



University of Hertfordshire

Access Agreement 2016-17

1) Overview

The University of Hertfordshire has a significant track record of success in raising aspirations and thus in widening participation. This is amply demonstrated by the performance in recruiting students from under-represented groups, and the University's consistency in meeting the relevant HEFCE performance indicators. In a broader sense, the University is committed to contributing to the raising of participation rates at national level.

The University will focus the Access Agreement activity on priority areas relevant to the institution; these are Outreach, Retention, Employability and Success.

Analysis of student recruitment and surveys of student opinion carried out by the University and nationally indicate that maintenance bursaries have not been very effective in encouraging less well-off students to apply to University (OFFA 2010). The University therefore proposes to direct resources to enhancing outreach activities and the support of students after they have enrolled. A range of additional innovative support initiatives for WP students will be implemented. These include:

- Ongoing support for primary and secondary schools in areas of low participation in HE, as part of the Hertfordshire Free Schools strategy.
- A partnership programme directed at schools and colleges previously supported by Aimhigher Hertfordshire and targeting other schools which also have low progression to university;
- Support at Academic School level for outreach activity and measures to promote student success;
- Additional support for teaching staff and careers advisors;
- Enhancement of retention activities;

This Access Agreement covers all relevant University provision delivered on and off campus.

2) Fees, student numbers and fee income

New fee-regulated full-time entrants in 2016-17 will be charged £9,000 if based on the University of Hertfordshire Campus.

New fee-regulated full-time entrants in 2016-17 will be charged £6,000 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 Barnet and Southgate College in London will be charged £6,000.

New fee-regulated full-time entrants in 2016-17 will be charged £9,000 if studying a PGCE with one of the following partner organisations: Bedfordshire Schools Training Partnership, The Pilgrim Partnership, Chiltern Training Group.

New fee-regulated full-time entrants in 2016-17 will be charged £8,999 if studying a PGCE at The Shire Foundation.

New fee-regulated full-time entrants in 2016-17 to the BA (Hons) Education Studies & Early Years - top up year at SEEVIC College will be charged £7,500.

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 £6,750.

In subsequent years, continuing students will pay a figure increased only in accordance with DfBIS regulations for index linking.

3) Access and student success measures

The University uses the 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).

3.1.i) Participation of under-represented groups in HE - Young full-time undergraduate entrants:

The University has set targets to maintain the levels of students coming from state schools and students from social classes 4, 5, 6 & 7 based on 2013/14 entrants. These are more challenging targets than our previous ones. The latest published HESA performance indicators (2013/14 entrants) show that the University is outperforming the benchmark and our targets for the percentage from state schools and the numbers recruited from the social classes specified. The numbers recruited from low participation neighbourhoods using the POLAR 3 method have increased but we have not yet reached the benchmark, and we have adjusted our targets to reflect this.

3.1.ii) Non-continuation of students - For full-time, first degree entrants, percentage no longer in HE

The latest published HESA performance indicators (for academic year 2012/13) show an improvement in terms of retention of all groups of students compared to the targets that the University has set. The University is outperforming the benchmark for all entrants.

3.1.iii) Employment Indicator (including further study)

The 2012/13 graduate data 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.

3.1.iv) Ethnicity of undergraduate students (13/14)

UNDERGRADUATE	Full-time & Sandwich %	Part-time %	Total %
Asian/Asian British	20.8%	10.6%	17.8%
Black/Black British	17.1%	9.8%	14.9%
Chinese	5.7%	5.0%	5.5%
Information refused	0.8%	4.4%	1.9%
Mixed	4.4%	2.5%	3.9%
Other Ethnic background	4.4%	2.9%	3.9%
White	46.8%	64.8%	52.1%

Grand Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
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The University has 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.

3.2) Our success

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 HE, enterprise and IAG partners to ensure that students in the local area have the best possible access to widening participation activities.

The success of our established outreach programme with widening participation schools in Hertfordshire can be seen by the progression rates to university in 2013; 53.2% of Key Stage 5 school leavers from our target widening participation schools in the county continued on to a UK HEI. However this is compared to a figure of 70.12% in the county as a whole, a difference of 16.92%. This demonstrates that we still have a considerable amount of work to do to close this gap. We are mindful of recent reports (e.g. HEFCE/OFFA, 2013; Milburn, 2012) 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 and a UTC; we intend to continue that collaboration with local schools, such that we are supporting potential students from their first to final years in education.

Our innovative student support programme will continue to enhance the experience of our current students. The University has a good track record of ensuring widening participation and strives to continually increase retention.

The University is cognisant of the research carried out by OFFA in their report 2014/02 that bursaries are ineffective at student retention, and as such has restricted access expenditure to those in most financial need through a hardship fund. This has allowed the University to retain our outreach, retention and success activities.

The University has a good track record of ensuring widening participation and strives to continually increase retention. A significant level of investment which comes from all sources, levelling out at over £7.5 million by 2019/20, will be used to resource additional widening participation, outreach and retention activity. This relates to £4.2 million expenditure on direct outreach activities and £2.5 million on progression and student success activities.

3.3) Outreach

OFFA's guidance document defines outreach work as "any activity that involves raising aspirations and attainment among potential applicants from under-represented groups and encouraging them to apply to HE." (OFFA, 2013, p.20)

As a result of the University's widening participation strategy, the number of students recruited from our target groups exceeded many of our benchmarks. The University has established an Outreach and Widening Participation department to ensure the continued delivery of support for students from low participation backgrounds. This includes a Research and Evaluation Officer to ensure that the University is effective in targeting areas of under-participation and students who will benefit most from outreach activities. The department's secondary school work predominately targets the former Aimhigher schools in the county, to ensure that the schools in most need receive the greatest amount of interaction.

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 (e.g. HEFCE/OFFA, 2013). We build on the successes of the Aimhigher programme through delivering established effective interventions such as Summer Schools (e.g. Hoare and Mann, 2011), campus visits and talks in schools (Roberts and Weston, 2010), and also introduce new activities which we evaluate on an on-going basis to assess their effectiveness.

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

- Maintain the consortium arrangements with local FE Colleges as a core element of the widening participation work;
- Maintain the innovative partnership agreement with Hertfordshire County Council, working together to share resources and expertise to benefit learners across the county;
- Work closely with key national and local organisations, for example, SETPOINT Hertfordshire, IET.
- Continue to collaborate with other universities in the East of England in the Eastern Region WP Group;
- Maintain our partnerships with Trust Schools, Academies, Free Schools and the two University Technical Colleges (UTCs).

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

- Continuing the WP partnership programme which includes all the former Aimhigher schools, in order to support their students' progress into higher education;
- Continuing the collaborative outreach relationships with the partners in the Herts AHEAD network which will be established during the 14-15 and 15-16 academic years;
- The sponsorship of academy schools and continuation of Trusts with schools to help build sustainable links and progression routes. This has already been successfully done with schools in Harpenden and Letchworth Garden City;
- Partnership with targeted schools/consortia of schools;
- Being a leading partner in the Elstree UTC and the Watford UTC;
- 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
- The University is keen to expand our participation in the Higher Apprenticeships programme and will be using the 2015-16 academic year to establish baseline figures that will allow us to set targets around this agenda in future years.

Within the partnership frameworks, we also engage directly with pupils to provide them with experience of the University environment, to make HE more accessible and to dispel negative perceptions, particularly in areas where there is a tradition of low participation in HE.

The provision of accessible, timely and co-ordinated information about all aspects of HE remains vital to our success and the University will further enhance the raft of communication activities aimed at young people, their parents/carers and teachers. The University will continue much of its established programme of support for schools and colleges designed to reach out to groups who might otherwise have been excluded from a university career. Specifically, this includes:

- Regular briefings for school/college 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;
- Liaison and progression activity with four Consortium Colleges to foster links and support for students and progression to higher education from further education;
- Development of a range of activities providing additional skills support for those who need it prior to their HE studies;
- Wide-ranging support for careers activities in schools and colleges;
- Vocational and Further Education Routes to Higher Education, including work-based learning opportunities and routes for Apprentices;
- A range of talks for years 9 to 13 regarding university. Topics include Personal Statements, Student Finance, Student Life, Parents' talk, Learning Skills for University;
- Routine engagement of Widening Participation Student Ambassadors and Student Mentors to work with pupils at schools with low participation rates;
- Summer schools, academic assistance and subject masterclasses particularly targeted at under-represented groups;
- Expansion of our programme of work with mature and part-time learners to ensure that they have the necessary information to make a considered choice about HE.

3.3) Looked after children and care leavers

The University is committed to providing support for looked after children as they make decisions about HE, and for care leavers once they have arrived at the University. We intend to continue our Summer School for looked after children and are investigating partnering with local schools and virtual schools to provide long-term outreach activities for children in care. Once care leavers arrive at the University, there is a dedicated officer to support them.

3.4) Retention, Employability and Success

The University has been successful in attracting students from a diverse range of backgrounds. 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. The University will ensure that 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;
- 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 areas:

- 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;
- Evaluation of the impact of the student retention 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 including those for a year abroad to study or work.

3.4.i) Herts Success programme

Following the end of the National Scholarship Programme, the University has introduced a new programme designed to increase our support for widening participation students before and during their time in higher education. In designing the programme, the University has considered reports such as OFFA 2014/02 indicating that bursaries appear to have little effect on retention rates, and that resources are better focused on outreach and student support.

The Herts Success programme will build on our existing successes, demonstrate a University-wide commitment to widening participation and establish an infrastructure for continued student success which is embedded within the academic schools of study. The University will be investing £510,000 per year in this programme on an on-going basis. Responsibility for administering the programme will lie within the Office of the Dean of Students.

Students will be eligible for inclusion in the Herts Success programme if they are on courses charging fees above £6,000 (excluding programmes with fees not covered by this Access Agreement; for example foundation degrees franchised to partner colleges) and who have a household income of up to and including £25,000 and fall into one or more of the following groups:

- Identified to be from the lowest HE participation quintiles
- In receipt of incapacity benefit
- Identified as a Looked After Child (Using the statutory definition)

The format of the Herts Success programme

As per NSP, students from a widening participation background will be identified when they arrive at university and will be eligible to participate in the Welcome programme administered by the central Herts Success team. This programme includes elements such as a dedicated contact point during induction; library, campus and local area tours; cookery classes; finance and budgeting classes and the Common Reading Programme.

Each of the ten academic Schools within the University will have a dedicated member of staff taking responsibility for the School's outreach, retention, pastoral and student success activities for widening participation students. They will each have an operational budget and will be managed by the Herts Success Programme Manager based within the Outreach and Widening Participation department.

3) Targets and milestones

4.1) Widening Participation, Retention & Employability

HESA has well established performance indicators for widening participation, retention and employability. The University has updated its targets to reflect that we have made excellent progress in exceeding our previous targets and therefore need new goals to challenge us. Our new targets for the 2016-17 academic year are as follows:

4.1.i) Participation of under-represented group in HE (HESA Performance Indicators Table T1b)

Young full-time undergraduate entrants:

- from state schools or colleges : 97.8%
- from NS-SEC (social) classes 4, 5, 6 & 7: 41.9%
- from low participation neighbourhoods (based on POLAR3 method): 7.8%

4.1.ii) For Full time, First Degree entrants: non-continuation of students (HESA Performance Indicators Table T3a)

- Percentage not in HE: Young entrants 5.1%
- Percentage not in HE: Mature Entrants 9.7%

4.1.iii) Leavers obtaining first degrees from full-time courses (HESA Performance Indicators Table E1a Employment Indicator (including further study): 93.2%

During the 2015-16 academic year, the University will be establishing a baseline employment indicator for widening participation students, and a baseline for student success indicators for widening participation students. These baselines will then be used to set targets that will be included in subsequent access agreements.

In addition, the University will, on a timely and regular basis, collate and disseminate transparent and robust data (both qualitative and quantitative) on students prior to entry, and on the retention, progression and achievement of students at University, School and programme level, that are amenable to analysis by gender, race, age, disability, social background, pre-entry qualifications, and familial experience of HE.

4) Monitoring and evaluation arrangements

Research will be fundamental to monitoring and evaluating the impact of the advance measures within the access agreement. The University will continue to fund the Research and Evaluation Officer within the Outreach and Widening Participation Department, whose work involves collaboration with colleagues in the Registry, Office of the Dean of Students, and Marketing and Communications.

Accountability for the monitoring and evaluation of the Access Agreement will be divided into two areas of responsibility:

- Outreach: the Dean of Students and Head of Outreach and Widening Participation; reporting to Academic Board or the appropriate subcommittees.
- Retention, Employability and Success: the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Student Experience, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Enterprise and the Dean of Students; reporting to Academic Board or the appropriate subcommittee, Student Educational Experience Committee (SEEC).

Academic Board is attended by representatives from the Students' Union.

5) Equality and diversity

The University of Hertfordshire has a diverse student population that is reflective of our continuing commitment to equal opportunities. 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 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 lessening the attainment gap between BME and white students and our ongoing support of Looked After Children/Care Leavers.

The University made a public commitment through our Equality Objectives in 2011 to reduce the degree attainment differential between white and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) students by ten percentage points by 2015. We are proud that the work of staff and students over the preceding years has secured a reduction of 7% in the attainment differential. This work has placed race, ethnicity, and culture firmly at the centre of the University's discussions and activities. Over 20% of our staff have enrolled on our *Unconscious Bias* workshops. We are now extending this activity to the University's subsidiary companies, including the 250 staff employed by Uno Bus, our bus company, where there will be the potential for even wider impact on our community. We are deeply conscious that we need to continue our work in narrowing the degree attainment differential and are committed to setting another ambitious, yet realistic, target for the next five years to be underpinned with further activities across the University. We are also aware that we need to continue to strengthen the diversity of our staff to better reflect and inspire our student community. This will necessitate reviewing recruitment, selection, promotion, retention, and talent management activities as well as the inculcation of cultural change to ensure there are no barriers, whether perceived or real, to the attainment of race equality at the University.

The University is taking proactive steps to prepare for the Government's changes to the way Disabled Students' Allowance are awarded to disabled students. In order to ensure there is no drop in admission or progression of disabled students, the University has

- given assurance that it will continue to provide disabled students with essential support once the DSA is removed
- set up a working group, chaired by the Head of Student Wellbeing, to review whether inclusive practice can be enhanced to better meet the needs of disabled students
- approved a review of support worker provision.

6) Provision of information to prospective students

The University recognises the importance of providing clear and transparent information on the financial arrangements for students. It 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 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 mini-prospectus will contain information explaining the policy on tuition fees and scholarships;

- A separate leaflet will be available at higher education fairs, open days and within the Student Centre;
- 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.

7) Consulting with students

Students in receipt of NSP support have been consulted frequently during their studies about their experience of NSP and the support they have received. Their responses to questionnaires and within focus groups have informed our student support arrangements in the current Access Agreement. A draft version of the access agreement was discussed with sabbatical officers from the Students' Union in April 2015.

8) References

Department for Education (2013) Destinations of key stage 4 and key stage 5 pupils: 2010 to 2011 Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/destinations-of-key-stage-4-and-key-stage-5-pupils-2010-to-2011>

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Hoare, T. and Mann, R. (2011) The impact of the Sutton Trust's Summer Schools on subsequent higher education participation: a report to the Sutton Trust. Available at: <http://www.suttontrust.com/research/the-impact-of-the-sutton-trusts-summer-schools-2012/>

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OFFA (2013) How to produce an access agreement for 2014-15. Available at: <http://www.offa.org.uk/guidance-notes/producing-access-agreements-for-2014-15/>

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