

Office for  
Students



# Widening access for mature students

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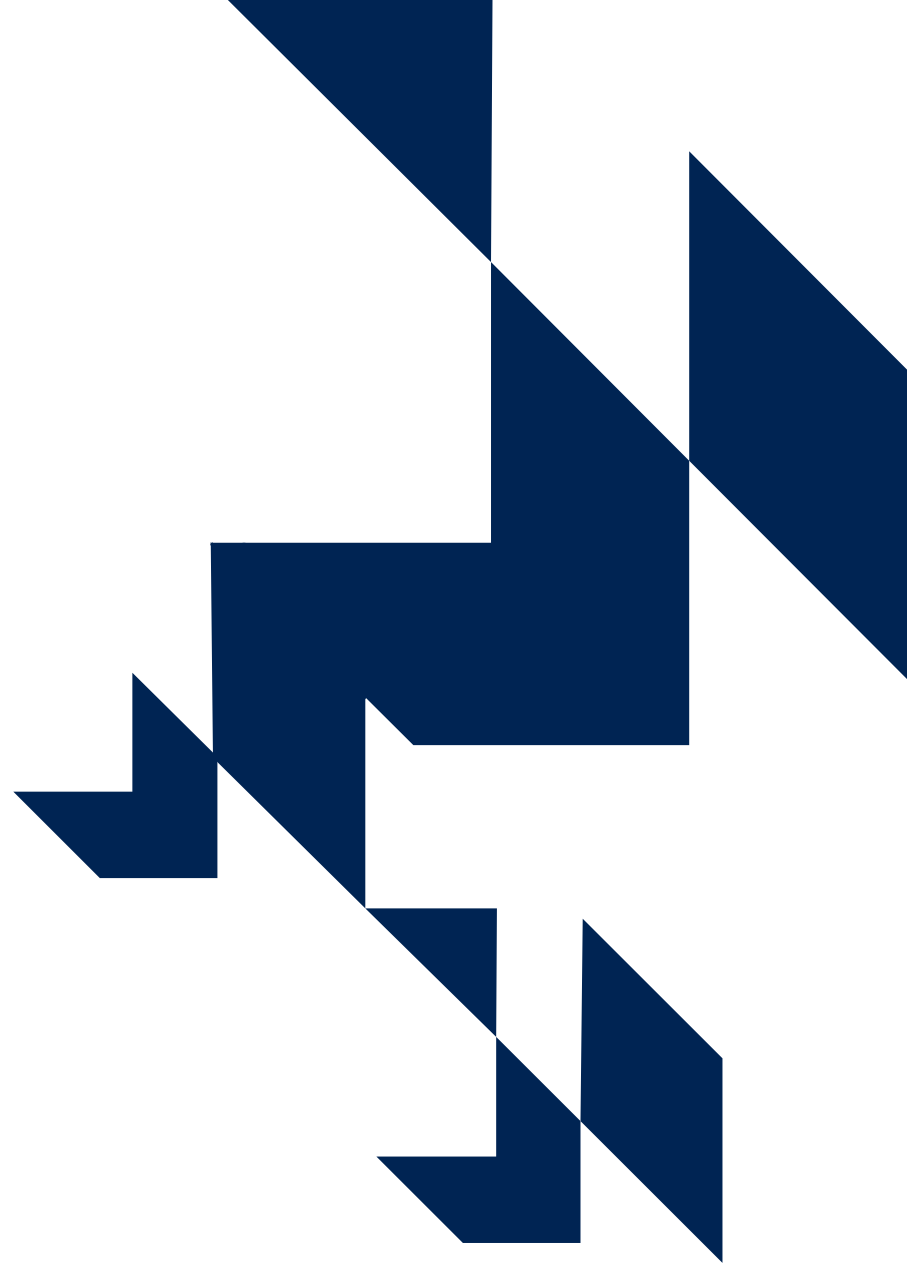
NEON Summit: How can HEIs attract greater numbers  
of mature learners

13 March 2020

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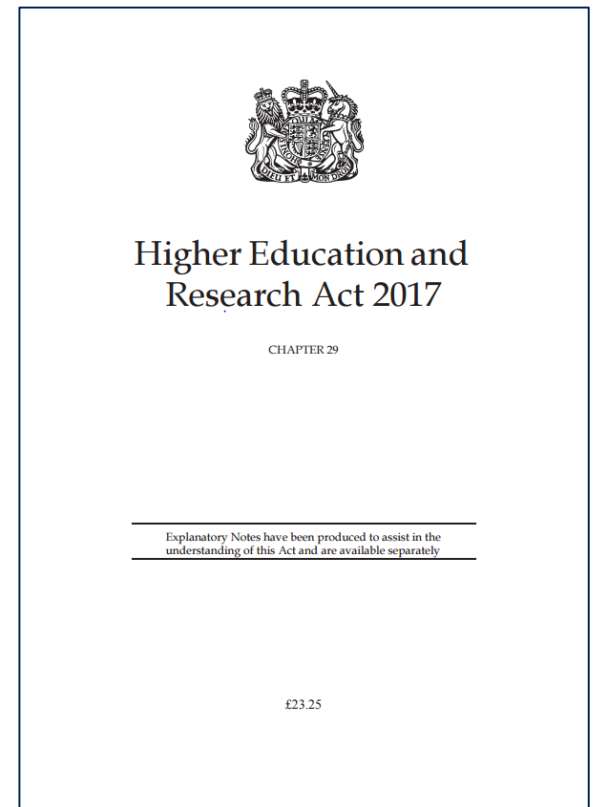
# The 'why'

Why now?



# OfS duties in HERA 2017

- (a) protect the institutional autonomy of English HE providers
- (b) promote quality, and greater choice and opportunities for students, in the provision of HE
- (c) encourage competition between English HE providers in connection with the provision of HE where that competition is in the interests of students and employers, while also having regard to the benefits for students and employers resulting from collaboration between such providers
- (d) promote value for money in the provision of HE
- (e) promote equality of opportunity in connection with access to and participation in HE**
- (f) use the OfS's resources in an efficient, effective and economic way
- (g) regulatory activities should be—
  - (i) transparent, accountable, proportionate and consistent, and
  - (ii) targeted only at cases in which action is needed.



# Our objectives

Every student, whatever their background, has a fulfilling experience of higher education that enriches their lives and careers.

## Participation

### Objective 1

All students, from all backgrounds, with the ability and desire to undertake higher education, are supported to access, succeed in, and progress from higher education.

## Experience

### Objective 2

All students, from all backgrounds, receive a high quality academic experience, and their interests are protected while they study or in the event of provider, campus or course closure.

## Outcomes

### Objective 3

All students, from all backgrounds, are able to progress into employment, further study, and fulfilling lives, and their qualifications hold their value over time.

## Value for money

### Objective 4

All students, from all backgrounds, receive value for money.

# Our challenge

*‘Our regulatory framework enables the Director for Fair Access and Participation to develop a bold new approach to supporting social mobility, and equality and diversity, through higher education. ...We will be radical and ambitious to make sure we deliver on the promise of higher education as an engine for social mobility, and a gateway to a better life for those who undertake it..’*



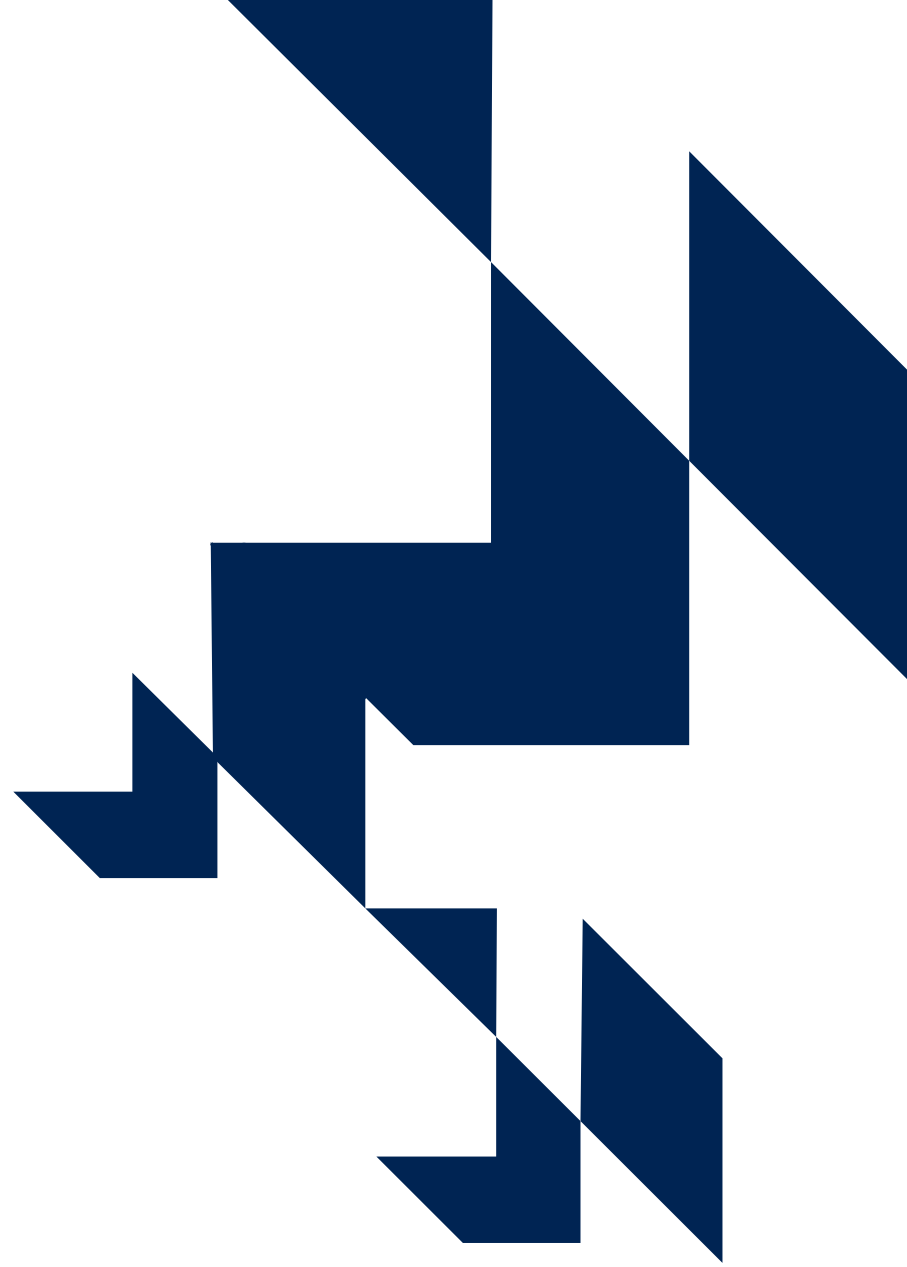
# Government commitments



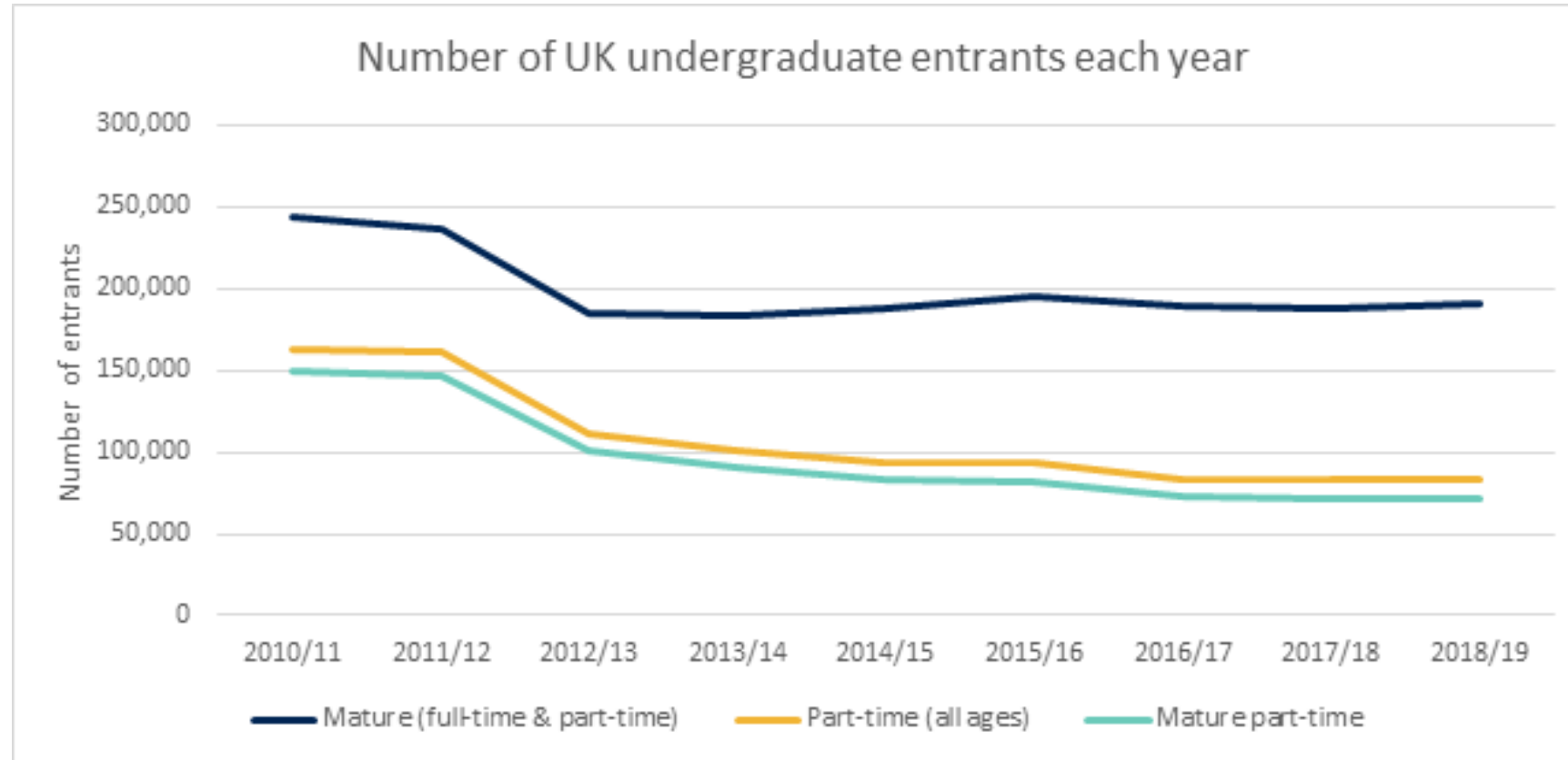
- **2019 Conservative Manifesto** ‘We will invest in local adult education and require the Office for Students to look at universities’ success in increasing access across all ages, **not just young people** entering full-time undergraduate degrees.’
- **Secretary of State strategic guidance letter to OfS** (Sept 2019): Your guidance on Access and Participation Plans included an emphasis on **mature learners**. As part-time, flexible and innovative provision increases diversity in the means by which **mature learners** are able to access higher education, as part of your ongoing learning, we would like you to review agreed Access and Participation Plans to help understand how higher education providers are offering this sort of choice of provision for students.

# The 'what'

Understanding the issue

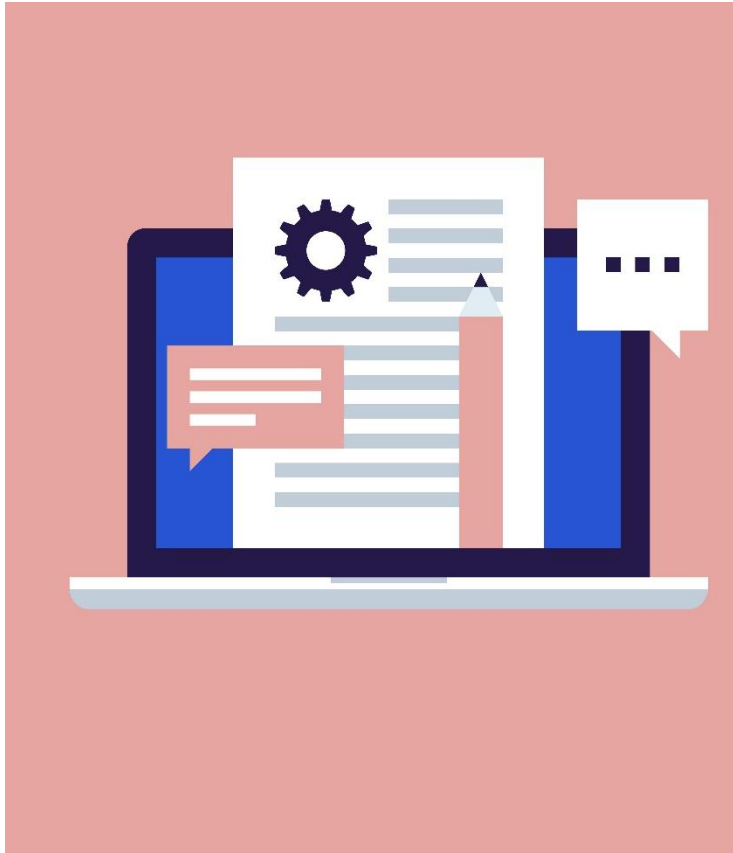


# What does the data say?





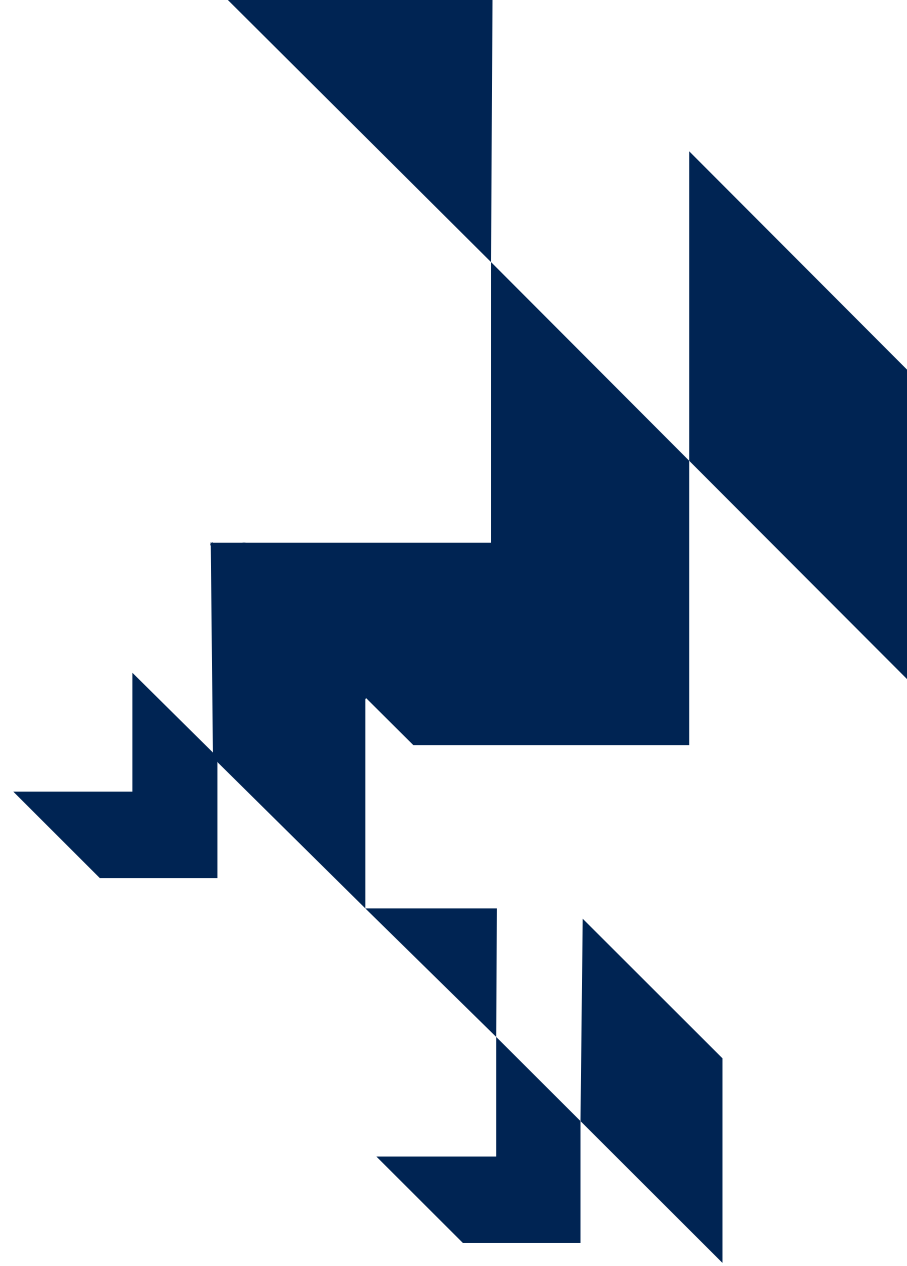
# What does the research say?



- More likely to be from under-represented groups
- Are more likely to have commitments and responsibilities outside of their studies, such as caring responsibilities and employment
- Are more likely to face other barriers to an inclusive experience

# The 'how'

What the OfS is doing



# Mature Students

- What is OFS doing?
  - Rewarding innovation and ambition through access and participation plans
  - Improving availability and use of data (ie A&P dashboard)
  - A-Z effective practice
  - Working with DfE and IfATE on the growth of higher level and degree apprenticeships
- What can providers do?
  - Take an evidence-based approach to interventions ([standard of evidence and self-evaluation tool](#) and [TASO](#))
  - Make use of data
  - Make mature student access part of the wider HE ambition and strategy

# Access and participation plans

- Expect all providers to assess their own performance
- What we found:
  - 40 plans with mature access targets
  - 37 plans with specific written commitments to support mature students (access, success, progression)



# A-Z effective practice



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## Evaluation and effective practice

To promote practice based on our research and case studies. Some of the things we highlight are:

- Tailored IAG
- Bridging provision
- Alternative and flexible study
- Student experience

# Degree apprenticeships



- Offer an opportunity to upskill, retrain or progress a career without tuition fee debt
- Important for skills agenda
- Exponential growth in the past few years

# The future



# Thank you for listening

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