1. **Introduction**

1.1 This Access Agreement has been prepared in response to the guidance published by the Office of Fair Access (OFFA) *Strategic guidance: developing your 2017 – 18 access agreement* and the detailed guidance on *How to produce an access agreement – a step by step guide*. We have also taken in to account the letter from the Minister of State for Universities and Science and the Green Paper *Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*.

1.2 At the time of writing, the Royal Veterinary College is ranked as the third best veterinary school in the world and maintains the highest academic and professional standards commensurate with such a position. In this respect, the relative success of our Widening Participation work contributes to our high standing as not only are we world class in regard to our discipline, but we also play a pivotal role in increasing social mobility within the professions. Widening Participation is integral to our educational purpose, it is not an option. The proportion of our student body that comes from lower socio-economic groups has doubled; while our retention rates among such students is good we continue to monitor this closely (see paragraph 3.2 below); while our outreach activities impact upon thousands of young people from our target groups every year. The essential driver in future years is to convert the “general impact” into “specific impact” with more school students applying for the increasingly varied range of degree programmes offered by the RVC.

This Agreement sets out how we intend to continue to develop and deliver our work to enable prospective students, whatever their background, to achieve their aspirations. As in previous years, we shall:

i. continue a major programme of generic outreach, whilst increasing the amount of focused, long-term work with members of our target cohorts;

ii. increase the quality of our evaluation activities, so that we are able to concentrate resources on the most effective interventions;

iii. develop our collaborative working, through both new and existing partnerships;

iv. monitor and review the effectiveness of the financial support we offer to disadvantaged students.

v. review and develop teaching and assessment methods and procedures to best reflect the needs of a diverse student body. Having significantly expanded its degree in the field of Biological Sciences with the development of both BSc and MSci (undergraduate) courses, the RVC is aware of the need to continually review its strengths and weaknesses in terms of Student Achievement, Teaching and Learning and Retention across all its programmes. Mechanisms are in place to monitor and report on retention both within groups and across
all year levels. We report on this at a later stage in this document. Furthermore, as an institution where two of its largest degree programme lead directly to professional recognition, it has a duty to inform and guide students in relation to employability and continuous professional development.

Partly because of degree programme expansion, our Access work has become focussed on the needs of new cohorts of undergraduates, and the College’s staff are conscious of the need to support students with different goals and varied demands. We shall be looking at ways in which we can open new and fair admissions pathways which may further encourage suitably qualified entrants. Much, though not all, of the above preamble, is similar to statements we made in Agreements written for previous years but we do not wish to be seen to be resting on any laurels or being complacent. Indeed, two of the main requirements laid down in both the strategic guidance and in the Minister of State’s letter, namely working with white, working class boys and with BAME groups, are already, and have been for some time, areas on which RVC’s activities have been focused.

2. **Fee Limits and Fee Income above £6,000**

2.1 Subject to meeting the institutional eligibility criteria specified in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), we intend to charge the maximum permissible fee (£9,250) to all full-time undergraduate entrants in 2017/18.

It is also our intention to charge students taking a sandwich year, as part of the BSc Bioveterinary Sciences or BSc Biological Sciences, the maximum permissible fee (£1,850) for the sandwich year.

Furthermore, we intend to charge students undertaking the Graduate Diploma in Veterinary Nursing a maximum fee of £2,805 per academic year.

2.2 As an HEI whose income is drawn mainly from Band A Students, the introduction of the £9,000 fee did not increase overall per capita income and has subsequently been eroded in real terms. In order to deliver a sustainable student experience, we intend to implement any increases in the maximum fee that may be permitted in 2017/18 and subsequent years.

3. **Expenditure on Access and Retention**

3.2 In previous Access Agreements we had raised the question of our targets being over ambitious in the light of declining figures. However, the further development of our science degree suite of programmes gives us confidence that we can achieve the targets across the timescale as set out in the appended tables. For a specialist institution with what is an expanding but still a relatively small number of undergraduate degree programmes these are already extremely challenging targets, any further increases would be unrealistic.

3.3 Retention at the RVC is good and this is the case even in programmes which have a higher average of WP students. RVC monitors retention across a range of cohorts similar to most other HEIs but given our relatively small numbers, our monitoring approach is data influenced rather than based on PIs. The Gateway Programme (Year 0 of BVetMed) has
retention in excess of 85% and this increases as the students from that cohort move through the BVetMed years. Retention in Veterinary Nursing degrees has been lower than other areas, but this has been due to a higher proportion of our undergraduates being offered employment at their work placed-learning providers and shifting their training to day-release programmes. So we do not see the need to increase our expenditure in this area. We shall of course continue to provide academic and pastoral support to maintain our high retention levels and look to change or develop specific activities but this should not have any significant budgetary implications.

3.5 As part of our drive to reach our targets we shall continue to focus much of our work on increasing the LPN Cohort working with the BAME Cohort and addressing the particular and continuing shortage of disadvantaged male students, applying and being accepted at the RVC. More detail on these activities can be found below in Section 4.

We also intend to spend the following sums on access and retention measures in 2016/2017 and 2017/2018:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2016/2017</th>
<th>2017/2018</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access expenditure</td>
<td>413,301 (£)</td>
<td>468,301 (£)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student success expenditure</td>
<td>198,686 (£)</td>
<td>253,686 (£)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progression expenditure</td>
<td>9,128 (£)</td>
<td>14,128 (£)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support</td>
<td>673,347 (£)</td>
<td>681,096 (£)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Expenditure</td>
<td>1,294,462 (£)</td>
<td>1,417,211 (£)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.6 Bursaries will remain part of our overall access provision. Financial hardship can be a significant factor, not only as a direct cause of student withdrawal, but also as a contributor to poor academic performance that itself leads to withdrawal. Our academic programmes, are relatively expensive and, in the case of BVetMed, lengthy. There is only limited opportunity for students to undertake part-time work. Lack of money can also reduce students’ opportunities to engage in the full range of social, and non-academic activities that contribute to a rounded university experience, particularly in an expensive city like London. We are committed to ensuring that none of our students withdraws from study, or suffers significant disadvantage while at College, because they come from a less affluent background. We are, however, in agreement with OFFA that a greater proportion of our Access resource should be devoted to activity and other aspects of widening participation work which not only encourages young people to apply but also provides them with a supportive educational and academic experience. However, we will continue to keep our bursary offering under close review, in the light of our concern that applicants from less affluent backgrounds are deterred from taking up offers at the RVC because of the cost of living in London and the relatively low bursary offering in comparison to our direct competitors.
4. **Access Measures**

4.1 The College’s Widening Participation and Community Engagement work sits within the RVC Access Unit which, in turn, is part of the College’s Professional Services Department. All staff in this Unit work together as a team collaborating across WP, educational liaison and admission activity and benefitting from colleagues’ expertise in particular areas. Widening Participation is firmly embedded within the RVC and its Corporate Plan. Academic excellence, or the potential to achieve it, remains the core driver for entry to the RVC. Curriculum development and with it Staff Development is central to our Widening Participation policy and practice and we continue to work with Learning Support staff on developing Inclusive Learning. Widening Participation staff are members of the College’s Working Party on the Inclusive Curriculum and of the Working Party on Equality and Diversity. Although we continue to engage in and expand our outreach work, it is the refining of entry qualifications and the support for, and assessment of, ability that results in successful Widening Participation. Our outreach work is geared to support the school curriculum and longitudinal progress so that the successful candidate and the discriminating staff can have confidence in the application process. We welcome the call for more “in-depth” work to be undertaken in partnership with schools and we shall build this in to our existing and future Progression Agreements with both schools and FE colleges.

4.2 In terms of activities for the period covered by this Agreement we shall be continuing the successful Widening Participation work of earlier years and we shall increasingly prioritise schools with cohorts of white males and BAME groups. Our work includes: master-classes, E-Mentoring (with the Brightside Trust), student ambassador work, taster sessions, mock interviews, weekly school visits both inward and outward, Information, Advice and Guidance, and highly successful residential summer schools. We are one of the core institutions working with the Sutton Trust to provide residential summer schools and in the selection process for this we shall be prioritising applications from BAME groups, males and LPNs. As one of several collaborations (see below) we shall continue to offer a Teachers’ Summer School aimed at staff from state schools in partnership with Imperial College and Kings College London. We have participated in projects to looking at the experience of BAME students in terms of IAG and we are continuing to look at ways of encouraging WP cohorts to consider progression to postgraduate training.

Our Primary School work, which is related to the Primary Science Curriculum, accounts for approximately 40% of our work. Although we see the need to increase the immediate numbers of WP students entering veterinary and biological degree courses, we have always supported the call for suitable interventions at earlier ages as an equally important goal for ensuring balanced development and educational advancement across all socioeconomic and minority groups. We consider the Primary School work to be of seminal importance in this endeavour and we shall be making every effort to ensure our levels of engagement continue. This we believe this to be hugely important for a specialist institution with strong links to a professional body as there is clear evidence that many young people aspire to be veterinarians from a relatively early age. With this in mind, our long-term outreach work moves through from Key Stages 1-4 and on to post-16 work to ensure suitable interventions at each level. For example, initially visiting and talking to whole cohorts of young primary
students following up the smaller class visits and gradually raising the level of content. We have built up steady relationships with numerous primary schools and are embedded in their cycle of work. We seek to work with these schools to ensure that the students maintain their discipline-specific interest as they progress through these schools and beyond.

4.3 As a specialist institution with an international remit, RVC is concerned that it demonstrates its work at both a national and local level. Although the greater portion of our WP activity takes place within the London area, we also work in other parts of England and beyond and with this in mind we hope that by 2017-2018 there will have been project opportunities to enhance our extra-London activity.

4.4 Being a major contributor to scientific and medical research, the RVC will continue to develop outreach activity which dovetails with STEM/Biological Sciences subject content. And in this respect we shall continue to expand and promote our Year 12/13 Masterclass Series in London and in other parts of the country in co-operation with institutions with which we have Progression Accords / Agreements.

4.5 As well as working in partnership with HEIs we have over time established collaborative ventures with other bodies such as the Francis Crick Institute, the Royal Society of Biology; and the Royal Institution with whom we collaborate on Family Learning and public engagement. We play a significant role in the work of AccessHE and London South Aim Higher and participate in joint ventures facilitated by both bodies, for example in working with young people in care and it is our intention to continue such work. We are actively involved as members of the University of London WP Group and are engaged in developing collaborative good practice and common data sharing across our various institutions which will enhance evaluation and activity in 2017-2018.

4.6 The setting up and funding of the National Collaborative Networks in 2014/15 enabled us to become active members of the Networks established by AccesHE / London South Aim Higher and also the one established by the University of Hertfordshire (HEAD). At the time we saw these networks as a valuable means of reaching hitherto untargeted schools, and we welcome any opportunity to continue such consortia work in to 2017/2018. Over and above the NCN work, membership of both AccessHE and AHLs has been of great value in developing and participating with other HEIs in a variety of projects. For example, as the largest regional network in England, AccessHE engages with over 300 higher education institutions, schools and colleges in London. As a member of AccessHE, the RVC is able to both develop strong reciprocal collaborative relationships with other HEIs in London and also participate in joint activities with shared goals. It is specifically useful with regard to the new priorities established by OFFA in relation to work with BAME and disabled learners given that the former are also a priority for RVC. In 2017-18 AccessHE will also be convening action forums across a range of other outreach areas and facilitating joint projects to raise attainment/improve knowledge of HE via ‘AccessHE Online’ and evaluate outreach work through ‘Impact London’ and where possible RVC will be supporting this work.

Similarly, AHLs enables RVC to work with HEIs not normally within our purview and reach schools outside of the immediate central London area. This will be of special value in our work with white working class boys and their parents.
4.7 The highly successful Gateway Programme, which has formed a foundation year for the professional BVetMed degree for over ten years will continue with an annual intake of 45 students. We shall continue to utilise this programme as an engine for social change and use it to develop our entry pathways further. It is our intention to continue to provide pre-enrolment support for students on this course through a “virtual summer school” which will provide a transition to university learning and enable them to “meet” staff and students without incurring expense.

4.8 We shall also continue to work towards expanding our cohort of vocational students. As the numbers of school and college students taking vocational qualifications outstrip those taking A Levels, it is essential we dovetail our entry requirements accordingly and particularly in the light of any new degree programmes which we believe will be attractive to the BTEC/National Diploma cohort. In this light we shall continue as a priority the development of curricula, teaching methodology and delivery platforms aimed at integrating a range of vocational needs while ensuring our Staff Development Programmes are focused and prioritised around these goals and our selection processes increase our student diversity while ensuring all potential students meet the requirements for entry to RVC degree programmes. We include the student voice in all our INSET training for staff.

4.9 **Opportunities for Part-Time Study, Impact Learning and Mature Study**

The number of mature students and part-time students on undergraduate programmes is increasing significantly. We are looking to enhance these trends across a wider range of our programmes through curriculum modularisation. We anticipate this will provide us with the capacity to develop general learning packages for family and parent groups, an area of activity which we would very much like to deliver at some point. Similarly, we shall be engaging in discussions with Birkbeck University of London on collaborative activity with parents.

4.10 **Tracking and Contextual Data**

Within RVC Access we have implemented a CRM system which enables us to track and liaise with potential students. This supports our developing work in supporting transition from secondary to higher education. We have developed the use of contextual data within our admissions framework which has made our processes clearer and transparent. The staff of RVC Access will work with the admissions team to identify applicants for whom contextual data can be part of a legitimate and supportive process.

5. **Student Retention and Success**

5.1 It is clear from what has been said in the above sections, and particularly in section 3.1 and 3.2 that we are proud of the work and effort that has gone in to our widening participation programme of our programme of widening participation, a success that has led to learners joining our courses from more diverse educational backgrounds. We are, however,
conscious that our efforts in widening access to our courses must also be backed up by efforts to improve retention of those learners that we have attracted into higher education, even though our retention figures are good.

Overall student progression at the RVC shows a good retention rate for undergraduate students. However, we are concerned there may be some pockets of lower performance. Although the low numbers of learners involved means this is unlikely to be statistically significant, teaching and assessment experience point to a possible connection between the type of entry qualification and successful progression through our courses. Cognisant of (i) the development of our own course portfolio to include more ‘science streams’ and (ii) the rising and increasing population of young people holding BTEC qualifications on entry, we realise we must investigate and if necessary address this. We would not want to ignore these signs and potentially disadvantage the progress of such students.

Therefore we intend to fund internally a project to examine any teaching and learning and employability differences that may exist among students entering our courses with different entry qualifications; particularly but not exclusively to determine whether there are differences between A-level entrants and those with BTEC qualifications. The intention would be to ensure that we have a secure bridge from all entry pathways to progression beyond the first year of our courses for all students.

We feel well placed to undertake this since we have relevant strands of experience in other quarters that can be drawn together. They are:

- An academic team experienced in education matters that offer courses and research in the area of veterinary education.

- A learning support service including qualified staff with backgrounds in the sciences. Details of this service and how it fits with the overarching Access Strategy are given below.

- A high proportion of students with a learning difference, meaning that we have experience in the provision and deployment of learning tools and techniques that we use to ensure each learner develops a learning style that is most suited to them. We would like to broaden the application of these tools to more learners, since they are potentially of value to any student.

- A Student Development Committee whose remit is to consider the provision and interaction of courses and services in support of the ‘all round’ development and support of the student. This Committee would be well placed to steer this initiative.

5.2 Our ultimate aim is to use the findings of this project to inform our teaching and learning, including careers advice, in two ways. Firstly we must ensure that we design our curricula and their associated assessments in such a way as to avoid discrimination in favour of learners from particular educational backgrounds (and by inference against those of others). It is with this in mind that we are considering the development of an “upskilling” programme for RVC academics referred to above. Secondly relevant findings from the project can be fed into our own, unique staff development program: the post-graduate qualifications that we offer in Veterinary Education. Since all new members of academic staff are expected to
undertake this qualification we can ensure that our teachers are adequately prepared to both recognise and adapt their teaching styles to learners from diverse backgrounds. Our post-graduate qualifications in Veterinary Education are also undertaken by academic staff members from other institutions both within the UK and internationally. This gives us an opportunity to disseminate good practice both internally and externally within the sector.

5.3 Over the last decade, the RVC student demographic has undergone rapid and significant change and this, along with changes in the way our programmes are delivered and accessed, has prompted us to rethink the provision of academic and pastoral support for future years.

We shall continue to embed academic skills development in the first term of all taught courses. In our experience, students are more likely to engage with training and feedback at the point of need and we shall, therefore, continue to provide a series of stand-alone workshops that can be accessed by any student, on any course, on campus or at a distance, at any time of year. Students requiring more in-depth or individualised support can book unlimited 1-2-1 sessions with an academic development tutor on either campus, via telephone/Skype or online. The demand for these 1-2-1 sessions has increased over time. A member of staff has specific responsibility for leading sessions with students from vocational backgrounds and this is proving popular and valuable.

An Academic Skills module within the RVC’s virtual learning environment which contains a full set of academic skills development materials and links to further advice and guidance will continue to be offered.

With backgrounds in biomedical science, veterinary medicine, education, research, TEFL and workplace learning, the RVC’s Learning Development Team has a broad skills-base and can adapt provision to the varying needs of RVC learners. These needs are monitored during regular 1-2-1 meetings with students and the team can quickly act when a course/cohort-specific training need is identified. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, staff training needs can be picked up and fed in to the academic staff development programme.

Over time, the LD team has undertaken focus group sessions with students on all courses, to gain a deeper understanding of the RVC student experience and tailor academic and pastoral support accordingly. Students with lower A level (CCC) and BTEC qualifications are in the minority at the RVC and have often faced negative reactions from teachers, friends and family when they have shared their aspirations to study with us. These students have asked us to improve communication with schools and colleges so that opportunities for non-traditional learners are more widely known. Once enrolled, BTEC students have reported feeling highly anxious about the ‘unknown world’ of written exams. We shall, therefore, continue to provide dedicated sessions for these students, early in the first term, to introduce them to a new rhythm of teaching, learning and assessment.

The College has two members of staff working exclusively on Learning Development (one on each campus), supported by two members of academic staff who contribute a day a week alongside their substantive clinical/teaching roles.
The RVC wishes to develop programmes, pathways and curricula that have intellectual depth combined with a flexibility that allows students to enter and exit study routes with confidence and with the certainty that they will achieve their qualification goals.

5.4 The continual growth in numbers on the Gateway Programme, and the success of its cohorts, has resulted in many of the learning support practices used in the programme contributing and enriching the support provided to the BVetMed, BSc and VN degrees. As we have stated elsewhere through this document, we are ever conscious of the need to ensure that students who do not have A Level qualifications are given all possible academic and learning support. In order to do this we need to further ensure that all our academic staff with teaching commitments are trained and able to teach the whole range of students who now enter the RVC and that they are aware of the different skills range of the students. WE can no longer assume that the majority of students across all our degree programmes will hold A Level qualifications.

5.5 In tandem with the academic and learning support described above, staff employed in the RVC’s Advice Centre provide a pastoral and financial advice and support service which has become increasingly important as student cohorts diversify. The Centre facilitates mentoring and counselling services, and support for students with learning difficulties, and issues relating to autism, financial hardship and mental health wellbeing. They provide a valuable service in supporting the Gateway students and others from the WP cohort.

6. **Financial Support for Students entering in 2017/18**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Income</th>
<th>Award</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Year</td>
<td>First Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below £35,000*</td>
<td>£1,000 cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second and Subsequent Years</td>
<td>Second and Subsequent Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below £35,000*</td>
<td>£1,000 cash</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Students’ household income and therefore bursary eligibility will be reassessed on an annual basis

6.2 A sum of £5,000 will be specifically allocated to provide an initial £1,000 cash bursaries for five (5) students from the Looked After Children cohort.
7. Targets and Milestones

7.1 Our target progression is as follows:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State-Educated</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entrants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS-SEC 4-7</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POLAR 3</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reaching these targets has been extremely challenging, some potential students and their families from the WP cohort still see entry to the medical and health professions as unachievable despite the great work that veterinary and medical schools have made over the last decade. But this illustrates the point that it takes more than bursaries to persuade potential students to apply to such institutions. We are, therefore, aware that colleagues in the RVC Access department will be “stretched” to reach these goals. Nevertheless, we do think that with the continued diversification of entrance qualifications, we shall, over the whole institution, reach these targets.

8. Management and Delivery

8.1 The College’s overall strategy for widening participation continues to be set by the College’s Council and Academic Board. More detailed consideration of activities and targets is undertaken by a broad-based Widening Participation Working Party, comprising both academic and professional staff, on which the College’s Senior Management Group (SMG) is represented. Policy in relation to bursaries is ratified by the Senior Management Group acting on advice from the College’s Vice Principal for Learning and Student Experience) and Finance Director.

8.2 Overseeing of delivery is the responsibility of the SMG, through the Vice-Principal for Learning and Student Experience. Delivery itself is managed and led by the Deputy Director of RVC Access and the Outreach Development Manager.

8.3 The College’s Widening Participation Unit is located within RVC Access, a unit within the Professional Services Department. This allows for direct lines of reporting to the Head of PSD who is the College’s Chief Operating Officer and to the Vice-Principal for Learning and Student Experience and thereby links both academic and academic support staff and provides an invaluable cross-college resource.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

9.1 As in previous years, we will be evaluating our progress by examining the proportion of our students from lower socio-economic groups, state schools, colleges, and low participation neighbourhoods. We continually strive to achieve a more socially representative student
body and these measures will allow us to view our progress in meeting this aim. We shall be re-aligning a proportion of our WP funding to enhance our evaluation processes and train staff in such evaluation and analysis. Unlike many other HEIs, we do not have Schools of Education on which we can call for pedagogical advice and development but we shall be seeking and to utilise examples of good practice insofar as they relate to our own institutional priorities. Our evaluation practices as described in the Access Agreement for 2016-2017 and outlined below, will continue and will hopefully be enriched by fresh approaches albeit within a constrained budget.

9.2 In order to ensure the activities we undertake in this area are effective in encouraging under-represented groups to apply to university, we use our evaluation framework to guide our aims for widening participation work. This evaluation framework has been developed by the College’s Outreach Development Manager and is the result of doctoral research undertaken by her at the Institute of Education. It includes the domains Skills, Place, Emotion, Attitudes and Knowledge domains in order to ensure that activities for schools, family and general public audiences both inspire and inform prospective students. It determines the collection of qualitative and quantitative evidence designed for formative evaluation (to improve activities) and summative evaluation (to demonstrate impact of activities for stakeholders).

9.3 We are using a novel iPad evaluation method which has been developed by using our evaluation framework to identify objectives for learners, which were made into an informal curriculum used to identify pupil learning. It functions by allowing teachers to capture photos, when permissible, as evidence of learning, and identify pupils’ learning. The software then allows a full report to be sent to the school and also to be saved by RVC, either by individual or by school. The aspiration is to link this to the CRM system in order to track the links between pupils taking part in outreach or on site WP activities and their subsequent engagement with study at RVC. We look forward to cascading this innovative model to partner HEIs. Overall, we are using an Engagement Progression model to guide the percentage of time we spend with different year groups; starting from short activities for many very young pupils (e.g. assemblies for as young as Reception), outreach for KS1, onsite for KS2, science workshops for KS3, Virtual work experience for KS4; and taster days/summer schools for post-16. Evaluation aims to capture the modular nature of the ways that these activities will sum to encourage successful applications from target groups.

9.4 We will also monitor numbers of students we recruit from other underrepresented groups (BAME groups, males, care leavers, vocational learners). This information is already available to us through the RVC’s main student database.

9.5 Progress in achieving our objectives is monitored by the Academic Board, which receives an annual report on Widening Participation work.

9.6 In 1.2 (iv) we referred to the monitoring of financial support. Given that the RVC is concerned to ensure that no student is financially disadvantaged we shall seek to ensure the effectiveness of our financial support on a regular basis by means of a financial monitoring group. This group, consisting of staff from RVC Access and the registry financial support staff will survey cohorts from LPNs and other WP groups to ascertain the effectiveness or otherwise of the bursary provision. The Group will also consider retention and performance issues as evidence for any changes it may propose making to financial support mechanisms.
10. **Equality and Diversity**

10.1 The Royal Veterinary College sets great store by the principles of Equality and Diversity and it has a particular duty to do so. Not only is it a free standing HEI that has to abide by and give practical voice to the requirements of law, it is also a representative of a high-status profession with worldwide contacts. Its daily interaction with an international community of students, scholars and professionals and with members of the public, places Equality and Diversity practice at the heart of the College’s Mission.

10.2 An Equality Strategy Group (ESG) provides functional oversight and scrutiny of policies and practices. Membership of the ESG covers the whole of the College including academic and administrative levels and representatives from both Widening Participation and Student Support sit on the body. The working party receives regular reports and updates on equality and diversity in relation to staff and students, as well as statistics and analysis of applications for entry to RVC and subsequent employment. The college’s Human Resources department reports on student profiles both to the ESG and to the college’s senior committees and Council. As will be evident in this Access Agreement, the College is concerned to develop both the ethnic and gender diversity of its student body and we see equality and diversity as a given in terms of everything that the institution does.

10.3 Members have received Equality Training and have also been trained in the undertaking of Impact Assessments. Staff at the College have many years’ experience of organising events and activities which encompass a variety of groups: BAME, lower socio-economic, Looked After Children, vulnerable young adults, older people. Because of the nature of our degree programmes, students with severe physical disabilities are rare, but we do have students who, for example, are profoundly deaf or have other health issues. Significant numbers of students are dyslexic. We ensure that our activities are accessible, in every sense of the word, for all of these groups.

10.4 The majority of school students attending our activities are from a BAME background and the range of schools and colleges with which we work encompasses many cohorts with diverse conditions. If we may re-iterate statements made in earlier Access Agreements, we take Widening Access to be self-evidently inseparable from Equality and Diversity although we accept that within diverse groups there is much variation in terms of aspiration and achievement.

11. **Provision of Information to Prospective Students**

11.1 The RVC is committed to providing prospective students, their parents and guardians and teachers, with clear, accessible and timely information on the fees that we charge and any financial support that we offer. We will broadcast fees and finance information via the following means:

RVC Website: [www.rvc.ac.uk](http://www.rvc.ac.uk)

Information for Prospective Undergraduate Students:

[http://www.rvc.ac.uk/Money/ProspectiveStudents/](http://www.rvc.ac.uk/Money/ProspectiveStudents/)
Prospectuses: [http://www.rvc.ac.uk/About/Publications/](http://www.rvc.ac.uk/About/Publications/)

Fees, Funds & Awards website: [www.rvc.ac.uk/Money/](http://www.rvc.ac.uk/Money/)

- providing links to UCAS, SLC and Got-a-teenager, to be used on their websites;
- providing information, advice and guidance on any email and telephone inquiries we receive, possibly creating a new email address e.g. studentfinance@rvc.ac.uk;
- Social media i.e. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc.;
- providing information in verbal and written form during Open Days and Campus Tours, and at recruitment events;
- through e-newsletters circulated to prospective students, careers advisers and teachers;
- through briefings to outreach groups;
- through advice from the RVC’s Student Finance team;
- E-Mentoring (in partnership with the Brightside Trust).

11.2 Review

We shall survey prospective students (e.g. at Open Days etc.) to ask if they were able to access information; and understood it. We shall engage with student representatives (e.g. Students Union) to seek opinions and feedback.

12. Consultation with Students

12.1 The Student Union does not have the full apparatus that would be expected of a Union in a larger institution. A Student Union President and a full-time Union Manager work closely with RVC staff and are involved in discussions and decisions at all levels. The Union officers and officials are active on behalf of the student body and seek to represent its interests and opinions. Student Union representatives sit on all college committees and also on the Widening Participation Working Party which proposes and monitors WP activity. We have drawn the SU into our Access Agreement discussions and it is well aware and fully supportive of the work we have undertaken in previous years and of the plans for future years. We are fortunate in that we have a large cohort of excellent student ambassadors who undertake a substantial amount of access work and this has acted as a stimulus in engaging the SU.
Although our % declined in 2014, we expect to see an increase over the cycle. We are refining 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.

We currently reach our targets in terms of applications from SEC 4-7, but conversion is proving problematic. We see positive use of a CRM system being important to rectify this and we shall put a proportion of our WP funding towards conversion activity. But issues beyond our control such as the high cost of living in London, allied to the more generous financial support offered by our direct competitors, mitigate against applicants from lower socio-economic groups accepting offers of places at the College.

In the light of the perceived fee obstacles it is likely to prove challenging to encourage potential students from LPNs to undertake an expensive five-year course. While the percentage increases we propose may seem low in comparison with other generalist HEIs we consider them challenging for a specialist institution. It should be noted that we have increased the number of actual applicants from these quintiles as a result of our outreach work.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T16b_03</th>
<th>Access</th>
<th>Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)</th>
<th>The RVC will work in collaboration with a range of HEI partners in London particularly concentrating on Science and Medicine</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>2014-15</th>
<th>300</th>
<th>500</th>
<th>500</th>
<th>500</th>
<th>500</th>
<th>600</th>
<th>The Collaborations will be developed over time in areas such as STEM work, LAC projects and IAG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T16b_04</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Mission targets</td>
<td>The number of BAME school students who are attending 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>22</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>We have been working as part of a project with AccessHE to improve our information on specific BAME IAG needs and shall apply this to our targeted work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16b_05</td>
<td>Access</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>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Although this is not a formal collaborative target we hope to work with other HEIs in this area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16b_06</td>
<td>Access</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>18 schools</td>
<td>18 schools</td>
<td>20 schools</td>
<td>20 schools</td>
<td>21 schools</td>
<td>We work with approximately 60 primary students a month by developing a close relationship with the schools and with the parents we shall seek to engage members of this cohort through the Key Stages and ultimately through to final secondary level.</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.

In the main text of our 2017-2018 Access Agreement and in Table T1 we refer to long-term outreach. It is through this activity that we work with primary schools, an area of work that we have expanded over recent years. We see our work in this area as very important and we have established a progression pattern of activity that leads from primary to secondary work. As we have established relationships with a number of primary schools we hope to establish links with young students at a relatively early age. Although there is no guarantee that we can maintain links through secondary level, we see primary work as essential in establishing at interest in scientific and medical subject and we are confident that this will carry through the student cycle and contribute to our secondary level work.