University Campus Suffolk
Access Agreement 2016-17

This agreement sets out how University Campus Suffolk (UCS) will safeguard and promote fair access to all of its HEFCE-funded full-time and part-time undergraduate programmes, recognising the need to support students throughout their whole student lifecycle. This agreement is submitted on behalf of the whole UCS network.

Introduction
UCS is a partnership between the University of East Anglia and the University of Essex, Great Yarmouth College, Lowestoft College, Suffolk New College and West Suffolk College. UCS provides Suffolk with a thriving university campus with a hub in the county town of Ipswich, together with linked Centres in Bury St Edmunds, Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft. The development of UCS is a county-wide initiative serving the whole of Suffolk, Great Yarmouth and beyond.

UCS offers a unique collaboration of higher education (HE). The universities, building on their established reputations in teaching and research, collaborate with UCS to offer a professionally and vocationally relevant curriculum. All UCS degrees are jointly validated by both the University of East Anglia and the University of Essex. The two validating universities work closely with UCS to assure the quality and standards of all the degree courses on offer. UCS is a private company limited by guarantee.

The UCS Board has agreed that UCS should seek to move towards a new governance structure. If successful this would mean that UCS would gain its own degree awarding powers and university title. The UCS Executive is committed to achieving this objective, and the earliest time that the process is likely to conclude is spring 2016. Following UCS’ application for TDAP last year, the institution is currently undergoing a period of scrutiny by the QAA, the outcomes of which are expected to be reported to ACDAP in the autumn of 2015.

UCS aims to be a beacon of excellence attracting students from Suffolk and beyond, helping to reverse the net export of graduates and the low post-16 participation rate which has adversely affected Suffolk for many years. The collaboration work between HEIs in Suffolk and Norfolk as part of the National Network for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO) initiative will continue into 2016-17. This work aims to address the problem of isolation in rural and coastal communities in Suffolk and Norfolk, ensuring that all schools receive outreach activity to help ensure that HE is accessible to as many people as possible.

Widening participation continues to be central to the mission of UCS, and the profile of its student population reflects this. UCS has a high proportion of under-represented students, and there is a broad mix of students across the undergraduate student body. UCS is pleased with the progress being made against the ambitious targets set for student access, success and progression.

The UCS student body is diverse and inclusive with 28.4% studying part-time and 62.6% classed as mature (over 21) in 2014-15. 12.7% of UCS students in 2014-15 come from ethnic minorities against a background figure for Suffolk of 4.8% (Suffolk Demographic Profile 2013, based on 2011 Census data).

In 2013-14, 13.9% of UCS students disclosed a disability and 6.1% were in receipt of the Disabled Students Allowance. Almost all young (18-21 year olds) full-time undergraduate UCS students came from a state school in 2012-13 (99.6%) and 47.6% are from NS-SEC
The majority of students are from the eastern region with 56.6% from the IP postcode in 2014-15.

Despite the image of Suffolk being one of affluence, 33 of Suffolk’s Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are ranked in the most deprived 20% areas in England, and 14 LSOA’s are ranked in the worst 10% deprived areas in England. In Great Yarmouth, 22% of the borough’s population are living in the 10% most deprived areas in England (English Indices of Deprivation 2010). There are nearly 20,000 children living in income deprived households in Suffolk, and a further 4,500 in Great Yarmouth (26.5% of children). 23% of children in Ipswich are being brought up in poverty (IMD 2010, Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)).

Suffolk continues to address poor attainment in maintained schools through the Raising the Bar initiative led by Suffolk County Council (SCC) to improve the outcomes for young people in Suffolk. UCS has a key priority to widen access and raise aspirations across the region which helps to support Raising the Bar. The participation of 18 years old from Suffolk in HE has increased from 16% in 2010, to 22.7% in 2014 (SCC data). UCS has played a significant role in achieving this increase, but there is still considerable work to do. In 2014, 30.4% of English 18 year olds were accepted into higher education, and 30.7% of 18 year olds from the East of England were accepted into higher education (UCAS End of Cycle Report 2014). Based on a cohort size of 7735 in Suffolk, the low participation rate means that Suffolk sent 619 fewer students to HE than would have been expected if the participation rate was at the East of England average.

UCS will continue to focus on curriculum areas that are closely aligned with the regional economic and New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP) priorities particularly STEM and those other areas that will support the local economy. UCS is working with SCC leading the Suffolk STEM Accelerator which will work with young people and schools to raise participation in STEM subjects at both school and in post-compulsory education and stimulate interest in STEM employment opportunities. UCS is also working with NALEP to establish a STEM Innovation Centre at UCS which will support new businesses and bring together students and employers.

In previous years UCS has reported high in-year retention and achievement rates. In 2013-14, the overall in-year retention rate was 95.4% and the achievement rate was 92.3%. A key strength is the quality of student support and this aspect contributes significantly to the retention and success rates of students. We also wish to report on continuation data which is currently at 86.8% for all full-time undergraduate students and 86% for all full-time mature undergraduate students (first degree and other, 2012-13 entrants, HESA). It is acknowledged that these figures are gradually increasing but need improvement, and this has guided the decisions over UCS’ access expenditure proposals which are discussed further in section 2.5.1.

In November 2014 the QAA undertook a Higher Education Review of UCS Ipswich. The overall aim of Higher Education Review is to inform students and the wider public whether a provider meets the expectations of the higher education sector for:

- the setting and/or maintenance of academic standards
- the provision of learning opportunities
- the provision of information
- the enhancement of the quality of students' learning opportunities.
UCS was delighted to be awarded ‘Meets UK Expectations’ in each of the above four categories, and that the Review identified good practice at UCS relating to employer engagement and employability skills. The full report can be found on the QAA website.

1. Fees, student numbers and fee income

For 2016-17 UCS proposes to maintain fee levels in line with those set in its 2015-16 access agreement which are as follows:

- £9,000 for full-time Bachelor’s degrees and DipHEs (estimated number: 1313 FTE)
- £8,000 for full-time Foundation degrees and CertHE courses (estimated number: 510 FTE)
- £8,490 (pro-rata) for part-time Bachelor’s degrees and DipHEs (estimated number: 20 FTE)
- £7,980 (pro-rata) for part-time Foundation degrees and CertHE courses (estimated number: 75 FTE)
- £6,000 (pro-rata) for HND/HNC (estimated number: 70 FTE)
- £6,000 (pro-rata) for ITT courses (estimated number: 70 FTE)

With the addition of the following programmes:
- £1800 (pro-rata) for a sandwich year including a placement in the UK
- £1350 (pro-rata) for a sandwich year including a placement studying abroad

It is felt that this fee structure represents an attractive offering to a wide range of potential students, and especially those from under-represented groups in HE. It reflects the diverse nature of UCS’ recruitment, and especially acknowledges the unique nature of UCS’ county-wide Learning Network.

All of the above fee levels will apply for the duration of the students’ studies, although UCS reserves the right to apply inflationary increases to these fee levels up to the Government’s RPI-X indicator.

2. Access and student success measures

2.1 Assessment of access and retention record

UCS has a high proportion of under-represented students. In 2016-17 UCS plans to spend 30% of higher fee income on additional access and retention measures.

This assessment is based on the following measures and indicators P3:

- 47.6% of young full-time undergraduate UCS entrants are from low socio-economic groups (NS-SEC classes 4, 5, 6, 7) (HESA data 2012-13) (benchmark 39.7%)
- 29.1% of young full-time undergraduate UCS entrants are from low participation neighbourhoods (HESA data 2012-13, P3)
- 18.2% of mature full-time undergraduate UCS entrants have no previous HE and are from low participation neighbourhoods (HESA data 2012-13, P3) (benchmark 11.3%)
- 28.4% of UCS students are part-time (2014-15)
- 17.9% of part-time young undergraduate UCS entrants have no previous HE and are from low participation neighbourhoods (HESA data 2012-13, P3) (benchmark 18.1%)
- 12.7% of UCS students come from ethnic minorities (2014-15)
- 99.6% of young full-time UCS students come from state schools (2012-13)

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1 Based on POLAR 3 data.
• In Suffolk the number of young people in Local Authority Care (LAC) progressing to university each year rarely goes above single figures, though this is increasing and in 2013-14 17 care leavers were studying at UCS

• Deprivation levels in much of Suffolk and Great Yarmouth remain high. 50 of Suffolk and Great Yarmouth’s Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are ranked in the most deprived 20% of the country, and 26 LSOAs are ranked in the worst 10% of deprived areas in the country (Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010)

• A high number of students in Suffolk and Great Yarmouth in low participation groups, are first generation HE students

2.2 Strategic approach to access and student success – the balance between widening participation, fair access and retention

In order to enhance access to UCS courses of under-represented groups in Suffolk and to increase the retention and success rates of students, UCS will concentrate most of its efforts on measures that will have a direct bearing on its own fair access, retention, performance and progression of students. UCS is, however, keen to continue with outreach work that promotes access to HE more generally and to maintain successful collaborative work and, as such, a proportion of UCS’ outreach work will continue to maintain and develop these partnerships.

UCS has seen a steady increase in students from widening participation backgrounds over recent years. This has been underpinned by successful outreach activity, improved pre-applicant information, advice and guidance (IAG), and excellent student support processes. UCS hopes to continue to improve these figures in 2016-17.

Though UCS’ overall in-year retention figures are good, recent HESA data highlights the need to improve continuation and achievement figures for full-time first degree students, including addressing and monitoring whether these figures are directly linked to the growing number of students from under-represented groups.

2.3 Expenditure on access and student success measures

In 2016-17 the total institutional expenditure on access, student success and progression measures will be approximately £2million, and this is broken down in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipated expenditure on new access and retention measures:</th>
<th>£</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Student outreach and access</td>
<td>£342,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Student success</td>
<td>£237,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Progression: Disability</td>
<td>£177,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Progression: Careers and employability</td>
<td>£128,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Non-NSP financial support (bursaries)</td>
<td>£1,161,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total Institutional Expenditure in 2016-17                  | £2,045,000   |

2.3.1 The balance between non-financial measures and financial support

In 2016-17 UCS plans to rebalance its resources and expenditure. In the first years of the new regime, priority was given to student financial measures as UCS wished to retain its high level of applicants from lower socio-economic groups and it was considered that fee waivers would be the best mechanism for ensuring this. As a result, expenditure as a proportion of higher fee income was significantly higher than as required in OFFA guidance which placed
UCS as one of the highest spending universities in the sector. UCS has had considerable success in widening participation (as above, 47.6% of young full-time undergraduate UCS entrants are from low socio-economic groups) but has found that uptake of its financial support measures has been difficult to promote. In particular, applications by students for the Suffolk Access Champion Scheme has been disappointing as has engagement of local schools and so this scheme will be withdrawn in 2016-17.

This experience at UCS is supported by a recent report carried out for OFFA about the impact of financial support on access and student success, which concludes that overall nationally, financial support does not have a significant effect on students’ choice of HEI or on non-continuation rates. Some institutional findings however suggest that financial support did impact the decision-making process of students, and meant it less likely for them to withdraw. The conclusions demonstrate the complexity of the situation and reflect the need for institutions to tailor the financial support they offer.

Following this, UCS intends to reduce its expenditure as a proportion of higher fee income to 30%. Levels of activity expenditure will be increased but financial support expenditure will reduce. UCS experience is that bursaries are important to our widening participation students and do have an impact on both access and retention and so it is proposed that the bursary offer to students is streamlined with expenditure on the main scheme maintained in absolute terms but that other unsuccessful schemes that have had little measurable impact are not continued. This will continue to enable UCS to respond to market demands and improve the attractiveness of UCS to widening participation students, supporting them through their whole student lifecycle and beyond. We will put in place better means of promoting the more simplified bursary scheme to potential students to improve take-up. Details of the proposed changes to bursaries are given under paragraph 2.6.

Below is a broad indication of the proportion of UCS’ institutional access spend between non-financial measures and financial support:

- Financial support (fee waivers and bursaries) - 57% (from 67% in 2015-16)
- Non-financial measures (access, student success and progression) - 43% (from 33% in 2015-16)

2.4 Outreach and access
UCS is committed to providing aspiration and attainment raising activities for under-represented groups across Suffolk and Great Yarmouth and encouraging them to apply for HE. This will include continuing to work in a structured way with schools and colleges with low progression rates, as well as with communities with low participation rates, including mature and part-time students. It is proposed that a proportion of the additional fee income will be allocated to specific measures designed to increase access.

UCS will invest approximately £342,000 in outreach and access in 2016-17.

Outreach activity will include:

- Continuation and growth of long term sustained outreach activity with young people from primary age upwards in carefully targeted schools and colleges in Suffolk, Great Yarmouth and beyond
- Maintaining intensive outreach activity such as summer schools, taster days, campus visits and family awareness days, that have proven to be most successful in evaluation of activity
- Subject specific events such as the Health Conference and Creative Arts Conference, and STEM events
- Development of progression agreements and a continued focus on outreach work with students that apply through a progression agreement
• Outreach activity with other targeted community groups e.g. mature students, military families, ethnic minority groups, care leavers, young carers, those wishing to study part-time and in particular parents
• Resources, including maintaining outreach staff and the UCS student ambassador scheme
• A subject specific ambassador programme, where current students contribute to outreach activity to inspire and enthuse young people to consider degree level study by running taster sessions in their subject area
• Collaborative activity with other regional HEIs to continue the work developed as part of the National Network for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO)
• Investing resources in contextual data gathering using CACI Acorn Data/HEAT, a strong and robust approach to evaluation of activity, and tracking students through their pre-applicant and student life cycle enabling UCS to focus resource and support on those most likely to need it
• Working with local schools to support development of new governance structures
• IAG materials to include explaining student finance and the UCAS application process to target groups and parents, and a targeted campaign to encourage mature and part-time applicants to UCS and HE in general
• Play a key role in the UCS Equality and Diversity Committee, which aims to review and monitor data about UCS staff and students and reflect relevant population benchmark data

UCS outreach will target the following groups:

• Students (and their supporters) from low income families, with particular emphasis on students from households with an income of less than £25,000. Some activities and UCS bursaries are offered to those with a household income of less than £42,620
• Students from primary school age upwards in carefully targeted Suffolk and Great Yarmouth Schools
• Students with a physical or specific learning disability
• Students who live in, or have recently left, local authority care
• Students from military families and ex-military
• Gifted and talented students
• Mature and part-time students
• Ethnic minority groups
• Young carers
• Parents/carers of these groups

UCS will ask schools to use the above criteria when selecting students to take part in outreach activity. UCS will continue to use contextual data resources, and indices such as POLAR 3 data, free school meals and no parental experience of HE to target the correct students.

UCS plans to enhance the transition for students from outreach work and access, through to application, enrolment and the student life cycle. The role of the UCS Infozone is to assist in providing IAG relating to wider educational opportunities in the local area, helping potential students to see pathways into HE and aspire to achieve higher level qualifications.

UCS will continue to deliver and where appropriate review the format of pre-entry study skills for prospective students. Currently this is usually offered to non-typical applicants and where it is felt they could benefit. With additional development and offer of online teaching and distance learning this will be available to more prospective students.
Induction events for mature students and others have proven successful in helping the transition to student life, and UCS plans to further develop targeted activities for identified ‘at risk’ groups, to be delivered throughout pre-arrival and over an extended induction period.

2.4.1 Collaboration
All outreach activities will be targeted and sustainable and will be run in collaboration with key partners and stakeholders.

UCS is the realisation of a Suffolk-wide outreach framework and, as such, will continue to work collaboratively with its partner FE colleges and other stakeholders, such as schools and the Raising the Bar project led by SCC, and NALEP, to raise attainment and widen participation. In particular UCS will strive to increase progression from its partner FE colleges on to HE programmes at UCS, where currently uptake is variable.

UCS works with all schools in Suffolk, but has a number of strong links with specific organisations that have low progression rates to HE or high numbers of widening participation students. UCS has a number of staff on different school governing bodies, who are involved with the development of new governance structures.

UCS is the lead institution in the Suffolk and Norfolk NNCO, through this network and the Eastern Region Widening Participation Working Group (comprising of Anglia Ruskin University, UEA, UCS, Norwich University of the Arts, and the universities of Bedfordshire, Cambridge, Essex and Hertfordshire) UCS will continue to share best practice and facilitate collaborative working in the region, increasing the engagement of schools in the east. In particular UCS will work closely with UEA to offer activities for both key stage 3, mature students, and secondary level teachers. These activities, supported by the NNCO until December 2016, will be multi-institution and multi-location to ensure the greatest possible reach and attendance. In order to effectively target, monitor and evaluate activity, we will share data on secondary school liaison with the Suffolk and Norfolk NNCO network to enable a full geographic coverage in provision within our catchment areas. We also plan to explore opportunities for data sharing to aid effective tracking of participants. UCS has met the collaborative targets for 2013-14 and has set new targets to ensure collaborative outreach is continued after NNCO funding has ceased.

UCS will also continue to be involved in the Eastern Region Care Leavers Group, running a joint conference for practitioners, or collaborative outreach events for young people.

UCS is a proactive member of the Higher Education Liaison Officers Association (HELOA). HELOA is the professional body of HE staff who provide information, advice and outreach activities to prospective students, their families and guidance advisers. Good practice around access and outreach is shared amongst members regionally and nationally.

The newly opened Fujitsu Intel Innovation Hub at the Ipswich Campus is the result of a new partnership between UCS, Fujitsu and Intel. It is equipped with a range of the latest computer equipment, and will be used to promote the use of technology in higher, further and secondary education. The new centre houses an array of Fujitsu technology including tablets, hybrid devices, laptops and desktop PCs, all running off the latest Intel® Atom™ and Intel® Core™ processors. As part of the initiative, UCS and Fujitsu will work with local schools in line with the new national computing curriculum and promoting STEM skills. The hub is already being used for outreach work with schools and we plan to incorporate use of this new technology into more school activities.

2.4.2 Contextual information
UCS will continue to invest a proportion of its outreach investment on further improving its
information systems to support contextual data gathering, tracking and evaluation. This has involved the purchase of contextual data (CACI Acorn data) which UCS will continue to use to cross reference with our student records to support outreach work and inform retention activity, alongside the use of the HEAT facility as part of the NNCO. We will continue to develop a system/resource that will ensure all of UCS’ information systems (including the enquiry service desk, paperless admissions, student records and contextual data) are linked and can be used cohesively to enhance outreach activity and targeted recruitment, and support focussed on-going student retention and success.

2.4.3 Courses and modes of study
UCS understands that some of its courses and modes of study attract a higher number of non-traditional students. Research into retention has highlighted the varying levels of success and student retention for particular groups and UCS is developing objectives to target these specific groups to improve retention levels. Events, such as taster days, Year 12 conferences and Summer Schools with the aim of helping prospective students to understand what is involved before enrolling on such courses will continue. A new programme to prepare students for HE will be introduced for 2016-17, aimed primarily at those applying through clearing. Further development needs to be made around taster sessions for potential mature and part-time students.

2.5 Student success and progression
In total, UCS plans to spend £542,000 on student progression and success measures in 2016-17.

2.5.1 Student success
UCS is committed to increasing student retention and success rates and, where identified, in reducing and removing gaps in success between different student groups. In year retention rates are 95.4% (HESA 2013-14) for full-time undergraduate students compared to 95.1% in 2012-13. Whilst retention rates are gradually improving, they still require further improvement in order to benefit individual students as well as the overall institutional position. The Retention Working Group addresses and leads on the issues of retention. This includes comprehensive analysis of withdrawals of students with protected characteristics and/or other factors that may impact upon retention. This data and the work of the Retention Working Group report into the Equality and Diversity Committee for oversight and further scrutiny. Annually key processes are reviewed (e.g. induction), student feedback is gained and impact measured. Findings and recommendations are implemented to improve the student experience and to aid retention and student success.

UCS will invest £237,000 in retention and success measures including:

- Building on initial statistical findings UCS will seek student feedback on specific topics and aspects of student experience
- Continuing to deliver and where appropriate review the format of pre-entry study skills and bridging modules for prospective students
- Induction events for mature students. Further development of targeted activities for identified ‘at risk’ groups to be delivered throughout pre-arrival and over an extended induction period
- Collaboratively across UCS continue to develop services that actively engage students and provide robust means for personal, professional and academic development and success
- Effectively promote opportunities e.g. counselling, wellbeing and academic support, and proactively engage students where they are more likely to be at risk of withdrawing, or where there are differences in attainment
- Design, implement and oversee effective peer-to-peer support systems in collaboration with the UCS Students’ Union
• Development of inclusive teaching and learning practices
• Increased access to learning resources and e-resources to facilitate flexible and inclusive approaches to learning materials
• Further development of the Enquiry Service Desk (ESD) and Student Guides to improve access to information, advice and support services

Student withdrawal is greatest in the first year of study (16.06% at Level 4 in 2013-14), the most common reasons cited for withdrawal include academic failure and other personal reasons. Pre-entry courses will continue to be delivered to develop study skills and confidence in those that are mature or from a non-traditional entry route. Bridging modules will be investigated and implemented where they will effectively support students’ transition into HE.

To further the overall student experience and to engage students across the student lifecycle, Professional Services teams will continue to expand extra-curricular, co-curricular and inter-curricular learning opportunities for students supporting their academic, personal and professional development. Staff will achieve and/or maintain specialist qualifications and the suite of learning opportunities delivered will be underpinned by current pedagogical practices. Learning opportunities will include the development of; underpinning academic and literary skills required, critical thinking, self-confidence, emotional intelligence, reflexivity and employability, for example. UCS will continue to invest in the development of these activities and develop mechanisms whereby such activities can be recognised as achieved on the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR). High quality teaching is a key factor in the student experience and while teaching rates highly in student satisfaction scores, continual improvement and development is required.

UCS acknowledges that proposed reforms to Disabled Students’ Allowances (DSAs) will impact students financially. UCS continues to monitor the proposed reforms via the DSA Working Group. This group will identify actions and make recommendations regarding areas for development where UCS can anticipate and support individual need, for example through investment in additional equipment, new technologies or expansion of e-resources. In addition, an extensive programme of staff development will be maintained that focuses on developing strategies for supporting students and their individual needs, for example, understanding the needs of mature, part-time and disabled students. This will also ensure that UCS can meet the needs of students with mild difficulties who may (under new DSA regulations) no longer be eligible for DSAs.

UCS plans to further develop plain English and user-friendly Student Guides to enhance student access to information about academic matters. The ESD service continues to be managed through the UCS Infozone. ESD enables students to access information and advice quickly and online. Students are able to self-book and self-manage advisory appointments, giving greater autonomy. UCS will continue to invest in ESD to ensure it continues to deliver a timely and quality service. System enhancements to reporting functionality will also be explored, which will allow greater analysis of service data and further roll out of ESD across UCS will be explored to improve contact between students, academic and professional services, and for pastoral support to be facilitated more effectively.

Following a review of mentoring programmes at the end of 2014-15, UCS will continue to develop the Peer Assisted Student Success Scheme (PASS) to provide an essential peer support network. Counselling and well-being services are well utilised by mature students and students who are experiencing short-term periods of anxiety or low mood. However, male and younger students (under 25 years of age) are typically under-represented in service data in these areas. UCS will further develop well-being resources for students, for example online, in the form of talking therapies or peer-to-peer networks.
Mature students (25 years upwards) are significantly over-represented in service data relating to accessing finance advice (2013-14 service data 59.1% compared to UCS population 42%). This is an area which will be kept under review for potential development to offer advice and workshops developing financial proficiency in students.

2.5.2 Progression: Disability
UCS will invest £177,000 in disability and equality and diversity activities. These will include:

- Specialist mental health adviser/s
- Outreach disability clinics and investigation into the use of a SPLD screening tool to enhance the effectiveness of referral to diagnostic assessment
- Ring fence money to enable students to access diagnostic learning assessments
- Provision of one-to-one support for students
- External disability training and professional updating
- Specialist equipment and adaptations
- Promotion of services

UCS is committed to improving the experience of students with disabilities and continues to maintain the staffing resource in Student Support in recognition of the continuing need from students presenting with disabilities as the institution has grown. Students presenting with physical, learning and mental health disabilities can all access specialist advice and support and there is a well-established process for agreeing and supporting reasonable adjustments that is embraced and understood across the institution. Findings from retention data and student focus groups, shows that students with reasonable adjustments are less likely to withdraw and that students felt there should be greater promotion of services. Work will continue to develop ways to promote disability support and reasonable adjustments to prospective and current students.

As described in section 2.5.1, the Disability and Wellbeing Team plan to expand learning opportunities, which will build on the existing workshops in self-esteem, communication and managing exam stress. There is a continued requirement to provide specialist support for students and training for staff as student need dictates.

UCS is mindful of its duties and responsibilities under the Equality Act and allocates a proportion of additional fee income to specific measures designed to fulfil them. It has been recognised that monitoring and evaluating the impact of such measures on student recruitment, retention and success requires more resource.

Following the announcement regarding reforms to DSAs the Disability and Wellbeing Team and DSA Working Group continue to review provision and resources to ensure the most vulnerable students that are affected by these changes are protected and to ensure that access to HE and the student experience for students with disabilities is commensurate to non-disabled students.

2.5.3 Progression: Careers and Employability
UCS will invest £128,000 in careers and employability activities targeted at students from under-represented groups using contextualised data sources. These will include:

- Specialist careers and employability post/s
- Employer Liaison Adviser
- Promotion of internships, placements and student exchange
- Progression of under-represented groups into graduate level employment and/or postgraduate study
- Internship programmes
- Promotional campaign
- External employability training and professional updating
• Careers Fairs and other related activities

A significant aspect of the UCS approach to improving the success of students from disadvantaged backgrounds is the attention to careers and employability advice including close engagement with employers to ensure the curriculum is fit for purpose. Broadly speaking, the overall offering at UCS is vocational, with courses overtly preparing students for the world of work, with graduate key skills embedded in programmes. In recent years, there has been targeted investment in using additional fee income to extend and enhance the internship and work placement scheme to support one of our main targets.

The Career Edge model, a holistic framework for graduate development was adopted in 2014-15 and a pilot Graduate Development Programme embedding this model into curriculum areas and across centralised services was trialled in 2015-16, bringing together Learning, Student Services and the Suffolk Business School. As described in section 2.5.1 the Careers and Employability Team will continue to expand the annual cycle of learning opportunities, guest speakers and fairs to support the progression of students and target groups that are under-represented to participate in these activities.

The Employer Liaison Adviser will continue to generate and increase opportunities and internships for students, with a particular focus on creating opportunities that are accessible. Further work is anticipated to expand employer engagement by working collaboratively with Research and Enterprise to engage SMEs with the UCS internship programme and following this identify progression opportunities for graduates.

The International Officer continues to support academic links with EU Universities to grow opportunities for international student exchange, supporting students’ development of cultural capital and international awareness. Additional resource allocated to the promotion and administration of Erasmus+ raises students’ awareness and aspirations to such opportunities.

The terms of reference for all Faculty Boards and Committees were reviewed to ensure that they reflect Chapter B4 of the QAA Quality Code: ‘enabling student development and achievement’. Ensuring that supporting all students’ personal, academic and professional development is a core area of discussion and focus. The B4 mapping document recording key processes and developments is kept under regular review and scrutiny of the Learning Teaching and Assessment Group (LTAG).

UCS promotes postgraduate provision through specific postgraduate open events, advertising to alumni and final year students. Development of peer networks gives undergraduate students access to postgraduate case-studies.

2.6 Financial support for students

2.6.1 NSP Financial Support
This is expected to be nil in 2016-17 as all planned expenditure is completed in 2015-16. However, there may be some deferred expenditure relating to awards not taken up for the 2013-14 and 2014-15 cohorts but this expenditure does not form part of this access agreement.

2.6.2 Non-NSP Financial Support
In-line with our own findings, and the supporting research carried out for OFFA, UCS is proposing to streamline its bursary offer to students and consolidate the areas that are proving successful.

UCS Bursary
For 2016-17 UCS will continue to run a bursary scheme for new students studying full-time on an undergraduate programme. Students who meet the following criteria will receive up to a £1,000 bursary in their first year of study and up to a £500 bursary in both their second and third years of study, to support student success.

The eligibility criteria for the bursary scheme will be as follows. Students must be:
- Studying a full-time undergraduate degree programme;
- Assessed through Student Finance England as having a household income of £42,620 or less;
- Living in the UK.

If applications for the UCS bursary exceed the number of allocations, awards will be subject to additional academic criteria.

**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.

This will relate well to UCS outreach work activity, as Looked After Children are highly under-represented in HE and are a key target group for UCS.

### 3. Target and milestones

**Targets and milestones relating to applicants, entrants or student body**
The following targets are until 2019-20, with measurable milestones at the end of each year. These targets include full and part-time students.

- UCS will aim to maintain the current broad mix of its undergraduate student body of over 45.5% of students from lower socio-economic groups until 2017-18 and aims to increase the target to 45.75% each year thereafter until 2019-20
- UCS will aim to maintain an in-year retention rate of 95%
- UCS will aim to increase its in-year achievement rates by 0.5% each year
- UCS will aim to increase student continuation by 1% each year
- UCS will aim to increase the number of students who disclose a disability by 0.5% each year
- UCS will aim to increase the number of students from BME backgrounds by 0.25% each year
- UCS will increase the number of Care Leavers from Suffolk and Norfolk applying to HE by two students each year
- In the UCS 2015-2020 strategic vision one of our institutional KPIs is to monitor student dropout rates. We would like to include this as a new target, to support monitoring our retention work in real-time, alongside the HESA targets. The undergraduate full-time dropout rate for all non-health students is 12% (2013-14), the target is to decrease this figure by 1% each year until we reach 9% and then maintain this rate, although UCS will aspire to reduce this to 8%.

**Other targets and milestones**
The following targets are until 2019-20, with measurable milestones at the end of each year.

- UCS will contribute towards raising the aspirations and attainment of young people in Suffolk, and ultimately progression of Suffolk students onto HE in general. UCS will contribute to increasing the number of young people in Suffolk progressing to HE by 1% each year
- UCS will maintain the number of residential and non-residential summer schools it runs for schools
• UCS will run one joint summer school or campus visit per year with other regional HEIs
• UCS will increase the number of outreach activities it runs for schools and colleges by 5% each year from 2016-17
• UCS will run two regional conferences per year for 11-16 schools in collaboration with other regional HEIs
• UCS aims to enhance the number of paid internships for students by 5 each year
• UCS aims to increase its graduate employability rate by 2% each year
• UCS will develop a shared programme of HE training for teachers with other HEIs and hold one event per year

4. Monitoring and evaluation arrangements

_Institutional monitoring arrangements_
UCS will monitor compliance with the commitments made under this agreement and its progress against UCS’ targets and milestones. The following indicators will be monitored annually:

- The retention, achievement and continuation rates of full-time and part-time undergraduate students
- The socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender, age, disability status and entry qualifications of its new entrants
- The graduate employability rates and progression of full-time and part-time undergraduates
- Quantity and impact of outreach activities taking place in each year

The monitoring will be undertaken via annual reports to the UCS Academic Board and the Senates of the University of East Anglia and the University of Essex via the UCS Joint Academic Committee. Reports will be submitted by the Deputy Provost (Resources).

_Evaluation_
UCS will evaluate all measures in the agreement to ensure long term value for money. Evaluation and monitoring data will be collected for all initiatives and activities by the following methods:

- Pre and post evaluation questionnaires to assess impact of all activity including collaborative work. Evidence relating to changes in attitudes and aspirations as well as long term changes in progression will be focussed on
- Tracking of a selected cohort of students from year 9 through to their destination at 18 and comparing their progress with a selected control group of the same age
- Evaluation of attainment and destination data provided by SCC
- The UCS Management Information Team which provides statistics on socio-economic data relating to retention and other matters
- The Equality and Diversity Committee which reviews UCS data on ethnic minority, age and disability and other protected characteristics – with specific working groups looking at retention and progression
- Student Experience Committee where there is representation from UCS students. This group is used to evaluate the entire student lifecycle, from pre-admission to graduation, for example by looking at NSS data and identifying both academic and non-academic areas that can be improved upon
- The Retention Working Group which reviews and monitors data on retention, and works to provide students with a positive induction experience

5. Equality and diversity
All UCS policies 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 Academic Board and the Joint
Academic Committee of our validating Universities.

At the end of 2014-15 UCS undertook a project to understand perceptions of race and ethnic
(in) equality and differences in experience, UCS continues to implement actions from the
findings of this project.

UCS monitors how its duties under the Equality Act 2010 are implemented and evaluated
through the Equality and Diversity Committee which enjoys a diverse membership from
community partners. In addition the work of the DSA Working Group advised on actions UCS
should take to mitigate the impact of the proposed reforms.

Work of other departments such as the Outreach and Student Services teams continue to
report into the Equality and Diversity Committee providing a holistic view of Equality and
Diversity issues across the institution. Much work has been done to capture and analyse a
broader range of protected characteristics of students in order to inform marketing and
recruitment activities, curriculum development, and the tailoring of support to suit a range of
needs. Continuing to develop an inclusive culture in HE remains an institutional priority.
Mechanisms in place that monitor student attendance and identify students at risk continue
to be reviewed for their effectiveness and there are plans to build on this work to analyse
data across the student lifecycle. Marketing and recruitment activities target and engage
closely with specific community events where diverse groups are represented with the aim of
raising aspirations and encouraging them into HE.

All staff involved with the recruitment of students receive training which emphasises the need
to ensure 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 UCS
regularly reviews its compliance with the expectations of the QAA UK Quality Code for
Higher Education and the Equality Act 2010. All marketing literature and digital media,
including the website, is fully compliant with accessibility guidelines. For example, web-based
tools were reviewed and a suitable piece of software sited for use on the UCS website that
enable partially sighted and dyslexic students to access information. All students are able to
access the physical environment in which they study, learn, live and take part in the social
life of the institution. UCS continues to invest in information and advice for applicants to
ensure that they are aware of the reasonable adjustment process, Disabled Students
Allowances and are encouraged to disclose as early as possible. UCS is committed to
developing the Applicant Portal which allows applicants to communicate on-line with UCS
and with other applicants, building early links and familiarity with course materials and tutors.

UCS supports a multi-faith Chaplaincy representing a wide range of faiths. There is 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 particularly important
for students from BME origin and different faiths outside Suffolk who find comfort from linking
to established networks nearby. The Chaplains are very visible in the UCS community,
enhancing the wellbeing service provided by Student Services, and welcoming students of all
faiths or no faith who are troubled in any way. In particular, strong links with the local mosque
have proved very useful in furthering understanding of the needs of our Muslim students.

The International Student Officer will continue to offer staff training and support aspects of
the PGCAP with sessions relating to cultural capital and cultural awareness. Work continues
to internationalise the experience at UCS by increasing opportunities for student and staff international exchange.

6. Provision of information to prospective students

UCS is committed to clearly informing prospective applicants and existing students of the tuition fees that UCS charge and the financial support UCS offer students in each year of their degree, including information on financial support packages.

Information will be made available through a wide range of channels which include specific information leaflets for applicants, the UCS website, its printed prospectuses, associated documentation, social networks and other online tools. UCS also commits to providing UCAS and SLC with information as required to populate their applicant-facing web services and databases.

Applicants will also be advised of the estimated associated costs of studying on particular courses during the application process and on the website, along with advice on the support available both at UCS and more broadly.

The UCS Infozone gives a single, coherent point of contact and it provides both current students and applicants with a well-established Student Support service including specific student financial and welfare advice. The Infozone-online service also provides an enhanced service and FAQs. Pro-active Recruitment and Admissions teams also support and advise applicants through the admissions process. The UCS Infozone and Student Recruitment and Outreach team provide an IAG service to students and applicants, as well as to members of the public, both online and in person. The Careers and Employability team provide IAG support to students’ right through their student life cycle and progression beyond HE. All services are promoted actively on both the UCS website and through MyUCS (staff and student intranet). The UCS Network of Centres also provides an IAG service to potential applicants about UCS and HE in general and progression onto postgraduate study.

7. Consulting with students

UCS has consulted with the Students’ Union when designing this agreement and the Union is in support of the proposals. UCS staff attended a meeting with the Students’ Union President and Vice-President to discuss potential changes to the Access Agreement. Feedback focussed mainly on UCS financial support packages and highlighted the students’ desire for continued bursaries to support them whilst at UCS.

UCS also consulted with current students (both full and part-time) via the Student Experience Committee.

UCS students will continue to be involved in the implementation of the Access Agreement in a number of ways, including through the subject specific ambassador programme where students will participate in outreach activities in local schools. In particular the Students’ Union will support UCS in promoting the financial support packages to potential students, and continue to be involved in the monitoring of the Access Agreement through sessions with the Student Union Council.

The President of UCS Union has stated his support for the 2016-17 agreement ‘UCS Union is supportive of the Access Agreement and is pleased that UCS have considered our feedback to be beneficial in the process. We are keen to continue taking part in outreach activities with potential students’.