



Birkbeck University of London

Access Agreement

2016/17

with the Office for Fair Access

1. Introduction and context

Since the foundation of the College in 1823, Birkbeck has sought to provide higher education opportunities to people who would not otherwise have access. The College's founder, George Birkbeck, had a vision of the power of education to transform and improve lives, and this founding commitment to social change and widening access is one core strand of what still drives the College today. The means of achieving this goal adapts with the times but our continued commitment is unwavering. As the sector moves through particularly turbulent times, Birkbeck's determination to pursue its mission has never been stronger or more important.

Birkbeck is 'London's Evening University', where students appreciate the flexibility that studying in the evening gives them flexibility to combine study with work or family commitments. As London's only specialist provider of flexible evening higher education, Birkbeck has long encouraged applications from students without traditional qualifications or from disadvantaged and under-represented backgrounds.

The 2012 changes to student finance impacted on Birkbeck significantly and led to a huge national downturn in part-time student numbers. The well-documented downturn in part-time HE students is easily the biggest consequence of the 2012 changes. Birkbeck reacted swiftly and introduced a new model of evening 3-year degrees offered via UCAS, which have proven hugely popular among students of all ages. The new provision secured Birkbeck's future at a time when the undergraduate provision was under significant threat in a way that is innovative and completely true to Birkbeck's mission.

Birkbeck has lived through challenging times in recent years with a dramatic downturn in its part-time undergraduate student numbers. It is a tribute to the College and its seriousness of purpose and its determination to fulfil its mission that it has found ways to rapidly re-invent itself in ways that breathe new life into an ancient mission.

Our evening provision, both full-time and part-time, uniquely enables students to combine study in the evening with meaningful work during the day. This distinctive Birkbeck proposition is helping to re-imagine university study for London. In order to support students to gain paid and meaningful job placements we have invested in our capacity to provide a particular type of careers support and a new service to create job brokerage called Birkbeck Talent. We will evaluate how these innovations impact on student success and progression. We believe that our approach to supporting students' employability in this distinctive way is beneficial to our students and offers prospective students a new model of higher education and an additional exciting option to consider.

We expect a further increase in full-time students and decrease in part-time students in 2016/17. Our evening study model remains mission-driven as it continues to attract a very high proportion of students with low incomes. We are determined to ensure that our new range of flexible provision continues to open up the opportunity of higher education to students who may otherwise not be able to study. However, the decrease in part-time study remains a major concern as numbers of mature students continue to decline. We are committed to working with this group of students, but remain concerned about the seeming lack of governmental action to rebuild this important aspect of social mobility.

While outside of the terms of reference for this Access Agreement, this year we are also developing new work to widen access at a postgraduate level as we believe this may become the new frontier for under-representation in higher education (HE).

This access agreement for 2016/17 sets out some of the ways that we continue to work to enable the progression of mature students, while also increasing the level of work to engage younger students. The access agreement also shows that we are reacting to our evaluation data and will be refocussing our resources by reducing the amount given in financial support in order to increase expenditure on student success and progression activities that will have greater impact on students.

2. Fees, student numbers and fee income

We will maintain a tiered fee structure in 2016/17, continuing the principles already established in the College for differential pricing taking into account our academic, widening participation and lifelong learning missions. Full time equivalent (FTE) fees will range from £4000 and £5000 for most Certificate of Higher Education modular programmes to £6000 and £9000 for other Certificates and degree programmes.

Our Certificates of Higher Education are an important part of our widening participation strategy as they are open to mature students without traditional HE entry qualifications. Successful completion of a Certificate leads to entry to the first or second year on an undergraduate degree. The lowest fee represents a price of £1000 for a 30-credit module from a Certificate of Higher Education. Certificates attract a diverse range of students. Students can choose to take one or two Certificate modules every year, or more intensive Certificate programmes of up to 120 credits a year.

Our degree portfolio relies on our strong research reputation. In 2016/17 we plan to have a standard FTE fee of £9000 for new entrants. We will retain a fee of £7000 for some provision linked to access and social participation. In 2016/17 we will be keeping the financial support criteria established in 2015/16, which includes a generous entitlement for part-time students with household incomes of up to £39,999. We will however be reducing the total expenditure on financial support and therefore the amount per student will be reduced.

We continue to be disappointed by governmental response to the sharp downturn in the numbers of part-time and mature students since part-time fees were regulated. We believe that the financial situation is not favourable for many mature students. If no governmental changes are introduced to better support part-time students, we may seriously consider directing all of our financial support towards part-time students from 2017/18.

Taking our student financial support into account, our average fee per FTE in 2015-16 will be £8146.

We are anticipating:

- 1200 part-time entrants and 1500 full-time entrants on degrees and foundation degrees.
- 500 entrants on Certificate of Higher Education programmes.
- 1500 students enrolled on modular Certificate of Higher Education courses.

We estimate our total student body in 2016/17 will be made up of approximately:

- 7000 (4000 part-time and 3000 full-time) students on degrees and foundation degrees.
- 950 students on Certificate of Higher Education programmes.
- 1500 students enrolled on modular Certificate of Higher Education courses.

We are also expecting approximately 500 students paying old system fees to return to complete the fourth year of their part-time degrees.

We estimate that our income from higher fees will be £14.75M in 2016/17. We intend to invest approximately a third of this income in supporting our outreach, support and retention work and on an extended student financial support scheme.

3. Access and student success measures

3.1 Assessment of Birkbeck's access record

Our student body has changed significantly since 2012/13 and 2013/14, and we anticipate that the trend will continue. Birkbeck now has more full-time undergraduate students than part-time students, which is remarkable considering that we welcomed our first full-time students in 2010. While our student body continues to be predominantly constituted by mature students, the average age is falling as the profile of students who enrol on the three-year evening programmes is younger than on the four-year degrees.

3.1.1 Performance regarding part-time and mature students

Birkbeck aims to make studying higher education as accessible as possible to mature students who may not have had the opportunity to study earlier in life. We believe that all mature students with no previous experience of HE, especially those who have low incomes, are a valid target group for outreach activities, regardless of whether or not they live in the lowest participation neighbourhoods. We argue that the social mobility impact on mature students who have missed out on higher education earlier in life is not dependent on the participation area that they currently live in. We will continue to target outreach activities towards students with no previous qualifications regardless of location, rather than focus significantly on POLAR-3 areas with the lowest participation.

We continue to attract a high proportion of students from low income backgrounds, with 40% of our part-time students eligible for Birkbeck financial support in 2014/15.

In the context of the downturn in part-time and mature students nationally, we remain committed to making HE as accessible as possible to mature students. We remain committed to facilitating the access of students who have few qualifications but who can demonstrate the potential to become successful students. Government policy created a crisis in this area, We hope government policy may change to help this market recover in time.

3.1.2 Performance regarding full-time and young students

2014/15 was another year of significant growth in enrolments onto Birkbeck's three-year, full-time evening programmes. To recognise the increased importance of younger students to

Birkbeck, we have increased our outreach efforts at younger students, working in a much more intensive way with Sixth Form Colleges in London. Over the past year, the College worked on a project jointly funded by the HEFCE Catalyst Fund to support the development of the intensive flexible three-year evening mode of study and to ensure the success of the students on this mode of study. The effective lessons that we have learnt during this process will be implemented into mainstream areas of work.

Of the 2014/15 three-year full-time evening cohort, 58% have a household income of below £25,000. We are pleased that full-time programmes delivered in the evening are proving to be attractive to students from low income backgrounds and that they are successfully widening access. We have chosen to use the NS-SEC measurement as this is the one that we believe to be most relevant, alongside the household income of our students. In 2013/14 we surpassed our benchmark on this target and will aim to continue to do so in future. We also have targets for the proportion of students on low income, as defined by eligibility for our financial support packages, and we will continue to have separate targets in order to demonstrate our commitment to both modes of study.

3.1.3 Disability

The percentage of our students who receive Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) in 2013/14 was at benchmark for full-time students (7.9%) and slightly above benchmark for part-time students (6.7%). Supporting part-time students is more resource intensive than supporting full-time students as they represent a FTE of less than one but require equal levels of support.

The percentage of students who have declared a disability is at 16%, a proportion that has increased substantially in recent years in response to the Disabilities Office's sustained efforts to increase the rate of disability testing among students. The proportion of disabled students choosing to take full- and part-time degrees is very similar.

In direct response to monitoring our statistics and observing a large increase in the number of students with SpLDs (Specific Learning Difficulties), the College has recently appointed a Specific Learning Difficulties Co-Ordinator. The new post provides an enhanced level of specialist advice to staff across the College. The Disability Office is also working with the Student Union to raise awareness of SpLDs specifically amongst BME students to encourage greater screening and to enhance the support provided to those who are diagnosed.

In order to ensure that we continue to attract and support students with disabilities, the Disability Committee of the College will continue to monitor:

Access:

- The total number and percentage of the undergraduate student body made up of students claiming DSA.
- The total number and percentage of students who declare a disability.
- The classification of disabilities reported by students to ensure that the relevant support is provided and to identify any emerging trends.

Retention:

- The number and percentage of students with disabilities enrolling onto the second year of study.
- The breakdown of retention statistics by full- and part-time provision and by the classification of disabilities in order to identify and address any issues arising.

3.2 Assessment of Birkbeck's student success record

Below we consider our student success record through measures of award, retention and progression. The findings suggest that there are significant differences between the success of students who study our traditional four-year part-time evening mode and those students who are studying three-year full-time in the evening. Our results are however provisional as the full-time mode was only recently introduced and so only one small cohort of students has graduated.

Awards:

The 2013/14 data covers only the second year that we have had full-time students graduating. Full-time students achieved slightly fewer first-class honours than their part-time counterparts (16% versus 20%), but 60% of them achieved first-class honours or an upper second-class degree, compared to 54% of part-time students. As our larger full-time cohorts move to graduation we may expect more fluctuation. We will keep these trends under close review in order to identify and address significant disparities and better support students.

Withdrawal:

Our data shows that students who withdraw are most likely to do so in the first year of their studies. Our efforts on student success are therefore focused on this period and particularly on the transition from pre-entry to enrolment and from first year to second year.

There is significant difference in the continuation rates of three-year full-time and four-year part-time students. We are pleased that we remain under our benchmark for our part-time students with a reduction from last year, to now show a non-continuation rate of 31%, against a HESA benchmark of 35.3%.

The withdrawal rates of three-year full-time evening students is lower than for part-time students, but does not achieve the HESA benchmark. The non-continuation rate following year of entry is 14.4% for the 2012/13 cohort against a benchmark of 12.7%.

The difference in withdrawal rates between full-time and part-time students mirrors the national picture, and reflects the fact that part-time students are likely to have more external commitments that might disrupt their studies. such as juggling their studies with work. At Birkbeck however, it is also the case that the majority of our full-time students are mature students and many will encounter similar barriers to study as their part-time counterparts. We will continue to focus on reducing the withdrawal rates of our students, as demonstrated by the increased proportion of additional fee income directed towards student success activities. Our strategic approach to improving retention rates are described in the following section.

3.3 Birkbeck's strategic approach to access and student success

Birkbeck has long had a strategic focus on improving the recruitment and retention of undergraduate, non-traditional adult learners. Over recent years, our work evolved to also look at

what support can be put in place for our younger students. A sustained and integrated 'student experience' initiative is led by the Pro-Vice-Master (PVM) for Strategic Engagement and Recruitment, with strategic direction overseen through the Student Engagement and Widening Participation Committee.

We are currently developing a Student Engagement Strategy that will ensure a whole lifecycle approach, working with students across all levels. The strategy will build on our previous work and will set out the priorities of our work over the coming years. The strategy will ensure that access and student success measures are considered jointly and holistically.

We recently reviewed the financial support packages we have offered since 2012/13, which has led us to remodel our financial support package for 2016/17. The evaluation demonstrated that receipt of the bursaries we offered did not have a statistically significant impact on student retention. The impact on student applications and enrolments is more difficult to evaluate effectively, but there is no direct evidence that receiving a bursary influences decision-making by students.

In light of the review, from 2016/17 we will be reducing the proportion of additional fee income spent on financial support to students, while increasing expenditure on student success and progression. The move to reduce the proportion spent on financial support will enable us to increase the number and range of initiatives that support widening access and student success, and we believe that it will lead to overall improvements for students across the student lifecycle.

Access

Birkbeck's access strategy has traditionally been aimed at mature students who have no previous HE experience. Mature students are less well serviced and often don't receive information and advice they need to make an informed choice about returning to higher education. As we have developed expertise in working with this age group over the years, we will continue to focus a significant proportion of resources on this group.

We increasingly work with Key Stage 5 students as the new three-year full-time evening courses are attracting 18-20-year-olds to Birkbeck for the first time. We provide a different model of HE delivery to that provided by other HEIs, and being able to offer this to students expands their options and increases the scope for widening access in HE. This is demonstrated by the fact that 58% of the students in 2013/14 on three-year full-time programmes were eligible for our financial support due to a household income below £25,000. Through the intensive flexible provision project we will be focusing more research on the access to and success of students on the three-year full-time evening model.

The College's outreach work is regularly evaluated to ensure that the activities are successful and cost effective. Details of a selection of our access projects are outlined in Section 3.5. The Widening Access and Student Engagement team are active in a number of cross-College committees and other groups that aim to support the widening access aims of the College. These include the Student Engagement and Widening Participation Committee, the Fees Bursaries and Scholarships Committee, the Equalities Committee, the Disability Committee, the Recruitment Monitoring Group and collaborative Birkbeck-UEL groups overseeing the new joint teaching facility at Stratford.

Student Retention and Success

Our Strategy for Learning and Teaching Enhancement aims to develop and enhance our practice through awareness and understanding of student diversity and equality issues. Specifically, the strategy aims to develop and enhance learner support, retention and progression. Learning and teaching at Birkbeck is grounded in the College's unique mission and guiding principles, including its responsiveness to the needs of diverse students in changing environments.

We aim to attract and retain students throughout their different learning journeys, ensuring that they have the best possible experience of flexible learning, enhancing learning, teaching and assessment through a distinctive Birkbeck curriculum and through developing a sense of institutional belonging.

The priorities for the Strategy for Learning and Teaching Enhancement include:

- Embedding graduate skills / skills for employability in the curriculum.
- Developing a strategy for online provision and technology enhanced learning.
- Transforming assessment and feedback.
- Recognising prior learning.
- Supporting learning through flexible provision.
- Developing critical pedagogy.

Centre for Transformative Practice in Learning and Teaching

The Centre for Transformative Practice in Learning and Teaching was launched in 2013 to help give Birkbeck students the best possible experience of flexible learning, which will in turn support retention and student success.

Birkbeck's founding vision of the power of education to transform and improve lives is at the heart of the College's new Centre for Transformative Practice in Teaching and Learning. The Centre works with all staff who teach, supporting their professional development and deepening their critical understanding of learning and teaching. The impact of the Centre will include the enhancement of pedagogic approaches for learners and the development of critical practices for practitioners and professionals. The Centre supports all staff at Birkbeck who teach and developing transformative practices to enhance students' learning experiences.

3.4 Birkbeck's expenditure on access and student success measures

Birkbeck's expenditure on access and student success measures shows that we will spend 26% of our additional fee income on OFFA-countable financial support, outreach and student success in 2016/7. The proportion will gradually reduce over the coming years but will remain above the proportion recommended by OFFA. As throughout our history, we remain committed to ensuring that higher education remains as accessible as possible to non-traditional students, and that they are able to succeed on their course.

We are committed to ensuring the success of our students and we will continue to increase our access, student success and progression expenditure for 2016/17. The increase is in response to a review of expenditure conducted over the past year. We evaluated the impact of the financial

support that we offered our students, to assess whether the high proportion that we had committed to bursaries was effectively encouraging lower income students to apply and succeed at Birkbeck. We reviewed both the national information and interrogated our own data. We believe that increasing our expenditure on access and student success initiatives will be more effective at supporting students than providing them with financial support. We are therefore reducing the amount spent on financial support and increasing expenditure on other categories. Further details are given in Section 3.7. The proportion spent on access initiatives, student success and progression will increase, and the amounts spent will increase in real terms as well as in proportion of expenditure. These changes are in line with OFFA's recommendations and match our evidence of effectiveness.

3.5 Examples of Birkbeck's access and student success activities

Birkbeck's outreach strategy has predominantly focused on opening up the possibility of higher education to adults who would otherwise not be aware of the options available to them, or who would not be able to easily study on a programme delivered during the daytime. Due to the changes in our student demographic in recent years, we have developed a strand of work, much more similar to other universities, of working with younger students. A third strand of work, developed during 2014/15, has focused on widening participation for postgraduate students. As our courses are delivered in the evening, our students are interested in using their days to pursue meaningful and useful employment, volunteering, interning and other activities. We have therefore invested in Birkbeck Talent, a service that supports students to find meaningful employment and experience during the day.

3.5.1 Examples of our access activities

Partnership working with London Borough of Haringey – Bridges to Birkbeck

We have partnered with London Borough of Haringey to develop a long-term presence for Birkbeck in the borough. The partnership is an innovative outreach initiative that demonstrates our belief in partnerships with a variety of stakeholders.

The aims of the project are to increase awareness and interest in HE in non-traditional students, and to support Haringey residents in achieving their chosen career goals. We will offer a HE presence in Haringey, with a dedicated outreach officer based in the borough to ensure that local communities are given the information and the opportunities to experience higher education for themselves. We also aim to run our introductory Higher Education Introductory Studies in Haringey.

The two-year project is at an early stage of its development, but we have committed to delivering a series of initiatives that will be free for local residents of all ages. The various strands that we will deliver have particular focus on different groups, including a year-long WP project with A-level students, support for Access to HE diploma students, attainment and confidence-raising initiatives aimed at mature students, and academic content aimed at encouraging existing graduates to explore postgraduate study. In time we hope the pilot project with Haringey may turn into a model for HE access for non-traditional learners in other London Boroughs.

Pop-up university

Our innovative Pop-Up University concept has grown and further developed this year. We have partnered with Enfield Council and three local FE Colleges to establish a project – Enfield Thinks

– that has wide appeal for anyone interested in re-entering education, regardless of age, previous experience or desired career. The project has inhabited a previously empty shop let, offering over 250 events, talks, lectures and discussions over a 12-week period. Local residents have been able to find out more about a range of possible careers and educational pathways – everything from hairdressing and construction, to philosophy and biosciences.

Enfield Thinks demonstrates the benefit of working in partnership with other organisations and of combining each organisation’s strengths to create opportunities that the partners could not offer alone. The project has been recognised with the awarding of additional funds from the Mayor of London’s High Street Fund.

The role of Certificates of Higher Education in access

The College has a long-established range of introductory programmes that reach out to disadvantaged and non-traditional learners, wherever they are in London, and create bridges that enable them to aspire to a university degree. In particular, the College’s Certificate of HE on Higher Education Introductory Studies (HEIS) programme acts as an access-type programme with significant support built into the curriculum, including English language and study skills learning and support. Success on these programmes often leads students directly into the second year of an undergraduate degree programme. No previous qualification is required for entry onto HEIS Certificates and they provide an accessible and supportive way to enter higher education for those who may not be ready to start an undergraduate degree.

Our Certificates of Higher Education are very successful examples of the types of entry years that Alan Milburn promoted in his 2012 *University Challenge* report as an effective means of promoting social mobility, providing new routes into higher education. We are offering the Certificates on a lower fee than our UG degree provision in order to encourage those students who may be most debt-adverse and have the lowest confidence. Through the Certificates of Higher Education, adults who might otherwise be excluded from higher education participation are finding their way onto degree programmes. Birkbeck will continue to expand our provision of these programmes where possible.

Get Started workshops

After evaluation in 2014, we changed our weekly workshops to a monthly model called Get Started. The monthly workshops means that staff resource is used more effectively, while maintaining a regular opportunity for prospective students to come onto campus and to receive information and guidance on applying successfully for a HE course.

We have recently developed similar workshops aimed at students interested in postgraduate studies. The Get Started PG workshops will run in 2015 and will be evaluated through the 2015/16 recruitment cycle.

Get Talking

The Get Talking project is an opportunity for prospective students to meet recent graduates to discuss their experiences of studying at Birkbeck. The sessions have been extremely successful in giving prospective students confidence and an opportunity to ask specific questions they may not have had answered. The positive impact of this project is shown by the fact that 75% of students who took part in the project went on to successfully enrol at Birkbeck in 2013/14. We will expand this project over the coming years to both increase numbers and also to incorporate postgraduate students.

Trade Union members

We have a strategic partnership with unionlearn that targets low-paid workers with no previous experience of HE to encourage them to progress to HE. Birkbeck offers a 10% fees discount to these entrants, with nearly 250 members taking advantage in 2014/15 on undergraduate programmes, a total cost of approximately £160,000 in undergraduate fees waivers. To support the unionlearn discount, a substantial programme of events is run throughout the year, working unionlearn representatives to reach the greatest number of individuals in particular sectors.

Institutional Partnership Agreement (IPA)

We have identified further education colleges (FECs) as important partners for Birkbeck. As part of our admissions policy we have an agreement that guarantees that any student on a Level 3 qualification at a partner institution will receive an offer from us. The IPA gives students the confidence to apply to Birkbeck and we have seen our applications from partner institutions have increase dramatically in recent years (from 250 in 2012/13 to 600 in 2014/15). We will continue to work with FE colleges to ensure that we are as accessible as possible for their students.

3.5.2 Examples of student success activities

Employment and career support

As an evening university, many of our students work during the day. We have developed our employment and career offer to support students in their careers both during their studies and after graduation. Due to the special type of support demanded by our students we developed a new in-house service – Birkbeck Talent – in 2014/15 which has proven extremely successful and will further develop in 2015/16.

The Employment and Career Support Team is constantly developing ways to increase interaction with students and facilitate access to support, information and advice, which has led to the creation of a new employability space within the student centre. During orientation and throughout the year, the space is available for students, with an Employability Advisor on hand to support students.

We will be offering numerous workshops during 2015/16 with delivery on technical, practical, soft skills and also including the more contemporary elements of looking for the right opportunities; during and after students complete their course. We work with employers who deliver workshops directly, which is something that is particularly valued by our students as it ensures that students hear directly from prospective employers.

We have significantly developed our online employment and career support for student and alumni this last year. As well as our social media engagement, the online careers portal has been a runaway success. We are developing the portal for the next year to include even more useful tools, including regular PDF updates directly to students from the service, additional employer advice and more support around self-employment / entrepreneurship.

The team work closely with our academic departments as this has proven to be an effective way to ensure that the service is appropriate for the students following particular career paths. We will be doing even more in the coming year, including employer insights in particular from hard to enter industries, for example publishing.

Learning support

Learning Support Officers (LSOs) are placed within each School and centrally in order to assist students during their studies. The LSOs' current focus is on the first year undergraduate, where the greatest risk of withdrawal has been identified, but they also work throughout the student lifecycle. The work of the LSOs is critical to the College's retention activities and the improved retention statistics demonstrate their success. The study skills support offered by the learning support officers is now part of the new Centre for Transformative Practice in Learning and Teaching.

Integrating learning development

We have a very successful Integrated Learning Development Working Group, which has resulted in improved collaboration and a coherent institution-wide approach to learning development. It reports to the Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee, that aims to bring together the College's learning development work, making clearer to students what is available, including workshops, tutorials, online provision and resources offered by the learning support officers, library, ITS and the Widening Access and Retention team.

'Get Ahead: Stay Ahead' activities

We offer a series of workshops under the heading of 'Get Ahead: Stay Ahead'. The 'Get Ahead' summer programme of workshops, alongside associated online tutorials, prepare applicants for study. In the summer of 2014 over 300 UG students attended the Get Ahead series of events prior to starting their course. We also offer a similar series for PG students, which are aimed at students who graduated some years previously and need support and guidance to build their confidence academic skills.

3.5.3 Progression activities

Birkbeck Talent

We support our students' aspirations through Birkbeck Talent, our own specialist internal recruitment agency. Birkbeck Talent is a professional recruitment service aimed exclusively at assisting Birkbeck students to find employment and internship opportunities.

Birkbeck Talent offers employers access to a diverse pool of highly motivated students. The students using the service are able to gain a salary that supports their studies, as well as work experience that will make them stand out in a highly competitive job market. The service is still new (it will be opened to all Birkbeck students in mid-2015) and will be evaluated on its success in improving retention and successful progression. Birkbeck Talent works closely with the Birkbeck Careers and Employability Service with the overall goal of improving student and graduate employability.

Birkbeck Talent is a project that was developed with the help of HEFCE's Catalyst Fund. It has proven to be highly successful in its first year, and the College is committed to ensuring its continuation and sustainability.

Supporting transition to postgraduate study:

In 2014-15 we extended the Widening Access and Student Engagement team's remit to also cover widening access to postgraduate study. We have analysed current and historic student data to determine the underrepresented population at PG level, finding that BME, disabled and first-generation-in-HE students were most likely to miss out on further study opportunities. In response to this data we are piloting a programme of activities aimed at supporting transition to

PG. The activities include running regular workshops to support successful applications, working with the Careers Service to link their career paths with courses, and ensuring that we provide improved online information on career prospects and the practicalities of studying postgraduate courses in the evening.

The School of Arts developed a successful project called 'Step Up to Postgraduate Study' which is being developed for our other Schools. The module provides students making the move from undergraduate to postgraduate study with the opportunity to work on the skills needed for taught postgraduate programmes. At the end of the module, participants reported high levels of increased confidence in their ability to succeed at postgraduate studies.

Our longer term widening access to PG actions will form a part of the Student Engagement Strategy, which is currently being developed by the Student Engagement and Widening Participation Committee.

3.5.4 Student Union activities

The Student Union has developed a range of initiatives that will support the access and retention of students by improving engagement and offering opportunities for participation and personal development. The activities include:

- Re-organising the standard model of student clubs and societies to make it fit for part-time and mature students. The changes encourage student engagement in both the student representation system and social and sporting events.
- An increased presence at Open Evening and creation of online tools to support students' pre-entry journey, and provide information about events, support and orientation, including hosting students on campus at pre-entry events.
- Developing innovative taster events to engage non-traditional students.
- Providing financial information and advice to students in collaboration with the National Union of Students.
- Building stronger community and support networks in the student body at Birkbeck through campus tours and a 'chaperoning' service for new students.
- Collaborating with colleagues across the College to deliver entrepreneurship workshops, opportunities for enterprise funding and delivery of soft skills to enhance student experience and employability.

3.6 Collaborative activities

3.6.1 University Square Stratford – collaboration with UEL

University Square Stratford (USS) is a major widening access initiative for Birkbeck, which opened its doors for the 2013/14 academic year. The College ensured that we worked in partnership with existing providers in the area in order to widen the provision available in east London. The decision to open a new centre in Stratford was taken due to the low participation rates in east

London and the knowledge that our particular provision of evening study would enable people to benefit from HE who would otherwise not be able to study.

At the heart of USS is a collaborative Birkbeck-UEL pre-entry Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) service for prospective students of both institutions and members of the public in general. The IAG service is a truly innovative provision between the two universities that provides a visible, accessible and impartial service to the local population. The service provided individual IAG interviews to over 2000 prospective students in its first full year of operation in 2013/14, which we aim to increase to 2400 by 2016/7.

As well as the initial IAG service, the building also hosts pre- and post-entry support activities to ensure that students from both institutions receive the support they need to succeed in their studies. Birkbeck expects to commit substantial investment to the IAG service in 2015/16 so that our students receive the most comprehensive pre-entry support possible.

Measurements of the IAG service's success will include an analysis of those given an IAG interview in terms of their enrolment to application rates, retention rates and their profile. The service will be evaluated through the monitoring systems at both institutions, with regular ongoing management meetings between the two institutions to ensure that lessons are shared.

3.6.2 Linking London

Birkbeck hosts the Linking London network, a unique network of 39 partners made up of universities, colleges, sixth form colleges, schools, awarding and professional bodies, the Jisc Regional Support Centre, the London Councils Young People's Education and Skills team and unionlearn.

The core aims of the partnership are to support recruitment, retention and progression into and through higher education. Through Linking London membership, partners work both collaboratively and individually to target student engagement and achievement, social mobility and social justice through education.

Areas of collaborative work with Linking London include:

- Delivery of advice and information sessions to FE colleges and sixth form colleges in order to encourage successful applications from students with Access and BTEC qualifications.
- Jointly organising a one-day conference aimed at advisors in FE colleges. The conference is now in its third year, helping advisors to support the progression of their students to HE.
- Collaborating with the network as part of HEFCE's NNCO programme.

3.7 Student Financial Support

For new students in 2016/17 we intend to keep household income as the sole eligibility criterion for our main financial support scheme. As previously mentioned, we intend to reduce the proportion of additional fee income given as financial support, in response to research that the support does not significantly assist access and retention. Reducing the proportion will have an impact on the size of bursary that we will be able to offer, but we will continue to offer support to

those on low income. Reducing the size of the bursary enables us to increase our expenditure on access and student success initiatives that will have a greater impact on student outcomes, as detailed in previous sections. Our financial support scheme also includes a specifically targeted initiative for part-time students who are disadvantaged by not being able to access government supported maintenance grants and loans.

All our financial support schemes will be available to all students who are eligible as far as funds allow. Budgets have been planned so that we hope to be able to offer the support to every student who is eligible.

3.7.1 Student financial support schemes for new students

Birkbeck Undergraduate Student Support scheme

The 2016/17 financial support scheme will apply similar income thresholds as used in 2015/16, but with reduced bursary amounts.

The Birkbeck Undergraduate Student Support (BUSS) scheme is available to all degree students on household incomes of less than £25,000 and additionally to all part-time degree students with incomes between £25,000 and £39,999. The support will be in the form of an annual cash bursary paid over three instalments, but can be taken as a fee waiver if the student requests this.

Less than £25,000

In 2016/17 the rate of support will be up to £800 each year where household income is £24,999 or below. These awards are available each year of study for the duration of the programme, pro-rata to intensity of study. Therefore eligible students will receive £800 per year if on a three-year degree (120 credits), £600 per year on four-year degrees (90 credits) and £400 per year on six-year degrees (60 credits).

Part-Time - £25,000 to £39,999

Part-time students cannot claim government maintenance loans and grants that are only available to full-time students. Many part-time students therefore struggle financially during their course, and many choose to study full-time when a part-time course would be a better option. In order to combat this issue Birkbeck also includes part-time students on middle income in this scheme, through extending the eligibility criteria to students with household incomes of £25,000 and up to £39,999. This demonstrates our ongoing commitment to addressing barriers to accessing part-time study.

Eligible students will receive a benefit of up to a maximum of £600 each year pro-rata to intensity of study. This will mean £450 each year, for students on our four-year degrees (90 credits), £300 per year on six-year degrees (60 credits) and £150 per year if studying 30 credits in one year. We believe that this is an innovative scheme that recognises the difficulties faced by many part-time students, many of whom are in employment on middle incomes with existing financial commitments.

In 2016/17 we expect the whole BUSS package to support new students will cost approximately £750k.

3.7.2 Student Financial Support Schemes for Continuing Students

We will offer continuing students the same financial support scheme as in the year they first enrolled, providing they are still eligible in terms of household income. We will therefore continue the cash bursary scheme offered to new entrants in 2012/13, 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16.

- **2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15 cohorts**

For students with incomes less than £25,000, we will continue to award a bursary in each year of study of up to £1000, pro-rata to intensity of study. £1000 for students on three-year degrees (120 credits), £750 for students on four-year degrees (90 credits) and £500 for students on six-year degrees (60 credits).

- **2014/15 cohort only**

For all degree students with incomes between £25,000 and £34,999, we will continue to award a bursary in each year of study up to £800, pro-rata to intensity of study. £800 for students on three-year degrees (120 credits), £600 for students on four-year degrees (90 credits) and £400 for students on six-year degrees (60 credits).

- **2015/16 cohort only**

Below £20k

For all degree students with incomes below £20,000, we will continue to award a bursary in each year of study up to £1,500, pro-rata to intensity of study. £1500 for students on three-year degrees (120 credits), £1000 for students on four-year degrees (90 credits) and £750 for students on six-year degrees (60 credits).

Between £20k-£24,999k

For all degree students with incomes between £20,000-£24,999, we will continue to award a bursary in each year of study of up to £1000, pro-rata to intensity of study. £1000 for students on three-year degrees (120 credits), £750 for students on four-year degrees (90 credits) and £500 for students on six-year degrees (60 credits).

Part-time between £25k-£39,999

For part-time students with a household income of between £25,000 to £39,999, we will continue to award financial support up to £1000, pro-rata to intensity of study. £800 for students on four-year degrees (90 credits) and £533 for students on six-year degrees (60 credits).

It is expected that the cost of continued support for these financial support schemes will be approximately £1,600,000 in 2016/17.

National Scholarship Programme

All remaining eligible part-time students on cohorts between 2012/13 and 2015/16 who have not yet received their full £3000 NSP will continue to receive any remaining NSP benefit up to a maximum of £3000. Birkbeck committed to ensuring part-time students received their NSP benefit over more than just the first year to ensure equality between full-time and part-time students and ensure that all students were able to receive the full £3000 benefit of each award

Pre-2012 Part Time (Top-Up)

We will continue to operate our generous bursary system for the remaining old system part-time students. Part-time students who started their studies prior to 2012/2013 are eligible for part-time grants of up to £1285 per annum for which they are means tested by Student Finance England. Our bursary scheme aims to 'top-up' recipients of the part-time grant to the level of the College's part-time fee.

3.7.3 Hardship Support

Birkbeck Access to Learning Fund

With the removal of the government funded Access to Learning Fund in 2014/15, we have agreed to establish a dedicated discretionary fund based on the government Access to Learning Fund to provide assistance with course costs for those students who are in financial need due to low income and high necessary living costs, prioritising under-represented groups including single parents, disabled students, care-leavers and students from low income families. This fund will also be increased to ensure we are able to fully support disabled students following government changes to the criteria of the disability students allowance in 2015/16 and in 2016/17. This will ensure we are able to provide essential specialist computers for disabled students on low incomes and non-medical assistive support.

Hardship Fund

In addition to the Birkbeck Access to Learning Fund, we will continue to operate the discretionary hardship fund for students who experience a substantial unexpected change in circumstances during their studies. This provides a limited amount of emergency financial support to cover the costs of their course.

3.7.4 Other Funding Support

Unionlearn Discount

Students who are a member of a trade union are able to obtain a 10% discount on any course at Birkbeck. Through this fund we are currently supporting approximately 250 undergraduate students a year at a cost of approximately £160,000 a year.

4. Targets and milestones, monitoring and evaluation

The targets that we have set are challenging, measurable and show a determination to ensure that Birkbeck continues its historical mission to ensure that the benefits of higher education are as widely available as possible.

We have included separate targets for full-time and part-time courses as the student characteristics vary greatly by degree mode. We believe that both the full-time and part-time evening modes will be attractive to students from non-traditional backgrounds for different reasons. We are keen to understand any differences in how the full-time and part-time modes attract students from non-traditional backgrounds, and whether the choice of mode impacts on students' success on their course. The knowledge will enable us to direct resources and support more effectively.

We will continue to monitor and evaluate our outreach work in order to react to successful developments. We will continue to monitor attendance at all of our events and online activities, and then the progression of those people who apply and enrol. The commitment to increasing the

proportion of higher fee income spent on access work demonstrated our commitment to the area of work, and ongoing evaluation will ensure that resources are used effectively.

Progress towards our targets and milestones will be monitored using College Management Information Systems, reviewed annually by the Student Engagement and Widening Participation Committee, which has representation from the Student Union, and reported through Academic Board to the Governing Body. The Strategic Planning Committee and the Governors also closely monitor student success targets.

5. Equality and Diversity

The College is proud of, and committed to maintaining, the ethnicity mix of our student body, which reflects the population of London, and number of disabled students as a proportion of the student body. Equality and diversity is an integral part of Birkbeck's practices and is embedded in all that we do. We strive to continue building an enabling environment, free from prejudice, discrimination and harassment, and support the diverse and cultural needs of all staff and students through a range of activities as outlined in the College's Single Equality Strategy.

An Equality Impact Assessment of the access agreement was undertaken in 2013. The agreement has been assessed as having a potentially positive impact on equality in terms of race/ethnicity, disability and age-protected characteristics, and a neutral impact on all other protected characteristics.

The impact of the College's recruitment and retention activities are captured through the College's Equality Strategy and supporting implementation plan which is monitored and reported on a regular basis at the Equalities Committee. The Head of Widening Access and Student Success is represented on the Equalities Committee and the Disabilities Committee, in order to ensure the sharing of information and particular areas of work through relevant College structures.

6. Provision of information to prospective students

Our research has shown that the majority of mature students rely on Birkbeck's own information channels for the majority of their information about higher education. This is true for course information, career advice and for financial information relevant to studying. It is therefore imperative that we provide accurate and thorough information to students.

We will provide information to our prospective students for the 2016/17 programmes, together with the financial support that we have available, as clearly and as timely as possible. As well as the mainstream methods of communication through our website and print prospectuses, we will work with partners to ensure that they are aware of the financial support available as soon in the application cycle as possible so that messages are can be distributed throughout the wider community. Our substantial pre-entry IAG provision, outlined above, will be a key way to ensure that students not only have access to the information, but also have the opportunity to discuss that information with a member of staff.

Despite our best efforts to communicate the financial information to students, there continues to be a lack of high-quality, accessible information targeted at the mature and part-time audiences. Benchmarking shows that our advertising and recruitment spending is higher than other HE institutions as large proportions of our students are recruited directly rather than via UCAS. Wider

coordinated efforts are required to ensure that prospective mature students have access to clear financial information and guidance.

7. Consulting with students

We have a range of ways in which we receive feedback from our students including: class representatives; student/staff exchange meetings; module evaluation forms; the National Student Survey; and our Birkbeck Student Survey. The College's engagement with students is likely to change as more of our students choose to study full-time, more students are younger, and more may have less intensive commitments away from their studies. The new Student Engagement Strategy will include measures to increase student engagement

Along with other elements of student engagement, student satisfaction surveys are being used as a tool to understand higher education from the students' point of view. Student survey work at Birkbeck is embedded in the processes and practices of enhancement, to make real improvements to learning and teaching, whilst recognising elements of a wider student experience.

Our own research shows that 80% of Birkbeck's part-time students accessed information on all aspects of the pre-entry journey through Birkbeck's own information channels. The contrast with students who applied through UCAS is significant, as they mainly found their IAG information through other channels, with only 20% primarily depending on Birkbeck's resources. These figures demonstrate the importance of our own information channels for prospective students, in particular for the part-time cohort who are predominantly mature students.

The impact of the student voice in the College's decision-making is demonstrated by the introduction of a Hardship Fund in 2012/13 in direct response to the Students' Union's request, and our commitment to continue to operate a discretionary hardship fund in 2014/15 as outlined in Section 3.7.3.

The Students' Union is represented on the Student Engagement and Widening Participation Committee, the body that reviews the College's access agreements and Widening Participation Strategic Statement. Students are also represented on Governors and Finance and General Purposes Committee meetings, where the new fees and bursaries and the related impact on the access agreement have been discussed.

Our consultation with the Students' Union has emphasised the need for clear and transparent information regarding financial support offered to students. The structure of the financial support that we have implemented ensures that the criteria are as simple as possible, with just a single eligibility criterion of household income. We believe that we offer very generous financial support and are proud to be committing this level of financial support to those who most need it, with evidence of its impact on student retention.

The College has worked with the Students' Union to review and adapt student support sessions, for example through working together to deliver additional career workshops for current students. Similarly, we actively seek and act upon student feedback for all our pre- and post-entry student support sessions.

Table 7 - Targets and milestones

Institution name: Birkbeck College

Institution UKPRN: 10007760

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

Reference number	Please select target type from the drop-down menu	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
						2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	
T16a_01	Other statistic - Low-income backgrounds (please give details in the next column)	Percentage of part-time students receiving financial support (household income under £25,000)	No	2013-14	39.1%	40%	40%	40%	40%	40%	
T16a_02	Other statistic - Low-income backgrounds (please give details in the next column)	Percentage of full-time students receiving financial support (household income under £25,000)	No	2013-14	50.7%	52%	53%	54%	55%	55%	
T16a_03	HESA T1a - NS-SEC classes 4-7 (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)		No	2013-14	39.7%	40%	40%	40%	40%	40%	
T16a_04	HESA T7 - Students in receipt of DSA (full-time, all undergraduate entrants)		No	2013-14	7.9%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%	
T16a_05	HESA T7 - Students in receipt of DSA (part-time, all undergraduate entrants)		No	2013-14	6.7%	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%	
T16a_06	Other statistic - Completion/Non continuation (please give details in the next column)	HESA T3e - HESA T3e - No longer in HE after 2 years (part-time, all entrants)	No	2013-14	31%	30%	29%	28%	27%	26%	
T16a_07	HESA T3a - No longer in HE after 1 year (All, full-time, first degree entrants)		No	2013-14	14.4%	14%	13%	12%	11%	10%	
T16a_08	Other statistic - Ethnicity (please give details in the next column)	Percentage of black and ethnic minority students, p-t and f-t degree	No	2014-15	49%	50%	52%	53%	54%	55%	

Notes

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

Table 7b - Other milestones and targets.

Reference Number	Please select target type from the drop-down menu	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
						2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	
T16b_01	Strategic partnerships (eg formal relationships with schools/colleges/employers)	UnionLearn - 10% discount to unionlearn members as part of memorandum of understanding with unionlearn. Target relates to number of UG students the discount was granted to.	No	2014-15	250	275	300	300	300	300	
T16b_02	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Number of students who attend a Get Started workshop and percentage who successfully enrol	No	2014-15	500	500	500	500	500	500	
T16b_03	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Number of students who apply through an Institutional Progression Agreement	No	2014-15	145	150	160	170	170	170	
T16b_04	Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Number of students who receive one to one guidance interviews via a single, holistic Information, Advice and Guidance service in partnership with UEL	Yes	2013-14	2191	2300	2400	2500	2500	2500	

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.