



2023 IMPACT REPORT

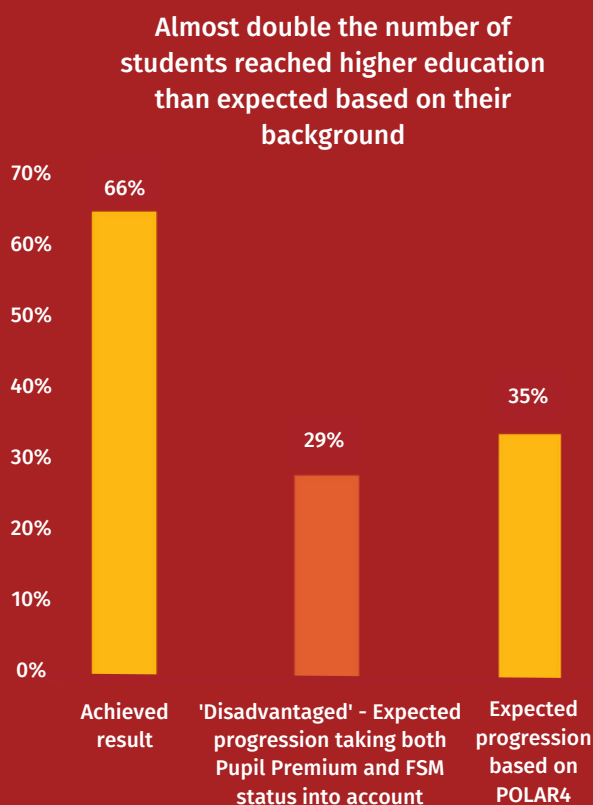


Impact Summary

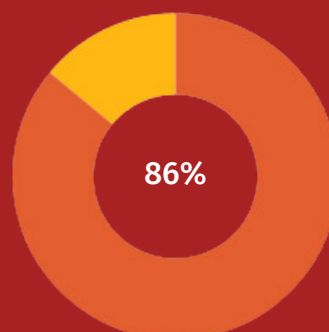
OVER THE LAST SIX YEARS WE HAVE WORKED WITH



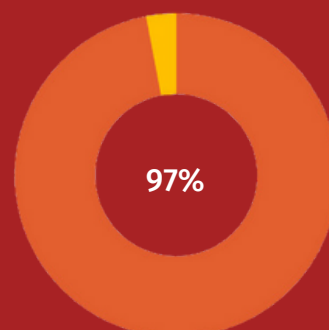
INCREASED SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS TO
UNIVERSITY COMPARED TO A TAILORED
BENCHMARK



We have contributed to improved GCSE attainment and understanding university.



University benefitted student attainment at GCSE



Participants agreed that the course gave them a better understanding of university

Significantly high applications

to Oxbridge and the

Russell Group universities

Foreword

As the Covid-19 crisis gave way to a cost of living crisis the challenges for many young people only increased. These challenges are to the ongoing detriment of their education and their futures. Another year of positive impact from the Universify programme for these same young people provides an opportunity for optimism.

It is encouraging that teachers continue to agree that Universify's programme benefits student GCSE attainment following the return to exams for the first time since the pandemic. The progress of Universify students to universities at a rate twice as high as students from similar backgrounds gives me confidence that our continued impact on GCSE attainment will contribute to more long-term success for future cohorts of students.

It is not just university access and GCSE attainment where we can see the impacts of Universify's work. Observing the first in-person summer residentials since the pandemic, I saw new, supportive friendships forged among young people who grew in independence and developed skills – like teamwork, communication, and leadership – that will be invaluable for future success.

In these challenging times the need for programmes like Universify is only growing. As the impact of the cost of living crisis makes hosting our programme challenging for some partners, we will explore hybrid in-person and online programmes that allow us to continue to grow our work. I am therefore also excited by Universify's plans for partnerships with new universities, other social mobility organisations, and businesses to meet that need so that we can not only expand our programme but maximise our long-term impact.

Finally, I am immensely grateful to the Universify team, volunteers, tutors, our university college host partners, and our lead teachers at partner schools who all make our programme possible. So, while we may be faced with another crisis, this year's impact and plans fill me with optimism to see the successes of future Universify students in the coming year.

Mary Nicholson, Chair of Trustees

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Executive Summary

INCREASING ACCESS TO TOP UNIVERSITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE FROM DISADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS

CREATING A FAIRER SOCIETY THROUGH EDUCATIONAL EQUALITY

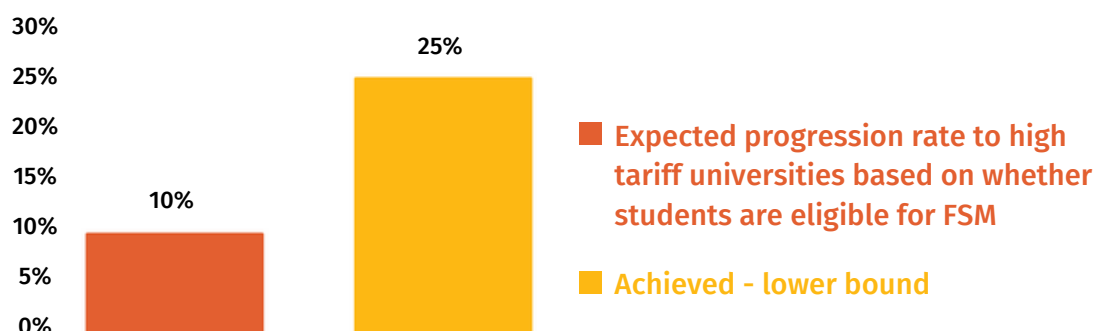
Universify Education is a charity which aims to reduce educational inequality. We support young people from backgrounds who are less likely to apply or consider applying to university – a decision which could drastically affect their future income, career and opportunities. Universify aims to equip young people with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to make successful applications to university, regardless of their background. In doing so, we aim to help these individuals break away from systemic cycles of poverty and inequality, which attaining highly academically and going to university can achieve.

Universify students progress to university at more than double the expected rate.

By aged 19, students who had participated in our programme:

- Were significantly more likely to apply to Oxbridge and to Russell Group universities according to UCAS.
- Progressed to high-tariff university at twice the rate of other students from similar backgrounds. [1]

Progression to High Tarriff HE by FSM status

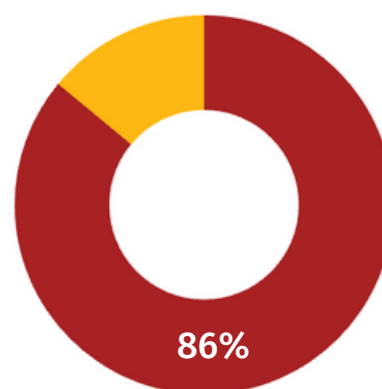


UNDERSTANDING OUR IMPACT

With a return to in-person delivery this year, we have focused on the direct impact of the programme on our students, considering how we contribute to increased aspirations and attainment as well as helping students to make an informed decision about whether to go to university:

- 85% of teachers agreed that their students were more likely to apply to university because of participating in the programme.
- 86% of teachers agree that taking part in Universify benefitted their students' attainment.

Universify benefitted student attainment at GCSE



[1] High-tariff universities are the top third of universities ranked according to their entry tariff points score by UCAS. They represent the universities which are most selective.

THE VALUE OF IN-PERSON AND ONLINE PROGRAMMES

In 2020 and 2021, our programmes enabled students to develop academic passions and make a better decision about whether to go to university despite being delivered online. [2] But a fundamental element of our programme has returned since delivering in person again: this summer, almost half of participants mentioned meeting new people or making friends as the best part of the course.

“The experience significantly helped my confidence, academically by showing me that I had the potential to get into a top university but also socially by building a network of peers who also had high ambitions which I stay in touch with and who continue to inspire me.”

**Katende, Cohort 6 student
(2022 Spring residential)**

As Katende says, these networks of students, who share similar goals, ultimately continue to help each other succeed beyond the end of the programme.

A YEAR TO DEVELOP NEW WAYS OF CREATING IMPACT

In 2023 we aim to meet the growing need and demand for our work by developing ways to maximise our impact. Firstly, we want to expand the reach of our year-long programme by partnering with more universities to help them to fulfil the Office for Students' new priority that universities must work with schools and organisations to increase attainment at GCSE. [3]

Secondly, we want to pilot a hybrid programme - combining the impact of our online and in-person programmes - so that we can support more young people alongside our flagship year-long programme. This hybrid programme will enhance our existing work by providing additional places where capacity is limited on our residentials.

Finally, we want to maximise our long-term impact by creating a pipeline to Year 12 programmes, partnering with businesses to provide employability and educational opportunities, and develop additional long-term support for participants after the year-long programme.



[2] 2020 Impact report, 2021 Impact report - <https://www.universifyeducation.com/report>

[3] Office for Students, 'Our approach to access and participation' <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/our-approach-to-access-and-participation/>. Article accessed 24th January 2023.

Who Are We?

WE BELIEVE IN EDUCATIONAL EQUALITY AND A SOCIETY WHERE EVERYONE HAS THE CHANCE TO FULFIL THEIR POTENTIAL, REGARDLESS OF THEIR BACKGROUND

WHY DO WE EXIST?

A young person's background often determines their educational outcomes, rather than their potential. Students from certain geographical, ethnic and economic backgrounds are less likely to apply successfully to highly-selective universities and high-demand courses. [4] These young people, therefore, miss out on the benefits university has to offer for professional and personal development, and the increased employment opportunities associated with it. [5]

The young people we work with face key barriers to higher education such as low aspirations, a limited understanding of higher education, lack of support and reliable information, and feeling out of place in the university environment. Low aspirations, confidence and motivation can impact students' attainment, meaning that they are less likely to achieve the high GCSE grades required to reach highly-selective universities and other future opportunities, and are at risk of falling short of their potential.

Underrepresentation in the country's top academic institutions limits social mobility and is to the detriment of everyone, as graduates disproportionately take up decision-making roles in society. Without graduates who are truly representative of our society, existing social inequalities are perpetuated.

Universify aims to empower young people to overcome these barriers through our annual programme.



[4] The Sutton Trust, 'Access to Advantage', 2018. <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/access-to-advantage-university-admissions/>. Article accessed 3rd February 2023.

[5] The Sutton Trust, 'Elitist Britain', 2019. <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/elitist-britain-2019/> Article accessed 3rd February 2023.

What We Do

OUR INTENSIVE, TRANSFORMATIVE YEAR-LONG PROGRAMME

OUR PROGRAMME CONSISTS OF THREE ELEMENTS

We run a year-long programme to improve access to university by increasing students' aspirations, GCSE attainment and knowledge of higher education, helping them to challenge any belief they might have that university isn't for 'people like me'.

Our intensive, year-long programme is for students from non-selective state schools starting in the summer of Year 10 until the end of Year 11.

The programme has three main aspects:

- A week-long summer residential at a highly-selective university.
- Monthly 1-to-1 coaching with trained volunteers.
- A three-day GCSE revision weekend in the spring of Year 11.

WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT

Universify works with students at this early stage, before they sit their GCSEs, to enable them to make more informed decisions about their futures and improve their chances of success if they apply to university. For many highly-selective universities and courses, higher grades at GCSE make applications more competitive. [6] Higher GCSE grades also open up additional pathways to other post-16 opportunities, affecting access to existing Year 12 outreach programmes, sixth form colleges, and certain careers. By intervening sooner to help raise aspirations and attainment, we provide more young people with the chance to fulfil their potential through education. Our programme combines the experience of university with individual ongoing support through coaching.

SUMMER PROGRAMME

The summer programme introduces participants to university through

- Academic taster sessions
- University Q&As
- Group project to design a dream university
- Confidence building and team games

MONTHLY COACHING SESSIONS

Monthly coaching sessions bridge the gap between our summer and spring residentials. Participants develop the goal-setting and problem-solving skills they need to pursue their chosen path.

SPRING PROGRAMME

Participants return in spring for

- GCSE revision classes
- Additional academic taster sessions
- Careers fair and post-16 programmes
- Self-reflection and group activities

[6] 'GCSE results do also help the admissions team whittle down applications to really competitive courses. If, for example, they need to choose between two applications, where predicted grades, personal statement and references are equally good, then the application with the slightly better GCSEs is more likely to receive an offer.' University College London, 'How important are your GCSEs when applying to UCL?' <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/culture-online/ask-expert/your-questions-answered/how-important-are-your-gcse-when-applying-ucl>. Article accessed 9th February 2023.

The residential trips to top UK universities provide participants with increased knowledge of university life and the admissions process, and the feeling of being 'at home' at university. They also allow participants to explore subjects beyond their GCSE syllabus, while improving their GCSE attainment and critical thinking skills. One-to-one coaching provides students with personalised ongoing support to sustain aspirations and develops the autonomy and self-esteem needed for young people to achieve their goals. Together, these elements equip participants with the skills, knowledge and belief to make and implement more informed decisions about their future, including overcoming the barriers to accessing higher education.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE FOR US

Success for Universify is achieved when a participant gains the knowledge and confidence to make an informed decision about their future as a result of experiencing the programme, as well as the qualifications and skills needed to pursue their aspirations.



HEAR FROM ONE OF OUR VOLUNTEERS



I find volunteering with Universify to be one of the most rewarding experiences I've undertaken – that is why I've volunteered for 3 years in a row!

Being able to assist the students in building their confidence and knowledge around university is one of the main reasons I enjoy it so much. Students tend to arrive with us nervous about attending University in the future and often believing that University is not for them. When they leave, they know that they are absolutely the type of students that would flourish in higher education. By giving the students a safe space to explore their future, we get to see them start to believe in themselves and their peers, building friendships and connections that will last a lifetime and that is a wonder to witness.

As a volunteer, I have gained a multitude of skills that have carried over into my student and professional life. I now work in widening access at a Scottish University because I fell in love with showing young people that they can achieve their dreams. It gave me the relevant experience and skills to secure a job I love before finishing my master's degree.

Niamh, Course Director



Who We Support

WE WORK WITH STUDENTS WHO ARE UNDERREPRESENTED AT HIGHLY-SELECTIVE UNIVERSITIES

COHORT 6 AND 7

In 2022, the 182 participants from Cohort 6 rejoined us for their spring residential. In August 2022 we also welcomed our seventh cohort of 165 participants at the summer residential.

PRE-GCSE AGE

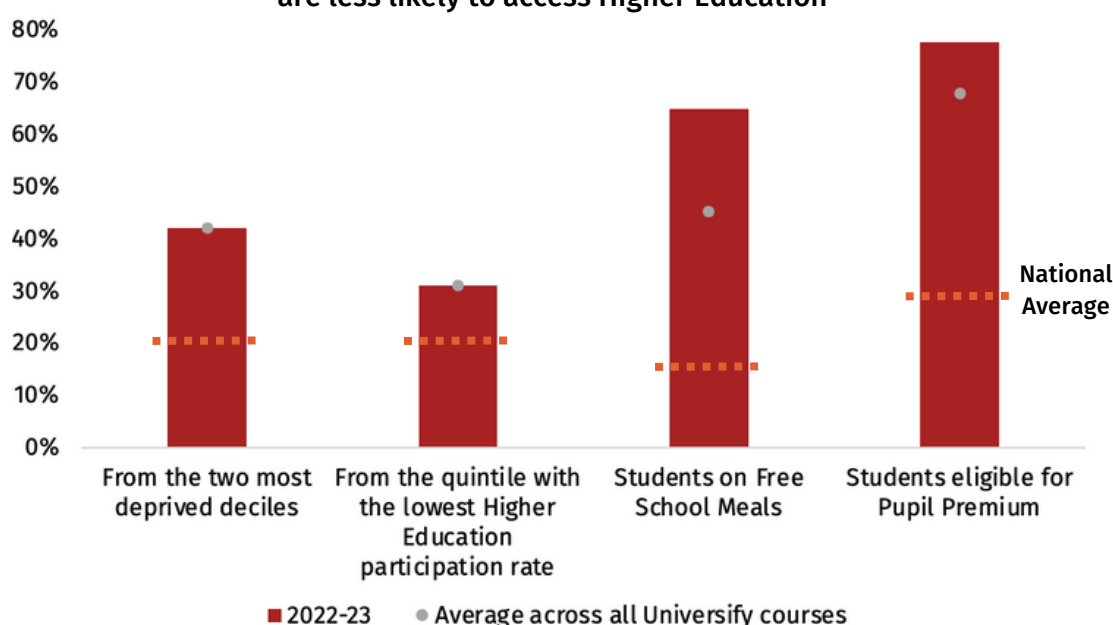
Our participants begin the programme aged 14-15 in the summer before Year 11, which is earlier than most university outreach programmes. This allows us to help young people at risk of underachieving at GCSE which would limit access to university, careers and other programmes.

FROM UNDERREPRESENTED BACKGROUNDS

We work with participants whose backgrounds are underrepresented at highly-selective universities to address the systemic inequalities these students face.

We select participants from low socioeconomic backgrounds, using Free School Meals as a proxy to identify low family income. [7] Students receiving Free School Meals (FSM) are half as likely to progress to university than students not receiving FSM, a gap which has remained significantly large in the past decade. [8] In Cohort 7, 65% of our participants were eligible for FSM and 78% received Pupil Premium. [9]

The backgrounds of our participants show they are less likely to access Higher Education



[7] FSM is a means-tested benefit that can indicate a student comes from a low-income family.

[8] UCAS End of Cycle data 2022 <https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-sector-level-end-cycle-data-resources-2022>. Article accessed December 2022.

[9] Pupil Premium includes young people who are or have been eligible for FSM in the past 6 years, care-experienced young people and young people who are looked after by the local authority. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium>.

Additionally, we prioritise applicants who would be the first generation in their family to attend university. Evidence shows that young people's aspirations, knowledge of the system and how to apply to university can be limited when they have no family members who have been to university. [10] Over 80% of Cohort 7 would be the first in their family to go to university.

HOLISTIC APPROACH

As well as considering applicants' socioeconomic background, we also consider more holistic assessments of disadvantage which could impact an individual's likelihood of fulfilling their potential and reaching university.

Teachers are asked to outline other challenges applicants may face, including being a young carer or care-experienced (Looked After Children) and other personal circumstances.

Many of our participants also face geographical barriers to accessing opportunities in education. [11] Over half of Cohort 7 (55%) came from areas with postcodes in the three most deprived deciles, according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). When considering geographical participation in higher education, 31% of participants came from areas with the lowest participation rates in higher education (POLAR).



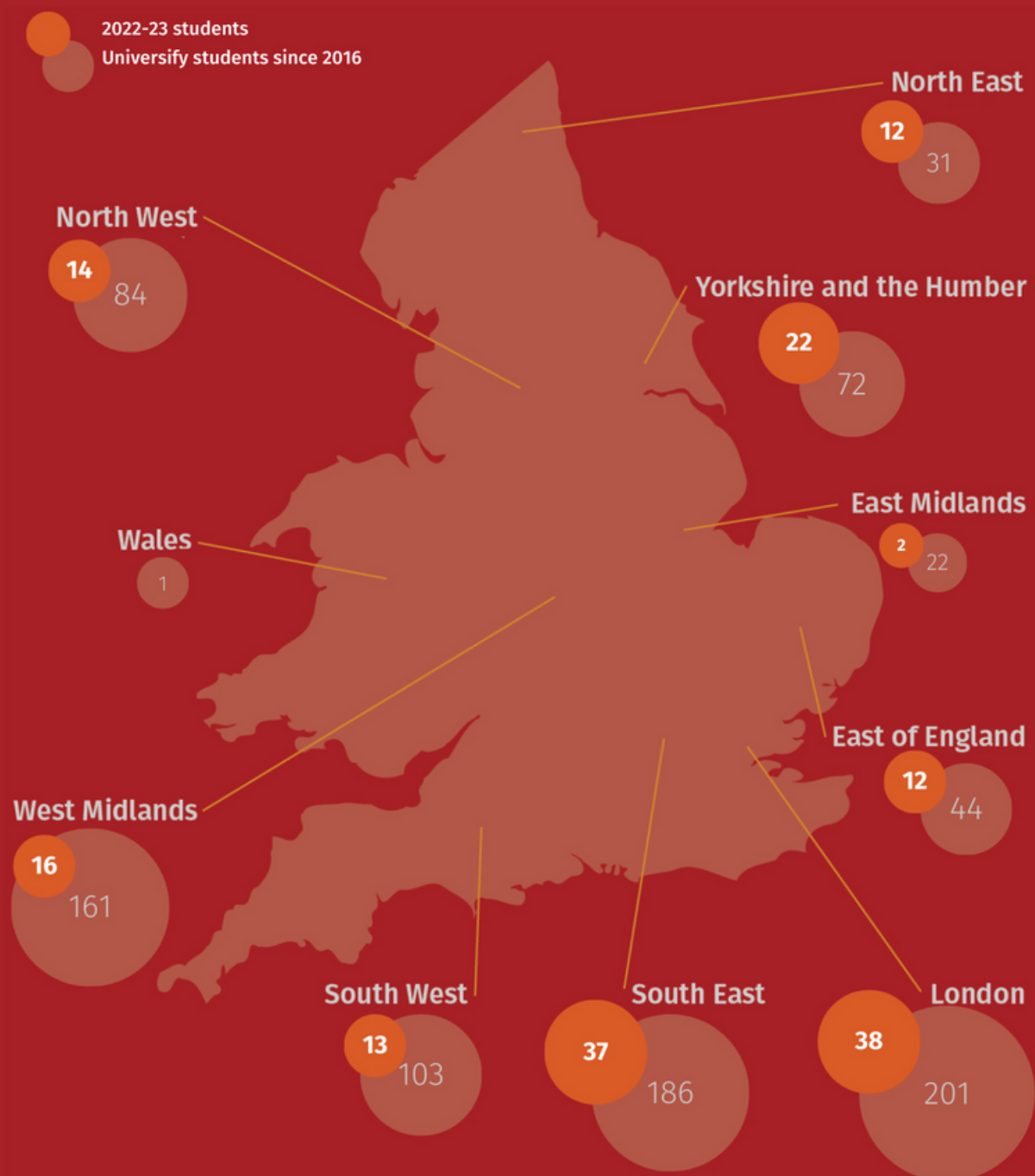
Over 80% of Cohort 7 would be the first in their family to go to university.

Over 55% of Cohort 7 came from areas with postcodes in the three most deprived deciles.

[10] CFE Research for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Understanding progression into higher education for disadvantaged and under-represented groups, p13 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/474269/BIS-15-462-understanding-progression-into-higher-education-final.pdf Article accessed 3rd February 2023.

[11] Young people on FSM from the highest participation neighbourhoods are over twice as likely to enter higher education than those from the lowest participation neighbourhoods. <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/blog/tackling-the-geographical-disparities-in-higher-education>.

Our Participants



Initially, schools are selected from the priority areas of our partner colleges in Oxford and Cambridge. For Somerville College these are Hounslow, Buckinghamshire, the West Midlands, and Staffordshire.

For St Hugh's College, it is Kent, Bexley, Bromley, and Greenwich; for Jesus College, they are Lambeth and Wandsworth; and for St Catharine's College, it is North Yorkshire and Suffolk.

Underlying Educational Equality

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT FOR THE IMPACT WE AIM TO CREATE: EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY AND ITS LINK TO LIFE OUTCOMES

As with many interventions, Universify aims to create individual change while operating within a societal system of entrenched inequality. It is important to understand the systemic factors which affect our students and how, by focusing on creating small but important changes at a crucial stage of education, Universify helps individuals break out of negative systemic cycles. These small changes are the measurements we prioritise to evaluate how our programme creates positive individual change, before ultimately reducing the systemic inequalities and underrepresentation at play. This section explains the context for the impact we aim to create.

Social Determinants of Health (SDH) are 'the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes' which impact on our lives. [12] Education is one such Social Determinant of Health. It is well established that the potential impacts education can have on a person's life are linked to improved health, wealth and increased happiness.

The 2022 IFS report, 'The UK education systems preserve inequality,' also suggests it should be a way out of poverty for young people who are from deprived backgrounds. [13]

Recent findings from the 2019 Deaton Review reports that children in the UK from the poorest and most disadvantaged backgrounds have worse outcomes throughout their education and indeed, in England it is reported that this is the case at every stage of their school lives. [14][15]



DIFFERENCES IN GCSE ATTAINMENT FOR THOSE FROM LOW SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS

There is a significant gap in attaining good Maths and English GCSEs for those who are eligible for FSM and those who do not qualify.

[12] World Health Organization, 'Social Determinants of Health', n.d. <<https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health>> [accessed 7 January 2023].

[13] Tahir, I., 'The UK Education System Preserves Inequality', Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2022 <<https://ifs.org.uk/articles/uk-education-system-preserves-inequality-new-report>> [accessed 8 January 2023].

[14] Tahir, I., 'The UK Education System Preserves Inequality', Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2022 <<https://ifs.org.uk/articles/uk-education-system-preserves-inequality-new-report>> [accessed 8 January 2023].

[15] Over recent decades, socio-economic status (SES) has been used as a proxy (way) of assessing educational attainment. One such proxy is free school meals which has subsequently become a proxy used as a mechanism for school funding and as a proxy linked to educational attainment. Tahir, 'The UK Education System Preserves Inequality'.

This additional funding scheme was initiated in 2011, through the Pupil Premium. This meant for every pupil eligible for free school meals the school received additional funding. In 2015-2016 this equated to £1320 for every FSM pupil (primary schools) and for those in England £935 and for Wales, £1050 for those eligible for free school meals in secondary schools. Tahir, I., 'The UK Education System Preserves Inequality', Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2022 <<https://ifs.org.uk/articles/uk-education-system-preserves-inequality-new-report>> [accessed 8 January 2023].

Approximately 40% of students eligible for FSM attain good Maths and English at GCSE versus nearly 70% of all other pupils.

Approximately 35% of students eligible for FSM have two or more A levels at age 19 compared to 60% for all other pupils.

*Snapshot of the GCSE/A Level and FSM attainment Gap (as of 2019, reported in 2022)
Adapted from the UK Education System Preserves Inequity – New Report, 2022*

Other datasets show a large, but less marked, difference at other stages. At aged five, approximately 55% of pupils eligible for FSM reached a good level of development compared to approximately 73% of all other pupils.

BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

There are a number of recognised and well documented barriers to education which in particular affect and negatively impact young people who come from poorer backgrounds. [16] In an educational context social mobility is referred to as, 'providing or facilitating equal opportunities to succeed academically...regardless of their socio-economic background.' [17]

Factors that create these barriers include geographical areas in particular, where social mobility may not be as accelerated.

Understanding the cumulative impacts of poverty, it is important to recognise they can have such an impact on students' 'educational outcomes health and personal well-being.' [18] Within the picture of barriers for this demographic group, affordability and the associated cost of attending university is a significant barrier and concern, and encompasses a number of elements which impact on the equal opportunity to succeed. [19]

The Universify programme aims to address some of these barriers in particular the geographical reach, and social mobility by offering a range of experiences and a positive and safe environment which sets them up to succeed and have newfound aspirations and increased self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is seen as a person's own belief in their ability to attain their own goals.

It is not uncommon for this age group to have the beliefs that they have little to no control over their lives and, for some young people, difficult life events can lead to lower aspirations and potentially result in a reduced commitment to their studies. [20] Work by Durrington Research School gave insight into self-efficacy and how it can be directly related to disadvantaged young people. They note that self-efficacy can change in an instant, between lessons for example, so can be difficult to capture a full picture. What the Universify programme does is offer the experience that will support the building of self-belief and confidence. [21]

[16] Forsyth, A., and Furlong, A., 'Access to Higher Education and Disadvantaged Young People', British Educational Research Journal, 29/2 (2003), 205–25.

[17] Burges Salmon, 'Social Mobility and Education' <<https://www.burges-salmon.com/about-us/community/social-mobility-and-education>> [accessed 12 January 2023].

[18] Tierney, S., 'Developing Confidence, Self-Esteem and Self-Awareness in Disadvantaged Students', Humanutopia, 2019 <<https://www.humanutopia.com/guest-articles/developing-confidence-self-esteem-and-self-awareness-in-disadvantaged-students/>> [accessed 19 January 2023].

[19] Such costs include accommodation and living costs, as well as the cost of tuition fees. McCabe, C, et al., 'Barriers and Facilitators to University Access in Disadvantaged UK Adolescents by Ethnicity: A Qualitative Study', Journal of Further and Higher Education, 46/10 (2022), 1434–46.

[20] Tierney, S., 'Developing Confidence, Self-Esteem and Self-Awareness in Disadvantaged Students', Humanutopia, 2019 <<https://www.humanutopia.com/guest-articles/developing-confidence-self-esteem-and-self-awareness-in-disadvantaged-students/>> [accessed 19 January 2023]. [21] Runeckles, C., 'Educational Disadvantage and Self-Efficacy', Durrington Research School, 2022 <<https://researchschool.org.uk/durrington/news/educational-disadvantage-and-self-efficacy>> [accessed 19 January 2023].

[21] Runeckles, C., 'Educational Disadvantage and Self-Efficacy', Durrington Research School, 2022 <<https://researchschool.org.uk/durrington/news/educational-disadvantage-and-self-efficacy>> [accessed 19 January 2023].

Our Impact

OUR PROGRAMME INCREASES STUDENTS' ASPIRATIONS, GCSE ATTAINMENT AND KNOWLEDGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION, HELPING THEM TO OVERCOME THE POSSIBLE BELIEF THAT UNIVERSITY ISN'T FOR 'PEOPLE LIKE ME'

This report presents the impacts from two Cohorts – 6 and 7 – and focuses on the three main barriers that the Universify programme concentrates on supporting students to overcome:

- **Low educational aspiration**
- **Low educational attainment**
- **Low self-belief, leading to the assumption that university is not a place for 'people like them.'**

By overcoming these three barriers, we aim to put students in a good position to make an informed decision about their future pathway, including whether they apply to university.

For Cohort 6 there were 182 students who took part in the programme and in Cohort 7 there are 165 students. For Cohort 3, who applied to university from 2021 onwards, there were 122 students.

“

Universify is a wonderfully supportive programme, which encourages and coaches students to maximise their abilities. The Universify programme has allowed our students to grow in confidence and experience university life via the residentials. In particular, Maggie has been able to ask her teachers for support and found the residential to be an excellent opportunity and she is looking forward to the Easter residential weekend.

I would recommend Universify as a supportive and sustained programme for GCSE students who may not consider higher education.

**Jordanna Riches, Lead Teacher,
The Bicester School**

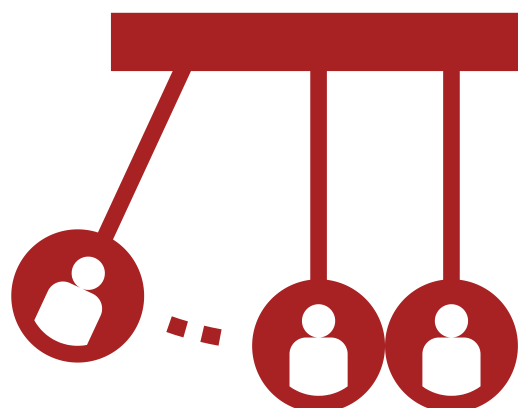
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1 Increased access to university and increased aspirations: changing students' knowledge and perceptions of university to impact whether they apply to university.

Students apply to university at significantly high rates after taking part in the programme.

Students begin applying to university three years after they take part in the Universify programme. We track our students' applications to university at aged 19 to see whether students' participation in our programme leads to an increased number of applications to universities. [22]



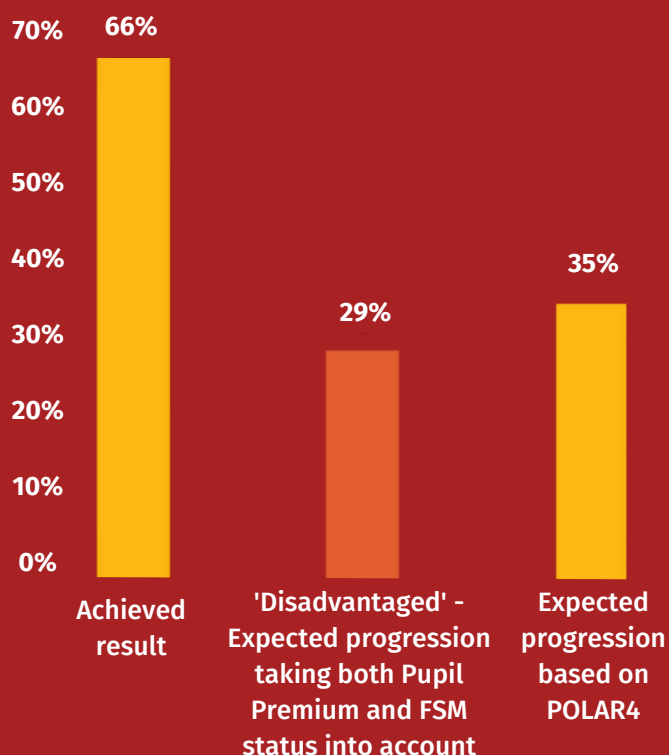
Cohort 3 began their Universify programme in 2018. The majority entered university in September 2021, with an additional 13% beginning university in September 2022.

Very significantly high applications to Oxbridge and the Russell Group universities.

Data from UCAS shows that 78% of Cohort 3 applied to university, which, statistically speaking, is very significantly high compared with UCAS' benchmark of similar applicants (78% vs 60%). This was particularly marked for high- and medium-tariff universities – universities with the highest entry requirements which are associated with greater social mobility. In particular, applications to Oxbridge were statistically very significantly high, which we believe our programme, hosted at Oxford and Cambridge, contributes to.

[22] We have updated our methodology this year to track university destinations at age 19, rather than age 18 as in our previous reports. This helps us capture data about students who choose to take a gap year before applying to university, which amounted to 15% of those who applied to university for Cohort 3.

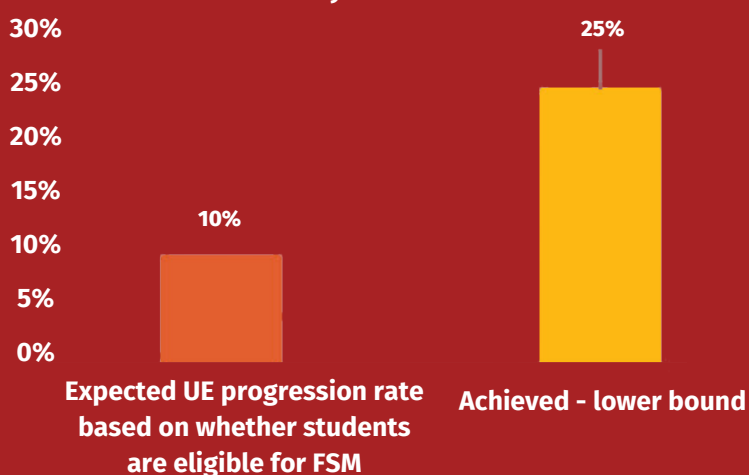
% of students expected to reach higher education based on background



We can compare Cohort 3's progression to university with national rates of progression. Overall, 66% of Cohort 3 reached higher education. [23] Compared with a benchmark assessing 'disadvantage' (FSM and pupil premium metrics), Cohort 3 progressed to university at a rate two times higher than expected (66% vs 29%), and almost double the rate based on geographical metrics (POLAR4 35%). [24]

Almost double the number of students reached higher education than expected based on their background.

Progression to High Tariff HE by FSM status



When we assess Cohort 3's entry to high-tariff universities, more than double the number of students reached a high-tariff university compared with national averages when considering FSM eligibility (25% vs an expected 10%). [25]

Our students' long-term data indicates that they are reaching university at higher rates than expected despite the barriers which they face and may point to the Unversify programme helping them to overcome these barriers.

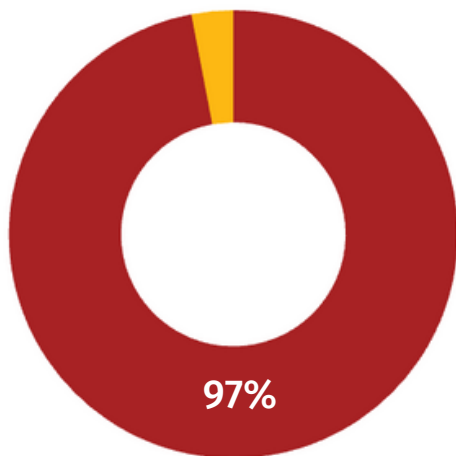
[23] UCAS rounds their data to the nearest 5 to protect student anonymity. Our figures are therefore estimates, and represent the lower bound of this estimation, meaning that an even greater percentage of students may have reached than we have reported university.

[24] We chose to use two benchmarks to account for the variety of indicators which impact progression to Higher Education. For our tailored disadvantage benchmark, we used two national data sets to work out our participants' expected progression rate based on their socio-economic disadvantage criteria in Year 10. We used data from UCAS' End of Cycle report for progression rates for those eligible for FSM. We used data from the Department for Education for progression rates for those who received Pupil Premium. For our second benchmark, we looked at participants' likelihood of reaching university based on the progression rates to university in the area they lived in (POLAR4). We have used data from UCAS' End of Cycle report 2022 to calculate this benchmark.

[25] High-tariff universities are the top third of universities ranked according to their entry tariff points score by UCAS. They represent the universities which are most selective.

INCREASED ASPIRATIONS TO UNIVERSITY DURING THE PROGRAMME

Our programme gives students a greater understanding of what university can offer them. Through the summer and spring residentials, we challenge misconceptions that university is 'not for people like me' and students see that university is attainable. This section considers both cohorts from different stages of their programmes and looks at long-term university destinations data.



97% of participants agreed that the course gave them a better understanding of university



INCREASED POSITIVE ASSOCIATIONS WITH UNIVERSITY TO ENABLE A GREATER LIKELIHOOD OF APPLYING

Students were asked what one word they associated with the idea of studying at university both pre- and post summer. The biggest increase was the change in the number of students who thought university would be fun, with an increase of 25 uses of the word 'fun', or a similar word ('exhilarating', 'cool beans', 'sick' and 'exciting'), up from just two uses before the summer. In addition, a new theme of words associated with 'independence' emerged after the summer course. Other words used included 'interesting' and words associated with determination, passion and education.



In contrast, the number of students who referred to university using words associated with it being 'hard' or 'hard work' remained consistent across the summer. There was a small change post course (increase of four) in the associated words referring to university being smart/intelligent, which could show a positive attitude to an improved self-belief. These were the second and third highest word associations across the survey both pre- and post summer.

The single most positive change was the number of students who associated studying at university with 'fun'. It shows that students attending appear to have experienced a particularly positive time during the summer residential which helps students feel that university is place they can choose to be a part of.

Universify was a course I had no knowledge of before being put forward to apply by my school, but this is something I am immensely grateful for as the course enabled me to think more widely about my future academic prospects and become excited about the possibility of going to university and enriching my ambitions.

Amy B - Student

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO STUDENTS' ASPIRATIONS TO EDUCATION

In 2022, for the first time, we saw a statistically significant increase in students' aspirations to education before and after the in-person summer residential.

This was mapped by adopting survey structures used in the DofE's Longitudinal Study of Young People in England. [26] The measure looks at whether students change their mind about statements like 'People like me don't go to university'. This summer's statistically significant increase in aspirations indicates that the in-person residential is very likely to have contributed to our students changing their minds to feel that they want to go to, and do belong at, university.

STUDENTS REPORT THAT THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO APPLY TO UNIVERSITY

Cohort 7 students were asked in a pre- and post-course survey whether they were likely to apply to a highly-selective university pre- and post-summer when they attended in person in August 2022. The results indicate there is a very positive response to the summer school regarding applying to highly-selective universities, shown by a combined change from 61% (pre-course) opting for 'very likely' and 'fairly likely' to apply, to 77% post course with a combined increase of 16% points. Overall, 32% of students answered this question more positively after the Universify course. In particular, four students went from saying they were 'not very likely' to apply to university to being 'fairly likely' after the course.

In total, 49% of students changed their mind about whether they were likely to apply to university. The most noticeable change was in those students who started the summer saying that it 'depends' whether they would apply to a highly-selective university, which accounted for 31% of students.

[26] Our survey includes the Department for Education's Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE) survey's five-question Educational Aspirations module and the one-question University and Higher Education module to measure whether there is a change to educational aspirations.

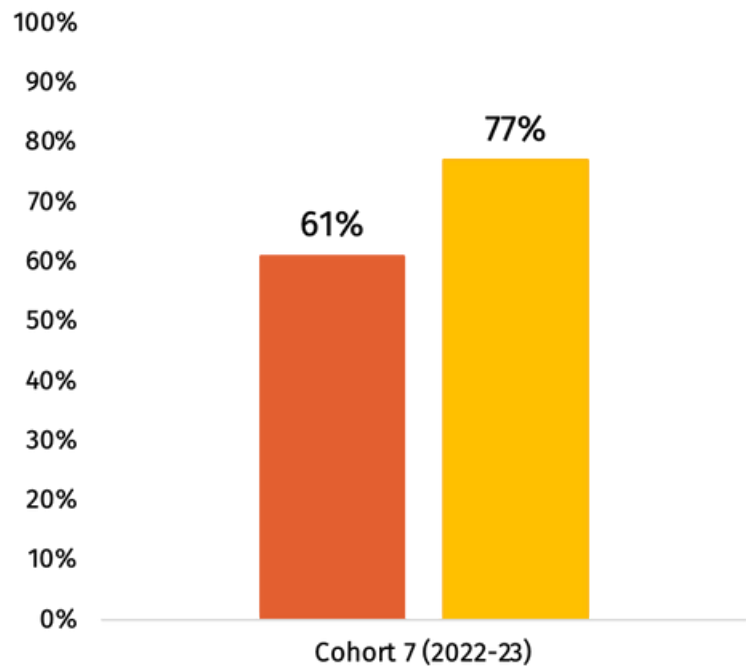
By the end of the summer course, 74% of students who had opted for the 'depends' category had reconsidered, which is significant as it shows that students had been able to reflect on whether they wanted to apply to university after experiencing the summer residential. Overall, 34 students changed their minds to feel they could apply to a highly selective university with eight students changing their minds from 'depends' to 'very likely' and 22 students changing their minds from 'depends' to 'fairly likely'. Eleven students showed a change of thinking, opting for 'not very likely' to apply to a highly selective university after the summer residential.

This indicates that students have gained the confidence to consider their futures along with a clearer understanding of university and are able to change their minds.

For Cohort 6, who have completed the year-long programme, aspirations to university in the medium-term increased drastically from the start of the programme in August 2021 to the Spring residential in April 2022. This saw a 25%-point change from before summer to after the spring residential of combined, 'fairly likely' and 'very likely,' to apply to a highly selective university.



Participants were more likely to apply to University after completing the summer programme



- Percentage of students likely to apply before summer residential
- Percentage of students likely to apply after summer residential

The following student testimonials show how the programme impacted whether Cohort 6 students would apply to university.



Before Universify, I was at a small school where university seemed so far away and I was unsure of what to do or how to take the next big step. However, looking back on my experience now I can confidently say that I have a new outlook and that path is far more accessible than I had previously realised.

Harriet - Student



“ Then...

I took part in the Universify programme as part of the 2021/2 cohort, the programme consolidated my want to attend university and to aim higher for what type of school I wanted to attend to achieve hopefully getting into a top university. The experience significantly helped my confidence, academically by showing me that I had the potential to get into a top university but also socially by building a network of peers who also had high ambitions which I stay in touch with and who continue to inspire me. Universify was one of the first times I felt seen as a real academic which drastically helped me going into GCSEs. Most distinctly, the subject sessions offered as part of the programme helped me realise about really interesting courses that I wouldn't have a clue about without Universify, which in turn impacted my IB choices. After completing the Universify programme I found that what had been a personal interest in Politics was something I wished to place a much stronger focus on. This inspired me to apply to the United World Colleges whose aim is 'a global movement that makes education a force to unite people, nations and cultures for peace and a sustainable future.'

Now...

I am now studying the International Baccalaureate at Lester.B Pearson United World College, one of the top international schools in Canada and know that in part, I owe this to the influence of the Universify programme impacting my goals and achievements.

”



2

Increased attainment: students gain the grades to apply to higher education and other future opportunities

Low educational aspirations and motivation, as well as insufficient support to overcome individual challenges, can lead to low attainment, closing off options to young people at the age of 16. By providing support through 1-to-1 coaching and improving aspirations to education (see previous section), our programme has had an impressive positive influence. We have seen improvements in the students' attained GCSEs indicating raising students' aspirations and motivating them, with some achieving notable improvement on their teacher predicated grades. For this impact, the majority of the data is gathered from teacher surveys focused on Cohort 6.

THE UNIVERSIFY PROGRAMME BENEFITS GCSE ATTAINMENT

Overall, 74% of students did better or attained their predicated grades, of which 30% improved on their predicted grades and 44% achieved their predicted grades. This includes a marked increase at grade 9, the highest grade, with an increase of 97 counts compared to their predicted grades. For the 26% who did not achieve their predicated grades, 60% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed that engaging in Universify's programme still benefited the student's GCSE attainment.

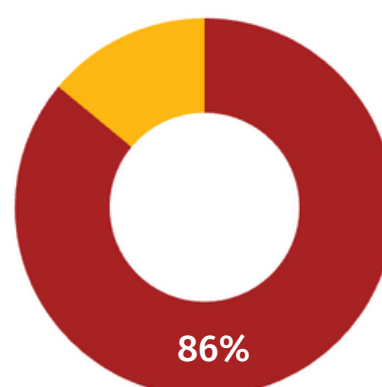
There has been a downward trend in attainment over the last three cohorts, from 91% of Cohort 4 (2020) attaining or doing better than their predicted grades, to 83% of Cohort 5 (2021), to 74% of Cohort 6 (2022).

It is worth noting that there are likely reasons based on the impacts from the pandemic as seen in analysis of learning loss and widening inequalities due to Covid-19 school closures. [27] Cohort 6 are the students who started their GCSE journey in Year 9 based much online and remotely. This cohort also is the first cohort to be assessed by examination since before the pandemic, as opposed to the previous two cohorts where the assessment was different due to Covid (teacher-assessed grades (2021) and centre-assessed grades (2020)).

Despite this, teachers stated that they either agreed or strongly agreed that 86% of students had benefitted from being involved in the Universify programme.

Coaching is an important part of the programme to support students to build on their academic goals in the run up to their GCSEs. From the student's perspective 77% stated they either strongly agree or agree that the coaching has helped towards their academic goals.

Universify benefitted student attainment at GCSE



[27] Jenna Julius, 'GCSE data reveals Covid's impact on disadvantaged schools'. <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/news-events/nfer-blogs/gcse-data-reveals-covid-s-impact-on-disadvantaged-schools/> Article accessed 3rd February 2023.



The coaching was incredibly helpful, allowing me to ask questions to someone who had the experience to answer, and there was strong support for my GCSE's – they helped me set goals to work on such as creating a timetable for revision. I was also able to develop my confidence in public speaking, and with this help I achieved a scholarship to my current college.

Harriet - Student



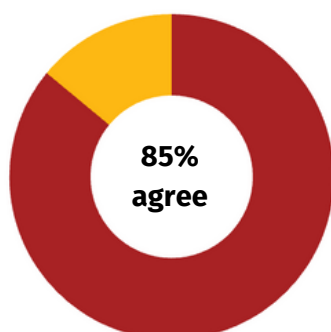
STUDENTS ARE IN A GOOD POSITION TO APPLY TO UNIVERSITY

Following students' GCSE results in August 2022, we surveyed teachers about how the programme has affected their students.

Teachers strongly agreed or agreed that 69% of students were in a good position to apply for a highly-selective university. For the 15 students (8%) where teachers did not think students were in a good position to apply, they still stated that taking part in the programme had benefitted attainment for 64% of students.

85% of teachers also 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that students are more likely to apply to a highly selective university after completing the year-long programme.

Students are more likely to apply to a highly-selective university after completing the year-long programme



3

Increased skills and self-belief to consider future pathways

We work with students in Year 10 to help build their confidence to achieve their potential at GCSE level and to ensure that decisions about their futures are not hampered by low self-belief, whether due to a lack of opportunities or role models. This section shows how students' experience of the programme impacted their confidence and ability to make decisions for their futures.

IMPROVED COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND RESPONSES TO CHALLENGES

Each student is offered up to 10 coaching sessions over the period of the programme. The purpose of these sessions is to encourage participants to become proactive and independent, by developing the goal-setting and problem-solving skills that they will need to pursue their chosen path beyond Universify.

Volunteer coaches are asked to measure three outcomes:

1

Communication

2

Attitude

3

Students' response to challenges

For Cohort 6, the three measures were examined in two different ways. Firstly, those students who had engaged and received 10 or more coaching sessions and secondly, those who had engaged in five or more coaching sessions. For the first group, the results indicate an increase in scores for communication along with an increase in response to challenges, and a slight decrease in scores for attitude.

The second group showed an increase across all three measures. This would show that the coaching overall is having a positive impact in helping students build skills to pursue their future pathway.

QUALITATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO STUDENTS' SELF-EFFICACY

While we saw a medium effect to our students' scores of self-efficacy, these were not statistically significant which may be caused by the small sample size. [28] Instead, we can see qualitative change in students through their testimonies.

The following list shows some notable words, phrases and excerpts from students' testimonials from Cohort 6, highlighting how much being part of the programme has offered support from illustrating what they can get out of attending university on all aspects, from living away from home, gaining independence, having the confidence to face their own negative perceptions and fears so they can achieve their newfound goals as well as new life skills.



- Previously isolated academically from peers.
- Walked away with grades I am proud of.
- Learnt more about myself and my aspirations.
- Learnt not to limit my options and open my mind.
- Coach talked through many barriers and guided me through year 11 with more organisation.
- Alleviated anxiety.
- Helped me realise that university was a place for people like me.
- Despite Covid, the week of online activities was unforgettable and showed me subjects which I had never seen - it introduced me to Art History which I now do for A-level!
- I especially enjoyed trying out my own dorm room and the independence that came with it.
- Residential trip was the favourite part of the course.
- Amazing adventures like punting and going to an ice-cream parlour.



[28] We measure our impact using robust statistical test wherever possible. However, we acknowledge that our small sample size can mask noteworthy changes and are mindful of reporting on these data even when statistical significance is not reached. As seen in further research, "underpowered studies should be interpreted cautiously and the 'absence of evidence' in these studies should not be taken as 'evidence of absence'." From Barun Kumar Nayak, 'Understanding the relevance of sample size calculation', <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2993974/>. Article accessed 3rd February 2023.

The following student testimonials show the positive impact the programme has had on their own self-belief that they not only can apply to university, but a highly-selective university. They have gained confidence in themselves and embraced the experience, which appears to have given them some control over the decisions they make for their educational journey.

“

Before Universify I did not have much self-belief academically. I did not know much about university life or how to learn in a way that suited me and I was very unsure of myself. Universify really helped me realise that university was a place for people like me. I am dyslexic and come from a non-academic background, but through Universify I have gained confidence socially and academically. Universify has given me invaluable advice, self-confidence and friendships. I am very grateful and I hope to apply to a university course I wouldn't have even thought about before Universify.

Jess



As a student fascinated with performing arts, I had always felt estranged from my peers because I seemed to lack the type of confidence that they had. I often shied away from new things and hardly ever believed in myself or my choices. I was always stressed and tired about school, however, this all began to change when I started my journey at Universify.

During my time on the course, I had learned so many new things about myself and how to handle certain situations. Firstly, my coaching sessions were super helpful, they had helped me realise that even if I did not achieve the grades that I had wanted at GCSE, I would still be able to take the A-levels that I wanted. For me, this was a major eye-opener and managed to take a great deal of stress off my shoulders.

Melody

”



Volunteer Testimonial

The following testimonial also shows the positive impact the programme has had according to the volunteers who are directly involved with the programme. The Universify programme provides a wide range of activities and experiences whilst navigating and addressing the inequalities within the educational system.

“

As the product of widening participation and access programs myself, Universify is doing an indispensable job in helping young people not only to develop skills that will help them for years to come in their GCSEs and beyond, but also to have the confidence and drive to think constructively about their goals and know their worth. The education system in the UK isn't perfect and Universify is doing its part in promoting a fairer world; where everyone has an equal chance to achieve their potential, regardless of what background they come from.

I think one of the great strengths of the course is the mix of activities the students receive: from academic sessions delivered by professionals in their field and one-on-one coaching; to museum trips; to fun activities and teamworking challenges organised by the volunteers. By the end of the summer course they've met new people, had new experiences, and made friends for life- all while learning about higher education in a safe and open environment. Being a Group Leader on the course, I have learned a lot of skills that I will take forward with me as I continue my degree and my work in access with the university, which Universify was my first introduction to.

Alex Lowrie, Group Leader, St Hugh's programme



”

Reviewing Our Programme Activities in 2022

In 2022, Universify returned to delivering residential summer programmes drawing inspiration from previous residential programmes and our recent experience of curating and adapting online timetables. The response from participants and volunteers remained very positive, with 98% of participants and 100% of volunteers agreeing or strongly agreeing that they enjoyed the course.

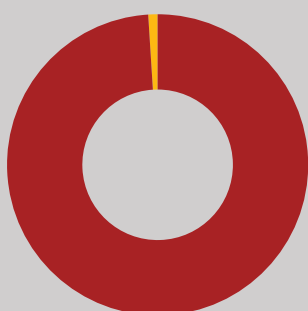
Participants revelled in the social aspect of a residential course with 46% of participants saying that meeting new people/making friends was the best part of the course, a notable increase from 33% of participants last year. Activities in our residential timetable such as going punting and exploring the city during the scavenger hunt were extremely popular with 63% of participants listing them as their favourite activity on the course.

This is not to imply that the academic work was a lesser part of the course with 92% of participants agreed that there was a good balance between academic work and activities. Feedback for the academic sessions remained consistent with previous in-person courses, with 28% of participants mentioning academic sessions as their favourite activity of the week, or the best part of the course. As our network of academic tutors grows, we continue to encourage tutors to return to teach with us with the confidence that their prior experience with Universify will provide high quality academic sessions.



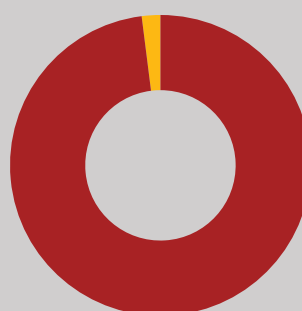
99%

of participants agreed that
staff were friendly and helpful



98%

of participants agreed or strongly
agreed that they enjoyed the course

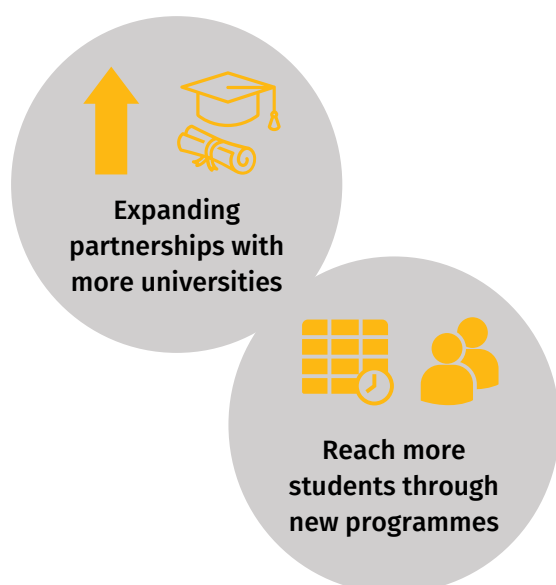


Our Future Plans

In 2023 we want to take advantage of the operational and financial stability we achieved in 2022 to maximise our impact. In particular, we want to address the growing need for more effective support for students whose education - and future opportunities - have been so severely impacted by the pandemic. [29] Our plan has three goals not only to increase the number of students we work with but also to maximise the impact of that work.

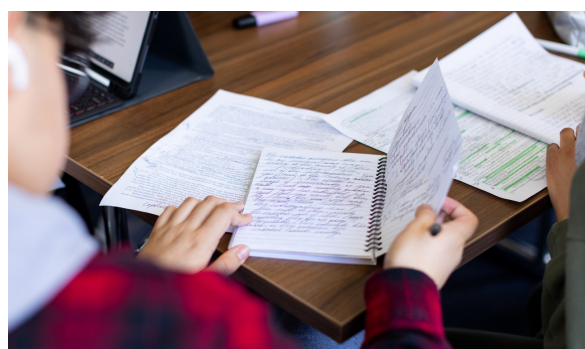
Tackle low GCSE attainment by expanding our year-long programme in partnership with more universities

One of the Office for Students' 5 new priorities is for universities to partner with schools and organisations to raise the attainment of young people. [30] With 6 years of consistent impact on GCSE attainment, we want to support universities to fulfil this priority through partnership. We aim to partner with additional universities to help them tackle one of the major barriers to university while expanding the number – and geographical range – of Universify students.



Grow our impact and meet increased demand by reaching more students through new programmes

Developing partnerships to host our year-long programme takes time. We want to meet the growing need for our work now by providing an additional, impactful programme that we can launch sooner alongside our flagship year-long programme. Therefore, with excellent feedback from our online programmes delivered during the pandemic, we aim to pilot a hybrid programme, combining online academic sessions with workshops at universities. [31] This new programme will also allow us to work with students who require the greater flexibility of online learning, such as young carers, while still maintaining the benefit of taking part in a sustained programme.



[29] Fair Education Alliance, 'Report Card 2022. Achieving a fair education in England', <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/543e665de4b0fbb2b140b291/t/63ce85df00392666493d4446/1674479078611/Report+Card+final.pdf>. Article accessed 24th January 2023.

[30] Office for Students, 'Our approach to access and participation' <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/our-approach-to-access-and-participation/>. Article accessed 24th January 2023.

[31] Link 2020 or 2021 impact report programme section.

Maximise our long-term impact through increased Alumni support

We aim to maximise our long-term impact in three ways:

- 1 Create a pipeline to programmes after Universify – Universify was created to complement the Year 12 programmes which increase access to higher education. We aim to create a pipeline to these programmes from the Universify programme to improve access to these opportunities for our students.
- 2 Increase the number of opportunities through corporate partnership – in 2022, pilot schemes with corporate partners offered alumni access to more employment and educational opportunities. In 2023, we aim to increase our corporate partnerships to offer more opportunities for our alumni while supporting Universify to scale and helping businesses fulfil their social mobility vision.
- 3 Refine our understanding of our long-term outcomes – we will analyse trends in our long-term impact data to ensure students are sufficiently supported after they complete the programme and to identify, what, if any, additional support Universify can provide to sustain impact beyond the year-long programme.

Our plans for the future are ambitious and their success rests on continued operational resilience and long-term sustainability. We will therefore continue to develop a growing team, to refine our operational processes, and to continue to increase our fundraising income through diverse income streams.



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And finally we would like to thank all the students that have applied and taken part in the Universify programme, who continue to inspire and amaze us with their successes. We are immensely proud of the incredible achievements you have accomplished and will continue to do so.

Written by Sophie Grinnell and the Universify team 2022



With special thanks to our partners, supports and collaborators.



How to get involved

We believe universities should be open to all students, based on their academic ability and regardless of their background. If you would like to work with us, please get in touch at info@universifyeducation.com

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