

Birkbeck University of London

Access Agreement 2018/19

with the Office for Fair Access

1. Introduction and context

Birkbeck has a unique position as the country's specialist provider of evening higher education. Since the foundation of the College in 1823, Birkbeck has sought to widen participation for people who would not otherwise have access to higher education. 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 continues today.

Birkbeck has over 13,000 students and 463 academic staff. Our students are aged 18 to 89 and study at all levels. Birkbeck is a research-led institution delivering a diverse undergraduate and postgraduate portfolio to predominantly non-traditional students. The average age of a Birkbeck student is 33 years. It is this unique combination of leading academic research and widening access that has defined the institution's mission for almost 200 years.

We know the conventional university model is not right for everyone. Teaching between 6pm and 9pm gives people the chance to study at a world class university and progress their life goals at the same time. Whether they are taking their first steps on the career ladder, changing career or fitting study around family life, people are drawn to Birkbeck because we support and enable diverse life choices.

Birkbeck is a widening access institution in the truest sense and the majority of our undergraduate programmes have part-time pathways that encourage entrants who lack traditional qualifications but who can prove their ability to succeed in other ways. To provide opportunities for all, no matter their previous educational achievements, we have a number of access routes on to our degrees. These include open access, modular Certificates of Higher Education, which enable students with low prior attainment to test their interest in higher education and their chosen subject, whilst developing skills and foundational knowledge at their own pace. Some of these programmes allow progress directly onto Level 4 and / or Level 5 of our undergraduate degrees (depending on the courses chosen and academic performance). Birkbeck also offers pre-entry support, both online and face-to-face. The aim is to ensure that students who have been out of education for some time choose the right course for them, are supported through the application journey and are prepared for the transition to higher education.

The 2018/19 access agreement focuses on the following areas:

- **Financial support review:** We have reviewed the financial support that we will offer to new students, focusing future provision on ensuring that those students who most require financial support receive it. We anticipate that the overall spend on more focussed financial support will be less than in previous years. These savings will be redirected towards retention and student success, demonstrating that our expenditure is informed by the available evidence.
- **Attainment raising:** We set out our approach to raising attainment. As our expertise lies in the recruitment and success of mature students, we will focus our attainment raising work with mature students, enabling them to access higher education, rather than working with schools. We set out our existing schemes and our plans to expand this area of work.
- **Retention:** we recognise that our retention rate for students is lower than we would like, although above benchmark for part-time students, and we set out our commitment to

tackling the issue and the resources required. We are currently conducting a unique research project to test various initiatives to improve retention rates, as well as conducting a full review of the student experience in order to identify further improvements.

- **Employability and career support:** many of our students choose Birkbeck because our model allows them to combine work and study. We actively support our students with their careers and employment goals, through our employability service and 'Birkbeck Talent' - our in-house job brokerage service. Birkbeck Talent supports students to gain paid and meaningful jobs and placements, giving students work experience during the day and preparing them for successful careers. Opportunities offered through Birkbeck Talent, enhances the College's proposition to re-imagine university study for London.

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

2. Fees, student numbers and fee income

The majority of our undergraduate programmes are degrees charging £9,250 (full-time equivalent rate) for new entrants. We will continue to maintain lower fees for some strategically selected provision to support access, including; £7,150 at selected Foundation and Bachelor degree level programmes and a new lower fee of £6,000 for the first year (i.e. year 0) of the new suite of Bachelor degrees with Foundation year (available for full-time students only). Full-time equivalent fees will range from £4,100 and £5,100 for most Certificate of Higher Education modular programmes. All part-time fees are pro-rata of full-time equivalent fees.

All fees will be subject to an annual increase for new and existing students, where permitted by Government regulations and in line with our Fees Policy.

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 on to the first or second year of an undergraduate degree. The lowest tuition fee represents a price of £1,025 for a 30-credit module from a Certificate of Higher Education programme, and attracts a diverse range of students. Students can choose to take one or two Certificate modules every year, or undertake a more intensive Certificate programme of up to 120 credits a year.

Our degree portfolio relies on our strong research reputation. In 2018/19 we plan to have a standard FTE fee of £9,250 for new undergraduate entrants. The new 4 year degrees with foundation year have a significantly lower first year fee. Our student financial support for new students in 2018/19 will be more targeted, allowing us to give more funds to the students most in need. The introduction of the part-time maintenance loans will allow part-time students to access more funds than previously and may impact the choices of students deciding between full-time and part-time options.

Taking our student financial support into account, our average fee per FTE in 2018/19 will be £9,015.

We are planning to recruit the following student numbers in 2018/19:

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

We estimate our total student body in 2018/19 will be made up of approximately:

- 5500 (2600 part-time and 2900 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 £13.9M in 2018-19. We intend to invest approximately 28% of this income in supporting our outreach, student 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 widening participation remains as strong as ever.

We actively encourage students with non-traditional qualifications to study at Birkbeck and the various flexible routes we offer into study are outlined elsewhere in the document. Given our evening model of study, we attract a high proportion of mature students. 40% of our undergraduate degree students chose to study part-time in 2016/17 and 94% of these students are over 21 (as compared to 66% of full-time students).

However, recruitment to our full-time programmes has been more successful in recent years than to our part-time programmes: higher fees and debt aversion have clearly been a deterrent to many mature, part-time students. The introduction of maintenance loans for part-time students may encourage some of these students back to higher education. Much of our outreach work is with mature students with no previous experience of higher education, especially those who have low incomes.

Low income households:

- 32% of our part-time students were eligible for Birkbeck financial support in 2015/16 (criteria of household income below £40,000).
- 40% 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 we are able to offer attractive opportunities to students who we would not have been able to reach with part-time provision.

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. Birkbeck Talent has supported students to make the most of the opportunity to combine study with meaningful and career-linked paid work.

The new financial support package from 2018/19 will distribute the financial support in a more targeted way, so it is received by the students who most need the support. Rather than receiving a set amount, a student's needs will be assessed in detail by a newly appointed Student Funding Officer and an appropriate bursary offered. . Compared to the cash bursary awards we expect to make fewer awards but that each award will be to students who have clearly demonstrated their need. We anticipate providing more generous awards for those in particular financial need. Awards are expected to be in the range of £200-£1500.

The impact of the change will be to reduce the overall financial support expenditure, and to redirect the expenditure towards student success activity, with the overall outcome of improvements in student continuation and success.

The changes are based on our research findings that financial support has not had an impact on withdrawal rates (more details on the evaluation of financial support is given in Section 3.3.1). Furthermore we do not believe that financial support significantly impacts student's decision about whether or not to enrol. However, as with any change, there is some risk that changing the financial support will impact either the recruitment or retention of students with low household incomes. We believe that the risk is worthwhile as this shift in support will allow us to redirect resources towards enhancing access and student success, in order to achieve improved student outcomes. We will communicate the new system as clearly as possible to prospective students, and will continue to evaluate the financial support provision and its impact on the proportion of low income students.

Students with non-traditional qualifications

- 35% of part-time entrants at Birkbeck had either level 2 (equivalent to GCSE), level 1 or no entry qualifications in 2015/16.

Our outreach work, alongside the various entry routes to degree study, support students without traditional entry qualifications to study successfully at Birkbeck. That a high proportion of part-time students do not have a level 3 qualification is a strong demonstration of our commitment to widening participation and to facilitating social mobility.

Disability

- 7.4% of part-time students eligible for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) in 2015/16
- 7.4% of full-time students eligible for (DSA) in 2015/16
- 16% of full-time and part-time students declared to us that they had a disability in 2016/17

7.4% eligible for DSA is at the benchmark for part-time students; 7.5% eligible for DSA is below the benchmark for full-time students, which is consistent with previous years.

It is worth noting that 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. Both our Disability and Dyslexia and Mental Health Advice Services work closely with these students to ensure that they are given the best possible opportunity to succeed.

Ethnicity

- 55% of full-time students were from BME groups in 2015/16
- 39% of part-time students were from BME groups in 2015/16

The proportion of BME students on our full-time programmes remains very high. Our widening access provision predominantly targets students on low income rather than focusing on ethnicity but as our work is exclusively in London our approach invariably means that we work with high numbers of students from BME groups. The Haringey project is an example where we did not seek to target any specific ethnicity, but where all student who enrolled were from BME groups.

3.2 Assessment of Birkbeck's student success record

Birkbeck is an institution that opens its doors as widely as possible to students from all educational backgrounds, including non-traditional. 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 further detail regarding how we plan to raise levels of student success. We also analyse any differences in the performance of our full-time students as compared to that of our part-time students in order to identify and respond to trends.

Retention:

- 34% of part-time students are no longer in Higher Education two years following year of entry (as reported in HESA Table T3, 2013/14 entrants). This has increased from 31% last year (2012/13 entrants).

This places Birkbeck at our benchmark for part-time retention, having been consistently above benchmark in previous years. Our aim is to be significantly ahead of the sector benchmark.

- 18.5% of full-time students have not continued in HE following year of entry.

We are aware of a number of factors behind the poorer retention rates, and are taking action to address these. We closely monitor changes in retention across our portfolio and student demographics to understand the variances and target appropriate action. We expect each of our five academic schools to maintain high retention rates and have a plan for continuous improvement.

In areas where retention has been an issue we have taken the following actions:

- Investing an additional £1.5M on academic staff in targeted areas from 2017/18, to provide additional support to students and enhance the learning experience.
- Implementing a review of the curriculum and assessment (focussing on retention) and making significant changes in management and administration. Most of these changes will become effective in 2017/18 and 2018/19.
- Particularly in the areas with the lowest retention we have had some students who enrol but fail to engage with the course from the outset. We have now established procedures to identify these students and actively support their withdrawal, if they have decided they are not on the right programme. Promptly updating our records to reflect that in practice these students never actually began the course benefits the student and will ensure they are not counted on the system as 'non-continuing'.

It is also noticeable that non-continuation of students recruited through UCAS clearing is at 26% in the most recent figures (2014/15 entrants), compared to 21% previously (2013/14 entrants). Given our mission to widen access, we recruit some 47% of our full-time students in the clearing period. The decline in continuation from entrants recruited through clearing goes some way to explaining the variation in our retention figures. Birkbeck is undertaking a number of new initiatives to provide additional support for students entering with low or no qualifications (see section 3.3.2) and we will explore the particular needs of students who join us via clearing.

Many full-time students will encounter similar barriers to study as their part-time counterparts (who have a much higher rate of withdrawal nationally), which partly explains why we are below our full-time benchmark. Part-time study is appropriate for many students who work full-time or almost full-time hours. Fewer of our students now study part-time and it is possible that too many students are attempting to study full-time whilst working overly long hours. We see the introduction of the part-time maintenance loan in 2018/19 as an important opportunity to encourage more students who work full-time or near full-time hours to study at a slightly slower pace and so increase their chances of both completing their programme and achieving their full potential in terms of both academic and employment outcomes. We intend to discuss these issues with students who apply through clearing to encourage them to apply to the programme most likely to support their success.

Awards:

We are particularly proud of the impact that Birkbeck has on the lives of our students. We support students from low entry to successful degree attainment and employment outcomes. 90% of part-time Birkbeck students with prior education at level 2 or lower gain a 2:2 or above; sector-wide this is 73%. 97% of full-time Birkbeck students with prior education at level 2 or lower gain a 2:2 or above; sector-wide this is 90% (source: HESA, part-time numbers are 2015/16 graduates, full-time are all graduates since 2012/13 totalled to give a large enough sample).

Part-time students with a disability have significantly higher continuation rates at Birkbeck (at 67.9%) than the sector benchmark average, and progress to employment or further study at a higher rate (at 94.3%) (Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) metrics). Birkbeck is at the sector benchmark (TEF) for students with a disability in 'Highly Skilled Employment or Further study'. In common with much of the sector, students with a disability are less likely to progress successfully than students who do not declare a disability. We aim to improve this. In the last 2 years, Birkbeck has invested heavily in developing the Disability & Dyslexia Service, and Counselling and Mental Health Advice Services. The developments are outlined in Section 3.3.3.

Progression

- 95.4% of Birkbeck full-time and 97% of part-time leavers are employed or have gone on to further study: both figures above the sector benchmark average (source: Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) metrics). 25.2% of Birkbeck leavers go on to further study; the Russell Group average is 22.9% (Source: HESA).

Birkbeck's performance in 'employment or further study' is remarkable considering that many of our students come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and have low or no previous qualifications; 35% of part-time entrants at Birkbeck have either level 2 (equivalent to GCSE), level 1 or no entry qualifications. Accordingly, we have received a positive flag in the TEF metrics indicating that our students have particularly high rates in progressing to 'highly skilled employment or further study'. Some students choose Birkbeck because they are already in work, and they enhance their career during the course of their studies or after graduation. Other students have chosen Birkbeck in order to enable them to start their careers alongside their study.

Birkbeck achieves positive outcomes for students from all backgrounds, with positive flags in the TEF outcomes split metrics for BME, disabled and age. Our students reflect the community we serve: 39% of our part-time students are BME, and BME students do significantly better at Birkbeck than other institutions (i.e. compared to the sector benchmarked average) for employment and further study outcomes.

3.3 Birkbeck's strategic approach to access and student success

Birkbeck has always been an institution which opens its doors to students who may otherwise not be able to study. We recognise that the sector is constantly evolving and that our provision must also adapt to ensure that we remain attractive and accessible to students from all walks of life.

We are proposing to make a significant change in the financial support that we are offering our students. We believe that the changes will allow us to redirect approximately £600,000 in 2018/19 to areas that directly improve access and student success measures, whilst still supporting the students who require additional income. Many of the initiatives are existing projects that we plan to scale up. We are also increasing resource to ensure that students can receive the well-being support they need.

A review of the student experience at Birkbeck is currently underway. Led by the Pro-Vice Master for Education (a newly created role within the College), the wide-ranging review will consider all aspects of the student experience both academic and 'non-academic' and follow the student journey from registration to award. An interim report will be produced in summer 2017. The review comes at an opportune time for Birkbeck. We have experienced rapid changes in our student body since 2012, and while the institution has adapted very quickly, we believe that a review of the student experience will be beneficial to identify areas of further change and improvements to implement, particularly in relation to student retention. Our expenditure on student success will grow substantially over the coming years, and this will include substantial support for initiatives that will be based on the recommendations of the Student Experience Review.

3.3.1 Birkbeck's expenditure on access and student success measures

We expect to spend approximately 28% of our additional fee income on OFFA-countable financial support, outreach and student success in 2018/19. Furthermore, we foresee that areas of expenditure will change significantly over the coming years as it is focused more on student success and retention. Whereas previously we have dedicated the majority of OFFA-expenditure towards financial support, we expect the proportion to fall from approximately 15% to 10% in steady state. The resource will instead be directed primarily towards student success initiatives and therefore to improvements in retention. By making the change, we will be able to ensure that higher education remains as accessible as possible to non-traditional students and that they are able to succeed once at university.

Our changes are based on research findings. We conducted a review of the impact of our financial support to analyse whether students in receipt of bursaries had improved retention rates. The results of the logistic regression analyses indicate that after taking into account student characteristics, whether or not students receive a bursary does not have a statistically significant association with whether or not they withdraw in year 1, nor whether they repeat year 1. This finding has given us the confidence to reduce the overall financial support expenditure and to allocate the expenditure to areas that will achieve a greater impact on student success.

The methods used in our review were similar to the evaluation resources made available by OFFA to identify the impact of financial support. We are committed to reviewing the impact of the changes in student financial support and to respond in accordance to those findings. We believe that the resources that are re-directed will support the efforts to ensure improved student success outcomes.

Governance of widening participation: towards a whole institutional approach to widening participation

At Birkbeck the Fees, Bursary and Scholarship Committee, chaired by the Vice Master oversees fees and financial support. The Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee (TQEC), chaired by the Pro-Vice Master for Education, is responsible for the learning and teaching strategy. The student experience is currently overseen by the Student Engagement and Widening Participation Committee. The pre-access component of widening participation is located within External Relations where there is a dedicated team of five access and outreach workers and an additional member funded through our partnership with Haringey. Also located within External Relations is the newly formed Student Engagement Team, consisting of three dedicated staff members. The College's Widening Access and Outreach Team has developed a 'Widening Access Framework', to enable the College to target resources most effectively, in order to support students from non-traditional backgrounds.

The College has strengthened its governance for widening participation by putting in place an academic lead in the form of a Pro-Vice Master for Access and Community Engagement. The committee structure is therefore to be amended to establish a dedicated Widening Participation Committee, chaired by the Pro-Vice Master, to lead development and implementation of the College's strategy for widening participation. Strategy for student experience will be integrated within the TQEC following our review of student experience.

The intention is for the College to become a leading example of the whole institutional approach to widening participation: fair access and equality of outcomes will become embedded aspects of andragogic practice throughout all areas of the College's work and at all levels, including senior management. The academic community will be fully involved in the design and delivery of all levels of provision, supporting both the development of evidence-based academically-driven, strategies and the robust evaluation of the Colleges approaches to fair access and equality of outcomes (academic and vocational). Currently we excel in recruiting non-traditional students. Our aim now is to excel in achieving equality of outcomes for these students. The development of a whole institutional approach to widening participation at Birkbeck is premised on the assumption that all students deserve excellent teaching that addresses their particular needs. Consequently, all teaching and support services must also be attuned to the needs of non-traditional students – both in general and with respect to the needs of specific groups. Furthermore, within the student body is a smaller but significant proportion of students have greater needs, born of more complex histories of disadvantage. These students often require more focused, specialised support. The College is developing an evidence-based, academically driven strategy to ensure effective identification of these needs and more targeted responses to ensure sufficiently individualised learning. For example, the College has already revised its policy on personal tutors and currently has an implementation group tasked with seeing this policy enacted across the College.

Indeed, the whole College has a role to play in identifying and meeting this complex range of needs. The long-term goal is to ensure that the academic and employment outcomes for students from non-traditional backgrounds mirror – or exceed – outcomes for traditional students. We are in the process of establishing differentiated baseline outcomes for each sub-group of non-traditional students and comparing it with those for traditional students. The aim then is to more effectively and more fully involve the College's academic community in achieving not only fair access but equality of outcomes.

3.3.2 Access and Attainment Raising

Our student body necessitates that our approach to raising attainment differs from those of many other universities. We believe that enabling mature students with low previous qualifications to enrol at university is as important for social mobility as is supporting GCSE attainment is among young people. At present attainment raising at Birkbeck takes two distinct forms. Firstly, our open access provision is a direct form of widening access as it enables students without traditional qualifications to enrol at university. Secondly, we deliver pre-entry programmes for adults and FE college students to increase their opportunities of successfully applying to universities. The work we do to raise attainment of students from non-traditional backgrounds through our access level provision and through the work of our outreach team is set out in more detail below.

Birkbeck has also launch a unique project targeting forced migrant communities in London, in collaboration with corporate sponsors, University of London (UoL) institutions and third sector partners. Given our flexible study options and our open access routes to study, we have designed an outreach programme to support, advise and help forced migrants to access higher education. We have also set up a fund to support asylum seekers whereby 20 full fee waivers will be on offer for the first 120 credits of study at undergraduate and postgraduate level.

Attainment Raising: entry level provision

Birkbeck's core business has long been to find ways to support non-traditional students into and through university. We offer a range of courses to support access to university for people who would not be able to study elsewhere – or who would not feel ready or able to embark on university level study. This provision includes Certificates of Higher Education; part-time degrees; foundation degrees; and most recently foundation years.

Certificates of Higher Education

In 2018/19 we forecast that there will be 2,500 individual enrolments on modular Certificate of Higher Education courses. Most Certificates are offered in a modular format so that students may take small steps into higher education, studying at their own pace. These classes are specifically designed for students who may lack confidence as well as the requisite skills and knowledge for success at university. This type of provision helps students assess whether university is for them – and if so, which is the right programme. Students may secure places on undergraduate degrees, on successful completion of the necessary modules, entering at Year 1 or Year 2 (depending on the programme). 26% of our part-time degree students come via Birkbeck pre-degree courses. Students who progress onto degrees from Certificate programmes perform as well or better in terms of completions, degree classifications and progression to postgraduate study than students who are admitted directly onto the first year of undergraduate degree programmes.

The extent and philosophy of this open access provision is a pivotal feature of Birkbeck's work with non-traditional students. The result is a distinctive teaching model characterised by small, interactive, tutorial-style classes that assume no previous knowledge and ensure that study skills are subtly but coherently integrated within each syllabus and across each programme. So successful is this approach, these modules have been employed as the basis for the College's new Foundation Year provision.

Foundation Year Programmes:

If an applicant to our three-year undergraduate degree programmes is unsuccessful, they may be redirected to an alternative programme if the admissions tutor assesses them to be potentially

capable of completing a degree but in need of additional support. Usually they are redirected to one of our Certificate programmes or to our part-time degrees, depending on their needs. However, few of these students enrol on these alternative programmes. Those with low tariffs are often able to secure places on undergraduate degrees at less prestigious providers. Our assumption is that these students may prefer to study at Birkbeck and would be willing to take an additional year of study to secure their ultimate success. Therefore, in 2017/18 Birkbeck is launching seven foundation year programmes with progression routes onto thirty undergraduate degrees. These are for students who just fail to meet the entry requirements for 3 year full-time programmes but who nonetheless demonstrate the potential to complete these degrees. Students will study for 4 years, receiving additional support in their first year to develop the skills and foundational knowledge required to excel at undergraduate level. Indeed, depending on the progress of students, the foundation year in psychology will potentially enable students to complete the degree in 3 rather than 4 years. The design of this particularly innovative programme is informed by successful provision at Certificate level; data purchased from HESA about foundation year programmes nationally; and research from the USA about provision there for 'academically underprepared' students. The outcomes of each stage of recruitment, retention and progression of the seven programmes is being closely monitored with a view to sharing good practice as it emerges.

Part-time degrees:

Evidence of the potential ability to complete an undergraduate degree may take various forms, including work and life experience. We particularly encourage applications to our part-time degrees from applicants who do not have traditional qualifications. These students tend to find the pace of study allows them time to develop the necessary skills and knowledge required for success. They have more time to study and assimilate their learning, and more time to make full use of the extensive study skills and careers support available within their Schools and the College more broadly.

Part-time students who join Birkbeck with low qualifications outperform their counterparts at other institutions: 51% of Birkbeck's part-time degree students coming with level 2 or lower go on to achieve a 1st class or 2.1 degree (the average for the sector is 43%); 95% of part-time Birkbeck students with prior education at level 2 or lower gain a 2.2 degree or above; sector-wide this is 75%.

Foundation Degrees:

Birkbeck also offers several foundation degrees, with 99 new students enrolled in 2016/17. These are vocationally oriented programmes at levels 4 and 5, and students may complete top up degrees at Level 6. These programmes also attract non-traditional students, with 67% of students over 25 years old, 51% are BME. Students receive intensive support in small, interactive classes and through curriculums designed to integrate the development of skills (discipline specific; transferable; and employability) within subject modules.

Birkbeck's campus in Stratford:

'University Square Stratford' (USS) was developed in partnership with the University of East London and with financial support from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to enhance widening participation. Birkbeck currently holds a 16% share of the building. In 2017/18 Birkbeck will celebrate its 10th year of delivering programmes at its campus in Stratford. Numbers in Stratford rose steadily between 2007/8 - 2014/15. The proportion of students with east London postcodes studying at the Bloomsbury campus also increased from

11% in 2004/5 to 16% in 2016/17. However, new students peaked in 2012/13 and continuing students peaked in 2014/15. Consequently, the Pro-Vice Master for Access and Community Development has been undertaking a review of provision at the Stratford campus with a view to relaunching and extending our provision in our 10th anniversary year.

Despite the recent redevelopment of the Olympic Park and surrounding area – and improvements in Newham on a range of health and social indices – disadvantage remains high in this and the surrounding boroughs. The primary purpose of Birkbeck’s campus in Stratford remains widening participation. The focus of portfolio development is likely to be vocational, aiming to address those needs within the local community identified for attention by local stakeholders. These include the need for careers advice and employability programmes; programmes to support career progression of low-skilled workers; educational support for self-employed workers; ‘conversion’ courses for under-employed immigrants; innovative pre-access and access level provision provided with and through a range of community partners such as libraries and community centres; a close collaboration with FE Colleges to develop progression across Levels 4, 5 and 6, and to develop and deliver apprenticeships.

With a focus on innovation, the campus will provide a test-bed for new provision and new ways of working to widen participation and secure equitable outcomes for non-traditional students. To this end the management of the campus is to be restructured and up to eight campus development appointments will be made by 2018/19 to manage three areas of activity associated with widening participation: access & community engagement; academic development; progression.

Birkbeck is participating in NCOP through Linking London and the intention is to bid for funding to pilot innovative evidence-based foundation (pre-access / access level) provision delivered by the Stratford campus in partnership with local FECs targeted by NCOP.

Attainment Raising: outreach activity

Our outreach activity is focused on giving prospective students the ability and confidence to apply successfully to university. Birkbeck’s strength in our outreach is that we reach people who would not otherwise be contacted by universities, and that our outreach activities operate alongside our various entry routes to lead directly to the enrolment of non-traditional students.

Get Started

The widening access team’s monthly Get Started sessions continue to be successful and numbers are growing. 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 leavers benefit from and so the sessions help applicants with non-traditional qualifications to make high quality applications. The Get Started sessions are an excellent ‘next step’ towards university after attending an Open Evening or an academic taster session.

Get Started is a successful programme which we plan to extend. Responding to demand from students who want additional support, during 2017/18 Get Started will be expanded to include a series of workshops, specifically to support those who have been out of education for a number of years and do not hold traditional level 3 qualifications. Our approach to attainment raising will

provide a foundation of skills and competences which many younger students carry with them from school study to university.

In 2017/18 we will complete our analysis of feedback and surveys taken from hundreds of participants; this analysis will help determine whether Get Started meets the needs and expectations of pre-entry participants. Employing the skills and knowledge of our academic community alongside our other research, we will then devise a year-round programme of work. From there we will set targets based on Get Started participant numbers and progression rates to date.

Get Ready – Preparation for Study

We plan to build on the success of Get Started with a new programme to help raise the attainment of mature students by helping them to be accepted onto university courses. We know that navigating the university system is difficult without a support base of teachers, tutors, or family and friends who are graduates. Applicants need a supportive experience that addresses fears and concerns about their ability to take on higher study.

We will run 'Get Ready', a programme of study skills, employability advice, and support to help students choose the right course of study. The success of Get Ready will be measured by the rates that attendees successfully enrol at university.

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 and this is reflected in the increased numbers of applications from students with non-traditional level 3 qualifications. The Widening Access team has developed a new and bespoke suite of activities and workshops for FE colleges, including a pilot strand of work relating to GCSE Maths attainment. We deliver a 6 week GCSE booster programme for BTEC students who have previously not achieved a grade C. Responding to the particular needs of each partner FEC and the students, we offer tailored content with additional revision sessions. We will expand the programme with new FEC partners in the coming year and establish baseline progression data.

Family and Community Learning

Our Family and Community Learning strand of work brings together our work with mature students and new initiatives with local authorities, adult education services and collaborations with other UoL institutions. This work is already underway with UCL and their Widening Access Team. During special family engagement days, hosted and arranged by UCL for widening participation students and their relatives, Birkbeck's Widening Access team present and advise parents about the benefits and opportunities university can offer them (as well as their children). Through this, we have begun the development of a referral system between Birkbeck and UCL's widening access teams and the monitoring of participants' next steps.

We intend to expand the family and community learning model with another two universities and offer something that is complementary to their attainment raising activities with school aged children. For 2017/18 we will explore new partnerships using our collaboration with UCL as an example.

Bridges to Birkbeck:

To continuously ensure we are supporting and attracting mature students onto the various entry routes set out above, we seek new partners in order to reach low-income households and those with non-traditional entry qualifications. The Widening Access team have been working in collaboration with Haringey Local Authority (HLA) to deliver a project aiming to increase adult participation in higher education.

We work with groups and individuals who would not otherwise come into contact with university outreach teams, and with support from HLA we have worked with a number of front line services including women's refuge groups, adult learning services, Children's Centres and employment support teams. This enabled effective joined-up communication across relevant communities.

Work with these groups has proven effective in attainment raising. We worked with 360 participants, resulting in 18 of whom enrolled on the Higher Education Introductory (HEIS) level 4 Certificate of Higher Education running in Tottenham in 2016/17. All enrolled students are BME and from low income households. Over half hold only a level 2 qualification (or below), whilst others hold a non-traditional level 3 qualification. One-third have declared a disability. Prior to the project, these students were not seeking to enrol at university. Through this project we worked with them to boost their confidence and make them feel ready for university, and to support their transition into higher education. Furthermore, we can report a 56% increase in enquiries from Tottenham residents and a 22% increase in enrolments from Tottenham residents onto Birkbeck courses.

Now in its second year we are building on this success and working to deliver new community based pathways into Social Science as of September 2017.

Building on the success of our provision to date, the Pro-Vice Master for Access and Community Development is leading a review of the College's access and pre-access level provision. The aim is to ensure (a) consistent, coherent provision across the College; (b) value for money for students; (c) easy to understand information for students and IAG services about the range of options; (d) clearly articulated progression from pre-entry provision through access level provision and onto degrees at the appropriate level, taking into account prior learning.

Compass Project

Birkbeck has launched a unique project targeting forced migrant communities in London, in collaboration with corporate sponsors, University of London (UoL) institutions and third sector partners. Given our flexible study options and our open access routes to study, we have designed an outreach programme to support, advise and help forced migrants to access higher education. We have also set up a fund to support asylum seekers whereby 20 full fee waivers will be on offer for the first 120 credits of study at undergraduate and postgraduate level.

3.3.3 Student Retention and Success

Our part-time students' continuation rates are above the sector benchmark, and we are pleased we can support our students to achieving their educational aspirations while they also continue with their external commitments. We also recognise that we have particular challenges with the continuation rate of our full-time students. As we set out in Section 3.2, part of the explanation for the current rate of completion relates to our unique student cohort. Our full-time cohort has similar demographics and behaviour to our part-time cohort, and unsurprisingly the continuation

rates are similar across our full-time and part-time provision. We are committed to seeing improvements in our retention rates, while continuing to welcome students from all backgrounds, and we have re-directed our expenditure to achieve this.

Three strategic College-wide initiatives are highlighted below that demonstrate our commitment to improving student success and progression.

Researching Student Success at Birkbeck

As well as the Student Experience Review, we are working on a project to better understand and improve retention at Birkbeck. The project entailed significant empirical research, funded through the HEFCE Catalyst scheme, into the factors that predict student non-continuation. This work began with an analysis of Birkbeck's student demographics to identify the factors influencing student success. These statistical analyses indicated that several demographic and other variables are associated with student success at Birkbeck. However, the associations between the predictor variables and the indices of academic success, though statistically significant, are weak.

In the light of these findings, a review of the academic literature on student retention was undertaken. This review (later submitted to HEFCE), examined the history of attempts to explain student success, focussing on student retention. The review showed that although various models of retention have been proposed, none have received substantial and sustained support across educational institutions. Furthermore, the unique nature of Birkbeck, including evening teaching, mature students, and part-time education, suggested that retention models developed for more traditional universities may not be applicable to Birkbeck.

After considering this literature review, a new strategy for examining student success at Birkbeck was formulated. Instead of basing analyses of student success at Birkbeck solely on student demographics and study aims, or on studies carried out in other universities, relevant data was collected directly from our students via purpose-designed surveys. An analysis of these surveys demonstrates the importance of students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in student success. Three critical variables were identified as strong indicators: the extent to which students felt that significant others (family and friends) expected them to complete the course; the extent to which students believed they had chosen the wrong course; and the extent to which the students believed they had the ability to complete the course. These variables did not vary across types of course, mode of study, or other between-student factors. As a result, it is in principle possible to develop generic interventions designed to influence the likelihood that students will complete their studies. The College successfully obtained an additional grant of £49,326 from HEFCE to carry out an experimental investigation of several interventions designed to improve student retention. These interventions are specifically designed to address the three factors identified by the College as critical in student retention: the views of significant others; belief that the wrong course has been chosen and perceived ability to complete the course.

To our knowledge, this is one of the first experimental investigations of a series of systematically designed interventions designed to increase student retention and success. It is therefore both ground-breaking and potentially of very considerable practical importance, not only to Birkbeck, but also to the many other educational institutions worldwide which experience significant challenges with student retention. This research is on-going with a completion date of March 2018.

Our investment in the research is a demonstration that we recognise the issue of withdrawal as an area for improvement for the College. The project will allow us to test interventions and compare their value. We look forward to reporting on developments in future documentation.

Wellbeing

Our Wellbeing service continues to develop and grow in response to increased student demand. The College has committed increased resources to expand the Wellbeing Service, which includes our Disability and Dyslexia, Mental Health Advice and Counselling Services. In 2017/18 an additional two posts have been approved. We have also responded to the increase in demand by initiating an innovative and successful programme that allows Associate Student Counsellors to provide counselling for free, and by introducing new reporting software. Furthermore, we have appointed an additional Student Counsellor post and a specialist Outreach Student Counsellor to reach out to those students less likely to make use of counselling such as men, care leavers and refugees, with the aim to improve the retention of students by identifying the key challenges they face when accessing counselling.

The level of support required by our students is highlighted by the fact that half of students who disclose a disability also disclose mental health issues. In response we created a new Mental Health Advice Service. The service 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 have 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 have also increased targeted support for those students with disabilities who have not progressed to their next year of study. The Return to Study Appointments had three primary objectives: to establish the reasons for interruption; to facilitate either re-enrolment or, where appropriate, withdrawal or further interruption; and in cases of re-enrolment, to ensure that both College and government support is in place prior to the start of the academic year in order to improve chances of subsequent retention. The project aims to contribute to a key goal in the Student Services Strategy of increasing the number of undergraduate disabled students progressing to second year by 5% of the disabled student cohort by September 2018.

Of the 48 students who attended Return to Study Appointments, 47.9% are now fully enrolled (compared to 11.1% of those who did not attend Return to Study Appointments). Of those who attended the interview, all but two made a definitive decision to either enrol or to withdraw, rather than remain as 'interrupted' for another year. This shows that the appointments were successful not only at assisting students to re-enrol, but also in facilitating withdrawal where progression was not the appropriate outcome.

The project will be rolled out to include the Mental Health Advice Service in the summer of 2017. Additionally, the Disability and Dyslexia Service and the Mental Health Advice Service will evaluate the input of their specialist services on student progression and will also liaise with all disabled students at key transition points in the academic year, in order to ensure that their reasonable adjustments are in place and address any issues which might lead to interruption. Additional efforts will be made to encourage disabled students to attend a meeting with DDS/MHS prior to interrupting, in order to ensure that reasons for interrupting are not due to reasons that can be mitigated with appropriate support.

The university has responded to the changes to the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) with comprehensive changes to managing support for 2017, and providing extensive assistance to students in receipt of bursaries in meeting the £200 student contribution to the costs of computer equipment. The development of an online Study Support Plan has enabled 1,500 students to access the necessary support in 2015/16, double that the previous year. We have also doubled the number of students who undertook a dyslexia screening.

We remain committed to further developments within the Wellbeing Services to ensure that we provide an excellent service to the complex needs of our students. We anticipate making up to further 8 appointments in this area (plus two administrative appointments) by 2018/19.

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. We seek to ensure that employability is incorporated into the curriculum, and our Careers and Employability Service and Birkbeck Talent are key strategic services for Birkbeck that supports student success as well as progression.

Birkbeck Talent is our bespoke in-house recruitment agency that matches students to partner employers. Through supporting students to find jobs and paid internships, 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 students to find employment and paid internship opportunities. Data from 2015/16 shows that 3,239 students registered with Birkbeck Talent, 447 employers have been engaged with 685 roles, 708 students have attended interviews and 304 students have been placed into paid roles. Birkbeck Talent was developed with the help of the HEFCE Catalyst Fund and has now been expanded to become a central service that we offer our students.

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 identify career goals, develop career action plans, give support in writing CVs and applications, help improve interviewing skills, and support to find new opportunities and paid placements.

In the past year Birkbeck Careers and Employability has supported 80,000 on and offline interactions with careers consultants, coaches, recruiters and a diverse range of employers from across all sectors, from start-ups to large corporates. Since October 2014 the Birkbeck Careers and Employability Service has helped 11,622 students. We offer a blended on and offline approach through workshops, individual sessions and online interactive tools. The Birkbeck Careers and Employability Service creates social capital in under-represented groups by helping students identify their unique abilities, the etiquettes and importance of networking, and how to manage career change.

In the TEF assessment, Birkbeck received a positive flag for 'highly skilled employment and further study' in both full and part-time. The institution received a positive flag for 'employment or further study' in full-time and is within 0.1% of a positive flag in part-time. This is a considerable achievement given the starting points of many of our students, in terms of social background and prior study.

One of the innovative ventures that has helped us achieve these outcomes is a project in partnership with JP Morgan to curate 'Upscale', a two year programme designed to help address

the digital skills gap in the UK. Work Readiness Programme is delivered by employers, and aims to inspire and prepare students from all disciplines to pursue careers in technology. The programme prioritises three groups under-represented in technology-related careers: women, students with disabilities, and students from a BME background. In 2015/16, over 550 students followed the programme.

We remain committed to further developments of services to support the employment outcomes of students who study at Birkbeck and anticipate making up to 4 additional appointments in this area by 2018/19 (two disability specialists and two specialist in work at a pre-entry level).

3.4 Examples of student success activities

Pre-entry support

As many of our students have been away from education for several 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.

Our School of Arts are developing a new pre-sessional blended module, Step-In to the Arts, to offer support and preparation for students who have accepted an offer of an undergraduate course. The goal of the new module is to help students who are uncertain about starting at university and to help hone their study skills prior to entry. Again, this is an intervention that will be especially useful to mature students who are not in education immediately prior to starting.

Another example of innovative provision is the Birkbeck Learning Skills module offered to students through the VLE. All students are automatically enrolled on this module which offers a wide variety of material designed to assist with the development of capacity for academic study. This includes videos, slides and hand-outs from face-to-face workshops, and has been accessed over 20,000 times in the past 12 months alone. This year, we have invested in further support for independent learning and self-development by subscribing to Lynda.com, a high-quality library of video tutorials on a wide range of technical, business and computer skills which can be accessed via a mobile app.

Support in the first year

We understand that students often benefit from additional support in their first year to help them acquire both the skills and confidence required for the transition to undergraduate study. Practices vary across the disciplines but, for example, the School of Arts has revised the first year of all undergraduate programmes to ensure a coherent, comprehensive study skills curriculum is integrated into each. Not surprisingly, this School fares well in the NSS. In the School of Science the part-time BSc (Hons) Psychology has a pathway that provides additional support in maths, academic English and study skills to students who just fail to meet the entrance criteria. Students achieve the same disciplinary learning outcomes as those on the main pathway but are taught in a smaller group (up to 25 students) and receive a more interactive, tutorial style of teaching. In 2017/18 72% progressed to the second year of the degree, as compared to 66% of part-time students across College.

Learning support

We have dedicated Learning Development Tutors (LDTs) within each school to assist students during their studies, and whose work is critical to the College's retention activities. The LDTs' 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 the service to as many students as possible with more than 9,500 students using the online resource in its first year. We also have a Flexible Learning Tutor, focused on supporting and leading on initiatives related to blended and flexible learning.

The peer mentoring scheme, which is available to all first-year students in the School of Business, Economics and Informatics has demonstrated measurably lower dropout rate for participants.

Engagement Data

Birkbeck uses engagement data from our e-Registers attendance system, engagement with the VLE and interactions with library and IT facilities to get a broad picture of student engagement on the course. This enables us to better understand how students engage with their studies and to feed this into curriculum and services design. Most importantly, the data enables us to flag where students are not engaging and prompt an appropriate intervention. Online attendance data available via the Birkbeck staff portal is used by programme administrators and module convenors to monitor individual student attendance. Concerns can be raised with personal tutors who can access the students' overall attendance profile, address concerns with the students and put appropriate measures to support them in place.

We have invested in an improved student portal, clearly giving students the details of their personal tutor and course administrators. Students have access to their own attendance history so that they can reflect upon their attendance and the importance of this for success. In addition, using the latest in data visualisation, reports on student performance is available to all academic staff, which breaks down student performance by module, course and different student demographics, and enables staff to quickly identify areas that need attention.

Blended learning

Recognising the variety of modes of study that our students engage in and their need for flexibility, Birkbeck has developed a strong focus on blended learning. Video recording of lectures is growing rapidly and all Birkbeck classrooms are equipped with software and hardware for lecture capture. Students with disabilities have reported that they particularly value this provision. In the last year for which we have data, 2015/16, 2,513 lectures were recorded through Panopto, totalling 4,055 hours of content. This attracted 240,292 views by students, and in the run-up to the examination period some 1,750 hours of footage was being watched daily. A swipe card electronic register allows us to see how engaged students are with their learning via attendance and through links with lecture capture uptake. This complementary technology allows us to offer a more focused, personalised level of learner support than we would have been able to offer in the past, and consequently helps to improve retention.

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 Collaborative activities

Haringey Adult Learning Services

As part of the partnership with Haringey Council outlined in Section 3.3.2, we have developed a collaboration with Haringey Adult Learning Services. The collaboration serves some of the most deprived and non-traditional communities in Haringey. The collaboration with Birkbeck has created new opportunities for the users of the Adult Learning Service, and allows progression opportunities beyond their own existing provision. As part of the partnership, we have run joint workshops, professional development opportunities for the learning service staff and facilitated the use of IAG services to support Birkbeck's community outreach programme.

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, helping them to consider their own educational options. We will evaluate the project through its impact in helping the parents to support their children, as well as 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 UoL 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 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 2017, looking at outcomes for summer schools and multi-intervention projects. The results will inform Birkbeck's future strategic planning.

The UoL has commissioned the Refugees Law Initiative, within the School of Advanced Study, to establish a Refugee Activities and Initiative Forum. This forum seeks to support a collaborative approach between UoL institutions that are working towards developing outreach and financial support to the forced migrants community. As a collective, they will seek to increase and inform the access, transition and progression of forced migrants. This commitment is intended to ensure that UoL institutions are improving their offer to those who sit on the fringes of social and educational support.

University Square Stratford - Partnership with University of East London

The partnership with the 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.

We aim for the service to provide 2700 individual IAG interviews for prospective students in 2018/19, rising to 3000 per year by 2021/22, supporting progression to programmes across a range of providers. This is a significant expansion of the service to meet a growing demand.

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.

East London stakeholders

As part of the review to extend our provision through our campus in Stratford, we are in discussion with a range of local stakeholders, exploring possibilities for collaboration. For example, we are:

- planning to run an annual programme of events for the local community with and through Newham libraries and community centres from 2017/18;
- engaged with the London Legacy Development Corporation with a view to supporting career development of through local internships;
- exploring with the local CCG with possibility of collaboration to support health outcomes in hard to reach communities;
- exploring progression routes and joint apprenticeships with local FECs from 2018/19 or 19/20;
- in discussion with NCOP the development of a modular foundation programme to support students in local FECs.

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 also hosts the HEinLondon.ac.uk website.

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.

In 2015-2017 Birkbeck hosted the pan-London network for collaborative outreach, HE in London: a unique collaborative network made up of over 40 higher and further education institutions across London, and funded as part of HEFCE's National Networks of Collaborative Outreach. A key legacy of the project is the heinlondon.ac.uk website which continues to be hosted by Birkbeck and is now managed by Linking London. Linking London have also received funding from HEFCE to work as part of a London outreach consortia, facilitated by the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP). Birkbeck, both as host institution to Linking London and as a member of the partnership supports and contributes to NCOP.

4. Student Financial Support

Based on our research on the impact of financial support on the outcomes of our students, we are changing our financial support offering for new students. The changes are timed to coincide with the introduction of government maintenance loans for part-time student in 2018/19. The introduction of the part-time maintenance loans will allow part-time students to access more funds than previously, and may impact the choices students make in deciding between full-time and part-time options.

The reason for the changes is to redirect resources towards investment in support for access, student success and progression, and therefore reducing expenditure on student financial support. The change shows that our expenditure is informed by the available evidence. We are also aiming to ensure that the financial support that is provided to students is offered in a more targeted way to ensure that it is made available to those students who would benefit most.

All of our financial support schemes will be available to all students who are eligible as far as budgeted funds allow.

4.1 Student financial support schemes for new students

From 2018/19 with the introduction of part-time maintenance loans we will no longer be providing a standard amount of bursary to all students who meet the eligibility criteria based on household income. In its place we will be extending the investment in our existing Birkbeck Access to Learning Fund. This requires students to provide detailed information on their financial circumstances so that a tailored bursary payment can be agreed. The Birkbeck Access to Learning Fund will take into account students essential income and expenditure commitments, employment circumstances and whether they are in receipt of government benefits.

In addition, for students starting in 2018/19 we will also continue to provide the Birkbeck undergraduate bursary (standard amount based on household income) for the first 120 credits of the following specific programmes:

- Undergraduate Degrees with Foundation year (4 year full-time degree)
- Foundation Degrees – part-time
- Certificates of Higher Education – part-time

This is due to the fact that foundation degrees and certificates of higher education students are not eligible for the part-time maintenance loan until 2019/20. We are also providing additional support to the undergraduate degree with foundation year as this is a new initiative to address widening participation and access. The bursary will be for students with household incomes less than £25,000 to a value of £800 for 120 credits of study, pro-rata to intensity of study.

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. The following are details of the undergraduate cash bursary scheme for each cohort of entry.

Eligibility is based on an annual assessment of household income. The UG cash bursary is in the form of an annual cash bursary paid over three instalments. These awards are available each year of study for the duration of the programme, pro-rata to intensity of study

2012/13, 2013/14

For students with incomes less than £25,000, we will continue to award a bursary in each year of study of up to £1000 for 120 credits of study, pro-rata to intensity of study.

2014/15

For students with incomes less than £25,000, we will continue to award a bursary in each year of study of up to £1000 for 120 credits of study, pro-rata to intensity of study. In addition 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.

2015/16

For all 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. For all 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. 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).

2016/17 and 2017/18

For students with incomes less than £25,000, we will continue to award a bursary in each year of study of up to £800 for 120 credits of study, pro-rata to intensity of study. For part-time students with incomes between £25,000 and £39,999 we will continue to award a bursary in each year of study of up to £600 for 120 credits of study, pro-rata to intensity of study.

4.3 Hardship Support

Birkbeck Access to Learning Fund

We are substantially increasing the funding available via the Birkbeck Access to Learning Fund for 2018/19. This fund is based on the previous government supported Access to Learning Fund and provides financial assistance 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.

As we are no longer offering the UG cash bursary we will be directing students to the Access to Learning Fund so that needs can be assessed in detail by a student funding officer and an appropriate bursary can be identified. Additional resource will be allocated to the administration of the Access to Learning Fund in order to ensure the accurate assessment of financial need.

This is currently in operation, but with many students in financial need already in receipt of the standard bursary, many students are not eligible for any more funding. Compared to the cash bursary awards we expect to be making fewer numbers of awards but the awards we make will be to students who have clearly demonstrated their need and it is expected that we will be able to provide more generous awards for those in particular financial need. Awards are expected to be in the range of £200-£1500.

Projecting required expenditure is challenging as awards will be made on a case by case basis based on a number of factors. It is anticipated that overall the expenditure on a targeted Access to Learning Fund will be 50% of the equivalent spend of the UG cash bursary.

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. The support for trade union members is consistent with our mission of supporting under represented students to achieve their goals. Recipients of this fund are generally mature, part-time and hold non-traditional entry qualification. Through this fund we are currently supporting approximately 250 undergraduate students a year at a cost of approximately £160,000-£180,000 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 either 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.

The targets regarding continuation in HE are particularly stretching given recent trends. We are committed to supporting our students and are confident that the measures outlined in the rest of the access agreement will lead to more positive student outcomes.

For the target analysing the socio-economic background of our students, we have replaced NS-SEC classes with Index of Multiple Deprivation. We believe this is the target that gives the most helpful overview in London, where the vast majority of our students come from. As our work to raise attainment with mature students becomes more structured we will develop targets for these areas of work in order to be able to demonstrate our success in supporting mature students directly into higher education.

In the target we have supplemented the HESA T7 DSA target with the number of students who declare a disability in order to give a more accurate overview. 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.

As part of our attainment raising activities, a target has been included for attendance numbers at the Get Ready programme for 2017/18. Get Ready is a new programme and outcome milestones cannot yet be added this year. In future submissions we will add an outcome target related to the number or proportion of attendees who successfully progress from Get Ready and into higher education.

The targets set 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 directing our resources and efforts at areas that will have the greatest impact in student access and student success.

6. Monitoring and evaluation arrangements

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

The launch of the research project outlined in Section 3.3.2 has helped us better understand the causes of student success at Birkbeck, and we will thoroughly evaluate the impact of the initiatives that seek to improve retention rates.

As outlined previously in the document, we evaluated the impact of the financial support on student success, and the changes to the bursary demonstrate that we act in response to the finding of our research. The corresponding increase in access and student success expenditure shows that our expenditure is informed by evidence. We will continue to monitor the impact of the changes to the financial support, and the impact of the introduction of part-time maintenance loans. We plan to use the tools created by OFFA to evaluate financial support so that the results can also contribute to an improved sector-wide understanding.

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 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.

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.

The College holds an Athena SWAN institutional award as well as departmental awards for areas covering the majority of STEM students. We are also recognised for our commitment to Disability Confident, Stonewall and Mindful Employers, and we have also recently created a Strategic Equality Review Group (SERG) to coordinate and resource equality initiatives for students and staff, and recommend new objectives and targets for student diversity and inclusion.

8. Provision of information to prospective students

We will provide information to our prospective students for the 2018/19 programmes, together with the financial support that we have available, as clearly and as timely as possible. We recognise that the access agreement outlines significant changes to financial support, and it will be important for us to communicate these changes to prospective students, so that they are clear on the processes of applying for financial support. We will outline how we support students while at Birkbeck, both with the financial support and with other provision to help students achieve their potential.

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 early 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 knowledge and understanding about higher education. This is true for course information, career advice and financial information relevant to studying. It is therefore imperative that we provide accurate and thorough information to students.

9. Consulting with students

Birkbeck and the Student Union (SU) have been working in partnership to ensure that the organisation is as effective as possible, with strong communication between the Union and the College. The College has invested significantly to support the SU and provide more services and staff to ensure that the student voice is heard.

The SU is represented on the Student Engagement and Widening Participation Committee, and on the newly formed group to plan ahead for our 200th anniversary celebrations. 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. In 2017/18 the SU will also meet monthly with the College Student Engagement team, in order to ensure constant and discussion throughout the year.

The SU has recently commissioned a major piece of market research to refresh their understanding of Birkbeck students' attitudes towards studying. The research grouped students into five segments. The research will allow the SU to provide targeted support for the various segments identified by the research, with a focus on the students that the research suggests are most likely to leave their academic courses or have a less satisfying university experience.

The SU recognises the role of peer support in supporting student retention and recognise that the time-poor nature of Birkbeck students means that they often do not have time to connect with their peers outside course related activity. The SU is currently developing a three year plan (2017-20), and in 2017-18, will conduct a mapping exercise of course reps, departmental societies and co-curricular activities. Any gaps in provision will be filled and developed, to engage in student voice dialogue and connect with peers across the College and to ensure that the SU is representing Birkbeck students from the entire student population, and in particular the student groups who are less likely to speak out or be heard.

The SU is run by Student Officers. The officer structure is unusual in that there are four part-time paid liberation officers to represent Black, Disabled, Women's and LGBTQ+ students (in other SUs these officers are usually not paid). The new structure aims to empower and represent these groups through all SU decision making and actions.

Statement from the Student Union

As representatives of the Birkbeck College student population, we support the College's efforts to target and respond to areas of improvement in regards to student satisfaction. In our interactions with students, the need for increased academic support is a common cause of concern. The College's assessment has recognised this, and presents a viable path for moving forward for the benefit of Birkbeck students. Academic support is absolutely essential for all students to feel empowered in their studies, but is a particular need for Birkbeck students, most of whom have other high priority responsibilities such as employment and family duties. Increased support will assist students who feel they do not fit the traditional 'student' role in engaging with and ultimately succeeding in their studies. The diversity of backgrounds and experiences which Birkbeck students bring to their higher education experience is an asset, and it is a strength of the College's approach that it acknowledges this. We are supportive of attempts to engage with the particular needs of the student body, especially in regards to underrepresented or vulnerable groups. The College's efforts at inclusion are commendable, and something we hope will continue to be central to any future visions of the Birkbeck student experience. We welcome the College's ongoing efforts to improve this student experience, and believe that these initiatives both appropriately respond to key issues as well as demonstrate steps towards positive change.

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)	Main target type (drop-down menu)	Target type (drop-down menu)	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target? (drop-down menu)	Baseline year (drop-down menu)	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
								2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	
T16a_01	Access	Low income background	Other statistic - Low-income backgrounds (please give details in the next column)	Proportion of part-time students who meet the eligibility for the highest value maintenance loan	No	2013-14	39.1%	41%	42%	43%	44%	45%	
T16a_02	Access	Low income background	Other statistic - Low-income backgrounds (please give details in the next column)	Proportion of full-time students who meet the eligibility for the highest value maintenance loan	No	2015-16	40.8%	42%	42%	43%	44%	45%	
T16a_03	Access	Socio-economic	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%	n/a	n/a	Target replaced by T16a_12 as the NS-SEC data is no longer published
T16a_04	Access	Disabled	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%	8.5%	8.5%	9%	9.5%	
T16a_05	Access	Disabled	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%	7.5%	7.5%	8%	8%	
T16a_06	Student success	Part-time	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%	28%	27%	26%	25%		
T16a_07	Student success	Other (please give details in Description column)	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%	12%	11%	10%	10%		
T16a_08	Access	Ethnicity	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%	53%	54%	55%	56%	56%	
T16a_09	Access	Disabled	Other statistic - Disabled (please give details in the next column)	Percentage of students who declare a disability	No	2015-16	16%	17%	17.5%	17.5%	18%	18.5%	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	Disabled	Other statistic - Disabled (please give details in the next column)	Proportion of students with disabilities who progress to second year	No	2015-16	64%	68%	69%	70%	70%	71%	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 (please give details in Description column)	Other statistic - Progression to employment or further study (please give details in the next column)	Number of non-traditional students supported to interview for paid opportunities	No	2015-16	90	100	105	110	115	-	
T16a_12	Access	Socio-economic	Other statistic - Location (please give details in the next column)	Index of Multiple Deprivation, quintiles 1 & 2	No	2015-16	73%	74%	75%	77%	77%	78%	New target that best represents London postcodes. Replaces our NS-SEC target

Table 7b - Other milestones and targets.

Reference Number	Select stage of the lifecycle	Main target type (drop-down menu)	Target type (drop-down menu)	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
								2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	
T16b_01	Access	Mature	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		
T16b_02	Access	Mature	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		
T16b_03	Access	State school	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	170	180	190	190		
T16b_04	Access	Mature	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	Yes	2013-14	2191	2500	2700	2800	2900	3000	
T16b_05	Access	Attainment raising	Lifelong learning	Mature students attending Get Ready programme	No	2017-18	n/a	50	100	125	125		Get Ready will be established in 2017/18, and outcome targets will be included in future submissions regarding number or proportion of attendees who successfully progress from Get Ready and into higher education

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.