

## **University of Bristol Access Agreement 2018-19**

- 1.1 The University of Bristol has been a pioneer in the field of widening participation for almost two decades. Recognising the potential of our applicants has always been at the heart of our mission to recruit the most able students from the most diverse backgrounds.
- 1.2 The University has developed an innovative and creative outreach culture whilst adopting an evidence-based approach to policy and practice. We remain determined to achieve a more diverse student community, recognising the social, educational and cultural benefits this confers to the individual and institution. We acknowledge the barriers that persist for many and will continue to examine our admissions procedures, entry routes and curricula to ensure that those with the potential to succeed at the University can do so. We will do everything we can to make the University of Bristol as attractive to those from underrepresented groups as it is to those from 'traditionally represented' backgrounds.
- 1.3 The University developed its first access agreement in 2005. Subsequent revisions reflected a review of our student finance package, in light of the first year of operation, a comprehensive review of long-term measurement of widening participation and changes to the government grant package. The new financial environment in 2012-13 necessitated a more fundamental review, the outcomes of which were reflected in our 2012 access agreement. Plans were further refined in response to significant environmental changes and our own plans for student number growth and outcomes were reflected in our 2013 agreements onwards.
- 1.4 The climate in which the 2018-19 access agreement is written in is one of rapid change. Demographic change, uncertainty regarding the outcomes of the Higher Education Bill and Teaching Excellence Framework, create challenges in long-term planning.
- 1.5 However despite such external challenges, the University remains resolutely committed to increasing diversity amongst our student population. Indeed, diversity and inclusivity form cornerstones of the new University Strategy<sup>1</sup>. This ambitious document captures the collective ambition of our staff, students, alumni, partners and guides the University's development over the years ahead. Diversity within the student population emerged as a key theme throughout the consultation process, with a clear appetite from staff and students to implement bold plans which will effect a step change in the composition of our student population. Those priority actions, namely the development of the Bristol Scholars Scheme and the introduction of a two grade reduction in our contextual offer, are included this document. In addition to complementing the University Strategy, this access agreement also aligns closely with the University's Education Strategy<sup>2</sup> which outlines our commitment to the highest

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/university/documents/governance/policies/university-strategy.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/academic-quality/facultyadvice/policy/educationstrategy/>

standards of teaching and learning for all students and our institutional Equality Objectives<sup>3</sup>.

- 1.6 The 2018-19 access agreement continues the University's commitment to invest a greater proportion of additional fee income into outreach and student success interventions than in previous agreements. Within our student finance spend, following consultation with the Students' Union there was an extension of the University's bursary from 2015-16 onwards such that it will reach all 'OFFA countable' groups. This financial support is in addition to our new accommodation bursaries for low-income students and our Sanctuary Scholarship Scheme designed to extend educational opportunity to those from asylum seeking and refugee communities.
- 1.7 In parallel with the arrangements for 2018-19 described here, we will continue to honour financial commitments to students admitted on financial support packages described in previous access agreements.
- 1.8 Our Students' Union sabbatical team have contributed to the development of the 2018-19 access agreement. The Equality, Liberation and Access Officer is an integral member of the Student Recruitment Committee and has provided insight into the specific role the Students' Union will play in the delivery of outreach, student success and progression interventions as well as the impact of all elements of the agreement for the student body.
- 1.9 This access agreement outlines our strategic priorities for 2018-19. It takes a whole institution approach, covers the student lifecycle, reflects on those interventions with greatest impact, explores the strategic rebalancing of spend to support access, student success and progression and demonstrates our commitment to long-term outreach, articulating the University's role in raising attainment in schools and colleges for those from disadvantaged groups. We have included an assessment of our current performance against targets, and articulate our planned response to the challenges faced. We demonstrate our collaborative work with partners within and outside the higher education sector and highlight the provision of support for mature and part-time students, students with disabilities and BME students. We reaffirm our commitment to working with our students to develop and deliver our work to diversify the undergraduate student body and are mindful of the very close links with institutional equality and diversity efforts. We recognise the impact of multiple indicators of deprivation and are determined to develop a rigorous approach to assess and overcome the impact of such intersectional variables at every stage of the student life cycle.

## **2. Tuition fees, student numbers and fee income**

- 2.1 The total value of planned widening participation related expenditure for 2018-19 onwards is based on the assumption that the University will charge the maximum fee permitted for all home fee status students on undergraduate programmes and full-time PGCE programmes, anticipated to be £9,250 in 2018-19 (increasingly annually in line with inflation where permitted). This will apply to all undergraduates and PGCE students entering in 2018-19. This will be kept under review subject to the final outcomes of the Teaching Excellence Framework.
- 2.2 Tuition fees for home fee status students studying on a part time basis will be calculated on a pro rata basis, using the £9,250 fee as the full time equivalent rate. In practice, the maximum fee charged to any part time student as a result of this will be £4,625. If a student studies at a higher intensity than 50 per cent (the standard

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.bristol.ac.uk/equalityanddiversity/act/equalityobjectives2012\\_html](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/equalityanddiversity/act/equalityobjectives2012_html)

pattern), but below 75 per cent (and therefore not deemed to be part-time) the maximum fee would not exceed £6,935.

2.3 The following exceptions to this will apply:

- Students who are entitled to a fee waiver as part of our pre-2015 and Access to Bristol student finance packages
- Students undertaking a year of study abroad or an industrial work placement, during which a fee totalling 15 per cent of the equivalent full time fee (£1,385) will be charged.

2.4 It is anticipated that undergraduate tuition fees will generate an ‘additional’ income above the basic fee of approximately £46.9m in 2018-19.

### **3. Access, student success and progression measures**

3.1 In 2018-19 The University of Bristol will invest 30.7 per cent of its additional fee income in additional access measures to include: financial support for students from low income backgrounds and a comprehensive programme of activities to support outreach, retention, and progression of students from underrepresented groups.

### **4. Assessment of access and retention record**

4.1 The University of Bristol is determined to invest additional fee income strategically in order to achieve maximum impact. We have taken an evidence-based approach, analysed current performance and prioritised interventions with a proven track record. As an institution with relatively low proportions of students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups we have focussed activity and investment on those areas in which we need to make progress against targets.

4.2 According to HESA performance indicators<sup>4</sup>, of the students aged under 21 who entered the University in 2014-15, 2.3 per cent withdrew from higher education, against a benchmark of 2.4 per cent. The same data source indicates a non-continuation rate of 9.6 per cent for mature students against a benchmark of 9.8 per cent.

4.3 Using the University’s own application and intake measures<sup>5</sup> to analyse performance over the five year period from 2012-13 to 2016-17, the proportion of undergraduate applications from under-represented groups has increased in seven categories: aspiring state schools and colleges (formerly known as low performing schools); state schools; disabled; local; in care; female and Black and Minority Ethnic students.

4.4 We are encouraged that following a period of decline from 2009-10 to 2013-14, the 2016-17 data highlights the continuation of an upward trend of applications from aspiring state school and college students which began in 2014-15. Since 2013-14 we have seen a 68 per cent increase in the number of applications from aspiring state school and college students from 4,316 to 7,232.

4.5 Applications from BME students have risen annually for the past five years and for 2016 entry there were 6,281, an increase of 1,910 from 2012. Applications from the state sector are also up in 2016 and now make up more than 70 per cent of our applicant pool.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/noncon>

<sup>5</sup> The University measures LPN applications and intake on the basis of the lower two POLAR quintiles, while HESA uses only the lowest quintile

- 4.6 At the intake stage, progress is also being made. The number of students entering the University from under-represented groups is higher the previous year in all categories except ‘in care’. State school intake rose from 61 per cent in 2015 to 65 per cent in 2016. We have seen an increase of 0.7 per cent in the proportion of students from NS-SEC groups 4-7 from 2015-16 to 2016-17 and the number of students entering the University from these backgrounds is at its highest for the past five years. Compared to the 2015 intake data, there has been a rise in six categories including a 3.4 per cent rise in intake from students attending aspiring state schools and colleges. This suggests that offers are being made to students from under-represented groups and that the contextual and guaranteed offers are proving effective. It should also be noted that progress on widening participation has happened at the same time as growth of the student body. Our student intake is 25 per cent higher than it was five years ago and we are proud that this expansion has not occurred at the expense of diversity.
- 4.7 Our focus on conversion from application to intake has also delivered significant success. During the five year period from 2012-13 to 2016-17, we have seen increases in converting proportions from nine target groups. We are also very encouraged by the conversion rates for those students participating in our Access to Bristol and summer school programmes. More information on this area of activity is provided in para 14.12.
- 4.8 In most respects, the profile of our PGCE intake is either in line with or better than that of our key comparators and other local providers. In 2016-17 we recruited a cohort which was 41 per cent male: 59 per cent female (which compares with 40 per cent male: 60 per cent female for the comparator group and 40 per cent male: 60 per cent female for the local group). 53 per cent were categorised as mature (compared with 46 per cent of the comparator group and 61 per cent of the local group). 8 per cent of Bristol’s current cohort is from a BME background (compared with 14 per cent of the comparator group and 8 per cent of the local group).
- 4.9 We recognise however that despite these positive rises, we continue to fall short of a number of our HESA benchmarks. In order to make progress against our widening participation progress measures, the University will continue to take a holistic and contextualised approach to admissions. All students from aspiring state schools and colleges will be flagged within the University’s admissions database and if an offer is made it will automatically be at the contextual level. This will be irrespective of the predicted grades exceeding the entry requirements. In order to ensure positive conversion rates, and to explain the rationale behind the lower offer, a bespoke communication will be delivered through the University’s Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.
- 4.10 As part of our review of our approach to contextual admissions, a decision was made to remove the small number of independent schools previously included in the aspiring state school and college list. We are also exploring a move away from a single indicator of context (based on school performance) towards a ‘basket of measures approach’ including whether applicants have taken part in an intensive outreach programme, are in POLAR quintiles 1 or 2, or have spent time in Local Authority care.
- 4.11 As we reflect on our performance in diversifying our student community and develop strategies to make faster progress, context is important. We are a highly selective, research-intensive University. For entry in October 2016, we received an average of 8 home applications for every place (with some programmes receiving almost 20 applications per place). The average UCAS tariff score of our 2016 entrants was 344. By contrast, average secondary attainment in the Bristol area is among the poorest in England. At A Level, the percentage of such students achieving AAB or above in at least two facilitating subjects is 12.1 per cent against a national average of 17 per

cent<sup>6</sup>. This presents significant challenges for an institution with high entry requirements<sup>7</sup>.

- 4.12 A report by Bristol City Council in November 2015<sup>8</sup> noted that Bristol has 42 Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the most deprived 10 per cent in England for multiple deprivation. Of these 42 LSOAs, there are 26 in the most deprived 5 per cent in England and 6 in the most deprived 1 per cent in England. In Bristol, 24 per cent of children live in income deprived households (rising as high as 65 per cent in some wards). A fifth (53 out of 263) of LSOAs in Bristol are in the most deprived 10 per cent nationally, for Education, Skills and Training deprivation. Of these, more than half (28 LSOAs) are in South Bristol, 14 are in North Bristol, 7 are in Central Bristol and 4 in East Bristol. More than 85,000 people live in areas of the city identified as in the most deprived 10 per cent nationally for Education, Skills and Training deprivation.
- 4.13 In contrast, the University draws students primarily from the south of England, where average income levels are relatively high. A predominantly traditional subject portfolio also has some impact on attractiveness of programmes to widening participation students. Such characteristics create some very specific challenges when it comes to diversifying our own undergraduate intake (as opposed to playing our part in raising student aspirations and widening participation in Higher Education more generally). These involve culture and perceptions as well as attainment and economics. The former are slower to change and less easy to control than the latter.
- 4.14 Given this context, the University of Bristol's strategy for widening participation has been deliberately built around a combination of aspiration and attainment-raising activity in local schools (often undertaken in collaboration with other local HE providers and designed primarily to widen participation in the Higher Education sector generally); more targeted activities, designed to attract the most able students from across the country to Bristol and a contextualised approach to admissions, which ensures that poor school performance is taken into account when selection decisions are made. As outlined in the expenditure section below, in recognition of the need to improve application and intake rates for students from under-represented groups (with information provided in sections 7 and 8 outline the interventions designed to achieve this), our investment in access, student success and progression will increase from 2017-18 onwards.
- 4.15 Having analysed our performance at every stage of the student life cycle, it is clear that the priority for spend must be at the outreach stage. Whilst we will increase funding for student success and progression measures, data from the DHLE survey confirms positive outcomes for students from under-represented groups. Students from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2 match the institutional average for employment and further study, disabled students are more likely to be in employment than non-disabled student and mature students outperform young students in participation in employment and further study and highly skilled employment. This comes in addition to retention rates for this group being 8 per cent higher than for young students. We are determined to build upon success at this stage of cycle and outline plans for further expenditure in section 10.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.education.gov.uk/cgi-bin/schools/performance/group.pl?qtype=LA&no=801&superview=p16>

<sup>7</sup> The UCAS tariff and NQF/QCF tariffs are not calculated on the same basis so cannot be directly compared with each other

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/32951/Deprivation+in+Bristol+2015/429b2004-efff-44c5-8044-9e7dc002faf>

## **5. Expenditure**

- 5.1 In order to fund the activity described above and make progress against our targets, the University plans to invest a total of £14.4m in additional access measures in 2018-19, representing 30.7 per cent of total income from additional fees.
- 5.2 A high level summary of how this investment will be attributed in 2018-19 is provided in the table below. The amounts quoted would rise annually with inflation if fee levels were to rise to reflect inflation.
- 5.3
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|--|---------------|
| Outreach activities                        | £3.4m         |
| Student Success and Progression activities | £1.9m         |
| Student finance package                    | £9.1m         |
| <b>Total reinvestment</b>                  | <b>£14.4m</b> |

## **6. Additional access measures**

- 6.1 Additional access measures fall into three main categories:

- Outreach activity
- Student success and progression activities
- Student financial support

## **7. Outreach expenditure**

- 7.1 It is clear that progress is required in order to achieve the University's ambitions to be a more diverse institution and exceed the targets set. There is a particular need to attract students from low participation neighbourhoods, state, local and mature students to the University.
- 7.2 In order to achieve our aims, and informed by the OFFA Strategic Plan 2015-20<sup>9</sup>, the Government's 'Schools that work for everyone'<sup>10</sup> consultation and research undertaken by our Widening Participation Research Cluster<sup>11</sup>, the University will invest £3.4m in outreach activities in 2018-19 rising to approximately £3.6m in 2021-22.
- 7.3 The focus of outreach activity in 2018-19 will be long-term, targeted and designed, where possible, to raise attainment. We have plans to scale up our sponsorship of local schools and outline this in more detail in para 7.18. We have taken an evidence-based approach to the targeting of activity and have specific intervention progress measures (detailed in paras 13.7-13.11) to reflect this. For those interventions designed and delivered by the University, we prioritise students who fulfil the following criteria: attend an aspiring state school or college<sup>12</sup>; live in a low participation neighbourhood; will be in the first generation of their family to progress to higher education; and live in the local area<sup>13</sup>. The targeting criteria for the Pathways to Law and Sutton Trust summer school programme also include: attendance at state school;

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.offa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/OFFA-Strategic-Plan-2015-2020-final-PDF.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/schools-that-work-for-everyone>

<sup>11</sup> Davies,S, Hayes, D and Collard, S (2014) 'Should expenditure be switched from bursaries to outreach? A comparative evaluation of the effects on Widening Participation of the Access to Bristol and Sutton Trust schemes'; Hartree,Y, Brown, G and Hoare, T (2014) 'Student Financial Support Survey'

<sup>12</sup> A 'lower performing school or college is defined as being in the bottom 40 percent for one of: A Level average per student; A Level average per entry; progression rates to higher education

<sup>13</sup> The 'local' criteria is used for those interventions when long travelling time would prohibit involvement

receipt of free school meals; and looked after children. IntoUniversity also use these categories with priority also being given to those who live in social housing. As outlined in greater detail in section 13, from 2016-17 onwards we introduced new, more granular targeting for participation of Black and Minority Ethnic students.

- 7.4 Using these criteria we will take a sustained approach to growing the applicant pool by working with primary school pupils to mature learners. We will continue to work closely with Merchants' Academy (an all-age academy based in South Bristol of which the University is a co-sponsor) and strengthen our links with providers of non-formal education (specifically the South Bristol Youth Project via our partnership in the National Collaborative Outreach Programme). We will also continue to work with the Brilliant Club to place postgraduate students into target schools to deliver university-style tutorials to small groups of high achieving students. Further detail is provided in paras 7.36 and to 7.38.
- 7.5 In order to ensure an evidence based approach to our outreach activity we have drawn on sector-leading expertise and ensured our work complements emerging research findings. An example of the way in which this has worked in practice is the secondment programme we established between the UK Student Recruitment Team at the University and colleagues at the Office for Fair Access (OFFA). As part of the programme, a widening participation practitioner from the University has been working one day a week at OFFA developing a topic briefing on 'White males from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds', otherwise known as 'White working class boys'. Since this topic briefing is addressing an emerging area of interest in access agreements, it has contributed to informing OFFA policy guidance and further research in this area. The University of Bristol staff member also spoke about this issue at the prominent Universities UK and OFFA Access Agreement Conference 18-19.
- 7.6 As part of the secondment of the University, a member of staff from OFFA has worked with colleagues in schools and charities in South Bristol to develop a comprehensive piece of research to explore the barriers to higher education faced by White working class students in South Bristol. The project is currently being finalised and will provide recommendations for future outreach activities.
- 7.7 Whilst we await the recommendations of the report into interventions targeted at White working class boys, we continue with our commitment to long-term sustained outreach. The University of Bristol co-sponsors two IntoUniversity centres in Bristol. Each centre is a higher education presence in the local community which provides a range of programmes working over the long-term with young people aged 7-18. These programmes include after-school Academic Support, Mentoring, aspiration-raising FOCUS programmes including visits to the University, early intervention work at primary schools, tailored secondary school provision, family learning, and employability and careers programmes. In the first year of opening, centres work with a minimum of 450 students and once established with a minimum of 900 students each academic year. Since the partnership began in 2012-13, 4,195 students have received support through the Bristol centres.
- 7.8 IntoUniversity centres are based in areas of disadvantage and students are carefully targeted to ensure they are from groups underrepresented in higher education – for example, White working class, BME and looked after children. In order to access the programme students (or schools) must meet at least one of IntoUniversity's strict widening participation 'primary' criteria (Free School Meals, pupil premium, household income below £25,000, living in social housing, child looked after) or meet multiple 'secondary' widening participation criteria, all of which are indicators of lower progression into higher education (e.g. first generation applicant, young carer).

- 7.9 Nationally, IntoUniversity works closely with 226 schools and The University of Bristol partnership with IntoUniversity includes collaboration with multiple local primary and secondary schools. This collaboration includes the charity and the University (eg volunteers, academics and/or WP staff) working with whole classes from target primary schools and with secondary schools to identify students for specific interventions in school, at the IntoUniversity centre and at the university. The IntoUniversity Bristol South centre partnership also includes the University of Bath and the University of Exeter.
- 7.10 Data collected by IntoUniversity suggests that the programme is effective at supporting students to gain a university place. In 2016, 75 per cent of IntoUniversity school leavers progressed to university, against 22 per cent (nationally) and 39 per cent (Free School Meal). In 2016, with funding from the Cabinet Office Impact Readiness Fund, a methodology was also devised to create two tailored benchmarks using POLAR 3 data and school progression data. The IntoUniversity progression rate also compares favourably to these benchmarks, 36 per cent and 43 per cent. Fourteen IntoUniversity students secured a place at the University of Bristol in 2016 and with the support of IntoUniversity it was possible to expand the satellite version of the Access to Bristol programme in East London. The success of the East Bristol centre led to the decision to commit further access agreement funds to the opening of a second centre in South Bristol in September 2015.
- 7.11 The development of the IntoUniversity centre in South Bristol will complement the outreach activity the University is already involved in through its co-sponsorship of Merchants' Academy. The Academy, ranked as the 31<sup>st</sup> most improved school in the country by the Department for Education, is making progress in raising the attainment and aspirations of its pupils. The Academy is now an all age institution with children beginning their education in the nursery and progressing to the post-sixteen centre. The through school is supplemented with a Free School for Autistic students, the only one of its kind in the city. The school is situated in an area of socio-economic disadvantage. Out of the 23 LSOAs for the Academy, 10 appear in the most deprived 10 per cent for multiple deprivation (the largest count of any in Bristol). Hartcliffe ward is the third most deprived of 35 wards in Bristol and the 439<sup>th</sup> most deprived in the country. The Income Deprivation Affecting Children (IDACI) measure ranks the Academy as 123 (with 1 being the most deprived and 32,482 postcodes include). Such high levels of economic disadvantage are reflected in the student community with 59 per cent classified as pupil premium and 20 per cent with special educational needs.
- 7.12 Given such a challenging context there is a clear need to provide outstanding leadership. The University seeks to contribute to this endeavour through the active engagement of the four University Governors in addition to the delivering a series of bespoke outreach projects for students.
- 7.13 There is clear evidence as to the impact of the collective efforts of staff, governors and parents in raising the aspirations and attainment of learners at all stages within the Academy. A recent Department for Education visit confirmed that there is an explicit focus on achieving an improvement in pupils' outcomes, a wide range of interventions in place to support the learning of Year 11 pupils and strong governance. At primary level, significant progress is being made: the most recent Year 2 SATs results marked an 18 per cent gain in writing on the previous year, particularly impressive in the context of none of the children entering nursery having met their early learning goals.
- 7.14 At post-16 level the upward trajectory continues. The current Year 13 cohort have a predicted pass rate (A\*-E) of 100 per cent, with 39 per cent predicted to achieve A\*-B.

This represents a 29 per cent increase on 2016, with the higher predictions reflecting the intensive academic support received from the University in addition to the strategies implemented by the Academy. A greater number of students than ever before are progressing to higher education. In 2010 only one student from the Academy made the transition to university; by 2016 this figure had risen to 19. It is anticipated that in 2017, 25 Year 13 students will enrol on degree programmes, 7 to selective Russell Group universities. This represents a progression rate to higher education of 20 per cent against an average of 8 per cent in the local population. The Principal of Merchants' Academy described as 'instrumental' the support provided by the University of Bristol in the improved outcomes at post 16 level, stating that the opportunities provided to the students enhanced their aspirations and provided structured support to realise their ambitions.

- 7.15 We will continue to work closely with learners to provide information, advice and guidance, academic mentoring, priority access to Access to Bristol, Pathways to Law and our summer school programme and a guaranteed offer for those students who apply to the University with the predicted grades (including at contextual offer level). We will provide academic tutoring to ensure all students at post 16 level are able to fulfil their potential. For those who receive an interview for a professional programme we will provide practice sessions, the opportunity to observe 'multiple mini interviews' and the chance to be mentored by academics from the Faculty of Health Sciences. Cognisant of the critical role teachers play in the attainment raising of students at all ages within the Academy and the importance of ongoing innovation in pedagogy, the University is part funding five MScs in the School of Education for teachers at secondary level as part of their continuous professional development. In order to ensure those in leadership roles at post 16 level are up to date with the most recent developments in the higher education sector will continue to sponsor attendance at UCAS teachers' conferences, seminars and workshops.
- 7.16 Finally, to further demonstrate our commitment to the Academy, we have included a range of collaborative targets into this agreement. With the Senior Leadership Team at the Academy we have jointly developed progress measures for: GCSE performance; the number of students progressing into post-16 at the Academy; the attainment of the cohort; and the progression rates to higher education. As would be expected, these progress measures are refined annually to reflect changes to the assessment and reporting procedures and the projections for specific cohorts. The targets, approved by Governors, belong to the school and form part of the Academy Improvement Plan.
- 7.17 Our experience of co-sponsoring Merchants' Academy for almost a decade, contributing to the development of an all age academy, establishing an autism free school and creating specific pathways to the University for post sixteen students at the school, has reinforced the value of long-term, strategic relationships with schools and colleges. The University has benefited from the insights into the challenges of increasing attainment and progression to higher education, particularly given the demanding social and economic context the school is situated within, and learnt much about building and maintaining relationships with schools across the city.
- 7.18 Building on the successful relationship with Merchants' Academy, the University is currently exploring the possibility of extending sponsorship of the existing Multi Academy Trust into an expanded Trust. This would comprise an additional secondary school, five primary schools and a possible new free school sixth form. Co-sponsorship of this new Trust presents the University with the opportunity to strengthen links with the diverse range of schools from across the city, strengthen post-16 provision and share expertise and best practice in teaching and learning. If approved by the Regional Schools Commissioner, the new Trust hopes to be established by

September 2017, with new targets introduced for the schools involved incorporated into the 2019-20 access agreement submission.

- 7.19 The University's commitment to raising attainment and aspirations through long-term outreach in South Bristol, one of the most economically deprived areas of the city and with the second lowest progression rates to higher education in the country<sup>14</sup>, extends beyond our work with Merchants' Academy. We will continue to support South Bristol Youth, an innovative partnership which brings together schools and youth organisations in the area. We have commissioned a longitudinal piece of research into the impact of the project which will examine the behavioural and attitudinal outcomes of the programme and participants, their families and peer group, the outcomes of which will inform possible expansion of the project. Evaluation is due to be complete in October 2017 and early findings indicate that the work of South Bristol Youth is having an impact on the aspirations of young people and their parents. There is also evidence of significant variation in behaviour within the different wards of South Bristol and this will play a part in the targeting of future outreach activity.
- 7.20 As part of the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) the University is part of a network led by the University of the West of England, called Future Quest. This network has clear targets to raise aspiration amongst students in 'opportunity areas' and harnesses a range of outreach projects by community organisations to deliver a sustained programme of activities. Co-ordinated by South Bristol Youth, such activities will include: advice and guidance as to the most beneficial qualifications to choose in order to progress to higher education; the opportunity to meet current students and take part in undergraduate style learning; the development of core skills; and access to experiences designed to increase cultural capital.
- 7.21 As well as taking a long-term approach to outreach, the University is committed to expanding those interventions with a proven track record of success. One such programme is the Access to Bristol programme (which incorporates our Pathways to Law scheme). It is clear that the intervention continues to have a demonstrable impact on applications and intake with the scheme exceeding the application and intake progress measures.
- 7.22 In the five-year period from 2012-13 to 2016-17 applications to the University from Access to Bristol participants increased by 160 per cent (121 to 314). 315 Access to Bristol students applied to the University for 2016 entry, against a progress measure of 166, with 65 students progressing to our degree programmes against a progress measure of 43. Such figures suggest that the guaranteed offer, academic content of the programme, support through the application process and financial support package is proving effective. As such we will retain the guaranteed offer, and provide a transition year fee waiver and bursary for such students in 2018-19.
- 7.23 In 2018-19, based on the success of the Access to Bristol scheme, we will expand the satellite programme schemes and the 'pathways to the professions' programmes piloted in 2016-17 working with the faculties of Health Sciences (incorporating medicine, dentistry and veterinary science). The programme will provide targeted outreach to academically able students at post 16 level from under-represented groups. Tailored support will be provided to prepare for interviews and exams. Participating students will have access to professional mentors and work experience placements in their chosen discipline.
- 7.24 There is much innovative outreach practice within our academic faculties. The Faculty of Health Sciences have developed a widening participation strategy with bespoke

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<sup>14</sup> HEFCE (2013), Trends in Young Participation in Higher Education: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2013/201328/>

activities to enable access to their highly popular programmes in medicine, dentistry and veterinary science. These activities include an apprenticeship programme in conjunction with Swindon Hospital through which students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are unsuccessful at interview will be offered paid work experience to support them in the areas they lack experience. These students will be evaluated throughout their month long work experience placement and successful candidates will be offered a place on our medicine degree.

- 7.25 Building on the success of the activity developed within Health Sciences and recognising the importance of widening participation activity being fully embedded within faculties, we will expand the development of 'Engagement Officer' posts, now established in the faculties Biomedical Sciences and Science, expanding this model to Arts in 2017-18. These roles provide a single point of contact for academically focussed outreach activity within the faculty, allow for enhanced communication with schools and colleges and create capacity to develop programmes of work which complement the national curriculum and can contribute to raising attainment within participating schools. In 2018-19 it is anticipated that the role will be extended to Engineering, Social Science and Law and Health Sciences.
- 7.26 We will also continue our commitment to the University's long-standing summer school programme in 2018-19. We will maintain the level of participants on the Sutton Trust summer school at 160 but seek to improve application and conversion rates through a programme of support for students at critical points in the admissions cycle. The summer school timetable was redesigned in 2015, as previous feedback has suggested that our subject streams were too broad. Students now learn in small groups, develop close relationships with each other and University staff, all of which enables a strong connection to the summer school and University. By narrowing the timetables down to one subject, it was hoped that students would gain a deeper understanding of their chosen subject, be more likely to make informed choices at the application stage and have increased levels of attainment due to their engagement levels in further study being raised by their participation in the programme.
- 7.27 The changes are having an impact. Applications to the University have increased from the 2014 summer school (from 118 to 130), and we will continue with the reforms in 2018-19 to ensure long-term, deep relationships are built between summer school students and the University. This involves paying for transport and accommodation to visit days, revision sessions, alumni funded bursaries and phone calls from summer school staff to answer questions about offers.
- 7.28 The examples provided above demonstrate our commitment to growing the applicant pool, raising aspirations and enhancing progression rates from our outreach interventions. Robust monitoring and evaluation, within and between academic cycles, allow us to assess the impact of our programmes and refine them where necessary. Our experience of both the Access to Bristol and summer school programmes, in particular the challenges of participants not meeting their predicted grades, coupled with a recognition of the importance of prior educational attainment as a key predictor of participation in higher education, has led to a focus on attainment raising in all our outreach programmes.
- 7.29 As highlighted in paras 7.7 to 7.10, the University co-sponsors two IntoUniversity centres in Easton and Hartcliffe. The centres work with primary school children to those at post-16 level and provide a higher education presence in the community. As we know that a key intermediate step to progressing to university is achieving the necessary attainment, this has formed a focus of IntoUniversity's work. Research shows there are a number of barriers that prevent young people from disadvantaged backgrounds progressing to higher education. The IntoUniversity programmes work to

break down these barriers through: supporting students with their academic study, ensuring for example that they complete their homework on time and to a good standard and are well-prepared for examinations; building soft skills, such as confidence, communication and teamwork; building study skills, such as the ability to learn independently; developing a positive attitude to learning; raising aspirations and normalising the idea of university; providing Information, Advice and Guidance; introducing primary schools students aged 7 and upwards to the idea of university; providing social and cultural capital.

- 7.30 There is clear evidence that the academic support provided by IntoUniversity is having impact. At the end of each programme students complete evaluation forms. These ask whether they feel any changes have occurred as a result of the programme. Staff use a standard script when introducing the evaluation forms to ensure they are presented as neutrally as possible. Students on all programmes are asked about the full range of outcomes, even though not all outcomes are expected for all programmes. It is expected that the responses for each question will be most positive on programmes where that question is asking about one of the expected outcomes. This helps to control for one criticism of self-reports, which is that respondents will to some extent respond the way they think those collecting the data want them to. The response to the question 'have your school marks/exam grades improved?' is much higher on Academic Support than on other programmes (75 per cent for Academic Support against 37 per cent on programmes where improved grades is not an expected outcome). IntoUniversity attempts to triangulate students' responses by collecting data on the same outcomes from their parents. If parents are also noticing the changes that students are reporting it suggests that they are real changes. Parent surveys show that 75 per cent of parents feel their children's grades have improved after attending Academic Support.
- 7.31 Consistent with the aim to develop a positive attitude to learning, 82 per cent of students report working better at school after attending Academic Support. To some extent all IntoUniversity programmes include content to develop this attitude, but it is a particular focus at Academic Support. In line with this, the response from Academic Support students is higher than on other programmes (82 per cent against 63 per cent). As with the question about grades, IntoUniversity attempts to triangulate students' responses by collecting data from parents, 86 per cent of whom feel that their child's attitude to learning has improved after attending Academic Support.
- 7.32 IntoUniversity can also demonstrate self-reported improvements in students' soft skills. This data shows that 80 per cent of Academic Support students report improved teamwork, 78 per cent improved confidence and 78 per cent improved communication skills. These skills are important for academic and future success, and exercises to develop them are built into all our programmes. IntoUniversity has begun to pilot a 'Future Readiness' scheme, formalising much of the work done at Academic Support on developing soft skills for year 7-9 students. Students on the scheme will complete a baseline questionnaire which includes externally-validated scales. At the end of the year they will complete the same questionnaire. This will provide data on whether there have been changes in soft skills for students taking part in the scheme.
- 7.33 IntoUniversity is also piloting an evaluation of the primary academic support curriculum. At the end of each session staff assess which of the learning goals each student has achieved (evidenced by the work they have completed during the session). The results will show what proportion of students have achieved the learning goals specified in the curriculum. As the IntoUniversity curriculum is closely tied to the national curriculum, achieving these learning goals equates to meeting the relevant parts of the national curriculum. IntoUniversity has been able to collect start and end

year attainment data for a small group of KS2 students across our network. Preliminary analysis of this data suggests that students who attend Academic Support on average make above expected progress over the course of a year. IntoUniversity is currently developing plans to partner more closely with one or more schools to better understand the impact their programmes are having on students' grades and we await this data with interest.

- 7.34 Moving beyond our work with IntoUniversity, we have incorporated a focus on attainment raising into our post 16 outreach programmes. Annual evaluation of both Access to Bristol and the summer school programme has indicated a higher than average number of offer holders whom have also taken part in these programmes do not achieve the terms of their offer. To address this challenge we have developed revision sessions in Bristol for Access to Bristol, Pathways to Law and summer school participants.
- 7.35 The sessions involve high quality, experienced teachers, recruited from the region, running four intensive day-long revision sessions in key facilitating subjects (Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Maths and English Literature). The revision sessions had a measurable impact on raising attainment (when compared to WP project participants who did not attend any revision sessions), on average raising each student's equivalent UCAS Tariff by 8 points, or approximately half a grade. 32 per cent of project participants who attended at least one revision session met the terms of their offer compared with only 21 per cent of those who do not attend any revision sessions. Based on the success of the scheme we will continue the programme in 2018-19.
- 7.36 We will continue to invest in our attainment raising programmes with the Brilliant Club and will fund a full partnership in 2018-19 to deliver their Scholars Programme in local target schools. The programme recruits, trains and places PhD tutors in these schools to deliver programmes of university-style learning to small groups of high performing pupils. Each scheme consists of six university-style tutorials, two study-skills workshops, a final assignment and two university trips aimed to increase university awareness and aspirations. The tutorials are designed and delivered by the PhD tutors, and are mapped on to the national curriculum at a key-stage above the expected level of attainment of the pupils. It is designed to provide long term support for pupils starting at KS2 and working with pupils throughout the life cycle to KS5.
- 7.37 The Scholars Programme is targeted to work with pupils who come from communities with comparatively low rates of progression to highly-selective universities, and within each participating cohort at least 33 per cent of the pupils will have been eligible for Free School Meals. Qualitative and quantitative evidence from the 2016-17 cohort suggests the programme is successful in its aims to both raise attainment and raise university aspirations within the students. Indeed, in 2016 nine University of Bristol tutors delivered the Scholars Programme to 104 students, 75 per cent of whom came from households in POLAR3 quintiles 1 and 2. In their final assessment, 64 of these students achieved a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2:1, graded at a level one Key Stage above their current study level. This is broadly equivalent to an A or B grade at each Key Stage, and as such evidences progress in attainment. The number of students confident to complete academic work at a higher level than their peers increased from 44 per cent to 77 per cent as a result of the Scholars Programme.
- 7.38 In addition to our partnership with the Brilliant Club, in 2018-19 we will embed academic support into all of our intensive outreach programmes. For those Access to Bristol, summer school and Bristol Scholars participants who apply to the University, are made an offer of study and firmly accept, we will provide private academic tuition for two hours a week in the ten weeks prior to their A Level exams. We anticipate that

we will provide such support for 450 students on an annual basis and will increase the proportion of participant offer holders who meet the terms of their offer to 75 per cent. We will monitor and evaluate the success of this intervention by comparing predicted grades to those attained at A Level Confirmation alongside ongoing tutor assessments.

- 7.39 In addition to the full range of attainment-raising outreach interventions outlined above, the University will continue with the innovative Bristol Scholars scheme. This initiative, the first of its kind in the country, provides up to five guaranteed, tailored offers for 'high potential' Year 13 students in state and independent schools in the city. Eligibility for the scheme is based on the Headteachers' assessment of potential and progress rather than examination results alone. In order to be eligible for the scheme students must have overcome educational or domestic disadvantage and / or meet a range of widening participation criteria. The scheme is intended to capture the missing talent we know exists in our locality, to demonstrate the University's commitment to Bristol's schools and colleges and provide alternative entry routes into our programmes to those who would otherwise be excluded due to our very high entry requirements. The 2016-17 pilot scheme is now underway with 56 students taking part from 19 schools across the city.
- 7.40 Bristol Scholars receive access to a comprehensive outreach programme in Year 13. This comprises: information sessions for Scholars and their parents; independent academic tuition; student mentoring, study skills support; and the opportunity to visit University residences and take part in cultural events. All Bristol Scholars receive bespoke invitations to University visit days where they are accompanied by their student mentor.
- 7.41 Mindful of the support that may be required for such students to make a successful transition to university from their school or college, a tailored package of academic and pastoral provision has been developed to guide their development through university. Key components include: a two week pre-sessional programme focussing on the development of academic skills; a residential; ongoing access to the Bristol Scholars Adviser who can provide signposting advice and personal development planning; peer mentoring; and a funded internship in the summer vacation. Such support will be provided for each year of study and is designed to be responsive to the individual needs of the students. The progress of the students will be tracked to assess the impact of their A Level qualifications on yearly marks and final degree outcomes.
- 7.42 To ensure that finances do not impact on the Scholars ability to study and engage fully in the student experience, the University will provide a first-year tuition fee waiver and an annual bursary of £3,750 for the duration of academic study for those students with a household income of below £25k. It is anticipated that a cohort of 50 Bristol Scholars will progress to the University in 2018-19.
- 7.43 Within and beyond the Bristol Scholars scheme, the interests of groups protected under the Equalities Act 2010 (and other groups including care-leavers) are important to the University and such students are well catered for within our outreach provision. Our 2016-17 intake data indicates that the University performs well against our Black and Minority Ethnic progress measures for applications but that this is not evenly spread amongst all ethnic categories. The largest proportion of BME students at the University continue to be 'Asian/Indian' or 'White/Asian' by a significant margin. 'Chinese' and 'other mixed background' categories constitute the next largest groups, although the former has declined and the latter increased since 2014-15. We continue to have relatively low proportions of 'Asian/Bangladeshi', 'Asian/Pakistani' and 'Black/Caribbean' students'. Although we are pleased to be exceeding our progress

measure we are keen to make faster progress and move beyond the blunt definition of 'BME students'. Our plans to do this are outlined below.

- 7.44 In order to increase applications from these groups, from 2016-17 onwards we will include a target for the number of BME students taking part in our Insight Into Bristol programme. We will also work with third sector organisations to run an outreach programme for BME students (with a particular emphasis on the under-represented ethnic groups listed above). We will continue to offer the Students in Schools programme to schools serving communities with high BME populations, monitoring the proportion of mentors and tutors from such backgrounds and encouraging these students to become involved in this work. Targeting of the programme has been revised to increase the emphasis on BME students as a priority target group for this activity. This is intended to raise attainment and encourage such students to participate in Access to Bristol, Pathways to Law and other interventions with a proven track record in converting under-represented groups to the University.
- 7.45 As well as an increased focus on learners from BME backgrounds, in 2018-19 outreach will continue to target those with additional protected characteristics including mature learners (outlined in greater detail in section eight) and students with disabilities. The University will continue to work towards being more inclusive by design, as well as make sufficient additional resources available to ensure disabled students are not disadvantaged by the changes to the Disabled Students Allowances. The University will ensure that it meets its duty under the Equality Act 2010 and aims to be one of the UK higher education institutions providing good practice to disabled students.
- 7.46 We will ensure that pre-application open days and campus tours are accessible to students with disabilities and will train tour guides such that they are able to support individual needs. We will continue to encourage students with disabilities to take part in the Access to Bristol scheme, making relevant adjustments where necessary.
- 7.47 In addition to supporting students with protected characteristics to consider higher education, the University of Bristol is committed to reviewing the modes of delivery of degree programmes to ensure they are as accessible as possible (see paras 8.3 - 8.13).
- 7.48 At postgraduate level we will continue our work to increase the number of Black and Minority Ethnic students undertaking a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) at the University. We will raise the profile of career opportunities in teaching within the group by supplementing the training that mentors and tutors receive with continuing professional development input from a variety of sources including Teach First and the Careers and Employability Service.
- 7.49 In 2018-19 the University will fund the delivery of continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities relating to pupil success and progression for aspiring state schools in the local area. This work draws on the professional and academic expertise of staff in the School of Education, working with widening participation staff to identify newly qualified teachers and support them via activities such as visits to other schools with a specialism in behaviour management.
- 7.50 Finally, in order to ensure we take a whole student lifecycle approach to widening participation, the University has recently expanded our WP and Postgraduate Recruitment Team. Responsibilities of this team include identifying target groups, developing interventions with current undergraduates from such groups to raise awareness of our postgraduate programmes and continuing to explore and promote new sources of funding (such as the PG loans system) to relevant individuals. We have commissioned a piece of research from the Graduate School of Education breaking

down our postgraduate student body by WP category, conducting focus groups with PG students and conducting other qualitative research into WP students and their PG choices. This will be followed by a series of recommendations of ways which we can make our PG student body more representative.

- 7.51 In order to effectively target outreach work and monitor the demography of our postgraduate community, the University's postgraduate application form now includes a series of questions about an applicant's background. This includes questions such as whether they received a bursary as an undergraduate, school attended and their postcode before applying to university. To mitigate the financial barriers to postgraduate study, philanthropic giving has provided funding for at least four bursaries of £10,000 each, to be awarded to students who attended the Access to Bristol scheme, took up an undergraduate place at Bristol, received the Access to Bristol bursary and will undertake a postgraduate taught programme at the University in 2017-18.

## **8. Mature and part-time students**

- 8.1 We share OFFA's ongoing concern regarding the decline in part-time applications and enrolment. The University was represented on the steering group of the UUK review of this area and whilst our current part-time provision is relatively small-scale we are committed to promoting those courses we do offer and to providing ongoing support to such students throughout the student lifecycle. Our Mature and Part-Time Students' Adviser works with colleagues in schools and faculties to identify such students, provides information on transition support and promotes the peer mentoring scheme.
- 8.2 Bristol Students' Union recently carried out research into the experience of part-time students. This highlighted that the University has a significant number of part-time students at postgraduate level compared to undergraduate level, particularly on taught courses. Part-time students reported similar barriers to accessing part-time education, relative to the national population of part-time students, with 69 per cent citing funding their studies as the main barrier, followed by 45 per cent who said that confidence in abilities was the main barrier. Part-time postgraduate study is more attractive to students from some widening participation backgrounds and this could be something to explore in relation to student progression. The report highlighted that the model of support in place for part-time undergraduates and mature students was seen as positive, and that a similar approach might benefit postgraduate students in the future.
- 8.3 We recognise that applications from mature students have dropped (in line with a national decline) from 2012-13 onwards. In order to increase applications from mature learners the University will continue to invest in a range of outreach activities. In 2018-19 this will include: information sessions to Access students in local Further Education Colleges and institutions identified as having significant numbers of mature students; contributing to the regional Access Conference; and running specific 'drop in' sessions on the University campus for prospective applicants; and providing information, advice and guidance on applications, childcare, funding and accommodation. We will ensure that mature students continue to take part in the University's Access to Bristol scheme. In 2016-17 we successfully piloted a Pathways to Law model for students studying Access courses in Law, seven students successfully completed this programme and it will be expanded in 2018-19.
- 8.4 We are committed to exploring new approaches to increasing mature student applications, using expertise from across the University. Since 2016-17 a member of academic staff with significant experience working on programmes designed for mature and part-time learners has been seconded to work with the central widening participation team on a part-time basis. The outcome of this work is the development

of a structured programme of tasters and short courses and bridging courses. These will create new routes into programmes for students who might not enter higher education, working with potential mature applicants up to 3-4 years prior to them applying to a degree and at different stages of their educational development. The programme will enable the University to build new relationships with employers, and with communities in the city that have low participation rates in HE. The first courses will be piloted in 2017-18 with a view to expanding the provision in 2018-19.

- 8.5 Such an approach is important as data indicates that the part-time courses we do have, specifically those bespoke programmes developed for this market, are reaching mature students and those with little or no experience of higher education. In 2016-17 there were 56 students enrolled on our BA in English Literature and Community Engagement, all aged between 23 and 73, who study one night per week over six years. The first cohort graduated in July 2014, with 76 per cent achieving a successful outcome, which is well above the average on comparable part-time programmes. This programme continues to recruit an exceptionally diverse range of students. In 2016-17, of the 14 students admitted to the programme, 94 per cent were local; 100 per cent were mature (with 94 per cent over 25 and 86 per cent over 40); 7 per cent were Black or minority ethnic; 29 per cent were from neighbourhoods with low participation in higher education; and 71 per cent were the first generation in their family to go to university.
- 8.6 Short courses in literature and creative writing have been developed with community organisations including: IDEAL Community Action, which supports communities affected by drugs and offending; the Single Parent Action Network; and the Eden House Project, which supports women involved in the criminal justice system. These courses are designed to facilitate progression, with many current students previously completing a short course. Outreach is also an integral part of the degree programme and each student runs a community project, such as a reading group, as part of their studies; partners for this work include a wide range of schools, library services and charities in Bristol and across the surrounding region.
- 8.7 The University remains committed reviewing all curricula to ensure that they are inclusive in scope and delivery. We will also explore opportunities to develop more flexible learning approaches particularly into our most competitive programmes. We read with interest 'A journey into medicine outreach guidance'<sup>15</sup> and are pleased to be undertaking much of the outreach suggested. Our Gateway into medicine, dentistry and veterinary science programme has been extremely successful in attracting applications from students from aspiring state schools and colleges, mature students and students from low participation neighbourhoods who are predicted lower grades than those required for the standard five year programme. The programmes began teaching the first cohort of students in September 2016 and all fifteen students are on track to pass the year and progress onto their chosen pathway. Applications for 2017-18 entry have been strong and there will be 20 students enrolled onto the programmes in September 2017 and this will grow to 25 in 2018. For 2016 entry there were more than 200 applications for the programmes.
- 8.8 The format of the Gateway Programme is not only designed to provide enhanced science training to students, but also to equip them with the necessary academic literacy skills for success in their future studies. Personal and professional development is a key strand of the programme and aims to give students the appropriate skills to succeed in the three clinical professions. Based on positive recruitment to the programme, we will be exploring a similar foundation year in the

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.medschools.ac.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/MSA-Journey-to-Medicine-Outreach-Guidance.pdf>

Engineering Faculty in 2017-18. This will focus on giving students the necessary maths and physics knowledge which is required to succeed on an engineering degree and has been identified as lacking in students progressing from Access courses, this deficit leads to higher non continuation rates for mature students in this area.

- 8.9 It is hoped that the Gateway Programme will build on the success of the Arts and Humanities Foundation Year. Launched in September 2013, the Foundation Year offers an access route to all undergraduate degree programmes in the Faculty of Arts for academically gifted and highly motivated students from a wide range of backgrounds who might not otherwise have an opportunity to access higher education.
- 8.10 Data continues to demonstrate significant success in recruiting a diverse student population for the Foundation Year. It is a distinctive feature of this programme that there are no prior qualifications required for admission and 90 per cent of the students recruited since the programme was established in 2013 have not had A-Levels. The curriculum combines an introduction to a broad range of arts and humanities subjects and relevant skills, including note-taking, time management, 'finding your voice at university' and career planning.
- 8.11 Since the programme was established in 2013, it has had an exceptional record in recruiting students from the following widening participation categories: 76 per cent of students are mature; 49 per cent are local; 37 per cent are from neighbourhoods with low participation rates to higher education; 16 per cent are Black or Minority Ethnic; 74 per cent have incomes below £25k; 37 per cent have declared a disability; and 43 per cent are the first generation in their family to go to higher education. Recruitment to the programme is supported through short taster courses run in collaboration with community organisations, including the Meriton, a pupil referral unit for young mothers; Bristol Refugee Rights; and IDEAL Community Action, an organisation that supports individuals experiencing chaotic lives as a result of issues such as addiction and offending.
- 8.12 Progression rates to first-year undergraduate degree programmes from Foundation Year students are impressive. 84 students were admitted to these programmes in 2013-16, of whom more than 90 per cent successfully completed the programme. To date, 58 students have progressed to a degree: 47 in the Faculty of Arts at Bristol; 5 to other programmes at Bristol (in Social Sciences and Law and in Geographical Sciences); and 6 to other universities.  
Many of the first cohort to complete the Foundation Year will graduate from degree programmes in 2016-17. We have been collating data on their progress and working collaboratively with students to map their experiences across the full life cycle of their studies. This data will be vital in ensuring that the support we offer to students who enter the University through alternative routes is appropriate and robust, and in mapping the diverse contributions these students have made to university life. Funding for outreach costs associated with the programme will be committed from additional fee income in 2018-19.
- 8.13 The Foundation Year was a case study in a 2017-18 project on 'Understanding the impact of outreach on access to higher education for disadvantaged adult learners', funded by OFFA and led by the Open University, with case studies also from Birkbeck and Leeds. The finds of this report will be vital in planning ahead for this programme, and we hope the findings will also help to influence similar practice across the sector.

## **9. Collaborative working**

- 9.1 The University recognises the strength of collaborative arrangements, including the benefits of scale, increased engagement with students and potential applicants, enhanced co-ordination and reduced duplication. In 2018-19 we will continue to build on existing partnerships, including the IntoUniversity Bristol South centre developed with the Universities of Bath and Exeter.
- 9.2 We will collaborate with eleven other universities in the South West region to fund, maintain, develop and promote, the free to students and schools, careers support websites managed by the Western Vocational Progression Consortium (WVPC). Careerpilot, will provide pathway and progression information on the full range of choices for 13-19 year olds in the South West region. Lifepilot will engage and support mature and part-time students and the HE Skills Map supports post 16 students and adults in recognising skills and experiences relevant to progression to HE.
- 9.3 The University will support the development of the websites; develop further strategies to embed the websites into outreach and IAG activities; maintain the 'Parent Zone' developed through the four National Network for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO) partnerships in the South West; work with universities and partnerships in the region to support plans for sustaining their integration of the Careerpilot site in their offer to all South West students and schools, including embedding the use of the careers resources in the work of NCOP consortia in the South West region.
- 9.4 The University is also a member of the Western Outreach Network (WON), part of the previously HEFCE funded NNCO. The evaluation of the WON showed that it adds significant value to the outreach work delivered by the partner institutions and the NCOP. Specifically it allows the University to provide activity for schools in a wider geographical area than we would be able to if we were working alone. The lighter touch activity and signposting nature of the WON ensures complementarity with Future Quest which will work in a sustained way in a relatively small area. Data indicated that because of the WON: the engagement of schools with outreach activities has increased; aspirations to progress to higher education have been raised; and the resource benefits of collaboration have been realised. As a result of this, the universities involved in the WON decided to sustain the network beyond the HEFCE funding period through subscription. The Coordinator has been retained on a part-time basis to maintain communications with schools and organise collaborative outreach activities for pre-16 students in the WON area. The WON is managed through the Western Progression Vocational Consortium (WPVC) Board along with Careerpilot and the Western Access Progression Agreement (WAPA). The Universities of Bristol, Bath and Bath Spa are all represented on both groups and also work together to increase the progression to higher education of mature students in the local area.
- 9.5 At a national level, the University will continue to contribute to the Russell Group WP Association in 2018-19. This group has provided a forum for collaborative work across these highly selective institutions for many years. The association provides peer support for senior widening participation staff, plans and delivers collaborative activity including the biennial Teachers' Conference and practitioner networks.
- 9.6 As part of the Russell Group WP association we are also a partner in Advancing Access, working together with schools and colleges to develop and deliver CPD for teachers and advisers that supports student progression to selective universities and courses. Advancing Access has a particular focus on schools with low levels of progression to such universities. We are delivering the majority of CPD events and resources online to allow easy access for all schools, regardless of their location. Advancing Access complements the work already carried out at the University and other partner institutions by engaging those areas that have historically been hard to

reach and may be in geographic ‘cold spots’. Advancing Access also aims to complement the work of national collaborative outreach programmes. It is a cost-effective approach to equipping teachers and advisers with the information they need to advise students with confidence.

- 9.7 In terms of collaborative student support activity, the University is actively engaged with the South West Peer Support Network and the developing academic peer led learning network which replaces the National Peer Assisted Study Sessions Network. Both networks serve to develop and share best practice for staff and student workers engaged in peer support for current students. These networks provide valuable opportunities for staff development and training, ensuring high quality delivery on these programmes. We will continue to play a part in such networks in 2018-19.
- 9.8 Whilst collaborative work outside of the institution continues, we are also committed to a co-ordinated approach to widening participation within the University. We will continue to work closely with the Students’ Union sabbatical team including: the Equality, Access and Liberation Officer; UG Education Officer and Student Living Officer as well as the part-time Widening Participation Officer and the Engagement Manager (a permanent staff member) to ensure that all outreach work is as co-ordinated as possible. All will be engaged in the development of strategy in this area, including outreach work, student success activity and research.
- 9.9 The University is committed to working with the Students’ Union as it develops its widening participation activity. There are a number of part-time, elected student officers whose remit includes the representation of students from under-represented groups. These include: a Mature and Part Time Students’ Officer; a BME Students’ Officer; a Disabled Students’ Officer and a WP Students’ Officer. In addition to this, several of the full time elected officers have access and mental health within their remit. Supporting the University to further improve diversity is a key representative priority.
- 9.10 Beyond representation, the Students’ Union is also involved in the development and delivery of a range of outreach programmes, including volunteering in local primary and secondary schools to provide classroom support and small group academic tutoring. Visits to the Union and an opportunity to find out about clubs and societies have been integrated into the Access to Bristol and ‘Going Places’ event highlighted in para 7.19, and this work will continue in 2018-19 and beyond.
- 9.11 Collaboration extends to the joint delivery of activities to support mental health and well-being. This includes a specific society that connects students who want to talk about mental health, peer-led support groups and networks. Each year the SU lead a dedicated mental health awareness campaign in partnership with central Student Services. This month-long initiative pulls together a range of activity dedicated to exploring and enhancing mental health.
- 9.12 In order to ensure that all students are able to benefit from the wealth of extracurricular activities at the University, the Students’ Union currently provides a ‘fair access fund’ for those who would like to take part in societies or sports clubs and who don’t have enough money to do so (essential, given a University commissioned study reported mature students, students with disabilities and female students reported personal finances as limiting their ability to participate fully in extra-curricular activities<sup>16</sup>). We are fully supportive of such an approach and will continue to work closely and collaboratively with sabbatical offers and staff members to enhance the student experience for all.

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<sup>16</sup> Hartfree, Y, Evans, J and Hayes, D (2016) ‘Widening Participation Student Financial Support Survey 2015’

## **10. Student success expenditure**

10.1 Whilst the University's overall track record in student retention is strong, we will continue investment in interventions which provide support for the specific challenges which students from underrepresented groups often face in making the transition to university level study and progressing into employment and postgraduate study. The University is making significant investment in student well-being, with specialist support provided for students from specific groups as detailed in paras 10.7 to 10.10, below. We will commit £1.9m in 2018-19 to student success and progression activity.

Specifically we will:

- Expand peer support through peer mentoring and Peer Assisted Study Sessions
- Continue the University's funded internship programme, providing ring fenced places for students from under-represented groups.
- Provide funded overseas internships for students from under-represented groups.
- Engage University alumni as mentors to help students explore career ideas and support progression.
- Provide additional academic skills support for students progressing from the Gateway programme into medical degrees.
- Support a whole-institution strategic approach to student wellbeing, with particular measures in place to enhance the wellbeing of students with enduring mental health difficulties. This includes additional counselling and specialist mental health provision.
- Develop work to address the BME attainment gap at undergraduate level drawing on the outcomes of research projects on the experience of BME students at the University.

10.2 The interventions outlined above have been informed by a number of research projects commissioned into retention and withdrawal rates at the University. A report on research by the University's Widening Participation Research Cluster into the relationship between widening participation characteristics, student funding arrangements and withdrawals has been produced, as has a qualitative investigation of students' reasons for withdrawal. While the latter did not have a specific focus on students with widening participation characteristics, it does provide a fuller picture of the range of wide-ranging and complex factors that can contribute to a students' decision to withdraw.

10.3 The results from the most recent completed student financial support survey<sup>17</sup> proved interesting and indicated that a relatively high proportion of first year respondents (26 per cent) said that they had seriously considered withdrawing from the University at some point during the academic year, an increase on the figure of 21 per cent from the previous year's survey. This was particularly amplified amongst students with a disability: while 21 per cent of non-disabled students had considered withdrawing, as many as 42 per cent of disabled students had considered doing so. There was also considerable variation by ethnic group, with 36 per cent of non-White students considering withdrawing, compared to 23 per cent of students from a White background. It should be noted, however, that this result was not statistically significant.

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<sup>17</sup> Hartfree, Y, Evans, J and Hayes, D (2016) 'Widening Participation Student Financial Support Survey 2015'

- 10.4 When the results were analysed against the variable of financial support, the data indicated that a higher proportion of unfunded students had considered withdrawing (36 per cent) compared with those who had received funding (22 per cent), though this result was also not statistically significant.
- 10.5 Students who had considered withdrawing from the University were asked why they had considered doing so. Over two-thirds of these students reported that financial reasons were at least partly the cause of their difficulties: 22 per cent said that they considered withdrawing for 'primarily financial' reasons and a further 48 per cent said that their reasons were 'partly financial'. The remaining 30 per cent gave other, non-financial reasons, such as illness, stress and anxiety, family difficulties and discontent with their chosen degree course. Reasons given for not withdrawing included a desire to get a degree for their future prospects. Other reasons included: having received personal advice and support, feeling that they had committed too much to their studies to drop out, receiving financial support, and that they enjoyed university (as a whole) too much to leave.
- 10.6 The findings of the research project cited above, as well as internal data indicating that students with disabilities are 35.7 per cent more likely to withdraw than those without, demonstrates the need for the University to invest in student success and progression interventions and take a whole institutional approach to the issue.
- 10.7 At a macro level, work will continue to improve student support and wellbeing. The University is reviewing its support for student wellbeing and development. While this review is still underway, it is expected that the University will re-focus the role of academic staff on academic mentoring and supporting the personal development of students, and create a new Student Wellbeing Service embedded in the academic schools to support the wellbeing and achievement of all students. In particular, these new roles will focus on enhancing support for student transition and the development of inclusive peer led learning communities. Wellbeing advisers will also work with academic colleagues to embed self-care within the curriculum as an underpinning study skill. They will also monitor the progress of all students, and proactively engage and offer support to those who appear to be disengaging from their studies addressing both wellbeing and retention.
- 10.8 In addition to supporting wellbeing and transition more generally, specialist aspects of the service will coordinate support for students with additional needs, such as disabled students, those with enduring mental health difficulties and those from underrepresented groups. This will include the appointment of specialist mental health caseworkers to help students with enduring mental health difficulties manage their mental health and wellbeing. Whilst the University is investing a significant proportion of core funding for the changes outlined, access agreement funding will be allocated in 2018-19 to provide specialist interventions targeted at students from underrepresented groups. The University has also commissioned research into student mental health, with a view to identifying additional actions that can be taken in this area in the future. These research projects are due to report in summer 2017 and will inform further developments in this area.
- 10.9 As new forms of support are developed, we will continue and expand those interventions with a track record of success. Peer support is recognised as having a positive impact on students' sense of belonging and connection to their peers. We will further expand our peer support provision with a particular focus on the growth of Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS). We will further develop the training for students leading study sessions to support them in developing inclusive practice and support for well-being. PASS leaders will also receive training to help them engage students in constructive and supportive discussion about self-care and wellbeing as a

fundamentals that underpin their academic skills. Evidence from previous evaluation of peer support shows significant benefits for both leaders and participants. In order to maximise the benefit of this activity we will seek to increase the number of leaders from BME backgrounds to ensure these students can access these benefits as well as enhancing inclusive learning communities.

- 10.10 We will continue to offer a tailored approach to peer support for students on the Arts and Humanities Foundation Year. This combines both pastoral mentoring and Peer Assisted Study Sessions. Students who are currently studying for degrees in the Faculty of Arts are trained to provide both peer mentoring and peer-led study so that they can respond effectively to the needs for the foundation year students as they develop over the course of the year. The peer mentors provide both group sessions and one to one support around transition from the foundation year to degree level study. Students who have progressed from the foundation year to undergraduate degree programmes will be encouraged to return to work as peer supporters for this group.
- 10.11 In order to ease the transition to higher education and ensure retention rates amongst mature learners increase, we will continue the student support activities we have developed in recent years. Bespoke study skills sessions and information on student funding, employability and managing the demands of study and childcare will be provided in welcome week. The Mature and Part Time Students' Adviser will continue to promote peer mentoring and Peer Assisted Study Sessions as being of particular benefit to this group and will encourage them to take part. Mature Student Advocates, who represent the needs of adult learners, will also be trained as peer mentors to provide mentoring for mature students. Training for Mature Student Advocates now specifically includes the needs of student parents and carers.
- 10.12 A calendar of social and support activities provided by the University and the Mature Students' Network will be provided at the mature students' induction event. This will raise awareness of the range of provision and serve to remind mature students that there are regular events for them throughout the year.
- 10.13 In order to ensure that widening participation encompasses the whole student life cycle, we will prioritise employability within our student support activity. We will continue to offer the Lloyds Scholars scheme which offers internships, mentoring and other development opportunities to students from low income backgrounds. We will also extend the University's own funded internship programme, providing ring fenced places for students from under-represented groups.
- 10.14 Our commitment to supporting care leavers will continue. In 2018-19 all such students will have the support of a staff member who will act as a personal adviser. Care leavers will be provided with mentoring and advocacy support, guaranteed a peer mentor on arrival and 365 day accommodation within the University.
- 10.15 We are committed to ensuring an outstanding experience throughout the student life cycle for all learners at the University. We will continue to work with our students and their representatives to ensure all needs are being met. We will take an evidence-based approach to the development of new student success interventions and will respond to them as the need arises. Recently we have identified a clear need to address issues of diversity within our residences, including the structural and cultural barriers that may have led to a bifurcation by school type in some of our accommodation. We are taking a whole institutional approach to this issue. Having examined pricing structures and allocation processes for residences, we introduced accommodation bursaries for the first time in 2017-18 and these will continue in 2018-19.

10.16 Funding from the Student Opportunity allocation was used to contribute to the cost of student success and progression activities provided by academic schools and central services. No activities have been reduced or discontinued as a result of the cessation of this funding and the costs have been met from core funds.

## **11. Student financial support – undergraduate programmes**

- 11.1 As part of the University's strategy to widen participation we have made a clear commitment to ensuring that as fees increase, students with genuine financial need are able to access excellent advice and appropriate financial assistance. It is our aim to ensure that no student has a legitimate reason to be deterred from applying to the University of Bristol because of their inability to meet the costs of living and studying here.
- 11.2 However, in light of the limited progress the University had made in achieving its targets to widen participation, and informed by research, including the OFFA and Nursaw Associates reports<sup>18</sup>, indicating that financial support alone has a limited impact on decision making or continuation rates of students from under-represented groups, an internal review of current arrangements was undertaken in 2014. The focus of the review was to assess the balance of additional fee income invested in the undergraduate student finance package, outreach and student success measures.
- 11.3 The Review Group was chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) and comprised the Academic Director of Undergraduate Studies; the Director of the Widening Participation Research Cluster; the Finance Director; the Director of Student Recruitment, Access and Admissions; The Head of UK Student Recruitment; the Student Funding Manager and three representatives of the University of Bristol Students' Union.
- 11.4 The Group took an evidence-based approach to the review, drawing on the outputs from the Widening Participation Research Cluster and the Students' Union's analysis of the current funding regime. Of particular note was a survey conducted with Year 2 students which indicated that 80 per cent of students valued the University cash bursary and the opportunity to take all or part of their financial support entitlement in the form of a cash bursary or fee waiver.
- 11.5 During the course of the review, the Students' Union expressed a concern related to the 'cliff edge' built into the current funding package which provides generous support to students in the lowest household income groups (£25k and below) but no support at all to other OFFA countable groups in receipt of a statutory maintenance grant (£25k-£42.6k income bracket). The Student Union's desire to extend financial support was reinforced by the Year 2 survey findings which indicated that 61 per cent of respondents not currently in receipt of funding being in favour of this change.
- 11.6 The impact of the University bursary on decision-making was also explored in research undertaken with participants on the Access to Bristol and Sutton Trust summer schools as well as focus groups in local schools. The initial findings indicated that bursary provision alone did not influence applicant decision making and that course, grade requirement, location of the institution and outreach work were all important factors.
- 11.7 The findings of the research undertaken resulted in a strategic rebalancing of access agreement spend from 2015-16 onwards, away from student financial support towards

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<sup>18</sup> OFFA (2014) 'An interim report: Do bursaries have an effect on retention rates?'; <http://www.offa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Literature-review-PDF.pdf>

outreach and student success measures and this is reaffirmed in our 2018-19 agreement.

11.8 The University's core financial support package for full time undergraduate students entering the University in 2018 will provide:

- A bursary of £2,000 for all students whose residual household income is £25k or below
- A bursary of £1,500 for all students whose residual household income is £25,001 - £30k
- A bursary of £1,250 for all students whose residual household income is £30,001 - £35k
- A bursary of £750 for all students whose residual household income is £35,001 - £40k
- A bursary of £500 for all students whose residual household income is £40,001 - £42,620

The amounts stated above will be available to students in every year of study providing they continue to meet the eligibility criteria.

11.9 In order to free up a greater proportion of access agreement spend for investment in outreach activity in 2018-19, the Access to Bristol and Bristol Scholars fee waiver (of £9,250k) will continue only to be available in the first year of study (as opposed to all three years) to provide transition support. Such students will still be eligible for the Access to Bristol and Bristol Scholars annual maintenance bursary valued at £3,750.

11.10 All these amounts are valid for 2018-19. Eligibility will be determined in accordance with the Student Loans Company (SLC) assessment of household income for state support purposes.

11.11 Our Student Funding Office's analysis of the costs of living and studying in Bristol suggests that, for those students in lower income groups, our core student finance package, combined with state support (tuition fee loans and maintenance grants/loans) and some part-time working should ensure that eligible students have sufficient funding at their disposal to cover normal tuition and maintenance costs while at the University.

11.12 While we are confident that, for most students, this package should provide an appropriate level of support, we are, in addition to the core package, investing in hardship funds to provide an additional safety net for those UK undergraduate students who, through no fault of their own, find themselves in financial difficulty during their studies. In 2018-19, a total of £350k will be set aside for this purpose.

11.13 Following concern from our students regarding rent rises in recent years and the possible impact of this on the demographic balance of our residences, we have introduced accommodation bursaries for the first time in 2017-18. Working with our Students' Union representatives we created 120 awards worth £1,000 for students with a household income of £20k or below, living in a POLAR 1 or 2 postcode. The scheme will be evaluated during the 2017-18 academic year and we will seek to assess whether the bursary has influenced: the likelihood of students applying to the University from under-represented groups; the choice of residence (with the aim being to diversify some of our more expensive residences); and the ability to engage in the full student experience (allowing bursary holders to undertake fewer hours of paid work for example). In 2018-19 we will allocate £200k for accommodation bursaries.

- 11.14 The impact of financial constraints on our students' ability to take part in all aspects of university life is recognised across the institution. In addition to the accommodation bursaries outlined above, we are actively exploring the introduction of a sports pass price reduction for low income students. It is proposed that the University will offer a sliding scale of discounted membership, with the greatest reduction on the standard sports pass fee for those with the lowest income. This approach will allow us to respond to student concern regarding cost whilst also reinforcing our commitment to diversification, retention and progression. Take up of the scheme and the impact on the student experience will be monitored following development of the offer. Access agreement funding will not be used to offset this cost, but it is included here as evidence of the University's commitment to providing equal access to all extracurricular activities.
- 11.15 Finally, we are also committed to provide financial support for those most in need but who also find it challenging to access existing funding streams. Introduced in 2016-17, the University's Sanctuary Scholarships were designed to enable access to higher education for students from forced migrant backgrounds. It particularly aims to provide opportunities to those whose previous higher education experience has been interrupted due to being forced to leave their home country, or for whom financial and other barriers have prevented them from being able to access higher education in the UK. The design of the Sanctuary Scholarship scheme was guided by the principles of inclusivity, accessibility, support and retention. The scholarships cover the full tuition fee, an award towards living costs in each year of study and any additional costs of English language or foundation support required. From 2017-18 onwards we will include the costs of the Sanctuary Scholarships for OFFA countable groups into the relevant access agreement (whilst protecting outreach, student success and progression spend).
- 11.16 In parallel with arrangements for 2018-19 described here, we will continue to honour financial commitments to students admitted to the University on support packages described in previous access agreements.
- 11.17 In order to ensure that our approach to student financial support is impactful, the package is evaluated annually by the University's Personal Finance Research Centre. The Student Financial Support Survey is conducted using an online platform. The survey is administered to first and third year students, including those in receipt of University of Bristol funding and those without. Analysis of the data comprises descriptive statistics and some inferential analysis. Chi-square tests are used to examine statistical significance of relationships between categorical variables and, where applicable, column proportion tests are used to identify which rows and columns are responsible for significant relationships. For continuous variables, t-tests are used to identify statistically significant differences between groups. Regression analysis is also used to examine relationships between variables, whilst controlling for other factors. We are exploring with the Personal Finance Research Centre whether OFFA's tool will provide useful additional data and if so how we can incorporate it into our evaluation methodology.
- 11.18 We are committed to ensuring that we evaluate the impact of our financial support on the behaviour of our students. We annually assess the retention rates of those in receipt of financial support and those who do not receive it, with data from the 2015-16 cohort confirming that only 1.96 per cent of those students receiving funding compared to 2.31 per cent who did not receive financial support. The data for 2016-17 also appears to be following a similar positive trend, but the final results won't be known until September 2017.

11.19 It is worth noting that the profile of students who receive financial support meet many more widening participation criteria than those who do not. Using our eight most often used widening participation metrics (aspiring state school and college, state school or college, NS-SEC, POLAR, local, mature, BME and disability), then students who receive financial support have, on average, nearly double the number of widening participation metrics than those who do not. This is important in evaluating the impact of our financial support on behaviour, as we know that widening participation students tend to have a higher withdrawal rate than non-widening participation students, so the combination of similar rates of withdrawal with the higher number of widening participation criteria would suggest that there is a link between financial support and improved retention.

## **12. Student financial support – PGCE programmes**

- 12.1 Most PGCE students are able to access financial support from other sources. We do not therefore believe that a support package mirroring the undergraduate one is appropriate.
- 12.2 The PGCE support package will be reviewed on an annual basis, within the context of any potential changes in wider bursary availability from the National College for Teaching and Leadership.

## **13. Targets and milestones**

- 13.1 In developing the 2018-19 access agreement the University has taken the opportunity to review our progress measures in relation to widening participation, ensuring all milestones are both stretching and achievable.
- 13.2 We have worked hard to ensure that our targets are linked to our widening participation aims across the student lifecycle, and using 2013-14 application and intake as our baseline year we will assess:
  - Year on year progress in diversifying our applicant and student population
  - Year on year progress in improving conversion of under-represented applicants
  - Year on year progress in retaining students from under-represented backgrounds
  - The specific impact of a number of key outreach initiatives
- 13.3 In line with the strategic priorities outlined in this agreement we aim specifically to increase applications in the following areas:
  - Students from aspiring state schools and colleges
  - Mature students
  - Students from NS-SEC groups 4-7
  - Black and Minority Ethnic Students
  - Disabled Students
  - Local Students

Progress measures for each of these categories (which include measures designed to enable us to monitor conversion from application to intake) are provided in the resource plan.

- 13.4 At the intake stage, we will continue to focus on aspiring state school and college performance and mature students, reflecting the role both play in our contextual approach to admissions.

- 13.5 As far as possible, measures have been calculated taking account of the expected impact of a number of specific outreach initiatives (the Access to Bristol scheme and summer school programme for example), each of which also has more detailed performance targets associated with it as highlighted in the resource plan.
- 13.6 In setting long-term progress measures for such groups we were mindful of the base from which we start, the finite number of students within each group and the importance of committing to targets we could realistically achieve.
- 13.7 In order to assess the impact of our outreach interventions we have a number of progress measures for conversion. These are focussed on those areas we are able to take into consideration as part of our contextual approach to admissions (low performing schools and colleges as well as those forming the basis of most outreach interventions (students from BS and BA postcodes). As is made clear in the resource plan, we have committed ourselves to incremental increases, aiming to have increased conversion rates for all indicators by 1.5 per cent in 2019-20 from the baseline data.
- 13.8 Last year we introduced a collaborative target for the IntoUniversity South Bristol Centre, a partnership intervention with the universities of Bath and Exeter. The target is long-term and seeks to increase the number of participants taking part in their programmes. The centre was deliberately situated in Withywood, an area of South Bristol with the second lowest progression rates to higher education in the country, in recognition of the need to increase the aspirations and attainment of white working class students.
- 13.9 The target for IntoUniversity Bristol South flat lines in the 2018-19 agreement as the centre will reach capacity by that point. We will be working with colleagues from IntoUniversity to refine the target for future submissions following an analysis of those areas in which greatest progress is needed (White working class boys for example).
- 13.10 Our long standing commitment to the Pathways to Law programme has led to the introduction of a target for applications to the University from students who take part in the Pathways programmes at partner institutions. Students who are part of the Bristol cohort of Pathways to Law are included in our Access to Bristol targets, however in the last year we have increased the number of outreach events which we organise for students from partner institutions. Evaluation of these events has shown that they are successful in generating applications to the University with a total of 74 applications being received by the University for 2017 entry. We will increase the number of activities which we provide for students from partner institutions in order to showcase the Law School and the benefits of studying a Law degree at Bristol.
- 13.11 We are committed to examining multiple indicators of deprivation and to doing all we can to reduce their impact. We have added in several new intervention targets to reflect the need for intersectionality between progress measures and the partnership work we are undertaking. Recognising the need to increase the number of students from specific BME groups (Asian/Pakistani, Asian/Bangladeshi and Black/Caribbean in particular), we have introduced a target for the number of such students on our Insight Into Bristol programme. As a result of this new targeting criteria we will ensure that students taking part in the programme are prioritised if they are: from BME backgrounds: come from low performing schools; are in the first generation of their family to apply to university; and live in neighbourhoods where few people progress to higher education.
- 13.12 Ethnicity continues to have impact beyond the application and intake stage. We have identified that ethnicity is an important factor in the success of learners at the University, with data suggesting that there is a gap in attainment between BME and

White undergraduate students at the top and lower end of degree classifications. In 2015-16 of the white students graduating, 30.4 per cent achieved a first class honours, compared to 19.9 per cent of BME students. Likewise, proportionately more BME students (15.0 per cent) who graduated are awarded a 2:2 classification than white students (8.0 per cent).

- 13.13 In 2017-18 we invested access agreement funds to explore the reasons for the attainment gap on specific BME groups and effective ways to address this. The report is due to be published in the summer of 2017 and at this stage we will seek to create new, more granular targets, for the retention of students from key under-represented groups for the 2018-19 agreement, to ensure we can address the issue of differential retention more effectively.
- 13.14 Recognising the importance of the whole student lifecycle and of the need to make continuing progress with retention rates, we have committed ourselves to stretching five year targets for withdrawal rates for students from N-SEC groups 4-7 and non-white students. These figures are benchmarked against withdrawal rates for N-SEC 1-3 and white students with the aim of reaching an equitable position by 2020-21.
- 13.15 We have also increased the number of intervention targets to ensure that they accurately reflect the partnership work undertaken by the University. In our 2017-18 access agreement we introduced targets regarding the percentage of Merchants' Academy students that achieve 5 or more A\*-C grades including Maths and English, the numbers progressing to the sixth form and those achieving level C or above at A Level as well as those who progress to higher education. We have retained all targets but note that the way in which success is measured at the monitoring stage will need to alter slightly as a result of the changes to GCSEs and a move from alphabetical to numerical grading and the introduction of 'progress 8' scores.
- 13.16 We have retained and incrementally increased application and intake progress measures for Access to Bristol and increased intake progress measures for the Sutton Trust summer school. We have also kept a number of student success intervention progress measures including peer mentoring coverage and peer assisted study sessions.
- 13.17 Finally, we are mindful of HESA's discontinuation of NS-SEC metric. We are working with UCAS to explore alternative approaches, including the use of multi-dimensional modelling, which would provide richer and more reliable data, allowing us to assess the impact of intersectional variables. We hope to be able to replace the NS-SEC target with a new metric over the next twelve months but will retain the existing progress measure in this agreement.

#### **14. Monitoring and evaluation**

- 14.1 Progress in delivering our widening participation strategy is monitored by the University's Education Committee, chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) and including Students' Union representation.
- 14.2 In addition, the Education Committee (through its Student Recruitment Committee with a membership which includes admissions and widening participation expertise as well as Students' Union representation) requires each of the University's faculties to submit, and report against, an annual action plan, containing detailed actions supporting delivery of the access agreement. Evaluation of student success and progression activity is reported to the University's Student Experience Committee, with student representatives on the committee playing an active role in the assessment of such interventions.

- 14.3 Operational responsibility for delivery and monitoring rests with the UK Student Recruitment team, reporting to the Director of External Relations. This team conducts a detailed annual review of progress against access agreement commitments, reporting key conclusions, achievements or concerns to the Student Recruitment Committee, which is accountable to Education Committee for overseeing compliance and monitoring progress against OFFA-related targets.
- 14.4 Strategy development is routinely informed by research commissioned from the University's Widening Participation Research Cluster. We have recently changed the way in which we commission research to ensure that it is agile, reports quickly and allows us to adapt policy in the light of changed priorities. For example, research projects will report in summer 2017 on their findings on the BME attainment gap and how students with sustained mental health difficulties can be best supported. These findings will be used to influence policy and practice in 2017-18 and beyond.
- 14.5 Recent Research Cluster projects include an analysis of the impact of the University's student finance package on our ability to attract and retain a diverse student community. This research informed the University's decision to strategically rebalance funds away from bursaries and towards outreach<sup>19</sup>.
- 14.6 We continue to benefit from the investment into six-large scale research projects funded in 2012. The studies conducted by leading academic researchers into: the efficacy of our widening participation progress measures; the impact of prior educational attainment and other relevant student background factors on the progress and retention of disadvantaged students at the University; the role which self-identification and aspiration play in the university application decision-making process; fostering a culture of belonging amongst widening participation students; overcoming mathematical barriers to participation in higher education and removing barriers to higher education and all influenced institutional policy and practised and were showcased at a national seminar in 2016.
- 14.7 The University is committed to enhancing progression opportunities for students from underrepresented groups. In 2015 we commissioned the Widening Participation Research Cluster to explore the inter-relationships between the individual characteristics of University of Bristol undergraduates and their post-graduation destinations after six months, as revealed by the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey, in order to inform policy in this area.
- 14.8 The study<sup>20</sup> compared the outcomes of 'widening participation' and 'non widening participation' students. The results proved interesting, with clear relationships emerging between the two datasets. The study confirmed that 'widening participation' students are disproportionately associated with certain post-graduation outcomes. They are less likely to undertake further full-time study or work in 'graduate' jobs, more likely to work in the public sector, to earn lower salaries, less dependent on their social networks in finding work and in financing further study, and more likely to work and study in locations familiar to them.
- 14.9 Recommendations from the report included: the need to expand internship opportunities for students from under-represented groups; enhance information, advice and guidance for such students from the Careers and Employability Service; increase the proportion of the 'disadvantaged' cohort progressing to postgraduate degree level; and strengthen the role of academic departments in supporting their

<sup>19</sup> Davies, S, Hayes, D and Collard, S (2014) 'Should expenditure be switched from bursaries to outreach? A comparative evaluation of the effects on Widening Participation of the Access to Bristol and Sutton Trust schemes'.

<sup>20</sup> Hoare, A (2016) 'What happens after graduation? : A first analysis of the short-term post-graduation experiences of one cohort of the University's widening participation students'.

students' career progression. The costs of such activities have been included within the student progression expenditure.

- 14.10 We recognise that robust monitoring and evaluation help to prioritise the delivery of programmes and activities that have the greatest impact. Evaluation is embedded in all of our plans and we analyse the efficacy of our outreach and student success interventions throughout the year.
- 14.11 Analysis of the impact of the University's outreach work indicates that those projects with the greatest success rates are long term interventions. This has influenced the overall focus of our outreach efforts. For example, the Access to Bristol and Pathways to Law schemes are all sustained programmes, run over a series of weeks, months and years and bring participants into contact with current students, academic staff and specialist mentors.
- 14.12 For the September 2016 intake we received 314 applications from Access to Bristol and Pathways to Law participants (against a progress measure of 166) and 79 per cent of these students were made an offer. This delivered an intake of 64 students in 2016 (against a progress measure of 43). It should be noted that the conversion rate for Access to Bristol and Pathways to Law students was significantly higher than the University average (20 per cent against 13 per cent respectively). It was disappointing that the number of applications from Access to Bristol and Pathways to Law students fell from 2015 and whilst we conducted a number of focus groups and evaluation questionnaires to determine the reason for this, the findings proved inconclusive. We are reassured to note that applications for 2017 intake have increased to a higher level than in both 2015 and 2016.
- 14.13 The analysis of impact of such interventions demonstrates our commitment to refine all outreach programmes in light of evaluation. As a result of the success of Access to Bristol we have expanded the initiative, extended the satellite programme with IntoUniversity, and implemented a guaranteed offer for those on the scheme. Conversely, the Realising Opportunities scheme and Year 11 Summer School did not show similar levels of success and both have been discontinued and the resource refocused into activities providing stronger outcomes.
- 14.14 We also adapt interventions in response to direct feedback from participants. Evaluation of the Insight Into Bristol programme found that those attending the programme reported that the structure worked well but there was a need for greater diversity in the subject streams available. We will therefore be running 11 subject streams in July 2017, an increase from five in 2016. It is anticipated that this will lead to higher levels of engagement from the participants and greater numbers of applications to the University from this cohort. The nature of the Insight Into Bristol programme has now changed from its inception in 2012. It now resembles a summer school more closely than Access to Bristol. Therefore the applications and intake will be included in the summer school target rather than the Access to Bristol target from 2017-18 onwards.
- 14.15 Specific initiatives are evaluated using a range of quantitative and qualitative measures, a number of which are included in our access agreement. A 'Guide to Evaluation' has been developed to ensure that appropriate evaluation is built in to planning of all activities. An annual evaluation plan is produced to ensure evaluation activities are focused in such a way as to be most effective. Outreach activities are assessed at a number of levels including: monitoring participant data to ensure activities reach target groups; participant feedback following events; pre- and post-event activity questionnaires measuring change in attitudes over time; and longitudinal work investigating outcomes such as participant behaviour. These approaches apply

to both collaborative and university-specific work. Outcomes can result in fine tuning of initiatives to develop and enhance experience for participants, the termination of a project or its development.

- 14.16 Recent evaluation of the Students in Schools programme highlighted challenges in measuring the attainment raising impact of the activity. While qualitative feedback from teachers and participants was extremely positive, the nature of the programme was such that it was difficult to acquire clear evidence of impact in terms of attainment or progression. A questionnaire has recently been sent to teachers asking specific questions about whether attainment has been raised by the scheme. If the results of this are positive the programme will be continued, if we are unable to show that students in schools raises attainment in local schools the programme will be discontinued and replaced with another attainment raising project. In light of this the target included in our resource plan may become redundant. A final decision on the future of the programme will be taken by the end of June 2017.
- 14.17 We adopt a similar approach to evaluation of student success. At a policy level, while our overall track record in student retention is strong, we recognise the attainment gap that currently exists amongst students from BME groups. One project addresses the experience of students from BME backgrounds around three key themes: university culture; aspiration and role models and; teaching and learning practice. The second project focuses on the institutional arrangements that facilitate success for BME students. These projects will both report in summer 2017 and an action plan for this work will be developed based on their findings and recommendations. The University's recently established Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Steering Group, chaired by our Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) will receive the report and ensure it is implemented in order to make progress in narrowing the attainment gap.
- 14.18 As outlined in para 14.17, evaluation of student success and progression activity is essential in order to ensure it remains effective. Evaluation of our peer support programmes has demonstrated the value of this type of activity in building student community, supporting transition and building students' confidence during the early stages of their course. Working as a peer supporter also has significant benefits for students themselves, many of whom report that working in such roles improves their own student experience and helps them to develop employability skills including communication skills and problem solving.
- 14.19 The University will continue to enhance evaluation in 2018-19. We have a formal evaluation plan which is being implemented in all outreach and student support activity. We have made it a requirement of faculties in receipt of Access, Success and Progression funding that they evaluate the activity undertaken effectively to ensure their initiatives are having maximum impact. This includes identifying key indicators of success before funding is allocated, and providing interim and end of year reports.
- 14.20 We continue to measure the impact of our activities by analysing applications, offers, conversion and intake on an annual basis. We contributed to the Sutton Trust's work to implement a single evaluation tool for all Sutton Trust programmes including summer school and the Pathways to Law programme, which was rolled out fully from 2015 onwards.
- 14.21 We have recently become a member of the collaborative Higher Education Access Tracker Service (HEAT) which assists in the targeting, monitoring and evaluation of both our individual and their collaborative outreach activities. HEAT allows us to demonstrate outreach participation in relation to success at key transition point, collectively explore best practice in combining qualitative and quantitative research on

outreach and in the future, facilitate the development of collaborative targets. Membership of the HEAT service will assist the University in fully understanding patterns of participation in outreach and the effectiveness of different types and combinations of outreach, something which is made possible by the collaborative nature of the service. We can use the HEAT database to record outreach activity and see where individuals have engaged in activities with more than one HEAT university. Collectively this allows the central HEAT service to analyse the timing and combinations of activities that show most impact on enrolment in higher education.

- 14.22 It can take some time for data about young participants in outreach to mature to the point of understanding their patterns of enrolment in higher education as well as their retention and success rates. In the meantime the HEAT service has developed a model of matching a number of different administrative datasets to the HEAT database which will afford us with a better understanding of the relationship between outreach and key educational outcomes at both pre and post-16, before any enrolment takes place. The collective size and diversity of the database will mean this relationship can be explored against multiple participant characteristics, contributing to both the University's and the sector's understanding of outcomes for different under-represented groups and recognising that widening participation students are not a homogenous group.
- 14.23 When the HEAT data has matured, it will allow the University to understand the relationship between outreach participation and HE enrolment, retention and success. We will be able to see if and when its outreach participants enrol in higher education. Crucially this data will show enrolment not only to the University of Bristol but to all other HEIs. This will allow us to demonstrate our contribution to the sector as a whole. We will also be able to build a picture of the retention and degree classification of its outreach participants, as well as seeing destination and postgraduate enrolment data.

## **15. Equality and diversity**

- 15.1 The University of Bristol has a long-standing strong commitment to advancing equality and representation of disadvantaged groups. Our equality objectives align with the objectives and outcomes set out in our access agreement. Equality and diversity considerations are integrated into all relevant decision-making processes and into the development of strategy and policy across the institution. Equality analysis must be undertaken on all policies and activities and committee cover sheets require reference as to how equality related issues and associated data have been taken into account. We have introduced a basket of measures relating to widening participation within the University's institutional strategic key performance indicators and report on progress against them (refining them in line with current priorities) on an annual basis.
- 15.2 Our quality assurance framework and programme review processes include reporting and analysis of student progress and attainment and cover the following characteristics: gender/sex; age; disability; and ethnicity. At the start of the 2014-15 academic year, we began collecting additional information from students as part of online registration. Caring responsibilities, gender identity, sexual orientation and religion or belief are the areas now included.
- 15.3 In 2016 we developed a tool to provide non-data specialists the ability to interrogate student performance, outcomes and progression by the widest range of student characteristics at institutional, faculty, school or programme level. By comparing students with historical trends, it has enabled a more sophisticated approach to monitoring our students' attainment and progression, including identifying those who are at risk of withdrawal or are likely to achieve a lower outcome than their peers. It also allows us to consider interventions based solidly on evidence and monitor the impact of initiatives.

- 15.4 The University's Education Committee has, for the last number of years, received an extensive equalities data report which is complemented by an annual report from Research Degrees Examination Board. The expanded dataset has allowed deeper review of specific aspects of this and in 2016 the Committee considered non-continuation by a range of student characteristics; and BME attainment. This has led to the University setting up a task and finish group to consider this further focussed specifically on mature students and BME attainment. The latter has led to the University funding research in partnership with the Students' Union in order to gain qualitative information about BME student experience and thus better target interventions.
- 15.5 Equality considerations have been embedded into the design of our University Strategy and of this access agreement. Equality analysis has been a part of the policy development process and will inform implementation. We undertake a detailed annual review of progress against all widening participation progress measures at university, faculty and programme level. Our analysis is used to help us identify groups that are particularly under-represented and to develop appropriate targeted actions to improve the diversity of our student body.
- 15.6 Monitoring pays particular attention to applications with protected characteristics and we have included progress measures for race, disability and age in our access agreement. We monitor gender and respond to trends in the data (working, for example, to increase participation of female students on some science and engineering programmes and encouraging male students to participate in summer schools) and have due regard to equality duty when selecting students.
- 15.7 Students with protected characteristics will continue to be included in all outreach work funded by the University's 2018-19 access agreement. 22 mature students and 159 students from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds completed the Access to Bristol programme in 2015-16 and we will work hard to ensure we continue to reach these important target groups. In order to meet the needs of prospective students with disabilities, we will ensure that all outreach activities are inclusive and accessible, making relevant adaptations as appropriate.
- 15.8 We are determined to make further progress in this area and, as a subscriber, deploy the resources received from the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) focused on addressing under-representation, progression and success of students to assist meeting targets outlined in the agreement. Many of the areas for consideration set out in ECU's SWAN and Race Equality Charters are already being undertaken, including examining the data and causes of differing participation and attainment of students by gender and race. Utilising benchmarking data provided by ECU, we align the work undertaken at the University with national challenges and priorities.
- 15.9 In recognition of the synergy between our diversity and inclusion ambitions as they relate to our staff and students we have established an Equality Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group to offer a strategically focused approach to these areas, identifying and implementing key mission critical activity that will influence demonstrable change and challenge accepted norms. Working in partnership with Bristol Students' Union, we aim to be creative in our thinking and bold in our recommendations, going beyond risk-based compliance to an approach that ensures the richness and diversity of society are reflected and celebrated in our staff and student experience. We have invested significantly in unconscious bias training, requiring all those involved in the development and delivery of recruitment and admissions processes and practices to undertake training. In order to respond to interest within the University, the invitation to take part in the workshop has also been extended to all staff. This is evidence of

both our commitment to this area and the appetite of colleagues to develop their understanding of such bias and influence future behaviour.

- 15.10 The approaches and interventions outlined in this access agreement positively impact upon equality and diversity within the University in a number of ways. We are committed to taking a whole institution approach to the issue as we know that our widening participation and equality and diversity efforts are likely to focus on the same groups of students who share a protected characteristic that is underrepresented. Understanding where this crossover exists and coordinating work that seeks to reach and support these groups will increase the impact of resources used. Critically, it will also ensure a smoother path for students so that they are supported to achieve the best possible outcomes and have a positive experience whilst at the University.
- 15.11 We are committed to providing a positive experience for all students, where individuals are treated with courtesy and consideration and where difference is valued and diversity respected. We expect the highest standards from our students and are resolutely committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation. We publish Student Disciplinary Regulations and Conduct Procedures for members of staff. We have signed up to the city of Bristol's Zero Tolerance pledge against gender-based violence and abuse, progressing activity as part of a multi-agency approach through our involvement with the Bristol Forum Against Sexual Violence and Harassment.
- 15.12 In order to ensure that students with particular protected characteristics are supported, we implement (and publish) a range of policies including fitness to study<sup>21</sup>. We are working in collaboration with Bristol SU to implement a Trans Experience Work-plan to better support trans students during their time at Bristol and recently reviewed and updated our guidance for staff on supporting trans students<sup>22</sup>.
- 15.13 When particular issues are raised, we take action. We have recently established a 'Task Force on Race' in response to recent incidents of racism on campus. The task force aims to inform our thinking and identify extra measures we can take to promote an open and inclusive culture for all staff and students within our community. We will bring together relevant stakeholders (including the Mayor of Bristol and representatives from Stand Against Racism and Inequality) to: review existing policy, practice and research around prevention in all its forms; review models of good practice across and beyond the higher education sector; develop principle and recommendations that will identify how we can support cultural change and demonstrate commitment to such change.

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

- 16.1 The University understands the importance of providing clear, accurate and up to date information to all prospective applicants. Such detail is particularly important to those students from under-represented groups who may be more debt averse than those from 'traditional' backgrounds.
- 16.2 Details of tuition fee levels and of the financial support available to students will be routinely published in our prospectus and on our website.
- 16.3 Our Student Funding website includes information to enable students to work out the likely costs of studying at Bristol and to identify the various sources of funding

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/equalityanddiversity/act/protected/disability/fitnessstostudy/fitnessstostudypolicy.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/equalityanddiversity/act/protected/genderreassign/supportingtransstudents.pdf>

(including both government and University of Bristol support) which they might be able to draw on to support themselves during their studies.

- 16.4 Information on tuition fees and financial support available to students will also be made available, in a timely way, to UCAS and to the SLC, as they reasonably require, populating their applicant-facing web services.
- 16.5 The University will also communicate information relating to student finance in the following ways; through the provision of Key Information Sets (KIS), student funding presentations in targeted aspiring state schools and colleges, pre application open days, recruitment events, widening participation interventions and all offer holder events.
- 16.6 The University is cognisant of having entered a period of unprecedented qualification reform within the United Kingdom, which will continue into 2020. The reform covers GCSEs and a range of post-16 options, including vocational qualifications, apprenticeships, AS and A levels as well as regional differences across the UK, with qualifications in Wales and Northern Ireland diverging further from those in England. We know that these changes will take place at different times depending on the region within the UK, the type of qualification and also the subject area. These complexities have the potential to cause confusion for applicants, their influencers as well as for University Admissions staff. The number of changes also pose a threat to the perception of fair and transparent recruitment, selection and admissions to the sector.
- 16.7 The University of Bristol will ensure throughout this time of qualification reform, noting in particular of the increasing take up of vocational qualifications and lesser take up of A-Levels, that admissions policies remain fair, transparent with clear provision of information to potential applicants and their influences in print, web and at open days.

## **17. Consulting with students**

- 17.1 The role of our Students' Union, key representative sabbatical officers and full time members of staff, has been critical to the development of this access agreement. Monthly meetings have taken place with the Students' Union's Equality, Liberation and Access Officer, Post Graduate Education Officer and Head of Student Engagement to plan and develop the submission, ensuring they contributed to the strategic direction of the agreement.
- 17.2 All sabbatical officers were invited to submit suggestions for allocation of access, student success and progression funding to Student Recruitment Committee and Student Experience Committee. The Equality, Liberation and Access Officer is a member of both groups and, as such, played a key role in making the final decisions as to areas of spend. A meeting was held with all sabbatical officers to discuss the content of the access agreement, to ensure their views have been accurately reflected and their feedback included.
- 17.3 Many of the strategic themes included in this document (specifically in relation to: the BME attainment gap; the impact of enduring mental health issues; the importance of a diverse and representative curricula; the importance of diversity in our residences; and the need to accommodation bursaries) have been championed by our student body through the University's new strategy development process and thus included in the agreement. We will continue to work with our students to implement the commitments outlined in the document.

## **18. Conclusion**

- 18.1 This access agreement outlines our strategic priorities for 2018-19. It takes a whole institution approach, covers the student life cycle, reflects on those interventions with greatest impact, explores the strategic rebalancing of spend to support access, student success and progression and demonstrates our commitment to long term outreach, articulating University's role in raising attainment in schools and colleges for those from disadvantaged groups. We have included an assessment of our current performance against targets and articulate our planned response to the challenges faced. We demonstrate our collaborative work with partners within and outside the higher education sector and highlight the provision of support for mature and part-time students, students with disabilities and BME students. We reaffirm our commitment to working with our students to develop and deliver our work to diversify the undergraduate student body and are mindful of the very close links with institutional equality and diversity efforts.
- 18.2 It is hoped that this Agreement demonstrates the University's determination to recruit the most able students from the most diverse backgrounds and reinforces our long-term commitment to widening participation and student success.