Introduction

This Access Agreement has been prepared in response to the guidance published by the Office of Fair Access (OFFA) *strategic guidance: developing your 2018-19 access agreement*. Consideration has also been given to the Government consultation *Schools that work for everyone* (2016) and the letter to institutions from the Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation laying out priorities for the future.

In the Access Agreement for 2018 – 2019 the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) sets out its commitment to Widening Participation and Social Mobility in the context of its role as a high tariff HEI and as a conduit to a highly regarded profession overseen by national and international professional bodies. The activities, strategies and targets presented in this Agreement should be viewed within the institutional context of a small, specialist institution with an international reputation.

Institutional Context

At the time of writing, April 2017, the Royal Veterinary College is ranked the third best veterinary school in the world. It is also the most accredited veterinary school in the world and sets the highest academic and professional standards commensurate with such a position. These high standards, established in the institution’s Strategic Plan, are reflected in the quality of both staff and students in every academic programme.

The RVC, therefore, is one of the high tariff institutions which OFFA expects to further commit to access and to support of attainment. Similarly, the RVC believes that it has a pivotal role to play in the forward march of social mobility within its profession and related employment, while maintaining the standards set by professional and scientific bodies. Having set very challenging benchmarks, milestones and targets in terms of state school enrolments and enrolments of other target groups, as outlined in the appended Resource Plan, we continue to provide a full programme of widening participation activity and are taking the opportunity to develop new initiatives which are described below.

Widening Participation is embedded within RVC. It is neither an adjunct nor is it marginalised in terms of strategic planning. In past Access Agreements we have successively committed to the priorities laid down by OFFA and the Government as the majority of these have been similar to our own institutional targets and context. Thus, partnerships with schools, evaluation, collaboration and more effective, adjustable expenditure, retention, success and progress are as important for this small specialist institution as for any other HEI. All this, however, has to be balanced by a comparatively smaller financial and personnel resource, increasing financial challenges and the demands of a clinical timetable. Unlike other veterinary schools RVC is free-standing and has no multi-faculty support on which to call. Nevertheless, we shall aim to meet the priorities as laid down in the 2018/19 guidance in the institutional context of the College, its resources, and its infrastructure. In addition, as an integral part of the University of London we shall continue to collaborate with other HEIs both within and beyond the capital to achieve our goals and targets. Further detail on these can be found below.
Our strategy is based on establishing relationships and specific partnerships with eligible schools at both primary and secondary level and with FECs. With these schools we provide a range of educationally relevant activities facilitated by our staff, academics and student ambassadors. We network with teachers to ensure that as participants develop and demonstrate an interest in our specific subject offer we can provide further targeted and Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) support. Our Easter and Summer Schools are primarily targeted at schools with which we have relationships and in 2018-19 we shall be further building on this element.

Assessment of Performance

Having set challenging base lines in 2013/2014, when we had a high percentage of state secondary school students our numbers in this category have shown a small decline even though this decline has been halted and we believe we can achieve our long-term targets. In terms of other HESA benchmarks it will be evidenced from our most recent monitoring returns, our appended Resource Plan and the published HESA data that we are gradually showing improvement and increase in terms of LPN, social class (though no longer reported on) and BAME.

The latter, along with White, Working Class Boys are particularly under-represented in our undergraduate cohort, as they may be in other high tariff institutions. Indeed, we make reference to both categories in other sections of this document as we have been conscious of this deficiency over time. Hence, much of our WP activity is targeted at inner city schools and colleges with significant BAME cohorts. We continue to participate in projects aimed at preparing BAME students to succeed and to this end we seek to emulate best practice from both domestic and international initiatives. We have begun to target increasingly schools which are male gender based as part of our aim to encourage white working class boys towards the veterinary, medical and scientific professions and will be seeking to devise programmes which will contribute to their improved attainment and ultimate progression.

We shall also be entering in to partnerships with colleges which will enable us to increase the number of non-A Level students studying at RVC. We were to the forefront in admitting such students to our programmes in the era of the Lifelong Learning Networks and having had a certain amount of success in this area we wish to build on it further.

Fee limits and fee income above £6,165

Subject to meeting the institutional eligibility criteria specified in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and any other requirements, we intend to charge the maximum permissible fee to all full-time, UK undergraduate entrants in 2018-19.

Expenditure on Access and Retention

For a small institution with a highly concentrated subject base, our Access targets are ambitions and stretching, a baseline having been established in an early and exceptional year. We are moving towards the targets as set out in the Resource Plan and to finally achieve these targets we intend allocating the largest amount of our Access expenditure to Access measures as opposed to retention and success measures which we feel to be less of a priority.

It is our intention to allocate the following sums to Widening Participation expenditure in the period 2018 – 2019:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017/2018</th>
<th>2018/2019</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access expenditure</td>
<td>£395,000</td>
<td>£407,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student success expenditure</td>
<td>£200,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial support</td>
<td>£654,117</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenditure</strong></td>
<td><strong>£1,264,117</strong></td>
<td><strong>£1,293,661</strong></td>
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We are in agreement with OFFA that a greater proportion of our WP resource should be devoted to the areas of our work which, through monitoring and evaluation, are seen to require further investment and it will be seen from the table that Access and Success remain important features. We shall within Access expenditure be increasing our resource towards monitoring and evaluation.

Bursaries will remain part of our overall access provision and further reference is made to this in the section on financial support and on monitoring and evaluation.

Access, Attainment and Admissions

As a high tariff institution, in terms of the Student Lifecycle, Access remains the most important challenge for RVC whilst there will be an adjustment to overall expenditure, particularly in the area of monitoring and evaluation, the largest amount has to be used to support, develop and improve our access activity in terms as understood from the OFFA guidance. We have outlined our targets and milestones in the Resource Plan. These are in line with previous years as we seek to attain our long-term goals of increasing our state school cohort; increasing our BAME cohort and increasing our Male (and white working class) cohort. The latter two cohorts have been priorities with the RVC over many years but our numbers remain relatively low. This is because of the decreasing number of males seeking to enter the caring and health professions and the relatively low esteem in which veterinary work is regarded by BAME families. Gradually this cultural obstacle may be overcome but it is an issue faced by veterinary schools worldwide. This has been highlighted over many years by the main professional body in the UK, the RCVS and by similar bodies in the USA and can be referenced easily and openly. Therefore, our targets as stated in our Resource Plan are quite small in percentage terms but if achieved will be a major step forward. In support of this we shall maintain our strategy and activities in working with schools throughout the UK and targeting in London and the South East those schools with large numbers of Males and BAME groups. It should be noted that the latter form by far the largest cohort in our regular inward WP activities throughout the academic year. The activities and engagements which we describe below focus on the medical and scientific nature of our specialist subject areas. By doing this we would hope to see an increase in male and BAME students.

The activities are intended to maintain and indeed increase our secondary state school enrolments. These are stretching targets for any institution but particularly for small specialist college whose main offer may only appeal to a minority of secondary school pupils. Those to whom our degree programmes appeal we shall track and support through a longitudinal series
of activities and through monitoring. With this aim we shall adjust expenditure to include greater effort on tracking, evaluation and monitoring. We emphasise throughout this document that all the activity within the RVC’s Widening Participation Programme is geared to encouraging and supporting school and college students in scientific subject areas. The educational focus that we provide should encourage students to aspire; it should enable them to achieve in terms of value added; it should result in them attaining in their overall goals. The activities listed below are presented in some detail to illustrate the range and breadth of work undertaken by RVC. We accept that there is more to be done to reach our goals and targets but we believe that the range of work presented supports a long-term path to veterinary and scientific study and contributes to the interests of prospective students and the needs of schools in supporting and improving attainment.

The RVC works with Primary schools, State Secondary Schools and FE Colleges. Within these spheres we further target specific cohorts/groups mainly at the secondary stage and these are described elsewhere.

Primary School Activity

Our work in this area is based on the primary science curriculum. In recent years this has accounted for approximately 40% of our WP activity. Even though there is evidence to show that the majority of veterinary student candidates nationally are what might be termed “early engagers”, the need to ensure that we meet our challenging state school entry targets has meant that we have reduced this to concentrate more on Secondary work, but still over 2,000 pupils have benefitted from this work 2015/17. We shall endeavour to maintain a similar number up to and including 2018-19.

The activity has been RVC centred, in addition to our existing partnership with St Joseph’s Holborn. In 2017 we also began a collaborative programme with Imperial College and the Royal Albert Hall and a London Primary School detailed below, which we shall carry forward in 2018/19.

**Outward Visit to Primary Schools-Years 3-5:** Student Ambassadors visit primary schools in the London and SE region to present a “Day in the Life of a Pet” assemblies, and Outreach workshops from Year 3 upwards “A Day in the Life of a Vet”. These workshops are curriculum linked and have been developed in partnership with teachers; children take part in 5 interactive activities.

**Collaborative Activity:**

We have been a partner of St Joseph’s Primary School Holborn since 2013. This has involved working closely with the school to develop curriculum linked sessions for Years 3-6, in addition to whole school activities.

For the whole school we run an assembly ‘Furry Friday’, where children dress as animals for the day and hear about the RVC’s latest news! Year 3 take part in A Day in the Life of a Vet. Year 4 took part in ‘Animal Locomotion’, studying the work of our Structure and Motion Lab in a cross curricular session which links art, physical education and science. Year 5 visit RVC for a cardiovascular session with RVC staff and PhD students, studying blood vessels and the heart using exercise bikes and blood pressure monitors. Year 6 visit RVC for Afternoon
Anatomy, as described above; for example when ‘Young Vets’ was filmed for BBC, St Joseph’s were the featured school.

RVC is an active member of the Kings Cross Knowledge Quarter which includes local HEIs and science organisations such as the Francis Crick Institute (Dr Grace Sim, RVC Outreach Manager is Chair of Community Engagement). Through this, we have been an integral part of the Primary Careers Conference hosted by the British Library, which involves Year 5s from all Camden Primary schools.

In 2017 we developed a new specific project in collaboration with Imperial College, the Royal Albert Hall and a targeted London Primary School, St Thomas’ RBKC. This has involved elements of Music, Sound, Science, Movement and Anatomy through the prism of Peter and the Wolf. For example, pupils investigated the relationship between an animal’s resting heart rate and the beat of the music it was represented by, and finding a positive correlation. By using this interdisciplinary approach we have enriched the study of the primary science curriculum. After the success of the pilot project in 2017 we intend to roll this out to other schools in 2018 and shall include this in our targets.

Secondary School/FEC Activity

From Year 7 through to Year 13 we offer secondary school students and students from FE colleges the opportunity to undertake a range of activities all of which focus on improved performance in school assessments and examinations.

**Inward Afternoon Anatomy-Years 7-10**: a continuation of the session described above, at a higher level focusing on the biological aspects of GCSE Science. Up to 30 students can participate at any one time, and sessions take place each week throughout the school term. Between 500-600 students of all ages benefit from this event each academic year.

**HE STEM Expo- Year 8**

We took activities about Cheetah Tracking, Anatomy, Movement and Dinosaurs to HE STEM expos as part of the Capital Access Project, run collaboratively with Middlesex, Hull and London Metropolitan universities. Through this project we strengthened links with schools in Islington, Camden, and Hackney, then subsequently Ealing and Brent.

**Prepare to Succeed- Years 9 and 10**

This outreach workshop was developed through the Access HE initiative to encourage BAME students. We identified BAME students at RVC to take part in focus groups with an external evaluator from IOE, who visited all 8 HEIs who were part of the project. Following the focus groups, these students then developed an outreach workshop ‘Prepare to Succeed’, to address areas of knowledge and skills they felt they had lacked prior to applying to RVC. Crucial to this workshop have been RVC alumni and students from a BAME cohort. Other BAME students will be taking this workshop to their home areas of Southall, Ealing, Hounslow and Feltham. This session has proved successful in attracting WP students to apply to our Year 10 Easter School.

**Art Anatomy- Years 9 and 10**

Art teachers in secondary schools are often in a more flexible position to book outreach workshops than science teachers, owing to differences in perceived curriculum pressures. A
new workshop which has proved popular is our Art Anatomy workshop, where we link the
study of veterinary anatomy to animation, since current popular film animation e.g. Fantastic
Beasts is based on studying animal anatomy. Animators from the studio that produced this
film visit our adults’ art classes, and Harry Potter’s Buckbeak was developed using advice
from RVC anatomy services. This cross curricular approach has also proved beneficial in
attracting WP students to apply to our Year 10 Easter School.

Easter School-Year 10: this is a new two day, non-residential Easter School aimed at pupils
from our participating schools. Held at both of the RVC’s campuses, the 20 students are
introduced to aspects of scientific research, anatomy, dissection and basic clinical skills. The
target students for this activity are those whose parents did not attend HE, and have shown
particular aptitude and interest during our outreach sessions. We have worked very closely
with schools to discuss joint goals in terms of encouraging WP students, to deliver outreach
events to advertise the opportunity, and to identify students who should be encouraged to
apply. Evaluation shows that all students who attended this course stated they intended to
apply to university following the experience.

Farm Experiences-Year 12:
Our Dairy and Lambing Days are intended for Year 12 students from urban backgrounds to
gain farm experience on our working farm, Boltons Park Farm. On a day course, they are
introduced to concepts about production animal lifecycle, reproduction, and common
diseases. This is a small group event and they are each given the opportunity to learn try out
cattle milking or lamb tagging, castration and tail ringing, to develop their skills. We also
include a session about university application advice.

Student Ambassador Visits-Year 11-13: undergraduate ambassadors from any of the
RVC’s degree programmes either visit groups of Science school students or attend Science
days where they talk about life as a veterinary or science student and provide information on
study techniques and subject specific material. They also provide mentoring support. This
links to the next activity.

Student Shadowing Year 12-13: This provides an opportunity for students who are
particularly eager to know more about university life and modes of study to shadow a current
undergraduate through the course of a “normal” day. The scheme is available to those with
interest in Veterinary Medicine or Biological Sciences.

Biology Masterclasses-Year 12-13: These sessions, led and taught by a wide range of RVC
academics, many of whom are leading experts in their field, provide the students with a
knowledge of cutting edge scientific research to enrich their subject study and understanding
and assist them in their A level work. Each session includes course descriptions, application
advice and the chance to work with our academics and student ambassadors in our Teaching
Lab to carry out a practical. Topics have included: Reproduction, Diabetes, Microbiology and
the Neuromuscular system. Sessions are curriculum linked. New for 2017, and based on front
end evaluation from a teacher focus group (joint with Imperial) RVC staff will support the A
Level Practical exams by offering a Gel Electrophoresis practical which will allow students
to attain their A Level ‘with practical endorsement’. This is a new requirement of the A level
certification, required for students studying veterinary and medical degrees. In this way we
will be contributing to attainment. This is further discussed below.
Summer School-Year 12: RVC has been providing residential summer schools for almost twenty years. For the last five years these have been operated in conjunction with the Sutton Trust with which RVC is a core partner. This collaboration enables RVC to co-operate with a range of Russell Group HEIs. School students from across the UK attend a week-long residential event providing scientific and clinical knowledge and awareness, IAG, presentational skills, admissions advice and the opportunity to work with student ambassadors and obtain unique farm work experience. Fifty students attend the School, which is the maximum residential capacity available. We receive in excess of 200 applications and give priority to BAME students and white working class boys. The Summer School consistently results in the largest single group of successful applicants to the RVC from a WP cohort (over 30% of Sutton Trust students receive an offer for their chosen RVC course) and we intend to develop its good practice in other areas of our work. We have recently changed our eligibility criteria for our Gateway course, to guarantee that Sutton Trust students are offered an interview for this course.

Personal statement/interview workshops- Year 13

We offer Personal Statement and Interview Guidance workshops in collaboration with Aim Higher London South (AHLS), as well as to individual schools. We have collaborated with the Higher Education Access Network (HEAN) to offer specific interview guidance, and hosted teacher events in partnership with them.

Teacher Activity: RVC recognises that teachers are vital to the cascading of reliable IAG to school students. We believe that it is essential that teachers are aware of the requirements and demands of our veterinary programme. With this in mind we have organised sessions introducing teachers to our scientific research and teaching and to the more practical skills required in veterinary study, in collaboration with the Royal Society of Biology amongst others. We intend to introduce a Teacher Panel in 2018-19 to guide our programme development and ensure we are providing the best opportunities for WP students.

We also undertake such work collaboratively with other HEIs’ teachers and this is described below.

Throughout the academic year, and indeed in vacation time RVC has school groups visiting for taster events, general admissions talks and student ambassadors in turn attend individual school science / careers days/science fairs and HE days.

Collaborative Activity

As a small specialist institution the RVC has been proactive in developing collaborations with a range of organisations. Such work has enabled us to reach areas and schools that are beyond our physical capacity or resource, participate in multidisciplinary projects both at a subject and a pedagogical level and to adapt good practice from partner organisations. Collaborative activity brings the RVC to the attention of teachers and students who would otherwise not consider or be aware of our institution.
Specifically in relation to Widening Participation RVC is involved in the following collaborative arrangements

**AccessHE**

RVC is an active member of AccessHE, one of the organisations whose purpose is to encourage school students from non-traditional backgrounds to aspire to and gain higher education. Its work is centred on central and north London but it also works beyond the region and it acts as a facilitator and co-ordinator for numerous projects via a partnership of 27 HEIs and over 40 schools. AccessHE projects in which the RVC has been involved include the Capital Project aimed at Year 8 students in local schools and which involved RVC staff and students in science teaching with a strong practical content; Prepare to Succeed, a project investigating the Learning Experiences of BAME students and how the findings could be used to deliver the workshop described above via AccessHE RVC is able to link to work being undertaken with students with disabilities and with carers.

It was through AccessHE that RVC became involved in the National Collaborative Networks in 2014-2016 and more recently in the NCOP work. Although the latter is not eligible to be included in Access expenditure, it should be noted that RVC has begun to play an active role in the local NCOP working with schools and colleges in the London Borough of Barking.

**Aim Higher London South (AHLS)**

RVC is an active member of AHLS whose purpose is also to encourage school students from non-traditional backgrounds to aspire to and gain higher education. Its work is centred in south London but it also operates on a regional basis in the south east, for example with schools in Sussex and beyond. It is a partnership of 10 HEIs and 22 schools. RVC hosts activities in relation to medical and health subjects for Years 10; provides IAG for Year 12 students; participates in a multi-HEI project for young people in care and offers general WP activity to member schools. Through the NCOP work co-ordinated by AHLS we are working with schools in Croydon and Hounslow. As with the NCOP work with AccessHE this activity is not eligible to be included in the Access Agreement, it does, however, demonstrate the level of WP work undertaken by RVC over and above its OFFA commitments.

**Teachers Summer School**

In partnership with Imperial College, RVC offers a residential summer school for science and maths teachers from across the UK. The activity not only provides the participants with valuable CPD which they pass on in their teaching, but also offers a great deal of guidance and information on admissions policies and practices, methods of HE teaching and showcases the activities which RVC and Imperial can offer schools thereby establishing new links. For example, one of the most valuable outcomes has been the initiating of an RVC Roadshow Summer School which began in Cornwall in 2017 and is set to continue. This activity is aimed at WP students, the majority of whom will be from an RVC Partner Academy. There is a teacher CPD session and an event for parents in the programme. This is covered further in the section below on Attainment.

**Brunel University**

The RVC contributes to Brunel University WP work through masterclasses for Year 12 and aspirational and IAG activity for Year 10 students.
Hartpury College

Working with the FE section of Hartpury College, Glos, we support students on the College’s BTEC programme with admissions advice and IAG.

University of London Widening Participation Group

RVC is an active member of the UoL Group of twelve institutions which meets to share good practice, data and ideas as part of a team approach to WP.

Other Collaborations

We support and contribute in practical terms to the widening participation and community work of numerous academic and learned bodies. These include: Camden Council, City and Islington College, Girton College, Cambridge, Hertfordshire University, St. Andrews University, Francis Crick Institute, Royal Agricultural University Royal Albert Hall, Royal Society of Biology, Royal Institution, Society of Physiological Society, Society of Reproduction and Fertility, and the BBSRC.

A particular success has been our “Night at the Vet College” events which are now funded by The Physiological Society for three years (2017-2019 inclusive which have proved highly popular with secondary school students considering veterinary medicine. The format of these events is a fun evening activity rather than a traditional school format. Some WP students who attended the initial events are now RVC students.

In addition to these specific collaborations there are the daily interactions with schools and FE colleges locally, regionally and nationally which are pivotal to establishing and embedding significant and deeper partnerships over the period of this Agreement and beyond.

Attainment

As first and foremost an institution for learning, education and professional training, RVC regards all its widening participation activity as contributing to the educational achievement of the school students concerned. We respect and admire the continual work of primary and secondary teachers whose work it is to educate and inspire young people on a daily basis and do not regard our interventions to be in any way a substitute for good teaching.

We do consider that subject specific expertise may, if carefully judged, enable individual students and possibly small cohorts of students to improve performance. To this end, RVC will build on existing partnerships and establish closer working relationships with a cluster of schools/FECs. From a purely logistical point of view, we see such a cluster consisting of three London region schools; two regional schools and one or possibly two schools from other regions. By prioritising the needs of the cohorts and developing and refining our work with them we would seek to contribute to an increase in cohort attainment at each school recognising that we would be one of a number of contributors in such success. Contingent on this relationship would be a commitment from the schools to provide RVC with performance data and tracking / destination data of the relevant participants as well as overall institutional attainment data in terms of GCSE, A Level or other qualification. These arrangements are to be formalised in the course of 2017 and until discussions with the schools are concluded we are unable to commit to a target for increase in attainment but we will actively work towards growing measures of success.
As an example, one such measure that will be the support of practical A Level Science assessments, referred to in the section above about Biology Masterclasses. A level students now have to complete 12 practicals in order to receive an A Level ‘with a practical endorsement’ and this will be required as part of the conditional offer for veterinary and medical degrees. As not all schools will have the capacity or resource for this intensive and time consuming process. RVC will provide one or more of the practicals listed, so that partner schools have access to the expertise, space, apparatus and time for students to undertake these assessments and meet the required level of attainment.

Admissions

As a high tariff institution RVC sets rigorous entry criteria for its undergraduate programmes. As well as achieving the required examination grades, candidates for the veterinary degree undergo a rigorous interview process whether applying for the standard entry or for entry as a WP student on to the Gateway programme. While the examination grade requirements for the latter are significantly lower, the interview criteria remain the same.

Whereas we see the attaining of grade Cs at A Level to be well within the capacity of most if not all candidates, and therefore do not seek to work on attainment issues with prospective Gateway students, we do not wish to see all WP students only applying for that programme. We aim to see all students attain the highest possible grades so that they will be well served in whatever post-school pathway they choose. We wish to see more WP students entering Veterinary Medicine by the standard route and, indeed, each year a small number do achieve sufficiently high grades to be transferred from the Gateway pool. But this is not enough, we want young people to be sufficiently confident both in academically terms and socially to apply for the standard entry. For these reasons we are keen, where possible to support schools in increasing attainment and consolidating our pool of applicants. However, attainment is not the only factor. Like all medical degrees, a veterinary degree is vocational. So not only must we work with students to help them attain their subject grade we must also encourage them to apply that excellent grade to a professional programme and not simply seek higher study of the same subject. There are strengths and weaknesses here: not everybody, wants to be a vet; but having a clear career path at an early age can be attractive in the economic climate. We need to ensure that candidates who perhaps have not received sufficient HE or careers advice are aware of how to write and balance their personal statements, and to understand what skills are being assessed at interview. This is essential for both standard entry and Gateway applicants.

By 2018-19 the Gateway Programme will be in its 14th year and, at the time of writing (2017) enrols 50 students each year, approximately 20% of allowable BVetMed numbers. A review group has been set up to regularly consider the social and economic criteria used as part of the initial selection process and the general issues of contextual data. This group will also consider the type of eligible schools and colleges. It will also survey Gateway students at each year level.

The RVC continues to accept BTEC students and admissions staff consistently keep abreast of curriculum and assessment changes to ensure that prospective applicants have a clear picture of what is required of them.
By means of a clear policy on contextual data and the capacity to deal with individual and detailed enquiries we seek to inspire confidence in applicants from all schools and colleges. The vast majority of our cohort comes from the state secondary sector with a small number of mature students. The latter group is unlikely to increase significantly in this time frame as the demands of our work with schools precludes further spreading of finite resources.

Increasingly we are looking to diversify the degree programmes and as the awareness of the Biological Sciences suite grows we would look to see more partner schools eager to direct students towards these subjects.

**Student Support, Retention, Success and Progress**

As the larger part of the RVC’s undergraduate offer is vocationally oriented, applicants who become students are eager to succeed. Consequently, retention rates are good in most areas of study though there are variables. Gateway retention over recent years is 85%-93%, an excellent outcome for a WP cohort course. Veterinary Nursing, which also includes a significant number of WP students does not perform as well though this may be due to significant placement demands and this is something that we shall be monitoring further. A number of VN students are offered employment during the course of their placements and this too can affect retention. Retention on other degree programmes is good and we do not see a need to divert funding to retention measures other than to support the Nursing degree. We will concentrate our existing funding, apart from bursary support, on learning support and career guidance.

In previous Access Agreements we have pointed to the need to support students who have not followed a traditional A Level route, may not have experience of examinations, lack a corpus of literary skills and vocabulary due to low social capital. We aim to ensure that our high quality teaching is transmitted in an inclusive manner and format while leaving standards undiluted. Conversely, many of our students rely on electronic media and find modes of traditional learning and revision unsatisfactory. The RVC’s Learning Support Team and the academic teams are very aware of this issue and through 1-2-1 support and tuition seeks to address this issue. At the time of writing a new Directorate of Learning Support and Wellbeing has been established combining Learning Support, the Advice Centre, E-Learning and Careers Support. Approximately 1:10 of RVC students have a form of learning difference which affects their performance, success and employability and the new structure is designed to address these challenges which may grow as the institution further diversifies. Clearly, not all of the students with learning issues are from the WP cohort but a number are and we shall be seeking ways to liaise with the Directorate to support targeted students at key points. The small size of our institution allows us to identify individual problems within a reasonable time period. The Student Experience Committee, chaired by the Associate Dean for Student Experience considers individual issues and makes recommendations to be carried through to Teaching and Learning Committee and Course Management Committees.

Success in the Veterinary Medicine degree (BVetMed) is classified only at the levels of First and Pass with the majority of students gaining Pass. Biological Sciences are graded as other standard BSc degrees as are the Veterinary Nursing degrees. The overall level of failure rate is low when re-sit candidates have been excluded. So low are the domestic minority groups within RVC that and the variation in success rates amongst different socio-economic and ethnic cohorts is negligible. Accordingly we believe that the thrust of our learning and
teaching support activities is correct and although we continue to monitor the situation regularly, do not intend to increase expenditure in this area at this time.

Most of the veterinary cohort and a substantial part of the Biological Sciences cohort obtain employment within six months of graduation. However, given the uncertainties of the post-Brexit economic climate, we recognise we must increase our efforts to ensure that all our students have as much support and advice as possible as they progress from RVC to the world of work. In co-operation with our careers advisors (who are franchised through UoL) we shall develop a structured programme of STEM IAG which will offer a series of career options for our various cohorts. Working with our Development Office we shall take steps towards creating an alumni network whose members can offer advice, mentoring and avenues of investigation. We shall also cover postgraduate careers in this initiative.

With retention on programmes consistently in the 80%-90% range and student success at a similarly high or higher level we do not intend to change our retention targets.

Financial Support for Students 2018 – 2019

The bursary support from the RVC is listed below

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<th>Household Income - First Year</th>
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<td>Below £35,000</td>
<td>£1,000</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Household Income - 2nd and subsequent years</th>
<th>Award in 2nd and subsequent years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below £35,000</td>
<td>£1,000</td>
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This will be reassessed each year dependent on annual household income.

A sum of £5,000 has been allocated to provide an initial £1,000 bursary for up to five students from a Care background.

All students will be eligible to apply for hardship funds which are assessed on a case by case basis. It is our policy that no students should be deterred from study at RVC on purely financial reasons.

Targeting and Milestones

The baseline and subsequent targets set by RVC have been stretching and challenging. This is especially so because of the relatively small pool of school students who aspire to a career in veterinary medicine. We anticipate that the ongoing diversification of the degree offering at RVC will go some way to improving the situation. We shall also continue to work with the RCVS and with our own internal careers staff to develop a greater understanding of the
veterinary profession in young students from across the social spectrum. In the Resource Plan we have set targets for the Student Lifecycle covering Access, Retention and Success and Attainment. The percentage of students from our priority groups (BAME and white working class males) is low and statistically minimal in terms of success and progression and so it is in Access that most of our targets sit.

Monitoring and Evaluation

We will continue to improve our evaluation methods over the coming years with increased investment in staffing and resource.

In 2018-2019 we shall monitor and evaluate at different levels and for different purposes. We shall continue to assess our success or otherwise in terms of enrolment targets particularly in relation to priority groups as well as state schools. On this basis we shall also seek tracking data from those schools with which we have significant partnership arrangements and progression accords.

We shall also increase the level of evaluation of activity by improving the volume of monitoring of participants from the point of view of background, social and economic circumstances, local geography and other standard categories. Over and above this we shall continue to systematically assess and evaluate the activities we undertake. This will use the evaluation framework developed by our RVC’s Outreach Manager through her PhD, including the domains of Skills, (awareness of) Place, Emotion, Attitudes and Knowledge. This framework dovetails with the curriculum but also allows assessment of important changes in learning and behaviour which are not traditionally assessed by school teachers.

We will continue to evaluate at front end, formative and summative stages. We aim to initiate a Teacher Panel to improve the quality of our front end evaluation, ensure we keep pace with the challenges faced by WP students and their teachers, and identify opportunities for RVC to offer activities which will assist with successful university application.

It is our intention to appoint a member of staff who will have specific responsibility for this work but who will also be involved in WP outreach work. Furthermore, using both external and internal expertise, we shall develop a series of case studies of our work to demonstrate good practice in terms of WP as well as inform teaching and learning with a view to contributing to target group retention and success. This will build on our use of iPads for evaluation, which has been enthusiastically received.

Through 2017 - 2018 we shall continue to use our existing evaluation framework as a basis and integrate it with the new procedures the following year. This will result in a much richer evaluation process using our innovative Engagement Progression Model which will continue to enable us to better understand the amount of time that is required for different activities and age groups to participate effectively in programmes.

There is also a demonstrable need to assess the impact of the financial support which RVC offers to all undergraduates as well as the WP cohort. Previously RVC has held focus groups to determine opinions of, and reactions to our bursary and other financial support. The financial commitment required of RVC students is significant. While the Biological Sciences degrees are mainly three years in duration and allow time in vacation periods for students to earn, the programmes in Veterinary Nursing, Veterinary Medicine and the Gateway path to Veterinary Medicine are, four, five and six years respectively in length. The study weeks and
course structure are such that students have no time to earn extra income and compulsory extra mural placement periods place additional financial burdens on young people already overstretched. From the initial discussions with cross section focus groups it is clear that the availability of bursaries and hardship funds has been vital not only to individuals but also to cohorts whose families face the added cost of being in the London region. We shall continue to survey both the general student body and within that WP cohorts from LPN and BAME areas to ascertain the effectiveness of our bursary provision and how such provision might become a more pro-active means of supporting retention and success, and, indeed, access.

In light of this the RVC welcomes the research and practical investigation undertaken by other colleagues and organisations in to the issue of financial support for students. The financial toolkit which has been developed and disseminated has great value and it is our intention to utilise this in a College wide survey of our student body which will begin in 2017-18 and continue through the annual Access Agreement time frame.

Equality and Diversity

The RVC sets the principles of Equality and Diversity at the core of its mission. As a HEI and as an organisation with responsibilities to a Professional Body, to health care and to the general public, staff and students are expected to conform to the highest standards of professional behaviour and work within these for the benefit of all members of society. In the course of their professional training staff and students encounter individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds and with differing needs.

The Equality and Diversity Committee is a full committee within the RVC administrative structure. It is chaired by a senior academic who in turn sits on the College Executive Committee. Its membership consists of academic and non-academic staff, student representatives from all college programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level and specialist staff from the Directorate of Learning Support and Wellbeing. The Committee receives reports on student profiles in terms of ethnicity, gender and disability. It organises staff development with the department of Human Resources and issues of concern or proactive proposals for improvement of equality and diversity issues are brought for discussion.

Widening Participation activity is based around equality and diversity, and in particular we are focussing on our ‘Prepare to Succeed’ programme outlined above. The vast majority of the young people who attend our inward activities are from London schools with large proportions of diverse students. The RVC’s own student body is increasingly international in profile and a significant number of our student ambassadors are from diverse groups. The activities offered are suitable for all groups, though some may not be physically possible for anyone with severe mobility issues. No school student is prevented from engaging in RVC widening participation activity on the grounds of ethnicity, religious belief/practices, gender orientation or learning difference. Support and advice is offered where there might be concerns on such issues.

Provision of Information to Prospective Students
The RVC is committed to providing prospective students, parents, guardians and teachers with clear, accessible and timely information on the fees that we charge and any financial support that we offer. The RVC Access staff offer a variety of presentations which can be tailor made to suit any group of students or individuals, all our information whether via standard presentation, social media such as facebook, twitter, you Tube, Instagram etc contains reliable and accurate detail in an accessible form.

Many Open Days, Offer Days and Taster Days are held throughout the year and are supported by Access, Academic and Advice staff who can provide comprehensive advice on all aspects of academic and student support. Prospective students are also encouraged to make individual enquiries or to visit the College for a one-to-one discussion.

In addition, as part of our Outreach events we visit festivals and community events in areas with low Polar postcode scores, such as Brighton Science Festival, Grantham ‘Gravity Fields’ science festival, and London free events such as Lambeth festival.

Under CMA regulations RVC is obliged to make public its undergraduate programmes and their content in terms of modules and options; workload and timetable demands; teaching responsibilities and staff; costs over and above set fees. All of this information is provided to each student and also appears on the RVC website.

Consultation with Students

The Students’ Union at RVC does not have the full apparatus of a Union in a larger institution. Nevertheless, the Students’ Union Executive, which is elected by the student body along with a full-time Student Union Manager, work closely with RVC staff and are involved in discussions at all levels representing its interests and opinions of the entire student body on all college committees and working parties. The Student Union President is a full member of the College Council and is also invited to the College Executive Committee. They have been actively involved in developing and supporting widening participation activity and are fully consulted on proposed developments and strategies.

The RVC has 140 active student ambassadors from all years of study and programmes and they provide an invaluable resource in shaping and delivering our WP ambitions.
**Table 7a - Statistical targets and milestones relating to your applicants, entrants or student body**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference number</th>
<th>Stage of the lifecycle (drop-down menu)</th>
<th>Main target type (drop-down menu)</th>
<th>Target type (drop-down menu)</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>In this a collaborative target? (drop-down menu)</th>
<th>Baseline year (drop-down menu)</th>
<th>Baseline data</th>
<th>Yearly milestones (numeric) where possible, however you may use text</th>
<th>Commentary on your milestone/target or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T16a_01</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>State school</td>
<td>HESA T1a - State school (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)</td>
<td>Although our % decline in 2014, we expect to see an increase over the cycle. We are retaining our target schools and the areas within which we operate but we also intend to extend our geographical reach beyond London and the south east of England.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Other (please give details in Description column)</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16a_02</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Socio-economic</td>
<td>Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>Through increasing use of contextual data and targeted and long term activity we hope to steadily increase our FSM (SEC) cohort. Within this cohort we look to target white working class boys and BAME students. The diversification of our Degree Programmes are also key to realise this target and we shall be especially concerned to develop our minority profile and improve our Applicant to Entrant ratio. Working with a designated group of partner institutions we shall contribute to the raising of A Level performance.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16a_03</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)</td>
<td>HESA T1a - Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3) (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)</td>
<td>Using the published data we shall specifically target schools and FECs serving LPNs.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16a_04</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Other statistic - Ethnicity (please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>We will target BAME students who form the largest cohorts in our regular activity. We have undertaken focus group work to inform our future plans.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>-5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16a_05</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>HESA T1a - Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3) (Young, full-time, other undergraduate entrants)</td>
<td>We shall target schools which are single sex in the London and south east region. This cohort already receives priority in our VN/FD First Year application process. We contribute to the raising of A Level performance.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>-5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16a_06</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Attainment raising</td>
<td>Other statistic - State School (please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>Working with a designated group of partner institutions we shall contribute to the raising of A Level performance.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Other (please give details in Description column)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>5% increase in grades A-C in science subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16a_07</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>State school</td>
<td>HESA T1a - Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3) (Young, full-time, other undergraduate entrants)</td>
<td>Teachers Summer School</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16a_08</td>
<td>Student success</td>
<td>Socio-economic</td>
<td>HESA T1a - VIN/FD classes A-F (Young, full-time, undergraduate entrants)</td>
<td>Develop learning support and methods of learning to slightly improve retention rates in VN/FD First Year</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference Number</td>
<td>Select stage of the lifecycle</td>
<td>Main target type (drop-down menu)</td>
<td>Target type (drop-down menu)</td>
<td>Description (500 characters maximum)</td>
<td>Is this a collaborative target?</td>
<td>Baseline year</td>
<td>Baseline data</td>
<td>Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)</td>
<td>Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16b_01</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>State school</td>
<td>Outreach / WP activity (summer schools)</td>
<td>40 - 50 Year 12 students recruited nationally for an annual summer school</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16b_02</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>State school</td>
<td>Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>Within this we seek to run a menu of activities including: Afternoon Anatomy; HE Experience Days; Student Shadowing; Science Clubs; Careers events</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>50 schools</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16b_03</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Low participation neighbourhoods (LPNs)</td>
<td>Outreach / WP activity (collaboration - please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>The RVC will work in collaboration with a range of HEI partners in London particularly concentrating on Science and Medicine and IAG</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16b_04</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Mission targets</td>
<td>The number of BAME school students who are attend our school activities is high. We shall aim through IAG+Mentoring to convert some of this number into applications and success</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16b_05</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Mature</td>
<td>Mission targets</td>
<td>To increase the number of Mature Students</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16b_06</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Other (please give details in Description column)</td>
<td>Mission targets</td>
<td>Long term outreach work beginning with primary school students and leading through the Key Stages.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>15 schools</td>
<td>16 school</td>
<td>20 schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.