Access and Participation Policy

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Full Name	Position	Signature	Date	Review Cycle
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Introduction

The School of Coding focuses on delivering an excellent academic experience while also ensuring the development of relevant employability and entrepreneurial skills. This focus enables us to deliver a dynamic, enriching and future-focused student experience, which equips all our learners with the opportunities to make significant contributions to society and the economy. We are a successful modern School with the foundational purpose of providing higher and applied learning opportunities relevant to our region and beyond. We support the transformation of our learners, our people and the local communities within which we live, work and engage

Our academic strategy is the framework through which we deliver our Strategic Plan to ensure the academic benefits and outcomes of our students' experience. Our academic strategy is delivered through a consistent educational philosophy across all our courses. It was developed to:
• meet our commitments for access and participation to increase equality of opportunity.
• develop a modern portfolio which meets the needs of the regional and national economy and global civil society.
• ensure the success of students from diverse backgrounds.
• facilitate an inclusive research culture and extend our research base (including enterprise, innovation, and impact) through internationally renowned research centres.
• embed research inspired education at the heart of our curriculum.
• co-create pioneering approaches to pedagogy and digital infrastructure with our students, trainees and apprentices.
• recruit, develop and retain high quality staff, reflecting the region we serve.
• develop sector leading approaches for pedagogic evaluation to raise the standards of evidence for what works.

Risks to Equality of Opportunity

In the context of higher education, there are several risks that can hinder equality of opportunity and limit access and participation for certain student groups. It is crucial for our School to identify and address these risks as part of our Access and Participation Plans to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to succeed in their academic endeavours. The following are some of the key risks to equality of opportunity that our School could face:

1. Socio-Economic Background: Students from low-income households may face financial barriers that prevent them from accessing higher education. These students may struggle to afford tuition fees, accommodation costs, textbooks, and other expenses associated with School life. As a result, they may be at a disadvantage in terms of accessing higher education and achieving academic success.

2. Ethnicity and Race: Ethnic minority students, particularly those from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, may face discrimination, stereotyping, and systemic barriers in higher education. These students may experience lower levels of attainment,

higher dropout rates, and limited access to opportunities for academic and career progression compared to their white counterparts.

3. Disability and Mental Health: Students with disabilities and mental health conditions may encounter physical, sensory, cognitive, or psychological barriers that impact their ability to fully participate in School life. These students may require additional support, accommodations, and resources to ensure equal access to education and a positive learning environment.

4. Gender and Sexual Orientation: Gender disparities and discrimination based on sexual orientation can impact access and participation in higher education. Women, transgender individuals, and LGBTQ+ students may face challenges related to gender stereotypes, harassment, and exclusion, affecting their educational experiences and opportunities for academic success.

5. Geographical Location: Students from rural or remote areas may have limited access to higher education institutions, resources, and support services. They may face challenges related to transportation, connectivity, and social isolation, which can impact their ability to engage in School life and access the opportunities available to urban students.

By recognizing and addressing these risks to equality of opportunity, universities can develop targeted interventions and support mechanisms to promote inclusive practices, address disparities, and create a more equitable learning environment for all students. Through their Access and Participation Plans, universities can enhance access, retention, and success rates for underrepresented and disadvantaged student groups, fostering diversity, equity, and social mobility in higher education.

Widening access to higher education remains key to supporting the life chances of young people in our region. The Equality of Opportunities Risk Register (EORR)1 was developed by the Office for Students (OfS) to support and focus higher education providers' understanding of the key risks of equality of opportunity faced by students. Through our assessment of performance, we have identified four areas of risk from the EORR that may impact equality of opportunity to access higher education for students. They are:
Risk 1. Knowledge and skills. Students may not have equal opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills required to be accepted onto higher education courses that match their expectations and ambitions.

Risk 2. Information and guidance. Students may not have equal opportunity to receive the information and guidance that will enable them to develop ambition and expectations or to make informed choices about their higher education options.

Risk 3. Perception of higher education. Students may not feel able to apply to higher education, or certain types of providers within higher education, despite being qualified.

Risk 4. Application success rates. Students may not be accepted to a higher education

course or may not be accepted to certain types of providers within higher education, despite being qualified.

Risk 5. Students may not have equal opportunity to access a sufficiently wide range of higher education.

Risk 6. Insufficient academic support. Students may not receive sufficient personalised academic support to achieve a positive outcome.

Risk 7. Insufficient personal support. Students may not receive sufficient personalised non-academic support or have sufficient access to extracurricular activities to achieve a positive outcome.

Risk 8. Mental Health. Students may not experience an environment that is conducive to good mental health and wellbeing.

Risk 10. Rising cost pressures. Increases in cost pressures may affect a student's ability to complete their course or obtain a good grade.

Risk 11. Capacity issues. Students may not have equal opportunity to access limited resources related to higher education, such as suitable accommodation.

Risk 12. Progression from HE. Students may not have equal opportunity to progress to an outcome they consider to be a positive reflection of their higher education experience.

Intervention Strategies:

1. Outreach Programs: The School of Coding AEP can implement outreach programs targeting secondary schools, community colleges, and underrepresented communities to raise awareness about coding and AI opportunities in higher education. These programs can include coding workshops, AI demos, and information sessions to inspire students to pursue studies in these fields.

2. Mentoring and Tutoring: The school can establish mentoring and tutoring programs to provide academic support and guidance to students, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds. Mentors and tutors can offer assistance with coursework, exam preparation, career planning, and personal development to help students succeed in their studies.

3. Inclusive Curriculum Design: The school can review and update its curriculum to ensure that it is inclusive, diverse, and accessible to students with different learning styles, abilities, and backgrounds. The curriculum can incorporate real-world applications of coding and AI,

collaborative projects, experiential learning opportunities, and interdisciplinary perspectives to engage all students in their studies.

4. Disability Support Services: The school can enhance its disability support services to accommodate students with disabilities and ensure equal access to coding and AI education. This may include providing assistive technologies, alternative assessment methods, flexible learning arrangements, and disability awareness training for staff and students.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Increased Diversity: By implementing outreach programs and financial support initiatives, The School of Coding & AI can expect to see an increase in the diversity of its student population, with a greater representation of underrepresented groups, such as women, ethnic minorities, students with disabilities, and students from low-income backgrounds.

2. Improved Retention Rates: Through mentoring, tutoring, and academic support services, the school can expect to see improvements in student retention rates, with a higher percentage of students successfully completing their coding and AI programs and progressing to the next stage of their education or entering the workforce.
3. Enhanced Academic Performance: By offering inclusive curriculum design and disability support services, the school can expect to see improvements in student outcomes, with higher levels of academic performance, engagement, and satisfaction among all students, regardless of their background or circumstances.

4. Empowered Graduates: Through targeted interventions and support mechanisms, The School of Coding & AI can empower its graduates to pursue successful careers in the tech industry, contribute to innovation and social impact, and become advocates for diversity, equity, and inclusion in the coding and AI fields.

Overall, by implementing these intervention strategies and monitoring their impact on access and participation, The School of Coding & AI can create a more inclusive, equitable, and supportive learning environment for all students, enabling them to thrive and excel in their coding and AI studies.

What we are aiming to achieve

We want all our students to achieve their full potential. We strive to create opportunity, deliver social mobility and transform lives. We have been successful in creating opportunities for students to join the School and we are working to ensure that the right academic and personal support is in place to help students complete their studies and to achieve good outcomes irrespective of their background. We have identified the following risks to equality of opportunity:

• Students from more deprived neighbourhoods in the local region might think that they do not have the relevant knowledge and skills to enter and achieve higher education. This may have a particular impact on competitive vocational programmes such as Nursing.

• Students who enter higher education with BTEC qualifications may not have the same knowledge and skills as students who enter with A-Level qualifications and may therefore not achieve the same level of outcome if there is insufficient academic support to provide the necessary up-skilling.

• Global Majority students and students from more deprived neighbourhoods may have had fewer opportunities to acquire and develop the knowledge, skills, information and guidance required to succeed in higher education, and may therefore not achieve the same level of outcome as other students if there is insufficient academic and personal support available. This may also have a direct impact on the mental health and wellbeing of these students.

• Students from more deprived neighbourhoods may not achieve the same level of outcome as other students as a result of cost pressures, which may result in students' having to undertake additional paid work and which may also have an impact on students' mental health and wellbeing.

• Mature students may have had fewer opportunities to acquire and develop the knowledge, skills, information and guidance required to succeed in higher education and may therefore be at risk of not continuing or completing their higher education studies if there is insufficient academic and personal support available.

• Mature students may not be able to continue and complete their higher education studies as a result of cost pressures, which may result in students' having to undertake additional paid work and which may also have an impact on the mental health and wellbeing of these students.

• Global Majority students may have had fewer opportunities to acquire and develop the

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knowledge, skills, information and guidance required to succeed in higher education, which may result in lower progression rates compared with white students if there is insufficient academic and personal support available in higher education to allow them to succeed to their full potential.

• Students entering with a BTEC qualifications may not have the same knowledge and skills as students who enter with A-Level qualifications and may therefore not achieve the same level of progression if there is insufficient academic support to provide the necessary upskilling to allow them to succeed to their full potential. We aim to:

• Maintain strong access rates for learners from more deprived backgrounds through a targeted programme of attainment raising activity.

• Increase interview success rates for nursing applicants from more deprived backgrounds.

• Eliminate the awarding gap between the following groups of students by 2029/30: students entering higher education with BTEC qualifications and students entering with A-Levels; Global Majority and white students; students from more deprived neighbourhoods and those from the least deprived neighbourhoods.

• Improve the completion rates of students entering higher education with BTEC qualifications and the completion rates of mature students to a minimum of 80% by 2028.

• Improve the progression rates for Global Majority students and students entering the School with BTEC qualifications to a minimum of 75% by 2028.