



# Access and Participation Plan

The Metanoia Institute

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# 1. Introduction and Strategic Aim

The Metanoia Institute is a pioneering educational charity with a distinguished history in the professional training of counsellors, psychotherapists, counselling psychologists, coaches, and organisational development consultants. Founded in the early 1980s, Metanoia was among the first institutions in the UK to offer humanistically-oriented professional training programmes, embedding a distinctive approach that prioritises personal development alongside academic and clinical competence.

Today, Metanoia boasts a diverse student body, with 189 undergraduate students, 775 postgraduate students on taught courses, 230 students in doctoral studies, and approximately 200 students taking a suite of additional clinical training offers. Our undergraduate programmes are the BACP-accredited BSc (Hons) in Person-Centred Pluralistic Counselling, BSc (Hons) in Humanistic Counselling, and the BSc (Hons) in Reflective Therapeutic Practice (One Year Top-Up). Our undergraduate students are undertaking rigorous clinical training in counselling, which demands not only academic achievement but also personal therapy, clinical practice hours, supervision, and a commitment to growing relational intelligence and self-awareness. This comprehensive and transformative learning journey ensures that Metanoia graduates are not only academically equipped but also emotionally and relationally skilled, ready to engage with the complexities of therapeutic work in diverse settings.

Metanoia's vision is to lead the way in therapy education and training, cultivating an outstanding, culturally responsive, and highly skilled psychological workforce. At the heart of this vision lies our commitment to transcending barriers, making therapy accessible to every corner of society, and using our influence to create impactful and positive change. This ethos underpins our four strategic priorities: Inclusion, Innovation, Intelligence, and Sustainability, all of which guide our efforts to foster an environment where learning and professional development thrive for all students, regardless of background.

Metanoia Institute values the wealth of experience, skills, and perspectives that students from diverse backgrounds bring to our institution. We actively seek to foster a culture of inclusion, where respect for difference, belonging, and support are paramount. As an institution, we are committed to continually improving access, success, and progression for students from traditionally underrepresented groups in the field of counselling and psychotherapy. These groups include, but are not limited to, individuals from areas of significant deprivation, students of under-represented ethnic groups, learners with disabilities or specific needs, care-experienced individuals, refugees, and communities such as Gypsy, Roma, or those from a Traveller background.

Our broader institutional strategy, outlined in the Metanoia Strategy 2023-2028, articulates our ambition to attract and retain a diverse demographic of students and staff. This ambition is realised through the implementation of our Education Strategy, which prioritises equitable access to high-quality education and ensures all students have the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their background. We are also committed to improving the representation of minority groups in both our student and staff populations, which is critical for enriching the learning experience and preparing students to work in diverse professional environments.

The findings of our Performance Assessment reveal several key challenges in relation to access, participation, and success at Metanoia. These include underrepresentation of students from the most deprived areas (Index of Multiple Deprivation Quintile 1), and of Non-White students, as well as

lower completion rates for male students, and poorer academic attainment for Non-White students. Disabled students, while present in lower numbers compared to national averages, also face particular barriers in terms of completion rates, often compounded by a lack of accessible support or the stigma associated with disclosing disabilities.

In response to these challenges, we have developed a comprehensive set of intervention strategies, each designed to address specific barriers and ensure equitable access to our programmes. Our four intervention strategies are:

1. **Inclusive Access through Outreach and Alternative Entry Pathways** – Focused efforts to increase applications and offers from underrepresented groups, particularly those from Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Quintile 1 areas, Non-White ethnicities, and disabled students.
2. **Inclusive Curriculum and Careers support** – Embedding inclusive, representative, and responsive learning design to close the attainment gap for non-white students and improve outcomes for male students; supported by a new Student Investment Fund. Ensuring all students, especially those from underrepresented groups, have access to personalised career development support, extending five years beyond completion of their studies.
3. **Mental Health-Positive Onboarding and Support** – Enhanced support for students with mental health conditions through a new Safe Disclosure Campaign, accessible services, peer support networks, and proactive mental health training for staff.
4. **Financial Support and Cost-of-Living Resilience** – Addressing financial hardship and reducing dropout risks through improved access to scholarships, a Cost of Living fund, and lower cost supervision and personal therapy.

Through these intervention strategies, Metanoia aims to improve access, success, and progression for underrepresented groups in counselling and psychotherapy training, ensuring that all students, regardless of background, have the support and resources they need to succeed. By doing so, we aspire to create a more inclusive and equitable workforce of counsellors and psychotherapists, capable of meeting the growing demand for mental health services in diverse communities across the UK.

## 2. Risks to Equality of Opportunity

In developing this Access and Participation Plan (APP), we have taken a targeted and evidence-led approach to identifying the most pressing barriers to equality of opportunity facing students at Metanoia Institute. After reviewing both internal data and sector-wide evidence, we have chosen to prioritise the following five risks (as identified in the OfS *Equality of Opportunity Risk Register*):

- **Risk 3: Perception of Higher Education**
- **Risk 6: Insufficient Academic Support**
- **Risk 7: Insufficient Personal Support**
- **Risk 8: Mental Health**

- **Risk 10: Cost Pressures**

These risks intersect most strongly with the demographics and lived experiences of our student body, particularly students from IMD Quintile 1 areas, Non-White students, disabled students (including those with mental health conditions), and men. We consider these are the risks to be prioritised given our small context. Our targeted interventions aim not only to mitigate these risks but to build long-term institutional capability to support diverse learners.

### **Risk 3: Perception of Higher Education**

There is a risk that learners from the most disadvantaged backgrounds (IMD Quintile 1), students of Non-White ethnicities, students with disabilities and male identifying students, may hold perceptions of higher education, and courses offered by Metanoia, that negatively affect their consideration of higher education options.

As reported in our Performance Assessment:

- **IMD Quintile 1:** Only 6.2% of students enrolling onto undergraduate degrees were IMD Quintile 1 over a four year period 2018-19 to 2021-22, despite these areas making up 16.8% of the local Ealing population in census data, or 21.8% of student enrolments in the England HE sector over the same period.
- **Non-White Students:** Across the same four-year period, enrolments of non-white students accounted for 21.5% of total enrolments —well below HE Sector averages, or census data for Ealing — the home of Metanoia — or London as a whole.
- **Disabled Students:** Across the same four-year period, 12% of enrolling students declared a disability at Metanoia, compared to a national HE average of 16.7%.

#### **Why this risk is a priority:**

We recognise that for many prospective students—particularly those from the underrepresented backgrounds that are our focus —the perception of higher education can act as a significant barrier to access. Metanoia Institute, with its specialism in psychotherapy and counselling, already attracts applicants with complex life histories and atypical educational journeys. However, we also observe hesitancy and lack of confidence among potential applicants, particularly students from under-resourced backgrounds and students from Non-White ethnic backgrounds, who may view higher education as inaccessible, elitist, or not relevant to their goals.

#### **Why we think it's occurring:**

This risk is rooted in a combination of cultural, psychological, and socio-economic factors. Many students report being “firsts” in their families or communities to enter higher education. Feelings of imposterism, self-doubt, and lack of belonging are compounded by a lack of visible role models, relatable messaging, or reassurance about the value and attainability of HE. This is particularly potent in relation to psychotherapy, which can be perceived as a profession culturally alien or financially unrealistic.

#### **How we are addressing it:**

We are reframing higher education as inclusive, relevant, and affirming.

- Our **Metanoia Scholarship** actively supports aspiring therapists from underrepresented communities.

- Initiatives such as the **Safe Disclosure Campaign**, fostering a culture of openness helping underrepresented students view higher education as accessible, inclusive, and relevant to their lived experiences.
- Alumni career stories aim to humanise the student journey and instil faith in counselling as a career path.

Together, these strategies build trust and confidence in prospective learners and challenge perceptions that higher education is “not for people like me.”

### **Risk 6: Insufficient Academic Support**

There is a risk that students from underrepresented groups—particularly Non-White students who may be the first in their family to access higher education—may not receive sufficient academic support to enable them to succeed and thrive in their studies. These students may enter higher education with uneven prior learning experiences or less access to academic capital, which can negatively impact their confidence, performance, and progression if support structures are not responsive to their needs.

As reported in our Performance Assessment:

- **Non-White Students:** Across the four-year period 2018-19 to 2021-22 we observe consistently poorer Attainment in non-white students of 52% compared with 81% for white students

#### **Why this risk is a priority:**

Our internal data, including student surveys and progression analysis, suggest that insufficient academic support is a key factor affecting retention and attainment—particularly for those without a strong academic background, and those from underrepresented groups. Academic confidence, especially in written work, academic conventions, and reflective practice, emerges as a common challenge.

#### **Why we think it’s occurring:**

Metanoia’s pedagogic approach centres on reflexive, relational learning that can be deeply rewarding but cognitively and emotionally demanding. Many of our students come from non-traditional academic pathways, including vocational or experiential backgrounds. They may have had significant gaps since previous study, or may lack familiarity with higher education conventions and academic writing. Additionally, the personal intensity of psychotherapy training can distract from core academic development.

#### **How we are addressing it:**

We are investing in enhanced academic support structures that scaffold success across the student journey. These include:

- A new **Student Investment Fund**, which will reduce barriers to professional development.
- Expansion of peer and near-peer support models.
- Increasing accessibility of policy and mitigation related documents, for instance through the use of explainer videos.
- Staff training in inclusive assessment and feedback.

These are supported by an enhanced **Primary Tutor** system and increased alignment between academic and pastoral support. Our aim is to normalise help-seeking, reduce shame around academic struggle, and close differential attainment gaps linked to prior educational background.

### **Risk 7: Insufficient Personal Support**

There is a risk that students from underrepresented groups—particularly men, and disabled students—may not experience a sufficiently personalised support environment to help them feel secure, connected, and confident in their long-term professional development. Without tailored emotional and career-focused support, some students may question whether they belong in the profession or whether psychotherapy is a viable and sustainable career path for them.

#### **As reported in our Performance Assessment:**

- **Male Students:** Across the four-year period 2018-19 to 2021-22, male students have poorer Completion rates than other students across the assessed period. Completion for Males was 80% compared with 87% for Female students.
- **Disabled Students:** Data across the four-year period 2018-19 to 2021-22 show poorer Completion rates (80%) for disabled students compared with their non-disabled peers (87%).

#### **Why this risk is a priority:**

Personal support is not only a matter of emotional wellbeing but a critical factor in student success. When students can see a clear and personally meaningful pathway through and beyond their studies, they are more likely to remain engaged, persist through challenges, and complete their courses (Vaughan, 2022). This is especially true for underrepresented groups, for whom the perceived personal and financial risks of study may be higher. Male students, in particular, may feel pressure to justify their study in counselling in terms of future income or professional legitimacy. When students receive personalised support—emotional and practical—that affirms their belonging and offers a tangible career trajectory, motivation and resilience tend to increase. A tailored, extended careers offer can therefore act as a protective factor for retention, particularly in later stages of training when doubt or fatigue often peak.

#### **Why we think it's occurring:**

While Metanoia's ethos is relational and student-centred, we recognise that our current model of personal support can feel diffuse or informal, and may not consistently provide the structured encouragement students need to stay the course—particularly those who are juggling life pressures or facing uncertainty about long-term prospects. Sector evidence shows that students are more likely to leave their studies or are undermotivated in their studies if they cannot see how their course connects to a viable future (Bargmann et al., 2022; Healy, 2023). Personal support that is visible, proactive, and extends beyond graduation helps build that bridge and reinforces students' investment in completing their course.

#### **How we are addressing it:**

We are expanding a suite of personalised support interventions that address both practical needs and the emotional experience of our student population. By improving access to timely, relevant, and identity-sensitive support, we aim to enhance student confidence, reduce withdrawal, and support sustainable professional identity development.

- Proactive Student Services Triage and Communication: Each semester, tailored messages will be sent to students from our target groups, offering timely signposting to relevant services such as study skills, wellbeing support, and academic guidance.
- Extended Careers Service: All graduates will have access to structured careers support for five years, providing continuity, mentoring, and guidance on building viable and sustainable careers.
- Career Boot Camps: Intensive events will provide job-readiness training, networking opportunities, and confidence-building for students who may not initially see themselves as professionals in the field.

Together, these targeted interventions aim to normalise help-seeking, increase engagement with available support, and foster student success, especially among underrepresented and financially cautious students.

### **Risk 8: Mental Health**

There is a risk that students from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds may face significant mental health challenges that negatively affect their ability to engage with, sustain, and progress through their studies. These risks are intensified by intersecting life pressures, experiences of marginalisation, and limited access to culturally competent or financially accessible mental health support (De Groot et al., 2024; Hardy et al., 2025).

As reported in our Performance Assessment:

- Student survey responses show that the emotional demands of psychotherapy training, combined with prior experiences of trauma, make the learning environment particularly intense. Without robust, embedded mental health support, this can worsen pre-existing conditions and increase drop-out or disengagement risk.

#### **Why this risk is a priority:**

Mental health consistently emerges as one of the most significant barriers to student success in our internal data. This risk affects students across all demographics but is particularly pronounced among disabled students, those with caring responsibilities, and non-white students who may experience additional social, emotional, or financial stressors.

#### **Why we think it's occurring:**

As a training provider in psychotherapy, Metanoia attracts many students with lived experience of trauma, mental health challenges, or personal transformation. While this enriches the learning environment, it also increases its emotional intensity. Many students are also managing employment, parenting, or complex life responsibilities, which can exacerbate underlying mental health vulnerabilities. Sector-wide evidence confirms that these risks are unevenly distributed and most acute among the groups we seek to support through this APP.

#### **How we are addressing it:**

We take a holistic, embedded approach to student mental health. Examples include:

- Structured pre-entry support meetings for students with additional needs
- CPD for staff in trauma-informed and inclusive pedagogy

- The construction of a new inclusive quiet space to serve neurodiverse students, those observing faith practices, and anyone requiring a calm environment.

We are also exploring the development of emotionally sustainable learning environments through curriculum design, co-regulated group processes, and safe reflective spaces. Mental health is not positioned as an individual issue, but as a shared institutional responsibility.

### **Risk 10: Cost Pressures**

There is a risk that financial pressures will disproportionately affect students from lower socio-economic backgrounds (particularly IMD Quintile 1). These pressures may limit both access to higher education and students' ability to remain and succeed in their studies, especially given the additional financial demands associated with professional training in psychotherapy and counselling.

As reported in our Performance Assessment:

- Students from IMD Quintile 1 not only have low representation at Metanoia, but national data show they experience significantly lower continuation, completion, and attainment rates than their wealthier peers. Whilst our internal data do not highlight gaps in continuation or completion, we do observe an attainment gap over four years of aggregated data 2018-19 to 2021-22. Over this period IMD Q1 students have an Attainment rate (good honours degree) of 75% compared with 83% in IMD Q5 students.
- In the Metanoia context, risks typically associated with IMD quintile are exacerbated by mandatory out-of-pocket costs for therapy, supervision, and professional membership.
- Students highlighted that financial strain from missed sessions, therapy fees, and unevenly distributed assessments makes it harder to balance study with caring responsibilities or employment. These hidden costs disproportionately impact financially insecure students, leading to stress, disengagement, and non-completion.

#### **Why this risk is a priority:**

The cost of higher education remains a major barrier to both access and success, particularly for mature students who make up the majority of our student population, and those with limited financial support from families. Many Metanoia students self-fund or rely on precarious employment, and we have identified financial pressure as a key driver of withdrawal, low engagement, and distress.

#### **Why we think it's occurring:**

Psychotherapy and counselling programmes entail unique costs not always present in other higher education contexts. In addition to tuition, students must fund their own therapy and supervision—requirements essential to professional qualification. This is particularly burdensome for those entering with existing financial precarity, dependants, or unstable housing. Students report that even small, unexpected costs (e.g. travel to placement, therapy cancellations, or conference fees) can have a cascading effect on confidence and participation.

#### **How we are addressing it:**

We have developed a suite of targeted financial and structural supports. These include:

- The **Metanoia Scholarship and Cost of Living Fund**, which will offer direct financial relief
- The **Alumni Discounted Therapy and Supervision Scheme**, which will support more affordable access to core components of professional training

- A simplified and transparent approach to financial support applications.

These interventions are designed not only to reduce direct financial barriers but to increase a student's sense of institutional care, security, and value. We aim to ensure that economic hardship does not equate to educational compromise.

### 3. Objectives

The Access and Participation Plan (APP) for Metanoia Institute sets out a strategic, evidence-based response to five key risks to equality of opportunity identified through institutional data and sector-wide analysis: **Perception of Higher Education (Risk 3), Insufficient Academic Support (Risk 6), Insufficient Personal Support (Risk 7), Mental Health (Risk 8), and Cost Pressures (Risk 10)**. The objectives outlined below are specifically designed to mitigate these risks, ensuring that the institution provides a more inclusive, supportive, and accessible environment for all students. These objectives are measurable, timebound, and focused on delivering tangible improvements in student access and success.

Target reference	Objective	Intervention Strategy
PTA_1	By 2029–30, increase proportion of new undergraduate entrants from IMD Q1 areas to 14% so as to close the gap with national aggregates for English HE as reported in the OfS data dashboard.	Strategy 1 (Access)
PTA_2	By 2029–30, increase proportion of enrolments of students from Non-White backgrounds by 6 percentage points to 27.5% so as to close the gap with national aggregates for English HE as reported in the OfS data dashboard.	Strategy 1 (Access)
PTA_3	By 2029–30, increase proportion of enrolments of disabled students by 2.4 percentage points to 14.4% so as to close the gap with national aggregates for English HE as reported in the OfS data dashboard.	Strategy 1 (Access)
PTS_1	By 2029–30, reduce the completion gap between male students and other students by 3.5 percentage points (halving the current institutional gap).	Strategy 2 (Curriculum and Careers)
PTS_2	By 2029–30, reduce the attainment gap between non-white and white students to 14.5 percentage points (halving the current institutional gap).	Strategy 2 (Curriculum and Careers)
PTS_3	By 2029–30, reduce the completion gap between disabled and non-disabled students – inclusive of students with mental health conditions - to 3.5% percentage points (halving the current institutional gap).	Strategy 3 (Mental Health)
PTS_4	By 2029–30, reduce the attainment gap between IMDQ1 and IMDQ5 students to 4 percentage points (halving the current institutional gap).	Strategy 4 (Finance)

## 4. Intervention strategies and expected outcomes

These strategies are designed to tackle specific barriers to higher education participation and ensure that all students, regardless of background, have the opportunity to thrive throughout their academic journey and beyond. Each strategy is aligned with the risks we have identified—perceptions of higher education, insufficient academic and personal support, mental health challenges, and financial pressures—ensuring that our interventions are both targeted and measurable. Through these strategies, we aim to foster a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, increase student retention and completion, and provide robust pathways to successful graduate outcomes.

### Intervention strategy 1: Inclusive Access through Outreach and Alternative Entry Pathways

**Objective:**

By 2029–30, increase access to underrepresented groups by raising the proportion of new undergraduate entrants from IMD Q1 areas to 14%, Non-White students to 27.5%, and disabled students to 14.4%, bringing Metanoia’s enrolments into closer alignment with national averages.

**Targets:** PTA\_1, PTA\_2, PTA\_3 – See Annex C, Table 5b.

Because representation of male students at Metanoia Institute is comparable with representation of male students across other counselling and psychotherapy training institutions nationwide, we have not set a target for an increased proportion of men, but expect our outreach work to encourage more applications from men and therefore an uplift in male representation in our student population across the lifetime of the Plan.

**Risks Addressed:**

- **Risk 3: Perceptions of HE** — via inclusive messaging, institute imagery, representation, and reframing the narrative on counselling as a profession

**Overarching Theory of Change:**

By developing strategic partnerships, delivering inclusive outreach, simplifying admissions processes, and providing visibility through student and alumni voices, we will build trust and awareness among underrepresented communities. This will reduce perceived and structural barriers to application and entry, enabling a more diverse student body that reflects the wider population.

**Summary of Evidence Base and Rationale**

There is a strong UK evidence base supporting the proposed interventions. Strategic school and college partnerships—particularly those embedded in IMD Q1 areas—are shown to enhance access by introducing higher education as a viable route to both young and mature learners, with co-

designed activities boosting relevance and impact. Alumni and student ambassador talks build trust and aspiration when speakers reflect the backgrounds of prospective students, offering relatable role models and demystifying pathways into counselling and psychotherapy (TASO, 2021). Targeted scholarship outreach increases awareness and uptake of financial support, which is known to positively influence enrolment decisions among underrepresented groups (Robinson & Salvestrini, 2020). Replacing personal statements with structured forms and adopting contextual admissions mitigates structural disadvantage in application processes. The recognition of prior learning and experience, along with staff training in evaluating non-traditional routes, widens entry to diverse cohorts (QAA, 2022). Offering personalised feedback to unsuccessful applicants supports reapplication and maintains engagement. Tailored pre-arrival communications and co-created induction materials, featuring paid contributions from current and former students, promote early belonging, preparedness, and transition success.

### Evaluation

Evaluation for this intervention strategy will generate OfS Type 1 (T1) and Type 2 (T2) standards of evaluation, which will establish whether the intended outcomes are being achieved. We do not propose to evaluate the strategy as a whole, but have set out evaluation against each of the activities. The strategy will commence from September 2026, with publication and sharing of findings as per the publication plan below.

### Publication Plan

Format of Findings	When findings will be shared
<p>We will produce an annual summary progress and review report, which will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide insights on the effectiveness and progress of relevant activities in this Strategy based on the achievement of intended outcomes.</li> <li>• Capture learning and insights that inform practice improvements and any appropriate changes and developments.</li> <li>• Highlights and themes from this report will be shared online, for example through our website.</li> </ul>	<p>Progress 'highlights' will be shared annually</p>
<p>We will produce an 'Evaluation To Date' or an 'End of Project' Report (whichever is relevant) capturing evaluation and findings, disseminated online via our website, and via channels mentioned below where appropriate.</p>	<p>4 years on from Plan commencement (Autumn/Winter 2029) and/or at the conclusion of projects.</p>
<p>We will also contribute at conferences and through workshops and events hosted by networks such as, but not limited to, SEER and our local UniConnect partnerships.</p>	<p>At a minimum every 2 years, starting from 2026-27.</p>
<p>We will contribute to other calls for evidence, such as through TASO.</p>	<p>As they arise, anticipated contributions at minimum every 2 years.</p>

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Evaluation (Standards of evidence denoted as T1, T2, T3)
Strategic school and college partnerships	Establish co-designed outreach with Further Education (FE) colleges and schools and / or with significant percentage of population from IMD 1 areas, reaching younger and mature students; focus on introducing counselling and psychotherapy as viable and meaningful careers.	Staff time for partnership development and delivery; travel costs for outreach visits.	Increased awareness of counselling careers; raised aspirations; strengthened institutional relationships.	<p><b>Process Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data analysis: Number and % of students at partner schools and colleges with target characteristics. (T1)</li> <li>• Output analysis: the number of schools /colleges in a relationship. (T1)</li> <li>• Data analysis: Number and % of students accessing outreach activities and % of students with target characteristics (T1).</li> <li>• Output analysis: the number of outreach activities delivered (T1).</li> <li>• Post-activity polls gathering stakeholder (staff and student) experiences and perceptions (T2).</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Analysis: application rates to Metanoia Institute by target groups (T2).</li> </ul>

<p>Inclusive alumni/student talks: "My journey into counselling"</p>	<p>Invite alumni and current students (expenses paid) to present to prospective students from target groups. Focus on accessibility, identity, and relevance.</p>	<p>London Living Wage (LLW) payments for alumni/student speakers; travel reimbursement.</p>	<p>Increased reliability of training journeys; reduction in perceived barriers; enhanced authenticity of outreach.</p>	<p><b>Process Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output analysis: Number of events delivered (T1).</li> <li>• Data Analysis: Number and % of students engaging with events and % of students with target characteristics (T1).</li> <li>• Some post-activity polls gathering student experience and perceptions of talks and topics discussed (T2).</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Analysis: application rates to Metanoia Institute by target groups (T2).</li> </ul>
<p>Targeted scholarship outreach campaign</p>	<p>Create and distribute marketing and outreach materials about scholarship opportunities for underrepresented groups.</p>	<p>Design and printing costs for promotional materials; staff time for campaign coordination.</p>	<p>Higher visibility of financial support; increased applications from students facing cost pressures.</p>	<p><b>Process Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output analysis: Number of scholarships communications delivered to target entrants. (T1)</li> <li>• Data Analysis: Number and % of students engaging with communications and % of students with target characteristics. (T1)</li> <li>• Polls gathering student opinions on the tailored messages and awareness of scholarship opportunities (T2).</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Analysis: number and % of scholarship applications from students with target characteristics (T1).</li> </ul>

Accessible application process redesign	Replace personal statements with structured forms; ensure inclusive language; accessibility audit; embed contextual admissions options.	Staff time for redesign; external accessibility consultant input (if needed).	Reduced procedural barriers; more diverse applicant pool; improved fairness.	<p><b>Process Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Analysis: number and % of applicants with target characteristics (T1).</li> <li>• Data Analysis: number and % of applicants receiving an offer from target groups (T1).</li> <li>• Data Analysis: number and % of new entrants with target characteristics (T1).</li> <li>• Data Analysis: reapplication rates from applicants with target characteristics (T1).</li> <li>• Staff feedback to inform accessibility audit (T1).</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student surveys to understand experiences of application process and experiences of entering through contextual admissions (T2).</li> <li>• Staff surveys to understand effectiveness of staff development and admissions training (T2).</li> <li>• Data Analysis: application rates to Metanoia Institute by target groups (T2).</li> </ul>
Recognition of Prior Learning and alternative pathway review	Develop clear routes recognising prior qualifications and relevant experience; train admissions staff in evaluating equivalencies.	Staff development sessions and admissions training; time allocated for framework design.	Expanded routes into training; improved access for career-changers and non-traditional learners.	
Constructive feedback to all unsuccessful applicants	Provide personalised feedback with encouragement and signposting to future application options or foundation-level courses.	Staff time allocated to review applications and generate tailored feedback templates.	Maintains engagement; improves reapplication rate; enhances equity of treatment.	

Tailored pre-arrival communications	Send staged communications tailored to underrepresented entrants (e.g. on money, wellbeing, study skills).	Staff time for content creation and segmentation ; platform or CRM software use.	Increased confidence and belonging; improved conversion from offer to enrolment.	<p><b>Process Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output analysis: Number of tailored pre-arrival communications delivered to target entrants. (T1)</li> <li>• Data Analysis: Number and % of students engaging with communications and % of students with target characteristics. (T1)</li> <li>• Polls gathering student opinions on the tailored messages (T2).</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Analysis: number and % of new entrants with target characteristics (T1).</li> </ul>
Asynchronous induction content with paid student/alumni input	Develop pre-induction content with representation from target groups; pay students LLW for filmed contributions.	LLW payments for student/alumni contributions; staff time and basic AV/editing resources.	Supports self-paced engagement; builds familiarity and inclusion; addresses barriers to in-person attendance.	<p><b>Process Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output analysis: Number of pre-induction content developed. (T1)</li> <li>• Data Analysis: Number and % of students engaging with pre-induction content and % of students with target characteristics. (T1)</li> <li>• Polls gathering student experience and perceptions of pre-induction content. (T2)</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-3 student focus groups at minimum every two years from 2026-27, to explore key themes from polls and surveys. (T2)</li> </ul>
<b>Cross-intervention strategy: IS3, IS4</b>				

Intervention strategy 1 is projected to cost £78,000 over the four-year duration of the Plan.

## Intervention strategy 2: Inclusive Curriculum and Careers Support

### Objective:

By 2029–30, reduce completion gaps for male students by at least half and attainment gaps for non-white students by at least half, ensuring more equitable outcomes across student groups.

**Target:** PTS\_1, PTS\_2 – See Annex C, Table 5d

### Risks Addressed:

- **Risk 6: Insufficient Academic Support** – strengthening inclusive, proactive academic support through enhanced resources, peer learning, accessible policies, and staff training to close completion and attainment gaps.
- **Risk 7: Insufficient Personal Support** – enhancing pastoral care and sustained career guidance, including extended mentoring and wellbeing support, to help students—especially men—envision and sustain counselling as a viable career path.

### Overarching Theory of Change:

By embedding inclusive teaching, diverse assessment methods, and amplifying student voice in curriculum design, we will create a learning environment that addresses varied academic needs and identities, reducing barriers and promoting equitable attainment for underrepresented groups. Simultaneously, by providing personalised, sustained career support and highlighting diverse professional pathways throughout the student journey, we will empower students—especially those less likely to see counselling as a viable career—to envision and build sustainable futures in the profession. This integrated approach fosters greater retention, confidence, and long-term success, ultimately widening participation and impact. Professional development funding (Student Investment Fund) mitigates opportunity gaps by fostering career readiness and networks, critical for underrepresented students.

### Summary of Evidence Base and Rationale

The interventions in this strategy are underpinned by robust UK sector evidence on inclusive teaching and learning. Diverse assessment formats—such as portfolios and formative tasks—are associated with improved engagement and attainment for students with varied learning needs, including those with disabilities and neurodivergent profiles (QAA, 2023). The provision of inclusive course materials, designed with accessibility in mind, supports students with dyslexia and neurodivergence in navigating key academic content. Co-produced video explainers, particularly when student contributors reflect the target demographics and are fairly compensated, strengthen orientation, belonging, and early engagement. Staff development in inclusive and trauma-informed pedagogy is widely recommended to improve the learning experiences and outcomes of students from underrepresented backgrounds (OfS, 2022). Supporting staff and student-led working groups and collectives builds community, agency, and belonging (HEPI, 2022b). Accessible, quiet spaces—along with the provision of assistive technologies—respond to a recognised need for inclusive

learning environments that support wellbeing, concentration, and equitable access to academic resources (OfS, 2022). Sector evidence shows that students are more likely to remain engaged and achieve positive outcomes when they can clearly see how their course connects to viable and meaningful career pathways (Bargmann et al., 2022; Healy, 2023).

The proposed interventions are grounded in robust UK sector evidence supporting inclusive employability practices. Extended careers services offering up to five years of post-graduation support, as implemented by institutions like Northumbria University and the University of Strathclyde, have been shown to assist graduates in navigating evolving labour markets and career transitions (Northumbria University, n.d.). Embedding employability frameworks within undergraduate curricula aligns with Advance HE's guidance, emphasising the integration of career development skills across all academic levels to enhance student preparedness for the workforce (Advance HE, n.d.). Career Boot Camps, reflecting the structure of government-backed Skills Bootcamps, provide intensive, sector-specific training that effectively addresses skills gaps and improves job readiness, particularly benefiting underrepresented groups. Alumni Career Spotlights, such as those hosted by Durham University and the University of Warwick, offer students relatable role models and practical insights into diverse career pathways, fostering increased engagement and aspiration. Integrating career development activities into the curriculum, including personal development planning and reflective practices, is recognised by institutions like the University of Bedfordshire and the University of Edinburgh as vital for enhancing students' employability and facilitating smoother transitions into the workforce (University of Bedfordshire, n.d.).

## Evaluation

Evaluation for this intervention strategy will generate OfS Type 1 (T1) and Type 2 (T2) standards of evaluation, which will establish whether the intended outcomes are being achieved. We do not propose to evaluate the strategy as a whole, but have set out evaluation against each of the activities. The strategy will commence from September 2026, with publication and sharing of findings as per the publication plan below.

## Publication Plan

Format of Findings	When findings will be shared
<p>We will produce an annual summary progress and review report, which will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide insights on the effectiveness and progress of relevant activities in this Strategy based on the achievement of intended outcomes.</li> <li>• Capture learning and insights that inform practice improvements and any appropriate changes and developments.</li> <li>• Highlights and themes from this report will be shared online, for example through our website.</li> </ul>	<p>Progress 'highlights' will be shared annually</p>

We will produce an 'Evaluation To Date' or an 'End of Project' Report (whichever is relevant) capturing evaluation and findings, disseminated online via our website, and via channels mentioned below where appropriate.	4 years on from Plan commencement (Autumn/Winter 2029) and/or at the conclusion of projects.
We will also contribute at conferences and through workshops and events hosted by networks such as, but not limited to, SEER and our local UniConnect partnerships.	At a minimum every 2 years, starting from 2026-27.
We will contribute to other calls for evidence, such as through TASO.	As they arise, anticipated contributions at minimum every 2 years.

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Evaluation (Standards of evidence denoted as T1, T2, T3)
Proactive student services triage and communication	Each semester, tailored messages will proactively reach our target groups—offering timely, relevant support through a central triage system. Communications will address specific needs, such as study skills for IMD Q1 and Non-White students, wellbeing prompts for Disabled students, and help-seeking encouragement for Male students.	Student services staff time; email platform use and campaign planning sessions.	Increased service uptake, reduced isolation, increased engagement with support	<p><b>Process Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output analysis: Number of tailored messages sent to target groups. (T1)</li> <li>• Data Analysis: Number and % of students engaging with student services and % of students with target characteristics. (T1)</li> <li>• Data Analysis: Number and % of students accessing support mechanisms and % of students with target characteristics. (T1)</li> <li>• Polls gathering student opinions on the tailored messages and triage system. (T2)</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Analysis: continuation and completion rates by target groups. (T2)</li> <li>• Data Analysis: module attainment and attainment (degree outcome) by target students. (T2)</li> </ul>
Diverse and Flexible Assessment	Expanded range of assessment formats including portfolios and formative tasks to suit diverse learning styles and needs.	Staff time for assessment redesign; internal CPD to support inclusive assessment practices.	Early support, better engagement, and improved attainment for non-white, male, and disabled students.	<p><b>Process Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output analysis: Number of course materials and video content developed. (T1)</li> <li>• Data Analysis: Number and % of students engaging with materials and % of students with target characteristics. (T1)</li> </ul>

Inclusive Course Materials	Dyslexia-friendly and neurodiversity-aware course handbooks and online resources.	Staff time for revising course materials; accessibility software/tools for formatting support.	Improved access and engagement for neurodivergent students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Analysis: Number and % of students accessing academic support mechanisms and % of students with target characteristics. (T1)</li> <li>• Polls gathering student experience and perceptions of updated policies, resources and assessment practices. (T2)</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-3 student focus groups at minimum every two years from 2026-27, to explore key themes from polls and surveys. (T2)</li> <li>• Data Analysis: continuation and completion rates by target groups. (T2)</li> <li>• Data Analysis: module attainment and attainment (degree outcome) by target students. (T2)</li> </ul>
Explainer Video Library	Video content co-produced with students to demystify processes and introduce key services. Student contributors paid London Living Wage.	LLW payments for student contributors ; staff time and basic AV/editing resources.	Better navigation and support engagement; student empowerment.	
Accessible policy and mitigation materials	Rewrite academic policies in student-friendly language, supported by explainer videos on mitigation, assessment extensions, and complaints.	Staff time for policy rewriting; production of student-friendly videos with London Living Wage (LLW)-paid student presenters.	Greater confidence in processes, increased use of support mechanisms, reduced anxiety around assessments	

<p>Staff CPD in Inclusive Pedagogy</p>	<p>CPD opportunities and a development fund for training in trauma-informed and inclusive approaches.</p>	<p>CPD budget allocation; staff time to attend or lead training sessions.</p>	<p>More responsive teaching and better engagement from diverse learners.</p>	<p><b>Process Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Analysis: Number of staff participating in training (T1).</li> <li>• Output analysis: Number of training sessions run (T1).</li> <li>• Post-training feedback survey for staff (T1).</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual end-of-year Staff Survey exploring confidence in inclusive pedagogy and in providing effective and tailored student support to meet diverse needs (T2).</li> <li>• Data Analysis: continuation and completion rates by target groups (T2).</li> </ul>
<p>Working Groups and Collectives</p>	<p>Staff groups on curriculum themes and support for student collectives; small grants for activities.</p>	<p>Staff facilitation time; small grants budget for student/staff-led initiatives.</p>	<p>Stronger student voice and sense of belonging.</p>	<p><b>Process Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Analysis: Number and % of students engaging with activities and % with target characteristics (T1).</li> <li>• Output analysis: Number of student/staff-led initiatives funded. (T1)</li> <li>• Output analysis: Number of staff groups developed. (T1)</li> <li>• Output analysis: Number of student collectives supported. (T2)</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual student survey of student initiative participants exploring experiences and benefits of activities. (T2)</li> </ul>

Assistive Technology and Facilities	Acquisition of specialist learning tools (e.g., text-to-speech, screen readers) to supplement DSA provision.	Capital spend on assistive software/hardware; training sessions for staff/students in usage.	Greater learning equity for students with disabilities.	<p><b>Process Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Analysis: Number and % of students engaging with assistive technologies and % with target characteristics. (T1)</li> <li>• Output analysis: Number of training sessions for staff/students delivered. (T1)</li> <li>• Polls for students engaging with assistive technologies to assess need and if support is fit for purpose. (T2)</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Analysis: continuation and completion rates by target groups (T2).</li> <li>• Data Analysis: module attainment and attainment (degree outcome) by target students (T2).</li> </ul>
Student Investment Fund	Enables students to apply for funding to attend or present at professional events, training or conferences.	Budget allocations for student awards; administrative time for processing applications and post-event reports.	Increased confidence, social capital, and networking opportunities; improved employability.	<p><b>Process Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output analysis: Number of student places funded. (T1)</li> <li>• Data Analysis: Number and % of students engaging with fund and associated events and % with target characteristics. (T1)</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual student survey of student fund recipients exploring experiences and benefits of fund, including their experiences of increased confidence, social capital, and networking opportunities. (T2)</li> </ul>

Extended Careers Service	Five-year access to careers support after graduation to support long-term career development.	Careers team time for graduate support; scheduling and delivery of follow-up sessions.	Increased student and graduate confidence in employment opportunities.	<p><b>Process Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output analysis: Number of events and sessions run (e.g. 1-1 careers support, careers boot camps) (T1)</li> <li>• Data Analysis: Number and % of students engaging with careers service/sessions and % of students with target characteristics. (T1)</li> <li>• Some post-activity polls gathering student experience and perceptions (T2).</li> <li>• Annual end-of-year Staff Survey exploring whether content was appropriate and effective, and to explore challenges. (T1)</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline and annual student survey exploring perceptions and confidence in respect of career development and management / employability skills and professional networks. (T2)</li> <li>• 2-3 student focus groups at minimum every two years from 2026-27, to explore key themes from polls and surveys. (T2)</li> <li>• Data Analysis: continuation and completion rates by target groups. (T2)</li> <li>• Data Analysis: attainment by target students. (T2)</li> <li>• Data analysis: progression into employment and into highly skilled employment or post-graduate study pathways for target students (T2).</li> </ul>
Embedded Employability Framework	Careers and progression framework integrated into UG curriculum from Levels 4–6.	Staff time for framework development and integration into module design.	Improved awareness of career paths; increased preparedness for work.	
Career Boot Camps	Events offering intensive support, networking, and job-readiness training; inclusive of target groups.	Event coordination costs; LLW payments for speakers; catering and venue as needed.	Improved employability confidence and outcomes for underrepresented students.	

Alumni Career Spotlights	Live and recorded talks from diverse alumni sharing career journeys and advice.	LLW payments for alumni speakers; staff time for coordination and video editing.	Increased visibility of diverse career options and professional role models.	<p><b>Process Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Analysis: Number and % of students engaging with videos or events and % of students with target characteristics. (T1)</li> <li>• Output analysis: Number of alumni events recorded/delivered. (T1)</li> <li>• Some post-activity polls gathering student experience and perceptions of diverse career options and professional role models represented in alumni videos/talks. (T2)</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data analysis: progression into employment and into highly skilled employment or post-graduate study pathways for target students. (T2)</li> </ul>
<b>Cross-intervention strategy: IS1, IS3, IS4</b>				

Intervention strategy 2 is projected to cost £216,000 over the four-year duration of the Plan.

## Intervention strategy 3: Mental Health-Positive Onboarding and Support

### Objective:

Reduce the completion gap between disabled and non-disabled students – inclusive of students with mental health conditions - to 3.5% percentage points (halving the institutional gap).

**Target:** PTS\_3 – See Annex C, Table 5d

### Risks Addressed:

- **Risk 8: Mental health** – Directly tackled via proactive messaging, safe spaces, and embedded support.

### Overarching Theory of Change:

By offering structured, stigma-reducing pre-entry support, clear communication of adjustments, and responsive onboarding for students with disabilities or mental health conditions, we aim to create a psychologically safe and inclusive training environment. This will increase students' ability to remain and succeed in training, leading to improved completion outcomes.

### Summary of Evidence Base and Rationale

Despite sector-wide increases in reported mental health conditions, Metanoia continues to record very low disclosure rates — just 1.1% of students declared a mental health condition in 2023–24, compared to 5.3% across the part-time sector. This disparity is concerning in light of research suggesting high levels of lived experience of mental health difficulties within the mental health professions. Students may feel reluctant to disclose for fear of stigma or the implication that their competence will be scrutinised. A mental health-positive onboarding approach therefore plays a vital role in supporting wellbeing from the outset. By normalising conversations about mental health, clearly signposting support mechanisms, and embedding inclusive practices from application through to registration, Metanoia can create safer conditions for early disclosure, engagement with support services, and sustained emotional resilience during training.

Sector-wide data highlights a steep rise in student mental health disclosures, with confidential surveys suggesting far higher prevalence than formal reporting captures (OfS, 2023; House of Commons Library, 2025). The emotionally intensive nature of counselling training heightens this risk. Metanoia's 2024 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Health-Check identified key actions including improved mental health awareness, tailored support provision, and strengthened peer learning. A systematic review of peer interventions (Pointon-Haas et al., 2024) suggests that structured peer mentoring and learning formats can reduce stress and anxiety, although evidence is mixed. These findings underscore the need for proactive, inclusive onboarding and support that normalises mental

health conversations, equips staff and students, and embeds early, culturally aware check-ins and peer connection as protective factors.

Inclusive messaging and success stories of graduates with lived experience reduce stigma and encourage help-seeking. Transparent, evidence-based risk assessment policies ensure equitable disability-related decisions, while pre-entry meetings and in-person onboarding correlate with higher retention by addressing concerns early. Curriculum-integrated self-care education, including burnout and vicarious trauma awareness, enhances resilience. Proactive triage systems and tailored communication improve access to support and trained tutors engaging in early intervention reduce academic risks. Simplified policies and explainer videos further mitigate barriers to accessing mitigations. Collectively, these strategies are underpinned by research demonstrating their efficacy in fostering belonging, retention, and academic success for vulnerable student groups.

### Evaluation

Evaluation for this intervention strategy will generate OfS Type 1 (T1) and Type 2 (T2) standards of evaluation, which will establish whether the intended outcomes are being achieved. We do not propose to evaluate the strategy as a whole, but have set out evaluation against each of the activities. The strategy will commence from September 2026, with publication and sharing of findings as per the publication plan below.

### Publication Plan

Format of Findings	When findings will be shared
<p>We will produce an annual summary progress and review report, which will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide insights on the effectiveness and progress of relevant activities in this Strategy based on the achievement of intended outcomes.</li> <li>• Capture learning and insights that inform practice improvements and any appropriate changes and developments.</li> <li>• Highlights and themes from this report will be shared online, for example through our website.</li> </ul>	<p>Progress ‘highlights’ will be shared annually</p>
<p>We will produce an ‘Evaluation To Date’ or an ‘End of Project’ Report (whichever is relevant) capturing evaluation and findings, disseminated online via our website, and via channels mentioned below where appropriate.</p>	<p>4 years on from Plan commencement (Autumn/Winter 2029) and/or at the conclusion of projects.</p>
<p>We will also contribute at conferences and through workshops and events hosted by networks such as, but not limited to, SEER and our local UniConnect partnerships.</p>	<p>At a minimum every 2 years, starting from 2026-27.</p>
<p>We will contribute to other calls for evidence, such as through TASO.</p>	<p>As they arise, anticipated contributions at minimum every 2 years.</p>

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Evaluation (Standards of evidence denoted as T1, T2, T3)
Mental health-positive messaging	Develop and maintain website content, open day materials, explicitly welcoming students with mental health conditions. Promote stories of successful graduates with lived experience. Target: all prospective and current students. Existing but to be expanded.	Staff time for content creation and student/staff interviews; web design and open day material updates.	Reduced stigma, increased disclosures, increased applications and enrolments from students with lived experience	<p><b>Process Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output analysis: Number of mental health-positive messaging materials developed. (T1)</li> <li>• Data Analysis: Number and % of students engaging with materials and % of students with target characteristics. (T1)</li> <li>• Data Analysis: Number of students disclosing mental health conditions. (T1)</li> <li>• Polls gathering student experience and perceptions of updated content and materials (T2)</li> </ul>
Safe Disclosure Campaign	Co-designed campaign to build trust around disclosure of mental health, disability, and care experience. Introduction of multiple staged opportunities for students to make disclosures around disability and mental health.	LLW payments for student co-designers; staff time for campaign development and delivery.	Increased disclosure; improved targeting of support and normalisation of disclosure.	<p><b>Impact Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-3 student focus groups at minimum every two years from 2026-27, to explore key themes from polls and surveys. (T2)</li> <li>• Data Analysis: application rates to Metanoia Institute by target groups (T2).</li> <li>• Data Analysis: continuation and completion rates by target groups. (T2)</li> </ul>

Inclusive Enrolment Processes	Embed destigmatising language and affirming messages around disclosure from senior staff and alumni.	Staff time for content development; contributions from senior staff and alumni.	Enhanced sense of safety and trust; greater data completeness.	
Risk assessment policy for disability-related decisions	Develop and implement a transparent, evidence-based policy framework for making disability-related fitness-to-practise decisions. Staff training included.	Policy development working group; staff training sessions on disability and fitness-to-train decisions.	Reduced fear of exclusion, consistent decisions, improved student trust	<p><b>Process Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Analysis: Number of staff participating in training (T1).</li> <li>• Output analysis: Number of training sessions run (T1).</li> <li>• Post-training feedback survey for staff (T1).</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual end-of-year Staff Survey exploring confidence in making disability-related decisions and effectiveness of policy and training (T2).</li> <li>• Data Analysis: continuation and completion rates by target groups (T2).</li> </ul>

<p>Structured pre-entry support meetings</p>	<p>One-to-one meetings between applicants who disclose a mental health or disability condition with the Head of Programme, followed by an in-person onboarding visit.</p>	<p>Staff time for pre-entry meetings; travel costs and room booking for in-person onboarding visits.</p>	<p>Improved preparedness, improved relationships with support staff</p>	<p><b>Process Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output analysis: Number of pre-entry support meetings run (T1).</li> <li>• Data Analysis: Number and % of students engaging with support meetings and % of students with target characteristics (T1).</li> <li>• Surveys for staff and students exploring experiences of pre-entry support meetings and onboarding visits (T2).</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Analysis: continuation and completion rates by target groups (T2).</li> </ul>
<p>Curriculum-integrated self-care education</p>	<p>Embed self-care, burnout awareness, and vicarious trauma content across all years. Existing activity to be extended and made more visible.</p>	<p>Staff time for curriculum development; CPD workshops on embedding wellbeing content.</p>	<p>Improved self-awareness and resilience, reduced attrition, healthier engagement with placement</p>	<p><b>Process Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Output analysis: Number of self-care education materials developed. (T1)</li> <li>• Data Analysis: Number and % of students engaging with materials and % of students with target characteristics. (T1)</li> <li>• Output analysis: Number of CPD workshops delivered. (T1)</li> <li>• Polls gathering student experience and perceptions of self-care education materials (T2)</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-3 student focus groups at minimum every two years from 2026-27, to explore key themes from polls and surveys. (T2)</li> <li>• Data Analysis: continuation and completion rates by target groups. (T2)</li> </ul>

Tutor engagement in early intervention	Training for tutors to proactively reach out where concern arises; additional tutorials for struggling students. Expand current informal practice.	Training sessions for tutors; increased tutorial time allocation for high-need students.	Improved staff-student relationships, timely escalation of issues	<p><b>Process Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Analysis: Number of tutors participating in training (T1).</li> <li>• Output analysis: Number of training sessions run (T1).</li> <li>• Post-training feedback survey for tutors (T1).</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual end-of-year Staff Survey exploring confidence in early intervention and in providing effective and tailored student support to meet diverse needs (T2).</li> <li>• Data Analysis: continuation and completion rates by target groups (T2).</li> </ul>
Quiet and Inclusive Spaces	Creation of a new garden room as quiet space; estate modifications for accessibility.	Estates budget for quiet room development and minor building modifications.	Reduced anxiety; greater comfort for neurodivergent and disabled students.	<p><b>Process Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Analysis: Number and % of students engaging with quiet spaces and % of students with target characteristics (T1).</li> <li>• Polls for students engaging with quiet spaces to hear feedback (T2).</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some student focus groups or reflective activities to share experiences of new quiet space and accessibility modifications, and suggest further changes where required (T2).</li> </ul>
<b>Cross-intervention strategy: IS1</b>				

Intervention strategy 3 is projected to cost £139,000 over the four-year duration of the Plan.

## Intervention strategy 4: Financial Support and Cost-of-Living Resilience

### **Objective:**

By 2029-30, reduce the attainment gap between IMDQ1 and IMDQ5 students to 4 percentage points (halving the current institutional gap).

**Target:** PTS\_4 – See Annex C, Table 5d

### **Risks Addressed:**

- **Risk 10: Cost pressures** – Targeted financial aid addresses both direct and indirect costs of study, supports wellbeing and reduces stress-related drop-out.

### **Overarching Theory of Change:**

By reducing the financial barriers that disproportionately affect underrepresented and disadvantaged students, we enable equitable access to core training requirements and wider developmental opportunities. Through scholarships, cost of living support, and affordable access to mandatory personal therapy and supervision, we mitigate financial pressures that often compromise engagement, wellbeing, and academic progress. Streamlined, stigma-sensitive application processes ensure that support reaches those who need it most. Together, these interventions will enhance student retention, reduce withdrawal due to financial hardship, and contribute to equitable success and progression outcomes.

### **Summary of Evidence Base and Rationale**

Financial support interventions, such as targeted scholarships and hardship funds, are evidenced to reduce barriers to access and improve retention for underrepresented students. Need-based fee waivers, like the Metanoia Scholarship, correlate with increased enrolment and completion rates among low-income students. Our rationale for the Scholarship is that it supports Access (and is thus also cross-referenced to Intervention Strategy 1) as well as supporting the student throughout the duration of their study, whereas the Cost of Living Fund is concerned with Success (and is thus tied to our target around improving Completion rates for IMD Q1 students). Scholarships reduce the psychological and practical barrier of high tuition fees, they carry prestige and send a strong, positive signal to recipients and their communities, and they provide certainty and clarity from the outset about the financial commitment required, which is essential for students making life-changing decisions such as retraining or returning to education.

Cost-of-Living Funds address acute financial stressors, which are linked to higher dropout risks, particularly for disadvantaged cohorts. Alumni-led affordable therapy/supervision aligns with evidence that accessible mental health resources enhance academic success, especially for marginalised groups. Simplified application processes improve uptake, as complex administrative hurdles disproportionately deter disadvantaged applicants. Collectively, these interventions address

systemic financial and psychosocial barriers, supporting equitable access, retention, and long-term success.

## Evaluation

Evaluation for this intervention strategy will generate OfS Type 1 (T1) and Type 2 (T2) standards of evaluation, which will establish whether the intended outcomes are being achieved. We do not propose to evaluate the strategy as a whole, but have set out evaluation against each of the activities. The strategy will commence from September 2026, with publication and sharing of findings as per the publication plan below.

## Publication Plan

Format of Findings	When findings will be shared
<p>We will produce an annual summary progress and review report, which will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide insights on the effectiveness and progress of relevant activities in this Strategy based on the achievement of intended outcomes.</li> <li>• Capture learning and insights that inform practice improvements and any appropriate changes and developments.</li> <li>• Highlights and themes from this report will be shared online, for example through our website.</li> </ul>	<p>Progress ‘highlights’ will be shared annually</p>
<p>We will produce an ‘Evaluation To Date’ or an ‘End of Project’ Report (whichever is relevant) capturing evaluation and findings, disseminated online via our website, and via channels mentioned below where appropriate.</p>	<p>4 years on from Plan commencement (Autumn/Winter 2029) and/or at the conclusion of projects.</p>
<p>We will also contribute at conferences and through workshops and events hosted by networks such as, but not limited to, SEER and our local UniConnect partnerships.</p>	<p>At a minimum every 2 years, starting from 2026-27.</p>
<p>We will contribute to other calls for evidence, such as through TASO.</p>	<p>As they arise, anticipated contributions at minimum every 2 years.</p>

Activity	Description	Inputs	Outcomes	Evaluation
Metanoia Scholarship	A 50% fee-waiver scholarship for eligible students from communities who are not currently well represented in the counselling and psychotherapy professions.	Tuition revenue allocation for fee waivers; administrative time for eligibility assessment and award processing.	Improved access, retention and completion rates for students from IMD Q1 and other target groups.	<p><b>Process Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Analysis: Number and % of students receiving financial support (T1), analysed by student characteristics (where possible).</li> <li>• Output Analysis: Total spend of financial support, including by student characteristics. (T1)</li> <li>• Poll gathering financial support recipient experience and perceptions of the process and allocation (T2).</li> <li>• Poll gathering student experiences with alumni supervision and therapy scheme (T2).</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As per relevant parts of the OfS Evaluating the Impact of Financial Support toolkit, every two years from 2026-27.</li> </ul>
Cost of Living Fund	A hardship fund for students facing financial difficulty.	Dedicated budget for grants; staff time for application review and fund disbursement.	Reduced financial stress, improved mental wellbeing, and reduced drop-out risk.	
Alumni Discounted Supervision and Therapy Scheme	Partnership with alumni to provide affordable personal therapy and supervision to current students.	Alumni engagement and coordination; minimal staff time for scheme administration.	Increased access to professional requirements; enhanced wellbeing.	
Improved Fund Applications	Redesigned and accessible application processes for hardship and investment funds. Includes explainer materials.	Staff time for redesigning forms and creating explainer materials; LLW payments for student feedback/input.	Increased uptake and reduced admin burden; improved experience and equity of access.	
<b>Cross-intervention strategy: IS1, IS3</b>				

Intervention strategy 4 is projected to cost £278,000 over the four-year duration of the Plan.

## 5. Whole provider approach

### 5.1 Our institutional journey

At the Metanoia Institute, our commitment to access and participation is not confined to the remit of one department or function, it is embedded across the organisation and driven by a whole-provider approach. This ethos is rooted in our institutional values and strategic priorities: Inclusion, Innovation, Intelligence, and Sustainability and shaped by our identity as a specialist higher education provider in psychological therapies.

Our Access and Participation Plan (APP) is not an isolated project; it is part of a wider transformation across the Institute. It aligns with our broader ambitions to secure Degree Awarding Powers, reframe our education strategy, and recalibrate our governance structures in pursuit of becoming an inclusive, data-literate, and socially engaged institution. As such, our approach to access and participation is institutionally owned, cross-functional, and future-oriented.

#### 5.1.1 Strategic Integration

There is clear commitment to student diversity and success in our institutional strategy and our institutional values. As expressed in our vision statement, ‘We aim to transcend barriers, making therapy accessible to every corner of society, using our influence to create impactful and positive change.’ The APP is integrated with the Metanoia Strategy 2023–2028, our Education Strategy, and People and Culture Strategy. These strategic frameworks commit us to widening access to the psychological professions, addressing underrepresentation, and removing barriers to success across the student lifecycle. The APP also complements our work on the implementation of inclusive pedagogy, evaluation capability (through SEER membership), and curriculum reform, ensuring alignment between APP objectives and institutional priorities.

We have reviewed our Education strategy in light of the proposals of the APP and are looking at ways in which mitigation policies and other supporting documentation can be made even more accessible to students.

#### 5.1.2 Our consultation and involvement activities

Our APP is shaped by extensive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including current students, staff, alumni, employers, and community partners.

We used surveys, focus groups, workshops, and open forums to gather diverse perspectives from students and staff on access, participation, and inclusion.

A cross-functional Task and Finish Group was established, including 12 staff and two student representatives, to oversee APP development and implementation.

Student voices are embedded in our governance structures, including EDI Committee membership and student advisory panels.

We commit to ongoing consultation and engagement to ensure the APP remains responsive to the needs and aspirations of our community.

## 5.2 Our institutional and senior leadership commitment

At the executive level, APP targets are embedded into performance monitoring frameworks, and progress is reviewed alongside other key strategic indicators. An annual APP performance report will be submitted to the Board of Trustees to secure engagement and accountability at the highest level. Risks associated with underperformance against APP objectives are overseen through our institutional Risk Management Framework, with the Head of Governance and Compliance coordinating cross-functional response plans where required.

### 5.2.1 Senior Leadership Commitment

Recognising the importance of distributed leadership in effecting sustainable change, we have actively involved staff and students in shaping, owning, and delivering this Plan. Consultation began in 2024–25 with an institution-wide process involving surveys, focus groups, live workshops, and the creation of the cross-functional Task and Finish Group. This group provided essential insight into operational feasibility, organisational culture, and the lived experiences of learners.

To support a culture of inclusive leadership and empower staff at all levels, we ran all-staff webinars introducing access and participation concepts, and targeted workshops supporting teams to identify where their roles could contribute. These sessions promoted ‘small but significant acts’, micro-level practices that, when adopted collectively, enable system-wide cultural shifts. Further work will continue in 2025–26 to embed ownership across admissions, marketing, student services, estates, and programme leadership.

The CEO is ultimately responsible for the successful implementation of the APP, with authority delegated to key members of Executive for monitoring the implementation of this Plan, monitoring under-represented groups in our student population, ensuring commitments are delivered, and embedding access and participation across the institution. The CEO is principally supported in this work by the Director of Education and the Head of Governance and Compliance, with added input from the Associate Director of Education acting as an Access and Participation Champion.

As part of the monitoring and reporting process we have an EDI Committee, reporting to the Executive, which in turn reports to the Board of Trustees. Membership of the EDI Committee includes our Director of People and Culture, Director of Education, academic and support staff members including the Head of Marketing and Communications, Head of Operations, Academic Registrar, Heads of Programme who are also closely connected to the employing industry (psychotherapy and counselling), and student representatives.

The EDI Committee, chaired by a nominee of the Executive, oversees the implementation, monitoring, review, and evaluation of the APP, advises on research, and makes reports and

recommendations to the Executive, including highlighting risk and making any necessary changes to the APP. If the group finds that progress towards objectives set out in the APP is not being achieved or is going backwards, it may recommend to the Executive to increase investment levels. These would be formally approved by the Board of Trustees if they fell outside of budgets.

Many of our staff, including our senior academic leaders and the Executive team, have longstanding professional and scholarly engagement with widening participation.

The CEO has been deeply committed to widening participation and removing structural barriers to education throughout her career. She was the EDI Lead at the University of Warwick (2018–2021), leading institutional efforts to improve access and inclusion across student services, including a full redesign of the wellbeing service to introduce a triage model, improving responsiveness, and reducing waiting times. She also enhanced the university's disability services to better support neurodiverse and disabled students, while overseeing student funding and hardship provision to ensure financial challenges did not prevent progression. Recognising the critical role of childcare in access to education, she was responsible for Warwick's on-site children's services, an important enabler of access for those with caregiving responsibilities and ensuring continuity of service and maintaining its Ofsted "Outstanding" rating to support student parents. At Metanoia Institute, the CEO has continued this commitment by developing a new institutional strategy to diversify the workforce and student body, commissioning an independent Culture Review to better understand the lived experiences of underrepresented students, and launching Metanoia's first scholarship programme to support access to higher education. This work reflects a sustained and strategic approach to inclusion, grounded in both operational delivery and systems-level change. The CEO also has experience of embedded widening participation principles into curriculum design and academic delivery, including the development of an MSc in Psychology at Birmingham City University, ensuring that both content and pedagogy reflected inclusive, accessible approaches. The programme was designed to support diverse entry routes, particularly for students from non-traditional academic backgrounds, and incorporated applied, real-world learning to enhance employability and academic progression.

The Director of Education held access and participation roles at the University of the West of England (UWE). She was EDI Lead in the School of Education with responsibility for retention and outcomes across the School, leading on data analysis sessions across UWE to support others in this role in other Schools. She was simultaneously EDI Lead for the College of Health, Science and Society (encompassing 4 Schools) with responsibility for innovative and inclusive curriculum and assessment design, sitting on the UWE EDI Strategic Board which covered EDI for both staff and students, supporting the Dean of the College with strategic planning to improve EDI based measures for the College. In addition to these roles, her research is tied principally to EDI and widening access matters.

The Head of Governance and Compliance has experience of developing EDI strategy and access interventions for small specialist providers, and embedding EDI into governance structures.

The Director of Clinical Training (DoCT) at Metanoia has played a nationally recognised role in advancing widening access and equity within psychological therapies education. He chaired the 2022 QAA Subject Benchmark Statement Review for Counselling and Psychotherapy, which embedded EDI, trauma-informed, and anti-oppressive principles as core features of the subject's curriculum expectations — an unprecedented shift toward strategic inclusion at the national level. The DoCT was instrumental in the development of the Person-Centred Experiential Counselling for Depression (PCE-CfD) curriculum, now nationally implemented within NHS Talking Therapies services with Metanoia as a National training provider. This curriculum was designed to enhance patient choice by

diversifying therapeutic modalities available, while also explicitly supporting widening participation into NHS-funded psychotherapeutic training pathways. His leadership extended to the creation of the full-time, salaried Postgraduate Diploma in PCE-CfD Psychotherapeutic Counselling, funded by NHS England. This programme was purposefully designed to remove financial and structural barriers to training, enabling greater inclusion of racially minoritised, working-class, and career-changing students — all while directly feeding into the NHS workforce. Beyond curriculum and programme development, The Director of Clinical Training serves on expert advisory groups both for NHS Talking Therapies as a national advisor and for the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). His work includes co-developing the Online and Phone Therapy Competences, which support widened access to therapy for clients with mobility needs, and those in underserved and rural areas, while also enabling therapists from diverse backgrounds to access flexible training and practice models. As Co-Chair of the UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) Training Standards Committee, he has helped to shape inclusive and future-focused national training standards fit for the 21st-century workforce. These standards embed principles of accessibility, flexibility, and cultural responsiveness to ensure psychotherapy education reflects the needs of modern, diverse populations.

## 5.3 Our WPA student experience: Working across the student lifecycle and experience for all students

### 5.3.1 Institutional Strategy and Vision

The APP is integrated with the Metanoia Strategy 2023–2028, our Education Strategy, and People and Culture Strategy. These strategic frameworks commit us to widening access to the psychological professions, addressing underrepresentation, and removing barriers to success across the student lifecycle. The APP also complements our work on the implementation of inclusive pedagogy, evaluation capability (through SEER membership), and curriculum reform, ensuring alignment between APP objectives and institutional priorities.

We have reviewed our Education strategy in light of the proposals of the APP and are looking at ways in which mitigation policies and other supporting documentation can be made even more accessible to students.

### 5.3.2 Embedding WPA into the student journey

Student experience and success is prioritised through an emphasis on embedded, systematic approaches rather than one-off interventions. Our intention is to make access and participation seamless and embedded rather than additional or separate.

Our recruitment strategy is targeted and strategic, with outreach and engagement activities focusing on underrepresented groups, including those from lower IMD quintiles, racially minoritised backgrounds, disabled students, and mature learners. We utilise data analytics to inform recruitment and admissions decisions, monitor application trends, and identify potential barriers.

Our admissions process includes contextualised offers and robust assessment of prior learning and experience, recognising the diverse routes students take into psychological therapy education and we intend to enhance this further through the implementation of the strategies listed in this APP.

We provide comprehensive pre-entry guidance and support, including open days, applicant webinars, and information on funding and scholarships. Metanoia's Scholarship programme supports those from backgrounds traditionally excluded from higher education.

Orientation and induction are designed to support social integration, academic preparedness, and wellbeing. Ongoing academic and pastoral support is provided through dedicated student support teams, disability advisors, and mental health resources.

Learning, teaching, and assessment strategies embed inclusive pedagogies and are continuously reviewed for accessibility and fairness. We provide resources and training for academic staff to enhance their capability in inclusive education.

Student feedback mechanisms, including surveys and focus groups, are actively used to monitor experience and outcomes, with action plans developed to address identified issues.

Progression and employability support is integrated throughout programmes, with strong links to professional bodies, employers, and alumni networks to facilitate transition into employment or further study.

### **5.3.3 Supporting all students**

Our APP addresses not only the needs of underrepresented groups but also aims to enhance the experience and success of all students. We recognise that a universal approach to wellbeing, belonging, and academic support benefits the entire student body.

We are developing resources and initiatives to support student mental health, digital literacy, financial capability, and academic skills.

We promote a campus culture of respect, inclusivity, and community engagement, supporting the development of identity, resilience, and agency among students.

## **5.4 Our data**

We are committed to data-informed decision-making and continuous improvement in access and participation.

We collect, analyse, and report comprehensive data on student demographics, access, retention, attainment, progression, and employment outcomes.

Data are disaggregated by protected characteristics, IMD quintiles, and other relevant categories to identify inequalities and target interventions.

We benchmark our performance against national and sector standards and share findings transparently with staff, students, and stakeholders.

Our data governance framework ensures compliance with GDPR and ethical standards, while enabling effective use of data for institutional improvement.

## 6. Student Consultation

At the Metanoia Institute, the voices of our students have been central to the development of our Access and Participation Plan. We have engaged students in multiple ways throughout the planning process, ensuring their feedback directly informs the strategies and interventions designed to improve equality of opportunity. This ongoing consultation has allowed us to identify barriers to access, progression, and success and to design targeted responses that reflect the lived experiences of our student body.

Our consultation on Access and Participation began in the 2024-2025 academic year, with an institution-wide consultation led by the Group Coordinator. This consultation invited all staff and students to provide feedback, both live and in writing, on the Access and Participation project. In addition to this initial engagement, we gathered extensive qualitative data from multiple student surveys and focus groups, including:

- The 2023 and 2024 Institute-wide student surveys, where qualitative responses were analysed to identify emerging themes and concerns.
- An Access and Participation survey conducted in Autumn 2024, followed by a second survey in Spring 2025, both of which invited feedback from the entire student body.
- Focus group discussions held with volunteer respondents to the Spring 2025 survey, allowing for in-depth exploration of specific issues raised by students.

A dedicated sub-group within the Access and Participation Task and Finish Group ensured that students were kept regularly informed of the plan's development and had opportunity to feed into and shape the Plan. Regular updates were provided through the *Metanoia Connected* newsletter and the student hub, with course representatives actively encouraging participation in surveys and focus groups. Two student representatives were also included on the Task and Finish Group itself, ensuring that student perspectives were embedded throughout the process.

Analysis of responses to Metanoia's Student Surveys of 2023 and 2024 highlighted several themes relating to disabled student experience including:

- A desire for more consideration of accessibility for mobility impaired students e.g. handrails, ramps, toilets etc.
- A desire for more consideration of spaces needed for neurodiverse students
- A request for Metanoia to be more proactive in enquiring about students' needs when they have disclosed disabilities

With respect to students learning differences or social communication conditions, respondents identified challenges relating to:

- A need for a more rigorous and tailored induction process
- Gaps in communication from the administrative services and from academics
- A sense of a disconnect with the student services, and not knowing what is available
- Finding the course handbooks complex and inaccessible

Each of these items is reflected through the design of the intervention strategies. One of the most significant insights was the concern expressed by students about the potential stigma surrounding the disclosure of mental health conditions. Many students shared that they chose not to disclose historical mental health conditions for fear of being perceived as unfit for counselling training or practice. This finding has led to the following planned interventions:

- The development of a **Risk Assessment policy** for disability-related decisions, particularly around determining whether it is 'safe' for an individual to begin counselling training and work with vulnerable people during placements.
- Clear **messaging on inclusivity and support** for applicants with mental health or disability disclosures, emphasising that reasonable adjustments can be made to support their training journey.
- **Mental health-positive messaging** on our website and at open days, designed to reduce stigma and promote an inclusive approach.

Students also highlighted challenges with the application process, particularly in relation to the personal statement. As a result, we have introduced **alternative application methods** and made the application form more accessible to a wider range of potential applicants.

Additional feedback provided by students has led to further planned interventions:

- **Proactive communication** with students about support services and additional tutorials for students who may be struggling academically or personally. Tutors are now encouraged to take a more active role in offering additional support where needed.
- Making **policy documentation more accessible**, with student-friendly language and explainer videos to improve clarity and understanding of key policies (Scope, 2024).
- **Resources for choosing and using personal therapy**, addressing students' struggles in identifying suitable personal therapists.
- **Encouraging the use of 'Enrolled Without Tuition' years**, particularly in light of concerns about the stigma associated with taking a year out. Our messaging now emphasises that this flexible route through training is a legitimate and supportive option, not a sign of failure.
- The creation of an **additional quiet space** on campus, particularly for neurodivergent students. In response to student feedback, we will build a new garden room, designated as a quiet space for students who need a peaceful environment to study or reflect.

Through ongoing consultation and feedback, students have played a crucial role in shaping our interventions, ensuring that the Access and Participation Plan reflects their needs and experiences. Moving forward, students will continue to be involved in the monitoring, evaluation, and delivery of the plan. This will include regular surveys, focus groups, and opportunities for students to provide feedback on the effectiveness of interventions. The student body will have the opportunity to engage with the plan and its implementation at the governance level through committee and board membership via the Institute's student representative scheme. By maintaining a student-centred approach, we are committed to ensuring that our Access and Participation Plan remains responsive to the needs of our diverse student body and continues to support the achievement of equality of opportunity for all.

## 7. Evaluation of the Plan

### 7.1 Strategic Context for Evaluation

Evaluation and research are part of our 'whole institution' approach to access and participation. Cross-institutional staff contribute to monitoring and evaluation of targets, intervention strategies and activities in this plan. We also draw on the skills of staff responsible for the delivery of the activities in this Plan, and our student representatives, to effectively incorporate evaluation.

Our assessment of our current context for evaluation using the OfS evaluation self-assessment tool shows that we need to continue to develop our practices, including strengthening and embedding evaluation into activity design and delivery and ensuring feedback cycles for improving practice. As we continue to build our capacities for effective evaluation and the application of findings to improve practice, staff and student representatives will be supported with relevant training in Theory of Change and evaluation methods, provided through our new SEER membership.

SEER provides us with the evaluation and research expertise we need to deliver our commitments in these areas. We will actively participate in this network, which provides us with opportunities to be part of collaborative research and evaluation projects and learn and share practice with other members and external stakeholders. SEER host an annual Symposium and regular workshops, throughout the year, as well as providing us with opportunities to showcase our practice and insights. We will also engage with TASO and other relevant organisations in calls for evidence, conferences, events, and training.

### 7.2 Activity design

As detailed in the Strategic Measures section of this Plan, evaluation has been established at the start. We have built effective evaluation practice into our Strategies by establishing a range of evaluation attached to the individual activities that contribute towards the overall objective of each Strategy. We can therefore build up an understanding of which activities are 'working' and which are not.

We have taken a Theory of Change approach to the development of our Intervention Strategies, identifying clear intended outcomes and a supporting evidence base that has informed our activity development and challenged assumptions. We will continue to review, develop and strengthen our Theories of Change (ToC), adding to our evidence base as our evaluation findings emerge and developing enhanced activity-level ToCs where required.

### 7.3 Evaluation design

We have collaborated with SEER and drawn from OfS and TASO toolkits and guidance on effective evaluation approaches. We have considered how the outcomes of activities can be evaluated credibly, particularly as our context as a small and specialist provider means that we are likely to be dealing with small cohorts.

Employing mixed method approaches is particularly important, as we will need to rely on qualitative data to support our understanding, or fill gaps, in quantitative data. We will triangulate findings

where possible and seek to deepen our insights through qualitative methods. The majority of our evaluations are type 1 (narrative) and type 2 (empirical enquiry) of the OfS 'Standards of Evidence'.

Our evaluation approach has also considered the context and scale of the activities and, as we have proposed working with strategic partners (e.g. schools, colleges) in our Intervention Strategies, we wish to note that some flexibility and development may be required as our collaborations take shape, allowing for input and advice from partners.

We have also considered our context and, where appropriate, will trial more creative evaluation instruments (as methods in surveying, focus groups and interviews). This may help to mitigate the issue of survey fatigue, which is a significant issue for effective evaluation and is compounded in small cohorts where the same students are more likely to be subjects of multiple evaluation and research projects. We will continue to be cognisant of this in the collection of feedback and have aligned our evaluation and measures across our activities to enable us to minimise the number of collection points, where possible and appropriate.

Our evaluation approach, data collection and analysis have been formulated on the intended outcomes and objectives of our activities. Where appropriate and possible, we will consider and employ validated scales to our evaluation practices. We have also considered evaluation that spans (a) process and (b) impact, to provide a comprehensive understanding of how our activities are working. We will explore, with SEER, further research projects in relation to our activities and our ambition to better understand the experiences and challenges of target students and issues of equality of opportunity. For example, consultation with students as part of the development of this Plan supports the identification of risks relating to insufficient personal support for students with mental health conditions; however, we consider that there is further research that would add insight to this area.

#### **7.4 Implementing our Evaluation Plan**

We will collaborate internally across our team and with our strategic partners to deliver our evaluation plan. We will be guided by our school, college and community partners, and our students in respect of effective implementation of the plan. Our evaluation process will comply with institutional policies and complies with all legal requirements relating to data protection, following ethical, safeguarding, legal and risk considerations.

As noted above, we are members of the SEER service, with whom we will work in partnership to deliver our evaluation plan. A Data Sharing Agreement has also been established. SEER provides us with opportunities to collaborate on various evaluation and research items, including for example the evaluation of the impact of financial support, using the OfS toolkit.

The design of our evaluation has also been heavily informed by intended and projected standardised outcomes being adopted by SEER across its membership base, which not only increases efficiencies but provides opportunities to increase the sample size and evaluation, helping to mitigate the issue of small datasets. SEER incorporate and draw on TASO guidance on best practices for evaluations with small cohorts (small n). Further, such collaborations may provide us access to tools that would otherwise be unaffordable. For example, as a practice network, we are able to participate in peer review of practice and evaluation and share practice and findings.

As a smaller provider, we are also well-placed to respond with agility to interim findings and emerging data. We can be responsive in flexing our activity accordingly to help to keep us on track to achieve our objectives and targets, and continuously improve our practice.

### **7.5 Learning from and Disseminating Findings**

We are committed to sharing our learning and findings internally, with our partners, within our close networks and with the broader sector, to develop a stronger and increased volume of evidence about what works and what can be improved. We are pleased to help to grow the evidence base for equality of opportunity in higher education and we will submit evaluation outputs to OfS' repository of evidence as appropriate. In Section 4, we have set out our publishing plans, which include publishing findings on interim and longer-term outcomes through a range of channels. In developing the format of our communications, we will consider creative and visual methods, and different audiences/purposes. We will ensure that our findings are open access.

Internally, developing a community of practice (staff and students) regarding access and participation will help to facilitate improvements to sharing of findings from evaluation, and subsequent improvements to practice. Shared practice across the institution allows for review and feedback on evaluation findings and reports, and discussion regarding the improvements that could be made. More broadly, evaluation findings related to access and participation work will inform other agendas and practice, such as programme review and revalidation, communications and recruitment strategies and community engagement. We will publish the findings of our evaluation activities on our website and with sector bodies as appropriate. Further details about how we will evaluate our intervention strategies is included in Section 4.

## **8. Provision of Information to Students**

Metanoia Institute is committed to ensuring that all prospective and current students receive timely, transparent, and accessible information about our courses, financial and other support, and the Access and Participation Plan (APP).

### **Information about Fees:**

Clear information on tuition fees for the full duration of each course is published on our website and in prospectuses. This includes the aggregate cost of the course, as well as details of any annual increases, which will be in line with the maximum permitted by the Office for Students and communicated clearly at the point of application and enrolment. We do not currently expect to apply inflationary increases to fees for continuing students but will notify applicants in advance if this changes.

**Financial Support Information:**

We provide comprehensive, accessible information about available financial support, including bursaries and scholarships funded through the APP. This includes clear eligibility criteria, the amount of support available per year, and how to apply. Information is shared through multiple channels including the website, offer holder communications, induction materials, and student handbooks. We also run targeted outreach campaigns to ensure underrepresented applicants are aware of support early in the recruitment cycle.

**Ongoing Access to Information:**

Throughout a student's time with us, we provide regular, tailored communications about financial support, wellbeing, and academic support offers. Students can access updated information via the student portal, dedicated webpages, and through personal tutors. A summary of the APP and progress updates will be made available to students annually.

We aim to ensure that all information is written in clear, inclusive language, is accessible to those with disabilities and neurodiverse needs, and is available in multiple formats on request.

**Summary of financial support**

<b>Financial Support Scheme</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Criteria for Eligibility</b>	<b>Number of Awards</b>	<b>Level of Support (£)</b>	<b>Level of Support in Subsequent Years of Study</b>
Metanoia Institute Scholarship	To promote Access for students from communities who are not currently well represented in the counselling and psychotherapy professions.	A screening tool calculates eligibility based on the student's Index of Multiple Deprivation, their score on the Everyday Discrimination Scale (EDS), and their care leaver status.	3 per year	£4638	Student is guaranteed this annual supplement to their tuition fees throughout the duration of their study.
Cost of Living Fund	To alleviate acute financial stress during critical points in a student's study, supporting student Success	A panel will determine recipients based on financial information and contextual information supplied by the student through a structured application form.	15 per year	£2319	Current students will be able to apply once per year and there will be no barrier to a previous recipient applying in future years.

## 8.1 Student-Facing Information on Financial Support

The following passages of text are written in a student-facing format to ensure that students clearly understand:

- The eligibility criteria
- The amount that students will be offered (as a figure or as a range), and
- How often they will be offered this in each year of their studies (one-off, quarterly, annually etc)

The same information will be made available on the Metanoia Institute website on the pages pertaining to the Scholarship and the Cost of Living Fund respectively.

### Metanoia Institute Scholarship

The Metanoia Institute Scholarship Fund is designed to support individuals from underrepresented communities, in line with our vision to increase diversity, access, and participation within the psychological professions.

If you are applying for one of our taught programmes, you can apply for the scholarship alongside your programme application. The scholarship application portal opens each January for students who wish to begin their studies the following academic year. You will be notified of the outcome of your scholarship application by 30th April, allowing you to make an informed decision about registration and enrolment over the summer.

### *Eligibility*

To apply for the Metanoia Institute Scholarship, you must:

- Meet the entry requirements for one of Metanoia's taught programmes.
- Not already be enrolled as a Metanoia student (scholarships are not available for current students or research degrees).

You must also meet **one** of the following criteria:

- **Live in an IMD Decile 1 or 2 area:** The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) considers factors such as income, employment, health, education, housing, crime, and the living environment. You can check which decile you live in by entering your postcode at [this website](#) and noting the Decile number (1–10).
- **Score above the threshold on the Everyday Discrimination Scale (EDS),** which measures your experience of discrimination. Guidance on the EDS can be found [here](#).
- **Be a care leaver,** as defined by The Care Leavers' Association: any adult who has spent time in care.

Your eligibility for the scholarship is not affected by whether you receive a student loan.

### ***Application process***

Once the scholarship portal opens, you will have access to an online screening tool to help you assess your eligibility. If eligible, you will then be invited to submit a personal statement in written, audio, or video form. Guidance on how to prepare your statement can be found on our Scholarship website.

A selection panel will review applications, and successful candidates will be informed by 30th April of the academic year before their studies begin.

### ***Scholarship award***

If you are awarded a scholarship, 50% of your tuition fees\* will be waived for each year of your programme. This reduction is guaranteed for the full duration of your studies, and no further action will be required from you in subsequent years.

*\*We will specify the value of the fee waiver once tuition fees for the 26/27 academic year are confirmed. Our current calculation is £4638 as stated in the table above.*

### **The Cost of Living Fund**

The Cost of Living Fund is a grant scheme designed to help students manage periods of acute financial stress during their studies. Its purpose is to support your wellbeing and success by providing targeted financial support at the points when you are most likely to need it.

#### ***What is the award?***

If successful, you will receive a cash grant equivalent to one quarter of your annual tuition fee. For the current year, this is £2,319\*. (*\*We will specify the value of the grant once tuition fees for the 26/27 academic year are confirmed. Our current calculation is £2319 as stated in the table above.*)

You can apply for this support once per academic year. Receiving an award in one year does not prevent you from applying again in future years.

#### ***Eligibility***

To apply for the Cost of Living Fund, you must:

- **Be a current student at Metanoia Institute** – you must have successfully completed your first year of training.
- **Demonstrate financial need** – applications are assessed by the Financial Support committee, who review your income and disposable income against essential expenses. Awards are competitive and granted to those students who present with the greatest need in each funding round.
- **Provide supporting documentation** – such as payslips, bank statements, rent or mortgage agreements, utility bills, and any other relevant evidence of your financial circumstances.
- **Submit a personal statement** – explaining your financial situation, any recent changes, and how receiving the grant would help you continue your studies and manage your personal life.

- **Include a budget plan** – setting out your expected income and expenses for the academic year.

### **Application rounds**

The Cost of Living Fund is awarded twice during each academic year:

- Round 1: October application, with decisions and payments made in December.
- Round 2: January application, with decisions and payments made in March.

This timing ensures the fund is available when students are most likely to experience financial strain.

### **Important to know**

- You may receive one grant per academic year.
- Receiving a grant one year does not prevent you from applying in the next.
- Awards are paid directly to you in cash, rather than as a tuition fee reduction.

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## Annex A: Further information and analysis relating to the identification and prioritisation of key risks to equality of opportunity

This performance assessment outlines the key risks to equality of opportunity identified across the student lifecycle—Access, Success, and Progression—at Metanoia Institute. Our analysis has been informed by a range of quantitative and qualitative data sources. However, it is important to note that our student population is small and mostly mature learners, meaning that caution must be exercised when interpreting trends. While individual data points may not always meet reporting

thresholds, we have sought to identify patterns over time and to triangulate our findings against robust external data sets and qualitative insights from our student body.

Our performance assessment draws on:

- HESA data as published on the Office for Students (OfS) Access and Participation Data Dashboard;
- Suppressed HESA data analysed in partnership with Applied Inspiration;
- National data and policy analysis from the OfS, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the London Borough of Ealing, the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP), and the House of Commons Library;
- Qualitative insights from the 2023 and 2024 Institute-wide student surveys;
- Autumn 2024 and Spring 2025 Access and Participation surveys; and
- Focus group responses drawn from volunteers responding to the Spring 2025 survey.

In areas where internal data is currently incomplete—such as student disability, care-experienced status, or historic eligibility for free school meals—our capacity to undertake a fully disaggregated performance analysis is limited. Similarly, progression and graduate outcomes data remain underdeveloped, reflecting both the small scale of our student body and quality of historic data. As part of this Plan, we commit to strengthening the completeness, consistency, and granularity of our data over time, to ensure a more accurate and equitable understanding of our students' experiences and outcomes.

We have not drawn on TUNDRA data, which is designed for predominantly young (21 years and under) student populations and is considered less appropriate for our mature, London-based cohort. Additionally, Metanoia's ABCS data is left blank on the OfS dashboard due to insufficient data to generate charts—further evidence of the need for proportional, qualitative, and context-sensitive analysis.

Where gaps in the plan's direct interventions exist, we have included appropriate mitigating actions or plans for further investigation. The analysis that follows focuses on those elements of the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) that are most relevant to our specific institutional context and student population.

Our Performance Assessment evidences the following areas that require our attention in the Plan:

- Students located in deciles 1 and 2 (Quintile 1) of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD, 2019) are clearly underrepresented and their proportion of the student population has been diminishing. This contrasts with the national trend in HE which has been towards greater representation of Quintile 1 and does not reflect the make-up of the general population local to the Metanoia campuses, as served by Ealing Council.
- The proportions of Non-White students are significantly underrepresented in contrast with the student populations of HE institutions in England as a whole, or with the general population of Ealing, or with London.
- We observe significantly and consistently poorer Attainment levels (achievement of a First or 2:1 degree outcome) in non-white students.

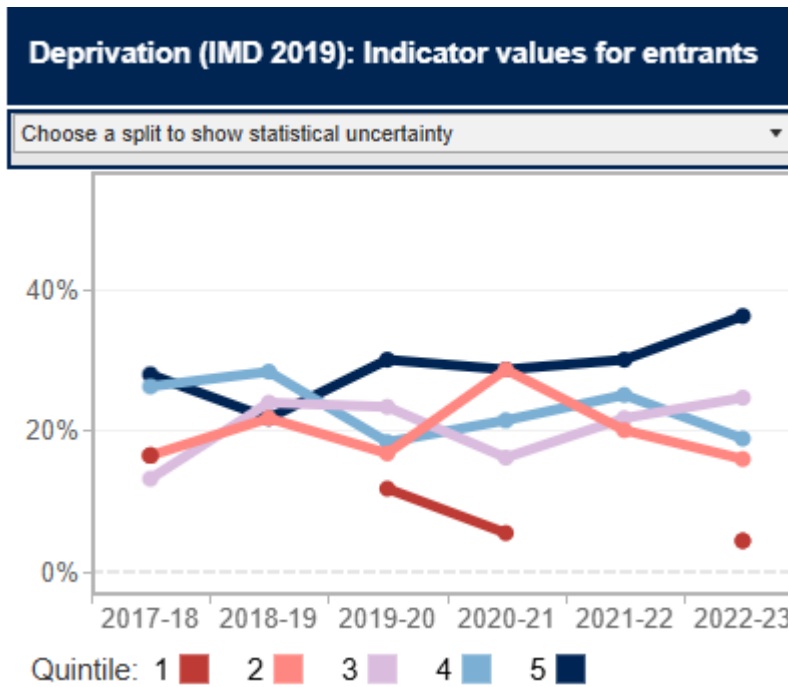
- The proportion of students declaring a disability at the Metanoia Institute is lower than the national average student population, however this may be explained in part by variations in our recording of students' declarations.
- Poorer Completion rates for Disabled students
- Males are significantly underrepresented in the student population.
- Male students have poorer Completion rates than Female students.

Because of our small undergraduate populations at Metanoia we will not present year on year data in this Performance Assessment except where these are reported on the OfS data dashboard as these data are suppressed given our obligations under GDPR. In addition to these published data we will refer to aggregate figures drawn from analyses of our internal HESA data over six academic years 2018-19 to 2023-24. We present analysis on Access based on HESA data on enrolling students over a three year period 2021-22 to 2023-24. However some institutional-level data are suppressed on the Office for Students (OfS) data dashboard due to small student population sizes, in order to protect individual privacy in line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements. As such we have used a four-year rolling average based on internal analysis of HESA data from the academic years 2018-19 to 2021-22 to anchor all seven targets advanced through the Plan. Comparisons with national data over the same period are thus provided in this Performance Assessment.

## 2.1 Access

### 2.1.1 Access for students from the most socioeconomically disadvantaged communities (IMD Q1).

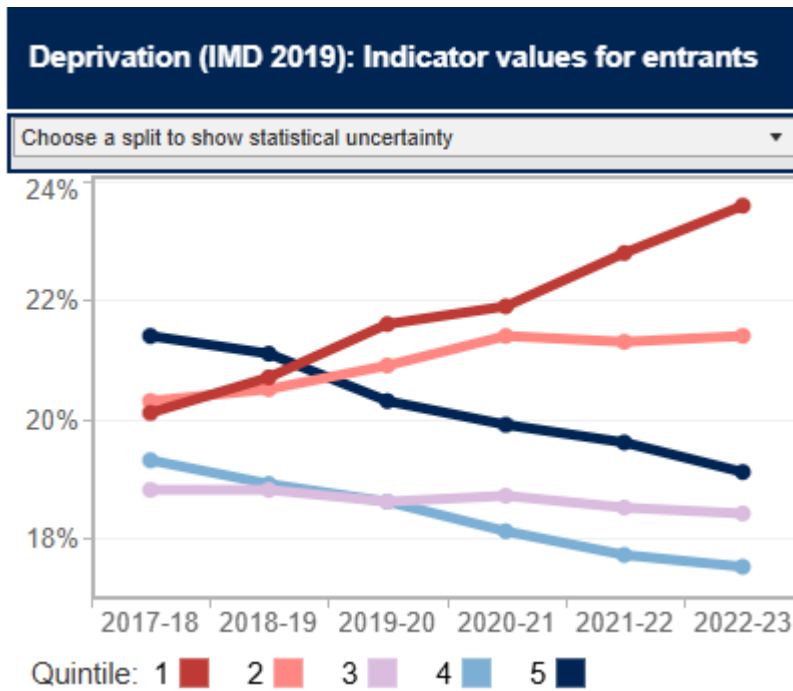
Students located in deciles 1 and 2 (Quintile 1) of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD, 2019) are clearly underrepresented and their proportion of the student population has been diminishing. Only 6.2% of students enrolling onto undergraduate degrees were IMD Quintile 1 over the four year period, despite these areas making up 21.8% of student enrolments in the England HE sector over the same period (Office for Students, 2024a).



Screenshot from the Office for Students' Access and Participation Data Dashboard (2024) Available at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/data-dashboard/> with 'The Metanoia Institute' selected from the 'Select a Provider' dropdown. [Accessed 18 December 2024]

The time series demonstrates a growing gap between quintile 1 and quintile 5 students. In 2022/23 there is a 31.9% gap between the quintile 1 (4.3%) and quintile 5 (36.2%) given the proportion of the student population they account for.

The following time series captures the same data over the same period for all registered English higher education providers:



Screenshot from the Office for Students' Access and Participation Data Dashboard (2024) Available at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/data-dashboard/> with 'All registered English higher education providers' selected from the 'Select a Provider' dropdown. [Accessed 18 December 2024]

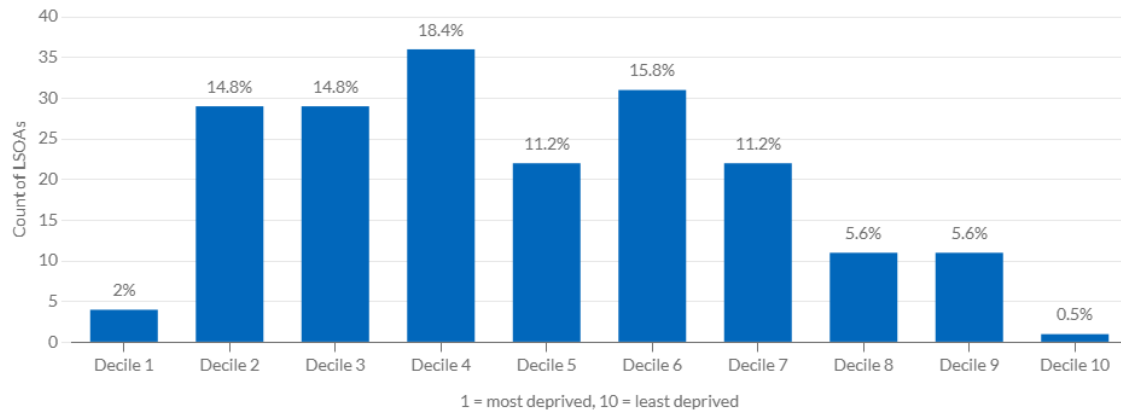
The national trend has been towards an increasing proportion of the student population represented by students located in quintile 1 (23.6% in 2022-23) which might be attributable to the work done by providers in promoting Access for quintile 1 students.

The following chart demonstrates the distribution of IMD deciles across the Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) administered by Ealing Council, the local authority within which Metanoia Institute's two campuses are located:

## ● Index of Multiple Deprivation

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas (or neighbourhoods) in England. The IMD ranks every small area (Lower Super Output Area) in England from 1 (most deprived) to 32,844 (least deprived). For larger areas we can look at the proportion of LSOAs within the area that lie within each decile. Decile 1 represents the most deprived 10% of LSOAs in England while decile 10 shows the least deprived 10% of LSOAs.

Index of Multiple Deprivation - LSOAs by decile in Ealing (2019)



Screenshot from Ealing Council's Ealing Data section (2024) Available at: <https://data.ealing.gov.uk/deprivation/reports> [Accessed 18 December 2024]

Quintile 1 LOSAs – covering approximately 2000 people each – account for 16.8% of the total population of Ealing, thus is much higher than the 6.6% proportion of Quintile 1 students at the Metanoia Institute.

Particular contextual factors might be at work at the Metanoia Institute given its status as a specialist provider of counselling and psychotherapy training. One theme highlighted in qualitative data collected in a student survey on Access and Participation was the additional costs of clinical training – such as pre-requisite skills training, personal therapy, clinical supervision, and professional membership – which create additional financial obstacles to Access for low income students.

### 2.1.2 Access for Non-White students

The proportions of Non-White students are significantly underrepresented in contrast with the student populations of HE institutions in England as a whole, or with the general population of Ealing, or with London.

The following table demonstrates the student population of Metanoia Institute broken down into five ethnic groups over the previous three years.

#### Ethnicity of Students at the Metanoia Institute (2021-22 to 2023-24)

3 Yr. Agg. %
-----------------

White	75.8%
Black	6.0%
Asian	7.0%
Mixed	7.4%
Other	3.7%

As we will go onto see, it is clear that Non-White students are underrepresented in contrast with the population of HE institutions in England as a whole, or with Ealing, or with London.

The following table details proportions of students from all registered providers identifying in different ethnic groups according the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data for five successive academic years:

Ethnicity	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
White	75%	74%	74%	73%	72%
Black	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%
Asian	11%	12%	12%	12%	13%
Mixed	4%	4%	4%	5%	5%
Other	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%

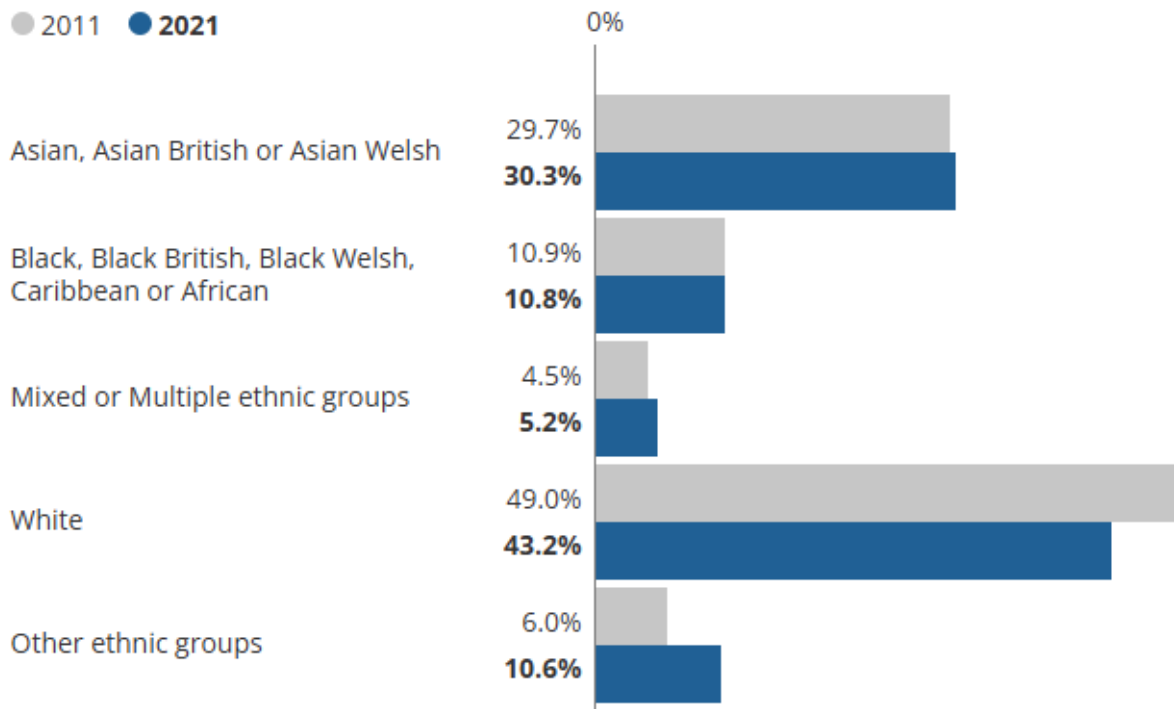
Data taken from Higher Education Statistics Agency (2024) Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2022/23 - Student numbers and characteristics. Available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/08-08-2024/sb269-higher-education-student-statistics/numbers> . [Accessed 18 December 2024]

The underrepresentation of Asian and Black students in the student population is pronounced in this comparison.

The following screenshot documents the proportions of different ethnic groups in residents of Ealing, the location of the Metanoia Institute's two campuses, at two timepoints – the two most recent censuses:

Percentage of usual residents by ethnic group, **Ealing** ▾

● 2011 ● 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics – 2011 Census and Census 2021

Screenshot from Office of National Statistics (2024) How your area has changed in 10 years: Census 2021 Ealing How life has changed in Ealing: Census 2021. Available from:

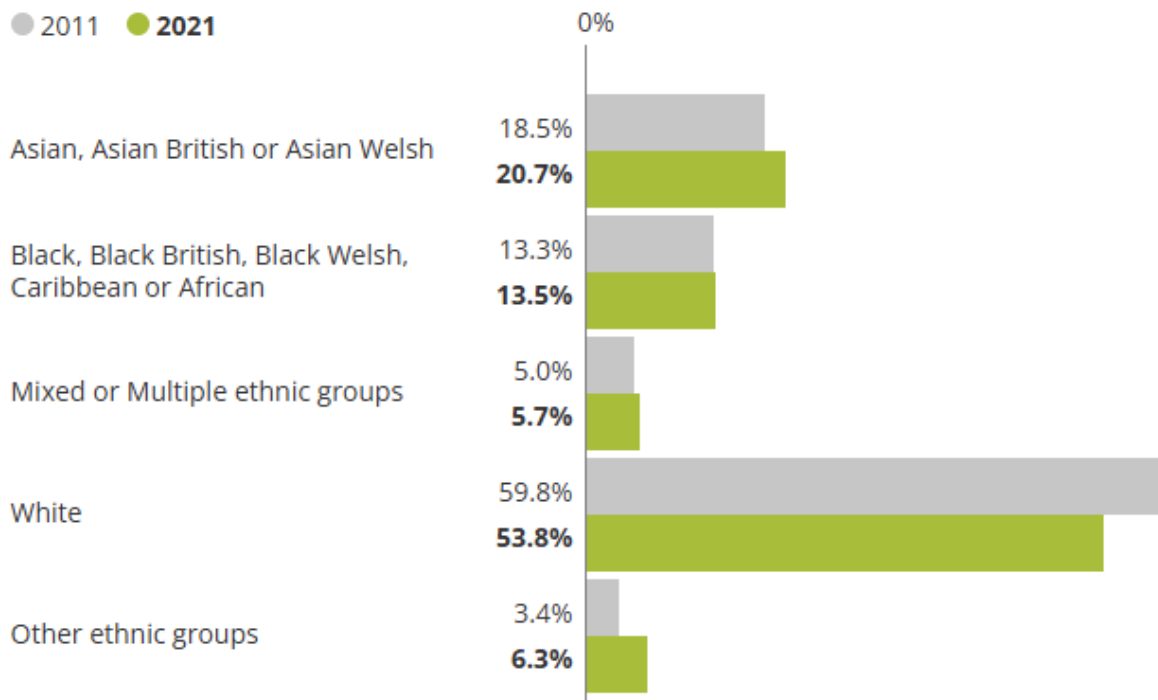
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E09000009/> [Accessed 18 December 2024]

Here too it is clear, particularly in relation to the proportion of Asian people, that the Metanoia Institute's student population is not representative of the ethnic diversity of the community in which it sits.

The same website also provides a breakdown of ethnicity for London as a whole:

Percentage of usual residents by ethnic group, **London** ▾

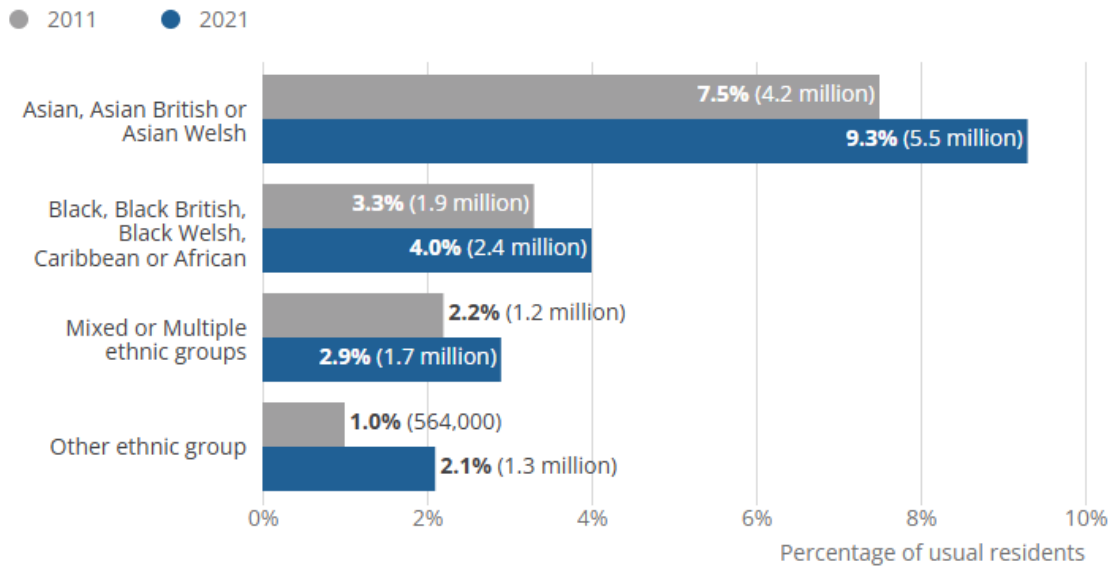
● 2011 ● 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics – 2011 Census and Census 2021

It may be argued that Metanoia's own distribution of ethnic groups reflects population data across England and Wales as a whole according to 2021 census results (excluding White populations):

### Ethnic group distribution (high-level categories), 2011 and 2021, England and Wales



Source: Office for National Statistics – Census 2021

[Embed code](#)

In this comparison Metanoia's own ethnic diversity is more closely matched. One explanation for this might be that Metanoia has a substantially older student population than most other HE institutions, as commented on in the earlier section. As the census data immediately above demonstrates, over time the representation of ethnic minorities in the general population increases and so it is reasonable to propose that an older population is likely to be less ethnically diverse.

Theoretically therefore, it is worthwhile considering what benchmark Metanoia Institute should be aspiring towards when it comes to Access. Turning to considerations of the need of the psychological therapies workforce, there are clear arguments for a need for greater representation of different ethnic groups. According to a British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP, 2023) Workforce Mapping Report, Asian and Black ethnicities are underrepresented in the BACP membership in comparison with UK census data. The same findings are echoed in the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy's (UKCP, 2023) Member Survey with Asian and Black ethnicities underrepresented in comparison with UK census data.

Whilst Asian and Black ethnicities are under-represented in the psychological therapies workforce, a House of Commons Library (2024) report found that Black people were more likely to have experienced a Common Mental Disorder (CMD) in the last week than people of other ethnicities, and that people of Asian, Mixed, and Other ethnicities were less likely to experience recovery after accessing the NHS's Talking Therapies for Anxiety and Depression (TTAD) services. Elsewhere a MIND (2020) article highlighted evidence that Black people are more likely to screen positive for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), bipolar disorder, and psychosis, than people of other ethnicities. When considered alongside evidence that people are more inclined to access psychological support from people they perceive as more like themselves (e.g. Anestis et al., 2021) there is a case to be made for greater representation of Non-White ethnic groups within the psychological therapies workforce.

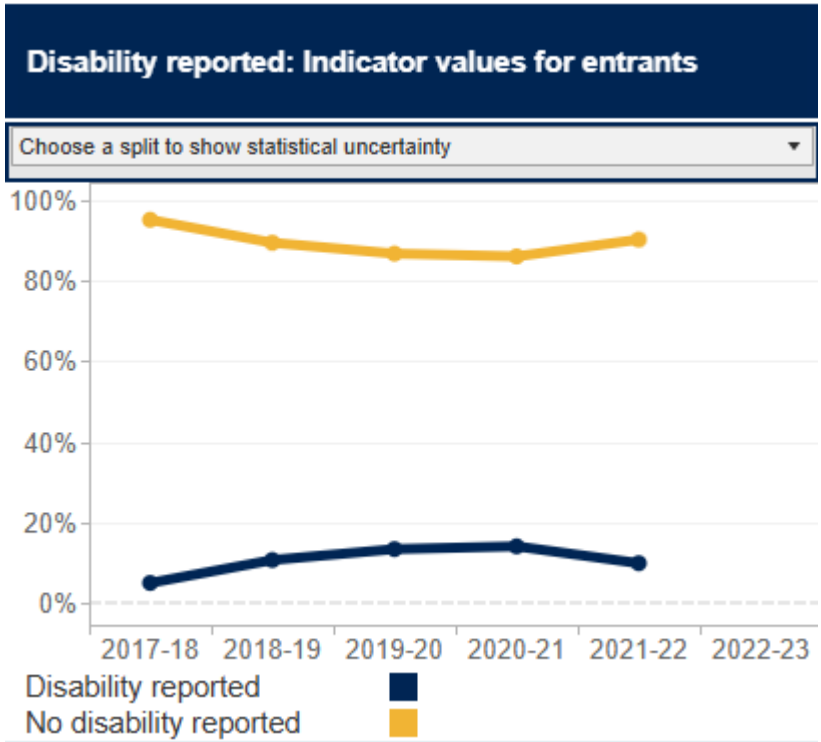
It is as such reasonable to propose that Metanoia Institute seek to close the gap in representation of Non-White ethnicities in comparison with national student population data as represented on the OfS Access and Participation Data Dashboard.

We have a complete analysis of our HESA data set for the period 2018-19 to 2021-22 and so will use these aggregate data to set our targets with respect to Access for non-white students. During this period the proportion of Non-White students who enrolled at Metanoia was 21.5% and this compares with the enrolment of Non-White students across English HE institutions during the same period of 33.3% (Office for Students, 2024a). We will as such aim to close the gap by at least half during the four years of the Plan.

### 2.1.3 Access for Disabled students, including students with a mental health condition

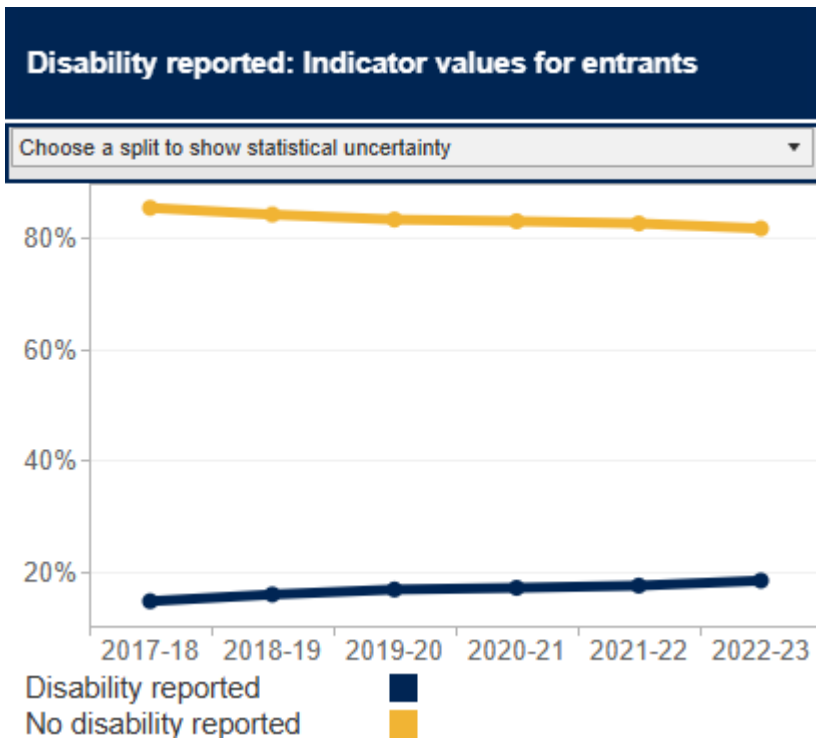
The proportion of students declaring a disability at the Metanoia Institute is significantly lower than the national average student population, however this may be explained in part by variations in our recording of students' declarations.

The time series below is from the Office for Students Access and Participation Data Dashboard and records Metanoia's 2022-23 population as 'Disability reported' in 9.8% of cases. This is down from our performance in the previous two years.



Screenshot from the Office for Students' Access and Participation Data Dashboard (2024) Available at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/data-dashboard/> with 'The Metanoia Institute' selected from the 'Select a Provider' dropdown. [Accessed 18 December 2024]

The following chart demonstrates the same variable as applied to all registered HE providers in England.



Screenshot from the Office for Students' Access and Participation Data Dashboard (2024) Available at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/data-dashboard/> with 'All registered English higher education providers' selected from the 'Select a Provider' dropdown. [Accessed 18 December 2024]

The time series demonstrates a flatter trajectory for all registered English providers over the same period but a greater proportion of students (18.3%) in the 'Disability reported' population in the 2022-23 academic year. Because Metanoia data for the 2022-23 academic year is suppressed on the OfS data dashboard it is relevant to compare the national figure for 2021-22 of 17.4% with Metanoia's reported data for that year of 9.8%. This reduced representation at the Metanoia Institute may be partly explained given variations in our recording of students' declared disabilities.

We have a complete analysis of our HESA data set for the period 2018-19 to 2021-22 and so will use these aggregate data to set our targets with respect to Access for all Disabled students. During this period the proportion of students who reported a Disability enrolled at Metanoia was 12% and this compares with the enrolment of Disabled students across English HE institutions during the same period of 16.7% (Office for Students, 2024a). We will as such aim to close the gap by at least half during the four years of the Plan.

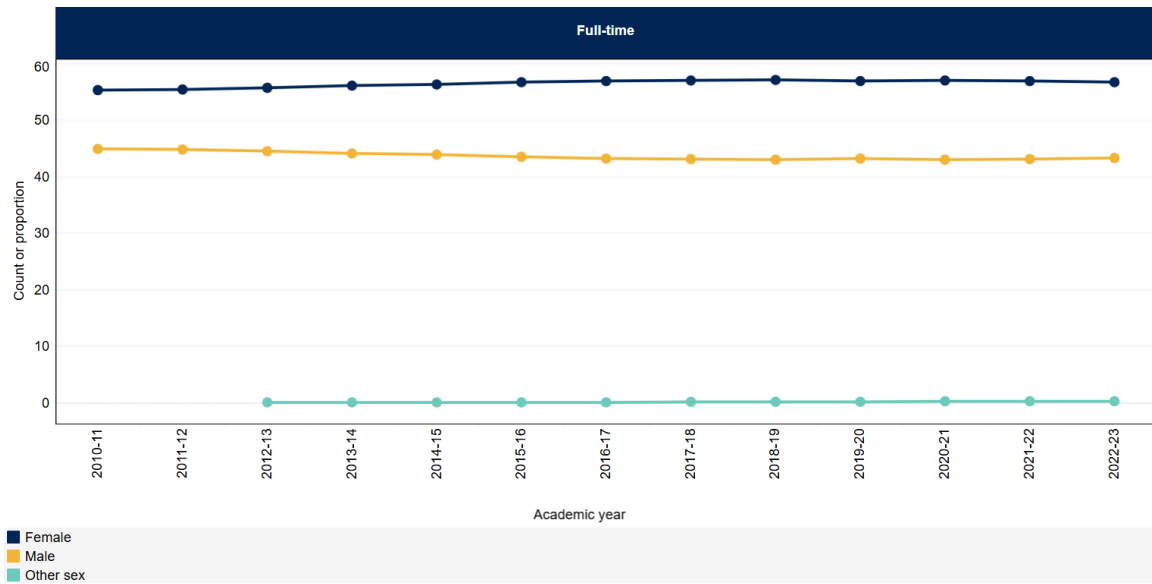
### 2.1.4 Access for Male students

There is a marked underrepresentation of men across the psychological professions, and this is reflected in our recruitment patterns to undergraduate training programmes in counselling as our three year aggregate data demonstrate.

#### What is your sex? (2021-22 to 2023-24)

	<b>3 Yr. Agg.%</b>
Female (10)	75.1%
Male (11)	24.6%
Other (12)	0.4%

The Metanoia Institute has a greater proportion of female students – consistently around three quarters of the entire student body - than is typical across registered English HE providers. The below table indicates a consistent ratio between students who declared as Female, Male, and Other over an eleven-year period, with females accounting for 56.6% of the student population in the 2022-23 data:



Screenshot taken from Higher Education Statistics Agency (2024) Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2022/23 - Student numbers and characteristics. Available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/08-08-2024/sb269-higher-education-student-statistics/numbers> . [Accessed 18 December 2024]

The higher proportion of women is reflected in workforce surveys such as the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy survey in which 73.5% of members declared themselves as women, compared with 20.2% of members who declared as men (United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy, 2023). The same report presented data from an NHS workforce survey of psychological professionals which found that 82% declared as women, compared with 51% of the general population according to the 2021 Census. The UK Census does not disaggregate people who are intersex from those with a different gender identity than their assigned sex at birth, and thus it is difficult to comment on whether the 1.5% of students who identify as Other in respect to their Sex is representative of the UK population as a whole, but we have no reason to suspect this figure is under representative.

Students who identify as men are thus underrepresented in the Metanoia student body, and in the psychological professions. This begs the question then whether there is an imperative to encourage more men into the psychological and psychotherapeutic workforce. According to the Mental Health Foundation (2024) women between the ages of 16 and 24 are almost three times as likely to experience a common mental health issue as males of the same age, and are twice as likely to be diagnosed with anxiety. However, the same survey found that men are three times more likely to become dependent on alcohol and report frequent drug use; three quarters of all people who go missing in the UK are men, and men account for three quarters of all suicide deaths. Importantly, men are much less likely to access psychological support accounting for just 36% of referrals to NHS Talking Therapies (Mental Health Foundation, 2024).

While there is currently limited research into men's access to, and experience of, these professions, available evidence points to a long-term and significant decline in male participation. For example, data from the United States indicates that the proportion of psychologists who are men has fallen from 68% in 1968 to just 20% in 2023 (American Institute for Men and Boys, 2023). In the UK, only 16.8% of applicants for clinical psychology training in 2023 identified as male (Clearing House for Postgraduate Courses in Clinical Psychology, 2023).

This decline may be compounded by systemic biases in recruitment. Data from 2023 suggest that the proportion of successful applicants to clinical psychology training was 83.7% women compared to just 14.6% men (Centre for Male Psychology, 2018; Clearing House, 2023). While this disparity may be multifactorial, it highlights the need for scrutiny of access and support structures for male applicants.

Recent work by Michel et al. (2023) explored strategies for improving access for men into psychotherapy training. Their findings highlighted a lack of consensus around the legitimacy or desirability of positive action, but identified a range of possible measures. These include targeted outreach and marketing efforts, reframing the public image of male therapists, and developing within-programme initiatives such as peer mentoring and support groups. These findings will inform our planned interventions under Strategy 1 (Inclusive Access) and Strategy 2 (Inclusive Curriculum).

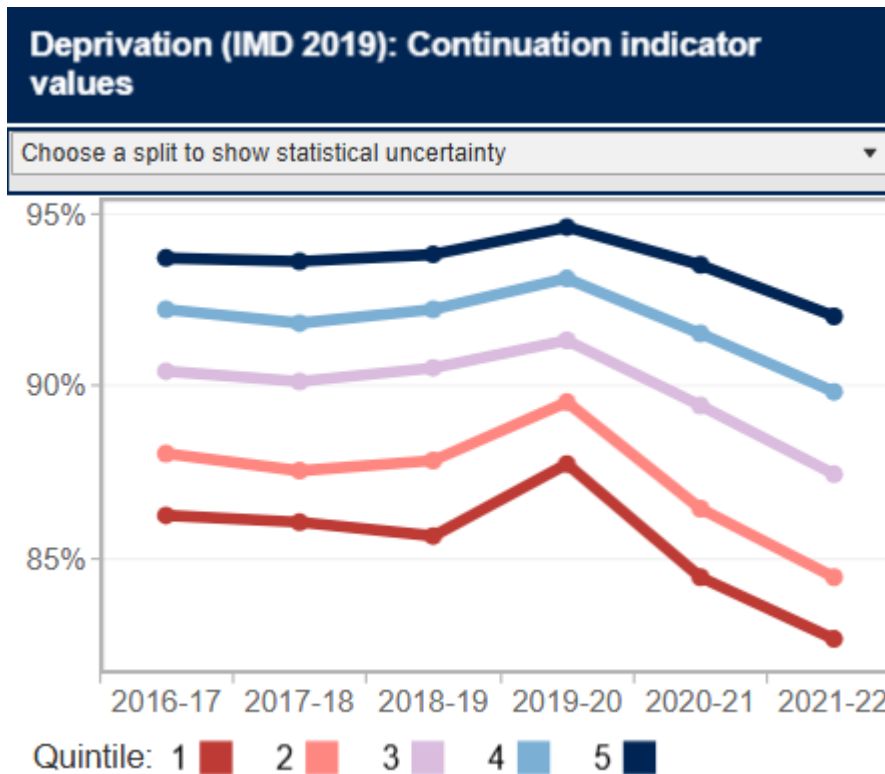
Thus we need to consider the distinction between UK Higher Education data as a whole, where men are more proportionally represented, and the situation particular to counselling and psychotherapy professions, where Metanoia's representation of 25% male students means we already perform well in comparison with competitors offering undergraduate programs in comparable subjects. We will therefore not set a target for Access for male students but have targets at later stages of the student lifecycle to improve the experience of male students whilst they study with us.

## 2.2 Success (Continuation, Completion, Attainment)

### 2.2.1 Success for students from the most socioeconomically disadvantaged communities (IMD Q1).

Analysis of our internal (suppressed) HESA data from 2014–2022, conducted by Applied Inspiration (SEER), found no evidence that students from IMD Quintile 1 (Q1) backgrounds at Metanoia experience poorer continuation or completion rates than their peers. This is encouraging however may reflect a survivorship bias resulting from the relatively low number of IMD Q1 students accessing our programmes in the first place. In the same analysis we do find evidence of poorer Attainment. In the four year period 2018-19 to 2021-22 IMD Q1 students have an Attainment rate (good honours degree) of 75% compared with 83% in IMD Q5 students.

National data indicates continued gaps throughout the student lifecycle for quintile 1 students compared with quintile 5 students. The following chart considers Continuation data:



Screenshot from the Office for Students' Access and Participation Data Dashboard (2024) Available at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/data-dashboard/> with 'All registered English higher education providers' selected from the 'Select a Provider' dropdown. [Accessed 19 December 2024]

Here 92.0% of quintile 5 students have been recorded as Continuing compared with just 82.6% of Quintile 1 students. Given the additional financial burden associated with therapeutic training we might expect to see a more pronounced gap within the Metanoia student population.

The gap in performance becomes even more pronounced for Completion – with 92.4% of Quintile 5 students completing their studies compared with just 81.6% of Quintile 1 students (Office for Students, 2024a).

The gap in performance grows further in Attainment, with 86.3% of Quintile 5 students securing a first class or upper second degree, compared with just 68.5% of Quintile 1 students.

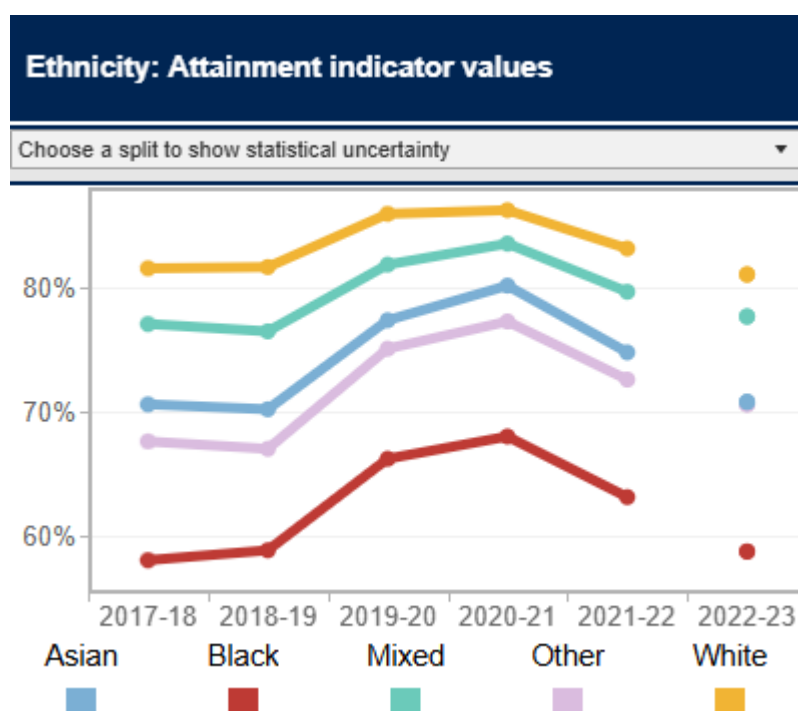
As we implement strategies to improve access for this group (see Strategy 1), we anticipate a potential knock-on effect on continuation and completion patterns, and will monitor this closely. To support sustained success, we are committing to inclusive pedagogy and assessment design, and embedded careers guidance (Strategy 2), targeted financial support (Strategy 4) ensuring that students from low-participation areas are well supported across the full student lifecycle.

## 2.2.2 Success for Non-White students

Whilst we do not observe evidence of disadvantage in Continuation and Completion, we observe considerable and consistently poorer Attainment in non-white students.

Internal analysis of our HESA data (2014–2022) actually shows that non-white students at Metanoia have higher continuation and completion rates than white students. However, this may reflect survivorship bias, given the lower number of Non-White students entering our programmes. In contrast, attainment outcomes show a persistent and concerning awarding gap for non-white students, despite small sample sizes preventing disaggregation by ethnicity. This mirrors sector-wide evidence of systemic disadvantage, including experiences of discrimination, microaggressions, and implicit bias, which contribute to isolation and reduced sense of belonging (Lawrence et al., 2022). Through our targeted interventions in inclusive curriculum (Strategy 2), mental health (Strategy 3), we aim to reduce these barriers and close the attainment gap for Non-White students.

With respect to later stages of the student life-cycle, the Office for Students (2024a) reports gaps in Continuation in White students (88%) compared with Black students (82.6%). There is a similar gap in Completion between White students (88.7%) compared with Black students (81.3%). However this gap becomes more pronounced looking at Attainment data. The following chart documents Attainment as broken down by ethnicity across the registered HE providers in England:



Screenshot from the Office for Students' Access and Participation Data Dashboard (2024) Available at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/data-dashboard/> with 'All registered English higher education providers' selected from the 'Select a Provider' dropdown. [Accessed 18 December 2024]

There is clear national evidence of an attainment gap along the lines of ethnicity with 81.1% of white students securing a first class or upper second undergraduate degree, compared with just 58.7% of black students.

### 2.2.3 Success for Disabled students, including students with a mental health condition

Our internal analysis of HESA data from the four-year period 2018-19 to 2021-22 shows poorer Completion rates (80%) for disabled students compared with their non-disabled peers (87%). Interestingly, attainment data indicate higher outcomes for Disabled students, though this may reflect survivorship bias — with only those able to remain on course reaching assessment stages.

Metanoia student surveys from 2023–2025 highlight persistent barriers to success, including insufficient physical accessibility, slow institutional responses to disclosed needs (particularly for neurodiverse students), and inconsistent teaching adjustments. Students expressed a need for proactive enquiry about disability, greater clarity about available support, and more neurodiversity-aware teaching. These findings align with sector-wide research (e.g. Sissons, 2024) showing that unsupported neurodivergent students are at greater risk of burnout, isolation, and attrition.

In the national data there is a consistent gap between students who don't disclose a disability and those who do, at each stage of the life-cycle, except attainment, where disabled students have slightly better outcomes than students who haven't disclosed a disability (Office for Students, 2024b).

The national gaps between students who disclose a disability and those who don't is more pronounced in part-time study than in full-time programs – a pattern that is pertinent to Metanoia's models of flexible delivery (Office for Students, 2024b).

Analysis of responses to Metanoia's Student Surveys of 2023 and 2024 highlighted several themes relating to disabled student experience including:

- A desire for more consideration of accessibility for mobility impaired students e.g. handrails, ramps, toilets etc.
- A desire for more consideration of spaces needed for neurodiverse students
- A Metanoia request for Metanoia to be more proactive in enquiring about students' needs when they have disclosed disabilities

A survey concerned with questions relating to Access and Participation was conducted with the Metanoia student body in October and November 2024. The survey yielded qualitative data which highlighted specific challenges faced by disabled students at different stages of their student journey with Metanoia. With respect to students learning differences or social communication conditions, respondents identified challenges relating to:

- Completing the online application form
- An experience of a lack of information over the summer
- A need for a more rigorous and tailored induction process
- Gaps in communication from the administrative services and from academics
- A sense of a disconnect with the student services, and not knowing what is available
- Finding the course handbooks complex and inaccessible

Many of these themes might present challenges to other student populations, including those students who are the first in their family to go to university (into higher education) and thus lack the social capital to independently make sense of and navigate HE processes and services.

Data from the same survey highlighted that for some students the environment of our two campuses – period houses that might be experienced as residential settings or retreats – was preferable to the much busier modern university campus and was a key factor in their decision to come to Metanoia.

However respondents also identified the lack of accessibility for mobility impaired students. Also pertinent to the experience of disabled students were reports of students' Learning Support Plans not being passed on to relevant teaching teams, or not travelling with them between year groups.

Each of these themes might be clearly shown to impact on the continuation and success of our disabled students but each highlight systemic issues that can be addressed through practical measures.

Our interventions in inclusive pedagogy (Strategy 2), and assistive technologies and therapeutic support (Strategy 3), are designed to address these barriers and improve continuation and attainment outcomes for Disabled students.

#### 2.2.4 Success for Male students

Across the (suppressed) 2014–2022 HESA dataset, male students usually demonstrated lower continuation and consistently lower completion rates than their female peers, despite no significant variation in attainment outcomes. Across the four-year period 2018-19 to 2021-22, male students have poorer Completion rates than other students across the assessed period. Completion for Males was 80% compared with 87% for Female students. This pattern may suggest that those men who do remain on course perform well academically, but a higher proportion disengage before assessment points.

Turning to national data, whilst Female students are slightly ahead of Male students in each of Continuation, Completion, and Attainment, Male students report slightly higher rates of Progression 15 months after completion (Office for Students, 2024b).

Qualitative insights from sector literature and online discussion forums (Michel et al., 2023; Whitcombe, 2025) highlight that men in the counselling professions often report feeling isolated, hesitant to participate in discussions, and misaligned with prevailing relational and communicative norms of training programmes, which may implicitly reflect feminised values. Male students and

tutors have raised concerns that this cultural imbalance may inadvertently signal to men that they are out of place or unwelcome. Interventions focused on curriculum inclusivity and career identity-building (Strategy 2), and diverse role model visibility aim to foster belonging and promote sustained engagement and success for male students across our programmes.

### 2.2.5 Intersections

Analysis of both internal student survey data (2023–2025) and limited attainment data reveals a range of intersecting structural and identity-based factors that influence student success at Metanoia Institute. These factors appear to disproportionately affect students from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds, including those from low-income households (particularly those living in IMD Quintile 1 areas), disabled students, Non-White students, male students, and those with caring responsibilities.

A persistent theme emerging across multiple surveys is the financial strain associated with training. The high cost of tuition, therapy, and clinical supervision—essential components of psychotherapy training—is regularly cited by students as a barrier to progression. This burden is most acutely felt by students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, who may also experience limited access to scholarships or bursaries. For these students, the additional costs of travel to placements and the opportunity cost of unpaid clinical hours can create compounding barriers to timely completion.

Placement-related issues were also highlighted as a significant factor in student success. Students report a lack of available and paid placements within their locality, alongside difficulties meeting mandatory placement hour requirements. These challenges disproportionately affect students from IMD Quintile 1 areas, who may face greater barriers in affording travel or balancing placement commitments with paid work. Disabled students—particularly those who are mobility impaired or neurodivergent—may encounter further challenges engaging with the transport system or managing the cognitive load of commuting, further compounding the strain of placement obligations.

Intersectional factors were also evident in students' experiences of academic engagement and attainment. Some respondents noted issues with clarity around marking criteria, difficulty accessing one-to-one academic support, and limited success in seeking mitigating circumstances or extensions—challenges that may be exacerbated for those for whom English is an additional language. Students from less advantaged backgrounds may lack the social capital to navigate complex academic systems or advocate for themselves effectively (Saw, 2019; Wong & Chiu, 2020), contributing to disparities in attainment. Our internal (albeit suppressed) attainment data also indicate disproportionately lower attainment for students of Non-White ethnicities, which suggests structural inequities that warrant deeper investigation and targeted response.

Further concerns centre on the availability and accessibility of wellbeing support. Some students report a lack of proactive pastoral care and insufficient relational contact with tutors. This may disproportionately impact male students, who may face cultural stigma around seeking help, and students from working-class backgrounds who may be unfamiliar with, or less trusting of, institutional support systems. Without adequate connection to wellbeing services, these students may be at greater risk of disengagement or attrition.

Finally, the surveys indicate a strong student desire for greater stability and predictability in programme requirements. Short-notice changes can be particularly disruptive for students with

caring responsibilities—often women and mature students—who require greater lead-in time to adjust their schedules and meet competing demands. Such changes, if unmitigated, risk undermining continuation and progression for those already juggling complex life commitments.

## 2.3 Progression

### 2.3.1 Progression for students from the most socioeconomically disadvantaged communities (IMD Q1).

According to the most recently available data from the OfS data dashboard (2024a), 77.2% of Quintile 5 graduates across English HE report positive graduate outcomes, compared with 67.2% of Quintile 1 graduates. However, over the four-year period 2018-19 to 2021-22 there was no concerning difference in Progression data from students from IMD Q1 locations and those in other quintiles. National data indicating some potential Progression challenges to alumni in lower IMD deciles lends further support to our extension of careers services 5 years post qualification.

### 2.3.2 Progression for Non-White students

Over the four-year period 2018-19 to 2021-22 there was no concerning difference in Progression data between Non-White and white students.

### 2.3.3 Progression for Disabled students, including students with a mental health condition

Over the four-year period 2018-19 to 2021-22 there was no concerning difference in Progression data from students with declared disabilities and those who declared no disability.

### 2.3.4 Progression for Male students

Over the four-year period 2018-19 to 2021-22 male alumni had slightly better Progression outcomes in comparison with other students. However this may reflect a survivorship bias given the much lower enrolments of male students (25% over the same period) and lower rates of completion as

reported above. Where our data do indicate potential Progression challenges to alumni this lends further support to our extension of careers services 5 years post qualification.

### 2.3.5 Intersections

Whilst internal quantitative data do not indicate disparities between student populations in Progression outcomes, our qualitative data do indicate some current challenges. Student and alumni feedback from the Spring 2025 survey highlights two key barriers to progression: insufficient careers guidance during training and a lack of structured support post-graduation. Many respondents expressed a desire for career planning—particularly around employment opportunities and developing a private practice—to be embedded within the curriculum, rather than treated as a peripheral concern. Additionally, there is a strong perception that the Institute provides limited support or connection once students graduate, leaving many feeling isolated at a crucial transition point in their professional journey.

These gaps are likely to impact all students but may be especially acute for those from IMD Quintile 1 areas and for Non-White students, who may have less access to professional networks and fewer informal routes into career opportunities outside the academic setting. Without targeted support, these students may be at greater risk of struggling to establish themselves professionally. This highlights a strong case for extending structured careers guidance and professional development support beyond graduation, with an explicit focus on addressing structural inequalities in progression outcomes.

## Annex B: Further information that sets out the rationale, assumptions and evidence base for each intervention strategy that is included in the access and participation plan

This Annex provides further rationale, key assumptions, and supporting evidence base for the intervention strategies outlined in Metanoia Institute's Access and Participation Plan. It draws on sector-wide research, national data, and internal analysis to justify the proposed approaches to widening access, supporting student success, and promoting progression.

### Impact of £9,250 Tuition Fees on UK Applications and Enrolments

In England and Wales, the undergraduate fee cap was raised sharply in 2012 – from about £3,000 to £9,000 per year (UCAS, 2014) (later modestly uprated to £9,250). After this increase, official data and academic studies show only modest short-term drops in applications, followed by a return to long-term growth. When fees first jumped to £9k in 2012, UCAS acceptances fell by about 7.6%, then rebounded the next year (House of Commons Library, 2025b). UCAS reported that in 2012 the share of 18-year-olds applying to university fell by roughly 5% compared to the previous trend, but then resumed its previous upward trajectory so that by 2014 overall demand was at “highest ever levels”. Similarly, UCAS’s analysis in 2017 found total applicants down about 4% (≈25,000 fewer) relative to 2016 (BBC, 2017) – the first decline since 2012. Notably, this 2017 drop was concentrated in specific fields (e.g. nursing applicants fell 19%) and older applicants (mature applicants fell ~18%) – factors which UCAS leaders partly attributed to policy changes in health courses and Brexit, as well as the fee rise.

Despite these bumps, enrolment (entry) rates continued to rise overall. UCAS found that the percentage of young people actually entering higher education continued its long-term ascent after 2012 (UCAS, 2014). In other words, universities simply admitted a higher fraction of those applying (acceptance rates rose) so that the fee rise did not ultimately reduce cohort size. Academic analyses broadly confirm this: for example, Sá (2015) estimates that the 2012 fee hike cut first-year entrants by about 33 log points (a substantial proportional drop), but notes this effect was smaller for non-white and low-participation-area students (Sá, 2014). Another large study (Murphy *et al.*, 2017) finds enrolments increased in the post-2012 era despite higher fees, accompanied by a narrowing of the socio-economic participation gap. Simion & Kilfoyle (2021) find that after both the 2006 and 2012 fee hikes, overall university enrolment fell only by about 0.5 percentage points (per reform) – a very small decline

In short, the evidence shows no collapse in participation – only a temporary dip in applications when fees rose, which was largely offset by universities recruiting more aggressively and by loan support for students.

### Variation by Subject, Income and Demographic

There is clear evidence that subject choice matters. Higher fees appear to have deterred applicants *more* in fields with poorer labour-market returns. Sá (2014) finds that application rates for low-salary, low-employment-rate courses fell more after fees rose. For example, UCAS data in 2017 showed nursing applications plummeted 19% (BBC, 2017) – likely reflecting both the fee rise and loss of NHS bursaries – whereas high-earning courses (e.g. many STEM fields) held up better. Although data on counselling/psychotherapy programs is scarce, these courses (often categorised under health/welfare) typically offer modest salaries, suggesting applicants may be price-sensitive. In general, studies of the 2012 fee jump found elasticities of demand in the range of  $-0.1$  to  $-0.3$  (i.e. a 10% fee rise cutting applications by a few percent) (UCAS, 2014).

Income and demographic group differences have, if anything, diminished rather than worsened. UCAS reports no widening of access gaps after 2012: young people from disadvantaged backgrounds applied and entered at similar rates as before, and in fact continue to improve their share (UCAS, 2014). Sá (2014) finds the fee rise had a smaller negative effect on non-white and low-participation-area students – contrary to the naive expectation that low-income youth would be most deterred. This likely reflects the fact that nearly all UK students finance study with government loans, and that high-fee universities have access agreements and bursaries to recruit poorer students. In practice, young applicants from all income quintiles continued to rise after fees went up. One survey found that lower-SES students do not appear unusually “debt-averse” under the current system, since loans cover fees and maintenance (Norton, 2023). To sum up, no clear disadvantage effect has been seen for lower-income or minority applicants: they have not shied away from university and indeed have slightly increased their enrolment rates.

#### Key points:

- After the rise to £9k+, young applicant rates fell only modestly ( $\approx 5\%$ ) and then rebounded.
- Applications to lower-ROI fields (e.g. nursing) dropped far more than high-ROI fields.
- Overall entry (enrolment) kept climbing, offsetting the early demand dip.
- The participation gap by income/ethnicity has not widened – disadvantaged groups did not see extra drop-offs.

### Outreach and Access Measures

Universities have also ramped up outreach and support programs aimed at lower-income and under-represented students. Since 2004, English institutions charging high fees have had to secure “access agreements” (now Access and Participation Plans) committing to outreach, widening participation bursaries, and other efforts (Sá, 2014). These include summer schools, mentoring, campus visits and partnerships with schools and colleges. The intended effect is to persuade and prepare students who might not otherwise consider HE. Evidence on the impact of these programs is mixed. Reviews note that most evaluations focus on intermediate outcomes (aspirations, confidence, attendance at events) rather than measured increases in enrolment (Robinson & Salvestrini, 2020). Some UK studies (e.g. of UniConnect/Reach for Excellence) suggest participants have higher rates of application and enrolment than similar peers, but rigorous causality is hard to establish. International research hints that multi-component outreach (mentoring, tutoring, counselling) can boost college attendance, especially for those with initially low aspirations.

At the very least, these policies appear to have helped offset any price effect. As noted above, disadvantaged students did not drop back more than others post-fees, implying that the loans and outreach together maintained access. Qualitatively, reports from access charities and universities claim that early outreach builds confidence and awareness of student finance options (loans, grants, hardship funds), reducing perceived barriers. For example, surveys of outreach summer schools report large increases in attendees' intent to apply and confidence about university. In counselling/psychology fields specifically, some providers run targeted college liaison (recognising these students often come from vocational rather than academic routes) – though formal evaluation of that is rare. In summary, while definitive evidence is scarce, it seems plausible that expanded outreach has helped mitigate the deterrent effect of high fees on marginal students: low-income young people remained as likely as others to apply, presumably aided by information and incentives provided through access programs.

## **Conclusions**

In sum, the bulk of evidence suggests that tuition fee rises have not dramatically reduced participation, though may cause a small, short-term dip in applications. Empirical studies and admissions data indicate: (a) a one-off fall in young applications of only a few percent ( $\approx 5\%$ ) in the first year of a hike, followed by a return to trend; (b) larger percentage drops in certain fields (especially lower-earning subjects like nursing); (c) overall enrolment (entry) did not decline because universities absorbed more of the demand; (d) poorer and minority students were not further disadvantaged – indeed, their entry rates continued rising after the national tuition fee hike of 2012. Universities' access plans have required bursaries, outreach to colleges/FE and information campaigns, which plausibly helped persuade marginal students to proceed. The direct evidence on outreach's offsetting effect is mixed, but there are strong reasons to believe it has counteracted much of the fee deterrent for low-income students.

## Partnerships and Outreach

Metanoia Institute is committed to enhancing access to counselling and psychotherapy education through a proactive and inclusive partnerships and outreach strategy. This approach is rooted in principles of co-production, local engagement, and long-term relationship-building with education and community stakeholders. Our work in this area directly supports widening participation, especially for underrepresented groups, and reflects our strategic vision for social impact.

### Strategic Outreach and Pre-Entry Engagement

We are currently developing a number of outreach initiatives designed to inspire and support prospective students, particularly those from disadvantaged or underrepresented backgrounds:

- **School and College Partnerships through Here4You**  
 Through Here4You, Metanoia's school-based counselling service, we are exploring strategic partnerships with local schools and colleges. These partnerships will involve co-designed outreach activities, including:

  - In-school talks and Q&A sessions delivered by current students and alumni on *"My Journey into Counselling Training and Practice"*
  - Taster sessions and workshops that introduce counselling and psychotherapy as viable, meaningful career paths
  - Therapeutic support and low-cost counselling services for teachers through Metanoia Counselling and Psychotherapy Services (MCPS)
- **Engagement with Further Education and Access Providers**  
 We are building connections with colleges such as West London College, West Thames College, South Thames College, and institutions offering Access to Higher Education qualifications, particularly those in areas of high deprivation. The intention will be to formalise these links and explore collaborations with careers services within each setting.
- **Community-Based Outreach and Collaboration**  
 We are exploring a potential partnership with Mind in Ealing, Hammersmith, and Hounslow to expand access to affordable counselling services and student placements. Similarly, various alumni-founded community CICs, for example rooted in the Anglo-Caribbean community, are under consideration for student involvement in innovative grassroots mental health initiatives (e.g., counselling skills training for 'first contact' and potential 'signposting' services such as hair stylists, first responders etc).
- **Careers Talks and Student-Led Outreach**  
 We are exploring how our students can give presentations across our partner institutions, especially through Metanoia's Here4You School-Based Counselling Service. It is intended that these activities become embedded in a new, formative module requirement that involves delivering outward-facing work (e.g., school talks, peer mentoring, mini-workshops).

### Social Impact and Student Involvement

We aim to embed social impact into the curriculum by:

- Introducing a Social Impact Learning Outcome (LO) within programmes
- Creating a suite of social engagement projects that students can opt into as part of their training
- In addition to out-reach activities described above, students will also have curricular options e.g. in formative assessment to participate in 'in-reach' activities such as taking student representative roles, committee membership, and peer-to-peer mentoring schemes.
- Encouraging alumni to ringfence low-cost therapy or supervision hours for current Metanoia students, supporting progression and resilience

### Future Commitments

We will continue to explicitly map and name current and emerging partners and detail the nature and outcomes of our collaborations.

We will also work to amplify and promote our outreach work as this develops via Metanoia's marketing channels, ensuring these impactful stories reach prospective students and communities who may benefit most.

## Inclusive Access through Outreach and Alternative Entry Pathways

### Strategic school and college partnerships

- **Collaborative outreach is proven to widen access.** National schemes (e.g. AimHigher/NCOP/UniConnect) unite universities with FE colleges and schools to coordinate activities targeting disadvantaged areas. Independent evaluation of UniConnect shows such partnerships “target underrepresented students who would otherwise struggle to access higher education” (Universities UK, 2025). By pooling resources regionally, these networks reach “cold-spot” schools in high-deprivation areas and ensure all local learners get neutral information on HE vs FE options (McCaig et al., 2017).
- **Partnerships ensure inclusive guidance.** Local school–college links let all pupils (including those in IMD Q1 schools) hear about diverse pathways. They can deliver co-designed workshops and career talks (e.g. by HE and FE staff or professionals) that introduce counselling/psychotherapy among other fields. Research advises embedding outreach in curriculum and careers curricula, so students see HE as attainable (TASO, n.d.). For example, mentoring/role-model schemes “are designed to encourage students to perceive higher education as a desirable destination”.
- **Reach both young and mature learners via FE routes.** Mature and adult learners often benefit from transition programmes linked to FE. Studies find that when success occurs, it is typically in environments “tailored to the unique needs of mature learners, like HE access courses, FE partnerships” (TASO, 2021). Likewise, there is evidence that targeted transition and information/advice interventions help mature students navigate HE. In practice, this

means embedding outreach in adult learning settings and ensuring admissions tutors recognise non-traditional qualifications.

### **Inclusive alumni/student talks**

- **Peer role models build trust and aspiration.** Inviting diverse alumni or current students to share their journeys gives prospective entrants “insider knowledge” of university life (Go Higher West Yorkshire, 2023). Under-represented students are more likely to relate to speakers close to their own background or age, so ambassadors can provide a “realistic view” of HE and reduce anxiety.
- **Ensure ambassadors reflect target groups.** Research recommends recruiting student/alumni speakers who came through non-traditional routes or disadvantaged backgrounds. Seeing “people like them” succeed is highly motivating: ambassadors themselves noted that limited encounters with similar role models made them want to provide that for others (Go Higher West Yorkshire, 2023). A diverse ambassador cohort (including first-gen, low-income or minority graduates) maximises the impact of “My journey into counselling” talks by making entry seem genuinely attainable.

### **Targeted scholarship outreach campaign**

- **Publicise WP bursaries clearly.** Financial support has a measurable impact: the EPI/TASO evidence review finds that “providing financial aid to disadvantaged students” has a small but positive effect on enrolment, especially when the support is simple to apply for and well-advertised (Robinson & Salvestrini, 2020). This implies outreach materials should highlight scholarships/bursaries (for instance, travel funds, maintenance grants, counselling training bursaries) in clear, tailored language. Materials might include case studies of previous recipients.
- **Leverage sector bursary schemes.** Encouragingly, professional bodies have launched targeted funding for counselling students. For example, the UK’s counselling association reports a bursary scheme “to encourage underrepresented groups into the profession” by providing grants for counselling/psychotherapy training (BACP, n.d b). Highlighting such scholarship opportunities (and related living-cost support) in outreach can help attract students who might otherwise think HE unaffordable.

### **Accessible application process redesign**

- **Replace free-text statements with structured forms.** The current personal statement is known to advantage privileged applicants. Studies show under-represented students struggle with the open-ended format, often lacking practice in crafting evidence-based academic writing, resulting in fewer offers (HEPI, 2022). By using short-answer questions or form fields (with clear prompts), admissions can reduce bias. Clear language and an accessibility audit (meeting WCAG standards) ensure the form is inclusive of all needs.
- **Adopt contextual admissions.** Integrate applicants’ backgrounds into offers (e.g. IMD Q1, school performance, care status) rather than relying solely on raw grades. Contextual admissions “allow universities to take structural factors into account” when assessing applications (Universities UK, 2025b). In practice, this can mean lower grade requirements, guaranteed interviews, or foundation years for students from disadvantaged areas. Universities UK notes that contextual offers have already helped institutions meet widening-participation targets (for example, increasing the share of entrants from the poorest areas).

### **RPL and alternative pathway review**

- **Recognise prior learning and varied routes.** Acknowledging non-traditional qualifications and experience can open doors for under-represented learners. In Scotland, RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) has been promoted explicitly to widen participation: it “can help make higher education more accessible to non-traditional learners, encourage different forms of flexible learning paths and engage a more diverse student body” (QAA, 2022). By training admissions staff to evaluate work experience, vocational awards or life achievements (not just A-levels), providers can recruit capable candidates who were overlooked by conventional entry criteria. Staff development on RPL processes and implicit bias (as advocated in UK widening-participation guidance) helps ensure fair decisions.

### **Constructive feedback to all unsuccessful applicants**

- **Provide personalised, constructive feedback.** Feedback helps rejected applicants improve and reapply. A summary of best practice advises institutions to give a reason for rejection plus encouragement or signposting. Tailored feedback (via email/UCAS/letters) reduces frustration and supports self-improvement. This practice also enhances the provider’s reputation and reduces complaints. For equity, feedback should be offered to all WP applicants (not just top candidates), with suggestions for strengthening their application or alternative pathways.

### **Tailored pre-arrival communications**

- **Engage offer-holders early and in stages.** Under-represented students benefit from graded, customised communication before arrival. For example, universities can send targeted emails or SMS updates addressing academic preparation, finance, and support networks in sequence. As one case study shows, piloting a pre-arrival questionnaire can reveal cohort-specific needs: Leeds Beckett’s PAQ during COVID-19 found many incoming students lacked recent study experience, enabling staff to bridge gaps before term (Morgan, 2021). Such pre-arrival engagement (via surveys, videos, or online resources) builds confidence and flags issues early, helping to smooth the transition for WP students.

### **Asynchronous induction content with paid student/alumni input**

- **Co-create induction resources with students.** Developing pre-induction videos or modules that feature current students and graduates makes orientation more relatable. Research reports that new students value meeting “previous students, who could pass on vital information” – this “plays a key role in making the experience of starting university ‘real’ and removing some of the mystery” (QAA, 2024). By paying student/alumni contributors at least the Living Wage, providers ensure diverse voices (often first-gen or non-traditional scholars) are included. Such content (e.g. day-in-the-life videos, peer tips, or Q&A sessions) shared before term starts can increase belonging and preparedness among target entrants, aligning with OfS expectations for enhanced induction of under-represented cohorts.

## Investigating Student Burnout and Mental Health in Counselling Training at Metanoia

In response to growing sector-wide concerns about student mental health, and recognising the emotionally demanding nature of counselling training, the APP Task and Finish Group investigated student burnout and wellbeing.

This work is informed by the 2024 Metanoia Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Health-Check, which recommended:

- A review of student support needs and available provision
- Comprehensive surveys and focus groups to understand diverse mental health needs
- Strengthening of peer learning groups
- Promotion of mental health awareness campaigns
- Provision of targeted resources to address emotional distress
- Staff training on the support landscape and their role within it

External data underlines the scale of the challenge. According to the House of Commons Library (2025), the proportion of UK students disclosing a mental health condition rose from under 1% in 2010/11 to 5.9% in 2022/23, with confidential surveys suggesting actual rates are significantly higher. A 2022 Student Minds survey found 57% of respondents self-reported a mental health issue, and 27% reported a formal diagnosis.

Office for Students (OfS, 2023) data for 2021–22 shows that mental health disclosures vary significantly by gender and ethnicity:

- 6.3% of full-time female entrants reported a mental health condition vs. 2.3% of male entrants
- Students of mixed ethnicity reported the highest rates (6.3%), followed by White students (6.1%); Asian students reported the lowest (2.7%)

In recognition of the unique pressures of counselling and psychotherapy training, the Task and Finish Group have explored best practice in student wellbeing, including check-in survey templates and external resources such as Student Space, which offers culturally specific support and 24/7 crisis text services. These have informed particular interventions, particularly Intervention Strategy 3, concerned with Mental Health-Positive Onboarding and Support.

One area of particular interest is peer support. A recent systematic review (Pointon-Haas et al., 2024) of peer support interventions in higher education identified three formats—peer-led support groups, peer mentoring, and peer learning. The review found that peer mentoring and peer learning were more effective in reducing anxiety and stress than support groups, although evidence quality was limited. Peer-led support groups were the only format specifically supporting students with existing mental health difficulties.

These insights directly inform the evaluation of existing peer support mechanisms, piloting enhanced check-in and wellbeing monitoring tools, and improving mental health literacy among staff and students alike.

## Student declarations of mental health conditions

Student declarations of mental health conditions at Metanoia are significantly lower than the sector average; in the 2023-24 academic year, only 1.1% of Metanoia students disclosed a mental health condition in comparison with 5.3% of part-time students across the sector (OfS, 2023).

It may be given the size of the student population, declarations of mental health conditions could be expected to be lower, however there is a substantial body of research that suggests that there is a high prevalence of lived experience of mental health difficulties within the mental health professions (Harris et al., 2016; Sherring, 2019).

Given the rate of disclosure is consistently low at Metanoia (1% in 2021-22; 0.5% in 2022-23; 1.1% in 2023-24), it may be that both prospective and current students are reluctant to disclose having a mental health diagnosis in trepidation of experiencing stigma or superfluous scrutiny of their competence for training (Adame, 2011; Harris et al., 2016).

### **Metanoia's process for disability declarations (including mental health conditions)**

Metanoia offers students the opportunity to declare disability as defined under the Equality Act 2010 to enable the assessment of needs and to put in place support mechanisms during their studies. These disclosures can occur at the following points during the student lifecycle.

- During admissions

Information is collected via the application questionnaire which includes a “prefer not to say” option and consent to share the information is also requested. This information is passed on a need-to-know basis to implement the adjustments when the offer is accepted and consent granted.

Prospective students who make such disclosures are encouraged to contact the Disability and Wellbeing Team after acceptance of an offer to arrange a Learning Support Plan (LSP).

- During Registration

During annual registration, students can choose to disclose this information through a brief questionnaire or verify previous disclosures.

Students pre-registered for Middlesex University validated awards declare/verify additional information annually, including disability, as part of the HESA Student collection to meet the conditions of registration with OfS and to manage Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) funding as part of that process. Consent to share with HESA for that purpose is assumed through disclosure.

- After registration

After registration, students can declare any new or existing disability by registering with the Disability and Wellbeing Services.

At the initial meeting, consent to share information can be given verbally, in writing or both. If there is consent, the team shares this information on a need-to-know basis to implement the recommended adjustments detailed in the LSP as applicable.

**Improving student declarations of mental health conditions**

We will create an environment more supportive of student declarations of mental health conditions, to have a more accurate picture of student support needs through the following interventions:

- To streamline processes where a student makes a first disclosure in an interview, ensuring that the information is recorded so that appropriate support can be implemented. This will help reduce the feeling of needing to make a declaration at multiple times in their student journey.
- To further emphasise external messaging that is positive and supportive for prospective students with mental health conditions, and transparent about how that information is used. We hope that this will increase confidence in student declarations, and reduce the perceived stigma or negative effect that a declaration might have on their application.
- To enhance training, support, and processes for staff to make confident, appropriate, and effective decisions around fitness to practice (particularly during application process).

## Related Metanoia Institute Policies and Other Documents

### Related policies and other documents

- Institutional Strategy 2023-28
- Education Strategy 2024-28 (this has been reviewed as of July 2025 to build in APP and make more accessible)
- Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy
- Enhancement Strategy
- Student Support Strategy
- Admissions Policy
- Governance Handbook
- Review Framework for Annual and Periodic Monitoring
- Programme Approval Policy and Procedures
- Student Representation Scheme
- Student Engagement in Governance Policy
- Student Engagement in Learning and Teaching Policy (in development)
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy (in development)
- Student Code of Conduct
- Student Charter
- Fitness to Practice

### External Reference Points

- UCAS: [Widening Access and Participation: Tools and Resources](#)
- QAA's 'Supporting Student Transitions' [Resources Hub](#)
- AdvanceHE's '[Student Engagement Through Partnership](#)' Framework (2024)
- Office for Students (OfS) - [Regulatory notice 1: Access and participation plan guidance](#)