

University of Essex
Access Agreement
2015-16

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 2015-16 Access Agreement sets out how we will invest our fee income to provide transformational opportunity to our students across the student lifecycle. We have invested significant time and resource in developing our Access Agreement to ensure our investment is focused on delivering impact and providing students with the ability to achieve successful outcomes. In developing our Access Agreement we have worked in partnership with our Students' Union to develop and influence our plans.

1.2 Principles

Our Access Agreement is based on the following principles:

- recruiting students nationally with the merit and potential to 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 to educate our students increase their prospects of securing a good degree;
- achieving successful outcomes and increasing the proportion of students achieving positive employability through providing specific support and mechanisms to help graduates from under-represented groups be on a level playing field with other UK graduates achieving graduate-level employment; and
- demonstrating the value of the type of education we offer as a research-intensive, research-led University by facilitating opportunities and access for researchers in schools, and engagement with young people and with families and education professionals.

1.3 Partnerships

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

Details of the Access Agreement commitment for Colchester Institute (continuing students only), South Essex College of Further and Higher Education (continuing students only), and the Edge Hotel School are included within this Access Agreement, Appendices A, B and C. University of Essex Online, delivered by Kaplan Open Learning, is not included in this Access Agreement due to the level of fee charged.

Due to changes in partnership arrangements from 2015-16, there will be an impact on our previously submitted predicted expenditure and targets where these have been inclusive of franchised partners. The targets and expenditure levels set for the University only, excluding partners, will remain as set in previous Access Agreements.

2 Tuition fee

The University's tuition fees for new and continuing students are all subject to any real-terms permitted increases in subsequent years. The tuition fee for students entering in 2016 onwards will be under review and confirmed in our 2016-17 Access Agreement.

2.1 Full-time

For undergraduate Home and EU students admitted in 2015-16, and continuing students that were admitted in 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15, 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 5804 in 2015-16, subject to a number of varying factors.

2.2 Part-time

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

2.3 Placement years

In order to give all students, regardless of background, access to the opportunities studying abroad provides, students admitted in 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015, 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 522 students in 2015-16, rising to 655 students in 2017-18.

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 2015-16, the University will spend 18.4 per cent of additional fee income, as defined by OFFA.

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

Access: 2 per cent

Retention, Progression and Student Success: 4 per cent

Financial Support: 12.4 per cent

The University and our franchised partnerships included under this agreement, expect to spend 18.7 per cent in Access Agreement expenditure in 2015-16.

4 Outreach

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

4.1 Targeting

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

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:

- 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;
- implementation of a progression project that works with cohorts of students across their school/college years;
- increasing our work with teachers; and
- pre-arrival mentoring.

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

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

4.3 Long-term outreach

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

4.3.1 University Challenge

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

4.3.2 Progression project

The University has developed a progression project that 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 data and academic ability, working with the schools involved to ensure effective targeting 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 open to a wider group of participants within the school/college.

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

4.3.3 Children's University

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

4.3.4 Long-term school/college links

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

4.4 Partnership working – 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.

4.5 Partnership working – Collaboration

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

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

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

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 in light of additional information being available from UCAS and application trends.

6 Retention and student success

6.1 Retention, progression and student success

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

During 2011-12 we undertook a major review to analyse the retention and progression of our students, including the identification of at risk groups and the mechanisms we can put in place to better support progression. Since 2012-13 we have continued to undertake further analysis. As a result of our findings, we are increasing investment to support the following activity:

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

6.2 Student support

The University will continue our Access Agreement commitment to fund a range of campus-based student support services which are designed to help students to succeed in their studies, to overcome any difficulties they may face and to make the most of their time at the University. We will 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 Residents' Support Network (RSN) provision to support the transition of students into higher education, to foster an inclusive community within residences, and to assist in skills development essential for independent living and learning. This initiative will continue to engage students from a wide range of ethnic and social backgrounds with a proportion of the cost of our RSN, the proportion of undergraduate students eligible for state support across all of our undergraduate and postgraduate student community, supported through this Access Agreement. By helping students to settle into living and learning at the University, the RSN supports 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.

6.3 Learning and Development

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 2015 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;
- 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 for undergraduate students; and
- targeted activity through our University Skills Centre.

Where support is available to all students, we will include 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 2015-16 Access Agreement we will continue to invest in:

- 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 Employability Coordinators
- Languages for All scheme

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

7 Financial support for students

In 2015-16, 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.

Due to the National Scholarship Programme (NSP) no longer being available from 2015-16 and the uncertainty and changes to the funding environment at the time of writing, we have undertaken a review of our financial support packages. Our review has 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 controlling for age, gender, disability, ethnicity, postcode (POLAR 3), stage number, course campus, and the type of bursary scheme according to which awards were granted. 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 2015 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 the 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 Scholarships

The University will fund continuing students on scholarship schemes that have been included in previous Access Agreements.

7.3 Other targeted bursary schemes

7.3.1 Care Leavers' Bursaries/Refugee Bursaries

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

7.3.2 Diagnostic Assessment Bursaries

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

7.3.3 International 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, in addition to there being no fee charged for the year students study abroad or undertake an industrial placement.

7.3.4 Helena Kennedy Foundation

In 2015-16, we will support one bursary through the Helena Kennedy Foundation, supporting disadvantaged students who have overcome significant barriers in order to continue their education and progress to the University of Essex.

7.3.5 Continuing students

Continuing students, who started their courses prior to 2015-16, will follow the bursary and scholarship scheme originally offered.

7.4 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. From 2014 onwards the University will also make use of the academic expertise within our institution for the evaluation of our Access Agreement investment. In particular, we will work with the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), our world-class team of survey and socio-economic research experts.

Our evaluation measures include:

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

8.1 STARS

Our STARS project 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 2015-16 we will continue to use the STARS data to inform our developments for supporting students from under-represented groups across the student lifecycle and to measure the impact of our investment for particular target groups.

8.2 Outreach Evaluation Strategy

In order to measure the impact and outcome of the resources invested in our outreach activity, we have developed an overarching Outreach Evaluation Strategy which will continue to be in place for 2015-16. 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.

8.3 Retention and student success analysis

Since January 2012 we have undertaken analysis to understand the student experience and the associated patterns of student retention, progression and attainment at the University of Essex. Multivariate logistic regression has been conducted on students enrolled on Bachelor degree courses from 2006-07. To date, analyses have included: gender, age, disability, ethnicity, entry qualifications, entry route (Clearing or not), 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 section 6.1 and 7.1.

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

9 Targets

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

For the purposes of the institutional targets set, low participation neighbourhoods include quintile one only, although participation from quintiles one and two is monitored. For our 2015-16 Access Agreement we have moved from using POLAR 2 to POLAR 3 data for our baseline, target and monitoring data.

Due to changes in the arrangements of our partnerships, targets that were inclusive of our partners are no longer relevant and will no longer be measurable from 2015-16. Where we have previously held duplicate targets, one inclusive of partners and one for the University only, we have removed the inclusive of partners target.

9.1 Outreach

Our Outreach Evaluation Strategy has been in place from September 2011 and continues to be implemented. The evaluation of our outreach activity provides information on the impact and outcomes of pre-application and pre-arrival outreach, and informs the development of future activity.

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

Activity

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

9.2 Applications

Using POLAR 3 data, applications from students from low participation neighbourhoods are monitored at key points during the admissions cycle. The University already attracts a high proportion of applicants from under-represented groups. Our applications target is set based on the considerable progress the University has already made.

Target

The University's five year target, from 2012-13, is to maintain the baseline position with 11.7% of all applications (UK) from students from low participation neighbourhoods, and 11.3% of offers made to students from low participation neighbourhoods¹.

9.3 Intake

The University has already made significant progress in fair access. Between 2004-05 and 2012-13, we increased our intake of young full-time first degree entrants from social classes 4, 5, 6 and 7 from 30.1% to 33.3% and the percentage of young full-time first degree entrants from state schools from 92.5% to 95.7%².

Our intake targets have been set taking into account our existing access levels to the University.

Current position and targets

Indicator	Baseline figures Essex excluding partners 09-10/11-12 actual	Current position Essex excluding partners 12-13 actual	Essex five year target 2016-17 (excluding partners)
Young full-time first degree from state schools	95.8% (09-10)	94.9%	95.8%
Young full-time first degree from NS-SEC 4, 5, 6 and 7 ³	31.1% (09-10)	30.7%	31.1%
All UG entrants from low-participation neighbourhoods ⁴	11.9% (11-12)	12.2%	11.9%

9.4 Retention/progression

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

Target

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

Indicator	Baseline figures Essex excluding partners 09-10 actual	Current position Essex excluding partners 12-13 actual	Essex five year target 2016-17 (excluding partners)
Young full-time first degree entrants	90.9%	90.0%	Increase of 2 to 4 percentage points above the baseline figure
Mature full-time first degree entrants	82.7%	83.9%	Increase of 2 to 4 percentage points above the baseline figure

9.5 Employability

The University uses POLAR 3 data and destination information to analyse the employability outcomes of our students. Our investment within the Access Agreement is to achieve an overall increase in the employability opportunities for students from under-represented groups. Our most recent analysis has identified year-on-year variance in the outcomes for our students from the lowest participation

¹ Internal University management information using POLAR 3 data

² Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), 2012-13 Performance Indicators, Table T1a

³ Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), 2012-13 Performance Indicators, Table T1a

⁴ Internal University management information, based on HESA return data

neighbourhoods. Through our Access Agreement, we have therefore increased our investment to support achieving our employability targets.

Target

Our employability targets and success is being measured using *The Times Good University Guide* definition, based on the standard occupation classification and the survey's positive and negative destination definition for graduate-level further study or graduate-level employment.

Positive destination: graduate-level further study and/or graduate-level employment

Negative destination: non-graduate-level further study and/or non-graduate-level employment

The destination information has been cross-referenced with POLAR 3 data to identify students from areas of low participation.

There has been a significant change in the methodology of the DLHE survey between the 2011 and 2012 surveys. These must now be considered as separate datasets and should not be compared for performance trends across the 2011/2012 boundary. For this reason we have removed the five year average shown in previous Access Agreement submissions.

Our original five year target of 70-75% was set using POLAR 2 baseline data. Moving to POLAR 3 data has resulted in a decrease effect and therefore all baseline data and targets have been adjusted accordingly. The ambition of the target from baseline position remains the same.

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Essex five year target 2016-17 (excluding partners)
% students from low participation neighbourhoods	10.0%	11.8%	10.4%	10.9%	11.5%	Positive 61.5%-66.5%
Negative	39.4%	46.6%	46.2%	47.5%	50.0%	
Positive	60.6%	53.4%	53.8%	52.5%	50.0%	
% students from other neighbourhoods	90.0%	88.2%	89.6%	89.1%	88.5%	
Negative	39.2%	40.0%	45.4%	40.9%	47.4%	
Positive	60.8%	60.0%	54.6%	59.1%	52.6%	
All students						
Negative	39.3%	40.8%	45.5%	41.6%	47.7%	
Positive	60.7%	59.2%	54.5%	58.4%	52.3% ⁵	

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 management, annual planning, monitoring and evaluation of our 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.

⁵ *The Times Graduate Employment Survey* and POLAR 3 data

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 2015-16 Access Agreement has been developed by a small working group that has included representation from the University of Essex Students' Union, with membership and input from the Vice-President Education. Our extensive review of our 2014-15 Access Agreement was in partnership with our Students' Union. 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.

12 Statement on Equality and Diversity

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

The University has undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment of our Access Agreement to ensure we meet our responsibilities and commitment to equality of opportunity for all. Through the University's Education Committee work has been undertaken to closer align statistical data used for monitoring students from under-represented groups and protected characteristics. The University's current Education Action Plan 2013-14, includes a target to "*mainstream and integrate consideration of Equality and Diversity through policies and processes that support the University mission to deliver excellence in education through appropriate pedagogical practice*".

13 Franchise partnerships

13.1 Colchester Institute

Colchester Institute Access Agreement, see Appendix A.

13.2 South Essex College of Further and Higher Education

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

13.3 Edge Hotel School delivered by Edge Hotel School Ltd

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

13.4 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 2015-16. For this reason University of Essex Online, delivered by Kaplan Open Learning, is not covered in this Access Agreement.

Appendix A

2015-16 Access Agreement: Colchester Institute

2015-16 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 Scholarship Programme (CISP).

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 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 very daunting for those from a widening participation background.

Appendix B

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

Context

This Access Agreement outlines South Essex College's commitment to activity related to income derived from continuing indirectly funded numbers through the University of Essex's Access Agreement for 2015/16. South Essex College's commitment to activity related to income derived from Directly funded numbers in 2015/16, including 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 15.6% of the student population registered and receiving support, against a national HE participation level of 7%⁶. The College recruits students with little or no family experience of HE; for example in 2009-10 28.3%⁷ of full time first degree entrants were from low participation neighbourhoods, 49.5% were from NS-SEC 4,5,6 and 7 and 100% from state schools. BME participants make up 15.5% of the total College HE student population which is above national population averages and well above regional population averages⁸ but below national HE participation averages (21.5%⁹). The HE student population of the College is diverse in age range and significantly different to the national HE average. 18 year olds account for just 19% (24%¹⁰ lower than national average) with 30+ students forming 30% of our learner population (16%¹¹ higher than national average). Given the decline nationally in mature adults entering HE¹² the College is working effectively to counter this trend. The percentage of 18 year old learners in the student population is however low and continues to be a priority supported by measures in this Access Agreement.

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

1. Aims of the College Access Agreement

The College Access Agreement aims to:

- Maintain the College's strengths in access for students from groups under-represented in higher education.
- Raise aspirations among potential applicants from under-represented groups.
- Improve retention of students on higher education programmes from under-represented groups.
- Use a learner journey centred approach through outreach initiatives to raise awareness and improve attitudes towards higher education of students, enabling them to make informed decisions about their future.
- 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. For Home and European Union Full Time students that entered in 2014 onto the first year, or progressing to the second or third year of undergraduate

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http://www.papworth.org.uk/downloads/factsandfigures_disabilityintheuk_july2011_110721132605.pdf, 2009/10 HE entrants

⁷ Review of HESA data looking at postcodes of enrols - POLAR 2

⁸ http://www.essexpartnershipportal.org/pages/uploads/JSNA/Demography_refresh_chapter_-_update_v1.3.pdf

⁹ <http://www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/2705/278/#age>

¹⁰ <http://www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/1897/239/> HESA 11-12

¹¹ HESA 11-12

¹² <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+.

programmes delivered by the College and awarded by the University of Essex, the College charged a tuition fee of £7000. Part time students on two year PGCE or Cert Ed programmes paid fees of £1975 per year. All other part time students paid fees on the basis of £875 per module with all programmes running below the Basic Fee level (£4500) with the exception of three year foundation degrees, for which the fees will be £4666 per year. These fees may be subject to annual increases in line with the amount set by the Government.

3. Expenditure

In 2015-16, the College will allocate 27% of its additional fee income, as defined by OFFA, from income derived from continuing indirectly funded numbers on additional activities related to raising aspirations and progression to higher education by under-represented groups, improving retention and providing bursaries.

The College expects to allocate £108,000 from income derived from progressing indirectly funded numbers in 2015-16 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 2014/15 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 and success of HE students

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

Typical activities will include:

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

3.3 Financial support for students

College Progression Bursaries

Any student on a further education programme at the College who registered for a degree programme at the College within one year of completion of the FE programme will have received a non means tested bursary of £300 for each year of study (for first attempts only).

Continuing Students

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

Student Consultation

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

Appendix C

2014-15 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 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, meetings with industry representatives, involvement in industry and working with organisations such as The Savoy Educational Trust.
- b) 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.

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.

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;
- b) 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.
- c) A programme of guest lectures and masterclasses 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.

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