

UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE

2018-19 ACCESS AGREEMENT

Submitted to the Office for Fair Access

UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE – ACCESS AGREEMENT 2018-19

The University of Gloucestershire continues to be committed to widening access and ensuring those same students are successful in their studies and subsequent progression. The themes within this Access Agreement underpin the goals in the University's new 2017-2022 strategic plan:

1. To provide a breadth and richness of experience that enables all our students to reach their full potential.
2. To provide teaching and support for learning of the highest quality.
3. To build partnerships which create opportunity, innovation and mutual benefit for the communities we serve.

The University is conscious of external challenges, such as the changes to demographics of 18-year olds in the traditional populations we recruit from and changes to external funding, for example, DSA funding, the removal of grants and the changing Student Opportunity funding. However, this Access Agreement sets out how the University of Gloucestershire will employ and enhance a full spectrum of activities to both widen access and improve attainment amongst targeted under-represented groups in 2018/19.

The University has a strong history of raising aspirations and attainment amongst its student body. Its outreach work spans the entire student lifecycle ranging from projects with primary schools to pre-16 activities and mentoring, taster days, conferences and year 10 and 12 residential experiences. This work is enhanced by successful relationships with its Compact Partner schools and colleges, some of which having been established for over 15 years and others being new relationships established over the last couple of years.

The University's commitment to student success is demonstrated by its fully-resourced Helpzones covering the breadth of advice and guidance for current students via a one-stop-shop. The University has also grouped all employability, careers, work experience and placements staff into a single team to ensure all students experience the full benefit of their university education and are supported to gain the skills for successful careers.

Our aim is to support all undergraduate students to create their own personalised career plan, 'Your Future Plan' (YFP). This personalised career planning provides a framework for the University to target specific groups who require additional support to improve their outcomes.

The University believes that the ambitions and potential outcomes of our Access Agreement activity reflect the key priorities of OFFA and the Government, covering the whole of the student lifecycle. The Students' Union has been engaged in the process of compiling this Access Agreement and are key contributors to our sustained strategy.

1. STUDENT NUMBERS, FEES AND FEE INCOME

The student numbers in the resource plan that accompany this agreement are based on the latest University forecasts available in April 2017.

The University expects to charge the following annual tuition fees for all new students starting on courses in 2018/19:

First Degree, delivered by University of Gloucestershire	£9,250
First Degree, sandwich-placement year	£1,000
Foundation Degree, delivered by University of Gloucestershire	£9,250
First Degree, delivered at franchised partner	Up to £9,000, depending on specialism
Foundation Degree, delivered at franchised partner	up to £7500, depending on specialism

Fees will be reviewed by the University on an annual basis and will be subject to increase according to the Government inflation rate and potential policy changes within the Higher Education landscape.

2. ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS IN ACCESS, STUDENT SUCCESS AND PROGRESSION

2.1 Access

The University continues to invest a significant proportion of its higher fee income in activities, events and support to encourage under-represented groups into higher education. Long-term trends are very positive and provide a stable platform to build on for us to deliver our targets. The focus of our activity in the coming years will expand to focus on the metrics related to attainment, student success and progression and, in particular, addressing differential outcomes for all student groups in relation to success and progression.

Our 2015/16 monitoring return shows that 95.9% of UK domiciled young full-time undergraduate entrants came from state schools or colleges. We are above our benchmark of 95.0%. Due to our commitment to long-term outreach activity, the proportion of young entrants from state schools has remained consistently well above the location-adjusted benchmark and above the sector average of 90.1%.

15.6% of young full-time undergraduate entrants came from low participation neighbourhoods, an increase from the previous year by 0.5 percentage points. The overall recruitment of students from low participation neighbourhoods has increased year on year. We are above our benchmark and in line with our location-adjusted benchmark.

The percentage of male primary teachers recruited is at 18.2%. Within the undergraduate BEd course, we have seen some significant improvements. Nearly 30% increase in males enrolling compared to the previous year, and reduced withdrawal rates for men at 4.0%. The issue continues to be more prevalent in the postgraduate courses and School Direct routes.

In 2015/16, the percentage of BME students participating in the teacher training programmes increased by 2.6 percentage points to 6.6%. This positive trend continues with the recruitment of BME students to teacher training courses. While the numbers are small, the enrolments have increased year on year. However, the applications from BME students have decreased for primary teaching. The conversion rates for both primary and secondary routes average around 51% for BME students compared to 21% for non-BME students. We will continue our work with the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) to target support to address the under-representation of BME and male students in School of Media and School of Education respectively.

The number of students attending the 'Males into Primary Teaching' conference and open day event is steadily increasing year on year, but there is still some further work needed to meet the overall target.

There has been a significant increase of 21% of UK domiciled entrants declaring at least one disability at the undergraduate level in 2015/16. The most prominent change noticed was with the students reporting a mental health condition, which has seen the most increase by 3.6 percentage points to 4.8% since 2012/13.

Over the last few years, the relative access performance of the University in attracting students from the under-represented groups has grown stronger. The HESA widening participation indicators show that we are above the sector average with positive trends across the majority of our indicators. We continue to remain confident that the current and future work will only improve our performance in attracting the under-represented groups of students.

2.2 Student Success

The University supports students well, with well-resourced centralised teams and embedded activities throughout their academic studies. The University has a strong track record in the continuation and attainment of students.

For non-continuation indicators, we use an internal measure to track students each year so that we can continue supporting all students to complete their studies. The previous cycle saw a slight increase in non-completion rates after a long-term trend of an improved non-completion rate. It is, therefore, pleasing to see that the rate returned to a decreased figure in 2015/16, which meets the milestone is on track to meet the overall target.

For mature young full-time first degree entrants, the proportion of the 2014/15 cohort who were no longer actively engaged at the University following their year of entry has decreased by 1.6 percentage points to 8.0%. The University has the lowest and, therefore, the best score of all its competitors. The benchmark has slightly increased to 13.2%. The University is significantly below its benchmark and the sector average of 11.7%.

The non-continuation rates among young, full-time first degree students have remained relatively steady over time. A small increase can be seen in 14/15, but the University remains considerably below its benchmark (lower score being better).

In 2014/15, 7.7% of UK-domiciled full-time students who had not achieved an award and were no longer actively engaged at the University, slightly increased from the previous year. The University remains well below its benchmark of 12.0% and below the sector average of 10.3%. We are currently analysing the completion rates and reasons for non-completion for all registered students to identify non-continuation trends as calculated by HESA metrics.

Following the changes proposed by the government to the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA), we carried out internal analysis to see the impact of this decision

on student retention. Our findings show that there is a statistically significant decrease in the non-completion rates for students who were in receipt of DSA, compared to the students who were not in receipt of DSA. Further evidence suggests a similar trend for non-completion rates of students with a disability, being lower, compared to students without a disability.

In addition to our sound access performance, the University is also pleased with its performance in relation to student success. The HESA indicators show that the University is exceeding its national benchmarks across all areas and for all groups. Current ambitions to improve the student experience should only improve our future performance.

2.3 Progression

Currently in its second year, the University of Gloucestershire's 'Your Future Plan' programme is both a suite of employability and employment services and a structure that enables a personalised programme of support to be developed and delivered to every student.

We are pleased to report comparatively better performance for some key groups within Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) metrics focused on employment. Mature and disadvantaged students achieved a positive flag, while BME students achieved a double positive flag under 'employment or further study'.

Under 'highly-skilled employment or further study', there were no negative flags for disadvantaged or BME students compared to their peers. We read these outcomes as evidence that our personalised and targeted approach to developing student employability has had an impact, and this submission builds upon that foundation.

3. IMPACT OF WIDENING PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES

3.1 Access

The University continues to offer a range of successful long-term outreach activities to raise aspiration and awareness of students seen at primary, pre-16, and post-16 levels to higher education. We have started to monitor the effectiveness of this long-term approach by tracking the progression of these students into higher education.

In 2015/16, over 200 engagements were organised and delivered by the Outreach team, as an on-going investment to long-term engagement with learners. More than half of the activities offered were with widening participation students, POLAR3 Quintile 1 students being the highest targeted group within the other indicators of deprivation. Over 10,000 learners took part in these activities. The evaluation analysis shows that, after taking part in our activities, 73% of all participants felt more

positive about considering going to university and 86% said that they had learnt new information from taking part in the activity.

Around 42% of tracked students who applied to go to university were from within the targeted widening participation school and colleges.

Each year, we run successful summer residential events, aimed at those students who are in years 10 and 12. We invite applications from all schools within our Compact Scheme to participate in the residential events with the focus on increasing the involvement of widening participation students.

The tracking data shows 65% of participants who attended our residential events applied to a university, compared to those who applied to our residential events but did not attend and those who applied but had no offer. The majority of those who applied (82%) to our residential events were accepted at a university. We see a strong statistical evidence that attending our residential events has increased the probability of students applying to us or other universities.

The new framework also allowed us to evaluate our residential events more effectively. At the end of the programme, participants reported well to the question on what they gained by participating in the year 12 Residential. 74% reported that they had gained more knowledge about the university. 59% said they would pursue new subjects, and 62% stated that they would take responsibility to achieve better grades.

The majority selected 'career advice' and 'university leading to a more interesting job' as the perceived benefits of going to university. (>83%) students said that they felt more confident to go to university and realised that they would 'fit in' at university reducing the 'not sure' to 'sure' category by over 43%.

Notably, more than half of the year 10 residential participants had no previous experience of activities with a university. At the end of the programme, (>84%) of participants said that they felt more confident in their ability to go to university decreasing the 'not sure' to 'sure' category by two-thirds.

There was a noticeable change in participants' attitudes on what can stop them from going to university at the end of the programme, showing a decrease of 20% on 'affordability' and 17% on 'getting the grades'. Both categories, 'moving away from home' and 'none of my friends are going' were reduced by 16.7% while 'my family do not want me to go' category remained unchanged.

For both residential events, the participants showed an overwhelming increase in the importance of making new friends, gaining more self-confidence, and becoming more independent.

Our long-established mentoring scheme for students provides individual support and guidance for post-16 and pre-16 students. We train and recruit mentors to provide

one-to-one mentoring support for all participating mentees, so they can gain confidence, increase motivation, and improve self-esteem. The focus of the mentors is to be a positive role model to inspire mentees to higher education. We have noticed a decrease, similar to, the previous year in the perception of students who were not sure what they would do after school or college and, interestingly, the percentage of those considering apprenticeships has increased for students. On the question of what can stop them from going to university, we saw a decline in the 'affordability' as one of the reasons that would stop them from going to higher education.

This year, we are going to review our evaluation framework for the mentoring scheme to bring the scheme in line with the other initiatives currently monitored by the Data and Evaluation officer.

63% of tracked mentees who participated in our mentoring scheme applied to a university, compared to those who dropped out of the scheme. From those, nearly 80% were accepted at a university. We see a strong statistical evidence that attending our sustained mentoring programme has increased the probability of students applying to us or other universities.

The Graduate Advocate Scheme was funded by OFFA countable funding for outreach; the remit was to deliver five different subject level aspiration raising activities within 14 key schools and colleges to target both pre-16 and post-16 students. We measured the success of the scheme by the number of students engaged and subject activities delivered.

In 2015/16, over 2500 students were seen for subject specific activities; more than half were widening participation students, significantly increasing the overall widening participation student interaction for the University. In total, they delivered 46 activities, which accounts for 55% of all our activities undertaken with those institutions.

42% of tracked attendees who participated in our subject specific activities applied to a university. We acknowledge that it is harder to follow the progression of these students due to unreliable data from the participants, but the direct impact of delivering subject specific activities has increased the probability of students applying to us or other universities.

Our intention is to continue the investment in subject specific outreach and expand the focus of this resource to raising attainment in partner schools. We will upgrade these outreach posts to ensure graduates have industry/academic experience and can provide schools with a bespoke offering that can focus on interventions to raise attainment. We will use the next 12 months to develop a new framework to show how this investment can address both widening participation and attainment objectives.

The University is supporting the development of two University Technical Colleges; sponsoring the Berkeley Green UTC, a specialist high quality vocational and academic education for learners with a strong interest in Advanced Manufacturing and Digital Technologies including Cyber Security. We are also working with partners to establish a UTC for Gloucester specialising in health and await a decision from the Department of Education.

The University has invested in a post to manage its Student Ambassador Scheme and is profiling all ambassadors to highlight students with widening participation characteristics. This year's selection process shows that 65% of those who were successful met one or more widening participation criteria. The most recent DLHE evidence shows that our student ambassadors leave the University feeling better equipped to enter the graduate world. By designing a comprehensive training and development programme, we hope to address both retention and graduate outcomes with specialised skills development, over multiple years, using the whole student lifecycle approach.

3.2 Student success

We have firmly embedded advice and guidance activities supporting retention and attainment outcomes for all students, with an increased focus on under-represented groups within the University. We analyse student data internally, which informs our action plan for targeting student activities around withdrawals, retention, and attainment, including the following examples:

The University has a robust mechanism for offering support to students for whom staff have serious concerns over their health, wellbeing or behaviour. The Supported Study Procedures provides an effective student success framework of support and engagement. This intervention is accessible to all students who might be at risk of not completing their course. However, we have noticed that currently all students supported within the framework have one or more widening participation characteristic, notably disabled students but also proportionately higher BME and mature students. This framework allows us to address retention and differential outcomes by multiple characteristics; we are already noticing that students who do decide to withdraw can have multiple characteristics.

Since the launch of the mature student pre-induction event in 2013, attendance at these events has more than doubled, with an overall increase in the satisfaction of all elements of the day: information, advice and guidance. Last year, we monitored students who participated in the mature student pre-induction day to assess the impact that the activity has on retention.

We are noticing a relationship between student engagement and student retention; non-completion rates are around 2% lower for those mature students who participated in the event, compared to overall mature student non-completion rates. Further analysis shows that around half of the students who withdrew had multiple

widening participation characteristics. We are using this knowledge to develop the mature student pre-induction event to assist these students in their transition to higher education, and to strengthen and enhance the support for under-represented groups within the institution.

The non-completion rates difference is significantly lower for disabled students who choose to engage with the Disability & Mental Health Team, compared to those students who are disabled but do not want to participate with the team. This internal student success measure informs student monitoring and validates our interventions to continue having one-to-one appointments to provide guidance. We are confident that the engagement with the team is likely to improve retention as the individual needs of students are being met through current interventions, such as, dyslexia assessment, funding (DSA), mentoring, extra time for assignments, academic support within lectures and tutorials, etc.

The University has continued to offer specialised support to care-leavers through our care leaver contact (0.5FTE). The support ranges from pre-arrival information, introductory meetings, access to bursaries and on-going availability for individual support. While numbers of care leavers at the University are small, we can see that retention has improved since the last academic year.

Students do engage in the process of securing the scholarships and then tend to link in with the dedicated contact as and when required (i.e. should they have any academic concerns). These touch points allow the opportunity for encouragement and support, and it is helpful for some of this group to know that there is dedicated support available to them. Many of those who appear as care leavers on their UCAS application do not meet the criteria laid out in our scholarships, and there are others who do not actively engage with us, so there is further work to be undertaken with this group to increase engagement.

3.3 Progression

Your Future Plan offers a structure through which a personalised programme of employability and employment support is developed and delivered for every student. The spine to the latter is a series of reflective career review questionnaires. Supported by their Personal Tutors, 34.8% of Level 4 students completed the questionnaire in 2015/16. The in-year completion rate for 2016/17 has increased by 22 percentage points. Feedback gathered from students at the close of the most recent academic year includes 'I can see my development, and this is encouraging for me' and 'It motivated me to think and act for my future NOW as opposed to my third year'.

The success of the programme is complemented by a programme of training for Personal Tutors in 'coaching for employability', helping ensure conversations about students' futures are personalised, assets-based and action-centred.

Your Future Plan Week is an OFFA funded project, wherein we run employability-focused workshops with guest speakers. This year we attracted 572 students, increase of 21% compared to the last academic year. This initiative has direct links with the concept of 'learning gain' in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and the suite of graduate attributes profiled in our 2017-2022 Strategic Plan. We will be developing this model further during 2018/19.

Our Gloucestershire Employability Award scheme celebrates the investment of students in developing their employability skills and exploring future career options. Completion of each level of the Award is recognised within the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) and this year registrations for the Bronze level have increased from 364 students in 2015/16 to 937. Contributing to this has been a newly forged collaboration with our Student Union, through which the impact on the employability of fulfilling such roles as Subject Representative, Student Trustee and Sports Captain is accredited through the Award. This year has also seen our first group of students achieving Gold level.

4. STRATEGIC APPROACH

Based on this evidence the University's strategic priorities for 2018-19 are to

- Further target students from low participation neighbourhoods by concentrating outreach activities with key FE College and WP Compact partners.
- Grow the recruitment and retention of mature students through bursaries and additional support activities throughout their student journey.
- Provide subject specific activities particularly for the recruitment of BME students, including outreach work in target geographical areas.
- Further understand our student cohorts to identify and narrow any attainment gaps between students from under-represented groups, or those with protected characteristics.
- Use evidence based interventions, informed by JISC learning analytics and identification of widening participation students via the student record system, to provide support to students who are at most risk of dropping out.
- Focus on the successful progression of all students using an expanded 'Your Future Plan' programme, paying particular attention to those WP cohorts who show differential outcomes to their peers in relation to successful employment or further study.

- Continue to focus on monitoring procedures, ensuring every large-scale project starts with a defined set of objectives. These objectives which will be evaluated throughout and at the end of each project to provide a strong evidence base for assessing future initiatives across the student lifecycle.
- Develop a framework for raising attainment in our locality, where there are issues of under-representation and disadvantage through partnership working and offering subject focussed interventions.
- Expand our partnership working through new membership of the Strategic Alliance and sponsorship of UTCs and projects with local schools.

5. EXPENDITURE

The University has exceeded its benchmark position and has demonstrated strong progress to date against the targets set in previous Access Agreements. The University is fully committed to investing in activities and support to attract, retain, add value and ensure students leave well equipped to gain successful employment or further study. We intend to allocate at least 18% of the University's undergraduate higher fee income and 10% of the University's postgraduate ITT higher fee income to Access Agreement expenditure.

Based on the current student number forecasts that we are using for budget setting purposes, this will total at least £1.58m of expenditure relating to new students in 2018/19 and will be used to support bursaries, outreach, retention and employability measures for students from under-represented groups. Following the research conducted by OFFA, which concluded that financial support did not have a significant impact on students' choice of institution or on student retention, the University redirected spend from financial support to increase non-financial support activities within the 2015/16 Access Agreement. As a relatively large percentage of the student population are eligible for the full or partial maintenance grant and we wish to further evaluate our longer term strengths, weaknesses and trends, the University has committed to the same strategy for 2018/19 and will continue to split its expenditure equally between financial and non-financial support.

Of the 50% of expenditure dedicated to non-financial support, 40% will be allocated to pre-entry outreach (access) activity and the remainder split equally between student success and progression in 2018/19. The University believes this reflects where funding is required to both meet our targets and to further embed measures required to allow successful outcomes for all students, regardless of their background. We are confident that the investment areas detailed below will lead to improved outcomes not only for under-represented students but also for a wide range of students who require support and intervention.

5.1 Financial Support

Students who commenced their course prior to the academic year 2018/19 and who have had no break in study will continue to receive financial support based upon the schemes that were in operation in their year of entry.

The University believes that access to financial support, particularly to cash bursaries, is necessary to some students to allow them to enter higher education or to support their successful progression through their course. Financial support for students joining the University in 2018/19 will be provided in two ways; through streamlined targeted cash bursaries and scholarships and through a generous hardship fund. Utilising both of these financial support mechanisms allows the University to meet two major objectives: to widen access from disadvantaged groups and to promote student achievement and excellence.

The University will offer the following bursary and fee waiver packages to students joining the University in 2018/19:

1. Care Leavers

Care Leavers remain a key priority group for the University. The University will continue to improve pre-entry guidance, on-going post-entry support throughout the student lifecycle and beyond, together with a generous financial support package to this target group. Despite the Buttle Quality Mark no longer being awarded, the University is committed to undertaking the actions from the action plan submitted as part of achieving the Buttle UK Quality Mark for Care Leavers.

The Care Leavers Scholarship will be offered for up to 15 home students who have been in local authority care for the duration of their three-year undergraduate degree, tailored to individual needs. This consists of a 50% fee waiver plus a bursary of up to £4,750 per annum determined upon interview and dependent on funding received by student's Local Authority.

2. Sanctuary Bursary

In recognition of the additional challenges and barriers in accessing education faced by asylum seekers and refugees, the University of Gloucestershire will offer a Sanctuary Scholarship for one new undergraduate student, per academic year, from 2018/19 onwards. The scholarship will cover the full tuition fees for up to three years for a refugee who has settled within the county of Gloucestershire and who has been granted permanent 'leave to remain' status. Eligible students will be assessed against set criteria based on their predicted academic results, references, personal statements and other relevant information.

3. Compact schools and colleges / Strategic Alliance partners

For 2018/19 the University will continue to offer a Partnership Bursary of £500 cash in their first year to all home, full-time, students with a household income of less than £42,000 studying at one of the Compact schools and colleges or at a Strategic Alliance partner. The scholarships reinforce our commitment to the compact scheme, which focuses on widening participation colleges and schools.

4. Mature students

The University is due to start running both a Nursing Foundation Degree and Undergraduate First Degree in 2018/19. In recognition of these courses attracting a higher than average Mature Student population and a lower than average retention rates nationally, the University will continue to offer a Mature Students Bursary, as concerns about financial security and potential financial hardship continue to be cited as a reason why mature students withdraw from their course prior to its completion.

5. Opportunities Fund

In addition to offering financial support to assist with access to higher education and the continuation of studies, the University is introducing an Opportunities Fund for 2018/19 starters. Students from disadvantaged and under-represented backgrounds will be able to apply to the fund which will be delivered as cash bursaries offering financial support to those who wish to participate in placements, trips, events and opportunities which will enhance their study, experience and improve their employability. Applications for financial support will be assessed and differing amounts relevant to each opportunity will be offered. This fund is forecast to total expenditure of £250,000 in the 2018/19 academic year and around £700,000 over the lifetime of the cohort.

A certain amount of this fund will specifically be set aside to reimburse full or partial travel, accommodation and childcare costs associated with undertaking a domestic or international work placement. Additional funding will be made available in 2019/20 to enable students to undertake paid summer internships in their second year.

6. University of Gloucestershire Hardship Fund

The Hardship Fund will continue to provide support to all home and EU undergraduate and postgraduate ITT students who are facing financial hardship. With a relatively large cohort of students who are eligible for the full or partial maintenance grant, it is likely that the majority of the fund will continue to be utilised by these students.

5.2 Outreach Activity

The University appreciates the need for outreach activities to be sustained and to prioritise planned programmes rather than one-off activities. For this reason, it will maintain and further target its work with compact schools/colleges and selected primary schools and continue to offer its very successful residential and mentoring programmes. We will update the graduate advocate scheme in 2018/19 to focus on both access and attainment.

The University will bring together a programme to attract a wider range of students from BME backgrounds and to begin targeting white disadvantaged boys, potentially using subject specialists to deliver inspiring talks and activities.

As national figures suggest, the University has also seen a general reduction in the profile of mature students; a reduction in applications and despite strong conversion in comparison to the general enrolment population we have seen a higher percentage of mature students who have secured their place fail to enrol. Enrolment figures also show a turbulent couple of years, especially since the introduction of higher fees. The University will explore ways in which activities or support could be increased to attract more mature learners to apply and enrol. This will include sessions at open days, additional skills based support prior to applying and before enrolment as well as mentoring through the conversion period.

The University will continue to:

- Work with at least one primary school per academic year in a ward classified as 1 or 2 under the POLAR3 methodology. Although this activity is difficult to track in terms of achieving general access, this represents a significant aspiration-raising opportunity and indicators of success show that this is valued by partner schools.
- Work within the compact scheme to ensure schools and colleges with higher concentrations of widening participation students have continued access to interventions and activities to raise aspirations to HE.
- Work closely with FE Colleges where the University provides collaborative HE provision to build strong relationships for both outreach work and for progression opportunities, including our new Strategic Alliance partner Bath College.
- Build on the strong student ambassador scheme. Students who would not normally gain employment will be given opportunities to gain key skills as well as a programme of activities to help them reflect on the skills gained to promote themselves more positively to gain future employment.

Collaboration

It is recognised that collaborative activity can play a significant role in achieving widening participation more generally. The University will therefore focus on three strands of collaborative activity.

Strategic Alliance

The University's Strategic Alliance with Gloucestershire College and South Gloucestershire & Stroud College has made significant steps in enhancing awareness of progression opportunities amongst learners. The three institutions have an overall co-ordinator and college based co-ordinators, who ensure regular contact between relevant teaching, recruitment, WP and marketing staff within the alliance partners and scope opportunities available. A joint strategy on progression is in place. As a result of this partnership, the University has gained access to more learners within the region and delivered a suite of aspiration-raising activities, with an agreed advance calendar of outreach opportunities and dedicated events. Monitoring takes place to track students' progression into the University. Indications show that progression of Strategic Alliance students has increased both to the University and to their own HE courses. The Strategic Alliance has expanded to include Bath College and over the period of this agreement, the University will look to expand its already successful approach to collaboration to this college.

Learners from within the Strategic Alliance will continue to benefit from additional financial support in the form of cash bursaries, for those students who have low household incomes.

The University is sponsor of the South Gloucestershire and Stroud College UTC, for 14-18 year olds. The UTC will offer a combination of academic and vocational pathways, with a specialism in computing and engineering. As well as supporting the overall success of the UTC. The University will provide strong progression routes through to HE for these students. The University is also in partnership with the alliance to provide apprenticeships within the region, through Thinkhigher. The University will be offering degree apprenticeships, a further progression route for students who traditionally may not have considered higher education.

Despite the closure of USW, the University of Gloucestershire will continue to collaborate with the universities in the South West region to fund, maintain, develop and promote the careers support websites managed by the Western Vocational Progression Consortium (WVPC).

- Lifepilot engaging and supporting mature and part-time students
(www.life-pilot.co.uk)

- Careerpilot providing pathway and progression information for 13- 19 year olds (www.careerpilot.org.uk).

Where possible the University will continue to collaborate on joint programmes that can be offered by universities in the South West.

Collaboration between FE and HE institutions to increase access of under-represented groups to higher education within Gloucestershire remains strong.

GROWS – NNCO for Gloucestershire

NNCO funding ceased at the end of December 2016, the five institutions who had collaborated under NNCO funding have committed to fund the continuation of the work until December 2018. At this point, the collaboration will be reviewed for success before a further agreement is produced. Each partner has provided funding based on their HE student numbers to; maintain the Gloucestershire-wide outreach website, ensure activity takes place for years 7 and 8 and to have regular communication with the main schools CEIAG staff. Cirencester College who were not involved in the original project have now joined the partnership.

GAP – NCOP for Gloucestershire

The University is the lead institution for the NCOP funded project GAP (Gloucestershire Aspiration Programme). We are collaborating with other institutions in the partnership under the NCOP project. We already work with all the schools targeted by the NCOP project, but it will enable additional activity and sharing of good practice as well as delivering more collaborative activities and projects. The project activity will complement our primary long-term outreach and widening participation programme and access work was undertaken would ensure that students have access to both attainment and aspiration activities.

5.3 Student Success

The focus areas for student retention and success expenditure are as follows:

- The University plans to introduce a mentoring scheme to provide students, and in particular WP students, with support coming from other students who are well trained and supported and have their university experiences they can relate back to those being mentored. There are many students who feel more comfortable talking about shared experiences with their peers rather than seeking support initially from staff. The mentoring scheme will be offered in conjunction with an alumni mentoring scheme which will provide support and experiences from past students who can further enhance students' learning and employment goals. It is hoped that such a scheme will provide practical support and encouragement for students in both being

successful in their studies (e.g. study buddies/trusted 'advisers'), as well as raising aspirations for WP students in their career plans.

- A dedicated Student Achievement team that offers study skills workshops and support for academic writing. Language development and presentation skills will be expanded to provide a specific resource for those students who are under-represented in higher education. Tailored support sessions will be developed as well as targeting and marketing support to students to ensure those who are in need of support engage. Support will be provided from pre-applicant stage to graduation.
- Over the past 5 years, the University Induction Programme has been reviewed and enhanced to ensure students feel truly welcomed and speedily connected to the University from the start. Our communications with students after receiving their results, leading to their arrival, and then during their first few weeks with us, has helped keep withdrawals to a minimum. As part of this initiative, the University will continue to offer a specific pre-induction session for compact students who are less likely to move away from home and therefore may feel more isolated at first and specific pre-induction events for mature students who desire specifically tailored information and to aid their acclimatisation to HE study.
- Working in partnership with the Students' Union, the University is planning to develop a full range of activities for students (aimed especially at WP students) to be able to participate in. This programme will be linked to Induction, but continue throughout the academic year. The programme will be focused on enabling students to engage in a range of informal cultural events devised to complement the traditional sports and entertainments offer led by the Students' Union. Students will be able to build upon their studies, in order to develop connections, friendships in their student life away from their course.
- A Working Group was established to consider the impact of the DSA changes and how these may affect student retention. Various options were considered and it was then decided to use OFFA funding to reimburse the £200 contribution towards DSA equipment that students are now expected to pay. The Group were concerned that some students would not be able to access their equipment and software without this funding and as a result might struggle to complete their course. In addition to this, the Working Group also made the decision to use OFFA money to continue to fund note-taking support for students who need it. The Disability Services Manager devised a robust system for students to apply for this support to ensure that the University is consistent in its approach. There was concern that some students may no longer be eligible for DSA support due to the criteria becoming increasingly narrow. In order to ensure that students can still access a range of support, even without DSA, the University of Gloucestershire has invested in a range of assistive software for the libraries as well as a large number of extra Digital Voice recorders for students to borrow. The University will maintain funding this support to ensure no disabled students are disadvantaged in their studies.

- Our dedicated support group will continue for male trainee teachers along with peer and alumni support schemes during the course at points of particular pressure (prior to placements etc).

The University is investing in an ambitious estates strategy, which provides community orientated social and academic areas. Provision of additional university residences within a new student village from September 2017 will provide all new L4 students with the option of campus accommodation, assisting with integration into university life as well as retention and the overall university experience.

Academic Subject communities have been established over the past 2 years, these have been found to be building supportive, subject-orientated groupings where students can genuinely feel part of a community. A number of Subject Communities have been enhanced through estates developments, which have created fit-for-purpose spaces, and social learning facilities, which have provided students with a greater sense of belonging. A development programme is on-going working to develop specific facilities for all Subject Communities.

5.4 Progression

At the close of 2017/18, the first cohort to have accessed 'Your Future Plan' from the outset of their study will graduate. 2018/19 will be a period of consolidation, refinement and development for 'Your Future Plan', with the fresh focus on removing practical and attitudinal barriers to employability for students from a Widening Participation background.

- Personal Tutors will be resourced to have bespoke, reflective, action-centred conversations with every undergraduate student about their futures and these will take place throughout the student lifecycle.
- For students at risk of not achieving that transition, there will be an ambitious programme of 1:1 mentoring by alumni and other external professionals, providing role models, building confidence and expanding students' understanding of their potential and where their degree could take them. Piloted in 2017/18 and expanded in 2018/19, mentoring will be complemented by work shadowing opportunities and psychometric testing that equips participants to identify and articulate their particular strengths.
- In recognition that a large proportion of our students are studying degrees in the arts & cultural sector and that these sectors are characterised by freelance portfolio working, we will provide a series of interventions that ease their transition into what can otherwise be a challenging pattern of working.
- Summer internship programme will be launched for Level 5 students, enabling them to progress their skills in a work setting, enhance their CVs and make valuable

contacts for the future. Hosts are expected to include SMEs and large businesses; community and third sector organisations; and departments within University of Gloucestershire itself.

- A work experience bursary will be available to disadvantaged students who would not otherwise take up optional opportunities or a placement overseas.
- We will create a new work experience programme for groups, through which students from a Widening Participation background will be organised into teams to deliver aspiration-building activities in local schools.
- We have been pleased over the last two years to be able to offer targeted careers workshops to disabled students, and aim to both continue this and offer similarly tailored provision to mature and BME students in 2018/19.

6. TARGETS AND MILESTONES

The University is encouraged by its progress towards its desired widening participation outcomes. The figures have been updated to include the most recently published HESA data and where possible have used the HESA location-adjusted benchmarks to assess performance.

The following targets have been identified:

- Maintain the current position in the recruitment of students from state schools and colleges, which currently exceeds the location-adjusted benchmark (the benchmark was 94.4% in 2015/16).
- The University will seek to achieve its location-adjusted benchmark for young full-time undergraduate entrants from low participation neighbourhoods as measured by POLAR3 (the benchmark was 15.6% in 2015/16). There has been good progress in this area over the last two years, and we have increased the target and milestones accordingly.
- The University will seek to exceed the benchmark figure (the benchmark is currently 12.7%, 2015/16) for known disability of new entrants on undergraduate courses. We feel 15/16 may have been a bumper year as it was the last year in which students could apply for the old style DSAs, however, we have stretched our target and subsequent milestones.
- The University is confident that the additional financial support and support throughout the applicant and student journey for mature students should and have led to a reduction in the proportion of mature students opting to withdraw from their course prior to completion.

- There has been a positive decrease in the non-continuation rates for mature students, the decrease is below the HESA benchmark, however, the non-completion rate did increase year-on-year for the past three academic years. The University will look to keep this decreased trend in non-continuation rates and remain well under the 2014/15 benchmark of 13.2%.

The following table summarises progress to date on these measures and indicates milestones for progress over the next four years, where asterisked figures are actual data.

	BM 2014	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
State school or college	94.7	96.1 *	95.9 *	97.3 *	96.9*	95.9*	96.0	96.1	96.2	96.3	96.3	96.3
POLAR3	15.9	12.9 *	14.5 *	14.0 *	15.1*	15.6*	14.7	14.9	15.1	15.4	15.9	16.0
Known disability	12.7	-	-	-	-	-	15.0	15.5	16.0	16.5	16.7	16.9
Mature Students Non-Continuation	12.5	9.4*	6.7*	8.3*	9.6*	8.0*	9.3	8.9	8.6	8.4	8.2	8.2

* Actual data

Subject Specific Attainment

The University will seek to expand our interventions to raise attainment by delivering subject specific outreach activities in partner schools. The aim is to deliver an attainment programme of subject specific outreach activities for widening participation students. See table below.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
No. of students seen by subject specific officers for subject specific activities (talks, taster days, and conferences):	60	62	64	66	68
No. of subject talks, taster days, subject conferences organised and delivered by subject specific officers	1380	1430	1480	1530	1580

ITT activity

- There are further areas of under-representation amongst the ITT cohort requiring separate focus, hence the additional targets set out below. Although the University has been successful in meeting its milestones for attracting male primary teachers the numbers of male ITT students recruited have been relatively low. We are therefore aiming to increase this cohort, whilst maintaining the percentage targets

originally set. ITT target groups will have access to the hardship fund, to ensure any financial difficulties whilst studying.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
% Male primary teachers	19.5*	19.0*	19.0*	18.2*	19.5	20	20.5	21.0	21.5	21.5
% BME groups (ITT courses)	5.1*	3.8*	4.0*	6.6*	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5
% Male primary withdrawal	17*	3*	16.0*	14.0*	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.8

Outreach with school/college partners

The University is proud of the networks built through compact schools and colleges which provide a sound structure to widen participation. Within the 2015/16 Access Agreement, the University altered its focus on compact partners to ensure those with partners with more students from LPNs received an enhanced relationship compared to those partners where progression to HE was already good. New partners are being targeted through their widening participation profiles and encouraged to join the scheme.

The three Strategic Alliance colleges, Gloucestershire College, and South Gloucestershire and Stroud College and Bath College are part of the compact scheme and there is confidence that these closer links allow for greater access to these students and progression opportunities. Early indications have shown that increased collaborative work has increased progression of their students both within the college to their HE programmes and to the University.

The following table summarises progress to date:

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Compact partners (WP)	22*	22*	21*	24*	25*	26	27	27	27	27	27
Students from WP compact partners	341*	223*	304*	333*	378*	350	365	380	395	400	405

* Actual data

Retention

We continue to undertake considerable work on retention activities. The data reflects the retention of students from one academic year to another at undergraduate level.

The following table summarises progress to date on this measure and indicates milestones for progress over the next five years:

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Non-completion rates	7.8*	6.8*	6.9*	6.5*	7.2*	6.7*	7.0	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.8

Because the University's fee-regulated part-time cohort does not represent a significant proportion of its overall intake, there are no specific targets relating to this area. Part-time students will form part of the overall targets.

Progression Target

Your Future Plan is the University's programme for students to review their career journey and to be signposted to relevant interventions. Questionnaire completion is the gateway into Your Future Plan and therefore a key metric for Progression. The following table summarises progress to date on this measures and indicates milestones for progress over the Level 4 questionnaire:

	BM	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Completion rate for Your Future Plan questionnaire	57	62	67	72	77	82

In addition to this, we are introducing two new measures focussed on progression. The recent evaluation of financial support suggests that students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups are less likely to take up work placement opportunities due to the additional costs involved with the programme.

The first target is to award financial support to 500 students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups to undertake work experience in the UK. The second target is to award 30 Summer internships in the UK to Level 5 students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
No. of under-represented and disadvantaged students awarded work experience bursary	500	500	500	500	500
No. of Level 5 under-represented and disadvantaged students on Summer internship programme	30	30	30	30	30

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Our investment in the full-time outreach Data and Evaluation role has enabled us to setup a plan to evaluate long-term impact of our outreach activities. This year we have also joined the National Education Opportunities Network to support staff to develop their knowledge and skills in evaluating outreach activities to widen access, the approach based on establishing evidence and impact of all our interventions.

We are more successful at collecting and storing learners' data to monitor engagement of all targeted groups. The framework for evaluating high and low-intensity interventions is proving useful in targeting future outreach interventions. We are assessing the impact of outreach activities in relation to raising aspiration to higher education for all interventions. We are using both formative and summative evaluation framework to measure residential and mentoring programmes impact and enhance their effectiveness. Our process of developing evidence-based high-intensity activities allows us to track students into university applications (or not) for all who applied to participate in these activities but did not get the offer, dropouts, actual attendees, and no shows.

Currently, the Disability, Dyslexia and Learning Support Team, as well as the Mental Health and Wellbeing team, carry out an annual overall satisfaction survey as well as more specific evaluation of interventions, e.g. study skills support and note-taking support. Any training that is undertaken is also evaluated so that improvements can be made within the year. Alongside existing surveys, we are looking to develop case studies, based on the qualitative data gathered, to evidence the impact of student engagement on student success. To do this, we will be using the framework in relation to internal retention and student success measures, engaging students from pre-entry level through to the key stages in the student lifecycle to determine any future priorities.

The University is committed to ensuring that financial support is utilised effectively to ensure the best possible outcomes for our students and that all target groups are accessing eligible funding. In 2015/16 the University received fewer applications for hardship funding than had been expected, with the result that expenditure on hardship funding was substantially less than had been forecast. To help identify the reasons for this lack of demand for hardship funding the University sent the survey from the 'Closing the Gap' report to all students who received any financial support and evaluated the results to determine whether we could target financial support at specific groups. This informed the University decision to offer the Opportunities Fund.

The University will continue to survey students, and staff will be attending the OFFA training on the statistical model and online tools with the hope that this will enable us to further evaluate the amount and type of financial support on offer. In addition, we are currently developing our student record system to enable us to easily and consistently identify students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups.

This will enable us to streamline the administration of bursaries, identify groups who could benefit from targeted bursaries and assess the percentages of WP students receiving each bursary to ensure they reflect the wider population as expected.

We will continue maximising the use of our online Future Plan portal and the expertise of Your Future Plan Data and Information staff to analyse the information

set out under Section 6 of Progression. This will include conducting an annual survey of students on the Your Future Plan questionnaire's design, collecting feedback from mentors and mentees from workshops. We will continue monitoring the impact of aspiration-building programmes and learning generated through internships. Our current analysis strategy includes monitoring employment outcomes for widening participation groups, in comparison to non-WP students.

The University Executive team approve both the Access Agreement submission and the monitoring return.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The University's Equality Objectives explicitly link with the objectives in this agreement in relation to outreach, student recruitment and retention.

To ensure that the Equality Objectives interact with the Access Agreement, these targets also form part of the University's overall Operating Plan and Faculty Business Plans. There are many aspects of this Access Agreement that meet the University's equality objectives.

- Successful progression into employment by implementing personalised career planning encompassing key groups such as disabled students and BME students and mature students.
- Work with mature students aims to target under-represented groups (by age).
- Retention activity with ITT students specifically targets two other protected characteristics (race and gender).

The University is committed to advancing equality and diversity in all its practices. It is developing a culture that actively respects and values differences, recognising that staff and students from different backgrounds and experiences bring valuable insight to the University. It is an inclusive, supportive institution and makes every effort to communicate this to all staff and students through staff induction programmes, equality webpages and the Student Handbook.

The Students' Union is active in providing opportunities for all students to engage in inclusive activities. As well as a Community Officer whose remit is Welfare and Campaign, the Students' Union has five part-time officers elected to represent students who are highlighted with protected characteristics. The students' Union runs a range of activities for students to celebrate diversity and to raise awareness through specific campaigns.

In April 2016, the University made a successful application to the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) to be part of its project "Addressing the under-representation of particular student groups". We were one of twelve universities selected and chose to focus on increasing the diversity of BME students in the Schools of Media and Education, with

a particular focus on Initial Teacher Training, reflecting the priority in our Access Agreement.

Having set up a project team, we have spent the last year reviewing our evidence to inform our choice of equality group i.e. BME students, identifying key barriers to access for the University and undertaking research to provide an evidence base. For the remainder of the project (which concludes in December 2018) we will be analysing our evidence and using it to develop initiatives to support improved access and attainment to trial in the two schools. Our expected outcome is increased participation in the targeted student groups and programmes.

9. PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

The University of Gloucestershire is committed to ensuring that students have timely, accurate and transparent information regarding the pricing and content of their course. Details of fees and financial support for students are published on the University website and as soon as they are approved by the Office for Fair Access. Information is provided to UCAS and the SLC for the purposes of informing their user groups. All information will be available in print, electronic and face- to-face form, including at open days and parent events. Any additional costs are available to see on the website and all publicity advises prospective students to seek this information.

The University's social networking groups invite questions from prospective students and will continue to be dealt with promptly. Market research reports will inform published information (digital and print) and will reflect the needs of under-represented groups. A range of video profiles communicate the University of Gloucestershire experience to prospective students and these videos represent students from diverse backgrounds.

10. CONSULTING WITH STUDENTS

The Students' Union has been involved in drawing up the plans for this agreement. The University will continue to discuss and monitor progress against this Access Agreement. The Students' Union has been invited to all meetings where the Access Agreement is discussed.

It fully support the University's long-term ambitions for growth and fully supports university priorities to identify under-represented groups who should benefit from the financial support packages.