Join the Club

Strategy
2021-2026
Our new strategy is an invitation to join the club. The Brilliant Club.

Pupils and Parents, partners and PhDers:

In this strategy we set out an ambition for university access and success that can only be delivered by working together. Our previous strategies focused on sustainability and outcomes; the next five years will focus on you and your participation. You have the power to help more young people progress to university and thrive when they get there. Let’s make it happen, together.

Pupils and Students
Being a part of The Brilliant Club is something really special. Firstly, we’ll be working with more pupils and students than ever before. So it’s even more important that your voices are shaping the programmes you participate in. When you progress to university we’ll be there to help you settle in and make a success of your time as a student. And you’ll be able to help the next generation of learners as Brilliant Alumni or by becoming a Brilliant Club Ambassador. You’re a member of the club for life. Welcome.

Parents and Carers
Hello. We want to stand with you in making sure your children get the opportunities they deserve. We’ll engage with you in the way that best works for you. Whether it’s receiving regular updates about your child’s progress on our programmes or building communities with other parents to help each other, then we’re here for you. We know parents and carers have the strongest influence on their children’s educational journey. Let’s make that journey together.

Partners
To our existing and future partners: universities, schools and colleges, supporters. We’d like to work with you to support young people across the student life cycle. We want to join the dots to ensure students can successfully transition to higher education and flourish there. Together we can ensure that underrepresented students have solid foundations to fulfil their potential. Through bridging provision, academic support and inclusive teaching and learning practice that we co-develop, we can make progress on eradicating attainment gaps and boosting social belonging for less advantaged students. You can partner with us on specific projects, co-deliver our programmes or provide invaluable funding to the charity. And we’ll continue to evaluate and build our shared understanding of what works.

PhDers
You are what makes The Brilliant Club unique, always have been and always will be. The PhD tutor is at the heart of everything we seek to do in the coming years. The PhD community is a force for change. You are already pushing the boundaries of knowledge. We need you to help us push the boundaries of educational opportunity too. In this strategy you are not just a tutor with The Brilliant Club. You’re part of a team. A movement. A collective endeavour. We’ll have more ways for you to make positive social change: boosting academic achievement as part of our Brilliant Tutoring Programme, opening up the world of higher education via The Scholars Programme or delivering student success initiatives. We’ll focus on building the PhD community and unlocking its power to make a difference.

To all our communities, we want to deliver our mission together with you. By joining the club you’ll be a part of the largest movement working to improve university access and success in the UK.

Yours,
Anne-Marie Canning MBE
(CEO, The Brilliant Club)
We believe it is fundamentally unfair that a young person should miss out on these opportunities simply because of their background.

Access
We want to support over 100,000 students to access the most competitive universities via our Scholars Programme.

Success
And work with 11,000 undergraduates by 2026 to enhance their achievement through our university partnerships.

Right now, students from the least advantaged backgrounds have a 1 in 50 chance of accessing the most competitive universities, compared to 1 in 4 of the most advantaged. This disadvantage doesn’t disappear when they enter university. This affects an individual beyond their time at university and impacts society as a whole.

Disadvantaged students are therefore 18x more likely to miss out on life-changing higher education. Disadvantaged students are 3x more likely to miss out on a 1st or 2:1 grade at university. Graduates from the most competitive universities are more likely to access professional careers and have higher rates of life satisfaction. On average, they will earn £10,000 more than their peers.

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We’ll be there every step of the way for young people – from primary school to graduation.

Supported by three enablers that will make our goals possible:

Communities
Capabilities
Consultancy

Together we can meet the challenge. Join the Club.
We mobilise the PhD community to support students who are less advantaged to access the most competitive universities and succeed when they get there.
1. The Problem

In the UK today, how and where a young person grows up – what part of the country they live in, or the qualifications, jobs and income of their parents and carers – has consequences. These factors are out of the control of young people, yet they have a huge influence on their chances of educational success and good life outcomes, including access to higher education.

Whilst more young people from the least privileged backgrounds go to university than ever before, inequality in access to the most competitive universities persists. At these universities students from the most advantaged backgrounds are 18 times more likely to enter than students from the least advantaged groups (UCAS Multiple Equality Measure).

The effort to widen participation and increase fair access to higher education has seen some successes over the last decade, including in access to the most competitive UK universities. In 2018/19, 3,136 students in England who were eligible for free school meals (FSM) at age 15 entered a high-tariff university compared to just 1,889 in 2010/11 (Department for Education, 2020). The numbers show progress in the number of FSM students attending these institutions. However, if we look at the difference between FSM students and their more advantaged peers (see chart below), it is clear that the access gap has widened between 2010/11 and 2018/19.

The problem of unequal access to the most competitive universities exists in every nation and region of the UK.

- In Scotland, only 7% of young people from the most deprived areas (SIMD20) progress to a competitive university, compared to 26% of young people from the least deprived areas.
- In Wales, only 4% of young people from low-participation areas (POLAR4 Q1) progress to the most competitive universities, compared to 22% of young people from high-participation areas.
- In Northern Ireland, only 2% of young people from low-participation areas (POLAR4 Q1) progress to the most competitive universities, compared to 10% of young people from high-participation areas.

Students from the least advantaged backgrounds have a 1 in 50 chance of going to the most competitive universities, compared to 1 in 4 of the most advantaged students. Disadvantaged students are therefore 18 times more likely to miss out on life-changing higher education.
Disadvantage does not disappear when students walk through the doors of their university, so we need to strengthen efforts to secure student success.

In recent years, a growing body of research has highlighted the inequalities that exist at undergraduate level. Some students are less likely to receive good grades in their first year, more likely to drop out before their second year and less likely to graduate with a 1st or 2:1 in their degree. The attainment gaps we see, even at the most competitive universities, are significant (Office for Students, 2020a):

- The gap between young people from areas with the lowest participation in higher education (POLAR Q1) and their peers in high-participation areas (POLAR Q5) gaining a 1st or 2:1 degree has remained at 10 percentage points since 2013/14.
- 82% of White students graduate with a 1st or 2:1 compared to 60% of Black graduates. Among Asian graduates, the proportion gaining a 1st or 2:1 degree is 72%.

If we want to achieve a fairer society, access to the most competitive universities and the success students can achieve once there is a key challenge we must overcome.

Despite continued challenges, a future with more equal university access and student success is possible.

Every higher-education provider develops an Access and Participation Plan detailing their work to close access and success gaps at their institution. If the most competitive universities meet the targets that they set out in their Access and Participation Plans, the ratio between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 students entering high-tariff universities will decrease from 6.2 to 3.7. This would equate to an additional 6,500 students from low-participation areas (Q1) entering high-tariff universities in 2024 compared to the baseline year of 2017. If this rate of progress were to continue, the Office for Students (OfS) estimates that the gap between POLAR4 Q1 and Q5 progression to high-tariff universities could fully close by 2038 (Office for Students, 2020b).

Goals also exist for student success, and the targets set out by universities in Access and Participation Plans add up to a reduction of the gap in degree award outcomes between Black and White students from 22 points in 2017/18 to 11.2 points in 2024/25 (OfS, 2020b).

The playing field for young people in the UK will not be levelled overnight, and the coronavirus pandemic has worsened existing inequalities. Yet there is great opportunity over the next five years to make significant progress with fair access and student success. The Brilliant Club will play its part in this collective endeavour, which will have a wider impact on society, as explained by Professor of Social Mobility at the University of Exeter, Lee Elliot-Major:

"Widening access into highly selective universities is not just about transforming individual lives but improving society as a whole. It’s important that graduates who will go on to be leaders across a range of professions come from all sections of society. Greater diversity among professional elites is beneficial for all of us. It would help to address Britain’s low levels of social mobility.

We want Cabinet ministers, judges and journalists to understand and empathise with the people they are meant to serve. If leaders all come from the same backgrounds there is a danger of “group think” and narrow perspectives leading to an increasingly disconnected society. Law firms and investment banks now seek talent from more diverse backgrounds to better reflect and understand the customers they work with. Greater diversity of talent makes for better decision-making in the world of business.

In medicine, general practitioners from less affluent backgrounds are more likely to work in practices serving the most deprived communities. When wealthy elites dominate positions of power they are less likely to deliver policies that help to improve the lot of those from other backgrounds. Boosting social mobility moreover would enhance the nation’s economic productivity. As we recover from a pandemic that has exposed and exacerbated inequalities in society, widening access into the country’s most prestigious universities has become an even more pressing issue."

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Join the Club

Professor of Social Mobility, Lee Elliot-Major, University of Exeter
2. Our Response

The Brilliant Club was founded by two teachers in 2011, following the successful pilot of a scheme to give 19 students in one state school a taste of university by completing an academic course with a PhD researcher. Ten years later, we are working with over 20,000 young people each year, who attend over 900 schools and colleges in every nation and region of the UK.

Target students

Educational inequality is complicated. A student is not a number, but numbers and statistics can help us to understand and measure inequality and our progress in eliminating it. The Brilliant Club has an established approach to ensuring we support the students who need us the most. A target student is a young person who meets one or more of the following criteria:

- Eligible for free school meals
- Living in one of the most deprived 40% of postcode areas
- No parental history of higher education in the UK
- Focus support on low-participation areas facing the most complex economic challenges (for example, rural and coastal areas or former industrial towns)
- Support young people with disabilities, those who are or have been in local authority care, those who have caring responsibilities themselves, and young people from military families and mature learners

Our approach to targeting is simple for schools and recognises the value of a teacher’s professional judgement and understanding of a young person’s context beyond data. On The Scholars Programme, we require that at least 55% of the students that schools put forward for the programme meet one or more of these criteria. In practice, over 80% of the students taking part in The Scholars Programme meet at least one of the targeting criteria, with over 45% being eligible for free school meals. Going forward, our targeting approach for The Scholars Programme will stay the same. However, we will change the emphasis of our messages to schools to encourage them to put forward as many young people eligible for free school meals as possible and aim for 85% of participants to be target students.

Just because we have targeting criteria, it does not mean that we think students in these groups are the only ones facing educational inequalities. Someone’s ethnicity, whether they live in a rural, coastal or former industrial area and other personal circumstances all affect their chances of going to university – especially the most competitive universities – and their chances of succeeding when they get there. These factors can interact to mean some students face exceptional barriers.

For our university transition and success projects, the targeting criteria we use will depend on the partners we are working with and the inequalities that they need to address in their own context. We will proactively seek out opportunities to work with partners on projects that address discrete inequalities, especially projects that:

- Address racial injustices or intersectional inequalities in the education system by targeting support for specific groups of young people (for example, Black students, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller students, White working-class boys)
- Focus support on low-participation areas facing the most complex economic challenges (for example, rural and coastal areas or former industrial towns)
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Finally, we will continue to always be open and honest with our data so that everyone can see how our programmes are serving different groups of young people. A priority is to collect more complete data on ethnicity from schools, students and parents, so that we can build a better understanding of the extent to which we are addressing racial injustice in education.

Goal 1: Access

- Support over 100,000 students to access the most competitive universities via The Scholars Programme by 2026.
- Play a significant role in securing academic attainment via The Brilliant Tutoring Programme.

Goal 2: Success

- Support over 11,000 undergraduates in our partner universities to reach their full academic potential by 2026.
- Establish our partner role in institutional student success work.

Underpinning our goals are three enablers, or ways of working, that will make it possible for us to deliver our ambitions.

- Communities
  - Build the power of our pupils, parents and PhDers to create educational opportunity.
- Capabilities
  - Consolidate and develop excellent operations across technology, communications and finance, and foster an inclusive culture.
- Consulting
  - Create system-level change by collaborating with universities, government and charities to generate evidence and impact.

The Brilliant Club is operating in a more changeable world and the coronavirus pandemic has shown us how plans can be subject to change. Therefore, we will reconsider our Join The Club strategy in the year 2023. This midpoint review will allow us to take stock, assess progress against ambition and calibrate the strategy yet further.

Partners

The Brilliant Club remains focused on addressing the inequality in access to the most competitive universities. However, we recognise that whilst, on average, some universities are much more competitive to get into, some of the most competitive degree courses are at institutions that are not listed as ‘high-tariff providers’ by the government or UCAS. We also recognise that many excellent courses are not especially selective in admissions terms.

Of our 43 current university partners, 23 are classified by the Department for Education as ‘high-tariff providers’. We remain committed to mobilising the PhD community, wherever their research is based, partnering with every university that shares our vision for educational equality. As part of our student success work we will expand and deepen our partnerships across the university sector.

We currently work with over 900 non-selective schools and colleges in the state sector. Our new strategy will also feature partnerships with a greater diversity of organisations, including fellow charities, community groups and civil society institutions.

Ambition and goals

Our new strategy is focused on two goals: working with more students than ever before and extending our support across the student journey.

In the next five years, we will scale our impactful Scholars Programme to support 100,000 students and support attainment through our Brilliant Tutoring Programme. We will extend our work across the student life cycle to support young people to make the transition to university and succeed when they get there.

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I always loved learning, but coming from a state comprehensive school, first-generation background, higher education wasn’t on my radar. One day, my teacher called us all to a meeting about a new opportunity called The Scholars Programme. I still remember when our tutor told us only a few people in the world knew about his speciality. I definitely think the experience was the most important factor in my decision to apply to Keble College, Oxford, where I’ve now spent the happiest years studying English and Italian. Collaborating with The Brilliant Club as part of my work with the Oxford First-Gen Society has been a real highlight. I can’t thank The Scholars Programme enough for giving me that all-important first push.

Scholars Programme graduate

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The Scholars Programme is our award-winning and longest-running programme, through which we recruit, train and place PhD researchers in schools to deliver courses of university-style tutorials to small groups of students aged 8–18. Since 2011, over 80,000 students have taken part in The Scholars Programme, in every nation and region of the UK.

The Scholars Programme has been rigorously evaluated and the evidence base for its impact is very strong. Five years’ worth of matched control-group analysis by UCAS (University and Colleges Admissions Service) has shown that Scholars Programme graduates are statistically significantly more likely to apply to, receive an offer from and progress to one of the most competitive universities. A randomised controlled trial (RCT) conducted by researchers at the University of Cambridge in 2019/20 showed why this might be: students who take part in The Scholars Programme report significantly higher levels of self-efficacy for university-style learning. Our intermediate outcomes data also shows improvements in students’ subject-specific knowledge, critical-thinking skills and written communication over the course of the programme.

The programme begins with a launch trip to a competitive university, where students first meet their tutor and learn about university life. Students then participate in seven tutorials with their PhD tutor, complete a challenging final assignment and receive one-to-one feedback. Programme ends with a graduation trip to another competitive university and a celebration of students’ achievements.

Our responsibility now is to scale The Scholars Programme and make it available to more young people who would benefit from participating. The programme can now be delivered in-person or entirely digitally, which will support further growth. Over the course of the next five years, we’d like over 100,000 students to have taken part. By 2026, The Scholars Programme will be the largest widening-participation intervention in the UK, with 25,000 students joining the programme in our final strategy year. This is considerable growth, and based on past performance, we are confident it is possible.

We need your support to grow The Scholars Programme to reach 100,000 students in the next five years.
To enable more students to benefit from The Scholars Programme we will need to do three things:

**Securing attainment through The Brilliant Tutoring Programme**

One of the biggest barriers to accessing the most competitive universities is achieving good grades at secondary school. The Education Policy Institute estimates that by the time they sit their GCSEs, students who have been eligible for free school meals have fallen 18.4 months behind their peers. The coronavirus pandemic has created a new urgency for work to boost attainment of less advantaged students. Evidence shows the attainment gap is widening and could take many years to start closing again. In these exceptional times, everyone in the education sector must ask themselves what they can do to stop the gap widening further. For The Brilliant Club, that means asking ourselves: how can we mobilise the PhD researcher community to help schools close the attainment gap?

In 2020, as part of the government’s National Tutoring Programme, we launched The Brilliant Tutoring Programme (BTP) and supported over 8,000 students in the first year of the initiative. The Brilliant Tutoring Programme is currently available to schools in England, with courses offered at Key Stage 3 (age 11–13) and Key Stage 4 (age 14–16) in English, maths, physics, biology and chemistry. Brilliant Tutoring Programme students complete a course of 15 hour-long sessions with a PhD tutor in small groups (1:3). Each course consists of three curricular modules, designed in partnership with curriculum experts and chosen by teachers to target their students’ biggest individual learning needs.

**Reach out and build secure relationships with more schools and colleges – especially those in areas where we have not worked before and social-mobility cold spots. The Brilliant Club already works with more schools and pupils in rural and coastal towns and villages than metropolitan areas.**

**Deliver The Scholars Programme in new spaces with our partners. We will think flexibly about how the programme can be embedded into partner programmes, including focused and bespoke delivery for discreetly underrepresented groups. We will respond to partner circumstances and deliver in civic institutions for the first time, for example, in community centres and faith spaces.**

**Secure efficiencies and enhancements to programme delivery that mean stakeholders find the programme easier to work with and we can maintain affordable prices for schools and colleges.**

The National Tutoring Programme is a government-funded scheme. Whilst it is in operation, we will offer The Brilliant Tutoring Programme to re-engage students and rebuild their confidence in core subjects, following the learning lost during the coronavirus pandemic. In 2021/22 and 2022-23 we will seek to deliver curriculum-based tutoring to 7,000 students.
4. Goal 2 – Success

Higher education transitions and academic support

Disadvantage does not disappear when students walk through the doors of their university. In recent years, a growing body of research has highlighted the inequalities that exist at undergraduate level. Some students are less likely to get good grades in their first year, more likely to drop out before their second year and less likely to graduate with a 1st or 2:1 in their final degree. The attainment gaps we see, even at the most competitive universities, are significant for less advantaged and underrepresented undergraduates.

Student success is a growing area of work for The Brilliant Club, and we have been building our expertise and experience in this area in recent years. The Office for Students has commissioned significant work to address barriers to student success, and the higher-education sector is facing the challenge of eliminating attainment gaps. This is where we believe The Brilliant Club can add the most value – enhancing achievement through academic support. In collaboration with our university partners, there is more we can do to support students’ transition to university. Our experience of making university-style learning accessible to less advantaged students can be marshalled to help key groups of undergraduates reach their full academic potential.

Our established approach aligns with the evidence about what works in reducing inequalities in student success at university. A randomised controlled trial (RCT) conducted by the University of Cambridge in 2019/20 shows that students who take part in The Scholars Programme report significantly higher levels of self-efficacy for university-style learning, suggesting that academic learning with a PhD tutor may be a powerful way of securing academic outcomes. A recent report by the What Works Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO) details that ‘academic skills programmes (analytical thinking, revision skills) appear to be interventions which can make a demonstrable difference to the students’ success in the degree course’ (Taylor et al., 2018).

Therefore, we will develop a flexible model of academic support, mobilising our PhD tutors to build the academic knowledge, skills and confidence of students both before and after they make the transition to university. By 2026, we aim to support 11,000 students to transition and succeed at university through our partnering model. Our model for delivering these partnership projects will be flexible but will build on a clear set of principles. We will work with partners to develop an evidence-based Student Success Outcomes Framework, and all our work will be aligned with this framework.

As with The Scholars Programme, the core of each project will be academic tutoring from a trained PhD tutor to build students’ skills and confidence. Some projects may also involve peer support from alumni of The Scholars Programme. We will work with universities and other partners to target this form of support towards groups of students who face the greatest inequalities.

Breakdown of our plan to work with 11,000 students through our student success programmes by 2026.

In 2019/20, 74% of less advantaged students achieved a 1st or 2:1 degree grade, compared to almost 90% of the most advantaged students. (Office for Students, 2020)
4. Goal 2 – Success

Inclusive teaching and learning practice

Curricular and learning developments are a critical dimension of student success work. Over the course of this strategy, we will make our high-quality training available to a wider range of university teaching staff, supporting partner universities’ efforts to make their teaching and learning more inclusive. Our PhD tutors consistently tell us that the training they receive at The Brilliant Club is valuable professional development and equips them with effective teaching techniques that they use in their undergraduate teaching.

We will adapt and refine the training on inclusive teaching practices we already provide to PhD tutors at The Brilliant Club so that it can be delivered to a wider range of teaching staff in partner universities. Our expertise has been organised into modules including: effective bridging between school and university curricula; delivering a diverse and representative curriculum; inclusive pedagogy that builds confidence and academic belonging; and developing students’ meta-cognitive strategies through teaching.

We will offer this training to university partners, both as stand-alone sessions and as co-designed courses to complement institutions’ own approaches to inclusive teaching and academic practice. We anticipate mobilising our PhD tutors to deliver peer training within their own institutions as part of this. We will also explore accreditation for our training offer with relevant sector bodies.
5. Ways of working – Three enablers

Communities

Many educational researchers agree that a sense of belonging is fundamental to improving access to higher education and success at university. The Brilliant Club has been building communities since its inception. Our programmes have created small communities of learners in schools and colleges across the country. And we know that our work in student success will need to develop social belonging to make an impact. Over the next five years we will become more intentional in strengthening three key communities: pupils, parents and PhDers. We will also provide opportunities for linking social capital to flourish by bringing these communities together. This will stand the students we serve in good stead in their educational futures whilst also developing the power of parents and PhDers. Our approach will be underpinned by a strategic partnership with Citizens UK, who provide training and expertise in community organising and development techniques.

“This was an amazing opportunity for my son, from a single-parent, low-income family he feels he can achieve so much more now. Thank you for this experience and the opportunity you gave him. Because of this he will go on to do great things and I have been inspired to sign up to a degree programme too.”

Parent of a Scholars Programme participant
Parents

The Brilliant Club has worked with over 90,000 students since 2011. As our programmes scale and our community of participant alumni grows, we will provide three ways for people to stay involved and connected with the charity. We are already integrating the voices of student alumni into our charity governance, including introducing a Young Trustee to our Board of Trustees. Our Young Trustee leads our Experience Experts Panel, who advise the charity. We will also grow our Ambassador community to a steady state of 50 members. Ambassadors will receive training and be supported to share their stories and strengthen programme outcomes for the next generation of participants. Finally, older Scholars Programme alumni (age 14 onwards) will be invited to join our Friends of the Brilliant Club network to maintain connection with the charity.

Pupils

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PhD researchers

The Brilliant Club is now working with over 2,000 active PhDs and they will be at the heart of everything we do to help students over the course of this strategy. It is vital that we develop a strong community for PhD researchers so they can support each other, strengthen their involvement and help others to join the club. Our existing PhD tutors are best placed to develop this community. For this reason, we will establish a Brilliant Club PhD Changemakers programme. A small group of Changemakers will foster an active PhD tutor community in the charity, building strong relationships and unlocking the capacity of the PhD tutor community to make positive change in the world of education. Working as a PhD tutor with The Brilliant Club will be an exciting and enriching prospect for individuals and the chance to be a part of something bigger.

Finally, we will continue to build the community of lead teachers, who enable our programmes to be delivered in schools and colleges across the country. We will offer additional value for lead teachers through a suite of professional development, good-practice sharing and networking. A core part of this will be our Researchers in Schools participants and alumni, over 450 PhD researchers who have been supported into the teaching profession by The Brilliant Club. The programme will recruit its final cohort of participants in 2021, and we will continue to use our expertise to support PhD-qualified applicants to become teachers in the state school sector through partnership and collaboration with other organisations across the teacher-training system.

Our evaluation of the Researchers in Schools programme has shown that recruiting PhD researchers into teaching increases the number of teachers who are predisposed to valuing academic research and the importance of research-informed practice. This has wider benefits for teaching and learning within schools that we will support through our teacher communities.

Parents

The evidence base is clear: parents have the power to help their children progress to competitive universities. The Brilliant Club will develop practice and expertise in parental engagement. We will implement our Parental Engagement Framework, which meets parents, grandparents and carers where they are and builds their capacity, knowledge and confidence about education. We will work with parents and carers so they can support their children no matter their circumstances. Our engagement will range from simple text message reminders through to the establishment of powerful parent communities with our partner universities. Value-based parental engagement will be a hallmark of our pupil-facing initiatives, and the fidelity of our programmes will be enhanced by working with parents as allies for their children’s educational futures.

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The Brilliant Club's growth over the past decade has been underpinned by strong operations that have given us the workplace culture, financial stability and technology needed to scale our programmes. The Brilliant Club was placed in the top three of The Sunday Times Best Not-for-Profit Organisations to Work For in 2019 and 2020. The goals set out in this strategy are ambitious and will require an operational approach that matches the very best, not just in the charity sector but in the public and private sectors.

To achieve programme scale, we will need to transform our technology platforms so that they are fully aligned to the needs of the students, teachers and tutors using them. The introduction of new areas of work means that we will need to diversify our income streams and seek new funder relationships to support our increased funding needs, whilst continuing to maintain strong financial systems. We will be communicating with new communities and will need to build an engaging and accessible brand and put the stories of the young people we work with at the heart of our communications. We cannot achieve these ambitions without a talented and engaged workforce. We will continue to create a dynamic people culture, with a particular focus on increasing diversity and inclusion within the charity. We want to be a dynamic, insurgent, diverse organisation, able to respond quickly to the needs of our stakeholders.

**Capabilities**

**People and Culture**

We will focus on ensuring that The Brilliant Club is a diverse and inclusive organisation, with a cutting-edge culture. To achieve this, we will:

- strengthen our culture of feedback and ownership, providing our team with the tools they need to take more ownership of their work
- promote increased work–life balance across the organisation
- improve our staff training with tailored programmes for staff at all levels
- adopt an organisational design approach to ensure that we have, and keep, the right people in the right roles with the key skills to deliver the strategy.

**Diversity and Inclusion**

We think it is important that our charity reflects the lived experience of our beneficiaries and their communities. Diversity and inclusion will move to the centre of our work on people and culture. To achieve this, we will:

- embed diversity and inclusion in every aspect of our organisation policies and practices
- continue to refine our recruitment processes so that we attract, select and recruit people from the widest possible variety of backgrounds and experience
- ensure we are listening to and encouraging feedback from staff on our inclusionary practices
- invest in additional staff time and financial resources to improve diversity and inclusion across the charity and in our programmatic work.

**Technology**

This new strategy requires a transformative approach to how we work digitally. We need to ensure that our use of technology is inclusive and helps to bridge the digital divide. To do this, we need to fundamentally redesign our technology to put the user at the centre and ensure that our programmes are accessible from mobile devices. To achieve this, we will:

- seek funding to develop a new student-facing platform by 2023, taking a mobile-first approach to our student-facing software
- use agile project management, a user-experience philosophy and design thinking to drive our technology strategy and implement new feedback and consultation mechanisms with all our end users
- ensure that our technology supports the delivery of all programmes both in person and remotely so that we can reach young people in every part of the UK
- accelerate the use of automation software to drive efficiency in the programmes and integrate our different platforms to reduce manual work for staff.

**Finances**

We will build on our tested approach of maintaining diverse income streams. To achieve this, we will:

- maintain a mixed model of funding, with traded revenue contributing the majority
- increase and diversify fundraising to keep pace with the growth of our programmes and support the introduction of new activity
- price our programmes competitively for schools and other partners
- continue to focus on strong financial controls, systems and efficiency to manage costs and ensure good value for money.

**Communications**

We will establish a more intentional and creative approach to communications. To achieve this, we will:

- build our brand and increase our audience engagement, to ensure more people know about The Brilliant Club
- develop people-led communications and put the stories of our pupils, parents, partners and PhDers front and centre
- introduce a warmer and more accessible tone of voice
- become a trusted voice by making meaningful and expert contributions to policy discussions.
Consultancy

In the coming years, we will expand our sector-facing evaluation work to build sustained research collaborations with universities and evaluation bodies. Primarily, our research areas will focus on attainment-related outcomes and the development of university-preparedness outcomes in education and community settings. As we develop our student success work we will expand our research areas to include diversity and inclusion and student success outcomes. We will systematise and scale the charity’s evaluation consultancy so that we can work with universities, third-sector organisations and communities to support the sector’s evaluation needs and priorities. The primary purpose of embedding our evaluation work beyond our own programmes is to improve the general provision and quality of sector-level evaluations.

We recognise that as a charity, we are one part of this change process, and we will seek to work with other evidence-led organisations to increase the quality of evaluation work. For example, by working with the Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) on key research areas where there are known evidence gaps and to partner with them as an evaluation provider. Importantly, our evaluation consultancy work will encompass the evaluation of pupil/student-level impact, intervention-level impact and systems-level impact. We already have significant expertise in understanding pupil/student-level and intervention-level impact, and systems-level impact is an area where we would like to build our knowledge in collaboration with others.

Over the past year we were extremely happy to have worked with The Brilliant Club who supported us with extensive evaluation material. We worked together to develop an outcomes framework, a measurement toolkit, and they created analysis templates all to support our programmes. We were also able to draw on the valued knowledge of the research team who possessed and identified detailed information to assist in this area. Our staff feel readily equipped to embed the overall expertise received from The Brilliant Club and we have already started the process of integrating their evaluation processes into our delivery.

Operations Director, consultancy partnership organisation
6. Measuring our progress

In achieving the goals set out in this strategy, we will make a significant contribution to reducing the overall long-term inequality in university access in the UK. We can achieve this by operating our programmes at scale and by influencing the system via communities and sharing our research expertise.

Our ambition is to support 100,000 state school students in the UK by giving them the opportunity to take part in university-style tutorials with a PhD researcher. Second, in terms of the outcomes that we support students to achieve: 30,000 students who will have graduated from The Scholars Programme between 2021 and 2026 will attend one of the most competitive universities. Third, in terms of system-level impact: graduates of The Scholars Programme will make up a sizeable share of cohorts of state school students entering the most competitive UK universities. By the end of this strategy we estimate that 1 in 14 state school students entering the most competitive UK universities in 2027 will have successfully completed The Scholars Programme. By the end of the decade, we expect 1 in 10 state school students entering competitive universities to be a Scholars Programme graduate. Further details of our target and impact modelling can be found in the Appendices.

We know that following the destinations of programme alumni is not enough. The time lag between students engaging with The Brilliant Club and then progressing to and through university can be substantial. Because of this time lag, for most students we will work with between 2021 and 2026 we will not know these long-term outcomes until several years after the completion of the strategy. We will continue to track the destinations of programme graduates and evaluate the impact of our programmes on students’ likelihood to enter the most competitive universities, for example, via the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) or UCAS STROBE. But if we are to stay on track to achieve our ambition, we need to check our progress as we go. For this reason, we have identified five key metrics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key metric</th>
<th>2021/22</th>
<th>2022/23</th>
<th>2023/24</th>
<th>2024/25</th>
<th>2025/26</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># students taking part in The Scholars Programme</td>
<td>15,600 (85%)</td>
<td>17,420 (85%)</td>
<td>20,581 (85%)</td>
<td>23,600 (85%)</td>
<td>25,409 (85%)</td>
<td>102,610 (85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># students taking part in Brilliant Tutoring Programme</td>
<td>7,000 (85%)</td>
<td>7,000 (85%)</td>
<td>14,000* (85%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># students taking part in transition and success programmes</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We will use these metrics to check our progress, supplementing them with long-term outcomes data on university progression as we receive it. We also commit to:

- build an evaluation of The Brilliant Tutoring Programme to the same standard as The Scholars Programme and to evidence programme impact on attainment
- design an outcomes framework for our transition and student success work and demonstrate improvements in key academic skills and university outcomes.

Evaluation was the keystone of our previous strategy and will continue to play a pivotal role in the coming years. Not only will we renew our commitment to delivering consistent and reliable outcomes for the young people we serve, but we will also deepen and expand this commitment by working closely with pupils, parents, partners and PhDers. We have earlier detailed our aim to embed our evaluation work across education and community sectors. We also aim to develop our own programmatic evaluation work in order to know whether we have been successful in delivering our mission.
Intermediate outcomes

A large part of our programmatic evaluation work focuses on the measurement of the charity’s intermediate outcomes, and we remain committed to developing key academic skills. We have prioritised outcomes in subject knowledge (both curricular and supra-curricular knowledge), critical thinking, use of effective study strategies, written communication and university self-efficacy (including academic self-efficacy and a sense of belonging). Based on our own evidence as well as wider evidence from the research literature, we are confident that these outcomes will support disadvantaged students throughout the student life cycle. For example, in our student access work, we will focus on a broader set of academic skills needed to support school attainment (i.e., subject knowledge, critical thinking and written communication). In contrast, the academic support that we provide to university students will be specialised, securing deeper levels of learning (i.e., critical thinking and use of effective study strategies). For our student success work, we have intentionally chosen a smaller range of academic skills that are closely associated with higher education outcomes. Given its importance, university self-efficacy will feature in both our access and success programmes, as we consider this relational component, especially a sense of belonging, to be a key driver of student outcomes.

Methods

For both our university access and student success programmes, we will use formative and summative evaluation methods. Formative evaluation methods focus on the development and improvement of a programme – that is, understanding how and why a programme is or is not working and making adjustments to increase its effectiveness. In contrast, summative evaluation methods focus more on the end-point of a programme to establish whether a programme has or has not had the intended impact. The evaluation method that we use will depend on the maturity and needs of each programme. For example, with a new programme, such as a student success programme, we will track outcomes to understand if it works. Whereas with a more established programme, such as The Scholars Programme, we can employ more formative methods to understand who the programme works well for and how we can improve it to make it better. On the next page we describe the types of formative and summative evaluation methods we will use to measure the direct impact of our programmes.

To understand how our programmes are having an impact and to make adjustments to increase their effectiveness during the lifetime of the strategy, we will use formative evaluation to:

- evaluate the impact of programme components on intermediate and long-term outcomes to support effective and efficient programme design
- analyse large data sets of student engagement and outcomes to support effective and efficient programme delivery
- use, develop and validate outcome measures to ensure they are robust and sensitive to the outcomes that the programmes are aiming to develop
- listen to the voices of the students and their communities to understand how our programmes are working for them and how we can improve them.

To understand whether our programmes are having the desired impact, we will use summative evaluation to:

- evaluate the causal impact of our programmes on intermediate outcomes and long-term outcomes via quasi-experimental studies and randomised controlled trials
- track outcomes of graduates of our programmes to review progress towards our targets and to evaluate impact together with our partners
- measure the progress on intermediate outcomes of students on our programmes and report them to partners, especially schools and universities
- tell the stories of the students and their communities to understand qualitatively how working with us makes a difference.

In the image below, we outline how we will apply these formative and summative methods to different areas of the strategy. Specifically, the image sets out the key priorities for our programmatic evaluation work.

### Key priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Key priorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Formative: Evaluate a new Key Stage 5 model of The Scholars Programme</td>
<td>Test components of The Scholars Programme to understand how it impacts on intermediate outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formative: Evaluate the impact of programme components on intermediate and long-term outcomes.</td>
<td>Use a data science approach to improve students’ interaction with and completion of The Scholars Programme and Brilliant Tutoring Programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student success</td>
<td>Formative: Use, develop and validate outcome measures.</td>
<td>Develop and test an intermediate outcomes framework for our student success work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summative: Evaluate the causal impact of programme components on intermediate and long-term outcomes.</td>
<td>Run a quasi-experiment/RCT to understand how our student success programmes impact on students’ engagement with university study.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To support the key priorities outlined above, we will continue to build on the existing mechanisms that we have in place, including the annual matched control group analysis that we commission from UCAS STROBE, findings from the randomised controlled trial with the University of Cambridge, data insights from DataKind UK and our internal evaluation work focused on our outcomes framework and impact reporting.
We have thought carefully about how we will work with young people and their communities to improve outcomes that are likely to reduce educational inequalities in higher education. To this end, we have developed a ‘theory of change’ for our programmes. Simply put, a theory of change lists the defining activities of a programme, the programme’s intended short-term outcomes – what we call intermediate outcomes – and then the long-term outcomes or goals. It is through this logic chain model that one can hypothesise how a programme is having an impact, and then empirically test whether the programme is impacting the intended intermediate and long-term outcomes. In what follows, we present a theory of change for our university access and success programmes.

We already have an established theory of change for The Scholars Programme from our previous strategy. Furthermore, we have clear evidence that The Scholars Programme is effective in supporting progression to the most competitive universities. Five years of UCAS findings shows that students who complete the programme are statistically significantly more likely to apply to, receive an offer from and progress to a competitive university.

At this stage, we will not commit to a wider set of outcomes until we have a better understanding of whether the programme is impacting the intended intermediate and long-term outcomes. In what follows, we provide a summary of how these outcomes relate to success at university.

**Critical thinking:** In the UK, critical thinking is identified as one of the primary learning outcomes of higher education (Quality Assurance Agency, 2018). In particular, universities identify analysis and evaluation as important skills for undergraduate students to develop (Bellaera et al., 2021; Benzanilla et al., 2019).

Students’ critical-thinking ability increases at university and is positively related to academic achievement and motivational variables (Ghanizadeh, 2017; Valenzuela et al., 2011). The emphasis on critical thinking at university also seems to be associated with student retention. For example, an intervention promoting critical thinking strategies at university led to increased student retention (Ahuna et al., 2011).

**Study strategies:** The term ‘study strategies’ refers to cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies related to how students approach the tasks of acquiring and demonstrating knowledge in academic settings (Entwistle & McCune, 2004).

In the US, academic-related skills were shown to be one of the strongest predictors of college retention (Robbins et al., 2004). Planning, managing tasks and setting goals was associated with higher achievement in first year (Krumrei et al., 2013; Wurf & Croft-Piggin, 2015). Time management and study skills contributed to students’ motivation and study behaviour, which in turn influenced GPA (Jansen & Suhre, 2010). One study found that organisation and planning skills were better predictors of achievement at university than final school grades (Garavalia & Gredler, 2002).

**University self-efficacy:** Within university self-efficacy, we distinguish between academic self-efficacy and a sense of belonging, detailed below.

Academic self-efficacy is operationalised as a task or domain-specific level through mastery of different academic subject knowledge and/or skills. Academic self-efficacy, however, can also refer to a student’s perceived competence in a range of context-specific study-related skills and behaviours, typically those thought to contribute to self-regulated learning. Academic self-efficacy also aligns with the concept ‘academic adjustment’, which focuses on feeling competent in a university setting (van Roon et al., 2018).

Academic self-efficacy is both a good predictor of final grades and one of the strongest predictors of student persistence (Burris et al., 2013). Academic self-efficacy has consistently been shown to positively correlate with academic performance (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). In a meta-analysis of 109 studies, academic self-efficacy was the strongest predictor of college GPA (Robbins et al., 2004). This effect may be indirect, through constructs such as learning strategies and persistence (Bartimote-Auflick et al., 2016). In first-year university students, higher self-efficacy in university study skills predicted better academic performance (Putwain et al., 2013).
A sense of belonging refers to the extent to which a student feels connected to the university environment, peers and faculty (Lotkowski et al., 2004). Although students are similar in their aspirations for higher education, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds consider it a less attainable goal (James, 2000). Therefore, it is important to foster a sense of belonging at university. In a study of first-year college students, sense of belonging was found to predict intentions to persist at university (Hausmann et al., 2007). A short intervention aimed at improving sense of belonging led to higher GPA scores and well-being in college students over three years (Walton & Cohen, 2011). This applied particularly to students from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Taking into account the research evidence outlined previously, we will focus on the following intermediate outcomes as part of our student success work.

### Intermediate Outcomes
- **Critical thinking**
  - Use of effective study strategies
  - University self-efficacy

### Long-term outcomes
- Support over 10,000 students to transition and succeed at university

### Activities
- A flexible model of academic support mobilising our PhD tutors
- Familiarisation with university environments
- University-style learning focused on the development of academic knowledge and critical-thinking skills
- Production of university-style assignments

### Reflections
A summary of our access and success programmes theory of change is provided below. Our approach to evaluation will always be evolutionary, not revolutionary, and as we move through the next five-year strategy we will continue to review and revise our outcomes and measures, responding to internal data as well as new evidence from the sector.

**Modelling our targets and impact**

**Paul Ruenz, Head of Impact and Strategy**

We have quantified the difference we expect to make via The Scholars Programme over the next five years in three ways. First, in terms of student reach: we will support 100,000 state school students in the UK by giving them the opportunity to take part in university-style tutorials with a PhD researcher. Second, in terms of the outcomes that we support students to achieve: 30,000 students will have graduated from The Scholars Programme between 2021 and 2026. We estimate that 100,000 students select into top third universities via The Scholars Programme by 2026. We have established an evidence base that shows The Scholars Programme is effective in supporting more students from the least advantaged backgrounds to enter the most competitive universities. From five years of analysis that tracked the applications of more than 3,000 graduates of The Scholars Programme, we have learned that:

- 44% entered top third universities according to the Department for Education.
- Scholars Programme graduates are significantly more likely to apply, receive offers and progress to the most competitive universities than peers from similar backgrounds.
- The programme delivers results for participants from all backgrounds, including students from our target groups (Pupil Premium, Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index or no parental history of higher education).
- It’s also effective in different parts of the country: Scholars Programme graduates from schools in rural or coastal areas were significantly more likely to apply and progress to Department for Education ‘top third’ universities, as were students from low-participation areas (POLAR4 Q1/Q2).

The problem section shows that there is a continuing need for efforts to increase fair access to the most competitive universities. That’s why we will work with more than 100,000 students from non-selective state schools on The Scholars Programme by 2026. We estimate that 30,000 students who take part in The Scholars Programme will end up entering one of the UK’s most competitive universities, including 24,000 from our target groups. The Scholars Programme will become the single biggest university access programme in the UK. But what difference will it make to the overall inequality in access to the most competitive universities in the UK that we outlined in the problem chapter?

To answer this question, we modelled several scenarios for how the gap in access to the most competitive universities will develop over the next decade and what share of state school entrants will be graduates of The Scholars Programme. Our main scenario projects that by 2027, 1 in 14 state school students entering the most competitive UK universities will be graduates of The Scholars Programme. By the end of the decade, we expect the share of Scholars Programme graduates among state school students entering competitive universities to go up to 1 in 10. The remainder of this section details the assumptions we have made in estimating these targets and impact
1) How we estimate the number of Scholars Programme graduates entering the most competitive universities

The estimate is based on our students reach targets and UCAS STROBE evaluation of progression rates of previous cohorts of students completing The Scholars Programme.

Step 1: For the 100,000 students we aim to reach by 2026, we estimate the split by year groups in which they will take part in the programme, and we set year-group-level targets for how many will graduate from the programme by successfully completing their final assignment.

Step 2: From UCAS STROBE analysis we know that 57% of Year 12 Scholars Programme graduates progressed to a competitive university and 42% for Year 10. By competitive universities we here mean any university that was part of the Department for Education’s top third or high-tariff list (DfE, 2020). For year groups without UCAS STROBE evaluation data, we make the following estimates: Year 9 progress at the same rate as Year 10; for Year 5/Year 6 we assume a progression rate of 15%, slightly higher than the national 18-year-old progression rate to the most competitive universities; Year 7/Year 8 progress at the mean average rate between Year 5/Year 6 and Year 9/Year 10, i.e. 29%.

Step 3: By multiplying the estimated number of Scholars Programme graduates (Step 1) with their year-group-specific estimated progression rate (Step 2), we calculate that more than 30,000 state school students who will have completed the Scholars Programme between 2021 and 2026 will enter one of the most competitive universities in the UK by 2034.

2) How we estimate the share of Scholars Programme graduates among all state school students entering the most competitive universities

Our aim is to estimate, each year, how many Scholars Programme graduates will enter competitive universities, as well as their share among the total population of state school students in the UK entering competitive universities. There’s helpful sector data that we can use to build our forecast of the overall number of state school students who will enter competitive universities:

- The Department for Education publishes statistics on the number of A-level students in England from non-selective state schools and from private schools who go on to study at high-tariff universities. In 2018/19, 22% of A-level students at non-selective state schools progressed compared to 56% of private school students (DfE, 2020).

- The Department for Education forecasts pupil numbers in England up to 2030 (Office for National Statistics, 2020).

- The OfS has analysed the growth plans of universities in England and found that high-tariff universities plan to grow UK/EU student numbers by 5.2% over a period of four years (OfS, 2019).

- The OfS has analysed Access and Participation Plans of universities in England and found that high-tariff universities have set themselves targets to significantly increase equity in entry for students from areas where historically the fewest young people go to university (POLAR4 Q1) and areas with the highest participation rates (POLAR4 Q5) (OfS, 2020a).

Three things follow from this sector data for our estimation. First, we model access to the Department for Education high-tariff universities to be consistent with sector-level data. Second, as detailed sector-level data is available for England (but only less complete data for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), we use data about England as a starting point and extrapolate for the rest of the UK. Third, based on the OfS data, we assume that the gap between state and private school students entering high-tariff universities will decrease in future years, but the increase of state school students will be in line with expected places available at high-tariff universities.

We estimated the share of Scholars Programme graduates among all students from non-selective state schools for all years between 2021/22 and 2034/35, the year in which Year 5 students who will have taken part in the Scholars Programme in the final year of this strategy will be ready to go to university (see figure below).

In 2027/28, four cohorts of Scholars Programme graduates from the next five years will be ready for university, including students who did the programme in Year 12 (2025/26) and in Year 10 (2023/24), the two year groups for which we have UCAS STROBE evaluation data. For 2027/28, we estimate that 1 in 14 state school students entering the most competitive universities will be graduates of The Scholars Programme.

We also project impact by the end of the decade. In 2030/31, five cohorts of Scholars Programme graduates from the next five years will be ready for university. To estimate the number of all cohorts of Scholars Programme graduates, we also include projections about Year 10 students taking part in the programme in 2026/27 and Year 12 in 2028/29 by assuming that The Scholars Programme keeps growing after 2025/26, but at only half the growth rate target we’ve set for the final year of this strategy. For 2030/31, we estimate that 1 in 10 state school students entering the most competitive universities will be graduates of The Scholars Programme.

To account for the uncertainties in assumptions about the future we also took the following steps:

- In addition to our main model, which we believe to have the most realistic assumptions, we also estimated a low-impact and a high-impact scenario. In the low-impact scenario, we assume that the number of Scholars Programme graduates entering high-tariff universities is 25% lower than in our main model and that more state school students enter high-tariff universities than expected, equating to a 10% four-year growth rate in available places rather than the expected 5% in our main model. In this scenario, only 1 in 20 students from state schools entering high-tariff universities in 2027 will be graduates of The Scholars Programme. In the high-impact scenario, we assume that the number of Scholars Programme graduates entering high-tariff universities is 25% higher than in our main model and that the private/state school pupil entry gap remains stable at the level of 2018/19. In this scenario, 1 in 10 students from state schools entering high-tariff universities in 2027 will be graduates of The Scholars Programme.

- We compared two strategies for extrapolating our estimate for England to the rest of the UK. Simply extrapolating by the overall population distribution (England: 84%, Scotland/Wales/Northern Ireland: 16%) leads to similar results as using the high-tariff university entry rate published by UCAS (England: 81%, Scotland/Wales/Northern Ireland: 19%).
3) How we will monitor progress towards these targets

Monitoring outcomes of university access interventions is an exercise in patience. For students in Year 12, the oldest group we work with, it takes two years to see their university destinations. For younger age groups, especially our work with primary schools, it takes much longer. This delay between running our programmes and seeing results means we won’t know in 2026 if we have reached our outcomes target. It also means that we need to consider intermediate outcomes to understand if we are on track and how to adjust our programmes to best support the young people we work with. Having said that, we will continuously update the assumptions that underlie our ambition model as new data comes in. For example, we will monitor the rate of students on The Scholars Programme who successfully graduate from the programme by submitting their final assignment and check if they are meeting the expectations that we set out in our model. We will also use university destinations data from Scholars Programme cohorts prior to 2021 to update our assumptions about what share of programme graduates enter the most competitive universities.

4) Why we don’t make causal assumptions in our outcomes and impact targets

In short, we considered it, but we think the data we currently have does not allow us to make estimates with confidence about the causal effect of the programme from 2021 to 2026. The UCAS benchmarking analysis shows that Year 12 and Year 10 Scholars Programme graduates progressed to the most competitive universities at significantly higher rates than their peers. We need to wait for the same analysis of younger age groups of Scholars Programme graduates to be able to confidently quantify the effect on progression to the most competitive universities for all year groups that we work with. Understanding the overall causal effect of The Scholars Programme on university entry remains an evaluation priority for the next five years, and we will continue to build on the emerging evidence we have from UCAS STROBE evaluations and the randomised controlled trial with the University of Cambridge.


9. Acknowledgements

Our message ‘Join the Club’ is about coming together to deliver our new strategy as we support young people to access and succeed at the most competitive universities.

Writing this strategy and setting our direction for the next five years has been a collaborative endeavour. It has only been possible because of a supportive and engaged club of people, who have helped us to get here. It would be impossible for us to acknowledge every colleague, partner, teacher, funder, pupil and parent that has contributed to this strategy. We appreciate the time, energy and enthusiasm that we have received throughout this process. We feel very lucky to have such a supportive club and community around us. We must, however, give special thanks to those who have played a particularly vital role in this process.

Our Board of Trustees, led by Dr Josie Valentine, have provided invaluable advice, challenge and support as we decided what the next five years would mean for The Brilliant Club. We look forward to working with them over the coming years as we bring this strategy to life. We would also like to thank three of our longstanding Trustees who stand down this year. James Turner, Matthew Hood and Ben Williams will be leaving our Board this year, but we hope they will remain close friends of the charity for many years to come.

We must also say a very special thank you to those who have set the foundations upon which we’re building this strategy. In 2020, Dr Chris Wilson, moved on from his role of CEO. Whilst he may have left The Brilliant Club, he has remained a firm friend of the charity. His advice, support and enthusiasm for our new strategy have been much appreciated – and we thank him for the leadership he gave to the charity and the friendship he continues to provide. He’s a valued and important friend of the charity.

Dame Sue John also stepped down from her role as Chair of Trustees in 2020. Sue has been a champion of the charity since its inception. Her leadership of our Trustee Board and support of the CEOs during her tenure as Chair have made a significant impact on the charity’s story so far. Thank you for everything over the past decade, Sue.

We also would like to thank the co-founders The Brilliant Club, Jonathan Sobczyk Boddington and Simon Coyle. When they founded The Brilliant Club in 2011, they did so because they felt passionate about supporting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to access the most selective universities. The Brilliant Club started with a pilot supporting 19 students in one state school. Ten years later, we are working with over 20,000 young people each year, who attend over 800 schools and colleges in every nation and region of the UK. As we move into the next stage of The Brilliant Club’s journey we would like to thank Jonny and Simon for co-founding The Brilliant Club and giving us such strong foundations to build upon.

We have also been supported by the Social Business Trust and Bain and Co, who guided our early strategy development and by BCS, who supported us to develop our financial strategy and implementation plan. The volunteers we worked with in both organisations felt like extended members of our team, and we thank them all for their support. Early drafts of the strategy also benefited from the expert eye and advice of Professor Jonathan Grant, Professor Lee Elliot-Major, James Blatchley-Asfa, Ryan Wain, Sam Kalubowila and Paul Teulon. Thank you. Finally, thank you to The Brilliant Club teams who have helped to shape this strategy and will bring it to life in the coming years. Every member of the charity has been part of this process. From participating in strategy workshops, giving input on our mission, and working hard to support the charity’s success, we are thankful to our staff for their support and commitment. In particular, our dedicated strategy team have guided the development of this strategy and made sure as many voices as possible were heard. Let’s go, team!
10. Work with us

Programmes

The Scholars Programme

btschools@thebrilliantclub.org
www.thebrilliantclub.org/btp

Brilliant Tutoring Programme

btschools@thebrilliantclub.org
www.thebrilliantclub.org/btp

We are always open to partnership conversations with universities and higher education organisations. Please contact universities@thebrilliantclub.org

To discuss consulting and collaboration
Please contact collaborate@thebrilliantclub.org
If you’d like to become a supporter of The Brilliant Club
Please contact hello@thebrilliantclub.org

PhD researchers

If you would like to join us as a tutor
Please contact tutors@thebrilliantclub.org
www.brilliantclub.org/apply

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Please contact hello@thebrilliantclub.org
We mobilise the PhD community to support students who are less advantaged to access the most competitive universities and succeed when they get there.

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