

New Model Institute for Technology and Engineering Access and Participation Plan 2026-27 to 2029-30

1. Introduction and strategic aim

NMITE (New Model Institute for Technology and Engineering) was founded to do something few other higher education providers have attempted in recent decades: to offer high quality, degree-level engineering education by locating itself in a region historically starved of such opportunity. We chose to build our institution not in a city or alongside an existing university ecosystem, but in Herefordshire – one of England's higher education cold spots, and a region where participation in higher education is significantly below the national average. This was deliberate. A response to a national challenge: the deep and persistent inequality in who accesses higher education and where they do it.

A Place-based Whole Provider Approach

Most new and specialist higher education providers choose to locate in large cities where infrastructure, networks, and high levels of university participation already exist. NMITE was created to do the opposite: to serve the underserved – and to focus on the geography of access and participation. Traditional universities suffer from one common constraint that is relevant to access and participation – they can't move so they must ensure that under-represented groups come to them. NMITE aims to put its underserved region first by building the institution exactly where the access and participation need is.

At NMITE, access and participation is not a strategy or an add-on – it is the institution. Our location, curriculum, entry requirements, support systems, partnerships, pedagogy, and funding model all reflect this. Our APP is a commitment to deliver on our founding mission through a targeted, evidence-based, measurable, whole institution strategy.

A Model Built for Access

Our admissions model is radically open. Unlike virtually every other provider of undergraduate and postgraduate engineering programmes, we do not require Maths or Physics A-levels for entry. This decision is based on a clear understanding of the structural barriers faced by many learners in regions like ours. Disadvantaged pupils are less likely to obtain good maths results and girls are less likely to choose Maths and Physics A Levels. Requiring these A Levels would immediately and artificially limit our local applicant pool. Our contextual approach directly addresses **EORR Risk 1**, which identifies lower rates of HE participation among students from underrepresented groups and areas.

Changing the Pipeline, Changing the Outcome

NMITE engages in extensive and targeted outreach. Our marketing messaging deliberately challenges perceptions of engineering. We work with a new generation of Level 3 providers, including University Technical Colleges (UTCs), FE colleges, and T Level institutions. This model directly supports **EORR Risks 2, 3 and 5**, by providing information and creating an HE destination that resonates with students for whom traditional universities feel irrelevant or out of reach.

Our inclusive admissions policy also is having a powerful impact on gender representation: we are seeing higher-than-average application rates from female students, and we expect this trend to continue. Traditional engineering programmes have long failed to attract women – a structural failure the sector (and the employers of engineering graduates) has struggled to resolve. Our approach seeks to address **EORR Risk 4**, related to differential access to specific subject areas.

Our presence in Herefordshire creates entirely new choices for local people. NMITE is not simply adding another option to an already crowded market – it is creating a market where none existed. In doing so, we tackle **EORR Risk 5**, which highlights the lack of higher education opportunities in certain areas.

A Model Designed for Success

Our small size is a strength. Every student is known by name. Staff are deeply bought into student success. This level of support is difficult to replicate in larger institutions, and we believe it has a direct impact on student outcomes, particularly for those from underrepresented groups. Our curriculum and spaces were co-designed with students and will continue to do so. Our teaching approach is based on best pedagogic practices. We deliver extensive individual and cohort-based support through our Student Services and additional academic skills through

the ASK Centre, with a joint transitions programme STEPS addressing the “hidden curriculum” from enrolment to progression. These activities directly address **EORR Risks 6, 7, 8 and 9**, which relate to poor student experience, attainment gaps, and withdrawal rates.

We are also able to provide a level of financial and pastoral support that far exceeds expectations for our scale. This is made possible by the generous philanthropic funding we receive, which supports both hardship funding and enhanced staffing for student welfare and success. NMITE has always operated with the ethos of a social charity as much as a university, and it raises more philanthropic income relative to its size than almost any other UK university. This addresses **EORR Risks 10 and 11**, related to cost pressures and limited resources.

Our Programmes

Our first set of programmes, **BEng/MEng Integrated Engineering**, were developed in response to the call from industry and other stakeholders for engineers with a better understanding of a wider range of engineering sectors and global issues. Consequently, we developed a **Foundation Year** to support those applicants who did not meet our entry requirements but were keen to join NMITE.

Two new programmes are being added from September 2025: **MEng Mechanical Engineering**, to address the continuing skills gaps in this area; and **BSc Construction Management**, to support the need for better skills for sustainability in the building sectors.

Our MEng programmes are delivered in accelerated form, i.e. over 3 years instead of 4 years. The Foundation Year is not a standalone programme but delivered as a Year 0 to all our degree programmes.

Our Students

Our current student population numbers 158, with the following approximate breakdown of composition:

- 100% home students
- 34% from Herefordshire and surrounding areas
- 12% are from POLAR4 Quintile 1 and 25% from Quintile 5
- 15% are women or identify as women
- 29% have declared at enrolment learning issue/mental health conditions/ND.
- 34% are mature students (over 21 years old)
- Approximately 75% are White, 14% Black and Asian.

We are expecting to welcome our first international students in September 2025.

From Education to Employment

Our first cohort of graduates is now entering the workforce – and the early signs are promising. NMITE graduates are securing professional, degree-level roles. Employers are actively seeking partnerships with us, with several already sponsoring students to ensure a reliable pipeline of industry-ready engineers. These outcomes help address **EORR Risk 12**, concerning disparities in progression into employment or further study.

2. Risks to equality of opportunity

Following an assessment of our performance through an analysis of the Office for Students' (OfS) APP dashboard, NMITE's internal data, student consultation, and the EORR, NMITE has identified several indications of risk to equality of opportunity.

Risk Area 1: There is a risk that learners from disadvantaged backgrounds and from areas where there is low participation in higher education experience inequitable access to knowledge and advice relating to higher education and may have limiting perceptions of engineering higher education pathways.

We have determined the following indicators of risk that suggest the risks noted above may be occurring.

- The 2-year aggregate (2021-22 to 2022-23) shows entrants from IMD Quintile 1 at 10.9%, and Quintile 2 at 9.1%.
- The gap between Q1 and Q5, using the 2-year aggregated data (2021-22 to 2022-23), is 12.7pp. This compares with -3.8pp for the sector over the same time period (2-year aggregate, 2021-22 to 2022-23).

Links to the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register

Along with education sector and industry evidence (see Annex B), our institutional experience and student consultations suggest that these enrolment rates may be a result of EORR Risks 1 to 3 and Risk 5.

- **Risk 1 - Access to knowledge and skills** by students from socio-economically deprived backgrounds, particularly from IMD Quintile 1 areas (Q1) and learners who are eligible for free school meals (FSM), is affected by lack of higher quality maths and science teaching and opportunities to take part in extracurricular STEM activities.
- **Risk 2 - Access to information and guidance about higher education** is particularly limited in rural areas such as Herefordshire. Further, schools in under resourced areas do not always have good access to guidance on engineering and technology work and higher education.
- **Risk 3 - Perceptions of higher education** have a negative impact on learners from disadvantaged areas, particularly in early transition periods.
- **Risk 5 – Lack of education opportunities in certain areas.** NMITE is addressing the HE gaps in Herefordshire and in particular aiming to increase access to local disadvantaged groups. For example, in addition, in Herefordshire only 12.2% of FSM students go to Higher Education and this represents a sizeable decrease of more than 34% in the decade to 2023 (Atherton & Sit, 2025).

The interventions for this risk will be nationally, not regionally, focused. There will however be significant overlap between the two student groups, i.e. local students and students from disadvantaged groups, particularly in relation to student personal and academic skills support, addressing the hidden curriculum, and transitions.

A 10-year Plan to 2035/36: We aspire to increase the proportion of students enrolled at NMITE eligible for free school meals to 25.7% in line with national FSM levels (Department for Education, 2025). We wish to eliminate gaps in access, continuation, attainment and progression between groups of students from different socioeconomic backgrounds; given NMITE's small size and ability to offer personalised support, we believe this ambition is both proportionate and achievable.

Risk Area 2: There is a risk that lack of access to knowledge and skills, in addition to lack of appropriate information, advice and guidance on engineering in higher education and the perception of engineering and technology in higher education may be affecting enrolment of female learners onto engineering programmes.

We have determined the following indicator of risk that suggest the risks noted above may be occurring.

- The OfS data dashboard shows our 2-year aggregate (2021-22 to 2022-23) access rates for female students to be 20.3%. Our internal data suggests that currently, female students make up approximately 15% of NMITE's enrolment. This is in line with what is usual for engineering degree programmes (Bellingham, et al., 2023), but it is a figure significantly different to demographic parity and to the original ambitions of NMITE.

NB. In this APP, "female students/learners" refers to students who are women or who identify as women.

Link to the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register

Along with education sector and industry evidence (see Annex B), our institutional experience and student consultations suggest that these enrolment rates may be a result of EORR Risks 1 to 2.

- **Risk 1 - Access to knowledge and skills.** We are concerned that the delivery of mathematics and physics, particularly at schools, is even today gendered and biased towards boys, as is reported by Mendick (2005) and the Institute of Physics (2018). This impacts on the numbers of girls taking up these subjects at level 3 (JCQ, 2024).
- **Risk 2 - Access to information and guidance about higher education** for STEM disciplines is also recognised to be gendered, particularly due to perceptions of engineering and technology.
- **Risk 3 – Perception of higher education.** Female students' perceptions may be that engineering, and technology is not for them, given the current male-domination of these sectors.

NMITE exists to address the significant shortage of new engineers and the lack of diversity (gender, race, socioeconomic, thought) in engineering. Our founding vision included being a gender-balanced institution. However, too few female students join NMITE. This risk addresses this issue and supports our aims to have more female students and produce more women engineering graduates.

Although the OfS do not highlight gender as an area of concern for access and participation in higher education nationally, the persistent underrepresentation of women within engineering disciplines at institutions such as NMITE constitutes a critical challenge for the engineering sectors and demands concerted and strategic intervention.

A 10-year plan for 2035/36: Our longer-term aspiration is for over 30% of our student population to be female by 2035. This longer-term aim is based on findings that individuals sharing characteristics with approximately a third or more of any social group will no longer perceive themselves to be of a minority (Kanter, 1977).

Risk Area 3: There is a risk that students with disabilities, particularly neurodivergent students, have lower continuation and academic outcomes due to lack of access academic and personal support, mental health concerns and systemic issues with progression to employment.

We have determined the following indicator of risk that suggest the risks noted above may be occurring.

- Our OfS APP data dashboard access data shows that 23.7% of entrants were students who reported a disability (2-year aggregate, 2021-22 to 2022-23). This is above the sector's 2-year aggregate (2021-22 to 2022-23) of 17.9% disabled entrants. Internal data suggests that by 2024, 34% of all our students declared some form of physical or other disability or condition at enrolment. A further 7% declared some form of neurodiversity condition after enrolment. From the OfS Data dashboard – the proportion of students entering undergraduate courses in engineering and technology in 2022/23 declaring a disability across all undergraduate provision in the UK was 17%.
- Although there is as yet no indication of gaps in continuation or academic outcomes for our student population, we wish to remain vigilant and pre-empt any future issues, given that, until the most recent year, continuation and attainment outcomes for disabled learners have been below those of non-disabled learners.

Link to the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register

Along with education sector and industry evidence (see Annex B), our institutional experience and student consultations suggest that these enrolment rates may be a result of EORR Risks 6 to 8 and 12.

- **Risk 6 – Insufficient academic support.** Neurodivergent students report more difficulties in fragmented programmes where multiple subject areas are delivered in parallel. Our immersive, block-based model should overcome some of these issues. Students with disabilities still face challenges in educational settings. In particular academic staff may lack of awareness and understanding of neurodiversity and other conditions and so fail to adapt their teaching approaches. This is evident in the conversations during Pedagogy School and Academic Team meetings, and in Module Quality Assurance Forms, where academics reflect on what has worked and what has not.
- **Risk 7 - Insufficient personal support.** Neurodivergent learners frequently report social isolation, particularly where the delivery style does not encourage students to develop a strong community of learning, and where the hidden curriculum is not addressed. At NMITE, Student Services report a high level of requests for support from neurodivergent students. We wish to ensure that our responses to those requests have a positive impact.
- **Risk 8 - Mental health** can be affected detrimentally by the experience of large and impersonal educational programmes, combined with insufficient student support. We have anecdotal evidence that several of our intake have been attracted to NMITE from large HEIs because of our size and personalised approach, and we wish to ensure that our small size continues to be a benefit.
- **Risk 12 - Progression from higher education** is a recognised issue for neurodivergent graduates and those with disabilities. Disabled graduates face a persistent employment gap compared to their non-disabled peers, experiencing lower rates of highly skilled and secure employment. Neurodivergent graduates face communication barriers and difficulties navigating the recruitment processes. At NMITE we have as yet to be able to assess whether or not this will be a risk here; however, we anticipate that we will see some barriers soon and wish to pre-empt the effect of these.

We are committed to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment where all students can thrive. We recognise that neurodiverse students bring unique strengths and perspectives. This priority area outlines our strategic approach to ensure that neurodiverse students and those with disabilities not only access NMITE but are fully supported to succeed academically, professionally, and personally, achieving outcomes comparable to their neurotypical peers.

Our approach, with its emphasis on block-based/immersive delivery, project-based learning, small cohorts, quiet spaces, integrated academic support and authentic assessment, is inherently attractive and beneficial for many neurodivergent learners (Whewell & Tiplady, 2023). Our focus on teamwork and collaboration in the studios leads to a strong student community. In addition, we argue that the inclusive and flexible design of our curriculum, our focus on teamwork, our provision of safe spaces to discuss and disclose (TASO, 2023) and the integrated transitions STEPS (including careers) programme, where we seek to anticipate barriers in our delivery (AdvanceHE, 2011) and in the steps towards employment (Davies, et al., 2023), and where we “fix the system” and not the students, will not only benefit students with neurodivergent issues, but all students.

Other challenges

Small Datasets

When deciding on risk areas to concentrate on in this APP, we focussed on the vision for NMITE which takes into account the risks for engineering and technology and our place-based approach. As a small provider with very small cohorts, however, we also note our limited capacity for comprehensive data analysis and statistical significance. This constraint impacts our ability to make accurate assessments and interpretations, particularly when examining disaggregated data and intersections of various characteristics. We carry out both aggregated and

disaggregated analyses and provide insights where it is meaningful and remain vigilant to any early indications of possible gaps and issues. We note our data is volatile over time and this will impact our targets.

Covid-19

We are still aware of the ongoing impact of the Coronavirus pandemic which will persist throughout the lifetime of this Plan. We continually monitor and assess risks to equal opportunity in accessing higher education, succeeding within it, and progressing to favourable graduate outcomes, which disproportionately affect underrepresented and disadvantaged students.

Understanding the experiences of students will be facilitated through our increased efforts in evaluation and research, as outlined in our Evaluation Strategy and supported in our collaborations with the SEER network.

3. Objectives

NMITE has set targets to be achieved over the lifetime of this APP. However, these are intermediate targets in our ambitions to reach the 10-year aspirational targets we have outlined for Risk Areas 1 and 2 above.

Target Reference (priority target areas)	Objectives	Intervention Strategy
PTA_1	NMITE will increase the proportion of students enrolled who were eligible for free school meals (FSM) to 20% by 2029/30.	Outreach Strategy (IS1) Admissions Model (IS2)
PTA_2	NMITE aims to close the gap between students from IMD Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 areas enrolling on our courses and eliminate the gap by 2029/30.	Enhanced Student and Learning Support (IS3) Teaching Model and Inclusive Curriculum (IS4)
PTA_3	NMITE will increase the proportion of females enrolled on our courses to 24% of our intake by 2029/30.	Outreach Strategy (IS1) Admissions Model (IS2) Teaching Model and Inclusive Curriculum (IS4)
N/A	No formal target set, but NMITE will support continuation for identified neurodivergent students and those with disabilities, aiming to eliminate any gap in continuation between these students and non-disabled learners.	Enhanced Student and Learning Support (IS3) Teaching Model and Inclusive Curriculum (IS4)

4. Intervention strategies and expected outcomes

We have developed strategies to address risks to equality of opportunity and achieve our objectives. These strategies align with the core mission of NMITE of regional educational uplift and widening access into engineering education. NMITE's Whole Provider Approach (WPA) means that our APP intervention strategies are not standalone; they are embedded into the structure and purpose of the institution.

Because our model is novel and our resources are limited, our intervention strategies need to be focused and pragmatic. In line with our WPA, we propose to measure success in the following areas (detailed in the Intervention Strategy section of this APP):

- Access for students from areas of deprivation (IMD and Free School Meals). This will have a regional lens to reflect our mission to reverse the brain drain and attract new talent to Herefordshire. We do not propose to limit our focus to the most deprived postcodes, and do not want to claim success by draining another region of its talent, because our aim is to lift the entire regional economy through education.
- Access for female engineering students, to help redress a national and long-standing structural imbalance.
- Continuation for neurodiverse students and students with disabilities. We recognise that NMITE's model and personalised approach is attractive to neurodiverse learners and to those with disabilities. We want to ensure that these students succeed at the same rate as non-disabled peers.

We believe that these priorities, rooted in regional regeneration and widening participation, provide a clearer and ultimately more impactful interpretation of what Access and Participation should mean for small, specialist providers.

Publication Plan

We are dedicated to sharing the evaluation findings. Publication plans are indicative and will expand as dissemination opportunities arise. Relevant evaluation outcomes will also inform and drive ongoing practice improvements.

Format of Findings	When findings will be shared
<p>We will produce an annual progress and review report which will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide insights on the effectiveness and progress of relevant activities across our Intervention Strategies based on the achievement of intended outcomes. • Capture learning and insights that inform improvements in practice and any appropriate changes and developments. <p>Highlights and themes from this report will be shared online, for example through our website/SEER website.</p> <p>Findings will also be shared internally to the Board of Trustees, Academic Council and internal committees, to inform practice and decision making. See 'Evaluation Strategy' section.</p>	Annually
We will also contribute at conferences and through workshops and events hosted by networks such as, but not limited to, SEER.	At least every 3 years from 2025/26
We will contribute to other calls for evidence, such as through TASO, GuildHE.	As they arise

Intervention strategy 1: Outreach Strategy

NMITE's Outreach Strategy is focused on challenging perceptions of engineering and higher education. These beliefs and limited awareness around HE options may impede pupils' aspirations, particularly those from disadvantaged areas of backgrounds, and pupils and their advisers may need support to understand their options. Perceptions of engineering and technology can impact negatively on choices made by young women and on the advice given by schools/colleges.

NMITE's Outreach Strategy aims to raise awareness of engineering and NMITE's approach with specific activities targeting those from disadvantaged/low participation backgrounds and of female learners, to increase representation of these groups at NMITE.

In 2025-26, we focus on Y10-Y13, i.e. ages 14-19. After 2026, we will review our Strategy to consider our priority groups in other age groups and collaborations with external STEM Outreach organisations.

Objectives and Targets

- NMITE will increase the proportion of students enrolled who were eligible for free school meals (FSM) to 20% by 2029/30.
- NMITE aims to close the gap between students from IMD Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 areas enrolling on our courses and eliminate the gap by 2029/30.
- NMITE will increase the proportion of females enrolled on our courses to 24% of our intake by 2029/30.

Targets: PTA_1, PTA_2, PTA_3 – See Annex C, Table 5b.

Risks to equality of opportunity

The following risks from the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register are relevant: Risk 1 Knowledge and Skills, Risk 2 Information and Guidance, Risk 3 Perception of higher education, Risk 4 Application success rates.

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Sociocultural factors in the UK often contribute to the early disengagement of both the disadvantaged from higher education, and of girls from STEM pathways. Careful targeting of audiences, including selecting outreach activities that are more inclusive, will change perceptions of higher education. Current STEM outreach can often focus on activities that mainly attract those who already identify as engineers and technocrats, which can reinforce misconceptions of engineering, perpetuating gendered stereotypes of engineering and resulting in the start of the

"leaky pipeline". In addition, much STEM outreach addresses school pupils but not their influencers, i.e. teachers, careers advisors and other adults around them. As part of our strategy, we will seek to engage with teachers and careers advisors and develop stronger relationships with our local schools to ensure that schoolchildren get appropriate advice and guidance on engineering and technology and access to NMITE or higher education more generally.

Work by the Institute of Physics and the Aspires projects at the Institute of Education indicate the need to address awareness of STEM and the aspirations of young people from a very early age and by addressing communities (Archer, et al., 2023) (Education Scotland, 2023). During the period of this APP, we intend to review our Outreach Strategy to look at earlier interventions, planned in collaboration with other institutions expert in STEM outreach for different audiences.

We also believe that this intervention strategy has also the potential to address areas of intersectionality, such as, women in lower socio-economic groups are less likely to take up engineering and technology. There is currently very limited information on this, however vocational programmes such as those related to construction and beauty services, where there is high incidence of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, are heavily gender-segregated.

Evaluation

Evaluation for this intervention strategy will generate OfS Type 1 narrative approach (T1) and Type 2 empirical research (T2) standards of evaluation, which will establish whether the intended outcomes are being achieved. We do not propose to evaluate the strategy as a whole but have set out evaluation against each of the activities.

The approximate cost of this Intervention Strategy over the four years of this Plan is £471,000 to include marketing budget, staff time, Student ambassador payments, travel expenses and PR agency payments.

OUTREACH Strategy	Inputs	Outcomes	Methods of Evaluation (Standards of Evidence denoted as T1, T2 or T3)
<p><u>Recruitment and Feeder Network Development:</u></p> <p>Structured engagement with sixth forms, UTCs and FE colleges, focussed on Herefordshire and neighbouring counties, identified as serving disadvantaged and low participation areas, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual calendar of taster events, workshops, and visits co-developed with schools, reflecting the NMITE model. • Integration of NMITE student ambassadors into outreach activity. • Attendance at school career events. • Annual engagement activity with community of local career advisors/ teachers to address perceptions of engineering and technology. <p>We aim to engage with a minimum of 10 schools in this category per year.</p> <p><i>Planned activity:</i> <u>Targeted Widening Participation Outreach</u></p> <p>In 2025-26, we will be piloting intentionally designed activities as part of Open Days, and our offer-holder Experience Days to ensure these address any hidden concerns our female potential students may have.</p> <p>We will look to expand our outreach activities in local areas by 2026 to include intentionally designed inclusive activities to address misperceptions of engineering and technology in both adults (e.g. teachers/careers advisors) and young people, particularly young women. From 2026, we will offer NMITE STEM activities to schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • from a wider geographical area • to include younger age groups • with high levels of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, • and targeted at girls. <p>We will seek to encourage teachers/careers advisors/ and other adult influencers to take part in these activities.</p>	<p>£50,000 annual marketing and outreach budget</p> <p>NMITE Staff time – including Academic member of staff with time allocated for Outreach.</p> <p>Trained and paid NMITE Student ambassadors to attend outreach events and support with Open Days.</p> <p>Administration and marketing team support and resource.</p> <p>Travel and accommodation where needed.</p>	<p><u>Intermediate outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased knowledge and awareness of HE, including types of courses, entry requirements, funding options. • Increased knowledge of HE pathways and the HE application process. • Improved knowledge and awareness of the field of engineering and technology studies. • Improved confidence and preparation for HE selection process. • Improved confidence in their ability to progress to higher education • Improved motivation and engagement in learning. • Improved self-perceptions about academic abilities and confidence. • Improved sense of belonging in HE / pathways to HE. <p><u>Longer-term outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustained relationships with local schools/colleges • Improved local awareness of NMITE's offer and approach • Increased applications to HE by local target groups • Enrolments at NMITE 	<p><u>Process Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Output analysis: number of activities delivered, and schools/colleges engaged (T1) • Data analysis: Number and % of pupils attending NMITE activities with target characteristics, including local areas. (T1) • Data Analysis: number and % of applicants with target characteristics (T1). • Data Analysis: number and % of applicants receiving an offer from target groups (T1). • Data Analysis: number and % of new entrants with target characteristics (T1). • Post-activity polls with students and staff at partner schools/colleges to identify any increased interest in STEM and NMITE, changing perceptions of engineering and technology in pupils and their advisors, and awareness of NMITE's approach (T2). <p><u>Impact Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School/college student surveys to gather insights on likelihood of considering engineering and technology studies and impact of outreach activities, particularly for target groups. (T2)

OUTREACH Strategy	Inputs	Outcomes	Methods of Evaluation (Standards of Evidence denoted as T1, T2 or T3)
<p><u>Wider Outreach and Campaigns</u></p> <p><u>NMITE Marketing:</u> includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disruptive social media messages about the nature of engineering and technology • NMITE website and resources intentionally designed to be inclusive and address concerns of target students • supporting inclusive Open Days and other events at NMITE • targeting international and national days of awareness, e.g. International Women's Day, Pride Month, Black History Month <p><u>External engagement & PR:</u> includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NMITE X-Change – a blog to challenge perceptions of STEM • PR messages and articles addressing widening participation. <p><u>EmpowerHER campaign:</u> to attract more women into NMITE and to raise awareness with potential students and our partners of the issues of low participation of women in engineering and technology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • includes bursaries for female students • provides a voice on the issues relevant to women in STEM. • is supported and informed by our women students, particularly by the student society NMITE Women in STEM (NWS). <p>NWS has been set up by our students to enable our female students and other underrepresented groups to share experiences in a safe space, and to encourage continued association and contact between female and other underrepresented groups and our female/underrepresented students and alumni.</p> <p><u>Planned activity: Institutional Collaboration</u></p> <p>Implementing disruptive outreach to the wider audience as a longer-term strategy, we will look to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to target high female participation Level 3 subjects • to provide local schools with STEM related development opportunities for teacher CPD and careers advisers • and to reach to younger children and their communities. <p>We will be exploring partnerships with organisations such as Primary Engineers, SATRO, STEM Learning, UniConnect, and STEM outreach with IET and IMechE.</p>	<p>£50,000 annual marketing and outreach budget.</p> <p>NMITE Academic Lead on External Engagement.</p> <p>NMITE staff time: including Academic staff to generate messages, support student societies, and work with fund development team for campaigns.</p> <p>Administration and marketing support.</p> <p>External sponsors and existing partners.</p> <p>PR agency contracted</p>	<p><u>Intermediate outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved awareness of NMITE's marketing and outreach messaging • Improved awareness of NMITE's support available for target groups (e.g. women) • Improved awareness of targeted financial support available • Student financial needs are supported <p><u>Longer-term outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved sustained relationships with relevant organisations and partnerships • Improved awareness of NMITE's offer and approach • Improved sense of belonging • Applications to HE from target groups • Offers from HE providers • Enrolments in HE 	<p><u>Process Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Output Analysis: Number of activities delivered, and schools/colleges engaged with CPD and outreach (T1). • Data Analysis: Number of students engaging with marketing and outreach messaging, and % with target characteristics (T1). • Data Analysis: Number and % of students receiving bursaries (T1), analysed by student characteristics (where possible). • Output Analysis: Total spend of bursaries, including by student characteristics. (T1) • Poll gathering bursary recipient experience and perceptions of the process and allocation (T2). • Feedback from students, participants at NMITE events, and other stakeholders on perceptions of inclusion at NMITE and awareness of NMITE messages and campaigns (T2) • Post-activity surveys and feedback from collaborating organisations/ partners. (T2) <p><u>Impact Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data analysis: application rates to NMITE by target groups (T2) • Data analysis: enrolments at NMITE by target groups (T2).

Intervention Strategy 2: Widening Access Admission Strategy

NMITE's Admissions Strategy aims to widen entry routes to engineering by encouraging applications from prospective students who may not meet the entry requirements of traditional universities but can demonstrate an ability and commitment to succeed in the NMITE learning environment.

NMITE removes structural entry barriers by not requiring Maths or Physics A-levels – which are under-taught in many rural schools – and apply contextual admissions policies that recognise regional and personal disadvantage.

By proactively addressing disadvantaged groups and gender disparity, NMITE can not only enhance its academic excellence but also contribute significantly to the development of a more representative, innovative, and globally impactful engineering workforce. This strategy contributes to and complements Intervention Strategy 1.

Objectives and targets

- NMITE will increase the proportion of students enrolled who were eligible for free school meals (FSM) to 20% by 2029/30.
- NMITE aims to close the gap between students from IMD Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 areas enrolling on our courses and eliminate the gap by 2029/30.
- NMITE will increase the proportion of females enrolled on our courses to 24% of our intake by 2029/30.

Targets: PTA_1, PTA_2, PTA_3 – See Annex C, Table 5b.

Risks to equality of opportunity

The following risks from the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register are relevant: Risk 1 Knowledge and Skills, Risk 2 Information and Guidance, Risk 3 Perception of higher education, Risk 4 Application success rates.

Summary of evidence base and rationale

Widening entry requirements within the context on NMITE's pedagogical model may encourage more people, including those who thought they could not, to study engineering. Contextual admissions practices enable students from disadvantaged background to progress to higher education.

Both fewer girls and disadvantaged learners study Maths and Physics at A-Level, therefore restricting their options to study engineering at most traditional universities. Disadvantaged pupils are more likely to have suffered from a lack of maths teachers in the early stages of secondary (see for example (Owen & Ferda, 2024)) and less likely to get a good GCSE pass (EEF, 2024) or to be offered Further Maths (Roylan, 2017). Only about 37% of A Level entries in mathematics, and just 26% in physics, are from girls (JCQ, 2024). In addition, our data suggests that our female offer-holders are not always enrolling at same rates as male offer-holders. Although the data for this is not stable, we wish to address this pre-emptively.

Bursaries on offer can be a factor in a student from disadvantaged backgrounds applying for higher education by giving them the added financial support.

Evaluation

Evaluation for this intervention strategy will generate OfS Type 1 narrative approach (T1) and Type 2 empirical research (T2) standards of evaluation, which will establish whether the intended outcomes are being achieved. We do not propose to evaluate the strategy as a whole but have set out evaluation against each of the activities.

The approximate cost of this Intervention Strategy over the four years of this Plan is £395,000.

WIDENING ACCESS ADMISSION STRATEGY	Inputs	Outcomes	Methods of Evaluation (Standards of Evidence denoted as T1, T2 or T3)
<p><u>Contextual Admissions</u></p> <p>All admissions processes at NMITE are highly contextual. Our contextual and enabling admissions process helps to facilitate success and provides targeted support in the application and admissions journey. We apply a contextual process to consider applicants who do not meet threshold but demonstrate ability and aptitude.</p> <p><i>Planned activity:</i></p> <p>Contextual offers will be introduced for 2026/27 cycle and will initially use FSM, Care Experience and IMD Quintile 1 with the aim of introducing additional measures in future iterations. This will enable transparent communication of the requirements to be admitted at a lower tariff.</p> <p>The policy will be published on the NMITE website with clear and concise information for prospective students.</p>	<p>Existing Admissions and registry resource</p> <p>Member of Academic Team is allocated a Lead for admissions</p> <p>Existing NMITE admissions policy and processes</p>	<p><u>Intermediate outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased knowledge and awareness of NMITE and contextual admissions policy (Staff) Increased knowledge and awareness of contextual admissions policy <p><u>Longer-term outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of applications from target students Increased enrolments of target students 	<p><u>Process Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data Analysis: number and % of applicants with target characteristics (T1). Data Analysis: number and % of applicants receiving an offer through contextual admissions from target groups (T1). Data Analysis: number and % of new entrants through contextual admissions with target characteristics (T1). <p><u>Impact Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student survey to understand experiences of entering through the contextual admissions system and reasons for applying to NMITE (T2). Data Analysis: Comparison of conversion rate of contextual admissions applicants to enrolment against standard admissions (T2).
<p><u>No requirement for A-Level (or other equivalent Level 3 qualification) in Maths and/or Physics</u></p> <p>NMITE does not require students to attain A-level Maths and/or physics to apply for one of our engineering programmes. This is deliberate to enable more women and other under-represented groups to study engineering.</p>	<p>Maths and school-level engineering science are integrated into the engineering curriculum.</p> <p>Additional support by the Academic Skills and Knowhow Centre (ASK)</p>	<p><u>Intermediate outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved perceptions of accessibility of engineering and technology without A-Level Maths/Physics Increased confidence in applying for applicants without A-Level Maths/Physics <p><u>Longer-term outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of applications from target students Increased enrolments of target students Improved gender balance of NMITE engineering students 	<p><u>Process Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data Analysis: number and % of applicants with target characteristics (T1). Data Analysis: number and % of target applicants receiving an offer from target groups (T1). Data Analysis: number and % of new entrants with target characteristics (T1). <p><u>Impact Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student survey to understand experiences of entering without Level 3 Maths/Physics and reasons for applying to NMITE (T2). Student focus groups or reflective feedback methods to gather insights on impact of no Maths/Physics requirement for target students, including influence on their decisions to enter high education and/or engineering (T2)

WIDENING ACCESS ADMISSION STRATEGY	Inputs	Outcomes	Methods of Evaluation (Standards of Evidence denoted as T1, T2 or T3)
<p><u>Financial Support</u></p> <p>NMITE offers generous bursaries for underrepresented groups, with the support of partners and funding organisations. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life Changer bursary: for students in local postcodes, to encourage local HE participation. Motorola Solutions Scholarship: supporting women pursuing an NMITE Engineering degree Care Experience Bursary: for those have/are supported by a local authority Leaving Care Service. Refugee Bursary. Young Adult Carers Bursary. Estranged Student Bursary. 	<p>£200k annual bursary fund for local students</p> <p>Fund Raising Team</p> <p>Relationships with partners and employers</p>	<p><u>Intermediate outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced financial pressures. Student financial needs are supported Improved student emotional and mental wellbeing, linked to financial security Students are able to fully participate in the NMITE student experience, positively impacting sense of belonging <p><u>Longer-term outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased continuation rates for target students Increased attainment rates for target students 	<p><u>Process Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data Analysis: Number of applications for bursaries and number of successful applications. (T1) Data Analysis: Number and % of students receiving bursaries (T1), analysed by student characteristics (where possible). Output Analysis: Total spend of bursaries, including by student characteristics. (T1) Poll gathering bursary recipient experience and perceptions of the process and allocation, and any impact of the offered financial support on decisions to enter NMITE and engineering (T2). <p><u>Impact Evaluation</u></p> <p>As per relevant parts of the OfS Evaluating the Impact of Financial Support toolkit, every two years from 2026-27 (T2).</p>
<p><u>Foundation Year:</u></p> <p>This Year 0 is offered as an alternative pathway into NMITE and engineering and technology. Our Foundation Year (FY) supports students who we would like on our programmes but who have not achieved the entry requirements to succeed in the main programmes. The aims of this programme are to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> prepare students with study skills, including learning-to-learn reduce the effect of the hidden curriculum increase confidence and sense of belonging in HE and engineering and technology 	<p>Designed and developed programme and resources.</p> <p>Programme Lead in Academic Team.</p>	<p><u>Intermediate outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased knowledge and awareness of HE, including types of courses, entry requirements, funding options. Increased knowledge of HE pathways, including Foundation Year, and the HE application process. Increased study skills and confidence in preparation for HE selection process after FY. Improved confidence in their ability to progress to higher education after FY. Improved motivation and engagement in learning. Improved self-perceptions about academic abilities and confidence. 	<p><u>Process Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data Analysis: number and % of FY entrants with target characteristics (T1). Data Analysis: number and % of FY students progressing to HE study at NMITE with target characteristics (T1). <p><u>Impact Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student surveys repeated at entry to FY, during FY, and after progression to HE, to gather student insights on effect of having a FY on their decisions, impact of FY programme on confidence, and FY student preparedness for HE (T2).

WIDENING ACCESS ADMISSION STRATEGY	Inputs	Outcomes	Methods of Evaluation (Standards of Evidence denoted as T1, T2 or T3)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved sense of belonging in HE / pathways to HE. <p><u>Longer-term outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applications to HE from FY students Offers from HE providers for FY students Enrolments in HE for FY students Increased HE enrolments at NMITE for FY students from target groups. 	
<p><u>INTO - enhanced offer-to-enrolment contact points</u></p> <p>The STEPS programme includes the transitions activity INTO, intended to address any hidden concerns by offer-holders/entering students. INTO is a series of pre-entry activities to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online meetings with Student Services and ASK Emailed newsletters with prompts to encourage early queries from in-coming students Offer of early support and advice from ASK and Student Services. <p><i>Planned activity:</i></p> <p>As part of improvements of INTO, we are planning to provide introductions to the student societies, including NWS (NMITE Women in STEM), and offer mentor touch points for students from underrepresented groups, particular women.</p>	<p>Student Services Team and resources.</p> <p>ASK Team and resources</p> <p>Marketing and communications resources.</p> <p>Trained and paid NMITE Student ambassadors from appropriate student societies to provide mentoring touch points.</p>	<p><u>Intermediate outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased confidence in starting NMITE course Timely referral to more support from ASK and Student Services <p><u>Longer-term outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved sense of belonging for target students Increased number of applications from target students Increased enrolments of target students Improved continuation of target students Improved attainment of target students Improved gender balance of NMITE engineering students 	<p><u>Process Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data Analysis: number and % of applicants from target groups (T1). Data Analysis: number and % of new entrants from target groups (T1). Output analysis: number of post-offer and/or enrolment disclosures of disabilities or neurodiversity (T1). <p><u>Impact Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre and post- induction surveys to measure change in confidence and sense of belonging during transition (T2). Student surveys or focus groups to share transition experiences and impact of INTO on sense of belonging (T2).

Intervention strategy 3: Enhanced Student and Learning support

NMITE's enhanced support for learners aims to provide a structured and supportive environment to give our diverse learners the best chance of continuing and succeeding with their studies. Academic support ensures students meet the demands of the programmes. Financial aid and cost-of-living assistance relieve economic stress, allowing students to focus more fully on their studies rather than part-time work or financial insecurity. Additionally, access to support for transitions, including advice on career development and well-being, empowers students to make informed decisions, stay motivated and build resilience.

Objectives and targets

- NMITE will increase the proportion of students enrolled who were eligible for free school meals (FSM) to 20% by 2029/30.
- NMITE aims to close the gap between students from IMD Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 areas enrolling on our courses and eliminate the gap by 2029/30.
- NMITE aims to close the gap between students from IMD Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 areas enrolling NMITE aims to close the gap between students from IMD Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 areas enrolling NMITE aims to close the gap between students from IMD Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 areas enrolling NMITE aims to close the gap between students from IMD Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 areas enrolling Whilst no formal target is set, NMITE will monitor this impact of this intervention strategy on continuation and attainment of identified neurodivergent students and those with disabilities.

Targets: PTA_1, PTA_2 – See Annex C, Table 5b.

Error! Reference source not found. Error! Reference source not found. Risks to equality of opportunity

The following risks from the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register are relevant: Risk 6 Insufficient academic support, Risk 7 Insufficient personal support, Risk 8 Mental health, Risk 10 Cost pressures, Risk 11 Capacity Issues, Risk 12 Progression from higher education.

Summary of evidence base and rationale

The cost-of-living crisis has had a greater impact on students from disadvantaged backgrounds and this group are more likely to cite financial issues as the reason for withdrawing from their studies (Office for Students, 2023).

Students with disabilities and from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to feel that they do not belong (Barnes, Kelly, & Mulrooney, 2021) (Fernandez, et al., 2025) (Ahn & Davis, 2023). On the other hand, when students feel included in one or more communities, specifically in relation to peer relationships, they are more likely to feel they belong (Maunder, 2017). The NMITE studio and team-based environment, supported by the transition programme STEPS, the small workshops at the ASK, and the support to set up student societies are important to enable a better sense of belonging.

Evaluation

Evaluation for this intervention strategy will generate OfS Type 1 narrative approach (T1) and Type 2 empirical research (T2) standards of evaluation, which will establish whether the intended outcomes are being achieved. We do not propose to evaluate the strategy as a whole but have set out evaluation against each of the activities.

The approximate cost of this Intervention Strategy over the four years of this Plan is £944,000.

ENHANCED STUDENT AND LEARNING SUPPORT	Inputs	Outcomes	Methods of Evaluation (Standards of Evidence denoted as T1, T2 or T3)
<p><u>ASK – Academic Skills and Knowhow Centre</u></p> <p>Our Academic Skills & Knowhow (ASK) Centre provides a team of dedicated staff and a physical contact point where students can seek 1-1 advice and support on their academic skills (maths, engineering science, technical communication, IT), including advice on assessments, study skills, academic expectations as part of STEPS. ASK also provides</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opt-in workshops which facilitate peer support groups to share experiences and build a sense of community. • ASK resources, including self-diagnostic tasks/quizzes and links to recommended online materials, are available on the NMITE VLE to provide yet another form of information and support. • In-module ASK delivery includes teamwork training for students, to leverage individual strengths and accommodate different working styles. <p><i>Planned activity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements planned for teamwork guidance • Sharing knowhow activities. • Address accessibility of resources and consider specific study skills relevant to different target groups, particularly in relation to neurodiversity (learning from the EPC Neuroinclusion COP). 	<p>ASK Team resource (approximately 2.25 FTE)</p> <p>VLE</p> <p>Physical space for ASK Centre supported by Kildare Trust</p> <p>Resourcing for external careers advisor</p>	<p><u>Intermediate outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved cognitive and metacognitive outcomes. • Improved motivation and engagement in learning. • Improved academic and study skills • Improved self-perceptions about academic abilities and confidence. • Improved assessment grades • Improved sense of belonging <p><u>Longer-term outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased continuation rates for target students • Increased attainment rates for target students 	<p><u>Process Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Analysis: Number and % of students engaging with ASK services (T1), analysed by student characteristics (where possible). • Output Analysis: Number of ASK activities delivered (T1). • Data Analysis: Tracking the incidence of ECs (requested and permitted, including reasons for the requests), at risk identification, withdrawals or leave of absences (including reasons) specifically for neurodiverse students (T2). • Output Analysis: Number and type of reasonable adjustments implemented for neurodiverse students. (T1) • Post-activity polls gathering student experiences of the ASK activities and services (T2). • Student engagement through student forums to provide feedback on ASK activities and services (T2). <p><u>Impact Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student surveys gathering insights on sense of belonging, perceptions of inclusion, effectiveness of ASK services, and any relevant challenges and barriers experienced (T2). • Data Analysis: Comparison of data between neurodiverse students and overall student population, considering intersectionality (T2). • Data analysis: continuation, completion and attainment by target groups.
<p><u>STEPS – Support, Transitions, Education, Progression, and Success Programme</u></p> <p>STEPS in-module sessions embedded throughout the academic year support students to navigate transitions, expectations, and the “hidden curriculum”. This support is of particular relevance to neurodiverse individuals and</p>	<p>Student Services Team for INTO.</p> <p>ASK Team resource for study skills</p>	<p><u>Intermediate outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased knowledge and capacity relating to career and employability skills. 	<p><u>Process Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Analysis: Number and % of students engaging with STEPS programme (T1), analysed by student characteristics (where possible).

ENHANCED STUDENT AND LEARNING SUPPORT	Inputs	Outcomes	Methods of Evaluation (Standards of Evidence denoted as T1, T2 or T3)
<p>students unfamiliar with higher education, especially in the early stages of their time in university.</p> <p>The STEPS programme also integrates career development and mentoring into every year of study</p> <p><i>Planned activity</i></p> <p>STEPS will also provide careers guidance and employability support that addresses the specific strengths and potential challenges for neurodiverse individuals in the job market, such as presenting neurodiverse strengths in CVs and interviews, and guidance on how to disclose neurodiversity to potential employers.</p>	<p>Resourcing for external careers advisor</p> <p>Partnership with Careers Platform TargetConnect</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved understandings of 'hidden curriculum'. Increased knowledge and understanding of the labour market, professional standards and competencies. Improved self-perceptions about career and employability capacities, readiness and confidence. Improved motivation and engagement in learning. <p><u>Longer-term outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved attainment rates for target students. Improved progression rates for target students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Output Analysis: Number of STEPS programme activities delivered (T1). Post-activity polls gathering student experiences of the STEPS programme relating to transitions and careers guidance (T2). Student engagement through student forums to provide feedback on STEPS programme relating to transitions and careers guidance (T2). <p><u>Impact Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student surveys gathering insights on sense of belonging, perceptions of inclusion, and effectiveness of STEPS programme (T2).
<p><u>BOOST – everyday support</u></p> <p>The scheme offers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily breakfast on campus Monthly Friday Breakfast Club Monthly Sunday lunches at the Wellington Access to the Living Room Larder for a 12-week period per student Support with daily travel by commuting students Free sanitary products Cleaning bundles for HMO houses 	<p>0.4 FTE BOOST coordinator [allocated from existing Student Services team]</p> <p>£16,200 per annum</p>	<p><u>Intermediate outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced financial pressures. Student financial needs are supported Improved student emotional and mental wellbeing, linked to financial security Students are able to fully participate in the NMITE student experience, positively impacting sense of belonging <p><u>Longer-term outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased enrolments from target students 	<p><u>Process Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data Analysis: Number and % of students engaging with BOOST activities (T1), analysed by student characteristics (where possible). Output Analysis: Total spend on activities and provisions (T1). Output Analysis: Number of BOOST activities delivered (T1). Post-activity polls gathering student experiences of the BOOST offers and activities (T2). Student engagement through student forums to provide feedback on BOOST activities (T2). <p><u>Impact Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student feedback on BOOST activities and cost of living support gathered as part of the OfS

ENHANCED STUDENT AND LEARNING SUPPORT	Inputs	Outcomes	Methods of Evaluation (Standards of Evidence denoted as T1, T2 or T3)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased continuation rates for target students 	Evaluating the Impact of Financial Support toolkit, every two years from 2026-27 (T2).
<p><u>Student Services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Student Services Team support all students with wellbeing and financial concerns, including addressing need for Reasonable Adjustments and application and implementation of DSAs. Appointed a further Student Services member of staff with expertise in neurodiversity and disabilities, responsible for overseeing support and advising academic staff, and to address issues of neurodiversity at extra-curricular student activities, including impact on mental health. Ensuring robust disability and accessibility services are well-resourced. We are proactive in implementing reasonable adjustments, providing support to access assistive technology and diagnostic services where needed, making use of the IET's Footprint support programmes. Awareness events for students on consent, mental health, discrimination, bullying and harassment, student conduct and NMITE values. Encouragement of student societies focussed on target groups (such as NMITE Women in STEM NWS). 	<p>Newly appointed Student Services member with expertise in disabilities and neurodiversity (FTE 1.0)</p> <p>Student Services Team</p>	<p><u>Intermediate outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students' wellbeing needs are supported Improved awareness of support services Improved student emotional and mental well-being. <p><u>Longer-term outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved sense of belonging Increased continuation rates for target students Increased attainment rates for target students 	<p><u>Process Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data Analysis: Number and % of students engaging with Student Services and % with target characteristics (T1). Polls and surveys to gather student opinions on awareness events and student societies (T2). Polls and surveys on student experiences engaging with Student Services, particularly regarding accessibility services (T2). <p><u>Impact Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline and annual student survey exploring perceptions of support and confidence in relation to outcomes (T2). Student interviews/focus groups every two years from 2026-27, to explore key themes from polls and surveys (T2). Data Analysis: continuation and completion rates by target groups (T2). Data Analysis: module attainment and degree outcome by target students (T2).

Intervention strategy 4: Teaching Model and Inclusive Curriculum

Our cohort-based, studio-driven pedagogy fosters deep peer connections, frequent feedback, and applied learning – all of which support retention and engagement, especially for those unfamiliar with academic environments.

Our curriculum allows students to focus on special areas of interest, whilst encouraging our students to be aware of the wider issues. Our NMITE Graduate Attributes highlight the benefits of different thinking.

Objectives and targets

- NMITE will increase the proportion of students enrolled who were eligible for free school meals (FSM) to 20% by 2029/30.
- NMITE aims to close the gap between students from IMD Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 areas enrolling on our courses and eliminate the gap by 2029/30.
- NMITE will increase the proportion of females enrolled on our courses to 24% of our intake by 2029/30.
- NMITE will increase the proportion of students enrolled who were eligible for free school meals (FSM) to 20% by 2029/30. Whilst no formal target set, NMITE will monitor this impact of this intervention strategy on continuation and attainment of identified neurodivergent students and those with disabilities.

Targets: PTA_1, PTA_2, PTA_3 – See Annex C, Table 5b.

Error! Reference source not found. Error! Reference source not found. Risks to equality of opportunity

The following risks from the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register are relevant: Risk 1 Knowledge and Skills, Risk 2 Information and Guidance, Risk 3 Perception of higher education, Risk 4 Application success rates, Risk 6 Insufficient academic support, Risk 7 Insufficient personal support, Risk 8 Mental health

Summary of evidence base and rationale

NMITE mission is to produce world conscious engineers, who are creative responsible global citizens. This vision requires us to support a diversity of people engaged in engineering as described and evidenced in Section 5.2 Our institutional and senior leadership commitment.

A sense of belonging happens when students see themselves and feel their needs are addressed in all areas of the organisation and in particular, in the curriculum (Cohen & Viola, 2022) (Amisi, Bates, & Wilbraham, 2024) (Viola, 2021). Our curriculum has been designed for both global citizenship and inclusion and is supported by academics and student-facing teams committed to EDI.

Evaluation

Evaluation for this intervention strategy will generate OfS Type 1 narrative approach (T1) and Type 2 empirical research (T2) standards of evaluation, which will establish whether the intended outcomes are being achieved. We do not propose to evaluate the strategy as a whole but have set out evaluation against each of the activities.

The approximate cost of this Intervention Strategy over the four years of this Plan is £452,000.

TEACHING MODEL AND INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM	Inputs	Outcomes	Methods of Evaluation (Standards of Evidence denoted as T1, T2 or T3)
<p><u>Curriculum</u></p> <p>Embedding principles of inclusive design and delivery of our curriculum, particularly in relation to neurodiversity and disabilities. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear and consistent communication: Providing clear instructions, consistent expectations, and multiple formats for information delivery. • Flexible Assessment Methods: Offering a range of assessment formats where appropriate to allow students to demonstrate their learning in ways that suit their strengths. • Predictable Routines: Establishing consistent daily and weekly routines to reduce anxiety and enhance predictability • Embedding of transferable skills, ASK and STEPs. 	<p>Academic Team who are committed to inclusive education.</p> <p>Existing materials, resources, IT tools</p> <p>Academic leads for transferable, academic skills and STEPS (~2 FTE)</p>	<p><u>Intermediate outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved cognitive and metacognitive outcomes. • Improved motivation and engagement in learning. • Improved academic and study skills • Improved self-perceptions about academic abilities and confidence. • Improved assessment grades • Improved sense of belonging <p><u>Longer-term outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased continuation rates for target students • Increased attainment rates for target students 	<p><u>Process Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Output Analysis: Number of Module Quality Forms referring to addressing issues of inclusive design. (T1) • Student and staff survey on belonging and NMITE values. (T2) <p><u>Impact Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Analysis: continuation and completion rates by target groups. (T2) • Data Analysis: module attainment and attainment (degree outcome) by target students. (T2) • Feedback and surveys from students on the curriculum and programmes, how accessible and supportive these are and any perceived issues relating to neurodiversity and disabilities. (T2)
<p><u>Pedagogy School, Staff Development, academic research and future developments</u></p> <p>Pedagogy School is a monthly activity where the Academic Team of workshops and discussions on inclusive teaching & learning including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active learning and enabling/accessible approaches for delivery • Alternative and flexible assessment • Bias and stereotypes • Invited external experts to bring new views and ideas. <p>Staff Development Days focus on NMITE curriculum development and improvement.</p>	<p>Academic Lead for Pedagogy School</p> <p>Academic Team time for CPD and research and engagement with external Communities of Practice</p> <p>Academic Director leading on Staff Development Days</p> <p>Budget for memberships of external COPs e.g., EPC, SEFI, AdvanceHE</p>	<p><u>Intermediate outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Staff) Increased awareness and knowledge of inclusive teaching and learning practices • (Staff) Improved confidence in implementing best practice in teaching <p><u>Longer-term outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased continuation rates for target students 	<p><u>Process Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Output Analysis: Number of pedagogy focussed events delivered. (T1) • Output Analysis: Number of research outputs focussed on or related to inclusive curriculum. (T1) • Post-training feedback survey from staff on changes to awareness. (T2) • Data Analysis: Module Quality Forms referring to planned and actual implementation of best practice. (T1) <p><u>Impact Evaluation</u></p>

TEACHING MODEL AND INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM	Inputs	Outcomes	Methods of Evaluation (Standards of Evidence denoted as T1, T2 or T3)
<p>NMITE student-facing teams will seek to keep up-to-date and lead on neuroinclusion in HE. For example, Academic and Student Services staff are engaged with the Engineering Professors Council Neurodiversity Community and its Working Groups, developing, during 2025-26, a Neuroinclusion Framework for engineering HE programmes.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased attainment rates for target students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff engagement in relevant research events and activities related to pedagogy and EDI, with relevant publications developed (T1)
<p><u>Staff Training</u></p> <p>Initial training for all academic and student facing staff on EDI, inclusive teaching practices, and effective support strategies.</p> <p>Cultivating openness and trust: Our student facing teams work towards an environment of trust. We encourage disclosure with consent and sharing of information and experiences to provide all our students with a better understanding of the challenges and strengths of neurodivergence and all disabilities.</p> <p><i>Planned activity:</i></p> <p>EDI Committee is to consider on-going training for staff on neurodiversity and disabilities.</p>	<p>Staff training budgets</p> <p>HR Team</p> <p>EDI Committee</p>	<p><u>Intermediate outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased staff awareness of EDI and inclusive teaching practices Improved staff knowledge and confidence in EDI and inclusive teaching practices and providing effective support for students. Staff feel supported in training, their roles, and their professional development. <p><u>Longer-term outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased staff confidence in embedding EDI topics and inclusive teaching practices in their teaching and/or interactions with students Improved staff understanding of student experiences and challenges affecting student outcomes and opportunities to provide effective support. 	<p><u>Process Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data Analysis: Number of staff participating in training (T1). Output analysis: Number of training sessions run (T1). Post-training feedback survey from staff on changes to awareness / behaviours. (T2). Surveys and feedback from students on feelings of inclusion. (T2) <p><u>Impact Evaluation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual end-of-year Staff Survey exploring confidence in EDI and inclusive teaching practices and in providing effective and tailored student support to meet diverse needs (T2). Data Analysis: continuation and completion rates by target groups (T2).

TEACHING MODEL AND INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM	Inputs	Outcomes	Methods of Evaluation (Standards of Evidence denoted as T1, T2 or T3)
<p><u>Community and Employer Engagement</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We aim to seek out relationships with employers and community groups who demonstrate a commitment to inclusive recruitment and workplace practices. Curriculum partners bring real-world challenges to modules. Local employers embedded in curriculum via the Partnerships Advisory Group, aligning NMITE's offer with local labour market needs. Use of curriculum partners as coaches for student teams. Alignment with Local Skills Improvement Plan priorities through active membership of the Local Skills Board and Business Board, chaired by Herefordshire Council. <p><i>Planned activity:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with curriculum partners to increase representation in modules of role models to reflect the student population. Developing an Alumni Network for informal mentoring and advice. 	<p>Partnerships Advisory Group</p> <p>Partnerships Engagement Team, including dedicated staff member to administer and manage relationships (FTE 1.0)</p> <p>Academic Lead for Partnerships</p> <p>Student Services supporting Alumni Network</p> <p>External communities and groups</p>	<p><u>Intermediate outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased knowledge and capacity relating to career and employability skills. Increased level of professional networks and contacts. Increased knowledge and understanding of the labour market, professional standards and competencies. Improved self-perceptions about career and employability capacities, readiness and confidence. Improved motivation and engagement in learning. <p><u>Longer-term outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved sense of belonging and awareness of diverse role models in engineering and technology sectors. Improved attainment rates for target students. Improved progression rates for target students. 	<p><u>Process Evaluation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Output analysis: Number of collaborative relationships with employers and community groups (T1) Output analysis: Number of in-module activities delivered (T1). Output analysis: Number of opportunities provided for student team coaching and mentoring for students through the Alumni Network. (T1) Data Analysis: Number and % of students engaging with curriculum partners and Alumni Network and % with target characteristics (T1). Surveys with students to gather insights on the relevance of curriculum partners and module challenges, and perceptions of inclusion and representation (T2). <p><u>Impact Evaluation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline and annual student survey to gather feedback on impact of coaching on their learning, confidence, and self-perceptions of employability skills and professional networks (T2). Annual survey with employers, community groups, and Alumni Network to gather insights on their perceptions of the activities, student development, and impact on student employability (T2). Data Analysis: attainment by target students. (T2) Data analysis: progression into employment and into highly skilled employment or post-graduate study pathways for target students (T2)

5. Whole provider approach

As outlined in the introduction, NMITE take a whole provider approach (WPA) to access and participation. It is at the very core of our vision. We have considered under this Plan via participation in emerging research on the WPA, working with our SEER colleagues and led by Professor Liz Thomas¹. We have evaluated our current WPA context and identified areas where we can go further, as part of the commitments in this Plan. The following provides a summary against the key domains in the WPA approach:

5.1 Our institutional journey

At NMITE, access and participation is not a strategy or an add-on – it *is* the institution. Our location, curriculum, entry requirements, support systems, partnerships, pedagogy, and funding model all reflect this. Our APP is a commitment to our founding mission through a targeted, evidence-based, measurable, whole institution strategy.

NMITE was founded to do something few other higher education provider has attempted in recent decades: to offer high quality, degree-level engineering education by locating itself in a region historically starved of such opportunity. We chose to build our institution not in a city or alongside an existing university ecosystem, but in Herefordshire – one of England’s higher education cold spots, and a region where participation in higher education is significantly below the national average. This was deliberate - a response to a national challenge: the deep and persistent inequality in who accesses higher education and where they do it.

Our mission is rooted in social and economic justice. NMITE exists to reverse the chronic brain drain from rural areas like Herefordshire, where the lack of graduate opportunities contributes to economic stagnation. The problem is not that too many talented young people leave regions like ours, graduates are mobile and often leave the areas they grew up in, but that virtually none comes in to replace them (see [Counting them out and back in: who gains from graduate mobility? | NMITE](#)). The result is a net loss of human capital, innovation, and aspiration. NMITE aims to challenge this dynamic, not only by retaining local talent but by attracting students and staff into the region to study, live, and build careers here.

5.2 Our institutional and senior leadership commitment

One of the key aims in NMITE’s Strategic Plan is ‘Inclusive Cohorts, Successful Students’. NMITE aims to create new opportunities and pathways into higher education that were not previously available to local people, increasing the diversity – in all senses of the term – of our student and professional trainee cohorts.

We deliver a safe and nurturing student experience but guide our students towards becoming independent and resilient. Our small size enables us to know each of our students as individuals. Students will enjoy high staff contact time and access to additional academic and pastoral support based on their needs. Each individual student knows they matter.

Increasing opportunities for under-represented groups will remain a key feature of our admissions process which will admit students who we know will benefit from, and succeed on, NMITE’s programmes. We will be judged by the positive impact of our students on the engineering professions and on society in general. We aim to deliver widening participation by organisation and programme design – not as an “add on” and afterthought.

A substantial body of research supports the enhanced problem-solving capabilities and innovative outputs of diverse and inclusive teams (Bear & Woolley, 2011) (Lorenzo, et al., 2018) (Smith-Doerr, et al., 2017). Therefore, the low participation of women and other underrepresented groups in engineering and technology is not merely a concern about fairness but also has profound implications for innovation and societal progress. At NMITE we wish to address these issues head-on.

Our Widening Participation Steering Committee

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this Plan, monitoring under-represented groups in our student population, ensuring commitments are delivered, and embedding access and participation across the institution. As part of the monitoring and reporting process we have a Widening Participation Steering Committee, chaired by the CEO. The WPSC reports to the Academic Council. Membership of the Committee includes

- Head of Finance
- Head of Academic Skills
- representatives from Registry, Student Services, and others from the Academic Team
- Head of Marketing, Communications and Student Recruitment
- Head of Quality Assurance.

The group oversees the implementation, monitoring, review, and evaluation of the APP, advise on research, and make reports and recommendations to the Chief Executive Officer, including highlighting risk and making any necessary changes to the APP. If the group finds that progress towards objectives set out in the APP is not being achieved or is going backwards, it may recommend to the Chief Executive Officer to increase investment levels.

The Academic member of staff leading on the APP is the Head of Academic Skills and of the ASK Centre. She is president of the International Network of Women Engineers and Scientists, and has expertise on gender in STEM issues, providing consultancy to EU funded projects to identify gender barriers in STEM, has published on women in engineering issues internationally and more recently on the impact of maths for diversity.

The Head of Academic Skills and Head of Quality Assurance are currently active in the Engineering Professors Council's working groups to develop a new EPC Neuroinclusion Maturity Framework.

Additionally, the Pedagogy School Lead has expertise in contextual admissions for disadvantaged students. The Student Services representative has extensive experience of student facing access support, working alongside UniConnect and raising aspirations for the local area, in her previous role as Widening Participation Officer at Hartpury University. Other members of the WPSC have personal experiences of disadvantage and keen to provide a voice to support widening participation at NMITE.

Staff Development

The Academic Pedagogy School considers all areas of teaching and learning, with a focus on inclusive curriculum design including the impact of EDI on education: this is our main mechanism for supporting ongoing development of the Academic Team. Our team includes several individuals with disclosed neurodiversity issues, and they ensure their lived experiences are included in discussions and curriculum design.

The EDI Committee, chaired by the Director People and Operations, is well-established and addresses wider EDI issues across the institution. This includes all staff training needs on EDI. All members of staff undergo training on EDI as part of induction at NMITE. As part of the future planning for Access and Participation, we have identified the need for the EDI Committee to consider future training for the institution on neuroinclusion and this is being included in future agendas, as part of a standing item on the APP.

5.3 Our WPA student experience: Working across the student lifecycle

We are committed to whole provider, whole lifecycle approaches to access and participation, recognising that our on-course provision should promote and support good outcomes for all students. As we continue with our ambitions to grow and diversify our student cohorts, we are therefore particularly mindful that the quality of provision and support is maintained and developed, ensuring a successful, positive, inclusive and enjoyable experience for all students.

Access and Participation is embedded across the organisation as it is a key part of the NMITE vision. As a small provider, all staff and departments have a part to play in living the vision and the strategic aims. For example:

- Our marketing messages consistently highlight how NMITE's model differ from traditional universities.
- Our partnerships activities include working with local community, employers, identifying opportunities for our local workforce.
- Wider skills agenda – looking to upskill and reskill businesses and individuals as part of our Centre for Innovation and Future Skills and the Centre of Advanced Timber Technology.
- We have ambitions to support local schools with STEM and raising aspirations as part of planning for the longer-term Outreach Strategy,

In addition, our Student Services Team deliver comprehensive mental health & wellbeing activities as part of their 'business-as-usual' activity through the whole of the student lifecycle. Early introductions to the team and other support services begin at Open Days and Offer Holders Days. Early disclosure is encouraged, and all offer holders receive personalised communication to address support needs declared pre-entry. Support mechanisms include an onsite counsellor, Personal Tutors, Reasonable Adjustments, Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) application support, and a dedicated wellbeing page on the MyNMITE portal. National and local awareness campaigns run throughout the year, involving guest speakers from external agencies such as Andys Man Club.

5.4 HEP structures for widening access and student success

NMITE has range of our existing strategies, plans and approaches that demonstrate our whole provider approach and are aligned to the ambitions in this Plan.

Institutional Strategy

NMITE's Strategic Plan 2023-2028 *Engineering a New Future* is centred around five key aims:

1. Academic quality and distinctiveness – with a focus on alignment to our mission to create “new engineers”

2. Inclusive cohorts and successful students – to support new pathways into engineering and technology for a diverse student community
3. Partnering for impact – to benefit the region
4. Operational and financial sustainability – for institutional resilience
5. Skills for the future of work – to address skills gaps in the workforce.

Student Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

NMITE aims to create, foster, and promote a positive inclusive culture that promotes a mutual respect for each other and the values, beliefs, and individual differences we all hold. They are what make us individual and collectively are what creates diversity and strength within NMITE.

We actively encourage and will strive for equality and inclusion within NMITE and will not condone or tolerate discrimination or unacceptable behaviour. We have a tolerant and social culture that benefits everyone.

The policy is monitored and reviewed annually by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Advisory Group, who ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion is continually promoted throughout NMITE. NMITE reviews student recruitment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness and to update policies to reflect any changes in legislation.

NMITE Guiding Principles for Learning and Teaching

- **Admissions Policy including contextual admissions.** We adhere to the principles to extend the range of education opportunities for all and promote diversity in terms of access, educational experience and support for all students. NMITE encourages applications from prospective students who may not meet the entry requirements of traditional universities provided they can demonstrate an ability and commitment to succeed in our learning environment. All offers of admission are made to ensure we promote equality and prevents and eliminate discrimination for staff and students on the grounds of age, disability, gender, marital status, race, sexual orientation, religious belief, social or national origin in a proactive manner in line with our duties under the law and our belief in the value of a diverse student body and diverse NMITE community overall.
- **Student Disability and Reasonable Adjustment Policy.** This policy specifically refers to and deals with disability support and reasonable adjustment applications by applicants and students undertaking an NMITE programme of study or short course. The aim of Reasonable Adjustments is to ensure that all students are able to demonstrate the full extent of their academic abilities, irrespective of a disability or long-term condition. Reasonable adjustments are also available for students who might not consider themselves to have a 'disability' but who nevertheless would benefit from additional support due to an ongoing medical or mental health condition.
- **Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.** NMITE recognises our duty of care to all within our community, we aim to support our students and create a healthy and happy environment. We want everyone to feel valued and be treated fairly. NMITE believes that no student should be disadvantaged from succeeding in their studies due to mental health difficulties or conditions. NMITE is committed to providing flexibility to facilitate students' success. NMITE promotes positive mental health wellbeing by providing information, direct support and signposting.
- **Student Engagement Strategy.** Developed in consultation with students and staff this strategy outlines avenues of student engagement and how NMITE works in partnership to achieve inclusive, responsive, collaborative, and transparent student engagement activities. Student engagement activity at NMITE is diverse. We actively encourage students to participate and engage across all aspects of their provision, taking purposeful steps to engage students individually and collectively as partners in both ensuring and enhancing the quality of the student experience. Ways in which NMITE students can engage with and participate in NMITE's quality assurance and enhancement activities and provide feedback on their experience as a student at NMITE include:
 - The **Student Liaison Group (SLG)** - a sub-committee of the NMITE Student Union. Its core membership and chair is elected from Student Union officers, although all students can attend meetings which will be held on a 2 monthly basis. The purpose of the SLG is to provide regular opportunities for all student to provide feedback about any aspect of their student experience, to provide feedback and work collaboratively with NMITE staff to action changes and improvements to the institution.
 - Student participation as **elected representatives** in NMITE's decision-making structure, working closely with in the governance mechanisms that assure and enhance the student experience ensures that students' interests are recognised and valued. Student representatives act as a sounding board for emerging issues and as a source for areas that might benefit from targeted feedback or enhancement work; student representatives are encouraged to proactively raise issues through discussion with the committee chair.
 - **Student Feedback Surveys** can offer valuable insight into student life, through a format that works synergistically with qualitative and quantitative data. Surveys offer the opportunity to gather quantitative data that can form a basis for longitudinal and cross-cohort comparison, anonymous participation, and the

opportunity for high levels of response. The Quality Assurance Committee approve the content of all student wide surveys.

- Students are invited in cohorts to face-to-face **mid FHEQ level fora** with members of the academic senior leadership team. These fora are used to gain structured qualitative contributions from students as well as provide a free voice opportunity for student to raise any particular issues. They also provide a forum that contributes to NMITE closing the loop and feedback to students on actions that have been taken.
- **The STEPS transitions programme**, including INTO, has been piloted at NMITE over the past two years. It will be fully operational from September 2025 and will include comprehensive and systematic careers support and advice through an external partnering careers platform TargetConnect. This external activity will be supported by internal STEPS sessions addressing the issues faced by different target groups, to include ensuring successful progression for all our students.

5.5 Our use of data and evidence

NMITE's new CORE Student Records System, which will be operational from September 2025, has been developed with our widening participation ambitions in mind. This is a significant investment by NMITE to strengthen its data systems and student records systems. CORE supports tracking of all student data, including data for our future Access and Participation planning such as:

- DSA support
- Reasonable adjustments
- Disclosed disabilities
- Genders
- Caring responsibilities

Our intention is to monitor data at each FHEQ level and for all targets groups to identify any potential but unforeseen systemic barriers to access, continuation and progression, and so address these as early as possible.

6. Student consultation

NMITE recognises that our students have experiences and perspectives on NMITE's model of contemporary learning and therefore are in a unique position to offer valuable and fresh insights into student experience and shape the workings of the institution.

6.1 Co-design at the heart of NMITE

During NMITE's founding years, 31 young people were hired to help co-design and co-create the learner experience. Known as **The Design Cohort** sought to even out the playing field for STEM opportunities and education, and 'make an impact'. The Design Cohort was instrumental in establishing the ethos for a strong and impactful student voice.

NMITE continues to commit to ensuring student voice is part of the institution. We have a comprehensive student representation system, which includes a Student Union, and a representation system of student delegates across academic committees and key steering groups and a student trustee on the Board of Governors. We take purposeful steps to engage students individually and collectively through various other input systems, including:

- FEHQ forums are whole cohort face-to-face forums held with the Academic Director and Director of Registry and Student Life. Occurring at the end of each FEHQ level for each programme and level.
- End of Level surveys, present an alternative to FEHQ Forums and collect quantitative data and feedback. Surveys take place at the end of each level of study, usually twice a year.
- Suggestion boxes (accessible through MyNMITE) and formal and informal focus groups

6.2 NMITE Students' Union

The SU is a constituted, unincorporated community of students. It comprises democratically elected student officers which form the Executive Committee. Officer positions are not currently sabbatical posts; students take on duties alongside their studies and are supported by the Student Services Team.

The vision of NMITE Students' Union is to enrich the student experience, 'representing and supporting all students within the NMITE community'. It is committed to 'creating an inclusive space' designed to support students to achieve and progress.

The Students' Union President and Education Officer lead and facilitate a Student Liaison Group (SLG) on a **bi-monthly basis** as part of the Students' Union commitment to representation. The purpose of the SLG is to enhance opportunities for all students to provide feedback on any aspect of their student experience. The Director

of Registry and Student Life is a co-opted member that acts as a key point of contact, triaging feedback received and directing to the appropriate department.

6.3 Student Representation

The Representation System consists of two main strands. The first is of Programme Representatives, who are elected from each degree programme and year of study. The role of the Student Programme Representative is to represent the views of their designated cohort at Programme Management meetings. These are held **four times a year** and Representatives take an active role in feeding back information from action logs to fellow students.

The second strand is of Student Committee Representatives elected to each of the following committees/groups which meet regularly: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, Strategic Advisory Group, Academic Council and the Board of Trustees.

Training is delivered for all Student Representatives to enable them to fulfil their roles. A Student Representative handbook outlining roles and responsibilities, the structure of the Representative system and feedback mechanisms is produced and reviewed annually. To ensure cohesion, the Director of Registry and Student Life holds breakfast meetings with all Student Representatives at the **start of each module** to encourage collaboration between the different strands of representation and strengthen feedback loops.

6.4 Focus groups for the APP

In preparation for the writing of this plan two focus groups were held, one at each campus, to increase input from students at all different levels of study. Supported by the Student Union President and EDI Representative, the focus groups were opened to all students. This allowed for a whole student community approach resulting in meaningful individual and collective experiences to be shared.

Focus groups began with an introduction to the purpose of Access and Participation Plans, the higher education context surrounding APPs and an explanation of NMITE's identified risk areas and targets groups. Pre-prepared questions were planned based on guidance from SEER and the following are highlights of the results:

- The NMITE model was greatly valued by students: eliminating A-Level Physics and Maths pre-entry qualifications and our 'non-traditional' assessments has reduced barriers and encouraged students to apply.
- Just under 50% of students that attended the focus groups classed themselves as local, (from Herefordshire or Worcestershire). Students identified the importance of having a local institution and local offering when considering higher education.
- Students expressed a strong appreciation for NMITE's inclusive learning and student experience environment. Highlighting pre-entry support, in the form of INTO and Welcome Week, as activities that contributed to an early sense of belonging. The provision of a laptop for every student, access to the ASK, and pastoral care from Student Services aid students to feel empowered and supported to succeed.
- NMITE's proposed areas of risk identified for the Access and Participation Plan were deemed a positive step towards fulfilling an organisational vision.

Possible barriers to a successful APP were also considered during the focus groups:

- Scalability of services and inclusive learning environments alongside institutional expansion, maintaining communication structures and financial hardship not elevated through bursaries were identified.
- Students of all genders expressed concern regarding the systemic failing to engage females in engineering from a younger age. However, NMITE's early Ingenuity studio was credited as "inspiring", and the NMITE Women in STEM (NWS) Student Society and targeted outreach were recognised as positive interventions.
- The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion student Representative expressed that it is "encouraging to hear that NMITE is so intentional in addressing their main goals of reaching learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, encouraging higher proportions of female learners, and encouraging neurodiversity among the student body".

6.5 Ongoing Student Involvement in the APP

The draft APP has been reviewed by Academic Council and the Board of Trustees; both have student representation on the committees. To ensure ongoing student collaboration and to monitor progress and outcomes, recurring updates will form part of the EDI Steering Group agenda and annual updates will be provided to Student Union Officers. In addition, the Widening Participation Steering Committee that monitors the NMITE APP has plans to invite a student representative as from 2026/27.

7. Evaluation of the plan

7.1 Strategic context for evaluation

Evaluation and research are part of our 'whole institution' approach to access and participation. Our academic, professional and leadership teams contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of targets, intervention strategies and activities in this plan through supporting and inputting on the range of evaluation measures. Our data team have skills in ensuring data capture is appropriate for the required monitoring and evaluation outputs, including designing new reports and processes to capture, collate and extract data for various evaluation and research questions. We also draw on the skills of staff responsible for the delivery of the Activities in this Plan, and our student representatives, to effectively incorporate evaluation.

In our assessment of our current context for evaluation, using the OfS evaluation self-assessment tool, we are 'emerging' across all areas. We have some foundations in place, but need to develop our practices, including embedding evaluation into activity design and delivery and ensuring feedback cycles into improving practice. Therefore, as we continue to build our cross-institution capacities for effective evaluation and the application of findings to improve practice, staff and student representatives will be supported with relevant training in Theory of Change and evaluation methods, provided through our SEER membership. Students are important in this work, and we will continue to work in partnership with students on the design and implementation of evaluation and research, particularly where this pertains to current students.

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

7.2 Activity design

As detailed in the Strategic Measures section of this Plan, evaluation has been established at the start. We have built effective evaluation practice into our Strategies by establishing a range of evaluation attached to the individual activities that contribute towards the overall objective of each Strategy. We can therefore build up an understanding of which activities are 'working', and which are not. We have taken a Theory of Change approach to the development of our Intervention Strategies, drawing from some of our existing models, identifying clear intended outcomes (intermediate and end) and a supporting evidence base that has informed our activity development and challenged assumptions. With the help of SEER, we will continue to review, develop and strengthen our Theories of Change (ToC), adding to our evidence base as our evaluation findings emerge and developing enhanced activity-level ToCs where required.

7.3 Evaluation design

We have collaborated with SEER and drawn from OfS and TASO toolkits and guidance on effective evaluation approaches. We have considered how the outcomes of activities can be evaluated credibly. Employing mixed method approaches is particularly important, as we will need to rely on qualitative data to support our understanding, or fill gaps, in quantitative data. We will triangulate findings where possible and seek to deepen our insights through qualitative methods. Given the developmental stage of our evaluation practice, the majority of our evaluations are type 1 (narrative), and type 2 (empirical enquiry) of the OfS 'Standards of Evidence'. We have however noted that we will explore and consider where type 3 evaluation could be implemented in future.

Our evaluation approach has also considered the context and scale of the activities and, as we have proposed working with strategic partners in our Intervention Strategies, we wish to note that some flexibility and development may be required as our collaborations take shape, allowing for input, support and advice from partners. Our evaluation approach, data collection and analysis have been formulated on the intended outcomes and objectives of our activities. Where appropriate and possible, we will consider and employ validated scales to our evaluation practices. We have also considered evaluation that spans (a) process and (b) impact, to provide a comprehensive understanding of how our activities are working. We will explore further research projects in relation to our activities and our ambition to better understand the experiences and challenges of target students and issues of equality of opportunity. For example, consultation with students as part of the development of this Plan supports the identification of risks relating to a lack of access to information and guidance about higher education meaning target groups aren't aware of our offer; however, we consider that there is further research that would add insight to this area.

7.4 Implementing our Evaluation Plan

We will collaborate internally across our team and with our strategic partners to deliver our evaluation plan. Our evaluation process will comply with institutional policies and complies with all legal requirements relating to data protection, following ethical, safeguarding, legal and risk considerations. As noted above, we are members of the Specialist Evidence, Evaluation and Research (SEER) service, with whom we will work in partnership to deliver our evaluation plan. A Data Sharing Agreement has also been established. SEER provides us with opportunities to collaborate on various evaluation and research items, including for example the evaluation of the impact of financial support, using the OfS toolkit. The design of our evaluation has also been heavily informed by intended and projected standardised outcomes being adopted by SEER across its membership base, which not only increases efficiencies but provides opportunities to increase the sample size and evaluation, helping to mitigate the issue of small datasets where these occur. SEER incorporate and draw on TASO guidance on best practices for evaluations. As a practice network, we are also able to participate in peer review of practice and evaluation and share practice and findings. We are also well-placed to respond with agility to interim findings and emerging data. We can be responsive in flexing our activity accordingly to help to keep us on track to achieve our objectives and targets and continuously improve our practice.

7.5 Learning from and disseminating findings

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

We are exploring membership of UniConnect and other organisations, at which we hope to share and present findings. We will actively contribute to conferences, network events and publications. Where appropriate we will draw on existing networks to collaborate and engage with similar organisations.

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

8. Provision of information to students

NMITE is committed to ensuring that all prospective students receive timely and accessible information on course content, entry requirements, tuition fees, financial support and other key information required prior to enrolment.

We ensure that key information about courses, fees, financial support and entry requirements is written in plain English and free from jargon. We prioritise accessibility in all our communications and make key materials available in a range of alternative formats to meet a range of needs.

We recognise the importance of this information to enable students make informed choices and reduce financial uncertainty. We provide multiple channels for communication to prospective students, applicants, newly enrolled students, current students:

- **NMITE Website:** this provides public information on NMITE, our programmes and key documents such as the APP and governance policies. The website also provides the route for direct applications throughout the year.
- **Open days:** NMITE runs regular open days throughout the year. They include talks on programme content, entry requirements, student finance and student support. There are members of staff available to answer further questions from prospective students and their families.
- **Offer Letter:** The offer letter contains key information such as course title, mode of study, start date, expected duration, offer conditions and tuition fees.
- **Student Contract:** This sets out the terms and conditions of contact between the student and NMITE from when an offer is accepted.
- **Student Handbook** contains information on student life at NMITE and welfare and support.
- **Tuition Fees and Refund Policy:** provides key information on the principles of setting tuition fees at NMITE and explains how students pay their fees.
- **MyNMITE portal** contains links to all policies, academic calendar, reporting facility and IT issues, claims for extenuating circumstances, links to the VLE, and support options during their time at NMITE including:

- **My Student Support** – information on NMITE BOOST, managing money, student life in Herefordshire, health&wellbeing, reporting concerns (self-referrals and other students).
- **My Student Voice** – surveys, feedback, suggestions.
- **My Bookings** - ability to book appointments with the Personal Tutors, Student Services and the ASK.

8.1 Financial Support

NMITE offers a wide range of financial support for our students, and this information is made available to all applicants and students, through targeted emails, on the website and through MyNMITE.

Financial support scheme	Purpose	Eligibility criteria	Level of support and number of awards	Level of support in subsequent years of study
NMITE Life Changer Bursary	Offers financial support to individuals from within Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire	Joining NMITE in 2026 Have a formal offer Have lived or been educated in the three counties in previous two years.	£10,000 over the duration of a student's studies 19 available in 2025 Availability in 2026 - TBD	For duration of study
Motorola Solutions Foundation Scholarship (women only)	Supports women pursuing a degree in Engineering at NMITE	Be a woman Be joining as a new student at NMITE for the September 2026 intake for an Engineering degree at BEng or MEng level.	£5,000 in cash for the first year of study to be awarded in two instalments in the first year of study	First year only
NMITE Care Experienced Bursary	For students who have or are being supported by a local authority Leaving Care Service and fulfil the criteria as stated in the Children Leaving Care Act 2000	Have accepted a formal offer on one of NMITE's undergraduate programmes (either as firm or insurance choice if applying through UCAS). Enrol on a programme in September 2026 Be aged 25 years or under at the start of the course.	The Bursary is worth £1000 per academic year of study (pro-rata), plus £1000 to help with start-up costs to a maximum of £4000 One available	£1,000 per year of study (up to 3 years)
NMITE Young Adult Carers Bursary	This bursary is for new undergraduate students from the UK who are young adult carers.	Be enrolled on either a degree level programme with or without Foundation year. Started your course here in the academic year 2026/27 Be aged 25 years or under at the start of the course.	The Bursary is worth £500 per academic year of study. One available	£500 per year of study
NMITE Neuro-diversity Diagnosis Fund	The aim of the Neuro-diversity Diagnosis fund is to support neuro-diverse students who do not have the means to fund a diagnostic assessment to reach their full academic potential whilst studying at NMITE	Be enrolled on either a degree level programme with or without Foundation year. Started your course here in the academic year 2026/27 Have completed an initial screening process either at previous education institution or self-assessed that indicates a neuro-diverse condition.	The NDDF will help with a formal diagnostic assessment to the maximum value of £1000	One off
NMITE Boost	Supports our students with cost of living		Free daily breakfast on campus (all) Free sanitary products (all) Free Sunday lunch once a month (up to 40 students, first come, first served) 10 free items from Living Room Larder for 12 weeks (limited number available) £1 per day towards travel costs (with proof of purchase)	All years
Financial Aid	For those experiencing financial difficulties	Individual consideration	Up to £1,000 Crisis payment of £100 two times a year	One off

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Fees, investments and targets

2026-27 to 2029-30

Provider name: New Model Institute for Technology and Engineering (NMITE)

Provider UKPRN: 10067406

Investment summary

A provider is expected to submit information about its forecasted investment to achieve the objectives of its access and participation plan in respect of the following areas: access, financial support and research and evaluation. Note that this does not necessarily represent the total amount spent by a provider in these areas. Table 6b provides a summary of the forecasted investment, across the four academic years covered by the plan, and Table 6d gives a more detailed breakdown.

Notes about the data:

The figures below are not comparable to previous access and participation plans or access agreements as data published in previous years does not reflect latest provider projections on student numbers.

Yellow shading indicates data that was calculated rather than input directly by the provider.

In Table 6d (under 'Breakdown'):

"Total access investment funded from HFI" refers to income from charging fees above the basic fee limit.

"Total access investment from other funding (as specified)" refers to other funding, including OfS funding (but excluding Uni Connect), other public funding and funding from other sources such as philanthropic giving and private sector sources and/or partners.

Table 6b - Investment summary

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Breakdown	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30
Access activity investment (£)	NA	£865,000	£865,000	£865,000	£865,000
Financial support (£)	NA	£190,000	£190,000	£190,000	£190,000
Research and evaluation (£)	NA	£27,000	£28,000	£28,000	£28,000

Table 6d - Investment estimates

Investment estimate (to the nearest £1,000)	Breakdown	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30
Access activity investment	Pre-16 access activities (£)	£120,000	£120,000	£120,000	£120,000
Access activity investment	Post-16 access activities (£)	£745,000	£745,000	£745,000	£745,000
Access activity investment	Other access activities (£)	£0	£0	£0	£0
Access activity investment	Total access investment (£)	£865,000	£865,000	£865,000	£865,000
Access activity investment	<i>Total access investment (as % of HFI)</i>	<i>71.5%</i>	<i>47.5%</i>	<i>33.8%</i>	<i>28.9%</i>
Access activity investment	<i>Total access investment funded from HFI (£)</i>	<i>£715,000</i>	<i>£715,000</i>	<i>£715,000</i>	<i>£715,000</i>
Access activity investment	<i>Total access investment from other funding (as specified) (£)</i>	<i>£150,000</i>	<i>£150,000</i>	<i>£150,000</i>	<i>£150,000</i>
Financial support investment	Bursaries and scholarships (£)	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000
Financial support investment	Fee waivers (£)	£25,000	£25,000	£25,000	£25,000
Financial support investment	Hardship funds (£)	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000
Financial support investment	Total financial support investment (£)	£190,000	£190,000	£190,000	£190,000
Financial support investment	<i>Total financial support investment (as % of HFI)</i>	<i>15.7%</i>	<i>10.4%</i>	<i>7.4%</i>	<i>6.3%</i>
Research and evaluation investment	Research and evaluation investment (£)	£27,000	£28,000	£28,000	£28,000
Research and evaluation investment	<i>Research and evaluation investment (as % of HFI)</i>	<i>2.2%</i>	<i>1.5%</i>	<i>1.1%</i>	<i>0.9%</i>

Fees, investments and targets

2026-27 to 2029-30

Provider name: New Model Institute for Technology and Engineering (NMITE)

Provider UKPRN: 10067406

Targets

Table 5b: Access and/or raising attainment targets[illegible]

Table 5d: Success targets

[illegible]

Table 5e: Progression targets

[illegible]