



University of Essex

Access Agreement

2014-15

1. Context

1.1 Background

The purpose of the University of Essex is to contribute to society through excellence in research and excellence in education.

Through our Access Agreement we will invest in our inclusive and diverse student community, providing opportunity for those who have the potential to benefit from the University's excellence, irrespective of socio-economic background or ability to pay.

Our 2014-15 Access Agreement sets out how we will invest our fee income to provide transformational opportunity to our students across the student lifecycle. We have invested significant time and resource in developing our most recent Access Agreement to ensure our investment is focused on delivering impact and providing students with the ability to achieve successful outcomes. In carrying out our extensive review we have worked in partnership with our Students' Union to develop and influence our plans.

1.2 Principles

Our Access Agreement is based on the following principles:

- recruiting students nationally with the merit and potential to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered by the University, irrespective of socio-economic background or ability to pay;
- increasing retention and progression for students from under-represented groups by recognising and supporting their specific needs;
- increasing student levels of achievement and ensuring the mechanisms to educate our students increase their prospects of securing a good degree;
- achieving successful outcomes and increasing the proportion of students achieving positive employability through providing specific support and mechanisms to help graduates from under-represented groups be on a level playing field with other UK graduates achieving graduate-level employment; and
- nationally demonstrating the value of the type of education we offer as a research-intensive, research-led University by facilitating opportunities and access for researchers in schools, and engagement with young people and with families and education professionals.

1.3 Partnerships

In recent years, the University has established strategic partnerships to increase student access to our provision.

Details of the Access Agreement commitment for Colchester Institute, South Essex College of Further and Higher Education, and the Edge Hotel School are included within this Access Agreement, Appendices A, B and C. University of Essex Online, delivered by Kaplan Open Learning, is not included in this Access Agreement because of the level of fee charged. University Campus Suffolk, via the University of East Anglia, and Writtle College submit their own institutional Access Agreements.

2. Tuition fee

The University's tuition fees for new and continuing students are all subject to any real-terms permitted increases in subsequent years. The tuition fee for students entering in 2015 onwards will be under review and confirmed in our 2015-16 Access Agreement.

2.1 Full-time

For undergraduate Home and EU students admitted in 2014-15, and continuing students that were admitted in 2012-13 and 2013-14, the University proposes to charge a fee of £9,000. The estimated number of students who will be paying the fee of £9,000 is expected to be 5238 in 2014-15, subject to a number of varying factors.

2.2 Part-time

The majority of University of Essex part-time provision is delivered through NHS-funded courses or by our franchise partners included under the partnership sections of this agreement. Where other part-time provision is provided by the University, students are not expected to exceed the basic fee of £4,500 within an academic year due to the part-time study being undertaken on a modular basis. While it is not expected that any student should incur a part-time fee above the basic fee level, should this need occur, the University commits to spend an appropriate proportion on access measures of any income above the part-time basic fee level.

2.3 Placement years

In order to give all students, regardless of background, access to the opportunities studying abroad provides, students admitted in 2012, 2013 and 2014, and subject to the new fee, will not be charged a fee for a study abroad year or for an industrial placement year as part of a four-year course. This is predicted to benefit approximately 415 students in 2014-15, rising to 500 students in 2016-17.

2.4 Continuing students

Students admitted prior to 2012 will be subject to the maximum fee levels for entrants prior to 2012.

3. Expenditure

In 2014-15, the University will spend 18.9 per cent of additional fee income, as defined by OFFA.

Steady state expenditure, as a percentage, of additional fee income in 2014-15 for the University of Essex excluding partners:

- Outreach: 2.4 per cent
- Retention and Student Success: 3.1 per cent
- Financial Support (including the NSP): 13.5 per cent

The University and our franchised partnerships included under this agreement, expect to spend 19.9 per cent in Access Agreement expenditure in 2014-15.

4. Outreach

In order to support access for students with the potential to benefit from a University of Essex education, the University will invest a proportion of tuition fee income in delivering outreach activity.

4.1 Targeting

The University uses Polar data, school attainment and free school meals data to target schools and colleges. We will invest time in ensuring that our target schools access the University's wider outreach activity, ensuring an appropriate representation of students from under-represented groups and providing the ability for students and schools to benefit from peer support.

Outreach activity will be targeted at students who have the potential to benefit from the type of education the University of Essex delivers and who meet any of the criteria below:

- students from low income backgrounds;
- students from low participation neighbourhoods;
- students in receipt of free school meals;
- mature students;
- students with a disability;
- young people in care;
- school/college recommendation of any other students who have the potential to benefit from our outreach activity;
- parents/carers and families of targeted participants; and
- teachers and advisers from targeted schools.

4.2 Activity

Our experience of delivering outreach activity and national best practice is used to inform the development of our outreach. Our programme is reviewed annually to ensure we can maximise the impact of our resources invested in this area. Our most recent developments include:

- enhancing our subject-focused activity through conferences and junior lectures;
- progression project that works with cohorts of students across their school/college years;
- increasing our work with teachers; and
- pre-arrival mentoring.

The University will also continue to deliver summer schools, campus visits, school talks, study skills and primary school activity.

Our outreach activity will be delivered by a dedicated outreach team with input where appropriate from our academic departments/schools, Student Support team, Employability and Careers Centre, art gallery, theatre, our team of student ambassadors and our Students' Union.

4.3 Long-term outreach

Our outreach activity builds long-term relationships with participants and schools and, in some cases, begins with students at primary school age.

4.3.1 University Challenge

In 2014-15 the University will continue to deliver our University Challenge programme, initiated in 2007 and delivered in partnership with a local education trust. The project works with Year 6 primary students as part of their transition into the schools we work with at secondary-school level. University Challenge has a number of elements that includes in-school delivery by University of Essex staff and students, on-campus experience for the participants and a graduation event that involves teachers, parents and carers.

Evaluation of the University Challenge programme to date has shown that students increase their knowledge of university after each stage and retain information between visits.

Evaluation and feedback from teachers involved in the programme has included:

- 'one can detect a feeling that they realise it is a distinct possibility that they will go to university';
- 'they talk about their university experience a lot and show a better understanding of the choices they need to make for the future';
- 'continued self-belief and desire to achieve. Students always come back excited and motivated'; and
- 'positive attitude has remained'.

Data is collected to track participant's future engagement with the University and their access and progression to the University of Essex.

4.3.2 Progression project

The University has developed a progression project that will work with cohorts of students across their school/college years. This project will work with 90 students per year across six schools, starting with students in Year 8 and working with them through to Year 13 and university entry. The selection of students for the scheme is based on POLAR data and academic ability, working with the schools involved to ensure effective targeting to maximise the impact of the project. The interventions students will receive and participate in during the project will be relative to their age and stage and in some cases open to a wider group of participants within the school/college.

The progression project will be evaluated, including participant and teacher questionnaires, school data on participant's progression and attainment, and tracking of participant's access and progression to the University of Essex.

4.3.3 Children's University

The University has links with Essex Children's University, part of the national Children's University Trust, that offers seven to fourteen year olds innovative learning opportunities outside of school hours. The University of Essex has a number of accredited activities across the age groups and hosts a number of graduation ceremonies for local participants.

4.3.4 Long-term school/college links

We view our continued work with our target schools as an important element for delivering long-term effect. In many instances this involves impacting on the culture and perceptions within our target schools. An example of this is our co-sponsorship of Colchester Academy which includes our students spending time in the Academy and the surrounding community to impact on aspiration and culture within the school.

4.4 Partnership working – Collaboration

The University has always maintained very strong relationships with other HEIs in the region. This is particularly to ensure school, college and university resources are not duplicated and are targeted appropriately. We also collaborate with other UK research-intensive universities on programmes such as Realising Opportunities, as part of our aim to encourage geographical mobility of students from under-represented groups.

The University has existing relationships with a number of schools and colleges, local education providers, education trusts and networks. We also work with Colchester Academy, for which we are a co-sponsor, with the majority of the Academy's intake from an area with high levels of deprivation.

Our collaboration extends beyond our access agreement activity, where we often work with education organisations and charitable trusts on projects established to support areas of student learning prior identified as requiring further support and skills development, pre- or post-arrival.

The University works with local authorities in delivering some collaborative outreach projects, including Essex County Council, Southend Borough Council, Colchester Borough Council and Tendring District Council.

We work with our Students' Union across a number of areas of our outreach activity, and in particular with our Students' Union volunteering scheme and engagement with local schools. This partnership provides opportunities for both local school staff and pupils and for our University students that participate in these activities.

5. Access and admissions

The University of Essex is committed to fair access and encourages applications from students demonstrating the greatest potential to benefit from the type of education studying at Essex provides. Applying a holistic approach, individual applicants are considered on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential, regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, socio-economic background, family circumstances, religious or political beliefs, and affiliations or other irrelevant distinction. Our admissions policies and procedures are designed to ensure that all applications are considered fairly and consistently, and in accordance with professional standards.

The University of Essex does not currently use contextual data in making selection decisions at the point of application. From October 2012 entry, we have used contextual data at the point of confirmation, to allow additional consideration of factors which may have affected borderline students who have not met their offer. Our relevant Senate Committee continues to review the use of contextual data in light of additional information being available from UCAS and application trends.

6. Retention and student success

6.1 Retention, progression and student success

The University is committed to ensuring our Access Agreement delivers our students support and opportunities in order to achieve successful outcomes as a result of their time at Essex. Since our 2012-13 Access Agreement, we have invested in support for the retention of students from under-represented groups. For our 2014-15 Access Agreement, we will increase this investment.

During 2011-12 we undertook a major review to analyse the retention and progression of our students, including the identification of at risk groups and the mechanisms we can put in place to better support progression. As a result of this analysis, we will increase investment to support the following activity:

- an increase in central staff and operational resource to support the retention of students;
- activity to support the transition of students from under-represented groups;
- targeted activity led by our departments/schools, delivered at identified periods when students are at greatest risk of withdrawal;
- enhancements to the University's Peer Mentoring Scheme;
- student support at department/school level; and
- targeted activity through our University Skills Centre.

6.2 Student support

The University will continue our Access Agreement commitment to fund a range of campus-based student support services which are designed to help students to succeed in their studies, to overcome any difficulties they may face and to make the most of their time at the University. We will provide additional support to the University's Student Support to provide on-going support for students from under-represented groups, particularly students with a disability, to assist with their progression and retention.

Since 2011 there has been a significant investment by the University in our Residents' Support Network provision to support the transition of students into higher education, to foster an inclusive community within residences, and to assist in skills development essential for independent living and learning. This initiative will continue to engage students from a wide range of ethnic and social backgrounds with a proportion of the expansion, the proportion of undergraduate students eligible for full state support across all of our undergraduate and postgraduate student community, supported through this Access Agreement. By helping students to settle into living and learning at the University, the Residents' Support Network supports induction and retention of students. In addition, the experience of being a Residents' Assistant with substantial training, supervision and opportunities to develop and practice skills is expected to enhance the employability of these students.

6.3 Employability

With a significant intake of students from under-represented groups, we recognise the importance of supporting our students to achieve graduate-level employability outcomes. From 2012 we have increased our investment in targeted employability activity. This has included evaluation of our students' engagement with our employability services and ongoing research to ensure we can maximise the impact of our investment.

For our 2014-15 Access Agreement we will continue to invest in:

- internships;
- Frontrunners scheme;
- student ambassador scheme; and
- targeted employability support for students from under-represented groups.

We will increase our investment to provide:

- employer and alumni mentoring;
- targeted workshops;
- support to recent graduates;
- Faculty Employability Coordinators; and
- Languages for All scheme.

Where support is available to all students, we will continue to include a proportion of the expenditure representative of the proportion of students from under-represented groups within our student community. We will target students from under-represented groups and monitor engagement with this activity to ensure those students benefit from our wider employability support.

7. Financial support for students

In 2014-15, the University will provide financial support packages, developed in consultation with the University of Essex Students' Union. The support is targeted at ensuring students can access and benefit from their education at Essex, and are not prevented from doing so due to financial concern or hardship.

7.1 Bursary scheme

The University's existing bursary scheme and our National Scholarship Programme (NSP) has been the subject of a major review to ensure they are delivering the impact we need. For students entering in 2014-15 we have developed a new scheme, based on feedback from students and in consultation with the University of Essex Students' Union.

For students entering in 2014, investment in the NSP and bursary scheme will be brought together to offer students one financial support package based on meeting financial need. Year one of the scheme will be provided through the NSP, and years two and three from the University bursary fund.

Students admitted in 2014-15 with a household income up to £25,000, who are resident in England, will be eligible for the following financial support:

Year one

- £1,000 cash bursary
 - £2,000 institutional service(s)
- or
- £3,000 institutional service(s)

Institutional service(s) for students to choose from include:

- accommodation subsidy;
- childcare costs for the University's Day Nursery;
- Passport to Sport membership;
- vouchers for textbooks;
- vouchers for technical equipment;
- printing credit; and
- credit to be used in the University catering outlets.

Year two

- £1,000 bursary

Year three

- £500 bursary

The total value of the award is £4,500.

Students undertaking a year abroad or placement year, as part of a four-year course, will not be eligible for the bursary due to students not incurring a fee for this year and due to our international study and international experience bursary schemes.

Students on courses funded by the NHS will not be eligible to receive a bursary due to other support available for NHS-funded courses.

7.2 Scholarships

The University will be providing scholarships of £2,000 for every year of undergraduate study at Essex for UK (Home fees) students who achieve academic excellence in their entry qualifications. Students will also be expected to achieve a success rate during their studies, in order to continue receiving the award. As a significant number (36 per cent) of students admitted to Essex are from low income households (up to £25,000), and the scholarships will be available for students from a range of educational routes, a proportion of students from low income households across our UK student community are included in the University Access Agreement.

7.3 Other targeted bursary schemes

7.3.1 Care Leavers' Bursaries/Refugee Bursaries

A number of targeted bursaries, of up to £1,000 per year, will be available for new and continuing undergraduate students who were in local authority care prior to starting their university course and/or who have refugee status, or who are dependants of refugees. These students may well have overcome significant barriers to gain a place at university and could have less practical and financial family support to fall back on.

7.3.2 Diagnostic Assessment Bursaries

Bursaries contributing to the cost of a diagnostic assessment for dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties will be provided to students, allowing assessments to take place prior to or after arrival at the University. This bursary will particularly benefit students who have not been in a position to fund an assessment prior to starting their course and ensure the relevant support is in place to support the transition to University. Each bursary will contribute up to the full cost of a diagnostic assessment and will be paid directly to the University-approved assessor.

7.3.3 International Study and International Experience Bursaries

The University recognises that cost can be a significant barrier for students being able to access opportunities for study abroad, international placement or volunteering. In order for all students to have the chance to benefit from these experiences, students from low income households eligible for statutory maintenance support will be eligible to apply for a bursary, of up to £2,500, in addition to there being no fee charged for the year students are studying abroad or undertaking industrial placements.

7.3.4 Internship Bursary

The University will be providing students with the opportunity to apply for a bursary, of up to £2,500, to provide financial support while undertaking an international internship. While all students from our University will be eligible to apply for this bursary, this financial support will be of particular benefit for those from low income households. The proportion of undergraduate students eligible for full state support across all of our undergraduate and postgraduate student community is therefore included as expenditure in this Access Agreement.

7.3.5 Helena Kennedy Foundation

In 2014-15, we will support one bursary through the Helena Kennedy Foundation, supporting disadvantaged students who have overcome significant barriers in order to continue their education and progress to the University of Essex.

7.3.6 Continuing students

Continuing students, who started their courses between 2006-07 and 2011-12, will follow the bursary scheme originally offered, subject to permitted inflationary increases.

7.4 Finance information

The University already provides information on student finance support in all pre-application material, including the prospectus, and in the student finance area of our University website. Finance information is distributed at pre-applicant events, including higher education fairs, open days, careers evenings and school/college presentations. Outreach staff deliver higher education finance presentations in a large number of schools and colleges throughout the year, and to parents and carers at University visit and interview days, plus a central e-mail address for any enquiries, both pre- and post-registration, is publicised.

From 2011 we have invested in staff support to manage our targeted support schemes, maximise IAG and availability of the schemes and target students in greatest need. We have further developed our student finance communications and provided targeted information on student finance. This has included printed publicity material to support IAG in schools and use at careers and education events, vodcasts and podcasts providing student finance information, and a funding and advice conference.

We work collaboratively with the regional Student Loans Company (SLC) Student Finance Consultant in promoting higher education student finance awareness.

Student finance information is already provided to a number of national information providers and, in particular, the University will also continue to provide any required information to UCAS and the SLC.

8. Evaluation

From 2011 we have increased our investment in ensuring the ability to evaluate and measure the impact of our investment through our Access Agreement. From 2014-15 the University will also make use of the academic expertise within our institution for the evaluation of our Access Agreement investment. In particular, we will work with the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), our world-class team of survey and socio-economic research experts.

Our evaluation measures include:

- Student Tracking Access, Retention and Success (STARS) project;
- Outreach Evaluation Strategy;
- Realising Opportunities scheme evaluated at a national project level;
- multivariate logistic regression to analyse the retention, progression and outcomes of our students; and
- analysis of participation in employability services by students from target groups.

8.1 STARS

Our STARS project has been established in order to analyse and create a better understanding of our students' journey from the point of initial interaction with the University through to their graduate destination. STARS provides the opportunity to analyse access, progression and student success by student groups, using identifiers such as POLAR data, household income, disability and gender. In 2014-15 we will continue to use the STARS data to inform our developments for supporting students from under-represented groups across the student lifecycle and to measure the impact of our investment for particular target groups.

8.2 Outreach Evaluation Strategy

In order to measure the impact and outcome of the resources invested in our outreach activity, we have developed an overarching Outreach Evaluation Strategy which will continue to be in place for 2014-15. Our methods of evaluation include pre- and post-activity questionnaires, teacher evaluation through questionnaires and feedback, and developing our ability to track participants' progression to the University through data collection and permissions, working with unique pupil and learner numbers, and use of our management information systems for data collection and reporting. This tracking will also form part of the University STARS project.

Analysis of our findings is used to inform the development of our outreach activity and assess the impact.

8.3 Retention and student success analysis

Since January 2012 we have undertaken analysis to understand the student experience and the associated patterns of student retention, progression and attainment at the University of Essex. Multivariate logistic regression has been conducted on students enrolled on Bachelor degree courses from 2006-07. To date, analyses have included: gender, age, disability, ethnicity, entry qualifications, entry route (Clearing or not), and postcode classification (POLAR 2). Future analyses will also include UCAS Tariff Points and financial factors, including household income threshold.

Our findings to date have already informed our decision to increase resources that support the progression and successful outcomes of students from under-represented groups, as outlined in section 6.1.

We will continue to undertake this analysis to inform our retention strategy and evaluate our increased investment.

9. Targets

The University has previously made use of HESA Performance Indicators (PIs) to monitor performance in access and widening participation. While we will continue to monitor against HESA PIs in order to measure against benchmark, and to allow for cross sector comparison, we have also invested in internal mechanisms and data to set targets and to monitor and analyse the access, progression, and outcomes of our students.

For the purposes of the institutional targets set, low participation neighbourhoods include quintile one only, although participation from quintiles one and two is monitored.

9.1 Outreach

Our Outreach Evaluation Strategy has been in place from September 2011 and continues to be implemented. The evaluation of our outreach activity provides information on the impact and outcomes of pre-application and pre-arrival outreach, and informs the development of future activity. Outreach activity is also a strand within our University's STARS project.

9.1.1 Activity targets

Beneficiaries

- 10,000 beneficiaries, including students, parents, teachers and advisers
- 1,000 students and their families from younger age groups
- 120 schools, colleges and organisations

¹ Internal University management information

² Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), 2010-11 Performance Indicators, Table T1a

Activity

- 200 on campus and in school/college activities including IAG, campus visits, subject taster events and insight events
- 3 summer schools
- 1 mentoring scheme
- 1 access scheme

9.2 Applications

Using Polar data, applications from students from low participation neighbourhoods are monitored at key points during the admissions cycle. The University already attracts a high proportion of applicants from under-represented groups, both directly and through our partners. Our applications target is set based on the considerable progress the University has already made.

Target

The University's five year target, from 2012-13, is to maintain the 2010-11 position with 13.4 per cent of all applications (UK) from students from low participation neighbourhoods, and 12.6 per cent of offers made to students from low participation neighbourhoods¹.

9.3 Intake

The University has already made significant progress in fair access. Between 2004-05 and 2011-12, we increased our intake of young full-time first degree entrants from social classes 4, 5, 6 and 7 from 30.1 per cent to 34 per cent. The intake of young full-time first degree entrants from low participation neighbourhoods has increased from 12.4 per cent to 15.5 per cent (2010-11), and the percentage of young full-time first degree entrants from state schools from 92.5 per cent to 95.7 per cent². Our intake targets have been set taking into account our existing access levels to the University.

9.4 Retention/progression

Current position and targets

Indicator	HESA benchmark 11-12	Baseline figures Essex including partners 09-10 actual	Baseline figures Essex excluding partners 09-10 actual	Current position Essex including partners 11-12 actual	Current position Essex excluding partners 11-12 actual	Essex five year target 2016-17 (including partners)	Essex five year target 2016-17 (excluding partners)
Young full-time first degree from state schools	91.7%	96.5%	95.8%	95.7%	94.5%	96.5%	95.8%
Young full-time first degree from NS-SEC 4, 5, 6 & 7 ³	32.6%	32.6%	31.1%	34.0%	31.7%	32.6%	31.1%
All UG entrants from low-participation neighbourhoods ⁴	11.5%	16.7%	14.6%	16.7%	13.7%	16.7%	14.6%

Our extensive review of our Access Agreement, and our emphasis on supporting the lifecycle of our students, has led to our increased investment in supporting retention and progression. This increased commitment is reflected in our targets.

Target

Institutionally calculated data and targets are by percentage of students, across all years that continue to the next stage of study or qualify.

³ Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), 2010-11 Performance Indicators, Table T1a

⁴ Internal University management information, based on HESA return data

⁵ Internal University management information, based on HESA return data

Indicator	Baseline figures Essex including partners 09-10 actual ⁵	Baseline figures Essex excluding partners 09-10 actual	Current position Essex including partners 10-11 actual	Current position Essex excluding partners 10-11 actual	Essex five year target 2016-17 (excluding partners)
Young full-time first degree entrants	89.4%	90.9%	90.6%	91.4%	Increase of 2 to 4 percentage points
Mature full-time first degree entrants	81.1%	82.7%	87.7%	84.0%	Increase of 2 to 4 percentage points

An increase in the institutional target will impact accordingly on the HESA PIs that include the University's partner institutions included in this agreement.

9.5 Employability

The University uses Polar data and destination information to analyse the employability outcomes of our students. Our investment within the Access Agreement is to achieve an overall increase in the employability opportunities for students from under-represented groups. Our most recent analysis has identified year-on-year variance in the outcomes for our students from the lowest participation neighbourhoods. Through our Access Agreement, we have therefore increased our investment to support achieving our employability targets.

Target

Our employability targets and success is being measured using *The Times Graduate Employment Survey* definition, based on the standard occupation classification and the survey's 'positive' and 'negative' definition for graduate level further study or graduate-level jobs.

'Positive' destination – graduate-level further study and/or a graduate-level job.

'Negative' destination – no or a non-graduate-level job and no or non-graduate-level further study.

The destination information has been cross-referenced with Polar postcode data to identify students from areas of low participation.

	2008	2009	2010	2011	All years mean	Essex five year target 2016-17 (excluding partners)
% students from low-participation neighbourhoods	10.2%	11.4%	12.6%	13.2%	11.9%	Positive 70-75%
Negative	32.1%	36.8%	39.8%	43.6%	38.5%	
Positive	67.9%	63.2%	60.2%	56.4%	61.5%	
% students from other neighbourhoods	89.8%	88.6%	87.4%	86.8%	88.1%	Positive 70-75%
Negative	31.7%	32.9%	38.1%	34.3%	34.2%	
Positive	68.3%	67.1%	61.9%	65.7%	65.8%	
All students						Positive 70-75%
Negative	31.7%	33.4%	38.3%	35.5%	34.7%	
Positive	68.3%	66.6%	61.7%	64.5%	65.3% ⁶	

⁶ *The Times Graduate Employment Survey* and Polar 2 postcode data

10. Monitoring

The University will undertake ongoing monitoring of activity, expenditure and progress against targets, at relevant key points during the year.

In order to ensure clear responsibility for our Access Agreement, we have rationalised our process for development and monitoring. The overall responsibility of our Access Agreement now resides with the University's Registrar and Secretary, with one of the Deputy Directors of Communications and External Relations having a management responsibility for the content, delivery and day-to-day monitoring. The financial management of our Access Agreement is overseen by our Professional Services Accountant.

Delivery of our Access Agreement commitments across the student lifecycle is embedded within the management, annual planning, monitoring and evaluation of our Professional Services.

In-year monitoring is the responsibility of the Deputy Director of Communications and External Relations and in-year financial monitoring the responsibility of the Professional Services Accountant, both of whom will report in year to the Registrar and Secretary.

The annual approval of the University's Access Agreement and monitoring return is the responsibility of the University Steering Group. All Access Agreement submissions and monitoring returns are approved by this group.

11. Consultation with students

The 2014-15 Access Agreement has been developed by a small working group that has included representation from the University of Essex Students' Union, with membership and input from the Vice-President Education. Our extensive review of our Access Agreement has been in partnership with our Students' Union. In particular we have worked collaboratively on the development of our revised bursary/NSP scheme, our peer mentoring scheme and student volunteering as part of our outreach activity, as well as the wider strategic developments of our Access Agreement and widening participation strategy.

Since 2012-13 the University's Access Agreement has been informed by consultation, research and evaluation carried out with current and pre-university students and teachers and advisers in local schools and colleges.

12. Statement on Equality and Diversity

The University of Essex recognises the value of diversity and is committed to equality of opportunity within the University. We expect students and staff to be treated with dignity and respect and solely on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, political beliefs and affiliations, family circumstances or other irrelevant distinction. The University is committed to a programme of action to ensure that this policy is fully effective.

The University has undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment of its Access Agreement to ensure we meet our responsibilities and commitment to equality of opportunity for all. Work is also being undertaken to closer align statistical data used for monitoring of the Access Agreement with monitoring by the University's Equality and Diversity Committee.

13. Franchise partnerships

13.1 Colchester Institute

Colchester Institute Access Agreement, see Appendix A.

13.2 South Essex College of Further and Higher Education

South Essex College of Further and Higher Education Access Agreement, see Appendix B.

13.3 University Campus Suffolk

University Campus Suffolk has its own Access Agreement, via the University of East Anglia, and is therefore not covered within the University of Essex Agreement.

13.4 Edge Hotel School delivered by Kaplan Open Learning

Edge Hotel School, delivered by Kaplan Open Learning, Access Agreement, see Appendix C.

13.5 University of Essex Online delivered by Kaplan Open Learning

Kaplan Open Learning delivers University of Essex degrees through part-time online study under the University of Essex Online brand. The nature of delivery is targeted to provide access to obtaining a University of Essex degree for students who require the ability to study in a flexible environment. The tuition fees for University of Essex Online courses, which lead to University of Essex degrees delivered through Kaplan Open Learning, will not be above the £4,500 basic fee level for an individual student in an academic year in 2014-15. For this reason University of Essex Online, delivered by Kaplan Open Learning, is not covered in this Access Agreement.

Appendix A

2014-15 Access Agreement: Colchester Institute

2014-15 tuition fee:

- Home and EU students
- Full-time University of Essex degree courses in arts and music: £8,000 (2013-14)*
- Other full-time University of Essex degree courses: £7,650 (2013-14)*
- University of Essex foundation year zero courses: £6,000 (no increase)
- Edexcel HNC/D: £6,000 (no increase)

**For students entering in 2014 the tuition fee will be increased by the permitted inflationary factor*

Contextual Statement

Colchester Institute has established vocational provision in the context of an HE strategy that underpins widening participation. The College continues to provide opportunities for those students who might otherwise not progress to higher education in addition to specialist vocational provision that serves local, regional and national industry.

Outreach

The College aims to continue to pursue existing short-term outreach activity (eg schools links, progression events) but is also looking to participate in longer term high impact activity through work with primary schools within the immediate College catchments (Tendring, Braintree and Colchester), active participation in the Children's University, the development of an HE mentoring scheme and, as lead sponsor, close engagement with the Colchester Academy.

National Scholarship Programme

The College is keen to promote local and internal (College) progression and intends the National Scholarship Programme to be used to support this aim. The College has been awarded 33 funded scholarships for 2014-15 through its partnership with the University of Essex and will use the required matched funding to provide further support to those 33 students throughout the duration of their course. For full-time students, the scholarship awards will provide a £1,500 fee discount in the first year, a £1,000 cash bursary and £500 of travel costs followed by a student choice of institutional benefits and travel costs of £1,500 per annum in subsequent years. For part-time students, support will be pro-rata with a 0.5 BA Hons student receiving support for up to six years of study.

Discounts

Colchester Institute will provide a discount of £1,650 for students enrolling on the year zero or foundation year art and design programmes and is looking to develop further opportunities for year zero entry across the vocational spectrum. The College also recognises that subject areas within the genre of creative industries can be more expensive for incoming students and will provide a start-up pack for art and design students in their first year of study (£200 per student) and an events season ticket (£50 per student) for all incoming students studying within music and performing arts.

Retention and achievement

Colchester Institute monitors the retention and achievement (within designated programme length) of students using internally produced metrics which provide greater detail than that indicated through HESA statistics, and is working to improve both aspects of the student experience. The College is keen to work to HE in FE benchmarks once established through the work of the Mixed Economy Group, and currently provided statistical data for Corporation Board consideration. The College is pleased to follow the advice provided through OFFA that 'additional' income might be used to support retention and will be looking to exceed the targets set by the University by evidencing an improvement in retention and progression of 2-4 per cent over three years. In order to effectively pursue such targets, the College will be taking the following steps:

- Further developing the new HE Centre, which opened in October 2012 at a cost of over £1.4 million, to support facilitation of an HE student community and provide bespoke HE facilities. These include a "one-stop-shop" for information and advice, quiet and group study areas and social space together with HE teaching space. Many cohorts have less than 20 students in their learning group and therefore students having difficulties can more easily become isolated. The development of family mentoring groups and interdisciplinary activity through the development of the Centre has been of particular value. This project was established as a direct response to this need and following discussion with student representatives.
- Extending the provision of wireless connectivity across the campuses to support the mobile technologies (Apple iPads) issued to all first-year students to support a more flexible approach to learning and to meet the need for the increased utilisation of ILT as a means of supporting retention. All students will be supported through Moodle and will be able to access learning materials and activities, participate in personal learning networks and access their own Personal Learning System through the use of this technology. As the College embraces continuing numbers of applications from 'mature' students, our awareness of the pressures of additional work, family needs and the tensions of maintaining pace with student activity has developed. The provision of mobile technologies is aimed to support a fundamental change in the way that learners interact with their peers, tutors and develop their own personal learning network both within and beyond the College.
- Provision of the Pebblepad Learning System for each student to support pre-registration study skills diagnosis and support, on programme personal development planning, reflexivity and activity that underpins 'My Next Step'. The establishment of study skills support needs prior to arrival at the College will enable a more effective tutorial and learning support process at a time that is often found to be very daunting for those from a widening participation background. This is particularly relevant for 'mature' students.

The College recruits and retains students who would not otherwise participate in higher education and/or those for whom we provide particular vocational specialism. Whilst some entrants to some music and art programmes have higher UCAS tariffs, statistics report a higher than average incidence of learning support needs within these areas.

In general, the entry profiles of our students indicates that the majority can be categorised as 'non-traditional' (using the range of categories published by HEFCE) and thus targeted support, for example via use of Pebblepad or iPads, would apply to the majority. Exclusion of a minority group would be perceived by the College as being contrary to our single equality framework.

Appendix B

2014-15 Access Agreement: South Essex College of Further and Higher Education

Context

This Access Agreement outlines South Essex College's commitment to activity related to income derived from indirectly funded numbers through the University of Essex's Access Agreement for 2014-15. South Essex College's commitment to activity related to income derived from directly funded numbers in 2014-15 is outlined in a separate Access Agreement published on the OFFA website.

South Essex College has a good record of attracting students from under-represented groups to higher education. Outreach activity is wide ranging through frequent engagement with local and regional educational, community and employer based networks. We are effective at enrolling and supporting students with a disability with currently 15.6 per cent of the student population registered and receiving support, against a national HE participation level of 7 per cent⁷. The College recruits students with little or no family experience of HE; for example in 2009-10 28.3 per cent⁸ of full-time first degree entrants were from low participation neighbourhoods, 49.5 per cent were from NS-SEC 4, 5, 6 and 7 and 100 per cent from state schools. BME participants make up 15.5 per cent of the total College HE student population which is above national population averages and well above regional population averages⁹ but below national HE participation averages (21.5 per cent¹⁰). The HE student population of the College is diverse in age range and significantly different to the national HE average. 18 year olds account for just 19 per cent (24 per cent¹¹ lower than national average) with 30+ students forming 30 per cent of our learner population (16 per cent¹² higher than national average). Given the decline nationally in mature adults entering HE¹³ the College is working effectively to counter this trend. The percentage of 18 year old learners in the student population is, however, low and continues to be a priority supported by measures in this Access Agreement.

Work is being undertaken to evaluate the impact of the change in fee regime in 2012-13 to participation levels, to review any achievement gap for the student groups outlined above and to extend opportunity to any groups currently below national averages of participation.

The activities outlined below, and in the College's Access Agreement for directly funded students, are designed to meet our targets for participation, success and progression.

1. Aims of the College Access Agreement

The College Access Agreement aims to:

- maintain the College's strengths in access for students from groups under-represented in higher education;
- raise aspirations among potential applicants from under-represented groups;
- improve retention of students on higher education programmes from under-represented groups;
- use a learner journey centred approach through outreach initiatives to raise awareness and improve attitudes towards higher education of students, enabling them to make informed decisions about their future; and
- increase applications and acceptances to higher education from targeted groups.

2. Tuition Fee

For Home and EU full-time students entering in 2014 onto the first year, or progressing to the second or third year of undergraduate programmes delivered by the College and awarded by the University of Essex, the College proposes to charge a tuition fee of £7,000. The estimated number of full-time students who will be paying the fee of £7,000 is 693 through indirect funding. Part-time students on two-year PGCE or Cert Ed programmes will have fees of £1,975 per year. All other part-time students will pay fees on the basis of £875 per module with all programmes running below the basic fee level (£4,500) with the exception of three-year foundation degrees, for which the fees will be £4,666 per year. These fees may be subject to annual increases in line with the amount set by the Government.

3. Expenditure

In 2014-15, the College will allocate 27.6 per cent of its additional fee income, as defined by OFFA, from income derived from indirectly funded numbers on additional activities related to raising aspirations and progression to higher education by under represented groups, improving retention, contributing to the National Scholarship Programme and providing bursaries.

The College expects to allocate £48,510 from income derived from indirectly funded numbers in 2014-15 to fund activities that will support raising aspirations and progression to HE, and improve retention.

⁷ www.papworth.org.uk/downloads/factsandfigures_disabilityintheuk_july2011_110721132605.pdf. - 2009-10 HE entrants

⁸ Review of HESA data looking at postcodes of enrols - POLAR 2

⁹ www.essexpartnershipportal.org/pages/uploads/JSNA/Demography_refresh_chapter_-_update_v1.3.pdf

¹⁰ www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/2705/278/#age

¹¹ www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/1897/239/ - HESA 2011-12

¹² HESA 2011-12

¹³ www.niace.org.uk/news/hefce-figures-confirm-slump-in-part-time-he-recruitment - Full-time mature acceptances for 2011-12 cycle fell by 12.1 per cent for 24-39 year olds and 10.2 per cent for 40+ year olds.

3.1 Activities to raise aspirations and promote progression to HE

The activities will build on those previously outlined in the 2013-14 Access Agreement Annex.

Typical outreach activities will include:

- School visits to and HE experience days at the College
- Information, advice and guidance in local schools
- Information, advice and guidance events for parents and carers on HE progression
- Taster sessions on HE programmes
- Subject-based research conferences for local schools and colleges
- Participation in UCAS fairs in locations that will enable engagement with potential BME applicants

3.2 Activities to improve retention of HE students

These activities will raise aspirations for achievement, promote awareness of the world of work and the skills needed in employment, and improve retention. Particular focus for these support activities will be students from under-represented groups who will be identified using POLAR3 data on entry.

Typical activities will include:

- The continuation of a peer mentorship scheme in which a final-year HE student from each programme will be appointed to offer on-course support to those on lower years. This student mentor will create a linkage between students on differing years of the programme and will offer advice and guidance about progression, as well as encouraging a programme identity through the management of social activities.
- The continuation of a Business Incubator Unit to support learners wishing to develop their own SME in the final year of study or on graduating. Learners would be supported in finding suitable subsidised accommodation, offered advice and guidance on the requirements of self employment, and be offered access to academic members of staff to mentor them through the initial phases of the business set up. This initiative is intended to offer opportunity to the wide range of College students from under-represented groups who currently have limited access to this type of venture.
- The continuation of the College Higher Education Newsletter including sections on alumni of the College, raising the aspirations of current HE students and promoting the development of those from under-represented groups to the wider region.
- The continuation of a skills unit in the HE centre to support learners' development particularly in the early stages of their study from under-represented groups.

3.3 Financial support for students

National Scholarship Programme

In 2014-15, the College will contribute £144,000 to the National Scholarship Programme, match funded by the government NSP contribution. Subject to final confirmation, the College will provide 96¹⁴ first-year UK students with a one-year fee waiver of £3,000. The College is keen to promote internal and local progression, and to use the scholarships to support students where financial factors may have been a barrier to enter higher education.

To meet this aim, 48 of the scholarships will be awarded to students from low income households with a household income of up to £10,000. As well as meeting the criteria for the household income threshold, students will be required to meet the UCAS and College deadlines and NSP eligibility criteria.

The remaining 48 students will be internal students, currently studying a level 3 qualification at South Essex College, or a sixth form in a school or a college in Southend, Castlepoint, Basildon or Thurrock council wards, with household declared incomes of £20,000 or less. As well as meeting the criteria for the household income threshold, students will be required to meet the UCAS and College deadlines and NSP eligibility criteria.

College Progression Bursaries

Any student on a further education programme at the College who registers for a degree programme at the College within one year of completion of the FE programme, will receive a non-means-tested bursary of £300 for each year of study (for first attempts only). The College expects to allocate £77,000 in 2014-15 for these bursaries of which an estimated £47,000¹⁵ will be allocated to applicants from under represented groups (identified using POLAR3 data on entry).

Continuing students

Continuing students will be subject to the South Essex College annex of the University of Essex Access Agreement for their relevant year of entry.

Student consultation

The College's HE Student Union have supported the development of this Access Agreement.

¹⁴ Total deriving from Directly and Indirectly Funded Learners, outlined in both Access Agreements for 2014-15.

¹⁵ Based on current percentage of 2012-13 enrolments from underrepresented groups using POLAR2 data.

Appendix C

2014-15 Access Agreement: Edge Hotel School

The Edge Hotel School is dedicated to practical and vocational education, and to the development of the future leaders of the hospitality industry. Industry professionals together with student managers run the hotel. Industry 'masters' will nurture the students' aspiring talent, knowledge and skills. This is an innovative way to develop the mastery necessary to prepare individuals for successful careers with leading hospitality organisations.

Edge Hotel School offers students a two-year accelerated honours degree and will charge a fee of £9,000 per year, £6,000 per qualification level. Due to the nature of the course and its offer, Edge Hotel School students are not included under the general University of Essex student financial support packages. A more appropriate model and programme has been developed specifically for the School's students, suitable for the practical and vocational learning focus of the course.

Edge Hotel School and its academic courses have been developed to attract students from all backgrounds and provide a vocational learning opportunity for students who may otherwise not be able to access and achieve a degree-level award.

The Edge Hotel School outreach programme actively seeks to widen access to its courses for non-traditional students.

This is partly embedded in the whole culture of the School where students learn by doing but also through two of our primary recruitment channels:

1. We work with the hospitality industry and specifically target individuals who may currently work or are seeking work in the hospitality industry. Our aim is to encourage individuals to aim higher and move from some of the many low paid occupations in the industry into education, in order that they can fulfil their potential. We achieve this by direct advertising, attendance at trade fairs such as Hotelympia, hosting the Big Conversation, and working with organisations such as Springboard and The Savoy Educational Trust.
2. We also actively work with colleges to offer a progression route to students that have come through the NVQ and BTEC routes, and many of these students are from disadvantaged backgrounds. We make direct visits to colleges, attend college fairs and speak at conferences such as the PACE (Professional Association for Catering Education) conference held in Blackpool.

The School has started to schedule events with current students, a high proportion of which come from non-traditional progression routes. This will help the School to find the best way of conveying the message about the unique opportunity offered by the Edge Hotel School to those unlikely to consider HE otherwise, and also to gain more insight into how students are best supported in an unconventional learning environment.

In order to provide access and high level employment opportunity to students, the School will provide the following:

- a total fee for the course of £18,000 over two years, representing a significant saving over many comparable courses both in the absolute cost of the course but also in the additional year of earnings and reduced living costs, compared to a traditional three-year course;
- students will be learning by doing, working with real hotel guests and will be highly regarded in the hospitality sector to ultimately secure graduate jobs with excellent employers and excellent career prospects; and
- a programme of masterclasses from industry experts that will allow students to expand their skill set further, and to network with potential employers throughout their course.

We will seek to recruit students from all backgrounds, looking for students with a real passion for the industry.

The course provision through Edge Hotel School represents excellent value for students and great employment prospects, and has been developed to provide access to high-level practical and vocational learning.

Please note that the Edge Hotel School may apply annual fee increases in line with the permitted amount set by the Government each year.