

The Senate, 10 December 2025

President & Vice-Chancellor's Report

Main Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report provides summary information on current and forthcoming developments, both internal and external, for the information of Senate members. The President & Vice-Chancellor will introduce the Report at the meeting and members will have the opportunity to raise questions. This report is structured around the University Vision's four Pillars and their respective Priorities, after a section about the external environment. Where information relates to more than one Pillar or Priority it is included under the most relevant theme. Where appropriate, reference is made to other papers that appear separately on the Senate agenda. The report now comprises two parts, the main report and a supplementary report with additional information and updates, available in the Reading Room.

1. EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

1.1 The government's Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper represents tweaks to the higher education system rather than an overhaul; inflation-linked domestic tuition fee rises provided for in law could future-proof income levels, but the international student tuition fee levy threatens budgets in the immediate term, reducing the education and research cross-subsidy

- The government's [Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper](#) represents a vision for higher education that drives economic growth, provides national capability, delivers regional impact, increases the UK's international standing and maintains a world-leading high quality experience for all, but it does not propose fundamental change to the system. The politics of immigration poses an immediate challenge, as seen through plans to introduce a [levy on international student tuition fees](#) to fund the partial reintroduction of maintenance grants. The commitment in the White Paper to enshrine an inflationary linked tuition fee increase into legislation is welcome for the longer-term sustainability of university finances, but the sector will need to exert pressure to secure this. Unlike measures to tackle the abuse of public funds through franchised provision, which will be introduced 'at the next available opportunity', legislation on tuition fees will progress 'when Parliamentary time allows'.

The White Paper recognises universities as engines of growth, in contrast to the anti-university rhetoric seen at the recent [Conservative](#) and [Reform](#) party conferences, and directly addresses several of the sector's long-standing concerns including: increasing maintenance loans in line with forecast inflation; improving research cost recovery; adopting a proportionate and risk-based approach to access and participation; and addressing barriers to collaboration between institutions. The role of universities'

governing bodies in overseeing institutions' financial planning is specifically addressed with a call for governance and leadership arrangements to 'be robust enough to respond to an increasingly challenging and volatile operating environment'. That said, the Paper provides few incentives to achieve its vision. Plans to impose recruitment limits on 'poor quality' courses are an exception in this regard, but again, the necessary legislation to achieve this is planned 'when Parliamentary time allows'.

Of more significant impact in the immediate term is the planned levy on international student tuition fees to fund the partial reintroduction of maintenance grants, details of which will be included in the Autumn Budget on 26 November. Whilst the sector has previously [called](#) for increased financial support for the most disadvantaged students, the impact the levy could have on international recruitment and universities' corresponding ability to cross subsidise education, research and innovation activity has raised significant [concern](#). [Economic analysis](#) commissioned by universities, including the University of Sheffield, shows that the government's modelling of a 6% levy underestimated the potential number of students who would be put off coming to the UK. The University's constituency, Sheffield Central, would be the 7th most affected in the country in terms of potential GVA loss (£32.6m) if a 6% levy is imposed. Work is underway within the sector, including with [business representatives](#), to push back against the levy, or at a minimum, prevent a fixed figure from being included in the Budget, given the questions raised around the government's evidence base for the plans. We will work with our trusted political stakeholders to encourage the government to consider HE funding in the round pending the outcome of its own [research](#) into the price elasticity of home and international students, due to be published next spring.

1.2 Research budget represents a real term increase but a reduced cross-subsidy from international student fee income risks reducing university R&D activity

- UKRI's recently announced [budget allocation](#) to 2029/30 represents a real-term increase over the next four years and is a positive outcome for research in the current fiscal climate. Higher education research is, however, a loss making activity, cross-subsidised primarily by international student tuition fees. The introduction of an international fee levy, as outlined above, poses a threat to this activity and the potential to generate economic growth through research. The Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper outlined a vision for HE research in which institutions specialise in areas of strength, which may result in individual institutions conducting less research in certain areas and, given the impact of the fee levy on the research cross-subsidy, less research overall.

1.3 House of Commons Business and Trade Committee

- The University recently hosted a [roundtable](#) which provided an opportunity to showcase to Members of Parliament our role in driving investment, creating jobs and delivering the government's [Industrial Strategy](#).

1.4 The Free Speech Act came into force on 1 August. There is a renewed political focus on the interference of foreign states in UK HE and antisemitism on university campuses

Parts of the Free Speech Act came into force on 1 August with compliance at the University coordinated by the Free Speech Working Group, chaired by Professor Mary Vincent. The Office for Students has drawn attention to the potential for foreign governments to interfere in UK HE, both in terms of [influencing research](#) and requiring international students to ‘[spy](#)’ on their counterparts. This has gained increased [political attention, with a spotlight on Sheffield](#), in light of [reports](#) that the Chinese state sought to influence research activity at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU’s statement on this can be found [here](#)). The OfS Director for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom, Professor Arif Ahmed, has [stated](#) that “universities absolutely must address threats from states trying to interfere with freedom of speech and academic freedom, whether that’s in the form of coercion or harassment of academics...or students”. Senior colleagues have been considering this issue and will report to the Free Speech Working Group on 15 December. Arif Ahmed is undertaking a series of institutional visits in relation to these issues and recently met with the Vice-Chancellor and others.

Antisemitism on university campuses has also received increased focus in the wake of student protests on 7 October, including those at the University, and the terrorist attack at Heaton Park Hebrew Congregation synagogue. Both the Education Secretary and [OfS](#) have written to universities outlining universities’ responsibilities towards their Jewish communities.

Dedicated information on free speech at the University of Sheffield, including the University’s updated Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom, can be found [here](#).

2. EDUCATION

2.1 DELIVERY OF THE PORTFOLIO

2.1.1 Strategic Projects

- [Marking and assessment](#)

The University is making positive changes to the way in which it delivers critical marking and assessment processes; by creating technical integrations between core systems that calculate student marks, local processes that often introduce error and require significant manual work by staff, will no longer be needed. Module marks and outcomes will now be automatically calculated by the system using approved assessment weightings and processes simplified overall. These changes are being implemented between now and January.

- [Timetabling](#)

New timetabling processes have been introduced at the start of this semester, focussed on significantly improving the student experience. A number of improvements have been made, including:

1. earlier publication of the timetable to all students
2. clearer principles established around teaching availability, scheduling and teaching spaces
3. consistent data collection to reduce clashes and post-publication changes

4. reduction in numbers of individuals building timetables across the institution supported by consistent job descriptions and improved role clarity.

2.1.2 Access and Participation Plan

- The Supplementary Report provides an internal update for Senate on progress made against the old Access and Participation Plan (2020/21 to 2024/25) following the release of the official OfS 2023/24 dataset. This plan will be closed off in November 2026, when we receive the official OfS 2024/25 dataset. At this time we will also be able to provide a re-baselined set of data for the current APP (2025/26-2028/29), which relies on the same 2024/25 OfS dataset. The intention is then to provide Senate with an update in summer 2027 and annually thereafter on progress against Intervention Strategies in the current plan using both OfS data, and internal data.

2.2 ADMISSIONS AND RECRUITMENT

2.2.1 Undergraduate Admissions

- The late October UG Home application position was encouraging with an increase in offers and accepts when compared with this point last year. From a University perspective, the majority of applications at that stage in the year were for Medicine/Dentistry (UCAS deadline of 15 October) and aligns with the wider sector position marking an overall 10.6% increase in Medicine and Dentistry applications at that point this year.

UG Overseas applications are up with a positive offer and accept pool. Drivers include increased applications from India, Malaysia and Hong Kong with UK domiciled international students continuing a recent trend of growth in demand for Sheffield aligned with the extensive marketing, recruitment and enhanced reputation work targeting the south east and London.

While this represents a positive start to undergraduate admissions this year, true market trends for undergraduate recruitment and student behaviour typically become clearer during November/early December as application submissions for all programmes across the portfolio are submitted ahead of the mid-January UCAS equal consideration date.

2.2.2 Postgraduate Admissions

- Despite continued volatility in PGT home demand, early cycle indications are positive with applications, offers and accepts all up on last year, however, the overall numbers are still relatively small. As per previous years we can expect to see the majority of applicants engage in admissions activity for PGT Home study during summer 2026.

Following the significant reductions in PGT Overseas demand for the University over the past few years, early indications for 2026 entry are encouraging with applications, offers and accepts driven by application submissions from China. It is important to note that while the overall increase is positive, it is not balanced in all subject areas across the PGT portfolio and this will require careful management throughout the admissions cycle.

2.2.3 Student Recruitment & Events

- The home Lead Generation team has delivered a confident start to the academic year with 64 interactions (+22 YoY) delivered across 71 schools/colleges in September, as of 23rd October there were 113 interactions booked in October (+32 YoY). For the 25/26

cycle, there are currently 576 interactions booked with 473 unique schools (58% against target). 5 exhibitions have also been attended, capturing a total of 773 leads (+208 YoY). Our new pre-16 offer launched nationally with 19 engagements booked already.

2,902 prospective students attended the 18th October undergraduate pre-application open day, which is 181 (+7%) up on last year. Across the four events delivered so far this year, 12,877 prospective students attended which is 1,495 (+13%) more than this point last cycle. Bookings for our final event of this cycle on 22 November stand at 3,810 prospective students (a/o 22/10/25), which is tracking in line with numbers for last year.

During September, the Enquiries and Customer Services team took 2,628 enquiries via email (Salesforce CRM), and answered 551 phone calls and 368 chat conversations. Comparison data will be available next cycle.

The PGT online open day is due to take place on November 26th and opened for bookings on October 15th. Bookings stand at 342 (as at 24/10/25), just under 5 weeks ahead of the event, which is over 20% higher than at the same point in 2024. Email communications start on the week commencing 3 November, after which time we expect bookings to rise more quickly.

Our autumn online events which include UG subject tasters and spotlights and Sheffield Live events are underway and have generated 3691 bookings and 956 attendances so far. Events run until December 3 and 32 events are still to be delivered. A number of subject tasters have experienced positive increases in attendance compared to 2024 including Computer Science (attendance up 66.67%), Journalism (attendance up 21.05%), Landscape (attendance up 20.83%) and Psychology (attendance up 29.79%).

2.2.4 Registration of New Students

- As of 29 October, the University had registered 9,896 new students against a target of 10,163. This is 267 students (-2.6%) below target.

When counting all student registrations (new and continuing students) this indicates a student population size of around 26,000 in the 2025-26 academic year (1st Oct census point including continuing students), compared with 27885 in 2024-25 and 30233 in 2023-24 (these two latter numbers from the 1st Dec statutory census point). The position will be captured again on 1 November and 1 December, to provide a more complete and comparative picture.

2.2.5 Undergraduate Home Tuition Fee Cap

- The Government announced in October that the maximum tuition fee cap for home undergraduate students will be uplifted annually in line with forecast inflation for the 2026-27 and 2027-28 academic years.

The precise fee cap figure for 2026-27 has not yet been published by the Department for Education (DfE), as it will be determined by the inflation figure used. Work is underway to consider the financial and strategic impact of this return to inflation-linked fee increases and the associated rise in the fee cap.

2.3 UKVI Compliance Visit

All sponsors are liable to periodic compliance inspections undertaken by UK Visas and Immigration Compliance (UKVI). A request to visit the University was received in October

and a team of UKVI staff visited the University from 7-9 October 2025 to assess all areas of immigration compliance. The team conducted interviews pertaining to recruitment, admissions, English language, partnerships, registration and contact details, and also checked documentation and records for a selection of student cases. Colleagues from the International Student Support, Advice & Compliance (ISSAC) team in Student & Academic Services supported the visit and the results are expected before Christmas.

3. RESEARCH

3.1 RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

3.1.1 Research Development

- Increasing signals are being heard from Ministers and UKRI on the following:
 1. The need for Universities to focus on their research strengths
 2. There is an expectation from the Government that public funding for research in higher education will need to demonstrate how it contributes to the 8 areas in the Industrial Strategy (IS-8).

The first is partly in response to concern in the sector about financial sustainability in research and is a shot across the sector's bows that it needs to work differently, rather than expect the government to step in with more funding.

The University of Sheffield is relatively well placed for the second, with strengths in advanced manufacturing, clean energy, and defence. The University does need to be mindful of continuing to make the case for discovery research (fundamental research, answering hypothetical questions) as this leads to application.

4. INNOVATION

4.1 GLOBAL AND REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

4.1.1 Global Engagement

- South China Agriculture University (Visit and Partnership)

Global Engagement hosted a visit by South China Agricultural University (SCAU) in collaboration with key stakeholders from the Faculty of Engineering in mid-September. The main purpose of the visit was to introduce staff from both universities, as Sheffield is close to signing a 2+2 Dual Award UG Agreement with SCAU and both the Schools of Computer Science and Electrical and Electronic Engineering. Once in place, the agreement should see 20+ students join Year 2 of programmes in both Sheffield Schools and will help supplement the recruitment of high-quality international students. The China Office reported that the visit was a success and how pleased SCAU are with developing the partnership with Sheffield. GE is optimistic that this will be the first collaboration of this type with institutions in China.

- MARA (Visit)

Global Engagement hosted a visit from MARA in mid-September. MARA are the main government sponsors the International Recruitment Team works with in Malaysia to send sponsored students on a range of UG Engineering programmes at Sheffield. The visit allowed GE and Sheffield Schools to showcase the University; update MARA on latest

programme developments; discuss Sheffield's efforts to increase employability and highlight the benefit of a Sheffield student experience to the MARA representatives.

- Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology workshop

On 14 October the Faculty of Science and Faculty Engineering held the first in a planned series for research sandpits with the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology (OIST). With opening presentations from the Vice-President & Head of the Faculty of Science at the University, and the Provost of OIST, the sandpit broke into three rooms where research conversations were held on Engineering, Materials, and Energy. Further workshops are planned to include Quantum and Neuroscience.

4.1.2 Knowledge Exchange and Partnerships

- Local Innovation Partnership Fund

[Announced](#) in July, Mayoral Combined Authority regions (including SY), via 'triple helix' partnerships between civic leadership institutions, businesses and universities, have the opportunity to access ring-fenced funding of up to £30M each to boost local growth by either strengthening existing innovation clusters, or supporting emerging clusters. The University is working with South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) and Sheffield Hallam to develop our proposal for the funding.

4.1.3 Regional Engagement

- South Yorkshire Local Growth Plan

During this period we have actively engaged with SYMCA on the development and launch of the Local Growth Plan. This has involved influencing national industrial strategy sector teams to reference South Yorkshire and successfully supporting a Defence Deal for South Yorkshire (announced in September) positioning the University of Sheffield as part of this.

- Academic Health Partnership for South Yorkshire

The University led the development and submission of a feasibility funding application, securing £150k from SYMCA to establish the partnership.

- The 2025 ESRC Festival of Social Science

The festival took place again during the October half term. The flagship event, The Research Arcade was a dynamic showcase where academics translated their latest social science research into fun family friendly interactive installations. Taking over two rooms of the central Sheffield Millennium Gallery it attracted close to 2,000 visitors, all enjoying engaging with our research.

4.2 ADVANCED MANUFACTURING RESEARCH CENTRE

4.2.1 Opportunities

- The University hosted a roundtable by the House of Commons' Business and Trade Select Committee at the AMRC's Factory 2050. Members of the Committee, including Chair Liam Byrne MP, were taken on a tour of the facility and briefed on the University's research and innovation and its role in driving economic growth. The University invited around 40 businesses and organisations, including a number of our partners, to share their views with the Committee to inform its future work programme focused on economic growth.

The visit was promoted on [LinkedIn](#) and Liam Byrne MP [shared a video](#) from the visit with his network.

5. ONE UNIVERSITY

5.1 PHILANTHROPY

5.1.1 Campaign targets, milestones and significant developments (data as of 16 October 2025)

- CAR has made a good start to the financial year, raising £0.3 million towards its annual target through a combination of mass fundraising and major gifts.
- The fundraising pipeline is strong and significant progress will have been made towards the £8 million target by the next Senate meeting. It is expected to secure three seven-figure gifts before Christmas.
- CAR's external advisory board, the Campaign Leadership Group, will meet in mid-November to review progress with the Forged in Sheffield campaign and discuss the philanthropic potential of new opportunities highlighted as University priorities. The meeting will be chaired by the University Chancellor.

5.1.2 Fundraising

- 400 new students started at Sheffield this academic year with a donor-funded scholarship for a taught degree course. These include the last cohort of undergraduate students to receive an Experience Sheffield Scholarship, worth £3,600 over three years. Conversations have now started with existing supporters and prospective donors about the new Access to Sheffield Scholarship. This will provide financial support to students throughout the duration of their degree, align with Sheffield's APP and prioritise candidates coming in through the University's Access programme.
- Fundraising towards a new facility for neuroscience research and medical school teaching has now exceeded £11.4m. The project's lead donor, who kickstarted fundraising with a £3 million gift, was welcomed onto site in October. As part of the tour, Estates and the contractors helped facilitate a ceremonial concrete pouring.

5.1.3 Reputation and rankings

- A coordinated approach to promoting the British Council Study UK Awards led to a record number of applicants from Sheffield's global alumni community. The final total (151) is twice that of the next best submitting institution. Most universities that take part have around 20-30 alumni applicants. Promotion of the awards forms part of work to drive a further increase in the number of alumni with impact responding to QS.

5.2 REPUTATION

5.2.1 Golden thread update

- October saw the formal internal staff launch of our Golden Thread reputation activity. Students and staff from across the community shared their stories which relate to the Golden Thread of 'Independent Thinking. Shared Ambition.' and a storybank has been released to enable people to access stories which they can use to speak confidently, consistently and clearly about the University.

At the same time an advertising campaign was also launched to support this and specifically to coincide with the QS rankings survey season to target academics and employers.

5.2.2 QS Rankings

- The approach to QS rankings has been agreed and activity to support the 2026 surveys' submission is now underway. The approach will involve a "Big" year where new contacts are sought from across the organisation for both academics and employers and a "Small" year where we already have enough contacts who have given consent for the University to submit so activity concentrates on reigniting the relationship with these contacts ahead of the survey. The deadline for submissions for this year is 26 November and warm up communications have already been sent to contacts ahead of this.

5.2.3 THE World University Rankings

- Following positive outcomes in almost all other league tables this calendar year (a return to QS top 100 and the best outcomes for more than fifteen years in UK league tables), we saw a decline in our position in THE World University rankings.

The University has dropped 10 places in the ranking this year from 98th to 108th. This drop in ranking was precipitated by a fall in reported industrial income. This was due to fluctuation in the HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) reporting guidance as to what can be included as industrial income, rather than any dramatic change in performance. A change in guidance meant that, for one year only, we were able to include a portion of normally excluded AMRC income and this precipitated our leap into the world top 100 in 2024. The amendment of the guidelines for 2025 and onwards has meant a return to just outside the top 100.

We are reviewing our industry income position in more detail to better understand whether any specific strategy could improve our overall outcomes.

5.3 COMMUNICATIONS

We have communicated and engaged with our staff and students on the upcoming industrial action and will be supporting senior leaders on how to respond to any enquiries received. We will also be sharing guidance with senior leaders on processes around managing and reporting participation, and corresponding messaging with all staff who may be participating or affected.

We shared an in-depth update with colleagues at the all-staff briefing on 13 October on our current student recruitment position and the financial environment.

5.4 MEDIA COVERAGE AND IMPACT

- Public First [published](#) a report co-commissioned by the University assessing how the proposed levy on international student fees may impact universities and local economies. The report was featured in the [Observer](#) and a quote from Beckie Hart, CBI Yorkshire and Humber Regional Director, was in the [Independent](#).
- Media coverage of the University's Clean Energy Summit in the [Yorkshire Post](#), including a [follow up piece](#) positioned South Yorkshire as having a major opportunity in the

clean-energy transition to generate good, well-paid jobs, as well as the University's existing SMR Module Development Facility which supports this ambition.

- Following a [press release](#) on the University's role in supporting the UK's Defence Industrial Strategy, the Cabinet Office's New Media Unit asked about featuring the University in a campaign highlighting the positive impact of defence investment.
- Following coverage of his [latest study with AstraZeneca](#), Professor Haiping Lu has been invited to deliver a series of high profile talks about his AI research, including Google and academic journal Nature.
- We facilitated a visit from The BBC to Endcliffe to produce Tik Tok content about students moving into university. One of the videos, '[How to make friends at Uni?](#)', was reshared by the social media team and has since received over 151k impressions.

6. FINANCE

6.1 RESEARCH AWARDS

- The total value of new awards for the last 12 months to the end of September 2025 is now £172m, a fall of £6m compared to £178m in September 2024.
- There has been a decrease in the total number of awards - for the 12 months to the end of September 2025, the number of new awards opened is 815 compared to 858 as at September 2024. There has been a fall in the number of RCUK awards by 20 to 159 in the last 12 months, whilst the number of UK Government and Charity awards have decreased by 14 and 3 respectively in the 12 months to September 2025 compared with September 2024. The number of Industry awards has increased by 5 to 11.
- The value of new awards for the 12 months to September 2025 has risen in EU Framework (£2m), Industry (£2m) and Charities (£10m) which is the highest value of the last 3 years. However, the value of RCUK awards has fallen by £3m to £59m and the value of UK Government awards has fallen by £14m.
- The fall in the number and value of UK Government awards can be partly attributed to the decrease in the number (27) and value (£7m) of new Catapult awards over the last 12 months. The timing of these awards appearing in the figures does change annually.
- Excluding Capital Projects, as of September 2025 in addition to the above figures, £72m awards have had notification of being successful compared to £62m in August 2024.
- In the 1 month since the last report, there have been 2 new awards for over £1m. £6m awarded by the Royal Society, which will appear in the Charity value, to the Faculty of Science and £2.6m from EPSRC to the Faculty of Engineering.
- The value of the Research Net Contribution is £49m for the 12 months to September 2025 compared to £45m for the 12 months to September 2024 an increase of £4m (9%).
- As of September 2025, research grants work in progress (research order book) which excludes capital projects, stands at £334m which is a decrease of £10m on the work in progress figure of £343m recorded in September 2024.

7. OUR PEOPLE

7.1 WORKFORCE

7.1.1 Industrial Action update

UCU asked its members to take 16 days of strike action between 17 November and 12 December, and to take continuous action short of a strike (ASOS) from Monday 17 November, over the risk of compulsory redundancies at the University. Seven dispute resolution meetings took place between representatives of the University and the UCU. The University made multiple offers to UCU to seek to resolve the dispute and bring an end to the industrial action, the final of which (made shortly after strike action commenced), was to commit to there being no compulsory redundancies before 31 October 2026 and an additional pause on all new restructures until April 2026. This offer was rejected by the branch. Whilst not all UCU members are participating, and the action is spread unevenly across the University, there are some areas of the University experiencing high levels of participation.

8. LEGAL AND REGULATORY MATTERS

8.1 REPORTABLE EVENTS

- Since the previous report to Senate in October 2025, there have been no new reportable events provided to the OfS.

The Senate, 10 December 2025

President & Vice-Chancellor's Report

Supplementary Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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1. EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

1.1 Public Affairs

- A small group of colleagues attended the Labour party conference in Liverpool to build and strengthen relationships with partners, and join discussions around higher education policy.

2. EDUCATION

2.1 HESA Student Statutory Data Return

- This year represents the third year the University completed the HESA Student Statutory Data Return under the new 'data futures' model. The introduction of the model - through which we provide data and details about our student population, which is then used by the OfS and other statutory customers to calculate funding, student outcomes, league table factors - has been highly disruptive for the sector with nearly three quarters of the sector being given extensions in previous years due to the increased administrative burden associated with the return.
- This year, we were the first University to submit a return that passed all data quality rules and resolved all credibility queries. As of 23 October, 237 out of 311 providers had yet to reach this milestone. This represents significant progress overcoming the challenges of previous years and shows the benefit of our data model.

2.2 Update on progress made against the old Access and Participation Plan (2020/21 to 2024/25)

The internal update for Senate on progress made against the old Access and Participation Plan (2020/21 to 2024/25) referred to in 2.1.2 of the main report is below.

Table: Progress against UoS APP targets 2020/21 to 2024/25

Aim/Description	Baseline data / Baseline year	Updates							Final Milestone
		2017 /18	2018 /19	2019 /20	2020 /21	2021 /22	2022 /23	2023 /24	2024/25
Access									
To reduce the gap in participation in HE for students from underrepresented groups/ Ratio in entry rates for POLAR4 quintile 5: quintile 1 students	4.2:1 (2017/18)	4.2:1	4:1	3.2:1	3.6:1	3.3:1	4.3:1	4.6:1 ¹	3:1
By working in collaboration, Realising Opportunities (RO) will contribute to national improvement in closing the gap in entry rates at higher tariff providers between the most and least underrepresented groups. Proportion of RO students who are tracked into HE who will access a research intensive university (RIU) within two years of becoming ‘HE ready’ and completing their Post-16 studies.	42% (2015-16)	48%	47%	49%	58%	67%	58%	53% ²	54%

¹ Change from indicative OfS dataset of 4:7:1

² Realising Opportunities participants have two years in which to enter University using their contextual admissions offer and so we are unable to confirm the 23/24 progression figure at this time

Aim/Description	Baseline data / Baseline year	Updates							Final Milestone
		2017 /18	2018 /19	2019 /20	2020 /21	2021 /22	2022 /23	2023 /24	2024/25
Success									
To reduce the non-continuation gap for students from underrepresented groups/ Percentage difference in non-continuation rates between POLAR4 quintile 5 and quintile 1 students.	4.9% (2016/17)	3.3%	1.5%	3.5%	3.4%	2.3%	3.5% 2.5%	3%	2.5%
To reduce the attainment gap for students from underrepresented groups/ Percentage difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between white and black students.	17% (2017/18)	17%	11%	9%	10%	24.3%	22.9%	12% 21.5%	10%
To reduce the attainment gap for students from underrepresented groups/ Percentage difference in degree attainment (1st and 2:1) between white and asian students.	19% (2016/17)	19%	12%	10%	5%	13%	14.4%	14% 11.1%	12%

3. RESEARCH

No Supplementary content.

4. INNOVATION

4.1 GLOBAL AND REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

No Supplementary content.

5. ONE UNIVERSITY

5.1 COLLABORATE AND SUPPORTIVE CULTURE

5.1.1 Recruitment

- University Secretary: We are in the early stages of the process to appoint a new University Secretary. David Swinn has been filling the position on an interim position since Jeannette Strachan's departure earlier this year.

We are seeking proposals from executive search partners regarding how they would support us in appointing to this role. We aim to appoint an agency in early November.

We expect the recruitment campaign to launch at the end of November, with a closing date prior to the Christmas break. Final interviews are planned for the end of February. It is expected that the new University Secretary will be in post early in the Summer.

David Swinn will continue in the interim position throughout the recruitment process, and I would like to extend my thanks for his continued leadership in this role during this period.

- AMRC CEO: Earlier this year, we announced some changes to the leadership and governance structures for the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre. Part of this included our intention to recruit a permanent Chief Executive Officer responsible for the strategic direction, leadership and management for the AMRC.

The recruitment process for this role launched on Monday 27 October, with Saxton Bampfylde acting as executive search agents. The deadline for applications is 21 November.

We anticipate that the selection process and interviews will take place in early 2026, and hope to have the new AMRC CEO in post in Spring 2026, depending on notice periods and other negotiations.

Professor Ben Morgan will continue in this role as Interim CEO until the new CEO takes up their position, and I would like to express my thanks for his leadership of the AMRC since January.

- New Head of Student Registry: Rosie Williams (r.h.williams@sheffield.ac.uk) has been appointed Head of Student Registry week effective 3 November 2025. This is the role formerly held by Ana Hidalgo-Kingston.

5.2 MEDIA COVERAGE AND IMPACT

- Yvette Marks, Ancient Material Scientist, was featured on [BBC Two's Digging for Britain](#) discussing the recreation of pre-historic furnaces.

- Dr Jonathon Cooper-Knock discussed the link between MND and frequent strenuous exercise on [BBC 5 Live](#), [The Independent](#) and [Times Radio](#). Professor Dame Pam Shaw also featured in the [Daily Mail](#) discussing the same topic.
- Professor Tim Chico's comments on a new study suggesting that weight loss jabs may help reduce the risk of heart attack or stroke regardless of total weight loss featured in several national newspapers, including [The Times](#), [Daily Mail](#), [Daily Mirror](#) and [The Herald Scotland](#).
- Professor Mary Vincent featured on the [BBC Radio 4 program Start the Week](#) discussing the Greek Civil War that ended in 1949.
- Research by Professor John Holmes exploring the sales data of low and no alcohol drinks was widely covered in national media, including [BBC News](#), [The Independent](#), [Daily Mail](#), [Daily Mirror](#) and [Hits Radio](#).
- Research by Professor Roger Lewis on new cryogenic technology to clear leaves from railway lines was featured by the [BBC](#) and in [The i](#).
- The Guardian published an [article](#) on research by Professor Nicola Hemmings and PhD Researcher Alessia Lavigne, which led to the first successful hatching of Aldabra Giant Tortoises in the Seychelles using artificial incubation.
- Research by Sheffield PhD student Dr Aimée Barlow, who developed a pregnancy test for skeletons, was featured in several national media outlets including the [New Scientist](#) and [The Times](#).
- Research showing that a mediterranean diet can be effective in relieving symptoms of IBS received international and national media coverage in [ABC News](#), [The i](#), [The Independent](#), [The Daily Mail](#), [The Herald](#), [The Daily Express](#).
- Media coverage highlighting the success of our [students who built and launched their own supersonic rocket](#) resulted in a university in Latvia inviting the team to share their expertise to help their own students.

6. FINANCE

No Supplementary content.

7. LEGAL AND REGULATORY MATTERS

No Supplementary content.