

Birkbeck University of London

Access Agreement

2017/18

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, enabling them 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.

Birkbeck's evening degree programmes can be studied over 3 years on a full-time mode, or over 4 years or 6 years on a part-time mode. The numbers of students choosing to study full-time have increased substantially over recent years.

The 2017/18 access agreement focuses on three areas:

- **Birkbeck Talent:** how we are supporting our students with their careers and employability goals. As our evening provision uniquely enables students to combine study in the evening with meaningful work during the day, we have established a job brokerage called Birkbeck Talent, which is now available to all students after a successful pilot phase. Birkbeck Talent supports students to gain paid and meaningful job placements, giving students work experience during the day and setting our students up for successful careers. The distinctive Birkbeck proposition is helping to re-imagine university study for London.
- **Supporting mature students:** the access agreement sets out how we are investing to ensure that mature students are able to study successfully at Birkbeck, regardless of their education level when they arrive with us. We will roll out greater support for students who require additional study support. By doing this, we ensure that we stay true to Birkbeck's mission of opening up educational opportunities, in a way that is relevant and possible in today's world.
- **Retention:** our record on access of students from non-traditional backgrounds is good, and we recognise that our retention rates could improve. We set out how we have embarked on a major research project to better understand the factors that impact student success, and how the research will help guide our student success activities.

Through focusing on these areas, we set out how Birkbeck is unique in helping students of all ages to benefit from research-based teaching, incorporating employment related skills within and alongside their studies.

2. Fees, student numbers and fee income

We will maintain a tiered fee structure in 2017/18, 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 £4,100 and £5,100 for most Certificate of Higher Education modular programmes to £6,150 and £9,250 for other Certificates and degree programmes.

All fees will be subject to an annual increase for new and existing students, where permitted by Government regulations.

Our Certificates of Higher Education are an important part of our widening participation strategy as they are open to students without traditional higher education (HE) entry qualifications. Successful completion of a Certificate leads to entry to the first or second year of an undergraduate degree. The lowest fee represents a price of £1,025 for a 30-credit module from a Certificate of Higher Education, and attracts 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 2017/18 we plan to have a standard FTE fee of £9,250 for new entrants. We will retain a fee of £7,150 for some provision linked to access and social participation. In 2017/18 we will be keeping the same financial support criteria and amounts as offered in 2016/17, which includes a generous entitlement for part-time students with household incomes of up to £39,999.

We are pleased that the government has reacted to the sharp downturn in the numbers of part-time and mature students by extending the eligibility for maintenance loans to part-time students. We will review our whole financial support package for 2018/19 to take into account the part-time maintenance loans. In the meantime, our 2017/18 financial support will stay the same as set out in the 2016/17 access agreement.

Taking our student financial support into account, our average fee per FTE in 2017/18 will be £8,847.

We are planning the following student numbers in 2017/18:

- 650 part-time entrants and 1100 full-time entrants on degrees and foundation degrees.
- 500 entrants on Certificate of Higher Education programmes.
- 2500 individual enrolments on modular Certificate of Higher Education courses.

We estimate our total student body in 2017/18 will be made up of approximately:

- 5200 (2400 part-time and 2800 full-time) students on degrees and foundation degrees.
- 550 students on Certificate of Higher Education programmes.
- 2500 individual enrolments on modular Certificate of Higher Education courses.

We estimate that our income from higher fees will be £12.9M in 2017-18. We intend to invest approximately 30% of this income in supporting our outreach, support and retention work and our student financial support scheme.

3. Access, student success and progression measures

3.1 Assessment of Birkbeck's access record

Birkbeck is proud to be a university that opens its doors to people who may otherwise not be able to study. While our student body has changed significantly in recent years, our commitment to combine research excellence with a widening participation approach remains as strong as ever.

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.

We measure our access record through the proportion of students who are from low income households, low NS-SEC classes, with disabilities and who are BME. Because of our evening model of study, we attract a high proportion of mature and part-time students. 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. We actively encourage students with non-traditional qualifications to study at Birkbeck.

Recruitment of part-time students has been more difficult in recent years due to the higher fees and the debt adverseness of mature, part-time students. Some students have also chosen to study full-time rather than part-time since we introduced that option. We are hopeful that the introduction of maintenance loans in 2018/19 will help reverse the part-time decline of recent years. Our part-time students remain extremely diverse group with a high proportion from widening participation (WP) backgrounds.

Low income households:

- 43% of our part-time were students eligible for Birkbeck financial support in 2015/16 (criteria of household income below £40,000).
- 41% of our full-time students were eligible for Birkbeck financial support in 2015/16 (criteria of household income of below £25,000).

We are pleased that full-time programmes delivered in the evening are proving attractive to students from low income backgrounds and that our full-time programmes are successfully widening access. Our students tell us that the ability to combine paid employment with study is an important factor in their decision to choose to come to Birkbeck. The roll out of Birkbeck Talent in 2016 will further support these students to make the most of the opportunity to combine study with meaningful and career-linked paid work.

NS-SEC Classes:

- 43% of young full-time students are from lower NS-SEC classes. In 2014/15 we surpassed our benchmark on this target. We will continue to report against the NS-SEC classes until the data is no longer published by HESA. We will ensure that we continue to set targets regarding our outreach and access work, and will consider targets from the new experiential performance indicators as they are published.

Disability

- 7.2% of part-time students eligible for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) in 2015/16
- 7.2% of full-time students eligible for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) in 2015/16
- 16% of full-time and part-time students declared to us that they had a disability in 2015/16.

We exceeded the benchmark for part-time students, but did not reach the full-time benchmark of 8.2%. 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 figures show that there are significant numbers of students who do not receive DSA, but may well require additional support in order to study successfully. Our Disability and Dyslexia Team works closely with these students to ensure that they are given the best possible opportunity to succeed. In order to report more closely on the number of students that our Wellbeing services support, we have added a target regarding the proportion of students that declare a disability, rather than relying on the DSA eligibility which can be changed by government.

Ethnicity

- 55% of full-time students are BME in 2015/16
- 43% of part-time students are BME in 2015/16

The statistics show that our full-time programmes are very popular with BME students, with Black students as the largest group, is encouraging from an access perspective.

3.2 Assessment of Birkbeck's student success record

Birkbeck is an institution that opens its doors as widely as possible to students from non-traditional backgrounds and all educational backgrounds. We are very keen to ensure that the students who enrol with us succeed to their full potential. Retention rates are a big challenge and we acknowledge that more work is required. Section 3.3 goes into some detail regarding how we plan to improve our performance in improving student success. We are also interested in how the performance of our full-time students compares to that of our part-time students.

Retention:

- 31% of part-time students no longer in HE two years following year of entry (as reported in HESA Table T3e)

The part-time percentage remains the same as last year, at 31.1%. We are pleased that the percentage is below our benchmark of 40%, and we are aiming to improve it further.

- 16.7% of full-time students have not continued in HE following year of entry

We will continue to focus on improving the retention of full-time students as a high priority across the College. Our benchmark is 13.8%. We are disappointed not to have reached our benchmark, and are aiming to improve full time retention, although it must be remembered that our courses take place in the evening, and that many students will be juggling significant work commitments alongside full-time study, which may be a factor in the higher levels of withdrawal. Many full-time students will encounter similar barriers to study as their part-time counterparts (who have a

higher rate of withdrawal nationally), and which partly explains why we are below our full-time benchmark.

We hope that the introduction of the part-time maintenance loan in 2018/19 will encourage more students who work full-time to study at the most appropriate pace for them to enable them to juggle their work and study.

Awards:

Our data suggest that our part-time students achieve better degree classifications than our full-time students. Of the 2011/12 cohort, 21% of part-time students received a 1st Class Honours degree or a 2:1 Honours degree, compared to 11% of full-time students. These data are preliminary findings, due to the small number of students who have graduated from full-time study (the first cohort graduated in 2010/11 and the numbers in each cohort remain small). However the available data do suggest a need to continue to monitor the degree outcomes of our full-time students to ensure that we are supporting them in the best possible way.

Our data suggest that our students with a disability have a higher propensity to withdraw or interrupt their studies, as may be expected due to the increased difficulties that students with disabilities will face. The disability team, together with the academic schools, continue to make improvements to the support that is offered to students, particularly in speeding up the processes for ensuring that the required adjustments are put in place at the beginning of the course. The College has set a new target to increase the proportion who progress successfully to their second year.

3.3 Birkbeck's strategic approach to access and student success

The Student Engagement and Widening Participation Committee has developed a Student Engagement Strategy that will ensure a whole lifecycle approach, working with students across all levels. The strategy will ensure that access and student success measures are considered jointly and holistically.

3.3.1 Access

The student experience work is led strategically through the Student Engagement and Widening Participation Committee, the Fees, Bursary and Scholarship Committee oversees the fees and financial support aspect, and the Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee coordinates the learning and teaching aspects of the mission. The Pro Vice Master for Access and Community Engagement's remit includes a focus on ensuring fair access for students from non-traditional backgrounds.

Birkbeck's access strategy has traditionally been aimed at mature students who have no previous HE experience. As has been well documented, the higher fees have had a major impact on access of mature and part-time students at Birkbeck and nationally. At Birkbeck in particular, the impact has been on the entry routes that we have into degrees for students with few or no qualifications.

The College recently approved a 'Widening Access Framework' to help define Birkbeck's WP students, how we measure our success in supporting them, and to help us to effectively target resources throughout the student journey to those who need it the most. The need for the new framework was identified due to the rapid change in Birkbeck's student body.

In 2016 we are conducting a wide-ranging review into our access and progression routes, led by the Pro Vice Master for Access and Community Engagement. A key part of the review will be the fees and the financial support available for these routes, and how we can use our resources to ensure that students with low entry qualifications can be supported to become successful students. The review aims to ensure that the College remains open and as welcoming to mature students who have low entry qualifications.

We continue to provide a unique offer to non-traditional students to benefit from higher education. 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. We have developed expertise in working with mature students, and we will continue to focus a significant proportion of resources on this student demographic.

Alongside working with mature students, the work with younger students is also of strategic importance. 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 41% of the students in 2015/16 on three-year full-time programmes were eligible for Birkbeck financial support due to a household income below £25,000.

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 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 joint teaching facility at Stratford.

3.3.2 Student Retention and Success

Three strategic College-wide initiatives are highlighted below that aim to have a positive impact on student success and progression.

Predicting Student Success at Birkbeck

As part of better understanding the reasons for the success and withdrawal of our students, the Strategic Planning Committee has approved the roll out of a College-wide research project. The purpose of the project is to identify factors associated with the success or failure of students at Birkbeck. The research will focus on the causes of student withdrawal. The purpose of the research is to understand the factors influencing withdrawal, which would enable the College to implement evidence-based interventions designed to increase student retention. As our students' demographic is very different to that of the majority of universities, the reasons for student success may differ from those at other universities.

A small-scale trial survey has been conducted, with encouraging signs that it may be possible to identify variables strongly associated with student withdrawal at Birkbeck. The research will now involve an annual survey of all Birkbeck students. We hope that we will be able to develop and test a robust statistical model to predict dropout intentions, and actual dropout behaviour, at Birkbeck. In time, the model would potentially establish causes of dropout (using experimental and/or longitudinal methods), and allow us to examine whether the causes of drop-out vary

across variables including subject areas, time of year, and full-time and part-time study modes. We will use the data to develop evidence-based techniques designed to increase student retention, and allow us to examine the relative and absolute impact of future interventions designed to reduce dropout on both drop-out related variables and actual drop-out behaviour.

Our investment in the research is a demonstration that we recognise the issue of withdrawal as an area for improvement. The project is an exciting development for Birkbeck and one that will allow us to test interventions and compare their value much more easily than previously. We look forward to reporting on developments in future access agreements.

Employability: Birkbeck Talent and Birkbeck Careers and Employability Service

Employability is a key factor for students choosing to study at Birkbeck. Our evening mode of study is a natural fit for students who are currently in, or who wish to progress, to career-related roles. Our Careers and Employability Service and Birkbeck Talent are therefore a key strategic service for Birkbeck.

Birkbeck Talent is a professional recruitment service aimed exclusively at assisting Birkbeck students to find employment and paid internship opportunities. Through supporting students to find jobs, Birkbeck Talent is boosting the employability of our students, enabling them to gain paid work, and build workplace skills during and after their studies. We are very pleased with the progress that Birkbeck Talent has made in assisting Birkbeck students to find employment and paid internship opportunities. To date, Birkbeck Talent has helped students to get 456 interviews and assessments, helped 174 students find paid work, and has made links with over 240 employers. Birkbeck Talent was developed with the help of Higher Education Funding Council for England's (HEFCE) Catalyst Fund, and the service has now been expanded to work with more students on an ongoing basis.

Birkbeck Talent works closely with the Birkbeck Careers and Employability Service with the overall goal of improving student and graduate employability. Together, the services help students all the way from identifying career goals, giving support in writing CVs and applications, to improving interviewing skills, and then to finding jobs and paid placements.

Strategy for Learning and Teaching Enhancement

Alongside new services, and the research outlined above, we recognise that the classroom experience is central to student success. We are determined to ensure that our teaching continues to be of the highest quality and is accessible to our extremely diverse student body.

Our Strategy for Learning and Teaching Enhancement runs until 2017. The strategy develops and enhances 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 drive to ensure that we provide high-quality teaching led to the development of the Centre for Transformative Practice in Learning. The Centre supports all teaching and learning support staff

in the College. Excellence in teaching is identified and best practice is then disseminated throughout the College in order to ensure that the classroom experience is as valuable as possible.

Birkbeck's expenditure on access and student success measures

We expect to spend 30% of our additional fee income on OFFA-countable financial support, outreach and student success in 2017/8. The proportion will gradually reduce over the coming years as we phase out our previous fee waiver programme, which was not having a demonstrable impact on student access, progression or success, 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.

In the 2016/17 access agreement we set out a change in our expenditure away from financial support and towards student success measures. We continue with this approach in 2017/18. We are aware that our challenge is the retention of our students and the success of specific groups of students. Our expenditure reflects this challenge and we will keep the impact of our expenditure on retention and student success under review.

3.4 Examples of Birkbeck's access and student success activities

In 2016/17 the Widening Access Team underwent a restructure in order to allocate more resources to student success. The team have also stepped up internal cross departmental work in order to support other departments to ensure that their activities are accessed and are useful for students from WP backgrounds.

3.5.1 Examples of access activities

FE Colleges and Sixth-Form Colleges

Core to the College's WP commitment is to support students into study who have non-traditional qualifications. The Widening Access team have long-term relationships with several FE colleges in London. We have increased our work with FE colleges, which is reflected in the increased numbers of applications to Birkbeck. The Team has developed a new and bespoke suite of activities and workshops for FE colleges.

Family and Community Learning

Supporting mature students into university is critical to Birkbeck's mission. Our Family and Community Learning strand of work brings together our existing work with mature students, together with new work with local authorities, adult education services and new collaborations with other University of London institutions.

A particularly important aspect of our work with mature students is to provide good quality Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) to them regarding pathways into professions via higher education. Many mature students do not access the kind of IAG that would be beneficial for them, and so to fill the gap we work in collaboration with our own Careers and Employability team, with University of East London (UEL), and with Haringey Adult Learning Services.

Bridges to Birkbeck

Birkbeck and the London Borough of Haringey are working in partnership to improve the education and employment prospects of the borough's residents, mainly in Tottenham. Improving

education rates and progress to university is one way in which local people can participate and benefit from the regeneration happening in Tottenham. The collaborative project brings together Haringey Council's focus to provide opportunities to the people of Tottenham with Birkbeck's experience of working successfully with similar communities in East London.

Haringey are funding the Widening Access Team to run an outreach project for the area for a minimum of two years. The Council has also created a bursary scheme for students undertaking Birkbeck's Certificate of Higher Education in Higher Education Introductory Studies course which will be running in Tottenham. The collaboration ties in our community development expertise and our ability to develop local partnerships and offer support to non-traditional mature students.

Based on the work with Haringey, we are developing local ways of delivering IAG support and mentoring schemes to prospective students in their communities. Bridges to Birkbeck is our integrated community campaign programme which will join up our marketing, communications and widening access teams in order to reach prospective students in disadvantaged areas of London. Research and benchmarking work is taking place to identify suitable areas in London to concentrate this work.

Get Started

Our monthly Get Started sessions continue to be successful. The sessions support prospective students to choose the right course, give an overview of fees and financial support, and advise how to make a successful application. The sessions mainly attract mature students who do not have the application support that school students benefit from, and so the sessions help applicants with non-traditional qualifications to make good quality applications. The Get Started sessions are an excellent next step towards university after attending an Open Evening or taster session.

In order to expand Get Started we have incorporated an optional tour of the campus and opportunity to meet current Birkbeck students. 523 students attended a session in 2014/15 and we plan to repeat the same number of events annually.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

We are currently developing a fee waiver offer to refugees and asylum seekers. Birkbeck is well placed to offer support and stepping stones into higher education to these groups. In order to ensure that the offer is tailored to the specific needs of refugees and asylum seekers we are working with Article 26, StAR (Student Action for Refugees) and London Local Authorities. The finalised offer will be communicated through our partners in order to ensure that they reach the people who stand to benefit the most.

3.5.2 Examples of student success activities

Pre-entry support

As many of our students have been away from education for a number of years, many are nervous about starting at university. We provide pre-entry study skills support for students throughout the summer to help reassure them and make sure that they are ready for the start of their course. In 2015, 600 students took part in these sessions.

Learning support

We have dedicated Learning Support Officers (LSOs) within each school in order to assist students during their studies, and whose work is critical to the College's retention activities. The LSOs' main focus is on the first-year undergraduate, where the greatest risk of withdrawal has

been identified. Alongside workshops and individual support, the Learning Development Team have developed successful online, interactive learning tools, opening up the service to as many students as possible.

Employment and career support

As an evening university, many of our students work in the daytime. To deal with the specific requirements of our student body we created a new Careers and Employability Service in 2014/15. The employability space within the Student Advice Centre continues to be successful with an Employability Advisor on hand to support students. Workshops, online careers portal, and regular employer engagement events form the backbone of the service, which last year worked with nearly 6,000 students.

Wellbeing

We created an umbrella 'Wellbeing Service', bringing together the Disability and Dyslexia Service, Mental Health Service and the Counselling Service. The Counselling Service has seen an 80% increase in the numbers of students wanting counselling over the past two years. We have responded to the increase by initiating an innovative and successful programme that allows Associate Student Counsellors to provide counselling for free, and by introducing new reporting software.

The College has created a new post to address increased level of need in Mental Health support. The post provides an enhanced level of specialist advice to staff across the College. The Disability and Dyslexia team have introduced an online screening procedure for Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) and has conducted extensive awareness raising activities, resulting in a 300% increase in the number of students undertaking the screening and significant increases in those being referred to diagnostic testing. We will continue and extend these awareness raising activities in the coming year.

The university has responded to the changes to DSA with comprehensive changes to managing human support for 2016 and providing extensive assistance to students in receipt of bursaries in meeting the £200 student contribution to the costs of computer equipment.

A significant development across the Disability and Dyslexia and the Mental Health Services has been the mapping and development of an online Study Support Plan, which has led to students being able to access to necessary support much quicker.

Lecture capture

We have successfully installed lecture capture technology in all our teaching rooms so that students can watch their lectures again, and to benefit those who cannot make it to a lecture. We have also developed our assistive technology offering within our library.

3.5.3 Examples of progression activities

Birkbeck Talent

A key part of supporting students beyond Birkbeck is the Birkbeck Talent. We have developed the service as an innovative offering that fits perfectly with Birkbeck's unique model of higher education. Birkbeck Talent is outlined in Section 3.3.2.

Supporting transition to postgraduate study

The School of Arts runs a successful project called 'Step Up to Postgraduate Study' which is being developed for our other academic 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.

3.5.4 Students' 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.
- The 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.
- 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.
- Providing financial information and advice to students in collaboration with the National Union of Students.

3.5 Collaborative activities

Haringey Adult Learning Services

As part of the partnership with Haringey Council outlined in Section 3.5.1, we have developed a collaboration with Haringey Adult Learning Services. The Service serves some of the most deprived and non-traditional communities in Haringey. The collaboration with Birkbeck will create new opportunities for the users of the adult learning service, and allow progression opportunities beyond the Adult Learning Service's own existing provision. As part of the innovative partnership, we have developed joint workshops, professional development opportunities for the learning service staff and use of IAG services to support Birkbeck's community outreach programme. We look forward to developing the collaboration further over the coming years.

University College London

We are developing collaborative work with University College London (UCL) to enhance existing access work conducted by both institutions. We will work with UCL to provide information to the parents of the children that take part in UCL's WP projects, and also to open up to them the possibility of accessing higher education themselves and to consider their own educational options. We will evaluate the project in its impact in helping the parents to support their children, and also in the impact that it has on the parents' own learning journeys and potential applications from the parents to university.

University of London

Widening Participation representatives from the colleges of the University of London meet once a term to share best practice and focus on common issues. In 2016, the group agreed to share project outcome data to enable colleagues to benchmark the performance of their suite of activities. This recognises the importance not just of evaluating activity internally, but also of benchmarking across the sector. Initial data sharing will begin in the summer of 2016, looking at outcomes for summer schools and multi-intervention projects. The results will inform Birkbeck's future strategic planning.

University Square Stratford - Partnership with University of East London

The partnership with University of East London (UEL) continues to offer IAG to students at University Square Stratford. The IAG service is an 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 nearly 2,000 prospective students in 2015/16, which we aim to increase to 2,500 by 2017/8.

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.

Linking London Partnership

Birkbeck hosts the Linking London network, a unique network of 40 educational partners. 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.

Birkbeck are part of the Linking London coordinated outreach IAG offer to partner institutions, delivering sessions to FE and Sixth-Form colleges in order to encourage successful applications from students, particularly those with Access and BTEC qualifications. We also jointly organise a one-day conference aimed at advisors in FE colleges, helping advisors to support the progression of their students to HE.

Birkbeck hosts the HEinLondon.ac.uk website and the Linking London National (NNCO), one of thirty regional networks across the country supported by HEFCE. The two year project aims to cover all further education and sixth-form colleges in London, and the simplification of availability of information.

4. Student Financial Support

For new students in 2017/18 we will keep the same financial support package as we offered in 2016/17. In last year's agreement, we reduced the proportion of additional fee income given as financial support, to enable more work on supporting access, success and progression.

We welcome the government's announcement that maintenance loans will be available to part-time students from 2018/19. We will therefore review our financial support for 2018/19 to take account of this new offer, and to take into consideration any new sector research into the effectiveness of financial support. We currently offer a more generous scheme for part-time students. The availability of part-time maintenance loans will provide an alternative means of finance for part-time students, and we will review the whole package of financial support to assess how best to direct our resource in the new environment. Until then, we will continue to offer the same support as outlined in last year's access agreement.

We are currently encouraging the government to open up the maintenance loans to continuing as well as new students in 2018/19, so that all part-time students will be able to apply for the maintenance loans. We believe that it would be equitable to enable continuing students to apply as well as new students, and would also help ensure that students do not defer their course in order to wait for the maintenance loans.

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.

4.1 Student financial support schemes for new students

Birkbeck Undergraduate Student Support scheme

The 2017/18 financial support scheme will be the same as that offered in 2016/17. 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.

Household income below £25,000

In 2017/18 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 only: Household income from £25,000 to £39,999

In 2017/18 part-time students will not be able to claim government maintenance loans that are available to full-time students. Many part-time students struggle financially during their course, and may choose to study full-time when a part-time course would be a better option for them. Birkbeck therefore offers a more generous eligibility to part-time students, which is available to students with household incomes of between £25,000 and up to £39,999. The extended eligibility 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.

4.2 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. This will mean £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. This will mean £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

Household income below £20,000

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. This will mean £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).

Household income from £20,000 to £24,999

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. This will mean £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 household income from £25,000 to £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. This will mean £800 for students on four-year degrees (90 credits) and £533 for students on six-year degrees (60 credits).

4.3 Hardship Support

Birkbeck Access to Learning Fund

We will continue with our Birkbeck Access to Learning Fund to provide assistance with course costs for those students who are in financial need due to low income and high living costs, prioritising under-represented groups including single parents, disabled students, care-leavers and students from low income families. In 2017/18 the Fund will remain at the increased level of

2016/17. The increase in the Fund ensured that we are able to fully support disabled students following government changes to the criteria of the DSA, and ensure that 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. The Hardship Fund provides a limited amount of emergency financial support to cover the costs of their course.

4.4 Other Funding Support

Unionlearn Discount

Students who are a member of a trade union recognised by the Trades Union Congress 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.

5 Targets and milestones

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 and we are keen to be able to highlight areas where one mode is particularly successful or faces an issue. 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 report against the NS-SEC classes until the data is no longer published by HESA. We will ensure that we continue to set targets regarding our outreach and access work, and will consider targets from the new experiential performance indicators as they are published.

We will also supplement the HESA T7 DSA target with the number of students who declare a disability, as the DSA eligibility criteria has changed, thereby changing the number of students eligible without any change in the needs of the student body. Reporting the proportion of students that declare a disability will give a more accurate measure of the needs of the student body. We have also included stretching targets relating to the progression of students with disabilities.

Over the coming months the new Student Equality Review Group will develop targets for student success, with targets to reduce attainment gaps by student characteristics. The targets will be informed by the new Widening Access Framework to ensure that we focus our resources on the students most in need of support. Together, our targets will give a holistic overview of our students, keep our focus on recruiting and supporting students with non-traditional characteristics, and allow us to be confident that we are reaching non-traditional students.

6 Monitoring and evaluation arrangements

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

The launch of the research project to help us better understand the causes of student success at Birkbeck and the characteristics of students who do succeed, outlined in Section 3.3.2, demonstrates our commitment to using data to inform our work. The research project is long term, and we will run activities and initiatives based on the findings of the research and distribute the knowledge gained throughout the institution. We will also continue to monitor the impact of financial support, and take account of the findings as we conduct a wholesale review of financial support for 2018/19.

Progress towards our targets and milestones will be monitored using College Management Information Systems, reviewed through the College committee structure. The access agreement targets are monitored through the Student Engagement and Widening Participation Committee, which has representation from the Students' Union, and it reports to the Governing Body through the Academic Board. The Strategic Planning Committee and the Governors also closely monitor student success targets.

7 Equality and Diversity

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

An Equality Impact Assessment of the access agreement has been undertaken. 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 its 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.

A cross-College Student Equality Review Group has recently been established which will identify areas of focus for the College. The group is chaired by the Academic Registrar and will be consider data from application to graduation, to identify areas of equality gaps throughout the student journey. The work of the group will feed into the student success and equality targets for future years.

8 Provision of information to prospective students

We will provide information to our prospective students for the 2017/18 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 can be distributed throughout the wider community. Our substantial pre-entry IAG provision, outlined within the agreement, 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.

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.

9 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 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.

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	Stage of the lifecycle (drop-down menu)	Target type (drop-down menu)	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target? (drop-down menu)	Baseline year (drop-down menu)	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
							2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	
T16a_01	Access	Other statistic - Low-income backgrounds (please give details in the next column)	Percentage of part-time students receiving financial support (household income under £39,999)	No	2013-14	39.1%	40%	41%	42%	43%	44%	Inflation will mean that this target will become increasingly challenging year on year. We will keep the eligibility criteria for financial support under review as well as the target for the proportion of students who receive financial support.
T16a_02	Access	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	2015-16	40.8%	41%	42%	42%	43%	44%	Inflation will mean that this target will become increasingly challenging year on year. We will keep the eligibility criteria for financial support under review as well as the target for the proportion of students who receive financial support.
T16a_03	Access	HESA T1a - NS-SEC classes 4-7 (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	Percentage of young, f-t students from lower NS-SEC classes	No	2013-14	39.7%	45%	45%	45%	45%		We will provide an alternative access target when the NS-SEC data is no longer published
T16a_04	Access	HESA T7 - Students in receipt of DSA (full-time, all undergraduate entrants)	Percentage of full-time students in receipt of DSA	No	2013-14	7.9%	8%	8%	8.5%	8.5%	9%	
T16a_05	Access	HESA T7 - Students in receipt of DSA (part-time, all undergraduate entrants)	Percentage of part-time students in receipt of DSA	No	2013-14	6.7%	7%	7%	7.5%	7.5%	8%	
T16a_06	Student success	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%	29%	28%	27%	26%	25%	
T16a_07	Student success	HESA T3a - No longer in HE after 1 year (All, full-time, first degree entrants)	Percentage of full-time students not in HE after 1 year	No	2013-14	14.4%	13%	12%	11%	10%	10%	
T16a_08	Access	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%	52%	53%	54%	55%	56%	
T16a_09	Access	Other statistic - Disabled (please give details in the next column)	Percentage of students who declare a disability	No	2015-16	16%	17%	17%	17.5%	17.5%	18%	Part-time maintenance loans may impact benefits that part-time disabled students can currently claim. We will keep this under review to help we remain as accessible as possible to part-time disabled students.
T16a_10	Student success	Other (please give details in the next column)	Proportion of students with disabilities who progress to second year	No	2015-16	64%	66%	68%	69%	70%	70%	Proportion of progress to second year is currently lower for students with disabilities. Target is to eliminate the difference by Sept 2018 and onwards
T16a_11	Progression	Other statistic - Progression to employment or further study (please give details in the next column)	Number of non-traditional students who find paid employment through Birkbeck Talent.	No	2015-16	-	-	-	-	-	-	We will collect the relevant data to identify the benchmark in 2015-16 in order to set future yearly milestones

Table 7b - Other milestones and targets.

Reference Number	Select stage of the lifecycle	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)
							2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	
T16b_01	Access	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	300	300	300	300		The nature of the partnership with unionlearn is to be reviewed to ensure most effective engagement with non-traditional students.
T16b_02	Access	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	Access	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	160	170	180	190	190	
T16b_04	Access	Outreach / WP activity (other - 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	No	2013-14	2191	2400	2500	2500	2500	2500	