
Independent review of Uni Connect attainment- raising activity

Evaluation of evidence
submitted by Uni
Connect partnerships
for the Office for
Students

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For more information about this report,
please contact:

CFE Research
Phoenix Yard,
Upper Brown Street
Leicester, LE1 5TE

0116 229 3300
hello@cfe.org.uk
www.cfe.org.uk

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Executive summary

This report brings together a substantial body of evidence on how higher education initiatives can help raise the attainment of underrepresented learners before they enter higher education. Building on previous reviews, the report focuses on evidence submissions that specifically evaluated student attainment-raising activities delivered by Uni Connect partnerships during the academic years 2023-24 and 2024-25.

Uni Connect is a national programme, funded by the Office for Students (OfS), supporting 29 partnerships of universities, colleges and other local partners across England. Uni Connect aims to widen access to higher education (HE) in support of the OfS's strategic goal to ensure every student can benefit from high-quality education that meets their needs, regardless of their background and circumstances.¹ The programme works with students who are most at risk of experiencing inequalities of opportunity in HE, as set out in the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR).²

The initial focus for Uni Connect was to provide high-quality, impartial information, advice and guidance on the benefits and realities of HE and to engage young people living in target areas with the capability to go into HE. As the programme has evolved, greater focus has been placed on attainment raising, in recognition of persistent gaps that exist between students from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds; these gaps often begin early in life and continue through school, affecting participation and performance in HE.

In the academic year 2023-24, partnerships were asked to deliver a new strand of attainment-raising activity with students in Years 7 to 11 in state secondary schools with the aim of improving students' academic achievement (grades) and their opportunities to access HE. Partnerships were encouraged to continue delivering academic attainment-raising activities for young people from underrepresented groups alongside strategic outreach, targeted outreach and signposting for schools and colleges, for the academic year 2024-25.³

Understanding the impact of attainment-raising activity

Partnerships have devised targeted interventions in response to locally identified priorities and have undertaken evaluation activity to inform the evidence base about what outcomes are associated with attainment-raising.

Outcomes measured include improved student grades, subject knowledge, study skills, self-efficacy and confidence. To assess the impact of attainment-raising activity, CFE analysed local evaluation evidence submitted by partnerships through two formal calls for evidence submitted in 2025 and 2026.

1 <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/how-we-are-run/the-ofs-strategy-2025-to-2030/the-ofs-strategy/>

2 <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/equality-of-opportunity/equality-of-opportunity-risk-register-eorr/>

3 <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/equality-of-opportunity/uni-connect/how-uni-connect-works/>



Approach to the evidence review

Each output was reviewed and coded using a framework based on criteria developed by TASO⁴ to identify the key features of the evaluation. This included:

- the research questions
- the outcomes being measured
- sample size relative to the population participating in the activity
- the methodological approach
- the key findings and any evidence of impact – positive or negative.

Partnerships provided evidence to demonstrate the impacts of a range of attainment-raising activities, including:

- study skills and revision workshops
- multi-intervention programmes
- subject-specific tutoring
- subject-specific workshops
- reading sessions
- oracy workshops and support
- non-subject-specific tutoring
- teacher continuing professional development (CPD) and academic summer schools
- mentoring.

CFE coded, analysed and synthesised the evidence using the Standards of Evidence⁵, to categorise them as causal or empirical, and to rate their methodological strength as strong, average or emerging.

Characteristics of the evidence submitted to date

Across the two evidence submissions, CFE has independently reviewed 91 sources of evidence. The majority of these (74) are empirical, comprising primary quantitative or mixed methods research that identifies associations between Uni Connect activities and outcomes for students. There are 16 sources of 'causal' evidence, which compare the outcomes of learners who have taken part in a Uni Connect intervention with the outcomes of a comparison group who have

⁴ <https://taso.org.uk/>

⁵ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/equality-of-opportunity/evaluation/standards-of-evidence-and-evaluation-self-assessment-tool/>





not, to attribute impact to the programme.⁶ However, most of the causal evidence is 'emerging' due to small sample sizes and/or low matched comparison groups. The largest volume and strength are observed for study and revision skills (33) – 13 of which are rated 'strong empirical' or 'causal.' The strength of evidence has also increased for multi-intervention approaches (a total of 15 evidence submissions, including two causal and two strong empirical submissions), and for subject-specific workshops (including one causal and three strong empirical).

Evidence in the latest call

A total of 40 new sources of evidence were reviewed in the 2026 call, providing the basis for new insight in this report. Almost all new submissions are 'empirical' (33) as was the case in 2025 (41) with nearly two thirds of the new evidence rated as strong (14), double the number of strong submissions in 2025 (7). A further seven new submissions were 'causal.' Most of the new evaluations report positive student outcomes, most notably in metacognition/study strategy knowledge, academic self-efficacy, confidence, motivation and critical thinking.

Key findings

Impact on attainment outcomes

- Due to the challenges assessing the impact on actual attainment, most partnerships have continued to submit empirical evaluations, to measure activities intended to achieve short-term outcomes, such as confidence, motivation and self-efficacy.
- Partnerships have collaborated to produce causal evidence about the impact of proxy attainment outcomes involving larger student sample sizes.
- It is still not possible to draw firm conclusions about which year groups benefit the most from attainment-raising activities. However, evidence indicates positive impacts across all year groups, with the strongest benefits for older students, particularly Year 10, through targeted revision and exam preparation. Younger students benefit most from age-appropriate programmes focused on cognition, learning strategies, and practical retention and recall skills.
- New evidence further substantiates the evidence base that three-six one-hour sessions are effective. However, further evidence is required to draw firm conclusions about the optimum dosage⁷ for different interventions and the role of other factors including age, ability, learner characteristics and intended outcomes.

⁶ Type 1 'narrative' evidence is out of scope for this review.

⁷ Dosage refers to the amount, frequency, and duration of an intervention or programme that a participant receives. It helps researchers understand whether the effectiveness of a programme depends on how much of it the participant engages with, often used to evaluate dose-response relationships.



Impact of individual interventions

Study skills/revision workshops

- New submissions have further strengthened the evidence base (33 submissions in total) that study skills/revision workshops, especially when repeated, are particularly effective at building students' cognitive abilities for future attainment. Interventions focused on cognition appear to be beneficial for younger students, while exam preparation and practice is impactful for older year groups.
- Study skills programmes appear to have a positive impact on the skills needed for successful attainment and there is some emerging evidence that this may translate into increased grades. For example, one causal study – involving students in Years 8-10 who participated in a study skills workshop – reported overall higher attainment compared with local authority averages.

Multi-intervention approaches

- The evidence base for multi-intervention approaches has increased, with new submissions (nine) demonstrating that study skills and subject-specific interventions are impactful on students' subject knowledge, study skills, confidence and self-efficacy. There is also further evidence of positive effects on critical thinking and motivation.
- Knowledge about the target groups most likely to benefit from multi-intervention approaches has increased, with the most positive effects reported for Year 8 students and those eligible for free school meals (FSM), compared with other learner characteristics.
- Three new submissions specifically targeting students eligible for FSM report positive impacts on study skills and confidence, with a strong empirical evaluation reporting a reduction in the attainment gap between FSM and non-FSM students following participation in the programme.
- Further causal evidence indicates that multi-intervention programmes may improve English and maths attainment, although the findings are based on relatively small sample sizes.

Subject-specific workshops, tutoring, reading and oracy

- Across the ten sources of evidence on the impact of subject-specific workshops, the evidence base is strongly positive. A total of eight submissions, including three from the most recent call, reported overall positive impacts, particularly in confidence, self-efficacy and critical thinking.
- Subject-specific interventions (including workshops, tutoring, reading or oracy) appear to be more impactful on actual grades and assessment scores than study skills and multi-intervention programmes. New causal (two) and strong empirical (three) evidence report assessment score increases in literacy, reading age, and mock English GCSE grades, which further substantiates the evidence base.

- 
- One new causal submission focused on public speaking for Year 9 FSM students reported improved oracy skills for the intervention group compared with the control group. Findings also suggest slightly more favourable outcomes for female students.
 - A further new average causal submission reported positive impacts on metacognition, confidence, motivation and problem solving for Year 9 students at risk of underperforming at GCSE.

Other interventions

- There were no new in-scope evidence submissions relating to teacher CPD, summer schools and mentoring, which means the evidence base for these interventions remains more limited than others.

Recommendations

To further strengthen the evidence base about the impact of attainment-raising activities, partnerships may wish to consider:

- **More causal evidence using attainment data:** A larger body of causal evidence, drawing on actual attainment data, is needed to accurately assess the impact of interventions on students' grades. Planning how and when data will be captured and the timescales involved to obtain attainment data, particularly from national administrative datasets, will help to incorporate these elements into future evaluations.
- **Partnership collaborations:** There is a growing body of evidence that partnerships who collaborate on larger scale programmes are showing more impactful results on skills that point to increased attainment. More collaborative approaches focused on delivering interventions that are considered most effective for their target groups, drawing on the evidence base to date, will deliver the strongest possible evidence.
- **Longitudinal studies tracking attainment data:** This approach will develop a clearer understanding of what works and for whom and ultimately what contributes to grade increases. Interventions should also focus on developing students' skills over time rather than one-off sessions.
- **More targeted evaluation activity for key learner characteristics:** All submissions aim to support underrepresented students; however, more evidence is required about how some groups, including minority ethnic groups, carers and disabled students, respond to different interventions, alongside the most effective duration and delivery mode.



Introduction

The initial focus for Uni Connect was to provide high-quality, impartial information, advice and guidance on the benefits and realities of university and to engage young people living in target areas with the capability to go into HE. As the programme has evolved, greater focus has been placed on attainment raising, in recognition of persistent gaps that exist between students from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds – that often begin early in life and continue through school – affecting participation and performance in HE and future prospects.

In the academic year 2023-24, partnerships were expected to deliver a new strand of attainment-raising activity with students in Years 7 to 11 in state secondary schools, to address Risk 1 in the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR):

Students may not have equal opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills required to be accepted onto higher education courses that match their expectations and ambitions.

The aim was to improve students' academic achievement (grades) and their opportunities to access the right HE for their ambitions and ability. In the academic year 2024-25, partnerships were encouraged to continue delivering academic attainment-raising activities for young people from underrepresented groups alongside strategic outreach, targeted outreach and signposting for schools and colleges.⁸

Partnerships are encouraged to devise targeted interventions that respond to locally identified priorities. Consequently, the aims and intended outcomes for interventions vary by partnership.

Understanding the impact of attainment-raising

To date, CFE has produced a series of reports for the national evaluation of Uni Connect, including five based on independent reviews of partnerships' local evaluation evidence. The reports, along with an evidence bank summarising the strength and quality of partnerships' evaluation evidence and the key findings, are published on the Office for Students website.⁹

This report focuses on evidence submissions that specifically evaluated student attainment-raising activities delivered during the academic years 2023-24 and 2024-25. It builds on the previous attainment-raising evidence review published in May 2025¹⁰, but it does not

⁸ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/equality-of-opportunity/uni-connect/how-uni-connect-works>

⁹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/equality-of-opportunity/uni-connect/evaluating-uni-connects-impact/>

¹⁰ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/independent-review-of-uni-connect-attainment-raising-activity/>

benchmark against the five earlier reports which focused on the impact of a different range of activities. This evidence round includes activities designed to:

- provide targeted academic support to students
- tackle non-academic barriers to learning
- upskill and support existing teachers.

Activities designed to deliver student outcomes about HE expectations, HE knowledge, future options, pathways or other similar outcomes are out of scope for this evidence review. Evidence on post-16 activity, including work with further education colleges, is also out of scope.

This report aims to support the ongoing planning and delivery of Uni Connect and attainment-raising work across the wider access and participation sector. It brings together a substantial body of evidence on how higher education initiatives can help raise the attainment of underrepresented learners before they enter higher education.

Meta-review of local evaluation evidence

Each partnership is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness and impact of locally delivered attainment-raising activities. Partnerships completed a template to assess the quality and strength of evidence, alongside their own reports documenting evaluation findings. Each partnership received guidance explaining the review process and the types of evidence in scope for the review.¹¹

A call for evidence was open between 5th November 2025 and 30th January 2026. Partnerships submitted evidence on eight interventions that were within the scope of this review¹² (see Table 1). CFE coded and synthesised the evidence to develop a more detailed understanding about the impact of different interventions on a range of student attainment outcomes.¹³

11 See the template: https://cfe.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/UC_Second_attainment-raising_review_call-for_evidence_Nov25_Submission_template.docx; and the guidance: https://cfe.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/UC_Second_attainment-raising_review_Nov_2025_Guidance_document-1.docx

12 Three further interventions were within the scope of this review: non-subject specific tutoring, supporting curriculum design and admission test support; however, no evidence on the impact of these was submitted.

13 The range of student attainment outcomes are defined here: <https://taso.org.uk/libraryitem/attainment-raising-mapping-outcomes-and-activities-tool-moat/>



Table 1: Attainment-raising activities delivered by partnerships

Attainment-raising activities
Study skills and revision workshops
Multi-intervention programmes
Subject-specific tutoring
Subject-specific workshops
Reading sessions
Oracy workshops and support
Non-subject-specific tutoring
Teacher CPD and academic summer schools
Mentoring

The review process

All evidence submitted by partnerships was screened against the criteria in Table 2 and those that fell outside the scope were excluded at this stage.

Table 2: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

✓ Included in the evidence review	✗ Out of scope for the evidence review
✓ Outputs with a focus on the outcomes and impact of individual activities or programmes of activity on Uni Connect students and those who support them	✗ Outputs with a focus on the effectiveness of systems and processes associated with the delivery of Uni Connect, e.g. student or teacher feedback on what they liked or disliked about an activity, what worked well and what could be improved
✓ Quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of impact	✗ Outputs with a focus on operational issues, e.g. the effectiveness of governance arrangements or partnership membership and collaborative working
✓ Evidence that an activity or programme has a positive impact	✗ Outputs focused on post-16 education
✓ Evidence that an activity or programme has a negative impact, mixed impact or no effect	✗ Outputs focused on the targeted and strategic outreach elements of the programme

Outputs that met the required criteria were reviewed and coded using a framework based on criteria developed by TASO¹⁴ to identify the key features of the evaluation, including the research questions, the outcomes measured, sample size relative to the population participating in the activity, the methodological approach, key findings, and any evidence of impact – positive or negative.

The overall quality of the evidence rating considers the type (narrative, empirical or causal) of evidence as well as the strength (strong, average, emerging¹⁵) of the evaluation design.¹⁶ Well-designed and executed evaluations that demonstrate a causal relationship between the intervention and outcomes achieved are considered the highest quality evidence.

Each submission was classified according to the categories in Figure 1. The highest quality evidence is classified as 'causal stronger' (darker green) and the weakest as 'emerging narrative.' Different types of evidence of equivalent quality are represented by the same shade in the figure. Only evidence classified as causal and empirical is included in this review.

Figure 1: Assessing the quality of evidence

Type of evidence			
	Emerging	Average	Stronger
	Strength of evidence		
Causal			
Empirical			
Narrative			

¹⁴ <https://taso.org.uk/>

¹⁵ Please note that in this report previously 'weak' evidence has been categorised as emerging to reflect the difficulty in developing causal evidence in an ever-changing school environment.

¹⁶ 'Strength' refers to the strength of the evaluation design, and what methods the evaluation team has used to collect the data and conduct their analyses. Strength does not explicitly relate to the strength, level or type (positive/negative) of impact achieved.



A total of 27 partnerships¹⁷ submitted 48 pieces of evidence in response to the latest call. Of these:

- Eight evidence sources were screened out because they did not meet one or more of the inclusion criteria.
- 40 sources were reviewed and assessed in detail and categorised as either Type 2 'empirical' (33), or Type 3 'causal' (seven) using the OfS standards of evidence.¹⁸
- Of the 33 'empirical' sources of evidence, 14 were strong, 12 were average and seven emerging. Of the seven 'causal' evidence submissions, three were average and four emerging.
- New submissions have been added to the attainment-raising evidence bank and will also be shared with TASO, where permission has been granted¹⁹. In some cases, existing entries have been updated. This helps ensure that each programme is represented by the most relevant and strongest available evidence.

The number of different evidence types reviewed at each call is summarised in Table 3:

Table 3: Type and amount of evidence reviewed in each call

	2025	2026	Total
Type 2 - empirical	41	33	74
Type 3 - causal	10	7	17

Synthesis of attainment-raising evidence

The next section synthesises evidence on the impact of attainment-raising activities on short-term student outcomes (for example, improved metacognition, self-efficacy, confidence to do well) that can contribute to improved attainment. For each intervention type, a table, mirroring Figure 1, summarises the number of pieces of evidence of each type and strength. The strength and type of evidence on which the findings are based (e.g. 'average empirical' denotes an empirical evaluation of average strength) provides an indication of the level of confidence in the findings and conclusions drawn.

¹⁷Two partnerships did not have evidence to submit in this call.

¹⁸The standards of evidence can be accessed at: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/equality-of-opportunity/evaluation/standards-of-evidence-and-evaluation-self-assessment-tool

¹⁹Three partnerships did not consent to sharing evidence.



Study skills and revision workshops

In this review, study skills and revision workshops were grouped together as a single intervention because they share similar aims and content. These programmes focus primarily on metacognition strategies to improve attainment, including planning and evaluating, reflecting on study approaches, identifying key information and using effective revision techniques such as mind mapping, flash cards, active reading and goal setting. Some programmes also incorporated lessons on self-regulated learning, enabling students to understand when and why to apply different strategies, informed by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) guidance and toolkits.²⁰

While a small number of programmes included campus-based delivery or visits, this was uncommon in the latest evidence submissions. Previous evidence suggested that university campus days were not as impactful for students in this context compared with the workshops focused on strategies and study skills practice. All interventions were delivered in person, typically in one-hour sessions. Programme length ranged from 1 to 9 sessions, delivered either within a single day or across consecutive weeks.

Figure 2: Number of sources and strength of evidence on the impact of study skills and revision workshops

Causal	3 (1)	1 (1)		The largest body of positive evidence submitted on attainment raising focuses on study/revision skills workshops/programmes. Total submissions to date (33) include 4 causal and 29 empirical evaluations, with 9 of those being strong in quality.
	10 (5)	10 (4)	9 (6)	
Empirical				
Strength of evidence (number of new sources in parentheses)				
	Emerging	Average	Stronger	

²⁰ <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/metacognition> The EEF 2021 report on Metacognition and Self-Regulated Learning highlights that “evidence suggests the use of ‘metacognitive strategies’ – which encourage pupils to reflect on their own learning – can yield the equivalent of an additional +7 months’ progress when applied effectively.



Key findings

- Across the 17 new evidence submissions on interventions classified as study skills or revision workshops, the evidence base is positive overall. A total of 12 new submissions (13 in 2023–24) report positive impacts and across both calls, seven report mixed findings. Notably, no evaluations report negative impacts, although one study submitted in response to the previous call in 2025 reported no impact overall. Mixed findings are typically associated with programmes targeted at multiple year groups.
- Across the two attainment-raising evidence reviews (33 submissions in total), there is a growing and consistent body of evidence that well-designed study and revision workshops can have a meaningful impact on students' metacognitive awareness, study strategy knowledge, academic self-efficacy and confidence, particularly when programmes are tailored to learners' age and ability. There is some limited but credible indicative empirical evidence of positive impacts on assessment grades following a study skills intervention.
- Study skills workshops appear to be most impactful for students in Year 10 when focused on revision strategies and exam preparation skills.
- Short, intensive interventions are associated with positive outcomes. There is stronger empirical and causal evidence that the most effective programmes comprise between one and six sessions. Student attendance was critical to maximising the impact of this type of intervention.
- An average causal submission reports emerging positive impacts on metacognition, confidence, motivation and problem solving for Year 9 students at risk of underperforming at GCSE. This partnership set out plans to track the impact of the study skills interventions on students' attainment using Attainment-8 data.²¹
- A causal study of a metacognition intervention for students across Years 8, 9 and 10 reports an impact on overall higher attainment compared with local authority averages. Findings require replication across a larger sample and multiple cohorts to confirm attributions to the programme.
- Empirical and causal evidence indicates promising effects for Years 8 and 9, where programmes focus on age-appropriate activities and cognition. These activities can contribute to improved confidence and self-efficacy.
- Evidence for Year 7 indicates that study skills programmes are associated with cognition and improved confidence. However, average empirical evidence suggests that the programme content needs to be age appropriate. The study found that Year 7 students do not respond as well to revision strategies as students in Years 10 and need more focused support to understand how to process information and prepare for learning.

²¹ 'Attainment-8 data' measures a secondary school's average academic performance by calculating the total points from a student's best eight approved GCSE subjects.

- In the 2025 call, five submissions were classified as emerging²² empirical evidence, largely because of small sample sizes, low response rates to the pre- and post-evaluation surveys, and/or incomplete information about the outcomes measured.
- A strong empirical submission in the latest call reports mixed findings with a small effect size but finds that academic self-efficacy and metacognition improved for some FSM students compared with non-FSM students.

Table 4: Evidence of the impact of study skills and revision workshops

Short-term outcomes	Impacts achieved
Metacognition, study strategies	- 14 new submissions added to the existing 12 submissions report a positive effect of study skills and revision interventions on students' metacognition. This includes 1 causal and 4 strong empirical submissions. 5 new submissions report statistically significant improvements in students' cognition, revision and study skills. - 1 new strong empirical submission reports mixed findings on metacognition for learners across Years 7, 8 and 9, targeted at white males from lower socioeconomic groups, FSM learners and learners from ethnic minority backgrounds. - A decline in metacognition was recorded in Year 7 non-FSM learners according to 1 new strong empirical submission. However, 1 other new strong empirical submission reports no impact on metacognition in this latest call, for Years 7, 8 and 9 in receipt of FSM.
Confidence	- A total of 20 submissions across both calls for evidence on the impact of attainment-raising activities, including 3 causal studies, reported a positive impact on confidence after engaging in study skills workshops. - 1 new strong empirical submission reports mixed impact on confidence, compared with 2 in 2025 (1 an average empirical study and 1 an emerging study). The new strong empirical submission was aimed at Years 7, 8 and 9. The average empirical study was aimed at Year 8 and 9 males and the emerging empirical study focused on Key Stage 3 learners who have FSM. This evidence suggests that these student groups may require more sustained and intensive programmes to improve confidence.
Academic self-efficacy	- 8 new empirical submissions are added to the existing 9 submissions that suggest a positive increase in student self-efficacy after study/revision skills workshops, with students reporting that they could do most tasks well and could identify important information.

²² In the previous attainment raising report, these studies were classified as 'weaker'.

Short-term outcomes	Impacts achieved
	Only 1 strong empirical submission reports mixed impact on student self-efficacy whilst 2 average empirical studies report no impact. These interventions focused on FSM students, one of which also targeted grade boundary learners and another minority ethnic groups. The results suggest more tailored provision is required for some target groups.
Attitudes towards learning	3 new emerging and 1 new average empirical source of evidence indicate that there is a positive impact on students' attitudes towards learning, particularly confidence in their ability to achieve higher grades. These findings are typically for Year 10 cohorts. This evidence is in addition to 4 submissions from the previous call, including 1 causal and 2 empirical evidence submissions that reported positive impacts and 1 emerging causal study no impact on a Year 11 group.
Critical thinking	- Being able to critically engage with and analyse information, and understand what is important, are some of the positive effects reported in 7 new submissions, including 1 causal and 2 strong empirical. The effects are typically for students in Years 9 to 11 and further substantiates last year's findings, where 1 submission showed a positive impact on Year 10 students' critical thinking. 1 new (average empirical) submission reports mixed impact on critical thinking for Year 8, 9, 10 learners from target groups including learners from a minority ethnic group, disabled learners and care experienced learners. One new strong empirical evidence submission reports no impact on Year 11 students' critical thinking.
Locus of control	- Students' locus of control increased, according to 4 new submissions, including 2 strong empirical studies. 4 average and emerging empirical evidence submissions from the 2025 evidence also reported positive impacts on locus of control. - Submissions showing a positive impact typically focus on exam preparation for older year groups. 2 new strong empirical studies, however, showed mixed and no impact.
Self-regulated learning	The positive impact on the self-regulation of students in Years 8 to 11 is evidenced in 1 strong and 2 average empirical studies. These studies report that students' ability to study independently improved. This builds on evidence from one strong and one average empirical study submitted in the 2025 call.



Short-term outcomes	Impacts achieved
Motivation	- 7 studies reported positive impacts on the motivation of Years 9 to 11 in the 2025 call. In 2026, 2 strong empirical and one average causal study report similar findings. However, a further strong empirical study finds no effect on Year 11.
Resilience	- A new emerging and one average empirical study indicate that resilience for some students increases after a study skills workshop. This adds to previous empirical evidence from 3 earlier submissions that showed a positive impact on resilience for Years 10 and 11.
Sense of belonging	- 2 empirical studies, one of which was strong, suggest a positive impact on Black students' sense of belonging, although this is not statistically significant. - An emerging empirical submission from 2025 reported a positive impact on a Year 10 group who had an HE campus visit as part of their study skills programme. - 1 emerging empirical submission reports a negative impact on students' sense of belonging overall, related to fitting in academically and socially in HE.
Subject knowledge	- 1 emerging empirical submission reports positive increases in students' working grades for core subjects following study skills workshops. However, the workshops did not have a subject-specific focus and further evidence is needed to attribute this change to the intervention.

Multi-intervention programmes

Multi-intervention approaches incorporate a combination of activities within one package of support, such as study skills, revision, careers and HE advice, oracy skills, mentoring, subject-specific workshops and tutoring, and/or campus visits. The activities range in length and intensity, for example from two, one-hour study skills sessions with a campus visit for a small group of students, through to a programme engaging 600 students overall comprising 35 workshops, mentoring in groups and individually, and subject-specific workshops lasting between 30 minutes and a whole day.

Figure 3: Number of sources and strength of evidence on the impact of multi-intervention programmes

Causal	2 (1)	1 (1)	
Empirical	2 (1)	6 (4)	4 (2)
	Emerging	Average	Stronger

**Strength of evidence
(Number of new sources in parentheses)**

Of the **15** multi-intervention evidence submissions to date, 3 are causal and 12 empirical, with 4 being strong.

Most evidence found positive student impacts, with only 3 reporting mixed impact.

Key findings

- The strongest evidence suggests that multi-intervention approaches combining study/revision skills with subject-specific activity (either workshops or tutoring) are the most impactful. Evaluations consistently indicate positive effects on study skills, confidence and subject knowledge.
- A further nine multi-intervention programme evaluations add to the growing body of evidence suggesting mostly positive impacts, particularly on students' study and revision skills (where these form part of the programme), confidence and subject knowledge.
- A further four new submissions specifically targeting students eligible for free school meals (FSM) report positive impacts on study skills and confidence, with a strong empirical evaluation reporting a reduction in the attainment gap between FSM and non-FSM learners following participation in the programme.
- Further causal evidence indicates that multi-intervention programmes may improve attainment in English and maths. While this is promising, the findings are based on a relatively small sample and should therefore be interpreted with caution.

- One programme delivered to Year 8 students and repeated for a second consecutive year reported increased confidence in sharing learning with peers, improvements in boys' ability to plan and organise their thinking and increased critical thinking among girls.

Table 5: Evidence of the impact of multi-intervention programmes

Short-term outcomes	Impacts achieved
Metacognition	- A further 5 submissions, including 2 causal, are added to the 2 submitted in 2025 that reported positive increases in students' metacognition. This is particularly evident when programmes feature a study skills/revision strategy element. - Positive impacts are reported for students in Years 9 to 11, with 1 average empirical submission reporting a positive impact on Year 8 pupils in receipt of FSM. Average empirical evidence from 2025 also suggested positive impacts on metacognition for Year 8 pupils in receipt of FSM. - 2 average empirical studies reported mixed impacts on Years 10 and 11, 1 in receipt of FSM and the other focusing on Black students in the 2025 call.
Confidence	- A further 5 submissions, including 2 strong empirical evaluations (in addition to 2 strong and 1 causal from the 2025 call), report a positive impact on student confidence in their ability to do well. This is across all year groups, FSM students and those with lower-than-expected attainment scores.
Subject knowledge	- 2 new submissions (1 empirical and 1 causal) are added to the existing evidence suggesting that multi-intervention programmes have a positive impact on English and maths grades. - A strong empirical study reports a positive impact on assessment scores for Year 7, increasing post-intervention from a mean score of 51% to 65% overall.
Academic self-efficacy	- The level of impact on academic self-efficacy varies across submissions. 1 new strong empirical evaluation suggests a positive impact on self-efficacy for Year 9 and 10. - Another average empirical submission reports mixed impact for progress 8 targeted learners and 2 causal submissions report no impact and a negative impact. The latter submission focused more on HE advice and campus activities than other programmes.
Critical thinking	- A strong and an average empirical study report positive impact, including improved ability to assess the reliability and to critically consider information. A further strong empirical evaluation reports a mixed impact on critical thinking across Years 8, 9 and 10 with lower-than-average Progress 8 scores.



Short-term outcomes	Impacts achieved
	- In the 2025 call for evidence, 1 strong empirical study suggested a positive impact on Year 8.
Motivation	- There is limited evidence about the impact on motivation. A positive impact on motivation is identified in 2 new empirical submissions (1 strong and 1 average), adding to the evidence from 2025, which comprised 3 studies, including 1 causal. - One new average empirical submission reports a mixed impact.
Attitudes towards learning	- 1 new average empirical submission and 1 causal indicate a positive impact on attitudes towards learning, whilst another empirical study reports mixed impact.
Sense of belonging, self-regulated learning and resilience	- Positive effects on resilience are reported in 1 average empirical and 1 strong empirical study submitted in 2026. In addition, 1 strong empirical study from 2025 also reported positive impact on resilience. - 1 strong empirical study submitted in response to each call for evidence showed positive impacts on students' self-regulated learning, and in the most recent call, on a sense of belonging for Year 7 FSM learners. - 1 emerging empirical study in the previous call also reported positive impacts on Black and mixed heritage learners' sense of belonging.

Subject-specific tutoring

Subject-specific tutoring activities were delivered to smaller, more focused groups of students than other interventions. Sessions typically lasted between 30 minutes and an hour, hosted over a period of 5 to 10 weeks. The main aim of tutoring is to improve students' performance in specific subject areas, with some programmes tailored to target groups identified as in most need of support, such as males or students in receipt of FSM. Evidence to date has typically focused on interventions designed to increase English and maths attainment, with a few focused on other subjects.

Figure 4: Number of sources and strength of evidence on the impact of subject-specific tutoring

Causal	2	1 (1)		A total of 11 , 3 causal and 8 empirical submissions focused on subject-specific tutoring. Of those, 3 empirical studies are strong. Most evidence suggests a positive impact on subject knowledge, confidence and grade increases.
	3 (1)	2	3 (3)	
Empirical				
	Emerging	Average	Stronger	
Strength of evidence (Number of new sources in parentheses)				

Key findings

- Most of the 11 evidence submissions to date showed positive outcomes following subject-specific tutoring, with the most positive impact being on students' subject knowledge.
- Of the new strong empirical studies, one shows positive impacts for self-efficacy, metacognitive/study strategies and confidence for Years 10 and 11 in receipt of FSM.
- A new causal submission is based on an evaluation of a collaborative programme delivered to the same cohort of students over two academic years when they were in Year 8 (2023-24) and Year 9 (2024-25). Statistically significant changes in literacy and writing scores were found post-intervention. This adds more weight to findings that subject-specific tutoring in maths and English can improve grades.
- In the previous call, one of the emerging causal studies reported a 1.5 grade increase in maths for a group of Year 11 students in receipt of FSM after taking part in an online tutoring programme.
- Subject-specific tutoring appears to have less impact on students' perceptions of their self-efficacy and confidence according to three empirical studies submitted in 2025 which

reported either mixed, negative or no impact. One average empirical submission in the first call, however, reported a positive impact on study skills for Year 9 learners who have FSM.

Table 6: Evidence of the impact of subject-specific tutoring

Short-term outcomes	Impacts achieved
Subject knowledge	- All 5 new submissions report a positive impact on subject knowledge, building on the positive evidence from the previous call. 3 out of the 5 new submissions included causal evidence from a collaborative tutoring programme delivered to the same cohort of students when they were in Years 8 and 9. - Across both calls for evidence, subject-specific tutoring is associated with statistically significant positive uplifts in literacy and writing skills and assessment scores, according to 3 sources of causal evidence.
Academic self-efficacy	- 1 new strong empirical study reports a positive impact on self-efficacy for Year 10 and 11 students in receipt of FSM. - 2 average empirical and 1 emerging empirical submission from the 2025 call reported no impact, a negative impact and a mixed impact for self-efficacy, but these outcomes were based on low survey response rates.
Confidence, attitudes towards learning	- 1 new strong empirical submission focusing on Year 10 and 11 FSM students also report a positive impact on confidence. Evidence of impact on confidence was more mixed in the 2 empirical studies submitted in 2025. - In 2025, 1 emerging empirical submission reported a mixed impact on attitudes towards learning. This was not measured in the latest call for evidence.

Subject-specific workshops

Subject-specific workshops are intensive programmes concentrating on a subject or area of the curriculum identified as being a priority for Uni Connect target schools. In this review, subject-specific workshops focused on English, maths, science and humanities. The intensity of these sessions ranged from two, one-hour sessions to a week-long programme. These workshops target specific students identified by schools as being the most likely to benefit from support, for example those on the GCSE grade boundary 3 and 4.

Figure 5: Number of sources and strength of evidence on the impact of subject-specific workshops

Causal	2		
Empirical	2	4 (2)	2 (1)
	Emerging	Average	Stronger

**Strength of evidence
(Number of new sources in parentheses)**

A total of **10** evidence submissions, including 2 causal and 8 empirical focused on subject-specific tutoring. Of those, 2 are strong.

Most of the positive impact is seen in confidence.

Key findings

- Across the ten sources of evidence on the impact of subject-specific workshops, the evidence base is strongly positive. A total of eight submissions, including all three from the most recent call, reported overall positive impacts, particularly in confidence, self-efficacy and critical thinking. From the previous call, one submission - a multi-disciplinary programme of subject-specific workshops - reported a mixed impact, and one study that focused on resilience and revision skills for underperforming Year 11 students reported no overall impact.
- The strongest and most consistent positive impact relates to students' confidence in their ability to succeed within the subject area. New empirical evidence indicates that subject-specific workshops are particularly effective for improving subject-level confidence.
- There is strong empirical evidence of attainment-related outcomes for older learners. One strong empirical study reports a positive impact on mock GCSE English grades for Year 11 students. Another new average empirical study reports a statistically significant improvement in mathematical understanding for a Year 11 group, although this is based on a small sample.

- One strong empirical study report that students in Year 10 improved by 1-2 grades in Maths, and in Year 10 English there was an average grade increase of 1.64.
- There is indicative evidence that subject-specific workshops can improve attainment for younger students in particular contexts. Amongst the 2025 submissions, three reported increases in post-assessment grades in science for Year 7 students.
- Evidence of impact on self-efficacy is mixed and appears to be cohort and context specific. While there is no consistent evidence for Year 7 or Year 10 students, one average empirical study reports positive impacts for Year 8. However, two of the new submissions are based on small sample sizes.
- One source of causal evidence indicates that confidence does not increase across all the aspects measured, indicating that the impact of subject-specific workshops on confidence and self-efficacy is likely to depend on the delivery context, subject focus and student characteristics.

Table 7: Evidence of the impact of subject-specific workshops.

Short-term outcomes	Impacts achieved
Confidence	- Across the 10 submissions, 7 empirical studies report positive impacts on student confidence, with 4 empirical studies reporting increased confidence in their ability to do well in maths and English. - One 2025 causal study, however, reported a mixed impact on confidence for Year 7 FSM learners.
Self-efficacy	- A positive shift in student self-efficacy was reported in 1 empirical study in the most recent call, and 1 causal and 2 empirical sources of evidence reported in the first call that they believed in their ability to achieve target grades. - A mixed impact was reported in an emerging empirical 2025 submission for Year 11 FSM learners.
Metacognition	- 1 new average empirical submission reports a positive impact on metacognition for Year 11 non-FSM students. In contrast, a 2025 empirical study reports a negative impact on Year 11 FSM students. - A negative impact in metacognitive practice scores suggested that FSM students found it more challenging to apply their study techniques and possibly required more support in this area.
Subject knowledge	- One causal submission with a reasonable sample size based on Year 7 science monitoring assessment grades reported a positive impact on students' test results after the workshop(s)



Short-term outcomes	Impacts achieved
	compared with a control group in the first attainment-raising call for evidence. - 2 new empirical submissions report a positive uplift in Year 10 and 11 English and Maths assessment scores. However, sample sizes were small and there was no comparison group to determine a causal link between the workshop and the results.
Motivation, attitudes towards learning, sense of belonging, resilience	- Evidence is limited about the impact of subject-specific workshops on other outcomes, for example resilience. - A strong empirical evidence submission reported a positive impact on motivation.

Reading sessions

Reading sessions aim to support students with lower-than-expected reading ages to increase their overall attainment. Delivery varies, ranging from a theatre-based workshop to subject-specific guided reading sessions, reading aloud sessions and programmes training older students to be reading 'buddies' for younger ones. Sessions primarily target Year 7 and 8 students, although some activities work with students in Years 9-11 as well, when students have a lower-than-average reading age. Interventions typically consist of one-hour sessions delivered over a period of 5 to 12 weeks.

Figure 6: Number of sources and strength of evidence on the impact of reading sessions

Causal	3 (1)			7 submissions focused on reading, with 3 causal submissions and 4 empirical submissions, 2 of which are strong. 4 submissions report a positive impact and 3 mixed effects.
Empirical	2		2 (2)	
	Emerging	Average	Stronger	
Strength of evidence (Number of new sources in parentheses)				

Key findings

- For two new strong empirical studies and one 2025 study, there were significant impacts reported for Year 7 learners including an increased average reading age of 18.85 months in one and improved reading test results in another.
- Another small-scale 2025 causal evaluation reports improved reading scores in the intervention group in comparison with the control group. This was also for Year 7 learners.
- One new causal study reports a mixed impact on Year 9 students with lower-than-expected GCSE grades. However, this study is based on a small sample size. Most impacts reported in this evaluation were in confidence and engagement in reading.
- One empirical study in 2025 suggested that significant improvements had been made on self-efficacy and overall academic achievement for a cohort of Years 7-11; however, further evidence is required to enable attribution to the reading intervention.



Table 8: Evidence of the impact of reading sessions

Short-term outcomes	Impacts achieved
Confidence	- All evidence to date, including 3 causal studies, showed a positive impact on students' confidence in their reading ability.
Reading skills	- 2 of the 3 new submissions, categorised as strong empirical, show a positive impact for FSM students in Years 7 to 9. One strong empirical evaluation reports that the reading age of Year 7 students increased by an average of 18 months. This adds to the evidence presented in the previous 2 causal studies of improved reading skills after reading interventions.
Academic self-efficacy	- A new strong empirical submission reports that a reading intervention has a positive impact on self-efficacy. Another new causal study focusing on Year 9 students report mixed impact, although this is based on a small sample size.
Metacognition	- A strong empirical submission provided evidence of a positive impact on FSM students in Years 7 and 8.
Attitudes towards learning	- Evidence of impact on Year 9 students' attitudes towards learning after a reading intervention is mixed, according to 1 strong empirical submission.

Oracy workshops and support

Activities to improve students' oracy skills tend to focus on language development and public speaking. Submissions to the previous call in 2025 were based on small-scale projects that used debating approaches to help improve students' language and communication skills. The new causal study submitted in 2026 focuses on developing skills in public speaking and oracy strategies to develop effective arguments. Programmes typically comprised of between 5 and 12 one-hour sessions, with some more intensive programmes delivered over an entire day.

Figure 7: Number of sources and strength of evidence on the impact of oracy workshops and support

Causal	(1)			Of the 5 evidence submissions focusing on oracy, 1 is causal and 4 are empirical.
Empirical	2	1	1	4 reported positive and 2 mixed impacts.
	Emerging	Average	Stronger	
Strength of evidence (Number of new sources in parentheses)				

Key findings

- The strongest evidence comes from one new causal study which demonstrates a positive impact on Year 9 FSM students who participated in a programme of oracy workshops designed to develop a range of speaking and communication skills.
- One strong empirical evaluation submitted in response to the previous call reported clear improvements in oracy skills among a cohort of Year 9 students, with 90% successfully passing the English-Speaking Board exam. While the findings were positive, the inclusion of a comparison group would have helped to determine whether this outcome was attributable to the oracy support.
- Across the five submissions to date on oracy skills, three (including one new causal submission) reported positive impacts on student confidence. Two of these focused on FSM students in Year 9 and 10, respectively. Another workshop aimed to improve techniques for speech writing and delivery among Year 8s. One evaluation reported mixed impacts across all outcomes measured.

- The overall strength of the oracy evidence is limited by the small sample sizes in three out of the five studies.

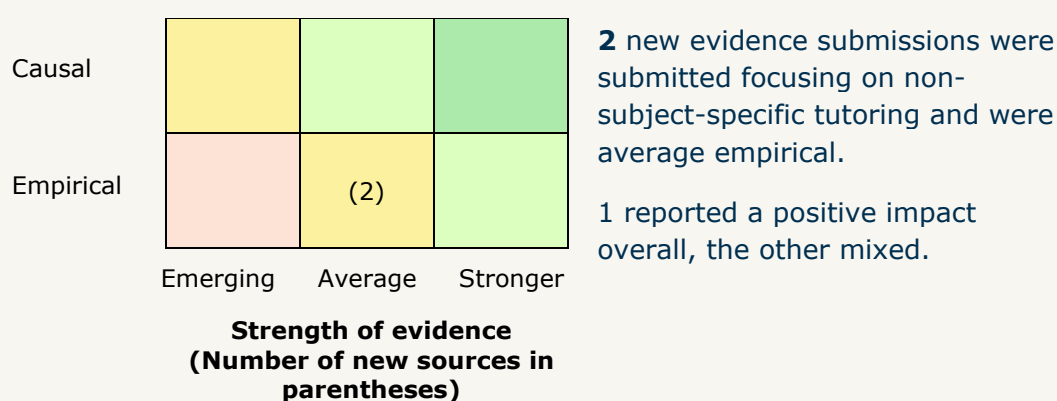
Table 10: Evidence of the impact of oracy workshops.

Short-term outcomes	Impacts achieved
Oracy skills	- Of the 5 submissions, 4 indicate a positive impact on oracy skills, including 1 new causal submission. - 1 new causal submission focused on public speaking for Year 9 FSM learners and reported an improvement in oracy skills for the intervention group compared to the control group. There is indicative evidence that the programme had slightly more positive impact on females. - One 2025 empirical evidence submission focusing on an intervention targeting Year 10 FSM learners (based on a small sample) reported a mixed impact. - One strong empirical submission in 2025 reported that 90% of students who engaged with the oracy support passed the English-Speaking Board exam and 65% were awarded a merit.
Confidence	- Positive effects on student confidence were reported in 2 empirical submissions in 2025 and 1 causal in 2026. - An empirical submission from 2025 reported a mixed impact on Year 10 learners taking part in the intervention.
Study skills, resilience, motivation and a sense of belonging	- Among the submissions in 2025, 1 empirical submission reported a positive effect on student motivation and resilience for a Year 8 cohort. - One new causal evidence submission reported a positive shift in students' metacognition and sense of belonging for Year 9 FSM learners. One 2025 empirical submission with a small sample size reported a mixed impact on these outcomes.

Non-subject-specific tutoring

New evidence on non-subject-specific tutoring has been submitted to the review in 2026. No evidence in this area was submitted in the previous call. Activities focused on developing knowledge and skills pertaining to attainment, giving learners the tools to simplify and present information. These sessions typically lasted an hour and were either six or eight sessions long.

Figure 8: Number of sources and strength of evidence on the impact of non-subject-specific tutoring



Key findings

- Both new average empirical studies report positive impacts on a range of short-term outcomes, including study skills, motivation and confidence, attitudes towards learning and resilience.
- Confidence and resilience are the main areas of impact reported for a Year 9 group with a range of targeted characteristics, including FSM, carers and children from military families.
- Motivation and attitudes towards learning were reported as impacts for a group of Year 7 learners, in receipt for FSM. However, this average empirical submission reports no impact on confidence.



Table 11: Evidence of the impact of non-subject-specific tutoring

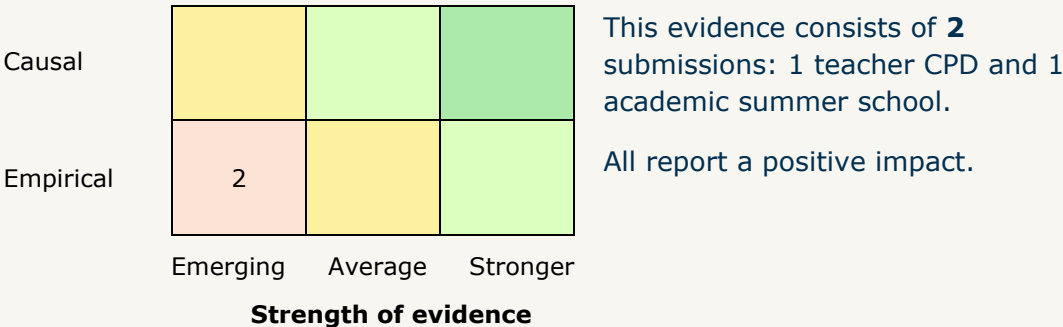
Short-term outcomes	Impacts achieved
Metacognition	- One new average empirical study reports a positive impact on metacognition and study skills strategies for Year 7 FSM learners.
Motivation	- Motivation was a short-term outcome with a positive impact on Year 7 FSM learners.
Confidence	- Although there was no impact on confidence reported for one average empirical study focusing on Year 7 FSM learners, there was a positive impact on Year 9 learners involved in a Lego-based careers and soft skills programme.
Attitudes towards learning	- The Year 7 group were reported to have been impacted positively in relation to attitudes towards learning; however, this was not measured as an outcome in the other submission.
Resilience	- One average empirical submission reported that there was a statistically significant positive impact on resilience for Year 9 pupils.



Teacher CPD and academic summer school

No new evidence on the impact of teacher CPD and academic summer schools was submitted in 2026. Both studies submitted in 2025 provided only emerging empirical evidence of the impact of these interventions.

Figure 9: Number of sources and strength of evidence on the impact of teacher CPD and an academic summer school



Key findings

- The academic summer school delivered a science-based intervention for Year 10 students, and reported a positive effect on their study skills, self-efficacy, sense of belonging and attitudes towards learning.
- The CPD programme for teachers was designed to develop English GCSE assessment skills delivered over two days on a university campus. Teachers reported a positive effect on their confidence to teach English at Key Stage 4 and an increased understanding of the GCSE English language assessment. Observations following the programme captured evidence that teachers were able to apply the learning in their classroom.



Table 12: Evidence of the impact of teacher CPD and academic summer schools

Short-term outcomes	Impacts achieved
Self-efficacy	- Students who took part in the academic summer school were reported to have experienced a positive impact on their self-efficacy, according to 1 emerging empirical study, including that they now had the skills needed to study and revise well and were now confident that they would be able to manage the study level required at HE.
A sense of belonging and attitudes towards learning	- The 2025 emerging empirical evaluation of the academic summer school provided evidence of small positive impacts on students' sense of belonging and attitudes towards learning.
Teacher motivation and professional skills	- The teacher CPD programme empirical evaluation provided evidence of a positive impact on teachers' skills to assess English. The study was limited by the small sample size, and high attrition between the pre- and post-intervention survey.



Mentoring

No new evidence on the impact of mentoring was submitted in 2026. Mentoring included tailored and 'holistic' support, delivered on campus or in school, by student ambassadors, to small groups and individuals in Years 9 to 11. Sessions typically involved hourly sessions over a period of six to eight weeks and focused on goal setting, time management, study skills and personal wellbeing.

Figure 10: Number of sources and strength of evidence on the impact of mentoring

Causal	1			Of the 6 submissions on mentoring, 1 was causal and 5 empirical. 3 empirical evaluations were average and 2 emerging. All evidence showed positive impact overall.
Empirical	2	3		
	Emerging	Average	Stronger	
	Strength of evidence			

Key findings

- The limited evidence on mentoring activities, including an emerging causal study, suggested that mentoring can increase student's self-efficacy. Among the empirical studies, three reported positive shifts in students' knowledge of study strategies. The causal evaluation and one empirical also reported increased levels of student confidence.
- Mentoring programmes were typically delivered to older year groups; four of the submissions including the causal study were based on programmes that targeted Year 10 and 11 students.
- The causal evaluation found that English attainment increased by one grade for some Year 11 students compared with a control group with no grade increases. Mentoring was delivered alongside other school interventions, so it was not possible to attribute the grade increases to mentoring alone.
- The causal evaluation reported smaller average grade increases for maths GCSE (0.7) following mentoring, and this increase was lower than the control group (0.8). The students who participated in the maths mentoring programme were at a higher starting point (Grade 4) than those who participated in the English mentoring programme. This was reported to explain the smaller increase in the grade achieved by the maths.

- All mentoring interventions targeted small groups of students and therefore the evidence was weaker compared with other interventions.

Table 13: Evidence of the impact of mentoring sessions.

Short-term outcomes	Impacts achieved
Self-efficacy	- Of the 6 submissions provided in 2025, 4 (including the causal study) reported a positive impact on students' self-efficacy. One average empirical submission reported no impact.
Subject knowledge	- Causal evidence indicated a positive effect on English knowledge, and one submission – focused on maths attainment – reported increased knowledge for a group of Year 9 students.
Confidence	- A positive effect on student confidence was reported in 2 empirical submissions, 1 emerging empirical and 1 causal, also reported increased subject knowledge.
Motivation	- 2 empirical submissions indicated a positive effect on student motivation to progress to HE.
Sense of belonging, self-regulated learning, attitudes towards learning and critical thinking	- One empirical evaluation that targeted male students indicated a positive effect on their sense of belonging. - Positive effects on self-regulated learning, study strategies and confidence were indicated in 1 average empirical study of an intervention that targeted Year 10 students. The same submission reported a positive effect on attitudes towards learning and critical thinking.



Conclusions and recommendations

The evidence on the impact of attainment-raising activities delivered through Uni Connect partnerships between 2023 and 2025 suggests that, overall, they contribute to student outcomes. A range of short-term proxy attainment measures have been positively impacted upon via a range of attainment-raising activities, with the largest volume of evidence being for study skills workshops and multi-intervention programmes. Evidence from these two intervention types provide almost half the 91 reports analysed across the two reviews.

The largest volume and strength of evidence is observed for study skills and revision workshops (33) with most of these evaluations reporting positive student outcomes, most notably in metacognition, confidence in the ability to do well, academic self-efficacy and attitudes towards learning. The largest positive effect is for metacognition and study skills strategies, with the suggestion being that the most impactful programmes are short, intensive interventions focusing on these learning strategies.

New evidence submissions build on existing knowledge that study skills workshops, especially when repeated, are particularly effective at improving students' cognitive abilities for future attainment. Interventions focused on recall and reflection appear to be particularly effective for younger cohorts, whereas exam preparation and practice is more impactful for older year groups. Collectively, there is a more robust body of evidence and although most is empirical, the increase in strong studies from the latest review further substantiates the evidence base.

Further new evidence from evaluations of subject-specific interventions, including workshops, tutoring, reading or oracy suggests that although there is less evidence, compared with study skills and multi-intervention programmes, there are some indicative positive impacts on actual grades and assessments. For example, causal and strong empirical evidence submissions report assessment score increases in literacy, reading age, and grade increases for mock English GCSEs for different year groups. This adds further weight to the previous evidence review where subject-specific workshops and tutoring were reported to have a positive impact on students' science, English and maths grades, as well as improvements in reading assessment scores. Whether or not these grade and assessment increases are representative for different year groups still require further exploration.

The evidence base for multi-intervention approaches has increased, with new submissions demonstrating that a combination of study skills and subject-specific interventions can be more impactful on students' subject knowledge, study skills, confidence and self-efficacy. There is also further evidence of positive effects on critical thinking and motivation. Knowledge about the target groups most likely to benefit has increased, with positive effects reported for Year 8 students and FSM students, compared with other student characteristics.

There were relatively few new submissions relating to reading interventions and oracy skills and no new evidence submissions for teacher CPD, summer schools and mentoring – which means the strength of the evidence base for these interventions remains more limited than others.



Due to the challenges of assessing impact on actual attainment, most partnerships submitted empirical evidence that measured activities intended to achieve short-term outcomes, such as confidence, resilience, motivation and self-efficacy. However, there has been an uplift in the number of partnerships collaborating to produce robust causal evidence with larger student sample sizes. This, together with tracking students' grades over time, should lead to more robust evidence in the future.

It is still not possible to draw firm conclusions about which year groups benefit the most from attainment-raising activities. Available evidence indicates that all year groups can be positively impacted, with older year groups, particularly Year 10, benefiting the most from specific revision strategy and exam preparation programmes. In contrast, younger year groups benefit from tailored, age-appropriate programmes focused on cognition, learning strategies and practical skills for retaining information.

Additional evidence from this review indicates that one-hour sessions of between three and six iterations are most effective. However, it is still not possible to draw firm conclusions about the ideal dosage. Evidence also highlights other factors – including age, ability, protected characteristics, intervention type and outcomes measured – are likely to influence the optimal duration and intensity of interventions, which warrants further research.

Strengthening the evidence base

Despite a high volume of submissions across the two calls and a growing number of strong empirical (16) and causal evaluations (17) identifying positive effects, the limited amount of causal evidence continues to be a gap. Although there are now 17 causal submissions across both reviews, over half (10) were emerging studies, characterised by small sample sizes, weak comparison/control groups and large post-intervention attrition. This limits the certainty that outcomes can be attributed to the interventions. However, the combined outcomes from the causal and strong empirical evidence have improved, providing more certainty that outcomes can be attributable, to some extent, to the intervention(s). Implementing studies using actual attainment data, large sample sizes and better matched comparison groups would further help to strengthen the evidence base. However, practical challenges, including deriving 'treatment' and 'control' groups in schools, coupled with time lags and availability of assessment and grade data, may continue to limit strengthening of the evidence base.

Recommendations to inform the future evaluation

To further strengthen the evidence base about the impact of attainment-raising activities, partnerships may wish to consider:

- **More causal evidence using attainment data:** A larger body of causal evidence, drawing on actual attainment data, is needed to accurately assess the impact of interventions on students' grades. Planning how and when data will be captured and the timescales involved to obtain attainment data (particularly from national administrative datasets) will help to incorporate these elements into future evaluations.

- 
- **Partnership collaborations:** There is a growing body of evidence that partnerships which collaborate on larger scale programmes are showing more impactful results on skills that point to increased attainment. More collaborative approaches focused on delivering interventions that are considered most effective for their target groups, drawing on the evidence base to date, will deliver the strongest possible evidence.
 - **Longitudinal studies tracking attainment data:** This approach will develop a clearer understanding of what works and for whom, and what contributes to grade increases. Interventions should also focus on developing students' skills over time rather than one-off sessions.
 - **More targeted evaluation activity for key learner characteristics:** All submissions aim to support underrepresented students; however, more evidence is required about how some groups – including minority ethnic groups, carers and disabled students – respond to different interventions, alongside the most effective duration and delivery mode.

Annex 1: Methods of analysis

Table 14: Criteria for assessing the standard (empirical or causal) of evidence

Type 2: Empirical enquiry		Type 3: Causal (includes criteria for Type 2 and the following)	
Criteria for classification of empirical enquiry	Not empirical enquiry	Criteria for classification of causal enquiry	Not causal enquiry
Clear aims of what activities seek to achieve	Aims developed after activity	Have a target and control/comparison group	Using groups that are not comparable
Select indicators of impact	No concept of measuring success	Use of an experimental or quasi-experimental design	Selection bias in comparator groups
Quantitative and/or qualitative data	Information not systematically collected	Think about selection bias and how to avoid it	
Pre- and post-activity data (minimum of two time points)	Only collect information once		
Analysis competently undertaken	Data not related to the intervention		
Sharing of results and review of activity	Results not used to inform decisions		



The evidence was coded using a framework aligned to criteria developed by TASO as part of its evidence review. In addition to the standard of evidence and overall quality score, the following information was recorded for each source of evidence.

Table 15: Coding framework

• Partnership	• Total number of participants in intervention
• Format of material	• Total number of participants in evaluation sample
• Date and timeframe for evaluation	• Total number of respondents and response rate
• Activity type and description	• Attrition rate (pre- and post-activity studies)
• Timing, duration and frequency of activity	• Data analysis
• Mode of activity delivery	• Outcomes evaluated
• Target year group	• Key findings on demonstrable impact
• Types of students engaged in activity	• Notes on demonstrable impact
• Target groups	• Challenges/limitations of evaluation
• Type of evaluation approach	• Overall impact achieved
• Data collection methods	• Strength of evidence
• Data subjects	• Overall assessment rating
• Rationale for sample selection	

Annex 2: Map of outcomes to interventions

The table below illustrates the volume of evidence submitted in response to both evidence calls and shows whether an intervention does (or does not) contribute to student outcomes.

- The 'P' codes depict evidence about the impact of an intervention that is overwhelmingly positive (when over 75% of sources report positive findings).
- The 'M' codes indicate mixed evidence (positive and some negative and/or less conclusive).

The main body of the report presents tables for each intervention based on the most robust sources. This figure can be used alongside the evidence bank which provides further details on the strength of the evidence and impact detected across submissions for 2025 and 2026.

Table 16: Strength of evidence matrix

	Study/revision skills	Multi-intervention	Subject-specific tutoring	Subject-specific workshops	Reading	Oracy skills	Non-subject-specific tutoring	Mentoring	Other
Subject knowledge		P3	P2	P2		P3		P3	P3
Study/revision skills	P1	P2	P3	M2	M1	P3	P3	P3	P3
Self-efficacy	P1	P3	M2	M2	P3	P3		P3	
Self-regulated learning	P3	P3	M2					P3	
Critical thinking	P2	P3				P3		P3	
Locus of control	P3			P3					
Motivation	P2	P3	M1	P3			P3	P3	
Sense of belonging	P3	P3		P3		P3			P3
Confidence	P1	P2		P2	P3	P3	P3	P3	
Attitudes towards learning	P3	P3		P3	M1			P3	P3



	Study/review skills	Multi-intervention	Subject-specific tutoring	Subject-specific workshops	Reading	Oracy skills	Non-subject-specific tutoring	Mentoring	Other
Resilience	P3	P3		M1			P3	P3	
Reading Skills				M1	P3				
Oracy skills						P3			
Teacher professional skills									P3

Key for Table 16

P1	Positive impact – large amount of evidence	M1	Mixed, negative or no impact
P2	Positive impact – moderate amount of evidence	M2	Mixed, negative or no impact – moderate amount of evidence
P3	Positive evidence -small amount of evidence	M3	Mixed, negative or no impact – large amount of evidence