2015/16
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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<td>DLHE</td>
<td>Destination of Leavers from Higher Education</td>
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<td>FE</td>
<td>Further Education</td>
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<td>FEC</td>
<td>Further Education College</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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<td>HELOA</td>
<td>Higher Education Liaison Officers Association</td>
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<td>IAG</td>
<td>Information, Advice and Guidance</td>
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<td>IMD</td>
<td>Index of Multiple Deprivation</td>
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<td>ITT</td>
<td>Initial Teacher Training</td>
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<td>LPN</td>
<td>Low Participation Neighbourhood</td>
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<td>MFL</td>
<td>Modern Foreign Languages</td>
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<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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<td>SLC</td>
<td>Student Loans Company</td>
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<td>SNC</td>
<td>Student Number Control</td>
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<tr>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics</td>
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<td>TA</td>
<td>Teaching Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCAS</td>
<td>Universities and Colleges Admissions Service</td>
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<td>UG</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
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<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 140 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 is marked by considerable success in drawing students from diverse backgrounds both globally and in the UK. Almost 60% of our (home-domiciled) undergraduate population belong to groups traditionally under-represented in HE. We have a strong retention rate, and 92% of our graduates are in employment or study within six month of graduating, 74% of which are in professional/managerial roles.

2. A Strategic Whole-Institution Approach

The University’s Widening Participation Strategy highlights our vision, aims and approach. The three strands of the Strategy are: student support, outreach and retention and success. It is published alongside the other University strategies at http://www.reading.ac.uk/about/about-policies.aspx.

One of the aims cited “to embed effective widening participation as part of the University's core business” is reflected in the way we manage Widening Participation across the University. The Widening Participation Group is strategic in its operation: it involves both academic and professional services parts of the University allowing an integrated approach to Widening Participation; it is fully involved in the mainstream planning and budgeting activities of the University; and it 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 appointed 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 Access strategies with our university 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) have 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. 2013/14 saw the establishment of a Community and Development sabbatical officer who is a full member of the Widening Participation Group and the working group that drafted 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 establishment of a Community and Development sabbatical Officer role highlights the importance of this work.
4. **Tuition Fees for Students Entering in 2015/16**

For full-time undergraduate students, we intend to charge tuition fees of £9000 p.a. for 2015/16 entrants.

For part-time undergraduate students beginning their studies in 2015/16, we intend to charge tuition fees at the maximum rate on a pro rata basis plus 10%; e.g. a half-time student would be charged £4950 p.a.

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 £9000 p.a. for 2015/16. For students entering through the Schools Direct route, fees information will be published on the University’s website in due course.

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 2016-17 entry and onwards, we expect to charge the maximum allowable fee for full-time undergraduate students and postgraduate ITT students.

5. **Expenditure on Access and Retention and Success Measures**

5.1 **Expenditure**

For 2015/16 we intend to maintain our level of expenditure at 27% of our above-£6 k fee income as agreed in our 2014/15 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, although the commitment to spend 27% of our above-£6k actual income will remain. The expenditure also assumes 100% uptake of the financial support packages on offer, much of which will be committed by January 2016, at which point we will reassess the use of any remaining funds.

5.2 **Balance of Expenditure**

In response to emerging findings on the effectiveness of different measures to support access and success and the analysis of our Access record we have reviewed the planned balance of our Access Agreement expenditure.

We intend to reduce the overall proportion spent on the general Reading Bursaries scheme to around 30%, and will redirect some of this saving to more discretionary financial support; for example, to placement bursaries and to our Hardship Fund. Consequently we now plan to spend around 45% of the total on financial support in 2015/16. The remainder will be split equally between outreach and recruitment on the one hand and student success and progression on the other. Uncertainty surrounding reductions to the Student Opportunity Allocation in addition to an emerging University strategy for the long-term development of the institution means that these proportions are indicative of our broad intentions, but should not be considered precise commitments.

5.3 **Target Groups**

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1 *Do Bursaries have an Effect on Retention Rates*, OFFA interim report (March 2014)

2 Given that we have committed to guaranteeing all eligible students a bursary our predicted expenditure on this form of financial support is very much an estimate (based on a modest expansion of current numbers) which becomes less certain as we extend these predictions over time.
Our target groups were set in the 2012/13 Access Agreement and are listed in the table below:\(^3\)

### Table 1: Target groups as set in the original 2012/13 Access Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State school entrants</th>
<th>Mature students</th>
<th>Male entrants to BAEd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Statistic Agency – Socio-Economic Categories 4-7</td>
<td>Mature students with no previous experience of HE and from LPN</td>
<td>Male entrants to PGCE primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Participation (in HE) Neighbourhoods Q1 and Q2</td>
<td>Care leavers</td>
<td>BAME entrants to BAEd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income households:</td>
<td>Disabled students:</td>
<td>BAME entrants to PGCE primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£16k &amp; below</td>
<td>In receipt of DSA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£25k-£42k</td>
<td>Disability declared</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Asian and Minority Ethnic students</td>
<td></td>
<td>BAME entrants to PGCE secondary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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#### 5.4 Access Record

The overall assessment of our Access record reveals a strong picture of our success in recruiting under-represented groups to the University of Reading. In the most recent recruitment round we have met and exceeded 10 of our 16 targets recruitment targets and we are also maintaining close alignment with our WP benchmarks as they increase over the years.

Over the period (2010/11 – 2012/13) we have achieved 98.5% of our benchmark for state school entrants admitted. In the recruitment of students from NSSEC groups 4-7, we have achieved an average recruitment rate of 90.5% towards our benchmark and 90% in the case of recruitment of entrants from low participation neighbourhoods (LPN POLAR Q1). In all three cases we exceeded our own targets.

Table 2 Proportion of young, full-time, first degree entrants admitted from state schools, National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) groups 4-7 and Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPNs). (Benchmark data taken from HESA performance indicators tables T1a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>School (State School)</th>
<th>National Statistics Socio-Economic Class (NS-SEC 4, 5, 6, 7)</th>
<th>Low Participation Neighbourhoods (POLAR3 Q1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actual %</td>
<td>AA target %</td>
<td>Location adjusted benchmark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/14*</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>82.6</td>
<td>Not published</td>
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</table>

\(^3\) Several of these target groups are no longer valid and we will wish to revise the groups in our submission for 2016/17. For example the University is no longer the recruiter for much of our PGCE provision and we have found that students are not ‘sharing’ their household income if they know it to be above £25k as they know they wont receive a bursary but we cannot therefore determine the proportion of entrants with household incomes between £25k and £42k.
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 8.7% of 2013/14 entrants have declared a disability. This is expected to rise as the year progresses and therefore compares well to the 8.9% end of year figure of all 2011/12 first year students in UK HEIs.

Table 3 Proportion of all full time first degree undergraduates receiving Disabled Student Allowance (benchmark data from HESA performance indicators table T7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Disability (DSA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actual %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/14</td>
<td>6.3**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/13</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/12</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/11</td>
<td>5.2</td>
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** In-year estimate drawn from internal data (March 2014); expected to rise further by the end of the academic year

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 intake is slightly higher than the 16% cited for new entrants to English HEIs outside London and significantly higher than the target we set for ourselves. It is likely that some of this success is attributable to the particularly strong recruitment to Law and Pharmacy, areas in which we have put significant investment in the last few years.

Table 4 Proportion of BAME students amongst our UK domiciled, full-time, first degree entrants

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4 Equality in Higher Education Statistical Report 2013: Students (p110-112)
We have exceeded our targets for recruitment of male trainee teachers for both primary and secondary teaching, and for BAME students on the BAEd degree, however, there appears to have been shift of BAME students away from the PGCE programmes towards the Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) only route. Only 4.9% of PGCE primary and 9.5% of PGCE secondary trainees declared a BAME ethnicity, but taken together BAME trainees make up 7.5% of PGCE/QTS primary and 11.3% of PGCE/QTS secondary students, meaning that we exceeded the target for primary but fell slightly short of that for secondary. The course fees for QTS are lower than for the PGCE so this may be a factor in the observed shift. It is also the case that 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.

As noted in the 2014/15 Agreement, recruitment of mature students has followed the national pattern of steep decline. However, when we include students on our Foundation Degrees and those progressing into the University from our Foundation Degrees 8.0% of our 2013/14 entrants were mature students. Given the national context this compares favourably with our target of 10.9% which was set before the impact of the new fee regime was clear.

Finally our recruitment of students known to be from low-income households (<£25k) exceeded 2013/14 targets.

We have met and exceeded 10 of our 16 targets recruitment targets and we are also maintaining close alignment with our WP benchmarks as they increase over the years. The targets that we have not met for 2013/14 (apart from care leavers) are all attributable to factors outside our control and which were undetermined when the targets were set in 2011:

1. Mature students and mature students with no previous experience of HE and from LPNs - this is a result of the well documented national decline attributable to several factors including the new fee regime and eligibility criteria for financial support.
2. Students from household incomes between £25k and £42k – the issue is likely to be one of declaration rates.
3. BAME entrants to PGCE programmes – discussed above.

However, we are pleased to note that mapping of the target groups recruited against individual student attributes reveals that 59% of (home-domiciled) 2013/14 entrants belonged to one or more of our target groups and of these almost half actually belonged to two or more target groups (NB for this purpose state school entrants were

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7 2013/14 was the first year in which students with household incomes greater than £25k were not eligible for bursaries. We believe that the apparent reduction in students recruited with household incomes between £25 and £42 is actually a reduction in those that decide to ‘share’ their household income information with us, as there is no incentive to do so.
The average entry tariff of recent years puts the University of Reading just on the edge of the ‘high tariff’ category of Universities\(^8\); however our recruitment of young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds is significantly stronger than a high tariff institution. The participation rate of the most advantaged young people (from LPNs Q5) relative to the most disadvantaged entrants (from LPN Q1 and Q2) to higher tariff universities was most recently calculated by OFFA as 6.3\(^{10}\). However, at Reading this relative participation rate was 2.0 for 2013/14 new entrants, meaning that for every 2 students recruited from the most advantaged neighbourhoods we have recruited one student from the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

5.5 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 supported to complete their studies successfully. Our retention record is consistently strong with levels between 91% and 95 % for all target groups of full-time UK domiciled students undertaking their first year of HE study in 2012/13. 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\(^{11}\). A study funded by the joint HEFCE/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\(^{12}\). The support provided through our Student Wellbeing Services 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.

In addition to retention we have examined the distribution of degree classifications and post-graduation destinations. This analysis has built on that undertaken for the 2014/15 Access Agreement and for the 2014 Equality Report and included a more granular comparison between different groups of students than we have previously been able to undertake.

The results align well with those from the HEFCE report on ‘Differences in Degree Outcomes’\(^{13}\) published in March 2014 and 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. We therefore recognize that enhancing our support for both academic attainment and progression into employment and/or study will be an important area of focus for 2015/16.

6. Continuing and Additional Access Measures

Access measures will include:

- **financial support** for students through the Reading Bursary Scheme, placement bursaries and through our University Hardship Fund;

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\(^{8}\) Target groups used in this analysis were: Disabled; DSA; NSSEC 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.

\(^{9}\) ‘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 and 349 for 2010, which puts the University of Reading variously just inside or just outside the ‘high tariff’ group.

\(^{10}\) Trends in Young Participation by Student Background and Selectivity of Institution. OFFA Research paper, p13 (February 2014)

\(^{11}\) Differences in Degree Outcomes: key findings. HEFCE report (March 2014)

\(^{12}\) http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/cdotl/SupportingStudentDevelopment/cdotl-Retention.aspx

\(^{13}\) Differences in Degree Outcomes: key findings. HEFCE report (March 2014)
consolidation and expansion of existing **pre-entry outreach** activity

Interventions to support improved **attainment** and continuation of our **retention** provision;

Enhanced support for students to develop their career prospects as part of our strategy to drive **progression** beyond the University.

In our 2014/15 Access Agreement we recognized that much of our focus until that point had been on outreach and recruitment activities and that we needed to turn our attention towards developing and enhancing measures to support student success (and progression) in its broadest terms. Developments both inside and outside the University since then have confirmed that this is the correct direction of travel to carry forward into 2015/16.

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

### 6.1 Financial Support for Students

#### 6.1.1 Students entering in 2015/16

In the light of recent research on the effectiveness of bursaries and the withdrawal of the National Scholarship Programme we are revising our bursary provision. We have listened to students on what is most useful to them and therefore the default option will be a cash bursary although students will be able to opt for a fee waiver should they wish. Following findings from the review of the NSP programme we will commit to guarantee bursaries to all students with confirmed household incomes of less than £25k and there will be no reduction in bursary amount in later years of study. Furthermore, we will direct a greater 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 from households with annual incomes of less than £25k will receive a cash award of £1000 in each year of undergraduate study.

**Postgraduate ITT students:** Eligible students from households with annual incomes of less than £16k will receive an award worth £500; and students from households with annual incomes between £16k and £25k will receive an award worth £250.

**Care Leavers, Foyer students and estranged students:** As part of our on-going 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 awards listed above, these students will be eligible for bursaries of £1,000 in each year of study.

**Foundation Degree Fee Waivers:** Students entering our Foundation Degree in Early Years Learning or our BA Children’s Development and Learning programme will receive a 50 % fee waiver; this waiver applies to both years of the Foundation Degree.

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 £25k 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.

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

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.

16 Eligibility for these awards will be assessed at the beginning of each year.

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

18 Note that recipients of these fee waivers are not eligible for other financial awards.
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.\(^{19}\)

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.

6.1.2 Students entering before 2015/16

Students who commenced their studies prior to 2012/13 from households with annual incomes of less than £45,000 will continue to receive support under the University’s Access Bursary scheme. Bursaries of up to £1,400 will be provided to eligible students as financial awards.

Students who commenced their studies in the 2012/13 academic year from households with annual incomes of less than £42,000 will continue to receive support under the Reading Bursary scheme. Eligible students will receive support worth up to £2,500.

Student who commenced their studies in 2013/14 or 2014/15 from households with annual incomes of less than £25,000 will continue to receive support under the Reading Bursary Scheme. Eligible students will receive support worth £1,000.

6.2 Pre-entry outreach activity

6.2.1 Target groups

Our target groups are set out in section 5.3. When focusing our pre-entry outreach work we take a ‘whole-student’ approach, assessing students for inclusion in intensive outreach work on the basis of a range of target characteristics, and prioritizing those meeting a number of targets.

Increasing the proportion of students from low participation neighbourhoods (LPNs) is a particular focus, for two reasons:

- LPNs are a particularly good proxy for reaching individuals across other target groups: it is recognized that disabled and black and minority ethnic people are over-represented statistically within these areas; similarly, pupils in these areas are more likely to attend state schools. Targeting LPNs therefore supports our ‘whole-student’ approach.

- We are further away from our benchmark in this group than other groups.\(^{20}\)

Targeting pupils from LPNs is therefore important for us as an institution. However, the number of Q1 LPNs in our region is small; we therefore target our outreach work at both Q1 and Q2 areas.

6.2.2 Pre-entry bursary provision

\(^{19}\) It is currently unclear how reductions to the Student Opportunity Allocation may affect the amount allocated to the University Hardship Fund. However, maintaining the level of financial support available to students via this mechanism is likely to be a priority whether from the SOA or from the Access Agreement funds

\(^{20}\) Taking a longitudinal perspective
We will make specific bursary provision available to all students from LPNs (young and mature; full time and part time); disabled students; care leavers.

Our Pre-entry Travel Bursaries are for all students from LPNs (Q1 and Q2) and for care leavers. These bursaries enable prospective students to engage fully in pre-entry events by contributing to travel costs. They therefore support pre-entry engagement with target groups and ensure information and engagement events such as Visit Days are accessible.21

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.

6.2.3 Pre-entry outreach: priorities for 2015/16 and beyond

6.2.3.1 An evidence-based approach

- We will continue to use relevant data sources to underpin our targeting decisions for outreach purposes;
- We will embed tighter recording, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to evidence the effectiveness of our outreach activities (in particular, our intensive outreach activities);
- We will share this expertise with colleagues to ensure consistency and to deliver - and evidence - maximum impact from our outreach.

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 2014, we will start to see the initial HEAT data relating to the first cohort of the Scholars Scheme, who are due to enter higher education in 2014.

We will assess the effectiveness of our outreach activity as follows:

- In terms of quantitative evidence, we will use the HEAT data to evidence progression rates to HE and to the University of Reading. We will continue to disseminate guidance on targeting, recording, monitoring and evaluation to our outreach colleagues across the University.
- In terms of qualitative analysis of our outreach, we will be seeking to identify attitudinal change amongst our intensive scheme participants. This will take the form of an online survey of participants, linked to their records on HEAT and/or on our e-mentoring platform. We intend to expand these mechanisms to survey participants involved in a broader range of our outreach activities in future.

6.2.3.2 A strategic, whole-institution approach

We aim to work more cohesively in terms of our institution-wide outreach, identifying effective activity and sharing good practice.

We will:

- Establish a new University-wide recruitment and outreach Community of Practice
- Establish University-wide recording of activity
- Establish University-wide shared practice in evaluation and monitoring

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21 More than 40% of all students who have received such a bursary have enrolled at Reading since it was introduced in our first Access Agreement (2006/7). The equivalent figure is 50% for students with disabilities.
We will disseminate processes and best practice to better record, and evidence, the breadth and effectiveness of outreach activity being undertaken across the institution. The data gathered will be used to inform future outreach targeting discussions with colleague departments and to deliver greater collective impact.

6.2.3.3 Effective collaboration

- We aim to undertake collaborative outreach activity including, but not limited to, the ongoing development of the Universities Network (UNet) partnership being officially launched in 2014;
- We will seek collaboration beyond other HEIs, working as appropriate with further education colleges (FECs), employers, third sector organisations, schools, colleges, and local authorities;
- We will be ensuring that effective collaboration starts within and across the University.

In 2013 we established a new collaborative initiative with the universities of Bath, Southampton, Cardiff, and Oxford, known as the Universities Network (UNet)\(^{22}\). The initiative aims to offer WP students who currently participate in intensive, sustained outreach activity in one of the partner universities the opportunity to engage in activities run by other HEIs within the partnership. The objective is to broaden their horizons and to offer them as much interaction with universities as possible so as to help them overcome any perceived social or academic barriers to HE. The initiative will be launched in July 2014 with a first, collaborative activity for student participants, the *Choices Conference*.

The University of Reading is very active in the community and seeks to expand its collaborative activity therein. Examples include the following:

- We are academic partners of two new University Technical Colleges. We are involved in the governance of these institutions and provide input into curriculum planning, content and pedagogy, as well as contributing to the UTCs’ outreach and open events.
- We place 250 – 300 current students per year in 40 local primary and secondary schools as volunteer Student Tutors. This activity provides positive role models in schools for future generations of WP entrants. The demand from schools for this scheme is substantial and we anticipate that it will expand. (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 STEMNET initiative and currently places c650 professional STEM ambassadors in 100 primary and secondary schools in Central & East Berkshire and Surrey.
- We run a range of community events for local schools and young people, from on-campus visits to Christmas lectures.

6.2.3.4 Long-term outreach

- The University’s flagship Reading Scholars Scheme\(^{23}\) launched in 2012/13 offers sustained contact with young people close to entering higher education and includes summer schools, subject masterclasses, e-mentoring and range of other activity. Participation is growing and we intend to expand and consolidate the scheme further.
- We have established a long-term partnership with the Whitley Excellence Cluster of Primary and Secondary schools and the ASPIRE2 charity\(^ {24}\). Through this partnership we will focus on one of the

\(^{22}\) Previous working title was Universities’ Outreach Partnership (UOP).

\(^{23}\) Reading Scholars Scheme – An intensive programme providing sustained support for selected students from target groups over the course of Year 12. The programme comprises academic and study skills sessions, a ‘student shadowing’ experience, a summer school and IAG delivered via e-mentoring from their matched undergraduate student in their field of study over the course of an academic year.

\(^{24}\) The Whitley Excellence Cluster (WEC) was formed in 2004 consisting 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
most socially deprived areas of the country that is in the lowest 20% for HE participation. We expect to develop a programme of ongoing collaborations that will support children at these schools to reach their academic potential and to aspire to university level study. Our work will be informed by a substantial 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.

- As part of a broader review of the University’s collective outreach provision, we aim to harness current and emerging outreach work with younger age groups (KS1, 2, 3). We are in the process of identifying and collating the substantial outreach activity currently being undertaken with younger-age students (KS1, 2 and 3) in the local community by the University as a whole (for example, through our Museums’ extensive engagement activity). We will then seek to embed new widening participation elements (focusing on understanding and aspiring to higher education) across this activity.

Our longer-term objective is to draw together existing provision at either end of the Key Stage spectrum to provide a cohesive programme of longer-term engagement.

6.3 Student Retention, Success and Progression

6.3.1 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\(^{25}\))
- close working with our Counseling and Well-being 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
- a number of departmental buddying schemes
- campus environment and first year hall accommodation
- a 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
- the advice and guidance provided by the Students Union officers with responsibility specifically for: Disabled students, mature students and Black Asian and Minority Ethnic 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\(^{26}\).

We will ensure that support for retention activities and in particular for disabled students is maintained following

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\(^{25}\) Postgraduate students employed by Schools to provide local study advise/support to UG students. PG students are supported and trained by the University Study Advisors team.

\(^{26}\) HEFCE/Paul Hamlyn Retention Project – What works? (http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/cdotl/SupportingStudentDevelopment/cdotl-Retention.aspx)
the reduction in the Student Opportunity Allocation\textsuperscript{27} which currently funds much of this work.

We consider the Reading Bursaries (awarded to eligible students throughout their programme) effective retention measures. Following the removal of the NSP and its prescriptions on spend we have amended our bursary scheme for 2015/16 entrants as outlined above. We have 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 a Reading Bursary 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 through the University Hardship Fund. In the short-term we will use some Access funds to ensure there is no reduction in the level of funding provided to students through the Fund. However we will also take the opportunity to review the way this fund is operated with the aim of streamlining its administration while maximize its functionality. In the medium term we will consider whether the balance between investment in the Reading Bursaries Scheme and the University Hardship Fund is right.

6.3.2 Student success and progression

As described above our intention is to devote 50\% of the 2015/16 non-financial support funds to support student success and progression. This confirms the direction of travel outlined in the 2014/15 Access Agreement, but with an even greater emphasis on the 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 92\% of students in employment and around 69\% of all students in graduate level employment and/or study, but there is a strong desire to improve on this. Analysis of our own data as well as national data\textsuperscript{28} reveals that progression to employment and further study is not as strong for a number of groups under-represented in HE. We will therefore have a strong focus on this in 2015/16.

Beyond this, the University is currently undertaking a strategic review of much of how it operates, the sorts of educational opportunities it provides and how it supports student to develop into successful graduates. The desire to better support our target group students will both underpin much of this thinking and be informed by it. It is expected that that specific measures will be more clearly defined in due course, however we will be informed by the recent ‘What Works?: Student retention and Success Project’ project and their key finding


g"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."\textsuperscript{29}

Some specific activities are likely to include:

- The implementation of recommendations from the BAME attainment project which is currently nearing

\textsuperscript{27} 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.

\textsuperscript{28} Differences in Degree Outcomes: Key findings. HEFCE report (March 2014)

\textsuperscript{29} What Works?: Student Retention and Success Programme - Final report. HEFCE and Paul Hamlyn Foundation (July 2012)
A project on mentoring for success and for career development will have concluded and recommendations will be available for consideration and implementation in 2015/16.

The placement bursary scheme, launched in 2014, will be well known to students and we will have been able to review its first year of operation in order to ensure effectiveness and assess the level of resource appropriate.

A new internship scheme launched in 2014-15 will reach its projected size providing internship opportunities for 150 students.

7. **Targets and Milestones**

Reviewing our targets and milestones we have concluded that although they do not reflect the full range of activity on which we intend to focus in 2015/16 we have decided not to add additional targets or to extend those that already exist at this point in time. Given the uncertainty around the reduction in teaching grant in general and the Student Opportunity Allocation in particular we need to retain greater flexibility than previous years. Also we do not want to pre-determine the University’s priorities for development which are currently being discussed at this exciting time of envisioning our future direction.

8. **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The University’s Widening Participation Group is the body responsible for the preparation and implementation of this Access Agreement. This body 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. This group also plays a critical role in the continuous development of the University’s Widening Participation Strategy. The Reading University Students’ Union sits on the Widening Participation Group. A key aspect of monitoring and evaluation is having a detailed understanding of the relevant statistics which is supported through a dedicated Planning Officer with responsibility for WP data and monitoring 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 Officer is responsible for ensuring that we fully utilise and contribute to the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) service, which we expect to begin to yield early tracking data of our first cohort of participants entering HE in 2014/15

As outlined above we are putting in place our strategy for evaluating the effectiveness of our outreach work and the Director of Student Development and Access is responsible for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on student success and progression measures.

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

9. **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.

10. **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 Equality and Diversity 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 both the Equality and Diversity Committee and the Widening Participation Group 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 Access 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 is 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.

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30 http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/humanresources/equality/humres-equalityanddiversyobjectives.aspx
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Please select target type from the drop-down menu</th>
<th>Description (500 characters maximum)</th>
<th>Is this a collaborative target?</th>
<th>Baseline year</th>
<th>Baseline date</th>
<th>Yearly milestone (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>
</table>
| 1      | Please select target type from the drop-down menu | Students in receipt of DSA (full-time, first degree entrants) | No | 2010/11 | 6.0% | (450/7500) | | These include students diagnosed with disabilities (mostly learning) after enrolling at Reading. Some may consequently apply for DSA.
| 2      | Please select target type from the drop-down menu | Male entrants onto the PGCE Primary | No | 2010/11 | 6.0% | (330/5500) | | Under the August 2014 Twenty First England Policy, there is no provision again, although the University has previously addressed this issue, as part of the University’s strategic plan.
| 3      | Please select target type from the drop-down menu | Male entrants onto the PGCE Primary | No | 2010/11 | 6.0% | (330/5500) | | We expect that due to the current financial constraints, the University will not be able to continue supporting students in this area.
| 4      | Please select target type from the drop-down menu | Male entrants onto the PGCE Primary | No | 2010/11 | 6.0% | (330/5500) | | We expect that due to the current financial constraints, the University will not be able to continue supporting students in this area.
| 5      | Please select target type from the drop-down menu | Male entrants onto the PGCE Primary | No | 2010/11 | 6.0% | (330/5500) | | We expect that due to the current financial constraints, the University will not be able to continue supporting students in this area.
| 6      | Please select target type from the drop-down menu | Male entrants onto the PGCE Primary | No | 2010/11 | 6.0% | (330/5500) | | We expect that due to the current financial constraints, the University will not be able to continue supporting students in this area.

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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Operational targets</th>
<th>Identification of specific target schools in Berkshire and beyond for intensive progression programmes.</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>25</th>
<th>25</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>Number of school partners involved in targeted intensive outreach schemes eg Reading Scholars Scheme.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Student Support Services</td>
<td>Student support for study advice and counselling for students and schools.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Numbers of students attending student support services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Outreach / WP activity (summer schools)</td>
<td>Outreach to schools (TEEM, MP etc)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Numbers of students attending summer schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>Outreach to schools to deliver IAG and student counselling.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Numbers of students attending outreach activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>Outreach to schools to deliver IAG and student counselling.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Numbers of students attending outreach activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>Outreach to schools to deliver IAG and student counselling.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Numbers of students attending outreach activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>Outreach to schools to deliver IAG and student counselling.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Numbers of students attending outreach activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Contextual data</td>
<td>Reading Scholars Schemes (including e-mentoring)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>100/40/20/5</td>
<td>100/40/20/5</td>
<td>100/45/25/8</td>
<td>100/45/25/8</td>
<td>Participants enrolled/number entering HE/students entering research intensive HEIs/students entering Reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Management targets</td>
<td>Continue partnership working with Schools and other SE HEIs on tracking all school/college outreach interventions through the HEAT database.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>2017-18</td>
<td>2018-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Lifelong learning</td>
<td>Building on progression arrangements established by Progress South Central.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>7400</td>
<td>7500</td>
<td>7500</td>
<td>7500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Other (please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>Information, Advice and Guidance</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Production of targeted publicity material and web-based resources including web portals for specific groups and 'virtual' IAG sessions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Other (please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>Thames Valley HE Conference (UCAS fair)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>7400</td>
<td>7500</td>
<td>7500</td>
<td>7500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Other (please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>Improving success at graduation (non-white students)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>68.5%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>