

Provider's name: Richmond, The American International University in London

Provider's UKPRN:10005470

## Access and Participation Statement 2019-20

### Introduction

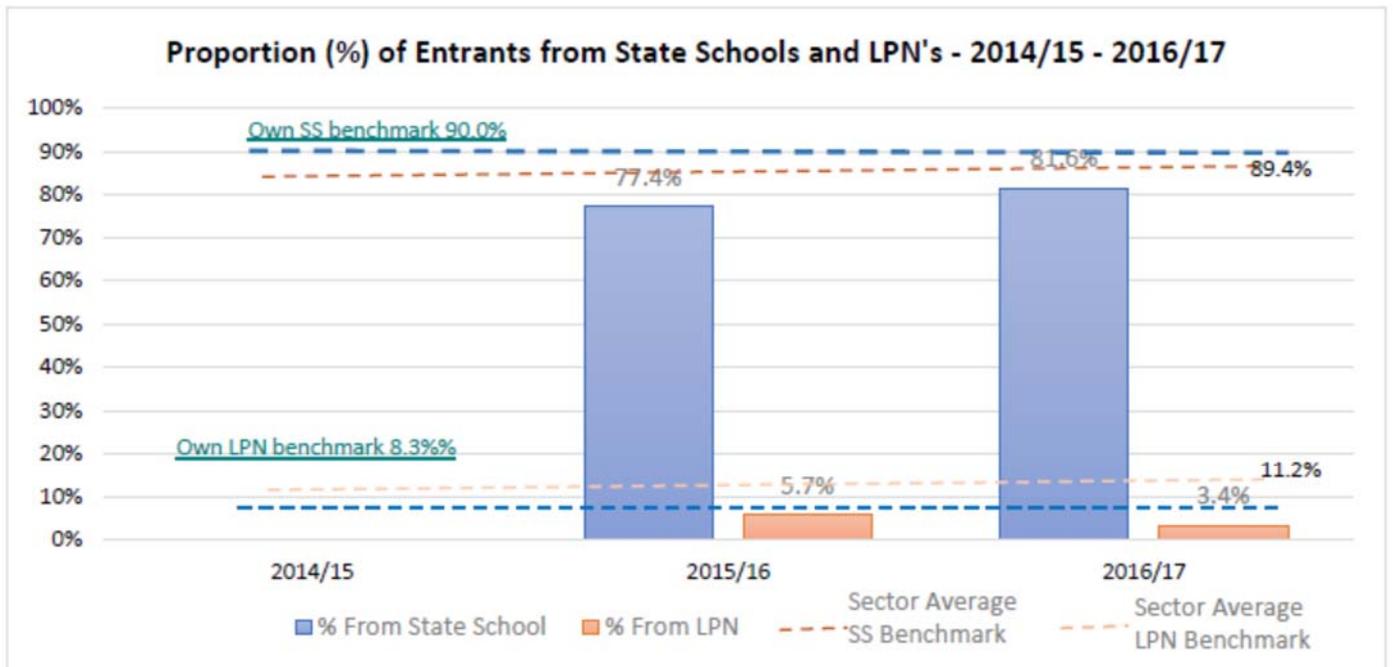
Richmond, the American University in London (RAIUL), has a continuing commitment to improve access for students from all backgrounds. We aim to support all students through their education to ensure a positive learning experience, and provide opportunities to support our students' progress into a fulfilling career. Uniquely in the UK, the university is based on a U.S. model of learning and provision of a liberal arts degree' has a number of advantages to supporting students who face disadvantages in accessing higher education, succeeding and progressing, namely:

- 4 year programme with a QCF level 3 entry. This 'freshman' year is designed to build confidence along with analytical and critical thinking skills, and enables students to explore and identify their key strengths before embarking on their specialisation (major).
- Our Student Affairs department is based on the US model of student support and its strength has been noted by the QAA and our US accreditor, the Middle States Commission for Higher Education (MSCHE).
- Our Student Government supports fellow students and is active in supporting decision making within the university
- We are an international university where students enjoy the benefits of a diverse mix of nationalities, and where no single nationality comprises more than 40% of our student body
- our liberal arts framework offers significant flexibility allowing students up to two years of study before a final decision is made on their degree major

The University has not been required to create an infrastructure to provide activities to support access or to collate data to support the monitoring from backgrounds previously associated with the Office for Fair Access. In addition our US framework, which promotes multiple points of entry, student mobility, and choice following admission at times presents sometimes profound compatibility and comparability problems with HESA data sets based on predominantly fixed cohort progression on single honours degrees. The university recognises that it needs to work towards putting in resources to support the collation of data related access in line with practice at other UK providers, while not damaging our institutional mission.

### Access

The University has been successful in increasing its recruitment from state schools by 4.2% between 2015/16 to 2016/17 but remains 8.4% below the HESA benchmark of 90%. While the number of state school students has increased, students from 'Low Participation Neighbourhoods' (Polar 3) have declined by 2.4% to 3.4% over the same period, and this is below the HESA benchmark of 8.6%. The trend is similar when considering institutional data (which is limited), looking at polar 4 data shows a negative trend over the past 2 years from 12.9% in 2014/15 which above HESA benchmark to 6.2% in 2016/7, and again below the HESA benchmark.



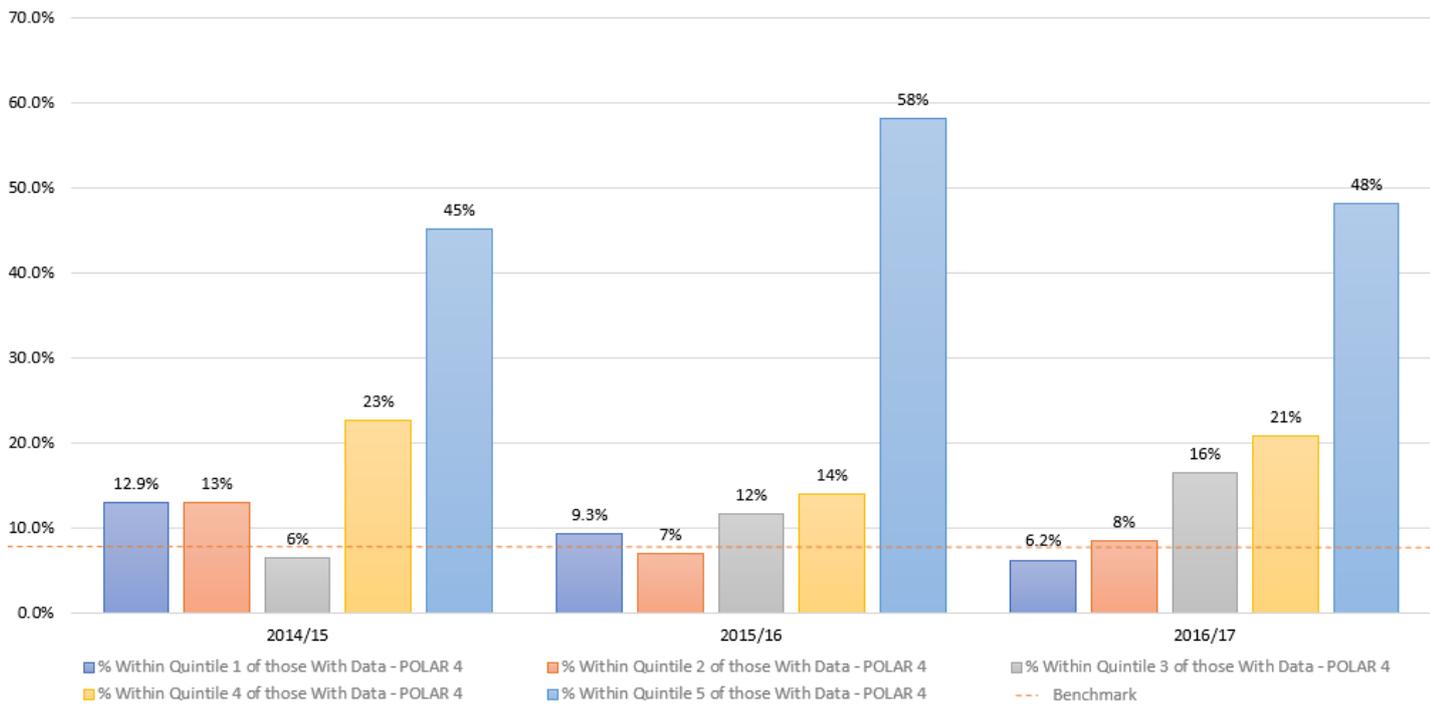
Looking at the Index of Multiple Deprivation – Richmond continues to attract students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and we note a steady upward trend in our student population over the past three years.

The University performs extremely well in attracting BME students, with nearly half of our domestic student population (with known data) being of BME background. This reflects national increases in the number of UK-domiciled BME students starting first degrees, which has increased by 34 per cent between 2010-11 and 2015-16.

Whilst our proportion of students with a disability claiming DSA is low, at 2.4% (2016-17), and under-performing against our HESA benchmark of 6.8% we have a significant number of additional students registering a disability without claiming the DSA allowance. In this category, we perform above the HESA DSA benchmark, with 14% of our students declaring a disability in 2016-17. In this year, only one quarter of disabled students at Richmond University claimed DSA. With our significant student number growth from 2015-16 to 2016-17, we are also note a near doubling of the proportion of disabled students at Richmond University (8% to 14%, respectively). Although the proportion (%) of mature students has decreased between 2015-16 and 2016-17 from 28.6% to 10.3%, overall mature student numbers have more than doubled, from 14 to 30 students.

Success

Proportion of entrants by Quintile - 2014/15 - 2016/17



Performance in the retention of students from target backgrounds is a concern. We have wide disparities between the completion rates of the general student population and target cohorts. In particular, we are reflective of national data which highlights the significant gaps in retention and attainment for BME students. With a 52% non-continuation rate in 2016-17 at Richmond University, we are committed to furthering our understanding of need and progressing quickly towards parity. This is the same for students from low socio-economic backgrounds, at 31% non-continuation. Notably and very pleasing to us, retention of students from POLAR 4 Quintile 1 and 2 backgrounds, and students in receipt of DSA, out-perform general cohort, at non-continuation rates of 10% and 7%, respectively.

### Progression

There is insufficient data to make any meaningful or reliable conclusions in this area.

### Ambitions and Strategy

Richmond is committed to providing higher education to all who have the potential to benefit from academically challenging study. The University has traditionally aimed to take a leading role in increasing awareness among young and mature learners of the importance of higher education and of the values and benefits of a liberal arts higher education in particular.

As a small university and alternative provider with restricted fee-income for UK students Richmond has been unable to commit the level of resources of larger public higher education institutions operating in the local area. The university will continue to improve access, progression and succession of disadvantaged groups based on its unique educational offer and strengths. Utilising its strengths and limited resources:

- As part the University’s liberal arts programme structure, the University requires transitional course units to build confidence, and develop presentation and academic skills. These study units enable our students to acknowledge that entering higher education and becoming accustomed to university is a very significant milestone. These units are mandatory for all

students in the first year and run alongside other academic provision in order to support students. The university is considering the introduction of a programme of work with local school and colleges in 'low participation neighbourhoods' with an emphasis on the benefits of this liberal arts approach and alternative opportunity

- Reduce the access barriers to the university and improve retention through adaptation of the programme offer, and utilising merit based scholarships to reduce the potential debt burden
- Working with the Student Government explore that challenges faced by BME students at the university and seek to address them with earlier intervention
- The university will ensure that measures and mechanisms are in place to ensure eligible students are claiming DSA, as well as making committed efforts to continuing our upward trend in the proportion of disabled students we enrol
- Explore the benefits of liberal arts programme as perceived by mature students, and utilise this to create an outreach package and investigate options to reach this group with the resources available
- Improve data collection, monitoring and research capabilities to inform future access and participation strategies
- Engage with HESA to discuss ways of enabling Richmond's unique offer and data profile to be better reflected in standard HESA returns and outputs

The university continues to consult and develop its services to students by working very closely with the student government. Students are represented on all the key university boards and committees, including membership of the University Board and the Academic Board and attendance at Board of Trustees meetings.

### **Activities to support students**

The University is proud of the extensive personalised support it provides to students.

- The University supports its widening participation mission with a complement of three student recruitment specialists who work with institutions in the UK, Europe and internationally.
- The university offers scholarships based on merit that provide fee reductions, and are based on the U.S. approach that the scholarship is awarded across all years of study with a view to reduce student debt.
- Our Recruitment and Marketing Team carry out a range of activities throughout the year to reach the widest constituency of applicants visiting schools, striking a balance of our reach to areas with higher, medium and low participation higher education rates.
- The University's programmes are designed to benefit students of ability, irrespective of age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief, or sexual orientation. Selection for entry is therefore based on consideration of academic ability, motivation for study, interest in the subject area and the potential both to benefit from the experience and to contribute to University life whilst studying for a degree.
- We offer an extensive progression opportunities through transfer credit evaluation and the recognition of wide range of academic, vocational qualifications and experiential learning, in order to offer greater access to student with non-traditional educational backgrounds
- The university facilitates a professional personal counselling service
- There is a wraparound careers advice through the degree, linked to both civic engagement and personal development and the opportunity to take for-credit internships on all our degree programmes
- The university operates an extensive and effective peer mentoring and peer tutoring arrangement for undergraduate students
- There are open access workshops for all students on a range of issues including study skills, mental health issues, and intercultural communication

- Registry Services operates a “below-C” warning system to enable us to identify students who are at risk of academic failure in a course (module) at mid-semester. Students are contacted and provided with support by their academic advisor, and Student Affairs are contacted should social, personal or financial issues be identified.
- Our systems identify students whose Grade Point Average falls below 2.0 for two consecutive semesters. These students are placed on academic probation which requires a lower course load and close attention and support from the academic advisor. Student Affairs are contacted should social, personal or financial issues be identified.
- First year students are provided a dedicated professional academic advisor to assist them with all academic matters; this position liaise with Student Affairs when personal, social and/or financial issues are identified. From year 2 students work with an academic advisor who is a full time member of academic staff.

As a small institution, the University is able to provide continual and personalised academic guidance counselling to all students for the duration of study. All students are guided through each semester and provided with assistance to ensure that their programme of study is sustainable and identify any on-going concerns that may prevent students from completing their studies successfully. As part of the University’s liberal arts programme structure, the University requires transitional course units to build confidence, and develop presentation and academic skills. These study units enable our students to acknowledge that entering higher education and becoming accustomed to university is a very significant milestone for students from all backgrounds. These units are mandatory for all students in the first year and run alongside other academic provision in order to support students.

- Richmond offers individualised support for students with disabilities and special educational needs including open access workshops, peer to peer tutoring, one-to-one tutorials during faculty office hours and targeted allowances during exams and in other forms of assessment.
- Students’ needs are assessed at the time they make their application to Richmond and support is negotiated through the acceptance stage and upon arrival.
- Students who are offered academic allowances for special educational needs are also monitored every term for academic progress to ensure they are getting appropriate support to help them make progress through their courses. Adjustments are made if support is found to be inappropriate or further allowances are required.
- All first year students take part in a year-long QCF Level 3 transitions course which aims to integrate them into University life. The courses connect students with peer mentors and offer resources to enable students to begin their journey as independent learners.
- Students create personal development plans (PDP) and are involved in civic engagement initiatives in order to build their understanding of responsibility and good citizenship inspired by the University’s liberal arts curriculum.
- The University’s employability plans stretch from civic engagement and personal development in the first year to student leadership in the second year, internships in the third year and research-related projects in the final year.

The university will be looking to implement the following to improve access, success, and progression:

- Pilot a programme of work with local school and colleges in ‘low participation neighbourhoods’ with an emphasis on the benefits of this liberal arts approach and alternative opportunity
- Offer a new scholarship that reduces student debt, and helps remove the fear of debt which is prevalent in low participation neighbourhoods and amongst mature learners

- Introduce a 3-year degree format in addition to the 4-year programme to appeal more to UK students and to improve retention by reducing costs,
- Working with the Student Government to explore that challenges faced by BME students at the university and seek to address them with a programme of early intervention
- Review how we communicate and identify students that may be eligible for DSA funding, and improve measures and mechanisms and put in place to ensure eligible students are claiming DSA, as well as making committed efforts to continuing our upward trend in the proportion of disabled students we enrol
- Explore the benefits of liberal arts programme as perceived by mature students, and utilise this to create an outreach package and investigate options to reach this group with the resources available
- Employ an insight/research specialist to improve data collection, monitoring and research capabilities to inform future access and participation strategies

This is part of the university's continuing commitment to increase access into higher education and support our students to achieve their potential, and progress into a career or vocation that they desire.