

**University of Suffolk  
Access and Participation Plan  
2019/20**

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This Plan sets out how the University of Suffolk will support students from all backgrounds with the ability and desire to participate in Higher Education (HE), to access, succeed, and progress from HE. This plan is submitted on behalf of the University of Suffolk, including its Partner Colleges.

The University of Suffolk is comprised of the main campus in Ipswich, and provision offered at East Coast College (based in Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft), Suffolk New College (based in Ipswich) and West Suffolk College (based in Bury St Edmunds). The University was established in 2007 as University Campus Suffolk (UCS) with degrees validated by the University of East Anglia and University of Essex; and was awarded Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP) in 2015 and HEFCE designation and University Title in 2016. UCS became the University of Suffolk in August 2016, with the first cohort of students admitted in September 2016.

## **1. a. Assessment of Current Performance: The Regional Context**

Data published by the [Department for Communities and Local Government](#) shows that 52 of Suffolk's Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are in the most deprived 20% in England, of which 21 LSOA's are in the most deprived 10%; and 20 of Great Yarmouth's 61 LSOAs are in the most deprived 20% of which 16 are in the most deprived 10%. The University's research into deprivation in the county (Smith and Dogaru, 2016) shows that deprivation extends far beyond the pockets of urban poverty in Ipswich and Lowestoft. Nearly half of Suffolk's neighbourhoods have become more deprived over the last five years, and while the worst cases of multiple deprivation continue to be found in the large towns, deprivation exists across the county.

In 2017, 32.9% of 18 years olds in the East of England entered HE ([UCAS, 2017](#)), compared to 32.6% of English 18 year olds ([UCAS, 2017](#)). However, [HEFCE gaps analysis](#) and the [HEFCE young participation map](#) shows that there are significant areas of low participation in coastal areas, along Suffolk's A14 corridor, and in Ipswich, Felixstowe, Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth (Norfolk). Ipswich has been identified as a 'social mobility cold spot' in the [Social Mobility Index](#) and in January 2017, Ipswich was designated as one of 12 Opportunity Areas.

Suffolk has experienced low participation rates in HE for some time and areas of Suffolk show considerable gaps between GCSE attainment and expected participation rates in HE. The University is a partner in a National Collaborative Outreach Project (NCOP), the Network for East Anglian Collaborative Outreach (Neaco), which aims to raise participation rates across Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Suffolk's secondary schools are often in remote small towns serving populations that include sparsely populated rural areas; and urban areas characterised by low-skill low-wage economies and an under-representation of graduate level jobs<sup>1</sup>.

The unemployment rate in Suffolk is one of the lowest in the country (Smith and Dogaru, 2016), but wages are low and fewer people work in professional or managerial jobs (39.5%) than the national average (44.5%). The area is predominantly a low-skill low-wage dispersed rural economy ([New Anglia Strategic Economic Plan, 2017](#)) and the region has a network of small and medium sized towns with a high number of SMEs. Challenges in the region's transport and public transport infrastructure, and weak broadband and mobile phone coverage present obstacles to productivity. The graduate job market is growing more rapidly in larger urban areas of the country due to cities having the

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<sup>1</sup> NEACO Consortium Document, submitted to HEFCE in October 2016

infrastructure and highly skilled employment opportunities to support a wide range of graduates ([HECSU, 2016](#)), while the range of options for graduate level employment in Suffolk is more limited. The Department for Education's recent research report on the Teaching Excellence Framework and highly skilled employment outcomes (Blyth and Cleminson, 2016) suggests that region of domicile (as well as social disadvantage) are statistically significant factors in employment and further study outcomes of graduates, and our data tells us that this is a significant issue for the University of Suffolk.

## 1. b. Assessment of Current Performance: The University of Suffolk<sup>2</sup>

The University of Suffolk was created to raise aspirations and increase HE participation across the region, and we work with partners including Suffolk County Council, the New Anglia LEP, schools, colleges, and local community groups, to do this. The University of Suffolk's student body is diverse and inclusive. 24.8% of the student population are studying part-time and 61.2% are mature; 12.8% of students come from ethnic minorities against a [background figure for Suffolk](#) of 4.8%. The majority of our students are from the eastern region, with 54.1% from an IP postcode in 2016/17. We continue to work closely with local authorities to support progression of Care Leavers, and are pleased that we had 11 Care Leavers from Suffolk and adjacent counties at the University in 2016/17.

UCAS Multi-Equality Measure (MEM) data shows that the most advantaged students in England are 3.8 times more likely to enter HE than the most disadvantaged. MEM data for the University of Suffolk<sup>3</sup> shows that in 2017, the most advantaged students were 1.1 times more likely to apply to the University compared to the most disadvantaged, but there was no difference in the likelihood of being placed at the University. We are pleased that this data shows that we are just as likely to have the most disadvantaged students enter the University as the most advantaged.

Data provided by UCAS for the 2017/18 application cycle<sup>4</sup> shows that the University has experienced an increase in applications from all ethnicities, with the largest increase (+55%) in applications from students with 'Mixed' ethnicity. We have experienced continuous increases in applications of all ethnicities since 2012 and reported an increase in the number of students from a Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) background in the 2016/17 monitoring return.

Table 1 shows the University's performance against our HESA benchmarks for a range of [Widening Participation](#) and [Non-Continuation](#) indicators. We are pleased that we are performing above our benchmark for young full-time undergraduate entrants from low participation neighbourhoods and state schools, and for mature undergraduate entrants with no previous HE and from low-participation neighbourhoods. We recognise that we are not meeting our benchmark for part-time undergraduate entrants from low-participation neighbourhoods, and students in receipt of DSA. The non-continuation data shows that we still have work to do to improve the continuation rates of our students. Our non-continuation rate of part-time students is close to the benchmark, but we need to make considerable progress for young full-time students, and have more work to do for mature full-time students.

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<sup>2</sup> Internal data unless otherwise stated

<sup>3</sup> UCAS MEM 2017 data for University of Suffolk, published 9 April 2018. MEM ratio Group 5:Group1 for placed applicants of 1.0

<sup>4</sup> UCAS Data based on applications received by 15 January 2018, with comparative data provided for each year from 2009

Indicator	University of Suffolk Performance	Benchmark
<b>Widening Participation Indicators (2016/17)</b>		
Young full-time undergraduate entrants from low participation neighbourhoods	26.5%	14.7%
Young full-time entrants from state schools	99.1%	95.9%
Mature full-time undergraduate entrants with no previous HE and from low-participation neighbourhoods	13.6%	8.5%
All part-time undergraduate entrants with no previous HE and from low-participation neighbourhoods	4.6%	5.8%
Percentage of all undergraduate students in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)	6.5%	7.8%
<b>Non-Continuation (2015/16)</b>		
Young full-time non-continuation following year of entry	13.5%	8.1%
Mature full-time non-continuation following year of entry	14.3%	11.3%
All part-time non-continuation two years following year of entry	29.3%	26.2%

Table 1: Performance against HESA benchmarks (HESA, 2018)

Our Monitoring Return for 2016/17 showed that the University's overall in-year retention rate was 93.03% and the achievement rate was 90.09%<sup>5</sup>. While our in-year retention rate declined slightly from 93.5% in 2015/16, we are pleased that our achievement rate increased from 86.7% in 2015/16. Continuation data for full-time first-degree undergraduate students has improved to 86.1% (2015/16) and has improved to 86.9% for full-time mature undergraduate students.

Intersectional analysis of internal non-continuation data for mature full-time students shows that mature BME students are disproportionately likely to withdraw compared to mature White students. While we saw 14.7% overall non-continuation of mature students, this was 21.3% of BME mature students compared to 13.8% of White mature students. There is no difference in non-continuation of mature students from low participation neighbourhoods. Analysis for young students shows that those from POLAR3 Q1 neighbourhoods have higher non-continuation rates (21%) than those from POLAR3 Q2-5 neighbourhoods (14.9%), and White POLAR3 Q1 students have higher non-continuation rates (21.6%) than BME POLAR3 Q1 students (17.9%). Students with a mental health condition have disproportionately higher non-continuation rates (22.5% compared to 15.4% of the population), which is higher for mature students with a mental health condition (23.9%) compared to young students (20%). Non-continuation is higher for POLAR3 Q1 mature students with a mental health condition (33%) compared to POLAR3 Q2-5 (19.4%). Small populations mean that it is not possible to see patterns in non-continuation when considering combinations of disability and ethnicity.

Similar analysis for part-time students shows disproportional non-continuation of part-time mature students (24.7%) compared to young students (5.7%), and higher non-continuation of part-time students with a long-standing illness or health condition (33%) compared to the general population (19.8%). As the population is small it is difficult to identify any further patterns or trends.

Analysis of internal degree classification data shows that students with a long-standing illness or health condition or specific learning difficulty are less likely to achieve a first class Honours degree (12.5% and 15.1%) than the overall student population (19%); and students with a learning difficulty are less likely to achieve an upper second class Honours degree (37.7% compared to 47.2%). There are no other obvious trends based on disability. However, we can see that BME mature students are less likely to achieve first class Honours degrees (7.8%) than BME young (15.8%) or mature White

<sup>5</sup> University of Suffolk Access Agreement Monitoring Return 2016/17, submitted January 2017

students (25.8%); and that young White students are less likely to achieve first class Honours degrees (16.1%) than mature White students (25.8%).

The University's graduate employment increased to 63.2% in 2015/16 from 62.3% in 2014/15 (DLHE) but analysis shows that graduates with a disability are more likely to be unemployed (5.9%) than non-disabled graduates (3.7%); and are less likely to be in professional or managerial jobs (41%) than non-disabled graduates (53.6%). The unemployment rate of graduates with a disability has decreased but more work is required to increase employment rates. The employment data shows that BME graduates are more likely to be unemployed (10%) than White graduates (3.26%), and that while the unemployment rate for White graduates has declined, it has increased for BME graduates. BME graduates are also less likely to be in professional or managerial roles (44.7%) than White graduates (52.8%). The University consistently has a student gender ratio of two female students to each male student, and DLHE data shows that female graduates have slightly higher employment rates (96.5%) than male graduates (95%). However, female graduates have lower professional and managerial employment rates (48.6%) than male graduates (58%).

The University's overall and graduate employment rates have improved, but should be viewed within the context of a local student body who often stay within the region upon graduation. Regional graduate-level prospects are limited, as illustrated in the sector-wide highly skilled employment data map<sup>6</sup>. However outcomes for BME graduates and graduates with a disability are lower than our White and non-disabled graduates and we will therefore prioritise these groups where possible.

The University recognises that it is important to consider how intersections of characteristics affect access, success and progression of students. Many of our students are from low-income backgrounds, but also are from low-participation neighbourhoods and/or are mature students. Supporting student retention, progression and achievement are priorities for the University and are key elements of our approach to widening participation. We recognise that the intersectionality of widening participation characteristics means that some of our students have complex lives that can affect their ability to commit fully to their course and to extra-curricular activity aimed at enhancing future job prospects. With our commitment to widening participation, we place a strong emphasis on 'added value' for students from all backgrounds. We recognise that non-traditional students may lack confidence and self-efficacy in their academic abilities, and we have developed our practices to support such students to develop independence, knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect their full potential. We recognise that we must target particular groups of students in order to increase positive outcomes, and this is particularly for students who are mature, from low participation neighbourhoods, and who have a disability or are BME.

Our 2016-17 data demonstrates that attrition rates for students who had accessed Student Services was lower than that of the general student population and 25% of our student population made use of their support in that year. However male students are under-represented in accessing finance, counselling and disability services; and part-time students are under-represented across all services. Students with disabilities, and those who are mature or from a BME group typically have higher non-continuation rates and so we are pleased to report that targeted interventions arising from previous Access Agreements have increased the proportion of these students using support services. Our data demonstrates that 29% of female students accessing disability and wellbeing services are in receipt of DSA in comparison to 34.2% of male users of the service. While this does not necessarily indicate

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<sup>6</sup> HEFCE TEF Data Maps – Provider Level data

that female students are reluctant to apply for the DSA, this plan includes interventions to enhance the support available for all students with disabilities to make an application, with the aim of ensuring parity.

We have analysed attrition data of students accessing support services, and can see that attrition was highest in cases relating to finance, disability and well-being services, with no difference in attrition of male and female students with disabilities in year one. However, female students were more likely to withdraw in later years. Intersectional data analysis is difficult as the dataset is too small to establish patterns and trends, and it is difficult to draw a direct correlation between attrition and engagement with Student Services. However, data enables us to shape and target promotion and delivery of services to enhance access, early intervention and representation of target groups.

Engagement data for Learning Services shows that there is a 50:50 split of young and mature students engaging with support, although the University has a higher proportion of mature students (61.2%) which means the mature students are under-represented in accessing the service. Mature students with a learning difficulty (3.9% of our population) used 4% of the Learning Services support; and young students with a learning difficulty (2% of our population) used 26% of the Learning Services support. We are aware that students with learning difficulties are able to access additional support through DSA, but would like to see the mature students make more use of the Learning Services support. Students with a learning difficulty are less likely to achieve first or upper-second class degrees than the general population, but the non-continuation rate of these students (10.7%) is better than the general population (15.4%).

Analysis of 2016/17 internal data on student engagement with our advice, guidance and one-to-one services within Learning Services shows that proportionately there is good engagement of students with disabilities, those from POLAR3 quintiles 1 and 2, and students from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. We are aware that some students make considerable use of Learning Services support and are concerned that mature students are under-represented in engagement with support.

Our analysis of data shows that the University is consistently meeting our targets and milestones for access, but we need to improve on success and progression. It is important that we continue to deliver activities that support the success and progression of our whole student population as our non-continuation rates for both young and mature full-time students are not yet at benchmark, but our analysis shows that some groups of students should be targeted for specific activity. We should target specific outreach activity towards mature, part-time and/or disabled students; specific success activity towards mature, part-time and students with mental health conditions or long-standing illness/health conditions; and specific progression activity towards students from low-income backgrounds, with disabilities, and BME students. Where possible, we will use the intersectional analysis to target students, but we recognise that some populations are small. Our analysis has guided our decisions on expenditure for 2019/20.

## **2. Ambition and Strategy**

The University's ambition is to have a clear, measurable and positive impact on the economic, cultural and educational lives of our communities and of our students. We aim to provide an inclusive and supportive environment for all students, embracing and valuing diversity and enabling our students to be active partners in their own learning. Our Progression Strategy focusses on developing our

students' learning skills, recognising that students do not join the University as 'independent learners' but require support and development to progress as graduates with the knowledge and skills to succeed in an ever-changing world. We aim to create agile graduates who will be ambassadors for education in their own communities, with the confidence and experience to be successful in their career of choice. The University aims to provide degree programmes that meet the needs of the local and national economy, in a constantly evolving world.

The University was established to raise aspirations and widen HE participation across the region. We remain committed to this and outreach activity continues to be a key priority for the University. Our progress on retention, success and progression has not been at the rate anticipated within our targets and milestones, and we will continue to focus on these areas to ensure that students receive support to successfully remain at the University and to progress into graduate employment and further study. We aim to make progress in 2019/20 on meeting the targets and milestones outlined in previous Access Agreements and accompanying this Plan. We do not wish to change any of our targets and milestones but would like to add two new targets:

- The University experienced a decline in applications from mature students in 2017/18, particularly for Health courses, although the number of entrants increased. We are committed to increasing our number of mature entrants and would like to add a new target as follows:
  - Increase mature student entrants for full-time undergraduate degrees to the University of Suffolk by 5% per year to reach 934 entrants by 2022/23 (*baseline year: 733 entrants for academic year 2017/18*).
- The University has experienced a decline in applications and enrolments of part-time undergraduate students, reflecting a national decline. Between 2016/17 and 2017/18 we experienced a 31% decline in part-time entrants. We are committed to increasing the number of part-time students accessing HE and would like to add a new target as follows:
  - Increase part-time entrants to undergraduate degrees at the University of Suffolk by 10% to 86 entrants by 2022/23 (*baseline year: 78 entrants in academic year 2017/18*).

## **2. a: Target Groups**

Assessment of our performance in access, success and progression supports the aim of the University to continue to target our activity, where possible, to the following groups:

- Students from an area of low HE participation, or with a low household income, or low socioeconomic status;
- Students from minority ethnic groups;
- Mature students;
- Students with disabilities, including those with specific learning difficulties;
- Student who have previously lived in the care of their Local Authority.

The analysis outlined in section 1 shows that we must specifically target the following groups:

**Access:** The University has experienced declining applications from mature and part-time students and we are below the HESA benchmark for entrants eligible for DSA. We will therefore carry out additional outreach activity for these groups. We have previously successfully delivered activities

aimed at young Carers, and for students from military families – reflecting the high number of military establishments within the region. We will continue to target activities to these groups where possible.

*Success:* HESA data shows that we need to make progress against our non-continuation benchmarks for both young and mature full-time students, which means we must improve continuation and success rates for all students. However, internal data shows that students who are male, BME, or have a disability (other than a specific learning difficulty) have been historically most likely to withdraw from the University. This is also reflected in engagement with Learning and Support Services. Our activities related to success will therefore target these groups of students. Our internal data also shows a discrepancy in the proportion of our female students accessing disability services who are in receipt of DSA and our activities will also support these students in applying for DSA.

*Progression:* DLHE data and internal data shows that students from POLAR3 Quintiles 1 and 2, students with disabilities and BME students have outcomes lower than our general student population, and we will therefore target employability activities to these groups of students. We will also target activity towards female students, aimed at increasing professional and managerial outcomes.

Where our activities on success and progression are aimed at the whole student population, we will use promotional materials and case studies that target the groups outlined above. We aim to increase the engagement of the target groups in these activities.

## **2. b: Strategic Approach to Access**

The University is successfully admitting students from a range of nationally under-represented backgrounds. We are pleased to be part of neaco, to increase participation of targeted young people in Suffolk, but gaps in participation still exist across the county and, currently, neaco is due to finish in July 2019. The University will therefore continue to undertake a wide range of activities to continue the work of neaco, but will also focus on the mature and part-time community, which has been declining over recent years. The development of our portfolio to include Higher and Degree Apprenticeships is part of our strategic approach to increase graduate-level skills in the local economy. We aim to develop the portfolio further to meet the needs of mature and part-time students locally, and to increase the opportunities for our own students to progress into postgraduate study, an area in which many of our target groups are also under-represented.

The University's access activity will be targeted and based on evidence of success. We will embed attainment-raising activity in our schools, and will expand the support that the University gives to the governance of schools across the region. We will use internal data and information provided by UCAS, HESA and HEAT to increase the effectiveness of our activities, and all activities will be evaluated fully.

## **2. c: Strategic Approach to Success and Progression**

The University aims to integrate our approach in outreach, access, induction, attendance, retention, progression, student satisfaction and employability into coherent strategies. This has started successfully with the development of a new Progression Strategy, which will be fully embedded by 2019/20. Consultation is taking place on a refreshed Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy aimed at further enhancing student success and progression.

The University has developed our courses to provide a progressively more academically challenging experience for students. Many arrive lacking in confidence in learning or with negative experiences of education, which can lead to a lack of engagement and/or failing to achieve their full potential. Our new Progression Strategy aims to provide a distinctly 'Suffolk Experience' where students develop from 'Supported Learners' at Level 4, to 'Negotiated Learners' in Level 5 and into 'Independent Learners' in Level 6.

This Strategy has five key elements: a new progressive structure of learning, teaching and assessment; extended induction; a fresh approach to student engagement; a clearer articulation of a distinct University of Suffolk model of learning, teaching and assessment; consistent integration of inclusive learning and employability.

Students will be supported through a longer induction process, blending academic and support elements in the first six to eight weeks. Screening will be offered to all students to identify learning difficulties and develop individualised support, and increase levels of engagement with academic skills support, particularly with students from groups already identified with lower levels of engagement such as mature BME students.

From 2018/19, students with disabilities will be invited to attend a 'relaxed induction' before the start of the formal induction process. This event will particularly benefit students with learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. Relaxed induction will offer opportunities for students to engage with services earlier in the University lifecycle. Speakers and activities will introduce students to the University environment and information in a way easily to digest and retain, and students can ask questions, seek help and become familiar with the University before the formal induction.

By 2019/20, the Progression Strategy will be fully embedded. Interventions will be implemented gradually throughout the first year, such as assessment-skills training held shortly before assessments, and peer-assisted learning support. These sessions will be part of the normal *inclusive* academic programme, ensuring that all students attend. We will capture data throughout the academic journey in a new learner analytics platform (to be implemented in 2018/19) allowing for the introduction of further interventions and identification and monitoring of learning behaviours/patterns.

The Progression Strategy will provide students across all courses with more contact time with academic staff in year one, working in small groups and with more formative low-risk assessments. Throughout year two, students will be supported to develop a greater level of autonomy in their learning and preparing for a more independent learning and fewer contact hours in year three.

In addition, a review of the current personal tutor system will enable us to more effectively identify individuals in need and to provide early supportive interventions. Personal tutors will be provided with a clear framework and accompanying data to enable them to provide targeted support and guidance. This will include information about individual entry profiles to aid signposting of appropriate support. Results from early formative and low credit bearing assessments in the first semester will facilitate discussion of development needs between the personal tutor and students. This will provide a structured opportunity for students to reflect on individual learning needs and access appropriate services. Although the emphasis of these meetings will change throughout the student lifecycle, the structured approach will provide opportunities to review individual needs as they evolve and to plan for successful progression from University.

Employability and progression will be embedded in all academic programmes, providing students with career development learning, employer engagement and activities to increase awareness of progression opportunities. Embedding employability enables all students the opportunity to engage, but activities will be targeted where possible (as outlined in section 4) The University's portfolio will continue to expand to meet local economic skills needs, and to grow the availability of graduate-level employer engagement and career opportunities. It will also expand to provide more postgraduate opportunities, based on the needs of the economy. Teaching and learning within our postgraduate courses will expand on the applied nature of our undergraduate portfolio.

Our strategic approach to success and progression is based on work required across the student body, but we will target specific activities where possible, as outlined in Section 4.

## **2. d: Collaboration**

The University collaborates with a range of organisations across all aspects of our work. Our collaborative activity for 2019/20 will include:

### *Access*

- Neaco: If the Neaco project continues past July 2019, the University will work collaboratively the Neaco partners to reduce duplication of outreach activities, and to take advantage of opportunities for the consortium to have presence in a wider range of activities, such as community events.
- Ipswich Opportunity Area: The University will work with the Priority Groups of the Opportunity Area (OA), providing activity and expertise in the development of activity. The University will also continue to host the Programme Manager.
- Schools and Colleges: We will prioritise collaborative activity with Schools and Colleges across the east of England to ensure young people and mature students have access to aspiration-raising information, advice and guidance, and on-campus activities. Sustained activity will take place with targeted primary schools, and engagement will be tracked using the HE Access Tracker (HEAT).
- Regional universities: We will continue to work collaboratively with the University of East Anglia, Suffolk County Council and Norfolk County Council, in the provision of Care Leaver activities and will continue to support collaborative younger age activities led by the University of East Anglia and Anglia Ruskin University. We will work collaboratively as part of the HELOA Anglia group, identifying opportunities for further collaborative work particularly with target groups.
- Employers: We are collaborating with employers to expand our portfolio of Higher/Degree Apprenticeships, with the aim of widening access to HE and increasing social mobility.
- Suffolk County Council, Ipswich Borough Council and other District Councils: The University will work with Local and District Authorities on community activities to increase awareness of HE. Events will involve children in fun and engaging activities and are important for engaging with prospective mature students/parents in the provision of IAG, including student finance.
- Service Children's Progression Alliance (SCiP): We will share good practice and work collaboratively with SCiP to increase HE participation of young people from military sites in Suffolk

and the East of England. The participation rate of young people from military families is just 24% ([OFFA, 2018](#)) and this group remains a target group for the University.

- HEAT: The University is a member of the HEAT membership service, which assists HEIs in England to target, monitor and evaluate their outreach activity. By working collaboratively, we can critically reflect on our approach to outreach data management, which in turn helps us monitor, evaluate and build evidence of impact.

### *Success and Progression*

- Charities and External Agencies: The University will increase engagement to support students with a range of information, advice and services, for example regarding managing money in times of financial hardship or crisis; housing, health and mental health and wellbeing.
- DanceEast: In 2018/19, the University will welcome its first intake into the first two-year accelerated Dance degree in the UK, delivered in collaboration with DanceEast. We expect this course to be attractive to students who are concerned about the cost of a three-year degree or moving out of the region. In 2019/20, our collaborative activity will continue to focus on increasing access to this course and the success and progression of students on the course.
- Teaching Partnership: The University works collaboratively with the University of East Anglia, Suffolk County Council and Norfolk County Council as part of a Social Work Teaching Partnership, which increases the involvement of practitioners in the design and delivery of the course, and increases the quality and quantity of placements. We hope to see this continue in 2019/20 and expect to see continued improvements in success and progression of Social Work students.
- Employers: The Ipswich Waterfront Innovation Centre (IWIC) was developed as a collaboration between the University and the New Anglia LEP. Many of the employers working with the IWIC are SMEs in growth sectors within the region, providing students with exciting opportunities to engage with prospective graduate employers and to gain employment skills.
- Internships, Placements and Subject-Specific Employer Engagement: We will continue to grow relationships with local and national employers to provide placements and internships to increase employability skills and confidence of our students. We will increase our engagement with employers who provide subject- or industry-specific experiences for students, through guest lectures, projects, and developmental activities. Where possible, we will prioritise speakers and activities aimed at our target groups, particularly those from a BME background or with a disability.
- The Careers Team will collaborate with academic programmes to embed employability into the curriculum. The team will also target extra-curricular online and face-to-face activities to improve early access of careers services and address differences in high-skilled employment progression, particularly for female students, students with a disability and BME students.

## **2. e: Evaluation**

The University accepts the recommendation of the [Social Mobility Advisory Group \(2016\)](#) that universities should make better use of data across all aspects of the student lifecycle to identify gaps and to be able to assess the effectiveness of work on social mobility and widening participation. A range of data is produced regularly for monitoring progress on access, success and progression,

which will be combined with evaluation from activities to inform continuous improvement in these areas. Each of the sections below outline specific evaluation activities, but are all underpinned by monitoring in each academic School and by the University's Planning Group and Executive.

#### *Access:*

Our approach to evaluation of outreach activities has focused on understanding the effectiveness of activities in meeting their objectives, which ensures continuous improvement of activities, and we now include HEAT tracking. In 2019/20, we expect HEAT reports to provide us with information about the progression of prospective young and mature students who have engaged with the University between 2016 and 2018 and who have entered HE in 2018/19, providing invaluable information in the evaluation of our outreach activities. Using these reports the University can evaluate the relationship between outreach programmes, disadvantage, attainment and patterns of progression into HE.

Much of our outreach activity has focused on students in school or college, and we aim to increase our activity with prospective mature students to achieve our mature and part-time targets. [OFFA \(2017\)](#) suggest using a three-step evaluation process of carrying out an institutional health check, reflecting on activities, and focusing evaluation on the significant barriers for adult learners. The University will follow this process as part of developing new activities for adult learners.

The University uses internal and UCAS data for continuous monitoring of progress against targets and milestones. Throughout the UCAS cycle, we report to the Executive on applications from students with specific characteristics, and carry out an annual review of the demographics and characteristics of our applicants. This activity helps us to plan new activity to meet our targets. We also attend a range of sector events each year to share good practice and evaluation. We are active members of GuildHE, where we engage with other small and specialist HEIs. We also contribute to evaluation and good practice with HELOA and Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA).

#### *Success:*

The introduction of a new VLE in 2018/19 will provide increased opportunities to deliver inclusive, action-based, blended model of teaching and learning. The integrated learner analytics platform will substantially increase the monitoring of engagement with learning and development opportunities, aside from current attendance monitoring and assessment processes. Staff and students will have access to live data at individual, module, course and cohort level. This data will allow the design of timely interventions to reverse and pre-empt crisis, and to identify patterns in engagement and preferences in modes of delivery, contributing to a 'whole person' picture of achievement and engagement. We expect the learner analytics platform and the delivery of live achievement data to contribute to a reduction in attrition and disengagement with learning.

Specific evaluation of activities relating to success will take place using methods such as:

- Pre- and post-evaluation questionnaires to assess impact, which will focus on changes in attitudes and aspirations.
- Analysis of learner engagement/metrics using the VLE, learner analytics and internal data.
- The Student Experience Group, which includes student representatives, evaluates the student lifecycle, from pre-admission to graduation. The Group considers a range of data, including NSS and Internal Surveys/Research to identify academic and non-academic areas for improvement.
- The Equality and Diversity Committee (EDC) reviews data on ethnic minority, age and disability and other protected characteristics, with specific working groups looking at retention, success and

progression. The EDC will play an increased role in monitoring the intersectional data developed to support the continued progress of the Access and Participation Plan.

*Progression:*

Evaluation of activity for progression will continue to be based on responses to post-event surveys, progression into internships and placements, and employment outcomes. We will embed employability across all course curricula, and feedback from staff on skills and confidence of students will inform further development of employability-based activities and assessments. We will continue to use DLHE outcomes to determine where progress is required, particularly where patterns can be seen between specific characteristics and high-skilled employment. We will continue to hold regular reviews on employability activities and protected characteristics as part of the Equality and Diversity Committee. Reporting based on specific characteristics will also take place in each academic School's annual Risk-based Monitoring and Enhancement meetings and reports.

*Evaluation of Financial Support:*

We monitor continuation rates of Bursary-recipients but have not previously carried out qualitative evaluation. By 2019/20, we will have implemented a programme of evaluation, including use of the OFFA toolkit and focus groups held in partnership with the Student Union. The focus groups will develop an understanding of how recipients use the Bursary and the impact on success and progression. We will also carry out evaluation based on outcomes of Bursary recipients, including graduate outcomes and employment rates, and outcomes based on specific characteristics.

We will continue to invest in Blackbullion, an online student finance platform, which provides financial advice available both on- and off-campus. Reporting functions within the system provides analytics on student engagement, which will be used within the evaluation of financial support. Additional promotion of the Blackbullion platform prior to students joining courses will support good financial literacy in students from the outset, reducing stresses caused by unexpected financial hardship.

## **2. f: Monitoring Delivery of the Access and Participation Plan (APP): Student Engagement and Consultation**

The Student Union has provided feedback, which has been incorporated into the development of this Plan (APP). The University's Executive and Board have approved the APP.

The University is implementing a new process from 2018/19 for monitoring and development of this and future APPs, to ensure that students are part of the whole process. The APP will be implemented and monitored by the Student Experience Group, chaired by the Director of Learning and Teaching, with membership from the Student Union, academic teams and professional services. Progress of the APP will be reported to the Student Union Trustee Board, and the Student Union Welfare Officer. The APP will be reviewed by a diverse range of students including those representing the target groups outlined throughout this APP, and their views will be sought regarding further development of activities, particularly those aimed at these groups. The Equality and Diversity Committee will review the data on outcomes based on specific and combined characteristics.

Individual aspects of the APP will be monitored and evaluated through regular engagement with students. Outreach activity is reviewed by the team of Student Ambassadors, which includes students from across the target groups. Activity carried out by Learning Services is evaluated through Critical

Friends events, the Student Union Council, and by direct engagement between Learning Services and course groups. Financial support will be evaluated through Focus Groups with students.

## **2. g: Monitoring Delivery of the Access and Participation Plan: Institutional Governance**

The University will monitor compliance with the commitments made in the APP and progress against targets and milestones. The following indicators will be monitored annually:

- Retention, achievement and continuation rates of full-time and part-time undergraduate students;
- Socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender, age, disability and entry qualifications of new entrants;
- Graduate employability rates and progression of full-time and part-time undergraduates;
- Quantity and impact of outreach activities taking place in each year.

The University monitors the APP through termly Planning Group meetings, and annual reports submitted by the Registrar to the Executive and Board, which are also reviewed by the Senate.

## **2. h: Equality and Diversity**

All policies and activities are subject to equality impact assessment and draw upon consideration of the access, success and progression of students, broken down by protected characteristics. This also includes consideration of academic appeals, complaints, academic misconduct, and professional misconduct and these are reported to Senate.

The University monitors implementation and evaluation of its duties under the Equality Act 2010 through the EDC, which has diverse membership from across the institution including key partners from the community. The work of the Outreach and Student Services teams is reported into the EDC providing a holistic view of Equality and Diversity issues across the institution. Work has been undertaken to analyse a broad range of protected characteristics of students to inform marketing and recruitment activities, curriculum development, and the tailoring of support to suit a range of needs. The continued development of an inclusive culture remains a priority. Monitoring of student attendance and other mechanisms to identify students at risk continue to be enhanced. Marketing and recruitment activities target and engage closely with specific community events where diverse groups are represented with the aim of raising aspirations and progression. All staff involved with student recruitment and admissions receives training, emphasising the need to ensure that discrimination, either direct or indirect, is not exercised during any recruitment processes.

Much work has been done to support applicants and students with disabilities and we regularly review compliance with the QAA UK Quality Code for HE and the Equality Act 2010. All marketing literature and digital media is fully compliant with accessibility guidelines. All students can access the physical environment in which they study, learn, live and socialise. We continue to invest in information and advice for applicants on reasonable adjustments and Disabled Students Allowances; and applicants are encouraged to disclose information about additional needs as early as possible.

The University's multi-faith Chaplaincy represents a wide range of faiths, with provision for private prayer and community worship and a programme of activities and clubs for different groups and effective links with local faith groups. The latter is important to students from outside Suffolk, particularly for refugees and international students. The Chaplains are visible in our community, enhancing the wellbeing service provided by Student Services. Strong links with the local mosque

have helped to increase understanding of the needs of our Muslim students. The Chaplaincy aims to develop the number and range of events held to mark important festivals.

### **3. Targets**

Targets are outlined in the attached resource plan. We do not wish to make any changes to the targets at this stage, although wish to add two new targets relating to mature and part-time students as outlined in Section 2.

An underlying aspect of our targets for 2019/20 is a focus on improving the data we use to understand the success and progression of our students based on intersectional characteristics and their use of the support services and enhanced personal tutor system. We also will work with schools and Suffolk County Council to access data to assess the impact of our GCSE English attainment-raising activity.

### **4. Access, Student Success and Progression Measures**

#### **4. a: Access**

The University is committed to providing activities aimed at raising aspiration and participation in HE of under-represented groups across the East of England. We recognise that information, advice and guidance (IAG) plays a key role in supporting informed choices of young people and mature students ([Social Mobility Advisory Group, 2016](#)) and we will continue to focus on delivering excellent IAG across all of our activities. We will continue to work in a structured way with schools and colleges with low progression rates, as well as with communities with low participation rates.

*Attainment Raising Activity:* The University recognises that GCSE attainment is a strong predictor of progression into HE (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2015; Whitty and Anders, 2016) and that disadvantaged students are almost equally as likely to progress to HE when attainment is equal to their advantaged peers ([OFFA, 2017](#)). In 2017/18, we piloted activity to raise attainment in GCSE English for disadvantaged students who were at Grade 3/4 borderline and for students with English as an Additional Language. The aim was to increase performance in English and increase confidence of the young people involved. We will use evaluation and tracking information from 2017/18 to inform how we develop this for delivery in 2018/19 and 2019/20. We plan to continue this activity and to expand it to include a larger number of students, including mature students undertaking Access to HE courses. The purpose of the activity will be to increase the proportion of disadvantaged young people and mature students achieving Grade 4 in GCSE English, increasing subject knowledge and confidence, with the aim of improving progression rates to Higher Education. This will be monitored through reports from the Schools/Colleges involved and HEAT tracking of the students. Baseline data has been provided based on the proportion of disadvantaged young people in Suffolk achieving Grade 4+ in GCSE English in 2017 (Suffolk County Council data) but milestones will be determined through work with the schools/colleges and local authority on the creation of clean data to show the impact of our work on subject knowledge and attainment.

*Mature and Part-time Students:* Applications from mature students and part-time students have declined both nationally and locally. Research suggests that the decline may be largely attributable to the change in tuition fees in 2012 and the change in financial support for Professional Health courses in 2017 (Callender and Thompson, 2018). We will carry out the three-step evaluation process

recommended by [OFFA \(2017\)](#) in the development of new activities aimed at mature and part-time students, and will develop digital and print information on financial support, highlighting our part-time bursary. Case studies will address the range of factors that typically affect mature students (MillionPlus, 2018). We will expand academic and IAG activity with Access to HE students at the University's Partner Colleges and in the wider network of Colleges in the East of England.

*Younger Age Activity:* Research with Primary School children (Chambers et al, 2018) found that career aspirations are based on people they know or the media, and that gender stereotyping is set from a young age. Only 1% of the children in the study knew about a job from someone visiting their school. We will develop printed workbooks for delivery of activities in schools and on-campus and will expand our STEM innovation activities and our popular Family Awareness Days. Where possible, we will deliver sustainable activity with Secondary Schools and their feeder Primary Schools.

*Information, Advice and Guidance:* We will expand sustained outreach activities in schools and colleges, and will target activity using HEFCE Cold Spots data. We will deliver academic workshops to provide an insight into university-level study, including residential summer schools for students within target groups. We will prioritise activity for students studying BTEC qualifications as they are less likely than those with A Levels to progress to HE (Cochrane, 2015) and those studying in FE Colleges where progression is often lower than in Sixth Form Colleges (Gartland and Smith, 2015). The University's Infozone will provide advice and guidance to anyone considering higher education study, including making referrals to FE and other local providers, to provide a pathway to HE.

*Students with Disabilities:* We will continue to deliver activities aimed at raising the aspirations of young people with disabilities, and will expand the on-campus 'Splendid' event for young people with Specific Learning Differences or disabilities. We will introduce activities for mature students with disabilities, using existing students with similar characteristics as mentors where possible.

*Young White Males:* We will use evaluation and tracking from our 2018/19 project to expand our activities to promote HE to young white males from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

*Students from Minority Ethnic Groups:* We will use evaluation and tracking from our 2018/19 project to expand our activities to promote HE to students from minority ethnic groups.

*Accessing University Interviews:* We will provide a fund to help students in target groups attend interviews where financial reasons may make it difficult to attend.

*Subject Ambassador Scheme:* The Subject Ambassador Scheme will expand to offer increased inspirational taster sessions in schools. Student ambassadors can be seen as positive role models when involved in informal learning activities (Gartland, 2015); and student ambassadors that interact with students on campus visits are often seen as reliable sources of information (Slack et al, 2012).

*School Sponsorship and Governance:* We committed to undertaking research in 2018/19 on options for school sponsorship and will respond to this research in 2019/20. We will continue to encourage staff to support the Governance of Schools and Colleges across the East of England.

*The University's Portfolio:* The portfolio of Higher and Degree Apprenticeships is expected to expand in 2019/20 to increase access to HE and grow skills required in the local community. Many of our degrees are available part-term but we have experienced a decline in part-time enrolments. We are

reviewing our provision to identify opportunities to increase accessibility, and the Partner Colleges play a key role in making HE available across our community. We will also be expanding our postgraduate portfolio to increase opportunities for our students to progress into postgraduate study.

#### **4. b: Student Success**

Continuation rates have not met all targets and milestones, and the Progression Strategy and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy aims to embed support across the full student population, targeting specific groups where possible. Promotional materials used to provide information and to promote activities will have diverse images and case studies from mature, male and BME students. Specific areas of focus in 2019/20 are:

*Study Skills:* Voluntary engagement in our 'Get Ahead' pre-entry study skills programme has been low, and in 2017/18, we piloted delivery as part of the induction programme for a large group of courses, which included screening for learning difficulties. This model increased attendance but engagement declined across the three days. A series of specially designed, course-focussed one-day programmes will be trialled with a range of courses across the portfolio for 2018/19 and will be fully embedded into all induction programmes in 2019/20. This is likely to make it easier for part-time students to attend the 'full' Get Ahead programme. Embedded study skills will be expanded throughout the curriculum to ensure it is provided for all students, with additional one-to-one support available outside the classroom, including online delivery for students on placements.

*Inclusive Practice:* The University is committed to embedding inclusivity in learning, teaching and assessment and will begin to rollout interventions in 2018/19, with further developments in 2019/20. A refreshed institutional course design framework is supporting academic teams in creating modules and programmes with employability and inclusive practice woven through the design, resourcing and assessment of learning. The new VLE will be introduced in 2018/19 and will provide students with access to learning that suits their learning preferences; and learner analytics within the VLE will provide regular monitoring of engagement and achievement.

*Screening for Learning Need:* We will embed the use of [Lucid LADS Plus](#) and associated software in 2019/20 to improve screening for the introduction of earlier individualised learning plans and access to Disabled Students Allowances, with the aim of reducing academic failure. Collaborative work between Learning Services, Student Services and the Student Union Liberation Officers will promote screening for mature students and BME students, for potential 'late-in-life' diagnosis, and to promote individualised support. Impact will be monitored via individual progression and achievement.

*BME Research:* The Social Work team have carried out research on the experience of BME students on the Social Work degree, and findings are being disseminated through the Equality and Diversity Committee in summer 2018. The results will inform practice to support BME students.

*[Peer-Assisted Student Success \(PASS\)](#):* We will expand opportunities for students to support one another through the PASS scheme, and aim to increase engagement of students from under-represented groups, particularly mature and male students. We will invest in further rollout of the PlacementPAL app that was developed to support students on placement. Initial evaluation was extremely positive and extension of the tool will support the large number of students on Professional Health programmes, Social Work and Counselling.

*Finance Advice:* Student use of the Financial Advisory service has increased, particularly with changes to funding for Health students. High numbers of POLAR3 Q1 and mature students use the service, and an increased number have been referred to the Food Bank. We will increase links with agencies and charities to broaden the range of assistance available, and will increase the availability of materials aimed at providing financial management advice. We will monitor this through analysis of department data, particularly access and support for young males and part-time students.

*Disability Support:* The team will seek to engage applicants and students earlier through recruitment and outreach work. Outreach activity and the development of 'relaxed induction' activities will support early engagement of students, timely identification of need and implementation of support arrangements. Applicants and students will be provided with advice about entitlement to DSAs and support in making DSA applications.

*Specialist Mentoring:* We will expand the availability of Specialist Mentors (with relevant professional qualifications and who meet the DSA Quality Assurance Framework (DSA QAF) standard) to increase provision for students with Mental Health Conditions, for whom retention is currently lower than other cohorts. We also plan to be able to offer this mentoring to a wider range of students, including Carers and Care Leavers.

*Specialist Study Skills:* We will increase the capacity for support for students with learning difficulties, particularly to respond to new diagnoses made through LUCID screening. We will target this support to mature students with learning difficulties, who are currently under-represented in engagement data. Impact of screening and individualised support earlier in the student journey will be monitored through individual progression and achievement records.

*Non-Specialist and Peer Mentoring:* We will continue to enhance and target pastoral support for students through the delivery of IAG on all aspects of student life. This holistic service will include the availability of non-specialist mentoring, aimed at students from POLAR3 Q1&2, mature, or first-generation backgrounds, and those studying part-time. We will also expand a programme of peer-led social activities that target hard to engage cohorts, and support social integration.

*BME Student and Staff Network:* An informal network of BME staff and students will develop activities to aid a sense of belonging at the University and to support success and progression, and will also be used as a consultative group for new initiatives aimed to support BME students.

*Safeguarding:* We will be increasing work to raise awareness of safeguarding issues and to prevent safeguarding problems, particularly for groups likely to be more susceptible.

*Counselling:* We will be increasing the availability of counselling services for students as the demand for this service has seen continuous growth.

*Personal Tutors:* We are carrying out a review of the Personal Tutor system to enhance the support provided to students to improve both success and continuation.

*Attendance Monitoring:* Following the implementation of a refreshed Attendance Policy, we will have fully embedded the new approaches and mechanisms in 2019/20, which will ensure early identification of students disengaging from their course, and will introduce early support measures.

### ***Students with Disabilities***

The Learning Services team will continue to ensure that all Academic Skills Advisors can provide non-medical specialist study skills support for students in receipt of DSA. In 2019/20, we aim to deliver more focussed support that enhances delivery embedded into the curriculum, less generic support, and increased one-to-one provision. This was piloted with a small number of courses in 2017/18 and we will be carrying out evaluation on the success of this work at the end of the academic year, with the aim of delivering this more widely across the University by 2019/20. The implementation of a learning analytics programme will help us to track ongoing engagement with support, and the impact on progression and achievement of these students.

Staff will undertake training in Mental Health First Aid, which will enhance the student experience through greater awareness of mental health and creating a more inclusive learning environment. Staff will be supported in undertaking training related to Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC) to raise awareness of sensory conditions. Students with ASCs will be given tailored pre-entry orientation to enhance their induction as part of the expansion of induction for students with disabilities.

We will continue to expand study support assistance and the availability of equipment, for students with disabilities to meet growing demand, which will be evaluated by retention and success data for students in receipt of this support. The University will continue to fund the first £200 paid by students eligible for DSA. This is an important aspect of ensuring that students with disabilities are not disadvantaged financially by their disability.

The University is committed to improving the experience of students with disabilities and continues to maintain the staffing resource in Student Services in recognition of the need from students presenting with disabilities as the institution has grown. Findings from retention data and student focus groups shows that students with reasonable adjustments are less likely to withdraw from the University.

### **4. c: Progression**

We recognise that more work is required to support the successful progression of our students into graduate level employment and postgraduate study, and that graduates with specific characteristics are less likely to be employed or in professional/managerial employment than others. Specific areas of focus in 2019/20 will therefore be on:

*Employability across the Curriculum:* In 2019/20 we expect to make greater use of the [Ab Integro](#) Careers Platform following the introduction of this in 2018/19, through the development of bespoke programmes and awards, and the embedding of employability across the curriculum. We will develop an extra-curricular employability award that can be tailored e.g. Women in Leadership. An employability award will combine a blended career development and skills programme, experience and personal reflection, and will be recognised on the HE Achievement Record (HEAR).

*Personalised Support:* We will implement personalised employability support for students for whom outcomes are likely to be less positive than our general student population, specifically BME students and students with disabilities. A range of online, group and individual activities will be developed to meet the specific needs of these students, including regular careers coaching, and they will be directed towards relevant work experience/internship opportunities.

*Supported Placement Programme:* The University trialled a Supported Placement Programme in 2017/18 to provide placement opportunities for undergraduate students who perceive that they have barriers to employment, particularly including students with disabilities. It will be continued and developed based on evaluation and we aim to increase the number of paid placements in 2019/20.

*The Suffolk Centre for Female Entrepreneurship:* The Centre provides events, workshops and networking opportunities for female students to develop their entrepreneurial skills, with the aim of providing female students with the knowledge and skills to start their own businesses or progress into graduate employment. The Centre will expand activities for students in 2019/20.

*Internships and Placements:* We will grow our partnerships with national and local employers to increase the availability of internships and placements for students. Specific support will be given to students from target groups to increase confidence in applying for work-based experiences.

*Careers and Employability Events:* We deliver careers and employability events where students can interact directly with employers. We will expand these in 2019/20 to include a wider range of employers, who will also contribute to the delivery of the extra-curricular employability award.

*Promotion of Postgraduate Opportunities:* We will deliver a series of activities to provide IAG to students about progression into postgraduate study. Information will focus on financial support, employability, and guidance on progression into research degrees and academic careers.

*Alumni:* We continue to make the Careers and Employability service available to our graduates to provide support for those still seeking employment, and will enhance support available in 2019/20. Where possible, we will use our alumni as role models to inspire our BME and disabled students, and to encourage our female students in aiming for professional and managerial roles.

The University is committed to improving the employability of our students and continues to maintain the staffing resource in the Careers and Employability team to provide individual and cohort-specific support to our students. Research shows that students from a widening participation background often require more support in developing career management skills than other students, specifically around self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy (Brown, 2014). Further research has found that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds tend to leave career planning to the end of their studies, and have a reluctance to participate in activities specifically aimed at boosting their CV (Greenbank, 2015). Our experience continues to reflect this research and much of the work of the Careers and Employability team is focussed on developing early careers interventions, and providing increased levels of individualised activities for the target groups identified.

#### **4. d: Financial Support**

*University of Suffolk Bursary:* We will continue to offer a Bursary in 2019/20 as our Bursary recipients have better retention rates than our general student population. We will maintain the Bursary amount at £500 per student per year to support success and retention. The eligibility criteria will be based on a Student Finance England (SFE) assessment of household income (less than £25,000).

*Bursary for Part-time Students:* We will introduce a new Bursary for part-time students, which aims to reduce the financial burden for part-time students undertaking HE. Students will be eligible if they are

studying at least 50% of the Full-Time Equivalent and eligibility will be based on a SFE assessment of household income (less than £25,000). The Bursary will be £500 pro rata per year of study.

*Looked After Children Bursary:* This will be offered to students who live or have lived in local authority care. The Bursary will be £500 each year of undergraduate study.

Eligibility criteria are clearly stated on our website and students are required to apply for the Bursary. Payment dates are set at February and May each year, and are therefore linked to students successfully starting their second semester and remaining on-course throughout the academic year. We will implement a new programme of evaluation of the Bursary in 2018/19.

## 5. Investment

The University of Suffolk has a high proportion of under-represented students. In 2019/20 the University plans to spend £2.4m (22.5%) of higher fee income on additional access, success and retention measures, and plans to further rebalance its resources to reflect guidance outlined by the OfS and our own assessment of our performance. The proportional spend of 22.5% has been previously agreed with OFFA.

The University recognises the research that was carried out for OFFA (2010/06)<sup>7</sup> which indicated that Bursaries do not have an impact on the likelihood of disadvantaged young people choosing to go to university. However, our experience is slightly different from the OFFA report (2014/02)<sup>8</sup> regarding the effect of Bursaries on retention rates. Our own data has shown that the overall withdrawal rate of all Suffolk students in 2015/16 was 12.38% compared to 6.75% of Bursary recipients. We recognise that additional outreach and/or success measures may also have an impact on these students, but we believe that Bursaries are still an important part of the wider support offered to the students.

The University will continue to offer financial support to students, but the balance of spend will continue to prioritise non-financial support measures with expenditure on financial support at c30% (£737,000) in 2019/20. A higher number of students is expected to be eligible for financial support with the inclusion of the previously NHS-funded students, but this level of spend will allow activity expenditure to increase compared to previous years. Expenditure on non-financial support measures is planned to be 70% of total expenditure at £1,698,000. We are increasing our absolute spend on non-financial support measures year-on-year, which allows us to build and strengthen our initiatives. The balance of spend on non-financial support measures, including the percentage that this represents of our total spend, will be:

- Access: £414,000 (17% of total spend)
- Success: £898,000 (37% of total spend)
- Progression: £378,000 (16% of total spend)

Our work to widen participation is being funded beyond the investment accounted for in this plan, particularly in relation to the work performed by our academic staff in attracting and retaining students from under-represented groups. Staff across the University participate in a wide range of community engagement activities that aim to raise aspirations and to increase awareness of higher education

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<sup>7</sup> OFFA (2010/06) Have Bursaries Influenced Choice Between Universities?

<sup>8</sup> OFFA (2014/02) An Interim Report: Do bursaries have an effect on retention rates?

and the positive impact of increased education on the county and region. The Ipswich Waterfront Innovation Centre (IWIC) acts as a hub for the business community to engage with the university and our students, and we have active researchers in the fields of education, attainment, widening participation, and social mobility. The University collaborates with a range of organisations across all aspects of our outreach work including community groups that focus on hard-to-reach groups including young parents, young carers, care leavers, those who are NEET, and groups with English as an Additional Language. Much of this work is supported by the University over and above the amounts included in this plan.

## **6. Provision of Information to Students**

The University of Suffolk is aware of its responsibilities within the Consumer Rights Act 2015 and QAA, and the University is committed to clearly informing students of tuition fees, financial support, and additional course costs. We clearly state in our communications with students that we will not increase fees for continuing students, which means that students joining the University will have a fixed fee for the duration of the course on which they enrol in 2019/20. We also provide information about the minimum associated costs that they should plan for to successfully pass their course.

The University's Access Agreements and the 2019/20 Access and Participation Plan are available from the University's website in a downloadable and printable format. All relevant information for students is provided as early as possible, including course specific information, bursaries and financial support, and the policies and procedures that will be relevant to students throughout their studies at the University of Suffolk. Students are also provided with information about making complaints, and information about the potential for changes either before they enrol or during their studies. The University also commits to providing UCAS and Student Loans Company with information as required to populate their applicant-facing web services and databases.

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