

An aerial photograph of London, England, taken during the golden hour of sunset. The River Thames flows through the center of the city, with several bridges crossing it. The Shard, a prominent skyscraper, stands out in the skyline. The city is densely packed with buildings, and the sky is a mix of orange and blue. The overall atmosphere is serene and urban.

Lessons from London: What are institutions doing to improve retention and success?

Sam Turner, AccessHE | June 2018



About AccessHE

- AccessHE is the pan-London organisation that aims to support the progression of under-represented groups to and through higher education (HE).
- We are a member-led network of 26 different Higher Education Institutions.
- We coordinate and deliver collaborative activity, research and sharing of good practice.
 - Action forums
 - London NCOP
 - AccessHE Online

Overview

- Introduction
- The London context
- Key themes and questions
- Common practice and targets

Introduction

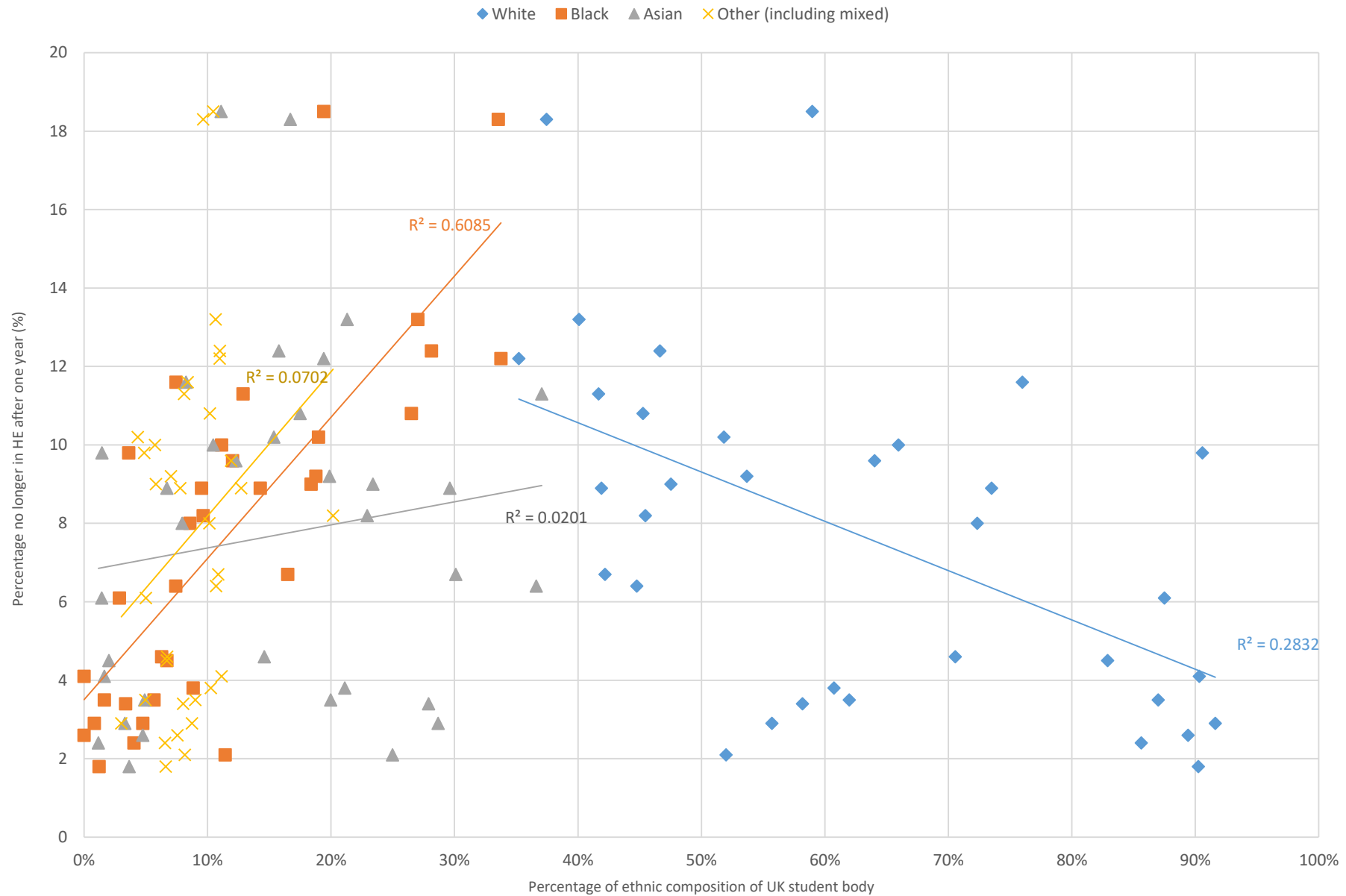
- Evidence suggests that investment (and resultant improvements) in access for disadvantaged students has often failed to translate into improved outcomes.
- Greater focus on retention and success as measures of widening participation performance (OfS strategic priorities, HERA, TEF, BME attainment gap etc).
- AccessHE member consultation/access agreement scan and events to explore retention and success in the capital.

Expenditure

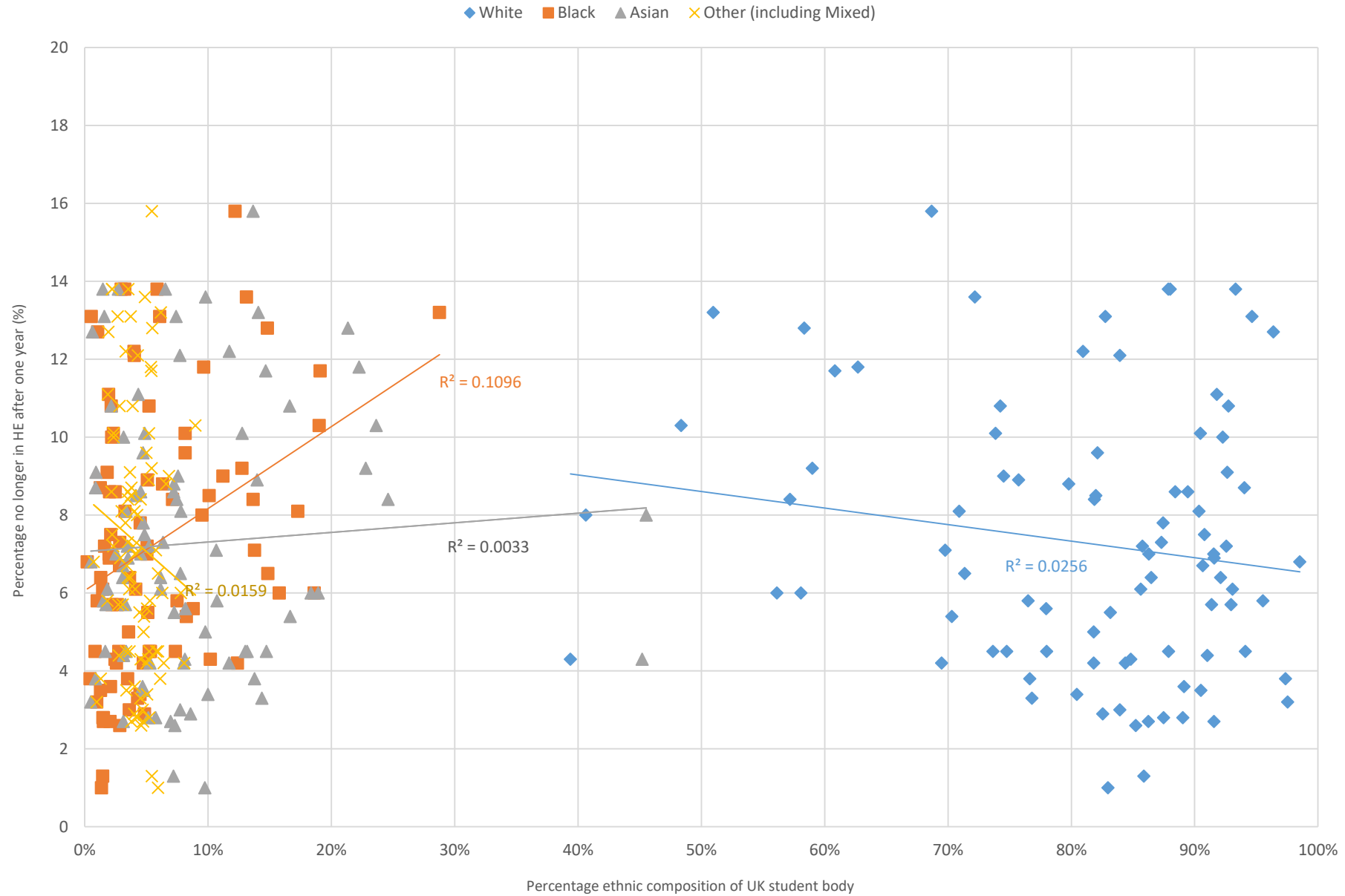
- Institutional expenditure within student success is expected to rise to £185.1 million in 2018-19.
- From 12% in 2013-14 to 23% in 2018-19.
- London spend in student success is expected to rise to £35.27 million by 2021-22 – 23.8%.
- Access spending still remains high (expected or not given London's performance?).

Unique challenges?

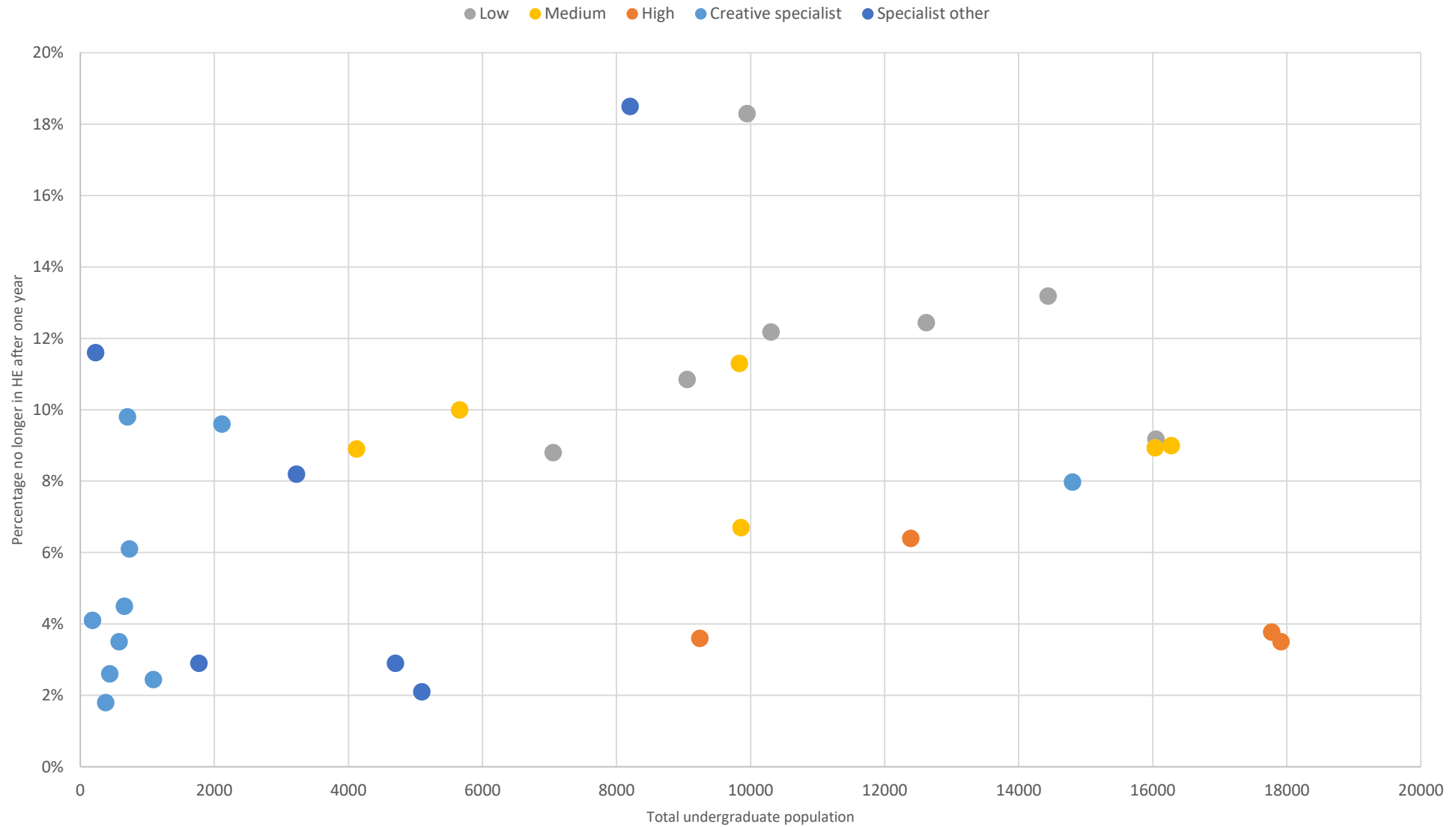
Ethnic composition of UK students vs institutional drop-out rates (London institutions)



Ethnic composition of UK students vs institutional drop-out rates (non-London institutions)



Total undergraduate population (by institution tariff band) vs institutional drop-out rate



Key themes

- **Targeted vs universal approaches**
 - Shift in targeting pre-entry vs on-course
 - Inclusive models vs positive action
- **Defining student success**
 - Institutions are different
 - Timing of both action and impact

OFFA

Student success: post-entry activity to retain and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds through their studies, for example through induction programmes and study skills support, aimed at reducing differences in experience and attainment with other students.

OfS

Success

- To improve the non-continuation rates of students from underrepresented groups, particularly those from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities, and to reduce the gaps between these groups and other students.
- To reduce the attainment gaps between students from underrepresented groups, particularly those from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities, and those from other groups.

What is student success?

Student satisfaction (NSS) and contact time?

Engagement in wider university life?

Student health and wellbeing?

Degree completion or transfer?

Academic attainment (1 or 2.1)?

Development of transferable / career skills?

Graduate employment or further study?

Continuation /progression to Year 2/3/4?

Key themes

- **Responsibility and terminology**
 - Who and where?
 - What do you call it?
- **Data and evaluation**
 - How to measure?
 - Learn analytics
- **Social vs academic**
 - An academic issue with academic solutions
 - Involvement of SUs, societies etc limited

Common practice

- **Personal tutoring and financial support**
- **Peer-assisted learning / support**
 - Formal and informal; mostly academic
- **Academic skill development**
 - Ensuring 'course-readiness' and prevent students 'falling behind'
 - Workshops, drop-in activity and on-course

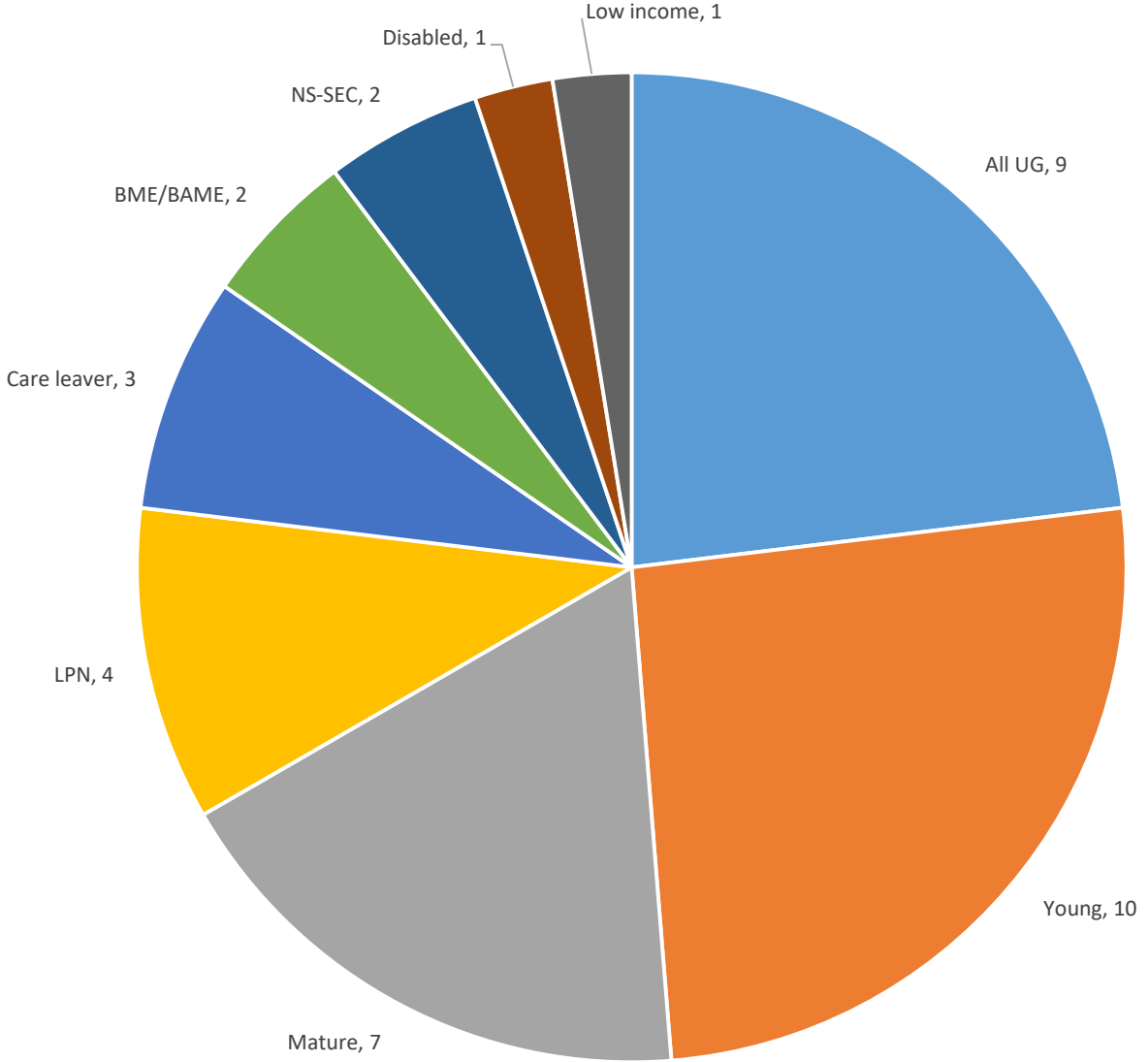
Common practice

- **Curriculum design and delivery**
 - Inclusive teaching and learning
 - Assessment and feedback processes
 - Skills-rich (employability)
- **Transition programmes**
 - First term interventions for targeted groups
 - Continuation from pre-entry schemes
- **Mental health and wellbeing**
 - Integration with other teams

Targets

- **Universal vs targeted approaches**
 - Differences even between areas of retention and success

AccessHE member HEI retention (non-continuation) targets by target group



Targets

- **Universal vs targeted approaches**
 - Differences even between areas of retention and success
- **Common targets**
 - Closing BME attainment gap
 - Improving degree completion rates
 - Expanding transition programmes
 - Widening the pool of students who engage with student support services

Summary

- Increasing sector-wide growth in recognition and expenditure within retention and success.
- London as a unique HE landscape with a significant retention challenge.
- Key themes and questions in this area around targeted vs universal approaches, definitions, institutional ownership and the role of data.
- Common practice includes peer-assisted learning and mentoring, academic skill development, curriculum changes, transition programmes and integration with mental health and wellbeing services.

Questions?

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Information and data sources

- <https://www.offa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Access-agreement-2018-19-key-facts-revised-OFFA-201708.pdf>
- <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/01-02-2018/widening-participation-tables>
- <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/whos-in-he>
- <https://www.offa.org.uk/access-agreements/>
- Additional internal consultation responses and interviews with AccessHE members.