

Improving access for the most able but least likely

Evaluation of the Realising Opportunities programme

Realising Opportunities (RO) is a collaboration of leading universities who have made a long-term commitment to sharing their practice in widening participation, fair access and social mobility.



RO provides a supportive programme to students in Years 12 and 13 with good academic attainment from disadvantaged backgrounds



Students receive a range of information and support to make informed choices about going to university, and whether they could attend a research intensive university

Successfully recruiting the most able but least likely students

99% of starters to date have achieved eight or more GCSE passes at A*-C/9-4 grades



91% of starters have parents with no experience of higher education (HE)



66% of starters come from local areas with the lowest HE participation rates

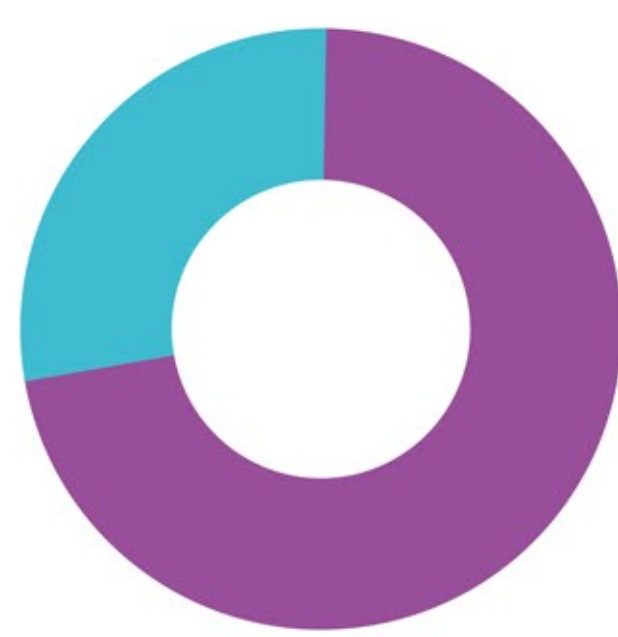


Nearly one in three starters have been eligible for free school meals



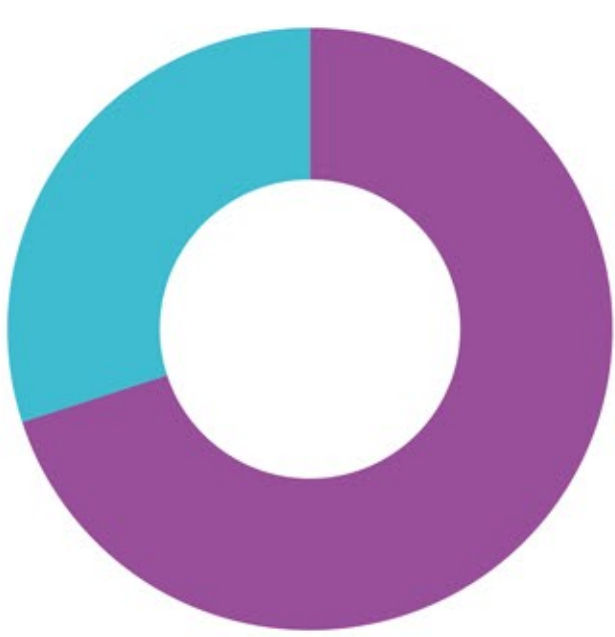
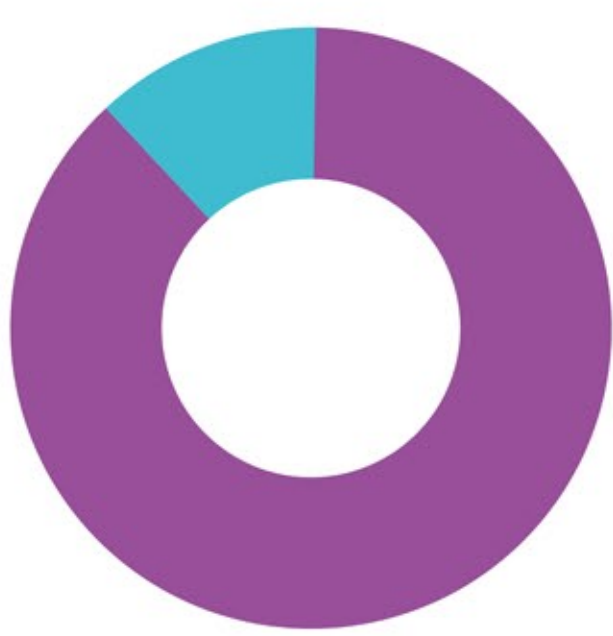
Programme participation increases students' understanding of research intensive universities and of university life

At the end of the programme...

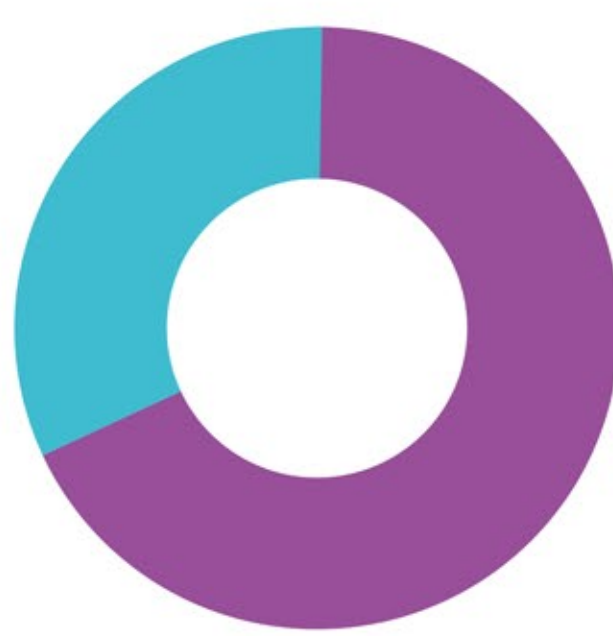


72% knew more about course options

88% knew more about how to apply to university



68% knew more about the costs and financial support offered



70% knew more about what a research intensive university is



57% knew more about what student life is like

Outcomes for programme participants



Participants
All 18-year-olds

The vast majority of participants apply to university at the end of Year 13, double the overall proportion of 18-year-olds who apply to university



Latest cohort
18-year-olds
Similar comparator group

Two-thirds of the latest cohort to become HE-ready started university. Almost double the rate for 18-year-olds, and better than a comparison group who participated in different outreach activities

Around one in three RO students attend research intensive universities, compared with one in four in the comparator group receiving alternative outreach support



The 'alternative offer' has helped up to 430 students take up a place at a RO university that they otherwise might not have obtained. That is just over half of all those who have attended a RO university



RO students have broadened their study horizons and become more geographically mobile over time. The proportion of RO students attending their 'host' university has declined substantially, and successive cohorts have tended to travel further to go to university



Once at university, RO students are more likely than students overall to stay on their course



Four-fifths of the most recent graduates obtained a First Class or Upper Second Class degree, slightly above the overall proportion of 76% of all students including those from the most advantaged backgrounds



RO graduates are just as likely as graduates overall to enter graduate-level employment or take up further study

