

Royal Agricultural University

Access Agreement 2015 -16

Introduction

This document sets out the proposed arrangements for Access in 2015 – 16. In considering these arrangements the University constantly strives to retain its high quality provision for all students whilst seeking to provide specific and additional support and guidance to those groups falling within the Access remit.

The small and specialist nature of the University, together with its rural location and land based curriculum continue to provide the University with some specific challenges regarding many outreach activities, however the University continues to work hard to overcome these challenges in order to retain a diverse and engaged student body across the full spectrum of student groups.

1 Fees

Charges for 2015-16

The University proposes to continue to charge the maximum additional tuition fee of £9,000 for all full time undergraduate courses taught on campus. The University also validates RAU awards at Foundation Degree and Top-up Degree level through Further Education partners.

Part time students will continue to pay per module (typically there are 8 modules per academic year) plus 10%. This equates to a maximum of 4 modules and £4950 per annum.

We anticipate approximately 870 full-time undergraduate students (including foundation) will be at the University under the new fee regime by 2015. We also expect approximately 4 new regime part time students.

Planned rises in fees for 2016 -17

The University will seek to apply annual increases to fees in line with the amount set by the Government.

2 Expenditure

Estimated Spending for 2015

Estimated spending will be in the region of approximately £749,000 in 2015. Approximately £230,000 of the total will be spent on outreach activities and £50,000 on retention and progression activities.

In 2015 approximately 30% of the additional fee income will continue to be spent on financial support (17%), outreach (11%) and retention (2%).

The University aims to maintain this proportion at approximately 30% in future years, however taking into account recent guidance on the efficacy of financial support, we are reducing the expenditure on financial support whilst increasing the outreach expenditure proportionately by at least 50% across the five year period.

Assessment of our Access and Retention record

The University continues to provide a range of outreach activities across a changing landscape of provision and resource. We continue to perform well against our HESA milestones and targets however this is not always reflected in the statistics due to the small numbers and specialist nature of the University.

Our percentage of recruitment from state schools increased to 56% in the year 2012-13 and we aim to keep increasing this figure for subsequent years. Our post-Aim Higher outreach activities have focussed on building up new contacts and forming good working relationships with our target schools and colleges within our locality. An area where we traditionally recruit well from is further education colleges as evidenced by the fact that over 40% of our new entrants each year are accepted with vocational qualifications.

We continue to work hard to recruit from low participation neighbourhoods and had a small increase in numbers this year to 3.8% but this remains an area where progress is slow due to our remote location and land based subjects. As ever with a relatively small institution such as the RAU quoted changes in percentages should be viewed with caution because a very small shift of one or two students in either direction can appear to be a much larger shift in percentage terms in the HESA tables. A comparison of students receiving support indicates that we are maintaining and slowly increasing the number of students coming from lower income families.

96% of our graduates in 2013 – 14 were in employment or full time study 6 months after graduating making the RAU still amongst the top in the country for employability.

Although we presently maintain a good rate of retention, the University continues to provide on-going student support and advice and guidance and financial assistance where needed. We have dedicated members of staff to provide general student and disability support as well as access to a professional counselling service if required. We also offer a range of rural skills courses for the students to obtain practical skills and a careers team to help and advise with work placements and job applications.

The split between WP, fair access and retention

The intended balance of expenditure is 28% on Widening Participation and Fair Access and 2% on Retention activities.

The impact of expenditure in each activity area is not necessarily restricted to that particular area. Where possible, the University will apply expenditure which we believe will yield the highest return across all activity areas. Evaluation and monitoring of our provision, performance indicators and external factors will inform us of such expenditure returns. We therefore believe that flexibility in expenditure across areas is crucial and allows us to be responsive.

3 Additional Access measures

Outreach Provision

A local focus for outreach provision will be maintained which recognises research data illustrating that students from areas with low percentage progression to HE are 25 % more likely to study at a local university (HEFCE, 2005). The University is continuing to play a role in the local and regional community, as well as maintaining a national scope under access, as our student base is rich in its local, national and international representation. The University recognises that its specialist provision offers a limited set of opportunities to local students, but that it has a definite role in providing outreach for higher education in its widest context. Therefore in conjunction with local provision, a proportion of funding will be directed to establishing a wider reach for our Access provision. The University recognises national activity as being equally significant as local programmes in improving our performance indicators and returning direct results to the University.

A good range of activities were undertaken by the Outreach department in 2012 -13 they included: parents evenings, road shows, careers fairs, community shows, school visits, Harry Potter days, HE experience days and summer schools and a range of workshops and guidance sessions. By increasing the use of Academic and Student Ambassadors, and further developing partnership agreements the RAU aims to continue to widen the list of activities.

New developments for 2013 – 14 include taster days for younger students in order to recruit them for the summer schools in the following year and new activities such as our 'Horrible Histories' day and a new 'Farm to Fork' day for a range of age groups.

The newly launched RAU Innovation Centre based on the University farm providing a hub for community activities, school engagement, and offering us the chance to

widely promote the importance of stem subjects, how they relate to the land based sector and the wider career opportunities.

We are continuing to build our online presence, and now have a dedicated Teacher Zone as part of the RAU Website, which will be home for our series of dedicated outreach podcasts more to be released over the coming months.

The RAU recognises the value of face to face contact with young people from the target groups both in their school environment and via activities based at the University. The Outreach team, supported by academic staff, including 5 academic ambassadors and over 50 student ambassadors provide a diverse range of activities and engagement to meet the requirements of individual groups.

The RAU continues its engagement with a full range of schools and colleges both nationally and across the local area to deliver a variety of targeted day programmes and activities, as well as the provision of advice and guidance both in the written form and via verbal / face to face delivery. In addition to more pro-active targeted regular engagement, allocation of an Academic Ambassador and two Student Ambassadors per institution for our Partnership Schools and Colleges.

These activities cover Key Stages 2, 3, 4 and 5 and include aspiration raising activities, subject enrichment, community engagement, summer schools, and IAG events, STEM subject events, mentoring, and bespoke careers officer workshops. The RAU is in the process of developing and establishing a new series of progression activities with targeted schools.

A new Collaborative Development Officer is now in post and is working closely with the Outreach team, to facilitate more clearly defined routes from FE into HE.

The university as part of its commitment to supporting and raising the aspirations of Looked After Young People, is working closely with Gloucestershire Virtual Schools and Who Cares Trust to identify and provide appropriate mentoring, guidance and support throughout their applicant and then into the student journey.

Collaboration

The University is committed to increasing our collaborative practices. As such, we have strengthened our existing networks and partnerships and will continue to seek new partnerships and collaboration for mutual benefit.

We have made progress in developing and establishing a new partnership model with a range of local schools and colleges (currently 7). We are also engaging with as many external community bodies as possible with the aim of expanding the RAU partnership scheme further over the next two years. New partners include Who Cares Trust, Gloucestershire County Council (post 16 Virtual Schools network), Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, National Trust, British Beekeeping Association and FACE (Farming and Countryside Education).

The University is working with the University of Gloucestershire to effectively collaborate to deliver long-term outreach, operating at a wider regional level to reach a larger number of learners, particularly those in pre-16 education and from under-represented groups. The RAU and UoG are aiming to provide some shared Student Ambassador training and mentoring to further strengthen the collaboration and will continue to explore further opportunities for collaborative activity.

The University is a member of the Western Vocational Progression Consortium (WVPC) of 7 HEIs in the northern sub-region of the South West and their FEC partners. The WVPC is the successor to the Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network (WVLLN).

The work of the consortium focuses on the progression of vocational and non-traditional learners into and through higher education.

The consortium is jointly responsible for the following online resources that contribute to widening access:

- The Lifepilot website (www.life-pilot.co.uk) offers information, advice and guidance to adult, part-time and work-based learners about progression routes to higher level study.
- The Careerpilot website (www.careerpilot.org.uk) helps 14-19 year olds plan their progression to study and work by showing the pathway choices at key decision points and the multiple routes to higher level study.

The University will also be participating within the University South West consortium. This group are committed to continuing and strengthening their collaborative widening participation partnerships to ensure that young people and adults across the region have access to activities that promote successful progression to higher education.

The work of this group will include:

- Sharing and building upon best practice in WP;
- Joint planning of provision in the region and identification of future areas for collaboration;
- Coordination of regional networks and events specialising in key areas e.g. disabled learners; care leavers and the progression of Access to HE Diploma learners;
- Developing coherence and consistency in data collection and data protocols to facilitate monitoring and evaluation;
- Identification and promotion of future opportunities for promoting further collaborative delivery mechanisms.

Admissions information

The University typically has applications from a broad range of backgrounds and abilities, and in the case of most courses, is a recruiting rather than a selecting institution. We aim to make all applicants standard offers where possible but we do pay particular attention to work experience and other factors detailed in personal statements and each applicant is evaluated on its own merits. Any potential concession for widening participation reasons will typically be decided at confirmation time when the full range of results are known and any mitigating information is received.

This year we have completed the implementation of a new student and admissions system which is now starting to help us to produce better applicant monitoring data this will assist us in targeting and evaluating our outreach activities more accurately. The RAU has developed an electronic portal ("My RAU") for applicants to use. This will help us to ensure the most up to date information about the applicant journey this includes fees, bursaries, scholarships and support and is available to all applicants throughout their journey at the press of a button.

Student retention and success

We are aware from previous years that our ability to offer financial support has often meant the retention of students who, without help, would have postponed or discontinued their studies. The University therefore recognises the value of continuing with some kind of financial support but is moving towards the use of more flexible fee and accommodation waivers in addition to bursaries. The University wishes to retain some bursary offer as an alternative for those from low income backgrounds and for those in the 'squeezed middle'. The University's enhanced bursaries and waivers package is being developed to ensure appropriate levels of support across the board in order to retain our excellent levels of retention, progression and employability.

Aside from financial assistance we shall be continuing to provide information advice and guidance to our student population via a number of activities including careers guidance, study and revision skills, student welfare and support and a dedicated disability officer. We have implemented a student portal which is being utilised by the University to increase the amount of information and support offered to students.

Ensuring applicants and new students are well informed and fully integrated into University life is seen as an important step to ensuring retention. Therefore additional to all paper and web-based information routinely sent out, all applicants have the chance to attend one of our University Open days, and those who apply before the 15th January UCAS deadline who are made an offer are also invited to an

Experience Day, which is a more focussed day with applicants attending mock lectures, and doing lab and farm visits. The feedback from Experience Day surveys indicates that meeting other students is seen as one of the most valuable activities on the day for the students themselves. However, the day also gives their parents and supporters a further chance to collect finance, accommodation and course information and ask any questions they may have. All applicants are provided with a USB wristband containing course and University information.

In 2014 we are once again planning a 'pre-induction day' which will give the new students an additional opportunity to receive information and ask questions about University life and study. Furthermore, it will provide a valuable opportunity for students to meet fellow classmates and get to know one another through a variety of teambuilding activities. The students will be introduced to members of the Student Union, and will be given an opportunity to meet and ask questions of a panel of key personnel such as the Admissions team, Student liaison officer, the Accommodation officer and Academic staff.

'Week 0' induction activities will be continued. It is hoped that by spending more time with new students on academic as well as social events and by giving them an enhanced and less complex registration process that students will be more settled right from the start of term.

Most student focused activities are open to all students, events are tailored to meet the requirements of a more diverse student body, and however some events are specifically created to meet the needs of our widening participation students. If events are open to all students then only a proportion of costs will be counted against under represented group spend in the Access Agreement this figure is calculated based upon actual current student numbers.

Financial Support for students

Bursary schemes, scholarships and fee and Accommodation waivers planned for 2015 are as follows:

Bursary/waiver	Amount per year per student	Description & Target group(s)
Disadvantage Fee / Accom Waiver	£1000 - £3,000 per year	Disadvantaged students with household income <£25k per year who fulfil at least 2 of the given 5 targeting criteria. See ** below
Means Tested Support Fee / Accom Waiver	£1,500 for first year	Student not in receipt of other support; household income £25,001-£42,600; able to demonstrate financial need
Skills bursaries	Minimum £250.00 per year in 1 st and	Bursary to enhance personal and professional skills, development and employability; complementary to academic

	2 nd yrs only	teaching and learning or work placement. Available to all students; priority to disadvantaged students where additional bursaries are available
Employability Projects (Internships)	Paid to student at salary of £10-12k pro-rata	4 available per year. Salary for project work that significantly enhances students' employability, experience and professional development. Available by application, in first instance to students from Access target groups who have relevant academic credentials. Unfilled positions rolled out to whole student population.
Student-led project Bursaries	Up to £1000 per project	10 bursaries per year for student-created and led projects that enhance students' employability and personal /professional skills. Available by application, in first instance to students from Access target groups who have idea for project(s) that relate to the community, outreach, business ventures, peer mentoring or other.

* Academic Criteria

A-Level grades: A*A*A*, A*A*A, A*AA, AAA, AAB,
 BTEC National Diploma Grades: D*D*D*, D*D*D, D*DD, DDD
 International Baccalaureate: 31, 30, 29, 28, 27

Other qualifications will be considered individually as will applications from mature students

** Criteria:

- 1) First generation higher education
- 2) Disadvantaged postcode (urban or rural)
- 3) Specified school or college
- 4) Member of a minority ethnic group
- 5) Mature
- 4) Care leaver

Additional to the bursaries mentioned above there will also be a number of Academic Excellence Scholarships available to students who meet the academic criteria above and who select the Royal Agricultural University as their firm choice with UCAS.

4 Targets and Milestones

The University continues to be committed to widening participation and wider access to all under-represented groups however the small and specialist nature of the institution together with its rural location does place limits on what can be achieved.

Over the next 5 year period the University aims to continue to increase the number of students from state schools by 8%, low participation neighbourhoods by 5%, low income backgrounds by 4%, minority ethnic backgrounds as well as mature local and part time students by up to 5%, as well as our new target for 2015 a 3% increase in Care Leavers.

5 Monitoring and Evaluation

Type	Level	Description
Pre- and post- event Q'aires / feedback (Quizdom)	Operational	Feedback (questionnaire / verbal / groups) is collected pre- and post- outreach events
Student ambassador & delivery staff ratings	Operational	Feedback (questionnaire / verbal / groups) is collected post-outreach events
Event Reports	Operational	Individual outreach event reports are collated to draw out participant, visiting staff and RAU staff / ambassador evaluations and to inform future practice
Student Feedback	Operational	RAU Student feedback from committees and groups, including course representatives, members of Inclusivity, Equality and Diversity, the student union and student feedback forums
National Student Survey (NSS)	Management	Data from the NSS is used to inform practice and development
Student Performance Report	Management	Annual report detailing student academic performance
Collaborations Report	Management	A full annual report detailing provision, co-ordination and delivery on collaborative activity. Recommendations for further collaborations, development of existing collaborative practice and future investment are made
WP Annual Report	Management	Annual report to Governing Council and SMG detailing all provision over year and offering recommendations for future activity
Student Registration system reporting	Management	Student data system has reporting mechanisms; identification of under-represented students, applicants and entrant data, students accessing financial and non-financial support measures
WPSS monitoring return	Management	Annual report on WPSS targets
Access Agreement return	Management	Annual report on Access Agreement milestones and targets

Review and Impact Assessment	Strategic	Bi-annual review of services and provision, including impact assessment in context of wider institutional objectives
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The people responsible for delivery

The Senior Management Team together with the Academic Registrar will be responsible for ensuring the goals of the Access Agreement are upheld. The Registrar (Student Recruitment) will be responsible for the on-going delivery of the initiatives and the monitoring of results. School Deans will additionally be responsible for academic staff engagement within their Schools.

Aside from staff, the student body via the Student Union and the Student Ambassadors are also encouraged to participate in many of the activities undertaken.

6 Provision of info to prospective students

Information advice and guidance will be made available to applicants and students via a variety of methods, including websites, leaflets, posters and the University intranet 'Gateway' system, student and applicant portals are now established which will also be used to provide up to date information about funding and scholarship opportunities as well as a range of induction and student activities.

7 Consulting with Students

The University works closely with its student body, typically via the Student Union and the Student Ambassadors. Students are represented on all major University committees including the Inclusion, Equality and Diversity Committee, Academic Quality and Standards and Academic Board. There is also student representation at Governing Council and each program year has its own representative at the Student Management Committee, chaired by the Principal.

We see our student ambassador population (at present 52) as being particularly valuable to the University as they undertake many of the widening participation and outreach activities. They are also a key source of information, advice and guidance not only to young participants of outreach activities but also to new students during enrolment and induction week.

Aside from our student body directly we also actively seek the views of the younger 'potential' student body by closely monitoring our outreach activities and evaluating events using the 'Quizdom' package, feedback forms and questionnaires. This means we can constantly improve our outreach activities to ensure we give the participants the best possible experience of the University and HE generally.

8 Equality and Diversity

The Admissions policy states that the University welcomes applications from everybody irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity, religious or political beliefs, age, disability, nationality, marital status, and sexual orientation. All applicants will be considered equally on their individual merit. The University aims to recruit students from a wide range of backgrounds who have the potential to complete their programmes successfully and make a valuable contribution to University life.

At student level equality and diversity activities are closely monitored by the Inclusion, Equality and Diversity Committee (IED) which is chaired by a University Governor. IED has two sub groups reporting to it, each chaired by senior support staff. These are the WP & Outreach Champions Group and the Social Inclusion group. The membership of these groups are from all areas of the University and include students, academic and support staff and governors. Their remit is to ensure that WP and Outreach is linked firmly to the equalities agenda and embedded across the whole institution to allow for responsive development of strategy and delivery.

The RAU has developed, as part of the revised Interim WP Strategic Statement for 2014, a clearly defined system of impact assessment linked closely to our Equalities policy, the IED committee, and Outreach Champions group are part of the consultation process to ensure we are able to meet the external requirements whilst delivering Outreach and WP that is consistent and embedded across the institution.

Access agreement 2015-16 resource plan (submission 1st May 2014)
(Table 7) Targets and milestones

Institution name: Royal Agricultural University
Institution UKPRN: 10005545

Table 7a - Statistical targets and milestones relating to your applicants, entrants or student body

Number	Please select target type from the drop-down menu	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)	If you have made any changes to the prefilled data around your milestones/targets, or included additional milestones/targets, please select a reason from the drop down list
						2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19		
1	HESA T1a - State School (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)		No	2009	46%	52%	53%	55%	58%	60%	moving towards targets	Updated based on new/latest data
2	HESA T1a - Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR2) (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	Both Urban and Rural	No	2009	3.4%	6%	7%	8%	9%	9%	moving towards targets	Updated based on new/latest data
3	Other statistic - Completion/Non continuation (please give details in the next column)	Maintain current good level of low non continuation	No	2009	96.5%	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%	moving towards targets	Updated based on new/latest data
4	Other statistic - Low-income backgrounds (please give details in the next column)	All low income students from all backgrounds	No	2009	34%	38%	39%	40%	40%	40%	moving towards targets	Updated based on new/latest data
5	HESA T2a - (Mature, full-time, first degree entrants)	New Entrants	No	2009	12%	16%	17%	18%	18%	18%	moving towards targets	Updated based on new/latest data
6	Other statistic - Location (please give details in the next column)	Local	No	2009	10%	13%	14%	15%	17%	20%	moving towards targets	Updated based on new/latest data
7	Other statistic - Care-leavers (please give details in the next column)	Care Leavers ie Looked after young people	No	2013	0	0	1	2	3	3	New target added to criteria for means tested awards to support our work with virtual schools	New target

Notes

Alongside applicant and entrant targets, we encourage you to provide targets around outreach and student success work (including collaborative work where appropriate) or other initiatives to illustrate your progress towards increasing access, student success and progression. These should be measurable outcomes -based targets and should focus on the number of beneficiaries reached by a particular activity/programme or the number of schools worked with, and what the outcomes were, rather than simply recording the nature/number of activities.

Table 7b - Other milestones and targets.

Number	Please select target type from the drop-down menu	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)	If you have made any changes to the prefilled data around your milestones/targets, or included additional milestones/targets, please select a reason from the drop down list.
						2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19		
1	Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Continue collaborative arrangements with University of Gloucestershire and further develop targets to measure future effectiveness	Yes	2012	Unknown						Progress has been slower than anticipated due to resourcing issues, and changes of insitution direction at both institutions over the last two years, we are again at a stage of reevaluating and agreeing the next steps now that the SNC has been removed.	Updated based on new/latest data
2	Management targets	To work to further develop baseline performance monitoring mechanism	No	2011							The exissting resource is being reviewed over summer 2014 to identify efficiencies to enable full development of an extended range of KPI's and SLA's in order to deliver effective monitoring.	Updated based on new/latest data
3	Other (please give details in the next column)	Delivery to primary schools	Yes	2011	5	14	16	18	18	18	Milestone met and exceeded we intend to continue at current level	Updated based on new/latest data
4	Other (please give details in the next column)	National delivery	No	2011	5	14	16	18			We continue to participate as much as possible in national delivery	Updated based on new/latest data
5	Other (please give details in the next column)	Developing further innovative communication mediums such as podcasts	No								Effectiveness will be evidenced using appropriate methods depending on media used.	Updated based on new/latest data

Optional commentary on milestones.

This box is character-limited to 1000 characters; however, we are happy for you to upload additional 'supporting information' as a separate Word/pdf document.