

## 2019-20 access and participation plan monitoring

### Provider impact report

This impact report summarises the progress made by The Royal Agricultural University against targets, objectives and written commitments set out in its 2019-20 access and participation plan. This document is a summary of information submitted by the provider to the OfS. This document is a self-report by the provider only and does not indicate any OfS assessment of compliance.

#### 1. Ambition and strategy

The Royal Agricultural University's ambition and strategy as detailed in the 2019-20 access and participation plan:

The overall ambition and strategy as written in our 2019-20 access and participation plan is broken down into four areas, which are each summarised below.

##### a) Building on Success

A new University strategy has been recently drafted which sets out our ambitions for a successful and thriving higher education institution which puts students at the heart of all that we do. This strategy been widely consulted on with staff and the involvement of student representatives. Our vision is to become the leading specialist University providing a fresh perspective for the land agri-food and rural enterprise sectors. The cornerstones of our strategy (strategic goals) are:

- To grow our student community by providing an outstanding student experience and excellent employment outcomes.
- Strategic and sustainable partnership working.
- To establish a Knowledge Hub.
- To become a sustainable, efficient, organisation.

The University, under new leadership, has now embarked on a systematic review of its whole undergraduate portfolio, placing the student experience at the heart of the University's mission. Evidence to support this plan can be drawn from the establishment of the new Governors' Quality and Standards Committee and recent academic appointments focused on improving the student experience. The overall position is that the RAU is on a strongly upward trajectory to realise its ambitions for providing a rich and stimulating learning environment for students in which they thrive, succeed and progress.

RAU has an excellent record in supporting students with disabilities and forms of specific learning difficulties. Student success and progression at RAU are important strengths, but we urgently need to widen the participation of students from diverse backgrounds at the University and this is key to ensuring that we can contribute to social mobility and ensure that all individuals who have the ability to benefit from an HE experience are able to do so. Just as we have set ourselves robust strategic ambitions for building on our successes we have also developed significant plans for addressing our biggest challenge: creating a diverse and representative student undergraduate body.

##### b) Widening Access to RAU

We recognise that the undergraduate student body is not representative of the diverse communities within society as a whole and that we need to make significant progress to reach out to students from different backgrounds in order to inform them about opportunities at RAU,

encourage them to experience our learning environment and join us for their studies.

Mechanisms for us to do this are summarised below.

- Build on existing school partnership networks to establish robust aspiration-raising and progression arrangements for students.
- Working with Colleges of Further Education to take forward further collaborative delivery of RAU awards focussed in areas with high numbers of students from disadvantaged or underrepresented backgrounds.
- Increasing levels of engagement with our two National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) Consortia, 'Study Higher' and 'GROWS' and establishing strong working relationships with the partnership schools.
- Work in collaboration with nineteen other universities to fund, maintain, develop and promote the free to use, careers and progression planning websites Lifepilot and Careerpilot.
- RAU's work with schools and colleges will be evaluated to ascertain the impact of the activities delivered to students.
- Helping students from disadvantaged backgrounds to think positively about higher education and to have the confidence and self-belief to choose the option of going to university.
- Work with students in target schools from early on in their secondary education experience and engage with learners in primary education.
- Targeted aspiration raising activities within defined schools and colleges, including those that are key 'feeders' of students to RAU.
- Increase public awareness and our presence in state schools in order to increase awareness of the institution and its undergraduate offer.
- Targeting schools and colleges on the basis of the potential for students to progress onto higher education taking into account student socio-economic profiles including residence in low participation neighbourhoods.
- Actively support the attainment-raising of target students in schools and colleges through our local and national school/college partnership networks.

From the beginning of academic year 2018-19 RAU exercises full and independent responsibility for relationship management and activity delivery for local schools/colleges and national SFNEA (School Farms Network Education Alliance) schools and colleges. Collaborative delivery of RAU awards, student recruitment and widening participation are being aligned into a coherent overarching strategy.

#### c) Targeting Underrepresented Groups

The stage of the student lifecycle that is most critical for RAU is: Access. The undergraduate student profile is not representative of the wider society and we want to ensure that the learning opportunities at RAU are made available to specific groups that have not historically participated in our provision. These are:

- Students from state schools
- Students from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR quintiles 1 and 2) and white working class males
- Students from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds
- Mature students
- Looked After Children
- Students with disabilities

Monitoring the degree of success in implementing the Access and Participation Plan is key to enabling progress to be made in improving higher levels of access to RAU for targeted cohorts of students. Therefore, statistical monitoring will include data on these areas disaggregated for different student background characteristics.

The RAU has adopted strategies to support inclusivity, equality and diversity which have been developed to promote our commitment to providing an environment where all people are respected and treated fairly regardless of characteristics or distinctions. The Access and Participation Plan interacts with the Inclusivity, Equality and Diversity Policy by providing

initiatives which will positively increase the participation of underrepresented groups in higher education at the RAU. The University uses its best endeavours to:

- Create an inclusive community;
- Provide its students, staff and visitors with a welcoming, secure and supportive environment;
- Implement strategies aimed at promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating discrimination;
- Take the appropriate steps to ensure that all forms of discrimination are addressed positively and constructively.

For 2019-20 RAU will emphasise the evaluation of access and outreach activity and its endeavours to widen participation. It is planned to evaluate using representative categories of intervention rather than attempting to evaluate every incidence of an activity to the same level. This approach has been taken in consideration of resource implications for conducting evaluative research. A combination of stakeholder surveys/focus groups and use of the HEAT online tool will enable us to make informed judgements about the effectiveness of access and outreach activities in relation to the key evaluation elements: a) the motivational dimension b) the behavioural dimension c) whether students act on plans to progress onto further and higher education.

#### d) Student Consultation on Access and Participation Plan

University strategies for student support, academic development and widening participation have progressed through the various planning and approval committees which have involved student representation, for example Governing Council and Academic Board. In addition, specific consultations have taken place with RAU students concerning this Access and Participation Plan. The assessment of RAU's current performance in relation to access, success and progression has been shared with students at these events and feedback has been obtained. The Students' Union was involved in helping set up the consultation and the large cohort of RAU student ambassadors were also invited to hear about the plan and our targets moving forward.

We plan to involve students in the implementation and monitoring of this plan in various ways including monitoring progress through the RAU committee structure, student ambassador involvement with evaluation of widening access measures and consultative updates with students to discuss progress and share perceptions and experiences of the implementation process. The Students' Union is an important partner of the RAU and we will work closely with them to monitor the success of the implementation of our Access and Participation Plan.

## 2. Self-assessment of targets

The tables that follow provide a self-assessment by The Royal Agricultural University of progress against the targets approved in its 2019-20 access and participation plan.

Please note the tables contain only a summary of target milestones approved in 2019-20 access and participation plans. Full information can be found in **Table 8a – statistical targets and milestones** and **Table 8b – Other milestones and targets** of The Royal Agricultural University's 2019-20 [access and participation plan](#).

Any optional commentary provided against the targets is given in [Annex B](#).

### Statistical targets and milestones

Reference Number (lifecycle stage)	Description	Baseline year	Baseline data	2018-19 milestone	2019-20 milestone	Units of target	Comparison year	Actual performance in comparison year	Target self-assessment
T16a_01 (Access)	Increase percentage of enrolments from state schools.	2013-14	47.6%	55%	57%	Percentage	2019-20	59.8	Expected progress
T16a_02 (Access)	Increase percentage of enrolments from areas where participation in HE is low i.e. POLAR 3 Quintiles 1 and 2.	2014-15	2.5%	8%	10%	Percentage	2019-20	14	Expected progress
T16a_03 (Access)	Increase percentage of enrolments from all low-income backgrounds, i.e. students in receipt of non-repayable support	2013-14	35%	42%	43%	N/A (see description / commentary)	2019-20		Expected progress
T16a_04 (Access)	Percentage with no previous HE & from low participation neighbourhood (POLAR3 Quintiles 1 and 2)	2014-15	3.4%	4.5%	4.5%	Percentage	2019-20	11.2	Expected progress
T16a_05 (Access)	Increase percentage of enrolments from local target areas, approx. 25mile radius	2014-15	11.6%	18%	20%	Percentage	2019-20	25.6	Expected progress
T16a_06 (Access)	Increase number of enrolments from students who are leaving care / in care. Reflects OFFA target priorities, working towards new partnership with local county council and Virtual Schools Network, which may lead to collaborative target in future years.	2014-15	0	2	3	Headcount	2019-20	2	Limited progress
T16a_07 (Student success)	Ensure low level of non-continuation/ completion is maintained, with the increasing number and widening of	2014-15	5.1%	4%	4%	Percentage	2019-20	5.2	Limited progress

	enrolments anticipated in our targets.								
T16a_08 (Access)	Maintain above benchmark position in % of full-time, first degree entrants in receipt of DSA	2014-15	11.4%	12%	12%	Percentage	2019-20	9.5	No progress
T16a_09 (Progression)	Of those respondents employed in the UK who studied full time at the University, % in Professional/Managerial roles or engaged in further study, training or research as defined by the Standard Occupational Classification code (DLHE)	2014-15	80.2%	81.5%	81.5%	Percentage	2017-18	72	Limited progress
T16a_10 (Access)	Support target schools by providing tutoring and/or mentoring activities that expressly seek to raise attainment amongst target pupils. Milestones relate to the min. number of learners tutored/mentored per year on a tutor-mentor programme.	2015-16	0	50	80	Headcount	2019-20	0	No progress

Other milestones and targets

Reference Number (lifecycle stage)	Description	Baseline year	Baseline data	2018-19 milestone	2019-20 milestone	Units of target	Comparison year	Actual performance in comparison year	Target self-assessment
T16b_01 (Access)	Partner in collaborative outreach activity, e.g. NNCO, NNOP, other networks specifically with University of Gloucestershire and others	2015-16	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A (see description / commentary)	2019-20		Expected progress
T16b_02 (Access)	Partnerships with target state schools and colleges, with Partnership Frameworks and Activity Plans in place	2015-16	0	30	33	Other	2019-20	36	Expected progress
T16b_03 (Access)	Relationships with national target state schools and colleges, with min. 2 visits p/a	2011-12	5	30	35	Other	2019-20	44	Expected progress
T16b_04 (Other/Multiple stages)	Relationships with other relevant organisations, e.g. employers, councils, youth services, trusts, community learning programmes/centres, etc.	2015-16	n/a	8	10	Other	2019-20	12	Expected progress
T16b_05 (Access)	Establishment and delivery of extended on-campus activities with overnight accommodation at halls of residence to increase awareness and aspiration to higher education	2011-12	2	100	120	Headcount	2019-20	0	No progress
T16b_06 (Access)	Delivery of a range of targeted outreach activities that apply the 5A framework and are scaffolded across school Years 7 to 13, and for mature learners	2014-15	n/a	10000	12000	Other	2019-20	950	Limited progress
T16b_07 (Access)	Review and formalise contextual admissions process to ensure access and recognition of education disadvantage at the application/ offer stage	2015-16	n/a	Yes	Yes	N/A (see description / commentary)	2019-20		Expected progress

T16b_08 (Student success)	Redevelopment of support service structures and programmes; implementation of strategy for Student Transition, Retention and Experience, embedding targeted support in the curriculum and paying particular attention to teaching and learning.	2013-14	91.8%	97%	97%	Percentage	2019-20	93.5	Limited progress
T16b_09 (Other/Multiple stages)	Review and implement data capture and monitoring system for more robust datasets and to build understanding and an evidence base for future practice.	2014-15	No	Yes	Yes	N/A (see description / commentary)	2019-20		Expected progress
T16b_10 (Other/Multiple stages)	Increase consultations and engagement with students; promotion of student voice in relation to evaluating and designing widening participation practices. Implement mechanisms for this to happen.	2014-15	not available	100	120	Headcount	2019-20	44	Limited progress
T16b_11 (Access)	Increase consultations and engagement with external stakeholders (pupils, teachers, schools, parents, community, etc) in relation to evaluating and designing widening participation practices. Implement mechanisms for this to happen.	2014-15	not available	6	8	Other	2019-20	8	Expected progress
T16b_12 (Other/Multiple stages)	Scope, identify and conduct research to inform practice and contribute to institutional and sector knowledge in the widening participation space	2014-15	0	3	3	Other	2019-20	0	No progress
T16b_13 (Other/Multiple stages)	Embed widening participation across the institution, including framework agreements; activity planning and acquittal mechanisms; and, embedded metrics	2014-15	0	8	8	Other	2019-20	4	Expected progress

T16b_14 (Other/Multiple stages)	Ensure effective coordination and management of the widening participation programme at the strategic level. Includes reporting structures to the highest level; effective deployment of funds; monitoring and achievement of targets and milestones; embedding across the institution and across the student lifecycle in a coherent way; and, ensuring human and system capacities are effective and efficient for purpose.	2014-15	No	Yes	Yes	N/A (see description / commentary)	2019-20	Expected progress
T16b_15 (Access)	to raise the GCSE attainment of a targeted group of students in Local Partnership Schools in maths and English by a single grade achieved through the delivery of maths and English revision sessions and student mentoring in study skills.	2018-19	GCSE grades for defined cohort	Student cohort grades	Increase GCSE attainment by one grade	Other	2019-20	Limited progress



### 3. Investment commitments

#### 3.1. Access and participation investment for the last audited year

Please note that some differences in predicted vs actual spend may be due to reporting differences between academic and financial years.

Financial year	2019-20		
	Predicted spend (£)	Actual spend (£)	Difference (ppt)
Access investment	£387,799.93	£476,000.00	23%
Financial Support	£250,193.50	£178,000.00	-29%

### 4. Action plan

Where progress was less than expected The Royal Agricultural University has made the following commitments to increase the rate of progress against their targets.

Reference Number	Steps that will be taken in the future to make expected progress against target
T16a_06	This remains a key target for the RAU moving forwards and we are committed to supporting the progression of care leavers. This includes building on the work already undertaken in delivering outreach and building relationships with the relevant local authorities, inviting these students onto campus once the pandemic restrictions are lifted. In addition, our current APP describes a series of commitments to support this target that include the collaborative outreach project with the GROWS Outreach Hub and signing the Care Leavers Covenant to commit to providing additional support to care leavers throughout their degree. In an effort to minimise barriers to admissions, as of the 2021 cycle Care Leavers are now guaranteed a conditional offer if they apply to study at the RAU and our intention is to also reduce the offer level for this group from the next cycle.

T16a_07	<p>We will continue to support our students using the range of academic and pastoral support services described in our APP that have proved successful in keeping our non-continuation rates low and significantly better than sector average. This will include the continued development of our disability support, integrated into our Student Support Services, and a more personalised approach to our personal tutoring system.</p> <p>As per our current APP we are working to ensure an inclusive learning environment and implementing a new Teaching and Learning Strategy that builds academic skills into the curriculum, creates a more inclusive assessment framework and develops an integrated approach to work placements, including an optional placement year on all degree programmes with support in place.</p>
T16a_08	<p>We are continuing to welcome high proportions of disabled students to the RAU, particularly students with a specific learning difficulty and we are maintaining our reputation for the strength of our support for disabled students. As part of our newly integrated Support Services team we are working to offer a more individualised approach to supporting disabled students, and we are continuing to more proactively promote DSA and support student applications not just when students arrive at the RAU, but also at the applicant and pre-applicant stage including via open days, email/Unibuddy chats and telephone appointments. As per our current APP, we are proactively working to reduce and ultimately close the gap in attainment for disabled students at the RAU and these measures mean we are already making strong progress.</p>
T16a_09	<p>We will continue to support the progression of our students through delivering our new Teaching and Learning Strategy that embeds employability into the curriculum and takes a more integrated approach to placements. We aim to monitor the effectiveness of placement provision for all students through assessment data, feedback and employment outcomes, aiming to ensure that all students benefit equally no matter the length of placement they choose/are able to take.</p> <p>Recognising that the national surveys may not adequately reflect the realities of outcomes for specialist land-based graduates, we are supplementing this with our own more tailored survey to gain a better understanding of our graduates' decisions and success levels in relation to progression to further study or employment, including self-employment. The first survey is launched in Spring 2021 to graduates from academic year 2019-20.</p>
T16a_10	<p>Our current APP outlines our continued commitment to raising attainment of targeted school/college students through our outreach activity in order to support university progression, for example through subject-enrichment masterclasses and study skills workshops, particularly relating to geography and sciences subjects. Our APP also outlines our plans to introduce a Compact Scheme, providing a structured and progressive programme of HE activities to increase levels of attainment and aspiration with targeted students. Implementation of this new scheme has been delayed due to Covid-19, however if restrictions allow we are aiming to make progress on this through the 2021-22 academic year.</p>
T16b_05	<p>We are continuing to commit to our annual summer school programme providing residential opportunities for targeted WP students. The ambition is to resume this in summer 2021 with a Year 10 Summer School and a Year 12 Summer School if Covid-19 restrictions allow. If this is not possible then we will once again offer an alternative virtual experience, and re-introduce a residential programme as soon as we are able.</p>

T16b_06	<p>Our current APP outlines our continued commitment to developing strategic relationships with schools and colleges and the delivery of targeted outreach activity, including academic outreach, careers support, summer schools, study skills and compact scheme activities. We aim to continue building this through 2021 and 2022 as Covid-19 restrictions allow. This will include using our new satellite site in Swindon as a platform to engage with the more diverse Swindon schools and wider community, including areas with some of the lowest HE progression rates in the country and with significantly below average school attainment.</p>
T16b_08	<p>We will continue to support our students using the range of academic and pastoral support services described in our APP that have proved successful in keeping our non-continuation rates low and significantly better than sector average. This will include the continued development of our disability support, integrated into our Student Support Services, and a more personalised approach to our personal tutoring system.</p> <p>As per our current APP we are working to ensure an inclusive learning environment and implementing a new Teaching and Learning Strategy that builds academic skills into the curriculum, creates a more inclusive assessment framework and develops an integrated approach to work placements, including an optional placement year on all degree programmes with support in place.</p>
T16b_10	<p>In addition to the continued engagement with our Student Ambassadors and Students' Union, we will once again implement the Access and Participation Student Panel from Spring 2021. This will be done with support from the Students' Union and will allow us to further consult with students on our widening participation practices. The SU representation in our monthly Access and Participation Delivery Group and quarterly Access and Participation Strategic Monitoring Group will provide a further mechanism for ideas from these consultations to be taken forwards.</p>
T16b_12	<p>Our current APP clearly outlines our future plans and commitments in relation to the evaluation of widening participation activity, including embedding evaluation in programme design and delivery for high intensive programmes, and use of the HEAT database. This includes making use of the knowledge gained through attendance at an Evaluating Outreach training course in 2020 and seeking support from the OfS Evaluation Self-Assessment Tool. Oversight of our evaluation work will come from the monthly meetings of the Access and Participation Delivery Group and the quarterly meetings of the Access and Participation Strategic Monitoring Group.</p>
T16b_15	<p>Our current APP outlines our continued commitment to raising attainment of targeted school/college students through our outreach activity in order to support university progression, for example through subject-enrichment masterclasses and study skills workshops, particularly relating to geography and sciences subjects. Our APP also outlines our plans to introduce a Compact Scheme, providing a structured and progressive programme of HE activities to increase levels of attainment and aspiration with targeted students. Implementation of this new scheme has been delayed due to Covid-19, however if restrictions allow we are aiming to make progress on this through the 2021-22 academic year.</p>

## 5. Confirmation

The Royal Agricultural University confirms that:

Student engagement	
Have you worked with your students to help them complete the access and participation plan monitoring student submission?	
Yes	
Have you engaged with your student body in the design, evaluation, and monitoring of the plan?	
Yes	
Verification and sign off	
The Royal Agricultural University has confirmed that the information included in this impact report is accurate, that it has been compiled in line with OfS guidance, and that it is being submitted on behalf of the governing body of the provider.	
Yes	
Accountable officer sign off	
Name	Professor Joanna Price
Position	Vice-Chancellor & Accountable Officer

## Annex A: Commentary on progress against targets

The Royal Agricultural University's commentary where progress against targets was less than expected.

<b>Target reference number: T16a_06</b>
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
Yes, our plan recognises that this is not a 'quick fix' and outlines a commitment to developing a progressive awareness raising programme for local Looked After Children, supported by establishing links with Gloucestershire Council and local virtual schools. We have proactively reached out to these organisations and are steadily building strong relationships and increasing the delivery of outreach activity each year. We have continued to offer financial support to care leavers via our RAU Support Bursary. Our actual performance for 2019-20 is just 1 student below our milestone and progress is being made.
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
Recognising the challenges of engaging with care leavers and their supportive organisations, we have proactively encouraged a collaborative outreach effort with our local Outreach Hub partners. Through GROWS we are continuing to build a relationship with the relevant authorities and reach more students with our activities. The ongoing pandemic has impacted progress on this but we have been pleased to offer activities virtually. To further our understanding and encourage collaboration we have also joined the SouthWest Care Leaver Consortium and become members of NNECL.

<b>Target reference number: T16a_07</b>
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
Yes, we have met the commitments in our plan to support students through a range of personalised student support services, high quality teaching, personal tutors, study skills support and targeted financial support. Our actual performance for 2019-20 is just 1.2 percentage points (equivalent to 2 students) behind milestone, and is subject to the small natural fluctuations that have a bigger impact in percentage terms due to the small numbers involved. In an environment where non-continuation rates are increasing nationally, we are pleased to maintain a low-level of non-continuation that is significantly better than sector average despite steady increases in our intake for underrepresented groups.
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
We are continuing to develop our academic offering, and since 2019 have offered an Integrated Foundation Year with all of our degree programmes. We have proactively supported students throughout the ongoing pandemic in order to mitigate the impact on their studies as much as possible. This has included student representation in our Covid-19 operational and response groups, maintaining our provision of financial support, maintaining our welfare, study and disability support virtually with additional signposting in place, additional virtual wellbeing and social activities, and a no detriment academic policy in place in 2019-20. This support is further described in section 4 of the monitoring return provider submission.

<b>Target reference number: T16a_08</b>
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
Yes, we have continued to offer support to our disabled students as outlined in our plan, including a Senior Disability Officer who provides advice on applying for DSA. Although our latest data indicates a drop in % of students receiving DSA, in 2019-20 we continued to welcome high levels of disabled students significantly above the sector average (27% of total student population, maintaining a similar level as to the previous 2 years). Our DSA data is as recorded at the start of the academic year, however due to a change of staffing in the Disability Officer role at the beginning of 2019-20 we know that a significant number of students were supported with their DSA application a little later in the year, and so not picked up in this data.
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
A change in the staffing of the Disability Officer role during 2019-20 coincides with the integration of our disability support into our wider Student Support Services, offering a more holistic approach to supporting our students. This includes more proactively raising the awareness of DSA options and supporting students with their applications, not just when students arrive at the RAU but now also at the applicant and pre-applicant stage. Since the start of the pandemic in March 2020 we have noted external delays in the processing of DSA applications, but this is now improving and by providing support earlier in the student lifecycle in this way, the impact has been mitigated. This sustained support has been greatly welcomed and has ensured our students are still applying for DSA, even if not all represented in this data for 2019-20.

<b>Target reference number: T16a_09</b>
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
Yes, we have continued to support students to progress into employment or further study as outlined in our plan, including through the provision of work placements, professional skills training, an award-winning Enterprise programme and a Careers Service that offers employer liaison, careers fairs, an active jobs portal, and career IAG sessions and consultations. The latest reported performance in 2017-18 appears below milestone, however it is important to note that this is based on the Graduate Outcomes survey whereas the milestones are based on DLHE data, and so are not necessarily comparable measures. We also know the GO has seen a lower response rate than DLHE nationally, although RAU's response rate of 57% is significantly above the national figure of 47%. We have reported this target as limited progress as our 2017-18 performance of 72% has improved on the figure of 71% for 2014-15 (baseline year) that is provided in the OfS access and participation data dashboard, which we believe to be more comparable data and suggests that limited progress has been made on this measure.
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
From 2019-20 we have begun implementing a new Teaching and Learning Strategy which supports student progression by embedding employability into the curriculum and taking a

more integrated approach to placements. From 2019 placement opportunities have been introduced on all courses, ranging from 6 weeks to an optional placement year. The duration of the placement is flexible to allow all students to participate irrespective of their background or other commitments, and greater liaison is being offered with providers to assist in securing appropriate placements for targeted students who require support.

**Target reference number: T16a\_10**

How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?

This target was introduced by the external agency that was given responsibility for widening participation work for the RAU prior to 2018. The transition of this responsibility back to the RAU from 2018-19 that is described in the plan, together with the writing of a new APP through that same year that is aligned to the new approach of the OfS, has allowed us to build a whole-institution approach to widening participation. As part of this we have not engaged students in a specific tutor-mentor programme in this way in 2019-20. However, we have maintained our committed investment in outreach activity and the overall commitment in our plan to support target schools to raise the attainment of their students. Through 2019-20 this has included delivery of 10 subject-specific enrichment sessions with schools/colleges prior to the Covid-19 lockdown, and a review of outreach offering to schools to include specific workshops on developing students' study skills, communication skills and confidence, all with the aim of raising attainment.

Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?

The delivery of our outreach offering to schools, including subject-specific enrichment and attainment raising workshops, was not possible during the second half of 2019-20 due to the Covid-19 lockdown. Given the school calendar, we would normally expect the latter months of the academic year to be the busiest for this activity. Instead, we proactively engaged with schools through this time to offer support in whatever way would work for them, although understandably the focus of most schools was how to provide the core curriculum and basic support to vulnerable students. We offered many of our activities virtually, including the successful Discover RAU Live virtual summer school. Over the course of a week, Discover RAU Live offered a series of live virtual subject-specific taster sessions and engaged 49 students, of which 83% met at least one WP criteria from our APP target groups.

**Target reference number: T16b\_05**

How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?

We had planned to deliver two summer schools in the Spring/Summer of 2019-20 that provide the described residential activities for students. These included one event for year 10 students and one for year 12 students. Unfortunately these activities could not take place due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated restrictions. Virtual activities were delivered instead, but these were of course non-residential.

Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?

Due to not being able to offer our planned residential summer school programme due to Covid-19 restrictions, instead we offered a virtual summer school called Discover RAU Live in

July 2020. Over the course of a week, Discover RAU Live offered a series of live virtual subject-specific taster sessions and HE awareness raising activities. A total of 49 students engaged in the programme through the week from across year groups 10 to 13, and of these 83% met at least one WP criteria from our APP target groups. In addition to being delivered live, the sessions were streamed to YouTube and collectively gathered a further 325 views within one month of the event.

**Target reference number: T16b\_06**

How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?

This target was introduced by the external agency that was given responsibility for widening participation work for the RAU prior to 2018. The transition of this responsibility back to the RAU from 2018-19 that is described in the plan, together with the writing of a new APP through that same year that is aligned to the new approach of the OfS, has allowed us to build a whole-institution approach to widening participation. As part of this, through 2019-20 we have not offered the specific 5A framework of activities that is described here, and we feel it unrealistic for an institution of our size to engage with as many as 12000 students over one year in a way that we would now consider meaningful. However, we have maintained our committed investment in outreach activity and the overall commitment to deliver targeted outreach activity. Through 2019-20 this has included engagement with approximately 950 students in meaningful outreach activities, not including our attendance at school careers fairs, community shows or GROWS activity. This would have been greater if not for the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, and we feel this is strong progress for an institution of our size.

Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?

The delivery of our outreach offering to schools was not possible during the second half of 2019-20 due to the Covid-19 lockdown. Given the school calendar, we would normally expect the latter months of the academic year to be the busiest for this activity. Instead, we proactively engaged with schools through this time to offer support in whatever way would work for them, although understandably the focus of most schools was how to provide the core curriculum and basic support to vulnerable students. We offered many of our activities virtually, including the successful Discover RAU Live virtual summer school. Over the course of a week, Discover RAU Live offered a series of live virtual subject-specific taster sessions and engaged 49 students, of which 83% met at least one WP criteria from our APP target groups.

**Target reference number: T16b\_08**

How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?

Yes, we have met the commitments in our plan to support the continuation of our students through a range of personalised student support services, high quality teaching, personal tutors, study skills support and targeted financial support. Our actual performance for 2019-20 is just 3.5 percentage points (equivalent to 9 students) behind milestone, and is subject to the small natural fluctuations that have a bigger impact in percentage terms due to the small numbers involved. In an environment where non-continuation rates are increasing nationally,



we are pleased to maintain a low-level of non-continuation that is significantly better than sector average despite steady increases in our intake for underrepresented groups.

Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?

We are continuing to develop our academic offering, and since 2019 have offered an Integrated Foundation Year with all of our degree programmes.  
We have proactively supported students throughout the ongoing pandemic in order to mitigate the impact on their studies as much as possible. This has included student representation in our Covid-19 operational and response groups, maintaining our provision of financial support, maintaining our welfare, study and disability support virtually with additional signposting in place, additional virtual wellbeing and social activities, and a no detriment academic policy in place in 2019-20. This support is further described in section 4 of the monitoring return provider submission.

#### Target reference number: T16b\_10

How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?

Yes, we have consulted with our current students as per the commitments in our plan. This includes actively engaging and consulting with our network of student ambassadors throughout the year, including specifically gathering their input into WP practices as part of their annual training programme. We have actively engaged with the RAU Students' Union on this matter and the SU President, who represents and regularly liaises with the full study body, and actively sits on our monthly Access and Participation Delivery Group, as well as our quarterly Access and Participation Strategic Monitoring Group. Although the actual performance is below milestone, we feel this is a significant number of engagements for a small provider and have focussed on ensuring these are of good quality.

Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?

We had set up a formal Access and Participation Student Panel in 2018-19 to further consult on this matter and gather feedback on EDI issues relating to student experience and widening access, success and progression for underrepresented groups. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the pressures on students, this group did not meet in 2019-20. Instead, through this time we ensured student representation at our Covid-19 response and operational groups to provide feedback and raise any issues related to student experience and wellbeing, ensuring all students were supported through the pandemic.

#### Target reference number: T16b\_12

How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?

We continue to recognise the importance of evaluating our activities and then sharing and acting on the findings where relevant. The full research projects described in this target would be completed for more intensive outreach programmes such as summer schools and our planned Compact Scheme. These were unfortunately not able to run or were delayed in 2019-20 due to the Covid-19 restrictions. Evaluation was undertaken for the alternative virtual summer school and findings shared internally, however due to the online delivery the opportunity for evaluation was limited and students did not engage in this aspect. We have

learned from this and are prepared to enhance our evaluation if required to deliver a virtual summer school in future years.
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
In order to build our institutional knowledge in undertaking such research, we have funded participation of our WP Manager in an intensive Evaluating Outreach training course through 2019-20. This will support the undertaking of such research in future years.

<b>Target reference number: T16b_15</b>
How have you met the commitments in your plan related to this target?
This target was introduced by the external agency that was given responsibility for widening participation work for the RAU prior to 2018. The transition of this responsibility back to the RAU from 2018-19 that is described in the plan, together with the writing of a new APP through that same year that is aligned to the new approach of the OfS, has allowed us to build a whole-institution approach to widening participation. As part of this we have not engaged students in GCSE Maths and English revision sessions in this way in 2019-20. However, we have maintained our committed investment in outreach activity and the overall commitment in our plan to support target schools to raise the attainment of their students. Through 2019-20 this has included delivery of 10 subject-specific enrichment sessions with schools/colleges prior to the Covid-19 lockdown, and a review of outreach offering to schools to include specific workshops on developing students' study skills, communication skills and confidence, all with the aim of raising attainment.
Have you taken any additional steps other than that detailed in the plan to reach the selected milestone?
The delivery of our outreach offering to schools, including subject-specific enrichment and attainment raising workshops, was not possible during the second half of 2019-20 due to the Covid-19 lockdown. Given the school calendar, we would normally expect the latter months of the academic year to be the busiest for this activity. Instead, we proactively engaged with schools through this time to offer support in whatever way would work for them, although understandably the focus of most schools was how to provide the core curriculum and basic support to vulnerable students. We offered many of our activities virtually, including the successful Discover RAU Live virtual summer school. Over the course of a week, Discover RAU Live offered a series of live virtual subject-specific taster sessions and engaged 49 students, of which 83% met at least one WP criteria from our APP target groups.

## Annex B: Optional commentary on targets

The Royal Agricultural University's commentary on any of the targets listed in [Section 2](#).

Reference Number	Optional commentary
T16a_01	
T16a_02	
T16a_03	This was discontinued in 2016-17 on advice from OFFA (see column P), as noted in each Access Agreement since 2016-17 including the 2019-20 APP resource plan. The target was based on data from HESA T1a, however the provision of this data was discontinued by HESA in 2016. As such, this data has not been reported in monitoring returns since 2016 and therefore we are also not able to report it in this 2019-20 return.
T16a_04	
T16a_05	
T16a_06	
T16a_07	
T16a_08	
T16a_09	
T16a_10	
T16b_01	
T16b_02	
T16b_03	
T16b_04	
T16b_05	
T16b_06	
T16b_07	
T16b_08	
T16b_09	
T16b_10	
T16b_11	
T16b_12	

T16b_13	Due to internal academic restructuring, the institution now has 4 academic Schools instead of 8. All have plans and metrics in place, and so we have assessed this to be expected progress.
T16b_14	
T16b_15	