University of Suffolk
Access Agreement 2017-18

This agreement sets out how the University of Suffolk 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 University of Suffolk Learning Network.

Introduction

The University of Suffolk exists as a Learning Network comprised of the campus in Ipswich, and provision offered within Great Yarmouth College, Lowestoft College, Suffolk New College and West Suffolk College. The University was established in 2007 as University Campus Suffolk (UCS) with degrees validated by the University of East Anglia and University of Essex, but was awarded Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP) in 2015 and HEFCE designation and University Title in 2016. UCS will legally become the University of Suffolk in August 2016, with the first cohort of students admitted in September 2016.

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

The University of Suffolk student body is diverse and inclusive with 27.3% studying part-time and 61.8% classed as mature (over the age of 21) in 2015-16. 12.4% of students come from ethnic minorities against a background figure for Suffolk of 4.8%.

In 2014-15, 14.3% of the University’s students disclosed a disability, which is a slight increase on 2013-14; and 5.8% of students were in receipt of the Disabled Students Allowance. Almost all young (18-21 year old) students came from a state school in 2014-15 (97.6%) and 45.3% are from NS-SEC classes (4, 5, 6, 7). The majority of students are from the eastern region, with 55% from an IP postcode in 2015-16.

Despite the image of Suffolk being a county of affluence, 52 of Suffolk’s Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are ranked in the most deprived 20% in England, of which 21 LSOA’s are ranked in the worst 10% deprived areas. In Great Yarmouth, 20 of the 61 LSOAs are ranked in the most deprived 20%, of which 16 are in the most deprived 10%. The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) shows that 50 of Suffolk’s LSOAs are in the most deprived 20% of areas, of which 19 are in the most deprived 10%; and in Great


Yarmouth, 19 LSOAs are in the most deprived 20% of which 12 are in the most deprived 10%. Looking specifically at Education, Skills and Training, 106 (24%) of Suffolk’s LSOAs are in the most deprived 20% of which 54 (12%) are in the most deprived 10%; and 29 of Great Yarmouth’s LSOAs are in the most deprived 20% of which 19 are in the most deprived 10%.

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. The University of Suffolk has a key priority to widen access and raise aspirations across the region, with much of our work supporting Raising the Bar. The participation of 18 years old from Suffolk in HE has increased from 19.6% in 2012, to 23% in 2015; and the University has played a significant role in achieving this increase. However, there is considerable work still to do. In 2015, 31.3% of English 18 year olds were accepted into higher education, and 31% of 18 year olds from the East of England were accepted into higher education. Based on a cohort size of 8067 in Suffolk, the low participation rate means that Suffolk sent 645 fewer students to HE then would have been expected if the participation rate was at the East of England average.

The University of Suffolk 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. The University is working with NALEP on the establishment of an Innovation Centre, known as The Atrium, which is due to open at the Ipswich campus in autumn 2016. The Atrium will support new business and bring together students and employers.

In previous years the University has reported high in-year retention and achievement rates. In 2014-15, the overall in-year retention rate was 94.3% and the achievement rate was 90%. A key strength is the quality of student support and this aspect contributes significantly to retention and success rates of students. We also wish to report on continuation data which is currently at 87.5% (2013-14 entrants) for all full-time undergraduate students and 86% for all full-time mature undergraduate students (2012-13) (most recent data available from HESA). It is acknowledged that these figures are gradually increasing but need improvement, and this has guided the decisions over 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 the Higher Education Review is to inform students and the wider public whether a provider meets the expectations of the higher education sector for:

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4 Data from Suffolk County Council showing participation in HE for the Year 14 Suffolk resident cohort group, based on cohort size
6 UCAS End of Cycle Report 2015, p. 38
7 Note: this is comparing participation rate with acceptance rate, but it has not been possible to access the acceptance rate for Suffolk 18 year olds.
• 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.

The University was delighted to be awarded ‘Meets UK Expectations’ in each of the above four categories, and that the Review identified good practice relating to employer engagement and employability skills. The full report can be found on the QAA website.

1. Fees, student numbers and fee income

The University of Suffolk expects to meet the requirements to be awarded a ‘Meets Expectations’ rating in the new Teaching Excellence Framework for 2017-18. The University therefore proposes to increase fee levels to the maximum fee cap allowed in the TEF, which are as follows:

• £9,250 for full-time Bachelor’s degrees and DipHEs
• £8,220 for full-time Foundation degrees and CertHE courses
• £8,724 (pro-rata) for part-time Bachelor’s degrees and DipHEs
• £8,220 (pro-rata) for part-time Foundation degrees and CertHE courses
• £6,168 (pro-rata) for HND/HNC
• £6,168 (pro-rata) for ITT courses

With the addition of the following programmes:
• £1850 (pro-rata) for a sandwich year including a placement in the UK
• £1385 (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 the University’s recruitment, and especially acknowledges the unique nature of the county-wide Learning Network.

The University of Suffolk will clearly state in our communications with students that subject to successful future TEF awards, the University may increase our fees for continuing students to the maximum fee cap set by the Government for our TEF award. This will apply to students joining the University in 2017/18.

2. Access and student success measures

2.1 Assessment of access and retention record

The University of Suffolk has a high proportion of under-represented students. In 2017-18 the University plans to spend 25% of higher fee income on additional access and retention measures.

This assessment is based on the following measures and indicators of students at the University of Suffolk:
• 45.3% (14/15) of young full-time undergraduate entrants are from low socio-economic groups (NS-SEC classes 4, 5, 6, 7) (HESA data) (benchmark 42%)
• 27% (14/15) of young full-time undergraduate entrants are from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3 Quintile 1, students aged under 22 on entry)
• 21.4% (14/15) of mature full-time undergraduate entrants have no previous HE and are from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3 Q1) (benchmark 13%)
• 27.3% as of March 2016 of the University’s students are part-time (2015-16 academic year)
• 22% (14/15) of part-time young undergraduate entrants have no previous HE and are from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3 Q1) (benchmark 17.6%)
• 12.4% as of March 2016 (2015-16 academic year) of the University’s students come from ethnic minorities
• 97.6% (14/15) of young full-time students come from state schools
• In Suffolk the number of young people in Local Authority Care (LAC) progressing to university each year is consistently very low and there is considerable work to do in this area. At the University of Suffolk in 2014/15, 11 Care Leavers were studying at UCS.
• Deprivation levels in much of Suffolk and Great Yarmouth remain high. 72 of Suffolk and Great Yarmouth’s Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are ranked in the most deprived 20% of the country, and 37 LSOAs are ranked in the worst 10% of deprived areas in the country
• 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

The University of Suffolk will continue to focus on work that raises aspirations of under-represented groups in Suffolk but recognises that work is still required to ensure the retention, success and progression of our students. The University will therefore focus on measures that have a direct impact on our students, with a specific focus on the student lifecycle. The University will maintain and develop successful collaborative work through partnerships within outreach activity.

The University 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. The University hopes to continue to improve these figures in 2017-18.

Though the University’s 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. We will continue to monitor whether these figures are directly linked to the high number of students from under-represented groups.

2.3 Expenditure on access and student success measures

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In 2017-18 the total institutional expenditure on access, student success and progression measures will be approximately £2.14million, and this is broken down in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipated expenditure on new access and retention measures:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Student outreach and access</td>
<td>£386,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Student success</td>
<td>£406,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Progression: Disability</td>
<td>£247,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Progression: Careers and employability</td>
<td>£149,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Financial support measures (bursaries)</td>
<td>£956,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Institutional Expenditure in 2017-18</strong></td>
<td><strong>£2,144,000</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2.3.1 The balance between non-financial measures and financial support

In 2017-18 the University of Suffolk plans to further rebalance its resources and expenditure to reflect guidance outlined in the OFFA strategic priorities. In the first years of the new fee 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 financial support measures 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. The University has had considerable success in widening participation (as above, 45.3% (14/15) of young full-time undergraduate entrants are from low socio-economic groups) but has found that uptake of its financial support measures has been difficult to promote.

The University of Suffolk recognises the research that was carried out for OFFA (2010/06)9 indicated that bursaries do not have an impact on the likelihood of disadvantaged young people choosing to go to university, and accepts that this is likely to be accurate for our students. However, our experience is slightly different from the OFFA report (2014/0210) regarding the effect of bursaries on retention rates. Our own data shows that the overall withdrawal rate of all UCS students in 2014/15 was 13.09% but that only 8.44% of students receiving a bursary in 2014/15 withdrew. We recognise that additional outreach and/or success measures may also have an impact on the likelihood of these students to withdraw, 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 move from financial to non-financial support measures. The University intends to reduce its expenditure as a proportion of higher fee income to 25% with a gradual reduction over the following 2 years, to bring spend more in line with the sector and OFFA required expenditure, to a level of 22.5% in 2019/20. Levels of activity expenditure will be increased but financial support expenditure will reduce. This will enable the University to respond to market

9 OFFA (2010/06) Have Bursaries Influenced Choice Between Universities?
10 OFFA (2014/02) An Interim Report: Do bursaries have an effect on retention rates?
demands and continue to improve access, success and progression of our students. Our current non-financial support measures target students from all groups including those on courses currently funded by the Health contract and so we feel that an overall reduction in spend as a percentage of fee income will not have a detrimental impact particularly as absolute expenditure levels will not decrease. Details of the proposed changes to bursaries are given under paragraph 2.6.

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

- Financial support (fee waivers and bursaries) - 48% (from 57% in 2016-17)
- Non-financial measures (access, student success and progression) - 52% (from 43% in 2016-17)

2.4 Outreach and access

The University of Suffolk 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.

The University will invest approximately £386,000 in outreach and access in 2017-18.

Outreach activity will include:

- 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. Schools and colleges will be targeted based on the HEFCE Cold Spots data showing overall low participation; and low participation when the factors of GCSE attainment and ethnic profile have been taken into account.
- Maintenance and expansion of intensive outreach activity such as summer schools, taster days, campus visits and family awareness days, that have proven to be most successful in our evaluation and tracking of activity
- Further development of subject-specific aspiration-raising events such as the Health and Social Care Conference, STEM activities and Creative Arts Conference
- Development of progression agreements and a continued focus on outreach work with students that apply through a progression agreement. Progression Agreements will increasingly include opportunities to provide subject-specific aspiration-raising activity with younger age groups (e.g. Year 10/11)
- 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 student ambassador scheme
- Expansion of the 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
• Development of IAG materials on student finance and the UCAS application process, and materials specifically for mature and part-time students, and parents
• Activity within and in support of the Equality and Diversity Committee, which reviews and monitors data about staff and students
• Working with local schools to support development of new governance structures through membership of school governing bodies

The University’s outreach activity normally works with full year groups in Suffolk and Great Yarmouth state schools and Colleges. Suffolk has a low participation rate and most of the work in Suffolk is therefore with students from neighbourhoods where participation is low. However, where it is possible to target activity, the University will specifically aim to work with students who meet one or more of the following criteria:

• Students from low income families, with particular emphasis on students from households with an income of less than £25,000. In some cases, the threshold for ‘low income’ will be £42,875
• White males from economically disadvantaged backgrounds
• Students with a physical or specific learning disability
• Students who are first in their family to consider progressing to HE
• Mature students
• Prospective part-time students
• Students who live in, or have recently left, local authority care
• Students from military families and ex-military
• Students from ethnic minority groups
• Young carers
• In recognition of the OFFA guidance for 2017-18, the University will also prioritise students who are refugees, and students from gypsy and Traveller communities

The University of Suffolk will also work with the parents, carers and supporters of students within these groups, and will work with key stakeholders in Suffolk to further identify opportunities to engage with low participation students.

We will ask schools to select students from these groups for participation in outreach activity, and will use HEAT to ensure that we are tracking our activity and the progression of these students into HE. We recognise that Suffolk has a historic challenge of low participation in HE, and that positive results from these activities are not likely to be seen for some time.

2.4.1 New Outreach Activities

The University of Suffolk will continue to run outreach activities which we know have been successful (as above) but we will also be developing new activity to target specific groups and in recognition of the evaluation and monitoring that we have undertaken. The new activities will include:

• STEM engagement activities in schools and in the new Innovation Centre (The Atrium), and at least one STEM-focussed summer school
• A new Access Conference aimed at mature students returning to higher education.
• Activities specifically offered to refugees and asylum-seekers being placed in Suffolk
• Activities and promotional material to support the change in student finance for Health courses. The University receives a large number of applications from mature students and disadvantaged young people into the health courses, and expects that the change in student finance may have an impact on the likelihood of these students to consider these courses and professions
• A new project working with two groups of young people from Year 9 upwards. The preliminary work identifying the groups will be carried out in 2016-17 but it is expected that one group will be young white males from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and the second group will be students from minority ethnic groups.
• Activities to specifically promote progression from low-participation neighbourhoods into higher education and then into teaching. Suffolk is experiencing a considerable problem in recruitment of teachers and we will be developing a project with one Academy Trust to promote progression into the teaching profession in Suffolk.

2.4.2 Evaluation and Monitoring

The University of Suffolk will focus more on the evaluation of activities through the development of enhanced pre- and post-evaluation feedback, mapping them against the aims and objectives of the activities. Evaluations will highlight the activities that are successful and should be maintained, and will clearly provide recommendations for improvements through an ongoing process of review and development.

The University will also invest in the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) and will work with Schools and Colleges to identify the best way to ensure that as much tracking data is collected as possible. We recognise that Suffolk and a number of areas within the East of England have low participation rates in higher education, and the HEAT data will help us to identify the types and frequency of activities that have the most impact. We recognise that this will be a long-term monitoring project but we will use the data to enhance our activity. To support this tracking activity, we will be purchasing data from UCAS annually to better understand the demographics of Suffolk applicants.

2.4.3 Preparation for HE Activities

The University of Suffolk will enhance the Get Ahead pre-induction Study Skills programmes, and will promote them to all target groups. This programme has previously been offered to mature students only, but will be further expanded to cover all target groups and to be offered on a subject-specific basis. The University will continue to deliver additional activities for target groups, including mature students events during the induction period.

The University’s Infozone will continue to enhance the support available to students throughout the student lifecycle. The Infozone offers information about educational opportunities to all enquirers, helping potential students to identify pathways into HE and aspire to achieve higher level qualifications. It will continue to offer information, advice and guidance to current students about all aspects of student success and progression.

2.4.4 Collaboration
All outreach activities will be targeted and sustainable and, where possible, will be run in collaboration with key partners and stakeholders.

The University of Suffolk 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 we will strive to increase progression from our partner FE colleges into HE, and specifically into the HE programmes at the University of Suffolk, where uptake is variable.

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

The University is currently the lead institution in the Suffolk and Norfolk Collaborative Outreach network, and we intend to participate in the national collaborative outreach programme for East Anglia (Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire). Discussions are taking place locally and we intend to submit a proposal to HEFCE before 1 July 2016. In addition to this, the University of Suffolk will continue to work collaboratively with HE providers locally and across the wider East Region. This will ensure a shared understanding of any potential gaps in provision, and further opportunities for collaborative projects. Our target is to host and participate in an increasing number of collaborative activities such as summer schools, campus visits and careers events. For example, we intend to continue working with the University of East Anglia offering joint activities for specific groups such as looked after children and mature students; and will continue to offer a joint teachers event with the University of Cambridge.

The University 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.

The University of Suffolk is a proactive member of the Higher Education Liaison Officers Association (HELOA). HELOA is the professional association 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 Fujitsu Intel Innovation Hub at the Ipswich Campus is the result of a partnership between the University, Fujitsu and Intel. It is equipped with some of the latest computer equipment, and promotes the use of technology in higher, further and secondary education. The 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. The University of Suffolk and Fujitsu 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 the addition our new Atrium will ensure we can increase the use of new technologies into our STEM outreach activities.
2.4.5 Contextual information

The University will use HEAT data, UCAS data and our own internal data to continue to develop and enhance our information systems to support outreach work and retention activity. We will continue to develop a system/resource that will ensure all of our 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.

2.4.6 Courses and modes of study

The University is actively working on the development of Higher and Degree Apprenticeships, which are likely to be of interest to students from low-participation backgrounds in Suffolk. We are working closely with a range of employers and the LEP to identify areas of potential development to meet the skills needs of the local economy. The University will work with employers and schools to promote Higher Apprenticeships to students who would otherwise be unlikely to consider higher education.

The University of Suffolk continues to make the majority of our degrees available to part-time students, but has experienced a decline in part-time applications and enrolments since 2012. We will invest in the development of information aimed at part-time students to specifically promote the availability of maintenance loans. The University will continue to participate in a range of events in the local community to promote the opportunity to study part-time.

2.5 Student success and progression

In total, the University of Suffolk plans to spend £802,000 on student progression and success measures in 2017-18.

2.5.1 Student success

The University of Suffolk 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 94.3% (HESA 2014-15) for full-time undergraduate students compared to 95.4% in 2013-14. Whilst retention rates are relatively stable, our continuation rates require 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, and carries out an annual review of attrition based on protected characteristics. The data for 2014-15 shows that mature students, male students, students who applied through Clearing and those with a disability (other than a specific learning difficulty) are most likely to withdraw. Students from some ethnic minorities are also more likely to withdraw than white students. This data has led to a review of the processes involved in identifying and supporting these students, and the Retention Support Officer works with Course teams to specifically focus on engaging these students in activities aimed at supporting them in staying on-course. The University of Suffolk benefits from being a small institution where course teams and course administrators have excellent contact with all students, ensuring that students at risk of withdrawing are identified early with support mechanisms identified and implemented.
The University will invest £406,000 in retention and success measures including:

- Seeking student feedback through focus groups on all aspects of the student experience that impact retention, and implementing changes as appropriate
- Reviewing and developing the format of pre-entry study skills and bridging modules for prospective students (as noted in section 2.4.3), and increasing the number of students who participate in these
- Induction events for mature students. Further development of targeted activities for identified ‘at risk’ groups to be delivered over an extended induction period. These activities will provide these students with specific and targeted advice, but will also give those students the opportunity to develop networks with students who share similar characteristics.
- Collaboratively across the Learning Network continue to develop our Learning Services and Student Services to actively engage students and provide robust means for personal, professional and academic development and success.
- Identifying students who are at risk of academic failure or withdrawal, and proactively engaging those students in academic support and/or other support services as required
- Design, implement and oversee effective peer-to-peer support systems in collaboration with the University of Suffolk Students’ Union
- Development of inclusive teaching and learning practices
- Increase 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 (15.7% at Level 4 in 2014-15) and the most common reasons cited continue to be academic failure and personal reasons. The University is investing in monitoring software to allow early identification of students at risk of withdrawing, and timely implementation of support measures.

To further the overall student experience and to engage students across the student lifecycle, Professional Services teams will 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, including critical thinking, self-confidence, emotional intelligence, reflexivity and employability, for example. The University will continue to invest in the expansion of these activities and develop mechanisms whereby such activities can be recognised as achieved on the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR).

The University of Suffolk will further develop the Peer Assisted Student Success Scheme (PASS), which provides an essential peer support network. PASS Leaders at the University are paid for their time and access a range of training throughout the academic year, which is passed to their wider cohort through peer mentoring. We will expand the PASS Scheme to considerably increase the number of courses involved in order for it to move towards becoming a University-wide programme. Counselling and well-being services are well utilised
in particular by mature students (over the age of 21), who are also over-represented in service data relating to accessing finance advice (2014-15 service data 85% compared to population 64%). This will be kept under review and our programme of student support workshops will be developed including the addition of financial proficiency sessions.

Male and younger students are typically under-represented in service data and we will further develop resources for these students, including online services, talking therapies and peer-to-peer networks. The Counselling service will be kept under review and expanded to meet student demand. Engagement with external agencies may be required to meet the specific needs of students where our services cannot ethically or professionally meet those needs.

The University will further develop plain English and user-friendly Student Guides to enhance student access to information. The ESD service continues to be managed through the 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. We 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 will be explored to improve contact between students, academic and professional services, and for pastoral support to be facilitated more effectively.

The Mental Health Adviser will train and deliver the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) accredited course for staff as well as students, who will be supervised to promote general mental wellbeing and offer peer-to-peer support. Learning opportunities are being expanded to 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.

2.5.2 Progression: Disability

The University of Suffolk will invest £247,000 in disability and equality and diversity activities. These will include:
- Specialist mental health and Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) adviser/s and mentors
- Outreach disability and support drop-ins
- 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
- Enhancement of disclosure strategies and promotion of services

The University will also be expanding and replacing some of the current loan equipment, including Digital Voice Recorders, tablet devices and other appropriate technologies.

The University of Suffolk acknowledges that reforms to Disabled Students’ Allowances (DSAs) will impact students financially. To reduce the likelihood that such financial concerns would impact the relevant students’ success, we will introduce a scheme to meet the cost of the £200 contribution that DSA eligible students will no longer be able to claim for personal equipment. Alongside this, we will continue to monitor the reforms via a DSA Working Group. This group will identify actions and make recommendations regarding areas for development.
where the University can anticipate and support individual need, for example through investment in additional equipment, new technologies or expansion of e-resources. In addition, a programme of staff development will be maintained and expanded, focussing on enhancing staff understanding of disabilities and their impact on learning; developing strategies for supporting students and their individual needs; and the development of inclusive practices and support services for students with mild difficulties who may (under new DSA regulation) no longer be eligible for DSAs. The University of Suffolk is committed to the DSA Quality Assurance Framework and will work towards maintaining high standards of service provision, through providing specialist training for support staff working directly with students with disabilities and complex conditions.

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 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 focus groups held with students identified 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. Staff will work with students to gain their feedback on services.

### 2.5.3 Progression: Careers and Employability

The University of Suffolk will invest £149,000 in careers and employability activities, which will be targeted at students from under-represented groups where possible. These will include:

- Specialist careers and employability post/s
- Employer Liaison Adviser
- Increased promotion of internships, placements and student exchange
- Progression of under-represented groups into graduate level employment and/or postgraduate study
- Development of the internship programmes
- External employability training and professional updating
- Careers Fairs and other related activities
- Expanding the cycle of guest speakers, fairs and progression workshops to promote early planning for graduate employment and/or further study.

A significant aspect of the University’s approach to improving the success of students from disadvantaged backgrounds is the attention to careers and employability advice. Research shows that students from a widening participation background need increased support in developing career management skills, specifically around self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy. 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

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to participate in activities specifically aimed at boosting their CV. Our experience reflects both of these pieces of research and much of the work of the Careers and Employability team is focussed on developing earlier careers interventions through working with course teams, and providing increased levels of 1:1 activities.

Increased activity will also be taking place relating to progression into postgraduate study, as we recognise that the availability of the new Postgraduate Loan is likely to make our students more willing to consider further study. Activities and information sessions are planned to promote postgraduate study, and as with careers guidance, we will be working with students in earlier years to promote these opportunities. The University will also continue to develop courses that prepare students for graduate employment, through close partnerships with local and national employers.

The Career Edge model has successfully been adopted, which is a holistic framework for graduate development. We successfully piloted a Graduate Development Programme in 2015-16, embedding graduate development into curriculum areas specifically in the Suffolk Business School. We plan to further develop and expand this programme in 2016-17 and 2017-18.

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. The University of Suffolk will continue to offer internships within the institution, and further work is anticipated to expand employer engagement by working with SMEs on both the internship programme and 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).

2.6 Financial support for students

2.6.1 NSP Financial Support

All planned NSP expenditure should now be complete, however there may be some deferred expenditure relating to awards not taken up for the previous cohorts. Any expenditure on NSP does not form part of this access agreement.

2.6.2 Other Financial Support

As outlined in Section 2.3.1, the University will be continuing to offer a bursary as we recognise that our bursary recipients have better retention rates than our general student population. However, we have a considerable number of underrepresented students and not all are eligible for the bursary. It is likely that the bursary is only one aspect of ensuring the success of our students, and we are therefore proposing to reduce the bursary to allow us to continue to spend on wider areas of success and progression for the benefit of all of our students.

University of Suffolk Bursary

For 2017-18 the University 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 a £500 bursary in each year of study to support student success and retention.

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 £25,000 or less;
- Living in the UK.

The University recognises that the change in NHS funding will increase the number of students who will be eligible for the University of Suffolk bursary. If applications for the bursary exceed the number of allocations available, 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.

The University is improving our method of collecting data on whether our students are care leavers, which should increase our awareness of students who are eligible for this bursary, and will improve the timely offering of additional support to this group of students. Care Leavers continue to be a key target group for the University of Suffolk.

3. Target and milestones

Measuring Disadvantage

The University of Suffolk has 45.3% of our students from NS-SEC classes (4, 5, 6, 7) but we are aware that HESA will no longer be publishing the NS-SEC indicator as a UK Performance Indicator after 2016. In the absence of information about how HESA will replace this, we will measure the proportion of young, full-time students from POLAR3 Quintile 1. In 2014-15, 23.3% of young full-time entrants were from POLAR3 Q1, which compares against
18.5% of all English students from POLAR3 Q1\textsuperscript{13}. The University had set targets based on NS-SEC until 2019-20, which committed to maintaining the current mix of students until 2017-18, with a slight increase in target until 2019-20. We will therefore aim to retain the POLAR3 Q1 proportion of entrants until 2017-18, and will aim to increase the target to 24% in 2018-19 and 2019-20.

**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.

- The University of Suffolk will aim to maintain the current broad mix of its undergraduate student body including 23.3% of young full-time students from POLAR3 Q1 until 2017-18 and aims to increase the target to 24% each year thereafter until 2019-20
- The University will aim to maintain an in-year retention rate of 95%
- The University will aim to increase its in-year achievement rates by 0.5% each year
- The University will aim to increase student continuation by 1% each year
- The University will aim to increase the number of students who disclose a disability by 0.5% each year
- The University will aim to increase the number of students from BME backgrounds by 0.25% each year
- The University will increase the number of Care Leavers from Suffolk and Norfolk applying to HE by two students each year
- From 2016-17 Access Agreement, the University of Suffolk will decrease the drop-out rate of non-health students by 1% per year until we reach 9% (12% in 2013-14), which we will maintain, working towards reducing this to 8%.
- We would like to add a new target in this section of increasing the rate of graduates in employment or further study by 2% each year (this target was previously included in the section below)

**Other targets and milestones**

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

- The University will contribute towards raising the aspirations and attainment of young people in Suffolk, and ultimately progression of Suffolk students into further and higher education. UCS will contribute to increasing the number of young people in Suffolk progressing to HE by 1% each year
- The University will maintain the number of residential and non-residential summer schools it runs for schools
- The University will increase the number of outreach activities it runs for schools and colleges by 5% each year
- The University will enhance the number of paid internships for students by 5 each year

**Collaborative targets**

- The University will support two regional conferences per year for schools and colleges with other regional HEIs, with at least one hosted at the University of Suffolk (amended

\textsuperscript{13} UCAS End of Cycle Report 2015, p. 92
from the 2016-17 target of ‘UCS will run two regional conferences per year for 11-16 schools in collaboration with other regional HEIs’)

- The University will develop a shared programme of CPD and HE training for teachers with other HEIs and will hold one event per year (amended from the 2016-17 target of ‘UCS will develop a shared programme of HE training for teachers with other HEIs and hold one event per year’)
- The University will run one joint summer school or campus visit per year with other regional HEIs

**Extending Existing Targets**

The University of Suffolk will not be taking the opportunity to extend our targets into 2020-21.

4. Monitoring and evaluation arrangements

**Institutional monitoring arrangements**

The University of Suffolk will monitor compliance with the commitments made under this agreement and its progress against 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 University of Suffolk carries out monitoring of the Access Agreement via annual reports submitted by the Deputy Provost (Resources) to the Executive and Board, which are also reviewed by the University of Suffolk Senate.

**Evaluation**

The University is developing evaluation methods and tracking procedures to ensure that we continue to invest in activity that has a demonstrable and positive impact on our targets. 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.
- Using the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) to enable better tracking of all students involved in outreach activities. It is expected that this will enable the University to accurately report on the success of both our own and our collaborative activities.
- Evaluation of attainment and destination data provided by SCC.
• The purchase of UCAS data relating to destinations and demographic data of applicants in Suffolk for comparison purposes against University of Suffolk applicants and enrolments.

• The Management Information Team provides statistics on socio-economic data relating to retention and attainment.

• The Equality and Diversity Committee reviews data on ethnic minority, age and disability and other protected characteristics – with specific working groups looking at retention and progression.

• The Student Experience Committee, on which there is representation from University of Suffolk students, evaluates the entire student lifecycle, from pre-admission to graduation. The Committee considers a wide range of data, including NSS and Internal Surveys/Research to identify both academic and non-academic areas that can be improved upon.

• The Retention Working Group reviews and monitors data on retention and works to provide students with a positive induction experience.

The University is committed to carrying out tracking and evaluation of the students who receive the University of Suffolk Bursary and/or other financial support. We look forward to the tools becoming available via the OFFA-funded research project to aid the evaluation of our financial support.

5. Equality and diversity

All University of Suffolk 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 the University undertook a project to understand perceptions of race and ethnic (in) equality and differences in experience, and we continue to implement actions from the findings of this project.

The University 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 advise on actions the University 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 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 into higher education.
All staff involved with the recruitment of students receives training which emphasises 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 the University 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. The University is building a new website for the 2016-17 academic year which will continue to ensure that partially sighted and dyslexic students can access the 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. The University 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.

The University of Suffolk 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 refugees and 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 university 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 the University of Suffolk by increasing opportunities for student and staff international exchange.

6. Provision of information to prospective students

The University of Suffolk is aware of its responsibilities within the Consumer Rights Act 2015, and is implementing recommendations made by the Competition and Markets Authority for HEIs. As part of this, the University is committed to clearly informing prospective applicants and existing students of tuition fees and financial support, and additional course costs.

Information is being made available in durable formats from course webpages, with additional downloadable durable information provided where relevant (e.g. information on bursaries and financial support). The University ensures that all information published in our wide range of channels is accurate. The channels ensure that all prospective students, their families and advisors, can access information in a method that suits them. The University publishes information via the website, the printed prospectuses, associated documentation (including policy documents), social networks and other online tools. The University also commits to providing UCAS and SLC with information as required to populate their applicant-facing web services and databases.
Applicants will be given information about the minimum associated costs that they should plan for in order to successfully pass their course. This information will be available for applicants via the downloadable course information from the University website. Applicants and prospective students will also be provided with information about the financial support and advice available to all students at the University.

The 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 support and advise applicants through the admissions process. The 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 University website and through the staff and student intranet. The Learning Network also provides an IAG service to potential applicants about the University of Suffolk and HE in general, and progression onto postgraduate study.

7. Consulting with the Students’ Union

The University has consulted with the Student Union when designing this agreement. University staff attended a meeting with the Student Union President to discuss changes to the Access Agreement. Feedback focussed mainly on financial support packages and highlighted the students’ desire for continued bursaries to support them whilst studying.

The Students’ Union “acknowledges and support the University in all aspects outlined within the access agreement. We welcome the continued student financial aid offered to Students’ in the 2017-2018 academic year. With the continuing expansion of the University, we are committed to improving the student experience and engagement at all levels.”

University of Suffolk students will continue to play a key role in the implementation of the Access Agreement, particularly in the support of outreach activities. The Subject Student Ambassadors will participate in outreach activities in local schools, including primary age activities and collaborative activities. The Student Union will support the University in promoting the University of Suffolk bursary to prospective and current students, and will continue to be involved in monitoring the Access Agreement through sessions with the Student Union Council.