



Universify Education

Case for support

Introduction to University

“Universify has made me see that I have the capability to achieve great things ...It has single handedly broke[n] all doubt in my mind that I cannot achieve my dreams.”

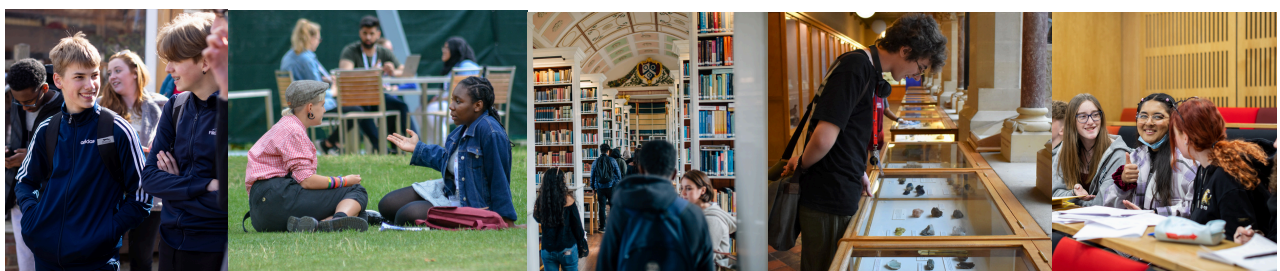


Our mission is to empower young people with the transferable skills, knowledge, qualifications, and self-belief to make informed decisions about their futures and overcome barriers to realising their goals

Our vision is a fairer and more equal society where every young person has the opportunity to realise their full potential

We aim to deliver on our mission by focussing support for young people during their GCSE years, ensuring they are not entering A-levels and the path to educational and employment opportunities already behind their peers from more privileged backgrounds.

Using a year-long programme, we empower young people to recognise their capabilities and support them to reach their GCSE grade goals. This means that they can successfully progress through further education to follow their career dreams and benefit from social mobility benefits.



The problem

Young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds are at greater risk of not realising their potential, despite their individual ability. Why is this?

Disengagement from Education: Young people eligible for Free School Meals are 50% more likely to drop-out of education and become NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training).

Lower GCSE attainment: Fewer than 30% of children in the poorest households earn five good GCSEs (vs. 70% of children from tenth richest families). The attainment gap at GCSE for socio-economically disadvantaged young people has not decreased in 20 years.



Lower rates of progression to university: Young people eligible for Free School Meals are 19% less likely to secure places at universities and fewer than 20% of young people from the poorest households are university graduates by the age of 26, compared to almost half those from the richest households.

Significant societal economic cost: The consequences of the UK's inequality cost taxpayers between £106.2 billion - 128.4 billion annually, which is greater than the total Department of Education budget, the cost of Universal Credit, or the estimated cost to fix the NHS crisis.

Who we support

We support young people, aged 14-16, from non selective state schools across England who have been identified by their teachers as having fantastic academic potential, but are at significant risk of not realising their potential due to barriers imposed by their backgrounds.

We particularly focus on groups who are significantly underrepresented in higher education and professional careers, including those who are eligible for Free School Meals (a means tested benefit and indicator of low household income), those who would be the first in their family to go to university, young people with special educational needs and disabilities, young-carers, and care-experienced.

Of the 1000 young people we have supported since our foundation in 2016 at least:

600

are eligible for Pupil Premium (PP)

575

would be the first in their family to attend university

485

are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)

430

come from the top 20% most deprived areas nationally (IMD deciles 1-2)



“During my time on the [Universify] course, I learned so many new things about myself and how to handle certain situations. Firstly, my coaching sessions were super helpful, they helped me realise that even if I did not achieve the grades that I had wanted at GCSE, I would still be able to take the A-levels that I wanted. For me, this was a major eye-opener and managed to take a great deal of stress off my shoulders.”

-Melody, participant on our 2021-22 programme, eligible for Free School Meals, Pupil Premium, and would be the first in her family to attend university.

How we help: Our programme

We provide an intensive, year-long programme designed to equip young people in their GCSE years with the skills, knowledge, belief and grades to pursue and access their chosen future. Specifically, our programme, currently catering to ~115 GCSE students each year delivers:

A week long summer university residential

Hosted by our partner the University of Oxford, the residential is carefully designed to build confidence, independence, and a supportive peer community to overcome the perceived idea that young people from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds don't belong at a prestigious university.



Monthly 1-to-1 online coaching

Students receive tailored, monthly coaching sessions which support students to identify personal and academic goals, potential obstacles and find their own solutions. Building self-belief in their own ability to make decisions, these sessions develop communication, confidence and problem-solving ability.

A three-day long spring GCSE revision residential

Returning to a university setting, students take part in small-group, tailored revision support for core subjects (English, maths, sciences) from experienced GCSE tutors, as well as workshops on techniques for managing exam stress, to support them to get the grades they are capable of.



Our impact

We have a positive track record of creating social opportunity by empowering young people to make and successfully pursue more informed decisions about their future.

Increased progression to universities

- **Significantly more Universify participants apply to university** than would be expected based on their background (78% vs 53%)
- Universify participants eligible for **Free School Meals applied to highly selective universities at a rate almost 2x the national average** (6% vs 3.4%).



Increased aspirations

“The course allowed me to come out of my comfort zone. I feel inspired and more confident in myself academically as being in an environment like Oxford University makes me believe I can go there one day and flourish there. I feel like I belong in those spaces now which was something I doubted for a long time.”



Improved GCSE attainment

- 86% of Universify participants teachers said that our **programme benefited their student’s GCSE attainment**
- 74% of our participants attained or **surpassed their predicted GCSE grades**
- 77% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that **coaching had helped them work towards their academic goals**

“The Universify programme is the most significant single intervention that improves progress, self esteem and aspirations [...] Overall in the school we are about to introduce our third cohort to the programme and 50 students have expressed an interest in taking part. I have no doubt that the ethos and academic culture that the Universify programme creates is excellent in our school that is aiming to inspire first generation university applicants”

- Tim Cox, Tim Fox, Senior Vice Principal at The Canterbury Academy Trust

Our strategy

We aim to create systemic change and significantly improve social mobility by tackling underrepresentation at university we need to work with more young people. Our programme is significantly oversubscribed and we plan to expand the size of our programme to meet this demand.

Our aspiration is to expand our programmes to more universities across England. In the short-term we are looking to diversify our income to sustainably grow our programme so we can empower as many young people to realise their potential as possible.

“By the end of this course I learnt that your background doesn't define your ability to progress onto further education. I learned that it's okay to trust people too and that sometimes doing things that make you feel uncomfortable is the best thing to do to grow.”



Our programme is free for participants, and we rely on charitable grants from trusts and foundations, corporate partnerships, and public fundraising, to fund our year-long intensive programme of support.

We receive significant benefits-in-kind from university hosts who provide accommodation and meals for the residents and part-fund the Universify programme. Schools cover student travel to and from the residential. The remaining cost is mainly staff time which goes into preparing and overseeing the Universify programme and ongoing fundraising.

All funds raised go directly into delivering our programme to further social mobility by empowering young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to fulfil their potential.

“Universify has been a transformative journey for me. Through their programs, I gained not only valuable knowledge but also lifelong friendships and a broader perspective on the world. This experience has equipped me with the skills and confidence to pursue my dreams and make a positive impact in my field. Thank you, Universify, for opening doors to new opportunities and shaping my future!”

Want to support our work?



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Email fundraising@universifyeducation.com

Web www.universifyeducation.com

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