



What is 'student success?'

Insights from AccessHE members

Sam Turner, AccessHE | February 2018



Introduction

- Growing evidence to suggest that investment (and resultant improvements) in access for disadvantaged students has failed to translate into improved outcomes.
- More interest in supporting students from under-represented groups on-course (OfS goals, work on BME attainment gap).
- AccessHE member consultation/access agreement scan and event to explore 'student success' in a London context.

Expenditure

- Institutional expenditure within student success is expected to rise to £185.1 million in 2018-19.
- From 12% in 2013-14 to 23% in 2018-19.
- London spend in student success is expected to rise to £35.27 million by 2021-22 – 23.8%.
- Access spending still remains high (expected or not given London's performance?).

Key themes

- **Defining student success**

- Dependent on institutional context and student body
- Different definitions across the sector of where student success begins and ends

OFFA definition

“Post-entry activity to retain and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds through their studies, for example through induction programmes and study skills support, aimed at reducing differences in experience and attainment with other students.”

What is student success?

Student satisfaction (NSS) and contact time?

Engagement in wider university life?

Student health and wellbeing?

Degree completion or transfer?

Academic attainment (1 or 2.1)?

Development of transferable / career skills?

Graduate employment or further study?

Continuation /progression to Year 2/3/4?

Key themes

- **Defining student success**

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- Different definitions across the sector of where student success begins and ends

- **Responsibility and terminology**

- Who has strategic/operational oversight for success work within an institution?
- WP / student experience / engagement / wellbeing / learning development / careers / enhancement
- Role of central teams vs faculties/schools
- Importance of senior leadership/oversight

Key themes

- **Targeted vs universal approaches**
 - Major shift in how 'groups' of students are approached in on-course vs outreach
 - Relevance of targeted approaches for some institutions with very diverse intakes
- **Data, evaluation and targeting**
 - Availability of data a key challenge in understanding and delivering activity
 - Choice of metrics (evidencing impact before degree outcome)
 - Relationship with TEF
 - Predictive learner analytics – targeted interventions

Key themes

- **Mental health**
 - Widespread recognition of its importance
 - Integration with student wellbeing/disability teams
- **Peer-assisted learning and support**
 - Commonly used alongside personal tutoring
- **Skills-rich curriculum**
 - Development of transferable skills within courses, not only as 'optional' enhancements
 - Competency-based, digital literacy, employability

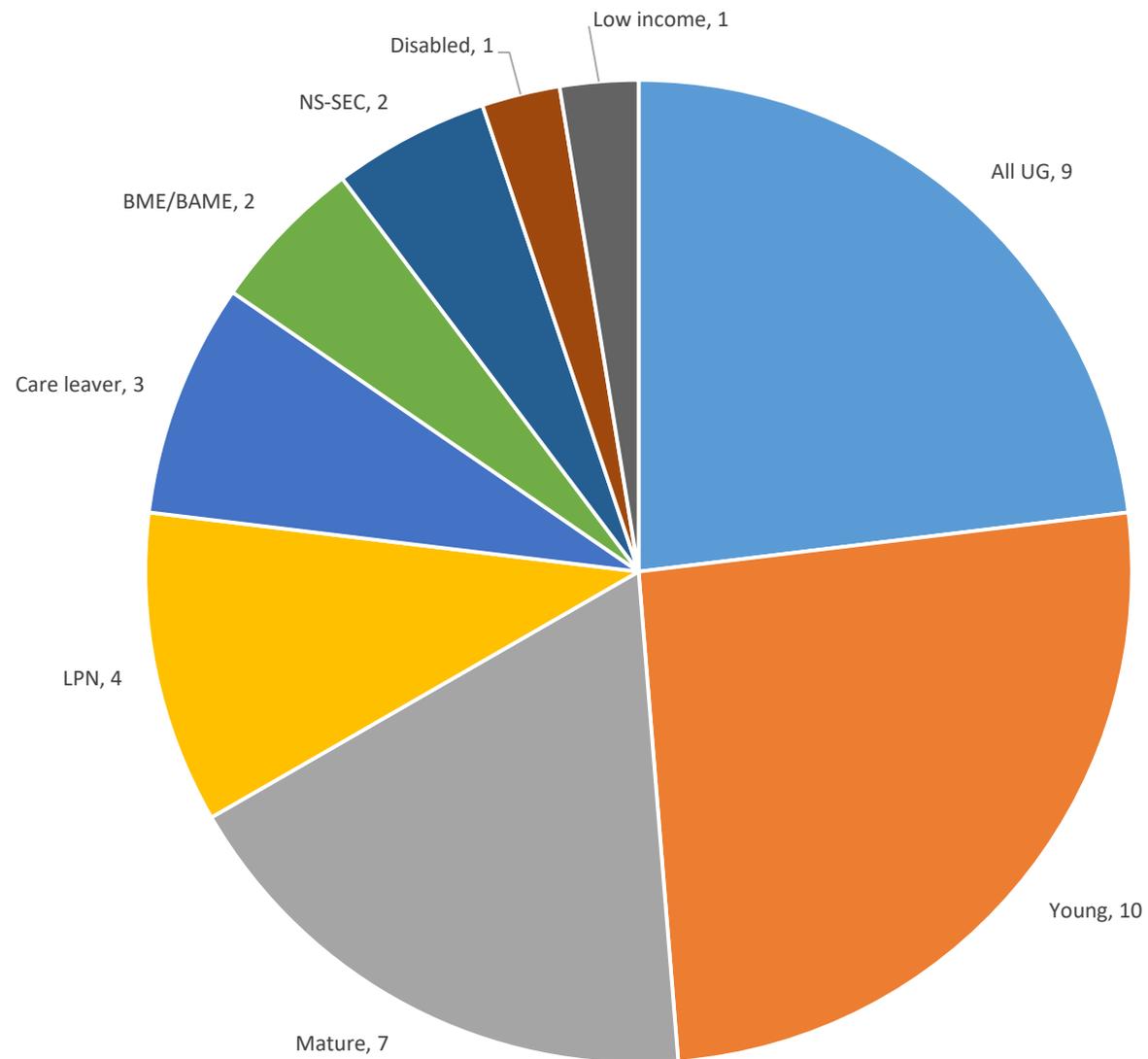
Key themes

- **Inclusive curriculum**
 - Diversified content
 - Teaching and learning practices
- **Timing**
 - When is activity most effective?
 - Managing expectation gaps between school/college and HE, particularly in assessment and feedback
- **Less recognition of the social sphere?**
 - Relationship with Students' Unions and importance of society involvement, joining communities etc.

Targets

- Recognition that student success work is typically more universal in its approach (even when compared to retention targets)
- Most common targets:
 - BME attainment – closing gap or improving outcomes
 - Improving degree completion rates
 - Expanding transition programmes
 - Widening the pool of students who engage with student support services or programmes
 - Other specific targets for care-leavers, mature students, disabled students, students from LPNs, from low income backgrounds or from NS-SEC 4-7

AccessHE member HEI retention targets by target group



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Summary

- **Expenditure** – London spending on student success in line with sector average; access spending is still high.
- **Defining** student success is difficult and measures vary considerably between institutions.
- **Key themes/questions** in this area of activity include determining institutional oversight, targeted vs universal approaches, data and evaluation, inclusive and skills-rich curricula, mental health, peer-led support, timing and importance of the social sphere.
- **Targets** are typically less ‘targeted’, but BME attainment a widespread issue.

Questions?

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