

University of Essex
2019-20 Access and Participation Plan

Ambition and strategy

Offering each student, irrespective of background, a transformational education is fundamental to the University of Essex. We believe that our track record is one of exemplary success both in offering students access to a challenging, research-led education, irrespective of their backgrounds, and in supporting all students to fulfil their potential. Our ambition is to build further on our current practice, focusing our efforts in those areas which can have the greatest impact.

Our University's founding vision in 1965 was to be "freer, more daring, more experimental"¹, a principle to which we still hold true. Our bold agenda, set out in our strategic plan², focuses on a very clear mission: to contribute to society through excellence in education and excellence in research.

Through this, Essex is one of a small number of universities which offers its students a gold-standard education, within a research-intensive environment. Our students come to us from a wide variety of backgrounds. We aim to add value through all of their experiences by offering them a life-changing education. Some of our work here is described in this Access and Participation Plan. That is not the end of the story, however; providing access to opportunities that may transform lives is fundamental to the Essex vision.

The pursuit of our mission and ambitions is underpinned by our University's core values, shared across our community and evidenced in our activities and behaviours. These values are excellence, academic freedom, integrity, partnership, accountability, community, innovation, global outlook and inclusivity. Sustaining an inclusive and diverse community that is open to all who have the potential to benefit from membership of it, which ensures equality of opportunity for all our members with equal respect and dignity at all times, is essential for the success of our university³. This means that students are at the centre of our thinking and student benefit is at the heart of everything we do. We recruit students with the merit and potential to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the University, irrespective of their background (e.g. socio-economic background or ability to pay) and we seek to develop their skills and attributes that will allow them, as active citizens, to make significant positive contributions to the development of society. Our Access and Participation Plan is aligned with this vision and mindset.

We have adopted a whole lifecycle approach to access and participation, starting with primary school outreach, through to progression into employment and further study. To support this, we have existing relationships with a number of schools and colleges, local education providers, education trusts and networks. We have always maintained very strong relationships with other higher education institutions in the region. In particular, we seek to ensure school, college and university resources are targeted appropriately and are not duplicated. We also collaborate with other universities on programmes as part of our aim to encourage geographical mobility of students from under-represented groups, as well as networking with other universities to share good practice.

In terms of access, we identify the schools and colleges that we believe will benefit most from outreach activity delivered by us using various indicators including school attainment, free school meals data, POLAR3 data and pupil premium data. We work to ensure an appropriate representation of students from under-represented groups in activities, and provide the facility for students and schools to benefit from peer support. The University is not currently planning to sponsor one individual school; however, since September 2015 we have supported the development of the VI6 Project. This enables five local sixth forms to teach A Level subjects on campus to over 300 students aged 16-19. This project enables students to access subjects that their schools would not normally be able to offer due to low take-up, staffing shortages or a reduction in education funding. We add value to the students' experience whilst on campus by providing attainment and aspiration centred activity once per month. This includes motivational speakers, subject tasters and inviting students to relevant

¹ *Lecture 1: A university in the making; tradition and innovation*, 1963. Reith Lectures 1963: a university in the making. [Radio broadcast]. BBC, The Home Service, 9 November 1963 [Transcript accessible at: http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/rmhttp/radio4/transcripts/1963_reith1.pdf]

² University of Essex Strategic Plan 2013-19, <https://www.essex.ac.uk/about/strategy>

³ University of Essex Equality and Diversity Framework and Sub-strategy 2015-18, <https://www.essex.ac.uk/equality/strategy.aspx>

undergraduate lectures. We feel that the collaborative approach to VI6 and the sustained commitment to the five schools involved deliver the outcomes that sponsoring a school would achieve.

Through conversations with senior leadership within the schools we have ascertained that some of the sixth forms involved were at threat of closure; VI6 has enabled them to stay open, become more financially viable, and offer students from disadvantaged areas an increased range of subjects (some of the colleges did not previously offer all of the available courses e.g. Further Maths). For some of these students, the nearest FE provider is 40 minutes away. With the reduction of funding available for students for travel, the lack of local education would be a barrier to accessing the qualifications needed for Higher Education. Our engagement with schools enables us to sustain a wide range of activities for the benefit of the students, the extent of which would simply not be possible by sponsoring a single school.

We also work with local authorities to deliver collaborative outreach projects, including Essex County Council, Southend Borough Council, Colchester Borough Council and Tendring District Council. For example in the last two years the Outreach Team has worked alongside Essex County Council to provide links with local employers and to highlight career opportunities as part our flagship STEM and Digital Arts events.

Our partnership working with our Students' Union also supports outreach and access, for example, through volunteering schemes and engagement with local schools. This relationship works particularly well with students volunteering regularly on our arts education activity. This partnership provides opportunities for local school staff and pupils, and for our University students who participate in these activities.

We are the lead institution for Make Happen, the Essex National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) consortia. Whilst funding is yet to be confirmed for 2019-10, it is anticipated that this will be continued. The majority of the Make Happen team are based at the University with 6 Outreach Officers remotely based at other Make Happen partner institutions. There are approximately 20,000 NCOP students living in the 55 identified wards in Essex; from this 86 schools/colleges in Essex have been identified from which learners attend. Make Happen engages with all these schools/ colleges to ensure the maximum number of NCOP learners in all wards are reached. The majority of Make Happen activity is sustained, allowing for students to take part in multiple interventions over a number of years, to ensure maximum impact. To help achieve the NCOP national targets Make Happen has a local evaluation plan that aims to work with 25% of all NCOP learners in Essex, as well as specifically 25% of all NCOP learners in Canvey Island, increasing the application rate to HE from target wards, increasing the awareness of Higher and Degree level Apprenticeships, and increasing the number of white males entering HE by 2%.

The Make Happen team and the Outreach Team at the University work collaboratively to ensure that no work is duplicated and that schools and colleges have access to all the opportunities available to them. The NCOP funding allows for existing University of Essex activity to be enhanced as well as allowing the implementation of new and innovative ideas that support the Make Happen aims.

The aim of our Education Strategy is to offer our students a transformational educational experience, encompassing both the academic and the extra-curricular, which provides them with the opportunity to fulfil their potential as individuals, irrespective of their background, by developing themselves within our living and learning community as independent learners equipped to take responsibility for their personal and professional development throughout their lives⁴. Rather than targeting specific student groups, therefore, an inclusive approach has been adopted wherever possible to ensure that every student is able to achieve their potential at our University. To support our ambitions, our Education Strategy and our Access and Participation Plan are aligned, and delivery of our Access and Participation Plan activity is directed and supported by our annual Education Action Plan. Progress against our commitments is monitored and reviewed by the Education Committee (a sub-committee of Senate) and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education).

⁴ University of Essex Education Strategy 2013-19,
http://www.essex.ac.uk/about/strategy/documents/education_strategy.pdf

Our University's Equality and Diversity Strategy sets out a framework to ensure staff, students and visitors are aware of our University's values and commitment to advancing equality in order to provide a fair and inclusive working, living and learning environment in which all members of the community are treated with dignity and respect and solely on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential⁵. One example of an inclusive approach taken to support the student experience is how we have developed an inclusive curriculum and appropriate pedagogical practice through resources, guidance and training to staff – integrating inclusivity into curriculum design and approval documentation. Other examples are the development of both our curriculum review toolkit and resources for our Annual Review of Courses (ARC); these ensure that the consideration of inclusivity is standard practice.

Achievement of our education ambitions is underpinned by our University's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and targets, which include institutional and departmental KPIs and targets relating to student continuation, good degrees and graduate employability. Academic departments are expected to reach and maintain their KPIs and these are monitored closely. Departmental level evaluation is complemented by institutional consideration through our committee structure. All departments, supported by their Faculty, consider their performance and identify actions to maintain and improve this. Additional support is made available to departments whose KPI performance indicates they may benefit from additional support. Our targeted approach ensures that we are able to monitor our performance closely against the measures set out in our access and participation plan whilst challenging ourselves in the areas where we have identified we should be making the most progress.

This alignment of our Access and Participation Plan and our strategic goals results in strategic investment in support of our priorities. For example, the Learner Engagement Activity Portal (LEAP) system has been developed to achieve a step change in understanding and supporting student engagement. The system was piloted in three departments in 2017-18. Pilot departments received weekly reports on levels of engagement for every student included in the pilot since the start of the academic year. In the early weeks of term, these reports were supplemented with information gathered during week one on student attendance at 'welcome' (induction) events. This meant that students who were not engaging (e.g. low attendance coupled with lack of other academic activity, such as use of Moodle) could be contacted by their department early in the term to offer support. The engagement data enables departments to understand better the progress of learners within their own context and in real time, and empowers lecturers and tutors to adapt their teaching if, for example, they identify that students are struggling with a particular topic. As well as being useful in the analysis and improvement of learning and teaching, learner analytics can also be used as a tool for supporting student wellbeing as much of the data is useful in assisting personal tutors, providing them with information about the course their students are studying and their progress. Using the engagement information at institutional level enables us to better understand student activity in learning environments and behaviours of different student groups, helping us to identify barriers to engagement for particular groups of students and thus, helping to inform policy development to enable all of our students to achieve their potential. In addition, each student can also view their own engagement data. From 2018-19 LEAP will be rolled out across the University and its functionality will be developed to better support student success.

Within our Education Strategy, we commit to working collaboratively with our students to draw on their views and experience to inform the development of the University's educational provision, and to shape and transform their living and learning community. The student voice is key in ensuring that we understand the needs of all of our students, no matter what their background. We use this information to develop our plan and targets, to adjust our services to respond to students' needs, and to provide targeted support.

This Access and Participation Plan sets out how we will invest our higher fee income to provide transformational opportunities to our students across the student lifecycle. In developing our Plan we are committed to ensuring our investment is focused on delivering impact and on providing students with the ability to achieve successful outcomes.

⁵ Ibid.

Continuous improvement through evaluation

In order to continue to improve, critical evaluation of our progress in relation to our strategic priorities is embedded into our activities and, wherever possible, the student voice is used to inform this.

We continue to develop and improve our data reporting and evaluation tools, to ensure that we continue to stretch ourselves and ensure that we are targeting resources effectively and having a positive impact. We will continue to undertake analysis to monitor the continuation, progression and success of our students and to inform our strategy and evaluate our increased investment.

Our evaluation methods include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **An 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. Our methods of evaluation include pre- and post-activity questionnaires, and teacher evaluation through questionnaires and feedback. We are developing our ability to track participants' progression to the University through data collection and permissions, working with unique pupil and learner numbers, and using our management information systems for data collection and reporting. Analyses of our findings are used to assess the impact of our outreach activity and to inform future developments.
- **Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT)** – The University of Essex is a member of the HEAT membership service which assists Higher Education Institutions in England to target, monitor and evaluate their outreach activity. We have been recording participation of students on intensive outreach activities through the HEAT since summer 2015. By working collaboratively, we can critically reflect on our approach to outreach data management which in turn helps us to continuously improve the way we monitor, evaluate and build evidence of impact. HEIs who subscribe to HEAT have developed a student data tracking system and a set of reports which allow annual tracking of outreach participants longitudinally from KS2 data through to entry to HE, postgraduate study and employment. We expect to see the first set of results in summer 2018 and these reports will be used to assess the relationship between outreach programmes, disadvantage, attainment and patterns of progression into HE, which will inform future annual outreach evaluation strategies.
- **Analysis of the impact of financial support** - Our Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) has undertaken research to investigate the impact of our financial investment on undergraduate student outcomes, specifically retention, progression, good degrees and employability. The findings of the report based on undergraduate students from 2009-10 to 2014-15 show that receiving a bursary reduces the risk of non-continuation; this is consistent with previous analyses. However, the positive effect related to receiving a bursary in first year is limited. The impact appeared greater in the second year of study and therefore, students receive £1,000 in year one *and* in year two, and £500 in year three/four, as indicated on page 15.

We remain confident that bursaries offer a benefit to students in receipt of them, especially within the context of feedback from our student body. During the 2017-18 academic year, our Students' Union sought student feedback on the issues that students at our University were most concerned about. The cost of living was one of the top five issues and consequently, is one of the key areas that the Students' Union will be working in partnership with the University to address.

We will continue to review the impact of financial support and will supplement our analyses with the financial evaluation tool⁶ provided by the Office for Students. Initial analysis has suggested that our earlier findings remain valid; that financial support through bursaries has some benefit. We will use these findings to inform the future development and use of our student financial support, and we anticipate that the findings from the completed analysis

⁶ Office for Fair Access, Understanding the impact of institutional financial support, <https://www.offa.org.uk/egp/impact-of-financial-support>

(which is expected to be completed during the 2018-19 academic year) will be used to help determine bursary arrangements from 2020-21. When considering our future bursary offer, we will also ensure that we take careful account of the student voice.

- **Analysis of continuation, student success and employability outcomes** - In order to support critical engagement with our KPIs, to inform our plans for supporting students from under-represented groups across the student lifecycle and to measure the impact of our actions, we have improved our data collection, management, and reporting.

We have developed a central data warehouse and central data reporting service (CEDRS). This system provides the opportunity to investigate and monitor students' access, retention, progression and success by comparative cohort analysis using identifiers (such as POLAR data, ethnicity, age, disability and gender) and collating data from internal and external sources. We use the Tableau reporting tool which provides enhanced reporting capabilities and is accessible to staff across our departments and professional services in order to inform both their reviews of activities and their priority setting. This also enables close monitoring of our performance against the measures set out in our Access and Participation Plan. Tableau enables colleagues to interrogate the data themselves in order to better understand issues (and successes) in departmental context. A group has been established to ensure that: there is a systematic approach taken to developing the data; the data is used to inform future planning at all levels; and staff have adequate training to understand and use the data effectively. We have seen significant progress as a result of data sharing. For example, attainment gaps are now firmly on the radar at all levels of the University and are discussed at workshops, conferences and meetings at all levels of our institution.

Alongside the core KPIs, we also undertake supplementary data analysis to identify student groups who might be at greater risk of either non-continuation or of not being awarded a first-class or upper second-class degree. We then monitor their performance. An iterative process has been adopted in the development of our analyses (e.g. we are starting to examine the intersections of characteristics to identify more accurately gaps in access, success and progression for particular groups of students); this also allows the analysis to consider additional variables and data as they become available.

To date, analyses have included gender, age, disability, ethnicity, entry qualifications, entry route (through clearing or otherwise), postcode classification (POLAR2 and POLAR3), bursaries, and term-time living accommodation (university or not) as predictors of continuation and degree outcome. Our findings continue to inform our decision-making on allocation of resources.

- **Analysis of engagement with services and activities** – All staff with responsibility for the student experience are encouraged to use available data (both qualitative and quantitative) – and to gather their own data where this is not available – to seek to understand student behaviour in order to respond to student needs, broaden the reach where needed, enhance our services and target resources more effectively. For example, information is analysed about which students participate in Employability and Careers Centre initiatives in order to ensure that there is equity of access to support available. Analysis of the data collected by the Employability and Careers Centre in 2017/18 showed that participation by under-represented groups was overrepresented in the vast majority of cases; for example, BAME UK-domiciled students constitute 61% of those taking part in the Rising Stars programme (when BAME UK-domiciled students make up just 39.2% of the student population) and 21% of home students who gain a Gold Big Essex Award have declared a disability versus 11.2% of the student population).

We are committed to evolving our evaluative measures – in 2018-19 we are piloting a new tool for measuring and evaluating impact to support our efforts to ensure that we identify, measure and evaluate the benefit of the projects and activities we undertake. This pilot will draw on national findings in relation to evaluating Learner Gain when they are available, and aims to embed evaluation in all activities to ensure that they remain focussed and relevant, and are of benefit to students, as well as helping us to make informed decisions about where best to target resources.

Student Consultation

At the University of Essex, we work closely with our Students' Union across all aspects of our mission, including access, progression and student success. The targets and priorities in our Access and Participation Plan have been built up over a number of years with detailed involvement of the Students' Union in our working and planning groups. Our Students' Union has provided a supporting statement alongside our 2019-20 Access and Participation Plan.

The implementation, monitoring and evaluation of our Access and Participation Plan takes a number of forms. A small group meets regularly both to consider the plan and to discuss the formulation of the next one. This group includes our Students' Union Vice-President (Education). We have also aligned our plan with our Education Strategy and therefore delivery of our Access and Participation Plan activity is directed and supported by our annual Education Action Plan. Progress against our commitments is monitored and reviewed by the Education Committee and reported to Senate. There is student representation on all our University committees, at all levels. At Senate, for example, representation includes both Students' Union sabbatical officers and Faculty student representatives.

The Students' Union additionally has access to our reporting tool (Tableau) and can engage independently with our data. We involve students in the agenda setting for our key committees and they use this mechanism to identify issues they would like to explore.

Through our student representation approach, we have ensured that students from a range of backgrounds are engaged as thoroughly as staff in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of our Access and Participation Plan.

Franchise partnerships

We have several strategic partnerships which seek to increase access to our education provision. These include:

- **Edge Hotel School delivered by Edge Hotel School Ltd**

The Access and Participation Plan for Edge Hotel School is attached as appendix A.

- **University of Essex Online delivered by Kaplan Open Learning**

Kaplan Open Learning delivers University of Essex degree courses through part-time online study under the University of Essex Online brand. The nature of delivery is targeted to provide access for students who require the ability to study in a flexible environment. Tuition fees for courses offered in

this manner will not exceed the basic fee level for part-time courses for students commencing in 2018-19. Therefore, University of Essex Online is not included in this Access and Participation Plan.

- **Colchester Institute**

Our partnership with Colchester Institute will have no new entrants in 2019-20 and will have one continuing part-time student who will be covered by the Colchester Institute Access and Participation Plan, as appropriate for the student's year of entry, charged above the basic fee level.

Assessment of current performance

Our Education Committee is responsible for setting the priorities in relation to equality and diversity matters to ensure that every student can achieve their potential at the University of Essex and that a transformational experience is delivered. Education Committee receives reports and data using information that has been reported via national programmes (e.g. HESA, UCAS and TEF metrics), as well as other data available internally. This data identifies student groups who may be at risk or disadvantaged. Education Committee reviews activity currently in place to support these students and recommends areas where further work is needed to address continuing or emerging inequalities in student access, success and progression.

Access

In 2016-17 our dedicated Outreach Team worked with 11,100 beneficiaries from over 130 schools in the eastern region. We carefully target resource and activity by using Edubase data to identify those schools that would most benefit from outreach intervention. All schools across Essex, Suffolk Southend, and selected London boroughs (Barking and Dagenham, Redbridge, Newham, Waltham Forest, Hackney and Tower Hamlets) are assessed to ensure that we work predominately with schools who have a higher than average percentage of students in receipt of Free School Meals. GCSE attainment is also considered to identify with which schools we should be engaging more intensively.

Our activity targets are based on increasing attainment through raising aspiration. Schools involved in the VI6 project tend to come from areas with low progression to higher education. By enabling schools to offer a broader range of subjects, students are more likely to raise their attainment through studying subjects they enjoy. We use whole school averages, rather than basing the target only on the students in the project, as the activity has a wide impact on the entire school community through, for example, peer influence. For 2016 entry, the combined average progression from these schools is 41.6% compared to an average of 46% in the county of Essex. Our target is to raise this average to 43% by 2021-22.

Partner schools have seen a significant change in their students' attitude to higher education as a result of this project. This increase in aspiration has a direct impact on the students' attainment as they can see higher education as an opportunity available to them. Surveys from our first cohort of VI6 students (2015-16) revealed an increase in students' intentions regarding applying to university. On the first day of the partnership, 64% intended to apply to higher education, rising to 87% by the end of their first term. A third agreed their VI6 experience has influenced this decision.

All students who take part in the summer school come from low progression schools and are those who have the academic ability to progress but often do not succeed. To evidence how our outreach activity is having a direct impact on attainment, we use our summer school students' written essays to compare their achievements both before and after the summer school.

Our outreach evaluation shows that female students are more likely than male students to engage in projects where participation is based on self-selection. We are aiming to increase the number of white male students participating in Aspire and Aspire Higher. Evaluation will be conducted through participant and teacher questionnaires, school data on participants' progression and attainment, and tracking of participants' access and progression to the University. As all students on Aspire/Aspire Higher will come from schools with low socio-economic indicators, we are confident that by attracting

white males to this project, we will engage this group. The baseline data is based on a two-year average. Our target is to ensure that white male students make up at least 40% of the project cohort by 2021-22.

Admissions

We are committed to fair access and we encourage applications from applicants demonstrating the greatest potential to benefit from the type of education that we provide. Our admissions policies and procedures are designed to ensure that all applications are considered fairly and consistently, and in accordance with professional standards.

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, affiliations or other irrelevant distinction.

We do not currently use contextual data in making selection decisions at the point of application. We may use contextual data at the point of confirmation in order to allow additional consideration of factors which may have affected borderline students who have not met the conditions of their offer.

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

Although we use a number of indicators to measure our performance in the proportion of students from under-represented groups, our intake target focuses on the proportion of our intake from POLAR3 quintiles 1 and 2 and seeks to sustain our baseline two-year average of 28.0% for 2016 and 2017 while we grow our student base. This applies to the University only and does not include our partner institutions. This target demonstrates that the University is committed to sustaining its already strong performance against this measure. As a growing institution, on track to achieve 50% growth in student numbers by 2019 (from a 2012 baseline) continuing to commit to this target at 28% will result in an increased absolute number of students at Essex from POLAR3 quintiles 1 and 2, supporting our commitment to maintaining the diversity of our student population.

We have seen a 63.6% increase in the number of undergraduate UK-domiciled BAME students in our registered student population from 2014-15 to 2017-18 (from 2,098 to 3,432 students). The number of UK-domiciled white students has increased by 10.0% from 2014-15 to 2017-18 (from 4,079 to 4,485 students).

Analysis undertaken in 2017-18 showed that young undergraduate students were more likely to be given an offer, versus mature students. In the past year, there has been a 14.5% decrease in the number of mature students registering for undergraduate study at our University (from 2,008 mature undergraduate students in 2016-17 to 1,716 mature undergraduate students in 2017-18). This is reflective of national trends where there has been a 20% drop in numbers of mature students since 2012. This decline in mature entrants is partly due to the removal of funding for allied health courses, for example Nursing.

The University provides information on tuition fee loans as well as alternative sources of funding to encourage mature learners to consider all courses. We have also made changes to our admissions policy and procedure to influence positively offer rates for mature learners. These changes have included increasing the "shelf life" of academic qualifications to ten years where an applicant has met the offer level for entry and referring mature learners to a foundation year where this would support their transition back into education. In addition, we continue to encourage academic admissions selectors to interview and ask mature learners to produce a piece of work if they have been out of formal education for some time or their qualifications do not meet our required level. Further support we offer and potential actions we will take in relation to mature students are referred to later in this document, under *Supporting Student Success*.

The number of our disabled undergraduate applicants has increased at a greater rate (2.6 times) than applicants with no disability declared from 2013-14 to 2017-18:

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	Change from 2013-14 to 2017-18
Declared disability	1,138	1,104	1,407	1,488	1,750	31% increase
No disability declared	17,340	16,987	18,829	19,456	20,525	12% increase

Table 1 – Number of applicants applying to undergraduate courses at the University of Essex by disability, from 2013-14 to 2017-18.

Year	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Applications from undergraduate students with a declared disability as a proportion of all applications	6.2%	6.1%	7.0%	7.1%	7.9%

Table 2 – Proportion of undergraduate applicants with a declared disability as a proportion of all undergraduate applications received by the University of Essex, from 2013-14 to 2017-18.

In addition to seeing an increase in the proportion of undergraduate applicants with a declared disability, we have also seen an increase in the proportion of students registering with a declared disability:

Year	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Proportion of students with a declared disability	8.9%	9.5%	9.1%	9.4%

Table 3 – Proportion of undergraduate students with a declared disability as a proportion of all registered undergraduate students at the University of Essex, from 2014-15 to 2017-18.

Student success

The University places a premium on enabling all our students to make full use of the educational opportunities we offer. Consequently, this access and participation plan continues to focus on ensuring the retention and successful progression of our students. For students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods (POLAR3, quintiles 1 and 2) the non-continuation gap compared to quintiles 4 and 5 has halved since 2013-14 (from 3.2% to 1.6%). We have focused on stretching ourselves to increase the continuation rate of students from quintiles 1 and 2 (POLAR3) relative to the continuation of students from quintiles 4 and 5 in our targets.

Our analysis of our data shows that students from lower participation backgrounds (POLAR3, quintiles 1 and 2) follow the national trend of achieving lower rates of good degrees than students from quintiles 4 and 5. We remain vigilant in seeking to reduce this gap.

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Q1 and Q2	74.7%	78.7%	79.7%	84.0%	79.8%
Q4 and Q5	75.5%	80.5%	83.8%	83.7%	81.1%
Difference	0.7%	1.7%	4.1%	-0.2%	1.4%

Table 4 – Good degree rates (percentage of the number of First and Upper Second class awards from within the population) of all University of Essex undergraduate students by POLAR3 quintiles, from 2012-13 to 2016-17.

According to the Equality and Diversity Analysis report, which was prepared for and considered by Education Committee, UK-domiciled White students had the lowest continuation rates in 2016-17 of all UK-domiciled ethnicity groups with a statistically valid population, while Black students had the highest continuation rates (5.5% higher continuation rate than White students).

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
BAME	92.5%	90.9%	96.8%	97.8%	94.0%
White	90.6%	92.0%	90.6%	94.4%	91.9%
Difference	-1.9%	1.1%	-6.2%	-3.4%	-2.1%

Table 5 – Continuation rates of all University of Essex UK-domiciled undergraduate students by ethnicity, from 2012-13 to 2016-17.

Our data shows that UK-domiciled BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) students are more likely to continue in higher education than UK-domiciled White students (continuation rates have been higher for BAME students than for white students since 2014-15), but of those continuing, BAME students are less likely to get a good degree.

In 2016, we established the Achieving Potential project; an institutional-level project to address attainment differentials. The aim of the project was to raise awareness of the issues relating to attainment gaps, recommend new initiatives, involve staff and students, and disseminate findings and good practice in order to close attainment gaps (including the difference in proportions of white and BAME students achieving good degrees). The recommendations of the project were embedded into University practice; attainment gaps are now actively monitored at all levels of our University and data relating to attainment gaps are included as part of the information routinely available via Tableau. Changes made, and interventions and initiatives which have been introduced – or are being introduced – as a result of this work have included (but are not limited to):

- Changes to the curriculum, including increasing diversity within the curriculum
- Changes to delivery of teaching and learning
- Increased diversification of assessment methods

Due to the nature of some of these changes, we would expect that any improvements to our data would be longer term. We continue to share and embed good practice across our University, working with departments to tailor initiatives to their departmental context. Addressing gaps in attainment, including those of BAME students, remains a priority and will be a key theme of the departmental away days in October 2018.

To date, we have reduced the size of the ethnicity attainment gap for home students and our ambitions are to improve this even further:

	Five year average from 2009-10 to 2013-14	Five year average from 2010-11 to 2014-15	Five year average from 2011-12 to 2015-16
Ethnicity gap	19.6%	14.3%	11.8%

Table 6 – Average difference between the proportion of White students receiving good degrees (First and Upper Second class awards) compared with the proportion of BAME students receiving good degrees at the University of Essex over a five-year period.

We have set ourselves a stretching target of achieving this. In recognition of the time needed to impact on outcomes, working with students over a three- or four-year period, we have set our baseline and target to cover an average five-year period. Reflecting our substantial progress to date on the previous target and based on an updated baseline of 11.8% (2015-16), we are setting a more challenging target of reducing the differential to 6.0% by 2021-22.

In relation to age, young students have been consistently more likely to continue than mature students (since 2012-13), but this gap has been steadily decreasing (reducing from 4.6% in 2012-13 to 2.0% in 2016-17), as continuation rates for mature students improve.

Whilst good degree rates for mature students have steadily increased since 2012-13 and the gap closed in 2015-16 (good degree rates for mature students were 0.9% higher than for young students in 2015-16), the gap in good degree rates between young and mature students has widened again to 7.4% in 2016-17. Whilst this mirrors the national trend with a lower proportion of mature students obtaining a good degree than young students, we are committed to closely monitoring this trend to ensure that this is not a long-term change.⁷

⁷ <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/degree/> (last accessed 16 January 2018)

The continuation rate of our students with no disability declared has remained consistent for the last five years (decreasing by just 0.4% from 2012-13 to 2016-17). However, the continuation rate for our students with declared disabilities has increased by 3.0% from 2012-13 to 2016-17, closing the gap and resulting in continuation rates being higher for students with declared disabilities than those without disabilities. This shows that our targeted support approach is paying dividends.

A comparison of attainment rates between disabled and non-disabled students in our equality and diversity annual monitoring reports, considered by Education Committee, shows that disabled students are more likely to obtain a good degree than their counterparts with the proportion of disabled students gaining a good degree in 2014-15, 1.8% higher than non-disabled students, increasing to 5.5% in 2016-17. This is in contrast to the national picture, where disabled students tend to do less well.

We have a number of measures in place to support care leavers. We know that our numbers of care leavers are small (as returned to HESA) and we will continue to promote opportunities and support to these students, as well as seeking feedback from these students to understand their experiences, in order to improve provision of support.

Progression

TEF Year Two Statement of Findings stated that ‘The University metrics, supplemented by the submission, indicate that students from all backgrounds achieve outstanding outcomes with regards to continuation and progression to highly skilled employment or further study, notably exceeding the University’s benchmark.’

In 2015, we set a target to increase the proportion of students from POLAR3 quintile 1 achieving a positive graduate destination from our benchmarks of 50.0% (2011-12) and 68.7% (2012-13) to 72.0% (2019-20). We have made substantial progress in this area and 77.9% of the target group achieved a positive graduate destination in 2014-15. Looking at both quintile 1 and 2 this rises to 83.9% in 2015-16 (see table 7). Our stretching target was a long-term commitment to increase the employability outcomes for our students from quintile 1 and we remain committed to making further progress.

Using the definition determined by HESA and the Times Good University Guide for highly skilled work and/or study, we have seen an improvement in graduate outcomes for all target groups of students (as identified by the Office for Students) over a three year period (from 2013-14 to 2015-16).

		2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
POLAR	Quintiles 1 and 2	66.3%	80.4%	83.9%
Ethnicity	BAME	68.0%	75.1%	81.6%
Age	Mature	72.7%	85.3%	90.2%
Disability	Declared disability	69.5%	79.3%	87.3%
IMD	Quintiles 1 and 2	61.2%	71.6%	77.5%
Overall population	All groups	64.1%	73.4%	79.6%

Table 7 – Proportion of University of Essex graduates in highly skilled work and/or study by protected characteristic, from 2013-14 to 2015-16.

The disability gap has seen significant improvement, with graduates who declare a disability having a higher graduate/professional work or study rate than those who did not declare a disability. The gender and ethnicity gap has also closed since the graduate cohort of 2013/14; however, the age gap remains the highest, with mature students more likely to be in graduate/professional level work/study after 6 months of graduating than younger students.

We do not have statistically significant or reliable data for care leavers in relation to graduate outcomes.

Our data shows a decrease in the gap between the proportion of white students from Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintiles 1 and 2 in highly skilled work and/or study, and the proportion of white students from quintiles 4 and 5 in highly skilled work and/or study:

Ethnicity	IMD Quintile Group	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
White	Quintiles 1 and 2 (most deprived)	60.9%	70.2%	76.4%
	Quintile 3	63.4%	72.7%	79.5%
	Quintiles 4 and 5 (least deprived)	68.0%	77.9%	82.6%
Gap between most and least deprived		-7.1%	-7.7%	-6.2%

Table 8 – Proportion of white University of Essex graduates in highly skilled work and/or study by IMD quintile group, from 2013-14 to 2015-16.

When looking at graduate outcomes by ethnicity, we have seen an increase in positive outcomes for Asian students, although the gap between their performance and White students appears to be growing. We will continue to monitor this development to see if it becomes a trend as, in general, the data would suggest that our strategy of focusing on each individual's potential and encouraging them to engage with our services is proving effective in relation to other groups:

Ethnicity	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Asian	66.7%	72.1%	76.3%
Black	60.9%	71.4%	82.2%
Mixed	81.1%	83.0%	81.4%
White	65.3%	75.1%	80.5%
Gap between Asian and White	1.4%	-3.0%	-4.2%
Gap between Black and White	-4.4%	-3.7%	1.7%

Table 9 – Proportion of University of Essex graduates in highly skilled work and/or study by ethnicity, from 2013-14 to 2015-16.

Overall, we have seen a consistent and significant improvement in progression into graduate level work and study. Since 2012, for UK undergraduate leavers from full time courses, we have seen over 27% improvement in our Graduate Prospects score with more students obtaining graduate level jobs and taking up graduate level study.

Analysis of the University of Essex Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data shows that at an institutional level and across all subjects our graduates equal or exceed the sector median earnings three years after graduation. This is particularly noticeable when considering students from POLAR quintile 1. LEO data released in 2017 was based on the tax year 2014-15. Given the improvement in our DLHE performance since 2012 we would expect to see further improvement to the sustained employment metrics in future years.

Access, student success and progression measures

Access

In order to support access for students with the potential to benefit from a University of Essex education, we will invest a proportion of higher fee income in delivering outreach activity to raise attainment to support entry into higher education. The University recognises the importance of long-term sustained engagement with students and schools. The activity delivered by our Outreach Team reflects this and aims to have multiple touch points with young people from early years (KS2) to point of entry. We run a number of outreach programmes aimed at raising the attainment and aspirations of students and preparing them for entry to university. Utilising past experience and examples of national best practice, we aim to continue refreshing our approach to access activity. The Outreach Team works closely with other departments and teams in these activities and will continue to do so. For example, through collaboration with Wellbeing and Outreach Services, we have created a number of aspiration-raising events designed particularly for disabled students, including on-campus taster sessions and targeted school visits.

Evaluation of outreach activity will continue to be embedded across all core activity to ensure that accurate HEAT data can be utilised to influence future activity.

We will work closely in collaboration with our NCOP team to deliver complementary activity that adds value to the core activity listed below. For example 2018/19 will see the introduction of an NCOP Sports Science stream added to our residential experience. Subject to funding approval, and in partnership with various academic departments and external charities, we will deliver projects at Essex with a high number of NCOP students in attendance. The aim of this activity is to improve access to higher education.

Our dedicated Outreach Team will run a number of outreach programmes aimed at raising the attainment and aspirations of students, preparing them for entry to university. Activities and support we will undertake in 2019-20 to achieve our goals and address our priorities include:

- We will continue to develop the **VI6 Project**, as we have done since it was launched; from the outset, we offered facilities to support up to 13 subjects. The project started with 7. We anticipate that by the beginning of the academic year 2019-20, the number of students taking part in study on our campus will have increased to 400. We are also anticipating the subjects offered not to be restricted to A-levels but also to encompass alternative qualifications, for example the BTEC. Our partnership is open to other schools joining the program which will increase the numbers further.
- We will continue to provide early years (KS2) opportunities through **Essex Children's University**, part of the national Children's University Trust which offers innovative learning opportunities to seven- to fourteen-year-olds outside of school hours. We have a number of accredited activities across the age groups and host graduation ceremonies for local participants. The University has links with local primary schools and our involvement with Children's University alone enables over 1,500 students and parents/carers per year to experience a university campus.
- Our **Schools Membership Plus** scheme, launched in April 2015, is designed to build on existing relationships, develop new sustainable relationships with schools and cultivate a channel to communicate information effectively with local schools and colleges. To date we have created special long-term relationships with 38 schools/colleges across the eastern region. As part of this membership each school/college is allocated a dedicated member of University staff to be their single point of contact to promote beneficial working relationships. It has enabled constructive conversations with schools and colleges about how we can work collaboratively, with the primary focus on supporting teachers who in turn have a positive impact on their students' higher education (HE) aspirations. We prioritise these schools above others and aim to react to their needs. Many of these schools have a large percentage of students from widening participation backgrounds with low progression to HE. We have recently introduced a new innovation fund which allows schools to apply for funding for an HE-focused activity that they would like to facilitate in their school. Our Schools Membership programme will expand with the introduction of a Pre-16 level to increase our engagement with year 7-11 students and their teachers. We will create new relationships with schools

offering them better access to our support/activity. We will also look to engage school governors as another way of improving communication with these schools.

- The University of Essex's progressive project will aim to deliver an intensive programme of activity which will include multiple engagements with students, schools and parents/carers. The project will contain two strands: **Aspire** (year 9-11); and **Aspire Higher** (year 12-13). Aspire will focus on general HE knowledge, whilst Aspire Higher will have a more subject specific focus, centred on Business, Computer Science, Electronics and Engineering and English Literature. The selection of students for the scheme is based on Free School Meal data and academic ability, working with the schools involved to ensure effective targeting in order to maximise the impact of the project. The interventions students receive and the activities in which they participate during the project are relative to their age and stage, and in some cases are opened up to a wider group of participants within the school/college.
- **Workshops** to support students and teachers, this includes academic writing and referencing for students studying the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ).
- A **Continuing Professional Development (CPD) week** providing free training to update teachers'/advisors' knowledge of higher education.
- To help raise pupil attainment, we will train dedicated **PhD students as outreach tutors** to go into schools to deliver academic writing, research skills and revision skills workshops, as well as offering taster sessions.
- We will add value to our campus visits by including **subject tasters** to expose students to subject they may not study at school e.g. Marine Biology.
- Working in collaboration with the Royal Institution and Essex County Council, we will deliver **STEM focused workshops** over a six-week period for pre-16 students.
- Last year our **summer school** took on a new aspiration- and attainment-raising approach by focusing on topical issues faced by young people today, linked to our award-winning THINK series. We will continue to deliver this.
- We will deliver a **flagship STEM event** the 'Big Bang' with over 40 exhibitors and 17 workshop sessions to facilitate knowledge and understanding of STEM higher education options and future career paths. In 2018 the Big Bang attracted over 850 students from over 30 schools.
- In addition, we will facilitate a **Digital Arts Festival** for creative subjects following a similar format.

In addition to the above activities, we will continue to provide financial support packages which have been developed based on research and consultation with our current students and our Students' Union. Such financial support will be targeted at ensuring students can access and benefit from their education at the University, and that they are not prevented from doing so due to financial concern or hardship, in line with our strategy and goals. Financial support to be offered in 2019-20 includes:

- **University of Essex Bursary scheme**
To help to reduce the gap in access and continuation 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 entrants with a household income of up to £25,000 and who meet all eligibility criteria. We have based the decision to continue to offer this financial support in 2019-20 on the comprehensive review undertaken by the Institute for Social and Economic Research (report published in June 2017), which showed that receiving a bursary in a student's first year increases the probability of progression into the second year, offsetting a corresponding reduction in the probability of withdrawing during the academic year or 'failing out'. The effect for second year students was similar, with reductions in the probability of repeating, resitting or restarting the year, and in withdrawal for those in receipt of the bursary.
- **Care Leavers' Bursaries/Refugee Bursaries**
We will offer a number of targeted bursaries of up to £1,000 per year to 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 have overcome significant barriers to gain a place at university and could have less practical and financial family support upon which they can rely.

Supporting student success

Our student community includes a substantial proportion of students from under-represented groups and with a wide range of academic backgrounds. We recognise the importance of supporting our students from their pre-arrival engagement with the University through to achieving graduate-level employability outcomes. We seek to ensure we can maintain and enhance the support we offer to these and other students, and our plans to support progression and student success are set out and targeted to ensure we support our students in the most effective way. We monitor and analyse students' progress and academic outcomes at all levels and we consider recommendations and take action where appropriate.

Academic departments play a key role in ensuring that our commitment to excellence in education for all students is delivered through an inclusive curriculum and through other department-based activities, with professional services providing supplementary activities to enhance this, as well as supporting staff to support students. Professional services actively support departments in responding to emerging issues, evaluating impact and subsequently embedding successful activities, wherever possible, to ensure that they are accessible to all. Course design and co-curricular activities are regularly reviewed as part of the University's annual review and planning processes to ensure both that ongoing efforts are made to improve the student experience and that resources are targeted most effectively.

In 2016, the creation of the new Student Life Directorate brought together many of the services and teams which provide support to our students during their time at the University in order to ensure that support services and activities are delivered in a strategic and coherent manner to maximise students' ability to achieve their potential, in line with our University's strategic aims. The Directorate has responsibility for increasing awareness of and accessibility to support services by all students, as well as playing a key role in encouraging the sharing of experiences and innovative practice across departments. For example, through proactive support and guidance, academics within departments who have responsibility for supporting students with disabilities have benefited from a community of practice. They have learnt what works and subsequently shared good practice across the University. We believe that this has led to the closing of the gap between continuation and good degree rates for students with disabilities and students with no disability declared.

We adopt an inclusive approach wherever possible to ensure that every student has the information and support they need to achieve their potential at Essex. Where support is available to all students, we direct a proportion of the expenditure to under-represented groups, the sums being representative of the proportion of students from these groups within our student community. In some instances we target students from under-represented groups and monitor engagement with this activity to ensure those students are benefitting from our wider support.

To support all students to be successful in relation to our targets, we are committing to continue to invest in the following new and continuing activities for 2019-20:

- **General and targeted support to departments** and development of specific initiatives and activities to support student success, where new issues emerge (informed by KPI performance or other available information, such as student feedback). New initiatives will be informed by research and good practice in the sector or new ideas may be developed to support the continuation and attainment of students from underrepresented groups (e.g. BAME, mature, commuting students), including changes in the curriculum, delivery of teaching and learning, assessment and feedback methods, visibility of role models. Where an initiative has been successful (informed by evidence of impact), we will seek to embed this or explore roll out to other departments to benefit more students.
- Between 2016-17 and 2018-19, our **Student Transitions and Engagement Project (STEP)** used University of Essex graduates to pilot initiatives in departments to support early engagement, and targeted activities and interventions to improve continuation and success at key points in the academic year. We will build on the findings of a comprehensive review of the impact of the STEP initiative in order to develop a clean plan for future sustainability and/or reshaping of the initiative for future years.
- Continued development of the **Learner Analytics** system (LEAP) to help students understand the impact of their engagement activities, to support personal tutors in the

provision of targeted support to students with low engagement, and to inform curriculum design and University decisions to improve the student experience.

- Continued improvements to training, resources and arrangements for **personal tutoring** and other student support at department level, including **peer mentoring**, in order to equip staff with the information and confidence to provide timely support to students.
- The delivery of **Welcome** induction activities, with the overall objective being to nurture a culture of belonging within the student body, with a particular focus on supporting students to transition into University regardless of educational background and promoting resilience, perseverance and “growth mindset”.
- Evolution of the outputs from the **Measuring and Evaluating Impact** Task and Finish Group, which was set up to develop means to evaluate work undertaken in the area of student continuation and success, evaluate the work and roll out effective practice across the institution.
- Development of the **Student Voice** in order to foster effective partnership working between students and staff, to provide an inclusive environment for student engagement and to ensure that there are opportunities for all students to be heard, as well as using the student voice to measure the effectiveness of actions taken to support the student experience.

Our experience is that, in some cases, additional and more targeted support is needed. We are committed to providing student support services which help particular groups of students to overcome difficulties they are likely to face in order to help them to succeed in their studies and to make the most of their time at our University, for example, supporting students with disabilities (including students with mental health problems, specific learning difficulties and/or students who are on the autism spectrum):

- Our **wellbeing team (encompassing residence life, disability and mental health support)** will continue to provide support for students from under-represented groups, particularly students with a disability, on all three campuses to assist with their progression and success. In 2017-18, we reviewed and restructured our Wellbeing Service, increasing investment in order to improve provision to foster an inclusive community on our campuses, and to enable skills development essential for independent living and learning.
- Support services are **tailored for specific student groups** such as international students, mature students, care leavers, estranged students and students with caring responsibilities. To further support **students who are care leavers or estranged from their families**, we ensure that on campus accommodation is available, where we have this provision, for 52 weeks of the year, throughout the whole period of their study. Additionally following the restructure of the wellbeing service, we are building stronger links with Local Authority Social Care Services to aid the transition into higher education of care leavers and estranged students. Collecting data on this cohort has been challenging. Currently this is on a by-request basis (in line with HESA) but after the restructure of services this will become focused more at departmental level to facilitate monitoring the impact of initiatives.
- Joint working with the voluntary sector has allowed us to provide an on campus regular drop-in surgery to provide local support to **students who have caring responsibilities** and even though the supplier of this service has changed we continue to work closely with the new supplier to ensure that continuity of support is available.
- We will contribute to the cost of a **diagnostic assessment for dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties**, allowing assessments to take place at or soon after enrolment or throughout students' courses. This will benefit students who have not been in a position to arrange or fund an assessment prior to starting their course and will help to ensure the relevant support is in place.
- We make a number of **anticipatory adjustments** to meet the diverse needs of our students including providing: an advice service for disabled students; Listen Again, our lecture capture service; assistive software in the labs; consideration of disabilities by sensitive marking (where appropriate to the learning outcomes); study skills support; support in each department to provide information to students on staff on academic adjustments; Library adjustments (extended borrowing, Sensus Access availability, Talis Aspire, support in accessing books and materials); adapted accommodation and policies to support access to on campus accommodation and parking.
- Students with **long term mental illnesses** receive the support outlined within disability provision. In addition, we offer a range of support services to students who experience

difficulties with their mental or emotional health. These include appointments with a wellbeing practitioner, counselling, and skills development workshops.

- In addition to the previously mentioned financial support packages (e.g. Care Leavers' Bursaries/Refugee Bursaries), we will continue to make available financial support for students in significant **financial hardship**. Our commitments include expenditure and the promotion of inclusive teaching practices to support disabled students who would previously have received support through the Disabled Students Allowances (DSA), including the provision of non-medical helpers such as note-takers. In addition we will continue to make on site provision of space at our Colchester campus, for external agencies to deliver non-medical helper services to students, in order to facilitate students' access to this additional support.
- We are aware that our disabled students are more likely to take a period of intermission than our students with no disability declared. The process for facilitating a leave of absence is helpful for some disabled students to be able to manage the impact of their disability. We will continue to work to **enhance the support for all students taking a period of intermission**, to help them to return to their studies and be successful.

Supporting progression

Successful progression into employment begins with early engagement in support and services; the likelihood of progression is increased the earlier a student engages with support and services. Since 2012, we have continued to increase our investment in targeted employability activity, with a particular focus on early engagement and, in recognition of this, we have strategically invested in embedded activity wherever possible to ensure that every student can benefit from the support available.

Research shows that the students who most need careers support (e.g. students from low participation backgrounds) are least inclined to seek support proactively. As such, we have built **Career Development Learning** into the students' departmental experience for all undergraduate students; either embedded careers education within their degree or as part of a timetabled co-curricular experience. Sessions are jointly designed and delivered by Faculty careers staff and are adapted to each degree. Sessions are reviewed and enhanced through the annual Departmental Employability Action Plans (DEAPs) and are increasingly informed through student panels.

We have identified that the cost of travel for **Work Based Learning (WBL)** may be an impediment to some students participating in work placement opportunities which can enhance and develop students' employability skills. From the start of the academic year 2018, the University will completely cover travel costs for all undergraduate students undertaking unpaid UK based work placements within a module as an integral part of their degree. By increasingly embedding placements and live projects in the curriculum we are removing barriers to access for students who have work or family commitments and by covering travel costs we are creating a level playing field for students regardless of family income.

Similarly, we recognise that cost can be a significant barrier for students seeking to access international internships, placements, volunteering or other educational experiences, e.g. conferences or summer schools. In order to provide the opportunity to experience the fullness of education to all our students, we will support students from low-income households to access these experiences by providing **International Experience Bursaries** of up to £1,500 to fund an international internship, placement or voluntary activity. Any such voluntary activity must be of four- to twelve-week duration over the summer vacation.

Our aim is to equip all students with the skills, confidence and attitudes for successful progression into employment and lifelong learning opportunities. Examples of initiatives to support this aim include:

- **Rising Stars** scheme which brings students and FTSE 100 and Times Top 100 graduate employers together through individually tailored packages of mentoring and development workshops. We have carefully marketed the scheme to make clear that aspiring to work for one of these companies is not about students having the right background, but instead is about unlocking potential and ambition, and aiming high. We have worked with the Students' Union to develop communications for this. The scheme has attracted a high proportion of BAME students and in 2017-18, 70 students went through the scheme. Our plan is to

continue to develop the scheme and extend the reach by enrolling a higher number of students on it in future.

- We will continue to develop our **employability mentoring** programme, in which students are mentored by employers or alumni across all subjects at Essex, with the view to expand this so that more students can take advantage of this opportunity in future years.
- **Women in STEM** is an annual internal conference, which draws on a wide range of high profile and inspirational speakers and is open to students from across the University. The conference seeks to raise students' aspirations and to enhance participation, recruitment and advancement of Women in STEM. In addition to this, we offer **Sprint**, a professional development programme for undergraduate women, open to our current students. We are identifying ways to improve the quality and value of this (e.g. offering it by Faculty so that attendees could explore subject-specific challenges).
- **Graduate Programme (Generation Essex)** is service which starts in the students' final year and continues after graduation to support students as they move into the labour market. 59% of all UK-domiciled 2016 leavers engaged with this scheme. The scheme provides individual advice, group sessions, online support, alumni events organised in conjunction with Alumni and events teams and participated in around 100 funded internships and around 50 start-up grants for budding entrepreneurs. From 2018, this support package will run for almost a year and half after graduation, offering one-to-one career coaching, access to jobs and bespoke internships tailored to the individual graduate.

Investment

In 2019-20, we will spend 19% of higher fee income, as defined by the Office for Students on the four areas set out below.

Our steady-state expenditure, excluding partners, of higher fee income in 2019-20 will be:

- Access: 1.5% (Total investment £1.805k, of which £464k APP countable)
- Student Success: 4.9% (Total investment £6,666k, of which £1,535k APP countable)
- Progression: 3.5% (Total investment £3,162k, of which £1,109k APP countable)
- Financial Support: 9.0% (Total investment £2,825k)

Our expenditure reflects our proportion of students from under-represented groups in a research-led university and our targeted evidence-based approach.

Our access activities remain built into our ongoing financial forecasts for 2019-20 and beyond. The University is committed to continuing to invest in activities which provide strong outcomes in this area.

Total expenditure including partnerships within the scope of this agreement will be 19% in 2019-20.

Provision of information to students

We will publish our approved Access and Participation Plan on our University's webpages so that it is accessible to prospective and current students.

We are committed to publishing clear, up to date and accessible information for prospective and current students on the fees that we intend to charge for the duration of their course and financial support that we intend to offer. We do this by publishing student finance information on our University's webpages and in pre-application material for prospective students, including the prospectus. We also distribute information 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 we provide a central email address for pre- and post-registration enquiries.

We will continue to invest in staff support to manage our targeted support schemes and to ensure that information, advice and guidance is provided in appropriate formats, particularly to students in greatest need. This includes providing printed publicity material to support information, advice and guidance in schools and for use at careers and education events. We will also continue to publish vodcasts about student financial support.

We will continue to work with the regional Student Loans Company (SLC) student finance consultant to promote higher education student finance awareness.

Student finance information is provided as a matter of course to a number of national information providers and, in particular, we will continue to provide information to UCAS (for courses that receive applications through UCAS) and the SLC so they can populate their course databases in good time to inform applications.

Tuition fees

Our tuition fees for new and continuing students are subject to any real-term permitted increases in subsequent years.

- **Full-time students**

For Home and EU undergraduate students admitted in 2019-20, we propose to charge a fee equivalent to the maximum fee cap permitted by Government for full-time students; this cap is currently £9,250. The estimated number of students who will be charged this fee in 2019-20 is 10,073.

For students commencing their studies at the University of Essex in the 2019-20 academic year, fees will increase for each academic year of study. For full-time undergraduate students with a Home fee status (which includes EU students) any fee increases during the programme of study will be limited to the annual increase in the RPI-X index. Increases in fees for full-time undergraduate students with a Home fee status remain subject to UK Government approval.

- **Part-time students**

The majority of our part-time provision is delivered by our partners; details are included in the franchise partnership section of this agreement.

- **Study abroad and placement years**

To support our commitment to give students access to the additional opportunities provided by a period of study abroad or a work placement, students admitted between 2012 and 2017 and subject to a £9,000 fee will not be charged a fee for a study year abroad or for a sandwich placement year as part of a four-year course. This is predicted to benefit approximately 469 students in 2019-20 (who entered before 2018-19) and participation will continue to increase in future years.

Students admitted in 2019-20 will be charged a fee of £1,385 for a study year abroad and £1,850 for a sandwich placement year as part of a four-year course.

- **Other continuing students**

Students admitted prior to 2012 will be subject to fees equivalent to the maximum fee caps which apply to entrants prior to 2012.

Appendix A

Access and Participation Plan for Edge Hotel School for 2019-20

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 either Hotel Management or Events Management with Hospitality, while gaining experience and putting their knowledge into context right away helping to run a real-life, 4* country house hotel.

The Edge Hotel School offers students two-year accelerated honours degrees and will charge a fee of £9,250 per year, £6,167 per qualification level. Applicants joining for the one-year Hotel Management Top Up Award will be charged £9,250. 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. A range of industry-funded scholarships have been established to financially support students, as well as provide connections with industry professions to further their career development, in addition to the Edge Hotel School means-tested bursaries.

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

The Edge Hotel School outreach programme actively seeks to widen access to its courses for non-traditional students. This is partly embedded in the whole culture of the School where students learn by doing but also through some of our primary recruitment channels:

- we work with the hospitality industry and specifically target individuals who may currently work or are seeking work in the hospitality industry. Our aim is to encourage individuals to aim higher and move from some of the many low paid occupations in the industry into education in order that they can fulfil their potential. We achieve this by direct advertising and involvement in industry.
- we also actively work with Schools and Colleges to offer a progression route to students that have come through the NVQ, VRQ and BTEC routes and a number of these students are from disadvantaged backgrounds. We make direct visits to colleges and attend college fairs. Time is involved in providing advice and guidance to these applicants both before, during and after these events as well as processing their applications
- the Edge Hotel School also hosts visits from a range of local and regional colleges which take place within the 4* Wivenhoe House Hotel, which is the practical skill development area of the Edge Hotel School

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

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

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

The Edge Hotel School accepts both FdA and BA (Hons) students into a common Level 4 and 5 route. It is the philosophy of the School that, by receiving the same classes and being an academically broad group, FdA entry students can measure themselves against their BA entry colleagues and both aspire and gain confidence to continue their studies through to Level 6 (the BA

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

Additional academic support sessions are available at the start of the course for entrants from a BTEC or vocationally-based qualification background to ensure students are supported in the transition to undergraduate level study.

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

- a lower tuition fee over two years when compared to a traditional three-year course, representing a significant saving over many comparable courses both in the absolute cost of the tuition but also in the additional year of earnings and reduced living costs
- students will be gaining professional experience, working with real hotel guests and will be highly regarded in the hospitality sector to ultimately secure graduate jobs with excellent employers and excellent career prospects
- a programme of guest lectures and master classes from industry experts will allow students to expand their knowledge and skill set further, and to network with potential employers throughout their course

We will seek to recruit students from all backgrounds, looking for students with a real passion for the industry. The course provision through the Edge Hotel School represents excellent value for students and great employment prospects and has been developed to provide access to high level practical and professional learning.

In 2019-20 Edge Hotel School will spend 19.7% of our OFFA countable income through our Access and Participation Plan. The Edge Hotel School may apply annual fee increases in line with the permitted amount set by the Government each year.

* course type not listed.

Full-time and part-time course fee levels for 2019-20 entrants.

Please enter inflationary statement in the free text box below.

For students commencing their studies at the University of Essex in the 2019-20 academic year, fees will increase for each academic year of study. For full-time undergraduate students with a Home fee status (which includes EU students) any fee increases during the programme of study will be limited to the annual increase in the RPI-X index. Increases in fees for full-time undergraduate students with a Home fee status remain subject to UK Government approval.

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£9,250
Foundation degree		£9,250
Foundation year / Year 0		£9,250
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		£9,250
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		£1,850
Erasmus and overseas study years		£1,385
Other		*
Franchise full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
Accelerated degree	Edge Hotel School Limited - 10044301	£9,250
First degree		*
Foundation degree		*
Foundation year / Year 0		*
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		*
Postgraduate ITT		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*
Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	- N/A	£6,935
Foundation degree	- N/A	£6,935
Foundation year / Year 0	- N/A	£6,935
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE	- N/A	£6,935
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*

Table 8a - Statistical targets and milestones relating to your applicants, entrants or student body

Reference number	Stage of the lifecycle (drop-down menu)	Main target type (drop-down menu)	Target type (drop-down menu)	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target? (drop-down menu)	Baseline year (drop-down menu)	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
								2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	
T16a_01	Access	Socio-economic	Other statistic - Socio-economic (please give details in the next column)	University of Essex (excluding partner institutions) proportion of quintile 1 and 2 neighbourhood entrants through UCAS calculated from HESA return data (POLAR 3). Excludes those with no application postcode data, as well as those for whom HEFCE has not published a POLAR mapping or where that mapping is 'Removed'.	No	Other (please give details in Description column)	29.2%, based on a two-year average from 2014-15 to 2015-16.	29.2%	29.2%	Replaced by T16a_05			We are replacing this target with T16a_05.
T16a_02	Progression	Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)	Other statistic - Completion/Non continuation (please give details in the next column)	University of Essex (excluding partner institutions) calculated from HESA return data - no longer in HE after 1 year quintile 1 and 2 neighbourhoods compared to quintiles 4 and 5 (POLAR 3)	No	2013-14	Gap of 5.7%	Gap of 3.1%	Gap of 1.6%	Replaced by T16a_06			We are replacing this target with T16a_06.
T16a_03	Student success	Ethnicity	Other statistic - Ethnicity (please give details in the next column)	University of Essex (excluding partner institutions) - degree outcomes (Ethnicity)	No	Other (please give details in Description column)	Gap of 19.6% (five year average from 2009-10 to 2013-14)	Gap of 11.8%	Gap of 10% (five year average from 2013-14 to 2017-18)	Replaced by T16a_07			We are replacing this target with T16a_07.
T16a_04	Student success	Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)	Other statistic - Progression to employment or further study (please give details in the next column)	University of Essex (excluding partner institutions) – positive graduate destination of students from low participation neighbourhoods (quintile 1 POLAR 3 data, internally constructed). Calculated using DLHE survey responses and Times Good University Guide graduate destination definition.	No	2011-12	2011-12: 50% 2012-13: 68.7%	71%	72%	73%	73%		
T16a_05	Access	Multiple	Other statistic - Socio-economic (please give details in the next column)	University of Essex (excluding partner institutions) two-year moving average of the proportion of POLAR3 quintile 1 and 2 neighbourhood entrants through UCAS calculated using internal data. Excludes those with no application postcode data, as well as those for whom HEFCE has not published a POLAR mapping or where that mapping is 'Removed'. Baseline data is a two-year average for 2016 and 2017.	No	Other (please give details in Description column)	28.0%	28.0%	28.0%	28.0%	28.0%		The milestone for target 5 replaces the milestone for target 1 from our previous access agreements. These milestones have been compiled on different bases, with the milestone for target 5 demonstrating that the University will be sustaining its already strong performance against this measure. The new target has come about from our use of updated HEFCE postcode mapping data, which has made it possible to identify these students more accurately. The 28% milestone quoted in target 5 represents the same proportion of students in the quintiles as quoted in target 1 (with the figures changing slightly because of a change in the areas mapped and, therefore, the pool of students in quintiles 1 and 2). As a growing institution, on track to achieve 50% growth in student numbers by 2019 (from a 2012 baseline) continuing to committing to this target at 28% will result in an increased absolute number of students at Essex from POLAR3 quintiles 1 and 2.
T16a_06	Student success	Multiple	Other statistic - Completion/Non continuation (please give details in the next column)	University of Essex (excluding partner institutions) calculated from individualised PI data - differential between proportion of 'At other UK HEP / Not in HE' students after one year for POLAR3 quintile 1 and 2 neighbourhoods compared to quintiles 4 and 5. Baseline data is a two-year average to 2014-15. Target is a two-year average to 2021-22.	No	Other (please give details in Description column)	3.2%	2.2%	2.0%	1.8%	1.6%		
T16a_07	Student success	Multiple	Other statistic - Ethnicity (please give details in the next column)	University of Essex (excluding partner institutions) five-year moving average of the differential between white and BAME undergraduate students achieving first or upper second class honours degree outcomes. Baseline data is a five-year average to 2014-15. Target is a five-year average to 2021-22.	No	Other (please give details in Description column)	14.3%	9.5%	8.3%	7.1%	6.0%		

Table 8b - Other milestones and targets.

Reference Number	Select stage of the lifecycle	Main target type (drop-down menu)	Target type (drop-down menu)	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)	
								2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23		
T16b_01	Access	Multiple	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Annual target for outreach activity to work with: 10,000 beneficiaries, 1000 students and parents from younger age groups and 120 schools/ colleges/ organisations.	No	2011-12	10,000 beneficiaries, 1000 students and parents from younger age groups and 120 schools/ colleges/ organisations.	10,000 beneficiaries, 1000 students and parents from younger age groups and 120 schools/ colleges/ organisations.	10,000 beneficiaries, 1000 students and parents from younger age groups and 120 schools/ colleges/ organisations.	10,000 beneficiaries, 1000 students and parents from younger age groups and 120 schools/ colleges/ organisations.			We are discontinuing this target.	
T16b_02	Access	Attainment raising	Strategic partnerships (eg formal relationships with schools/colleges/employers)	Percentage of students from schools participating in VI6 project progressing to a UK higher education institution. Baseline is whole-school average progression to higher education from schools in VI6 project. Compiled from Department for Education data.	Yes	2014-15	41.6%	42%	42.5%	43%	43%			
T16b_03	Access	Multiple	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Percentage of participants in our Progress with Essex long-term project who are white males. Baseline is two-year average based on 2015 and 2016.	No	Other (please give details in Description column)	19%	25%	30%	35%	40%			
T16b_04	Access	Attainment raising	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Percentage of students who increase their grade boundary by 3 or more after taking part in our Summer School. As there are three grade boundaries within one grade (e.g. C-, C, C+), this is the equivalent of an increase from the bottom of one grade (e.g. C-) to the bottom of the next grade up (e.g. B-). As data is only available for one year we do not yet have enough information for a reliable baseline.	No	2016-17	N/A	60%	61%	62%	63%	64%		As part of the Summer School application process students are asked to submit an essay response to 1 of 3 questions which is then marked by Outreach PhD tutors. Students work on this essay as part of the Summer School programme and resubmit their response at the end of the residential to be marked again by the same tutors. It is the grade difference between their initial essay and final submission that we have set as our target.