



University of Essex

Access Agreement 2012-13

1 Context

1.1 Background

The University of Essex is an institution of academic excellence, with an outstanding reputation for both teaching and research, ranked ninth out of 159 universities and colleges for the quality of its research in the 2008 national assessment¹. Since our establishment in 1964, we have encouraged applicants from a wide range of backgrounds and educational routes and have delivered significant targeted support and activity to students from groups under-represented in higher education.

Currently 96.5 per cent (2009-10) of UK students at Essex were admitted from state schools, with 14.6 per cent of young students and 16 per cent of mature students from low participation neighbourhoods². The University consistently exceeds its HESA Widening Participation Performance Indicator benchmarks for the access of students from under-represented groups. This surpasses both comparator institutions and the sector average.

The University is proud of its reputation as an 'access elite' institution, providing students from less advantaged backgrounds with access to international research excellence. We also have a wide commitment to community engagement and are a major resource for the social, cultural and economic development of Essex and the wider region.

The University's Widening Participation Strategic Assessment 2008-09 to 2011-12 demonstrates the far reaching impact of the University's commitment to widening participation and community engagement.

This Access Agreement is intended to build on our strengths and experience, as well as focus on the specific needs of our students. It has been informed by careful evaluation of a range of existing interventions and current best practice, as well as research carried out with students and advisers in local schools and colleges. We have engaged the University of Essex Students' Union in developing this Access Agreement and work closely with them on many of the proposed interventions.

1.2 Access and Admissions

The University of Essex is committed to fair access and encourages applications from anyone able to demonstrate the potential to meet entry criteria for the relevant course and benefit from study at undergraduate level. Individual applicants are considered on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential, regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, socio-economic background, family circumstances, religious or political beliefs and affiliations or other irrelevant distinction. The University's admissions policies and procedures are designed to ensure that all applications are considered fairly and consistently and in accordance with professional standards.

1.3 Partnerships

In recent years the University has established strategic partnerships to increase student access to its provision in the region. The various partnerships have led to increased collaboration in course development and design in order to address barriers to participation including geographical isolation, aspirations and perception of higher education.

Details of the Access Agreement commitment for Colchester Institute and South Essex College of Further and Higher Education are included within this Access Agreement. University Campus Suffolk, via the University of East Anglia, and Writtle College submit their own institutional Access Agreements. Kaplan Open Learning is not included in this Access Agreement because of the level of fee charged and all students study part time.

The University is committed to working with other higher education institutions (HEIs) and further education colleges within the region. While this has previously been facilitated by Aimhigher, the University had strong regional relationships prior to the Aimhigher programme and is already working with other local HEIs to build upon and continue successful collaboration. This is particularly in the areas of targeting, evaluation and delivery of outreach activity and maintaining local networks with schools and colleges.

The University collaborates with other UK research intensive universities on programmes such as Realising Opportunities, as part of our aim to encourage geographical mobility of students from under-represented groups.

We are an active member of the Higher Education Liaison Officers' Association (HELOA) with the national office hosted and supported by the University.

1.4 Principles

The University of Essex Access Agreement for 2012-13 is founded on our existing expertise in attracting students from under-represented groups. The University has always taken an integrated approach to widening participation and access. The 2012 Access Agreement will continue to embed widening participation across the whole student lifecycle to ensure fair access and support successful outcomes for our students, irrespective of their background.

The key principles of the University of Essex 2012-13 Access Agreement are to:

- maintain the University's strengths in access for students from groups under-represented in higher education;
- support retention and employability to maximise opportunities for students from under-represented groups;
- continue to deliver a successful programme of targeted outreach activity, particularly with the loss of Aimhigher funding;
- maintain an embedded approach for access and widening participation activity across the institution;
- deliver an inclusive Access Agreement that ensures access and success for all students.

¹ Sunday Times University Guide

² Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), 2009-10 Performance Indicators, Tables T1b and T2a

2 Tuition Fee

For undergraduate Home and EU students entering in 2012 the University proposes to charge a fee of £9,000. The estimated number of students who will be paying the fee of £9,000 is up to 2,097 students in 2012-13 increasing to a steady state of up to 5,674 students in 2014-15, subject to a number of varying factors.

In order to give all students, regardless of background, access to the opportunities studying abroad provides and to enhance employment opportunities, students subject to the new fee will not be charged a fee for a study year abroad or for an industrial placement year. This fee-free year is predicted to benefit approximately 80 students per year (2014-15).

For students entering in 2012 the tuition fee is subject to permitted real term increases in subsequent years. The tuition fee for students entering in 2013 onwards will be under review and confirmed in the 2013-14 Access Agreement.

3 Expenditure

In 2012-13, the University will spend 19 per cent of its additional fee income, as defined by OFFA, on ensuring that all students, regardless of background, are able to access the University, maximise their student experience and increase their life opportunities. This will include continuing support committed to existing students who entered prior to 2012. By 2014-15, the University expects to be spending at steady state a total of 18 per cent annually of additional fee income through Access Agreement commitments.

In preparation for the changes from 2012 entry, the University will be spending £262,475 in 2011-12, in addition to the existing 2011 Access Agreement commitments, in order to impact on access for students entering in 2012.

Students from groups currently under-represented in higher education will be targeted for outreach, financial support, retention and employability activity.

Steady state expenditure, as a percentage, of additional fee income in 2014-15:

Outreach: 2.3 per cent

Retention and Student Success: 1.4 per cent

Financial Support (excluding the NSP): 9.4 per cent

NSP Participation: 5.3 per cent

4 Outreach

The University has strong existing links with schools, colleges, other education organisations and local groups, and already delivers a high standard of outreach activity that has contributed to the increased intake to Essex of students from groups under-represented in higher education. We have developed and implemented innovative projects and already work with a range of age groups from primary pupils through to mature students and parents. The University has been an active partner in the Aimhigher programme, including undertaking the role of lead HEI for Aimhigher Essex, and has already committed (in the 2011-12 Access Agreement) to provide and support activity for the local schools and colleges that have been part of the Aimhigher programme. The University will continue this commitment in 2012-13 and will also expand its outreach provision in both staffing and activity. This outreach activity will be additional to the University's existing schools and colleges liaison and recruitment activity.

4.1 Targeting

We will continue to work with the local schools and colleges currently targeted through the University and Aimhigher activity. The schools are targeted using the following criteria:

- any school with more than 50 per cent of its students from the 40 per cent most deprived Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), super output areas (SOAs) or with very large cohorts and more than 25 per cent of students from the 40 per cent most deprived IDACI SOAs;
- any school with more than 25 per cent of its students from 40 per cent of the most deprived SOAs and more than 50 per cent of the students from educationally deprived SOAs;
- additional information obtained from consultations with local authorities about local schools.

The University will also work with local HEIs to share resources and expertise in reviewing targeted schools and will make use of existing and new school data available such as the number of students receiving free school meals, the number of students attracting the pupil premium and progression rates of Year 11 students.

The outreach programme will include primary schools, secondary schools, sixth form and further education colleges, adult community colleges, local education trusts and partnerships, local authorities, learning shops and local community groups. The University will work intensively with Colchester Academy for which it is a co-sponsor, with the majority of the Academy's intake from an area with high levels of deprivation.

Outreach activity will be targeted at students who have the potential to progress to higher education and who meet any of the criteria below:

- students from low income backgrounds;
- students from low participation neighbourhoods;
- students in receipt of free school meals;

- mature students;
- students with a disability;
- young people in care;
- school/college recommendation of any other students who have the potential to benefit from higher education or accessing a research intensive university but are currently facing barriers to progression;
- parents/carers and families of targeted participants;
- teachers and advisers from targeted schools.

Additional criteria of previous or expected academic attainment will be used for some activity, for example activity that targets students identified as most able but least likely to progress to a research intensive university.

4.2 Activity

Pre-application outreach activity will aim to raise aspirations, achievement, and awareness of higher education amongst disadvantaged groups and provide pre-application and transition information and advice. This outreach activity will include:

- subject master classes, taster days and campus visits;
- Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) in schools and colleges;
- retention and transition activity;
- schools' conferences on campus;
- insight events;
- mentoring and buddy schemes;
- local authority schools support programmes;
- primary schools activity;
- family days;
- outreach support for learning shops;
- outreach and transition activity targeting students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties;
- outreach for young people in care;
- outreach support for the Colchester Academy.

The University's outreach programme will provide participants with the ability to access and benefit from University academic staff, students, teaching facilities and other University facilities including the gallery, theatre and museum.

4.3 Summer Schools

The University will also run a summer schools programme, building on the expertise that has been developed from HEFCE match funded and Aimhigher funded summer schools. All summer schools will complement the outreach provision, allowing students to undertake a progressive programme of activity. The purpose of the summer schools will be to provide participants with a university student experience and equip participants with knowledge, skills and experience that can be applied to their current learning and in their transition to HE level study.

Working in partnership, we will liaise with other HEIs in the local area to ensure outreach and summer school provision is complementary, and delivers joint outreach activity where appropriate. We will also discuss any opportunities for shared communication with schools and colleges.

4.4 Realising Opportunities

The University is a member of Realising Opportunities (RO), a unique collaboration of twelve research intensive universities³ working together to promote fair access and social mobility of students from under-represented groups.

The Realising Opportunities programme provides support for students through interventions designed to raise aspirations and enable them to demonstrate their potential for success at a research intensive university. These interventions are offered both at their local participating university, and nationally, so that the student can tailor the programme to meet their own needs and interests. The programme includes a national conference which is a compulsory element for all participating students.

Each student is supported through the programme by a student mentor. The mentor, an undergraduate student from one of the twelve universities, provides ongoing support and encouragement. Successful completion of RO, which includes a robust academic element, will lead to students receiving an alternative offer through UCAS from the University of Essex.

The RO Strategy Group has unanimously agreed that the twelve participating institutions will each commit £35,000 to the scheme in 2012-13. This commitment will ensure that the momentum of the programme is maintained, will enable the recruitment of a third cohort of students, and will build up the evidence base for evaluating the impact of the project

4.5 Contextual Data

The University of Essex does not currently use contextual data in making selection decisions at the point of application, as this is not deemed necessary to ensure fair access based on the current trend and profile of applications. From October 2012 entry (applications cycle beginning in September 2011) we propose to use contextual data at the point of confirmation to allow additional consideration of factors which may have affected students who have not met their offer. The University Admissions Sub-Committee will continue to review the use of contextual data in light of additional information being available from UCAS and application trends.

³ Partner universities: University of Birmingham; University of Bristol; University of Essex; University of Exeter; King's College London; University of Leeds; University of Leicester; University of Liverpool; University of Manchester; Newcastle University; University of Warwick; University of York.

5 Retention and Student Success

5.1 Retention

We recognise that a significant element to widening participation is having the relevant support in place to ensure successful completion and outcomes for students admitted to the University. Through our Widening Participation Strategic Assessment we have identified a need for an even greater emphasis on supporting retention of students, and have a number of projects and initiatives already under way. In response to research evaluation of existing projects we will be providing staff and resources to focus on the retention of students and decrease non continuation rates for the University. This will focus on the whole student lifecycle, particularly targeting at risk groups including mature students, students from low participation neighbourhoods, students facing financial hardship and students with a disability.

The retention programme will coordinate existing arrangements and employ a number of new interventions throughout the 'student journey' including a range of tutorial support arrangements (both face-to-face and online through academic departments and central support services), academic referrals, peer support, transition support, study skills, financial support and the use of residents' support networks, social media and networking sites and Students' Union clubs and societies. Many areas across the University, including Student Support, Learning and Development, Outreach, the Careers Centre and the Students' Union, as well as academic departments and centres, will contribute to a strategy and work to ensure more cohesive approaches to retention issues.

The University has established a Skills Centre to bring together and supplement study skills programmes currently being offered by a wide range of University Departments and Sections. The retention programme will support the Centre to target at-risk groups, identify their training needs and provide drop-in sessions, tailor-made modules, workshops and web resources to improve writing, critical reasoning and academic skills.

Activity and enhancements to retention support will be informed by monitoring and evaluation from the University's Planning Office.

5.2 Student Support

The University will continue our current Access Agreement commitment to fund a wide range of central Student Support services which are designed to help students to succeed in their studies, to overcome any difficulties they may face and to make the most of their time at the University.

We will fund support to the University Disability Team to ensure student support needs are identified and managed as early as possible in the application cycle. We will also provide on-going support for students with disabilities to help their progression and retention. This will supplement other University support for students who are not eligible for, or who have not yet claimed, Disabled Students' Allowance.

There will be a significant investment by the University in Residents' Support Network provision from 2011 onwards to support the transition of students into higher education, to foster an inclusive community within residences and to assist in skills development essential for independent living. This initiative will engage students from a wide range of ethnic and social backgrounds with a proportion of the expansion supported through the Access Agreement. Enhanced training for volunteer members of the network is expected to contribute to the employability of these students.

5.3 Employability

The University recognises that for many students their background can mean facing additional challenges in accessing graduate employment opportunities, and this area is of particular concern to us as we have a high intake of students from low income households and low participation neighbourhoods. We will now increase investment in employability with a particular focus on ensuring that students from low income households and low participation neighbourhoods are given the additional support and preparation needed to make sure they can access the employment opportunities more normal for graduates from research intensive universities.

The importance of student employability will be integrated into the whole period of a student's time at Essex. Student responsibility to connect with employability opportunities will be further emphasised in order to raise employment aspirations and provide opportunity at a very early stage to engage with the support available.

The University will particularly focus on providing the following schemes and opportunities:

5.3.1 Frontrunners Work Placement Scheme

This novel and effective scheme is designed to encourage students to develop their employability skills as well as earning additional income to fund their studies through working on campus in a variety of jobs linked to their own Personal Development Plans. Participating students develop high-level workplace skills which will enhance their eventual employability. Additionally, working on campus is thought to be less disruptive to their studies and will help to retain students who might otherwise not complete their course of studies because of financial pressures. A variety of placements are available based in academic departments, in Professional Services and in the Students' Union. The University will use additional fee income to fund a proportion of Frontrunners placements relative to the number of students eligible for full state support and include information about the opportunities of Frontrunners in outreach and the application process, to help with concern regarding part time employment and graduate employment opportunities.

5.3.2 Internships

As part of the University strategy to increase the number of students from under-represented groups gaining graduate level employment, work experience opportunities in the form of internships will be available for current students and recent graduates. As part of this commitment the University will be continuing to fund an internship programme when funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England comes to an end. Although internship opportunities will be open to all students at the University, additional resource

will focus on targeting students from low participation neighbourhoods and will assist students who are less likely to have other forms of financial support, by providing work experience opportunities that will enhance their job prospects when seeking to gain future graduate level employment. Through internships students from under-represented groups will have the opportunity to gain practical knowledge of the world of work, engage, learn from and build relationships and networks with employers in highly competitive professions.

5.3.3 Workshops

In order to ensure students are prepared for competitive graduate employment markets, and in recognition of the fact that not all students may have access to guidance and support from experienced and/or high flying professionals, an increased number of specialist work-related workshops will be provided by the Careers Centre, targeting students from under-represented groups. The University will also make use of external and internal expertise to provide advice and scheduled events to equip students with the relevant skill set necessary to compete for graduate jobs. These workshops will target students from low participation neighbourhoods and under-represented groups and will seek to build on existing careers activity including: application process training, interview skills, personal effectiveness training, working with others, business/commercial awareness, introduction to the work place, confidence building and reflective practice.

5.3.4 Senior Student Ambassador Scheme

As part of delivering the University outreach programme the University has developed a Senior Student Ambassador Scheme. Senior Student Ambassadors are often students from under-represented groups who undertake a peer support role for the students targeted through the outreach activity. Training for Senior Student Ambassadors will be augmented, both enhancing the support for outreach groups and inculcating valuable transferable skills. The dual benefit of providing a targeted training programme for Senior Student Ambassadors will impact both on the outreach activity delivered and the employability of the students who are working with these groups.

By delivering this enhanced employability programme as part of the Access Agreement, the University aims to build on its strengths in access through targeted support, helping students to overcome ongoing barriers and to achieve graduate level employment. This programme will contribute to the University's aim to improve employment outcomes for all its students.

6 Financial Support for Students

6.1 National Scholarship Programme (NSP)

Participation in the NSP will target students identified as having the greatest financial need and will focus on enabling these students to access the University and benefit from the student experience. The University will provide 200 first-year students, who meet the NSP eligibility criteria and are from low income households with a household income of up to £10,000, with an accommodation subsidy of £3,000. As well as meeting eligibility criteria students will be required to meet UCAS, NSP and University accommodation deadlines. The accommodation subsidy will support the University's aim to promote geographical mobility for students from under-represented groups and provide local students, regardless of background, with access to the complete student experience.

6.2 Financial Support

In 2012 the University will provide financial support packages for students from low income households, developed in consultation with the Students' Union, to ensure maximum impact and benefit for students from low income households. The support is targeted at ensuring students can access and successfully complete their studies and are not prevented from doing so due to financial concern or hardship.

6.2.1 Bursary Scheme

UK (Home fee) students with a household income of up to £25,000 who meet the conditions of their offer and make the University their firm choice by the relevant UCAS deadline, will be eligible for a contribution from the University of £1,500 per year for every year of their undergraduate study. Students taking a year abroad or industrial placement will not be eligible for a bursary during that year as no tuition fee will be charged and other bursary support is available. Students will be given the option to use this support in the most appropriate way to suit their individual circumstances, by either reducing the amount of tuition fee loan or maintenance loan required.

6.2.2 Scholarships

The University will also be providing scholarships of £2,000 for one year for UK (Home fees) students who achieve academic excellence in their entry qualifications. This will include students who achieve: three grade As at A-level; three Distinctions in the BTEC National Diploma; 38 points or more in the International Baccalaureate Diploma; and Distinction in 45 credits at level three in the Access to HE Diploma. As a significant number of students admitted to Essex are from low income households and the scholarships will be available for students from a range of educational routes, the proportion of students from low income households who will receive the Academic Excellence Scholarship is included in the University Access Agreement.

6.2.3 Other Targeted Bursary Schemes

6.2.3.1 Care Leavers' Bursaries

A minimum of 24 targeted bursaries of up to £1,000 will be available for new and continuing undergraduate students who were in local authority care prior to starting their University course. Students leaving care may well have overcome significant barriers to gain a place at University and are expected to have less practical and financial family support to fall back on and are more likely to need to pay for accommodation all year round.

6.2.3.2 Refugee Bursaries

Targeted bursaries of up to £1,000 will be available for undergraduate students with refugee status, or who are dependants of refugees. These students may have experienced a disruption in their studies, have exceptional financial difficulties and/or have less family support in the UK.

6.2.3.3 Mobility Bursaries

The University recognises that cost can be a significant barrier for students being able to access opportunities for study abroad, international placement or volunteering. In order for all students to have the chance to benefit from these experiences, students from low income households will be eligible to apply for a bursary of £2,000 for a full year or £1,500 for a part-year. A total of 40 bursaries will be available, in addition to the fee-free year for students studying abroad or undertaking industrial placements.

6.2.3.4 Helena Kennedy Foundation

In 2012-13 we will support one bursary through the Helena Kennedy Foundation, supporting disadvantaged students who have overcome significant barriers in order to continue their education to University level.

The University will put in place staff support to manage the targeted support schemes, maximise IAG and availability of the schemes and target students in greatest need.

Through the University's fundraising strategy, efforts are also being made to increase financial support available for students from low income households through philanthropic and charitable donations.

6.2.4 Continuing Students

Continuing students who started their course prior to 2012 will follow the bursary scheme originally offered.

6.2.5 Finance Information

The University already provides information on student finance support in all pre-application material including the prospectus and in the student finance area of the University website. Finance information is distributed at pre-applicant events, including higher education fairs, open days, careers evenings and school/college presentations. Outreach staff deliver higher education finance presentations in a large number of schools and colleges throughout the year, finance presentations to parents and carers at University visit and interview days and a central e-mail address for any enquiries both pre- and post-registration is publicised.

However, we recognise that the changes to 2012 undergraduate fees have led to considerable confusion. For 2012 the University already has a student finance communications strategy in place with 2012 FAQs and student finance information on the University website with a prominent link from the University homepage. In addition, targeted information on student finance for 2012 will be developed including printed publicity material to support IAG in schools and use at careers and education events, vodcasts and podcasts of student case studies and a funding and advice conference.

Student finance information is already provided to a number of national information providers and in particular the University will provide any required information to UCAS and the SLC.

7 Targets, Milestones and Evaluation

The University has previously made use of HESA Performance Indicators (PIs) to monitor performance in access and widening participation. While the University will continue to monitor against HESA PIs in order to measure against benchmark and to allow for cross sector comparison, we will also be investing in internal mechanisms to manage targets, monitor progress through institutional data, develop systems to track students from outreach/enquiry stage through to graduate employability and disaggregate the University and our partner institutions data. More immediate data will be used to inform outreach, retention and employability activity and resource. The University has recently added Polar 2 postcode data to management information systems to enable analysis of students from low participation postcodes for both intake and applications. For the purposes of the institutional targets set, low participation neighbourhoods include quintile 1 only, although participation from quintiles 1 and 2 will be monitored.

We will use additional data where available, particularly via UCAS. While we currently intend to make use of contextual data for admission purposes at the point of confirmation, this information will also be used for data and monitoring purposes. In particular, the University intends to analyse:

- the proportion of students in receipt of free school meals – analysed by applications, intake and continuation rates;
- the proportion of students from socio-economic classes 4, 5, 6 and 7.

7.1 Outreach Targets

The University Outreach Evaluation Strategy is being implemented from September 2011, with some activity already being evaluated. This will provide more information on the impact and outcomes of pre-application outreach and inform the development of future activity. This evaluation will replace some local Aimhigher evaluation that has helped inform local schools and colleges on the importance of outreach and effectiveness of targeting.

7.1.1 Activity Targets

Beneficiaries

- 10,000 beneficiaries, including students, parents, teachers and advisers.
- 1,000 students and their families from younger age groups.
- 120 schools, colleges and organisations.

Activity

- 200 on campus and in school/college activities including IAG, campus visits, subject taster events and insight events.
- 3 summer schools.
- 1 mentoring scheme.
- 1 access scheme.

7.1.2 Outcome Targets

- Applications to the University from target groups.
- Intake to the University from target groups.
- Change in perception of higher education for participants and schools and colleges.
- Impact on achievement for participants and schools and colleges.
- Progression rates for participating schools and colleges.
- Participation rates by postcodes of intake of the participating schools and colleges.

The University is already communicating with other local HEIs regarding collaboration on evaluation activity where appropriate.

The Realising Opportunities Scheme will be evaluated at a national project level.

7.2 Applications

Using Polar 2 data, applications from students from low participation neighbourhoods will be monitored at key points during the 2012 admissions cycle. The University already attracts a high proportion of applicants from under-represented groups both directly and through its partners. Given the considerable progress the University has already made, investment through the Access Agreement will be to maintain the substantial position already achieved.

Target

To maintain the 2010-11 position with 13.4 per cent of all applications (UK) from students from low participation neighbourhoods and 12.6 per cent of offers made to students from low participation neighbourhoods⁴.

7.3 Intake

The University has already made significant progress in fair access. Between 2004-05 and 2009-10 we increased our intake of young full-time first degree entrants from social classes 4, 5, 6 and 7 from 30.1 per cent to 32.6 per cent. The intake of young full-time first degree entrants from low participation neighbourhoods has increased from 12.4 per cent to 14.6 per cent and the percentage of young full-time first degree entrants from state schools from 92.5 per cent to 96.5 per cent⁵. Taking into account the University's existing strength in access, investment in additional fee income and the Widening Participation Strategic Assessment will strive to maintain our existing position of strength on the intake of students from under-represented groups.

Current Position and Targets

| Indicator | HESA benchmark 09-10 | Essex including partners 09-10 actual | Essex excluding partners 09-10 actual | Essex five year target (including partners) | Essex five year target (excluding partners) |
|--|----------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Young full-time first degree from state schools | 91.7% | 96.5% | 95.8% | 96.5% | 95.8% |
| Young full-time first degree from NS-SEC 4,5,6 & 7 ⁶ | 32.1% | 32.6% | 31.1% | 32.6% | 31.1% |
| All UG entrants from low-participation neighbourhoods ⁷ | 14.3% | 18.5% | 16.1% | 18.5% | 16.1% |

⁴ Internal University Management Information

⁵ Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), 2009-10 Performance Indicators, Table T1a

⁶ Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), 2009-10 Performance Indicators, Table T1a

⁷ Internal University Management Information, based on HESA return data

7.4 Retention/Progression

Positive progress has already been made in increasing continuation rates for the University and its partners.

Current Position inclusive of partners

Percentage of young full-time first degree students that continue, qualify or transfer by academic year of entry

| | 2004-05 | 2005-06 | 2006-07 | 2007-08 | 2008-09 | All years mean |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------------------|
| Entrants from low-participation neighbourhoods | 89.9 | 93.3 | 90.1 | 90 | 90.2 | 90.7 |
| Low-participation – benchmark | 90.8 | 91.3 | 89.8 | 90.2 | 91.7 | 90.8 |
| Entrants from other neighbourhoods | 90.3 | 94.3 | 93.5 | 92.7 | 92.8 | 92.7 |
| Other neighbourhoods – benchmark | 93.4 | 93.5 | 93 | 93 | 93.5 | 93.3 ⁸ |

Percentage of mature full-time first degree students that continue, qualify or transfer by academic year of entry

| | 2004-05 | 2005-06 | 2006-07 | 2007-08 | 2008-09 | All years mean |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------------------|
| Entrants with no previous HE qualification | 81.6 | 84.2 | 83 | 85.5 | 85.8 | 84.0 |
| No previous HE qualification – benchmark | 86.1 | 85.3 | 85.7 | 85.2 | 87.1 | 85.9 ⁹ |

Target

Investment in retention activity is being established in order to put in place support and mechanisms that will increase continuation rates even further.

Institutionally calculated data and targets are by percentage of students across all years that continue to the next stage of study or qualify.

| Indicator | Essex including partners 09-10 actual ¹⁰ | Essex excluding partners 09-10 actual | Essex five year target (excluding partners) |
|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| Young full-time first degree entrants | 89.4% | 90.9% | Increase of 2 to 4 percentage points |
| Mature full-time first degree | 81.1% | 82.7% | Increase of 2 to 4 percentage points |

An increase in the institutional target will impact accordingly on the HESA PIs. The University will also work with partner institutions on increasing continuation rates.

7.5 Employability

The University will use Polar 2 data and destination information to analyse the impact of additional investment on employability for students.

The investment made in employability will be to achieve an overall increase in the employability opportunities for students from under-represented groups.

The University already has existing targets for employability as a Key Performance Indicator (KPI)

⁸ Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), 2009-10 Performance Indicator, Table 3b Data

⁹ Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), 2009-10 Performance Indicator, Table 3c Data

¹⁰ Internal University Management Information, based on HESA return data

University of Essex, KPI 2, Student Experience

| | |
|---|--|
| 2.2 Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey data | 70% graduate track employment or 'graduate prospects' 90% in graduate employment or further study |
|---|--|

Target

Employability targets and success will be measured using *The Times Graduate Employment Survey* definition based on the standard occupation classification and the Surveys 'positive' and 'negative' definition for graduate level further study or graduate level jobs.

'Positive' destination – graduate level further study and/or a graduate level job.

'Negative' destination – no or a non-graduate level job and no or non-graduate level further study.

The destination information has been cross-referenced with Polar 2 postcode data to identify students from areas of low participation.

| | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | All years mean | Essex five year target (excluding partners) |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------------------|--|
| % Students from low- participation neighbourhoods | 9.9% | 10.2% | 11.4% | 11.7% | 10.8% | |
| Negative | 23.6% | 32.1% | 36.8% | 38.3% | 33.0% | |
| Positive | 76.4% | 67.9% | 63.2% | 61.7% | 67.0% | Positive 70-75% |
| % Students from other neighbourhoods | 90.1% | 89.8% | 88.6% | 88.1% | 89.2% | |
| Negative | 30.1% | 31.7% | 32.9% | 39.2% | 33.3% | |
| Positive | 69.9% | 68.3% | 67.1% | 60.8% | 66.7% | Positive 70-75% |
| All students | | | | | | |
| Negative | 29.4% | 31.7% | 33.4% | 39.1% | 33.3% | |
| Positive | 70.6% | 68.3% | 66.6% | 60.8% | 66.7% ¹¹ | Positive 70-75% |

8 Monitoring

The University's Planning Office will undertake regular monitoring of applications, intake, retention and employability to monitor impact, assess progress against targets and inform activity. In addition the monitoring and analysis of intake, progression and outcomes for students from under-represented groups is both the identified responsibility and integrated remit within a number of University committees and the University's management and governance.

Fulfilment of the University Access Agreement and progress against targets will be monitored by the University Education Outreach and Widening Participation Strategy Committee and reported to the University Steering Group. The Education Outreach and Widening Participation Strategy Committee will receive a termly monitoring report of progress against targets from the University's Planning Office.

The intake, progression and outcomes for students from under-represented groups will be monitored by the University's Equality and Diversity Committee.

The University Steering Group will approve the annual Access Agreement and Widening Participation Strategic Assessment monitoring report to OFFA and HEFCE.

Targets for access, retention and employability are built into the University's Key Performance Indicators which are monitored and reported on to University Council, Senate and the University Steering Group.

University faculties and departments review progression rates as part of the Annual Monitoring process. Work will be undertaken to further enhance the monitoring at department and faculty level for progression rates for mature learners, students from low-participation neighbourhoods and students with a declared disability.

The Admissions Sub-Committee, which reports to the University's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, is responsible for monitoring effectiveness of the Undergraduate Admissions Policy, including review of management information about applicants' qualifications and other relevant attributes in relation to confirmation, enrolment, progression and final outcome.

¹¹ The Times Graduate Employment Survey and Polar 2 postcode data

The University of Essex Students' Union has membership on University Council, University Senate and the Education Outreach and Widening Participation Strategy Committee. Consultations with the Students' Union have taken place in the development of the 2012-13 Access Agreement and this communication will continue as the impact of this Access Agreement is monitored and evaluated.

9 Franchise Partnerships

9.1 Colchester Institute

Colchester Institute Access Agreement, see Appendix A.

9.2 South Essex College of Further and Higher Education

South Essex College of Further and Higher Education Access Agreement, see Appendix B.

9.3 University Campus Suffolk

University Campus Suffolk has its own Access Agreement, via the University of East Anglia, and is therefore not covered within the University of Essex Agreement.

9.4 Kaplan Open Learning

Kaplan Open Learning delivers University of Essex degrees through part-time online study. The nature of delivery is targeted to provide access to obtaining a University of Essex degree for students who require the ability to study in a flexible environment. The tuition fees for University degrees delivered through Kaplan Open Learning do not currently and are not intended to reach the 2012 Access Agreement minimum threshold and for this reason, along with being a provider of part-time courses only, are not included in this Access Agreement.

Appendix A

2012 Access Agreement: Colchester Institute

2012-13 Tuition Fee:

Home and EU students

Full-time University of Essex Degree Courses: £7,500

Edexcel HNC/D: £6,000

For students entering in 2012 the tuition fee is subject to real term increases in subsequent years.

Contextual Statement:

Colchester Institute has established vocational provision in the context of an HE strategy that underpins widening participation.

The College continues to provide opportunities for those students who might otherwise not progress to higher education in addition to specialist vocational provision that serves local, regional and national industry.

Outreach:

The College aims to continue to pursue existing short-term outreach activity (for example: HE Ambassadors, schools links, progression events) but is also looking to participate in longer term high impact activity through work with primary schools within the immediate College Catchments (Tendring, Braintree and Colchester), active participation in the Children's University, the development of an HE mentoring scheme and, as lead sponsor, close engagement with the Colchester Academy.

National Scholarship Programme:

The College is keen to promote local and internal (College) progression and intends that the National Scholarship Programme should be used to support this aim. The College has been awarded 15 funded scholarships through its partnership with the University of Essex and will fund a further 15 scholarships. It is intended that 15 scholarships will be awarded to promote aspiration and attainment as learners look to progress within the College and that 15 are awarded to students progressing from local sixth forms, thus raising the profile of the HE in FE pathway and the understanding of 'higher education' in its various forms. Awards will comprise a one year benefit comprising of a fee discount of £1,500, a £1,000 cash bursary plus £500 travel voucher.

Discounts:

Colchester Institute will provide a discount of £1,500 for students enrolling on the Year 0 or Foundation Year Art and Design programmes and is looking to develop further opportunities for Year 0 entry across the vocational spectrum. The College also recognises that subject areas within the genre of Creative Industries can be more expensive for incoming students and will provide a start-up pack for Art and Design students in their first year of study (£200 per student) and an Events Season Ticket (£50 per student) for all incoming students studying within Music and Performing Arts.

Retention and Achievement:

Colchester Institute monitors the retention and achievement (within designated programme length) of students using internally produced metrics which provide greater detail than that indicated through HESA statistics and is working to improve both aspects of the student experience. The College is keen to work to HE in FE benchmarks once established through the work of the Mixed Economy Group, and currently provided statistical data for Corporation Board consideration. The College is pleased to follow the advice provided through OFFA that 'additional' income might be used to support retention and will be looking to exceed the targets set by the University by evidencing an improvement in retention and progression of 2-4 per cent over three years. In order to effectively pursue such targets, the College will be taking the following steps:

- The provision of an HE Centre, at a development cost of over £1.4 million, to support facilitation of an HE Student Community and provide bespoke HE facilities. These will include a 'one-stop-shop' for information and advice; quiet and group study areas and social space together with HE teaching space. Many cohorts have less than 20 students in their learning group and therefore students having difficulties can more easily become isolated. The development of family mentoring groups and interdisciplinary activity through the development of the Centre is seen of particular value. This project has been established as a direct response to this need and following discussion with student representatives;
- Provision of mobile technologies (Apple iPads) to all first-year students to support a more flexible approach to learning and to meet the need for the increased utilisation of ILT as a means of supporting retention. All students will be supported through Moodle and will be able to access learning materials and activities, participate in personal learning networks and access their own Personal Learning System through the use of this technology. As the College embraces continuing numbers of applications from 'mature' students, our awareness of the pressures of additional work, family needs and the tensions of maintaining pace with student activity has developed. The provision of mobile technologies is aimed to support a fundamental change in the way that learners interact with their peers, tutors and develop their own personal learning network both within and beyond the College;
- Provision of a Pebblepad Learning System for each student in order to support pre-registration study skills support, on programme personal development planning, reflexivity and activity that underpins 'My Next Step'. The establishment of study skills support needs prior to arrival at the College will enable a more effective tutorial and learning support process at a time that is often found very daunting for those from a widening participation background. This is particularly relevant for our 'mature' students.

Appendix B

2012 Access Agreement: South Essex College of Further and Higher Education

1. Aims of the College Access Agreement

The College Access Agreement aims to:

- maintain the College's strengths in access for students from groups under represented in higher education;
- raise aspirations among potential applicants from under represented groups;
- improve retention of students on higher education programmes from under represented groups;
- use a learner journey centred approach through outreach initiatives to increase the awareness and attitudes towards higher education of students enabling them to make informed decisions about their future;
- increase applications and acceptances to higher education from targeted groups, particularly lower-socio economic groups.

2. Tuition Fee

For Home and European Union students entering in 2012 onto the first year of undergraduate programmes delivered by the College and awarded by the University of Essex, the College proposes to charge a tuition fee of £7,000. The estimated number of students who will be paying the fee of £7,000 is 350. This fee will be subject to annual increases in line with the amount set by the Government.

Continuing students, new entrants and transferring students to years two and three of a programme will be subject to the South Essex College annex of the University of Essex Access Agreement for 2011 entry. The estimated number of students who will be subject to this Agreement is 700.

3. Expenditure

In 2012-13, the College will allocate 25.6 per cent of its additional fee income, as defined by OFFA, on additional activities related to raising aspirations and progression to higher education by under represented groups, improving retention, contributing to the National Scholarship Programme and providing bursaries.

The College expects to allocate £70,000 in 2012-13 to fund activities that will support raising aspirations and progression to HE and improve retention.

3.1 Activities to raise aspirations and promote progression to HE

The activities will build on those previously funded by Aimhigher for students attending further education programmes at the College and on 14-18 programmes at local schools.

Typical outreach activities will include:

- school visits to and HE experience days at the College;
- information, advice and guidance in local schools;
- information, advice and guidance events for parents and carers on HE progression;
- taster sessions on HE programmes;
- mobile HE road show to visit schools and Colleges across the region;
- subject based Research Conferences for local schools and colleges.

3.2 Activities to improve retention of HE students

These activities will raise aspirations for achievement, promote awareness of the world of work and the skills needed in employment and improve retention. Typical activities will include:

- a peer mentorship programme in which final year HE students support year one and two students;
- further development of the HE tutorial programme;
- an Alumni Association Newsletter for current HE students.

3.3 Financial support for students

National Scholarship Programme

In 2012-13, the College will contribute £45,000 to the National Scholarship Programme. Subject to final confirmation, the College will provide 30 first year UK students with a fee waiver of £3,000. The students will be from low income households and selected using appropriate criteria.

As well as meeting the criteria for the household income threshold students will be required to meet the UCAS and NSP deadlines in order to be eligible.

College Progression Bursaries

Any student on a further education programme at the College who registers for a degree programme at the College within one year of completion of the FE programme will receive a non means tested bursary of £300 for their first year of entry. The College expects to allocate £90,000 per year for these bursaries.

Continuing Students

Continuing students who started their course prior to 2012 will follow the bursary scheme that was offered at the point of entry, subject to any inflationary increases.

Appendix C

2012 Access Agreement: Edge Hotel School

Working with the education foundation Edge and education provider Kaplan, the University is developing a unique hotel school on the Colchester Campus. Edge is dedicated to raising the status of practical and vocational learning so all young people can reach their potential.

The School will be dedicated to practical and vocational education and to the development of the future leaders of the hospitality industry. Industry professionals together with student managers will run the hotel. The industry 'masters' will nurture the students' aspiring talent, knowledge and skills. This is an innovative way to develop the mastery necessary to prepare individuals for successful careers with leading hospitality organisations.

Edge Hotel School will offer students a two-year accelerated honours degree and is proposing to charge a fee of £9,000 per year, £6,000 per qualification level. Due to the nature of the course and its offer, Edge Hotel School students are not included under the general University of Essex student financial support packages.

Edge Hotel School and its academic courses have been developed to attract students from all backgrounds and provide a vocational learning opportunity for students who may otherwise not be able to access and achieve a degree level award.

In order to provide access and high level employment opportunity to students, the School will provide the following:

- a) a total fee for the course of £18,000 over two years, representing a significant saving over many comparable courses both in the absolute cost of the course but also in the additional year of earnings and reduced living costs, compared to a traditional three-year course;
- b) students will be learning by doing, working with real hotel guests and will be highly regarded in the hospitality sector to ultimately secure graduate jobs with excellent employers and excellent career prospects.

We will seek to recruit students from all backgrounds, looking for students with a real passion for the industry.

The course provision through Edge Hotel School represents excellent value for students and great employment prospects and has been developed to provide access to high level practical and vocational learning.

Table 5 - Milestones and targets

Table 5a - Statistical milestones and targets relating to your applicants, entrants or student body (e.g. HESA, UCAS or internal targets)

| Please select milestone/target type from the drop down menu | Description (500 characters maximum) | Baseline year | Baseline data | Yearly milestones/targets (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) |
|---|--|---------------|---------------|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|--|
| | | | | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | |
| Applications | Applications from students from low participation neighbourhoods (quintile 1 Polar 2 postcode data) (internally constructed) | 2010-11 | 13.40% | | | | | 13.4% | |
| Other (please give details in the next column) | Offers to students from low participation neighbourhoods (quintile 1 Polar 2 postcode data) (internally constructed) | 2010-11 | 12.60% | | | | | 12.6% | |
| State School (HESA Table T1a) | HESA Performance Indicator, including partner institutions | 2009-10 | 96.50% | | | | | 96.5% | |
| State School (other measure - please give details in the next column) | University of Essex (excluding partners) calculated from HESA return data | 2009-10 | 95.80% | | | | | 95.8% | |
| NS-SEC (HESA Table T1a) | HESA Performance Indicator, including partner institutions | 2009-10 | 32.60% | | | | | 32.6% | |
| Socio-economic (other measure - please give details in the next column) | University of Essex (excluding partners) calculated from HESA return data | 2009-10 | 31.10% | | | | | 31.1% | |
| Location (other measure - please give details in the next column) | University of Essex, Colchester Institute and South Essex College calculated from HESA return data | 2009-10 | 18.50% | | | | | 18.5% | |
| Location (other measure - please give details in the next column) | University of Essex (excluding partners) calculated from HESA return data | 2009-10 | 16.10% | | | | | 16.1% | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---------|--------|--|--|--|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| Completion/Non continuation (other - please give details in the next column) | University of Essex (excluding partners) young full time first degree students continuation/ completion rate calculated from HESA return data | 2009-10 | 90.90% | | | | | Increase of 2 to 4 percentage points | |
| Completion/Non continuation (other - please give details in the next column) | University of Essex (excluding partners) mature full time first degree students continuation/ completion rate calculated from HESA return data | 2009-10 | 82.70% | | | | | Increase of 2 to 4 percentage points | |
| Other (please give details in the next column) | Positive' employability of students from low participation neighbourhoods. Calculated using DLHE survey responses and Times 'Positive/ Negative' employment | 2009-10 | 67% | | | | | 70-75% | |

Table 5b - Other milestones and targets

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

| Please select milestone/target type from the drop down menu | Description (500 characters maximum) | Baseline year | Baseline data | Yearly milestones/targets (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) |
|---|---|---------------------|--|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---|
| | | | | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | |
| Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column) | All activity listed in the Access Agreement for the University of Essex | (2005/06 - 2009/10) | County of Essex full time HE progression at 18 by KS5 final year cohorts - provided by Aimhigher Essex | | | | | | <p>Attitudinal and data evaluation carried out to assess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Change in perception of higher education for participants and schools and colleges - Impact on achievement for participants and schools and colleges - Impact on progression rates for participating schools and colleges - Impact on participation rates by postcodes of intake of the participating schools and colleges |
| Operational targets | All activity listed in the Access Agreement for the University of Essex | | | | | | | | <p>Activity Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10,000 beneficiaries - 1,000 students and parents from younger age groups - 120 schools, colleges and organisations |
| Outreach / WP activity (summer schools) | University of Essex only | | | | | | | | <p>Attitudinal and data evaluation carried out to assess change in understanding and consideration of higher education</p> |
| Operational targets | University of Essex only | | | | | | | | <p>Activity Targets:</p> <p>3 summer schools for a total of 100 participants</p> |

