

**EMPOWER
WITH
PLYMOUTH
UNIVERSITY**

Plymouth University

**Access Agreement
2018-19**

Submitted June 2017

Section One: The Strategic Context and Governance

1.1 Introduction: A Strategic Approach to Access

At the heart of Plymouth University's Strategy 2020, 'Transforming Lives with Plymouth University', there remains a clear and continued commitment to Widening Participation. Focusing on the access, success and progression themes, the University's strategy clearly outlines its intention to:

- "continue to raise aspirations for higher education study amongst underrepresented groups in accordance with our Access Agreement."
- "help students to develop personally and enhance their employability skills by offering a wide range of extra-curricular experiences"
- "strengthen pathways of educational opportunity in partnership with its academy schools, local schools, University Technical College and network of further education partner colleges."

Throughout the current cycle the University has worked cross-institutionally to continue to focus its widening participation strategy and activity across the student life-cycle. Through this Access Agreement the University will aim to clearly support this approach to ensure that the strategy incorporates **access** to higher education through raising **aspirations** and **attainment**, the **retention** and **success** of students while at university and successful **progression** from university into employment or to postgraduate study. Our approach also seeks to embed **evaluation** of our activities in order to **assess their impact** and ground our further progress in **evidence**. Finally, in line with our "Students as Partners" strategy, we seek to work with our students both so that their views, experiences and ideas continue to inform our approach, and so that they can actively contribute to widening participation in line with the University's mission, vision and values.

The University is currently delivering an effective programme of widening participation that has resulted in the University's student population remaining at a maintained level of around one third of students from widening participation backgrounds. In order to maintain and enhance our effectiveness, and ensure the sustainability and enhancement of an approach that embraces the principles set out above, we continue to develop our strategy, which reflects our geographic and socio-demographic context, national policy and guidance and the related evidence base, and systematic evaluation of our own programme of work. Within the 2016-17 academic year, we have established new governance arrangements for widening participation which includes the cross-institutional Widening Access Group, which oversees progress against our targets, ensures that appropriate monitoring and evaluation is taking place, and that the University's executive leadership team and Senate are appropriately briefed. The Widening Access Group is chaired by the Director of Student Services and includes Students' Union, academic and "practitioner" representatives working to promote access, student success and graduate progression, as well as those with a strong record of evaluation within higher education settings.

The promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion sits at the heart of the University's mission, and is reflected within its Teaching, Learning and Student Experience (TLSE) Strategy, which recognises that "our students have a wealth of skills and experience from a diversity of backgrounds". The TLSE Strategy includes commitments to:

- "develop inclusive learning and assessment opportunities that meet the needs of diverse learners through flexible learning and assessment options"
- "broaden support for learning through tutoring, peer support initiatives and learning development opportunities"
- "ensure our students are included and equipped to participate in all University decision-making bodies in meaningful ways"
- "target induction support in all years to facilitate transition onto and through our programmes...to raise the aspirations and achievements of our students and to improve retention"

The monitoring of equality, diversity and inclusion within the University is included both within the action planning process within the quality assurance framework for taught programmes, and through the University's Annual Equality Report, which includes an analysis of student data. Students are represented on the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. The diversity of the student voice is further augmented through the University of Plymouth Students' Union (UPSU) governance structures, which include a number of forums, each led by an elected chair, including such groups as mature students, black, asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students, students with disabilities, LGBT+ students and postgraduate students.

The University provides support to students from the following groups:

- Mature Students
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Students
- Students with Disabilities
- "Looked After Children"/Care Leavers, and those who are estranged from their families
- Lone carers, including both lone parents and those who are lone carers for vulnerable adults
- Students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods (identified via POLAR3 profiling)
- Students progressing from our academic partners who deliver HE in FE to "top up" to a degree at Plymouth University

We explicitly that there is considerable overlap between some of these groups and activities. For example, the BSc (Hons) Nursing (Adult) programme consistently recruits more women and more mature students than other Plymouth University programmes, but due to practice considerations based on Nursing and Midwifery Council-set competencies and patient safety, enrolls relatively few students with disabilities. Mature students are also more likely to be lone carers; however, some wards within Devon and Cornwall record high teen birth rates, with considerable

overlap with low participation neighbourhoods. Enrolment on Foundation Degrees in Public Services within our HE and FE partnership are heavily skewed towards young white men with career aspirations to join a uniformed public service, but for those that progress to Level 6, their likelihood of achieving a “good” (2:1 or above classification) degree is low.

The University recognises the potential difficulties associated with a reducing fee income in real terms associated with changes to regulated undergraduate annual fees as connected to the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), alongside inflationary pressures and the impact of Brexit and the consequent impact on the real terms value of the funds it can direct to support access and student success. Other policy changes, such as the removal of NHS bursaries and the extension of student loans to cover postgraduate taught study, may impact upon the numbers and sociodemographic distribution of students enrolling on University programmes, which may require the University to review its strategy and adjust its activities accordingly. However, we continue to recognise the importance of how the measures related to access, success and progression are essential to reinforce a culture of equality in education and improved social mobility.

1.2 The Role of Geography: The Regional and University Profile

As an HEI based on the South West coast, much of the University’s widening participation outreach activities are focused within a geographic area that includes West Somerset, Devon and Cornwall; this focus is evidenced through both the geographic spread of our National Collaborative Outreach Project (NCOP) partners and schools, and through our network of HE in FE academic partners. Consistently over the last five years, over 60% of our enrolled students are from the South West region. Compared to England and Wales as a whole, the South West’s population is, according to the 2011 Census older, increasing in size less rapidly, and less ethnically and linguistically diverse. There is overall outward mobility for people of working age. The higher education participation rate is also lower.

A recent study undertaken by the Sutton Trust using UCAS data suggested that only 32% of young people in the South West applied for a university place in the current application cycle, compared to 37% in England and 47% in London¹. Participation rates (calculated using POLAR3 methods) are particularly low in wards within Bridgwater, Tiverton, Barnstaple, Bideford, Newton Abbott, Bodmin, Camborne and Redruth, all of which fall below 20%, placing them into the lowest POLAR3 Quintile 1. The major urban centres within the region, Paignton, Exeter and Plymouth all include multiple wards which fall below a 20% participation rate. In some cases, POLAR3 Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 wards are adjacent; within Plymouth for example, Peverell (Quintile 5, 47.5%) sits next to Ham (Quintile 1, 14.9%).

The region’s profile is further complicated by economic differentiation, including localised low wages and high housing prices, particularly within rural and coastal areas. Within Cornwall, the median gross weekly FT salary was £425 in April 2015

¹ BBC News (2017). “University Applications ‘Depends Heavily on Where You Live’”, 17 Feb. Available from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-38996267>.

and in North Devon £427, compared to £521 in Plymouth, £567 in Exeter and £528 nationally². Median house prices in 2016 were £212,249 for Cornwall, £160,287 for Plymouth, £215,628 for North Devon and £231,729 for Exeter.³ Across the region, the cost of a median lower quartile home is about 9 times the median lower quartile annual earnings. In some rural and coastal areas, this figure is approaching 13 times cost to earnings⁴. An “affordable” home is considered to be approximately 4 times cost to earnings. Rock, in Cornwall, best illustrates the stark contrast between wealth and social deprivation hinted at by the patchwork of POLAR3 participation rates. Attractive to 2nd home buyers, the estimated average value for a property in this coastal village in April 2016 was £820,416⁵. The nearby ward of Rock, away from the coast, sits within Quintile 1, with a participation rate of 18.7%.

Local economic activity is focused within the service industry, particularly tourism and hospitality, agriculture, and the public services, in particular the National Health Service. Large-scale mining, fishing and ship-building has ceased. A significant proportion of businesses in West Somerset, Devon and Cornwall are small and medium enterprises (SMEs), a majority of which are classified as “microbusinesses” employing less than 10 people. Economic activity is supported through two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), the Heart of the South West (which includes all of Devon and West Somerset) and Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly; the University is an active partner in both. One of the University’s contributions is an ongoing analysis of the region’s “skills gap”. While local employers report a lower-than-average proportion of their employees lack full proficiency in their current role, compared to the UK as a whole, there are a greater number of hard-to-fill vacancies and a higher proportion of employees with skills and qualifications more advanced than required.⁶

Transportation can be challenging. While a robust public transportation infrastructure exists within Plymouth itself, students living at home or on placement further afield can face a lengthy commute. The straight-line distance between Torquay and Plymouth is 27 miles, but a normal journey by either road or train takes at least an hour. The journey from Camborne is over 60 miles and is typically close to 90 minutes in length; Barnstaple, over 90 miles and two hours by road and over 2.5 hours by train. Regional bus services are sparse in the early morning and in the evening, restricting students’ abilities to attend evening activities including classes. Because of the hours of the shift, some students on clinical placement are unable to travel to and/or from the location using public transportation, requiring them to either drive or take a taxi.

² Office of National Statistics (2015). “What are the Average Earnings Where You Work?”, available from <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/HTMLDocs/dvc126/>.

³ Land Registry (2017). “UK House Price Index”, available from <http://landregistry.data.gov.uk/app/ukhpi/explore>.

⁴ Cornwall Council (2015). “House Prices and Affordability”, available from <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/17171873/bn14-house-prices-and-affordability-v2-dec-15.pdf>.

⁵ Zoopla (2017). “House Prices in Rock, Cornwall”, available from <http://www.zoopla.co.uk/house-prices/cornwall/rock/>.

⁶ SERIO Plymouth University (2016). “State of Skills in Devon: Workforce Skills Research Programme”, available from <http://www.devonomics.info/sites/default/files/documents/State%20Of%20Skills%20In%20Devon%20-%20Workforce%20Skills%20Third%20Annual%20Report.pdf>.

The University's current student and portfolio profile and performance against targets reflects that of the region, which interacts with trends across the higher education sector. This includes:

- A gender skew, with some 56% of undergraduate students and 57% of PGT students female.
- A stable, but still relatively low, number of students from BAME backgrounds, a significant proportion of which are international students. Comparatively few BAME students list Devon or Cornwall permanent addresses.
- An attainment gap, with both male students and BAME students less likely to achieve a “good” (at least a 2:1 classification) degree than female students or white students. For BAME students, the attainment gap is growing, and exceeds that of the higher education sector in England. There is a stable gender attainment gap, but it exceeds that of the sector.
- A comparatively high proportion of students who declare a disability. While the University has a sustained strong record in supporting students with a disability, the changes to the Disabled Student Allowance, along with the documented sector-wide increase in students with mental health challenges⁷, requires us to carefully plan how we support these students.
- A small number of part-time students, particularly at undergraduate level. While there are a few part-time students enrolled on full-time undergraduate programmes, the vast majority of students designated as part-time are in a “fail must repeat” situation. Evening (after 6pm) undergraduate provision has not proven to be financially or pedagogically sustainable, with transportation perceived to be a particular barrier.
- A decreasing number and increased segregation within particular subject areas of mature students. Analyses of application and enrolment data suggest that following the introduction of the then-new £9,000 fee, applications to NHS-funded programmes from individuals over the age of 21 years remained stable, but that other subject areas saw a sharp drop. It is unknown at this point what the impact of the end of NHS funding will have on the age profile within those programmes or on the University as a whole. Withdrawal rates among mature students at Plymouth compared to their younger counterparts are higher on some programmes (there is considerable variability at the programme level), with patterns similar to that of the sector as a whole.
- Gender segregation within subject areas. There is a large clinical education portfolio, which includes medicine, dentistry, nursing, midwifery, healthcare sciences, psychology, social work and the allied health professions. Many of these professional subject areas demonstrate a level of gender segregation,

⁷ Brown, Poppy (2016). *The Invisible Problem? Improving Students' Mental Health*. HEPI Report 88. Oxford: Higher Education Policy Institute. Available at <http://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/STRICTLY-EMBARGOED-UNTIL-22-SEPT-Hepi-Report-88-FINAL.pdf>

with women much more likely to enrol than men. BSc (Hons) Nursing (Adult) is the single biggest programme in the University, followed by BSc (Hons) Psychology, both of which recruit significantly more women than men. While the student numbers are lower, within engineering, mathematics, computing, robotics and architecture, there is a skew towards men.

- A significant, but reducing, number of students enrolled on University-approved programmes delivered by further education colleges. The number of students progressing from these partners (normally enrolled on a Foundation Degree) to the University is also declining.

Considering this profile, the University's specific challenges as aligned to OFFA's strategic priorities include:

- Increasing the higher education participation rate across the region, particularly in the wards scattered across the region that are within POLAR3 Quintiles 1 and 2. Given both the gender imbalance and the comparatively low levels of ethnic diversity in the region, a significant target will be raising aspirations and attainment among white working class young men.
- Supporting mature, part-time and students living in rural areas through flexible learning options while taking into account transportation limitations that restrict physical attendance, particularly in the evening.
- Understanding the profile of and responding to the support needs of the "fail must repeat" student.
- Addressing the challenges posed by the changes to the Disabled Students Allowance alongside the recorded increase of students disclosing mental health difficulties to the University and the structural disadvantages people with disabilities experience within education and employment.
- Recognising the specific support needs of the small BAME student population within the context of the region's predominantly white profile, and as above, the structural disadvantages BAME people experience within education and employment.

To address these challenges, we will be applying an approach focusing on the student lifecycle, recognising that preparation for a successful transition from one phase in that lifecycle to a subsequent phase requires particular levels of support. The themes of aspiration, attainment and employability are weaved in throughout the lifecycle.

Using this approach, we will in particular seek to address:

- Gender imbalances in aspiration and attainment and gender segregation within subject areas.
- Levels of engagement, confidence, resilience and attainment among target groups, which can be barriers to access, success and progression.

- Institutional, structural and socioeconomic barriers that can lead to disadvantage.
- The need for flexible delivery of both programmes of study and the wider support of student learning, engagement and wellbeing.

This programme of work will be discussed in Section 4 below.

Section 2: Working in Partnership

One of the core principles to the University's approach to widening participation is the importance of working in partnership.

2.1 "Students as Partners"

The University's commitment to promoting the student voice is embedded within the "Students as Partners" strategy. "Students as Partners" sets out the principles through which the University and students will work together to enhance academic standards and the student experience in line with the University's vision, mission and values. Within this, the University commits itself to actively seeking students' feedback regarding their experiences and to involve students in decision-making. Within the context of the University's governance around widening access and the drafting of this agreement, students have contributed through:

- Student representation on the University's Widening Access Group. Oversight over the University's progress under this agreement sits with the Widening Access Group, and the student representatives participated in the first discussions regarding the 2018-19 Access Agreement when the guidance was published at the end of February 2017.
- Active consultation within the Students' Union. The Director of Student Services (chair of the Widening Access Group) consulted with the UPSU Executive, and (with the support of the elected Vice President for International and Outreach) representative forums and societies, to explore what students feel should be the priorities with the Access Agreement and to gain feedback on early proposals for specific activities. In these consultations, the students emphasised:
 - The importance of activities that promote employability, including opportunities to gain work experience through both on-campus and off-campus placement experiences. There is a need to introduce increased flexibility into models for placement and other work-based experiences to facilitate a wider range of programme-related opportunities and to support students who are unable to engage in a full-time placement for at least six months. The students also advised that opportunities for shadowing and mentoring were beneficial.
 - The power of peer-assisted learning schemes (PALS), and the willingness of many students to contribute their time and their own experiences to supporting their peers.

- The vulnerability of students experiencing mental health challenges, and the impact that mental health has on the ability of students to participate in university life and to succeed academically.
- The strong interest in progressing to postgraduate taught study among many students, with both lifelong learning and furthering employability cited as motivators. While the move to postgraduate loans is welcome, affordability is still a key concern.
- Mature students, BAME students and LGBT+ students all highlighted particular concerns regarding their experiences to date and their career prospects following graduation. Mature students highlighted the challenges of balancing family responsibilities with their studies, concerns around commuting and timetabling, and a lack of support for their particular employability needs. BAME students find the lack of diversity among the staff population a barrier for engagement and seeking support; they give in particular the example of Student Counselling as a service that does not have any individuals within it who understand from experience what it means to be “black like me”⁸. LGBT+ students reported similar concerns around marginalisation, and in particular were concerned about their prospects of finding employment with an organisation that welcomed diversity.

2.2 Education Partners

The University works closely with a range of education and community partners to promote access to opportunities for higher education study and professional careers among under-represented groups.

The University has a wide range of academic partners spread across the South West Region who deliver University-approved higher education awards delivered within a further education context. This set of partnerships facilitates access to higher education opportunities for those who do not have the educational qualifications and/or who are unable to leave their locality due to work and care considerations. Many of the students studying in this HE in FE context are mature, from low participation neighbourhoods, and/or are studying on a part-time basis. Many of these colleges also deliver BTEC, Access to HE and NVQ Awards, and there are advanced plans for the delivery of Higher Education Apprenticeships in partnership with the University.

The University currently sponsors:

- the Marine Academy Plymouth (MAP), a specialist all-through school in the marine environment encompassing science, engineering and sustainability education, developing employability pathways relevant locally, nationally and globally. Located in an inner-city location where many residents experience social and economic deprivation with a persistent number of young people neither in employment nor education and training (NEET), the University

⁸ *Black Like Me* (1961) is an autobiographical account of white journalist John Howard Griffin's experiences living life as a black man in the American Deep South.

supports the aspirations and achievement of the pupils, their families and the wider community through the sharing of subject expertise and pedagogical practice, and through the support and mentoring offered by student ambassadors.

- the Mayflower Community Academy and Nursery. Similarly located in an area of social and economic deprivation, the relationship with the University brings access to specialist knowledge, facilities and resources, and provides placement opportunities for University of Plymouth students. A key feature of the school's ethos is working in partnership with parents and the wider community to promote the development of key skills through the development of positive attitudes and confidence in ways that are relevant and enjoyable.
- UTC Plymouth. This University Technical College provides students age 14-19 years with a specialist education focusing on engineering that prepares them to progress to higher education, apprenticeships and technical careers. Many of the students who attend UTC Plymouth have not succeeded in traditional educational environments. Alongside the familiar classroom environment, students are immersed in workshops that support the development of practical skills, and in industry-set challenges which encourage integration of learning, creative thinking, and working collaboratively with others.
- Opening in September 2017, the University, working in partnership with Stoke Damerel Community College, is co-sponsoring the Scott Medical and Health College studio school, which will be offering up to 375 Years 9 to 13 places to develop vocational skills for the wider healthcare sector. It is anticipated that many of these students will progress to achieving accredited qualifications within the health and social care sector, including Higher Level Apprenticeships and degrees accredited by the NMC, the HCPC, the GMC, the GDC and the GOC.

Raising attainment in schools and colleges within low participation areas is identified as a key element to the national strategy for increasing access to higher education. Within this, it is important to recognise that the research evidence indicates that raising attainment within schools and colleges can be complex and can take time before interventions have a sustained impact. While applications to higher education are assessed primarily by using post-16 qualifications, attitudes towards learning and achievement are first shaped within the primary years, and are heavily influenced by family, peers and the wider community. These cultural factors are embedded within wider patterns of economic deprivation which result in families experiencing multiple symptoms of disadvantage. In the primary years, the most successful interventions are those that foster and reward engagement and achievement, those that support the development of "good learning habits", particularly in numeracy and literacy, and those which encourage creative thinking and innovation. Within secondary settings, relevant and targeted information, advice and guidance, subject level engagement with practical applications, and developing self-awareness and leadership among pupils are frequently cited as factors in improving attainment. Across all years and settings, strong school leadership, engagement with families, the community and

employers, and continuing professional development for school staff have evidenced impact.

Much of the “attainment” research undertaken to date has focused on assessing the impact of interventions in schools and colleges within urban settings. As set out in the introduction to this Access Agreement, the socio-economic and geographic nature of the South West brings distinct challenges to raising attainment, including a low-wage, low skill economy within which employment opportunities rest within seasonal employment and/or SMEs and micro-businesses. Analyses suggest that the greatest demand for professional employment within the South West sit within education, health and social care, engineering and coastal and marine environmental management. Feedback from employers within these sectors locally and nationally highlights the importance of generic transferable skills, including professionalism, self-efficacy, and entrepreneurship.

The University’s strategy for working in partnership with its sponsored schools reflects both the national evidence base for success in raising attainment and the local context within which these schools operate. Within primary settings, we work in partnership with schools to

- Develop their workforce through the provision of CPD, with particular foci on pedagogies for teaching Maths and English, supporting pupils with special educational needs, digital technologies, and safeguarding.
- Work with school leaders, including parent governors, to develop their leadership skills, including their ability to evaluate progress and develop and implement plans for school improvement
- Through the Students’ Union Volunteering programme, provide university students with opportunities to support learning activities within schools, including reading circles, homework clubs, and field trips
- Work with parents and families to help address their social and economic challenges, including information, advice and guidance for accessing lifelong learning opportunities, employability skills, online safety, and health and nutrition.

The specialisms within our sponsored secondary schools closely reflect the nature of the South West’s economic and professional employment profile. The curricula within these schools, developed in partnership between each school and subject specialists within the University, is designed to provide students with clear career pathways through secondary school to tertiary education (including foundation degrees, apprenticeships, and professionally accredited degrees) which prepare them for employment within their chosen sector. Opportunities to access University facilities and workshops (including clinical skills, robotics, and the Coastal Ocean and Sediment Transport (COAST) labs), participate in lectures and demonstrations by experts in the field, and subject-led conferences are supplemented by opportunities for shadowing and mentoring of current students, career-relevant information advice and guidance, and summer schools supported by academic staff and trained student ambassadors. Generic to the curricula of all sponsored schools is a focus on “business awareness”, within which creativity, entrepreneurship, and professional conduct are developed. As above, CPD for schools staff is available, as

is support for school leaders. Student volunteers also work within our sponsored schools supporting extra-curricular sports and activities.

The University is working in partnership with other regional HE providers, further education providers and schools to raise aspirations and promote multiple points of access to education and training that lead to sustainable careers. Through the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP), the University of Plymouth successfully bid to HEFCE to be the lead institution for the Next Steps South West consortium, covering target wards in Cornwall, Devon and Somerset. This collaboration builds on the success of the former regional NNCO networks: the Devon Collaborative Outreach Network and Next Steps Cornwall. Working within the targeted remit of the NCOP initiative, this programme focuses on pupils in Years 9-13, identified as medium-high achievers, with low HE aspiration, and domiciled within nominated postcodes (HEFCE POLAR3 and Gaps Analysis). A diverse range of outreach projects are currently being confirmed, designed and delivered collaboratively by partners in the consortium, with robust evaluation of impact throughout. Across the consortium, other benefits of this complementary programme are being maximised to add momentum and efficiency to Widening Participation Access programmes. Through sharing best practice, avoiding duplication, enabling specialisation due to having a wider pool of providers, allowing a broader representation of partners at a larger number of events, and pooling resources, partners are able to make best use of resources for targeting under-represented groups in HE.

The funding for these projects will continue to sit outside the University's Access Agreement, but their presence within the university directly sits within the broad access and outreach "offer" and contributes to a rich evidence base that can be used to track student access, success and progression throughout the life-cycle. The Next Steps South West provision for target groups complements the broader outreach work to promote higher education to the wider range of WP target groups such as other age groups or those with other indicators of disadvantage.

The activities of Next Steps South West are underpinned by thorough evaluative methodologies that assess both engagement and impact. While it is anticipated that the funding of the SWNCOP will continue to sit outside the University's Access Agreement, their presence within the University directly sits within the broad access and outreach "offer" and provides us with a rich evidence base which can be used to track student access, success and progression throughout the life-cycle.

Using a similar networked partnerships model, The University of Plymouth collaborates with eleven other universities in the South West region to fund, maintain, develop and promote the, free to students and schools, careers support websites managed by the Western Vocational Progression Consortium (WVPC).

- **Careerpilot**, will provide inspirational pathway and progression information on the the full range of choices for 13-19 year olds in the South West region, (used by 60,000+ young people a month). (www.careerpilot.org.uk).
- **Lifepilot** will engage and support mature and part-time students (www.life-pilot.co.uk).

- **HE Skills Map** supports post 16 students and adults in recognising skills and experiences relevant to progression to HE.

The university will support the development of the websites, develop further strategies to embed the websites into outreach and IAG activities, maintain the 'Parent Zone' developed through the four National Network for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO) partnerships in the South West, and work with universities and partnerships in the region to support plans for sustaining their integration of the Careerpilot site in their offer to all South West students and schools, including embedding the use of the careers resources in the work of NCOP consortia in the South West region.

Section 3: Review of Plymouth University's Performance

3.1 Current Position

The University has reviewed its progress to date using the most recently published HESA indicators from 2015-16, with some data sets that are 2014-15 due to the data being from other reporting sources. Where possible, interim data gathered internally from the current 2016-17 academic year are also being monitored to support forward planning, but these data are yet to go through formal verification and thus are indicative of progress rather than confirming progress.

In respect of access, the University had 93.9% of its entrants from state schools, nearing its baseline, which we expect to meet in 2016-17. The percentage of new entrants from low participation neighbourhoods as defined by POLAR3 methods continues to rise, and is above the baseline to 14.1%. Some 17.3% of part-time entrants are from low participation neighbourhoods.

For disabled learners, the University continues to build on its position from 12.6% in 2011-12 to a current position of 15.0%, exceeding the baseline. Following a period of growth between 2011-12 and 2014-15, the proportion of students declaring a disability appears to be stabilising. Students with a disability are more likely to withdraw at 2.0%, compared to students without a disability at 1.7%. While the small numbers make trend analysis difficult, some 3.8% of students declaring a mental health difficulty withdrew. There is no recorded attainment gap for disabled students.

The proportion of "Home and EU" BAME students enrolled in undergraduate programmes in 2015-16 remained consistent with previous years at 8.6%. Of these, 34.9% list a home address within the South West. Some 1.1% of BAME students withdrew or were withdrawn from their studies, compared to 1.9% of white students. The attainment gap for UK-domiciled BAME students is 18%.

Students aged 21 and above upon enrolment in the first year of their programme of study make up 30.5% of our first year FT undergraduate students and 99.2% of our PT students. Those in their first year aged 25 and above make up 13.7% of FT undergraduate entrant students and 90.8% of PT entrant students. The withdrawal rate for students aged 25 or above at any stage was 3.4%, compared to 3.8% for

students 24 years or under. There is no recorded attainment gap for mature students.

Across the institution, 55.2% of undergraduate students are female and 44.8% male, with trend data demonstrating an increasing imbalance towards women. There is a difference of less than 0.1% in withdrawal rates between women and men. The attainment gap for male undergraduate students is 8%.

The University's performance in retention and student success is however encouraging with improvements in completion already significantly exceeding the intended target. Completion for all undergraduate students is at 94.5% relative to a benchmark of 92.6%.

3.2 Targets

This Access Agreement reflects the commencement of a new 5 year cycle of targets and therefore the baseline data is the most recently published HESA data sets from 2013-14 in the majority of categories, with some that are 2012-13 due to the data being from other reporting sources, that have different data publishing schedules. Only those targets that are outcome-based have been presented here as the University's Access Agreement 2018-19. This aligns with the direction of the OFFA and HEFCE guidance.

While measures of activity such as number of activities undertaken or number of participants in an activity are useful internal indicators of reach, the University recognises that increased activity may not assure increased impact. The University has developed more relevant milestones and targets in relation to outcomes and impact to replace those previously associated with activity measures especially around progression. Where we have already met or exceeded targets, we will be reviewing these and adjusting our strategy in order to maintain progress across the student lifecycle.

The University's Access targets span the period from 2015/16 – 2019/20 and use baseline data from 2013-14 and 2012-13:

1. New entrants from state schools - from 93.8% (2013-14) to 94% (2019-20)
2. New entrants from NS SEC 4,5,6,7 and 8 (low income) from 32% (2013-14) to 34% (2019-20). (This KPI has been formally discontinued)
3. New entrants from LPN (Low Participation Neighbourhoods) – from 12.2% (2013-14) to 13% (2019-20)
4. Part time entrants from Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR 3) from 4.3% (2013-14) to 5.6% (2019-20)
5. Increase participation for disabled learners from 13.5% (2013-14) - 14.6% (2019-20)
6. Mature student (full time undergraduate) participation from 10.3% (2013-14) to 11.3% (2019-20)
7. Participation and retention of care leavers from 0.2% (2013-14) to 0.5% (2019-20)
8. Participation of black & minority ethnic (BME) students from 8.53% (2013-14) to 10% (2019-20)

9. Progression to employment or further study from 62% (2012-13) to 66% (2019-20)
10. No longer in HE after 1 year (young, full time, first degree entrants) – reduction from 5.5% baseline to 4.8% by 2019-20.
11. Males into Initial Teacher Training (Primary) – 24% (2013-14) – 34% (2019-20)

With a new senior leadership team in place and a recently published refreshed strategy, the University will be revisiting these targets to ensure that they are aligned with our strategic intent and profile.

Section 4: Commitments, Planning and Proposals

In line with previous Access Agreements and with the guidance and reporting mechanisms for OFFA, there are five strands to the University's planned expenditure:

- Outreach
- Individual financial support (including bursaries and scholarships)
- Retention and student success
- Employability and progression
- Research, monitoring and evaluation

These are embedded within a cross-institutional approach, ensuring that its central student service infrastructure, working with Schools, Faculties, partners and the Students' Union, enables the delivery and evaluation of activities efficiently, effectively and with equity.

4.1 Access

The University will continue with its aim of effectively embedding a widening participation approach to all outreach and recruitment activity, recognising that those from underrepresented groups are to be found in any school or college, at home or within the workplace, and of any age.

From an access perspective, the student life cycle approach now commences much earlier and with this understanding the University will continue to build its younger years work to ensure that aspiration and attainment are part of the access strategy for widening participation. Much of the University partnerships with academies seek to deliver this "early years" approach, as does our work as part of the Children's University network, our Primary Open Days and focused work such as STEM engagement through the SciTech Showcase and British Science Week events.

The involvement of Faculties in the University's widening participation activity is significant. They will continue to provide or support inspirational subject-based outreach activity, some of it explicitly supporting under-representation targets such as men into primary teaching or women into computing and engineering.

The University's current campus undergraduate enrolments are largely full-time, reflecting tight restrictions on teaching space which make timetabling part-time pathways challenging, the weak transportation links within the South West region in the evenings in particular, and that many professionally accredited programmes are only approved to run on a full-time basis. Proportionally more part-time undergraduate students study with our partners, and a number of our postgraduate taught programmes successfully facilitate part-time study. The installation for September 2015 of a new digital learning environment and current reviews of timetabling and estates seek to increase flexibility in the learning opportunities that the University offers, supporting the delivery of blended and distance learning, reducing space pressures and the need for students to travel.

The Devon and Cornwall Children's University represents an important programme within our Access strategy, supporting engagement with learning at the primary levels. A significant number of its partner schools are based within low participation neighbourhoods, with children collecting "stamps" which certify participation in learning activities outside normal school hours. Certificates are presented for the accumulation of stamps, starting with Awards at 30 (Bronze), 65 (Silver) and 100 (Gold), continuing to 1000 for a Gold Fellowship. A "graduation ceremony" is organised at the University each year at which the participants receive their awards, with parents, teachers and representatives from the University in attendance to celebrate their success. Evaluation to date suggests that there is a positive impact on aspiration among the children themselves and their parents. We will be focusing further evaluation activities on attainment, replicating the evaluation work undertaken of the Children's University in Sheffield, which demonstrates a sustained positive link between participation, and achievement and academic performance⁹.

4.2 Retention and Student Success

The University continues to acknowledge the importance of support in ensuring success across its student population.

The University will continue to support individual students with specific support needs. Bridging between the academic and the pastoral, the PALS scheme (peer assisted learning), which trains current students to support the learning of students in lower years of the same programme, continues to well received, with the programme now expanded to include subject areas and student cohorts across the institution.

The faculties will continue to hold the main responsibility for all students' academic programmes and their learning and, in association with relevant support services, to encourage retention and academic achievement. Primary academic responsibility for the provision of pastoral care and support rests with the personal tutor. It is a University requirement that every student is allocated a personal tutor, and it is an expectation that most academic staff will be personal tutors as part of their normal duties. The University's Personal Tutoring Policy sets out minimum requirements for

⁹ Hamshaw, Katie (2016). *Sheffield Children's University: Participation and Performance Analysis: Evidencing the Impact of Out-of-School Learning Accredited and Celebrated by Children's University in Sheffield*. Available from <http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/cu>.

personal tutoring, including at least 3 face-to-face meetings with each personal tutee within the academic year.

Personal tutors are supported both by the programme leader, who has primary operational responsibility for the organisation of the academic programme, the Associate Head of School for Teaching and Learning, who provides operational leadership within the School, and the School Senior Personal Tutor, who oversees personal tutoring activities. A student will have considerable contact with his/her programme leader, particularly where the student has challenging personal circumstances that require support above and beyond what the personal tutor is able to give.

The University continues to focus on the enhancement of its personal tutoring provision; this will be a key focus in the refreshed TLSE strategy as it emerges over the coming months. Key foci include:

- Providing support for students that is consistent across the institution while reflecting the local academic context and related professional and employability considerations.
- The changing policy context, including revisions to the Disabled Students Allowance, and the introduction of the Prevent duty.
- The documented increase in students experiencing mental health challenges
- The need to support students who are victimised as result of incidents of hate, sexual misconduct, and aggression and abuse, including incidents occurring within social media

Alongside the implementation of a “causes for concern” framework which will give personal tutors clear referral and support lines to specialist services, enhanced guidance and support for personal tutors and other colleagues (including those within the Students’ Union) who have incidents disclosed to them by students are in the process of being developed. Building on the successful student-led SHINE resources promoting positive mental health and wellbeing¹⁰, self-help resources and enhanced information about community resources and services are being developed. The University is also working with Devon and Cornwall Constabulary to establish a third party crime and incident reporting centre on campus.

Provision through Student Services includes:

- Counselling and mental health support. In 2015-16 the University appointed two mental health specialists to work with students and with colleagues to both support students experiencing mental ill-health but also to promote healthy behaviours, followed in 2016-17 by the appointment of a qualified social worker.
- Disability Assist Services. As well as providing support to individual students, Disability Assist also works with academic staff to ensure that “reasonable adjustments” are put in to place that facilitate student success, and increasingly advise on the development of inclusive assessment. This work

¹⁰ See <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/learning-gateway/shine>

sits alongside that of Teaching and Learning Support providing pedagogical guidance promoting inclusive teaching, learning and assessment practice.

- Learning Development. The Service provides a range of supports including 1:1 coaching sessions, workshops for students covering a range of learning skills, and supports the Writing Café (literacy, academic and creative writing), Sum:UP (numeracy and statistical skills) and works alongside the Peer Assisted Learning Scheme (PALS). There is bespoke PALS support available for mature students who come to the University with an Access to HE qualification.
- Employability and Careers. The Employability and Careers Service (CES) is increasingly providing targeted support for students across the lifecycle, including the provision of the SPRINT and related programmes, supporting the personal and professional development of female and male students respectively, and bespoke support for students with disabilities seeking inclusive placements and career opportunities and employers providing such placements and opportunities. The CES also coordinates the provision of mentor support for BAME students that request it, and is working with Academic Partnerships to develop a bespoke programme of activities for students who have progressed from an HE in FE partner to “top up” to degree level.

Student Services also provides advice and support to professional colleagues working with students within our academic partners. Electronic resources available to students at the University are also accessible by students enrolled at our partners, providing support for both success (e.g. through the development of digital literacy skills and the provision of resources promoting resilience and wellbeing) and progression (e.g. through guidance on interview skills).

In addition, Complaints, Appeals and Conduct and Chaplaincy provide support focussing on the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion, including working with students who have been victims of incidents of hate, sexual misconduct and violent assault. While this support does not focus on specific activities for widening participation target groups, students from some target groups are more likely to be victimised. A sustained programme of work undertaken in partnership with UPSU and Residence Life includes campaigns promoting diversity, inclusion and community coherence, training for staff and for student leaders in victim support and intervention, and a zero tolerance approach to harassment and bullying in all of its forms. Based on specific feedback from the UPSU BAME and LGBT+ forums, a workshop focusing on workplace rights and supporting diversity in the workplace has been developed by Careers and Employability and UPSU, extending that promotional activity into employability and seeking to address some of the structural disadvantages that exist within the workplace.

An extension to this partnership working model involves developing student resilience and wellbeing and its evidenced positive impact on retention and attainment through a programme of work focusing on inclusive opportunities for sport and exercise, social activity and volunteering, and accessing “green space”. Students engaging with Disability Assist Services and Counselling and Wellbeing, along with those approaching the front-desk Student Gateway expressing concerns about “coping” will have recommended to them opportunities to engage with the

programme of sport and exercise activities put on by UPSU. Through partnerships that the Institute for Sustainable Solutions and the Partnerships and Community Engagement Office, opportunities for students to engage with organisations promoting wellbeing through engagement with the environment (e.g. Dartmoor Zoo, Schumacher College, and the Eden Project) will be developed, including workshops and volunteering opportunities.

During the 14-15 cycle the University commissioned a piece of research entitled 'Investigating the Experience of Care Leavers at Plymouth University'¹¹. This excellent and insightful piece of work demonstrates the University's commitment to Care Leavers as part of its widening participation strategy. This research has been used to support and guide activities related to ensuring access, success and progression of care leavers at Plymouth University, and also provides a model for evaluation which can be replicated in other projects and activities. This holistic support model is effective in its ability to coordinate support in response to the complex needs of care leavers across the student lifecycle, beginning with application, pre-entry and induction support, following through to academic and social support, and a programme of skills development, mentoring and work experience to enhance career opportunities. Coordination with statutory and voluntary services, and accommodation and financial support occur throughout the care leaver's student lifecycle.

The University is continuing to monitor non-completion rates across target groups, including young students from low participation neighbourhoods. We routinely survey students who withdraw (not including those who withdraw due to failure) from the University regarding their reasons. The most frequently occurring response is "personal reasons"; when this is unpicked, such issues as transportation, care responsibilities and other family-related pressures, and ill-health. For students within health and social care programmes, the first placement represents a key decision point regarding continuation. Financial pressures, including the need to work also feature. Reviews of patterns of engagement including attendance, use of the digital learning environment and the library, and accessing support through personal tutors, Learning Development and Careers and Employability suggest a correlation between low engagement and academic failure. Research undertaken both at the University and nationally emphasises the importance of "engagement" broadly defined, including engagement with co-curricular opportunities and Students' Union activities. Participation in the life of a university community is a key positive indicator for success.

The University's strategy to address non-continuation seeks to address both the underlying "personal" reasons for withdrawal and weak academic performance that can lead to failure. Our work in partnership with UPSU to promote engagement by students at risk of marginalisation is documented above, as is our inclusion of students with care responsibilities and those estranged from their families as "target groups", seeks to address some of the social foundations of non-completion. One of the key drivers for the Curriculum Enrichment Project (CEP) was to enhance

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https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/3/3293/FINAL_Report_Care_Leavers_Research_2_.pdf - Cotton, Kneale and Nash, October 2014

students' academic skills and strengthen their "cohort identity" and networks of support, including strengthening relationships with personal tutors. A design feature includes the first "immersive" module, which students are introduced to during Induction Week and study exclusively for the first four weeks of classes. Using active learning pedagogies, it focuses on introducing students to their chosen discipline, allows them to develop and practice key academic and communication skills, and to work closely with each other and with academic staff. Evaluations demonstrate a positive impact on retention and attainment, and feedback from students and from academic staff suggests that the relationship building opportunities have been positively received. Further developments to enhance engagement include the introduction of an attendance and engagement policy for September 2017 and the development of learning analytics as a means of supporting students and tutors to understand learning preferences and performance, and to identify potential risk factors for withdrawal and failure, allowing for intervention. Also from September 2017, students in a "fail must repeat with attendance" situation, and those who are returning to study following interrupting study, will be invited to attend 1:1 sessions with both Learning Development and Careers and Employability to support their (re)engagement with their studies.

Feedback from students highlights the University's teaching timetable as a source of frustration, particularly for those who commute, work, or have care responsibilities. As outlined above, a weak transportation infrastructure make evening and weekend delivery of teaching unviable, largely restricting the University to face-to-face delivery between 0900 and 1800. In addition to developing digital delivery of learning as a means for flexible provision, a project focusing on rationalising the timetable to provide stability from week to week, to reduce the number of days within a week that a student is required to attend, and to allow the earlier publication of the timetable for the following academic year. A primary focus of this work is a shift in emphasis away from module-led timetabling towards a programme-led approach. It is anticipated that some improvement will be experienced for September 2017, with greater impact for September 2018.

4.3 Progression

To ensure effective preparation for progression the University will continue to have an enhanced focus on employability to enable students to access the range of career opportunities including postgraduate study that their more advantaged peers could expect and that society and the economy requires.

The rebalancing of funding proposed in this Access Agreement will support a significant growth in work within the University's Careers and Employability Service to support the progression of underrepresented groups to take up placement and work based learning opportunities and to support higher levels of progression into employment and/or postgraduate study. Academic programmes explicitly embed employability development through for example the Curriculum Enrichment Project; opportunities for placements, internships and shadowing complement wider co-curricular opportunities provided by the Students Union, for volunteering, involvement in student sports and societies and through the Student Jobs part time jobs service. Based on the feedback from students and from analysis of DLHE and

other data sources and reports, we will be targeting the broadening of “work experience” initiatives on and off campus, in particular targeting students with little or no work experience and students who are drawn from groups (e.g. students with disabilities, BAME students) who are known to be disadvantaged within the labour market, regardless of their degree subject or outcome. A programme of activities designed specifically to promote professional postgraduate skills is also being introduced.

Other initiatives include:

- The introduction of an online “career readiness profiling tool” at enrolment that will identify those that need help the most and will target an appropriate offer of support out to students. This was first introduced within the September 2016 induction period, and starting with the February 2017 intake of nursing students, is now a requirement of the enrolment process. This digital support will be extended to include online self-assessment, profiling and planning tools, starting in September 2017. Academic Support Technology and Innovation, working with JISC, is leading on the development of learning analytics, which will bring together these data and tools with academic profiling and engagement data.
- Targeted skills development sessions focussing on career planning, skills development for employability and managing digital footprints will be complemented by the delivery of business challenges, enterprise mentoring and networking events.
- Targeted and funded national and international alumni networking and mentoring opportunities will be introduced alongside a redeveloped information, advice and guidance provision to support those at university while the graduate internship scheme will be extended to enhance pre- employment and progression opportunities.
- A co-curricular offer that includes access to a range of learning resources which enhance employability, including both University-led resources focusing on such areas as privacy, data protection and freedom of information and unconscious bias, and through institutional subscriptions to Lynda.com.
- Workshops, coaching and mentoring for students in target groups who are considering undertaking postgraduate study, including research degrees.

4.4 The University Programme of Activities and Events

The University intends to support its widening participation agenda through a series of activities and events that are aimed at all widening participation students, or in some instances on specific targeted groups.

Examples of these are listed in Table 1 below but there are also a suite of activities which aim to have an impact across the breadth of the widening participation target groups. These include:

- Student Shadowing
- Subject specific Taster days
- Residential Summer Schools
- Business Challenge days

- School clubs
- Careers and Employability advice and support for schools and colleges and for individuals looking to return to study
- Facilitated groups for students e.g. lone carers, students with autism.
- Provision of interactive digital resources focused on wellbeing, study and career planning, and financial management.
- British Science Week and the ESRC Festival of Social Science
- Attendance at Parents' Evenings & HE Fairs
- Focused talks and interactive sessions on: Applying through UCAS, Fees & Funding, The benefits of/choosing a University and Student Life.

Illustrative sample of Widening Participation activities

Mature Students	Talks to Access Course students at Partner Colleges and Adult Education Centres
	"Men into Health and Social Care" and "Men into Education" and "Women into STEM" taster days
	Sessions on Admissions Interviews especially for health and social care
	Talks on funding for mature applicants
	Targeted sessions for mature students during induction and throughout the year
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students (BAME)	Ring-fenced places on summer schools
	IT courses delivered with the Racial Equality Council
	2 day residential summer schools for Arts student from Tower Hamlets College
	Mentoring by successful BAME employers and researchers
	1:1 advice for refugees seeking a higher education qualification, including those with professional qualifications not recognised within the UK
	IT Course delivered in partnership with Devon and Cornwall Refugee Service, preparing participants for the EDCL qualification, as well as English language practice and support for progression into higher education.
Students with Disabilities	Supported theatre project for people with experience of mental health difficulties
	Peer Learning for Empowerment for students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties
	"Have a Go" sessions for UPSU sports and societies to encourage participation
	Bespoke mentoring and coaching for employability
Looked After Children/Care Leavers	Programme of events for Looked After Children including Taster Days on campus supported by SRA
	Specific sessions at Open Days
	Financial support for applicants to Applicant Days from POLAR3 Q1 geographically targeted areas.

Low Participation Neighbourhoods, including addressing gender disparity	Experiential learning days for target schools and populations e.g. “Patient journey”, “Build a bridge”, “Your sustainable school”
	Scholarships for Plymouth University applicants
	Sessions during induction and throughout the year focusing on finances, including healthy eating on a budget.
	“Boys into Health and Social Care”/“Men into Health and Social Care” and “into Education” “Girls into STEM/Women into STEM”
	“So You Want to...” age-specific interactive guidance, setting out pathways into specific careers (e.g. “Design video games”, “be a sports physiotherapist”, “discover new planets”).

4.5 Fees, Student Numbers and Fee Income

The University is committed to publishing clear and accessible information regarding its fees and financial support for prospective and existing students.

At the time of writing, the University intends to continue to charge a range of fees calculated on the basis of the programme/level of study and the student’s enrolment status as follows. We anticipate that no students will be on the “old” fee regime by 2018-19.

The University reserves the right review these proposals should the government revise the proposed capped fee, set for 2018-19 at £9,250.

- Full-time

All full-time undergraduate programmes, including Year Zero programmes, in line with the proposed inflationary fee increase, propose a fee level of £9,250. Students undertaking a placement year as part of a “sandwich” degree will pay a proposed fee of £1,230.

- Part-time

For part-time students, the University proposes to charge a maximum fee of £6,935 in 2018-19.

- Academic Partners

Plymouth University’s Access Agreement also extends to higher education programmes offered on a franchised basis including those delivered through the University’s network of partner further education colleges. Partners that have set tuition fees above £6,000 and will produce their own Access Agreements are:

- Bridgewater and Taunton College (reflecting the merger of Bridgewater College and Somerset College)
- British College of Osteopathic Medicine
- City College Plymouth
- City of Bristol College
- The Cornwall College Group
- Exeter College
- Petroc College
- Truro and Penwith College
- South Devon College
- Weymouth College

Fee levels have been advised directly and separately by the respective Principal of each of these colleges and were not set by the University, though the University does approve any fees set by a partner. The University's Access Agreement does not attempt to suggest direct measures for success, progression or additional financial support at these colleges given this is a matter for each college to determine. As part of its ongoing programme of quality assurance and enhancement within the colleges, the University does oversee these activities.

For 2018-19, Plymouth University International College (PUIC), part of the Navitas Colleges Network and a partner of the University, will be seeking to recruit European Union students. They will be aligning tuition fees for those students with the fees of the University, and for the purposes of the Access Agreement, be included within the provision set out here.

As above, partners offering Plymouth University HE degrees within FE Colleges work collaboratively with the University to promote outreach activities and to support progression to "top-up" honours degree and postgraduate opportunities. Regardless of the intended destination and subject of study, all individuals falling within the target group populations as set out in Section 1.2 will be eligible to participate in outreach activities designed to facilitate access to higher education opportunities.

4.6 Summary Student Numbers and Fee Income

The University does not anticipate any students enrolling with eligibility for the "old" fee regime

Total Number of Students (From Table 3a)

Mode of study	Full-time	All students	13,443
		Of which above the basic fee	13,208
	Part-time	All students	420
		Of which above the basic fee	139
Total	All students		13,863
	Of which above the basic fee		13,347

Fee Income Above the Basic Fee (From Table 3b)

Mode of study	Full-time	£39,650,430
	Part-time	£ 660,692
Total Higher Fee Income		£40,064,987

4.7 Expenditure on Access and Student Success

In total the University will spend **21.7%** of additional fee income above the basic tuition fee level on access, student success and financial support in 2018-19, with a stable target of 21.3% for 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 as reflected in Tables 6a and 6b

As discussed above, we are continuing with the rebalancing of expenditure which takes into account OFFA's guidance to understand "fair access" within the context of the entire student lifecycle, the University's own strategic positioning and commitment to promoting access, our evaluation of our programme to work to date, and feedback from students.

Within our return covering the 15-16 academic year, we reported that:

- The shift in expenditure away from a focus on outreach towards other activities had not impacted on our performance against outreach targets; our strategy to be more focused within our outreach activities on activities with high impact continues to be effective
- Underspend in some areas has been balanced by increased expenditure on individual financial support
- Monitoring and evaluation of access is consistently undertaken. For success and progression, some good evaluative work on specific projects is being undertaken through the Plymouth University Pedagogic Research Institute and Observatory (PedRIO), with an evaluation and dissemination strategy a pre-condition for funding. Systematic evaluations of the SPRINT project focusing on "women in STEM" are being carried and to date the programme has been very positively received by participating students, with further work planned to assess the impact on progression into STEM careers and postgraduate study.
- The evaluation of financial support students appreciate the scholarships, loans and bursaries available to them, but outreach-based funding to applicants has little impact on their decision to enrol. To date, few students who have subsequently withdrawn have identified financial issues as the reason for withdrawal, citing instead "personal reasons" suggesting that financial hardship reflects wider challenges within these students' lives.

Reflecting upon what we reported in our most recent return, proposed actions include:

- Maintaining the targeted approach to access, focusing our efforts on activities where there is most need (based both on benchmarking and targets and on our own strategic focus) and which have the greatest impact.
- A reduction in the proportion of funding made available for financial support, balanced by an increase in funding supporting success and progression activities. Following a review of the scholarships and bursaries available to new students, there has been some consolidation where there was overlapping eligibility.
- Eligibility for the Mayflower Award has been expanded to include students who are enrolled on programmes previously funded through the NHS.
- Within all activities funded under this Agreement, there is a requirement for an evaluation strategy with a line of reporting into the University's Widening Access Group where that evaluation can be considered.
- The expansion of a specific programme of work focused on addressing the evidenced disadvantages that some widening participation groups experience when entering the workplace
- The continuation of a systematic framework of evaluation for financial support, to include such measures as student satisfaction, retention, and take-up

In consolidating our approach to evaluation, our current strategy consists of

- A systematic analysis of our corporate information that supports the profiling and tracking of individual students and cohorts across the student lifecycle. Through this analysis we identify key areas for intervention (e.g. degree attainment) and assess progress (e.g. on graduate outcomes as measured by DLHE). This will be expanded to include learning analytics as the data, algorithms and underlying management information technology becomes available.
- Project level evaluations that can assess the perceived impact based on participant feedback (e.g. raising aspirations) and on behaviour (e.g. attendance) and attainment (e.g. GCSE outcomes). The University has nationally-recognised expertise in pedagogical evaluation both within PedRIO and within NCOP Next Steps South West.

We seek to involve our students as co-researchers in these evaluation activities; the University has a strong record of student participation in the British Conference of Undergraduate Research (BCUR) which reflects how evaluation and research skills are embedded within curricula, and evaluation activities sponsored by UPSU.

Estimated costings for outreach, retention, employability and financial support in 2018/19 are as follows (from Table 6a):

Activity	Estimated Costing	
	Returned 2017-18	Expected 2018-19
Access	£1,457,348	£2,100,000
Student Success	£3,095,403	£3,500,000
Progression	£1,038,135	£1,100,000
Financial Support	£2,391,927	£2,000,000
Total expenditure committed	£7,982,852	£8,700,000

In line with the proposals above to adjust activities and funding to focus on the University's strategic priorities and to focus on activities with the most impact, the proposed funding of financial support has been restructured, with increased investment the other areas. While research evidence suggests that within selective universities, scholarships and bursaries do facilitate access from under-represented groups, feedback from our students and market research suggest that this is not the case for Plymouth University.

The costs for evaluation are embedded as a core aspect of all activities undertaken to promote access.

4.8 Awards and Bursaries

As above, the University is committed to publishing clear and accessible information regarding its fees and financial support for prospective and existing students.

The University offers the following programme of awards and bursaries:

<p>The Mayflower Award</p>	<p>The University has made £2.3 million available to students who are entering into their first year of study on their first course, are identified as being domiciled in England and whose household income is below £25,000.</p> <p>The Mayflower Award is broken down into two tiers; the Higher Rate and the Lower Rate;</p> <p>The Higher Rate of £2,000 will be paid to qualifying students whose household income is below £16,000, and the Lower Rate of £1,250 will be paid to qualifying students whose household income is between £16,001 and £25,000.</p> <p>The Mayflower Award is payable only in the first year of study and will not be repeated in subsequent years.</p> <p>There is no application process for this award.</p> <p>All recipients will be automatically identified from University and Student Finance England systems, with those who had their full SFE funding approved by the beginning of November and who meet the other required criteria being eligible for the award. If funding had not been approved by this date, no award can be made.</p>
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Summer Support Fund	<p>The Summer Support Fund can provide basic assistance to students who are unable to work during the summer period. Non-final year students are expected to financially support themselves during the summer. However, the following students are eligible to apply to the Summer Support Fund:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students with dependants under the age of 14 and who have applied for all benefit entitlements. • Students who are ill or have a disability and are therefore unable to undertake work, and for whom other benefits are not available. • Students who are the primary carer of a disabled or seriously ill person. • Students on an integral (not voluntary) placement throughout the summer vacation and who have no other income source once your Maintenance Loan has been exhausted. • Students who are unexpectedly required to resubmit elements of their course either in or out of attendance across the summer which prevents them from seeking work. • Care Leavers/Estranged Students. <p>To apply for the fund, students in one of the above categories must be full-time home undergraduates who have paid all tuition fees in full and are in receipt of the full entitlement of Maintenance Loan. Postgraduates will be expected to have made realistic provision for their studies and the cost of living throughout the summer period.</p>
Financial Support Fund	<p>This fund provides discretionary financial assistance to help students access and remain in Higher Education, particularly if s/he needs financial help to meet extra costs that cannot be met from other sources of support. The fund can help to alleviate unexpected financial hardship. The University particularly encourages students who may be considering leaving Higher Education because of financial problems to apply.</p>
"What Just Happened" Fund	<p>The "What Just Happened" Fund provides help for a student and his/her family if s/he is receiving emergency hospital care. The fund provides limited financial support for a student– and/or close family or friends – for costs incurred at short notice if a student unexpectedly requires treatment for a serious injury or illness while studying at the University. The financial help available can be used towards the cost of travel, accommodation, and food and drink during the stay.</p>
Helena Kennedy Foundation Award	<p>The Helena Kennedy Foundation offers support to disadvantaged students who have overcome significant</p>

	<p>barriers in order to continue with their education at university level. Each year, the Helena Kennedy Foundation invites FE Colleges, Adult Education Centres and Sixth Form Colleges to nominate a student to receive a £1,500 bursary sponsored by Plymouth University, to support their progression to higher education. The Foundation administers the Award directly.</p>
<p>Unite Foundation Scholarship</p>	<p>The Unite Foundation scholarship offers students the full cost of accommodation in a Plymouth Unite student property plus a cash scholarship of £3,000 per year, for the duration of their course. These scholarships are administered by Plymouth University with respect to its own students.</p> <p>Plymouth University will be offering five Unite Foundation scholarships each year to those successfully applying for entry to full-time undergraduate courses at Plymouth University. Accommodation will be covered for a full 52 weeks each year during the period of the award.</p> <p>Applications are open to students who meet the eligibility criteria listed. However, these scholarships are intended to support access to higher education for students who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have previously been in the care of, or accommodated by, a local authority for three months or more (and have not been adopted) • are irreconcilably estranged from their parents (as assessed by Student Finance England or Student Finance Wales); or • have been residing, for three months or more, in Foyer premises operated by The Foyer Foundation or similar residential provision for young homeless adults in the UK
<p>The Reid Access Bursary</p>	<p>This bursary can provide financial support for up to three civil and coastal engineering undergraduate students studying at Plymouth University. The bursary has been provided to the University by a Trust, the Guildford Academic Associates, and aims to support the advancement of education in the science and technology areas.</p> <p>To be eligible for this award a student will need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be a civil and coastal engineering student at Plymouth University • be preferably female

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a household income below £25k • be the first family member to attend university.
Roland Levinsky Memorial Fund	<p>The Roland Levinsky Memorial Fund offers current students who have completed their first year at University the opportunity to enhance their University experience through extra-curricular activities, despite any financial restrictions they may be experiencing. Awards of up to £1,500 enable a student to take part in activities which could include anything from participation in a sports club or society, to undertaking a volunteering project overseas.</p> <p>Awards will often be granted to individuals who demonstrate the extent to which the award will benefit not only themselves, but also the wider community. The type of projects that have previously been supported include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative projects • Field trips and internships • Research expeditions • Sports and societies • Travel • Volunteering and charity work.
The Tamar Engineering Project	<p>Available to high achievers whose background or personal circumstances may prevent studying at a higher education level, successful applicants will receive</p> <p>£3,000 towards living costs A £1,500 fee waiver One-to-one mentoring with an industry expert</p> <p>for each year of study. Applicants must have a good academic achievement record, be a UK or EU resident, not already enrolled on a University programme that progresses to an engineering course, and have accepted a firm offer from the University for an identified engineering course. Applicants must also meet at least one of the below selection criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a family income of less than £25,000 per annum • Live in a postcode area identified as a low participation neighbourhood (ie POLAR3 quintiles 1 or 2) • Be a looked after young person or a care leaver

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An unpaid carer of a person with a disability, long-term illness, mental health condition or addiction• Irreconcilably estranged from parents <p>Up to 5 awards are available.</p>
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Table 7: Targets and Milestones (to be inserted here)

Table 7 - Targets and milestones

Institution name: University of Plymouth
 Institution UKPRN: 10007801

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	State school	HESA T1a - State School (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	From state schools or colleges	No	2013-14	93.8%	93.8%	94%	94.5%	95%	93.9% For 2015-16; Maintain proportion as already exceeding benchmark	
T16a_02	Student success	Socio-economic	HESA T3a - No longer in HE after 1 year (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	All entrants	No	2013-14	5.5%	5.4%	5.2%	5.0%	4.8%	7.2% in 15-16.	
T16a_03	Access	Disabled	Other statistic - Disabled (please give details in the next column)	Based on HESA Disability code 00, 99, 98	No	2013-14	13.5%	14.1%	14.4%	14.6%	14.6	15.0% for 2015-16; Already exceeded benchmark; Stabilisation of proportion of entrants with increased focus on success and progression	
T16a_04	Access	Care-leavers	Other statistic - Care-leavers (please give details in the next column)	% of Undergraduate care leavers	No	2013-14	0.2%	0.35%	0.45%	0.5%	0.5%	Stable at 0.2% for 2015-16. This includes HESA codes 01 and 04	
T16a_05	Access	Ethnicity	Other statistic - Ethnicity (please give details in the next column)	Participation of BAME students	No	2013-14	8.5%	9.5%	9.75%	10%	10%	8.6% for 215-16. As reported last year, amended to reflect Home/EU only. Change in reference to BAME ("Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic") to match contemporary practice.	
T16a_06	Progression	Socio-economic	Other statistic - Progression to employment or further study (please give details in the next column)	Employability - DLHE % of UK and EU leavers in professional occupation	No	2013-14	62%	64%	65%	66%	68%	69.8% for 2015-16. Exceeded benchmark in 2015-16 for the first time.	
T16a_07	Access	Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)	HESA T1a - Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3) (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	Young, full time, undergraduate, POLAR 3	No	2013-14	12.2%	12.6%	12.8%	13%	13%	14.1% for 2015-16. Grow to stretch to new target	
T16a_08	Access	Mature	HESA T2a - (Mature, full-time, all undergraduate entrants)	Mature, full time undergraduate LPN, using POLAR 3	No	2013-14	10.3%	10.8%	11.1%	11.3%	11.3%	Declining sector so reflects slow growth	
T16a_09	Access	Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)	HESA T2b - Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3) (All, part-time, entrants)	All, Part Time POLAR 3	No	2013-14	4.3%	5%	5.3%	5.6%	5.6%	To meet benchmark by 19/20	
T16a_10	Access	Gender	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	Males into Initial Teacher Training (Primary)	No	2013-14	24%	29%	31.5%	34%	34%	22.4% for 2015-16	
T16a_11	Access	School sponsorship	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	Proportion of pupils attending sponsored schools offering secondary education that achieve at least 5 A* - C grades, including maths and english	No	2017-18	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc	New target reflecting work with sponsored schools. Currently baseline data not available.	
T16a_12	Access	Gender	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	Proportion of entrants on BSc (Hons) Nursing pathways that are men	No	2015-16	9.24%	12.0%	14.0%	16.0%	18.0%	Change in funding arrangements may have an impact	
T16a_13	Student success	Ethnicity	Other statistic - Ethnicity (please give details in the next column)	Proportion of BAME students achieving a 2:1 and above in degree classification	No	2015-16	56.0%	62.0%	65.0%	68.0%	71.0%	Seeking steady improvement	
T16a_14	Progression	Disabled	Other statistic - Progression to employment or further study (please give details in the next column)	Employability - DLHE % of UK and EU disabled leavers in a professional occupation	No	2015-16	57.3%	61.0%	64.0%	68.0%	72.0%	Seeking accelerated improvement	
T16a_15	Multiple	Disabled	Other statistic - Disabled (please give details in the next column)	Proportion of disabled students (non-statutory programmes) completing sandwich (6 or 12 month) placements	No	2017-18	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc	Currently no baseline data as this is the first time that this scheme will have been measured in this way	
T16a_16	Access	Mature	Other statistic - Mature (please give details in the next column)	Proportion of entrants to undergraduate study aged 25 and above	No	2015-16	27.63%	32.0%	33.0%	34.0%	35.0%	Cautious approach; may be affected by funding changes to health and social care programmes which historically proportionally more mature (25+ age) students.	

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	Socio-economic	Outreach / WP activity (summer schools)	% of students attending summer schools who enrolled into the University from WP backgrounds	No	2014-15	18	22%	25%	30%	32%		
T16b_02	Access	Socio-economic	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Number of applications from students engaging in shadowing scheme from WP background	No	2014-15	6	15	20	25	35		
T16b_04	Access	Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)	Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Increase the proportion of students applying to HE from 10 targeted regional schools with high WP populations	Yes	2014-15	303	350	380	410	450	Currently no baseline data as this is the first time that this scheme will have been measured in this way	
T16b_05	Student success	Socio-economic	Student support services	Number of WP students accessing the Peer Assisted Learning Support scheme	No	2015-16	tbc	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	See commentary below.	
T16b_06	Student success	Socio-economic	Mission targets	Number of WP students completing placements or work based learning	No	2016-17	tbc	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Currently no baseline data as this is the first time that this scheme will have been measured in this way	
T16b_07	Student success	Socio-economic	Student support services	Number of students from WP backgrounds becoming Peer Supporters for our Student Counselling and Personal Development Service	No	2016-17	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc	Measured locally within the PALS programme for the first time in 2016/17	
T16b_08	Progression	Socio-economic	Management targets	Number of WP students accessing the Careers Service	No	2016-17	tbc	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Currently no baseline data as this is the first time that this scheme will have been measured in this way	

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.

For Table 7b, while these performance measures were established with the best of intentions, some of them have proven to be challenging to apply. For some of our WP target groups (e.g. care leavers), we rely on self-declaration and currently do not have the management information infrastructure to collect information systematically about these students and match it to our Student Records System to analyse, for example, assessment performance. There is also the methodological challenge of "multiple counting" - a student might be a care leaver from a BAME background who has a declared disability. This is prompting us to rethink our milestones and targets under Table 7b to be more specific, and so for example rather than referring to "WP students" achieving "good degrees", we are now focusing on "BAME students" achieving a "good degree". In analysing our data, of the WP target groups that we collect systematic data for, two target groups -- mature students and students declaring a disability -- demonstrate no statistically significant differences in degree attainment. Where an attainment gap is demonstrable is the distinction between Home and EU BAME students and Home and EU white students. Based on this and similar analyses, we propose to change some of our measures to be more focused on target groups where we have a demonstrable weakness.