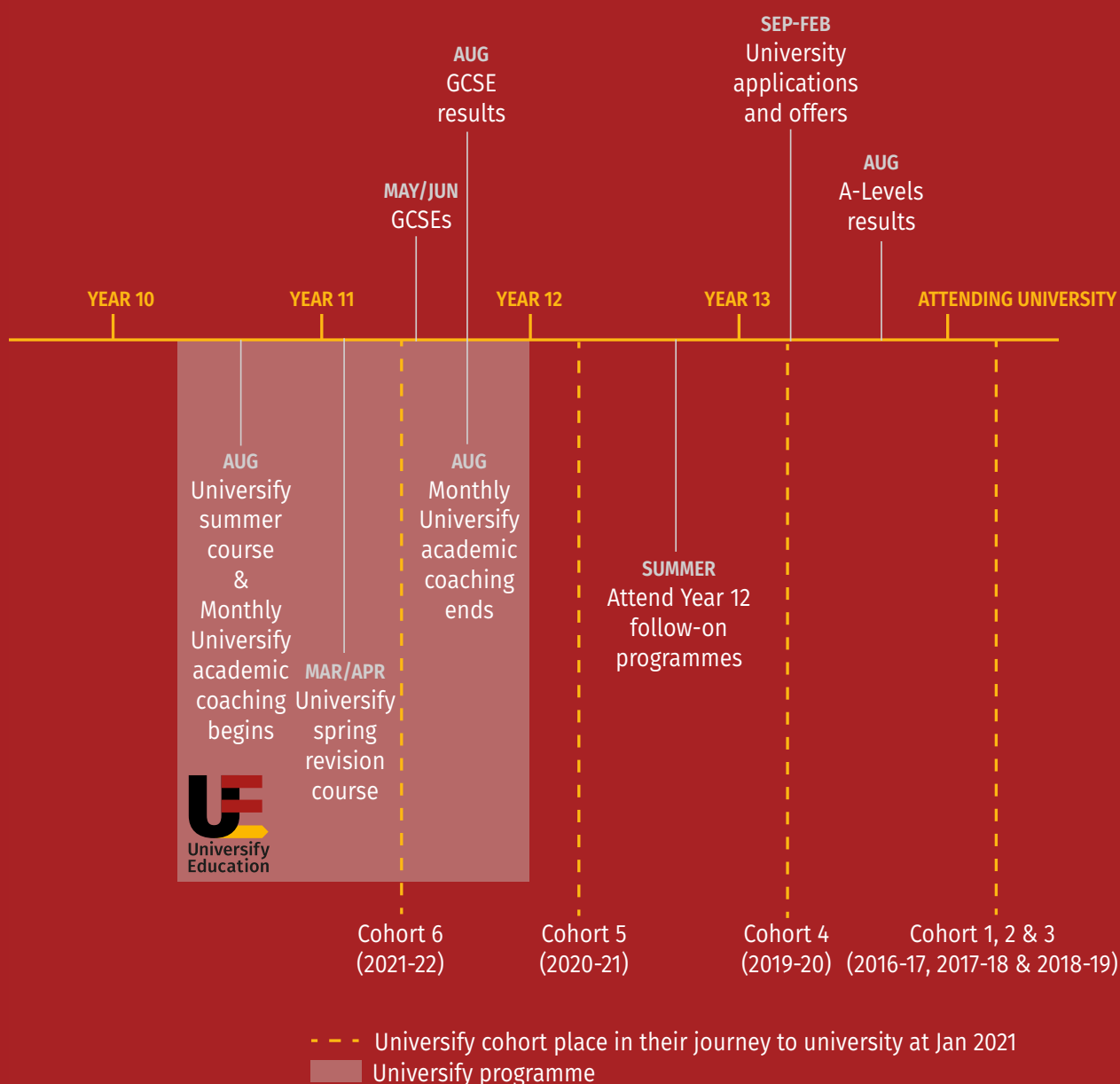


*Each Universify course is unique, thanks to the diversity of students and volunteers alike. But they all provide students with the skills, knowledge, and experiences to carry them forward to success in whatever they decide to do after their GCSEs.*

*The combination of group courses and monthly individual coaching is a particular strength of Universify's programme. I love the final group work sessions during the summer: in their presentations the students bring together everything they've learned throughout the week, sharing innovative ideas and mature perspectives about educational institutions, especially the importance of mental health support and inclusive policies. My two years of volunteering with Universify have given me so much – from my experience as a Group Leader and Course Director I've found a real sense of purpose and self-belief, as well as my first job in the Widening Participation sector.*

**Elsie Linley, Course Director 2021-22.**

# Participant journey, from Universify to university



Our year-long intervention starts in Year 10 to build a pipeline of prospective applicants eligible for existing Year 12 programmes and with the aspirations and attainment to apply to highly-selective universities. We invite Year 12 programmes to the spring course to present follow-on opportunities to participants to encourage them to continue exploring their academic futures.

# Who we support

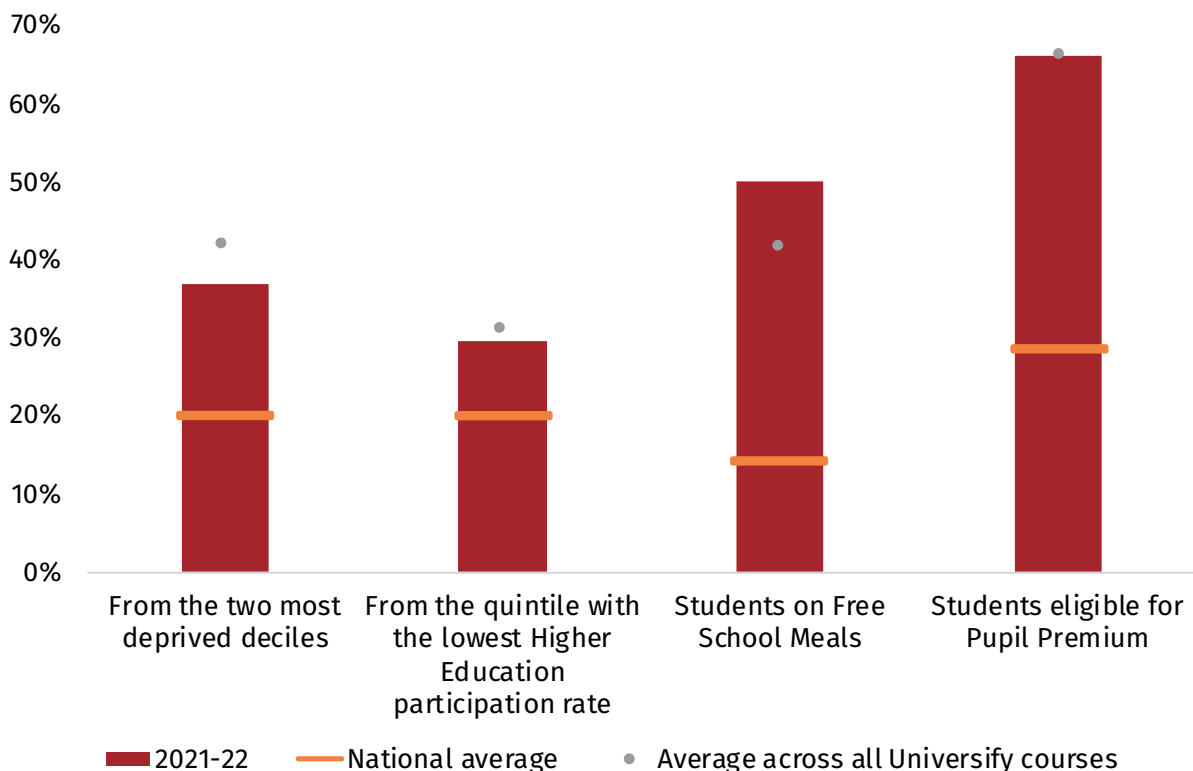
WE WORK WITH STUDENTS AT NON-SELECTIVE STATE SCHOOLS THROUGH YEAR 10 TO YEAR 11 WHO ARE AT RISK OF MISSING OUT ON THEIR ACADEMIC POTENTIAL.

In 2021, our programme grew from 167 participants in Cohort 5 to 182 participants in Cohort 6, who completed the summer course in August 2021. Our participants begin the programme in the summer before Year 11, which is earlier than most university outreach programmes. This allows us to help young people at risk of underachieving at GCSE. Without intervention, these young people may not achieve the grades necessary to make a successful application to a highly-selective university or access existing Year 12 access programmes due to not meeting the GCSE entry requirements.

In line with our vision that universities should be open to anyone with academic potential, regardless of their background, we work with participants whose backgrounds are under-represented at highly-selective universities.

We select participants from low socioeconomic backgrounds as research shows that students receiving Free School Meals (FSM)<sup>1</sup> have lower progression rates to university than students not receiving FSM,<sup>2</sup> a gap which has increased in recent years.<sup>2</sup> In Cohort 6, 50% of our participants were eligible for FSM and 66% received Pupil Premium.<sup>3</sup>

## The backgrounds of our participants show they are less likely to access Higher Education



<sup>1</sup> A means-tested benefit that can indicate a student comes from a low income family.

<sup>2</sup> DfE 2020 - <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/widening-participation-in-higher-education>.

<sup>3</sup> Pupil Premium includes young people who are or have been eligible for FSM in the past 6 years, care-experienced young people and young people who are looked after by the local authority. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium>.



Additionally, we prioritise applicants who would be the first generation in their family to attend university, as a lack of family members with experience of attending university can limit young people's aspirations and knowledge of the system to apply. Over three quarters of Cohort 6 (76%) would be the first in their family to go to university, a small increase on last year (73%).

As well as considering applicants' socioeconomic background, we also consider more holistic assessments of disadvantage which could impact an individual's likelihood of fulfilling their potential and reaching university. Teachers are asked to outline other challenges applicants may face, including being a young carer or care-experienced and other personal circumstances. Teachers are also asked to assess whether applicants have the potential to achieve six 6s at GCSE, a standard

which would allow them to make a strong application to a highly-selective university.

Many of our participants also face geographical barriers to accessing opportunities in education.<sup>4</sup> 37% of our sixth cohort came from areas with postcodes in the two most deprived deciles, according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). When considering geographical participation in higher education, 30% of participants came from areas with the lowest participation rates in higher education (POLAR). Although we use these measures to provide additional insight into participant backgrounds, we do not currently select participants based on POLAR or IMD.

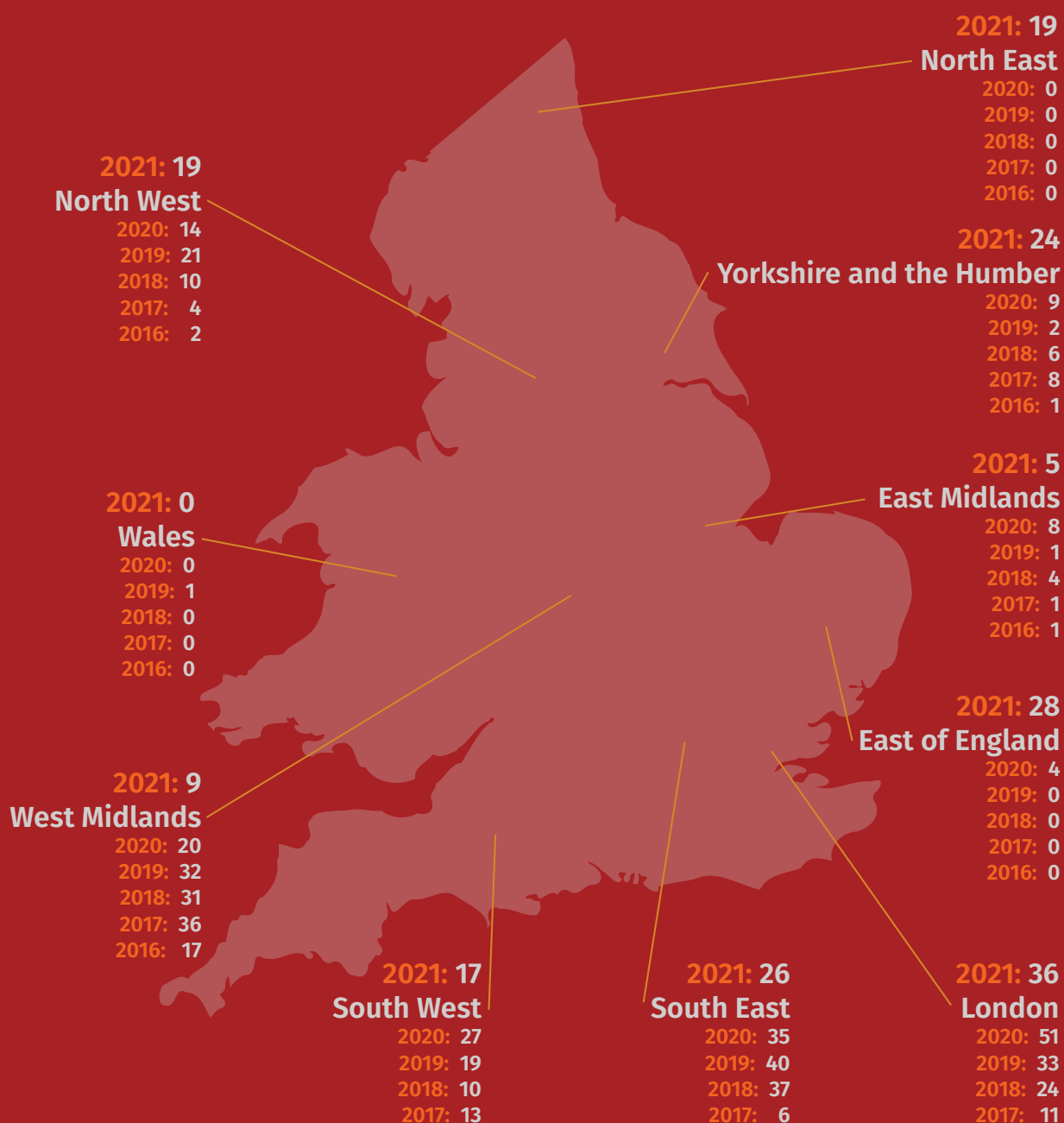


<sup>4</sup> Young people on FSM from the highest participation neighbourhoods are over twice as likely to enter higher education than those from the lowest participation neighbourhoods. <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/blog/tackling-the-geographical-disparities-in-higher-education>.

# Where our participants are from

Initially, schools are selected from the priority areas of our partner colleges. For Somerville College these are Hounslow, Buckinghamshire, the West Midlands, and Staffordshire; for St Hugh's College, it is Kent, Bexley, Bromley, and Greenwich; for Jesus College, they are Lambeth and Wandsworth; for St Anne's and Trinity College it is the North East; for Balliol College it is Norfolk; and for St Catharine's College, it is North Yorkshire and Suffolk. In 2021, other schools came through teachers

who supported us in programme development, partner organisations, word of mouth from lead teachers, school registrations of interest, and University outreach. The number of participants from each area is based on these link regions and partnerships. For example participants from the South East in 2021 are from Kent which belongs to St Hugh's link region while partner schools in Oxford, Worthing, and Milton Keynes were recruited through other partners and through word of mouth.



# Our impact

WE HAVE CONTINUED TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO THE TOP UNIVERSITIES AS WELL AS RAISING ACADEMIC ATTAINMENT AND ASPIRATIONS

## UNIVERSITY DESTINATIONS

**More participants from disadvantaged backgrounds gain places at university for a third year in a row**

- **4X more Universify participants who were eligible for Free School Meals progressed to high-tariff universities than the national average**
- **a statistically high proportion of our participants applied to Oxford or Cambridge according to independent analysis by UCAS Strobe**

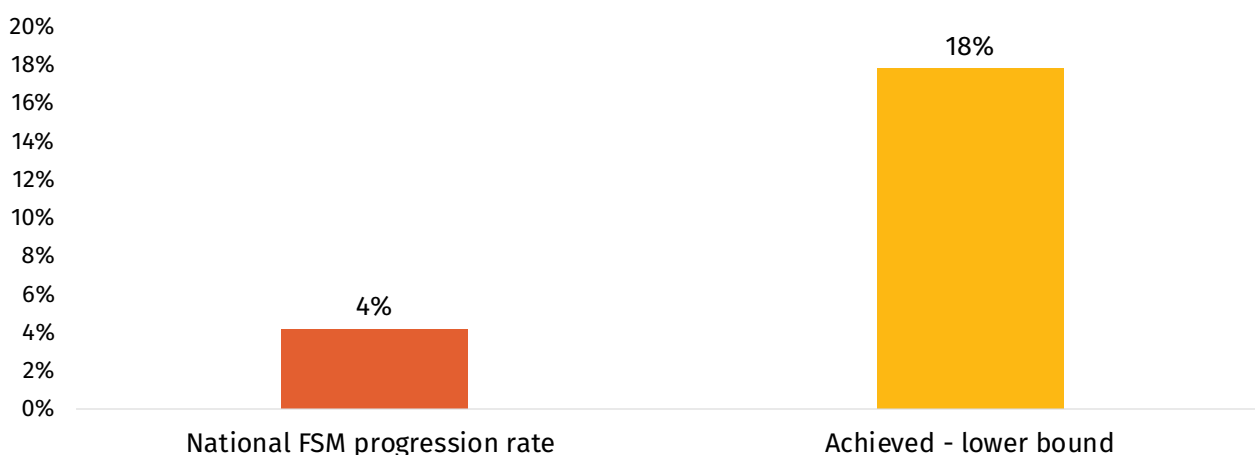
To track university outcomes, we obtain data from UCAS Strobe, who compare our participants to a control group of people from similar backgrounds.<sup>1</sup> For our third cohort of 122 participants, UCAS Strobe data once again showed that a **statistically high proportion of our participants applied to Oxford or Cambridge** compared with a group of potential applicants. This outcome continues the

trend from Cohort 2, and it is particularly pleasing to have achieved statistical significance with a larger sample of participants (122 participants vs 79 participants in Cohort 2).

This year, we have been able to track whether our participants who were eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) entered university, and specifically, high-tariff universities – those with the most stringent entry requirements. 18% of our participants who were eligible for FSM have accepted a place at a high-tariff university in 2021, which is **more than 4 times the national average for students eligible for FSM entering a high-tariff university**.

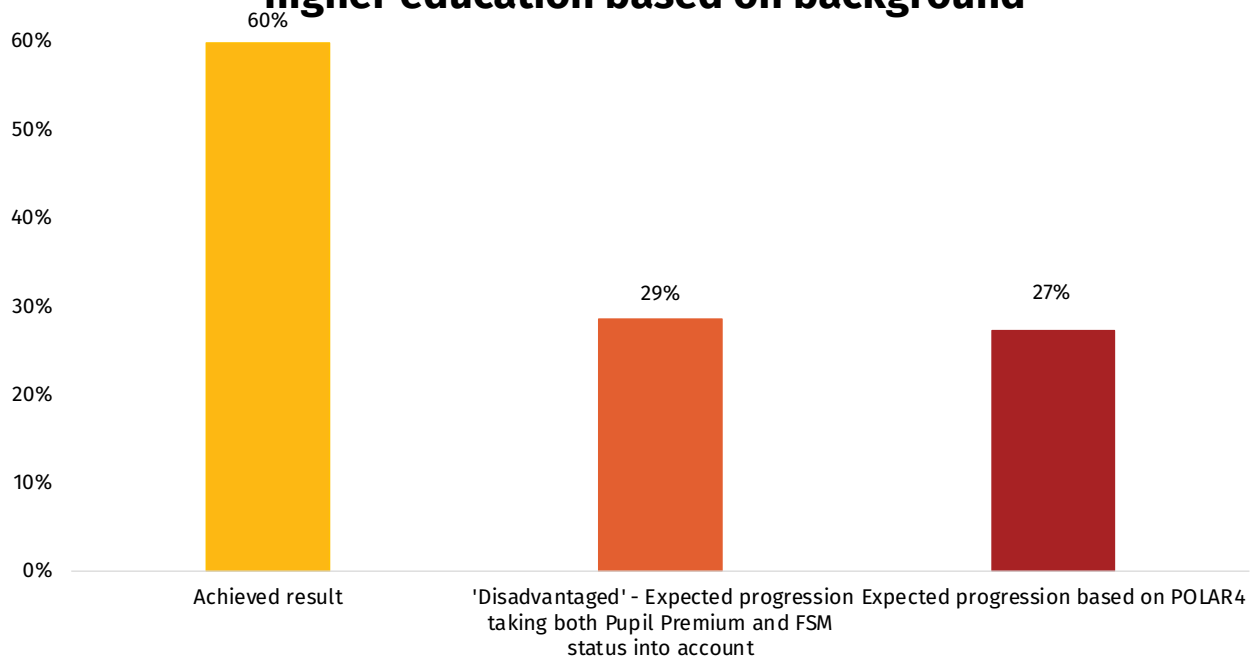
This large increase is particularly significant in determining whether our programme increases participants' chances of reaching university. While we expect that our participants are more likely to go to university than the national average, as they are selected for the programme for their academic potential and interest in attending a university residential, students who are eligible for FSM

## % of Universify's Free School Meals (FSM) students who went to high-tariff universities vs national average for FSM students



<sup>1</sup> Impact reporting is core to our work. Since we were founded in 2016, we have consistently evaluated our programme with the help of Ellie Harries, our experienced external impact evaluator, who has helped to design, evaluate, review, and improve our measurement and data analysis. A detailed breakdown about how we measure our impact can be found in the appendix.

## % of students from Cohort 3 expected to reach higher education based on background



are statistically some of the least likely to enter university, particularly high-tariff universities.<sup>2</sup>

In 2021, although we expected an even greater proportion to do so, the majority of Cohort 3 applied to university.<sup>3</sup> Looking at the whole cohort, twice the number of participants from Cohort 3 entered university than would be expected to based on their backgrounds. This can be seen whether controlling for socioeconomic disadvantage through participants' eligibility for FSM or Pupil Premium, or controlling for area-based differences in participation in higher education (POLAR).<sup>4</sup>

While most of Cohort 2 entered university in September 2020, a small proportion applied to university in 2021, a year after completing 16-18 education. Combining those who applied to university in 2020 with those who applied in 2021, UCAS Strobe found that, compared with a pool of potential applicants,

1. **significantly more Universify participants applied to Oxford and Cambridge,**
2. **significantly more Universify participants also applied to the Russell Group universities (a group of research-intensive universities).**

Overall, our participants have shown that they have overcome the barriers to reaching university, and highly-selective universities in particular, regardless of their backgrounds and despite the ongoing difficulties they face during the pandemic.

<sup>2</sup> In 2021, of those who were not eligible for FSM, 13.3% of the 18-year-old population were accepted onto courses at high-tariff universities. This compares with just 4.2% of FSM eligible 18-year-olds, a rate more than three times lower than their peers. UCAS End of Cycle 2021 – <https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-sector-level-end-cycle-data-resources-2021>.

<sup>3</sup> Based on participants' postcodes and additional contextual factors, we expected an even greater proportion to have applied to university this year than did. This is reflected by UCAS Strobe's benchmark data for Cohort 3's application rates. A possible explanation is that UCAS Strobe found that Cohort 3 were less likely to apply to low-tariff universities, which could suggest that participants who were unsure about attending university chose not to apply at all, and instead chose alternatives such as apprenticeship schemes. Another reason could be that a higher than average proportion have chosen to take a gap year and will apply next year. We will investigate these results again next year once we have the second year of destination data for Cohort 3.

<sup>4</sup> To see whether taking part in the programme contributes to their likelihood of getting into university we look at the expected rates of progression to university using national statistics and compare these to the actual progression of our participants. Further information about how we measure our impact can be found in the appendix.

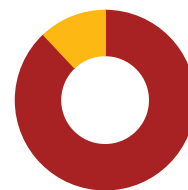


## INCREASED ATTAINMENT AT GCSE

- **88% of teachers agree that engaging in the Universify programme benefited GCSE attainment**
- **83% of individual Cohort 5 participants either attained their predicted grades or did even better than their predicted grades**

In 2021, GCSEs were awarded based on Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) rather than public exams, with teachers using a range of strategies to assess students throughout the year such as coursework as well as mock exams.<sup>5</sup>

Universify continues to make a vital positive difference to participants' GCSE attainment, with 88% of teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing that engaging in the Universify programme benefited participants' GCSE attainment.<sup>6</sup> This is consistent with percentages from previous years (in 2020 83% agreed with this statement).

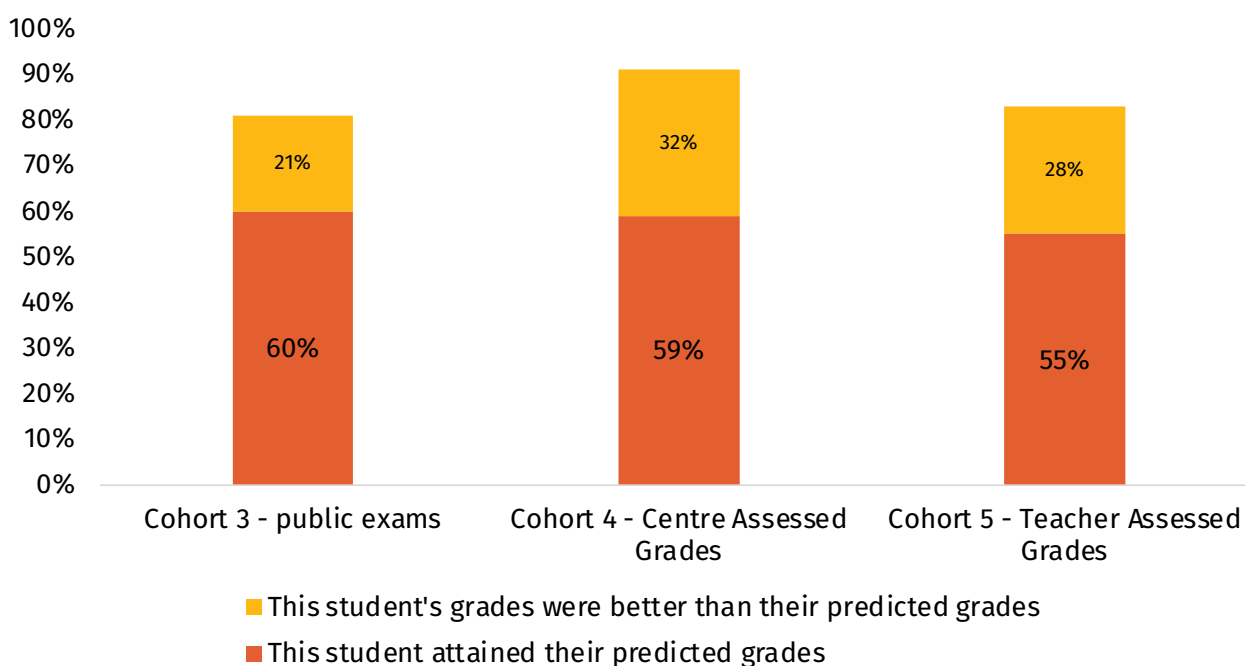


**91%**

of teachers agreed their students attained their predicted grades or did better

Overall, Universify participants attained highly in 2021. Teachers said 83% of individual Cohort 5 participants either attained their predicted grades or did even better than their predicted grades, and 70% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that individual Universify students achieved the highest grades at GCSE. Particularly positive is the percentage of teachers who stated that participants' grades were better than their predicted grades - 29% of responses indicated participants exceeded their predicted grades.

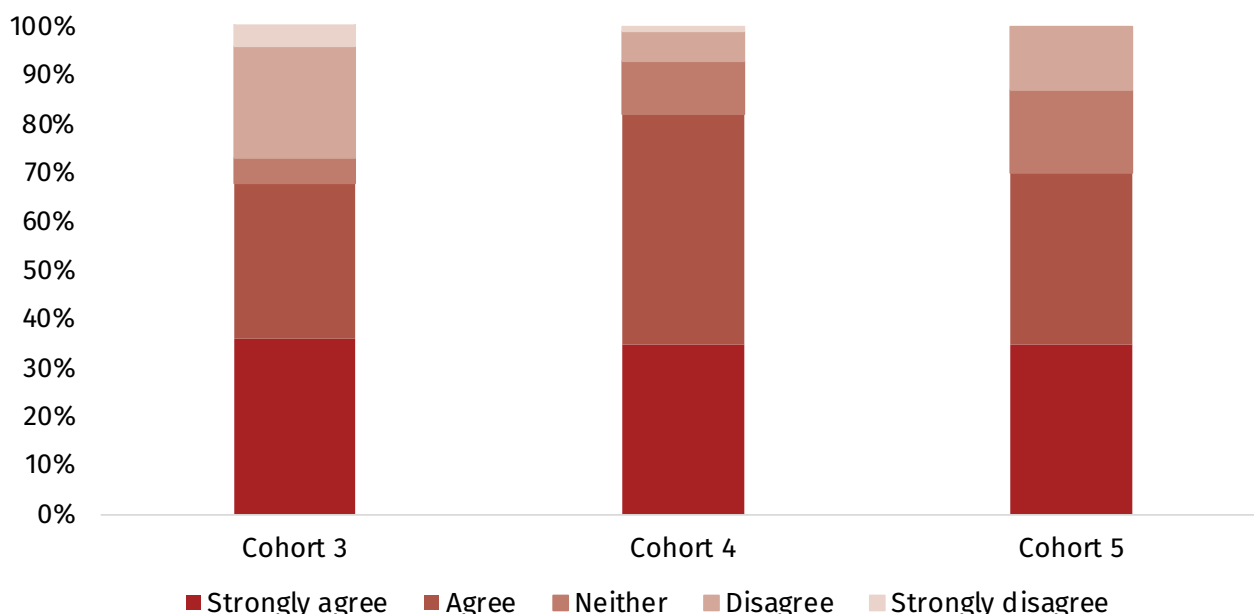
## What percentage of students achieved their predicted grades?



<sup>5</sup> TAGs were also assessed differently to the Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs) which were awarded in 2020. Cath Jadhav, "Teacher judgements in 2021: what we can learn from 2020," Ofqual, 17 May 2021, <https://ofqual.blog.gov.uk/2021/05/17/teacher-judgements-in-2021-what-we-can-learn-from-2020>.

<sup>6</sup> Educational attainment at GCSE affects students' choices for post-16 education, access to post-16 programmes, and their likelihood of receiving a place at the university of their choice. Universify measures its impact on participant attainment by surveying teachers about how Universify impacted the attainment of each individual participant. Our appendix, 'Measuring our data', contains more information on our methodology.

## Did students achieve the highest grades at GCSE?



These statistics are a slight decrease on those for Cohort 4 in 2020 but are either comparable with or better than these outcomes for Cohort 3 in 2019 (see graph below).

This pattern may reflect the wider education landscape, as the disadvantage gap appears to have widened in the UK in 2021, whereas in 2020 it narrowed very slightly.<sup>7</sup> This worsening of outcomes for the most disadvantaged young people is likely a result of the continued disruption from the pandemic with erratic teaching, school closures, and increased home-learning with inadequate resources.<sup>8</sup> Given this context, comparisons with previous years, including 2020, should be seen as interesting but inconclusive.

Overall, it is hugely positive that teachers believe Universify continues to contribute to positive outcomes for their students and that Universify participants continue to attain highly at GCSE.

### MAINTAINED ASPIRATIONS AFTER THE SPRING PROGRAMME FOR COHORT 5

- **21%-point increase in the proportion of participants who said they were 'very likely' to apply to a highly-selective university over the course of a year**
- **13%-point reduction in the proportion of participants who believed they were unlikely to apply, from 19% down to 6%**

As the Universify programme is year-long, we measure participant aspirations to higher education at three points — before the summer programme, after the summer programme and after the spring programme — to see the impact of the programme in both the short and medium term.

For Cohort 5, overall aspirations to apply to highly-selective universities, like Oxford, increased from the start of the summer programme in August 2020 to the end of the spring programme in April 2021. There was a 21% point increase in the proportion of participants with the highest aspirations, who said

<sup>7</sup> Education Endowment Foundation, Impact of school closures on the attainment gap: Rapid Evidence Assessment, London: Education Endowment Foundation, 2020. TES, 'Call to boost catch up funds to close disadvantage gap', November 2021. (Article accessed 17 November 2021) - <https://www.tes.com/news/call-boost-catch-funds-close-disadvantage-gap>.

<sup>8</sup> The Guardian, 'Home schooling is widening attainment gap between rich and poor, finds report', January 2021. Article accessed 17 November 2021) <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/jan/21/home-schooling-is-widening-attainment-gap-between-rich-and-poor-finds-report>.

they were 'very likely' to apply to a highly-selective university like Oxford.

When combining those who said they were 'likely' to apply (both 'fairly likely' or 'very likely') over the course of the programme, 61% of Cohort 5 said they were likely to apply before the summer programme, rising to 80% after the summer programme, and tailing off to 67% after the spring programme. This represents a larger than usual drop-off in aspirations between the end of the summer programme and the end of the spring programme (2-7% for previous cohorts).

There may be several reasons for this unusually large drop-off: participants had expected to attend the Spring residential in person, but the second wave of the pandemic meant that they became the first cohort not to visit university in person, an important experience for raising aspirations. This may be reflected in the increase in participants who became unsure about applying between summer and spring.<sup>9</sup> Other factors could include the change to the format of our online Spring course and short-term concerns around teacher assessed GCSE grades and their impact on future opportunities.

It is also worth noting that initial aspirations for this cohort were lower than in previous years, who attended the summer programme following the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

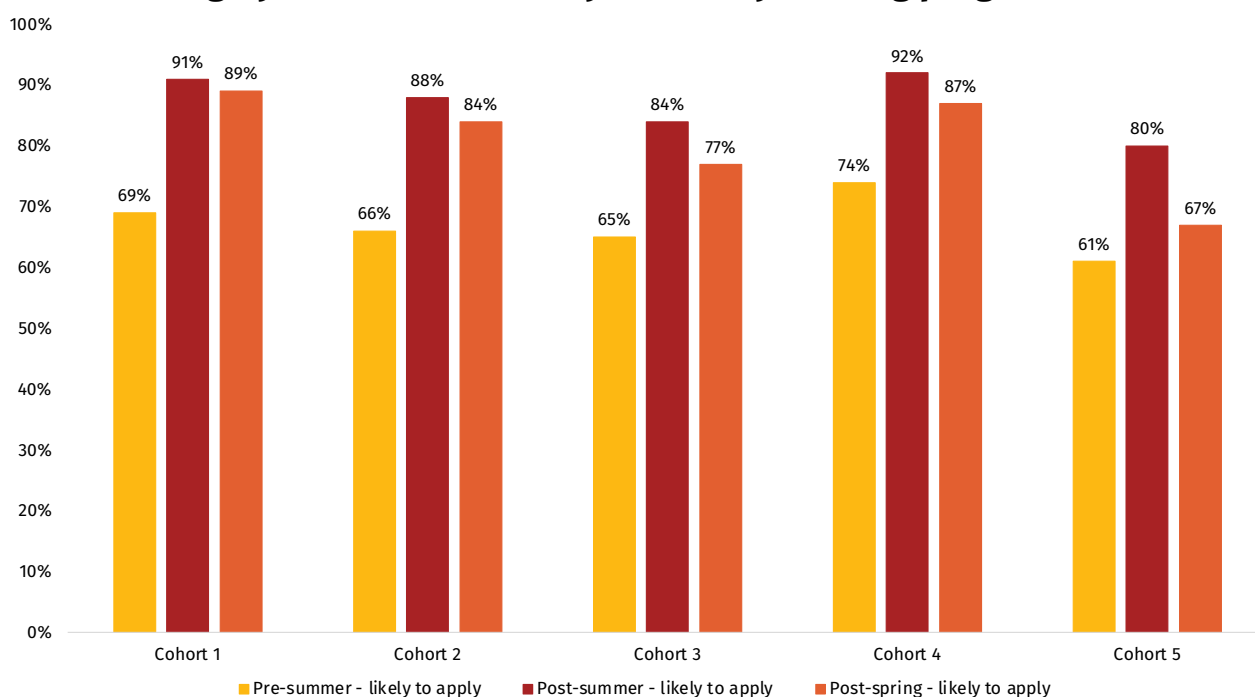
In contrast, there was a 13% point reduction in the proportion of participants who believed they were unlikely to apply to a highly-selective university. 19% believed they were unlikely to apply before summer, reducing to 9% after summer, and reducing to only 6% in spring.

In sum, our results from Cohort 5 show that overall, more participants - including those who believed they were unlikely to apply at summer - are open to attending a highly-selective university following our programme but may feel there is a substantial level of uncertainty about whether they will apply.

### INCREASE IN AUTONOMY DESPITE UNCERTAINTY

Despite participants' lower levels of certainty towards applying, we are pleased to see a small, statistically significant increase in feelings of autonomy and control over the course of the

## Cohort 1 to 5 participants aspirations - likely to apply to a highly-selective university over our year-long programme



<sup>9</sup> For Cohort 5, a much higher proportion of participants replied 'It depends' in response to this question compared with previous years: 20% before summer, 11% after summer, and 27% after spring, compared with 8%, 3%, and 11% in Cohort 4.

Universify programme in the medium term. This marks a return to the pattern of earlier cohorts and in contrast to last year, when we reported a large, statistically significant decrease in participants' feelings of autonomy and control at spring compared with before the summer, and hypothesised this may have been linked to external factors in the initial first wave of the pandemic. This year's results mark Cohort 4 as an outlier and support this hypothesis.

### INCREASED SHORT-TERM ASPIRATIONS TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR COHORT 6

**Increase in short-term aspirations to higher education despite background of increased uncertainty about the future**

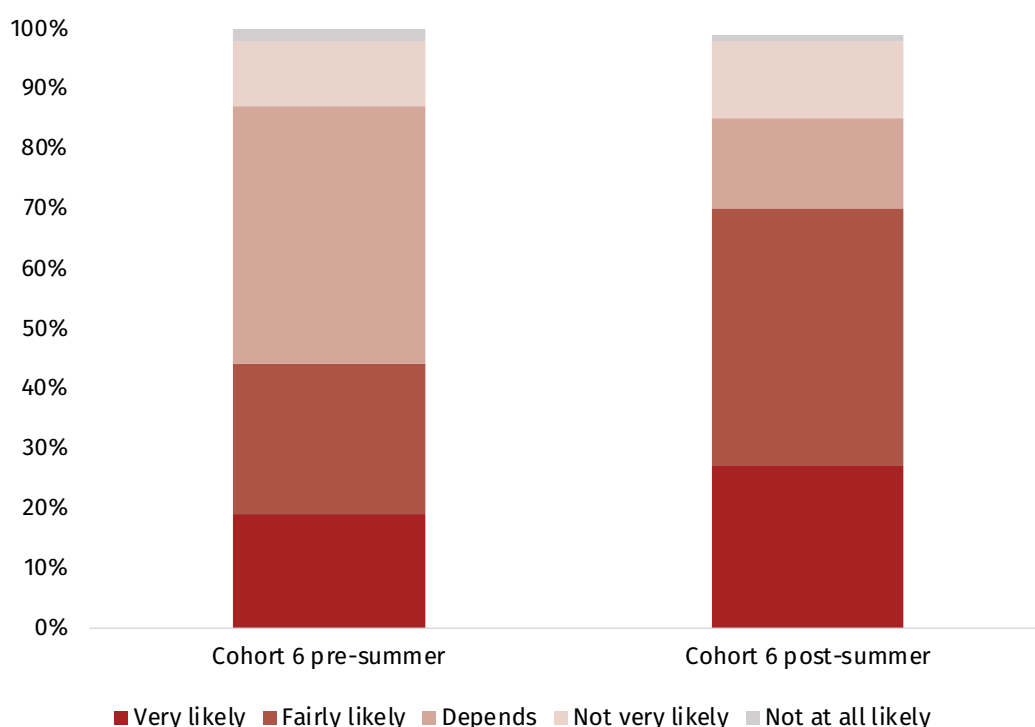
- **27% point increase in those who were likely to apply to a highly-selective university over the course of the summer programme, from 44% pre-summer to 71% post-summer**

Our online summer programme continued to raise aspirations, helping participants to feel more certain about their plans for the future.

This summer, we found a 27% point increase in the number of participants in Cohort 6 who were 'fairly likely' or 'very likely' to apply to a highly-selective university, from 44% before the summer to 71% after the summer.

This increase is particularly encouraging given that participants started the course more uncertain of their future plans than previous cohorts. When asked whether they were likely to apply to a highly-selective university before they joined the Universify summer residential, 43% of participants answered 'it depends,' compared to 19% in 2020 and 12% in 2019. Additionally, only 43% of participants agreed with the statement 'Most of my friends are planning to attend university,' down 13% points from 2020, suggesting that aspirations may be lower across our participants' year group.

## Cohort 6 - How likely are you to apply to a highly-selective university?





In contrast, 12% of participants said that they were not very likely or not at all likely to apply to a highly-selective university before the summer course, rising slightly to 14% afterwards. We will continue to monitor this trend after the spring course, which we hope to run in-person, to see if visiting a university helps participants to feel more comfortable in the environment and be more likely to apply.

It is worth noting that for some participants, ruling out applying to highly-selective universities may reflect increased confidence that an alternative path is right for them. It is our goal to give participants the knowledge, skills and belief to make an informed decision about their future. Where we can help participants have a clearer and more hopeful view of their future, we have achieved our goal.

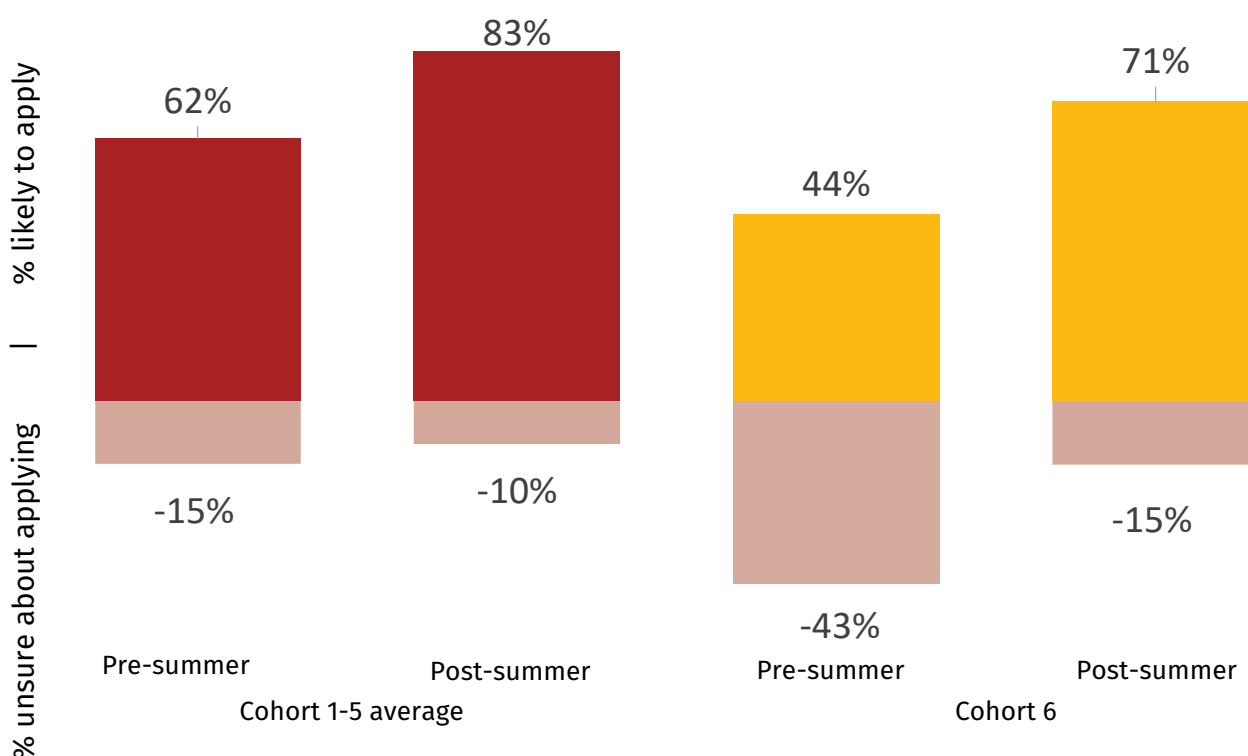
## CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF UNIVERSITY AFTER THE SUMMER PROGRAMME

One key impact of the Universify programme is changing participants' perception of university, challenging negative stereotypes and widening perspectives on what university would mean for the participants if they chose to attend. Participants are asked what word they most associate with 'university' at the beginning and end of the summer course, allowing us to measure how their perception of university changed.

The most common words participants associated with university before the summer course were 'stress/stressful' and 'hard/difficult'. The most common positive word was 'interesting', which may suggest that participants may be interested in university but before the summer course had little concrete idea of what to expect from it.

After the summer course, the most common associations changed dramatically. Participants were much more likely to think of university

## Cohort 6 - How participants' aspirations increased after the summer programme from a more uncertain starting point compared with previous cohorts



### TOP THREE WORDS ASSOCIATED WITH UNIVERSITY

Before the summer course

**Stress / stressful (11)**

**Hard (10)**

**Interesting (7)**

After the summer course

**Exciting (8)**

**Independence (8)**

**Fun (7)**

as 'exciting' and 'fun', the latter representing a dramatic change going from not featuring at all before the summer to being one of the most common words after summer.

These results are very consistent with our findings from last year, with the exact same three words most common before and after the summer course (from 'stressful', 'hard', and 'interesting' to 'exciting', 'fun', and 'independence').

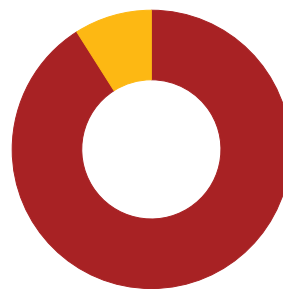
We can also analyse general trends by grouping positive, neutral, and negative words together to

assess overall shifts in perception. There was a 45% increase in positive words and a 50% decrease in negative words between the start and end of the summer, showing that both negative stereotypes or associations had been lessened and new positive associations had been formed during the summer course. This change can also be seen at the level of the individual. Before the summer course one participant thought of university as 'scary' but afterwards saw it as 'exciting'; another went from seeing it as 'stressful' to 'fun'; and another who initially believed university to be 'hard' came to see it as a place of 'dreams'.



## THE IMPACT OF MONTHLY COACHING SESSIONS

- 91% of participants said that coaching had helped them
- The majority of participants demonstrated improved attitude, communication skills and ability to overcome challenges



91%

of participants said that coaching helped them

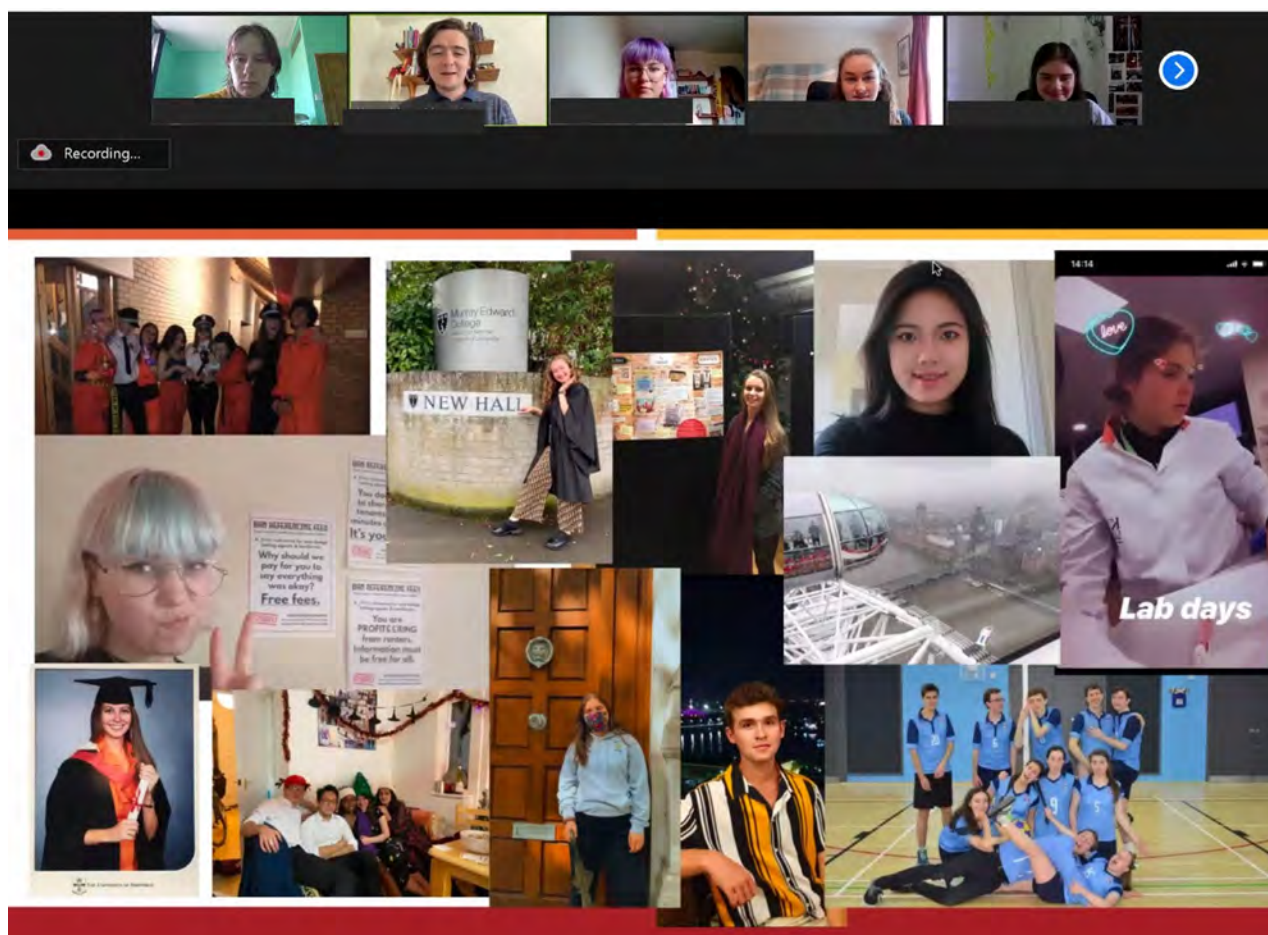
## WHAT IS COACHING?

Coaching is an integral part of our programme. It provides participants with a regular opportunity to meet with their coach to reflect on their progress and build on academic goals such as investigating A Level and university choices. Coaching encourages participants to become proactive and independent by developing the goal-setting and problem solving skills that they will need to pursue their chosen path beyond Universify.

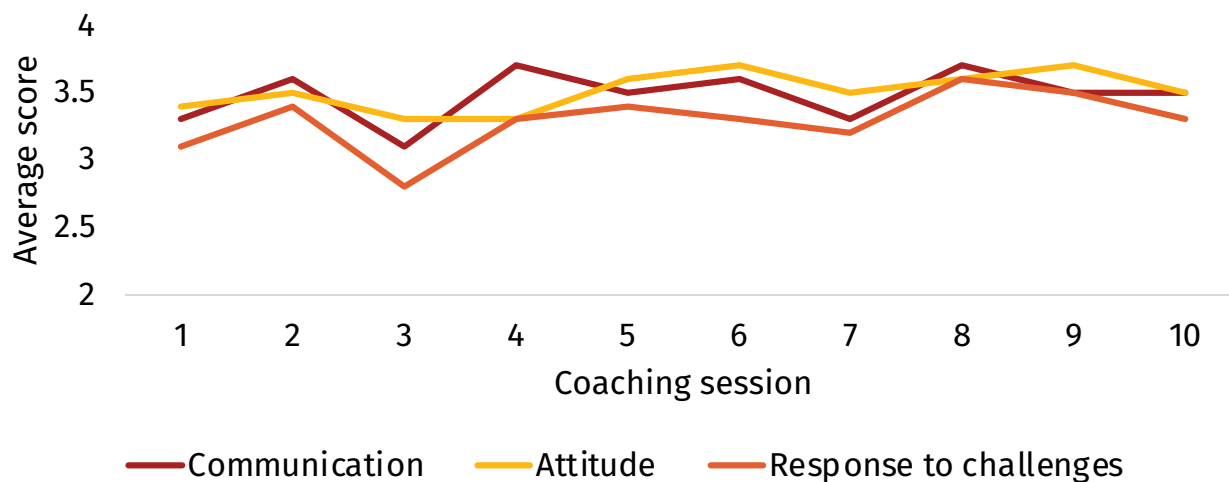
## IMPACT OF COACHING

In 2020-2021, participants from Cohort 5 completed over 800 coaching sessions, with each coaching pair averaging 5 sessions across the year.

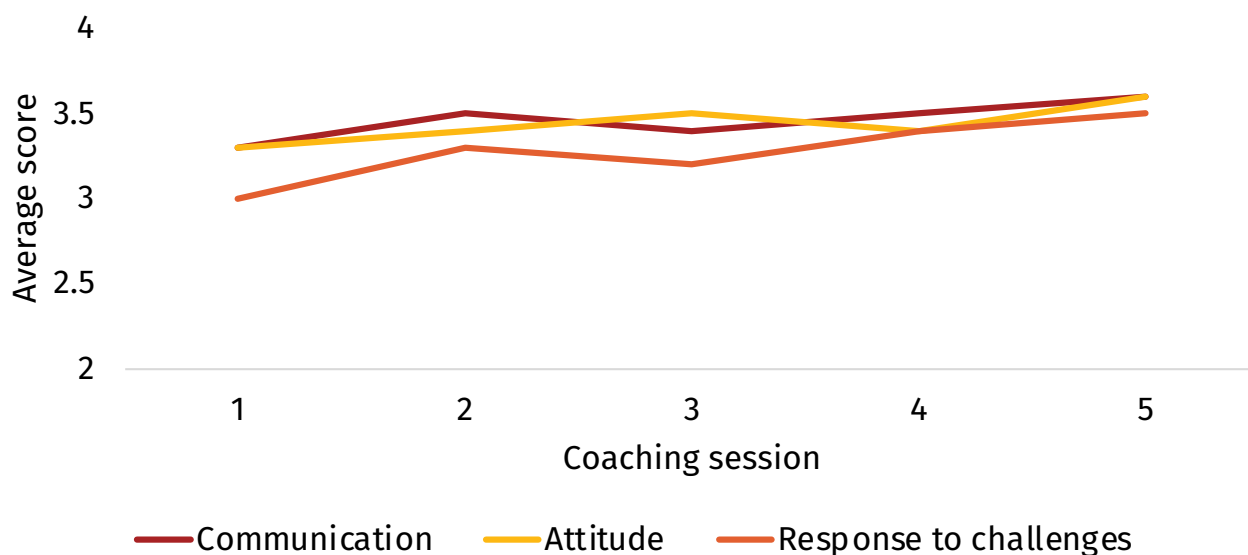
After each session, we asked coaches to rate their coachees on a 5-point scale to measure their communication skills, attitude and ability to overcome challenges. Our findings suggest



## Coaching outcomes from 10 sessions



## Coaching outcomes from 5 sessions



that engaging in coaching regularly has a positive impact on participants.

For participants who attended coaching sessions most consistently (ten or more), we found an increase in scores for all three outcome areas from their first session to their last session.

Participants' scores fluctuated throughout the year, dipping to their lowest point after the third session, perhaps reflecting the shifting landscape of government restrictions and school disruption in autumn-winter 2020.

For participants who attended five or more coaching sessions, just under half of the whole cohort, we found larger increases in all outcome



areas, with a particularly large increase in responsiveness to challenges, from 3.0 to 3.5 out of 4.

Beyond these three areas of improvement, participants self-reported that coaching helped them in many areas of their school and personal lives. For example, some reported that they learnt to become more focused, learnt new revision strategies, or reduced stress and improved their confidence. When given the opportunity to reflect on coaching during the Futures Day of our Spring course, 91% of participants said that it had helped them.



#### Asees:

*Coaching has definitely influenced my life in the best ways! My coach, Rosanna, equipped me with a variety of tools to help me navigate both my academic life and my personal priorities.*

*I used to doubt my decisions a lot but coaching allowed me to understand what my priorities were and now I'm able to see things from a better perspective by being able to trust myself and focusing on what I can control.*

*I've used the guidance I gained in all aspects of my life and will continue to do so because it has really helped me to stay true to myself while still trying to be successful in terms of education and other opportunities.*

*I do attribute a lot of my GCSE success and my ability to make the right choices for the future to coaching and I feel as though coaching really helped to cultivate my potential and allowed me to become my best self, especially by helping me to overcome fears, many of which I didn't even know I had, which used to limit me.*

#### Rosanna:

*It was incredible to have watched Asees' transformation over the programme and it was very rewarding to see how valuable core coaching principles can be for young students navigating their personal and academic challenges. One key strength of the programme is the structure of the monthly 1-2-1 sessions, which provide a consistent and supportive forum, where having regular contact helps create a sense of accountability, as well as trust.*

**Asees Sangha was part of Cohort 5 and had monthly sessions with her coach, Rosanna.**

# Beyond Universify - Supporting our alumni after the programme

‘COACHING INCREASED MY CONFIDENCE AND ENCOURAGED ME TO MEET MY ACADEMIC GOALS.’



In 2021, Universify introduced an alumni newsletter to provide participants with information, support and opportunities to pursue their chosen path after Year 11 (e.g. resources on making a successful application to university, advice on managing wellbeing during lockdowns). We promoted over 26 opportunities through our monthly alumni newsletter, including work experience and internships, scholarships, foundation years, and Year 12 outreach programmes.

*I attended the Universify residential in summer 2019, which confirmed that I should pursue University and that I shouldn't let my financial background burden me. Coaching increased my confidence and motivated me to achieve my academic goals, especially as I was unable to sit my GCSE exams due to the pandemic.*

*The insights day at Macquarie gave me a detailed understanding of what it would be like to work in the financial sector and also inspired me to find ways to secure a more stable relationship with the company. After a series of applications and interviews, I was awarded a place on the Rise to it Scholarship with Macquarie. This opportunity is such a blessing, especially as I come from a significantly disadvantaged background, and I will be able to pursue my long-term aspirations of becoming a barrister. I am so excited to complete my journey with Macquarie and work in an environment full of ambitious, hard-working, and passionate individuals."*



**Zaheda Hussain has been awarded the Rise To It Scholarship after taking part in an Insight Day at Macquarie which was advertised through our alumni newsletter.**

**"The Macquarie Rise to It Scholarship Programme was designed with the aim of dismantling the assumptions that you need to come from a certain background to succeed. The scholarship covers a student's tuition and maintenance loans to study a three-year degree. Those selected will also join us on our annual insight career week, intern and graduate programmes."**

**Rachel Engel, Regional Director, Macquarie Group Foundation.**



# Assessing value for money

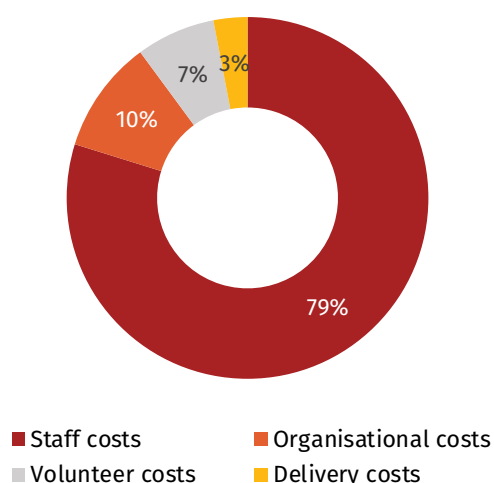
THE COST OF SUPPORTING A STUDENT ELIGIBLE FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS TO REACH UNIVERSITY THROUGH THE UNIVERSIFY PROGRAMME IS UP TO 75% LESS THAN OTHER PROVISION.

## THE COST OF PROVIDING UNIVERSIFY

In 2021 it cost Universify £650 for each participant to take part in our year-long programme. This covers course costs and staff time to organise the programme and run Universify.

Our cost per participant in 2021-22 was similar to previous years despite running fully online. This is because in years where we have run courses in-person, the cost to Universify has remained low as our host colleges at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge provide accommodation and meals for participants and volunteers as a benefit in kind. Schools usually cover the cost of transport to the residential courses. All coaches and pastoral staff who run the courses are volunteers, and this year, some tutors kindly chose to donate their teaching time as well.

**Breakdown of cost per participant for 2021-22**



Though the pandemic has put greater pressure on fundraising, we have been able to fund additional staff time to fundraise via the Government's Kickstart Scheme. As a result, the cost per participant to Universify has remained stable since

2019. However, the end of the Kickstart Scheme in March 2022 will likely see our staff costs increase for the financial year 2022-23.

## UNIVERSIFY'S VALUE FOR MONEY

Our programme remains cost-effective for a larger cohort and new data shows our work is particularly cost-effective in supporting students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) to reach university.

To calculate cost-effectiveness, we use UCAS Strobe data to calculate how much it costs Universify to get each additional participant – who would not otherwise have been expected to progress – into university.

We look at multiple benchmarks to compare our participants' expected versus real progression to university on aggregate and do not show exact individual outcomes.

The first benchmark is the broadest, looking at progression to all universities for all our participants. From Cohort 3, our benchmark for



# £2,110

**estimated cost per Universify participant, eligible for Free School Meals, reaching higher education**

progression to all universities suggest that at least 38 additional students (31% of the cohort) progressed to higher education who would not have been expected to. Our second benchmark looks at progression to high-tariff universities specifically and suggests that at least an additional 17 participants (14% of the cohort) progressed to high-tariff universities.

Using our unit cost of £650 per participant, it cost Universify £79,300 to run the programme for Cohort 3.

Our two benchmarks therefore suggest that each additional participant entering higher education from Cohort 3 cost Universify £2,067, and that each

additional participant progressing to a high-tariff university cost £4,728, which is consistent with costs for Cohort 2 (£2,703 and £4,668 respectively).<sup>1</sup>

## **A COST-EFFECTIVE PROGRAMME TO HELP PARTICIPANTS ELIGIBLE FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS TO REACH UNIVERSITY**

For the first time, we have been able to collect destination data specifically for our participants eligible for FSM. We can therefore compare our costs to the national cost of helping a young person receiving FSM to progress to higher education.

45 participants were eligible for FSM from Cohort 3. Compared with the National Average, 14 additional participants who were eligible for FSM (31% of Cohort 3 eligible for FSM) entered university. The overall cost to Universify to run the programme for this sub-cohort was £29,250. Therefore, the cost to Universify per additional student, eligible for FSM, to reach university was £2,110. This is much lower than the national cost (£9,670) and can be compared with other charitable outreach initiatives, costing around £5,600 per participant.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Both figures are overestimated costs as our aggregated university progression data is based on data rounded to the nearest 5 from UCAS Strobe, from which we have taken the lower bound for each estimate.

<sup>2</sup> Outreach activities range from standalone personal statement writing workshops to full residencies, weekly tutoring and multi-year interventions. We must bear in mind the vast differences in activities, duration and intensity when considering our cost versus the cost of other outreach activities. We have made this comparison to gauge how our initiative sits within the wider outreach work which is done. The figure of £5600 has been taken from IntoUniversity impact report, 2019, [https://intouniversity.org/sites/all/files/userfiles/files/IU19009\\_IU\\_IMPACT\\_REPORT\\_2019\\_WEB\\_AW%20\(1\).pdf](https://intouniversity.org/sites/all/files/userfiles/files/IU19009_IU_IMPACT_REPORT_2019_WEB_AW%20(1).pdf) (Accessed December 2020).

# What we have learnt

OUR ONLINE PROGRAMME ENGAGED AND INSPIRED PARTICIPANTS DURING A YEAR OF SHIFTING GOVERNMENT RESTRICTIONS AND HIGH COVID 19 RATES.

In 2021, Universify built on the successes of our online programmes in 2020, delivering an online summer programme that brought together our most popular and impactful activities from the past twelve months of online delivery. The response from participants and volunteers was overwhelmingly positive, with 95% of participants and 100% of volunteers agreeing or strongly agreeing that they enjoyed the course.

We received our best ever academic session feedback from participants. 49% of participants mentioned academic sessions as the best part or their favourite activity during the course and more participants rated lessons as 'just right' in terms of lesson difficulty than previous years. This feedback is testament to the excellent quality of online teaching provided by our tutors, many of whom donated their teaching time this year. We aim to maintain this high standard when we return to in-person teaching by keeping successful initiatives, such as giving participants a choice of subject and providing a webinar about engaging students to tutors ahead of the courses.

Group work also continued to prove popular online, with 92% of students rating group work as either 'engaging,' 'useful' 'inspiring' or 'thought provoking.' New activities such as our virtual escape room and an updated version of the drama competition proved very popular, allowing participants to



*I really loved the course. Every session was both engaging and helpful in preparing me for university - the academic sessions and the University Q&As were my favourite ones. I now feel much more confident about my own abilities and will definitely apply to a high-level university when I am older.*

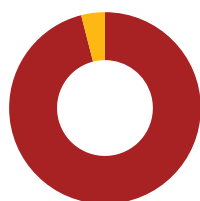
**Cohort 6 participant.**

interact with each other and make new friends during the programme.

## FUTURE POSSIBILITIES ONLINE

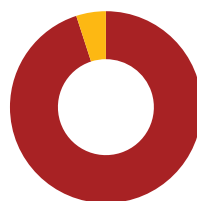
Throughout the pandemic, we have built a track record for impactful online programme. By some measures, our online courses have outperformed our in-person courses. For instance, participants have rated academic sessions more highly during both our online summer courses compared to our in-person courses.

However, there are disadvantages to online delivery. On a residential course, participants live in student



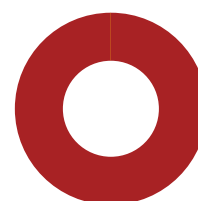
**96%**

of participants agreed that the course gave them a better understanding of university



**95%**

of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed the course



**100%**

of participants agreed that staff were friendly and helpful



accommodation, helping them to feel comfortable in a university setting and ease concerns that they might feel out of place. For some participants, it is their first time staying away from home and the course helps build confidence and independence. These experiences cannot be perfectly replicated online, and although participants report gaining confidence in other areas such as public speaking, it may not match the depth of the impact that the residential experience provides. Despite more government funding and initiatives to improve digital access, some participants who had received laptops or dongles through their schools continued to face technical difficulties during the course, affecting their ability to access the programme.

Given these considerations, Universify will continue to offer residential summer and spring courses and we look forward to returning to our in-person courses as soon as it is safe to do so.



# What is next for Universify?

LOOKING AHEAD AND LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR INCREASED IMPACT AND GROWTH.

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As for many organisations, the pandemic has forced us to reconsider our plans. It has slowed down our initial aspirations to expand our participant numbers, required us to adapt our programme, and challenged us to reconsider our funding model to ensure we can sustainably create impact.

In 2021, our focus has been meeting these challenges by balancing the provision of impactful online programmes for those whose education has been most harmed by the pandemic with the need to navigate a more competitive and challenging fundraising environment.

Our plans for 2022 build on the foundations we have established during the pandemic to become a more resilient and sustainable organisation that can achieve long-term impact at scale.

We have set ourselves the following three objectives to build on these foundations.

1. Enhance our in-person programme with the best aspects of the online courses to maximise the impact of our programme





2. Build on sustained and diversified income streams to enable sustainable growth that matches the growing demand for our work
3. Build partnerships to grow beyond Oxford and Cambridge for 2024

### **FURTHER ENHANCE OUR IN-PERSON PROGRAMME WITH THE BEST ASPECTS OF THE ONLINE COURSES**

Our planned return to in-person residential courses will begin with the extended spring courses in March/April 2022, giving participants the opportunity to picture themselves at university and crucially to feel whether it is the right path for them. However, our two years of online courses have highlighted that we provide more than simply a visit to a university. We intend to bring the advantages and learning from online to our in-person delivery to ensure our participants gain the most from their experience with Universify.

### **LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH**

2022 marks the end of our three-year grant from Macquarie Group Foundation which has enabled us to build a long-term track record of impact and create a strong case for ongoing support for our work. In 2022, we want to build financial resilience to enable sustainable growth to support more young people by diversifying our income.

Following a successful pilot with one partner college, which provided a contribution to Universify to cover the charity's costs to deliver the programme, we will transition to a college co-funding model as we work towards a shared mission.

The pandemic has created a more challenging fundraising climate for all charities. With increased staff fundraising capacity through the Government Kickstart scheme, we will build on our work over the pandemic increasing trust and foundation and public fundraising activity and collaborating with corporate organisations to provide further opportunities for our participants while generating income for Universify.

### **EXPANDING TO A THIRD UNIVERSITY IN THE FUTURE**

In the next 3 years, we aim to meet the challenge of expanding to a third university outside of Oxford and Cambridge, allowing more young people to participate in our programme and make an informed decision about their future. We see partnering with a third university outside of the South of England as a gateway to working with students from a broader geographical region, as well to showcase the breadth of experiences that different universities provide

These are ambitious plans to fulfil our ambitious vision to support as many young people as possible in a time where educational inequality and the demand for our work has increased.



# Thank you

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS FOR THEIR SUPPORT, HELP, AND GUIDANCE

## UNIVERSITIES

### Somerville College, Oxford

Steve Rayner, Senior Tutor

Dave Simpson and Millie Packer, Conference Office

### St Catharine's College, Cambridge

Kathryn Singleton, School Liaisons Officer

Liza Zhabina, Schools, Liaison & Outreach Officer

### St Hugh's College, Oxford

Elena Sorochina, Outreach Officer

Thea Crapper, Academic Registrar

### Trinity College, Oxford

Richard Petty, Senior Access Officer

### Balliol College, Oxford

Pravahi Osman, Head of Access and Outreach

### Jesus College, Oxford

Matthew Williams, Access Fellow

### St Anne's College, Oxford

Hannah Snell, Senior Outreach Officer

## FUNDERS AND DONORS

Macquarie Group Foundation

The Manak Family

Arnold Clark Community Fund

The Nisbet Foundation

The Kusuma Trust UK

The Funding Network

The Needlemakers Livery company

Survey Tech

Co-op Academies Trust

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Lisa McCarthy, Tutor recruitment and Course

Journal design

Tom Bradley, Independent Accountant

Chris Tomlinson and Nicola Webb, The Co-op Academies Trust

## OUR PARTNERS

Oxford Nanopore Technologies

DAME

## UNIVERSIFY TRUSTEES

Mary Nicholson

Harry Hortyn

Tibor Gold

Nick Lawrence

Steve Rayner

Matt Lacey

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Jaynil Patel

Laura Jackson

Adam Badawy

Stankiewicz

Britney Hamersley

Elsie Linley

Jazmine Bennett

Laura Nykopp

Adam Kavanagh

Alexander Lowrie

Charles Lamport-

Emily Oldridge

Joshua Albert

Laura Wales

Aderinsola

Alice Paterson

Beale

Ethan Fraenkel

Kara Allum

Lauren Callaghan

Adebowale

Amber McGhee

Charlotte Styles

Francis Adam

Katherine Hiley

Lauren Charters

Agnieszka

Amelia Burdett

Chenying Liu

Grace Haynes

Kerstin Weil

Lauren Tyerman

Niewiadomska

Andie Kane

Clare Lam

Hannah Rees

Khama Gunde

Layomi Coker-Ojo

Ahana Kamerkar

Anna Petric

Dennise Boon

Helen Norman

Khama Gunde

Lewis Timms

Aisha Nadim

Annelise Davies

Eden Girma

Henry Hawkins

Kimberley Sparrow

Madeleine Clark-

Aisha Toorawa

Aysha Rahman

Eleanor Ash

Ilgin Özkul

Kitty Debieux

Jones

Beatrice Fantì

Elizabeth Olabode

Imogen Creavin

Kyla Thomas

Magnus Smellie

Mahira Muhsanat	Natasha Judson-	Oghale-Oghene	Rebecca Wilcockson	Sheneque Brice	Violet Black
Megan Luk	Richardson	Erikigho	Sai Kruthi Adepu	Stephen Darby	Wayne Smith
Megan McGowan	Nell May	Olivia Tan	Sara Harb	Taya Dixon	Yunzhi Shi
Michael Murray	Niamh Stolvoort	Rachel Zerdin	Sara Vitaldurand	Terushi Mendis	Zahra Bakhsha
Natalie Thompson	Niamh Townend	Rahul Radia	Sean Shirley-Smith	Vincenza Russu	Zoe Balroop

## LEAD TEACHERS

All our Lead teachers and schools who help set up the programme at each of our partner schools and support their students throughout the programme.

## UNIVERSIFY TUTORS

All our Universify GCSE tutors and academic taster tutors who have taught on our courses. Special thanks to the tutors who volunteered their time to teach on our programme.

## STUDENT COUNCIL 2020-21

Claire (Student Representative)	Keeley, Savanna Chloe	Todd	Jake	Bethany	Stephen
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And finally we would like to thank all the students that have applied and taken part in the Universify programme, who continue to inspire and amaze us with their successes. We are immensely proud of the incredible achievements you have accomplished and will continue to do so.





# Appendix: Measuring our impact

WE MONITOR THE PROGRESS OF UNIVERSIFY PARTICIPANTS TO EVALUATE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR PROGRAMME.

Our data is collected in the following ways.

Short- and medium-term results:

- Three student questionnaires: one administered at the start of the summer programme, one at the end, and one at the end of the spring course to enable before and after comparisons at three points
- A GCSE questionnaire completed by lead teachers to evaluate GCSE attainment
- 4 sets of GCSE grade data; 3 sets when students apply (predicted grades, target grades, working at grades), 1 set when they have completed Year 11 (achieved result)
- Monthly coaching observation forms completed by students and volunteers

Long-term results:

- UCAS Strobe data service for university destinations data from UCAS, the University and College Admissions Service who manage university applications
- A student survey administered following A Level results day for university destinations data

Wherever possible, our survey design utilises independently validated psychological scales to measure 'soft' outcomes, such as an increase in self-esteem or self-efficacy. We also draw on Inspiring Impact's JET Framework, which brings together a number of key measures of young people's skills and personal traits.<sup>1</sup>

All surveys are digital and data is cleaned to ensure we have consistency across our sample. Although student survey response rates this year were improved compared to last year following greater efforts to collect surveys during the online courses, response rates remain lower than during in-person delivery. At spring for Cohort 5, we received 109 survey responses from 169 participants of which we were able to track 89 individuals to measure aspirations to higher education across summer and spring.<sup>2</sup> In summer 2021 for Cohort 6, we received 161 survey responses from 181 participants (89%) which is the same as in 2019, our last in-person summer course, and a significant improvement on 2020 (79%) during our first ever online summer course.

For our GCSE attainment survey we received data for 54 participants out of 161 from lead teachers, a reduction on last year's completion rate.<sup>3</sup>

## ASPIRATIONS FOR EDUCATION

To measure increased aspirations to education, we asked students the question, 'How likely do you think you are to apply to a highly selective university, like the University of Oxford?'

We also used the Department for Education's Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE) survey's five-question Educational Aspirations module and the one-question University and Higher Education module to measure students' aspirations to education.<sup>4</sup> The combined change across these six questions was not statistically significant.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/the-journey-to-employment/> (Article accessed 4 December 2018).

<sup>2</sup> In comparison, only half of participants from Cohort 4 were able to attend spring online in 2020 and therefore survey completion was even lower across the Cohort.

<sup>3</sup> We previously reported on survey responses by school rather than by students. This year's response rate is equivalent to 23 out of 68 teacher responses (34%) vs 48% in 2020 and 43% in 2019.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.education.gov.uk/lsype/workspaces/public/wiki/Questionnaires> (Article accessed December 2017).

## SELF-EFFICACY AND SELF-ESTEEM

To measure students' self-efficacy we used the Individual Protective Factors index, Self-Efficacy sub-scale, which is a seven-item, four-point scale.<sup>5</sup> We also measured students' self-esteem using the Single Item Self-Esteem Scale (a shorter version of the widely-used Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale).<sup>6</sup> The latest student data from Cohort 6 was not statistically significant.

## GCSE ATTAINMENT

Universify is seeking to contribute to and measure two key outcomes linked to attainment:

1. Increased attainment.
2. Increased likelihood of making a successful application to a highly selective university.

To measure these our independent evaluator worked with Universify's former trustee for impact measurement to devise a Likert scale survey to send to lead teachers. The survey presented teachers with the following statements for each student:

1. This student attained their predicted grades.
2. This student achieved the highest grades at GCSE.
3. Engaging in Universify's programme benefitted the student's GCSE attainment.
4. This student is in a good position to apply to a highly-selective university.
5. Engaging in Universify's programme means this student is more likely to apply to a highly-selective university.

For Cohort 5, we piloted collecting students' working at, target, predicted and real GCSE

grades to investigate whether taking part in the programme influenced students' average grades. Teachers were asked to provide three types of predicted grades when students applied for the programme, 18 months before students would be due to take their exams. However, as students were awarded their final grades via Teacher Assessed Grades following exam cancellations due to the pandemic, we have chosen not to report on the findings this year but to wait until exams return.

## PERCEPTIONS OF UNIVERSITY

To measure students' perceptions of university, we asked the question, 'What one word do you most associate with the idea of studying at university?' in our participant survey before and after summer. We analysed these words to determine whether they were positive, negative, or neutral associations to calculate the overall cohort's shift in perceptions towards university.

## IMPACT OF COACHING

In 2018-19, we began using coach observation forms to collect data on whether participants' attitudes, communication skills, and responses to challenges would improve throughout the year through monthly coaching sessions, as these are three components crucial for academic success and successful university applications.

This year, we have been able to collect a larger sample of data through an improved, automated feedback system which we have built into our existing coaching scheduling process.

Our external impact evaluator analysed how students' attitudes, communication skills and responses to challenges changed for two groups of students, allowing us to analyse whether there were observable differences between the two groups of students. One group had attended 10 coaching

<sup>5</sup> Dahlberg LL, Toal SB, Swahn M, Behrens CB. Measuring Violence-Related Attitudes, Behaviors, and Influences Among Youths: A Compendium of Assessment Tools, 2nd ed., Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Robins, R. W., Hendin, H. M., & Trzesniewski, K. H. (2001). 'Measuring Global Self-Esteem: Construct Validation of a Single-Item Measure and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale'. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 27, 151-161: [http://fetzer.org/sites/default/files/images/stories/pdf/selfmeasures/Self\\_Measures\\_for\\_Self-Esteem\\_SINGLE-ITEM\\_SELF-ESTEEM.pdf](http://fetzer.org/sites/default/files/images/stories/pdf/selfmeasures/Self_Measures_for_Self-Esteem_SINGLE-ITEM_SELF-ESTEEM.pdf) (Article December 2017).

sessions over the year, while the other group had attended 5.

## UNIVERSITY DESTINATIONS

We used UCAS' Strobe service to track our participants' university applications, offers, and acceptances. Data are estimates only, as figures are rounded to the nearest 5. UCAS Strobe also matches our participants to a control group with similar characteristics to determine whether there is any statistical significance in our participants' application, offer, and acceptance rates. In 2021, we obtained additional data from UCAS Strobe to track how many of our participants who were eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) reached university. We

compared this with the national rate of 18-year-old students eligible for FSM who entered high-tariff universities in 2021 according to UCAS End of Cycle 2021 data.

We supplemented destination data from UCAS Strobe with two additional benchmarks, constructed by combining the national rates at which students from different backgrounds attend university.<sup>7</sup> We created two tailored benchmarks: one which looked at socio-economic disadvantage and the other which looked at progression rates to Higher Education in participants' local areas (POLAR). We chose to use two benchmarks to account for the variety of indicators which impact progression to Higher Education.



<sup>7</sup> This methodology was originally based on IntoUniversity's method of benchmarking (IntoUniversity, 'Impact Report 2019', [https://intouniversity.org/sites/all/files/userfiles/files/IU19009\\_IU\\_IMPACT\\_REPORT\\_2019\\_WEB\\_AW%20\(1\).pdf](https://intouniversity.org/sites/all/files/userfiles/files/IU19009_IU_IMPACT_REPORT_2019_WEB_AW%20(1).pdf)).



For our tailored disadvantage benchmark, we used two national data sets to work out our participants' expected progression rate based on their disadvantage criteria in Year 10.<sup>8</sup> We used data from UCAS' End of Cycle 2021 report for progression rates for those eligible for FSM; we used data from DfE for progression rates for those who received Pupil Premium.<sup>9</sup>

For our second benchmark, we looked at participants' likelihood of reaching university based on the progression rates to university in the area they lived in Year 10 (POLAR4). We have used data from the Office for Students based on UCAS placed applicants to calculate this benchmark.<sup>10</sup>

These two benchmarks do not take into account the fact that participants on our programme are more likely to go to university than the national average, as they have to opt-in to the programme. We use these benchmarks to help us understand how many more of our participants do enter university, alongside UCAS Strobe control groups.

This year, we piloted a post A Level participant survey to supplement UCAS data and better understand individual participant destinations such as which universities they are attending. We received 31 surveys from 122 participants, and through networks, have been able to track 50 participants.



<sup>8</sup> Vikki Boliver et. al., 'Using contextualised admissions to widen access to higher education: a guide to the evidence base' (2017); see also IntoUniversity, 'Impact Report 2019', p12 for discussion. [https://intouniversity.org/sites/all/files/userfiles/files/IU19009\\_IU\\_IMPACT\\_REPORT\\_2019\\_WEB\\_AW%20\(1\).pdf](https://intouniversity.org/sites/all/files/userfiles/files/IU19009_IU_IMPACT_REPORT_2019_WEB_AW%20(1).pdf).

<sup>9</sup> UCAS Undergraduate Sector-Level End Of Cycle Data Resources 2021. <https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-sector-level-end-cycle-data-resources-2021>. Department for Education, 'Academic Year 2019/20. 16-18 destination measures', Published 21 October 2021 <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/fnd-statistics/16-18-destination-measures/2019-20>.

<sup>10</sup> OFS analysis of UCAS-placed applicants by POLAR4 28 days after the Joint Council for Qualifications results day; applicants by POLAR4 – Placed applicants 2021, entry rates <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/get-the-area-based-measures-data/>.







With special thanks to our partners, supporters, and collaborators



## How to get involved

We believe universities should be open to all students, based on their academic ability and regardless of their background. If you would like to work with us, please get in touch at

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