

# DURHAM UNIVERSITY

## ACCESS AGREEMENT WITH THE OFFICE FOR FAIR ACCESS 2017-18

### Context

1. Durham University is a highly selecting institution, with demanding degree programmes. It works hard to identify potential students with the greatest merit and potential amongst applicants from all backgrounds. The University's approach is threefold.
2. Firstly, through various outreach initiatives it generates applications from students with merit and potential from under-represented groups who might not otherwise apply. For example, over the last six years the University has developed a Supported Progression Compact Scheme, which provides a progression route for a targeted cohort of most able, but least likely to apply students from the North East, Cumbria and West Yorkshire. Through this scheme the University is increasing applications from state educated students from households in lower socio-economic groups from regions with traditionally low rates of HE participation<sup>1</sup>. The University recognises the value of targeted outreach activities, spends proportionally more on this than typical across the sector, and has evidence of the effectiveness of activities through evaluation of outcomes.
3. Secondly, the University adopts a holistic approach to assessment of merit and potential, including using information about the context of prior academic achievement. Academic achievement and future potential are critical factors in determining which applicants receive offers of places. Significant resource is dedicated to developing effective use of contextual information in admissions to provide selectors with sharper tools to identify merit and potential. Since the University began using contextual information, the student intake average tariff score has increased.
4. Thirdly, the University recognises that higher graduate contributions consequent on a £9,000 fee makes provision of financial support more important than before the fee rise. Therefore significant financial support packages are provided to support enrolments from target access groups.
5. At the time of writing the University is experiencing significant change. A comprehensive Strategy review is underway, including considerations of growth in numbers and relocation of undergraduate programmes from Queen's Campus, Stockton to Durham City. Most of these programmes will not relocate until 2018, although a first cohort may move in 2017. Final

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<sup>1</sup> The North East and Yorkshire and the Humber have the lowest participation rates for young entrants to HE (29.4 and 30.0 per cent respectively), compared to the England average of 34.2% (see <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/pubs/2012/201226/POLAR3.pdf>). The rate for the North West (which includes Cumbria) is 32.5%, which is also less than the national average.

decisions are pending at the time of the submission. The developing University Strategy will directly address widening access matters as part of its education workstream.

### **What is new in this access agreement?**

6. The University plans the following new initiatives:
  - to commission research projects about the correlation between the predicted and actual achievement of Durham applicants and students, from GCSE, through A levels, to degree attainment, which will help inform policy about the use of contextual data;
  - to make greater use of targeted offers and contextual data, including guaranteed and differential offers to students of outstanding potential in target categories, using multiple indicators of disadvantage;
  - to offer pre-residence support to students from socio-economically disadvantaged and other targeted backgrounds, using digital technologies and new on-line content to raise application numbers and improve conversion rates from target groups;
  - to expand the number of students in the Supported Progression Scheme, redirecting resource from less effective activity, and to give greater emphasis to the gender balance in recruitment to the scheme;
  - to target financial support towards postgraduate applicants who meet fair access criteria, have existing undergraduate debt and have no access to funding to support their continuing study;
  - to commission research to estimate the likely size of the pool of suitably qualified potential applicants to Durham University from British ethnic minority backgrounds, taking account of limiting educational and geographical factors, to assist the University in setting realistic goals for increasing the diversity of its student intake;
  - to expand the scale of targeted outreach activity with schools with a higher than average proportion of BME students;
  - to extend the Raising Aspirations Project as a vehicle for pre-16 outreach.

## **Section 1: Fees, student numbers and fee income**

7. The University intends to charge a tuition fee of £9,250 for all full-time Home/EU undergraduate new entrants in 2017/18 (subject to any Government approved inflationary rise).
8. The University does not plan to recruit part-time undergraduates, but should this position change, then a pro-rata fee up to a maximum of £6,935, representing 75% intensity (subject to any Government approved inflationary rise) would be charged.
9. The University intends to charge a tuition fee of £9,250 for all full-time PGCE entrants in 2017/18 (subject to any Government approved inflationary rise).
10. For Home/EU undergraduates undertaking a year abroad as part of their degree programme, the University will charge 15% of the maximum tuition fee, which means those entering in

2017/18 will be charged a year abroad tuition fee of £1,385 (subject to any Government approved inflationary rise).

11. For Home/EU undergraduates undertaking a placement year as part of their degree programme, the University will charge 20% of the full-time fee during their placement year, which means those entering in 2017/18 will be charged a placement year tuition fee of £1,850 (subject to any Government approved inflationary rise).
12. To maintain the value of the fees in real terms, the University will apply annual increases in line with an appropriate inflationary measure set by the Government each year (within the appropriate maximum fee cap).

## **Section 2: Access, student success and progression measures**

### **2.1 Assessment of the University's Access and Retention Record**

13. The HESA key performance indicators (HESA KPIs) relating to the requirements of the new access agreement cover:
  - Access indicators for students from under-represented groups in Higher Education
  - Non-continuation rates and projected outcomes.
14. The following assessment makes use of the adjusted sector average (the HESA 'benchmark') to evaluate the relative performance of the University. The adjusted sector average is an average for the sector weighted according to the subject(s) of study, qualifications on entry and age on entry of the University's students. As an average, there will inevitably be institutions above and below this 'benchmark', so achieving this cannot be a target. The benchmark is useful as a means of comparing sector-wide student profiles and retention.

#### **Low Participation Neighbourhoods**

15. As an indicator of social mobility, the University wishes to increase the percentage proportion of Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPN) enrolments. The proportion of new entrants to the University from POLAR3 LPN in 2014/15 was 4.4%, compared to the adjusted sector average of 6.5%. The University improved its LPN performance measure against an initial figure for 2008/09, but its performance against the measure has begun to plateau. Therefore LPN participation became a key target in the 2016 Access Agreement and it will remain a priority for this Access Agreement.

#### **Social class**

16. The HESA KPI relating to social class is derived from an applicant's self-declaration of parental occupation, according to which s/he is classified into a National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) group. This is an important but problematic indicator, because the self-declarations are not validated, and many applicants choose not to self-declare. The problematic nature of this measure has been recognised and it will no longer be published after

2016. In 2014/15, 14.2 % of Durham’s young (under 21) home/EU entrants gave self-declarations consistent with NS-SEC 4-7 classifications. This figure is 4.4 percentage points below the adjusted sector average, which, compared to 2013/14 figures, represents a gap reduction of 0.6 percentage points, and compared to 2012/13, represents a gap reduction of 2.6 percentage points.

17. To overcome the problematic nature of this HESA KPI, the University has replaced previous milestones and targets for NS-SEC 4-7 with milestones and targets for LPN (POLAR 3) and ACORN (A Classification of Residential Neighbourhoods) categories 4 and 5 for its access agreements for 2016/17 onwards. The ACORN measure uses a street level postcode classification, and the LPN measure uses postcodes at district level. Whilst the first of these allows tracking at a more detailed level, the second aligns with the measure used in OFFA’s widening participation strategy 2015/20.
18. By segmenting at street-level postcode, ACORN provides good contextual data for decision-making and a precise indicator of how the University performs in attracting students from adverse socio-economic circumstances. Moreover, for Durham students, the ACORN measure has a closer correlation with household incomes as assessed by the Student Loans Company, than the NS-SEC 4-7 measure does. Durham’s ACORN data for 2014/15 shows an improvement of 0.5 percentage points in enrolments of students from postcodes classified as 4 and 5 compared to the previous year.

### **State School Entrants**

19. Against an adjusted sector average of 74.1%, the University’s proportion of young, full-time undergraduate degree entrants from state school backgrounds was 63.1% in 2014/15. A state school participation level of 63% of entrants was set as a target in earlier access agreements, and the University has achieved and maintained this target proportion, consolidating the 4 percentage point rise in 2012/13. It has also reduced the difference to the adjusted sector average by one percentage point compared to 2013/14 figures. Particular factors contributing to this include our Supported Progression Compact Scheme, the Sutton Trust programme, and the improved success rates of state school students in securing offer grades. The grade distribution characteristics of school types and high levels of achievement required to enter the University mean that the scale of increase experienced in 2012/13 is unlikely to be repeated. Nonetheless, the University aims to maintain young state schooled enrolments at 63% whilst focusing on increasing enrolments of students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods and postcodes categorised as ACORN 4 and 5.

### **Mature Students**

20. The proportion of full-time mature (over 21) entrants from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR 3) without previous HE qualifications was 17.1% in 2014/15, representing an increase of 1.4 percentage points on the previous year and exceeding the adjusted sector average by 0.5 percentage points. This is attributable to the University’s Foundation Centre, which targets home applicants with few or no formal qualifications, or intermittent education.

### **Students in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance**

21. The proportion of full-time first degree students in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) in 2014/15 was 5.6%, an increase of 0.6 percentage points on the previous year and exceeding the adjusted sector average of 5.3%.

### **BME Students**

22. The government is encouraging universities to increase the ethnic diversity of their undergraduate student bodies. This is challenging for universities with highly selective entry requirements because some British ethnic minority groups achieve less well at A-level on average compared to the White British group, and are less likely to study A-level subjects required for entry to certain degree programmes (most notably the arts and humanities). Universities located in areas where the local population is not very ethnically diverse face the additional challenge of encouraging suitably qualified British ethnic minority pupils from other parts of the country to apply to their institution. Although BME participation does not feature in the HESA KPIs, an independent analysis in 2012 showed that Durham receives a low proportion of applications from BME applicants, which results in a low percentage of entrants (7.2%). The report analysed the application rates to Durham as a proportion of all applications made to all institutions through UCAS: 0.4% of ethnic minority applicants applied to Durham compared to 1.0% of white applicants. However when they do apply, ethnic minority applicants are equally likely to receive offers of admission as white applicants (49.9% of those ethnic minority applicants who apply compared to 48.2% of white applicants). The low proportions of BME applicants results in a low percentage of Durham entrants (7.2%), which is only around one third of the figure for UK universities generally (20.9%). The issue of low proportions of applications is addressed in this Access Agreement.

### **Non-continuation rates**

23. Student retention is one of the University's strengths. Only 1.5% (2013/14) of its young full-time first degree entrants did not continue with their studies beyond their first year, compared to the adjusted sector average of 2.5%. Financial reasons account for a tiny proportion of withdrawals; the majority are academic or personal. In absolute terms retention rates of mature students (13.5% non-continuation rate in 2013/14) and young students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods (7.1% non-continuation rate in 2013/14) are less strong but still good.

### **Projected Outcomes**

24. Taking account of students projected to transfer to another institution, such as Durham's cohort of Phase 1 medical students to Newcastle University, the University's projected completion rate is an extraordinary 95.5%, exceeding the adjusted sector average by 1.4 percentage points.

## Conclusion

25. The HESA KPIs show strong evidence of student success at Durham; retention and outcomes are not the primary issue on which the University has to focus. Nor is the progression of students after graduation; the taught postgraduate population has a higher proportion of LPN students than the undergraduate population. There is also evidence of success in improving and maintaining participation from groups targeted in previous access agreements, in particular the percentage of state schooled enrolments, but further improving participation from under-represented groups is where attention has to be focussed. Therefore the University's future work will focus on access to Durham from these under-represented groups measured by LPN (POLAR 3) and ACORN postcode classification, and taking account of other indicators of disadvantage.

## 2.2 Expenditure

26. The Office for Fair Access guidance suggests that an institution with low or very low proportion of under-represented students should spend between 30 and 35 per cent of its fee income above £6,165 per fte on access commitments. The University is committing a figure of 31.0% in 2017/18. Therefore, with a fee of £9,250, this approximates to £10.9 million per annum, to be divided primarily between financial support packages and access outreach activity.
27. As part of the annual access agreement review, the University will consider the impact of its access activities and the balance of financial commitment between outreach activity and financial support, and if appropriate, adjust them.

### **The balance between non-financial measures and financial support**

28. The University recognises the value of targeted outreach activity, and has spent proportionally more on this than is typical across the sector. Over time it has reduced the value of bursaries in order to commit more resource to outreach work. The reduction in bursaries has had no demonstrable impact on recruitment of students from lower household incomes, which accords with OFFA's own research findings.<sup>2</sup> The impact of bursaries on retention and attainment is being evaluated again through the University's participation in a research project led by University College London. If there is an impact at Durham, the effect will be small; nonetheless, the University will use information from this project, which is due to report shortly, to inform its future decisions. The University is already committed to high value bursaries for 2017 entrants from the Supported Progression Scheme, but, depending on the research outcomes, may reduce the value of these for the 2018 cohort so that the resource can be invested where it will be more effective.

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<sup>2</sup> OFFA publication 2010/06, Have bursaries influenced choices between universities?, and OFFA publication 2014/02 An interim report: Do bursaries have an effect on retention rates? Available at [www.offa.org.uk/publications](http://www.offa.org.uk/publications).

29. The University estimates that in 2017/18 approximately £5.5 million per annum will be committed to financial support packages. £1.6 million of this will provide bursaries for students progressing from our Supported Progression Compact Scheme. The remaining £4 million will be targeted towards students from households in which income is below £25,000 per year.
30. Evidence demonstrating the value of expenditure on outreach activity has been shown through the evaluation of outcomes (see section 2.3). Therefore the University will, through this Access Agreement, continue to commit more resource to targeted outreach activity in absolute terms.
31. By 2017/18 the University estimates expenditure of £4.5 million on fair access activity, £0.6 million on student success and £200k on progression, as set out below. Funding will be committed to researching, developing and evaluating the methods for assessing merit and potential, enhancing services to enquirers and applicants from under-represented groups progressing through the admissions cycle, and evaluating the efficacy of its widening access measures. The University intends to commit funds to develop placement opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to enhance their employment prospects, and to develop study skills support further for students in under-represented groups, particularly those progressing from the Supported Progression Compact Scheme and the University's Foundation Centre. The University plans to invest in supporting disabled students following changes to the Student Opportunities Fund.

### 2.3 Overview of Outreach

32. In 2016/17, the University will develop its programme of well-targeted and high quality outreach activities, with a focus on enhancing applications to Durham University from a specific range of backgrounds. The University recognises that access activities play a broader role in extending educational opportunities to those from non-traditional backgrounds but a specific target is to promote fair access by increasing applications from students from LPNs and ACORN category 4 and 5 postcodes who do not traditionally apply to Durham.
33. Feedback shows that activities which work best in raising aspiration and attainment involve continuous, direct engagement of students, teachers and parents with the University: in particular Sutton Trust Summer Schools, teacher conferences and the Supported Progression Compact Scheme .
34. The views of potential students are in part informed by the views of their parents and guardians, and therefore we work to ensure that parents and guardians are informed and involved, through discussions, residential events, non-residential events and webpages. We provide them with tailored information about UCAS, Student Finance and our access schemes, and we obtain feedback from them.
35. The University analyses and evaluates outcomes to demonstrate impact. The Supported Progression Scheme, for example, has been running long enough to see a tangible impact in terms of student enrolments and achievement (see paragraphs 38-43).
36. The University benefits from involvement with the Sutton Trust (see paragraphs 47-50). Collaborating with the Sutton Trust gives access to research, which allows the University to track

any other highly selective universities chosen by students attending a Durham summer school. We participate in the Trust's Common Evaluation Framework (see paragraph 74).

37. In summary, the University will continue to use additional tuition fee income to provide:
- a team of staff working on realising the aims of the fair access plan,
  - progression schemes involving regular targeted contact with potential students,
  - dissemination of financial information to applicants and prospective applicants,
  - targeted residential summer schools,
  - school and college visits,
  - collaborative work with strategic partners including other HEIs,
  - a Foundation Centre programme, offering a direct progression route into Durham degrees for LPN, mature, and non-traditionally qualified students,
  - conferences and events for teachers supporting higher education progression,
  - engagement with students from schools in areas of significant disadvantage to stimulate an interest in STEM subjects,
  - activity with children and young people from Early Years Foundation Studies onwards.

### **The Supported Progression Compact Scheme**

38. The University's flagship access scheme remains the Supported Progression Compact Scheme, which is a series of intensive activities focussed on able, least likely to apply, disadvantaged students from targeted areas. The Scheme uses multiple indicators of disadvantage and aims to increase applications from students from state schools, Low Participation Neighbourhoods, and ACORN category 4 and 5 postcodes in regions with traditionally low rates of HE participation. Impact is achieved among students participating and among participants' peers, as an intended outcome is removing real and perceived barriers to accessing Durham degrees. The Scheme provides an integrated portfolio of contacts with individual students in Year 12, continuing to Year 13 and then to registration at the University.
39. Numbers of participants and consequent enrolments at the University are summarised below. Growth is observed since the first cohort in 2011.

Year of entry to the University as an undergraduate student	Participants in Supported Progression	Successfully Completed Supported Progression Summer School	Applications to Durham from Supported Progression Participants	Applications target	Undergraduate enrolments at Durham of Durham Supported Progression Participants	Enrolments target
2011	54	47	40	-	31	-
2012	114	110	95	-	56	-
2013	150	131	112	80	69	70

Year of entry to the University as an undergraduate student	Participants in Supported Progression	Successfully Completed Supported Progression Summer School	Applications to Durham from Supported Progression Participants	Applications target	Undergraduate enrolments at Durham of Supported Progression Participants	Enrolments target
2014	188	172	149	105	95	90
2015	269	248	190	140	104	95
2016	275	253	201 (as at March 2016)	150	Not yet known	100

40. We aim to continue to build upon this success by striving for greater numbers of successful enrolments. The University bases development on evaluation of impact, through which we have recruited under-represented students while retaining admissions tariffs.
41. Future developments for Supported Progression include:
- expanding numbers of students on the Supported Progression Scheme, redirecting resource from less effective activity;
  - activity targeted at supporting attainment;
  - increased reach of Supported Progression into additional areas in Yorkshire;
  - continued development of high-impact Year 13 interventions to sustain motivation;
  - creation of fresh approaches to information, advice and guidance (IAG) provision, including careers guidance;
  - giving greater emphasis to the gender balance in recruitment to the scheme;
  - reviewing the value of bursaries awarded to Supported Progression participants.
42. Of significance in evaluating the success of our widening access activity is the graduation of first and second cohorts of Supported Progression students (2011 and 2012 entry) by 2015. Of these 87 students completing Supported Progression, 22 graduated in summer 2014; 38 in 2015; a further 22 students on four or five year courses are due to graduate in 2016; 4 failed to complete their degree.
43. We are working with Durham's Careers, Employability and Enterprise Centre to track Supported Progression graduates to determine the extent to which a Durham degree impacts on their life chances.

### **Access Partnerships**

44. Pre-16 engagement occurs through our Access Partnerships team. The Team works with external partners to support progression of talented state school pupils from under-represented groups into higher education. Building collaborative relationships maximises potential impact on the lives of young people and ensures best practice is shared between organisations. All Access

Partnership projects share a common goal of supporting young people's informed decision-making and providing inspiring opportunities to engage with higher education. We offer activities for young people and parents/carers throughout the year, in collaboration with partners and independently. Opportunities exist for students from Key Stages 2 to 5 (School Years 5-13). However, we have a particular focus on supporting local students in Key Stages 3- 4, that is, Years 9 - 11.

45. The North East Universities Raising Aspiration Partnership (RAP) is a collaborative programme of widening participation activity which was originally delivered by Newcastle, Northumbria and Sunderland Universities. The partnership was extended in 2014/15 to include both Durham and Teesside Universities and the consortium is now part of the National Network for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO) providing a single point of contact for widening participation work in the North-East region. The five Partnership universities (Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria, Sunderland and Teesside) work together to ensure every young person has the opportunity to make informed decisions about higher education. From January 2015, therefore, the University's spend was augmented by the HEFCE collaborative funding. Whilst this additional collaborative funding will not be available beyond 2016, the Partners are committed to continuing the excellent work of the collaboration beyond the current NNCO funding period.
46. To date we have:
- Developed and promoted our new regional website to all state schools in the region via leaflets and our newly created 'Mini guide to North East Universities'.
  - Expanded our 'Supporting Secondary – NERAP comes to you' strand of activity delivered by our Graduate Ambassador team, promoted and available to all schools.
  - Delivered region-wide events open to all school teachers and advisers (targeting both a pre-16 and post-16 audience).
  - Organised and promoted region-wide events for parents/carers to increase their knowledge and understanding of higher education progression which is advertised and promoted across all schools.
  - Developed activity for specific vulnerable groups such as Looked After Young People, Young Carers and students with Specific Educational needs/disabilities.

### **Sutton Trust Programme**

47. As a national counterpart of the compact scheme's regional focus, Durham University hosts Sutton Trust summer schools for Year 12 students. The week long summer schools are designed to give students from under-represented backgrounds experience of a selective university. The aim is to equip students, most of whom will be the first in their families to progress to higher education, with confidence, knowledge and insight to make high quality applications. The University currently offers three summer schools.
48. A high proportion of students from the Sutton Trust summer schools enrol at participating institutions. Visiting Year 12 students are supported by enthusiastic Durham Student Ambassadors, led by an experienced management team.

49. Durham University aims to continue this collaborative work with new activities. September 2014 saw the first Sutton Trust sponsored residential conference for state school teachers and advisers, focussing on increasing knowledge, skills and resources relating to independent learning skills developed through qualifications such as the Extended Project Qualification.
50. In October 2015, 34 of 175 applicants who had participated in the Sutton Trust summer school held in 2014 enrolled at Durham University. This represents a 26% increase on the previous year's figures. To strengthen impact, starting with the 2014 entry cohort, the University now supports the Sutton Trust scheme by awarding a guaranteed offer to any successful participant. This major development means that 228 Sutton Trust students currently hold an offer from Durham University for 2016 entry.

### **BME Students**

51. We are expanding the scale of targeted outreach activity with schools with a higher than average proportion of BME students, which is helping our understanding of what activity is likely to deliver the greatest impact. Specifically, we are delivering an 'Increasing Diversity' project whose aim is to broaden the ethnic diversity of undergraduate students by building sustainable relationships with teachers and pupils in schools which have been identified as having a high proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups and who are likely to achieve the entry requirements to come to Durham University. Site visits to schools in Yorkshire, Birmingham and London (Hackney and Tower Hamlets) have been undertaken and presentations delivered to raise awareness of progression opportunities. More focussed activity is under development with these schools, including the development of a student ambassador programme providing BME students with role models currently studying at Durham University. A targeted event offering students from selected schools the chance to visit the campus and get a taste of our academic programmes and colleges is planned for delivery. We are basing activity on the findings of focus group activity undertaken in 2015 and continued into 2016 with students from under-represented backgrounds, with an intention to expand the programme into a larger range of schools across the country. This activity is being supported by research currently being undertaken within the University to help us best target our activity with BME students to deliver the greatest impact in terms of increasing applications to Durham (see paragraphs 75-77).

### **Open Days and Communication with Enquirers and Applicants**

52. Durham University's campus-wide Pre-Application Open Days were established in 2011 to provide high quality opportunities to visit the University, and in 2015 more than 25,000 visitors attended. They are open to students from all backgrounds, and are intended to make the University accessible to potential applicants who may not typically regard Durham as a possible choice. They deliver guidance on student finance, career planning and offer Higher Education advice for parents and carers. Student finance and student support arrangements are structured to try to pre-empt cost being perceived as a barrier to entry.
53. The Open Days are marketed to state schools throughout the country. In 2013 travel bursaries were introduced for Pre-application Open Days attendees in receipt of the 16-19 Bursary or the

EMA (Scotland). This has been retained. From 2014 onwards the bursary scheme was expanded to include care leavers. 53 individual prospective applicants benefited from this support during 2015 Pre-application Open Days. Travel bursaries were also made available from March 2015 for Post-offer Visit Days, to ensure students in receipt of offers could attend these events. 46 individuals holding offers benefited from this support to attend in March 2015. This support will be maintained. The bursaries will be drawn to the attention of potential students likely to benefit.

54. The University is enhancing its IT systems to communicate better with enquirers and applicants from under-represented groups. We will capture and analyse data across the stages of the enquirer to enroller journey so that we can use the information to target our recruitment activity effectively. We will offer pre-residence support to students from socio-economically disadvantaged and other targeted backgrounds, using digital technologies and new on-line content to raise application numbers and improve conversion rates from target groups.

### **Colleges**

55. The Colleges of Durham University play a critical role in supporting activity designed to increase applications and enrolments from under-represented groups and in providing opportunities for students from those backgrounds to succeed in their studies, to overcome difficulties that they may encounter and to participate in a wide range of activity that supports academic success, personal development and improved employability.
56. The foundation of all outreach work at the University is our student body, and our Colleges provide a locus for the activities in which our current students engage with our target students. Our fair access residential activity such as Supported Progression, Sutton Trust Summer Schools, Access Partnerships and engagement with teachers and advisers is based within our Colleges. College communities are a focus for pre-application open day and post-offer visit day activity with considerable involvement from Junior Common Rooms. These are key events with considerable influence in encouraging applications and acceptances and valuable opportunities to overcoming perceived barriers to entering the University for students from under-represented backgrounds.
57. Individual colleges conduct a wide range of different activities relevant to fair access. An example is the Young Persons' Project run at Van Mildert College. This programme is designed to raise aspirations of students from disadvantaged North East schools, and is based around school visits and a residential activity. Other colleges engage with schools in different ways (for instance, by inviting schools to visit colleges for away days, or by going to visit schools).
58. College outreach activity has multiple goals contributing directly and indirectly to fair access goals. These differ between activities, but typically include community engagement; support for the personal development and employability of student participants; research projects; and building knowledge, understanding and aspirations in relation to higher education generally and Durham University in particular.
59. Once students join the University our Colleges play an important role in student success and in progression, often working in partnership with other parts of the University. For instance, staff

in the University's constituent colleges work with the University's student financial support service to ensure that all existing students have access to the financial support information that they need. College staff also complement the work of academic advisers in departments and professional services staff by providing support to students on pastoral issues and personal development.

### **Durham University Library and Museums**

60. Outreach and engagement work is delivered by the Learning Team of the University Library and Museums. The team engages with children and young people via a range of school workshops, project based work, weekend and holiday activities. The sessions engage children with University collections to provide informative, fun and interactive learning opportunities. Feedback is excellent.
61. Since 2009 the number of visits by primary aged children to University collections, events and buildings has increased by over 300%. During the 2014/15 academic year, University Library Learning Team members engaged with 21,933 primary and secondary school students from 226 individual schools in the North East and beyond. This represents an increase of 27% in the number of schools with which the team engaged in 2013/14. The overwhelming majority of participants are from state schools in North East Local Authorities. Visits by children attending schools in London, Doncaster, Wigan and North Yorkshire have also occurred. Children and young people aged 4-18 have visited. Since 2011 there has been a focus on ensuring all children are aware that they are visiting a university. Care is taken to ensure their experience reinforces messages about the accessibility of the University.
62. In addition to the core programme, the team has supported research projects in English, History, Classics, Archaeology and Anthropology, developing resources based on current research now being used by students in schools located nationwide
63. The Learning Team runs a programme for Year 12 and 13 students. Students attend a training session on research skills using University Library facilities. Once they have attended, students are welcome to use the University Library and its resources for their study throughout the year.
64. Informal learning plays a part in the offer to local children and young people. Family activity sessions are run at weekends at sites in the Heritage Collections portfolio. The team delivers public events such as the Diwali celebration, a Lunar New Year Lantern Festival, a Holi Festival, and a Teddy Bear's picnic, and contributes to University-wide initiatives such as the "Celebrate Science" Festival held in October.
65. The Library Team will continue to provide support to local schools and seek new ways of engaging with children and young people via development of new sessions, increased outreach and identification of methods to support Key Stages 3-5 teachers and students. For example, approximately 950 school and college students, along with undergraduates in engineering, maths and physics, took part in a project tied into our "Robots" exhibition held at the Palace Green Library.

### Science Outreach

66. Durham University has a strong track record of supporting and promoting science in primary and secondary schools. Current activities build on our world-class scientific research and teaching, involving the local community in the excitement of science. The Science Outreach team has visited one in three secondary schools and more than one in ten primary schools in the region. Therefore, whilst this activity is primarily about the promotion of science rather than improving participation from under-represented groups, it is nonetheless being carried out in the North East Region, which has the lowest participation rate for young entrants to HE in the country and therefore indirectly targets access priorities.
67. “Science into Schools” is a science-oriented access scheme. This comprises modules offered across the Faculty of Science to third and fourth year undergraduates. A primary aim of the scheme is to develop undergraduates’ key skills, by offering an early taste of teaching science. School students benefit by meeting undergraduate role models. The undergraduates spend up to 40 hours on placement in a local school working with a teacher mentor. The school gains a knowledgeable and enthusiastic student able to offer practical assistance in the classroom. During the placement, from January to the end of March, the undergraduate undertakes a Special Project based upon the needs of the school and individual skills. For the academic year 2014/15, 76 undergraduates enrolled across seven subjects working with 54 North East schools, 37 of the students placed in Primary Schools.
68. Durham also holds an annual Schools’ Science Festival which stimulates interest and encourages post-event participation in science. Year 9 and Year 10 students follow a demanding programme of engineering projects including design, building and testing, and hands-on science and technology activities. In 2015 the Schools’ Science Festival celebrated its 20th Anniversary with over 700 school students attending from 23 North East secondary schools.
69. “Celebrate Science” is our annual community science festival. Over 200 staff and students showcase science and scientific research in nine departments. Over 7,000 people visited the Festival during October 2015 beating our previous record visitor total of 6,500.
70. In 2015 the Science Outreach Team hosted an undergraduate summer internship, allowing us to support even more activities during the local schools’ summer term, a time when many schools request help to run special activity weeks and events.

### Experience Durham

71. The Experience Durham Team is responsible for student volunteering in Durham Student Organisations. A considerable proportion of volunteering comprises student-led projects engaging primary and secondary school students. In 2014/15 Experience Durham facilitated volunteers in over 30 schools and ran activities on site at the University. Volunteering to support educational attainment comprises teaching assistants within classes, afterschool clubs and one-to-one tutoring. Volunteers run holiday camps, youth clubs and sporting events and activities in the North East. Although project objectives differ they are developed in consultation with partners, colleges and students. The programmes offer, either directly or indirectly, an insight into university life. Examples include:

- Young Carers Project
- CATTS (Children Achieving Through Student Support) providing disadvantaged children aged 7-10 from County Durham with three day trips and a residential break during the Easter vacation
- International Scholars in Schools Programme
- Modern Foreign Languages Club
- Science Club
- Energy Clubs (sport outreach)
- Primary/secondary schools teaching assistants
- After school tutorials
- One-to-one tutoring
- Sixth Form tutoring
- E-mentoring

### **Evaluation and Development of Long-term Outreach Work**

72. Demonstrating impact of programmes such as Supported Progression scheme is relatively straightforward, as we can track a steady rise in numbers of participating students who apply to the University. Measuring the impact of longer-term outreach work with children in key stages 1, 2 and 3 is more challenging. Nonetheless we believe there are legitimate ways of doing so. For example, Durham University Libraries and Museums are about to launch a new outreach evaluation survey and trial it over the summer term 2016. This will include a section on perceptions of HE but also asking about essential skills that the Sutton Trust wants to promote. As another example, we can investigate if applicants to our Supported Progression Scheme and other programmes have had prior contact with the University to see if this included long-term outreach activities with younger children.
73. In 2014 and 2015 the first cohort of Supported Progression students graduated. We will evaluate their journey from initial interaction to employment or further study. We will utilise focus groups rather than standard feedback forms with an emphasis on thorough stakeholder analysis, so we know we are asking the right questions of the right people. This means ensuring that parents, guardians, teachers, advisers, student mentors and academic staff in the University have input into the overall evaluation, rather than just the student participants.
74. To ensure a comprehensive evaluation, national comparisons will be utilised alongside local monitoring and internal evaluation. We are participating in the Sutton Trust's new Common Evaluation Framework (CEF) which is being designed and executed by Durham University's Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (CEM) Centre. This framework allows the University to feed into a national programme of evaluation which can be used to assess impact and to monitor good practice at other institutions.
75. Increasing the ethnic diversity of its undergraduate student body remains challenging for Durham as a highly selecting institution, because some British ethnic minority groups for reasons of social context achieve less well at A-level on average compared to other ethnic

groups, and are less likely to study A-level subjects required for entry to certain degree programmes, particularly in the arts and humanities. Moreover, the County Durham population is not ethnically diverse which adds to the challenge.

76. The CEM centre has already carried out data research to inform a pilot of targeted outreach to black minority ethnic (BME) students who achieve highly in their A level examinations. Information on the number of BME pupils in each state school was taken from DfE data. Then, data from the National Pupil Database (NPD) containing A level results of all students sitting examinations was used to identify high achieving schools and colleges. This information was matched with the BME file to identify high achieving schools in which there are a large number of BME students. Information about progression rates to Durham University was also matched with this targeted schools information to inform target outreach.
77. As a next step, the University has commissioned a project to provide some estimate of the likely size of the pool of suitably qualified potential applicants to Durham University from British ethnic minority backgrounds, taking account of limiting educational and geographic factors so that the University can set realistic goals for increasing the diversity of its student intake.

### **Contextual Information**

78. Durham University uses contextual data in admissions and has already developed systems to use this data in its selection process to ensure that applicants with the greatest merit and potential for undergraduate study receive offers. The University intends to pursue these developments further by looking at all predictors of success at undergraduate level as a basis for selection. We will make greater use of targeted offers and contextual data, including guaranteed and differential offers to students of outstanding potential in target categories, using multiple indicators of disadvantage.
79. The University has commissioned two projects which will help to inform policy about the use of contextual data. Universities set entry requirements in terms of achieved A-level grades but often need to rely on predicted A-level grades and, to a lesser extent, prior achievement at GCSE when making initial admissions decisions. This may be problematic if predicted A-level grades and/or GCSE grades are poor predictors of subsequent A-level achievement, since universities will inevitably make offers to some applicants who do not later meet the entry requirements and reject some applicants who might have been accepted had more accurate information been available. The potential non-congruence of these indicators of applicant ability is more problematic still if certain applicant groups, such as those from lower socio-economic and ethnic minority backgrounds, are more likely than other groups to do better at A-level than their predicted A-level grades and GCSE results would imply.
80. Drawing on data relating to recent applications to degree programmes at Durham University, the first project will determine the degree of correlation between predicted and actual grades at A-level, and the degree of correlation of GCSE scores with predicted and actual grades at A-level. It will then consider whether certain applicant groups are more likely to have their A-level grades under-predicted or over-predicted and/or are more likely to have GCSE profiles that are incongruent with their predicted and actual grades at A-level.

81. A second project will analyse data on the prior achievement and degree outcomes of recent cohorts of Durham University graduates to understand how strongly prior attainment correlates with degree achievement and what threshold level of prior attainment is needed to achieve a 'good' (first or upper second) degree classification for a particular degree course. This will inform policy decisions about how much standard offers could be varied for socio-economically disadvantaged applicants without jeopardising their likely degree performance.
82. Using the evidence base provided by the above projects, the University plans to make greater use of contextual information in its decision-making processes for the 2016/17 admissions cycle onwards to support the achievement of targets it has set itself in this Access Agreement. We will extend the use of guaranteed and differential offers to students of outstanding potential in target categories, using multiple indicators of disadvantage.

### **Student success**

83. As the University is successful at recruiting increasing numbers of students from under-represented groups so it wishes to increase the support in place to ensure that these students achieve their potential in their studies and match the degree outcomes of students from other backgrounds. This will help maintain confidence in our access schemes which are aimed at recruiting students with the potential to succeed on a Durham degree but who would not normally consider applying. The University has therefore committed a modest level of resource to ensuring that it maintains its excellent student success levels. Post-entry support measures will be targeted on study skills support and pastoral support for students in the under-represented groups. Academic Advisers have been introduced, who are a student's first point of contact for advice on all academic matters, such as academic progress, academic plans and goals, programme of study and modules, as well as supporting progression planning. These are complemented by college staff who provide support on pastoral issues and personal development. The University hopes that these measures will play a role in encouraging under-represented groups to apply, who may be unnecessarily concerned about their ability to cope with a demanding programme of studies.

### **Progression**

84. The University has two new initiatives designed to improve the progression of students from under-represented groups. Firstly, it will commit resource to develop placement opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds as a means of enhancing their employment prospects. This targeted progression activity will be delivered through our Careers, Employability and Enterprise Centre. Secondly, from 2016 onwards, the University will actively promote its planned postgraduate fee discounts for students from under-represented backgrounds and its credit union financed postgraduate tuition fee loans.
85. The University will be offering fee discounts of £3,000 which are intended to help ensure that cost is not a barrier to progression to postgraduate study. The initial allocation will be in the order of 100 bursaries per year and the scheme will operate up to and including 2017 entry, at which point the scheme will be reviewed. Applicants for the fee discounts must meet one or

more criteria which relate to under-representation within the institutions' taught masters population. Applicants must be progressing from an undergraduate course for which the applicant was charged the higher tuition fee applying since 2012/13, intending to study either full-time or part-time for a maximum of two years, and domiciled in the UK or European Union (EU) (classified as Home/EU for tuition fee purposes). In addition, applicants must also meet one or more of the following criteria which relate to under-representation within the institutions' taught masters population: classified as either category 4 or 5 of the ACORN classification; have a household income of under £42,620 as assessed by the SLC; classified as a Care Leaver or assessed as having a disability. If more applicants qualify for the fee waiver than there are awards available then awards will be given to those judged to be in greatest need.

86. For Full-Time, UK self-financing students, we are offering an opportunity to apply for a Postgraduate Tuition Fee Loan of up to £7,000, to cover the cost of fees, through our collaboration with NEFirst Credit Union Limited. The loan scheme is designed for full time students who will complete their postgraduate course within one year, but applications from part-time students will be welcomed and considered.

### **Collaboration**

87. The University believes very strongly that a collaborative approach to fair access can be highly effective. With a great deal of excellent work taking place within the University we have been careful to foster links with like-minded groups who share our appetite for helping students from under-represented backgrounds to apply to high-demand universities. To this end we have established an Access Partnerships Team, with a focus on third party collaboration. We will therefore continue to work collaboratively with key partners, as well as actively developing new partnerships, including:

- Local, regional and national staff in schools and colleges
- Other universities in the North East through the North East Raising Aspirations Partnership
- An increased emphasis on the role of parents, guardians and other opinion shapers
- The National College for Teaching and Leadership
- Teach First
- NOCN and the Forum for Access and Continuing Education (through the Foundation Centre)
- The Sutton Trust (and indirectly through the Sutton Trust with the Wolfson Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, Barclays and HSBC)
- Universities in the Sutton Trust Summer Schools Group
- The Brightside Trust
- Buttle UK (Holder of the Buttle UK Quality Mark)
- National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL)
- The Who Cares Trust
- The Russell Group (especially through the Russell Group Widening Participation Association and the Russell Group Admissions Forum)
- Supporting Professionalism in Admissions
- HELOA

88. We actively target state schools across the UK to offer engagement activity that is both informative and provides support to those students who might otherwise not consider universities such as Durham. Additionally we are committed to strengthening our collaborative work with teachers, which underpins the success of many of our access programmes. We continue to work with groups of schools such as the Tower Hamlets Schools Partnership, the Grammar Schools Heads Association, Making the Leap (social mobility charity) and The Harris Federation. We have successfully expanded delivery of engagement events for teachers with the introduction of 'regional hubs'. This ensures that teachers within areas of the country such as the South East of England are provided with localised opportunities to develop effective relationships with Durham University. In addition we host a number of conferences for teachers and advisers, ranging from day events to residential subject-specific conferences both on site and within regional hubs. Through these we can share important information, advice and guidance, enhance teaching practice, and deepen shared understanding of developments in curricula. The links we have established through these conferences and visits to individual schools and colleges have also enabled us to develop a network of schools and colleges with which we maintain regular contact, building on face-to-face interactions. In order to further support schools across the UK we have developed a range of academic and study skill classroom resources for teachers and advisers to enhance student learning outcomes, support transition to Higher Education and further promote engagement with and aspiration to Higher Education.
89. As has already been outlined the Sutton Trust is one of the University's most important partnerships, and this has resulted in the development and delivery of an annual conference for teachers and advisers from state schools and colleges. Through this conference and others run by the University we expect to engage on-site with at least 150 state school teachers and advisers each year.
90. Through the Sutton Trust we are able to work with a number of high demand universities on issues of access. The Sutton Trust Summer Schools group includes Bristol, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Imperial College, Kings College London, Nottingham, St Andrews, University College London, Royal Veterinary College and Warwick. The universities meet and communicate regularly. We work on similar programmes, facilitated by the Sutton Trust, and so are able to share good practice and future programme developments.
91. The Russell Group collaborates in access activities such as the HEFCE funded NNCO Advancing Access project, designed to create resources for teachers and advisers in schools. Durham is involved in the Russell Group Widening Participation Association which allows for the sharing of good practice and resources with all the universities in the group working on access issues. In addition to regular meetings there are other events throughout the year that focus on developing successful common approaches to access work. Already we have agreed to participate in the Group's annual conferences for teachers by providing expert guidance on applying to University. The University is also an active member of the Russell Group Admissions Forum, through which we are able to discuss and share best practice in delivering an admissions process that supports identifying the strongest students from all backgrounds, including the use of contextual information. This enhances our active engagement with the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions organisation, through which we continue to share best practice,

most recently in a further review of the use of contextual information. Staff from Durham University have participated in the SPA National Expert Think Tank (NETT) considering Curriculum and Qualification Reforms.

92. The University has made significant progress in supporting care leavers. As a group, care leavers have always been implicitly part of our access work. We are proactive in encouraging applications from care leavers to our access programmes, giving them priority in selection for these programmes. We have also had some productive discussions with Buttle UK and NNECL, as well as providing information for the Who Cares Trust Handbook. Our work so far has been recognised with the Buttle UK Quality Mark as recognition of our commitment to care leavers. With the oversight of a Care Leavers Action Group, the University hopes to increase support for care leavers as well as other groups of applicants, such as those who are estranged from their families.
93. As stated above, in 2015 Durham joined the North East Raising Aspirations Partnership which is a collaboration of Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria, Sunderland and Teesside Universities. The partnership is facilitating good information, advice and guidance on application to higher education through school visits, conferences for teachers and other ad hoc activities. (See paragraphs 45-46).

## **Section 3: Financial Support**

### **3.1 Financial Support for Students**

94. The University concluded, following consultation with its Students' Union, that the loan arrangements available through Student Finance England make fee waivers a less attractive offer to prospective students, whereas packages that provide financial support in cash or in kind are preferred.

#### **Bursaries and Accommodation Subsidies for Students Progressing from the Supported Progression Compact Scheme**

95. The University has a financial bursary scheme for students who progress from the Supported Progression Scheme who currently receive £5,500 per annum for the duration of their course. Any students progressing from the scheme who also qualify for funding from the Durham Grant Scheme currently have their combined total bursary and scholarship amount capped at £5,500. It is estimated that in 2017/18, 105 new entrants will be offered the bursaries, which, over the three or four years of their programmes, will cost approximately £1.6 million. In their first year, students will normally be offered the bursary in the form of a subsidy for college accommodation. The University is currently reviewing the bursary amount and it may change for students entering the University in future years.

### **Bursaries and Accommodation Subsidies for those with Household Income below £25,000**

96. Through the Durham Grant Scheme, the University will provide financial support packages of £2,000, either as subsidised accommodation or as a cash bursary, to all home<sup>3</sup> undergraduate students entering in 2017/18, for each year of study, where the residual household income is below £25k per annum (as assessed by Student Finance England in accordance with its guidance on Assessing Financial Entitlement). Approximately 630 new students will be in this category in 2017/18.

### **Additional hardship funding for those with Household Income below £42,650**

97. In view of the ending of dedicated funding for the Access to Learning Fund (ALF), the University is providing substitute additional hardship funding for undergraduate students resident in the UK, where the residual household income has been assessed as no greater than £42.65k per annum. We estimate that this will be a commitment of the order of £100k per year.

### **Total Commitment for Financial Support**

98. The accumulation of new arrangements through successive access agreements will reach a reasonably steady state in 2017/18, at which point the total commitment for financial support under the various Access Agreements will be of the order of £5.5 million.

### **Total Countable Expenditure**

99. The commitment to financial support of about £5.5 million and the commitment to outreach, student success, progression and evaluation activities of about £5.4 million give a total commitment under the access agreement under steady state of approximately £10.9 million. All this expenditure is countable under the guidance provided by the Office for Fair Access. It consists of expenditure in previous access agreements that the University is continuing to make and expenditure on new access and student retention measures consistent with the guidance. In view of the uncertainty over the future level of the HEFCE Student Opportunity Allocation, the University will review the detail of its commitments when the HEFCE funding level is known and make adjustments accordingly, nonetheless honouring the student financial support commitments stated in this agreement.

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<sup>3</sup> Classified as home domiciled by Student Finance England and classified as Home or EU fee status by Durham University

## **Section 4: Targets and Milestones**

### **Access Targets**

100. The University is committed to making sustained progress in increasing the proportion of students from under-represented groups.
101. The OFFA guidance suggests that, in choosing what targets and milestones to use to evaluate the effectiveness of access measures, the University might consider both the HESA Key Performance Indicators and other statistical measures. The University will therefore set milestones and longer-term targets for enrolments from both HESA Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPNs) and for lower socio-economic classifications as expressed through ACORN postcode classification 4 or 5, along with milestones and targets for its Supported Progression Compact Scheme and its Sutton Trust Summer Schools. The University anticipates that the achievement of the Supported Progression Compact Scheme and Sutton Trust Summer Schools milestones will lead to consequent improvement in the HESA KPIs.
102. The HESA measure for Low Participation Neighbourhoods is enrolments as a proportion of those who are Home/EU fee status, UK domiciled, and under 21 years of age using the POLAR 3 dataset. The University's targets are to increase significantly the proportion of young entrants from LPNs as measured by the HESA KPI from 4.5% to 6.4% and to reduce significantly the number of percentage points below the HESA KPI adjusted sector average (the 'benchmark') from 1.8 to 0.1 by 2020/21. These are challenging targets, amounting to a 42% improvement on current performance in terms of the proportion of enrolments and if achieved will result in the largest proportion of LPN enrolments at Durham University since the introduction of the POLAR 3 categorisation in 2009/10.
103. As a measure of lower social class, the University's target is for entrants in the academic year from postcodes classified as ACORN categories 4 or 5 as a proportion of all entrants from postcodes classified within the ACORN dataset. From a starting point of 7%, the target is to improve performance by 3.5 percentage points to 10.5% in 2020/21.
104. Proportional intermediate milestones for entrants from LPN postcodes (POLAR 3) and from ACORN categories 4 and 5 are set for each academic year.
105. Whilst focusing on improving performance in these areas, the University also aims to maintain the recent major increase in the proportion of young entrants from state school or college as measured by the HESA KPI at no less than 63%.
106. The targets relating to the Support Progression Compact Scheme are as follows:
  - a. Applications to Durham from those students who participated in the Supported Progression Compact Scheme. By the 2020/21 application cycle: 190 per year
  - b. Enrolments at Durham from those students who participated in the Supported Progression Compact Scheme. By 2020 entry: 120 per year
  - c. Enrolments at other selective universities from those students who participated in the Supported Progression Compact Scheme, selective universities being defined by entry tariff score, as those with an institutional average of 375 tariff points or more. By 2020 entry: 40 per year

107. The target relating to the Sutton Trust Summer Schools is a minimum number of enrolments at Durham from those students who participated in the Durham Sutton Trust Summer Schools. By 2020 entry: 52 per year.
108. Proportional intermediate milestones in the period up to 2020/21 have been set for each academic year for the Supported Progression Compact Scheme and for Sutton Trust Summer Schools targets.
109. The University has a collaborative target for activity involving the North East Raising Aspirations Partnership of the five universities in the North East, for the number of beneficiaries of this activity. The 2017/18 joint target for the Partnership is 19,965 individuals. Proportional intermediate milestones in the period up to 2017/18 have been set for each academic year.
110. The target relating to the number of children and young people involved in Durham University's Museums educational outreach activity is a minimum number in 2020/21 of 18,000. Proportional intermediate milestones in the period up to 2020/21 have been set for each academic year.

### **Retention Target**

111. The University already has an excellent retention rate and therefore its target for non-continuation is to maintain the current excellent record in absolute terms: young full-time first degree entrants not continuing with their studies beyond their first year no greater than 2%.

### **Progression Target**

112. The University will aim to enrol 100 students who qualify for the postgraduate £3,000 fee waiver.

## **Section 5: Monitoring and Evaluation Arrangements**

113. The University has employed the services of its Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (CEM) and other researchers in the University to undertake evaluation. The Centre, which works with schools nationally, has access to very large quantities of relevant background data against which to evaluate the University's access measures. The University has also collaborated in an external research project to evaluate the retention benefits of bursaries.
114. Policy in respect of widening access is developed by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) through the University Executive Committee, the Education Committee and Senate, the latter two having student membership. Operational performance in respect of widening access is monitored by the same governance structures.
115. The Student Recruitment and Admissions Office has institutional responsibility for the implementation and delivery of measures to promote access to the University. Evaluation of impact is embedded in all access programmes from the outset and it is through continuous monitoring and analysis that we improve and expand our outreach work. A long term commitment to widening participation has allowed us to create longstanding projects which we

have been able to grow. Our Access Partnerships team has become dynamic in responding to the needs of pre-16 cohorts with a variety of new projects being put in place with a relatively short lead-in time. Supported Progression has grown to the point at which we can happily look at increasing the size and scope of the Programme to meet increasing demand. Our Sutton Trust Programme has developed well with over 1400 applications for 360 places, but in order to continue this development we will be looking at ways in which we can increase its impact, based on evidence of previous success as well as evaluation compiled by Durham University's Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring.

## **Section 6: Equality and Diversity**

116. The focus of this Access Agreement is on representation from Low Participation Neighbourhoods and lower socio-economic groups. Durham University is aware of its commitments in this respect and also its duties under the Equality Act 2010 to advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not. It is recognised that BME and disabled people are statistically overrepresented within lower socio-economic groups, and as such this Access Agreement is another mechanism to help the University develop its approach to equality and diversity.
117. As stated above, the University is engaging in outreach activity designed to increase the number of applications from BME students. This work will be supported by research currently being undertaken within the University to help us best target our activity to deliver the greatest impact in terms of increasing applications to Durham. We also hope to increase dedicated support for students from BME backgrounds and the University has had productive discussions with Naz Hussain from the Bradford-based charity SHAPE UK about how we can support BME populations based on feedback from recent graduates. SHAPE has been involved in a number of projects to support BME communities and has valuable experience to share. Our Supported Progression Programme has extended to West Yorkshire where we hope generally greater levels of ethnic diversity than the North East will allow us to engage with more BME students. The University is also looking at how it can ensure we have facilities that meet the needs of students from all cultures, so, for example, meeting spaces that don't have areas serving alcohol. We have already adapted our central outreach work so we can meet the needs of different cultures and religions and ensure that feelings of exclusion should not be a barrier.
118. Durham is committed to promoting equality and diversity. The Pro Vice Chancellor (Education) has overall responsibility for the agenda, chairing the Diversity and Equality Advisory Group (DEAG) and leading the continuing improvements in our approach across the institution. This Group reports to the University Executive Committee and to University Council. Through this, equality and diversity is overseen at the highest levels within the University. The University has also developed an Equality and Diversity Strategy and has a Dean for Equality and Diversity, supported by an Equality and Diversity team. Part of our Strategy includes the setting of seven key objectives, one of which is that "we will collaborate with partners to see a continued increase in students coming to the University from our targeted under-represented groups". The strategy will be reviewed during the 2015/16 academic year. In addition, the University's

Council receives a report annually in relation to equality and diversity. The report details activities undertaken in the previous academic year to deliver against the institutional equality and diversity objectives. It also comments on trends in staff and student data for all reported protected characteristics at key lifecycle junctures and sets out the key objectives for the forthcoming year.

119. Durham has clear HR policies, effective team working and delegated responsibility for the agenda across the University and it is making progress in key areas. Examples of the University's commitment to equality and diversity include our Foundation Centre, joining Stonewall's Diversity Champion programme, achievement of Two Tick accreditation and receipt of a University wide bronze Athena SWAN award. A further institutional Athena Swan application has been submitted and a range of departmental awards have been made, with plans to increase the number of departments holding awards. Two departments from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Health were successful in achieving a Gender Equality Charter Mark award following a pilot by the Equality Challenge Unit. The Schools of Biological and Biomedical Sciences and Engineering & Computing Sciences both made successful applications in 2014/15, to be formally awarded in 2015/16. Further ahead the University plans to submit an application for Silver Institutional Award and to have at least 17 out of our 24 Departments holding an Athena SWAN award.
120. The University's primary activity relating to mature students is the Foundation Centre. A key strand of the Foundation Centre's activity is to help mature learners return to education and there is direct progression from the Foundation Centre onto all University degree programmes.
121. The University is considering how Equality and Diversity might be embedded within student curricula. It is planning to devise a pilot for 2016/17 that will incorporate a range of Equality and Diversity issues into the start and end of a PGR programme.
122. The University is committed to the principles of inclusion and encourages applicants from disabled students. We have a proven track record of providing tailored support packages for individual students and arranging appropriate support. The Disability Support Service works proactively with students who declare a disability prior to enrolment to ensure all reasonable adjustments are anticipated, assessed and implemented in a timely manner. There is a dedicated team of specialists to support both disabled students and we aim to capture information regarding student disclosure at any point in the student lifecycle.
123. During 2014/15 the University commissioned a peer-led, independent audit of the University's provision for disabled students. The audit identified that the University has all necessary policies in place and that they are fit for purpose and in line with good practice across the sector. However, there are gaps in practice when implementing such policies and the fieldwork identified areas that would benefit from process improvements. The recommendations identified ways in which processes can be enhanced, to ensure disability support is being delivered to students as envisaged and in a more consistent way and an action plan has been developed to deliver this. The report also identified a strategic issue which the University will need to address in the short to medium term. There is a need to move away from providing individual reasonable adjustments for disabled students to more anticipatory adjustments operating within an inclusive teaching environment.

124. The Government announced during 2014/15 a series of changes to the Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA) which will come into effect fully in 2016/17. The changes will require the University to provide lower level, non-medical help support to students previously funded by the DSA by adopting more inclusive teaching practices. The University is reviewing its approach in this area to ensure that an increasingly inclusive approach to teaching is adopted thereby minimising the number of costly individual adjustments required for disabled students. An Inclusive Teaching Task and Finish Group has been established, chaired by the Dean and Deputy to PVC (Education), and will report to Education Committee in anticipation of the changes expected for 2016.
125. The University dovetails its support for disabled students with the University's wider approach to equality and diversity. Senior staff overseeing disabled student support are represented on DEAG and influence the strategic direction adopted by the University in this area. A consequence of this collaboration was the establishment of an Access Review Group with responsibility for enhancing the accessibility of the University's estate for disabled staff, students and visitors. The Group has budgetary responsibilities and reports to DEAG.
126. Across the sector, universities are experiencing an increasing complexity of presentations; more students are pre-disclosing mental health conditions and increased levels of self-harm and suicidal thoughts. The University has recognised and responded to this situation. For example, it has enhanced delivery of counselling services through introduction of a mental health adviser seconded from the NHS. It is recognised however that there is further work to do and a review of the University's mental health provision is imminent. The outcomes of that review will be implemented during 2016/17.
127. The requirement to identify and address diversity challenges within each department and college has been part of the annual planning process for some. The approach seeks to embed equality and diversity across the institution as illustrated by the University's response to the Equality Act 2010, with the successful delivery of this Access Agreement being acknowledged as one of the key diversity priorities for the University.
128. The University views impact assessments as having an integral role in ensuring that our policies, procedures and practice operate to support our diversity objectives. We also recognise their effectiveness in ensuring fairness and improving organisational effectiveness as well as helping us meet our legislative duties. As such, we undertook an impact assessment of the Access Agreement during the 2014/15 academic year. This assessment determined that the Access Agreement contributes positively to creating an increasingly diverse student body and one in which students with a number of protected characteristics are encouraged to participate and are supported post-arrival. The University will establish impact assessments as a routine activity when signing off new policy and strategy developments.
129. The University collects, collates and publishes annual admissions statistics that include reporting on ethnicity, sex, declared disability and age group. Through this the University can monitor its admissions process to ensure that there is fairness and consistency of treatment for applicants from all backgrounds and that admissions decisions are made on academic grounds. These statistics are reported annually to Education Committee, which reports to University Senate.

130. Participation in some of our access activities is only restricted to students on the basis of ACORN postcode classification and school type. This focus enables our activity to be targeted towards our milestones, which in themselves reflect backgrounds which are under-represented in the University's student profile. We will ensure that protected characteristics are recognised in the design and the selection decisions for entry to these activities.
131. The University has established a Sexual Violence and Misconduct Taskforce to research and review existing policy and practice around receiving, investigating and resolving complaints of sexual violence. In addition the Taskforce has considered current forms of support for those who have experienced sexual violence and those against whom allegations have been made. The Taskforce has reviewed existing research in this area to inform its work as well as best practice from across the higher education sectors in the UK and abroad. Implementation of the outcomes of the Taskforce will be taken forward in 2016/17

## **Section 6: Provision of Information to Prospective Students**

132. Through its website, the University will publish clear, accessible and timely information for applicants and students on the fees that it will charge and the financial support that it will offer.
133. The University will also disseminate information via its outreach and recruitment activity.
134. Within the University's Academic Office there is a student financial support service, which will work with staff in the University's constituent colleges to ensure that all existing students have access to the financial support information that they need. The development of guidance information provided through our programme of open days is key to providing clear and accessible support.
135. The University will also provide timely information to UCAS and SLC to populate their applicant-facing web services.

## **Section 7: Consulting with Students**

136. The foundation of all outreach work at the University is our student body, and our Colleges provide a locus for the activities in which our current students engage with our target students. Almost all access activities involve undergraduate students as guides and role models. Durham has a Student Ambassador scheme that offers a high level of training and support to enable Durham students to engage with the fair access agenda. Every fair access residential activity will involve undergraduate mentors who provide academic and pastoral support to the school students taking part. Increasingly Student Ambassadors are being included in the planning process and are creating more activities that are student-led as part of Durham's residential access activities programme. Student Ambassadors are also being used in School and College visits and UCAS fairs, as a means to provide role models to a diversity of prospective students. We have also developed the role of "sabbatical officer" within the Student Recruitment and Access Office, whereby four recent graduates are recruited for a year to the Access and Student

Recruitment team. This provides strong input from those who have recent experience of the decisions that a young person will have to make between 14 and 18 years of age.

137. The University intends to work with the Students' Union to integrate its access activity further with a range of extra-curricular activities and initiatives that will offer current students different opportunities, not only to develop as individuals but also to offer their experience to encourage students from lower socio-economic backgrounds to come to the University.
138. The University also ensures that resources and materials used for centrally organised outreach work is available for use by student groups involved in outreach activity, including the University's successful and wide-reaching Student Community Action team.
139. Through its evaluation mechanisms the University is able to gather feedback from students participating in our access activities to inform the future development of these, so that they best meet the aims of the University and the needs of students we are working with.
140. In drafting the 2012 Access Agreement, the University consulted with Durham Students' Union in detail on its preferred options for student financial support. It supported the University's conclusion that given the loan arrangements available through Student Finance England, fee waivers are a less attractive offer to prospective students, whereas packages that provide financial support in cash or in kind are preferable. In each of the successive versions of the original 2012 Agreement, including this one, the Students' Union officers were consulted again about the content of whole Agreement.

**Table 7 - Targets and milestones**

Institution name: University of Durham

Institution UKPRN: 10007143

**Table 7a** - Statistical targets and milestones relating to your applicants, entrants or student body

Reference number	Stage of the lifecycle (drop-down menu)	Target type (drop-down menu)	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target? (drop-down menu)	Baseline year (drop-down menu)	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
							2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	
T16a_01	Access	HESA T1b - Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3) (Young, full-time, undergraduate entrants)	Percentage proportion of young entrants from Low Participation Neighbourhoods in the academic year as measured by the HESA KPI	No	2013-14	4.5%	4.9%	5.2%	5.6%	6.0%	6.4%	Baseline is 2013-14 as this is the most recent published data
T16a_02	Access	HESA T1b - Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3) (Young, full-time, undergraduate entrants)	Percentage points below the HESA KPI benchmark for young entrants from Low Participation Neighbourhoods	No	2013-14	1.8	1.4	1.1	0.7	0.3	0.1	Baseline is 2013-14 as this is the most recent published data
T16a_03	Access	Other statistic - Location (please give details in the next column)	Percentage proportion of entrants in the academic year from postcodes classified as ACORN categories 4 or 5 as a proportion of all entrants from postcodes classified within the ACORN dataset	No	2012-13	7.0%	8.5%	9.0%	9.5%	10.0%	10.5%	Baseline is 2012-13 as this was the year that the University started to use the ACORN dataset to inform selection decisions
T16a_04	Access	Other statistic - Applications (please give details in the next column)	Applications in the admissions cycle to Durham from those who participated in the Supported Progression Scheme	Yes	2011-12	41	150	160	170	180	190	Baseline is 2011-12 as this was the first year for participants in the Scheme to enrol at the University for undergraduate degrees
T16a_05	Access	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	New enrolments in the first year at Durham from those who participated in the Supported Progression Compact Scheme	Yes	2011-12	31	100	105	110	115	120	Baseline is 2011-12 as this was the first year for participants in the Scheme to enrol at the University for undergraduate degrees
T16a_06	Access	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	Enrolments at other selective universities (average institutional tariff points on entry of 375+) from participants in the Supported Progression Compact Scheme	Yes	2011-12	2	40	40	40	40	40	Baseline is 2011-12 as this was the first year for participants in the Scheme to enrol at the University for undergraduate degrees
T16a_07	Access	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	New enrolments in the first year at Durham from those who participated in the Sutton Trust Summer Schools	Yes	2013-14	19	42	45	48	50	52	Baseline is 2013-14 as this was the first year for participants in the Summer Schools to enrol at the University for undergraduate degrees
T16a_08	Student success	HESA T3a - No longer in HE after 1 year (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	Maintain the current excellent non-continuation rate	No	Other (please give details in Description column)	2%	Maintain 2%	Maintain 2%	Maintain 2%	Maintain 2%	Maintain 2%	Baseline data from 2009-10
T16a_09	Progression	Other statistic - Socio-economic (please give details in the next column)	Enrolments of students who qualify for the postgraduate £3,000 fee waiver	No	2015-16	0	100	100	0	0	0	The fee waiver is being introduced for the 2016-17 and 2017-18 academic years, after which it will be reviewed against the intended aims. Therefore milestones for 2018-19 onwards are not stated.

**Table 7b - Other milestones and targets.**

Reference Number	Select stage of the lifecycle	Please select target type from the drop-down menu	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
							2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	
T16b_01	Access	Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Collaborative target for NE Raising Aspirations Partnership (this is a target for the whole partnership)	Yes	2014-15	8623	18150	19965	TBC	TBC	TBC	Long term funding cannot be confirmed at this time and therefore milestones for 2018/19 onwards are not included.
T16b_02	Access	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Minimum number of children and young people involved in Museums educational outreach activity	No	2011-12	7000	10000	12000	14000	16000	18000	