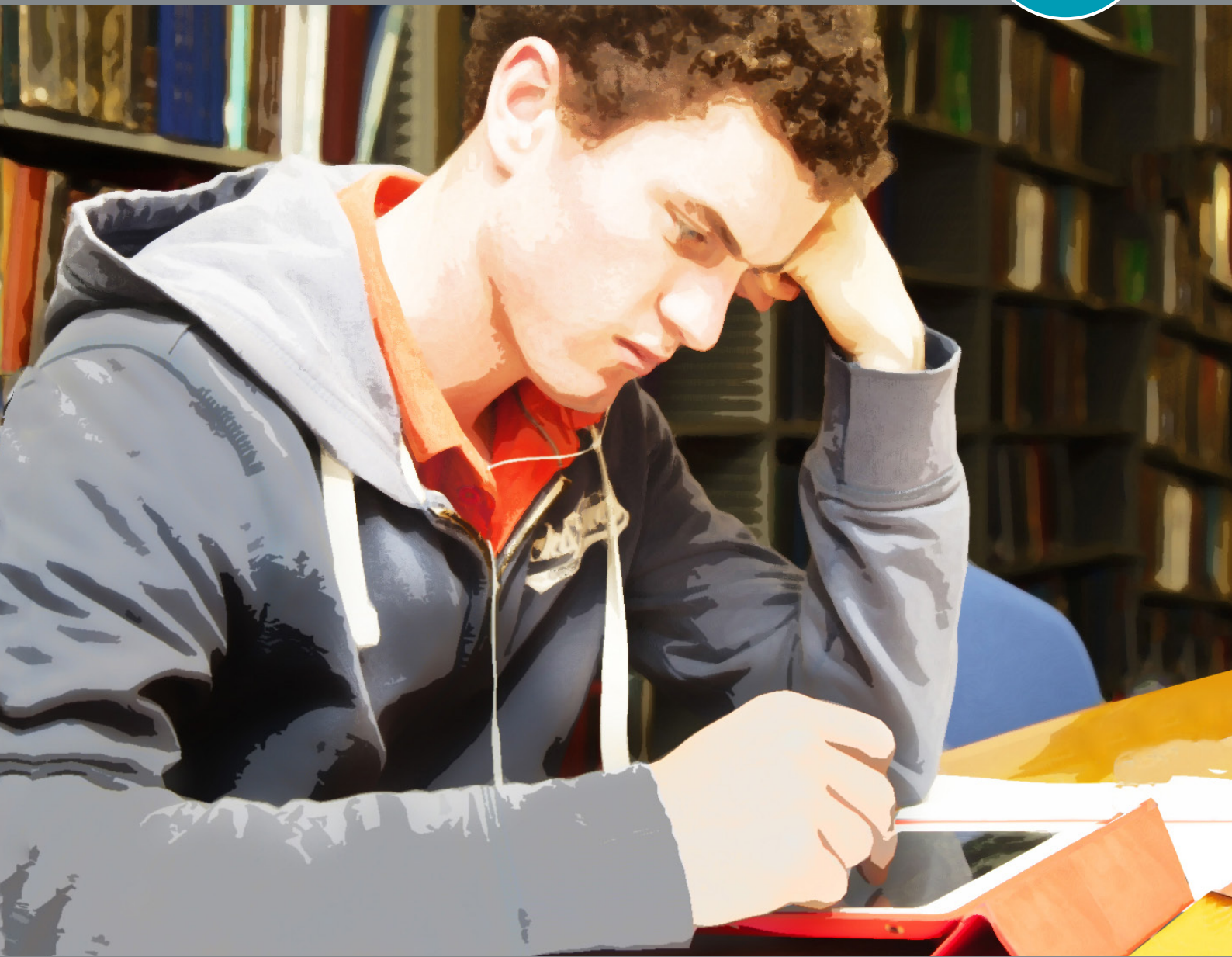# Strategic Plan

2015-**2020**

offa

office for fair access

OFFA Strategic Plan 2015-2020

About this document

This new strategy sets out the Office for Fair Access' (OFFA's) vision for the period 2015 to 2020. It describes:

- our aims

- how our strategic plan relates to the national strategy for access and student success[1]

- the approach we are now taking

- the change that we expect to see in universities and colleges (which we will support through our new approach)

- how we will measure our progress in achieving our aims.

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[1] The national strategy for access and student success is available from https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-strategy-for-access-and-student-success.

Foreword

OFFA's new strategic plan sets out our aims from 2015-2020, how we plan to work with the sector to achieve those aims and how we will measure our success. I am confident that our new approach will help us have even more impact, strengthening our ability to offer intelligent, evidence-based regulation of fair access to higher education.

Although we remain a very small regulatory body, we have worked closely with others to make a significant impact. More people from disadvantaged backgrounds are now entering higher education than ever before and progress has accelerated since we were established. OFFA's single focus regulation has made a significant contribution to these improved rates of participation. We ensure there is focus on access and equity across the student lifecycle, providing public transparency around commitments and progress in improving access. In the most recent access agreements we signed off, we secured an annual investment of £735 million – this is additional money for fair access that is increasingly being spent on the long term, targeted outreach that we know to be effective in raising aspirations and attainment levels among potential students from poor and other disadvantaged backgrounds. The social and economic arguments for improving fair access to higher education are well known and I do not intend to elaborate on them here – suffice it to say that the benefits of improving fair access accrue not just to the individual but to society and the country as a whole.

In developing a strategic approach for the next five years, we have sought to build on our success so far, strengthening our ability to work in partnership with the sector to achieve shared goals. A good example of our partnership approach is our recent work with the Medical Schools Council to produce guidance for medical schools keen to ensure they are recruiting people from all backgrounds with the potential to become good doctors. Our approach also takes into account important developments that influence the way we work. These include the request by Ministers that we focus more sharply on the outcomes of the work universities do to improve access and the creation of a national strategy for access and student success, produced by ourselves and the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

Our new strategic plan has two key aims. Firstly, we want to increase the proportion of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds in higher education generally. Secondly, we want to specifically address the large participation gap between the most advantaged and the most disadvantaged at our most selective universities. The most disadvantaged 20 per cent of young people are still 6.8 times less likely to attend these universities than the most advantaged 20 per cent. This is not just a dry statistic – it represents thousands of talented people who are not achieving their potential because of their background.

We are seeing some significant progress in access to highly selective universities, and there are signs that recent improvements are becoming a trend. Highly selective universities recognise that they have a role to play in raising attainment levels and, in doing so, widening their applicant pool. Many are doing excellent work in this area – work that is translating into results. For example, UCAS statistics show a 40 per cent increase in students from disadvantaged backgrounds entering higher tariff institutions since 2011. Despite this progress, there are still only 3.2 per cent of students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds going to highly selective universities, which is why we need to strive for quicker, sustained change in this area.

To enable us to measure our progress against these two aims, we have set ourselves ambitious objectives – objectives that recognise that fair access is only meaningful if students from disadvantaged backgrounds not only enter higher education but succeed in their studies and are well prepared to progress to employment or further study. Our objectives are deliberately ambitious – our aim is to accelerate the progress we have seen in fair access over recent years.

As well as challenging universities and colleges to make progress across the student lifecycle, we will also be supporting them to do so and will continue to recognise the tremendous diversity of the sector. An important element of our support will be our work in helping to improve the evidence base around fair access. We will be ensuring that research by the sector informs our guidance and expectations and will be asking institutions to harness more of their own significant research potential in this area. We'll also be commissioning and conducting our own research, working in close partnership with the sector, and encouraging others to carry out research in areas where greater evidence is needed. And finally, we'll be helping to translate emerging evidence into guidance that leads to more effective practice on the ground.

The task before us is crucial. Working together with institutions to achieve our shared goal of making access to higher education fairer, we have already made significant progress. But we know we have much further to go. Today, in the 21st century, your chances of being able to go to university, particularly a highly selective university, are *still* limited by your background. That is why we will seek every opportunity to champion the successes of the sector, ensuring that we can all learn from what works best to improve fair access. We will work hard to keep fair access issues high on the agenda of all interested parties, facilitating and encouraging collaborative working. Our sole focus on access means that we can be a vocal champion for fair access issues, highlighting the positive progress that has been made as well as the challenges ahead.

Breaking the link between background and access to higher education is not an easy task but the lifting of the student number cap gives us a real opportunity to do so. I'm confident that this plan will help OFFA play a full part in achieving this and so helping to create a society which is fairer, more socially mobile and more prosperous for us all.

Professor Les Ebdon CBE DL
Director of Fair Access to Higher Education.

About OFFA

OFFA is an independent, non-departmental public body. Our role as a regulator, set out in the Higher Education Act 2004 and in subsequent Ministerial guidance, is to promote and safeguard fair access to higher education for disadvantaged and under-represented groups. We achieve this by issuing clear guidance to support the development of access agreements, and then assessing, approving and monitoring them; identifying and disseminating good practice; and undertaking year-round dialogue with universities and colleges. We also raise issues relating to fair access with Government and the higher education sector as a whole, championing success and identifying those areas where progress needs to be made. In carrying out these activities, we take a student lifecycle approach. In short, this approach recognises that access does not stop at enrolment; for fair access to be meaningful students must have the opportunity to fulfil their potential – successfully completing their studies and being prepared for what they choose to do next.

Maximising our impact as the access regulator

Through our work as the access regulator, we play a key role in increasing fair access to higher education. Access agreements are a powerful lever for change across the student lifecycle, with the greatest share of investment in fair access delivered through them. Institutions and other organisations share or contribute to our objectives and we work closely with a wide range of organisations across the sector as

effectively as possible to maximise the impact of our regulatory role. For example, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) are our principle partner in coordinating the delivery of the national strategy for access and student success, through their role in distributing the student opportunity allocation and conducting research and analysis across the student lifecycle. The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and UCAS produce a wealth of data and analysis that helps the sector to understand the challenge ahead. And many third sector organisations are working with universities, colleges and schools to deliver activities that raise aspirations and attainment.

All publicly-funded universities and colleges wishing to charge higher tuition fees must have an access agreement approved by the Director of Fair Access to Higher Education. Access agreements set out institutions' tuition fee limits, their targets for making progress across the student lifecycle, and the measures they intend to put in place to meet those targets. Access agreements, and the outcomes from our monitoring of them, are published, to ensure transparency and public accountability.

Throughout this document we refer to under-represented and disadvantaged groups. These include, but are not limited to, learners from lower socio-economic groups or from disadvantaged neighbourhoods; disabled learners; learners from some ethnic groups; and care leavers.

OFFA's aims

Our aims are:

- to increase the proportion of learners from under-represented and disadvantaged groups who enter, succeed in and are well prepared to progress from higher education to employment or postgraduate study

- to make faster progress in improving access to the most selective higher education institutions by students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups.

In achieving these aims, we will contribute to the vision set out in the national strategy for access and student success, namely that:

"…those with the potential to benefit from higher education have equal opportunity to participate and succeed, on a course, and in an institution that best fit their potential, needs and ambitions for employment and further study."

Progress to date

There has been welcome and significant progress in the rates of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds entering higher education since the establishment of OFFA as a single-focus regulator[2]. This sustained improvement, with institutions actively responding to OFFA's guidance and our engagement with the sector, means that entry rates for young, full-time undergraduates from disadvantaged backgrounds are at their highest level ever. While the participation gap at highly selective institutions has been slow to change, data from UCAS[3] shows that recently, from 2011, there have been significant improvements at this group of institutions.

However, there is still much more to do. Despite these improvements, the gaps between the most advantaged and most disadvantaged people remain unacceptably large. The latest UCAS data shows that, on average, the most advantaged 20 per cent of young people are 2.5 times more likely to go to higher education than the most disadvantaged 20 per cent[4]. At the most selective institutions this ratio increases – with the most advantaged young people on average 6.8 times more likely to attend one of these institutions compared to the most disadvantaged young people[5].

Concern over part-time student numbers

Although the majority of students enter higher education as full-time undergraduates immediately or shortly after leaving school, others enter later in life. It is therefore also important that universities reach out to potential mature and part-time students, and support them through their studies. The significant and sustained reduction that we have seen in the numbers of part-time students (the number of part-time students nearly halved between 2010-11 and 2013-14)[6] is especially concerning for fair access as part-time students are more likely to come from groups under-represented in higher education[7].

Attainment differences

In addition, while progress is being made in the entry rates of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, this is not translating into equal success across the student lifecycle. Evidence presented in the national strategy for access and student success shows students from some disadvantaged and under-represented groups achieve worse outcomes. The differences in experience and attainment cannot be explained by entry profiles, and action is needed to address these gaps.

How access agreements are changing

In line with our developing policy and guidance, access agreements are becoming more strategic documents. Institutions are developing clearer plans of action that measure the outcomes, as well as the inputs, of the work they do to raise aspirations and attainment among talented people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and support these students throughout their studies and as they prepare for employment or postgraduate study. As well as showing more consideration of disadvantage across the student lifecycle, institutions are also taking an increasingly evidence-based approach, focusing their resources on activities that they know to have the greatest impact and in areas where they have furthest to go within their own context.

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[2] See table 1c of the Higher Education Statistics Agency's performance indicators on widening participation of under-represented groups. These are available from https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/urg.

[3] UCAS - *UCAS Undergraduate 2014 End of Cycle report*, Page 80. Published December 2014.

[4] Ibid. Page 75.

[5] Ibid. Page 80.

[6] See Figure 11 of Universities UK – *Trends in undergraduate recruitment*. Published August 2014.

[7] For further information, please see Universities UK – *The Power of Part Time*. Published October 2013.

How our strategic plan supports the national strategy

Following a request from Ministers, and drawing on the knowledge and expertise of the whole sector, OFFA and HEFCE jointly developed a national strategy for access and student success. The national strategy was published by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in April 2014, and sets out recommendations for how those with an interest in access and student success, including Government, universities and colleges and other national bodies, as well as OFFA and HEFCE, should work to meet its vision.

Our strategic plan sets out the approach that OFFA will take between 2015-2020 to help deliver the vision set out in the national strategy, and will support the Government's wider ambition for greater social mobility.

Central to our approach are the three ways of working identified by the national strategy as critical to driving change – a student lifecycle approach, greater collaboration and partnership at every level, and evidence-based practice.

A student lifecycle approach

The student lifecycle is the entirety of the higher education experience for students encompassing the three stages of access, student success and progression. OFFA's contribution to a student lifecycle approach is delivered through the guidance we provide to institutions and the work we do to support this – for example our research and our year-round engagement with universities and colleges.

Greater collaboration and partnership at every level

The national strategy emphasises the need for more effective and strategic collaboration between higher education providers, schools, colleges, communities, employers and, where appropriate, the third sector. OFFA is therefore seeking to grow our existing collaborative work – and work in new ways – with the universities and colleges we regulate, other sector bodies including HEFCE, and Government and those interested in widening participation and fair access across the lifecycle.

Evidence-based practice

Evidence about fair access over the lifecycle is generated by many partners across the sector including institutions (both academics and practitioners), a wide range of stakeholders and ourselves.

This evidence contributes to our shared understanding of which approaches and activities have greatest impact for students. It's important that we understand it in the context of the complex and evolving higher education landscape, and a diverse sector comprising institutions with different characteristics and missions. For example, evidence may support different approaches in different institutions, or for different groups of students.

Our new approach

Maximising our impact as the access regulator

We are seeking to maximise the impact that we have as an effective access regulator. We want to make best use of the primary and powerful lever through which we can effect change, namely access agreements. While OFFA's primary regulatory purpose remains access to higher education, we recognise that for access to be truly meaningful it is necessary to support disadvantaged students through their studies and as they prepare to progress to employment or postgraduate study. We will, therefore, work with partners to continue to seek equality of outcomes at all stages of the lifecycle – challenging institutions to focus on the areas where they most need to make progress.

We will deliver our aims through our ability to:

- **Understand:** learning from the research of others, as well as contributing to a greater evidence base and so improving the guidance that shapes and informs access agreements and the approaches that universities and colleges take to their work on access, student success and progression, according to the circumstances of their particular institution

- **Challenge:** using an evidence-based approach to more actively challenge and engage with universities and colleges to make sustained and faster progress towards their targets across the student lifecycle

- **Champion:** raising issues of fair access to a broad audience and sharing and championing evidence of success and best practice, so informing practice, policy and investment decisions.

We believe this three-pronged approach will deliver greater balance in our regulatory activities, enabling us to support and challenge institutions more effectively. We will continue to seek ways to reduce unnecessary burden on institutions – including working more closely with institutions to improve our processes to best support our aims and to understand better the impact of our regulatory process on them.

Below, we set out in greater detail how we intend to achieve our new approach, both through the work we do on our own, and through our work with partners.

Understand

In order to achieve our aims, we must help to foster a culture of enquiry and evidence-based policy development and practice among institutions. Institutions' access agreements need to adopt and share good practice that is drawn from a sound evidence base, making use of national, regional and institutional level evidence. Our focus, both in carrying out in-house research and commissioning research from others, will be on areas where there is a clear link or benefit to our regulatory practice.

What we will do

We hold a wealth of information about what institutions are doing to improve the participation, success and progression of disadvantaged students in higher education. This includes information derived from our approval and monitoring of access agreements as well as intelligence gathered from our year-round communication and discussions with institutions and other stakeholders. We will further develop and focus our in-house research and analysis capacity to exploit this information more effectively, analysing access agreements in greater detail to enable us to better support good practice, contribute to the understanding of the impact of institutions' approaches and help grow the evidence base.

In addition, we will also use our increased analytical capacity to continue to carry out research in particular areas. For example, in 2014, we published a report on the effect of bursaries on retention[8]. A number

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[8] OFFA publication 2014/03: *An interim report: do bursaries have an effect on retention rates?*

of institutions have cited this research to explain why they are rebalancing their access agreement spend – in line with our guidance – towards activities that raise attainment and aspirations at an early stage, or that support students throughout their studies.

Where we have a strong interest in an area but do not have the internal resources or expertise to carry out research ourselves, we will commission it from others who are better placed to do so.

How we will work with others to 'understand'

As well as analysing the information that we hold in greater depth and carrying out in-house research, we will also work with partners to build the evidence base. This complements the approach set out in the national strategy for access and student success, which sets out how we will help others to grow and co-ordinate research activity in the sector. We will also contribute to the development of the evidence base through the evaluation framework presented in the national strategy. We will do this by:

- working in partnership with others to commission or produce research

- working with others to understand how to get maximum benefit from the growing focus in the sector on data analysis and evaluation

- working with partners to ensure that important national, regional and local evidence is recognised by OFFA and informs our policy development and the guidance we issue to institutions

- helping to co-ordinate the commissioning of national research to reduce duplication and fill gaps in the evidence base – we will explore how we might work with HEFCE and the sector to ensure greater co-ordination of the research being done by many different organisations with an interest in access and student success.

Challenge

Our approval and enforcement powers, set out in the Higher Education Act 2004, provide public and transparent challenge to institutions to make progress on fair access. Through our access agreement and monitoring processes, we set clear expectations for institutions on where and how we want them to make progress. These expectations are informed by the developing evidence base and also by our awareness of institutional diversity and our understanding that there are a range of valid responses. Our core regulatory processes sit alongside year-round engagement with universities and colleges, and the sector as a whole.

What we will do

We will challenge by:

- further improving the links between the evidence base and our guidance, including:

  - using new and emerging evidence to refine our guidance to institutions

  - highlighting the areas where we expect institutions to focus

  - requiring institutions to monitor and evaluate their approach

  - ensuring institutions are making appropriate levels of investment in their access agreements related to their performance

- supporting universities and colleges to use the flexibility we give them to develop and deliver access agreements that are tailored to their circumstances, focusing on the lifecycle stages where they most need to make progress

- requiring institutions to consider how they can best work collaboratively with schools, colleges and employers, with other institutions, and with their student bodies to drive improvement across the

student lifecycle. This supports the development of the national networks for collaborative outreach as set out in the national strategy for access and student success

- increasing our focus on long term outcomes as well as faster progress

- using the information we gather during the monitoring process to inform future discussions with, and support, individual institutions

- calling on universities and colleges to make progress across the student lifecycle, identifying groups of students (whether by socio-economic background, protected characteristics or other measures of under-representation) at risk of not succeeding in their studies and supporting them to achieve their potential.

Champion

We want all those with an interest in fair access, student success and progression issues to act on the best available evidence, using it to inform their practice, policy and investment decisions. In order for this to happen, we need to share evidence and good practice effectively and celebrate successful outcomes. We also need to act as a high profile advocate for the need to improve fair access – with policy makers, within the higher education sector and with the wider public.

What we will do

Our role as the fair access regulator means that we are excellently placed to bring about change across the sector. We will:

- keep fair access issues high on the political agenda, regularly engaging with Ministers and other national policymakers

- continue to make the social and economic case for fair access and for the delivery of the national

strategy for access and student success a national priority – at a strategic level in universities and colleges, with Government and MPs

- increase our profile in the media, championing the successes of the sector and robustly challenging common misconceptions

- contribute to the debate on what constitutes effective, sustainable practice, championing success where it is evident

- advise and advocate as necessary on issues that affect fair access, student success and progression

- play a more active role in disseminating new, innovative and important research and reflecting this research in our guidance, thereby translating theory into practice

- champion success through the evidenced progress and good practice universities and colleges deliver, identified through our work with them.

How we will work with others to 'champion'

Making the case for fair access, and ensuring that the progress that continues to be made is celebrated, requires a sustained, collective effort. We will work collaboratively with partners to:

- stimulate change – identifying the most effective way of sharing information that has an impact on policy-makers and practitioners

- raise the profile of fair access issues – working with institutions and sector bodies to help illustrate the importance of access, student success and progression issues

- celebrate success and good practice – working closely with those with an interest in fair access issues to pinpoint and investigate examples of effective practice, disseminating research and stimulating debate about findings.

How we expect universities and colleges to work

By working with institutions in the three core ways we have outlined, we aim to support and challenge them to deliver significant change in the way that they themselves work. As described in the national strategy for access and student success, we want institutions to build on the progress they have already made to take a more strategic, whole lifecycle and whole institution approach. This will help institutions to make further, faster progress towards their own targets, working in ways that are most effective for their particular circumstances while contributing to sector-wide improvements. We will support and challenge universities and colleges to be:

Strategic

- embedding core priorities for access, student success and progression at all levels across the institution

- balancing their focus and efforts according to where they need to make most progress

- having clear plans in place to address gaps in participation and achievement, taking into account the wide range of factors that have an impact on the whole lifecycle.

Learner-focused

- listening to and engaging with learners to understand and respond to their needs

- involving students' representatives in developing their access agreements

- focusing on improving outcomes for students across the lifecycle.

Evidence-led

- identifying a strong rationale for plans and activities to improve access, student success and progression

- securing robust evidence of the impact of their work, including harnessing their own academic, research and evaluation expertise

- contributing to the evidence base through the sharing of findings.

Collaborative

- sharing understanding and insights among all those with a professional interest, so helping to inform effective practice

- establishing consultative relationships with other stakeholders to co-ordinate and inform approaches

- working flexibly with others to build shared infrastructure, delivery of activities, monitoring and evaluation.

Dynamic

- considering, developing and testing new approaches to improve impact and cost-effectiveness

- responding to changes in the evidence base and the higher education landscape to improve practice.

How we will measure our progress

Improving fair access is a sector wide responsibility. However, as the access regulator we have a role to set expectations for the sector. In order to measure whether we have been successful, we have established sector outcome objectives, and set out how OFFA's work will contribute to achieving these objectives. We have used measures which are published and therefore recognised and transparent. We will also make use of the full range of other relevant published data to monitor the sector's progress, ensuring that our measures are consistent with a wider assessment of progress.

Our sector outcome objectives will measure progress against our aims at a high level. The objectives reflect our primary regulatory purpose to safeguard and promote fair access, recognising that fair access is only meaningful if we seek equality of outcomes for students from disadvantaged backgrounds throughout their studies and as they prepare to progress to employment or postgraduate study. For those objectives where we have sufficient data to set a numerical indicator against which we will measure success, we have done so.

These indicators are stretching, but their ambition is based on a continuation of the excellent progress made by the sector in recent years and that has accelerated in the last decade.

The lifting of the student number cap provides further opportunity to turn these ambitions into a long term reality, particularly as the previous increases in participation have helped make families, communities and schools from disadvantaged areas more familiar with higher education.

While the sector outcome objectives overleaf examine performance in low participation neighbourhoods, we will continue to take a broad view of disadvantage, taking into account the progress made by disabled students, part-time and mature students, care leavers, students from different ethnic groups, and other under-represented groups.

Sector outcome objectives

Sector outcome objectives	How we will measure success
1. To make faster progress to increase the participation rate of higher education entrants from under-represented and disadvantaged groups, and narrow the participation gap between people from the most and least advantaged backgrounds.	Young participation rate by POLAR 3. Source: _Trends in young participation in higher education_ (HEFCE 2013/28, see Figure 10). Our target is for the participation rate from quintile 1 entering higher education to increase from 20.4 per cent in 2011-12 to 36.0 per cent by 2019-20, and the participation rate for quintile 2 to increase from 29.2 per cent in 2011-12 to 46.0 per cent by 2019-20. To reduce the gap in participation, our target is for the quintile 5: quintile 1 ratio to decrease from 2.9 in 2011-12 to 2.0 by 2019-20.
2. To make faster progress to increase the entry rate of students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups entering more selective institutions, and narrow the participation gap between people from the most and least advantaged backgrounds at such institutions.	English 18-year-old entry rates by POLAR 2 for higher tariff providers. Source: _End of cycle report 2014_ (UCAS, see Figure 79) Our target is for the entry rate from quintile 1 to increase from 3.2 per cent in 2014-15 to 5 per cent by 2019-20, and from 5.1 per cent in 2014-15 to 7 per cent by 2019-20 for quintile 2. To reduce the gap in participation, our target is for the quintile 5: quintile 1 ratio to decrease from 6.8 in 2014-15 to 5.0 by 2019-20.
3. To improve continuation rates for students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups and narrow the gap in non-continuation rates between advantaged and disadvantaged students.	Proportion of young entrants no longer in HE after one year, by POLAR 3. Source: _'Non-continuation rates at English HEIs'_ (HEFCE 2013/07, see Figure 10) Our target is for the proportion of young entrants from POLAR 3 quintile 1 remaining in study after their first year to reach 92 per cent by 2019-20.
4. To improve the proportion of students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups achieving a good degree outcome (a first or upper second class degree) and narrow the gap in attainment between advantaged and disadvantaged students.	We will work with others to carry out and publish analysis of HESA data (using qualifying cohort, benchmarked on age, subject and prior attainment). We want to see faster progress in this area, but do not currently hold data over a long enough timescale to set a meaningful numerical target. Working with experts in the sector, we will investigate the possibility of a numerical target during the lifetime of our strategic plan.
5. To improve rates of progression into graduate-level employment or further study for students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups and narrow the gap in successful outcomes between advantaged and disadvantaged students.	We will carry out analysis of the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey (HESA, see Table 1). We want to see faster progress in this area, but do not currently hold data over a long enough timescale to set a meaningful numerical target. Working with experts in the sector, we will investigate the possibility of a numerical target during the lifetime of our strategic plan.

Note: Please note that the baseline year and data source for sector outcome objectives 1 and 2 differ and so the targets are not directly comparable. Analysis of HESA data is currently not available for the young participation rate by POLAR3 for highly selective institutions, hence the latest UCAS data has been used in lieu.

How we will contribute to the sector outcome objectives

These will measure OFFA's key outputs – what we are delivering and how we are working as a regulator.

What we will do	How we will know that we've been successful
1. Influence strategy and practice – primarily through our guidance – to ensure that access agreement spend reflects the evidence base, and also reflects the performance of individual institutions in different areas of the student lifecycle.	The access agreements we approve will be founded on the latest and best evidence, taking into account the priorities of individual institutions. Our access agreement monitoring will show that institutions are spending in line with national, regional and/or their own evidence, basing their spending decisions on where they need to make most progress across the student lifecycle.
2. Commission, conduct and disseminate OFFA's in-house and commissioned research and research developed in collaboration.	The research we produce and commission will be instrumental in informing the debate, reviewing and changing practice in the sector. We will be able to evaluate this change.
3. Champion where progress is being made in improving access – and highlight where challenges remain.	There will be a good understanding among policymakers and stakeholders of where further progress needs to be made. Our stakeholder relations survey and press cuttings analysis will demonstrate this good level of understanding.
4. Produce robust and clear qualitative and quantitative data, and put in place processes to enable us to ensure the accuracy of the data that universities and colleges submit to us.	The data we publish is transparent, supports the regulation of fair access, and is fit for use by institutions and other stakeholders.
5. Working with HEFCE, we will make progress to deliver the national strategy for access and student success.	Our reporting (alongside HEFCE) to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills every three years shows that we are making demonstrable progress to deliver the national strategy.
6. Meet best practice under the Regulators' Code.	We will work with institutions to ensure that, as far as possible, our processes support effective regulation and contribute to institutions' management information needs, while also reducing burden. As part of this, we will: • work with institutions to understand better their ways of working so that we can improve processes • approve access agreements and monitoring returns within 12 weeks, provided there are no issues with them • give institutions more time to develop their access agreements. Our stakeholder relations survey will demonstrate that our regulatory processes are effective and minimise burden.

What we will do	How we will know that we've been successful
7. Benchmark and seek to continually improve our governance, management and operational performance.	We will meet our corporate planning objectives. We will measure this through audit opinion and internal review.
8. Deliver value for money in all of our services.	We will demonstrate cost efficiencies in our monthly and quarterly reports to government, we will publish information about our running costs in our annual reports and we will demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness in our front-line services through self-assessment and periodic value for money audits.
9. Continue to improve the professionalism, motivation and capabilities of all of our staff.	Staff will receive tailored training and development opportunities to enhance their performance, meet the needs of the organisation and support the progression of their careers.