

UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON

ACCESS AGREEMENT

2017-18 Entrants

(Version Revised 29 June 2016)

These Access Agreement proposals are based on information and guidance available in April-June 2016. We reserve the right to submit a revised Access Agreement in the light of emerging details or other changes.

1. The University of Wolverhampton's Widening Participation Strategy

INTRODUCTION:

The University's Strategic Plan (2012 to 2017) makes the following statement:

The University is a major contributor to the success of the higher education sector's influence in widening participation. This requires considerable investment in developing progression routes and coherent ladders of opportunities. The University will continue to be at the leading edge of promoting social mobility, enabling and contributing to the significant improvement in individual life chances across our communities. By providing the opportunity for individuals to engage in higher education we will be shaping economic and social regeneration in the years to come. The University sees itself as having a key role to play as an anchor for economic and social regeneration, working closely with schools, employers and communities to accelerate regional growth. We will build these ladders of opportunity on the changing needs of our students and the requirements of the changing world of employment.

This statement reflects the historic position of the University, which has consistently exceeded all widening participation benchmarks, and restates our commitment to retaining that position. The University is currently in the process of consultation on the development of our new Strategic Plan - which we will be seeking to launch before the end of the current academic year (by July 2016). The development of the Access Agreement is therefore subject to any final confirmation of our strategic ambitions and priorities.

We are cognisant of the changes to the fair access landscape; because this is our core mission as the University of Opportunity. We are pleased that there has been an increased focus on under-represented and disadvantaged groups entering higher education and the ambitious social mobility goals announced by the Prime Minister (January 2016). However we are regularly disappointed that there is little recognition for those universities who are already delivering successfully towards widening participation targets – where we are working at the leading edge of promoting social mobility, enabling and contributing to individual life chances across our communities, and in many cases significantly exceeding benchmarks.

From HESA UKPIs *Widening Participation of under-represented groups 2014/15.*

Percentage of (young) full-time first degree entrants –

	UW position	Benchmark
From state schools / colleges:	98.9%	97%
From NS-SEC Classes 4, 5, 6 & 7	56.9%	44%
From Low participation neighbourhoods	20.0%	15.8%

In the same period the proportion of enrolled students who identify as being from a BME background at the University is 41%. This compares favourably to the best estimates of BME students in higher education in the UK (circa 25%) and to the national population (circa 20%). As a University that is both for and of its region we are committed to ensuring that our University community reflects the communities in which we operate. For example the BME population of the City of Wolverhampton is estimated to be 35% of the residential population.

Our mission is strongly rooted within the regions we serve – although not exclusively. We already operate flexible and distributed learning models, with plans to expand on these. We are the main sponsors of two University Technical Colleges, with plans to expand on these, and we already work closely with our 13 sponsored schools, through the University of Wolverhampton Multi-Academy Trust.

The challenge for the University of Wolverhampton therefore is two-fold:

1. **To continue to grow our overall student numbers;** maintaining our overall widening participation profile and working to identify and tackle the causes of under-representation amongst any specific groups.
2. **To continue to improve the outcomes for all students** (in terms of academic progression, success and graduate employment) and to ensure that any disparities in attainment and outcomes between identified groups are eliminated.

2. The Role of the Access Agreement in the Widening Participation Strategy

This Access Agreement sets out how the University utilises the 2012 student funding framework to contribute towards its widening participation goals. This includes:

- Scholarship schemes for high achievers, and for sports excellence – 50% of whom, given our entry profile, will be from low income households – and for students from key partners in our Schools Engagement Framework.
- Progression Scholarships for new entrants from our School & College partners serving areas of traditionally low participation in higher education.
- A bursary scheme for d/Deaf entrants and care leavers.
- A lower fee for part-time students designed to provide a genuine high quality and low cost alternative route.
- A suite of projects and activities designed to maintain our WP recruitment profile and to improve the outcomes for those students.

3. Tuition Fees

For 2017-18 entrants the University's proposed standard tuition fee for home/EU students on full-time and sandwich undergraduate degree programmes, and the PGCE, will be **£9250** p.a. (uplift recognises that the University will charge the inflationary increase permitted under TEF1)

The proposed fee for Foundation Degrees and HNC/D courses taught at the University will be £8250 p.a. Proposed tuition fees for full-time Foundation Degrees and HNC/Ds students taught in partner colleges will not exceed £6,165 p.a. The fee for 2017-18 entrants onto Foundation Year programmes (whether taught at the University or in partner colleges) will not exceed £6,165 p.a. There will be no tuition fee charged for sandwich year students or for study year abroad students.

The tuition fee for part-time students, whether University or College based, will not exceed the basic fee cap. This is in itself an Access measure, as it provides an alternative route into higher education for any potential applicant who is deterred by higher tuition fees.

4. Access, retention and employability measures

The major expenditure incurred is in supporting a widening participation student base. Additionally, the University expects to spend at least 10% of its additional tuition fee income on more specific Access Agreement and related measures. Our activities will include, for example:

<p>The Black Country Children's University:</p>	<p>The Black Country Children's University™ (BCCU) currently comprises three campuses in Wolverhampton, Sandwell and Dudley, with a further Walsall campus joining in 2016. Coordinated by the University of Wolverhampton, the BCCU is part of the national Children's University Trust.</p> <p><i>"At the heart of its work is the ambition to raise aspirations, boost achievement and foster a love of learning so that young people can make the most of their abilities and interests".</i></p>
<p>Inspiring Deaf and Hard of Hearing Learners:</p>	<p>Drawing on significant expertise and community links the University is a leading recruiter of Deaf and Hard of Hearing learners. We are the main sponsors of DEAFFEST 2016.</p>
<p>Inspiring Looked After Children:</p>	<p>Working with three local authority "Virtual Schools" the University coordinates research and a dedicated mentoring programme for Looked After Children. We are working to develop pathways to progression for children from a care background and Estranged Students.</p>
<p>Promoting STEM subjects through Sci Fest:</p> <p>Science activities associated with the launch of our new £25M Science Centre – The Rosalind Franklin Building:</p>	<p>Now in its fourth year - Our week-long celebration of science, technology, engineering and maths with dedicated "Primary Day", "GCSE Day", "A-Level Day" and Family Day.</p> <p>Opened in September 2014 - features a dedicated outreach classroom for use with Schools and Colleges.</p>
<p>ArtsFest & Sports Fest:</p>	<p>Building on the successful model established by SciFest these two new festivals seek to celebrate and encourage participation in the Arts and Sports with events and activities aimed at families and young people.</p>
<p>Reduced part-time tuition fees:</p>	<p>The University has established a lower part-time fee level that promotes and encourages flexible part-time study. This measure is focussed on mature and "in-work" learners who might not otherwise consider a full-time study option.</p>
<p><i>The University is also the lead institution in the recently launched Explore Network – a collaborative network with Keele, Staffordshire and Harper Adams Universities. This</i></p>	

network aims to reach out to schools, with a focus on raising aspirations amongst younger (primary age) children through activities that are not otherwise reflected in this access agreement.

Retention, attainment and employability measures

The University has published a new Learning & Teaching Strategy with a focus on inclusive practices.

While deliberately focussed on all students we recognise that there are disparities in attainment, outcomes and satisfaction amongst BME Students and Students with Disabilities.

Appointment of 40 Graduate Teaching Assistants, focussed on supporting all Level 4 students in understanding assessment requirements, in response to evidence that this specific intervention improves BME student attainment and supports overall retention.

The University has committed a significant investment to “The Digital Campus” which will deliver a new Virtual Learning Environment and **Applications Anywhere** - which will provide access to specialist software for all students – including a suite of accessible software products (designed for students with various disabilities) which will also be available to all students.

New “Capture” technologies will be available in all large classrooms by September 2017 which will allow students to review lecture content and revise and develop notes and practical techniques.

Employing graduate interns to deliver a range of support and advice services to existing students.

We currently employ up to 40 graduate interns in a range of roles including applicant advice and nurturing and supporting student engagement and achievement. These opportunities are provided through a salaried scheme that gives employment and training opportunities to recent graduates.

Reducing additional charges to students on courses with specific additional costs.

Activities/materials valued at £250k p.a., previously charged out to students, are now covered in the tuition fee (as per our Statement on a Transparent Tuition Fee).

Provision for students previously supported by the DSA.

We will develop options to provide alternative support to students no longer eligible for DSA support.

Hardship funds

We will maintain the level of financial support for students previously earmarked as the Access to Learning Fund.

The University has committed £630,000 to a new Dennis Turner Opportunity Fund

	<i>replacing the previous government cut to the Access to Learning Fund.</i>
'Skills for Learning' support provided in Learning Centres:	The University supports students at all levels through an extensive programme of on-line support, workshops and individual guidance delivered beyond the curriculum through our Learning Centres.
A range of 'Employability' initiatives delivered under the University's Enterprise and Employability sub-Strategy:	<p>Opportunities for all students to undertake structured work experience, participate in mentoring opportunities, receive high quality IAG and have access to a job pool of employment opportunities.</p> <p>The University offers an integrated "Employability Award" that works in parallel with the curriculum to offer an opportunity to recognise and reflect on employability skills.</p> <p>We have one of the highest numbers of KTPs in the UK; and we have introduced a further scheme (KEEN) which provides graduates with an opportunity to work full-time in a business on short-term commercial projects.</p> <p>The University operates the regional SPEED programme which offers recent graduates support in establishing their own commercial business.</p>
Volunteering Bureau – Volunteer Central.	A joint Students' Union/University initiative designed to offer students the opportunity to improve their employability through volunteering activities.
Healthcare Education; student nurses, midwives, and other health professionals	At the time of writing we are aware of the announced plans to reform the NHS Bursary system and routes into nursing. At the same time a consultation exercise is currently open – Healthcare student funding consultation (until 30 June 2016). The University will be making a submission to the consultation and is currently considering how we might support and advise prospective students who will be affected by these changes. We would also wish to highlight that significant numbers of students who choose these programmes are likely to be from a widening participation category and may benefit from targeted access measures. Until the consultation has reported we are not able to make any firm

	commitments within this version of the Access Agreement about any prospective access measures. The timescales for the Access Agreement clearly make it difficult for institutions to plan in these situations.
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The proposals outlined in this Access Agreement continue to develop our on-going work, endorsed by our Board of Governors, reflecting four key areas:

First, we will continue to enhance the employability of our students as a direct means of influencing social mobility. Where appropriate we will employ students or graduate interns to undertake outreach/enrichment and student support work, which will mean that additional financial support will be available to students, but in the form of payment for work undertaken (with associated employment experience) rather than simply as a scholarship or fee waiver.

Secondly, through our Schools & Colleges Engagement Strategy; which envisages holistic and joined-up engagement with academies, trusts, schools and colleges, encompassing the work of our social enterprise Education Central, our own outreach, and direct provision of, and wider support for, teacher training.

Thirdly, we will develop, in partnership with a range of public and private providers, distributed provision to enable students who are less geographically mobile to participate in our programmes – through our distributed learning centres and the development of initiatives to reach out to family members (Adult Learners) via our partner schools.

Fourthly, we will continue to support the aspirations of our students in successfully completing their studies through a focus on support for enrolled students; ensuring progression, monitoring retention and enabling successful outcomes so that every student has the potential to succeed.

5. Additional Financial Support for Students

Distinction Scholarships

Scholarships will be provided to all UK-based entrants with ABB grades at A level, or equivalent (as defined by HEFCE).

Sports Scholarships

A fixed number of scholarships will be offered for entrants with an outstanding record in sport.

Progression Scholarships

A fixed number of scholarships will be reserved for candidates nominated by schools and colleges participating in the University's Schools Engagement Framework.

Access Bursaries

To be eligible for consideration, candidates must:

- Have applied to study (and subsequently enrol) on a full-time course with a tuition fee of £6000 p.a. or more.
- Have firmly accepted a conditional or unconditional offer of a place at the University of Wolverhampton by July 2017; and

And either

- Be a disabled person with Deafness /hearing Loss or other hearing impairment and eligible for support via the Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) which has been declared to the University prior to enrolment. (If necessary, this criterion may be reviewed in the light of the detailed Government changes to DSA eligibility expected to be developed shortly).

Or

- Be a Care Leaver which must be declared to the University prior to enrolment. [A care leaver is someone who has previously lived with foster parents, in a children's home, orphanage, or sheltered accommodation. [The Children \(Leaving Care\) Act 2000](#) defines a care leaver as someone who has been in the care of the Local Authority for a period of 13 weeks or more spanning their 16th birthday].

We have continued to invest in financial support for students where we continue to receive affirmative feedback about the impact. We understand our local context and our communities and many of our (prospective) students (and their families) remain highly debt adverse, from the poorest family backgrounds, and from families with no previous experience of higher education. All four schemes will take the form of a £2000 cash payment paid in two instalments during the course of the student's first year of study when the funds are needed most – i.e. when students tell us that hardship conditions might impact on their potential continuation.

These schemes are not specifically targeted at 'OFFA countable' students, since we would take the view that this is not an inclusive access measure. However since more than 50% of our overall intake comes from the lowest income groups, and our key partner schools are based in low participation neighbourhoods, it is assumed that at least 50% of Distinction Scholars and Sports scholars, and 80% of Partnership Scholars, will be 'OFFA countable'.

6. Targets and Milestones

OUR COLLABORATIVE OUTREACH TARGETS		
AMBITION	FOCUS	SPECIFIC MEASURE(s)
<p>We will seek to raise aspirations to Higher Education amongst Looked After Children / Care Leavers. These are a significantly disadvantaged and under-represented group.</p> <p>The University will combine its academic expertise in this field and associated support for Care Leavers who do become students with an ambitious collaborative project: Aspire2Uni.</p>	<p>Working with three local authorities in our region we will coordinate an intensive and effective progression programme. Working with the Creating Chances Trust to provide mentoring and aspiration-raising for children from Year 7.</p> <p>As part of the programme the University will organise a series of ongoing events and initiatives from year seven through to year thirteen, designed to raise aspirations, break down barriers and inform progression to HE. A dedicated mentor will be available for the young people, and Virtual Schools will provide any academic support required to aid progression. Working with local businesses, Creating Chances Trust will raise funds and access high quality work placements, potential employment opportunities and professional role models.</p>	<p>To increase the number of participants (mentees) by at least 30 students in each year of the programme.</p> <p>Ultimately, utilising the HEAT database we will be able to track progression into Higher Education.</p>
<p>At the time of writing the University is developing a submission for consideration as part of the (new) National Collaborative Outreach Programme. While this work is in progress we are unable to commit to any more specific targets that might be later addressed by this project.</p>		

OUR ACCESS TARGETS		
AMBITION	FOCUS	SPECIFIC MEASURE(s)
<p>We will seek to deliver an annual increase in the proportion of students enrolled from low participation neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>We will focus on low participation “target wards” within our regional footprint as identified by the National Collaborative Outreach Programme.</p>	<p><i>Percentage of (young) full-time first degree entrants from low participation neighbourhoods:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 20% to 23% by 2020.

Overall, the University's UK student body will reflect the total population demographic of the communities we serve with respect to ethnicity and gender.	We will deliver an improved flexible offer to grow part-time student numbers (with an emphasis on mature learners)	<i>Continue to grow the number of students enrolled on a part-time course.</i>
We will seek to deliver an annual increase in the proportion of Disabled People enrolled and studying at the University.	We will continue to improve levels of pre-entry advice and guidance to support declaration of a disability that will enhance the delivery of support packages and with a specific emphasis on Deaf and Hearing-impaired learners, reflecting our specific expertise in this area.	To increase the number of enrolled students who declare a disability to reflect the working age population: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 13% to 16% by 2020.

OUR STUDENT SUCCESS & PROGRESSION TARGETS	
AMBITION	SPECIFIC MEASURE(S)
<p>We will support all students to make good progress and be successful in their studies.</p> <p>Our aim is to provide an inclusive learning and teaching environment that will enable all students to reach their potential.</p> <p>We have identified an outcomes / attainment gap amongst BAME students that we are focussed on eliminating.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maintain above benchmark the retention of students in each category identified in the HESA performance indicators (i.e. young and mature, and by neighbourhood participation markers). • To maintain above benchmark the proportion of students who complete first degree courses. • To increase the proportion of students awarded first class or upper second class degrees. • To increase the proportion of BAME students awarded first class or upper second class degrees.
<p>We will support all students to realise their ambitions for graduate employment and career development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maintain above benchmark performance for graduate employment (and further study) – as currently measured – and to exceed the UK average graduate employment rate.

7. Monitoring and evaluation

The main targets and milestones are incorporated into the University's Key Performance Indicator framework. These indicators are reviewed annually by relevant University committees, including Academic Board and the Board of Governors, all of which include student representatives. Overall managerial responsibility for the Access Agreement lies with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Access and Lifelong Learning).

We recognise the importance of being able to measure the impact of initiatives and interventions, in order to be able to better target spend and activities. We have therefore begun an extensive evaluation programme to be assured of the effectiveness of our widening participation activity that is being lead with senior academic oversight.

We are using an interpretative methodological approach using both quantitative and qualitative data to address the 'what works' questions. The overarching evaluation framework adopted for this purpose is that proposed by CFE Research for HEFCE in their report Student Opportunity outcomes framework research: in-depth study (2015). This comprises a series of logical chains between the elements and a series of metrics (Indicator bank) for each evaluation area and questions or indicators to guide the evaluation process. Our focus on activities that already appear to be effective is consistent with appreciative enquiry and is likely therefore to yield findings that will allow us to highlight good practice. Whilst this evaluation is primarily focusing on the activities and initiatives as the units of analysis, we will also generate a small number of student case studies that will provide an evaluation of the influences on student decision making from the students' perspective. This approach is intended to reveal influences over the life of individual WP students that might not otherwise emerge.

The University is also a member of the collaborative Higher Education Access Tracker Service (HEAT) which assists members in the targeting, monitoring and evaluation of both their individual and their collaborative Fair Access activities. It allows member universities to demonstrate outreach participation in relation to success at key transition points, collectively explore best practice in combining qualitative and quantitative research on outreach and in the future, perhaps, facilitate the development of collaborative targets.

Membership of the HEAT service assists the University in fully understanding patterns of participation in outreach and the effectiveness of different types and combinations of outreach, something which is made possible by the collaborative nature of the service. Individual members use the HEAT database to record outreach activity and can see where individuals have engaged in activities with more than one HEAT university. Collectively this allows the central HEAT service to analyse the timing and combinations of activities that show most impact on enrolment in HE.

It can take some time for data about young participants in outreach to mature to the point of understanding their patterns of enrolment in HE as well as their retention and success rates. In the meantime the HEAT service has developed a model of matching a number of different administrative datasets to the HEAT database which will afford the University a better understanding of the relationship between outreach and key educational outcomes at both pre and post 16, before any enrolment takes place. The collective size and diversity of the database will mean this relationship can be explored against multiple participant characteristics, contributing to the University of Wolverhampton's and the sector's understanding of outcomes for different under-represented groups and recognising that widening participation students are not a homogenous group.

As HEAT data begins to mature it enables the University to understand the relationship between outreach participation and HE enrolment, retention and success. The University will

be able to see if and when its outreach participants enrol in HE. Crucially this data shows enrolment not only to the University of Wolverhampton but to all other HEIs. This allows the University to demonstrate its contribution to the sector as a whole.

Furthermore, as the data matures, the University can build a picture of the retention and degree classification of its outreach participants, as well as seeing destination data. For the first time in 2016/17, the HEAT service will also be able to show members postgraduate enrolment data.

The University is an active participant in a range of collaborative networks that seek to share expertise and best practice. As one example we are a member of The National Education Opportunities Network (NEON) is the professional organisation for access to HE in England with over 60 Higher Education Institution (HEI) members. NEON represents the only member-based national vehicle developing collaborative relationships through professional development specifically focused on widening access to HE. In 2017-18 NEON will be providing opportunities for professional development and collaboration in the government key priority areas of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) learners, supporting those with disabilities, enabling greater progression for white disadvantaged males, as well as in the ensuring improvements in the evaluation of access to higher education work. Membership of NEON allows University of Wolverhampton to improve the quality and range of its access work by being part of a collaborative national community of practice. NEON will be extending its work through to 2017-18 providing its members the opportunity to draw on the strength of collaborative working to strengthen their work across the student lifecycle encompassing success, retention and progression work as well as outreach.'

8. Provision of information to prospective students

The University provides the information specified by OFFA, including the provision of information to UCAS and the Student Loans Company, as required to populate their applicant-facing web services. The University will additionally use the following forms of communication:

- Web-based information on Fees and Scholarships 2017-18
- Information on Fees/Scholarships 2017-18 for applicants on students application portal (E:Vision)
- Fees and Funding presentations at all open days (hand-outs provided)
- Specific Fees and Funding presentations to top 100 feeder schools/colleges delivered throughout the academic year
- Fees and Funding 2017-18 'Money Matters' brochure to be produced and distributed to all local/regional stakeholders (Schools/Libraries/Town Halls/Community organisations)
- Briefing sessions for local/regional HE advisors in local/regional schools during 2016-17 academic year.
- Improved information for mature applicants.
- Direct Advice & Guidance via our high street centres and distributed learning centres.

9. Student Involvement in Access Agreement Design and Monitoring

Since December 2011 the President of the Students' Union has been a member of the University's Fees, Bursaries and Scholarships Working Group which keeps under review University tuition fee policy and makes recommendations where required to the Corporate Management Team and the Board of Governors. The President of the Students' Union has been actively involved throughout the decision making process associated with this Access Agreement.

10. Equality and Diversity

The proposals contained in the University's Access Agreements entry have been evaluated under the new procedure for Equalities Impact Assessment approved by our Corporate Management Team in May 2012. This has considered whether any aspect of the proposals is likely to have an unintended detrimental impact on any of twelve categories of student, including the six protected characteristics, and has identified action taken, or to be taken, to address issues raised.

11. Summary

Widening Participation and the opening up of HE opportunities to a wider range of individuals is a key part of the University's mission and purpose. As a University committed to listening to our students and responding quickly to funding and policy changes, we need to be able to make in year changes in the way we manage activity and expenditure, both to protect the student experience and to ensure continuing financial sustainability.

The University of Wolverhampton makes a significant financial investment in supporting a widening participation student base and this expenditure is difficult to separate out from wider spend. However, the University expects to spend at least 10% of its additional tuition fee income on more specific Access Agreement and related interventions.

