



University of Essex

Access Agreement

2013-14

1. Context

1.1 Background

The University of Essex is an institution of academic excellence, with an outstanding reputation for both teaching and research, ranked ninth out of 159 universities and colleges for the quality of our research in the 2008 national assessment¹. Since our establishment in 1964, we have encouraged applicants from a wide range of backgrounds and educational routes, and have delivered significant targeted support and activity to students from groups under-represented in higher education.

Currently 95 per cent (2010-11) of UK students were admitted from state schools, with 15.5 per cent of young students and 17.9 per cent of mature students from low participation neighbourhoods². The University consistently exceeds its HESA Widening Participation Performance Indicator benchmarks for the access of students from under-represented groups and surpasses the sector average.

We are proud of our reputation as an 'access elite' institution, providing students from disadvantaged backgrounds with access to international research excellence. We also have a wide commitment to community engagement, and are a major resource for the social, cultural and economic development of Essex and the wider region.

1.2 Access and admissions

The University of Essex is committed to fair access and encourages applications from students demonstrating the greatest potential and who will benefit from the opportunity 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 will be using contextual data at the point of confirmation, to allow additional consideration of factors which may have affected students who have not met their offer. Our University Admissions Sub-Committee continue to review the use of contextual data in light of additional information being available from UCAS and application trends.

1.3 Partnerships

In recent years, our University has established strategic partnerships to increase student access to its provision in the region. The various partnerships have led to increased collaboration in course development and design in order to address barriers to participation including geographical isolation, aspirations and perception of higher education.

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, Appendix 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.

1.4 Principles

The University of Essex Access Agreement is founded on our existing expertise in attracting students from under-represented groups. We have always taken an integrated approach to widening participation and access. Our 2013-14 Access Agreement will continue to embed widening participation across the whole student lifecycle to ensure fair access and support successful outcomes for our students, irrespective of their background.

The key principles of the University of Essex 2013-14 Access Agreement are to:

- maintain the University's strengths in access for students from groups under-represented in higher education;
- support retention and employability to maximise opportunities for students from under-represented groups;
- continue to deliver a successful programme of targeted outreach activity;
- maintain an embedded approach for access and widening participation activity across the institution; and
- deliver an inclusive Access Agreement that ensures access and success for all students.

¹ Sunday Times University Guide

² Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), 2010-11 Performance Indicators, Tables T1a and T2a

2. Tuition fee

The University's tuition fees are all subject to any real terms permitted increases in subsequent years. The tuition fee for students entering in 2014 onwards will be under review and confirmed in the 2014-15 Access Agreement.

2.1 Full-time

For undergraduate Home and EU students admitted in 2013-14, and continuing students that were admitted in 2012-13, 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 reach a steady state of up to 5,738 students 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 £6,750 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, and to enhance employment opportunities, students subject to the new fee will not be charged a fee for a study year abroad or for an industrial placement year as part of a four-year course. This fee-free year is predicted to benefit approximately 250 students per year (2015-16).

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

3. Expenditure

In 2013-14, the University will spend 18.4 per cent of its additional fee income, as defined by OFFA, on ensuring that all students meeting our entry criteria, regardless of background, are able to access the University, maximise their opportunities to succeed on their programme of study and increase their life opportunities. This will include continuing support committed to existing students who entered prior to 2012. By 2015-16, the University expects to be maintaining, at steady state, a total of 18.4 per cent annually of additional fee income through Access Agreement commitments.

The University and its franchised partnerships included under this agreement expect to maintain a steady state expenditure of 20 per cent in Access Agreement expenditure by 2015-16.

Students from groups currently under-represented in higher education will be targeted for outreach, financial support, retention and employability activity.

Steady state expenditure, as a percentage, of additional fee income in 2015-16 for the University of Essex excluding partners:

- Outreach: 2.2 per cent
- Retention and Student Success: 1.7 per cent
- Financial Support (including the NSP): 14.5 per cent

4. Outreach

The University has strong existing links with schools, colleges, other education organisations and local groups, and already delivers a high standard of outreach activity that has contributed to the increased intake to Essex of suitably qualified students from groups under-represented in higher education. We have developed and implemented innovative projects, and already work with a range of age groups from primary pupils through to mature students and parents. We have recently expanded our outreach provision in both staffing and activity. This outreach activity is additional to our existing schools and colleges liaison and recruitment activity.

4.1 Targeting

We will continue to work with targeted local schools and colleges using POLAR2, free school meals, average attainment and IDAC1 data to identify the schools and colleges that could benefit most from our outreach activity.

The outreach programme will include primary schools, secondary schools, sixth form and further education colleges, adult community colleges, local education trusts and partnerships, local authorities, learning shops and local community groups.

Outreach activity will be targeted at students who have the potential to progress to higher education 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 higher education or accessing a research intensive university but are currently facing barriers to progression;
- parents/carers and families of targeted participants; and
- teachers and advisers from targeted schools.

Additional criteria of previous or expected academic attainment will be used for some activity; for example, activity that targets students identified as most able but least likely to progress to a research intensive university.

4.2 Activity

Pre-application outreach activity will aim to raise aspirations, achievement, and awareness of higher education amongst disadvantaged groups and provide pre-application and transition information and advice. This outreach activity will include:

- subject master classes, taster days and campus visits;
- Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) in schools and colleges;
- retention and transition activity;
- schools' conferences on campus;
- insight events;
- mentoring and buddy schemes;
- local authority schools support programmes;
- primary schools activity;
- family days;
- outreach support for learning shops;
- outreach and transition activity targeting students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties;
- outreach for young people in care; and
- outreach support for the Colchester Academy.

The University's outreach programme will provide participants with the ability to access and benefit from University academic staff, students, teaching facilities and other University facilities, including the gallery, theatre and museum.

4.3 Summer schools

The University will also run a summer schools programme. All summer schools will complement the outreach provision, allowing students to undertake a progressive programme of activity. The purpose of the summer schools will be to provide participants with a university student experience and equip participants with knowledge, skills and experience that can be applied to their current learning and in their transition to HE level study.

4.4 Realising Opportunities

The University is a member of Realising Opportunities, a national collaborative partnership of 12 research intensive universities working together to promote fair access and social mobility of students from under-represented groups. The Partnership was awarded the Times Higher Education Widening Participation Initiative of the Year 2012, in recognition of their leading work in this area.

The Realising Opportunities programme provides support for students through interventions designed to raise aspirations and enable them to demonstrate their potential for success at a research intensive university. These interventions are offered both at their local participating university, and nationally, so that the student can tailor the programme to meet their own needs and interests. The programme includes a national conference which is a compulsory element for all participating students. Each student is supported through the programme by a student e-mentor. The e-mentor, an undergraduate student from one of the 12 universities, provides ongoing support and encouragement.

Successful completion of RO, which includes a robust academic element, will result in additional consideration given to applications through UCAS from all 12 universities, and the potential for an alternative offer worth up to 40 UCAS points from 10 universities.

The Realising Opportunities Partnership has unanimously agreed that the 12 participating institutions will commit to future funding, continuation of the programme, and the development of a business plan which will ensure the on-going development of the programme to 2016.

4.5 Collaborative outreach

The University is committed to working with other higher education institutions (HEIs), colleges, schools, local authorities, trusts and other organisations within the region.

The University has always maintained strong regional relationships with other HEIs in the region, and is building upon and continuing successful collaboration. This is particularly in the areas of targeting, evaluation, delivery of outreach activity, summer school provision, joint published student information, and maintaining local networks with schools and colleges. We 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 aims to work with 120 schools, colleges and organisations in 2013-14, and will continue to build upon existing relationships with schools and colleges and support local education providers. We will work intensively 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.

The University also works with local authorities in delivering collaborative outreach projects, including Essex County Council, Southend Borough Council, Colchester Borough Council and Tendring District Council. Following the end of Aimhigher, we have focused on maintaining collaborative outreach and networks previously facilitated by the Aimhigher project, and will continue to work closely with a number of local education trusts and organisations.

We are an active member of the Higher Education Liaison Officers' Association (HELOA), with the national office hosted and supported by the University.

5. Retention and student success

5.1 Retention

We recognise that a significant element to widening participation is having the relevant support in place to ensure successful completion and outcomes for students admitted to the University. In response to research evaluation, we have increased staff and resources to focus on the retention of students and achieving a decrease in non continuation rates for the University. This focus will continue to be on the whole student lifecycle, with the resource included in this Access Agreement targeting at-risk groups including mature students, students from low participation neighbourhoods, students from low income households facing financial hardship and students with a disability.

The additional retention support will work with the University's wider retention programme that will coordinate existing arrangements and employ a number of new interventions throughout the 'student journey' including a range of student support arrangements (both face-to-face and online through academic departments and central support services), academic referrals, peer support, transition support, study skills, financial support and the use of residents' support networks, social media and networking sites and Students' Union clubs and societies. Many areas across the University, including Student Support, Learning and Development, Outreach, the Employability and Careers Centre, and the Students' Union, as well as academic departments and centres, will contribute to a strategy and work to ensure more cohesive approaches to retention issues.

The University has established a Skills Centre to bring together and supplement study skills programmes currently being offered by a wide range of University departments and sections. The retention programme will support the Skills Centre to target at-risk groups, identify their training needs and provide drop-in sessions, tailor-made modules, workshops and web resources to improve writing, critical reasoning and academic skills.

One Retention Officer and expenditure targeting under-represented groups is included in this Access Agreement while wider retention activity and our Skills Centre are part of the University's wider commitment to supporting the progression of students and expenditure for this is not included in this Access Agreement.

Activity and enhancements to retention support will be informed by monitoring and evaluation from our University's Planning Office.

5.2 Student support

The University will continue our Access Agreement commitment to fund a wide 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 Team to provide on-going targeted support for students from under-represented groups, particularly students with a disability, experience of being in care and students from low income households, to assist with their progression and retention.

There has been a significant investment by the University in Residents' Support Network provision from 2011 onwards 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. 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 (17.4 per cent), supported through this Access Agreement. Enhanced training for volunteer members of the network is expected to contribute to the employability of these students.

5.3 Employability

The University recognises that, for many students, their background can mean facing additional challenges in accessing graduate employment opportunities. We will continue investment in student employability by developing a programme of targeted interventions for students from under-represented groups. Institutional effort will also be placed on ensuring that students and graduates from low income households and low participation neighbourhoods are given the additional support and preparation needed, to make sure they can access the employment opportunities that are appropriate for graduates from research intensive universities.

The importance of student employability will be integrated into the whole period of a student's time with Essex, from engagement with outreach activity through to supporting graduates entering the labour market. Student responsibility to connect with employability opportunities will be further emphasised, in order to raise employment aspirations and provide opportunity at the earliest stage to engage with the support available.

The University will particularly focus on providing the following schemes and opportunities:

5.3.1 Frontrunners work placement scheme

This novel and effective scheme is designed to encourage students to develop their employability skills, as well as earn additional income to fund their studies through working on campus in a variety of jobs linked to their own Personal Development Plans. Participating students develop high-level workplace skills which will enhance their eventual employability. Additionally, working on campus is thought to be less disruptive to their studies and will help to retain students who might otherwise not complete their course of studies because of financial pressures. A variety of placements are available based in academic departments, in Professional Services and in the Students' Union. The University will use additional fee income to fund a proportion of Frontrunners placements relative to the total number of students eligible for full state support (17.4 per cent) and include information about the opportunities of Frontrunners in outreach and the application process, to help with concern regarding part-time employment and graduate employment opportunities.

5.3.2 Internships

As part of our University strategy to increase the number of students from under-represented groups gaining graduate level employment, work experience opportunities in the form of internships will be available for current students and recent graduates. Although internship opportunities will be open to all students at the University, additional resource will focus on targeting students from low participation neighbourhoods, and will assist students who are less likely to have other forms of financial support, by providing work experience opportunities that will enhance their job prospects when seeking to gain future graduate level employment. Through internships, students from under-represented groups will have the opportunity to gain practical knowledge of the world of work, to engage, learn from and build relationships and networks with employers in highly competitive professions.

5.3.3 Senior Student Ambassador scheme

As part of delivering our University outreach programme, we have developed a Senior Student Ambassador scheme. Senior Student Ambassadors are often students from under-represented groups, who undertake a peer support role for the students targeted through the outreach activity. Training for Senior Student Ambassadors will be augmented, both enhancing the support for outreach groups and inculcating valuable transferable skills. The dual benefit of providing a targeted training programme for Senior Student Ambassadors will impact both on the outreach activity delivered and the employability of the students who are working with these groups.

By delivering this enhanced employability programme as part of the Access Agreement, the University aims to build on our strengths in access through targeted support, helping students to overcome ongoing barriers and to obtain graduate level employment.

6. Financial support for students

6.1 National Scholarship Programme (NSP)

Participation in the NSP will target students identified as having the greatest financial need, and will focus on enabling these students to access the University and benefit from the experience it provides. For 2013-14 entrants, the University will provide 370 students a £3,000 accommodation subsidy for their first year in University accommodation at our Colchester Campus, and 20 students a £3,000 accommodation subsidy for their first, second and third year in University accommodation at our Southend Campus. Students will be required to meet the NSP eligibility criteria, to have a household income of up to £25,000 and to meet UCAS, NSP and University accommodation deadlines. The accommodation subsidy will support our aim to promote geographical mobility for students from under-represented groups and provide local students, regardless of background, with access to the complete student experience.

6.2 Financial support

In 2013-14, the University will provide financial support packages for students from low income households, developed in consultation with the Students' Union, to ensure maximum impact and benefit for students from low income households. The support is targeted at ensuring students can access and successfully complete their studies, and are not prevented from doing so due to financial concern or hardship.

6.2.1 Bursary scheme

UK (Home fee) students with a household income of up to £25,000, who meet the conditions of their offer and make the University their firm choice by the relevant UCAS deadline, will be eligible for a contribution from the University of £1,500 per year for every year of their undergraduate study at Essex. Students taking a year abroad or industrial placement will not be eligible for a bursary during that year, as no tuition fee will be charged and other bursary support is available. Students will be given the option to use this support in the most appropriate way to suit their individual circumstances.

6.2.2 Scholarships

The University will also 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. This will include students who achieve: AAB grades at A-level; three Distinctions in the BTEC National Diploma; 35 points or more in the International Baccalaureate Diploma; 18 level three credits at Distinction and 27 level three credits at Merit in the Access to HE Diploma. Students will also be expected to achieve a minimum pass rate during their studies, in order to continue receiving the award. As a significant number of students admitted to Essex are from low income households, and the scholarships will be available for students from a range of educational routes, 30 per cent of students that are expected to receive the Academic Excellence Scholarship, a proportion of the number of students from low income households across our UK student community, are included in the University Access Agreement.

6.2.3 Other targeted bursary schemes

6.2.3.1 Care Leavers' Bursaries

A number of targeted bursaries, of up to £1,000, will be available for new and continuing undergraduate students who were in local authority care prior to starting their university course. Students leaving care may well have overcome significant barriers to gain a place at university, and are expected to have less practical and financial family support to fall back on and are more likely to need to pay for accommodation all year round.

6.2.3.2 Refugee Bursaries

Targeted bursaries, of up to £1,000, will be available for undergraduate students with refugee status, or who are dependants of refugees. These students may have experienced a disruption in their studies, have exceptional financial difficulties and/or have less family support in the UK.

6.2.3.3 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 no more than £2,500, in addition to the fee-free year for students studying abroad or undertaking industrial placements.

6.2.3.4 Inspiring Internship Bursary

The University will be providing students with the opportunity to apply for a bursary, of no more than £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, it is envisaged that 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 (17.4 per cent) is therefore included as expenditure in this Access Agreement.

6.2.3.5 Helena Kennedy Foundation

In 2013-14, we will support one bursary through the Helena Kennedy Foundation, supporting disadvantaged students who have overcome significant barriers in order to continue their education to university level.

The University will put in place staff support to manage the targeted support schemes, maximise IAG and availability of the schemes and target students in greatest need.

Through our University's fundraising strategy, efforts are also being made to increase financial support available for students from low income households through philanthropic and charitable donations.

6.2.4 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.

6.3 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 also had in place a student finance communications strategy to develop 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.

7. Targets, milestones and evaluation

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 are also developing internal mechanisms to develop systems to track students from outreach/enquiry stage through to graduate employability, allowing greater monitoring, tracking and targeting of under-represented groups. The Student Tracking for Access, Retention and Success (STARS) project will provide more immediate data that will be used to evaluate and inform outreach, retention and employability activity and financial support targeted at students from under-represented groups, and as covered under the University's Access Agreement.

The University has recently added Polar 2 postcode data to management information systems to enable analysis of students from low participation postcodes for both intake and applications. For the purposes of the institutional targets set, low participation neighbourhoods include quintile 1 only, although participation from quintiles 1 and 2 will be monitored.

7.1 Outreach targets

The University Outreach Evaluation Strategy has been in place from September 2011 and will continue to be implemented. The evaluation of the outreach activity provides more information on the impact and outcomes of pre-application outreach, and informs the development of future activity. This evaluation replaces some local Aimhigher evaluation that had helped inform local schools and colleges on the importance of outreach and effectiveness of targeting. Outreach activity is also a strand within our University's STARS project.

7.1.1 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

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

7.1.2 Outcome targets

- Applications to the University from target groups
- Intake to the University from target groups
- Change in perception of higher education for participants, schools and colleges
- Impact on achievement for participants, schools and colleges
- Progression rates for participating schools and colleges.

We are communicating with other local HEIs regarding collaboration on evaluation activity, where appropriate.

The Realising Opportunities Scheme is evaluated at a national project level.

7.2 Applications

Using Polar 2 data, applications from students from low participation neighbourhoods will be monitored at key points during the 2013 admissions cycle. The University already attracts a high proportion of applicants from under-represented groups, both directly and through its partners. Given the considerable progress the University has already made, investment through the Access Agreement will continue to be to maintain the substantial position already achieved.

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 neighbourhoods³.

³ Internal University management information

7.3 Intake

The University has already made significant progress in fair access. Between 2004-05 and 2010-11, 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 34.1 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, and the percentage of young full-time first degree entrants from state schools from 92.5 per cent to 95 per cent⁴. Taking into account our existing strength in access, investment in additional fee income and the Widening Participation Strategic Assessment, we will strive to maintain our existing position of strength on the intake of students from under-represented groups.

Current position and targets

Indicator	HESA benchmark 10-11	Baseline figures Essex including partners 09-10 actual	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 (including partners)	Essex five year target 2016-17 (excluding partners)
Young full-time first degree from state schools	92.2%	96.5%	95.8%	95.0%	93.7%	96.5%	95.8%
Young full-time first degree from NS-SEC 4,5,6 & 7 ⁵	33.3%	32.6%	31.1%	34.1%	31.9%	32.6%	31.1%
All UG entrants from low-participation neighbourhoods ⁶	12.3%	16.7%	14.6%	16.9%	15.1%	16.7%	14.6%

7.4 Retention/progression

Positive progress has already been made in increasing continuation rates for the University and our partners.

Current position inclusive of partners

Percentage of young full-time first degree students that continue, qualify or transfer by academic year of entry

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	All years mean
Entrants from low-participation neighbourhoods	93.3%	90.1%	90%	90.2%	90.2%	90.8%
Low-participation – benchmark	91.3%	89.8%	90.2%	91.7%	89.1%	90.4%
Entrants from other neighbourhoods	94.3%	93.5%	92.7%	92.8%	93.9%	93.4%
Other neighbourhoods – benchmark	93.5%	93%	93%	93.5%	92.2%	93% ⁷

Percentage of mature full-time first degree students that continue, qualify or transfer by academic year of entry

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	All years mean
Entrants with no previous HE qualification	84.2%	83%	85.5%	85.8%	84.9%	84.7%
No previous HE qualification – benchmark	85.3%	85.7%	85.2%	87.1%	86.2%	85.9% ⁸

⁴ Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), 2010-11 Performance Indicators, Table T1a

⁵ Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), 2010-11 Performance Indicators, Table T1a

⁶ Internal University management information, based on HESA return data

⁷ Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), 2010-11 Performance Indicator, Table 3b Data

⁸ Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), 2010-11 Performance Indicator, Table 3c Data

Target

Investment in retention activity is being established in order to put in place support and mechanisms that will increase continuation rates even further.

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

Indicator	Baseline figures Essex including partners 09-10 actual ⁹	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%	90.8%	92.0%	Increase of 2 to 4 percentage points
Mature full-time first degree	81.1%	82.7%	84.4%	82.4%	Increase of 2 to 4 percentage points

An increase in the institutional target will impact accordingly on the HESA PIs. The University will also work with partner institutions on increasing continuation rates.

7.5 Employability

The University will use Polar 2 data and destination information to analyse the impact of additional investment on employability for students.

The investment made in employability will be to achieve an overall increase in the employability opportunities for students from under-represented groups.

Target

Employability targets and success will be 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 2 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% ¹⁰	

⁹ Internal University management information, based on HESA return data

¹⁰ The Times Graduate Employment Survey and Polar 2 postcode data

8. Monitoring

The University's Planning Office will undertake regular monitoring of applications, intake, retention and employability to monitor impact, assess progress against targets, and inform activity. In addition, the monitoring and analysis of intake, progression and outcomes for students from under-represented groups is both the identified responsibility and integrated remit within a number of University committees and the University's management and governance.

Fulfilment of the University Access Agreement, and progress against targets, will be monitored by the University Education Outreach and Widening Participation Strategy Committee (EOWPSC) and reported to the University Steering Group. The EOWPSC will receive an annual monitoring report of progress against targets. The STARS Steering Group also reports to the EOWPSC.

The intake, progression, and outcomes for students from under-represented groups is being aligned where appropriate, with reporting to our University's Equality and Diversity Committee.

The University Steering Group will approve the annual Access Agreement and Widening Participation Strategic Assessment monitoring report to OFFA and HEFCE.

Targets for access, retention and employability are built into the University's Key Performance Indicators, which are monitored and reported on to University Council and the University Steering Group.

University faculties and departments review progression rates as part of the Annual Monitoring process. Work will be undertaken to further enhance the monitoring at department and faculty level for progression rates for mature learners, students from low-participation neighbourhoods and students with a declared disability.

The Admissions Sub-Committee, which reports to our University's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, is responsible for monitoring effectiveness of our Undergraduate Admissions Policy, including review of management information about applicants' qualifications and other relevant attributes in relation to confirmation, enrolment, progression and final outcome.

The University of Essex Students' Union has membership on University Council and the Education Outreach and Widening Participation Strategy Committee.

9. Consultation with students

The University's Access Agreement has been informed by consultation with the University of Essex Students' Union and research carried out with students and advisers in local schools and colleges, as well as careful evaluation of a range of existing interventions and current best practice. We have engaged the University of Essex Students' Union in developing the 2012-13 and 2013-14 Access Agreement and have taken into account input which has had a particular impact on the financial support packages provided and targeted employability activity. Further consultation will take place with students admitted in October 2012, in order to further assess and evaluate the commitments put in place.

The University has also consulted with the Students' Union and other collaborative partners representing pre-university students, to deliver the most effective outreach activity. We work closely with the Students Union and collaborative partners on a number of the proposed interventions.

10. 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.

11. Franchise partnerships

11.1 Colchester Institute

Colchester Institute Access Agreement, see Appendix A.

11.2 South Essex College of Further and Higher Education

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

11.3 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.

11.4 Edge Hotel School delivered by Kaplan Open Learning

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

11.5 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 2012-13 or 2013-14. For this reason University of Essex Online, delivered by Kaplan Open Learning, is not covered in this Access Agreement.

Appendix A

2013-14 Access Agreement: Colchester Institute

2013-14 tuition fee:

- Home and EU students
- Full-time University of Essex degree courses in arts and music: £8,000
- Other full-time University of Essex degree courses: £7,650
- Edexcel HNC/D: £6,000
- For students entering in 2013, the tuition fee is subject to real term increases in subsequent years.

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 (for example: HE Ambassadors, 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 that the National Scholarship Programme should be used to support this aim. The College has been awarded 31 funded scholarships through its partnership with the University of Essex, and will fund a further 31 scholarships. It is intended that 31 scholarships will be awarded to promote aspiration and attainment as learners look to progress within the College and that 31 are awarded to students progressing from local sixth forms, thus raising the profile of the HE in FE pathway and the understanding of "Higher Education" in its various forms. Awards will comprise a one-year benefit comprising of a fee discount of £1,500, a £1,000 cash bursary plus a £500 travel voucher.

Discounts:

Colchester Institute will provide a discount of £1,650 for students enrolling on the Year 0 or Foundation Year Art and Design programmes, and is looking to develop further opportunities for Year 0 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 provides 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:

- The provision of an HE Centre, at a development cost of over £1.4 million, to support facilitation of an HE Student Community and provide bespoke HE facilities. These will 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 is seen of particular value. This project has been established as a direct response to this need and following discussion with student representatives.
- Provision of mobile technologies (Apple iPads) 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 have 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 a Pebblepad Learning System, for each student, in order to support pre-registration study skills 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 the College's '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

2013-14 Access Agreement: South Essex College of Further and Higher Education

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 2013-14. South Essex College's commitment to activity related to income derived from directly funded numbers in 2013-14 is outlined in a separate Access Agreement published on the OFFA website.

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 increase the awareness and 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, particularly lower-socio economic groups.

2. Tuition fee

For Home and European Union students entering in 2013 onto the first year, or progressing to the second 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 students who will be paying the fee of £7,000 is 495 through indirect funding. This fee may be subject to annual increases in line with the amount set by the Government.

Continuing students, and transferring students to years three of a programme of continuous study, will be subject to the South Essex College annex of the University of Essex Access Agreement for 2011 entry. The estimated number of students who will be subject to this Agreement is 320.

3. Expenditure

In 2013-14, the College will allocate 24.8% 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 £99,000 from income derived from indirectly funded numbers in 2013-14 to fund activities that will support raising aspirations and progression to HE and improve retention.

3.1 Activities to raise aspirations and promote progression to HE

The activities will build on those previously outlined in the 2012-13 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
- Mobile HE road show to visit schools and colleges across the region
- Subject-based research conferences for local schools and colleges

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 POLAR2 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.
- Development of a New 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 underrepresented 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 2013-14, the College will contribute £66,000 to the National Scholarship Programme, match funded by the government NSP contribution. Subject to final confirmation, the College will provide 44 first year UK students with a fee waiver of £3,000. The students will be 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.

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 £37,000 in 2013-14 for these bursaries of which an estimated £24,874 will be allocated to applicants from under represented groups identified using POLAR2 data on entry.

Continuing students

Continuing students, who started their course prior to 2012, will follow the bursary scheme that was offered at the point of entry.

Student consultation

The College's HE Senior Student Representative and the HE Student Council have supported the development of this Access Agreement.

Appendix C

2013-14 Access Agreement: Edge Hotel School delivered by Kaplan Open Learning

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:

- a) 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 and working with organisations such as Springboard and The Savoy Educational Trust; and
- b) we also actively work with colleges to offer a progression route to students that have come through the NVQ and BTEC routes, as 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.

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

- a) 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; and
- b) students will be learning by doing, working with real hotel guests and will be highly regarded in the hospitality sector, so ultimately secure graduate jobs with excellent employers and excellent career prospects.

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, 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.