Royal Agricultural University Cirencester RAU

Widening Participation at the RAU
Access – Success – Progression

ACCESS AGREEMENT 2018-19

As a Small and Specialist Institution, the Royal Agricultural University can make a distinct contribution to the widening participation agenda locally and nationally, using a thematic base for showcasing the value of higher education amongst target communities, through the lens of our niche land-based disciplines. As a small campus community, with a teaching focus and practical application of learning, with excellent professional and industry linkages globally, we can make a rich contribution to the success and progression for all our students.

Contents

1 Introduction & Context

1.1 Institutional Context

The Royal Agricultural University (RAU) was awarded University status in 2013. This decision offered the valuable opportunity to widen access and promote agricultural education and careers to students from diverse backgrounds, with a continuing aspiration to:

> *"…be a major, world class international contributor to the global strategy for sustainable food supply and land management and the built environment, and for the equine industry – an institution that promotes enterprise, creativity, innovation, **inclusivity** and leadership in all that it does."[1]*

The small campus provides a unique and community-centred learning environment for courses delivered at foundation, undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The RAU has steadily increased in student numbers over the last two decades, with growth aspirations to reach more than 1,500 total billable full-time equivalent learners by 2020, as articulated in the RAU's 2015-2020 Corporate Plan[2]. Continued growth aspirations acknowledge the necessity to widen the pool of potential applicants, building a pipeline from school-aged learners to higher education.

A commitment to widening access and participation

> *"The RAU will be, and will be seen to be, an **equal, inclusive**, ethical, well-led and **diverse** institution committed to **enabling individuals to achieve their full potential**."*

The RAU has a continuing strategic commitment to widening access, participation and success across the *student lifecycle*, which continues to be embedded in the Corporate Plan 2015-2020 and considered by the 2016-17 restructure and transformation agenda. It has a specific KPI to Increase students from under-represented groups in line with the University's access agreement.

Specific challenges and opportunities for the RAU

There are a number of specific challenges that impact the widening participation agenda at the RAU. Our approach to widening participation is cognisant of these challenges and, whilst the University does not accept them as insurmountable barriers, we acknowledge these factors as constraints that impact upon subsequent outcomes and impact, particularly in the short term, going some way to rationalising performance.

Particular **Challenges** include:

- Institutional history and tradition
  - Having been established in 1845 the RAU retains much of its institutional history and culture, which has placed the RAU as a destination for children of land-owning families. Perceptions of RAU as catering from this cohort has perpetuated and adds an additional complexity when engaging with potential students not from this group.

- Specialist, niche Course Offering

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[1] *RAU Corporate Plan, 2015-2020* https://www.rau.ac.uk/sites/files/rau/field/field_document/Corporate%20Plan%202015%20-%202020.pdf
[2] *Ibid. Priority 1: Students*

- o The RAU specialises in land-based higher education and does not offer a comprehensive subject range, which makes it more difficult to appeal to schools in terms of access to pupils, who have diverse subject aspirations and limited (and in some cases we note, none) time for external activity.
- o The history and nomenclature anchor the RAU in "agriculture" or "farming". Over the past year, we have found that, even locally, our offer of generic Business degrees, our strong entrepreneurship agenda, and even wider land-based subjects such as environment and conservation, sustainability, and food (which arguably may have more appeal to a diverse audience) are not fully understood by our target audiences, teachers and pupils alike. Increasing awareness of the full range of the RAU Land-based course offer in to the secondary school and college education market is critical to advancing the widening participation agenda and has featured heavily in outreach activities over the past two years (2015-16 / 2016-17).
- o Land-based course offering may be a less obvious career pathway to WP target groups, with it being less likely to be in their sights and lived experiences and identities. This results in awareness and aspiration challenges.

- Local marketplace for WP
  - o RAU competes for the hearts and minds of local potential students with a large, comprehensive university in the immediate locality offering WP activity to schools and community. However, whilst we anticipated that access to schools' limited time may be difficult for RAU given the breadth of other comprehensive university work, this has not been the case and we have developed good access to local schools. In our collaboration with the University of Gloucestershire, as part of the NNCO and now NCOP, we have taken a partnership approach, which means that we can now further focus into areas where we can offer most value and avoid duplication.

- Institutional infrastructures and capacities
  - o As a small institution, many staff do multiple roles and hold broad remits. This places unique demands on RAU to deliver effective WP activity. RAU has implemented a capability development program as part of its WP agenda from 2015-16, which has included recruiting new positions and forming a longer-term partnership with education specialists to address this.

- The "fit" of traditional outreach agendas
  - o Traditional approaches to outreach in widening participation tend to be locally focused, which presents challenges to RAU due to niche course offer and as smaller, less well-resourced institution in local area. We have identified that RAU requires an alternative approach to increasing WP access, leveraging its unique advantages as a small and specialist land-based provider. This has required a balancing of traditional local approaches to WP with our particular institution type and need to target more broadly.

- Making *fast* progress
  - The ability of RAU to make *faster progress* in terms of outcomes (student applicants, entrants and study body) has been historically (pre-2015-16) limited due to the identified gaps and challenges. We have been addressing these since 2015; however, slow progress in terms of progression to targets is further compounded by:
    - The long-run nature of Access work, which starts early and relies on a lead-in period to form relationships with target schools and colleges
    - Recruitment, training and development times for new staff
    - History and culture

Particular **opportunities** include:
- Delivering the Access agenda through a targeted lens of land-based disciplines
  - We have a unique opportunity to showcase the land-based disciplines and their relationship to broader school subjects, such as science, food, technology and business. Over 2015-16, we have developed our targeted programme of Access work with schools in the School Farms Network, targeted by WP indicators and for the fact that these schools all have some form of agricultural activity.

- Small, campus community
  - RAU has a community ethos, being a small campus with a small student population. We are positioned to showcase the experience of studying at small campuses, and have appeal for students who prefer a more personal experience, particularly when the step to university may be daunting.
  - We are well positioned to provide a personal experience, and to ensure positive transition to university, creating a sense of belonging and identity. We are building our expertise in transition pedagogy, ensuring an excellent student experience and transition from application through to end of first year.
  - Good staff-to-student ratios and our campus community provides for excellent student support and development, working into the Success agenda

- Small & Specialist University
  - RAU has the opportunity to make a distinct contribution to widening participation, using a thematic base for showcasing the value of higher education through the lens of our niche land-based disciplines.
  - We have leveraged our specialisms and disciplinary expertise, to provide a rich range of targeted outreach programmes to identified schools and colleges, with impacts for raising attainment in schools. Particularly, we have focused on contributions on Science (STEM) and Business (Business and Enterprise) curricula.
  - Our "School Farms Network Education Alliance" with an established network of School Farms Network schools (with approximately 115 secondary and primary school members), is now in its second iteration, maintaining the following objectives:
    - To improve awareness of, access to and participation in land-based education particularly for non-traditional or disadvantaged students, with pathways from primary and secondary school and on to higher education

- To deliver a range of school and community activity, training, resources and capacity development for the purposes of increasing access and participation in land-based higher education
- To advocate for, encourage and promote land-based education and provide support and development for schools and communities.
  - o Institutionally, we continue our focused, thematic widening participation agenda.

Widening access and the recruitment agenda

As a specialist institution, the RAU recruits nationally, in addition to locally. The University has established and continues to increase partnerships with relevant Further Education Colleges (FECs) across England, with the purpose of validating degrees and offering top-up programmes to FEC-delivered foundation courses. Whilst FECs continue to grow their provision, providing an increasing range of competitor courses in higher education, the RAU continues to acknowledge and realise the benefits of collaborative approaches. FECs also continue to be a targeted area of widening participation work.

The RAU's *Access* activity still includes both a locally-focused and national programme serving the objectives of widening participation. Underpinned at the outset by effective school and community targeting, there is now iterative targeting checks and adjustments, to ensure increased outputs and outcomes. We maintain that our approach should secure outcomes for the widening participation agenda objectives at the national/ government (macro) level; the local (meso) level, and; the institutional (micro) level.

To ensure we continue to make *faster progress*[3], the strategic approach presented in this Access Agreement remains one of alignment with institutional drivers, particularly recruitment and growth, and embedding widening participation across the University.

RAU's Commitment to Widening Participation

The RAU is committed to ensuring that the widening participation agenda can be effectively and strategically implemented at the micro level, specifically to contribute to rich learning environments. We also recognise our contribution to national priorities, including upward social mobility and economic productivity outcomes.

We expressly recognise and embed widening participation in terms of university business outcomes, for example as a contributor to core institutional drivers such as recruitment and community engagement; teaching and learning; and research and innovation. We see this as an ongoing process which will be further influenced by the Teaching Excellence Framework[4] and the complementary orientation of linking strategy and outcomes across *Access, Success* and *Progression*.

The development and implementation of a revitalised WP Strategy in 2015-16 following an in-depth review is testament to their acceptance of the challenge.

Under our strategic framework (Widening Participation at the RAU, implemented in 2015-16), the RAU continues to align its widening participation agenda to a *whole-of-institution approach* and coherent

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[3] *OFFA Strategic Priority as identified in the OFFA Strategic Plan 2015-2020* http://www.offa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/OFFA-Strategic-Plan-2015-2020.pdf

[4] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/474227/BIS-15-623-fulfilling-our-potential-teaching-excellence-social-mobility-and-student-choice.pdf

frameworks across key domains of *Access, Success* and *Progression*. This *student lifecycle* approach, from outreach/transition and induction through to completion and exit, is our framing approach. The RAU acknowledges that widening participation extends beyond access; that what happens through university and what outcomes are achieved also matter.

1.2   OFFA Key priorities for 2018-19 access agreements

OFFA's strategic priorities[5] for 2015-2020[6] and the Strategic Guidance for 2018-19 Access Agreements have informed the development of RAU's strategic and operational priorities.

Strategic priorities for OFFA for 2018-19[7] are:
- Raise attainment in schools / colleges
- Increase investment in access activity
- Expenditure informed by evidence & evaluation
- Evaluate financial support to determine impact
- Improve understanding of challenges faced by different students

The following 2017-18 priorities remain particularly relevant in RAU's approach:
- Whole of institution approach
- Student lifecycle approach
- Greater emphasis on long-term outreach
- More effective collaboration
- Smarter, evidence based spend
- Stretch targets to make faster progress, collectively across sector and the institution

2   Our Strategic Approach

The RAU has developed and implemented its WP Strategy, which applies an embedded *whole-of-Institution* methodology and reiteratively aligns three key agendas:

1. OFFA strategic priorities with regards to widening participation
2. University corporate agenda and drivers
3. Stakeholder goals and drivers (e.g. local community, schools, further education colleges, etc.)

The *Access* agenda continues to provide additional understanding of our external stakeholders and partners, due to the *partnerships* methodology we have applied particularly to engaging with identified target schools and colleges. This understanding contributes to the necessary evidence bases and underpinning data to inform future practice, with a view to maximising potential outcomes.

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[5] *OFFA's priorities have been informed by the National Strategy for Access and Student Success (April, 2014).*
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/299689/bis-14-516-national-strategy-for-access-and-student-success.pdf
[6] *OFFA Strategic Priority as identified in the OFFA Strategic Plan 2015-2020 http://www.offa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/OFFA-Strategic-Plan-2015-2020.pdf*
[7] *Introducing the guidance, Chris Scrase, OFFA (2016) (http://www.slideshare.net/UniversitiesUK/introducing-the-guidance-chris-scraseoffa?next_slideshow=1)*

Aligned Model for Whole-Of-Institution approach
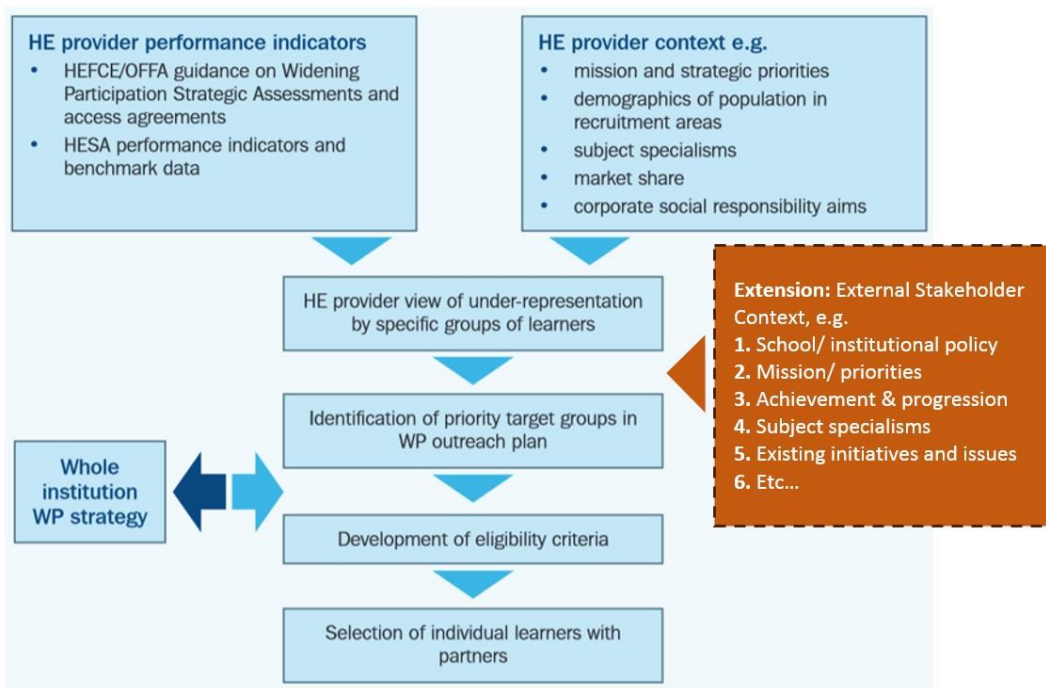
2.1 WP Strategic Framework

Our Strategic Framework for WP comprises six key Initiatives, under which Programmes and Activities are clustered thematically. This has been in place since 2015-16, and remains relevant for this Access Agreement.

Six Strategic Initiatives (A-F)

A. BUILDING OUR CAPACITY	**D. LEVERAGING THE CURRICULUM FOR IMPROVED STUDENT OUTCOMES**
B. BUIDLING OUR STUDENT PIPELINE THROUGH OUTREACH	**E. ENSURING STUDENT SUCCESS**
C. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT, COLLABORAITON & PARTNERSHIP	**F. COMMUNICATION AND RECOGNITION**
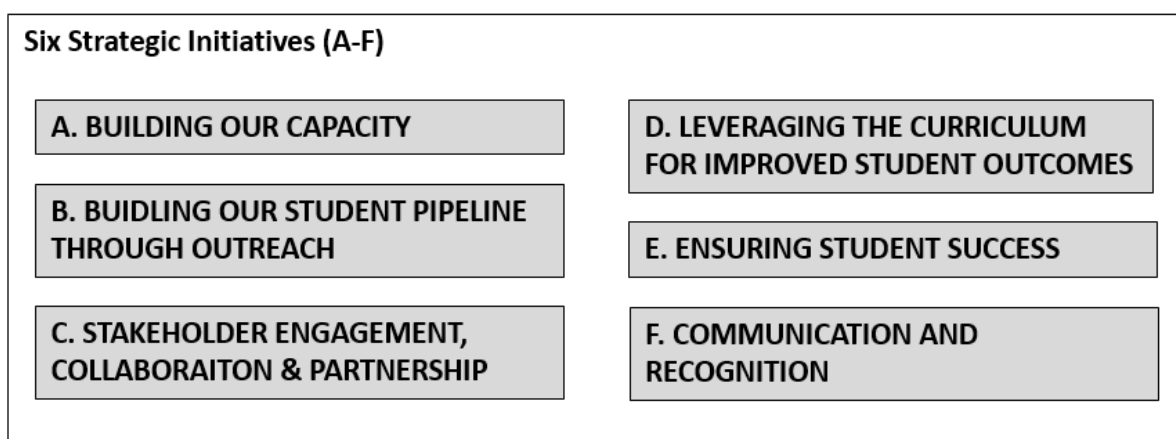
2.2 Mapping the strategy and establishing priorities

As articulated in our 2016-17 and 2017-18 Access Agreements, the University continues to apply OFFA priorities as either:

1. **Conceptual frameworks**, namely:
    a. The Student Lifecycle approach
    b. Whole of Institution approach; or,

2. **Strategic themes**, namely:
    a. Emphasis on long-term [early] outreach
    b. Effective collaboration
    c. Smarter, evidence-based spend (2017-18 priority) / Expenditure informed by evidence & evaluation (2018-19 Guidance)
    d. Equality and diversity
    e. Stretching targets to make faster progress

3. In this Agreement, we have specifically provided for OFFA's additional priorities contained in the guidance, within the identified institutional priorities and investment allocations:
    a. Raise attainment in schools / colleges
    b. Increase investment in access activity
    c. Evaluate financial support to determine impact
    d. Improve understanding of challenges faced by different students

3 Fees, student numbers and fee income

3.1 Fees and fee income

The Royal Agricultural University currently intends to continue to charge £9,250 per annum for full time undergraduate study for students commencing in 2018-19 and for full time continuing undergraduate students. These charges will apply irrespective of mode or qualification type. Course charges will be reviewed annually and may rise in line with inflation and any other permitted increases announced by Government each year.

Part-time study charges are set at 50% of the full-time fee, being £4,625. Students who study at a fraction less than 50% will be charged on a 'per module' basis, at £1,237.50 per module.

Whilst the Student Union has not noted concern being raised from the student body regarding student finances and fees, there is an identified need to ensure scholarships and bursaries are appropriately tailored, accessible and relevant to eligible students; and, plans to enhance a student led hardship fund initiative.

3.2 Student Numbers

The University continues to actively seek to increase student numbers. The RAU is currently working towards a target of over 1,200 full-time equivalent students by 2021-22. In the 2018-19 academic year, the University anticipates approximately 1,033 undergraduate students, including approximately 50 students studying through its current franchise partner, Capel Manor College.

4   Access, student success and progression measures

This section provides performance assessments (based on published HESA data); descriptions of activity; and priorities and targets for each of the Access Agreement focus areas. It also provides information on investment and activity, based on assessment and review of our performance to date. We reiterate the following significant factors for the RAU, that are duly considered:

- The RAU is a small, niche land-based institution. It was granted University status in 2013.
- The land-based disciplines offered at the University have not traditionally attracted students from target areas for widening participation, and there are perceived and real potential barriers to access that we can address.
- Some of the methodologies the University has put in practice to encourage access and widen participation have not yet brought large *impact* in terms of student applicant, entrant and student body data; however, the commitment to, for example, providing a range of degree routes (e.g. foundation degrees) and to ensuring access for students with vocational qualifications through equitable admissions processes is core business.
- In acknowledgement of the need to make *faster progress*, the University commissioned a comprehensive WP Review from September 2014 to February 2015 and an implementation agenda spanning strategy, management and operations.
- Students from non-traditional backgrounds represent a significant growth opportunity.

4.1   Access

4.1.1   Performance assessment – participation, outreach and partnerships

Performance and HESA benchmarks
Whilst we continue efforts that will ultimately progress the University towards OFFA milestones and HESA target benchmarks, the impact of our multi-year and early (from Year 7), sustained programmes with schools have yet to translate into positive impacts in terms of student entrant targets. The table below provides a summary of performance in identified target groups against HESA locally-adjusted benchmarks, from 2010-11 to 2015-16.

Target group	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
% young full-time first degree entrants from **state schools or colleges**	51.8	54.5	50.3	47.6	57.6	46.8
HESA Local-Adjusted Benchmark		*84.5*	*81.5*	*83.8*	*85.0*	*83.1*
% full-time first degree entrants from **low participation neighbourhoods** (POLAR 3)	2.2	3.7	3.8	2.1	2.3	1.8
HESA Local-Adjusted Benchmark	*9.0*	*8.9*	*9.2*	*9.7*	*10.6*	*10.0*
% **Mature** full-time first degree entrants with no previous HE and from **low participation neighbourhood** (POLAR 3)	5.1	0.0	-	2.4	2.7	0.0
HESA Local-Adjusted Benchmark	*9.8*	*4.3*	*-*	*7.7*	*4.7*	*2.6*

Number of Care Leavers	-	-	-	-	0	0
(no HESA benchmarks)	-	-	-	-	-	-

Students from State Schools and Colleges

The University's student body has been fairly consistent over the last four years with approximately half of its students coming from private, and half from the state schools and colleges. As an identified target area, and as addressed in our previous Access Agreements, the University is committed to increasing the number of students from state schools and recognises the need to make *faster progress* in doing so.

A recruitment challenge

The current student growth trajectory based on RAU Corporate Plan targets of increasing to 1,500 students by 2020 will pose a significant challenge to expedited shifting of the proportion of students at RAU from state schools. There simply will not be sufficient growth to enable a proportional shift of any great magnitude, leaving aside the scenario of recruiting a reduced number of students from our traditional base. This represents a significant systemic barrier to achieving HESA benchmarks in relation to participation of student from state schools. As the University is on a growth trajectory, with accessible entry requirements and alternative pathways such as foundation degrees, continued progress towards extending the reach of the university to non-traditional recruitment targets will support the objective to improve achievement against the milestones.

Working with schools in widening participation

RAU has increased investment and effort via our structured widening participation agenda, which is part of a wider recruitment drive and activity. Activity is also being embedded within the academy, with increasing engagement from academic staff. We continue to drive this *institutionally embedded* approach to further develop discipline-specific experiential activity for target schools, sixth-forms and colleges.

Rather than a reactive approach, our partnerships are built on a proactive, targeted and clear methodology, which is being positively received by our target schools. We expect this work to translate into *outcomes* in terms of progression towards our HESA targets and milestones, and benchmarks, particularly over the medium-term. We maintain that this is a long-run, pipeline agenda and therefore whilst we strive to make *faster progress* quicker, we at the same time acknowledge that returns are likely to be achieved across three horizons.

Since 2015-16, under our ***Initiative: Building Student Pipelines through Outreach & Access***, we have:

- Established meaningful partnerships with targeted schools

- Implemented meaningful activity delivery plans that leverage in-school programmes

- Delivered a range of activities, utilise our School Partnership Framework (SPF) and individual School Implementation Plans methodology, including:

  o University focused activities across Year 7 to Year 13, across the 5As raising and supporting aspiration, awareness, achievement, affordability and access to HE
  o Signature residential camps
  o A Young Ambassadors programme
  o A HEROs Ambassadors programme

- o Schools Roadshow
- o Subject enrichment lessons

School Partnership Framework

In 2015-16, the University launched its schools partnerships programme, proactively engaging with targeted state schools to increase recruitment from the state schools sector. The Partnerships Framework document provides a framework under which delivery can take place and expectations / intentions are set; flexibility in the implementation plans behind the framework allows us to respond to individual school need; to add value to existing infrastructures / programmes; and help to prevent additional admin burden schools. This strategy has been praised as key to effective and meaningful school engagement.

This collaborative partnerships model with schools enables understanding of specific contexts, which is now in full implementation at the local (20 schools) and national (up to 30 schools through the School Farms Network) levels. At mid-point 2016-17, we are undertaking a school partnerships review with 20 local schools to assess and evaluate individual school partnership work, with a view to further refining and targeting school focused activity and establishing increased value to engaged target schools will form part of our commitment to building *evidence and evaluation*, in turn informing investment decisions. In our assessment, we particularly consider:

- Level and types of school engagements, effectiveness and outputs
- Relationship management factors
- Needs and priorities analysis
- School profiling factors to maximise leverage of key influencing factors (e.g. school status/ special measures and introduction of the NCOP)
- Partnership effectiveness assessment and next steps planning to tightening focus on raising attainment and achievement in schools

The University continues to undertake a range of outreach activities, including parent's evenings, road shows, careers fairs, community shows, school visits and HE experience days.

School Sponsorship Arrangements

The University acknowledges the role that universities can play in supporting raising attainment in target schools. Since 2015-16, our framework of activity into schools has explicitly included an "achievement raising" theme, across Years 7-13, as part of a scaffolded learning matrix. Sessions have included working with teachers to add value and enrichment to school curriculum; specific exam, revision and study skills workshops; and development of subject tasters linking school curriculum to RAU offered disciplines. All resources in our learning matrix are aligned to National Curriculum learning outcomes across the Key Stages.

Whilst the RAU remains committed to delivering this agenda, and expanding it further to deliver increased activity to raise attainment in target schools (see *Priorities in Access*, below), we do not propose to sponsor a school or form a new school. Having reflected on the opportunities, challenges and requirements for school sponsorship, we must acknowledge that the resourcing requirements exceed our institutional capacity at this time. That said, we have provided for significant increase of school activity in the area of attainment raising, where there is opportunity to provide support in

addressing the attainment gap between local target and non-target schools in the Gloucestershire area; and similarly between local target schools and the England average (2015 data).

Students from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR 3)

We have renewed our targets to increase our percentage of students from low participation neighbourhoods (using the POLAR 3 method) to five per cent by 2018-19, building to seven per cent by 2021-22. These targets represent a balance between setting stretching targets that progress the University towards HESA benchmark for participation of students from LPNs (at 10 per cent in 2015-16), whilst ensuring they are grounded in realistic expectations. Early indications from institutional data for 2016-17 show that there is further work to be done and that the impact of our new access strategy and activity, specifically targeting LPNs, has yet to flow through to impact milestones over the next few years.

We are cognisant of higher education application rates in the South West area, remaining amongst the lowest in the country, still more than 10% below average, and in a negative trend.
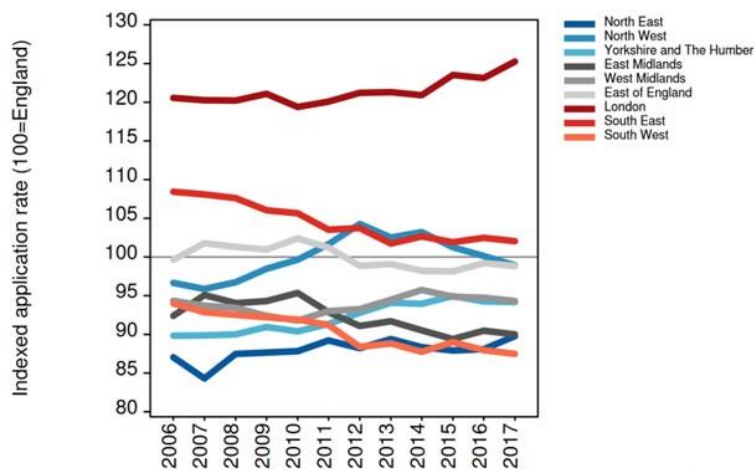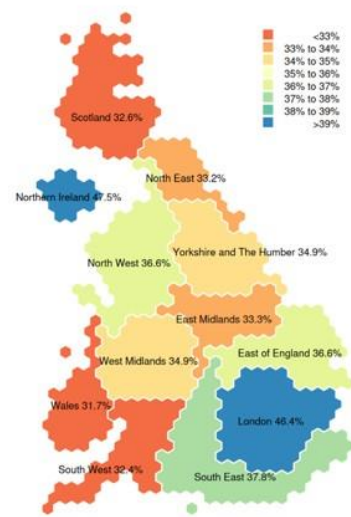

UCAS UK Application Rates by the January deadline, 2017 cycle February 2017

To help to address this issue, the University maintains our local approach, specifically serving the south-west. This commitment is also reflected in our "other" target to increase participation specifically of **local** students. A range of support mechanisms are now being considered to complement this, including ensuring adequate transport links, deeper engagement with local community, and financial support.

In the local catchment area, the major centres of Gloucester, Cheltenham and Swindon have significant areas of low HE participation. These areas largely align to the identified target wards under the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP), indicating that there are under-served populations in these areas with the capacity to enter higher education (based on previous GCSE

outcomes data). This reflects our schools targeting criteria, where we have considered the percentage of students with GCSE A*-C grade (incl. English and Maths) in target schools.

Gloucester and Cheltenham   **Swindon**
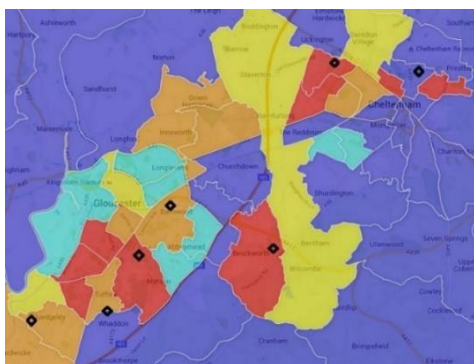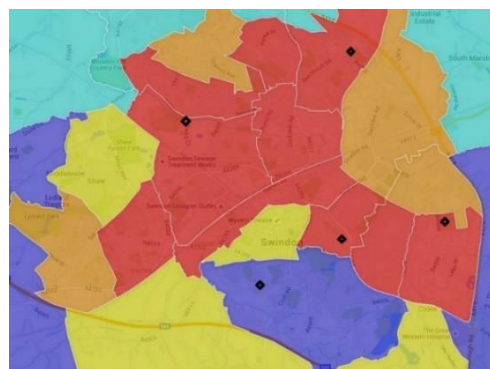
POLAR3 Q1 = Red; Black dots represent target schools

These are key target areas for activity being delivered under the local school partnerships programme, which is already demonstrating outcomes. Flags identified on these maps indicate our local target schools, where a scaffolded programme of engagement and activity has been offered and delivered (level of participation differs by school) since 2015-16. The 2015-16 early impact data is:

- Demonstrating a lift in the percentage of students who think it is possible, and would like to, attend university in our target schools
- Providing a rich source of understanding about perceived barriers in our local areas (which are then addressed *in-action* in our activity programme)
- Providing a measure of programme and activity effectiveness (pupils and teachers)
- Providing a measure of programme and training effectiveness, and impact for our student ambassadors. Ensuring university student voice and input informs and is captured in our widening participation programmes.

We also see significant room for development of the widening participation programme to better align with local agendas and school and community priorities such as local level employability and entrepreneurship strategies and engagement of local employers in partnerships and meaningful contributions. This type of engagement will particularly seek to integrate employment outcomes and needs with relevant higher education pathways. The enterprise and entrepreneurship agenda is particularly relevant for the RAU's Business and Entrepreneurship portfolio, which has:

- Clear and accessible entry pathways to degree programmes
- Excellent student support and development opportunities for undergraduates, including an award-winning entrepreneurship programme and a 20-week work placement module; and
- Post-graduate progression routes, with a range of support, including a fee discount for continuing students.

Our National Targeted Schools Programme

Our complementary national school partnerships programme through our membership of the *School Farms Network Education Alliance*, recognises our special responsibility within the widening participation agenda specifically in relation to:

- Showcasing and increasing access to our specific disciplines as a specialist institution serving the land-based sector
- Raising awareness and understanding of the experiences of studying at small, campus-based niche institutions
- Ensuring that we make *faster progress* on our institutional targets, as an institution that needs to pay due and particular regard to targeting in relation to discipline-aligned opportunities.

This means there is specific onus on ensuring that we have a sophisticated targeting approach given our range of courses on offer.

Mature students with no previous HE from low participation neighbourhoods
The RAU is increasingly understanding how to develop its widening participation activity to target mature learners. The University is considering provision and support for mature learners, which takes into account specific barriers such as:

- Non-traditional qualifications
- Competing responsibilities
- Alternative access/ provision
- Course and learning mode flexibility
- Course and module offering

We have also noted specific items raised through feedback from the student union, and with students we seek to address specific issues such as:

- Access to and time required to be on university campus, considering commuting barriers
- Balancing work, family and study effectively, where curriculum development offers opportunity in the design and timetabling processes to provide for alternative and more convenient study modes
- Lower social engagement amongst mature learners, particularly with the Student Union (as advocates), limiting student voice from this cohort;
- Supporting access to or provision of specific facilities, e.g. child care.

An evidence based strategy to increase participation of mature learners, focused on participation amongst those from POLAR3 (low HE participation) areas will be implemented.

The University has updated milestones to ensure access for this mature learner target group, taking into account our baseline, performance data and current provision for mature learners. We note that, despite a revision of milestones to better reflect baseline and performance data, these are still set above the HESA benchmark of 2.6 per cent in 2015-16. Curriculum development and changes in offer and learning modes will offer further opportunities to mature learners, who typically at RAU are more likely to be interested in part-time, flexible and intensive learning and teaching provision, albeit this is currently a small cohort.

Black and Minority Ethnic Students

The University has traditionally attracted a small number of domestic students from black and minority

ethnic (BME) backgrounds. Whilst the participation level has remained relatively constant over the past three years, we are committed to increasing this figure and have accordingly ensured that, under our new strategy for widening participation (implemented in 2015-16), access activity includes targeted work with schools with higher proportions of students from BME backgrounds and with English as a second language (ESL). For example, target schools under our local schools outreach programme include those in Gloucester, Cheltenham and Swindon that recruit from wards with the highest percentage BME population. We also recognise the impact of relevant and identifiable role models, ensuring that our ambassador pool includes students from BME backgrounds.

Whilst all eligible students receive an offer of a place at the University (based on tariff points or alternative work experience or a combination of both), overall participation of young, first degree undergraduate entrants, and all undergraduate entrants, from BME backgrounds is a small percentage of our student cohort:

		2014/15			2015/16			2016/17	
		No. of students	%		No. of students	%		No. of students	%
Young entrants	First Degree	5	2.3%		5	2.2%		4	1.8%
	Other Undergrads	0	0.0%		1	2.0%		1	1.0%
	All Undergrads	5	1.8%		6	2.2%		5	1.5%
All entrants	First Degree	7	2.8%		5	2.0%		5	1.9%
	Other Undergrads	1	1.1%		1	1.2%		2	1.6%
	All Undergrads	8	2.3%		6	1.8%		7	1.8%

We are concerned that this is somewhat a legacy of the history and tradition of the institution and UK agriculture as an industry sector, hosting predominantly people from white backgrounds. Access to and experiences in the land-based industries and disciplines for people from BME backgrounds has been limited, which impacts on young people's aspirations for and identification with the land-based industries. We expect that our long-term, early, targeted work into schools, with a broader narrative of our offer, for example, business and entrepreneurship, sustainability, environment and conservation, etc. (framing away from "farming") will help to address this challenge over time, complemented by the increasing accessibility of the industry

Collaboration

Universities and FE Colleges

The University seeks to increase collaboration with the local FE College, and targeted others, to develop mutually beneficial outcomes for WP student progression to HE. In 2015-16 and 2016-17, as part of a renewed strategy for working with target colleges, this work has included, for example:

- Targeting colleges with linked courses to the RAU offering, but with lower than expected progression rates to RAU.
- Meeting with colleges to discuss a plan of intervention to highlight the benefits of HE in the sectors.
- Running activities based on raising aspirations around progression to HE.
- New courses and joint provision

This will include working with Further Education Colleges to address potential barriers to transition from an FE to HE institution, including issues of finance, attainment and aspiration. The FEC strategy

will expand to include further focus on informing students about student finance, utilising academics to deliver subject enrichment and tasters in and aspiration and awareness development approach. The University is taking a bespoke approach to each college, developing a programme of activities relevant and valuable to each.

In relation to joint provision, the RAU and Cirencester College run joint delivery programmes, where Cirencester College staff are fully responsible for teaching modules across the programmes. This relationship has expanded in 2016, with the new Foundation Degree in Business Enterprise. The University will again expand in 2018 with a new Foundation Degree in Animal Science. The intention is to target Level 3 students at Cirencester College for whom there is no suitable local HE provision for them to progress to. This is significant given the high proportion of students studying at Cirencester College from the Swindon area, which is a target location with areas of low participation in higher education and areas of high deprivation.

Other activities include specific open days, campus visits including finance talks, and collaborative stands at community events to demonstrate potential progression routes from FE to HE and into the workplace. We are considering student ambassador drop in sessions, at which our ambassadors would visit on a frequent basis to talk to students.

We are also exploring further provision that supports access to campus, in terms of improved transport links for local students. In recent research commissioned by the Gloucestershire National Network for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO) ("GROWS", of which RAU is a member – see below), transport and proximity to university has been identified is a significant barrier for target young people. Collaboration with local providers and services to improve transport links is being explored. This is particularly relevant to the University, as provision of on-campus accommodation is expected to be somewhat limited in the short-to-medium term. That said, preferential allocation of accommodation is also being explored as part of value-add packages of support and positive transition for target groups. These considerations will be informed by students from local areas.

Locally, the University has representation on the Swindon Council sub-group for Higher Education, which is tasked with increasing participation to Higher Education for its residents.

Validation and Franchise arrangements

The RAU has strategic and formal partnerships in place with seven Further Education Colleges (FECs) for whom we validate degrees and in some cases offer top-up programmes to bachelor level. We support access through these networks, and we have identified an opportunity to further leverage the FEC partnerships to further our widening participation work.

The RAU is particularly pleased to be working in partnership with Capel Manor College, Enfield, for the delivery of land-based provision of relevance to the greater London area. This is an opportunity to widen RAU's portfolio of provision, and also achieve progress in reaching out to target WP audience through the validation and shared delivery of novel, and accessible, HE provision.

The RAU currently franchises three programmes to Capel Manor College, at their Enfield Campus. Two of these programmes commenced in 2016/17 and all three are currently recruiting for 2017 entry. There are at present 21 students studying on the first year of the two programmes, all of whom are giving very positive feedback on their experiences and who are also all likely to succeed and progress with their studies next year. A recent study visit to the RAU undertaken by one of the groups as part of their programme of study has proved successful, and feedback from the students been positive, so that opportunities for similar events for the remaining programmes will now be explored for the future.

Initial analysis of institutional data for Capel Manor students only in 2016-17 suggests that over 80 per cent are from state schools, which significantly increases our performance in the State School target area. The RAU is also now considering the development of additional franchised provision with Capel Manor for 2018 commencement, including provision of top-up degree programmes for the existing Foundation Degree awards and new subject areas of relevance to both institutions.

Such franchise arrangements allow the University to provide an Offer into different institution types, at different locations. This also serves to provide more accessible study beyond the location of our Cirencester campus; and, beyond the traditional perceptions that are associated with the RAU at Cirencester. We are exploring leveraging further provision, to benefit from the differences and opportunities franchise arrangements can afford. Part of this commitment is to helping recruit into our franchise partners.

National Networks for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO), 2013-15 and the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP), 2015-2020
The RAU has been a leading member of the Gloucestershire NNCO, "GROWS" (Gloucestershire Reaching Out With Schools) since its inception in 2013. This collaboration has been extremely valuable, linking the University with target colleges and schools. Activity under GROWS has included:

- Delivering collaborative insight days aimed at individual year groups at partnering institutions. Each partner delivers elements of a structured and layered programme which is built upon each year. A family day aimed at Y9 students and their parents was also delivered in the University of Gloucestershire and attended by all partners involved.
- GROWS is also exploring running a residential for Y10 students between two partner institutions, with students spending a day at each location, whilst residing in halls of residence.
- The GROWS website has been redesigned to contain information from each partner, targeted at different audiences, including primarily students, teachers and parents. This has allowed the website to reflect the needs of its audiences. It also contains a menu of activities that each party can request.

Whilst NNCO funding ceased at the end of December 2016, the five partner institutions, including RAU and the University of Gloucestershire, and three colleges, have committed to fund the continuation of selected work until December 2018. The collaboration is currently being reviewed for success before a further agreement is produced between the parties. The RAU, along with other members, has committed funding to:
- Maintain the Gloucestershire-wide outreach website
- Ensure activity takes place for Years 7 and 8 pupils (NCOP restricted to Year 9 and above)
- Have regular communication with key schools CEIAG staff.

Cirencester College, who were not involved in the original project, have also now joined the partnership.

Under the new NCOP agenda, the RAU continues its partnership with the University of Gloucestershire-led partnership, now called "GAP" (Gloucestershire Aspirations Programme). All six Gloucestershire-based institutions offering HE courses are collaborating under this new NCOP funded project GAP, led by the University of Gloucestershire.

Whilst the RAU already works with many of the schools targeted by the NCOP (GAP) project, the GAP will incorporate existing activity into the bespoke programmes being developed by the project. The project will allow the RAU to increase capacity to deliver additional activity and new activity, addressing gaps identified through needs analysis. The project activity will complement, and be in addition to, the current main access work undertaken as part of our local schools partnerships agenda.

The RAU is also an associate member of the Oxford Brookes-led NCOP, Study Higher, particularly in relation to serving target students in the Swindon area. These collaborations particularly serve our targets for LPNs, local and state schools.

Collaboration with Gloucestershire County Council

The RAU has progressed its relationship with the local Gloucestershire County Council Children in Care team and the Virtual Schools Network (VSN) to explore collaboration to promote, encourage and support higher education access and participation for young people in or leaving care. We recognise the low levels of participation in higher education amongst young people who are in or leaving care, as well as the barriers faced by those students who are care-givers. We are committed to supporting these target groups, highlighted by OFFA as a priority group. This has been reflected in our *Resource Plan* Targets and Milestones.

The targeted care-leaver programme started in 2015 with positive partnership discussions between RAU, the VSN and the Gloucestershire CC Prospects (CIC) team. It included exploration of particular challenges for care leavers and what RAU could contribute in terms of aspiration and awareness for HE pathways and tasters. The work builds on recent successes including a skills and experience on campus event at the RAU rural innovation centre (practical skills) for 6 young people. The RAU Year 11 Achievement Residential held in September 2016 also had one child in care in attendance.

Collaboration with the Western Vocational Progression Consortium (WVPC)

The University continues to participate in and support development of *Careerpilot* and *Lifepilot* websites as mechanisms to provide information advice and guidance to target audiences. The University is one of eleven universities in the South West region collaborating to fund, maintain, develop and promote the careers support websites managed by the Western Vocational Progression Consortium (WVPC):

- Lifepilot, engaging and supporting mature and part-time students (www.life-pilot.co.uk)
- Careerpilot, providing inspirational pathway and progression information to the full range of 13-19 year olds in the South West region and used by 50,000+ young people a month (www.careerpilot.org.uk)
- HE Skills Map supporting post 16 students in recognising skills and experiences relevant to progression to HE.

Partners support the development of the websites; develop further strategies to embed the websites into outreach and IAG activities; maintain the 'Parent Zone' developed as part of the four National Network for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO) partnerships in the South West; and 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 schools.

4.1.2 Priorities in 2017-18 *Access*

Given the strategic framework implemented in 2015-16, which included a phased model across a 3-5 year pipeline; alignment with OFFA's Strategic Plan (2015-2020); and specifically a long-term agenda of developing capacity and embedding across the whole of institution, the priorities contained in our 2017-18 Access Agreement remain largely relevant, with additional considerations documented to reflect areas where *faster progress* is required in terms of performance; and, to meet specific strategic priorities underlined by OFFA.

List of Priorities in Access

1. **Increase our <u>investment in Access</u> and continue to increase, consolidate, deepen and improve our schools and colleges outreach activities**
   - By 2018-19, our partnerships with target schools and colleges will have further deepened and been consolidated through iterative processes of review, development and tighter targeting.
   - Scaffolded, early programmes that support, encourage and develop pathways to and achievement for entry to higher education will be in place with engaged target schools and colleges. These build on the existing infrastructures that we have developed over 2015-16 onwards.
   - The new Colleges strategy includes, in first instance:
     o The development and implementation of partnership plans and activity that will be focused into relevant subject areas
     o A framework for partnership
     o Linking with the careers and employability agenda
     o Establishing evaluation processes and partnership review
     o Developing tailored projects that address identified challenges and areas of need to support progression to higher education

   - Our range of targeted and scaffolded activities will continue or be put in place and continuously improved through action learning, for example:
     o Working with parents and carers programme
     o Residential camp programmes for target schools and pupils
     o Looked after children/ care leavers aspirations and development programme
     o School Awards scheme

     o Professional Development Series for teachers and school/college staff
     o Curriculum enrichment and alignment projects, further aligning activity with the RAU Offer
       ▪ Working with the academy to continue projects to encourage access to our niche university courses that have more traditional cohorts.

- o Careers, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship challenge programme
- o Programme linked specifically to increasing use of the Rural Innovation Centre (RIC) and leveraging the local Agri-tech agenda
- o Mentoring / Buddy programme
- o Extended Ambassadors/ Role Models programme, including training from school staff to aide ambassadors' skills in working in the classroom and particularly in supporting raising attainment
- o Wider community engagement activities held at the university and local towns

- Building from practice in 2015-16, we will continue to enhance and widen external partnerships and collaboration, particularly at the local level and with target priority schools and colleges; and, exploring deeper and broader partnerships and collaborations at the national level.

2. **Expand provision and <u>collaboration with FECs</u>, including validation and franchise arrangements; flexible offer /mode; and other opportunities**
   - Further explore and realise opportunities to expand collaboration and support recruitment and access to existing partners and particularly our franchise arrangement, which is attracting target students.
   - Broaden partnerships with FECs and their target students to further encourage participation and ensure effective pathways to undergraduate level.

3. **Continue the development, and ensure <u>targeted programme effectiveness</u> to support the participation of specific target groups**
   - White boys from disadvantaged backgrounds
     - o As many courses within the teaching programme at the RAU provide hands- on, practical skills-building components, and are grounded in land-based education and careers, there is an opportunity to create a unique and targeted *Boys Programme,* themed through our disciplinary lens, to improve access and success in HE for young males from WCB in our local area. Through research and in consideration of what we are able to provide, the RAU will engage with and increase opportunities for young white males from lower SES backgrounds to aspire to, access and succeed in higher education. Activities that respond to identified challenges will include:
       - ▪ Nuanced targeting and starting interventions early
       - ▪ Securing appropriate mentors, delivering a mentorship programme
       - ▪ Provision of targeted information, advice and guidance
       - ▪ Working with parents, community and employers as key influencers

   - Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds
     - o The work that the RAU has been doing in outreach, including school partnerships and profiling, as well as through research undertaken with the schools within the Gloucestershire NNCO region, has identified key target local schools and community areas.
     - o In providing access for BME students, we are informed by best practice and literature, which considers that:

- ▪ An inclusive rather than a targeted approach is more effective for creating change
- ▪ Inclusive teaching and learning practices are critical for access and success, and include:
  - Curriculum design and content, ensuring a diverse, accessible and multicultural curriculum
  - Delivery & pedagogy
  - Student assessment & feedback
  - o Including early integration into institution's culture and creating sense of belonging is critical at the access and transition phases
  - o Celebrating and valuing cultures & creating a campus environment that values and validates diverse cultures can be experienced

- Care leavers
  - o Activity for 2018-19 will continue to build on the programme initiated in 2015- 16, in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council YST and then the Virtual School Network.
    - ▪ Over the next 5-year period, the RAU aims to increase the number of care leavers transitioning to study at their institution by 3%, with at least 2 care leavers enrolled in 2018-19.

  - o Our programme considers and includes the following best practice:
    - ▪ Cooperation between education providers (schools, colleges and universities) and the care system
    - ▪ Common optimistic approach and a culture of high expectations
    - ▪ Ongoing practical, financial, academic and emotional support and assistance
    - ▪ Established protocols in higher education institutions
    - ▪ Developing and nurturing personal resilience and motivation of the young person
    - ▪ Ongoing support beyond the age of 18 (Mendes, Michell & Wilson, 2014)

- Disabled students (see pages 28-30)
- Mature learners (see page 16)

4. **Further develop and implement <u>evaluation practices</u> in delivery to schools and colleges**
   - Further develop and embed evaluation and reflective assessment practices that facilitate improved understanding of our partners and 'what works'.
   - Ongoing monitoring development, including targeting and assessment of outputs and outcomes data
   - Continue to develop evidence base for *Access* activity, and further embed or develop effective monitoring, evaluation and data capture systems.
   - The university will endeavour to leverage the university's existing data capture systems.
   - Further collection and application of community and key stakeholder information and data to improve the University's practices in relation to raising aspirations and achievement within under-represented groups and communities through targeted and relevant activity.

- Continue insight and research/diagnostic activity to provide deeper understanding of our contexts, stakeholders and target learner cohorts.

5. **Support the <u>raising attainment</u> agenda in target schools and colleges**
   - Work in raising attainment in schools will build from our activity in place from 2015-16, on the theme of "achievement".
   - We will expand our collaboration with a number of our target partner schools (up to 10 schools) to identify areas of need that address specific attainment gaps, and co-create a strategy and plan to address these, including best practice elements in raising attainment, such as:
     - Activity delivery (see below)
     - Leadership and professional development capacity
     - Close links with parents and increasing community support
     - Effective use of data
     - An innovative curriculum
     - Fostering a culture of high expectations

   - We will develop further knowledge of needs areas and apply best practice in raising attainment in school contexts

   - **<u>Additional activity</u>** to be implemented by 2018- 19 will be to:
     - In consultation with our target schools (10), offer a range of academic sessions (at minimum 1 programme per school, comprising a minimum of 6 activities per annum, **to be agreed with the schools**), designed to support attainment, which may include, but not be limited to:
       - Homework clubs
       - Tutoring programmes
       - Subject coaching sessions
       - Learner attainment and study skills programme
       - Learner Challenge programmes
     - Whilst activities and focus areas need to be determined in conjunction with the target schools to ensure relevance and impact, it is intended that we will specifically seek to support, for example:
       - Curriculum areas of relevance to the RAU offer (including science, geography, land-based studies, business and enterprise)
       - Study and exam skills
   - Target pupils with core learning in literacy and numeracy

4.2   Student Success

4.2.1   Performance Assessment – Retention and Success

The university maintains its strong reputation in securing high rates of retention for all students. In 2015-16, we achieved 94.8 per cent of young full-time first degree entrants qualifying or continuing study following their year of entry. For mature learners, this percentage was 97.3%. A proportion of young entrants not continuing at the RAU also stay in higher education generally, which we view as positive attrition. For 2015-16, percentage of non-continuation in any higher education for young entrants was 3.3%.

We have a consistent high performance in retaining students in HE (measured by HESA Table 3a). The graphs below illustrate our performance since 2009-10 for Young and Mature entrants.

Non-continuation following year of entry: full-time first degree <u>Young</u> Entrants

% Young Entrants no longer in any HE

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
■ % Young Entrants no longer in HE	10.6	5.3	6.6	1.6	3.7	3.3
■ HESA Benchmark	7.5	6.4	5.8	6.5	6.2	6.5
■ Performance Gap						

Year

■ % Young Entrants no longer in HE ■ HESA Benchmark ■ Performance Gap
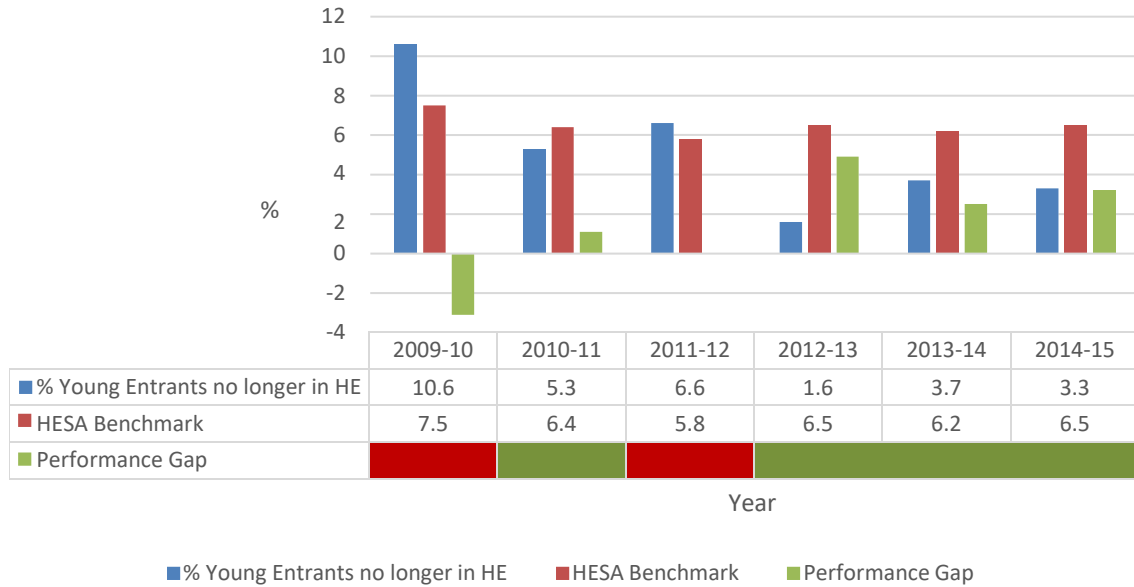
Non-continuation following year of entry: full-time first degree <u>Mature</u> Entrants

% Mature Entrants no longer in any HE

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
■ % Mature Entrants no longer in HE	8	4.9	13.2		9.5	2.7
■ HESA Benchmark	13.4	12.5	10		12.9	11.4
■ Performance Gap						

Year

■ % Mature Entrants no longer in HE ■ HESA Benchmark ■ Performance Gap
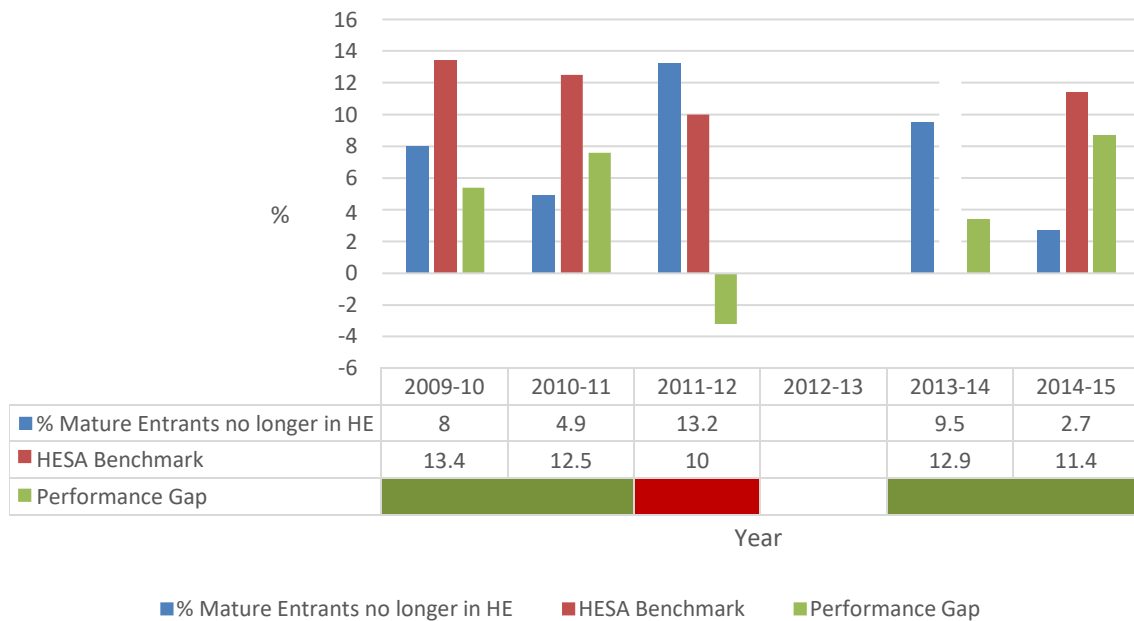
HESA data not available for 2012-13

4.2.2   Performance evaluation – Retention and Success

The University adopts teaching and support strategies which are embedded into standard practices and available to all students. The University's commitment to inclusive teaching practice is embedded in teaching and learning policy. There is a focus on experiential and practical learning and skills acquisition, with employability and skills developed integrally to the curriculum. For example:

- Compulsory assessed work placements into degree programmes
- Skills development and practical learning using the farms, innovation centre and new Farm 491 facilities; and, leveraging relationships with employers

In 2015-16, the RAU has commenced work on exploring Transition Pedagogy[8] as a framework to conceptualise student support and success, particularly from offer to end of first year. This takes into account the critical *transition-in* and *first year experience* periods, as key components of the *student lifecycle*. It is envisaged that this will support and provide recommendations into continuous improvement of student support and development, and the in-progress curriculum developments.

Transition-in

We acknowledge the importance of the transition-in phase of the *student lifecycle* as a critical juncture for student participation and ongoing success. Our support and development activities around the transition-in phase include the student "My RAU" portal; various information, advice and guidance literature; a full O-week programme; pre-induction days; "Experience Days" for students with an offer; taster experiences; Applicant Days and, connecting with parents, carers and extended family. These events offer opportunity to connect with the campus community, academic and support staff.

As part of an ongoing commitment to ensuring accessibility and offer attractiveness, the University will continue to explore:
- Barriers to access and enrolment, including consideration and deepening understanding of specific target groups and their needs and challenges
- Required improvements to products, services and processes, considering target groups
- Required institutional developments, including consideration of specific target groups (this links into other considerations under *success* and *progression* including the University Offer)

4.2.3   Retention and Success

Across the whole degree, academic, learning and pastoral support is available to all students. The University hosts a responsive range of additional study skills workshops, which are provided on a group-level basis and by request can be facilitated one-to-one. These sessions are offered as extra-curricular activities, or are embedded into university curricula. The careers and employability service also provide continuing advice and support to students, up to three years after graduating. Availability of part-time employment on and off the campus is promoted and students looking for employment during their studies, as well as career development, are supported.

4.2.4   Student Support

As the RAU continues towards its aspirational recruitment targets over the next five years and particularly with increased and recalibrated efforts to widen participation to more diverse learner cohorts, we are acutely aware of the need to continuously review and develop our provisions in student support and success and meet the needs of all our learners.

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[8] *Kift, Sally (2015) A Decade of Transition Pedagogy: A Quantum Leap in Conceptualising the First Year Experience, HERDSA Review of Higher Education, Vol.2*

Student Support Services at the University provide a professional, responsive service which enables and empowers students to fulfil their potential. It is a confidential support service which is student led, student specific and tailored to the student needs.

The University collaborates with a range of partners, including healthcare, students, mental health services, the police and the Council, etc.

Key services include:

- A flexible Wellbeing drop-in service to help students find strategies to cope with common issues while at the University
- A small confidential counselling service for students where students can talk about personal issues in order to find a new perspective on them and feel more able to cope.
- Access to an external confidential Counselling service which provides appointments face to face or by phone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- An important link between the University-wide support structures. To act as a first point of contact for the majority of questions students may have.
- Assistance with any medical concerns and ailments and for general health promotional advice.
- A confidential, free, friendly sexual health advice and support.

Improvements

- STARs – Support Team Advisor Reps have been appointed from September 2016 to provide out of hours peer support, guidance and signposting services for residential students. STARs are all second or third years students and they are a mix of international students with both males and females being appointed.
  - STARs assist students to settle into University life by introducing them to their new surroundings, ensuring nobody is left lonely.
  - The STARs are available from the Student Support Services Hub each day.
  - STARs have been instrumental in setting up a range of new community events which form part of the social calendar. Events are aimed at attracting all students to encourage healthy living.

  "I have had a lot of positive feedback regarding the STARs from both students and staff. Challenges that students came to me with ranged from simple queries to more serious concerns such as contemplating leaving the uni for various reasons. This has been prevented through intervention and many students that came to me for advice mentioned that, had it not been for there being a student they can talk to, then they would have bottled up their concerns and simply left when it got too much." **Second Year student STAR**

- A forum is being set up between Student Support Services and other support services in the University to share information on vulnerable, at risk students. The aim of this group will be to ensure advice and help is consistent across the board. The group will consist of disabilities, medical services, counselling and any other appropriate support services involved in pastoral care.

Academic support and curriculum

The University will be continuing to ensure institution curriculum aligned with best practice and supports the inclusion and retention of students from WP backgrounds.

Curriculum developments to be considered include:

- Responding to the TEF and ensuring quality, excellence and inclusivity in teaching and learning
- Course offer, learning pathways (access and entry) and progression
- Study mode, including part-time and other flexible options
- Leveraging RAU's industry and employer engagement, including work-based learning
- Recruitment and access campaigns, market research requirements
- Embedded skills, careers and employability attributes and experiences

This is a key opportunity to embed inclusive curriculum and addressing issues and opportunities for widening participation. We see this as an ongoing opportunity, and by 2018-19, the University will be:

- Annually measuring success for target groups
- Working with partners (e.g. FECs) to enhance and expand flexible provision and pathways
- Exploring any differences in attainment and success amongst target and non-target groups, and seeking to understand challenges and solutions
- Ensuring student voice and experience is informing and contributing to the creation of ongoing improvements in teaching and learning
- Appropriately responding to market insights and student voice in terms of relevant developments in course offer, modules, development, employability and assessments, specifically taking into account target cohorts in the widening participation agenda.
- Recognising the efforts and contributions of academic and professional staff in relation to widening participation and inclusive curricula.

The University is also currently piloting supporting technologies to enhance teaching and learning activities and provide an improved student learning experience. These include lecture capture software enabling recordings of lectures and practical sessions to be available for subsequent review by students and the provision of a range of educational training and skills development resources designed to enhance the skills required for more effective and supported learning in higher education. These capabilities continue to be piloted and evaluated for impact.

Peer and Personal Tutor Support and Development

All students are allocated a personal tutor who is a member of academic staff.

The RAU's pilot study on peer-to-peer learning sets is being undertaken in 2016-17, using volunteer groups of students from a range of programmes and year groups, working with academic tutors to develop their academic skills and enhance their academic potential, supported by external educators. As part of this process, we are identifying needs in relation to the development of specific resources required for those involved in the pilot project. In 2018-19, this project will be implemented and in the process of evaluation and further improvements (as required). In so doing, the University will explore outcomes for different target groups, gather insights into challenges and opportunities, and adjust the programme accordingly.

A new position of Senior Tutor has been created, to refine and strengthen the personal tutoring systems across the University. As part of this process, we are exploring a range of good practice initiatives provided through GuildHE and the NUS, as well as linking with local schools and colleges to identify the nature of support services provided to Level 3 learners such that we can develop complementarity across systems and manage expectations and transitions effectively.

In this area, feedback from students has provided deeper understanding of the particular challenges and service offer that need to be addressed, and include:

- Service offer improvements:
    - Increasing service utilisation
    - Raising visibility and presence (promotion)
    - Increased collaboration and relationships with the Student Union
    - Integration with employability, e.g. CV skills
    - Ensuring training for tutors, and ensuring skillsets in the transition space, particularly to facilitate belonging and community

- Common issues presenting at Student Union:
    - Home sickness (tends to happen more in 2nd term)
    - Growing number of students requiring mental health support

Process and Service Improvements

An institutional, cross-disciplinary team including staff from Registry and Admissions, Management Information Systems, IT, the Web Development Team and Marketing has been established to explore improvement of services provided to students. Key items progressed include:

- Development of an electronic online platform (e.g. digitisation of current paper forms means using the web as a means of widening participation by providing access to services and an online 24/7 helpdesk) for all Student Registry services accessed via the University website and Student Portal. This is a continuing project from 2015-16.
- Development of on-line resources to support the new Personal Tutoring system, including information, advice and guidance for students, key FAQs and on-line help desk facility aimed at providing greater 'out-of-hours' and self-help support

Disabled Students

The proportion of students claiming DSA is significantly higher than HESA benchmark, at 11.4% in 2015-16 compared to the benchmark of 8.0%.

The University continues to provide effective services to support disabled students, as evidenced by our high rate of retention. We operate an inclusive learning environment based on the learning styles of SpLD students, providing all information electronically to an accessible document standard via Moodle [VLE]; this includes all lecture notes, presentations and other learning materials which are published at least 2 days in advance of the lecture. Notwithstanding, our review of provision in 2016-17 has identified the following challenges, which are currently being explored in terms of solutions, and which by 2018-19 should be in place:

- Further improving physical access around campus and space utilisation for disabled students.
    - This has included:

- A review by an external consultant (end 2016)
- Student 'walk-throughs' to identify where provision can be improved
- Consideration of additional requirements and service improvements based on the needs of current students

- Ensuring and improving inclusive approaches to curriculum design and teaching and whole-institution and embedded approaches to supporting disabled students, particularly as integrated with curriculum

- Evaluation and research to better understand and inform practices in relation to supporting disabled students
  - This includes:
    - Evaluation of practices supporting disabled students, their impact and recommendations for improvements
    - Better understanding the reasons why the RAU course offer attracts higher numbers of dyslexic students
    - Exploring discrete data on retention, progression and attainment for disabled learners and exploration of differences in success and progression
    - Exploration of incoming and outgoing student qualifications, and whether the RAU can demonstrate greater added value in terms of progress.

- Increased awareness and professional development for academic and professional staff
  - We have identified a need to further increase awareness of disabled students' needs, effective support mechanisms and inclusive curriculum design
  - There is opportunity to offer staff training and professional development, as a priority for all staff. This will increase the level of awareness and delivery of effective support. There is an opportunity to make such training and development mandatory as part of institutional change. A key element of this will be linking to institutional agendas.

- In the Access area, there are a number of concerns and opportunities.
  - Specific challenges are presenting:
    - Lack of disclosure or reluctance to disclose due to negative perceptions that a disability will put the student at a disadvantage in terms of progression and entry to university
    - Lack of confidence by students in their own abilities / low self-esteem / low expectations
    - Lack of awareness of support and reasonable adjustments available at university, and in some cases, students not being aware they can progress to higher education at all.

  - By 2018-19, solutions in place to address these challenges include:
    - Provision of improved information and guidance into schools and colleges to ensure early identification and registering. Specifically, including the advice to apply for DSA at same time as Student Loans applications
    - Strengthening links with Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCos)
    - Better communications with applicants

- Target students are identified for those who record on UCAS system
- Specifically addressing perceptions of disadvantage because of disability
  - Provision of Professional Development events:
    - With target schools and colleges staff
    - Internally, with key staff and ambassadors delivering the widening participation access agenda
  - Attendance from Disability Officer at school activities, particularly in partner schools and colleges

At the RAU, we encourage disabled students to disclose their circumstances on application and provide advice prior to entry in an endeavour to get supporting arrangements in place as quickly as possible. To this end, the University employs a dyslexia tutor and a counsellor who can provide learning support to meet the needs of target students. Ensuring provision of ongoing support has been identified as a challenge, with only approximately 20% of the students accessing initial advice going on to register for and access ongoing support.

Information is provided via the website, prospectus, Open Days and Applicant Days, at Induction and repeated by email during the year; in addition the Disability Officer is a member of the SENCo Forum and spreads information about the DSA to school and college SENCos. There is however more scope to address identified issues.

RAU has high profile national representation on boards such as NADP and of ADSHE, and the newly formed BIS Disabled Students Sector Leadership Group, which was set up to establish the criteria for an inclusive learning environment to replace the DSA.

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Students

We note and are cognisant of the fact that the very small cohort sizes for BME students mean that a shift in just one headcount makes significant difference to retention data and proportions. In 2015-16, the University had attrition of one student from a BME background (out of the five students enrolled).

Small cohort sizes make comparative analysis with overall retention rate (at 94.1 per cent for all young, first time degree entrants in 2015-16) problematic, however the University is ensuring that specific target groups are provided with accessible, targeted support and development during their degree studies through a range of enhanced student support services (see sections on priorities for success and progression), particularly including peer and tutor personal support networks. In relation to target groups, particularly where cohort sizes are very small, we are concerned with identifying qualitative data to better understand the challenges and barriers to success, to enable us to proactively ensure that our continuation rates are high and achievement levels comparable.

In relation to graduate outcomes, the majority of BME students (of those who responded to the DHLE in 2015-16) choose further full-time study or go into full-time employment (total 66.7%). The total graduate employability for the discrete BME group in 2015-16 was 83.3%, which fell slightly below that of the whole cohort, at 94.7%. However, whilst the ***graduate level*** employment outcome (by SOC) for 2015-16 for the total cohort was 71%, of the BME students who reported being in full or part-time employment, the graduate level employment for this group was 87.5%.

2015-16 Graduate Outcomes: BME students (discrete group)	%
Working full time	38.89
Working part time	5.56
Due to start a job	5.56
Engaged in full-time study	27.78
Engaged in part-time study	0.00
Travelling	0.00
Doing something else (e.g. retired, looking after home or family)	5.56
Unemployed	*16.67*
TOTAL EMPLOYABILITY	**83.33**

Our progression activity under this Access Agreement seeks to ensure comparable level graduate outcomes for target and under-represented groups, with specific provision made for:

- Exploring qualitative data to better understand progression for target groups to tailor support and development and create an evidence base for practice; and,
- Enhanced activity, support and development, specifically in relation to access to, and engagement and experiences with, employers and industry.

Accordingly, whilst the University invests a significant amount of funding into the *access* area to increase participation performance, we have also provided for resources in the *success* and *progression* areas to specifically support these small targeted cohorts, and lay foundations for a lift in participation as our strategy begins to produce increasing enrolment outcomes.

4.2.5   Priorities in 2018-19 *Retention and Success*
The university has identified the following key priorities for student success and retention:

1. **Targeted student support and development services**
   - Ensure development and evaluation of targeted support for non-traditional cohorts across the *student lifecycle.* Ensure provision supports target cohorts and provides inclusive, informed, engaged best practice retention and success agenda, paying particular attention to:
     - o Offers, enrolments and acceptances
       - ▪ Focus area is the applicant / student journey (transition to university)
     - o University experience (success and retention)
       - ▪ Focus areas are personal tutor system, provision of student support and career and employability support and development
     - o Graduate outcomes (progression)
       - ▪ Focus area linking to employers and industry

2. **Capacity, professional development and training**
   - Provide professional development and training for staff relating to inclusive practices in and out of the curriculum, to ensure course and curriculum design, assessment,

feedback and student support recognise the diverse backgrounds of students and can respond effectively.

- Ensure feedback loops, data capture and sharing of good practice to inform future practices and continue developing understanding of challenges and what works for more diverse cohorts

3. **Impact assessment of the Careers and Employability strategy on student success**
   - Evaluation of the careers and employability strategy and activity (being implemented from 2016-17), taking specific account of impact and outcomes for target cohorts in the widening participation agenda.
   - Considers the challenges faced by non-traditional students in terms of existing networks and access to the professions and employment/ industry; and seeks to assess whether barriers are being removed.

4. **Student consultation**
   - Continued progress and development of the consultation strategy and platform for student voice, to enhance engagement of student and explore the potential for co-creation of solutions in partnership with students on institutional issues.
   - This will include a focus on issues related to access, participation, success, financial support and progression of different target groups.
   - A solution-orientated "challenge" model may be adopted, which also provides students with employability and innovation skills and experiences.

4.3   Progression

Employability at the University is a key pillar of the university's offer, and includes opportunities for employment and employment experiences (work-based learning modules) embedded in degree programmes and post-graduation. The employability agenda is an integrated programme that operates in-curriculum, co-curricular and extra-curricular engagement. It includes specific curriculum-linked and assessed activity; career development and planning support; personal and professional development; access and engagement opportunities with employers; and a range of available employment options. Postgraduate study options are highlighted and discussed with students on an individual basis as part of the careers advice and guidance offered. Programme managers also raise the possibilities of appropriate progression routes to undergraduate students.

4.3.1   Performance assessment – Graduate destinations

In 2015-16 we our graduate employability was 94.7 per cent of full-time students in employment or further study six months after graduation.

The University are cognisant of a slightly decreased percentage trend over the past four years, which we are seeking to address through the development and implementation of a review and action agenda for Careers and Employability (commenced 2016-17). The following graph shows our trend line.

Overall Graduate Employability (%)

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
■ Employability Rate (%) Graduates in employment 6 months after graduation	96.3	98.2	93.7	94.7
■ HESA Benchmark	93.7	93.7	93.4	
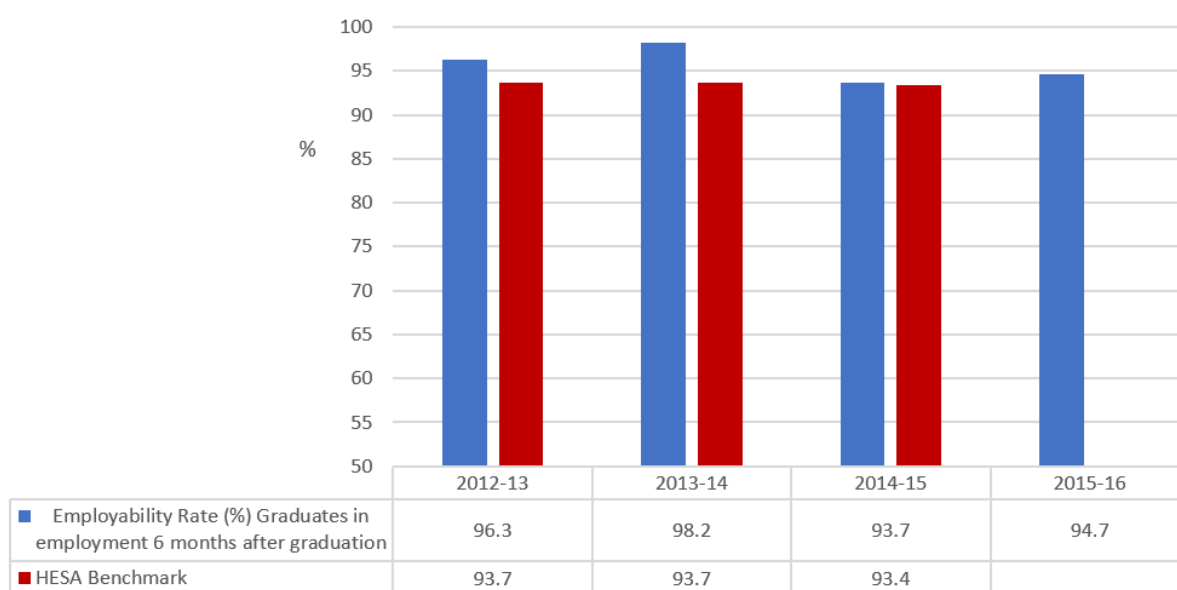
The University is also aware that development and evaluation of the careers and employability (progression) agenda needs to incorporate:

- Metrics and monitoring for graduate level employability
- Monitoring of outcomes by target cohorts, compared with non-target cohorts

By 2018-19, these monitoring mechanisms will be in place.

Careers and Employability Provision
The University provides Careers Information, Advice and Guidance to all students and alumni for up to two years post-graduation. We support students with employability skills development, organise annual careers fairs and manage an on-line jobs portal.

Employer collaboration occurs on daily basis, including advertising of vacancies and student engagement activities. The University organises Careers Fairs involving more than 60 employers across 3 events, giving students valuable opportunity to network and build contacts with industry and employers. Graduate employment is a primary focus, and remains a key target in the corporate plan 2015-2020.

This has provided impetus for further exploration with a view to developing a comprehensive employability strategy, into which considerations for a diverse range of students will be mapped. This has commenced in 2016-17.

The Careers & Employment Strategy proposes to work across the curriculum to embed employability in a systematic way and position RAU students as premium employment prospects in their field. As part of this, we undertake to monitor progression outcomes for different student groups, and ensure any identified gaps in progression are addressed.

Specifically, this is intended to also include the development of a more effective target for *Progression*, now included in this 2018-19 Access Agreement.

4.3.2 Priorities in 2018-19 *Progression*

Identified priorities in the area of progression remain as:

1. **Evaluation and data capture to assess Careers and Employability impact for target cohorts**
    -   Data capture and monitoring to better explore, understand and compare/contrast progression of different target groups and according to student attributes.

2. **Professional development and networks activity for target cohorts**
    -   In-line with institutional development of the careers and employability strategy, ensure support and development strategies for, and consideration of, students from widening participation backgrounds, including:
        o   Provide support to secure and incentivise work placements
        o   Establishment of a career / professional mentor programme (leveraging alumni and employer partnerships)
            -   These activities recognise lower access to professional networks and opportunities amongst target cohorts

4.4 Activity investments and underpinning evidence

4.4.1 Literature and good practice

Key practices taken into account in this Access Agreement include:

-   Targeted and progressive programs including intensive support
-   Reaching out to mature learners and employees
-   Identifying and working with key influencers and role models
-   Working to address identified attainment gaps
-   Clear strategies for delivering information, advice and guidance
-   Collaborative and engaged community partnerships which are *integrative* or *transformational*
-   Creating a sense of belonging and identity, particularly at transition in (orientation)
-   Simple financial support packages coupled with information
-   Starting employability support at pre-entry
-   Strategies for monitoring and evaluation; collaboration between academics and practitioners
-   Application of findings to part-time as well as full-time learners

Particularly in the *Access* area, the University continues to apply best -practice supporting successful widening participation programmes[9]. Of particular note:

1. Consistent and sustained interventions with structured and coherent frameworks
2. Early interventions
3. Partnership activity

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[9] Moore J., Sanders, J., & Higham, L. (2013). *Literature review of research into widening participation to higher education: Higher Education Funding Council for England.*

4. Access to HE-related information, advice and guidance (IAG)
5. Reaching out to key influencers, evaluating interventions
6. Acknowledgement that friends, family and peers have an important supporting role
7. Addressing retention and success by approaches which develop peer relations; staff-student interaction; identity as successful HE learners; and, a career-relevant HE experience.
8. Ensuring employer engagement in widening participation and the employability of graduates.

Evidence based best-practice in WP management and practice is taken into account in the development and maintenance of the widening participation programme along with items below, which evidence good practice identified in the *OFFA Key Statistics on Agreements*. These have been mapped across the *student lifecycle*:

The student lifecycle		
Access	**Success**	**Progression**
Tracking the progress of students that attend outreach schemes who subsequently apply to university	Implementation of infrastructure such as online support and flexible learning	Interview skills training and workshops
Assessing the attainment of students who have been reached by access activity	Examining withdrawal, degree outcome, and employability rates for students from underrepresented groups, before and after introduction of student success and progression schemes	Information sessions about postgraduate study and careers
Collaborations with local employers	Specific activity and support targeting mature and part-time learners	Collaborations with local international employers
Interview skills training and workshops	Careers elements built into curricula	Volunteering opportunities
Careers advice targeted at students from underrepresented groups	Entrepreneurship and business skills courses and training	Bursaries to enable students to attend interviews
Use of contextual information in admissions	Analysing the impact of financial support schemes on access and retention	Careers advice targeted at students from underrepresented groups
Academic staff conducting research within institutions on the range of issues affecting under-represented and disadvantaged groups	Development and expansion of part-time and flexible provision	Entrepreneurship and business skills courses and training
	Academic staff conducting research within institutions on the range of issues affecting under-represented and disadvantaged groups	Employability and progression support directed at mature and part-time learners
	Whole institution focus groups to research and develop good practice in relation to supporting p/t and mature students	
	Targeted financial support for mature and p/t learners	

4.5 Investment Strategy for Access & Student Success

In line with previous commitments in previous Access Agreements, in 2018-19 the University proposes to allocate 32 per cent of additional fee income to access, student success, progression

and financial support measures. **This is in line with OFFA Guidance regarding investment and performance.**

Building on commitments in our 2017-18 Access Agreement, we propose a further slight shift in weighting of investment across *Access*, student *Success, Financial Support* and *Progression*, in accordance with our performance assessment and a *smarter, evidence-based spend* strategy.

4.5.1   Spend across access and student support measures

It is predicted that for 2018-19 the total higher fee income investment in outreach and student success (including access, success, progression and financial support) will be **£927,177**. The following table provides a broad overview of the University's proposed investment in outreach and student success over the next five-year period, including the percentage of total fund allocated to each area.

Expenditure Area	2017-18		2018-19		2019-20		2020-21		2021-22	
	£	% of HFI	£	% of HFI	£	% of HFI	£	% of HFI	£	% of HFI
Access Expenditure	408,311	14.5	515,743	17.8	492,520	15.5	519,668	15	512,187	14.5
Student Successs Expenditure	81,662	2.9	84,025	2.9	95,327	3	114,327	3.3	116,567	3.3
Progression Expenditure	42,239	1.5	43,461	1.5	54,018	1.7	58,896	1.7	60,050	1.7
Financial Support Expenditure	318,201	11.3	283,948	9.8	317,755	10	353,374	10.2	377,959	10.7
TOTAL	850,413	30.2	927,177	32.0	959,620	30.2	1,046,265	30.2	1,066,763	30.2

4.6   Financial support for students

The University is committed to ensuring all students are successful in their studies, and to minimising negative attrition. Particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, we recognise that the upfront costs of study at Phase 2 on the *student lifecycle* "Offer, Acceptances, Enrolments"; and also costs embedded in successive years of study (e.g. materials, study trips and work placements), constitute potential barriers to access and ongoing participation. Whilst the impact of financial support packages, particularly upon choice to study at university, has been found to be negligible in recent studies, at the institutional level there is evidence for the positive impact of financial support on retention and student experience.[10]

To advance our understanding and provide a more robust evidence base and methodology for ongoing assessment and evaluation, in 2015-16 the University participated as one of five universities in a pilot research study into the impact of financial support. This was commissioned by the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) and is being conducted by Dr Colin McCaig at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU). The study included an evaluation of our financial support offer.

In the RAU experience, the evaluation was limited in terms of drawing meaningful conclusions, due to variables which included a limited sample size in one of the cohorts and availability of comparable datasets. However, for the larger cohort (approximately 200 students) it was determined via application of the model that all students receiving financial support continued into next reporting year, showing retention outcomes. These outcomes were comparable to the comparison group of students receiving no financial support, who were similarly retained. Also, it was noted that financial support was allocated evenly across courses, POLAR3 scores, and Tariff points.

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[10] *Whiteford, G., & Trinidad, S. Equity scholarship provision and impacts; Zacharias (2016) Moving Beyond Acts of Faith Effective Scholarships for Equity Students; Reed, R. J., & Hurd, B. (2016). A value beyond money? Assessing the impact of equity scholarships: from access to success.* Studies in Higher Education, 41*(7)*, 1236-1250.

The University will utilise relevant components of the model for subsequent years in terms of evaluation of financial support, and particularly consider the application of the qualitative tools provided, to better understand the impact of financial support. However, it is considered that, notwithstanding this study, there is further evaluation required to understand the impact of financial packages and what works in context. In 2018-19, a full evaluation including collection of qualitative data from students will be in place, as a model that can be applied on an annual basis.

4.6.1   Financial Support Objectives

The following objectives from our 2017-18 Agreement in relation to provision of financial support to students remain relevant:

1. Further develop financial support packages for disadvantaged students and at-risk learners that are responsive and flexible to meet changing needs in line with best-practice.
2. Continue to seek ways in which to maximise the impact of financial support packages including levels and timing of financial support bursaries and scholarships, supporting professional development or supporting target students in connecting to employers.
3. Monitor, evaluate and critically assess the impact of institutional financial support packages to gain better understanding of outcomes and to inform future practices. This includes implementation of relevant evaluation practises building upon the recent OFFA study into the impact of financial support (as per above); and, consultation with the student body regarding how financial support can be improved, tailored and leveraged for outcomes that support student success and progression.

4.6.2   Performance evaluation: scholarships and bursaries

The University has consistently targeted bursaries, scholarships and fee waivers at students from the lowest income households, where income is <£25,000. In addition, we have actively sought to establish and guide scholarships and awards from other income streams (e.g. philanthropic) to prioritise the most disadvantaged students. The range of scholarships are provided on the website.

In addition, the University has provided and continues to provide:

1. A hardship fund, which is available to disadvantaged students experiencing short-term financial difficulties and pressure and which is accessible at any point in the academic year.
2. Free professional financial support and advisory services at the individual level, provided by an accountant who is familiar with the higher education sector.
3. Opportunities for students to undertake part-time paid employment on campus, for example in facilities, administrative and/or student ambassador positions.
4. A Cirencester Alumni fund providing support for students to undertake significant career enhancement activities linked to their studies, such as support for internships and work placements, which otherwise would not be feasible due to financial constraints.

4.6.3   Priorities 2016-17 *Financial Support*

The university has identified key priorities as follows:

1. **Annually evaluate the impact of financial support and ensure institutional mechanisms for doing so are in place; and, make appropriate adjustments based on evidence**
   - Annual review and implementation of appropriate findings from the OFFA research study, and complement with other relevant evaluative mechanisms, to assess the impact, and increase effectiveness of, our financial support packages. For example:
     - Ensure an appropriate data capture, analysis and monitoring system for evaluation.
     - Strategic targeting and ongoing development of the evidence base informing decision making regarding scholarships and other grants that are responsive to student needs.
     - Ensure relevant, targeted financial support is provided across the student lifecycle and exploring provision in Access
     - Provide added support for high need target groups, e.g. care leavers.

2. **Provision of targeted support in identified areas of need**
   - Includes exploration and documentation of the real costs of studying at the University, including differences in requirements by course (additional funds for placements, visits, and/or materials and resources, for example) and understanding 'cost hotspots' across degree programmes.
   - Financial implications and financial support solutions will be reviewed and implemented, as appropriate.

4.6.4   Spend on fee waivers, bursaries and scholarships

The following table illustrates the proposed range of financial support packages offered by the university for 2017-18. It is proposed that it would be reviewed to assess relevance in terms of the above to support students in the future.

Award type	Amount per new student	Brief description
Core Bursary (Means Tested)	£1,000 per annum	Awarded automatically to all students who accept a firm offer prior to the middle of May with an assessed household income of <£25k p/a. Awards paid in three termly instalments throughout each year of study.
Support Bursary (Means Tested)	£1,000 per annum	Awarded upon application to students not in receipt of any other support with household incomes <£42,600 p/a. Students must also demonstrate financial need by fulfilling a minimum of one Eligibility Criteria* or by providing other supporting evidence and statement(s). Awards paid in three termly instalments throughout each year of study.
Skills Bursary	£250.00 First and second year only	Bursary to support students in the acquisition of degree relevant professional skills to enhance employability and progression and complement academic programme. Available to all students. Where additional bursaries are available, priority will be given to disadvantaged students (as identified by either of above methods).

* Eligibility Criteria:

1) First generation higher education student
2) Specified school or college
3) Students with a disability
4) Low higher education participation neighbourhood background (POLAR3)
5) Member of a black minority ethnic (BME) group
6) Mature student
7) Part-time student
8) Care leaver / care giver

5   Targets and milestones

Targets and milestones are contained in the Access Agreement Resource Plan, annexed. Given our performance assessment, the University has set stretching targets in the *Access* domain, that acknowledge our position but which represent a sustained commitment and effort to make *faster progress* institutionally, as well as contributing to the sector.

The University acknowledges that more progress is required to achieve a more socially representative intake, and this journey will also require ensuring iterative consideration and improvement of student success and progression measures to ensure maintenance of high performance in these areas. Although targets are stretching, through adopting recommendations of the WP Review (which align with the OFFA Strategic Plan priorities), we are confident and committed to progressing outcomes.

6   Monitoring and evaluation arrangements

The University continues to apply the models and practice identified as part of the WP Review as a means by which progress can be measured. We will continue to review policy, best practice and emerging literature to add further robustness and ensure relevance of our evaluation processes.

In terms of Access activity, the RAU is now subscribed to HEAT to aid the monitoring of the effectiveness of this work (from 2016-17).

6.1   An Institutional framework

Monitoring and evaluation of the Access Agreement and widening participation agenda continues to be integrated more strategically into a wider Institutional framework, which is inclusive and embedded across the University. In interpreting the implementation of a *whole of institution* approach and framework, the University considers:

1. **Location:** Activity is located at all relevant sites across the Institution, which means in academic Schools; key professional and administrative/supporting Departments; and, in key Governance areas.
2. **Levels:** Activity is located at all levels of the Institution, including governance and strategic; managerial; operational (programmatic) and administrative.

This institutional framework provides the opportunity for multiple layers of accountability and transparency, as well as shared ownership of the widening participation agenda and outcomes. We continue to progress this agenda, having noted excellent progress since our last Access Agreement. In particular, this has included planning and metrics embedding and development in:

- The Corporate Plan and its annexures
- Academic Course related strategies and planning
- Marketing and Recruitment strategy and planning

Institutional level evaluation is underpinned by evaluation of programmatic elements (projects and activities), which include qualitative and quantitative assessment and analysis.

6.1.1 Strengthening our data and evidence base

The University is progressively improving it use of data to inform decision making and supporting effective monitoring and evaluation of activities. The RAU Information Group is specifically looking at reporting by groups (including target student groups) to effectively monitor progress, retention, attainment, attendance and other key performance indicators with a view to directly feed into enhancement activities, programme review and individual student support.

In addition, our online personal tutoring capabilities monitor individual student engagement throughout the academic year, identifying individuals for appropriate intervention and support.

Th University implementation of an evaluation, monitoring and reporting framework for widening participation pays particular attention to performance in the Access area. In 2018-19 this evaluative framework will be reviewed and renewed accordingly. The Evaluation Framework provides institutional capacity to plan, acquit, monitor and evaluate practices across the following key dimensions:

- *Strategy & Governance — Managerial — Operations*
- *Inputs — Outputs — Outcomes — Impact*

The objective is to develop and implement an institutional Evaluation, Monitoring & Reporting Framework which enables assessment of absolute performance against the Access Agreement; managerial and operational performance at the programme effectiveness level; and, monitoring of planning and acquittal of allocated funds.

The Evaluation Framework provides:

- High level Access Agreement monitoring and reporting
  - Collation of Initiative reporting for Governing Council Reports and VC Senior Advisory Group
  - Collation and analysis of data, drafting of annual WP Report
- Institutional Performance Evaluation (whole institution)
- Monitoring embedded in planning agreements
- Initiative and programme level monitoring, performance & reporting
- Evaluation using effectiveness, efficiency and equity orientation parameters
- Stakeholder and Activities evaluation embedded in activity design

6.1.2   Aims and objectives of Evaluation

The following objectives are relevant in progressing the monitoring and evaluation approach:

1. Embed and review institutional monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for widening participation outcomes.
2. Ensure strategic governance of the Access Agreement and access, success and progression agendas generally to ensure the University is an inclusive, diverse and sustainable institution.
3. Ensure evaluation and assessment of performance in relation to collaborative and partnership work.

6.1.3   Monitoring through an embedded metrics model framework

The University will utilise its institutionally-mapped metric framework for widening participation, as an embedded strategy for performance assessment and to deliver *faster progress* and *smarter, evidence-based spend* using a *whole of institution* and *student lifecycle* approach. This results in established metrics across the following domains, which will require review in 2018-19:

- Institutional Measures *e.g. Change in recruitment levels from state schools*
- Strategic Measures *e.g. WP engagement in Corporate Plan*
- Departmental / Managerial measures *e.g. Reporting controls in place*
- Programmatic Operational Effectiveness *e.g. Project Plans in place for all activity*
- Compliance and Reporting *e.g. Reporting to Government, management and committees occurring regularly and on time; collection of relevant data and evidence*
- Engagement *e.g. Partnership Agreements in place with External Stakeholders*
- Operational Efficiency *e.g. Productivity: Events/Activity/FT Employee Trend Assessment*
- WP Effectiveness/ Outcome Measures *e.g. programmatic /Activity evaluation; monitoring activities and partnerships outcomes*
- Aspiration raising and pre-university *e.g. Increase aspirations of attending university amongst under-represented groups*
- Applications and Transition *e.g. Increase applications from under-represented groups*
- University Experience and Progression Assessment *e.g. Proportion of students satisfied with standard of learning and teaching support and assessment*
- Graduate Success Assessment *e.g. Employability statistics (DLHE)*

6.2   Institutional processes for monitoring, evaluation and reporting against targets and milestones

Performance outcomes for WP are proposed to be reported to University Executive through the appropriate organisational line management, including Director for Student Experience; Director for Finance, and where relevant Director of Business Development and Marketing.

These operational arrangements are complemented by the University's planning, monitoring and review cycle, including annual quality review.

At the individual activity level, staff and teams responsible for delivery evaluate their achievement and assess this against performance measures.

6.2.1   Redesigning institutional reporting, monitoring and evaluation

The University continues its process of establishing increasingly rigorous, transparent and consistent reporting mechanisms across the Institution.

Aggregation of activity monitoring will provide an assessment of performance against Institutional targets and milestones contained in the Access Agreement. To support this process, representative officers have now been established across the Institution. These bring together key staff covering outreach, equality and diversity, teaching and learning, student support and progression to support annual monitoring and reporting to HEFCE and OFFA.

6.3   Responsible persons

Following an inclusive *whole of institution* approach, the University has embedded responsibility for commitments contained in the Access Agreement as per the following table. At the corporate level overarching responsibility for the Access Agreement rests with the **Vice Chancellor** working closely with the new **Director of Student Experience** (new appointment from 2017-18).

Institutional location & level	Responsible person(s)	Responsible for
Governance Executive	**Vice Chancellor**	Review, input and approve Access Agreement and Return.
Governance Executive	**Director of Student Experience** **Director of Finance**	Review, input and approve Access Agreement and Return. Student numbers and financial data. Funds oversight. "Assurance" contact officer for OFFA.
Governance Committees	Governing Council Senior Management Academic Board	All responsible for receiving/ reviewing data & reporting. Input and contributions to strategy as required. *All committees have student representation.*
Governance Committee	Student Affairs Liaison Group	Receiving, providing input and reviewing strategy and programmes. Consideration of equality and diversity, including provision of relevant data. *Student representation.*
Office of the Director of Student Experience Senior Management	**Director of Student Experience**	Provision of student data and key information; data analysis. Strategically contribute to, review and approve Access Agreement. Overarching Budget responsibility. Provide information to and gain approval from executive. Delivery of documents (Access Agreement, return, etc.) to OFFA. Management responsibility for widening participation delivery team, strategy and programme.
Academic Centres Senior Management	Heads of Subject Centres / disciplines	Strategic input and embedding widening participation into academic Centre plans, including setting metrics. Receive and review reporting on widening participation performance for respective Centres; contribute to solving challenges and/or recognition of achievements. Provision of lead/contact person(s) for widening participation and direction for academic Centres staff engagement with widening participation, including contribution to drafting of School widening participation reports.
Office of the Director of Student Experience	Widening Participation Management and Delivery	Management and operational delivery of the widening participation programme and commitments. Facilitation and relationship management across the institution and with external partners. Ensuring the construction and implementation of a *whole-of-institution* approach across the *student lifecycle*, attending to *Access, Student Success* and *Progression*.

Management, Operations & Administration		Management of Widening Participation delivery team. Management and operational delivery of the widening participation programme and commitments. Facilitation and relationship management across the institution and with external partners, including new partnership with the University of Gloucestershire for NCOP. Reporting internally and externally; monitoring outputs, outcomes and impact, including draft Access Agreement.
Business Development & Marketing Management, operations and administration	Head of Marketing and Recruitment Widening Participation Management and Delivery Team	Strategic input and integration with wider recruitment agenda. Wider operational contribution to the *Access* elements, including Recruitment staff engagement with widening participation activities. Ensure provision of relevant information regarding activities, etc. and responsibility for website information.
Office of the Director of Student Experience Operations and Administration	Admissions team	Operational contribution to the *Access* and *Student Success* (particularly at transition-in) elements, including delivery of activity. Ensuring equitable, fair and accessible admissions processes, including contextual admissions method. Provision of relevant, up-to-date admissions/ financial information.
Office of the Director of Student Experience Operations	Careers and Employment team	Operational contributions to the *Progression* elements, including staff engagement in delivery of activity.

6.4   Evaluation in the *Access* domain

The widening participation team ensure that ongoing evaluation and action learning review takes place across activities in the *Access* area. These evaluations are incorporated into internal reporting. Whilst this area will be reviewed as part of the institutional evaluation framework described in Section 6.2, current practices include:

- Output measures
    - Number of events, activities
    - Number of participants
    - Number of partners (e.g. schools)
    - Depth of engagement
    - Event and activity design integrity
- Outcome measures
    - Number of student applications/ enrolments from target backgrounds
    - Feedback via surveys to participants and teachers and student ambassadors
    - Case studies

6.5 Composite list of all current evaluative and reporting practice

Type	Level	Description
Pre- and post- event Questionnaires	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 collated to draw out participant, visiting staff and RAU staff / ambassador evaluations and to inform future practice
HEAT data	Operational	Capture and reporting of HEAT data from schools activity
Student Feedback	Operational	RAU Student feedback from committees and groups, including course representatives, the student union and student feedback forums
National Student Survey (NSS)	Management	Data from NSS used to inform practice and development
Student Performance Report	Management	Annual report detailing student academic performance
Collaborations Report	Management	Full annual report detailing provision, co-ordination and delivery on collaborative activity. Recommendations for further collaborations, development of existing practice and future investments
WP Reports	Management	Annual and Progress report to Governing Council and SMG detailing provision over year and offering recommendations for future activity Monthly outputs reporting
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
Access Agreement return	Management	Annual report on Access Agreement milestones and targets

7 Equality and diversity

The University's Corporate Plan 2015-2020 affirms our commitment to inclusion, equity and widening access as part of the University's mission and as a core institutional responsibility. The University is dedicated to providing opportunity for all and is committed to maintaining fair and equal access to the higher education experience for all those who wish to access it. We believe this positively contributes to business outcomes, efficiency and effectiveness, and a rich and diverse teaching and learning environment.

7.1 Institutional review, analysis and reporting

The University publishes an annual equality report and conducts reviews of diversity impact, which are based on a *whole-of-institution* approach and which are contained as action plans in the RAU Equality Plan (2014-2017). Responsibilities and commitments under this Plan are reviewed by both Senior Management Group and Academic Board, under the direction of the Vice Chancellor, and reported to Governing Council.

The Equality Plan sets an institutional intention to ensure that the services the University provides take account equality duty factors, and provides the monitoring mechanism to review performance against protected characteristics covered by the duty.

The University facilitates and delivers events to increase visibility and awareness, recognise and celebrate its commitment to inclusivity, equality and diversity, bringing together the campus community together to share achievements, exchange knowledges, and discuss issues of inclusion and equality.

7.2 Inclusivity, Equality & Diversity and integration with the Access Agreement

The widening participation agenda is closely aligned with the Equality Plan and diversity assessments, and is incorporated specifically as an area for continuous review. Equality is embedded and intrinsic to the widening participation agenda at the University, given the nature of the work and target groups served. The Access Agreement contributes to the University's equality and diversity commitment and outcomes across the *student lifecycle*.

Many of the protected characteristics are reflected in the Access Agreement targets and milestones, with specific targets for example to ensure access, financial support, success and progression for students from under-represented backgrounds such as mature students and care leavers, as well as students from low income backgrounds and areas where participation in higher education is low.

7.2.1 Monitoring impact on equality and diversity – current status

Equality and diversity issues are monitored by the Senior Management Group and Academic Board, under the direction of the Vice Chancellor, and reported to Governing Council.

7.2.2 Monitoring impact on equality and diversity – opportunities for development

Following foundation building in 2015-16 to 2017-18, and major structural change in 2017, the University continues to improve the ways in which those with responsibilities under the widening participation agenda report into and communicate upstream. There have been improvements in:

- Formal consultation and strategic discussions about the widening participation agenda and strategic approach, which have resulted in alignment with and value-creation for core business
- Understanding of the national landscape for widening participation in the context of the University
- Co-creating solutions in Access with the academy and professional services, and identifying potential areas for leverage, development and/or innovative practice

Continuing the narrative and cultural shift required to embed change, the University recognises a continued need to:

1. Increase the level of **understanding of the value of widening participation** to the University corporate mission and values.
2. Increase the appreciation of the **value added to wider University aspirations and strategic priorities** in a fully engaged and embedded widening participation agenda.
3. Increase **ability to engage** in widening participation across the University.
4. Increase **recognition and incentives to engage** in the widening participation agenda.

8   Provision of information to prospective students

8.1   Our Commitment

The University is committed to publishing a range of clear and accessible information for our existing and prospective students, and particularly to ensuring access to information regarding fee charges and financial support packages offered.

RAU is committed to providing relevant well-timed accurate information to UCAS and the Student Loans Company (SLC) to enable key bodies to populate course databases in a timely manner to inform applications.

8.2   Methods and tools

The University employs a range of tools and distributes information to prospective students via multiple channels.

The University continues to implement process improvements, and also product and service improvement, in relation to informing and communicating with students particularly at the transition-in phase of the *student lifecycle*. "*The applicant journey"* process, in place from 2015-16, has resulted in and maintains:

1) An *Applicants Portal* for all students who are offered a place at the RAU (conditional or unconditional), with access is via the 'My RAU' tab on the website homepage.

   The *Applicant Portal* is a micro-site offering applicants up-to-date information and help regarding their application and next steps for accepting their place; applying and paying for accommodation, fees and funding; and registration and induction. Information is updated regularly to ensure that the portal provides a conversion tool, not only positively impacting students but fostering a whole-of-institution approach by helping to bridge identified gaps and improving service alignment between the Marketing and Admissions teams.

2) A *Prospective Student and Applicant Communications Plan*, mapping information and communications to students and identifying/addressing gaps in information provision. Particularly, fees and financial support feature in communications (print and digital/email).

Pastoral and academic support activities now extend into the first few weeks of the academic year.

We continue to seek to establish better mechanisms for data capture, transfer and application with an emphasis on understanding and responding to emerging barriers and challenges particularly for our under-represented target groups; and developing relevant and targeted resources further downstream into the *Access* agenda.

<u>Online and digital</u>

The RAU website has dedicated fees and financial support areas accessed through prominent homepage links. Our webpages provide up-to-date and detailed information, including:

- Fees, financial support and Student Finance England (SFE)

- Scholarships, waivers, bursaries and loans
- Support, information, advice and guidance
- Admissions and enrolment processes
- Entry requirements, access
- Student support and pastoral care
- Information and support for students with disabilities
- Career development and employability
- Courses and prospectus
- Open days, applicant days and other events

The information on the website is regularly reviewed and updated.

Printed materials

Literature specifically containing information on fees, finance and financial support, and a range of other supporting information, is available at recruitment and engagement events and on-campus open events (e.g. open days, applicant days and community events). These materials are also readily available by request on the website.

Face-to-face

The University has dedicated staff who provide course offer information, advice and guidance to prospective and enrolled students. Advisers have a presence at many recruitment events and deliver talks for example in schools and community, and at on-campus and career/ university 'fair' events. RAU Student Ambassadors also receive specific training on university finance and draw upon their recent personal experiences of university fees and affordability, transferring knowledge and information to the students and key influencers (parents, teachers) with whom they work in schools and community.

9   Consulting with students

The University places high value on the student voice and has a number of established mechanisms by which student consultations take place across the student body.

9.1   Current consultation points and mechanisms

The Student Union and its various student representatives constitute the central formal mechanism for student consultation. In particular, student welfare and support staff work with the Student Union to ensure ongoing knowledge exchange, consultation, feedback and action learning towards institutional improvements across teaching and learning, social welfare, support and development.

Students also sit as representatives for consultation on a range of major university committees, including the university Governing Council; the Student Affairs Liaison Group; Academic Quality and Standards; and, Academic Board.

The Student Union has reinstated their Student Management Committee with student representatives from each academic programme, from each year level. This committee is chaired by the Student Union's student Chairman/Executive Officer.

The University has consultation capacity at the pre-entry and post-graduation phases. Our cohort of student ambassadors (over 60 students), who support delivery of outreach activities, provide valuable insight and reflection for activities undertaken with target schools, colleges and community. Consultation with ambassadors occurs through informal action learning process following events, which helps to improve our activity under the Access Agreement particularly in the *Access* domain.

The views and input of our diverse and well-connected alumni are also valued and encouraged, with an emphasis on consultation that informs the future direction of the university and its developing offer; and, leveraging the diverse range of knowledge of the employment market into which our alumni are embedded and networked. This is a valued component of our alumni consultations, which impacts positively upon the career development and experience outcomes for our undergraduate and postgraduate students. The University has an established alumni base of over 12,000. There are formal mechanisms for consultation and engagement through, for example: monthly e-newsletters and an annual magazine for which they are encouraged to send stories and feed back into; invitations to a range of events; conversation and feedback forms via the website; a strong alumni focused social media presence, sharing good news stories and relevant RAU information; and specific telephone campaigns seeking input, feedback and contributions to the University.

9.2   Consultation performance and opportunities

9.2.1   Performance

With the exception of consultation with student ambassadors through ongoing action learning, the current model of consultation relies on interpretation of general input from students at the above 'meeting' points, and then application for widening participation outcomes, for example:

- Input from Academic Board, Academic Quality & Standards and the Education Committee includes consultation on inclusive teaching practice; employability in the curriculum (work integrated learning through placements, etc.); and academic support and resourcing particularly for equity groups.
- The Student Affairs Liaison Group is targeted at identifying issues faced and raised by students to allow resolutions to be planned and actioned.

Committees operate on a quarterly basis, with student representatives at all meetings.

In 2015-16 and 2016-17, the University has provided for improved communications with students, which provide a basis for opening further dialogue and continuous input. These have included:

- Student voice and input consultations, led by the School of Business and Entrepreneurship
  - *"As a course representative I attend regular meetings to discuss the opinions and concerns of the students on my course. It is encouraging to see that our voices are listened to and our points taken seriously. Many suggestions that are made in these meetings are either taken to the relevant level to be discussed or spoken about in the*

> *meetings. Whenever a suggestion cannot be met we are given valid explanation as to why."* **Second Year student, International Business Management.**

- Student consultation workshops, as part of the institutional review and restructure

The Student Union has indicated these consultations have been effective, with some improvement outcomes already being realised, such as:

- Tighter turn around on assessment feedback
- Consultation on campus facilities being included in planning and designs
- Teaching and learning practices

In 2018-19, consultations with students will develop further in terms of co-creation and collaboration, rather than reflective feedback, on specific targeted issues and in particular in relation to access, participation and the student experience. The RAU considers this an excellent opportunity to leverage student voice in a positive, empowered agenda that positions students in partnership with the University, as agents of positive change and development.

9.2.2   Opportunities and Priorities

The University continues its improvement process, targeting and progressing the level of student consultations for benefit of the University as a whole, and to specifically to address elements of and issues for widening participation, across the student lifecycle.

Four overarching aims remain relevant:

1. **Broadening Consultations:** Establish the mechanism for increasing the volume of student voice, providing consultation opportunities for larger, diverse cohorts to engage.
2. **Deepening Consultations:** Provide opportunities for feedback and input along the journey as a continuum (across the student lifecycle), rather than relying upon specific formal and time-measured input points, e.g. committees and meetings.
3. **Targeting Consultations:** Ensure a meaningful and targeted range of topics or 'challenges'.
4. **Engaging Consultations:** Ensure consultation is engaging and empowering, contributing to a unique and cohesive university community, a sense of belonging and ownership. Providing consultative opportunities that engage students in a meaningful way with regards to developing their employability, professional and personal skills.

9.3   Our strategic approach to consultation

As per our 2016-17 and 2017-18 Access Agreements, we continue to apply a *student lifecycle* model for consultation, identifying examples of key topics which are positioned in their relative domains of *Pre-Entry (Access); University Experience (Student Success);* and, *Graduate Outcomes (Progression)*.

The Student Lifecycle consultation framework diagram including: Understanding choices about where to study; Barriers to entry to HE; Example topics for consultation; Who are the key influencers; School support and career/ pathway advice; Understanding the narrative on HE; Impact of financial packages on choice; Formal consultation points; Student Ambassador Programme; Prospective Students (WP target cohorts); Additional Phase: Offer, acceptance, enrolments — *Whether offers of admissions are made and whether applicants accept and enrol.* Identified opportunity to establish student consultation mechanisms at the transition-in phase (Naylor, 2013). Topics may include: understanding decisions to apply and enrol; barriers and challenges at the transition-in phase; streamlining processes; communications and support mechanisms; contextual admissions processes; and, provision of information, advice and guidance. Pre-entry — *Decisions about whether/where to apply to University*; Alumni Network; Graduate Outcomes — *Employability and returns to education post-graduation*; University Experience — *Coping with university life and learning; student completion, success*; Student Management Committee; Academic Quality & Standards; Academic Board; Student Union; Barriers and challenges to success for different student cohorts; Improving RAU community and student experience; Overcoming financial barriers; Issues in transition to employment; Barriers to entry in to the professions; Post-graduate financial support; Governing Council; Inclusivity, Equality & Diversity Committee; Enhancing employability in the curriculum and extra-curricula; Linking employers to students to promote opportunity; How can the RAU improve inclusion, support & development; Knowledge exchange opportunities; Inclusive teaching practice; SWOT student support.

9.4   Student Union Input

Over 2016-17, the Student Union has worked hard to broaden the reach of the student voice. Not only has the Union been instrumental in reaching out to current students but it is now also looking closely at how to improve access and prevent barriers to students attending University. As a small and specialist institution, the Royal Agricultural University has the ability to cater for all. We expect to work in collaboration with the University to look further into improvements in points such as access, financial support such as scholarships and bursaries, and the ability to study remotely; be that distance learning or part time options. Student voice in these issues that affect our student body is crucial.

The Student Union will continue to work alongside the University in order to ensure that the voice of students with barriers is heard and are addressed. Throughout 2016-17, members of the Union have this year sat on various 'area reviews' such as the registration department and IT department, and have been able to suggest ideas, collaborate and bring about changes in order to, for example, make registration processes easier and information technology infrastructures more accessible. In 2017-18, a hardship fund will be created and owned by the Student Union in order to ensure that everyone is able to participate fully in extra-curricular activities. This is a further example of the Student Union, together with the University, taking proactive steps to provide for its student body.

END.

Table 7 - Targets and milestones

Institution name: The Royal Agricultural University

Institution UKPRN: 10005545

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

Reference number	Stage of the lifecycle (drop-down menu)	Main target type (drop-down menu)	Target type (drop-down menu)	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target? (drop-down menu)	Baseline year (drop-down menu)	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)
								2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	
T16a_01	Access	State school	HESA T1a - State School (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	Increase percentage of enrolments from state schools.	No	2013-14	47.6%	53%	55%	57%	59%	60%	Updated milestones according to latest data and statistical modelling undertaken for institution. New targets still represent challenging target in order to progress towards HESA benchmark
T16a_02	Access	Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)	HESA T1a - Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3) (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	Increase percentage of enrolments from areas where participation in HE is low. Measure from new POLAR3 method (replaced POLAR2).	No	2014-15	2.5%	6%	8%	10%	10%	10%	Maintain progression to HESA benchmark (at 10% in 2015-16).
T16a_03	Access	Socio-economic	HESA T1a - NS-SEC classes 4-7 (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	Increase percentage of enrolments from all low-income backgrounds, i.e. students in receipt of non-repayable support	No	2013-14	35%	40%	42%	43%	n/a	n/a	Milestone discontinued in 2016-17 on OFFA advice.
T16a_04	Access	Mature	HESA T2a - (Mature, full-time, all undergraduate entrants)	Percentage with no previous HE & from low participation neighbourhood (POLAR3)	No	2014-15	3.4%	4.5%	4.5%	4.5%	5%	5%	Updated data to HESA record in 2014-15 for baseline data; and adjusted annual milestone targets accordingly. These represent stretching targets in excess of HESA benchmark (at 2.6% in 2015-16)
T16a_05	Access	Other (please give details in Description column)	Other statistic - Location (please give details in the next column)	Increase percentage of enrolments from local taget areas, approx. 25mile radius	No	2014-15	11.6%	17%	18%	20%	20%	20%	Updated milestones according to latest and revised baseline and trend data.
T16a_06	Access`	Care-leavers	Other statistic - Care-leavers (please give details in the next column)	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.	No	2014-15	0	2	2	3	3	3	Number not percentage. Updated milestones based on more realistic projections, following work with Glos. CC and VSN and deeper understanding of target group/ capacity and lead times for enrolments
T16a_07	Student success	Other (please give details in Description column)	HESA T3a - No longer in HE after 1 year (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	Ensure low level of non-continuation/ completion is maintained, with the increasing number and widening of enrolments anticipated in our targets.	No	2014-15	5.1%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	
T16a_08	Access	Disabled	HESA T7 - Students in receipt of DSA (full-time, first degree entrants)	Maintain above benchmark position in % of full-time, fisrt degree entrants in receipt of DSA	No	2014-15	11.4%	11.5%	12%	12%	12%	12%	
T16a_09	Progression	Other (please give details in Description column)	Other statistic - Progression to employment or further study (please give details in the next column)	Of those respondents employed in the UK who studied full time at the University, % in Professional/Managerial roles as defined by the SOC (Standard Occupational Classification) code (DLHE)	No	2014-15	80.2%	81%	81.5%	81.5%	81.5%	82%	
T16a_10	Access	Attainment raising	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	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.	No	2015-16	0	0	50	80	100	100	New Target

Table 7b - Other milestones and targets.

Reference Number	Select stage of the lifecycle	Main target type (drop-down menu)	Target type (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)
								2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	
T16b_01	Access	Multiple	Strategic partnerships (eg formal relationships with schools/colleges/employers)	Partner in collaborative outreach activity, e.g. NNCO, NNOP, other networks specifcally with University of Gloucestershire and others	Yes	2015-16	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	2 partnerships	The RAU has maintained partnerships and relationships, contributed to the partnerships, provided required IAG and/or activitives to support School engagement and other activities of the networks
T16b_02	Access	State school	Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Partnerships with target state schools and colleges, with Partnership Frameworks and Activity Plans in place	No	2015-16	0	25	30	33	33	33	Number of schools/ colleges with partnerships

T16b_03	Access	State school	Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Relationships with national target state schools and colleges, with min. 2 visits p/a	No	2011-12	5	25	30	35	35	35	Number of schools/ colleges with some relationship
T16b_04	Other/Multiple stages	Multiple	Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Relationships with other relevant organisations, e.g. employers, councils, youth services, trusts, community learning programmes/ centres, etc.	No	2015-16	n/a	6	8	10	15	15	Number of organisations with relationship
T16b_05	Access	Multiple	Outreach / WP activity (summer schools)	Establishment and delivery of extended on-campus activities with overnight accommodation at halls of residence to increase awareness and aspiration to higher education	No	2011-12	2	80	100	120	150	180	Number of participants
T16b_06	Access	State school	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	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	No	2014-15	n/a	8000	10000	12000	12000	12000	Number of meaningful participant engagements
T16b_07	Access	Multiple	Contextual data	Review and formalise contextual admissions process to ensure access and recognition of education disadvantage at the application/ offer stage	No	2015-16	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Review	Review is complete. Process is formalised and provides equity of access for students who have disrupted or disadvantaged educational backgrounds
T16b_08	Student success	Multiple	Student support services	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.	No	2013-14	91.8%	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%	HESA Table 3a data "% who continue or qualitfy at same HEI" column
T16b_09	Other/Multiple stages	Multiple	Operational targets	Review and implement data capture and monitoring system for more robust datasets and to build understanding and an evidence base for future practice.	No	2014-15	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Data capture and monitoring system is effective and efficient, and relevant for reporting and programme evaluation and design needs
T16b_10	Other/Multiple stages	Other (please give details in Description column)	Operational targets	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.	No	2014-15	not available	80	100	120	150	150	Number of RAU students inputing on WP and Access Agreement measures/ programmes
T16b_11	Access	Other (please give details in Description column)	Operational targets	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.	No	2014-15	not available	4	6	8	8	8	Number of external stakeholder consultation forums for inputing on WP and Access Agreement measures/ programmes
T16b_12	Other/Multiple stages	Other (please give details in Description column)	Management targets	Scope, identify and conduct research to inform practice and contribute to institutional and sector knowledge in the widening participation space	No	2014-15	0	2	3	3	3	3	Number of research projects /studies completed
T16b_13	Other/Multiple stages	Other (please give details in Description column)	Management targets	Embed widening participation across the institution, including framework agreements; activity planning and acquittal mechanisms; and, embedded metrics	No	2014-15	0	8	8	8	8	8	Number of academic Schools and administrative Departments with activity plans and metrics
T16b_14	Other/Multiple stages	Other (please give details in Description column)	Management targets	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.	No	2014-15	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	The institution is making "faster progress" towards targets and milestones and the widening participation programme is strategically aligned and contributing to institutional goals and drivers

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.