

Black Access Impact Evaluation 2025/2026

ACCESS AND OUTREACH TEAM, SEPTEMBER 2026

PLEASE CITE THIS REPORT AS: Access and Outreach Team (2026), Black Access Impact Evaluation 2025/2026, University of York

Access and Outreach

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Executive summary

This report evaluates the impact of the Black Access programme in 2025/2026 in supporting Black-heritage pupils across England in their journey to higher education (HE). The Black Access programme aims to increase participant knowledge and understanding of HE, as well as increasing confidence to apply to university. In doing so, the long term goal of the programme is to increase the number of successful applications and enrolments for Black-heritage students at highly selective institutions such as York.

The report uses survey responses from students before beginning their engagement with the Black Access programme and highlights themes regarding students' initial perceptions of HE. As the current cohort is midway through the programme at the time of writing and publishing, this analysis will provide narrative and seek to outline emerging themes in student responses. In future reports, this data will be directly compared with survey responses post completion of the programme and will look to analyse statistically significant changes in knowledge, understanding, confidence and attitudes around HE as outlined in the programme Theory of Change.

Programme overview and background

The Black Access programme is co-designed and delivered by current Black students at the University of York for Black students in Year 12 and Year 13. Students apply to the programme as individuals from geographical areas and schools/colleges all across England.

To be eligible for the Black Access programme, students must meet all of the following essential criteria:

- From a Black background, such as Black African, Black Caribbean, Mixed or multiple ethnic groups (including Black heritage), or other Black background
- Have the potential to achieve BCC or above at A Level, DMM or above in BTEC Extended Diploma or the equivalent in a Level 3 qualification e.g T Level
- Currently studying at an English state (non-fee paying) school, sixth form or college and in their first year of further education (such as Year 12 or Level 3 Year 1). We consider applications on a case by case basis where an applicant is attending an Independent Special School fully funded by their local authority
- Attended a State (non-fee paying) school from Year 7 to Year 11. Again, we consider applications on a case by case basis where an applicant has attended an Independent Special School fully funded by their local authority

As places on the programme are limited, priority is given to students who meet one or more of the following widening participation criteria.

- Have experience of local authority care
- Are estranged from their family members
- Are seeking asylum in the UK or granted refugee status
- Entitled to, or were in receipt of, free school meals or discretionary payments at school/college
- Have a disability or long term health condition
- From a military or service family
- Parent/carer/guardian(s) didn't go to university or went as a mature student during their secondary education
- Are a young carer. Students who care, unpaid, for a family member or friend with an illness or disability, mental health condition or an addiction. (UCAS & Carers Trust, 2026)¹
- Live in a low participation neighbourhood

Once on the programme, students are given the opportunity to engage with a variety of online and in-person activities such as online Zoom events, remote super-curricular learning opportunities, campus visits, and residential events. In completing the full two year programme, they can access the following benefits:

- A guaranteed offer or interview to study their chosen course at the University of York (subject to meeting course minimum requirements)
- An alternative offer of up to 3 grades lower than the standard offer for their course as published in the prospectus

Completing the full two year programme requires students to complete two stages:

Stage One of Programme Completion

The first stage of programme completion is to pass the first year. In the first year, each activity that students can take part in has a number of credits attached and students must gain a minimum of 100 credits to pass. Participating students have the full academic year as well as the beginning of the next to gain their required credits. For example, for the cohort this report starts to analyse, students have taken part in activities throughout the 2025/26 academic year and have a deadline of 5 October 2026 by which to gain the minimum 100 credits. Students are able to choose which activities they take part in in order to gain these credits therefore they do not have to engage in every activity offered. This is so that students are able to take part in the programme around existing commitments, giving more students the chance to participate in and successfully complete the programme. This model also recognises that not all students seek the same information, thus enabling them to tailor the programme to suit their interests and gain knowledge in specific areas that they feel is needed. Some events are joint events with other Post-16 programmes at York. The first year event offering is outlined below:

Table 1: Black Access Programme First Year Activity Offering

Activity Timeline	Activity Title	Activity Type	Activity Description	Maximum credits earned from taking part in the activity
January 2026	Black Access Launch	Online	Introduces students to the programme as a whole including the student team, the staff team and the activity offering.	15

¹ <https://www.ucas.com/applying/applying-to-university/students-with-individual-needs/students-with-caring-responsibilities>

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February 2026	Academic Conference Online	Online	An online session offering students to take part in subject taster lectures delivered by University of York academics.	15
February to March 2026	Mentoring Phase 1	Online	Hosted on the Brightside platform, students are matched with a member of the Black Access student team to engage in a 5 week period of mentoring. Students are able to ask mentors anything about student life via message	25
February 2026	All Things Uni	Online	Online session to guide students through the university application process, covering UCAS and student finance, and detailing the academic strengths and student experience at the University of York.	15
March 2026	Choosing your Course as a Black Student	Online	Online session providing students with advice on choosing the right university course for them, teaching students how to match their passions with career opportunities and helping them to deal with any pressures and expectations from within their support network.	15
April 2026	The Cookout	In Person	On campus event to prepare students for university success by equipping them with academic skills (study, research, and collaboration), essential life skills (budgeting and planning), and helping them connect and build their village with our student team and each other.	30
April 2026	Diversity and Inclusion at York	Online Joint event with the Next Step York Post-16 programme	Online session focusing on fostering a strong sense of belonging and celebrating students' unique identities, giving them a safe space to get honest answers about student life from diverse peers, current students and university staff.	15

BLACK ACCESS IMPACT EVALUATION 2025/2026

May 2026	Being Black at University	Online Black Access event that is open to Black-heritage students on other University of York Post-16 programmes	Student Team members share real-life experiences of being a Black student at university both generally and at York specifically. The session aims to give students space to tackle their biggest worries head-on, and show them where to find their community and support on campus.	15
May 2026	Preparing to Apply to Medicine at HYMS	Online Next Step York Post-16 programme event that is open to Black Access students	This session is led by current Medicine students and provides students with an overview of the specific application process for Medicine courses and provides advice and guidance on applications and interviews.	15
June 2026	June Enhanced Open Days	2 x in-person Open Days (only need to attend one)	An in-person Black Heritage Student Drop in session, where students can meet and greet the Black Access student team. This session sits within the wider University of York Open Day offering.	30
July 2026	Summer Residentials	3 x in-person residentials (only need to attend one) Joint event with the Next Step York Post-16 programme	Opportunity for students to visit campus and experience life as a University of York student. Students stay on campus for 3 days and 2 nights, engaging in subject taster sessions, an academic group project, sports/society sessions, social activities and a trip to the city centre.	40
September 2026	September Enhanced Open Days	2 x in-person Open Days (only need to attend one)	An in-person Black Heritage Student Drop in session, where students can meet and greet the Black Access student team. This session sits within the wider University of York Open Day offering.	30
September 2026	Preparing your UCAS Application	Online Joint event with the Next Step	Webinar event providing a structured, step-by-step guide to the UCAS application process, and guidance on writing an effective personal statement.	15

		York Post-16 programme		
September 2026	York Renaissance	In Person Black Access event that is open to Black-heritage students on other University of York Post-16 programmes	Campus event focusing on connecting students' future university degree to strong career success, giving essential professional skills experience, and celebrating Black success as students plan their journey.	30
Flexible	Supercurricular remote learning resource	Online	Students are able to engage in University of York MOOCs, listen to episodes of the Black Access podcast, or engage in their own super-curricular activity. They then need to submit a reflection piece to outline their learnings from the resource in order to gain credits.	20
Following each event	Feedback surveys	Online	Feedback surveys to gather students' views to help the team improve events year on year. Most surveys offer 5 credits for completion. Occasionally longer surveys offer 10 credits for completion.	5-10

Achieving 100 credits by the outlined deadline and therefore passing the first year of the programme makes students eligible to receive the first of the benefits outlined above, a guaranteed interview or offer to study a course at York (subject to meeting course minimum requirements, such as studying particular subjects at A Level or equivalent).

Stage Two of Programme Completion - complete the YorJourney module

In Year 2 of the programme, the Black Access team hosts a range of online activities from October to December. There are no credits attached to second year Black Access specific activities and none of these activities are mandatory. This is due to the recognition that students are likely to be applying to university at this time and preparing for Post-16 exams. So as not to add an additional workload on participants at this stage of their HE journey, the bulk of the programme takes place in Year 1. Year 2 events offer touch points to stay connected to the programme and offer transitional information, advice and guidance until the start of the YorJourney module in the summer term. Moreover, as YorJourney is an invite-only module for students who have placed York as their firm or insurance choice, the Black Access specific Year 2 events offer support for students who may later select other institutions.

In the summer term of the programme, all students who have completed the first year of a University of York Post-16 outreach programme, including Black Access, and have selected York as their firm or

insurance choice are invited to attend the YorJourney module. Completing this module is mandatory to complete the full two years of the Black Access programme and become eligible for the alternative offer.

The Black Access Programme second year activity offering is outlined below:

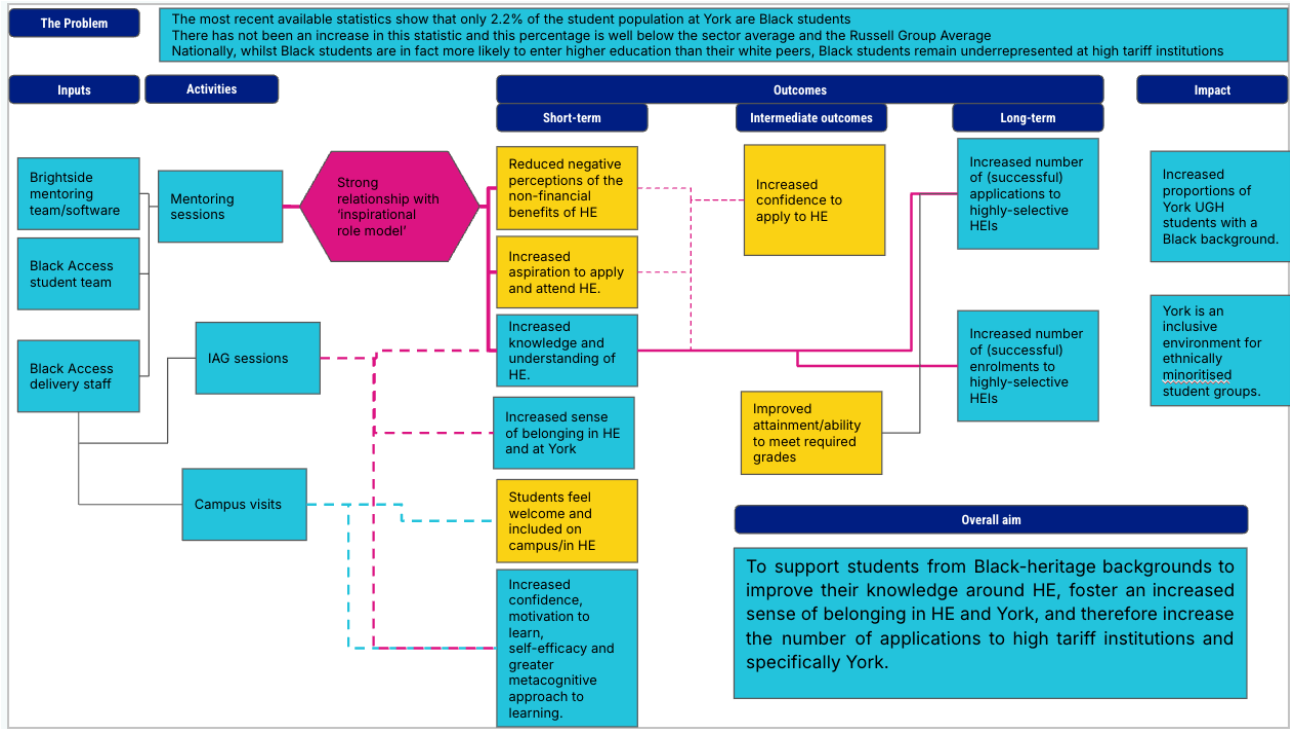
Table 2: Black Access Programme Second Year Activity Offering

Activity Timeline	Activity Title	Activity Type	Activity Description
September to October 2026	Mentoring Phase 2	Online mentoring using the Brightside platform	Students engage in a further 4 weeks of mentoring with a member of the Black Access student team at a time when the UCAS application window is open.
November 2026	Mental Health and Support	Online	Event aiming to equip students with the understanding, tools, and confidence to protect their mental health and wellbeing during the pressures of their final year of school/college and the transition to university.
December 2026	Revision and Study Skills	Online	Event to help students develop effective revision and study strategies that enhance exam performance, reduce stress, and promote academic confidence.
December 2026	Black Access Wrapped	Online	Final Black Access-specific event. A celebratory online games night to commemorate achievements and wrap up the Black Access programme as a community.
Summer Term 2027	YorJourney Module (Joint with all University of York Post-16 programmes)	Online	Module designed to support students across all post-16 programmes with the transition from school/college to university. Completion of this module is essential for students to unlock their reduced

		alternative offers.
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The cohort of Black Access participants that joined the programme in December 2025 are known as The 2025-27 Black Access cohort. They joined the programme in December of Year 1. Black Access events finish in December 2026 for this cohort, but in order to be eligible to receive the alternative offer, as outlined, students must complete the YorJourney module in the summer term of 2027.

Figure 1: Black Access Theory of Change



An accessible version of the Theory of Change can be found in [Appendix A](#)

Black Access was founded in 2020 in response to the stark underrepresentation of Black-heritage students at the University of York and other high tariff institutions. UCAS data summarised in a House of Commons Library Research Briefing (CBP-9023)² demonstrates that while 51% of Black 18-year-olds entered higher education in 2022, a higher percentage than White students and the overall average, only 9% went to a higher tariff institution. This was the lowest rate of any ethnic group. At York this picture is evident. The latest figures show that Black students make up only 2.2% of the student population at York (University of York Access and Participation Plan 2025/26 - 2028/29)³, a statistic that remains stagnant and falls well below both the Russell Group and the wider sector averages. The Black Access programme, delivered by current Black students at York, seeks to increase students' knowledge of HE, their confidence, and their sense of belonging at institutions like York.

An empirical link between belonging and successful outcomes in higher education is established in the *What Works? Student Retention & Success* final report (Thomas, 2012). The report highlights that belonging is achieved through supportive relationships with peers, university students, and staff

² <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9023/CBP-9023.pdf>

³ https://www.york.ac.uk/media/abouttheuniversity/University%20of%20York_APP_2025-26.pdf.pdf

members. These strategies were found to be most effective at the pre-entry stage and where interventions had engagement and a clear academic purpose.

However, Black students face additional barriers in terms of feeling a sense of belonging at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The *Wonkhe/Pearson Belonging and Inclusion Survey* (Wonkhe and Pearson, 2022) demonstrates that minoritised students report significantly lower rates of belonging and higher rates of exclusion at UK universities. As highlighted by Bhopal (2018) in an article in *The Conversation*, British higher education institutions, and academia more generally, have historically been characterised by an institutional *whiteness* that alienates minoritised groups. HESA data highlights only 1% of professors in the UK are Black (White, 2022). Moreover course curriculums often lack diversity, further contributing to the pervasiveness. The lack of Black representation and role models signal to prospective applicants that elite spaces are not designed for them. Black Access seeks to directly combat this through the student-led model of the programme. As the programme activities, including mentoring, are led by a Student Team of current Black students at York, participants are able to see themselves in Black role models, connect with other Black students and address culturally significant queries. As such interventions are built around peer engagement around the academic purpose of entry into and success at HE.

Another barrier Black students may face in accessing HE is a lack of self efficacy. Albert Bandura's (1994) foundational literature on *Self-Efficacy* asserts that an individual's belief in their capability to execute courses of action directly dictates their motivation, resilience in the face of academic adversity, and eventual level of achievement. For Black-heritage students, institutional racism in school and HE settings can significantly negatively impact self efficacy. For instance, disproportionately high rates of school exclusions for Black pupils, low teacher expectations and less favorable treatment of Afro-Caribbean students, can reduce Black pupils' motivation, self esteem and self efficacy (Yemane, 2023).

In spite of this, Sammons, Toth and Sylva, (2015, p.29-30) demonstrate that Black students consistently maintain exceptionally high educational aspirations when compared with their white peers. When evaluating the net factors predicting whether a student thinks it is "very likely" they will attend university, Black African heritage students were more than seven times more likely to believe they will go to university, and Black Caribbean heritage students also demonstrated a strong positive outlook. In the closely related model evaluating whether students believe getting a university degree is "very important," Black Caribbean heritage students were nearly three times more likely, and Black African heritage students were over ten times more likely to highly value getting a degree. However, translating ambitions into applications at high-tariff universities requires navigating a hidden curriculum of how to apply to university and make the right choices for you. Whitty, Hayton, and Tang (2015) suggest in their report '*Who you know, what you know, and knowing the ropes*' that navigating the admissions processes of elite HEIs requires specialised social capital ('*who you know*'), a high level of academic attainment and qualifications ('*what you know*') and deep institutional knowledge ('*knowing the ropes*') regarding personal statements, admissions interviews, and strategic choices. Black Access aims to address this gap through a consistent two-year programme providing information, advice and guidance to aid students in their decision making process.

Data reporting notice

Pupil numbers used throughout this document are being reported under HESA rounding guidelines to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of programme participants. As such, all participation figures are rounded to the nearest 5. Any category numbers reported as 0 do represent some programme participants; categories with no pupils are not reported on.

Participant information

All pupil numbers in this report are rounded to the nearest 5 to protect pupils’ identities. Pupil information and event attendance data reflect the full cohort, while the analysis of surveys includes only those programme participants who consented to their responses being used for evaluation purposes in accordance with the Black Access programme’s ethics procedures.

In 2025/2026, a total of 230 students enrolled onto the Black Access programme and remained enrolled at the point of the programme beginning with the Black Access Launch in January.

Figure 2: Black Access Year 12 pupil demographics

Number of Students vs Demographic

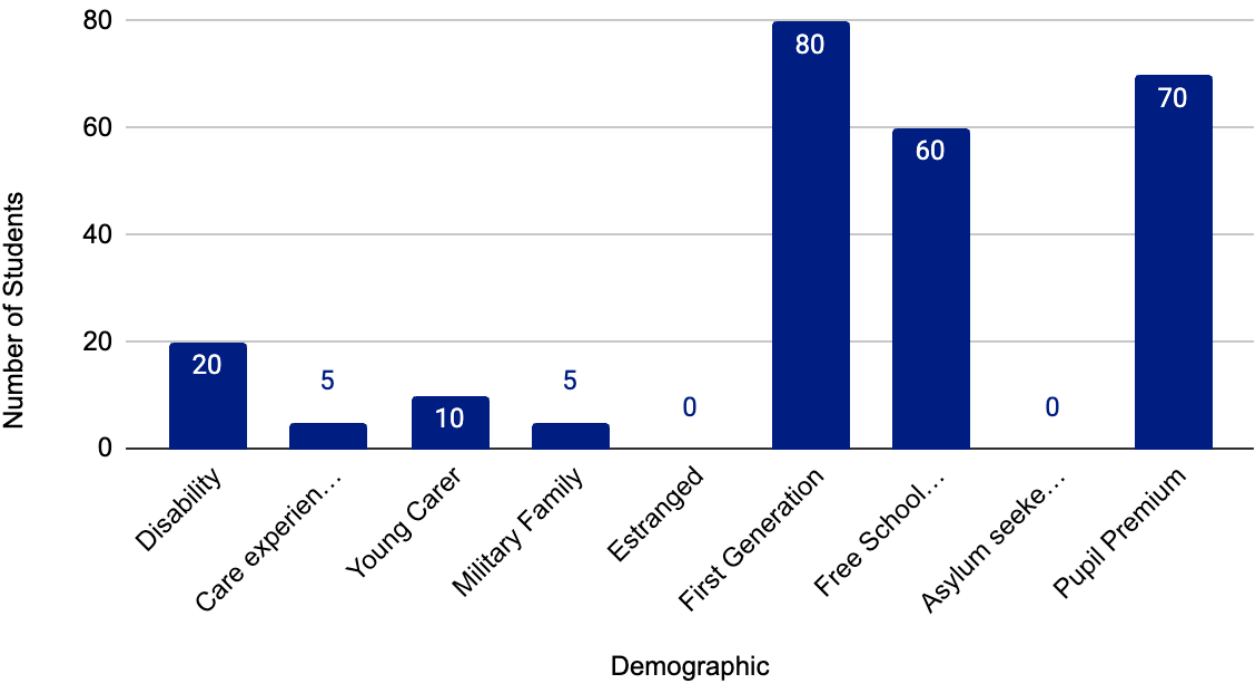


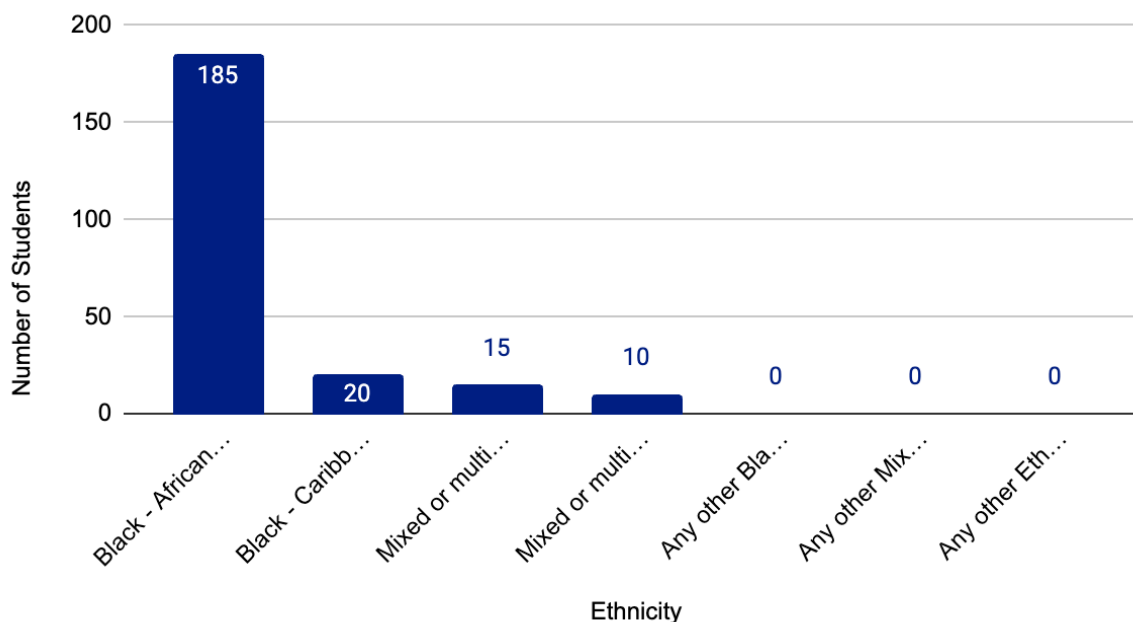
Figure 3: Black Access Year 12 breakdown by ethnicity**Number of Students vs Ethnicity****Event attendance rates**

Table 3 provides an overview of the Black Access events that took place during the 2025/26 academic year, detailing the number of pupils invited, the number who attended, and the corresponding attendance rate for each event.

Table 3: Attendance at Black Access events during the 2025/2026 academic year

Black Access event	Number invited	Number attended	Percentage
Black Access Launch	230	180	77.4%
AcademicConference Online	230	75	33.0%
Mentoring Phase 1	230	75	33.0%
All Things Uni	230	125	53.5%
Choosing your Course as a Black Student	230	85	37.0%
The Cookout	230	75	31.7%
Diversity and Inclusion at York	230	20	9.6%
Being Black at University	230	50	20.9%

Black Access event	Number invited	Number attended	Percentage
Preparing to Apply to Medicine at HYMS	230	30	13.5%
June Enhanced Open Days		20	9.6%
Summer Residentials	90	86	95.56%

Please note that the remainder of the Year 1 Black Access event offering has not yet taken place.

Research consent

Ethics approval was received from the University of York's Professional Services Research Ethics Committee (ProSREC) in October 2025. All participants and their parent/carer/guardian(s) (PCGs) were required to read an information sheet and complete a consent form before participating. Participants were told that taking part in the research was optional and they had the right to withdraw at any stage of the project. Participants were made aware that taking part in the research would not impact any current or future interactions with the University of York.

Research aims

The Black Access evaluation report aims to research the following questions:

- To what extent does the programme address barriers present for Black heritage students in accessing highly selective HEIs and the University of York specifically?
- What is the impact of BA on participants' engagement in higher education and specifically at York?
- To what extent does the programme ensure participants feel welcome and included within HE and specifically at York?

Hypotheses

The Black Access team hypothesised the following student outcomes, which directly respond to the research questions above and are based on the Theory of Change.

- Participants will report an increase in their knowledge base and understanding of HE compared to their pre-programme baselines.
- Participants will report an increase in their academic self-efficacy and cognitive strategies compared to their pre-programme baselines.
- Participants will report an improvement in their perceived sense of belonging in HE and at York compared to their pre-programme baselines.
- Participant cohorts will achieve higher Key Stage 5 academic attainment on average than the school-wide non-participant baseline
- The University of York will see an increase in applications, offers and enrolments from participants.
- There will be an increase in enrolments to other highly selective institutions from participants who do not enrol at York.
- Participants will report an improvement in their perceived sense of belonging in HE and at York compared to their pre-programme baselines.

- Participants will report an increase in the value of creating community and seeing role models in HE compared to their pre-programme baselines.
- The University of York will see an increase in the proportion of its students from a Black background.

Data collection and methods

To assess the impact of the Black Access programme, students who had successfully gained a place completed a Welcome Survey before the start of any programme activities. This research uses a repeated-measures design, therefore, the Welcome Survey serves as a baseline measure to understand students' initial perceptions and attitudes around higher education and the University of York. Consenting participants will be asked to repeat the survey at both a midpoint and end of programme timeline to measure change and impact.

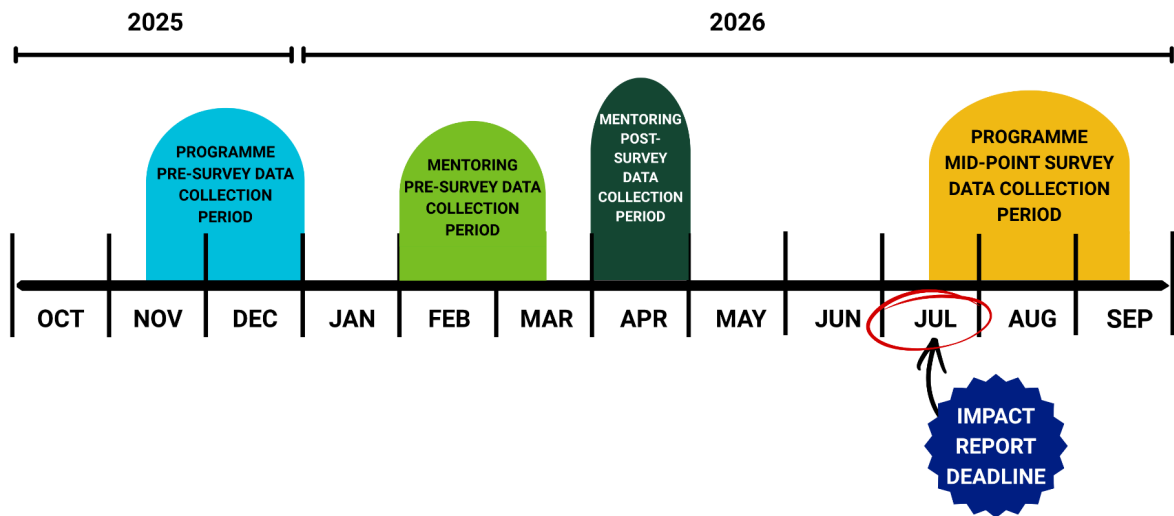
The Black Access evaluation framework uses a mixture of TASO Access and Success Questionnaire (ASQ) validated scales as well as custom questions. Of the seven outcomes the ASQ scale measures, this framework uses all four relevant for Access activities and one which can be used for both Access and Success. These are; Academic Self-efficacy, Higher Education Expectations, Knowledge of Higher Education, Sense of Belonging and Cognitive Strategies. The TASO validated scale weighting has been applied for each participants' scores. The custom questions were categorised into custom scales aligning to the Black Access Theory of Change outcomes. These can be viewed in full in Appendix B.

All Welcome Survey questions, both from the ASQ validated scale and custom, used a 5-point Likert scale for responses, which were converted into numerical values for quantitative analysis for each pupil (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Mean and median scores were then calculated for each ASQ validated scale and custom scale, as well as per question to ascertain the highest and lowest scoring question within each scale. 'Prefer not to say' responses were coded as 0 and excluded from the mean and median calculations, therefore, the reported figures reflect active sentiment.

Of the 230 students on the programme, 180 gave full consent to use their responses within this research. Following data cleaning, these responses have been initially analysed to identify emerging themes. The Academic Self-efficacy, Knowledge of Higher Education and Sense of Belonging scales contained three questions each, the Higher Education Expectations scale contained one question, and the Cognitive Strategies scale contained four questions. There were 180 full responses and scores for each scale. The custom scales focus predominantly on intentions and motivations behind joining the programme and applying to university. Whilst these provide insightful contextual information, it is the TASO ASQ validated scales which this and following reports will focus on to assess the impact of Black Access.

It is not yet possible to conduct further comparative analysis or draw conclusions of impact due to the longitudinal nature of the Black Access programme. Nevertheless, the findings presented in this report offer early insights and themes regarding students' initial perceptions of HE and the University of York. In future reports, this data will be directly compared with survey responses post completion of the programme and will look to analyse statistically significant changes in knowledge, understanding, confidence and attitudes around HE as outlined in the programme Theory of Change.

Figure 4: Data collection and reporting timeline for Black Access cohort 25-27



As part of the mentoring aspect of the programme, students completed a pre-mentoring survey, a mid mentoring survey at the end of phase 1 of mentoring and they will complete a post-mentoring survey at the end of phase 2 of mentoring. The mentoring survey used questions from the [NERUPI evaluation framework question bank](#). Questions were selected and grouped to align with the Black Access Theory of Change outcomes, see [Appendix B](#). Each custom group, Finances, Knowledge of Higher Education, University Support, and Sense of Belonging, used 5-point Likert agreement scales which were averaged for each pupil to create an outcome score.

Students were asked to provide their Black Access usernames so that responses could be matched over time, allowing for a more detailed analysis of trends and individual progress. 25 students (and their PCG's) consented to participate in the research and then completed both the pre and mid mentoring survey. The data was cleaned by outcome group to remove any participants who did not complete a full set of questions for the outcome (for example, if they responded 'prefer not to say'). This left 20 participants for the 'Knowledge of Higher Education' outcome and 25 for the remaining three. Each outcome measure was tested to see whether any change is statistically significant.

The pre and post outcome scores were tested for normality. 'Finances', 'Knowledge of Higher Education; and 'Sense of Belonging' scores were normally distributed and therefore required a paired samples t-test to determine whether changes in scores were statistically significant. 'University Support' scores were not normally distributed and therefore a Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used.

Findings

TASO Validated Questions

The following tables present our findings with regards to student responses to the TASO validated questions within the pre-programme Welcome Survey. The full set of questions are outlined in [Appendix B](#).

Table 4: Mean and Median scores for TASO validated questions assessing students' academic self-efficacy, cognitive strategies, HE expectations, knowledge of HE and sense of belonging in HE.

	Academic Self-efficacy	Cognitive Strategies	HE Expectations	Knowledge of HE	Sense of Belonging
Mean	4.28	4.00	4.66	3.72	3.97
Median	4.36	4	5	3.72	4

This table shows that students had high overall mean and median scores in all areas. Comparatively, students had particularly high scores in their expectations that they would go on to enter HE. The table further demonstrates students' confidence in their academic ability to gain a place at university, fit in and succeed academically at university. However, whilst students demonstrated high confidence in academic ability, this table shows they had comparatively lower confidence in their knowledge of HE and sense of belonging at university.

Table 5: Highest scoring statement within each category

Highest scoring statement in the scale			
Academic Self-efficacy	Cognitive Strategies	Knowledge of HE	Sense of Belonging
I have the academic ability to do well at university	I can tell how reliable information is when I read something.	I believe that if I apply to university, I will get a place.	I would fit in well academically with others at university.

Table 6: Lowest scoring statement within each category

Lowest scoring statement in the scale			
Academic Self-efficacy	Cognitive Strategies	Knowledge of HE	Sense of Belonging
I could manage with the level of study required at university.	I can clearly explain my ideas, even when writing about complicated things.	I know what studying at university would be like.	University is for people like me.

Custom Survey Questions

The following tables present our findings with regards to student responses to the custom questions within the pre-programme Welcome Survey. The full set of questions are outlined in [Appendix B](#).

Table 7: Factors affecting students' applications to universities

University Application Factors			
	Practical & Financial Constraints	Academic & Reputational Capital	Social Fit & Community
Mean	3.53	4.22	3.40

Median	3.5	4.17	3.5
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Table 8: Highest scoring statement within each category of application factors

Highest Scoring Statement within the scale		
Practical & Financial Constraints	Academic & Reputational Capital	Social Fit & Community
The financial support offered by the university i.e. non repayable scholarships and bursaries	The required grades	Reputation regarding equality / diversity

Table 9: Lowest scoring statement within each category of application factors

Lowest Scoring Statement within the scale		
Practical & Financial Constraints	Academic & Reputational Capital	Social Fit & Community
How close the university is to where I live	The contextual admissions policies offered i.e. reduced offers or additional considerations	Where people I know are applying

Value Ranking Questions

The following tables present our findings with regards to student responses to the value ranking questions within the pre-programme Welcome Survey. The full set of questions are outlined in [Appendix B](#).

Table 10: Scores outlining where Black Access students find value in the programme

Community & Role Models Total Score	Practical Programme Elements Total Score
3.23	3.77
3	4

Table 11: Highest scoring statement within each category of different elements of the Black Access programme that students value

Highest Scoring Statement within the scale	
Community & Role Models	Practical Programme Elements
The chance to meet a community of current Black university students	The chance to attend online sessions

Table 12: Lowest scoring statement within each category of different elements of the Black Access programme that students value

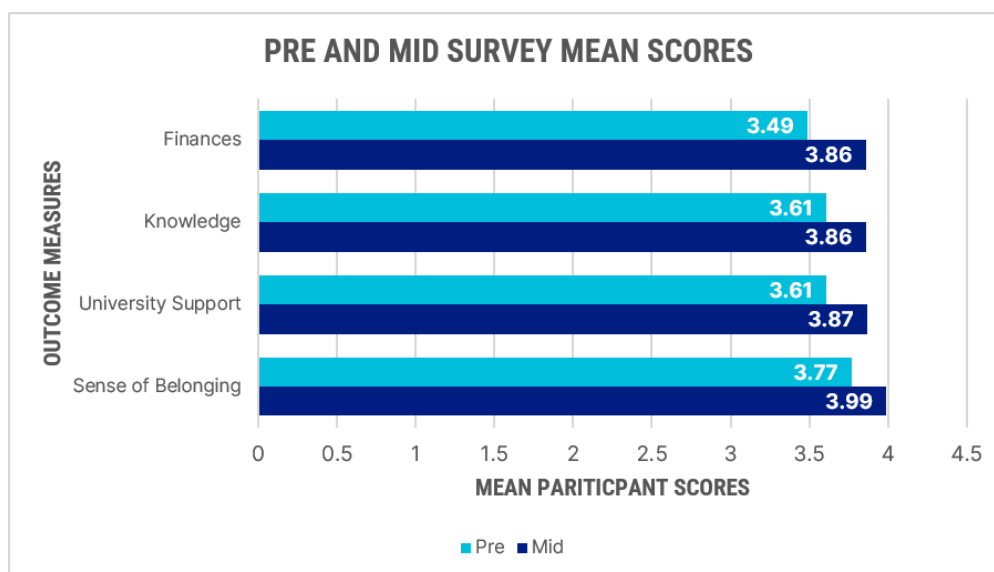
Lowest Scoring Statement within the scale	
Community & Role Models Total Score	Practical Programme Elements Total Score
The chance to meet a community of other Black students considering applying to university / The chance to be mentored by a current Black university student	The chance to secure an alternative offer (upon successful completion of the programme)

Table 13: Student intentions in applying to different types of universities

HE Intentions			
	I intend to apply to the University of York	I intend to apply to other Russell Group universities	I intend to apply to other top-third ranking universities
Mean	4.16	4.54	4.18
Median	4	5	4

Mentoring survey questions

For each outcome group we considered the cohort scores from the pre and mid survey as seen in Figure 3. An increase was found for each outcome between the pre and the mid mentoring survey. For each outcome group the scores before and after the mentoring scheme were tested for any statistically significant differences.

Figure 5: Pre and Mid Mentoring Survey Mean Outcome Scores

When these increases were tested, no statistically significant changes were found. For each outcome the results are below⁴:

⁴ Degrees of freedom and sample sizes are reported here using HESA rounding of the number of participants with matched complete outcome scores.

- **Finances:** A two-sided paired samples t-test found no statistically significant difference between the pre (M = 3.49, SD = 0.91) and mid (M = 3.86, SD = 0.84) surveys; $t(25) = -1.765$, $p = 0.091$.
- **Knowledge of HE:** A two-sided paired samples t-test found no statistically significant difference between the pre (M = 3.61, SD = 0.68) and mid (M = 3.86, SD = 0.48) surveys; $t(20) = -1.857$, $p = 0.077$.
- **University Support:** The Wilcoxon signed-rank test conducted did not find a statistically significant difference, ($Z = -1.901$, $p = 0.057$), $n=25$
- **Sense of Belonging:** A two-sided paired samples t-test found no statistically significant difference between the pre (M = 3.77, SD = 0.80) and mid (M = 3.99, SD = 0.71) surveys; $t(25) = -1.464$, $p = 0.157$.

Discussion

These findings are based on the Black Access Welcome Survey and the Mentoring Survey only.

TASO Validated Questions

Academic Self-efficacy

Participants recorded high overall mean and median scores in Academic Self-efficacy, both in absolute terms and in comparison to most other scales. Students demonstrated strong confidence in their academic ability to succeed at university. However, they reported comparatively lower confidence regarding their ability to manage the specific level and workload of study required at the undergraduate level.

Feedback from the online Academic Conference provides an early indication of how this barrier can be dismantled. A majority of the cohort reported gaining a clearer understanding of what university-style lectures are like. By demystifying how university teaching operates compared to school-level study, such events can alleviate concerns around managing higher-level workloads.

To build upon these baseline scores and early feedback, Black Access has supported participants through subject taster lectures, an academic group project during the residential, and targeted 1:1 mentoring. Through these practical academic exposures, we anticipate a continued positive trajectory in academic self-efficacy in subsequent survey rounds.

Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive strategies, defined as the mental techniques and processes used to facilitate learning, problem-solving, decision-making, and critical thinking (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986), represent an area where cohort confidence is not as firmly established in comparison to other areas of the TASO validated scales. Within this scale, students expressed the highest confidence in assessing the reliability of information, but reported their lowest scores when required to articulate and explain their own ideas.

Black Access should support participants by embedding opportunities for academic debate, through subject taster lectures and workshops, an academic skills activity in The Cookout event and academic project sessions within the summer residentials. By embedding these skills within the programme, we expect to see a positive upward trajectory in future surveys.

Higher Education Expectations & Intentions

Higher Education Expectations generated the highest mean and median scores across all five TASO scales. This shows that the cohort enters the programme with an exceptionally firm expectation that they will enter HE. While general expectations are high, intention scores vary across university types. Intentions to apply to highly selective universities and Russell Group institutions (other than York) are consistently high. Conversely, intentions to apply to other top-third ranking universities and to the University of York specifically recorded comparatively lower scores.

As we expect general HE expectations to remain high throughout the programme, the key programme objective is to showcase the specific benefits of applying to and enrolling at the University of York, thereby converting general high ambition into increased application intentions for York specifically. The Black Access programme enables participants to form connections with current students and academics at York, which we hope will increase participants' understanding of what being a top-third ranking university practically looks like and demystifying the University of York.

Knowledge of Higher Education

Knowledge of Higher Education recorded the lowest overall mean and median scores across all five TASO scales. While participants express strong confidence that they will receive an offer if they apply (aligning with their high overall expectations), they report feeling significantly less informed about what studying at university would actually be like on a day-to-day basis.

Early interventions are already addressing this gap. Feedback from the online Academic Conference showed that a majority of participants gained a better understanding of university-style lectures, directly addressing their lack of familiarity with HE learning environments. Black Access will continue to target this knowledge gap through student panels, campus experiences, and interactive sessions detailing student life, academic structures, and university support services. Given these planned interventions, we expect to see a clear positive trajectory in Knowledge of HE scores in future evaluation cycles.

Sense of Belonging

Sense of Belonging returned the second-lowest mean and median scores across the TASO scales. These scores could suggest that across the cohort, participants do have a fair sense of belonging at university but that this is an area with room for improvement.

Within the scale there is a high belief that participants will fit in well academically with others at university, which aligns with the baseline findings from the Academic Self-efficacy scale. However, the scores record a comparatively lower belief that they will fit in well socially.

Fostering a sense of belonging is a key focus of Black Access. The programme is structured around developing this through its student-led format and will address this through structured social programming, peer cohort bonding during the residential project, and dedicated mentoring from current Black undergraduate students. Providing strong peer networks and representation is expected to foster a broader sense of social belonging, leading to a positive trajectory in subsequent surveys.

Value Ranking Scales

To better understand participant motivations for joining the programme, six value-ranking questions were categorized into two custom scales: Practical Programme Elements and Community & Role Models (Tables 10–12).

Overall, the cohort placed a higher overall value on the practical elements of the Black Access programme (Mean = 3.77, Median = 4) compared to the community and role model aspects (Mean = 3.23, Median = 3).

Highest Scoring Statement: "The chance to attend online sessions"

Lowest Scoring Statement: "The chance to secure an alternative offer (upon successful completion of the programme)"

The preference for online delivery suggests that accessibility, flexibility, and convenience could be key drivers for student engagement.

Interestingly, securing an alternative contextual offer scored lowest within this category. This is, however, consistent with earlier baseline findings where students demonstrated high Academic Self-efficacy and high HE Expectations. As participants already enter the programme with strong confidence in their ability to earn a university place, the contextual offer may be viewed as a welcome secondary benefit rather than their primary motivation for joining.

While community dimensions scored lower overall than practical elements, responses to specific statements reveal important distinctions in how participants value current student connections and representation.

Highest Scoring Item: "The chance to meet a community of current Black university students"

Lowest Scoring Statement: "The chance to meet a community of other Black students considering applying to university" / "The chance to be mentored by a current Black university student"

Although community factors ranked lower overall, the cohort placed significant value on connecting directly with current Black undergraduates. Interacting with students who are already navigating predominantly white institutions like York may provide authentic representation and role models.

Mentoring Survey Questions

Due to the very small number of matched survey responses, it is not surprising that despite positive increases for all outcome measures that no statistically significant differences were found. At this time, we do not have enough evidence to suggest there was a statistically significant difference related to the Black Access mentoring scheme. Even so, an increase in each outcome measure is very positive and will be tested after the final survey for any changes seen in Year 2.

Recommendations and Limitations

These findings provide a narrative summary of the Black Access programme so far. However, due to the programme being mid-cycle, the data sees a number of limitations.

Limitations

- Data is limited to baseline Welcome surveys for both the programme as a whole and the mentoring aspect of the programme as a significant portion of Year 1 activities (September open days, Renaissance) and all Year 2 interventions have not taken place at the time of reporting
- Students self-apply for the programme and are likely to already have high motivations and self-efficacy for applying to and entering higher education

- Specific post-event surveys that have been collected so far have largely been structured for internal use rather than directly contributing to the assessment of the impact of the programme as a whole. These surveys have therefore not been used as part of this report
- Surveys that have been mapped to the Theory of Change and can provide statistically significant data, such as the mentoring surveys, had a very small sample size, meaning statistically significant findings could not be drawn

To maximise programme impact, the report recommends the following interventions:

Recommendations

- Continue to survey cohort at mid-point and programme completion to build a data set where impact can be evaluated
- Systematically mapping all post-event survey data directly to Theory of Change outcomes to yield more comparative data even when programme delivery is not yet finished at the time of report writing
- Further refine data collection for the mentoring component across future cohorts to build a larger dataset for statistical analysis.

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Appendix A: Black Access Theory of Change

Problem

- The most recent available statistics show that only 2.2% of the student population at York are Black students
- There has not been an increase in this statistic and this percentage is well below the sector average and the Russell Group Average
- Nationally, whilst Black students are in fact more likely to enter higher education than their white peers, Black students remain underrepresented at high tariff institutions.

Target population

Students in Year 12 from Black-heritage backgrounds across England.

Inputs and activities

The Black Access staff team work alongside the Black Access Student Team, and the Brightside team to deliver the following activities of the Black Access programme.

- Mentoring Sessions
- IAG Sessions
- Campus Visits

Short term outcomes

- Reduced negative perceptions of the non-financial benefits of HE
- Increased aspiration to apply and attend HE.
- Increased knowledge and understanding of HE.
- Increased sense of belonging in HE and at York
- Students feel welcome and included on campus/in HE
- Increased confidence, motivation to learn, self-efficacy and greater metacognitive approach to learning.

Intermediate outcomes

- Increased confidence to apply to HE
- Improved attainment/ability to meet required grades

Long-term outcomes

- Increased number of (successful) applications to highly-selective HEIs and York specifically
- Increased number of (successful) enrolments to highly-selective HEIs and York specifically

Overall aim

To support students from Black-heritage backgrounds to improve their knowledge around HE, foster an increased sense of belonging in HE and York, and therefore increase the number of applications to high tariff institutions and specifically York.

Assumptions

- Students want to take part in widening access programme such as Black Access
- Students' parents/carers/guardians and a teacher at school or college support their participation on the programme
- Students have the means and time to access the event offering

Barriers

- Not all students will have access to a device where they can access online events, forms, newsletters etc
- Students may not have the time they would like to dedicate to the programme, due to individual commitments and circumstances

Appendix B: Evaluation Framework

TASO Validated Questions						
The following statements relate to how you feel about studying at university from an academic perspective. Please think about each statement and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree.		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Academic Self Efficacy	I am confident that I can get the exam results required to progress to university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I have the academic ability to do well at university.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I could manage with the level of study required at university.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The following statements are about how you study. Please think about how you go about learning and studying generally and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement.		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Cognitive Strategies	I can tell which information is most important when I study.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I can tell how reliable information is when I read something.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I can clearly explain my ideas, even when writing about complicated things.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I can confidently explain my ideas when talking to others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

TASO Validated Questions						
This question is about whether you're thinking about going to university. There is no right or wrong answer, the important thing is to respond honestly about what you think.		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
HE Intentions	I am thinking about going to university in the future.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The following statements are about what you know and how you feel about going to university. Please think about each statement and indicate to what extent you agree or disagree.		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Knowledge of HE	I know what studying at university would be like.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I know how studying at university is different from studying in school or at college.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I believe that if I apply to university, I will get a place.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The following statements relate to how you might feel about becoming a student at university. Please think about each statement and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree.		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Sense of Belonging	University is for people like me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I would fit in well academically with others at university.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I would fit in well socially with others at university.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Custom Questions						
These statements relate to how important the following factors are to you when making a decision about which universities to apply to. Please think about each statement and indicate the extent of their importance to you.		Not important at all	Not important	Not sure	Important	Very important
Factors affecting students' decisions about which universities to apply to	Where people I know are applying	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	How close the university is to where I live	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	How much it will cost to live in that location	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	How much people at the university are like me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	The required grades	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	The contextual admissions policies offered i.e. reduced offers or additional considerations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	The course content	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	University rankings/reputation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Graduate prospects	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Facilities available at the university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	The location of the university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Reputation regarding equality / diversity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	How much people share a similar background to me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	The financial support offered by the university i.e. non repayable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Custom Questions						
	scholarships and bursaries					
The following statements relate to the influencers when considering applying to university. Please think about each influencer and their importance related to your decision making about higher education.			Not important at all	Not important	Not sure	Important
Importance of different influencers in making decisions about higher education	Parent/Carer/Guardian		☐	☐	☐	☐
	Other family members		☐	☐	☐	☐
	Friends		☐	☐	☐	☐
	Teacher		☐	☐	☐	☐
	Careers advisor		☐	☐	☐	☐
	Other (box to input custom response)		☐	☐	☐	☐
Please rate the following elements offered by the Black Access programme in order of their value to you. Please drag and drop the statements to show your rank order with (1) being the most valuable and (6) being the least valuable to you.						
Value placed on different elements of the Black Access programme	The chance to meet a community of other Black students considering applying to university					
	The chance to meet a community of current Black university students					
	The chance to be mentored by a current Black university student					
	The chance to attend on campus in person visits					
	The chance to attend online sessions					
	The chance to secure an alternative offer (upon successful completion of the programme)					
The following statements relate to reasons that you have applied to the Black Access			Strongly	Disagree	Neither	Agree

Custom Questions						
programme.		disagree		agree nor disagree		agree
Please think about each statement and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree.						
Motivations for joining the Black Access programme	I would like to learn more about universities like York	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I would like to speak to current students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I would like to meet new people and join the university community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I would like to develop my academic skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I would like to try something new	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	My friends were applying	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I hope it will help me decide whether to go to university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I would like support with my application	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I would like to find out more about student life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I would like to know more about student finance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I would like to know more about certain subjects	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I would like to know more about careers and what I can do with a university degree	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I thought it would be useful for my personal statement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I would like an alternative offer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Other (box to input custom response)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Custom Questions						
This question is about whether you intend to apply to specific universities. There is no right or wrong answer, the important thing is to respond honestly about what you think.		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
HE Intentions (not TASO Validated)	I intend to apply to the University of York	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I intend to apply to other Russell Group universities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I intend to apply to other top-third ranking universities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Mentoring Questions - Using NERUPI Questions						
How much do you agree with the following statements about yourself?		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Finances Increased knowledge of and confidence in managing financial elements of student life	I know about opportunities that are available for working and studying	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I understand about how I'd be able to afford university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I am aware of what financial support is available for university students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Knowledge Increased knowledge of and confidence in choosing between different courses and universities based on what is "right" for them	I am aware of the types of courses / subjects offered at university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I know how to compare universities based on what I'm looking for	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I am confident making decisions about which courses are right for me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Figuring out how to choose a university that's best for me is overwhelming (Negatively ranked)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Mentoring Questions - Using NERUPI Questions						
University Support Increased knowledge of and confidence in accessing a range of university support	I know about the services available to support students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I know how teaching and learning at university might be different from school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I feel confident studying at a higher level	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sense of Belonging Increased knowledge of and confidence in establishing networks and finding a sense of belonging within the student community	I know lots about what student life is actually like	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I feel confident about meeting people and making new friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I know about the types of social and leisure opportunities which would be available to me at university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I am confident I would have the support I need to do well at university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix C: Pupil demographics

Student Group	Definition
Care experienced	Pupils who have care experience ; this refers to anyone who has been, or is currently, in care. This care may have been provided in many different settings, including living with foster carers, living in a residential children's home, being looked after at home under a supervision order, or living with friends or relatives in kinship care
Estranged students	The term 'estranged student' describes someone who has no communication with both of their biological or adoptive parents, and the situation is likely to remain permanent.
Disabled or long-term health condition	Pupils who report a disability, including pupils with long-term health conditions, specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and ADHD, autistic spectrum conditions and mental health conditions
First generation	Pupils who are the first generation in their family to go to university
Free school meals	Pupils entitled to, or in receipt of, free school meals
IMD 1 or 2	Pupils living in an IMD 1 or 2 area. Measure of relative deprivation. IMD 1 and 2 represent the most deprived areas
Military or service family	Pupils of an individual who is currently serving in the Regular or Reserve Armed Forces.
Pupil premium	Pupils entitled to, or in receipt of, discretionary payments at school
Young carer	Pupils with unpaid caring responsibilities for a family member

Appendix D: Glossary

Acronym	Definition
A Level	Advanced Level
ASQ	Access & Success Questionnaire
BTEC	Bachelor of Technology
FSM	Free School Meal
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HYMS	Hull York Medical School
IAG	Information Advice & Guidance
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
LLE	Lifelong Learning Entitlement
MOOCs	Massive Open Online Courses
NERUPI	Network for Evaluating and Researching University Participation Interventions
ProSREC	Professional Services Research Ethics Committee
PCG	Parent, Carer, Guardian
Q&A	Questions & Answers
Q1	Quintile 1
T Level	Technical Level
TASO	Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service