

PATHWAYS



Uni Connect Pathways

phase 2 evaluation

OUR FOCUS DURING PHASE 2

During Phase 2 of Uni Connect Pathways we ensured that all of our activities had measurable **objectives** that related back to our **progression framework**. We focused on **outcomes** rather than events, and by embedding evaluation into everything that we did, we were able to both measure success and use our learning to make changes to improve in the future.

Despite the pandemic, we formed and nurtured **strong relationships** with schools, which has resulted in a **greater number of engagements** with target students compared to Phase 1. In addition to our targeted outreach to school and college students, we launched our **Outreach Hub**: a mapping exercise identified groups of students with additional needs; we established relationships with stakeholders who work with these groups; and we delivered activities to meet the needs we'd identified.

This summary report presents the findings from our Phase 2 evaluation: (1) how we **embedded evaluation** into everything that we do; (2) the challenges due to the **pandemic**; (3) the **impact** of our project events; (4) the launch of our **Outreach Hub**, including a case study of our Junior Emergency Medicine activity; and (5) how we intend to **use our learning** to shape our plans for Phase 3.

We are proud of our achievements during Phase 2 and we're looking forward to even greater things during Phase 3.

Emma Angell
Pathways Evaluation Officer

EVALUATION HEADLINES

Students have engaged with our project events outside of the school setting and evaluation has demonstrated impact:

21% of survey responses were from Uni Connect target students, **36%** were residing in POLAR4 Q1 or Q2 locations.

On a scale of 0 to 4, students' knowledge of subject-specific higher education and careers increased from **1.90** before the activities to **2.41** afterwards, an increase of **+12.7%**.

On a scale of 0 to 4, students' knowledge about higher education increased from **1.88** before the activities to **2.47** afterwards, an increase of **+14.5%**.

Younger students' objective knowledge was tested: Just over a third (**35%**) answered correctly before, whilst **85%** answered correctly after the activities.

87% of students felt their personal aims were met at least *very well*; nearly half (**47%**) felt their aims were met *extremely well*. On a scale of 0 to 4, the average score was **3.30**.

EMBEDDING EVALUATION INTO ALL THAT WE DO

The Pathways team was trained in:

Using **theories of change** to set objectives and plan activities based on desired outcomes and impact.

Using **cognitive science** principles to ensure activities are delivered in ways that maximise student learning.

Developing evaluation **surveys** that encourage students to answer honestly and accurately.

Using **qualitative methods** to complement our quantitative data collection, through **interviews**, **focus groups** and ethnographic **observation**.



CHALLENGES DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

All Uni Connect partnerships experienced challenges due to the pandemic (reported elsewhere:).

However, Pathways experienced a greater impact than most due the context in which we operate. Difficulties during Phase 1 meant that we were behind schedule compared to other partnerships.

At the time of the first lockdown we were in process of establishing relationships with schools; lockdown stalled the forming of many of these relationships, which:

Reduced the number of target students to whom we had access.

Prevented our outreach assistants from embedding into these schools.

Adversely affected the number of in-school activities we could deliver.

Caused a lack of monitoring and evaluation data for our in-school work.

We intend to rectify this during Phase 3 and have set ourselves an ambitious target to develop strong working relationships with **75%** of our target schools.



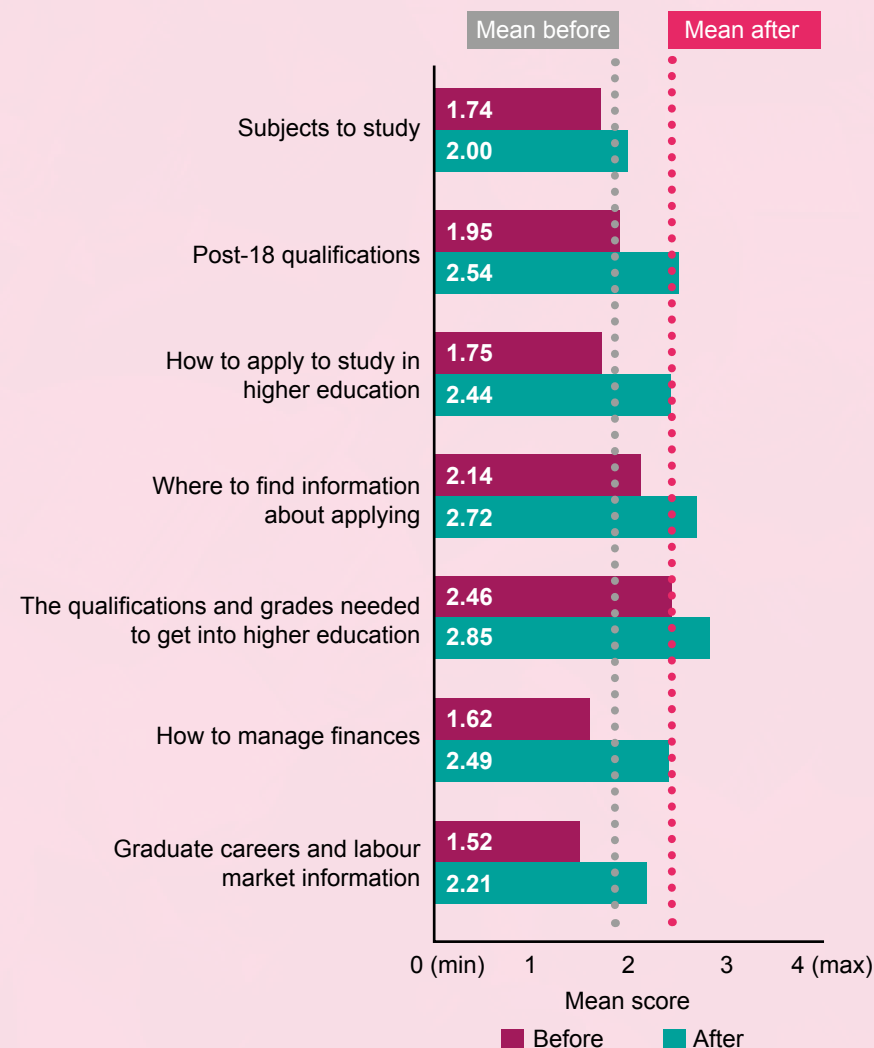
STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT OF OUR PROJECT EVENTS

We collected **524** survey responses from students attending our activities out of the school or college setting, of which **21%** were from Uni Connect target students. Most of our findings are **statistically significant**, meaning that we can be **99.99%** sure that the positive outcomes are due to the activities, and not due to chance.



Knowledge of higher education

Students were asked about how much they knew about various aspects of higher education. Each aspect was included in the surveys if they related to the objectives for the activity being evaluated. Across all these elements, the mean score (0-4) increased from **1.88** (above a *little* and approaching a *moderate amount*) at baseline to **2.47** (nearly halfway between a *moderate amount* and a *lot*) after the activities, an average increase of **+14.5%**.



Matched mean scores for knowledge of HE before and after.

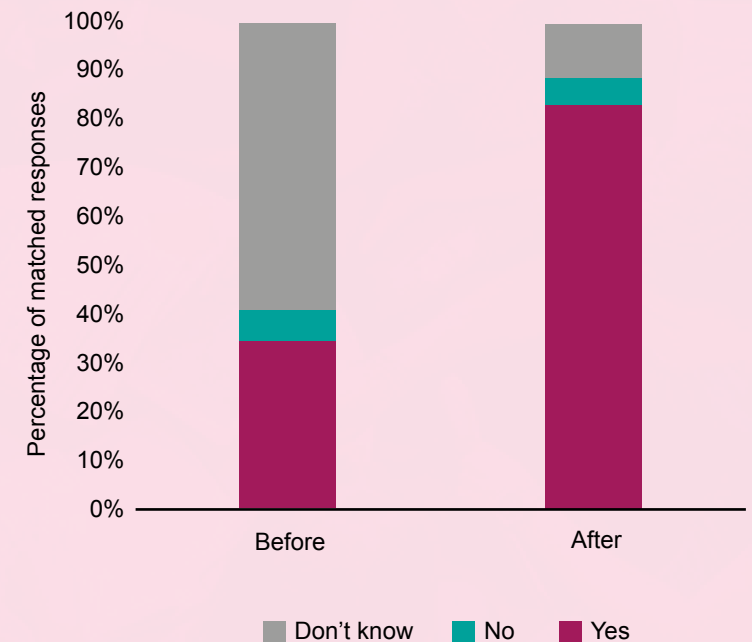
STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT OF OUR PROJECT EVENTS

Knowledge of further education

Younger students' knowledge was tested through the question "If you take T levels, can you go to university?" Just over a third (**35%**) answered correctly before the activity, whilst **85%** answered correctly after. Students who attended more than one activity were more likely to answer correctly at baseline than those who attended only one activity, indicating that a sustained programme is of long-term benefit.

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The information I was told was very detailed and I was even provided with useful links and told where and what to look at (The Plug participant, January 2021)



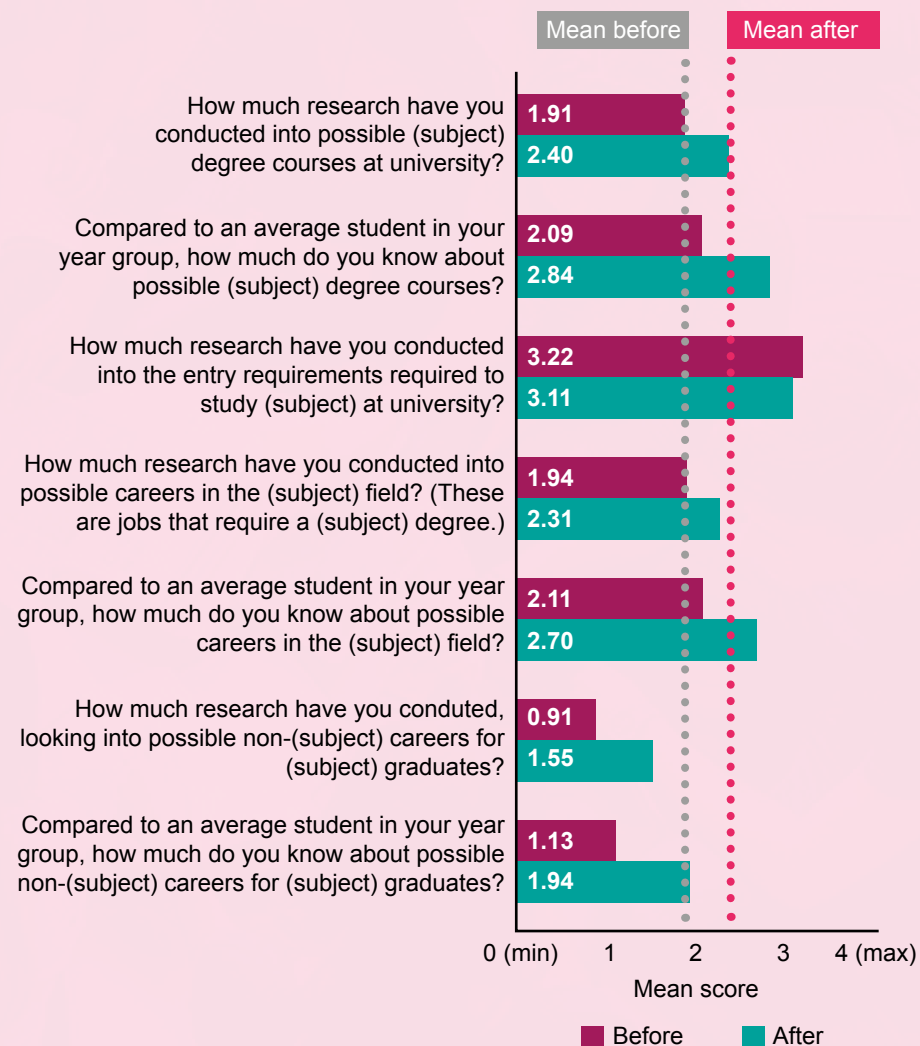
Matched students' answers to the question "If you take T levels, can you go to university?"

STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT OF OUR PROJECT EVENTS

Knowledge of subject-specific higher education and careers

Students were asked about how much they knew about various aspects of subject-specific higher education and careers. The wording of these questions varied according to the subject-specific focus of each activity, e.g. for Science Club, the subject was 'science'. Across all these elements, the mean score (0-4) increased from **1.90** (approaching a *moderate amount*) at baseline to **2.41** (nearly halfway between a *moderate amount* and a *lot*) after the activities, an average increase of **+12.7%**.

*Having spoken to the Pathways mentors and read the edmodo posts, I feel as if my knowledge about STEM degrees and jobs has increased.
(Science Club participant, July 2021)*



Amount of research and knowledge about subject-specific HE and careers.

STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT OF OUR PROJECT EVENTS

Meeting students' personal aims

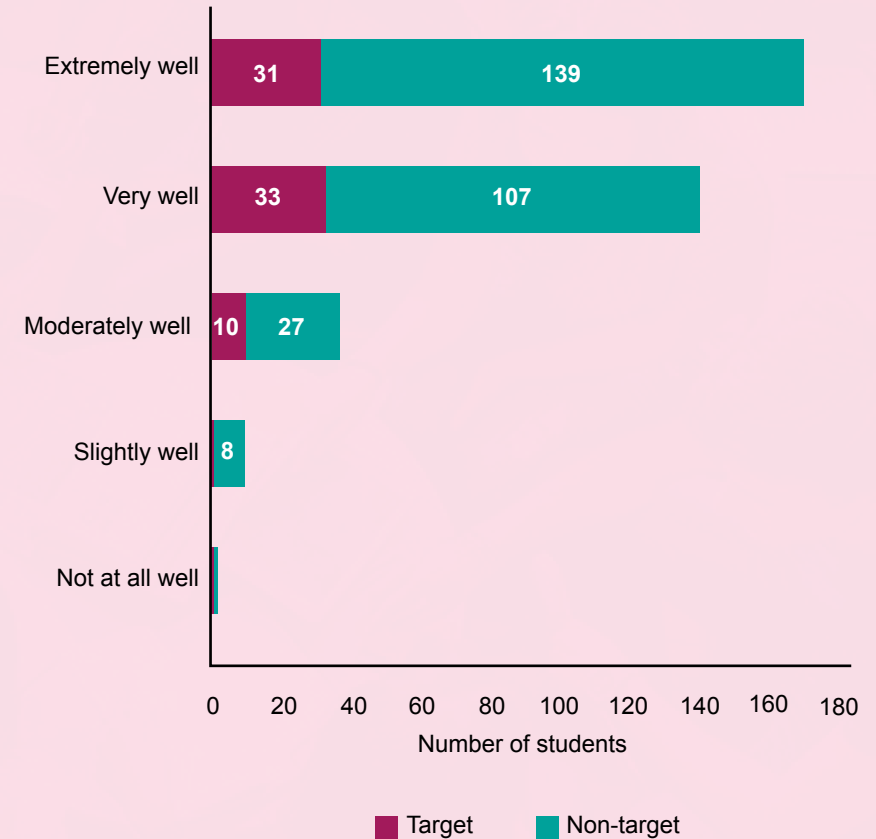
Of the **358** students who answered the question about how well their personal aims were met by the activity, **87%** felt their aims were met at least *very well*; nearly half (**47%**) felt their aims were met *extremely well*. The distribution of responses was similar across target and non-target students. With the worded Likert scale converted to a numerical scale (0-4), the average score was **3.30** (above *very well*).

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It helped me as I had to practise, spend time thinking outside the box and planning; as well as practicing the presentation (Art Club participant, February 2021)

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We heard from a variety of people in different healthcare roles e.g. nurse and emergency medicine doctor. It was helpful to hear different opinions and perspectives (JEM participant, September 2020)



How well students felt the activity helped them to meet their personal aims.

OUTREACH HUB LEARNING

During the 2020/21 academic year, our half-time Outreach Hub Officer was involved with mapping the needs of specific groups within the Hub region and initiating relationships with external stakeholders.



It was really useful to have specific ambassadors that represent the Strategic Outreach groups. We ran a number of events for Looked After Children and having care leaver ambassadors meant that they had a role model and could ask specific questions about finance and support that only those in a similar circumstance could answer.



Relationships
are important: where relationships were forged and maintained, activities followed. Where relationships were more difficult to form, activities did not take place.

Activities
were delivered in response to the gaps that were identified in the mapping exercise and included staff training, parent events, and activities for young people.



Ambassadors
drawn from the demographic at which activities are aimed are well-received as role models.

CASE STUDY

JUNIOR EMERGENCY MEDICINE

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It was fantastic to **work in partnership** with Pathways to bring **Junior Emergency Medicine online** during the pandemic. We'd previously delivered JEM face-to-face on the De Montfort University and University of Leicester campuses, but this just wasn't possible during the **Tier 3 restrictions in Leicester**. We put together **recorded simulations** and delivered JEM virtually to **over a hundred year 11 and 12 students**. We showed them the **realities of emergency medicine** through a screen and, through **discussion in small groups**, **empowered students** to reflect on the skills that they would need to succeed, and **encouraged** them to reflect on their health and clinical course and career choices.



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The **evaluation** produced by the Pathways team showed how **effective** the event was for **increasing students' knowledge and confidence**, but also how we could improve – when we delivered JEM online for a second time to a further 100 students, we took those **recommendations** into account and delivered an even better activity, spread out into **smaller chunks** with a comprehensive **workbook** for students to record their **reflections**.



Dr Navin Leanage
Emergency Medicine Registrar and Academic
Clinical Fellow in Medical Education

CASE STUDY CONTINUES
ON THE NEXT PAGE

CASE STUDY

JUNIOR EMERGENCY MEDICINE HELPS STUDENTS TO MAKE CHOICES THAT ARE RIGHT FOR THEM

We delivered our 'Junior Emergency Medicine' activity virtually to year 11 and 12 students in September 2020 and May 2021, which was featured in the OfS annual report for Uni Connect

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Using real to life emergency simulations, filmed by medical professionals and discussion groups, the event sought to provide insights into the skills and qualities that students applying for medicine and allied health courses would need to demonstrate in their applications, recognising that many students had missed out on opportunities to undertake work experience.



CASE STUDY CONTINUES
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CASE STUDY

JUNIOR EMERGENCY MEDICINE HELPS STUDENTS TO MAKE CHOICES THAT ARE RIGHT FOR THEM

Evaluation of the second event introduced a comprehensive set of questions about changes in students' intentions to enter higher education:

59% of students were interested in health/clinical careers both before and after the event, with many remarking that JEM had consolidated their plans.

9% were not interested at first, but JEM helped them to consider that a health/clinical career might be right for them.

5% who were initially interested in health/clinical careers were, afterwards, either unsure or had decided to pursue alternative courses, demonstrating how JEM can help students discover the realities of the profession *prior* to applying for a university course.

22% changed their mind about which health/clinical course to apply for, demonstrating that JEM was effective at encouraging students to proactively reflect on their choices.

Yes, I wasn't interested in applying for a health/clinical course but now I am

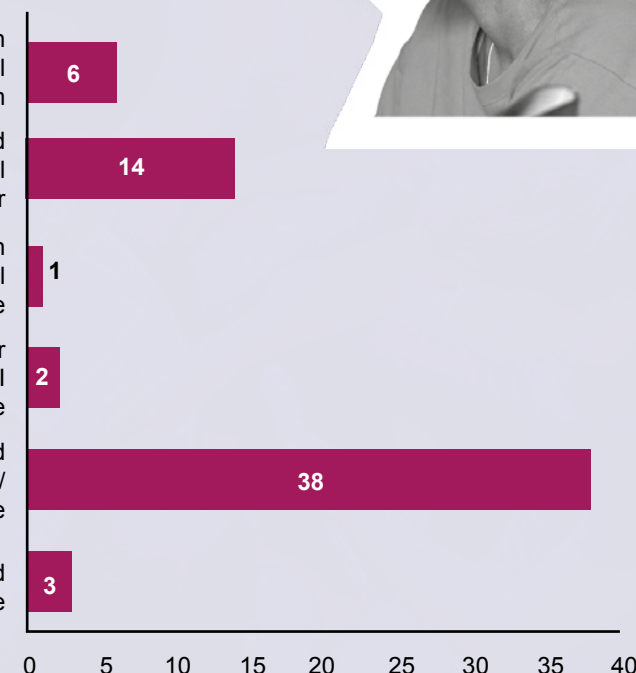
Yes, I have changed my mind about which health/clinical course I want to apply for

Yes, I was interested in applying for a health/clinical course but now I'm not sure

Yes, I was interested in applying for a health/clinical course but now I definitely want to do something else

No, I am still interested in the same health/clinical course

No, I was unsure and I still am unsure



How JEM helped students to make informed choices.



INTENTIONS FOR PHASE 3

1
To develop strong working relationships with 75% of our target schools, which will:

Increase the number of target students we can access.

Increase the number of activities we can deliver.

Increase the proportion of target students attending our activities.

Increase the quantity and quality of our data monitoring.



2
To run a regular learner survey in schools, which will:

Allow us to evaluate the long-term impact of our activities through repeat surveys delivered at least annually.

Provide reports to our partner schools about students' future goals, and gaps in students' knowledge of about educational options and their confidence to progress, contributing towards Gatsby benchmark 7.



**MORE INTENTIONS
ON THE NEXT PAGE**



INTENTIONS FOR PHASE 3



* The NERUPI framework sets out clear aims and objectives based on both theory and practice for those seeking to reduce inequalities in higher education access, participation and progression. The framework is designed to help NERUPI network members to plan, develop and evaluate their programmes and activities (www.nerupi.co.uk).

** A quasi-experimental design is an empirical interventional study used to estimate the causal impact of an intervention on target population without random assignment.

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