

**University of Essex**  
**Access Agreement**  
**2016-17**

## **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 fully from the University's excellence, irrespective of socio-economic background or ability to pay.

Our 2016-17 Access Agreement sets out how we will invest our fee income to provide a transformational opportunity to our students across the student lifecycle. We invest significant time and resources in developing our Access Agreement to ensure our investment is focused on delivering impact and providing students with the ability to achieve successful outcomes. Our whole university approach aligns our Access Agreement with our Strategic Plan, Education Strategy, Equality and Diversity Framework and Sub Strategy, and Recruitment Sub Strategy. In developing our Access Agreement we work 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 with the merit and potential to benefit fully from 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 levels of student achievement and ensuring the mechanisms are in place to educate our students and 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
- 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, 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 Edge Hotel School, Colchester Institute (continuing students only) and South Essex College of Further and Higher Education (continuing students only) 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 due to the level of fee charged.

## **2 Tuition fee**

The University's tuition fees for new and continuing students are all subject to any real-term permitted increases in subsequent years. The tuition fee for students entering in 2017 onwards will be under review and confirmed in our 2017-18 Access Agreement.

### **2.1 Full-time**

For undergraduate Home and EU students admitted in 2016-17, and continuing students that were admitted in 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16, 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 7,257 in 2016-17, 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 between 2012 and 2016, 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 605 students in 2016-17, rising to 605 students in 2019-20.

### **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 2016-17, the University will spend 18.7% of additional fee income, as defined by OFFA. This will increase to 19% from 2017-18.

Steady state expenditure, as a percentage, of additional fee income in 2016-17 for the University of Essex excluding partners will be:

Access: 1.8%

Student Success: 3.3%

Progression: 2.4%

Financial Support: 11.2%

Our proportion of spend is in line with OFFA guidelines, as outlined in the '*How to produce an access agreement for 2014-15*' guidance. Our expenditure reflects our proportion of students from under-represented groups in a research-led university and our targeted evidence based approach.

The University and our franchised partnerships included under this agreement, expect to spend 18.7% in Access Agreement expenditure in 2016-17.

## **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 3 data, school attainment and free school meals data to target schools and colleges. We 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.

### **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:

- VI6 partnership
- expansion of our subject-focused activity through conferences and junior lectures
- enhancing access to University study support materials for schools, teachers and students at the enquiry and application stage, including our online learning platform Essex 101 which develops students' study skills prior to entering university
- implementation of a progression project that works with cohorts of students across their school/college years
- increasing our work with teachers
- pre-arrival mentoring
- schools membership programme

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

Our outreach activity is 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 VI6**

From September 2015, the University will be enabling local students to study their A-levels on our campus. Six local sixth forms who are unable to offer some A-levels due to small class sizes, are coming together to teach seven subjects collaboratively one day a week. In addition to offering the space and facilities at no charge, the University will work with the schools to offer additional academic and cultural opportunities such as taster sessions, use of learning facilities and interaction with our academic staff and students.

### **4.4 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.

#### **4.4.1 University Challenge**

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.

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

#### **4.4.2 Progression project – FUSE**

The University has developed a progression project that works with cohorts of students across their school/college years, 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 3 data and academic ability, working with the schools involved to ensure effective targeting in order to maximise the impact of the project. The interventions students receive and participate in during the project are relative to their age and stage, and in some cases are opened up to a wider group of participants within the school/college.

The progression project is 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.

#### **4.4.3 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.

#### **4.4.4 Long-term school/college links**

We view our continued work with our target schools as an important element for delivering long-term outreach. In many instances this involves impacting on the culture and perceptions within our target schools. Many of these schools will be involved in our new Schools Membership scheme.

### **4.5 Partnership working**

The University has existing relationships with a number of schools and colleges, local education providers, education trusts and networks. 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 universities on programmes such as the National Networks for Collaborative Outreach and Pathways to Law, as part of our aim to encourage geographical mobility of students from under-represented groups.

Our collaboration extends beyond our access agreement activity, where we often work with education organisations and charitable trusts on projects established to support students' 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.

#### **4.5.1 Schools Membership**

The University launched a schools membership programme in Spring 2015 with a number of target outreach schools selected for the enhanced Schools Membership Plus programme. This will strengthen relationships already developed with schools and colleges as well as ensuring that the University has effective communication channels. The scheme will give schools access to outreach activity, CPD events, an online newsletter, as well as other useful information and activities. Schools within this programme will also help inform future activity through feedback and evaluation.

#### **4.5.2 National Network for Collaborative Outreach**

The University of Essex is the joint lead with Anglia Ruskin University for the Essex Collaborative Outreach Network. The network will be based at the University of Essex within the Outreach team. The current position for the funding is that it will end in December 2016 with no continuation. We will provide further information on the work of the Essex Collaborative Outreach Network in our next Access Agreement.

#### **4.6 Partnership working – Pathways to Law**

The University is participating in the Sutton Trust Pathways to Law scheme as a higher education partner. In delivering our part of the scheme we work in partnership with the Sutton Trust, other university partners and legal profession partners. The University will be participating in the scheme during the period of this Access Agreement.

### **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 that 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.

### **6 Progression 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 continuation of students from under-represented groups and have increased this investment from 2015-16.

During 2011-12 we undertook a major review to analyse the continuation of our students, including the identification of at-risk groups and the mechanisms we can put in place to better support

progression. Since 2012-13 we have continued to undertake further analysis. As a result of our findings, we have increased investment to support the following activity:

- an increase in central staff and operational resource to support the engagement, progression and success of students
- activity to support the transition of students from under-represented groups
- targeted activity to improve continuation rates, delivered at key points throughout a students' course
- enhancements to the University's undergraduate Peer Mentoring Scheme
- enhancements to personal tutoring arrangements and other student support at department/school level

Our activity to increase the progression and success of our students is embedded within our Education Strategy and Education Action Plan.

## **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 University. We will continue to invest in the University's Student Support on all three campuses 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 increase in investment by the University in our Residence Life 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 investment was particularly significant in 2013-14 with the introduction of four full-time Residence Life Co-ordinators providing support to the network of Residents' Assistants and taking the lead in programming activities. This initiative will continue to engage students from a wide range of ethnic and social backgrounds with a proportion of the cost of our Residents' Life Team supported through this Access Agreement. By helping students to settle at the University, Residence Life support a sense of belonging, 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.

For 2016-17 we will ensure continued support to students who would have previously been supported through the Access to Learning Fund (ALF) and/or the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA). At the time of writing the impact of the changes to ALF are still being assessed and the changes expected for the DSA are still unknown. We have included a proportion of expenditure in our Access Agreement to support ALF and DSA changes and will provide further information on this support in our next Access Agreement submission.

## **6.3 Learning and Development**

Our Learning and Development team work closely with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education and support the delivery of the Education Strategy. Projects and activities managed through Learning and Development are directly aligned with, and monitored through, the University's annual Education Action Plan and Education Committee.

Our investment in the learning and development of our students and staff ensures we are able to support the development of our students in the most effective way. Given the significant proportion of students we admit from under-represented groups and the range of academic backgrounds our students are admitted with, our 2016-17 Access Agreement will ensure we can maintain and enhance the learning support for our students from under-represented groups. This includes new and enhanced activity, such as:

- access to study support and study skills materials for enquirers, applicants and teachers
- an online study skills programme for applicants, supporting applicants in their preparation and transition to the University
- access to a suite of self-assessments for students to understand their starting point and to target academic skills support effectively

- Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme (UROP), providing students with the opportunity to work in placements alongside established academics and to learn first-hand what being a researcher really means
- coaching and mentoring for undergraduate students
- Challenge Essex Project, providing students with an opportunity to reflect on and develop their research skills and mind set in partnership with academic staff
- targeted academic skills activity through our University Talent Development Centre. This includes independent study, face-to-face advice and guidance, peer-assisted learning, and bespoke projects and events
- increasing access to online submission, feedback and assessment of coursework through the University FASER service. This is being developed to enable students to monitor their progress and respond to feedback over time
- professional development opportunities and recognition support for academic staff
- access to an institutional curriculum design and delivery toolkit to ensure teaching is aligned with Education Strategy

Where support is available to all students, our Access Agreement includes a proportion of the expenditure representative of the proportion of students from under-represented groups within our student community.

#### **6.4 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 2016-17 Access Agreement we will continue to invest in:

- Essex Employability Award
- internships
- Frontrunners scheme
- student ambassador scheme
- targeted employability support for students from under-represented groups
- employer and alumni mentoring
- targeted workshops
- support to recent graduates
- Faculty Placement Managers / Officers
- Faculty Employability Officers
- Languages for All scheme

Where support is available to all students, we continue to include a proportion of the expenditure representative of the proportion of students from under-represented groups within our student community. We 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 2016-17, the University will provide financial support packages, developed in consultation with our current students and 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.

Following the National Scholarship Programme (NSP) no longer being available from 2015-16, we undertook a review of our financial support packages. Our review included evaluation and analysis on the impact of our financial support for home undergraduate students.

## **7.1 Bursary scheme**

Our findings have shown that being in receipt of a bursary is a positive predictor of student retention: students not in receipt of a bursary are more likely to fail or withdraw from their course than those that received a bursary. The scale of this difference has varied in recent years as the bursary arrangements have altered, but the difference has been present in each case. Our findings have also shown that this effect persists even when age, gender, disability, ethnicity, postcode (POLAR 3), stage number, course campus, and the type of bursary scheme according to which awards were granted are taken into consideration. Although the criteria for bursary schemes have changed over the years, household income has remained one of the criteria for an award. Therefore, the University will continue to provide a bursary scheme for students from low income households.

We will provide a bursary of £1,000 per year for the first two years of study and £500 for the final year, to full-time undergraduate 2016 entrants with a household income of up to £25,000 that meet all eligibility criteria.

Students undertaking a year abroad or placement year, as part of a four-year course, will not be eligible for this bursary due to students not incurring a fee for this year and due to our International Experience Bursary scheme.

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 Other targeted bursary schemes**

### **7.2.1 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.

### **7.2.2 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 at or soon after arrival at the University or throughout a students' study. 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 to the cost of a diagnostic assessment and will be paid directly to the University-approved assessor.

### **7.2.3 International Experience Bursaries**

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

### **7.2.4 Helena Kennedy Foundation**

In 2016-17, 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.

### **7.2.5 Continuing students**

Continuing students, who started their courses prior to 2016-17, will follow the bursary and scholarship scheme originally offered.

## **7.3 Finance information**

The University 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 a central email address for any enquiries, both pre- and post-registration, is publicised.

We invest 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. The University is also making use of the academic expertise within our institution for the evaluation of our Access Agreement investment. In particular, we are working with the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), our world-class team of survey and socio-economic research experts.

Our evaluation measures include:

- an Outreach Evaluation Strategy
- Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT)
- evaluation and analysis on the impact of financial support - ISER
- multivariate logistic regression to analyse the retention, progression and outcomes of our students
- access to relevant data sets as a result of the University's STARS project

### **8.1 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 2016-17. 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.

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

### **8.2 Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT)**

The University will start to record participation of students on intensive outreach activities through HEAT from summer 2015. This will track progression to university and enable us to measure the impact of outreach activity to inform future projects. We anticipate seeing the first set of results in spring 2017. HEAT data will form part of our Outreach Evaluation Strategy.

### **8.3 Evaluation and analysis on the impact of financial support**

From March 2015, together with our Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER), we are embarking on a research project to investigate the impact of the University's financial investment on undergraduate student outcomes – retention, progression, good degrees and employability. This project will benefit from our University's research excellence and will inform future development of our student financial support.

### **8.4 Progression 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. An iterative process has been adopted so that each year the analysis considers additional variables and data as they become available. To date, analyses have included: gender,

age, disability, ethnicity, entry qualifications, entry route (did they enter through clearing), postcode classification (POLAR 2 and POLAR 3), and bursaries as predictors of continuation and degree outcome.

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 previous sections.

We will continue to undertake this analysis to monitor the retention, progression and success of our students and to inform our strategy and evaluate our increased investment.

## **8.5 STARS**

Our STARS project was established in order to create a better understanding of our students' journey from the point of initial interaction with the University through to their graduate destination. Data sources developed in the STARS project provide the opportunity to investigate and monitor students' access, retention, progression and success by comparative cohort analysis using identifiers such as POLAR data, household income, disability and gender. In 2016-17 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.

## **9 Targets**

As part of the development of our 2016-17 Access Agreement we have undertaken a review of our Access Agreement targets. We have rebalanced our targets to ensure our stretching targets are focused on the areas where we need to make the most progress and provide the greatest benefit for our student demographic. We have simplified our targets and aligned them to ensure they are more reflective of the University's current Strategic Plan, and are aligned to our Education Strategy and Education Action Plan. Our targets have also been rebalanced to reflect our proportion of investment to particular areas of the student lifecycle and to support our strategy. Our targeted approach is to challenge ourselves in the areas where we have identified we should be making the most progress.

### **9.1 Our 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. The Outreach team take an evidence based approach and this has been reflected in the targets set. Our targets will measure the number of beneficiaries engaging in our outreach activity. We have removed the use of targets for the number of specific activities in order to provide flexibility in directing our outreach in response to our evaluation findings and monitoring.

Meeting our Access Agreement outreach and intake targets is included within the University's Recruitment Sub-Strategy.

#### **9.1.1 Annual 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

## **9.2 Our intake**

The University has made significant progress in fair access and has played a key role in setting a high benchmark for access of students from under-represented groups to research led universities. The HESA Performance Indicator data shows that in 2013-14 our intake of young full-time first degree entrants from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR 2) was 14.9%, the percentage of young full-time first degree entrants from state schools 95.4% and our proportion of students from NS-SEC classes 4,5,6 and 7 was 36.2%. In all three areas we are exceeding our benchmarks and the national average.

We have assessed our intake of students from under-represented groups against an identified benchmark group of comparator research led universities. Our analysis shows the University continues to lead in the proportion of students accessing a research led education.

While a number of measures reflect our performance in the proportion of students from under-represented groups, our intake target will use one measure and will focus on the proportion of our intake from NS SEC classes 4,5,6 and 7, for the University only and not including our partner institutions. In order to provide a baseline that is reflective of our performance to date, we will use a two year average, from 2012-13 to 2013-14.

## **9.3 Our students retention and progression**

Our 2016-17 Access Agreement continues to focus on ensuring the retention and successful progression of our students. While we have historically had a target focused on retention and progression, these targets covered a wider group of our student community, separated only by young and mature students. In reviewing our targets we have focused on stretching ourselves to increase the retention and progression of students from quintiles 1 and 2 (POLAR 3) relative to the progression of students from quintiles 4 and 5.

## **9.4 Outcomes for our students**

Through our evaluation and analysis we have identified a gap in degree attainment of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students (BAME) compared to other student groups. Embedded within the work of our Education Strategy and Education Action Plan, we will work to close this gap and have set ourselves a stretching target to achieve this. In recognition of the time needed to impact on a student's outcome, working with students over a three- or four-year period, we have set our baseline and target to cover an average five-year period.

## **9.5 Employability of our students**

In our 2012-13 Access Agreement we set ourselves a stretching target to increase the employability of our students from a 2010-11 position of 56.4% (POLAR 2) to 70-75% (POLAR 2) / 61.5-66.5% (POLAR 3), for the proportion of students from quintile 1 achieving a positive graduate destination. The University has made significant progress towards our target, achieving an increase of 13.1% (POLAR 2) in two years. Our stretching target was a long-term commitment to increase the employability outcomes for our students from quintile 1 and we remain committed to making further progress.

## **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 resides with the University's Registrar and Secretary, with the Director of Admissions and Access 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 strategy, management, annual planning, monitoring and evaluation of our Education Strategy and Professional Services.

In-year monitoring is the responsibility of the Director of Admissions and Access 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**

Our 2016-17 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. In particular we work collaboratively on 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.

## **11 Equality and Diversity**

The University of Essex celebrates diversity, challenges inequality and is committed to sustaining an inclusive and diverse community that is open to all who have the potential to benefit from membership of it and which ensures equality of opportunity for all its members. We expect staff, students and visitors to be treated, and to treat each other, with dignity and respect 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.

Our Equality and Diversity Framework and Sub-Strategy 2015-18 includes our commitment to *appeal to a broad student market and provide a living and learning environment in which a diverse student population can develop as independent learners and globally-engaged, inter-culturally-aware citizens*. Our Access Agreement was used to inform our Equality and Diversity Framework and Sub Strategy, with direct links between our agreement principles and framework objectives for the access, progression and employability of students from under-represented groups.

The University's Education Committee considers department-level data and analysis by protected characteristic of the student body and applicant pool, identifying and pursuing trends as appropriate. It ensures that issues are addressed in the Annual Planning Process and makes recommendations to University Senate.

The University has undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment of our Access Agreement to ensure we meet our responsibilities and commitment to equality of opportunity for all.

## **12 Franchise partnerships**

### **12.1 Edge Hotel School delivered by Edge Hotel School Ltd**

Edge Hotel School Access Agreement, see Appendix A.

### **12.2 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 2016-17. For this reason University of Essex Online, delivered by Kaplan Open Learning, is not covered in this Access Agreement.

**12.3 Colchester Institute** – continuing students only  
Colchester Institute Access Agreement, see Appendix B.

**12.4 South Essex College of Further and Higher Education** – continuing students only  
South Essex College of Further and Higher Education Access Agreement, see Appendix C.

## Appendix A

### 2016-17 Access Agreement: Edge Hotel School

The Edge Hotel School is dedicated to practical and professional education and to the development of the future leaders of the hospitality industry. Students study the theory to achieve a degree in Hotel Management but also work alongside hospitality professionals – putting their knowledge into context right away - helping to run a real-life, 4\* country house hotel.

The 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, the 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 professional learning focus of the course.

The Edge Hotel School and its academic courses have been developed to attract students from all backgrounds and provide a 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 some of our primary recruitment channels:

- 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, meetings with industry representatives, involvement in industry and working with organisations such as The Savoy Educational Trust
- we also actively work with Schools and Colleges to offer a progression route to students that have come through the NVQ, VRQ and BTEC routes and a number of these students are from disadvantaged backgrounds. We make direct visits to colleges and attend college fairs. Time is involved in providing advice and guidance to these applicants both before, during and after these events as well as processing their applications
- the Edge Hotel School also hosts visits from a range of local and regional colleges which take place within the 4\* Wivenhoe House Hotel, which is the practical skill development area of the Edge Hotel School

The School supports the work of one of its main sponsors, the Edge Foundation, in widening access to hospitality courses through numerous events including:

- assisting and attending events such as the Annual Skills Show, in which students and staff of the Edge Hotel School provide hands-on experiences that inspire young people to explore further education, skills and apprenticeships
- visits to and support, of Careers Colleges supported by the Edge Foundation, which combine high quality vocational study and academic study so as to equip 14-19 year olds with the knowledge and skills needed to develop employability skills
- support and attendance at Edge Foundation activities and events

The School is scheduling events with current students; 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.

Student Success is enhanced by pastoral support and mentoring which is undertaken for students. A full time Student Support Officer is employed to provide guidance, advice and support for personal student matters on an 'on demand' basis (although in some instances, students are directly referred to this service for professional support). The School also has a managed academic mentoring system to provide academic guidance and review on a regular basis which is managed by the Student Support Officer.

The Edge Hotel School accepts both FdA and BA (Hons) students into a common Level 4 and 5 route. It is the philosophy of the School that, by receiving the same classes and being an

academically broad group, FdA entry students can measure themselves against their BA entry colleagues and both aspire and gain confidence to continue their studies through to Level 6 (the BA (Hons) degree). This is assisted through the unique syllabus that has been developed within the Edge Hotel School which places substantial emphasis on the philosophy of 'Learning by doing' and Practical Skill Assessments. These in turn tend to reflect the skill sets of kinaesthetic learners who may have lower 'academic' or theory based levels of achievement than traditional entrants to Higher Education. Progression from FdA to BA (Hons) is managed through a system of individual advisory discussions with students which cover both a review of academic progress to date as well as advice and direction so that those who do elect to undertake this route have a higher chance of success. A range of additional preparatory classes are also provided for these students so that they maintain their academic momentum and understand the nature of the largely non-kinaesthetic activities which will be required of them.

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 gaining professional experience, 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
- a programme of guest lectures and master classes from industry experts will allow students to expand their knowledge and 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 the Edge Hotel School represents excellent value for students and great employment prospects and has been developed to provide access to high level practical and professional learning.

In 2016-17 Edge Hotel School will spend 15.1% of our OFFA countable income through our Access Agreement. The Edge Hotel School may apply annual fee increases in line with the permitted amount set by the Government each year.

## **Appendix B**

### **2016-17 Access Agreement: Colchester Institute**

#### **2016-17 Tuition Fee**

Home and EU students:

Full-time University of Essex Degrees £7,950 (14/15)\*

University of Essex Foundation Year Zero Courses: £6000 (no increase)

Edexcel HNC/D: £6,000 (no increase)

*\*For students entering in 2015 the tuition fee will be increased by the permitted inflationary factor*

From 2015-16 only franchised continuing students will be included in the University of Essex Access Agreement and all new entrants from 2015-16 will appear in the Colchester Institute direct Access Agreement. This will impact on the income and expenditure which will progressively transfer to the College's direct Access Agreement over a period of years.

#### **Colchester Institute / National Scholarship Programme 2015/16**

The NSP scheme for undergraduate students ended with the 2014/15 allocation of £24,000 but the College has an ongoing commitment until 2016 for students awarded NSP support in previous years.

From 2013/14 the College has used matched funding to provide NSP support to students for the duration of their course. NSP support will therefore be provided to 13/14 and 14/15 students in 2015/16 and the year after.

The elements of the scheme that have proved most beneficial are travel support and cash. The College therefore intends to extend this assistance to ALL students meeting the 14/15 NSP criteria of family income at or below £25,000 and to name the new scheme the Colchester Institute Travel Scholarship (CITS).

#### **Retention and achievement**

Colchester Institute will be 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.

Support will be provided by a pre-registration study skills diagnosis and on programmed 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 very daunting for those from a widening participation background.



## Appendix C

### 2016-17 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 continuing indirectly funded numbers through the University of Essex's Access Agreement for 2016/17. South Essex College's commitment to activity related to income derived from Directly funded numbers in 2016/17, which includes all new applicants is outlined in a separate Access Agreement published on the OFFA website.

South Essex College has a good record of attracting students from underrepresented 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 21% of the student population registering a support requirement, against a national HE participation level of 7%<sup>1</sup>. The College recruits students with little or no family experience of HE; for example in 2014-15 69% of 18/19 year old students studying HE at the College came from the two lowest quintiles for student participation in higher education (QYPR), with 36% from the lowest alone. Similarly, of adult students in 2014-15, 71% came from home postcodes with the two lowest quintiles of participation in HE, with 37% from the lowest alone. BME participants make up 13% of the total College HE student population which is above national population averages and well above regional population averages<sup>2</sup> but below national HE participation averages (21.5%<sup>3</sup>). 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 30% (14%<sup>4</sup> lower than national average) with 30+ students forming 24% of our learner population (13%<sup>5</sup> higher than national average). Given the decline nationally in mature adults entering HE<sup>6</sup> the College is working effectively to counter this trend.

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 underrepresented in higher education
- raise aspirations among potential applicants from underrepresented groups.
- Improve retention of students on higher education programmes from underrepresented 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
- increase applications and acceptances to higher education from targeted groups

#### 2. Tuition Fee

This annex outlines the commitment to continuing students through indirectly funded programmes, not new applicants. The annex covers Home and European Union Full Time progressing students on undergraduate programmes delivered by the College and awarded by the University of Essex for which the College charged a tuition fee of £7000.

#### 3. Expenditure

In 2016-17, the College will allocate 21% of its additional fee income, as defined by OFFA, from income derived from continuing indirectly funded numbers on additional activities related to raising

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.essex.ac.uk/downloads/externalfigures\\_disabilityrhetuk\\_july2011\\_110721132825.pdf](http://www.essex.ac.uk/downloads/externalfigures_disabilityrhetuk_july2011_110721132825.pdf), 2009/10 HE events

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.essexpartnershipportal.org/pages/uploads/JSNA/Demography\\_refresh\\_chapter\\_-\\_update\\_v1.3.pdf](http://www.essexpartnershipportal.org/pages/uploads/JSNA/Demography_refresh_chapter_-_update_v1.3.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/2705/278/#age>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/1897/239/> HESA 11-12

<sup>5</sup> HESA 11-12

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.niace.org.uk/news/hefce-figures-confirm-slump-in-part-time-he-recruitment> Full time mature acceptances for 11-12 cycle fell by 12.1% for 24-39 year olds and 10.2% for 40+.

aspirations and progression to higher education by underrepresented groups, improving retention and providing bursaries.

The College expects to allocate £20,765 from income derived from progressing indirectly funded numbers in 2016-17 to fund activities that will support raising aspirations and progression to HE and improve retention and success.

### **3.1 Activities to raise aspirations and promote progression to HE**

The activities will build on those previously outlined in the 2015/16 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, success and progression 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 underrepresented groups who will have been 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 skills unit in the HE centre and available as a distance learning course on moodle to support learners' development particularly in the early stages of their study. This resource is highly effective at supporting students returning to education after a break or those progressing from further education.
- The continued development of HE student experience champions, a group of students who are employed as ambassadors for the College in outreach activity. Additionally they will be involved in evaluative and developmental work with staff at the College to review and improve all aspects of the student learning cycle.
- Collaborative activity between staff and students undertaking combined research projects focusing on progression.
- An annual HE conference and publication providing a focal point for reporting on and sharing outstanding staff and student practice

### **3.3 Financial support for students - College Progression Bursaries**

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

## **4. Institutional Monitoring Arrangements**

The College's Heads of Higher Education (Curriculum & Quality) undertake regular monitoring of information provided by University partners and the College's registry department including applications, intake, retention and employability. They assess impact, access and progress against targets and report to members of the College's HE Committee. The reports are scheduled to align to the College's annual quality cycle and allow sufficient time for any reasonable adjustments to ensure compliance with this agreement.

College departments review progression rates as part of the Annual Monitoring process which are reported to partners and performance against targets for access, retention and employability are built into the Colleges Key Performance Indicators which are monitored and reported to the FE Corporation.

Students have been consulted on the contents of this Access Agreement through the HE Student Union. Current student engagement is central to the success of many of the proposed activities in the Agreement and progress will be discussed and monitored at Programme Board meetings.