

Access Agreement 2018-19

1) Overview

The University of Hertfordshire's vision is to be internationally renowned as the UK's leading business-facing university. For our students this means that our core purpose is to transform their lives and prepare them for work and society in a global community. Our track record on student achievement and social mobility is impressive. The average tariff at entry for our students over the past three years is just over 300 UCAS points. During this time the percentage of our leavers in employment or further study has risen to 96.2% (DLHE, 2015).

Our student community of over 24,500 includes more than 3,700 students from 134 different countries. Approximately half of our students are from a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) background and, in some Schools, make up the majority of students. Three-quarters of the students in our largest School (Health and Social Work) are mature students. A significant proportion of our students are first generation into higher education. We estimate that approximately 40-44% of our new UK domiciled undergraduate students are the first in their family to attend university.

To deliver on our core purpose of transforming lives the University is committed to widening participation and outreach. We work with over 600 local schools and colleges, and we are a sponsor of two University Technical Colleges (UTCs) and one local Free School. As well as actively supporting three further local primary free Schools.

The Outreach and Widening Participation Department continues to develop its relationship with the University's partner schools. Staff within the department are involved in the strategic development of the Schools as Governors. Furthermore, the Schools are located in areas where there is low aspiration and progression to HE, therefore reinforcing the need to work in partnership.

Within the partnership frameworks, we focus on equipping young people with the information, advice and guidance they need to make effective, realistic and confident decisions about their future. The Outreach Team currently works in partnership with the UTCs providing specialised mentor training to sixth form students throughout the academic year. The UTCs are invited to take part in our Year 9 Pathfinder Days and bespoke on campus events that provide high level technical education and supports the needs of the regional economy, for example STEM outreach days, Young Enterprise and Federation of Small Businesses events. In strengthening these links we continue to be involved in UTC open days and parents evenings. Other activities include:

Regular briefings and communication with UTC staff to ensure an understanding of current HE developments (examples include student finance, the UCAS tariff, value of key skills, writing references);

Academic support for specific qualifications, for example, the extended project qualification; Development of a range of courses provided additional skills support for those who need it prior to their HE studies;

Vocational and Further Education Routes to Higher Education, including work-based learning opportunities and routes for Apprentices;

A range of talks for years 10 to 13 regarding university. These include 'Getting into University' – usually year 11 or 12, 'Personal statements, 'Finance' – year 12 or 13, 'The Student Experience' – year 11 or 12.

University days for year 9 pupils where they work with students on the University campus to explore aspects of going to university;

School visits to the University for years 9, 10, 11 and 12;

Summer schools, academic assistance and subject masterclasses.

An extensive provision of mentoring and coaching activity.

There are substantial positive benefits associated with the University being active in supporting its local community to achieve. We aim to increase engagement with the primary free schools in developing a full lifecycle approach to support pupils from an early stage. This includes developing skills, knowledge and information they need to access HE. With longitudinal interventions to promote social mobility in mind, the Outreach and WP department is developing a link club programme with the primary free schools. The pilot programme will commence in 2017/18 with Ascot Road and Lanchester Free Schools and we will continue to work closely with the Schools to develop the programme which will be evaluated at specific points in order to roll out to all free schools in 2018/19. We are also facilitating technical teacher training for STEM activities for free school staff members, and developing plans for a 'Terrific Scientific' family day at the University of Hertfordshire for free school families.

The University of Hertfordshire also has a vibrant consortium partnership with the four Hertfordshire Further Education (FE) Colleges: around 14,600 students have progressed to the University from the Consortium since it was founded in 2000 and in 2014/15 over 450 students who progressed from the Consortium graduated from the University. Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) metrics demonstrate the impact of our institutional drive on positive outcomes particularly for disadvantaged, BME and male students. The University exceeded TEF benchmarks for employment or further study, and highly skilled employment or further study for mature, BME, disadvantaged, disabled and male full-time students. We exceeded our TEF non-continuation benchmarks for BME, disadvantaged and male full-time students. The University has a high level of awareness of gender and race equality: key Equality achievements in recent years include achieving institutional Bronze Athena SWAN award and five Bronze departmental awards. The University is also one of only eight UK institutions to hold a Bronze award in the Race Equality Charter.

The University is committed to transforming lives through increasing access to, and success in, higher education for students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups. In line with OFFA guidelines and TEF metrics the University's definition of widening participation is a broad and inclusive one which embraces students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, BME, disabled, mature and part-time students. Adopting this definition means that around 40% of our students come from a widening participation background.

Within this broad definition, the University acknowledges the additional needs of particular groups of students including, (but not limited to) care-leavers, carers, people estranged from their families, refugees, students from traveller and gypsy communities, economically disadvantaged white males, disabled students and people with a broad range of mental health conditions.

The University's approach to widening participation and social mobility is holistic and fully aligned with its 2015-2020 Strategic Plan objectives, in particular:

- Strengthening the diversity of our community.
- Fostering enquiry, critical thinking and curiosity through inclusive, intellectually challenging courses.

- Developing students with the knowledge, skills and attributes to succeed in business and the professions.
- Strengthening professional partnerships to enhance graduates' employability
- Developing students' social and global awareness
- Demonstrating and promoting our positive social, cultural and economic impact
- Sharing our knowledge, facilities and resources
- Providing local leadership in education, culture and innovation
- Attracting and developing outstanding people

In order to achieve these objectives the University is committed to enabling positive outcomes for all, and we have adopted the following principles to mainstream our approach to Widening Participation and social mobility:

- The adoption of a broad definition of under-represented and disadvantaged groups as outlined above.
- A reflective and evidence based approach to all widening participation activity in order to maximise the impact and reach of everything we do.
- A commitment to an inclusive approach which ensures that curriculum design, learning and teaching, and student support activity is successful in meeting the needs of our diverse student body in a way that enhances retention, success and employability.
- The provision of evidence based, targeted additional support to students where needed.
- A commitment to working in partnership with schools and FE colleges in order to raise attainment of students and promote interest in, and enthusiasm for, higher education.

The University will focus Access Agreement activity on priority areas relevant to the institution: outreach, retention, employability and success. We have reviewed and updated our Access Agreement for 2018-19 in the context of the Government's strategic priorities for the year; the University's strategic plan objectives 2015-2020; and the principles that underpin the University's commitment to widening participation. This Access Agreement covers all relevant university provision delivered on or off campus.

Following the review of outreach and success activity in 2016-17 the University will adopt a whole university approach to expanding our outreach and student progression and success activities to raise attainment of learners from those groups in schools and colleges and to accelerate the progress of our own students from under-represented and disadvantaged communities. We will direct resources to enhancing outreach activities and the support of students after they have enrolled. We continue to be committed to developing strategic relationships and to our leadership of NCOP work in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire through the Aspire Higher consortium. We will further invest in evaluation and monitoring to improve our understanding of the challenges faced by different groups of students (including white males from socially disadvantaged backgrounds) and to ensure that investment is informed by evidence to maximise impact and reach in those areas where we most need to improve.

2) Fees, student numbers and fee income

New fee-regulated full-time entrants in 2018-19 will be charged £9,250 if based on the University of Hertfordshire Campus.

New fee-regulated full-time entrants in 2018-19 will be charged £6,165 if based at one of the University's four consortium colleges in Hertfordshire: Oaklands College, North Hertfordshire College, Hertford Regional College and West Herts College. Additionally entrants at Barnet and Southgate College in London will be charged £6,165. New fee-regulated full-time entrants in 2018-19 to the BA (Hons) Education Studies & Early Years top up year and the BSc (Hons) Health Promotion and Social Care at SEEVIC College will be charged £8,000. New fee-

regulated full-time entrants in 2018-19 at Pen Green and Hertfordshire International College (EU) will be charged £9,250 and in 2018/19 new fee-regulated full-time entrants will be charged £9,250 at City and Islington College.

Our 2018/19 OFFA return is based on the assumption that most health courses previously NHS funded will be charged at the current student fee cap of £9,250, although some may be charged at £9,000. We are awaiting further guidance on the transitional arrangements for these healthcare courses and reserve the right to amend the fees for 2018/19 entry based on this guidance.

Part-time students will be charged on a pro rata basis; the maximum a part-time student will pay in a single academic year will be £6,935. We have a new PT student partnership with Epping College which will start in 2018-19.

In subsequent years, continuing students (those starting 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18) will retain the fees package they started on, as long as their course or mode of study does not change. In the event that a student changes their course or mode of study they will have the fee package amended to that academic year, as if they were studying with us for the first time.

For continuing students who started in 2012/13 and 2013/14, the fee may increase only in accordance with DfE regulations for index linking, but will not exceed £9,000 per academic year.

Fees for Study Abroad and Placement students will be;

Home/EU Students Studying Abroad (not Erasmus)

- | | |
|---|----------|
| • 2nd year: tuition fees if studying abroad for both Sem A & B | 15% fee |
| • One semester studied abroad in 2nd year, rest of year in UK | Full fee |
| • 3rd year in 4 year degree –work placement / studying and work placement | Nil fee |

Home/EU studying in Europe (Erasmus Programme)

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| • 2nd year: Full year abroad | Nil fee |
| • One semester in 2nd year, rest of year in UK | Full fee |
| • 3rd year in 4 year degree – work placement / studying and work placement | Nil fee |

3) Access and student success and progression measures

The University is proud of its successful record of working with students from widening participation backgrounds; our strong performance on many of the HESA measures is evidence of the effectiveness of the approach that we take, and we intend to continue in our commitment to that strategy. In response to the HESA statistics demonstrating potential for growth, we will renew our focus on attracting a higher percentage of students from low participation neighbourhoods according to POLAR3 data. We will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of our activities and use these evaluations to guide our programme of activities in the future. We will work in collaboration with other universities, our local consortium colleges and other higher education, enterprise and IAG partners to ensure that students in the local area have the best possible access to widening participation activities.

The University is mindful of reports underlining the need for longitudinal interventions to promote social mobility; the University of Hertfordshire has taken a lead in planning a long-term future for widening participation success in the county through our involvement in

establishing Free Schools, three of which (Jupiter Community Free School, Lanchester Community Free School and Ascot Road Community Free School) opened in September 2014. We also continue to support the Elstree and Watford UTCs and the Hatfield Community Free School. We are therefore supporting potential students from their first to final years in education.

The University has a good track record of ensuring widening participation and strives to continually increase retention. A significant level of funds are invested. The University will spend in the region of £4.7m on Access activities with £3.3m being OFFA countable.

3.1) Progression Measures

The University uses well-established performance indicators produced by HESA for assessing widening participation, retention and employability outcomes. We have revised our targets to reflect the success of our previous performance and to challenge ourselves to perform even better. (see Section 4: Targets & Milestones).

- The University has set targets to maintain the levels of students coming from state schools. The latest published (2015-16) HESA performance indicators show that the University is outperforming the benchmark and our targets for the percentage from state schools. The numbers recruited from low participation neighbourhoods using the POLAR 3 method have increased but we have not yet reached the benchmark, and our targets reflect this.
- Non-continuation of students: for full-time, first degree entrants, percentage no longer in higher education the University continues to outperform the benchmark for young and mature students, as demonstrated in the most recent (2015-16) non-continuation data published by HESA.
- The most recent graduate data (2014-15) shows that the University has increased employment levels for both full-time and part-time first degree graduates, and we are outperforming the benchmark in both these measures. In addition 97.3% of Herts Success graduates were employed or in further study (compared to 96.2% across all UH graduates) However, there is a gap between the graduate level employment of students accessing Herts Success and the performance of graduates overall (71.3% compared to 77.3% and our targets reflect our aspiration to improve this.
- Ethnicity and gender of undergraduate students (2015-16) The University does not set specific targets relating to the recruitment of students from ethnic minority groups as these groups are already well represented. The University will however monitor to ensure that this diversity is maintained.

UNDERGRADUATE	Full-time & Sandwich %	Part-time %	Total %
Asian/Asian British	22.6%	11.1%	19.2%
Black/Black British	18.8%	11.4%	16.6%
Chinese	3.6%	3.6%	3.6%
Information refused	1.3%	4.0%	2.1%
Mixed	4.6%	3.0%	4.4%
Other Ethnic background	4.8%	3.4%	4.4%
White	44.0%	63.5%	49.7%
Grand Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The University has not historically included gender statistics in the Access Agreement but in light of the falling numbers of males entering higher education we are now monitoring this. In particular, the University is working to develop benchmarks for white, socially disadvantaged males, and our targets going forward will reflect this.

UNDERGRADUATE	Full-time & Sandwich %	Part-time %	Total %
Female	52.4%	69.2%	57.3%
Male	47.6%	30.8%	42.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

UNDERGRADUATE	Female	Male	Total %
Asian/Asian British	16.4%	22.9%	19.2%
Black/Black British	16.8%	16.4%	16.6%
Chinese	2.8%	4.6%	3.6%
Information refused	1.9%	2.4%	2.1%
Mixed	4.4%	4.4%	4.4%
Other Ethnic background	4.2%	4.7%	4.4%
White	53.5%	44.6%	49.7%
Grand Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The University will spend in the region of £960k on progression activities with £680k being OFFA countable.

3.2) Outreach (Access and aspiration)

In planning our outreach work, the University is guided by existing research highlighting the need for a sustained programme of activity with interactions occurring throughout the students' educational careers. We build on the successes of the Aimhigher programme by delivering established effective interventions such as Summer Schools, campus visits and talks in schools, and also introduce new activities which we evaluate on an on-going basis to assess their effectiveness.

The National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) consortium (Aspire Higher) is built upon an existing relationship between the University of Hertfordshire and the University of Bedfordshire. The partnership will address the Gaps areas as detailed by HEFCE and draw upon its wider partners that have been formed through the successful National Networks for Collaborative Outreach scheme which ran previously. The University intends to increase the progression to higher education in the identified Gaps areas by establishing a complimentary set of outreach activities to its central outreach programme. These activities will be determined by conducting an analysis of the needs identified by schools and students in order to develop a bespoke programme in collaboration with both universities. The NCOP team will work closely with schools and the local authority to ensure the effective targeting of the programme to eligible learners in Gaps areas.

The University recognises the significant advantages of collaborative work and we intend to do this in the following ways:

- To maintain the consortium arrangements with local FE Colleges as a core element of the widening participation work;
- To maintain University Campus St Albans, our collaborative venture with Oaklands College, which delivers part-time higher education courses to predominately mature learners;
- To work closely with key national and local organisations, for example, SETPOINT Hertfordshire, IET;
- To continue to collaborate with other universities;
- To proactively engage with our partners in the NCOP, ensuring effective coverage of the wards covered by the funding;
- To maintain our partnerships with UTC's, Trust Schools, Academies and Free Schools.

A number of strategic partnerships and support will be maintained. These include:

- Continuing the widening participation partnership programme in order to support their students' progress into higher education;
- The sponsorship of academy schools and continuation of Trusts with schools to help build sustainable links and progression routes;
- Partnering with targeted schools/consortia of schools to increase aspirations and attainment;
- Continuing our partnerships with four Community Free Primary Schools, focusing on social mobility and educational achievement, and considering being actively involved in establishing other Free Schools in collaboration with the Hertfordshire Free School Company;
- Re-launching the University of Hertfordshire School and Colleges Governors' Forum;
- Expanding our participation in the Degree Apprenticeships programme.

The main widening participation outreach programme is delivered by the Outreach and Widening Participation team, but other activity is carried out by the student recruitment teams and by and on behalf of academic Schools. All of this activity has value in raising awareness, aspirations and attainment. It also helps students to progress, succeed and gain employment. Specifically this includes:

- Regular CPD activities to support the work of school/college staff
- Liaison and progression activity with the FE Consortium Colleges
- Development of a range of activities to enhance aspiration and attainment of primary, secondary and other learners
- Wide-ranging support for careers activities in schools and colleges
- Vocational and FE Routes to Higher Education, including online learning, work-based learning opportunities and routes for Apprentices;
- Widening Participation Student Ambassadors and Student Mentors to work with pupils at schools with low participation rates;
- Work with mature and part-time learners to ensure that they have the necessary information to make a considered choice about higher education

All our activities are evaluated to ensure that they are engaging and effective in achieving our aims. An evaluation framework helps inform aims and objectives outreach activity.

Aims	Levels	Objectives
		Enable students to:
Develop students' knowledge and	Key Stage 3 & 4	(a) Understand how GCSE study relates to HE and future career opportunities

awareness of the benefits of higher education and graduate employment		(b) Explore academic, social, economic and personal benefits of progressing to HE
	Post-16	Investigate course options, employability and social opportunities at the University of Hertfordshire and other universities
	Higher Education	Receive information about personal development and employability opportunities to help make the most of the University of Hertfordshire
Develop students' capacity to navigate HE and graduate employment sectors and make informed choices	Key Stage 3 & 4	Explore differences between HEIs and study opportunities within subject areas
	Post-16	Evaluate course, student finance and graduate employment opportunities and make informed choices that align with personal interests
	Higher Education	Access opportunities and identify provision that aligns with personal interests and future aspirations
Develop students' confidence and resilience to negotiate the challenge of university life and graduate progression	Key Stage 3 & 4	Increase confidence in their capacity to progress onto HE
	Post-16	Anticipate challenges they will face in HE and make a successful transition to university
	Higher Education	Maximise the benefits of university life and successfully progress to graduate employment
Develop students' study skills and capacity for academic attainment and successful graduate progression	Key Stage 3 & 4	Identify and develop study skills through educational projects or initiatives which encourage active learning
	Post-16	Enhance academic skills through collaborative projects or initiatives that develop capacity for critical thinking, independent research and self-directed learning
	Higher Education	Consolidate study skills and capacity for academic and graduate success
Develop students' understanding by contextualising subject knowledge	Key Stage 3 & 4	(a) Broaden understanding of subject knowledge and its wider applications (b) Link GCSE subject knowledge to university subject areas
	Post-16	(a) Situate existing knowledge within wider fields of knowledge and apply to other contexts (b) Situate existing knowledge and interest within the context of university degree programmes and academic disciplines
	Higher Education	(a) Situate existing knowledge within wider fields of knowledge and apply to other contexts (b) Situate existing knowledge and interest within the context of post-graduate study or employment settings.

The University will continue to deliver a comprehensive year-round calendar of events, including residential summer schools, on-campus Student Shadowing and Pathfinder Days, attainment boosting Autumn and Spring schools and a suite of in-school talks and workshops.

In summary, the main aims of the Outreach programmes are to:

- Encourage learners to continue their education to Sixth Form/ college/ university
- Raise awareness of Higher Education opportunities
- Help with making choices and planning a future
- Help learners to acquire and develop study skills in order to improve their application to their studies and raise attainment
- Develop greater self-esteem, motivation, confidence and application
- Help learners address behavioural problems and engage with education

All schemes are evaluated and an impact report provided to each school, to date this has shown in all cases, clear evidence of raised aspirations, raised levels of confidence and motivation to continue in education.

3.3) Success and progression

3.3.i) Inclusive and Mainstream Approach

The University has been successful in attracting students from a diverse range of backgrounds and, in keeping with our focus on taking a mainstream and inclusive approach we have been very successful in ensuring positive outcomes for all. Analysis of the latest HESA performance indicator data shows that the University continues to perform strongly in the area of non-continuation following the year of entry for young full-time first-degree entrants (5.3% against a benchmark of 7.7%) and for mature full-time first degree entrants (8.8% against a benchmark of 10.8%) and we will aim to maintain this. Our employability outcomes are also excellent. We have achieved an increase in the percentage of full-time UK domiciled first degree leavers progressing to employment or further study from 93.2% in 2012/13 to 96.2% in 2015/16. Analysis of our progression and awards data for students who declare a disability compared to those who do not shows no difference in attainment between these two groups. Our work in enhancing BME student attainment has produced a reduction in the gap between BME and white students by 8.6% from 27.3% in 2009/10 to 18.7% in 2014/15. We will continue to focus on all of these measures to ensure that we continue our excellent progress in reducing this gap.

While we have adopted an inclusive approach which meets the needs of a large proportion of our students, we also recognise that we can do more to ensure our practices are mainstream and embedded. We have therefore broadened our definition of widening participation and planned a number of approaches to enhance retention and success across all of our mainstream activity. We will ensure that all students have a clear sense of identity and engagement with their programme of study and support for their transition into the University through:

- A carefully planned and supportive induction period for both new and returning students;
- Focus on generic study skills, including Maths and Academic English support;
- Early feedback on work and provision of advice for academic success;
- Monitoring engagement and attendance as a tool to identify issues students may have that may affect their ability to succeed, including identifying students who may be at risk of dropping out/ failing.

The University will also focus on the following specific areas and invest in initiatives to support student success by:

- Providing a range of options for students to participate in higher education, including Degree Apprenticeships, Foundation Degrees, online courses and part-time courses specifically aimed at mature learners;
- Raising retention awareness among all staff;

- Promoting and sharing good practice within the University in relation to student retention;
- Supporting, monitoring and informing the retention, progression and achievement performance of the University, its Schools of study, programmes and subjects;
- Identifying and removing obstacles to retention, progression and achievement;
- Increasing the degree attainment of BME students;
- Working with the Student Union to address the needs of commuting and mature students through the continued development of a collegiate campus experience;
- Increasing access to and opportunities for students from a widening participation background to participate in accredited workplace learning and work placements;
- Implementing a revised and re-focused Inclusive Teaching Action Plan;
- Evaluating the impact of the student retention and progression activity.

The University has taken the strategic decision, recognising the significant impact this has on the learning, degree attainment and employability opportunities for students, to waive placement year tuition fees for those students spending their third year of a four year course studying abroad or working. There will be a fee charged to students choosing to study abroad during their second year.

The University will spend in the region of £3.9m on student success activities with £2.8m being OFFA countable.

3.3.ii) Targeted student support

The University recognises the complexity associated with multiple dimensions of disadvantage and the subsequent impact this can have on differential outcomes. We also recognise that students from widening participation groups often require additional support to ensure retention, employability and success. We have therefore identified this area as an important element of our Access Agreement. Following the end of the National Scholarship Programme, the University introduced a new programme designed to increase our support for widening participation students before and during their time in higher education (Herts Success). In 2015/16, over 1,500 students were supported by Herts Success. Our programme evaluation reveals that there were high levels of success and retention across this targeted group of students. Key findings indicate:

- 21% decrease of the withdrawal rate amongst Year 1 targeted students progressing to Year 2 between 2013/14 (13.85%) and 2015/16 (11%).
- 67% of outgoing targeted students achieving a 1st or 2:1 degree.
- 97% of targeted graduates employed or in further study, including 71% in graduate level jobs.

We will continue building on those elements of our existing programme that we identify as most effective and re-focus and integrate these with other mainstream activities to provide more students (e.g. mature and commuting students) with the opportunity to participate and succeed.

3.4) Looked after children and care leavers

The University is committed to providing support for looked after children as they make decisions about higher education, and for care leavers once they have arrived at the University.

We have a dedicated support officer who is the first port of call for care leavers when they arrive at the University. We liaise with their social workers and assist them in dealing with

issues such as finance, housing and wellbeing. Care leavers also receive a £1500 per year bursary. The University continues to evaluate the effectiveness of this financial support.

We will continue our Summer School for looked after children and our partnership with local schools and virtual schools to provide long-term outreach activities for children in care.

4) Targets and milestones

4.1) Access

- i. Maintain the percentage of young full-time undergraduate entrants from state schools or colleges at 97.8%
- ii. Improve the percentage of young, full-time undergraduate entrants from low-participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3 method) to 8.2%.
- iii. Maintain the number of declared care leavers studying at the University at 24
- iv. Establish a baseline for the higher education progression gap between identified WP student groups and the Hertfordshire cohort as a whole
- v. Maintain collaborative outreach activities for potential students at 5
- vi. Maintain interactions with potential students and their families at 5,400
- vii. Maintain percentage of male attendees at outreach events on campus at 48%
- viii. Maintain the number of residential summer schools for young people at 3
- ix. Continue to sponsor UTCs and Free Schools. Work to support other schools through Trust Agreements.
- x. In order to boost attainment in secondary schools, we will draw on University disciplinary expertise to support the subject knowledge development of secondary teachers in partnership schools.
- xi. Maintain the number of secondary school pupils engaged in buddying/mentoring schemes at 130

4.2) Student Success

- xii. Narrow the gap between graduate employment levels of widening participation students engaged in the Herts Success programme and the whole university cohort to 4%
- xiii. Narrow the gap in attainment of a good degree between BME and white students to 15%
- xiv. Maintain non-continuation rates in the year following entry of young full-time first degree entrants not in higher education at 5.1%.
- xv. Maintain non-continuation rates in the year following entry of mature full-time first degree entrants not in higher education at 9.7%.

- xvi. Establish a benchmark for non-continuation rates of white, socially disadvantaged male students.
- xvii. Establish a benchmark for the number of widening participation students engaged in online programmes and higher/degree apprenticeships
- xviii. Maintain employment rates of full-time, first degree graduates who say they are working or studying (or both) as a percentage of all those who are working or studying or seeking work at 93.2%.

5) Monitoring and evaluation arrangements

Monitoring and evaluating the impact of our actions is at the heart of the University's new widening participation strategy. 'Disadvantage' is complex and the effect it has on individuals is similarly complex. Key to understanding this is the need for an improved understanding of how information may be gathered and legitimately shared across the University. We will continue to increase our use of internal and external data to inform the development and delivery of activities. Monitoring and evaluation will be a key function of the central Widening Participation team. Data will be reviewed and monitored by senior leadership when setting strategic priorities and evaluating progress. Responsibility for monitoring and evaluation of the Access Agreement now falls under the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Education and Student Experience, reporting to Academic Board, the Student Educational Experience Committee (SEEC) and the appropriate sub-committees.

The University will:

- Monitor expenditure to ensure that it is spent effectively to maximise reach and impact.
- Enhance programme-level monitoring with the provision of tools to allow more sophisticated analysis of student data.
- Systematically evaluate outreach activities and student success and progression work across the University to ensure effective reach and impact on target widening participation communities.
- Increase the use made of published and internal student data, including value added data, expanding the work of the Student Performance Monitoring Group (SPMG).
- Subscribe to the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) service to track engagement in outreach activities and build longitudinal evidence of student achievement.
- Monitor the impact of the new bursary payment for first year, low-income students who live in POLAR3 quintiles 1 and 2; along with the ongoing care leavers' bursary and the University's Hardship Fund.

6) Equality and diversity

The University of Hertfordshire has a diverse student population that is reflective of our continuing commitment to equality of opportunity and equality of outcomes. Our over-arching Equality and Diversity Policy articulates a renewed vision for advancing equality and valuing diversity which supports the achievement of the University's Strategic Plan. The Equality and Diversity Policy (UPR EQ03, updated 4th April 2012) can be accessed on the University's website at the following location: <http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/secreg/upr/EQ03.htm>

The University is committed to delivering inclusive practice, for example in our delivery of teaching and assessment. This enhances inclusive and accessible practice for all students. In addition to this we have mechanisms in place to regularly monitor the performance of our

student body across a range of protected characteristics throughout the student journey, e.g. from admission to attainment.

The policy statement set out in this document summarises how the University will realise this vision, and ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation. The University is committed to producing Equality Impact Assessments for the areas covered by this Access Agreement, supported by the University's Equality Office.

Much of the work set out in this Access Agreement will positively impact on the equality and diversity of the University of Hertfordshire; particular examples of this are our commitment to reducing the attainment gap between BME and white students and our ongoing support of Looked After Children/Care Leavers.

Key equality achievements in recent years include achieving institutional Bronze Athena SWAN award and five Bronze departmental awards. The University is also one of only nine UK institutions to hold a Bronze award in the Race Equality Charter. Both of these charter marks are helping the University to maintain a high level of awareness of gender and race equality, as well as to consider the intersections of other protected characteristics with race and gender that may affect student outcomes. These activities have further enhanced engagement across staff, students and other stakeholders about the work the University is undertaking. This work has included staff and student recruitment, staff development and progression, as well as student pipeline to postgraduate study and student attainment.

The University has in place institutional action plans relating to Athena SWAN and the Race Equality Charter, and is actively implementing these across the institution to address areas that require change or improvement.

6.1) Attainment for students from ethnic minority backgrounds

The University has a longstanding public commitment to reduce the attainment gap between BME and white students, and this commitment has been reflected in our Equality Objectives 2016-2020. Our work on the BME Student Success project has identified that there is no single cause for the awarding gap. We are using data to inform us of awarding levels across different ethnic groups, and this has consistently shown that black students continue to receive 'good degree' awards at a lower rate than any other ethnic group, and this was evidenced within our Race Equality Charter bronze submission. As a result, we have set the challenging target of further reducing the awarding gap between white and black students receiving a 'good degree' by 10 percentage points by 2020. This will focus our attention on the reasons behind the awarding gap for this particular cohort of students and begin to identify and implement strategies to reduce the gap. Our focus here will benefit all groups of students in future. The University has recently been successful in a recent HEFCE Catalyst bid in collaboration with other institutions to continue our work to address the attainment gap, and we are confident this will facilitate further development with our learning and teaching strategies.

6.2) Disability

The University monitors recruitment, achievement and progression by disability on an annual basis and is proud to report that statistics remain positive showing that there is no significant difference in the way disabled students at the University perform academically or in their progression when compared to non-disabled students. There is also no evidence of under-recruitment of disabled students. This data will continue to be reviewed regularly and methods of collecting data on disability disclosed post registration will be reviewed for reporting purposes.

The number of students seeking support for their mental health and the complexity of difficulties they present with continues to rise. We have therefore taken steps to address this through enhancement of our Mental Health Team in Student Wellbeing and by building closer working relationships with the local NHS trust who, due to demand on their own services, have recruited a mental health worker specifically to work with our students. This positive working relationship and the University's own Mental Health Team will be kept under review and further enhanced in line with identified need.

The University is continuing to provide support services for individual disabled students and our commitment to provide the support they need, funding bands 1 and 2 support workers in response to the Government's cut of the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). A strong focus for 2018-19 will be the second stages of implementation of our Inclusive Learning & Teaching action plan, developed specifically for disabled students. This will enable more students to learn and demonstrate their ability and knowledge without the need for so many individual adjustments. This approach is in line with the University's overarching ethos in its Strategic Plan 2015-2020. While this specific action plan has been developed for disabled students, it will enhance access to learning and assessment for a wide range of the student population.

7) Provision of information to prospective students

The University recognises the importance of providing clear and transparent information on the financial arrangements for students. We will communicate information on fees and scholarships to applicants and potential applicants in several different ways:

- The website will continue to include student finance web pages explaining the University's policy on tuition fees and the availability of, and eligibility for, additional support. Where appropriate the web pages will be linked to relevant external websites, such as Student Finance England
- The University's undergraduate prospectus will contain information explaining the policy on tuition fees and scholarships
- Applicants are sent a copy of our Fees and Finance Policy as part of their Offer Pack
- All University open days will have designated presentations and trained staff available to answer questions on student finance
- The University's website has a specific section containing information for parents on how to support their children
- A facility for applicants to see Student Finance staff on an individual basis is and will continue to be available

The University will provide timely and accurate information to UCAS and Student Finance England about the finance offer to our students. The University has mapped its information provision to the HEFCE guide to providing information to prospective undergraduate students, and meets all expectations regarding information on 'Costs and Financial Support'.

8) Consulting with students

Hertfordshire Students' Union has worked in partnership with the University of Hertfordshire to develop its educational, student experience strategies and this Access Agreement, which incorporate an inclusive focus to ensure the University is meeting the needs of all students here at our diverse institution. HSU are enthused about the University's approach to ensure all students achieve their potential and remove barriers which may exist to transform the lives of every student at the University of Hertfordshire. The University continually consults its students through student representatives present in all of its management committees and many other working groups. We are confident in the University's approach and will continue to work in partnership for the benefit of our students here at the University.