



ACCESS AGREEMENT 2018/19



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Guiding principles

The University of Exeter is committed to the principle that everyone with the potential to benefit from higher education should have equal opportunity to do so. We believe that fair access to higher education is a fundamental enabler for social mobility, improving life opportunities and outcomes for individual students, while benefiting the economy and society as a whole.

Our goals for our University are to widen participation; raise attainment; and bridge gaps in retention, progression and success to ensure our students enjoy the best possible outcomes, at University and as graduates.

Our strategy is based on the following:

- **Diversity, fair access and equal opportunity** – addressing the specific challenges we face as a highly selective university within a largely rural catchment area to ensure we build a diverse community which fully represents wider society and enables all students to realise their potential and enriches the learning experience for all.
- **A whole student lifecycle approach** - with the aim of raising aspirations; improving attainment; enabling fair access; and providing the right support to help students thrive and achieve academic and professional success.
- **Collaboration and partnership** - pulling together expertise, resources and knowledge across the University and working with local and external partners within education, business and the third sector to create joined-up and sustainable solutions.
- **Evidence-based practice** - focusing our resources where they can make most impact; improving our knowledge of the challenges facing students to enable us to tailor more effective solutions; evaluating what we do and learning from experience.

1.2 New for this Access Agreement

Raising pupil attainment

- information about our exemplar **successful school sponsorship** and support arrangements
- investment in **mentoring and coaching** support for pupils to help build confidence and attainment levels at critical stages of their school education
- greater **focus on the national curriculum** in our outreach programmes and training support

Access to Exeter

- investment in the **University of Exeter Scholars programme** to extend and strengthen our best practice longitudinal schemes to benefit a greater number and diversity of students and ensure complementarity with the National Collaboration and Outreach Programme (NCOP).

- extension of our work with **Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students**, their families and schools with the aim of improving the ethnic diversity of our study body
- scoping and related investment in specific interventions targeting **disadvantaged white males**
- investment in a **new stakeholder management model** for working with schools and colleges to build stronger relationships and provide joined-up access, careers and other support
- working with our partners to formulate a joined-up approach to providing tailored support for pupils within our nearest **Opportunity Area**, West Somerset.
- extension of our **contextualised offers policy** to take into account multiple indices of deprivation to ensure a fairer and more sophisticated approach to our admissions

Success and progression

- tailored support for **estranged students** and commitment to the Stand Alone Pledge.
- investment to ensure all qualifying students are able to take up potentially life-changing opportunities including **paid internships and international experience**
- extension of our **peer mentorship programmes** to include specific support for mature, disabled and minority ethnic students
- continued development of our **Effective Learning Analytics** tool to provide a better knowledge-base for academic staff to enable them to provide focused interventions to help narrow retention and attainment gaps
- continued investment in tailored and enhanced support for students with **mental health issues and learning difficulties**

Evaluation

- **academic research** to develop more effective strategies for enhancing social mobility
- **investment in expertise, capacity and infrastructure** to better evaluate our activities and their impact across the whole student life cycle and understand the challenges faced by students who share specific characteristics

2. CONTEXT

2.1 Local and demographic factors

The University's local region of Devon and Cornwall covers around 4,000 square miles and extends 180 miles from the Somerset border to the Isles of Scilly. Largely rural, the main population centres are Plymouth, Exeter and Torbay, which account for almost one third of the total population of around 1.7 million.

While generally standards of living are good, the area contains pockets of deprivation, with 59 lower-layer super output areas (LSOAs) within the most deprived 10% of areas in England according to the 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation. These include 27 neighbourhoods in Plymouth (including Stonehouse, among the 1% most deprived); 14 in Torbay; 17 in Cornwall; two in Exeter and two in North Devon.

HEFCE's Gap Ward analysis shows the two counties have an average young participation rate in higher education of 31.9% compared with 41.6% for Greater London. Over 8% of wards

within Devon and Cornwall fall into the lowest 20% of young people entering higher education in England. By comparison just over 3% of wards within Greater London fall into this category.

One of the most popular holiday and retirement destinations in the UK, the area suffers from a lack of affordable homes, with average house prices around 11 times more than the average annual salary. With lower than average earnings, the counties have a higher than average part-time workforce; and a higher than average proportion of disabled people and carers within the working age population.

The physical size and rural nature of our locality present difficulties in delivering our outreach programmes and maintaining close relationships with our local schools. With driving times of between two and three hours between the edges of our local area and a lack of public transport links to rural communities, delivering multiple interventions to widely dispersed students can prove challenging.

The area has low levels of ethnic diversity. The population of Cornwall, for example, is just 1.4% Asian/Asian British and 0.7% Black/Black British compared with a national average of 7.5% and 3.3% respectively. While the University is ethnically diverse, welcoming students from more than 150 different countries from around the world, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students make up a smaller proportion of the UK/EU cohort than the sector and Russell Group averages. We have ambitious targets to increase the proportion of these students to create a more diverse student community, but can only achieve this by extending our outreach into areas beyond the South West. In 2015/16, 40% of our BAME students came from Greater London.

2.2 University of Exeter profile and performance

2.2.1 Access

Improving access remains a high priority for the University with progress against some metrics proving challenging because of the significant link between prior pupil attainment and disadvantage. In the period since our targets were set, the standing of the University has increased, resulting in growing demand for places from highly qualified candidates. We have made progress thanks to sustained and targeted interventions and have set ourselves ambitious targets to improve further. Headlines include:

- The proportion of **state school entrants** has improved year on year for the last three years, but at 69.8%, we are still slightly below our target for 2016/17 of 71%.
- Following a revision of our contextualised admissions policy we have made a very significant improvement in the recruitment of students from **low participation neighbourhoods**, with a 20% improvement from 4.4% to 5.3% in 16/17. This has enabled us to meet our target.
- We have made excellent progress in building a **more diverse student body** increasing the proportion of BAME students steadily from 5.8% in 2011/12 up to 10.4% in 16/17.
- We have seen a dip in the recruitment of **BAME and male PGCE students**. Traditionally these harder to reach groups apply to us later in the cycle and

therefore were disproportionately affected by new National College for Teaching and Leadership procedures for 15/16 which resulted in the early closure of programmes.

- The proportion of students stating they have a **disability** has increased year on year for the last three years
- Our **Penryn Campus in Cornwall** primarily attracts students from the South West and recruits a larger proportion of students from LPN Q1 and state schools, making a significant contribution to our diversity objectives.

2.2.2 Success and progression

Our performance against Teaching Excellence Framework metrics exceeds our benchmarks in all categories for disadvantaged, disabled, BAME and mature students (teaching quality, learning environment, student outcomes and learning gain). We will continue to build on this success. Headlines include:

- **Mature students** continue to experience lower Year 1 progression rates and degree outcomes than their younger peers, although they compete equitably when it comes to graduate employment. Improving these rates are a key priority for our Academic Skills team.
- There is a **gap in attainment** between our BAME students and their peers. Although 77% graduate with a first or 2:1, this is lower than the rest of the student population.
- We are delighted to report a **significant improvement in degree outcomes for students with disabilities**, with the latest figures showing no statistically significant discrepancy between those with a declared disability and those without for the first time in four years.
- **State school students experience similar progression and degree outcomes** as students from independent schools although there is a small but significant gap in graduate destination scores which we will seek to address.
- In 2014/15 there was a gap of 14 percentage points in **graduate destination scores between LPN Q1 and Q5 students**. While this gap narrowed to 8.4 in 15/16, improving performance in this area is a priority focus for our employability teams.

3. RAISING ATTAINMENT

The University plays a direct role in improving school quality and pupil attainment and is an active partner in innovative projects designed to unlock student potential; address skills gaps within the region; improve the gender balance in STEM; and provide fair access to the very best education. The projects outlined below demonstrate how we will continue to raise attainment via shared governance arrangements, assisting with curriculum design, mentoring of students and other education support. We are working with the Department for Education (DfE) to investigate how we may share our expertise more widely and contribute to any national developments in this area.

3.1 Exeter Mathematics School

The University sponsors Exeter Mathematics School, the first University-sponsored school outside of London, specifically designed to meet the needs of able mathematics students throughout the South West.

The state-funded school was judged outstanding in all categories by OFSTED in January 2017. One of the key findings of the inspection was that the school successfully recruited young people who had not previously had the opportunity to fulfil their potential in mathematics and science. Around 20% of learners are from disadvantaged backgrounds and over 25% have a learning difficulty and/or disability. OFSTED found no gaps in attainment rates between different groups of learners, including those from low income families.

One of the aims of the school is to encourage female students in maths. The proportion of female learners has increased from a fifth to a third - well above the national average for participation in physics and further mathematics - and the school will continue its efforts to achieve a target of 40%.

Colleagues from the University, Exeter College and industry work closely with the school across all areas from governance to the curriculum. The A level syllabus is significantly enriched by the sponsorship of the University. Problem-solving, and an ability to think creatively about mathematics, is developed throughout and students take part in project work and assignments, designed by our academics to develop the skills and attributes needed to flourish at university.

The OFSTED inspection noted that pupils “take full advantage of the excellent support from undergraduate and post-graduate mentors who introduce them to the rigours of university research and assist them with developing and presenting projects. Learners gain a very good insight into higher education through experiencing aspects of campus life at Exeter University and inspirational lectures by university academics. Learners also receive very good advice on vocational options and higher apprenticeships.”

In 2015/16, 97% of students firmly accepted university places and 55% were offered places at a Russell Group institution; 80% gained A*AB in their A Levels and 45% achieved an A* result in Mathematics. For the second consecutive year, the school is amongst the top 1% of providers for student progress.

3.2 Ted Wragg Multi Academy Trust

The University is a partner in the Ted Wragg Multi Academy Trust in Exeter. The Trust demonstrates how University sponsorship of schools – as part of a holistic whole-city approach – can lead to improvements in outcomes and performance for schools and pupils.

Established in 2010, the Trust comprises five academies and is responsible for the education of over 3,000 children aged two to 16. Currently all academies are graded as good with improvements identified in every school since they joined the Trust. Exam results in 2016 placed the Trust’s secondary schools in the top 20% of all schools nationally for progress and in the top 15% for Maths attainment. Recent achievements include opening the Cranbrook Education Campus at the new town in the East of Exeter; and supporting St James School to

move from Special Measures to borderline Outstanding and to become the second most popular school in the City.

The Trust has been selected by DfE to run Exeter Creative School, a new all-through free school which will serve communities to the south west of Exeter. The primary phase is due to open in September 2018.

3.3. South Devon University Technical College

The University is a partner in the South Devon University Technical College (UTC), and chairs the Governing Body and Board of Directors. One of the first schools of its kind across the country, it offers students from Years 10 to 13 the opportunity to focus on science and engineering subjects in a specialist environment. The UTC currently has 161 students but will continue to expand during 2018.

The innovative and progressive college, which opened in 2015, provides GCSEs, A Levels and Diploma programmes, as well as job-ready skills and preparation for careers in science, engineering, civil engineering and the environment. Employers help to shape the curriculum, provide challenge projects and work experience to ensure UTC leavers are ready for the world of work.

3.4 IntoUniversity, Bristol South Centre

The University of Exeter co-sponsors an **IntoUniversity** centre in Bristol. The centre is a higher education presence in the local community which provides a range of programmes working over the long-term with young people aged 7-18. These programmes include after-school Academic Support, Mentoring, aspiration-raising FOCUS programmes including visits to the University, early intervention work at primary schools, tailored secondary school provision, family learning and employability and careers programmes. In the first year of opening, centres work with a minimum of 450 students and once established with a minimum of 900 students each academic year. Since the partnership began in 2015-16, 1,227 students have received support through the Bristol South centre.

IntoUniversity centres are based in areas of disadvantage and students are carefully targeted to ensure they are from groups under-represented in higher education – for example, white working class, BAME, looked after children. In order to access the programme students (or schools) must meet at least one of **IntoUniversity's** strict widening participation 'primary' criteria (Free School Meals, pupil premium, household income below £25,000, living in social housing, child looked after) *or* meet multiple 'secondary' widening participation criteria, all of which are indicators of lower progression into higher education (e.g. first generation applicant, young carer).

Academic support sessions make up one of the main strands of the programme and are delivered by graduate staff and university student volunteers. These sessions aim to improve academic performance, build soft skills and develop a positive attitude to learning. The programme's academic effectiveness is evidenced through evaluation data collected from Likert scale self-reports and seek to assess impact on grades and motivation. Student self-reports are supplemented by research with a sample of parents, based on their observations of their children's progress.

Students from the Bristol Centre have completed our progression programmes and we have run familiarisation sessions on campus with students from Bristol, Oxford and Southampton Centres. This year we will also be piloting a scheme involving our teacher trainees based in largely BAME schools in London, who will be helping to deliver Primary Academic Support workshops at the charity's North Kensington Centre which, if successful, will be extended to 2018.

We will continue to extend and strengthen our relationship with IntoUniversity, whose students experience a 75% progression rate into higher education, compared with a national average for pupils on Free Schools Meals of 39%.

3.5 Outreach

We are taking specific measures with the aim of refocusing our outreach programmes on raising pupil attainment in addition to raising aspirations. Improvements include the addition of mentoring and one-to-one support; closer tie-ins with the national curriculum and related training. Details can be found in section 4 of this report.

4. ACCESS

The University works with around 1,600 pupils a year via our main outreach and on-campus widening participation activities. We also provide or sponsor workshops, mentoring, teaching sessions and admissions support to many more through on-site delivery in schools. We intend to put in place new approaches to the main strands of our access strategy including:

- **Investing in additional outreach** to support a larger number of students and to better target key groups including disadvantaged white males; Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students; students with disabilities and those from lower participation neighbourhoods
- Extending and **strengthening our relationships** with schools and colleges
- **Extending our partnerships** to improve the take-up and efficacy of our outreach programmes
- Expanding our tutoring and mentoring support to **help raise attainment**
- Making better **use of technology** to improve engagement and evaluation
- **Refining our contextualised admissions policy** to better enable disadvantaged students with the potential to succeed at Exeter to obtain a place

4.1 Primary stage

Although this age group is not a major focus of our widening participation activities, we are involved in a number of initiatives to raise aspirations and support primary pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. We intend to explore extending provision for this age group during 2017/18.

We will continue to provide free places for disadvantaged pupils on our Primary Enrichment Programme which provides one and two day courses for Key Stage Two pupils across a range of national curriculum subjects. The project aims to engage with pupils who demonstrate interest and skills within specific subject areas. We will explore opportunities to extend this programme to our Penryn Campus to benefit a greater number of eligible pupils.

We co-sponsor the **Into**University in Bristol, which runs various programmes for primary age children to raise aspirations around higher education and to improve attainment. Academic Support is an after-school programme offering students support with their learning, coursework and revision. The pupils can access resources taken for granted in many better-off homes such as books, a computer, revision guides and a desk. Primary students can either receive support with their homework or take part in **Into**University's bespoke curriculum which links to university degree topics and national curriculum learning.

We will continue to share our expertise in widening participation with the South West Academic Trust consortium of grammar schools as they develop strategies to support the progression of disadvantaged primary pupils into selective secondary education. We will explore models for collaboration and share knowledge and best practice where appropriate.

4.2 Secondary stage

4.2.1. University of Exeter Scholars programme

The different strands of our longitudinal and intensive residential provision for secondary pupils will be drawn together under a new University of Exeter Scholars programme. Details on current activities are set out below and they, together with the new branding, will aim to:

- provide greater coherence between disparately badged schemes
- simplify information for schools, partners and students
- encourage a sense of community, belonging and cohort identification to better support pupils
- support aspiration raising and a sense of pride and motivation
- build continuity of support and engagement beginning in schools - and for those students progressing to the University of Exeter - continuing during their studies and beyond

4.2.2 Secondary stage – pre 16

Our pre-16 provision has two strands a) aspiration-raising / skills based; and b) subject-specific. Our longitudinal programme for pre-16s, currently badged Uncover HE, is run in partnership with 18 schools in Devon, Dorset and Cornwall with the aim of raising aspirations and preparing pupils for higher education. Beginning in Year 9 with a launch event on campus for pupils and families; the scheme is run over three years with 250 students in each year group. Interactive sessions as part of a set programme are delivered in schools by student ambassadors, culminating in a celebration event in Year 11.

The aim of this programme is to provide students with information about progression options post 16 and 18, including introducing the concept of higher education. The support and information offered by the university students aims to inform, inspire and focus the pupils enrolled on the programme and subsequently improve their motivation and performance at school/college. At the start of the programme in 2014, 66% of participants stated that they planned to remain in full-time education post-18, by completion this increased to 80% of the cohort, indicating a significant rise in aspirations towards higher education.

In addition to our aspiration activity, we also run subject-specific activities in schools, on campus and in the form of a Year 10 residential. The aim of this provision is to get students excited in particular areas of study and related career destinations and to encourage girls to consider science subjects post GCSE. We are currently reviewing the results of a pilot with the Brilliant Club, involving PhD students in delivering subject-based sessions in schools to get students inspired by research.

We are mindful of the findings of the Social Mobility Commission which highlighted the disparity in performance at GCSE level for students from low income households, with just 5% of children eligible for free school meals gaining 5 A grades at GCSE. We therefore intend to review the programme with our partners with a view to rebalancing the content to better focus on raising attainment.

We will continue to develop this provision under the University of Exeter Scholars banner, with a particular focus on disadvantaged while males, who are currently under-represented. Eligible students will be encouraged to progress on to our post-16 programme following completion of their GCSEs.

4.2.3 Secondary stage - post-16

Our flagship widening participation provision for post-16s, currently called Exeter Progression, is a subject-based programme involving students from schools in Devon, Cornwall, Somerset and Dorset. Eligibility is based on a combination of GCSE attainment and personal contextual factors. The majority of these pupils - due to local demographic factors - are white.

Each year group comprises of around 200 pupils carefully selected via schools and colleges, many of whom are part of our Exeter Links partnership. The programme supports access to the professions as well as targeting specific disciplines and complements the Pathways to Law programme, which we run in partnership with the Sutton Trust. Students who complete Exeter Progression benefit from an alternative offer.

The 14 progressive subject strands are taught by our academic colleges, with delivery enhanced by Student Opportunity funding. Following the withdrawal of this funding, we will commit to retaining and extending these discipline-specific activities by making sufficient funds available through our widening participation budget.

Our evaluation demonstrates the programme successfully improves propensity to apply for higher education, motivation and confidence, and around 50% make applications to the University of Exeter. While the majority of students will go on to higher education, only a small proportion of those who successfully progressed to the University of Exeter met or exceeded our standard offer, both underlining the importance of our contextualised admissions policy but also raising questions about we might supplement our provision in an effort to improve attainment.

Students currently self-select and as a consequence, we have a gender imbalance on this programme, with girls accounting for around 70-75% of each cohort. We have found however that the gender balance improves at the application and offer stage, confirming that the programme appears to be having a particularly beneficial effect for the male pupils who take part. Around 65% of the students who progress to Exeter are LPN Q1 and Q2.

The core elements of Exeter Progression are also offered in an intensive residential format for Year 12 students living outside our immediate catchment area and/or selected by partners such as IntoUniversity. The majority of participants are Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic pupils, many from low participation neighbourhoods and areas of deprivation in inner cities.

During 18/19 we will extend our post-16 provision in the following ways:

- a) increase the number of students participating in our programmes in excess of 300 per cohort
- b) set ourselves a target to increase the proportion of disadvantaged white boys who participate on our longitudinal programme
- c) achieve this target through greater engagement with schools during the selection process and by forging new partnerships with schools and colleges in lower participation neighbourhoods and IMD areas
- d) explore partnerships with organisations such as the WESC Foundation with the aim of encouraging more disabled students on to our programmes
- e) supplement our provision with one-to-one tutoring support via a new partnership with CoachBright, a company set up by two of our alumni, which trains and deploys students to deliver mentoring while giving them valuable career experience and employability skills.
- f) sharpen our focus on helping to raise attainment by better linking our discipline strands to the national curriculum
- g) explore a blended-learning and support model with a view to extending our University of Exeter Scholars programme even more widely

4.3 Partnership programmes

4.3.1 Realising Opportunities

In addition to our own post-16 programmes, we will continue to work in partnership to deliver the Realising Opportunities initiative. The award-winning programme, developed through shared best practice, provides support for students through interventions designed to raise aspirations, develop skills and enable them to demonstrate their potential to succeed at a research intensive university.

These interventions are offered locally and nationally and include a National Student Conference, ongoing support and encouragement from a trained student e-mentor and an assessed academic element. Successful completion will result in additional consideration given to applications through UCAS from all partner universities, and the potential for an alternative offer worth up to 40 UCAS points.

4.3.2 National Collaborative Outreach Programme

The University is a partner in Next Steps, our regional NCOP which covers target wards in Cornwall, Devon and Somerset. Two Outreach Officers for this scheme sit alongside our Widening Participation teams in Cornwall and Devon and have made significant progress in building relationships with our target schools. In Devon we have developed a joint operational plan with Exeter College and currently have a number of collaborative bids under consideration. Although this funding sits outside our Access Agreement, we have

reviewed our own provision to ensure it complements the programme in terms of its targeting and school partnerships.

4.3.3 Experience Exeter

Although the University is an international and ethnically diverse institution, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students are under-represented in our UK student population, due in part to the make-up of a significant proportion of our catchment area and local demographics. We have set ourselves an ambitious target to increase the number of BAME students by 20% (2015-2020) and are making good progress against this target; we will consolidate our efforts in 2018.

During 2017 we launched a longitudinal programme specifically for BAME students, following a pilot the previous year and working in partnership with IntoUniversity and Generating Genius. The programme, which will become a pathway within our University of Exeter Scholars scheme, engages with students over a period of four years and employs a variety of interventions to raise aspirations; familiarise students and their families mainly from the inner cities, with the University and West Country more generally; improve subject-specific knowledge and attainment; create positive role models and provide support through the admissions process.

The programme was developed following evaluation of our initial pilot and informed by focus groups with a number of our own BAME students who shared their experiences and helped us get a much better insight into the potential barriers faced by their peers; and what we should do to overcome them. Their advice on the way we should engage with students around the potentially sensitive issues of race and ethnicity was invaluable.

This group of students were so engaged and committed to the project that they now form the core of our new BAME Advocates scheme (affiliated to our Student Ambassadors) and are participating in the implementation of our programme and providing the types of positive role models, our initial BAME cohort said were lacking during the pilot.

We are also benefiting from the expertise and insights of our Race Equality Group and Black Academics Association. Working with our Graduate School of Education, we have also funded bursaries to support teaching trainees working in inner city schools with largely BAME students. The group of four trainees will be running student and family education workshops for one of our partner agencies in London; extending their knowledge and skills-base through practical application; while engaging BAME students and their families with higher education. We will extend this scheme in 2018 if the pilot is successful.

During the year we will work with four separate cohorts of BAME students including Year 10s, mainly from Birmingham and London, who will begin their four-year programme with an Easter residential in Exeter; our Year 11 STEM cohort, recruited via our partnership with Generating Genius, whose second year involves London-based science and maths workshops and a summer celebration event; and two groups of Year 12 students who will join us for subject-based STEM and HASS residential workshops at our Streatham and Penryn campuses during the summer.

4.4 Working with schools and colleges

Personal relationships with heads, teachers and advisors increase levels of engagement leading to better outcomes for students. It is important that we maintain and improve the quality of these relationships as we seek to widen our engagement with disadvantaged and under-represented students and forge new partnerships both within our region and further afield.

We will therefore increase capacity within our Widening Participation team to ensure that all of our partner schools receive continuity of support and work with an advisor who will have a detailed knowledge of the school, its objectives and the needs of its students. This will also enable us to harness the considerable enthusiasm of schools outside our immediate area, particularly the Midlands and London, to work more closely with us in widening participation.

We will increase our network of link schools and associated provision of up to £1,000 per institution to help fund a range of support depending on the requirements of the school including school-based workshops; priority access to our main outreach programmes; CPD support for teachers; and networking. These schools are carefully selected on the basis of their school population and our analysis, based on comparison with a neutral group, shows higher application and progression rates to the University of widening participation students from these schools.

The University will continue to be a partner in the Career Pilot and Life Pilot schemes, which are run in partnership with a consortium of schools in the South West. This initiative provides an online toolkit and resource for pre and post-18s, which helps students plan their routes to study, qualifications and careers.

4.5 Supporting educators

Our Widening Participation team and colleagues in the Graduate School of Education are currently planning a formal training programme for our staff and partners to help improve the efficacy of our interventions in schools. Depending on the outcome of a pilot planned during 2017/18, we anticipate offering a number of training sessions a year under the auspices of our Centre for Professional Learning with a particular focus on the national curriculum and raising attainment.

The University of Exeter will continue our partnership in Advancing Access - a national collaboration of 24 selective universities working together with schools and colleges to develop and deliver CPD for teachers and advisers. Advancing Access complements the work already carried out by partner institutions by engaging those areas that have historically been hard to reach and may be in geographic 'cold spots' and aims to support student progression to selective universities and courses.

The scheme also aims to complement the work of national collaborative outreach programmes and is a cost-effective approach to equipping teachers and advisers with the information they need to advise students with confidence. Initially funded through HEFCE's collaborative outreach network scheme, Advancing Access is now financed by partner contributions.

We will continue to host HE Advisers' days at our Streatham and Penryn campuses. The days provide the opportunity for teachers and careers advisers from our link schools, who play a vital role in supporting students making progression decisions, to attend a full programme of presentations and workshops focusing on the current higher education environment and the factors affecting progression. We will also continue to provide training and other support with a range of other organisations such as Teach First.

4.5 University admissions stage

4.5.1 Programme innovation

The University is committed to the Degree Apprenticeship scheme with the aim of improving access to higher education and providing a more flexible model of career-focused study. We launched our first degree apprenticeship, BSc (Hons) Digital and Technology Solutions, in 2016. The programme provides IT training for business and allows employers to select from five specialist IT roles. The programme is delivered through an innovative and flexible combination of blended/ distance learning and on-campus residentials. We are preparing to launch a second programme in 2018, and hope to develop further degrees in subjects such as manufacturing, product design, renewable energy and electronics, financial services and management, depending on the outcome of scoping work with employers. We will be working with the Guild and FXU to ensure these students are fully able to benefit from student support and advice services.

4.5.2 Application

We provide a range of support to help disadvantaged and under-represented students as they progress through the application and admissions process.

We regularly survey our decliners and acceptors and therefore understand the importance of an open day experience to help their decision making either at the pre-application or offer stage. A disproportionate number of decliners living in low participation neighbourhoods do not visit the University, or limit themselves to one visit. We have therefore developed an online open day platform to enable hard to reach students to access a range of resources including online sessions with tutors and advisors. This follows our efforts to trial a travel bursary scheme at our Penryn Campus, for which take up was surprisingly limited. We will continue to keep this under review, noting that bursaries do aid participation in our outreach programmes; it may therefore be that we have simply not found the most effective mechanism through which to deploy financial support during the admissions stage.

We will also continue to make special provision for some groups of under-represented and disadvantaged students, when appropriate to do so. For example, we provide pre-application events for care leavers and mature students; and supplement open day attendance for students on our main and partner progression programmes. We may also make financial contributions to facilitate attendance at interview. We are currently considering how we might extend this type of support for estranged students and carers.

The University will continue to review and improve the quality of its information for disadvantaged and under-represented students. We will also seek to further segment our marketing activity - supported by customer relationship management technology which will

be in operation by 2018 - to ensure prospective students have all the information they need to make informed choice about study with the University of Exeter.

4.5.3 Contextualised admissions

The University adjusted its contextualised undergraduate admissions policy in 2016 following evaluation that showed previous practice, based on school performance, was not sufficiently effective in improving access for students from lower participation neighbourhoods.

As a result, we amended our policy ahead of confirmation and clearing, to take account of an applicant's neighbourhood in addition to the performance of their school/college to allow a more considered assessment of each application now that this information is available through UCAS.

Although introduced late in the cycle, amending our approach has resulted in a very significant improvement in the recruitment of students from low participation neighbourhoods, with a 20% improvement from 4.4% to 5.3% in 16/17. This has enabled us to meet our target. This change in approach has been rolled out to the 2017 cycle and is used as part of our contextualised offer-making strategy which takes into consideration an applicant's neighbourhood, carer status, extenuating circumstances and if they have attend an access programme. We anticipate the proportion of LPN Q1 students will increase further in 17/18.

We are keen to refine our approach in 18/19 to take account of a range of indicators of disadvantage. We have been working with UCAS to define multiple equality measures on which to base a more sophisticated contextualised admissions process going forward, but progress has been slower than expected due to issues relating to access to data. We will continue to work on this approach with the aim of revising our admissions policy for future recruitment cycles.

5. SUCCESS

5.1 Transition stage

We recognise that some groups of students require more support when making the transition into higher education and that the progress they make during their first year has a bearing on their attainment and progression.

Our Wellbeing Service will continue to develop its support package for students with disabilities and mental health issues to help their transition to University. This includes a range of online information for prospective students explaining the benefits of declaring a disability and the range of support available. The intention is to develop individual learning plans for prospective students with long term health problems, disabilities and/or mental health problems to help their successful transition to University.

Mature students have been a particular focus as we have sought to narrow the gap in completion and attainment levels with the wider student population. Mature students are invited to attend bespoke induction events and additional workshops covering academic

skills, revision and exam techniques. We have already noted correlated improvements in progression and attainment rates between 2015 and 2016.

We are running a pilot scheme with a cohort of mature students in Medical Imaging to evaluate the influence of peer support in helping retention. The students participate in a breakfast club, and preliminary findings suggest this approach has been highly successful. We are now in the process of setting up a Peer Support Scheme for mature students across the University and are also developing a similar model for care leavers and BAME students. We will aim to develop this work still further in 2018/19.

Our Academic Skills and Student Engagement team will continue to provide a range of tailored support for students in specific disciplines with higher proportions of disadvantaged and under-represented students. These include peer learning schemes and skills sessions on maths, statistics and writing skills. We would also like to extend skills support available online, particularly for mature, part time and distance learners who may have limited time on campus.

5.2 Ongoing support

In addition to academic interventions, we intend to develop further our services to support students suffering from mental health issues. We intend to increase online services for current students to encourage engagement with our support services; creating specific advice and self-help tools for students with eating disorders and those suffering from anxiety. We will continue offer Silvercloud, an online platform designed for those who may be suffering from anxiety and/or depression. The package provides the user with ongoing advice and information via a series of online workbooks and is an evidence based package used by the NHS which is proven to significantly improve the wellbeing of users. We will also offer well-being workshops to help students look after their mental health during critical points of their studies.

Our Students as Change Agents initiative has been a powerful enabler for widening participation students, who make up 30-40% of participants. The scheme allows students to initiate, lead and own improvements to the education experience. They are trained and supported in developing their ideas into a project, which they then use to implement change. From September 2017, we aim to introduce a new framework to support more partnership-based projects driven jointly by students and staff to encourage a broader range of students with less spare time or confidence in their abilities to contribute towards education enhancement without the pressure of having to manage a project in its entirety. Internal data shows a strong correlation between participation in projects such as our interdisciplinary Grand Challenges initiative and Students as Change Agents and successful outcomes for WP students in terms of completion, attainment and graduate destinations.

5.3 Academic Success

Analysis of internal data demonstrates the importance of academic success for career progression with no significant difference in positive graduate destination scores for WP and non-WP students who attain the same degree class.

We have found a variation between POLAR 3 quintile cohorts and degree outcomes with LPN Q1 students achieving the lowest proportion of 2:1 degrees and Q5, the highest. It is important to note we have found no “cliff edge” between cohorts and so it has been

important to develop support which targets those who need it most without creating a squeezed middle. Significantly, analysis shows that first year academic transition is a more important for our students than prior attainment when it comes to ultimate degree success.

We are therefore developing a model of personalised learning - provisionally called Success for All – with the aim of providing tailored support based on individual need with a particular focus on first year academic transition. This model is founded on 6 pillars:

- personal academic tutor as individual learning coach
- peer support and mentoring in action learning sets
- enriched curriculum
- employability support and career mentoring
- informal curriculum
- Effective Learning Analytics

Core to this model is further development of the enhanced tutoring model supported by Effective Learning Analytics outlined in our 17/18 Access Agreement. The University has made considerable investment in using data analytics to enable both students and tutors to monitor performance more effectively and identify strategies to improve. The first phase of the Effective Learning Analytics project produced a student dashboard, providing students with visual information about their performance and was launched in 2016.

The second stage, focusing on providing more sophisticated information to tutors taking into account specific characteristics in order to provide bespoke interventions for widening participation students, has taken longer to implement than expected. This has been due to complexities surrounding new data protection legislation and ethical considerations relating to the identification of students as “disadvantaged”. This has required a considered policy response and a related code of practice.

While some of our deadlines have been affected, Effective Learning Analytics is due to become fully operational by August 2018 and will provide diagnostic data to support targeted interventions for groups who have been identified ‘at risk’ of not fulfilling their potential. Specialist support material for academic tutors will guide student interventions and help staff adapt existing practice.

6. PROGRESSION

6.1 Graduate level employment

The differential outcomes, both in terms of degree performance and post-graduation progression, for some under-represented and disadvantaged groups have been demonstrated at national as well as at institutional level. Access to the professions and progression to postgraduate study have been identified as national priorities. We are aware that in addition to the importance of academic success, having the networks and social capital that create opportunities can be instrumental to supporting social mobility.

We will continue to work in partnership with the charity upReach which provides skills development and work placements for a cohort of 70 students each year. We have also made significant investment in our capacity to work with employers and alumni, and have focused on creating placements and internships within key professions and career sectors.

Advisors support students through the process of gaining, completing and reflecting on their placement or internship. We are currently on course to provide more than 300 paid internships for widening participation students this year alone, exceeding our activity target. We will seek to maintain these schemes during 2018/19.

We will also seek to adapt our practice based on the outcomes of our Learning Gain projects, which aim to build a nuanced understanding of those interventions likely to have most impact, and identify any areas of career development not currently being serviced.

A particular focus is to better understand the benefits of international experience. The recent Erasmus Impact Study and UUK report *Gone International: The Value of Mobility*, powerfully demonstrate the short and long-term effects of international experience on improved career outcomes, particularly for widening participation and BAME students, coupled with a lower take-up amongst these groups.

We will continue to explore how we can encourage under-represented students to take up an international experience. We have facilitated a number of students to take part in the Common Purpose scheme which provides a high-quality immersive international experience. We expect to extend this type of experience to a higher number of students.

6.2 Further academic study

The University carries out significant activity to promote postgraduate opportunities available to current undergraduates from WP groups both within the University of Exeter and at other institutions. We run postgraduate open days, attend external postgraduate study fairs in target regions, promote the national loan scheme and information about scholarships and other funding sources. This approach has been highly successful and recent analysis has shown that students in receipt of our Access to Exeter bursary are more likely to progress to postgraduate taught programmes at the University, in comparison with other groups.

7. EVALUATION AND MONITORING

We will increase our investment in evaluation and monitoring activity to improve our knowledge, understanding of best practice and inform our strategy. We will carry out activity within four strands namely

- building our academic research expertise
- extending our market research and consultation with target groups
- investing in our evaluation infrastructure, capacity and procedures
- improving our use of data analytics and business intelligence

7.1 Academic research

The University is leading a project which seeks to tackle potential barriers faced by students with vocational qualifications when they enter higher education. “Transforming Transitions” will examine and challenge potential barriers experienced by students with BTEC qualifications as they apply for, and then enter, higher education. The aim is to address the gap between the number of students taking solely BTEC qualifications and those moving into

Higher Education, and identify ways in which to smooth and aid their transition once they enter university.

The project will be conducted between 2017-2019 in partnership with university and school partners. The project is one of 17 projects nationwide to receive funding from HEFCE's Catalyst Fund, which seeks to address differences in outcomes for various student groups and is being matched-funded by the University. The work follows on from a smaller scale research project carried out in collaboration with Pearsons which investigated the experiences of BTEC students as they transitioned into University.

We are continuing to invest in research expertise in social mobility and in January 2017, we successfully awarded a PhD studentship to support our access evaluation measures.

7.2 Market research

Over the last three years we have undertaken a number of market research projects with disadvantaged and under-represented students and have embedded reporting against specific characteristics within our annual round of quantitative research. These findings have shaped our approach to admissions; student support and outreach activities. We will continue to invest in primary research to inform our approach to key focus areas such as improving the participation of disadvantaged white boys in our outreach programmes.

7.3 Evaluation

During 2018/19, the University will consolidate its outreach evaluation activity which is based on the OFFA-recommended Kirkpatrick Model. Through investment in expertise, tools and technology, we are building a more robust infrastructure for evaluation based on the progressive building blocks of reaction, learning, behaviour and results.

In addition to completing a full review of our evaluation measures and instigating new monitoring and more accessible datasets across the student life-cycle; we are also seeking ways of making sure this data is fully operationalised so it can inform day to day decisions about where we should focus our expenditure. We will be investing in additional staffing capacity to extend our work in this area.

The University is a member of the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) membership service which assists Higher Education Institutions in England to target, monitor and evaluate outreach activity. By subscribing to HEAT we can take an evidence based approach to planning outreach delivery so that we can continue to invest in outreach activities that optimise progression with disadvantaged cohorts. We hope that the efficacy of this service will not be adversely affected by the tightening of data protection legislation and are currently working with partners to understand the implications.

Tracking reports received from HEAT help the University to better understand the relationship between our outreach provision and the attainment and progression of disadvantaged young people. We are able to track student progression to any HEI, including this institution, so that we can assess the extent to which we are contributing to the increased participation rates of disadvantaged young people as a whole. Being part of the HEAT service also enables the University to engage with collective WP sector research. By using data from all members as an aggregate, the HEAT service is now able to explore new

multi-dimensional ways of defining under-representation, disadvantage and differential outcomes and the effect that outreach can have on different groups of participants.

We are also a member of the Network for Evaluating and Researching University Participating Interventions (NERUPI), and adopt the consortium's framework for evaluating initiatives. The framework is based on five overarching aims and sets out to maximise the impact of Widening Participation interventions by providing a theoretical rationale for the types of intervention that are designed and delivered; setting out clear aims and learning outcomes for interventions; and rationalising and integrating evaluation processes to demonstrate impact using a range of indicators.

7.4 Social Mobility Strategy Group

The University is reviewing the visibility and focus it offers to widening participation activity as part of a current organisational design review in student recruitment and admissions. We are also reviewing education governance at institution level and planning to introduce a Social Mobility Strategy Group to lead our institutional commitment in this area. The Group will adopt a research-informed whole-student-lifecycle approach and will provide senior leadership across outreach, access, student success and progression. There will be a Widening Participation Management Group to drive the implementation of our Access Agreement institution-wide.

8. STUDENTS AND FINANCE

8.1 Student numbers and fee income

It is expected that the University will recruit 4,781 undergraduate students and 429 postgraduate ITT students during 2018/19. This will bring the total student population for undergraduate and postgraduate ITT study to 15,663 and 429 respectively.

Part time students, including students repeating all or part of an academic session, will be eligible for fees and financial support in the same way as all other students covered by this Agreement, but on a pro-rata basis and no part time student will be charged a fee in excess of £6,935 within an academic year.

The estimated fee income above the basic level for undergraduate and postgraduate ITT courses in 2018/19 is £46.4m. We anticipate allocating 29.5% of higher fee income on widening participation measures.

8.2 Tuition fees

The rules surrounding the setting of fees for 2018/19 may be subject to change in the next 12 months in regard to the following:

- eligibility of EU students for Home fees as Britain negotiates its exit from the European Union
- conditions relating to the application of inflation and the raising of the fee cap
- the future of the Erasmus Scheme in the context of Brexit

The University has therefore set its fees for 2018/19 within existing parameters, with the caveat that it will seek to amend its fee rates, eligibility and exceptions in accordance with any changes in national policy.

The University of Exeter intends to set tuition fees for Home/EU students commencing undergraduate courses and postgraduate Initial Teacher Training (ITT) courses after 1 September 2018, at the maximum rate allowed subject to the terms set out by Government. This fee is currently set at £9,250 per annum, but may be subject to change for the reasons set out above. The only exceptions to these fees will be:

- Home/EU students undertaking a full-year Erasmus study abroad or work placement, or a non-Erasmus study abroad year, who will be liable for fees at 15% of the maximum fee (£1,385) for that year;
- Home/EU students undertaking a full-year non-Erasmus placement in industry (in the UK or abroad), who will be liable for fees at 20% of the maximum fee (£1,850) for that year;
- B Medicine/B Surgery students in the University of Exeter Medical School, where tuition fees for the fifth year of study will be met by the Department of Health. If this funding were to be withdrawn, these students will be required to pay the full fee for each year of undergraduate study.

It is the University's intention to apply annual increases to this fee, up to the maximum tuition fee level as established by Government each year. Financial support for students will also rise annually in line with any increase in fees.

8.3 Financial support

The University carried out a review of its financial support in 2016/17, drawing on a variety of data including market research with prospective students, decliners and current students; applications for hardship funding; enquiries via the Student Advice Unit; information collated from exit interviews; retention and progression data relating to students in receipt of funding support; local market data on the accommodation sector; cost of living trends; and accommodation application patterns and outcomes for students from specific household income bands.

Taking this information into account, the University aims to increase its support package in line with inflation in 2018/19. In addition to financial support, the University will extend its success package for disadvantaged students to provide easier access to paid internships and international experience. This will be made available in the form of continued investment in our paid internship and related schemes. We intend to review the methodology by which we award this support with the aim of making sure it is targeted as effectively as possible.

The University will set aside a new fund for estranged students. This discretionary fund will be administered by the Student Guild Advice Unit. The funding will be used to support transition to university, year-round accommodation and crisis funding. We will also continue to provide fee waivers and accommodation bursaries for care leavers.

In addition to our bursary scheme, we will continue to provide support for undergraduate students in financial hardship. In 2018/19 we expect to provide at least £100k of financial assistance for undergraduate students in receipt of statutory financial support.

Following on from new work to evaluate the impact of our funding, we will continue the process of embedding OFFA’s student funding evaluation toolkit within University practice. This and other evaluation measures will be put in place to assess the efficacy of the funding package.

Bursary allocation for 2018/19 entrants

Household income	Bursary Yr 1	Bursary Yr 2 onwards	PGCE bursary
Less than £16,000	£2,100	£1,550	£520
£16,000 - £25,000	£1,050	£1,050	£520

8.4 Expenditure

Our OFFA-countable expenditure forecast for 2018/19 in comparison with 2017/18 is set out below along with the related percentages in higher fee income (HFI). The profile of expenditure reflects our commitment to supporting students throughout each stage of the student lifecycle, taking into account OFFA’s strategic guidance on increasing investment in access measures:

	2017/18	% HFI	2018/19	% HFI
Access	3,306,000	7.1	3,884,000	8.2
Success	3,224,000	6.9	2,865,000	6.1
Progression	1,916,000	4.1	1,814,000	3.8
Financial support	5,322,000	11.5	5,348,000	11.3
Total	13,768,000	29.7	13,911,000	29.5

9. MILESTONES

We have set a number of milestones in relation to raising attainment, access, success and progression and operational targets relating to our employability support and outreach. Full details are included in our access template.

The University has set a collaborative target with the Ted Wragg Trust relating to raising pupil attainment. This target is included within the school’s improvement plan (ending 18/19) and will be jointly monitored and delivered by the partnership. We will work with the Trust to identify a more specific attainment target for future years and include this in next year’s Access Agreement.

Our access targets aim to deliver incremental improvements in the proportion of state school, LPN, BAME and mature students, students with disabilities and white males from LPN Q1. We have also set a target relating to the recruitment of care leavers to reiterate our commitment to this particular group. We wish to replace this target in future with an activity target for care leavers (subject to OFFA agreement) to provide a more robust measure of our support instead of a percentage measure relating to student numbers in single figures.

Following consultation with OFFA we will drop our access target relating to NS-SEC recruitment, due to the withdrawal of monitoring data by HESA. We will also seek to replace targets for students in receipt of DSA, with targets for students who declare a disability, and have included this access measure for the first time.

We have retained targets relating to the recruitment of BAME and male students to our PGCE programmes, but have not set five year targets as these are historical measures, which we would prefer to replace over time with other measures.

We have set a new target for 2018/19 with the aim of redressing a gender imbalance on our main outreach programme with the aim of encouraging disadvantaged white males into higher education. We have collaborative targets with Realising Opportunities and IntoUniversity. We have adjusted the target for our work with IntoUniversity based on the receipt of baseline data and to rectify an error made in our previous Access Agreement.

Our success targets focus on narrowing the gap in completion rates between our main student population and mature students and students with disabilities; and improving degree outcomes for BAME students. We have also set a target for the number of students involved in our peer support programmes.

Our main progression target relates to narrowing the gap in graduate destination scores for students from low participation neighbourhoods in comparison with their peers. We have also set an activity target relating to our internship scheme for widening participation students.

10. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The University is committed to a policy of equality of opportunity and aims to provide a working, learning and social environment that is free from unfair discrimination. In accordance with University policy, an Equality Analysis has been carried out on the University of Exeter's Access Agreement and consideration been given to the impact of this on protected groups recognised by the Equality Act 2010. No equality concerns or negative impacts were identified in this Equality Analysis. Positive impacts were recognised in the provisions made for students with protected characteristics relating to age, disability, gender and ethnicity.

11. INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION

The University will continue to provide clear and accurate information about fees and funding and to students through a variety of information channels including:

- printed materials such as the Undergraduate prospectus and Finance Guide
- online via our Undergraduate Study Student Finance websites
- direct communications via our Admissions team
- face-to-face communications at HE fairs, pre-applicant open days, offer-holder open days and other events including finance workshops and advice surgeries in schools
- enquiry handling through our Admissions and Student Finance teams, via our Student Information Desk and student service hubs

- third-party platforms including UCAS website, Student Loans website and Key Information Sets
- presentations and online resources for teachers

In addition we will continue to provide and improve targeted information through appropriate channels and formats for specific disadvantaged and under-represented groups to encourage engagement in our outreach programmes, provide tailored information through the application process and to optimise take-up of support, advice and opportunities during their studies at the University of Exeter.

We will continue to support staff posts in the Student Funding Team in order to ensure the effective distribution of financial advice and information. We will also extend our funding support for the Students' Guild to enable it to extend its financial and related support and advice service for students, including estranged students.

We have consulted with our study body in the preparation of this Access Agreement. The Guild and FXU reviewed and approved this agreement and are represented on the group with governance responsibilities for widening participation. Feedback from prospective and current students was also considered in formulating specific responses within this agreement for example in relation to our information provision, support package and development of our outreach programmes.