2016/17
ACCESS AGREEMENT WITH THE OFFICE FOR FAIR ACCESS
## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Access Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>BAME</td>
<td>Black Asian and Minority Ethnic</td>
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<tr>
<td>DLHE</td>
<td>Destination of Leavers from Higher Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSA</td>
<td>Disabled Students’ Allowance</td>
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<td>HE</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
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<td>HEAT</td>
<td>Higher Education Access Tracker</td>
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<tr>
<td>IAG</td>
<td>Information, Advice and Guidance</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITT</td>
<td>Initial Teacher Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>LPN</td>
<td>Low Participation Neighbourhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>NS-SEC</td>
<td>National Statistics - Socio-Economic Classification</td>
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<td>OFFA</td>
<td>Office for Fair Access</td>
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<td>PG</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
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<td>POLAR</td>
<td>Participation of Local Areas</td>
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<td>RUSU</td>
<td>Reading University Students' Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>SLC</td>
<td>Student Loans Company</td>
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<tr>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics</td>
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<td>UCAS</td>
<td>Universities and Colleges Admissions Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>UG</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
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<tr>
<td>WP</td>
<td>Widening Participation</td>
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1. Introduction

The University of Reading is a research-intensive university with a world-class reputation for teaching, research and enterprise. Reading enjoys strong application rates and is a consistently popular higher education choice in the UK. We are a global institution with students from over 150 countries enrolled on our programmes, and an increasing number of international teaching partnerships. Our broad portfolio of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes covers the arts, humanities, business, sciences and social sciences. We regularly update and improve our programmes as new ideas emerge, and industry and student needs change. Our on-going investment in staff and teaching and learning facilities of the highest quality ensures that our students are challenged to achieve their full potential while at University, and are well prepared for the wider world when they leave. Our aim is to provide opportunity to those who are equipped to benefit irrespective of background and personal circumstance.

The University of Reading’s strong commitment to the widening participation agenda is marked by considerable success in drawing students from diverse backgrounds both globally and in the UK. Almost 58% of our (home-domiciled) undergraduate population belong to the under-represented groups we have targeted up to now (see section 4). We have a consistently strong retention rate (94%\(^1\) in 2013/14), and 93%\(^2\) of our 2013 graduates are in employment or study within six months of graduating. With 76% of those employed in professional or managerial roles.

2. A Strategic Whole-Institution Approach

The University aims to align its widening participation strategy, covering access, student success and progression, with the institution’s overall strategy. Its Widening Participation Strategy and Access Agreement Committee reports to the University Executive Board, operates strategically to ensure access is aligned to other institutional goals, and informs University policy at the highest level.

In recognition of the importance of both a whole-institution approach and a whole student lifecycle approach the University has a Director of Student Development and Access who works closely with Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) and the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning as well as the student support services of the University. The specific remit of the role is to ensure the alignment of our widening participation strategy with our institutional strategies (and vice versa) and in particular to co-ordinate the implementation of the University’s Access Agreement commitments across the student lifecycle. The role sits across the academic and student support spheres of the University and is a consistent voice embedding the Access agenda in both the strategic and operational workings of the University.

3. Consulting and Working with Students

The Reading University Students’ Union (RUSU) has been involved in the creation of all of our Access Agreements and in the general formulation of strategy and policy on widening participation and access. The Widening Participation Strategy and Access Agreement Committee membership includes at least one of the sabbatical officers who has been involved in drafting this agreement. RUSU and the University of Reading have a strong working relationship founded on partnership and synergy in a number of projects and initiatives. RUSU and the University work collaboratively on outreach activity and this is being further developed in alignment with RUSU’s strategic aim to create more opportunities for students to volunteer and interact positively with the local and wider community. The Community and Development sabbatical officer role highlights the importance of this work.

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\(^1\) 94% of all UG students enrolled during 2013/14 completed the academic year.

\(^2\) 2013 graduates Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education Survey.
4. Access Record

Assessment of our Access record reveals significant success in recruiting under-represented groups to the University of Reading.

Mapping of our 2012/13–2014/15 target groups against our 2014/15 cohort reveals that, even excluding the state school target group, 58% of (home-domiciled) entrants belonged to one or more of those target groups; and of these, almost half actually belonged to two or more target groups.

In line with OFFA’s stated sector outcome objectives we have been narrowing the participation gap between people from the least and most advantaged backgrounds. The average entry tariff of recent years puts the University of Reading on a par with Universities in OFFA’s ‘high tariff’ category of Universities; however our recruitment of young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds is significantly stronger than the average for a high tariff institution. The participation rate of the most advantaged young people (from areas in the fifth quintile of the POLAR3 dataset) relative to the most disadvantaged entrants (from areas in the first or second quintiles) to higher tariff universities was most recently calculated by OFFA as 6.3. However, at Reading this relative participation rate has narrowed from 2.0 in 2011/12 to 1.73 for 2014/15 new entrants, meaning that for every student we admitted from the least advantaged neighbourhoods we admitted 1.73 students from the most advantaged neighbourhoods. The University of Reading is therefore making a significant contribution to the objective of reducing the participation gap, especially given the high average tariff of our entrants.

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3 Target groups used in this analysis were: Disabled; DSA; NS-SEC 4–7; BAME; income <25k; POLAR Q1 or Q2. The calculation did not include Foundation Degree students which we would expect to increase this figure further. Neither did it include state school entrants as we already know that more than four fifths of our entrants fall into this group.

4 ‘High tariff’ universities are the top one third of universities based on average entry qualifications of entrants. The Guardian university league tables cites our average entry tariff as 379 for entry in 2013, 374 for 2012, 367 for 2011, which puts the University of Reading variously just inside or just outside the top one third based on average tariff.

5 Trends in Young Participation by Student Background and Selectivity of Institution, OFFA Research paper, p13 (February 2014)
In the most recent recruitment round we have met and significantly exceeded our recruitment targets for state school, NS-SEC 4-7, disabled, and BAME entrants, as well as entrants from low participation neighbourhoods and from low-income backgrounds. We are also maintaining close alignment with our HESA PI benchmarks as they increase over the years (table 2).

Ethnicity is an area we have examined closely both from a widening participation and from an equality and diversity perspective. We are pleased to note a continued trend in increased ethnic diversity. There is no HESA benchmark for this target but our 2014/15 intake is higher than the 17.2% cited for new entrants to English HEIs outside London and significantly higher than the target we set for ourselves. Some of this success is attributable to the continued strong recruitment to Law and Pharmacy, areas where we have put significant investment in the last few years.

We have consistently exceeded our benchmark target for students in receipt of DSA. In addition, our own internal monitoring indicates that representation of all disabled students remains high. To date 11.9% of 2014/15 entrants have declared a disability. This is expected to rise as the year progresses and therefore compares well to the 8.0% an end of year figure of all 2012/13 first year students in UK HEIs.

Table 1: Proportion of all full time first degree undergraduates receiving DSA (data from HESA performance indicators table T7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Disabled Students (in receipt of DSA)</th>
<th>Actual %</th>
<th>AA target %</th>
<th>HESA location adjusted benchmark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.0*</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Not yet published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Figure as at March 2015. Previous years’ data suggest that the final figure reported to HESA may exceed this by around 1%.

We have exceeded our targets for recruitment of male trainee teachers for both primary and secondary teaching, and have met or exceeded those for BAME students on the BAEd and PGCE primary degrees. Recruitment of BAME students to the PGCE secondary is just short of target; however, the University no longer determines the selection of trainee teachers for the majority of PGCE places as they form part of the Schools Direct scheme, where the trainees are appointed as employees of the school they are working in.

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7 Equality in Higher Education Statistical Report 2014: Students (p72)
Table 2: Proportion of young, full-time, first degree entrants admitted from state schools, National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) groups 4-7, Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPNs) low-income backgrounds and BAME students. (Data taken from HESA performance indicators tables T1a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>State School New Entrants</th>
<th>NS-SEC 4, 5, 6, 7. New Entrants</th>
<th>LPNs (POLAR3 Q1) New Entrants</th>
<th>Household Income &lt;£25k New Entrants</th>
<th>Ethnicity (BAME) New Entrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actual %</td>
<td>AA target %</td>
<td>HESA location adjusted benchmark</td>
<td>Actual %</td>
<td>AA target %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>86.7**</td>
<td>83.8</td>
<td>Not yet published</td>
<td>27.6**</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actual %</td>
<td>86.1</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>86.1</td>
<td>82.6</td>
<td>86.1</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>82.6</td>
<td>85.2</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>83.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Early indication for 2014/15 drawn from our own internal data. Based on previous years’ figures, these estimates are expected to be largely in line with the final data reported to HESA.
For 2014/15 we expect to have met and exceeded 14 of our 17 recruitment targets and have maintained close alignment with our WP benchmarks as they increase over the years. Overall, since our baseline year of 2010/11, we have made excellent progress in recruiting students from under-represented groups. Therefore, in this Access Agreement we are taking the opportunity to focus more strategically on a smaller set of target groups as listed below (see section 7.3).

5. Student Success and Progression Record

The University of Reading is committed not only to providing access to HE for our target groups but to ensuring that they are appropriately supported to complete their studies successfully.

Our retention record is consistently strong with 92.5% of all 2013/14 entrants continuing from year one to year two of their studies, with no more than a 5 percentage points variation for any under-represented group. This high level of retention is all the more remarkable given our high proportion of students from under-represented groups as such students are known to be more likely to withdraw from HE. A study funded jointly by HEFCE and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation attributed the high retention rate to our university-wide commitment to personal tutoring and to the provision of contextualised study support through our University Study Advisors. The support provided through our Student Wellbeing Service (Disability Office, Counselling Service and mental health advisers) also plays a significant role in supporting students to stay on course and as a result has a strong sector-wide reputation, particularly for supporting students with mental health conditions.

We continue to monitor the distribution of degree classifications and post-graduation destinations for each of our under-represented groups. The patterns align with those from the HEFCE report on ‘Differences in Degree Outcomes’ published in March 2014 which shows that there are pervasive sector-wide differences in academic attainment and progression when students are grouped by background, age, gender, ethnicity, disability, school type etc. The widest attainment gap amongst University of Reading students is between BAME and white students, but there is also an evident gap between students from low-income backgrounds and those not. The differentials between success in securing employment or further study opportunities are not as marked but are nevertheless present primarily for students from low-income backgrounds and for disabled students. We therefore recognize that support for both academic attainment and progression into employment and/or study are important and this is reflected in our revised targets.

6. Tuition Fees for Students Entering in 2016/17

For full-time undergraduate students, we intend to charge tuition fees of £9,000 p.a. for 2016/17 entrants with the exception of the second, third and fourth years of study in the BA Accounting and Business programme for which tuition fees of £7,200 p.a. will apply.

Part-time undergraduate students beginning their studies in 2016/17 will be charged £750 for each 10 credits undertaken up to a maximum of £6,750. Improvements to our processes for part-time

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8 Under-represented groups monitored: disabled; NS-SEC 4-7; BAME; mature; income <25k & <£16k; POLAR Q1 or Q2; school type.
9 Differences in Degree Outcomes: key findings. HEFCE report (March 2014)
10 Comparing and evaluating the impacts on student retention of different approaches to supporting students through study advice and personal development. https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/what-works-student-retention/Reading_Oxford_Brookes_What_Works_Final_Report
11 Differences in Degree Outcomes: key findings. HEFCE report (March 2014)
students have enabled us to remove the 10% administration charge with the aim of improving the experience for part-time students at the University of Reading.

For undergraduate students on a placement year or year abroad, we intend to charge 15% of the relevant fee.

For postgraduate courses for initial teacher training (ITT), we intend to charge tuition fees of £9,000 p.a. for 2016/17. For students entering through the Schools Direct route, the following fees will apply:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Fees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)</td>
<td>£9,000 p.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) only</td>
<td>£7,500 p.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Certificate in Early Years</td>
<td>£7,000 p.a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students who are continuing their studies will be charged at the rate appropriate for their year of entry, as defined in previous Access Agreements with an inflationary increase where appropriate.

From 2017-18 entry and onwards, we expect to charge the maximum allowable fee for full-time undergraduate students and postgraduate ITT students.

### 7. Expenditure on Access and Retention and Success Measures

#### 7.1 Expenditure

For 2016/17 we intend to maintain our level of expenditure at 27% of our fee income above the basic amount\(^\text{12}\) as agreed in our 2015/16 Access Agreement.

We have based our expenditure estimates on assumptions of meeting the current projected targets for student recruitment set by the University. However, actual expenditure may vary in the light of actual student numbers. In such circumstances, we would still aim to maintain the proportionate commitment of our fee income.

#### 7.2 Balance of Expenditure

In our 2015/16 agreement we revised the planned balance of spend in response to findings on the effectiveness of different measures to support access and success\(^\text{13}\) and on the basis of the analysis of our widening participation record. In 2016/17 we intend to maintain the balance between outreach and recruitment activity and success and progression activity. Therefore our intention is to spend:

- 40.1% of the total on financial support: 28.0% on the Reading Bursary Scheme and the remaining 12.1% on fee waivers for Foundation Degrees, and other forms of discretionary financial support, e.g. our placement bursaries and Hardship Fund
- The remaining 59.9% will be split equally between outreach and recruitment on the one hand and student success and progression on the other.

\(^{12}\) The basic amount is defined by OFFA for different modes of study, e.g. for full-time undergraduate programmes the basic fee is £6,000.

\(^{13}\) *Do Bursaries have an Effect on Retention Rates*, OFFA interim report (March 2014)
These are our broad intentions; however, the University is working through a period of substantial change under our Strategy 2026 project and we are also mindful of possible changes to HE funding and further policy changes in the future which may require us to alter the balance of spend.

### 7.3 Target Groups

We have revised our target groups for 2016/17 and onward activity. Target groups are identified separately for the three areas of activity (recruitment and outreach, success and progression) and span the student lifecycle. This more explicit set of target groups will help to align our activity accordingly.

| Students from low income backgrounds: (<£25k) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Black Asian and Minority Ethnic students | ✓ | ✓ |
| State school students | ✓ |
| Students from National Statistic Agency – Socio-Economic Categories 4-7 | ✓ |
| Students from Low Participation (in HE) Neighbourhoods | ✓ |
| Disabled students | ✓ | ✓ |

### 8. Continuing and Additional Activity

Our activity will include:

- Financial support for students through the Reading Bursary Scheme, targeted fee-waivers, placement bursaries and our University Hardship Fund;
- Consolidation and expansion of existing pre-entry outreach activity;
- Interventions to support improved attainment and strong retention;
- Enhanced support for students to maximise their career prospects as part of our strategy to drive progression beyond the University.

In the sections that follow, we provide a broad outline of our approach to financial support, outreach, student success and progression.

#### 8.1 Financial Support for Students

8.1.1 Students entering in 2016/17

We have listened to students on what is most useful to them and therefore the default option will be a cash bursary, though students will be able to opt for a fee waiver should they wish. Following findings
from the review of the NSP programme\textsuperscript{14} we will commit to guarantee bursaries to all students with confirmed household incomes of less than £25k in all years of study. Furthermore, we will direct a proportion of our financial support budget to discretionary funding through schemes such as the placement bursaries and the University Hardship Fund.

Eligible students will receive financial awards under the following schemes:

- **Reading Bursary Scheme (RBS):** All eligible students\textsuperscript{15} from households with annual incomes of less than £25k will receive a cash award of £1,000 in each year of undergraduate study\textsuperscript{16}.
- **Postgraduate ITT students:** Eligible students from households with annual incomes of less than £25k will receive an award worth £500.
- **Care Leavers, Foyer students\textsuperscript{17} and estranged students:** As part of our ongoing commitment to care-leaver students and in recognition of the specific needs of these three groups of students, we intend to supplement the standard RBS provision by offering additional financial support. In addition to the other awards listed, these students will be eligible for cash bursaries of £1,000 in each year of study.
- **Foundation Degree Fee Waivers:** Students entering our Foundation Degree in Children’s Development and Learning or progressing onto our BA Children’s Development and Learning programme will receive a 50% fee waiver; this waiver applies to both years of the Foundation Degree\textsuperscript{18}. We are particularly keen to support these students because ca. 80% are mature students, ca. 95% are female (many with families) and many are on low incomes. When qualified they have a very strong impact on the local community.
- **Placement Bursaries:** Students with household incomes of less than £35k may apply to receive a bursary of between £200 and £1,000 to support them to cover the cost of undertaking a placement as part of their degree programme.
- **University Hardship Fund:** Any student in financial hardship may apply to the University Hardship fund. A proportion of this fund will be resourced through the Access Agreement.
- **Part-time students:** Part-time students will be eligible for the above financial support on a pro-rata basis.
- **Year Abroad or year-in-industry/placement students:** despite not paying the full £9,000 fee, students on a year abroad or a year-long placement will continue to receive the full amount of any bursary that they are otherwise eligible for.

8.1.2 Students entering before 2016/17

Students commencing their studies prior to 2016/17 will be eligible for financial support as outlined in the Access Agreement relevant to their year of entry.

8.2 Pre-entry outreach activity

8.2.1 Target groups

Our target groups for entry are set out in section 7.3.

\textsuperscript{14} Formative Evaluation of the National Scholarship Programme – Year 2 (November 2013). End of year report to HEFCE by CFE and Edge Hill University.

\textsuperscript{15} Eligible students are UG students who are eligible for funding through the Student Finance Authorities of England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the EU.

\textsuperscript{16} Eligibility for these awards will be assessed at the beginning of each year.

\textsuperscript{17} Foyer students are students who have come to the University from Foyer accommodation for homeless young people.

\textsuperscript{18} Note that recipients of these fee waivers are not eligible for other financial awards.
When focusing our pre-entry outreach work we take a ‘whole-student’ approach, assessing students on the basis of a range of target characteristics and using all the data available to us, with those meeting a number of targets being the highest priority.

Targeting outreach work towards students from low participation neighbourhoods (LPNs, Q1 and Q2) is a particular focus, as LPNs are not only a target in their own right but a good proxy for other target groups for which we cannot access direct data on individuals pre-entry (e.g. BAME, NS-SEC 4-7, low income backgrounds).

8.2.2 Whole-institution approach

We aim to work in an increasingly cohesive way in terms of our institution-wide outreach, identifying effective activity and sharing good practice.

• In 2014, we established a University-wide recruitment and outreach network to share good practice and coordinate work.
• We are in the process of establishing University-wide recording of activity, having procured and piloted a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system in 2014/15.
• The CRM will also facilitate University-wide shared practice in tracking the results of activity to allow evaluation and monitoring.
• The CRM will hold WP data on both schools/colleges and (where available) individuals, giving users across the University access to relevant data.
• Our policy is to treat widening participation, recruitment and wider community outreach as complementary rather than separate activities, integrating the strategic aims of all these activities and aligning the objectives across the institution. In doing this we aim to ensure that the maximum range of activity undertaken across the University is harnessed to promote to under-represented groups participation in HE generally and at the University of Reading in particular.
• All undergraduate recruitment activity will have due regard to ensuring we attract a diverse range of students. This will be achieved in a number of ways; for example:
  ○ providing travel bursaries to ensure finance is no barrier to accessing recruitment and outreach events like open days,
  ○ using widening participation school-level data to help determine which schools and colleges to target in recruitment and outreach activity,
  ○ ensuring that on-course support for under-represented groups (e.g. disabled students, care leavers) is showcased,
  ○ ensuring recruitment materials show a diverse range of students through imagery and quotes,
  ○ ensuring recruitment and IAG materials promote the on-course financial support available to lower-income students,
  ○ ensuring our student ambassadors represent diversity.
• We are developing policies and materials to ensure that all outreach activity (whether WP-focussed, community-focussed or relating to public engagement with research) will showcase higher education, and in particular the University of Reading, in some way, even if this is not the primary focus of the activity. This will provide participants in a range of activity, from research engagement to museums work, with a concrete example of a university, thus promoting participation in higher education.

8.2.3 Pre-entry bursary provision

In order to promote fair access to our on-campus outreach programme and ensure that students from under-represented backgrounds are well represented at all outreach events, we are introducing a
Widening Participation and Access Travel Policy. This is an expansion of our pre-entry travel bursaries which were more limited in scope\(^\text{19}\).

The policy will allow us to cover the costs of travelling to on-campus events for those from under-represented groups.

The objectives are:

- To ensure that all prospective students have fair access to events and activities, removing any financial barriers;
- To promote participation in HE among under-represented group by facilitating their exposure to university;
- To provide additional encouragement to those from under-represented groups to engage in our programme of recruitment and outreach activity.

Additionally, we will continue to make support available for students with disabilities throughout the enquiry, application and admissions process right up to, and including, an Orientation Day just prior to enrolment. The bursaries will contribute to costs incurred for support such as sign language interpreters, any other disability-related needs, and travel.

8.2.4 Pre-entry outreach and recruitment activity

Our primary scheme for intensive WP work is the Reading Scholars Programme, which offers sustained, long-term contact to young people from under-represented groups. The programme includes summer schools, subject masterclasses, e-mentoring, student shadowing and a range of other activity, offering regular and intensive contact with a university to promote participation in HE.

In addition we run a very wide range of subject-specific events and activities, including taster days, masterclasses, in-school enrichment activities and summer schools. Some of this is targeted exclusively towards under-represented groups; all of it uses WP indicators as a prioritization factor.

Further, as described above (section 8.2.1), all of our recruitment and outreach activity aims to meet widening participation aims through a range of measures.

8.2.5 Long-term outreach

There are three ways in which we will strengthen our work to raise the aspiration and attainment of potential students of all ages, from primary school upwards, and to undertake more sustained, long-term outreach work:

1) Adaptation of activity for primary age children

The University undertakes a very wide range of activity with primary age children in the local community, from providing volunteer student helpers in local schools to activities and enrichment in our museums. Often these children come from groups who are under-represented in HE.

We will ensure that, in addition to its existing value for young people, this activity is adapted or augmented to specifically encourage participation in higher education. We are developing materials and scripts for those delivering the activity to use, based around the concept of a university and the benefits of going to university. These have been developed in collaboration with our Institute for Education which has research expertise on effective materials for this age group.

2) Extension of Scholars Programme

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\(^{19}\) Almost 40% of students who have received a pre-entry travel bursary over the preceding three years have enrolled at Reading.
The University’s flagship Reading Scholars Programme, launched in 2012/13, offers sustained contact to young people close to entering higher education and includes summer schools, subject masterclasses, e-mentoring, student shadowing and a range of other activity. It is provided for those in target groups and gives them regular intensive contact with a university right through to the point of choosing a university to apply to. It has so far extended across Year 12, and we intend to extend the programme down to younger years so that rather than a one-year sustained programme it is sustained across two or three years.

3) Collaboration with other HEIs

Through our new Network for Collaborative Outreach (the Study Higher partnership with the University of Oxford, Oxford Brookes University, and Bucks New University), we will have sustained contact as a partnership with a group of students from Year 9 right through to Year 13 (see section 8.2.6).

8.2.6 Effective collaboration

We will use our National Network for Collaborative Outreach to raise aspirations and inform learners in schools and colleges across our region about higher education. Study Higher – a Network for Collaborative Outreach with Oxford Brookes University, the University of Oxford, and Buckinghamshire New University – will deliver a coordinated outreach programme among schools and colleges across Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and areas of Wiltshire. Our provision will include Information, Advice and Guidance, subject-specific activity, and a Study Higher conference for teachers and careers advisors.

Our other collaborative work is wide-ranging and includes:

• A partnership between Bath, Cardiff, Oxford, Reading and Southampton Universities, UNet (the Universities Network), which aims to improve access to selective universities. Through collaborative outreach UNet encourages post-16 students to consider higher education opportunities at leading universities in the region, supporting them in making an informed decision about the degree which is most appropriate for them. Students have the opportunity to participate in activities organised by partner universities and benefit from a jointly organised ‘Choices’ conference which provides in-depth information about our respective undergraduate offers.

• The Pathways to Property initiative is a programme for Year 12 students in UK state schools and colleges who would like to find out more about a career in the property sector. Led by the Reading Real Estate Foundation (RREF) at the University of Reading, the initiative is supported by British Land, one of the largest property development and investment companies in the UK, the educational charity The Sutton Trust and other leading real estate firms and charitable trusts. The Pathways to Property scheme includes a residential summer School at the University of Reading, industry-led talks in schools throughout the year, work shadowing, and undergraduate mentoring.

• We are involved in the Chemistry For All programme, funded and coordinated by the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) and involving multiple HEI partners, which aims to widen participation in chemistry.

• We are members of the Routes Into Languages consortium, which aims to promote raised aspirations and attainment of students in secondary school and higher education in languages, thereby widening access to language study and helping to encourage a broader social profile of undergraduates studying languages.

• We are associates in SEPnet, the South East Physics Network, along with nine partner HEIs, one other HEI associate, and the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory. SEPnet activity includes an outreach programme to increase student interest and enrolment in this subject area.
• We are academic partners of two University Technical Colleges. Our contribution includes support for curriculum planning and pedagogies, academic support, a programme of outreach activity (IAG and subject-specific) and access to facilities.

• We place 250–300 current students per year in c.40 local primary and secondary schools as volunteer Student Tutors. This activity provides positive role models in schools for future generations of WP entrants. (This activity also supports student success and progression, as it offers current students, including those from target groups, an excellent opportunity to gain work experience).

• Reading holds the contract for the BIS/DfE funded STEMNET initiative and currently places c.650 professional STEM ambassadors from a range of businesses and institutions in 100 primary and secondary schools in Central & East Berkshire and Surrey.

• We have a partnership with the Whitley Excellence Cluster of Primary and Secondary Schools and the ASPIRE2 charity. Through this partnership we can support one of the most socially deprived areas of the country that is in the lowest 20% for HE participation. The collaboration supports children at these schools to reach their academic potential and to aspire to university level study. Our work will be informed by a substantial University of Reading research project that aims to understand the particular circumstances at work in the area and underpins our long-term commitment to making a difference to the lives of people in the Whitley area.

8.2.7 Evidence based activity

An evidence-based approach underpins our targeting for outreach purposes and, as one of the founder HEIs working on refining the HEAT tracking database, we continue to monitor which schools/colleges and individuals participate in our intensive outreach activities carefully. We record details of participating schools/individuals, numbers of participants etc. and review our targeting every year, taking into account the profiles of both the schools and the individual student participants in terms of postcode indices of multiple deprivation. In 2016, the HEAT data relating to the first cohort of the Reading Scholars Programme, who were due to enter higher education in 2014, will be released.

8.3 Student Retention, Success and Progression

8.3.1 Student retention

We have a strong student retention record which we attribute to our:

• embedded personal and academic tutoring;
• contextualised study support (one-to-one, workshops, embedded in the curriculum, embedded ASK advisors);
• close working with our Student Wellbeing Service (and our mental health advisor);
• school/departmental disability officers network and community of practice;
• central support schemes such as: peer supporters, academic mentors and social mentors;
• number of departmental buddy schemes;
• campus environment and first year hall accommodation;

20 The Whitley Excellence Cluster (WEC) was formed in 2004 and consists of two secondary schools and five primary schools in South Reading. Originally WEC received funding directly from the Department of Education as part of the national Excellence in Cities initiative. From 2008 to 2011, funding came through the Reading Borough Council, but when this came to an end support for continuing the work led to the creation of a charity, Aspire2, which is dedicated to improving the lives of Whitley families by supporting activities in and around the area.

21 Postgraduate students employed by Schools to provide local study advise/support to UG students. ASK advisors are supported and trained by the University Study Advisors team.
vibrant Students’ Union whose wealth of activities, clubs and societies foster a sense of belonging to the University and allows students to form alternative support networks;

- advice and guidance provided by the Students’ Union officers with responsibility specifically for: disabled students, mature students and BAME students.

In order to ensure that we continue to effectively support all our students, we have reaffirmed our commitment to personal tutoring which has been demonstrated to be successful in supporting student retention\(^{22}\).

We will ensure that support for retention activities and in particular for disabled students is maintained following the reduction in the Student Opportunity Allocation\(^{23}\) which currently funds much of this work.

We consider the Reading Bursary Scheme (awarded to eligible students throughout their programme) to be effective retention measures. Following the removal of the NSP and its prescriptions on spend we amended our bursary scheme for 2015/16 entrants as outlined above. We set the bursary amount by assessing the true cost of living for students in Reading and considering the other bursary and maintenance loan amounts available as well as a modest income from part-time work. We believe that the £1,000 per year bursary replaces some supplementary financial support that students from higher household income families would expect from their families. It is clear from our analysis of retention data that students from low income households make up a larger proportion of those that withdraw than is simply a product of chance and we therefore believe it is important to retain these bursaries. We have clarified that students on a placement year or a year abroad who qualify for an award will be eligible to receive the full amount of the bursary despite paying partial fees for that year.

We will continue to provide discretionary financial support to ensure retention through the University Hardship Fund, to which the Access Agreement will contribute.

8.3.2 Student success and progression

As described in section 7.2, 50% of the non-financial support spend will fund activity to enhance student success and progression. This balances our commitment to access into higher education with our commitment to supporting students throughout the undergraduate lifecycle.

In particular, preparing students for and supporting them into graduate-level employment/study has become a main focus of University strategy in recent years. A number of university-wide projects and initiatives have focused on this objective, including an ambitious initiative to develop placement elements within every undergraduate degree in the University. Our graduate destination rate has been stable (despite the economic downturn) with 93% of students in employment and around 71% of students in graduate-level employment and/or study, but there is a strong desire to improve on this. Analysis of our own data alongside national data\(^{24}\) reveals that progression to employment and further study is not as strong for a number of under-represented groups in HE. We will therefore continue to develop activity in this area in 2016/17.

As noted in the 2015/16 Access Agreement the University has been undertaking a strategic review of much of how it operates, the sorts of educational opportunities it provides and how students are supported to develop into successful graduates. The desire to better support our target group

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\(^{22}\) Comparing and evaluating the impacts on student retention of different approaches to supporting students through study advice and personal development: https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/what-works-student-retention/Reading_Oxford_Brookes_What_Works_Final_Report

\(^{23}\) The Student Opportunity Allocation is an allocation that HEFCE provide to universities as part of the teaching block grant. It is provided to help ensure successful outcomes for students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and to widen participation and improve social mobility.

\(^{24}\) Differences in Degree Outcomes: Key findings: HEFCE report (March 2014)
students is underpinning much of this thinking. Specific measures are beginning to be defined and in particular are informed by the recent ‘What Works?: Student Retention and Success Programme’ project and their key finding:

“At the heart of successful retention and success is a strong sense of belonging in HE for all students. This is most effectively promoted through mainstream activities that all students participate in.”

Some planned specific activities which will enhance the success and progression of under-represented groups include:

- The implementation of recommendations from the BAME attainment project and Race Equality Charter Mark action plan;
- The development of a Curriculum Framework with a strong focus on inclusive pedagogies and curricula;
- Strategic initiatives to implement peer mentoring and embed peer-assisted learning, as these are proven approaches for enhancing retention and success;
- The extension of our career development mentoring programme as part of a University Careers Strategy that reaches a more diverse range of students;
- The continued expansion of our internship schemes, providing valuable experience and support for students from under-represented groups.

9. Targets and Milestones

As noted in section 7.3 we have included a revised set of target groups in this agreement and have extended the milestones and targets to 2019/20. Targets for recruitment are based on new entrants to the University and have been set within the context of already strong recruitment of under-represented groups. However they demonstrate a commitment to continue to diversify representation at the University and to contribute further to meeting the OFFA sector outcome objectives.

All three targets for student success are focused on the proportion of students achieving first class or upper second class degrees. The student progression targets are based on the DLHE survey data as the only available national measure of student progression after graduation. We have chosen to use both the measure of graduate employment or further study and the proportion of those graduates in work who are in professional or managerial roles.

We recognise that it will take some time for new initiatives to have an impact on the targets for student success and progression and therefore feel it is important to demonstrate progress through operational targets that will allow us to monitor and assess the implementation or expansion of new measures.

10. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Widening Participation Strategy and Access Agreement Committee is the body responsible for the preparation and implementation of this Access Agreement. This committee reports to the University Senate through the University Executive Board and, amongst its other duties, evaluates measures set out in the Access Agreement and progress against targets and milestones. Representation from the Reading University Students’ Union sits on the Widening Participation Strategy and Access Agreement Committee. A key aspect of monitoring and evaluation is having a detailed understanding of the

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25 What Works?: Student Retention and Success Programme - Final report. HEFCE and Paul Hamlyn Foundation (July 2012)
relevant statistics which is supported through a dedicated Planning Officer with responsibility for WP data and monitoring, who has developed a standard dataset for assessing and monitoring progress against the Access Agreement targets and HESA benchmarks. This includes analysis of our performance in relation to national and regional trends using the HEIDI datasets. In addition, our Access and Recruitment Officers are responsible for ensuring that we fully use and contribute to the HEAT service, with which we have been involved for some time.

As noted above (section 8.2.2), we are in the process of establishing more systematic and University-wide recording of outreach activity, having procured and piloted a CRM system in 2014/15. This will allow more effective recording, monitoring and evaluation of our outreach activities (in particular, our intensive outreach activities) and will facilitate University-wide shared practice in tracking the results. We are also establishing greater clarity of expectations with regard to the assessment of effectiveness of on-course student success and progression support. It is however recognized that, as with outreach activity, the ultimate measures of effectiveness can often only be determined several years later, although we are also identifying more immediate indicators based either on feedback, student behaviour or analysis of data.

Those running access activities are required to identify measures of effectiveness before funding is provided and to report against those measures on an annual basis.

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) is the senior University officer responsible for delivery of our Access Agreement.

11. **Provision of Information**

The University of Reading is strongly committed to providing appropriate information, advice and guidance to prospective students, teachers and parents, as well as to key organisations such as the University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) for the Key Information Set (KIS) and the Student Loans Company (SLC). We will provide information on fees, loans, fee waivers, financial support, and pre-entry bursaries. We will use the usual mechanisms (websites, prospectuses, mailing lists, etc.) and will also work hard to build professional relationships with teachers to ensure that they are able to readily provide local students with relevant information.

12. **Equality and Diversity**

The University of Reading is committed to furthering equality and diversity amongst its staff and students, and believes that it fully executes its duty under the Equality Act 2010. The University’s Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Committee monitors equality and diversity data concerning both staff and students and this underpins the annual Equality and Diversity Report and Objectives. The Director of Student Development and Access is a member of both the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Committee and the Widening Participation Strategy and Access Agreement Committee and plays a pivotal liaison role particularly concerning the annual monitoring of student related equality and diversity data. This results in a close alignment of widening participation and equality and diversity priorities.

As part of our Equality and Diversity Policy, we have set a number of objectives that aim to address the key elements of the Act: eliminating unlawful discrimination; advancing equality of opportunity; and fostering good relations. Regard for equality and diversity is a central component of our high-level decision-making and it is our aim to use and embed best practices in equality and diversity.

We believe that this approach will allow us to recruit and retain the highest quality staff and students. It will also ensure that all students are supported to make the most of their Higher Education experience and their potential.
Table 7a - Statistical targets and milestones relating to your applicants, entrants or student body

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Balance number</th>
<th>Description (500 characters maximum)</th>
<th>Is this a collaborative target?</th>
<th>Baseline year</th>
<th>Baseline data</th>
<th>Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)</th>
<th>Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T16a_01</td>
<td>NS-SEC classes 4-7 (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>90.1%</td>
<td>88.5%</td>
<td>87.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16a_02</td>
<td>NS-SEC classes 4-7 (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>90.2%</td>
<td>88.5%</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16a_03</td>
<td>Low participation neighbourhoods (T16b_04) (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16a_04</td>
<td>Other statistic (please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>Percentage of entrants who self-classify as BME</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16a_05</td>
<td>Other statistic (please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>Percentage of entrants from a low income background (household income of £25k or less)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16a_06</td>
<td>Other statistic (please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>Percentage of BME students achieving either a first or upper second class degree classification</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>93.2%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16a_07</td>
<td>Other statistic (please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>Percentage of registered disabled students achieving either a first or upper second class degree classification</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>71.8%</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16a_08</td>
<td>Other statistic (please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>Percentage of registered disabled students achieving either a first or upper second class degree classification</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>72.9%</td>
<td>73.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16a_10</td>
<td>Other statistic (please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>Percentage of students from a low income background (household income of £25k or less) progressing into graduate level employment six months after graduation. Baseline data is the three year average between 2011-12 and 2013-14.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>86.9%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16a_11</td>
<td>Other statistic (please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>Percentage of students from a low income background (household income of £25k or less) progressing into professional and managerial employment six months after graduation. Baseline data is the two year average between 2012-13 and 2013-14.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16a_12</td>
<td>Other statistic (please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>Percentage of registered disabled students progressing into employment six months after graduation. Baseline data is the three year average between 2011-12 and 2013-14.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>88.5%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes

Alongside applicant and entrant targets, we encourage you to provide targets around outreach and student success work (including collaborative work where appropriate) or other initiatives to illustrate your progress towards increasing access, student success and progression. These should be measurable outcomes-based targets and should focus on the number of beneficiaries reached by a particular activity/programme or the number of schools worked with, and what the outcomes were, rather than simply recording the nature/number of activities.

Table 7b - Other milestones and targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Balance number</th>
<th>Description (500 characters maximum)</th>
<th>Is this a collaborative target?</th>
<th>Baseline year</th>
<th>Baseline data</th>
<th>Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)</th>
<th>Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T16b_01</td>
<td>Operational targets</td>
<td>Percentage of entrants participating in transition mentoring programmes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16b_02</td>
<td>Operational targets</td>
<td>Number of students with access to Peer Assisted Learning schemes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16b_03</td>
<td>Operational targets</td>
<td>Cumulative number of staff participating in teaching and learning related diversity and inclusion training/development</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16b_04</td>
<td>Student support services</td>
<td>Number of undergraduate students with declared mental health difficulties</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16b_05</td>
<td>Student support services</td>
<td>Number of students participating in extra-curricular personal development workshops</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16b_06</td>
<td>Operational targets</td>
<td>Number of placements</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16b_07</td>
<td>Operational targets</td>
<td>Number of students from under-represented groups taking up in-curricular placements</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational targets</td>
<td>Number of students from under-represented groups taking up UoR internships</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Including Research and Employment Internships</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational targets</td>
<td>Number of students from under-represented groups registering on the RED Award</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In-year registration on the extra-curricular employability award</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational targets</td>
<td>Number of students from under-represented groups participating in the UoR career mentoring programme.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students from under-represented groups are prioritised in the allocation of mentors.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Optional commentary on milestones.
This box is character-limited to 1000 characters; however, we are happy for you to upload additional ‘supporting information’ as a separate Word/pdf document.

We have included a number of operational targets in this agreement as we wish to monitor and demonstrate progress against planned activity which should ultimately have an impact on the headline statistical targets. By using 2010/11 data as our baseline for outreach and recruitment targets we aim to show the long term impact of our activity.