1.0 Executive summary

This report analyses data from three Summer Schools at the University of Hertfordshire (UH) and compares outcomes against a number of objectives: providing valuable information about higher education (HE), developing students’ confidence and boosting aspirations (the latter for Year 10 only).

It is important to attract students who are not only interested in HE, but able to fully benefit from the Summer Schools. Over a third of Year 10 pupils were not yet sure about a future in HE post-school. Over half of Year 12 participants were seeking information about courses and student finance. A key aspect of Year 12 Summer School was to engage participants in their decision to apply to HE—just 50% had either just started thinking about their application or identified a potential course.

All Summer Schools were a resounding success. 81% of Year 10s said the programme has opened their eyes to new possibilities. Their confidence in living away from home increased dramatically. There was an 18% increase in the proportion of pupils likely to pursue HE after school.

Many Year 12s are now further along in their decision to apply to HE—in fact 67% are now in the latter stages of applying. 95% improved their knowledge of personal statements. Confidence in living away from home was also boosted.

More than half of participants across both year groups are now less worried about the costs of HE.

2.0 Introduction

UH ran four Summer Schools in 2014. Two of these were dedicated to Year 10 pupils (Beacon and Partnership schools), one to Year 12 students and one to Children in care in Year 10 and 11 (the latter of which is reviewed separately).

2.1 Attendance

In total, 140 students attended across the Year 10 and 12 Summer Schools:

- 50 – Year 10 Beacon schools
- 46 – Year 10 Partnership schools
- 44 – Year 12 Beacon schools

Maximum attendance for the Year 10 Summer Schools was 50 each. For Year 12s it was 75.
Note: due to low numbers of Partnership school applicants, extra Beacon school pupils were accepted onto the Partnership Summer School. As a result, the two Year 10 Summer Schools are combined into one sample set for analysis purposes.

2.2 Goals, sessions & outputs

Table 1 details the goals, sessions and outputs for each Summer School.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sessions</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year 10 Beacon Schools &amp; Partnership Schools</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>● Subject taster sessions</td>
<td>● To provide an insight into what university can offer academically</td>
<td>● Aspirations</td>
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<td>● Science Museum visit (London)</td>
<td>● To inspire pupils to aim for HE</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Student finance and ‘Why go to uni?’ sessions</td>
<td>● To inform students on various aspects of HE</td>
<td>● Personal development</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Meal times and social events</td>
<td>● To boost pupils’ confidence in new environments with new people</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Theatre trip (London)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Year 12 Beacon Schools</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>● Student finance and ‘Why go to uni?’ sessions</td>
<td>● Helping pupils to make informed decisions about applying to HE</td>
<td>● Information, Advice and Guidance</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Course search workshop</td>
<td>● Boosting skills and knowledge regarding UCAS applications</td>
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<td>● Student ambassador Q&amp;A</td>
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<td>● Independent living</td>
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<td>● Making the most of Open Days</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Personal statement workshops</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Meal times and social events</td>
<td>● To boost pupils’ confidence in new environments with new people</td>
<td>● Personal development</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 1: Detail of sessions delivered, goals and outputs across each Summer School

2.3 Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)

All Summer Schools focus on IAG to varying degrees. For the Year 10s, IAG is a relatively small part of the experience, as participants are given briefings on student finance and reasons for going into HE. For Year 12s, IAG has a much stronger focus as sessions and
workshops are devoted to navigating UCAS applications, with particular attention paid to understanding personal statements and how to identify courses.

2.4 Personal development

Personal development is an important aspect of all Summer Schools, as students are challenged by new environments (e.g. university and London), new activities (e.g. theatre or museum trips) and meeting new peers in situations they would likely encounter at university (e.g. in halls, at meals and social functions).

2.5 Aspirations

The Year 10 Summer Schools have important aspirational-elements as they target participants who face barriers to entry in HE. Sessions are designed to engage pupils in academic topics and university life in order to motivate them to think about applying to HE.

2.6 Format

The Year 10 Summer Schools are three day residential programmes with a two night stay in UH accommodation. The Year 12 Summer School is a two day, one night residential programme. Costs for event tickets, transport, food and accommodation are paid for by UH. However, ‘Partnership’ schools (defined as higher-achieving than ‘Beacon’ schools) are asked to pay £85 per student.

Summer Schools are run separate from each other but follow similar schedules: social events within UH accommodation (including meal times), activities, academic taster sessions and workshops across the University and field trips to London occur throughout the day; social events in the evenings are on UH campus.

2.7 Delivery

Summer Schools were planned and led by Lindsey Rigby (Outreach Manager) and supported in their delivery by Cobi Campbell and Kirsty Alexander (Outreach Officers) as well as by a team of student ambassadors.

3.0 Methodology

Below is an overview of the methods used for evaluating the Summer Schools.
Pre and post event questionnaires were completed by pupil participants. Individual participants were identified by a unique code on each questionnaire thereby allowing them to be tracked across the programme.

Table 2 details what areas the questionnaires covered:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common themes</th>
<th>Year 10</th>
<th>Year 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographic information</td>
<td>• Identification of likely post-school routes (education, employment or otherwise)</td>
<td>• Identification of likely post-school routes (education, employment or otherwise)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Programme expectations</td>
<td>• Programme expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subject interests and courses</td>
<td>• Subject interests and courses being considered in HE</td>
<td>• Subject interests and courses being considered in HE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frequency of conversations</td>
<td>• Frequency of conversations about HE</td>
<td>• Frequency of conversations about HE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amount of known knowledge about HE</td>
<td>• Amount of known knowledge about HE</td>
<td>• Amount of known knowledge about HE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barriers to HE</td>
<td>• Barriers to HE</td>
<td>• Barriers to HE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fitting in at uni</td>
<td>• Fitting in at uni</td>
<td>• Fitting in at uni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff satisfaction</td>
<td>• Staff satisfaction</td>
<td>• Staff satisfaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall programme satisfaction</td>
<td>• Overall programme satisfaction</td>
<td>• Overall programme satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different themes</td>
<td>• Confidence levels being away from home and meeting new people</td>
<td>• Location within application process to HE</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Confidence levels living away from home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Breakdown of topics covered in questionnaires

Questions outputted both qualitative data (open-ended questions) and quantitative data, the latter of which was analysed using SPSS.

4.0 Findings & outcomes – Year 10

The following section highlights key data and outcomes linked to the goals listed earlier.

4.1 Gender proportions

- Female – 56%
- Male – 44%

4.2 Are the right students attending Summer School?

- Summer School participants are keen on HE: 59% declare they are likely to pursue HE after finishing school
There was an 18% increase in the proportion of students who are likely to pursue HE—that equates to 7 ‘converted’ individuals during Summer School.

- Pupils expect to find out about life in HE at Summer School
  - 48% were seeking information about courses and subjects
  - 60% were keen to find out about student life
- Participants have particular subject areas of interest but are open to new ideas
  - 47% had a subject they’d like to study in mind but said that could change
  - Law (55%) was by far the most popular subject students wanted to find out about—although this likely greatly do with how engaging the Law tutor was

“[Law] was interesting to see the different arguments put across and the two sides [debate].” – female explaining why Law was her favourite taster session

“I enjoyed the group discussions about justice and hearing other people’s opinions” – female explaining why Law was her favourite taster session

- 72% claimed before Summer School that they still needed more information before they could decide if university was for them

Summer School’s objective of providing students with an insight into HE and informing them on key issues is at the heart of Year 10 Summer Schools and has drawn participants in—a strong segment of which are potentially undecided about HE but want to engage with it.

4.3 A surge in confidence

Confidence building is a major part of Summer School’s ‘Personal development’ goal. From being away from home, to meeting new people, to engaging with new areas of knowledge—all of which are important facets of university that would-be HE entrants need to get experience of.

A jump in confidence was especially noted across these topics:

- Being away from friends – 85% increase in confidence
- Meeting new people – 81% increase in confidence
- Doing activities with new people – 74% increase in confidence

It was especially rewarding to some of the more introverted participants come out of their shells:

- 68% of pupils who were not confident meeting new people before event said meeting new people was the best part of summer school

1 Of participants who were Not at all confident, Not that confident and Not sure before Summer School compared to after.
“I am getting more confident” and “I am liking the idea of starting a new ‘life’ at uni” – male who was not that confident in meeting new people and doing new activities at the start of Summer School

“I am confident in meeting new people” and “I am confident in being away from friends and family” – female who was unsure about meeting new people at the start of Summer School

“I am able to meet and talk to new people” and “I am able to make friends in a new environment” – female who was not that confident in meeting new people and doing new activities at the start of Summer School

“I am confident studying away from home” – male who was unsure in meeting new people at the start of Summer School

“I am now more confident with meeting new people” and “I am more social than I have been in the past” – male who was not that confident in doing new activities at the start of Summer School

4.4 Aspirational experiences

Aspirations are difficult to quantify, especially as the entire Summer School contributes to building aspirations in some way, whether it is being on campus, engaging with new academic subjects, staying overnight in halls or getting a social glimpse of student life.

With that in mind, there is data that reflects students’ sense of aspirations:

- 81% said Summer School opened their eyes to new possibilities
- 18% increase in students planning on pursuing HE after Summer School compared to before
- 42% placed “finding out about university subjects” in their top three of best parts of Summer School
- More than half (54%) rated the theatre trip into London as in their top two favourite activities

Some of the data below on participants’ preconceptions about HE, particularly the items on working full-time and being comfortable in an HE environment also contribute to the impact Summer School had on these Year 10s.

4.5 Preconceptions about HE

The survey addressed several preconceptions that Year 10 students had about HE before and after Summer School, such as financing, the lure of full-time employment and how comfortable they might be at university.

- 59% of pupils are now less worried that university will cost too much
- 43% increase in pupils who are now less inclined to go into FT work than HE
- 61% increase in pupils who now believe HE is an environment they are comfortable in
Seeing the cost of university as a barrier to HE appears linked to the amount of conversations pupils have with people close to them (e.g. family, teaching staff, peers):

- 58% of students who rarely or never talk about HE viewed the cost of university as too high before Summer School
- This proportion decreased by 45% after the event

### 4.6 Staff satisfaction

Outreach staff (incl. ambassadors) were deemed *helpful* or *very helpful* by between 83% and 90% of participants in the following situations:

- Making students feel comfortable
- Delivering activities
- Helping you during activities
- Answering your questions

### 4.7 Improvements

In general, Summer School was very well received. However, a minority of participants offered suggestions in the following areas:

- Running a Psychology taster session (for those who didn’t get one)
- The length of some taster sessions (incl. more balanced sessions time-wise)
- More mixing between participant groups
- Exploring the campus further
- A lot of down-time spent waiting and organising the participant groups
- More traditional sports included, e.g. football, basketball (from males)
- Longer overall length of Summer School

### 5.0 Findings and outcomes – Year 12

The following section highlights key data and outcomes linked to the goals listed earlier.

#### 5.1 Gender proportions

- Female – 66%
- Male – 34%

This gap is larger than it is for Year 10 Summer Schools—particular attention should be paid to engage boys further, perhaps when contacting teachers (who nominate students).
5.2 Are the right students attending Summer School?

This Summer School is geared towards transmitting information about HE courses and the application process so that students can make informed decision. Participants should be leaning towards applying to HE in order to get the most of the event. Notwithstanding, 54.5% say that do not have enough information about HE to know whether to apply or not—so Summer School can still play a vital ‘conversion’ role.

The information students say they are lacking the most are:

- “what course is best for me” – 59% of students
- “student finance” – 57% of students
- “Accommodation” and “student life” – 48% and 41%, respectively
- Under 5% are not lacking any information

Beyond that:

- Over half (54.5%) expected to find out more or work on their personal statements during Summer School
- 70.5% were participating with the intention of experiencing what independent living was like for an HE student
- Half of all participants are open to new academic options despite having a chosen subject or course in mind

These points affirm the commitment many participants have to HE and the role Summer School can still play in their decisions: they have dedicated time and resources to thinking and planning about HE but still need more information and to experience both academic and non-academic elements of HE.

To illustrate this further:

- 50% have either just starting thinking about applying or have identified course to apply to

5.3 Working towards an HE application

Getting information about personal statements and working on them during Summer School is a core part of Summer School. The participant outcomes on personal statements reinforce this:

- “finding out about/working on my personal statement” was the second highest Summer School outcome – chosen by 79% of students
- 95% stated they improved their knowledge on personal statements—with 89% saying this knowledge increased either “quite a bit” or “loads”
The previous section highlighted that participants wanted to find out about student life, student finances and what courses to potentially choose. All these aspects are well represented in Summer School’s outcomes:

- 88% rated “finding out about student life/independent living” as their top outcome
- 98% felt Summer School was either helpful or very helpful in informing participants about student finance
- 53.5% said Summer School either confirmed their course choice or helped them discover a new course preference—just 9% are confused about how to make a decision

Many students moved themselves along their HE decision-making process:

- More than 1/3 students are now at the point of working on their personal statements (116% increase compared to before Summer School)
- 67% of participants are in the final three stages of their HE decision-making process, compared to just 45% before Summer School

Lastly, there’s a 25% increase in the amount of students who now have all the information they need to make a decision about applying to HE, compared to the start of Summer School.

"Thank you for the experience. It was a great opportunity. I have learnt lots of information about uni and am now nearly ready to apply" – female

"Very useful and gave me all the extra info about university [I needed]” – male

"Summer School helped provide me knowledge about student finance/life, accommodation and courses” – female

"Everything was covered and [to a] high standard” – female

5.4 Living away from home

To recap some participant expectations:

- 48% came to Summer School wanting more information on accommodation
- over 70% expected to find out more about independent living at university

A central part of Summer School is staying in UH accommodation and getting to grips with issues related to living away from home. A boost in confidence was measured in:

- 76% are now confident or very confident living with new people (39% increase compared to the start of Summer School)

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2 The decision-making process stages are: just started; identified courses; narrowed it down; personal statement; ready to apply
Overall, confidence has increased in the following topics related to independent living:

- Sharing common spaces; getting set-up (e.g. bank accounts); budgeting; knowing what to do if something goes wrong

### 5.5 Preconceptions about HE

As with the Year 10 Summer Schools, the Year 12 programme addressed preconceptions students might have about HE, especially concerning student finance:

- 55% of pupils are now less worried that university will cost too much

Interestingly, finance does not appear to be a barrier to HE, when considering that:

- 80% who said before Summer School that HE would cost too much, say university is their most likely route post-school
- 100% who said after Summer School that HE would cost too much, say university is still their most likely route post-school

Students did not display any real concerns with the other preconceptions—except concerning the grades needed to get to HE: more students were concerned about their grades after Summer School than before.

### 5.6 Staff satisfaction

Outreach staff (incl. ambassadors) were deemed helpful or very helpful by between 95% and 100% of participants in the following situations:

- Making students feel comfortable
- Delivering activities
- Helping you during activities
- Answering your questions

### 5.7 Improvements

In general, Summer School was very well received. However, a minority of participants offered suggestions in the following areas:

- More mixing between participant groups
- Exploring the campus further with a more complete tour
- Felt patronised/treated like children at times
- Finding out more about different courses/subjects

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3 Working FT instead of HE; lack of familial support for applying to HE; not comfortable with HE environment; friends are not going to HE; rather pursue other forms of education
6.0 Conclusions

6.1 Year 10

Year 10 Summer Schools are focused on inspiring participants, transmitting key information and building confidence. They were successful across these objectives:

- 81% said Summer School opened their eyes to new possibilities
- Up to an 85% surge in confidence in terms of being away from home, meeting new people and doing new activities
- 59% of pupils are now less worried that university will cost too much
- 18% increase in students planning on pursuing HE after Summer School compared to before

6.2 Year 12

Year 12 Summer School is focused on transmitting key information about HE and particularly the application stage and building confidence. It was successful across these objectives:

- 95% stated they improved their knowledge on personal statements
- 98% felt Summer School was either helpful or very helpful in informing participants about student finance
- 55% are less worried about the cost of HE
- 39% increase in students’ confidence in living with new people
- 67% are in the final stages of their HE decision-making process