

# University of Birmingham

## Access Agreement 2017-18

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### Introduction

The University of Birmingham offers an inspirational student experience at a selective leading global University. We are proud of our strong outreach and retention record that has been built up over a long period of time, and which places us amongst the top Russell Group institutions. We continue to build on this record by committing the equivalent of c. 30% of our additional fee income to an enhanced range of outreach and access activities. Over the last 5 years, the HESA performance indicators show that we have consistently recruited in the region of 76-80% of our intake from state schools and out-performed many of our peer institutions in terms of the volume and proportion of students from lower socio-economic groups. On retention, the exceptional quality of our students and the high quality of their teaching and learning environment ensures that we are able to retain a higher proportion of our intake than either the average of our peers or the majority of the English higher education sector.

Building further on this successful record in promoting fair access, we continue to demonstrate innovation and leadership. In September 2015, following £2.6m of capital investment from the University, the University of Birmingham Training School (UTS) opened to over 330 students recruited from specially identified nodes of under-provision and low socio-economic scores across the city. The School exists to advance the educational attainment and aspiration of Birmingham's young people, and from day one students have unrivalled access to University facilities and academic capital.

We are committed to investing over £4.9m per annum by 2017/18 in activities supporting outreach, retention and student success. We are continuing to develop our flagship Access to Birmingham (A2B) scheme and we are committed to continuing our leadership role in successful, collaborative Aimhigher activities. Following the success of our locally funded initiative, after the removal of national funding, we are now hosting an expanded network of 12 HE and FE institutions through the National Network for Collaborative Outreach funded to December 2016 by HEFCE; this is in addition to our existing commitments through our Access Agreement. With the HEFCE announcement in April 2016 of new targeted funding for collaborative outreach to support government targets, we will be working with our partners to consider how we can build and further develop this from January 2017. We are continuing to develop our 'Forward Thinking' progressive programmes which work with Gifted and Talented widening participation (WP) students over the course of their secondary education. To support the Access to the Professions agenda, we have invested in our employability strategy, which includes increasing the number of funded internships for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. We are also investing in an enhanced academic tutoring system to support the increased retention of our students. In both these latter cases, we expect there to be a demonstrable impact on our ability to recruit students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

### Fees, Student numbers and Fee income

At the time of writing this Agreement, the Government is proposing a new Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). Institutions that choose to participate in the TEF, and achieve a rating of 'Meets Expectations', will be permitted to charge increased fees in future academic years (expected to be £9250 in 2017/18). Details of the TEF and fee caps are yet to be finalised by the Government; the fee information detailed below is therefore subject to confirmation by Government.

To ensure that we can continue to deliver the inspirational experience that our students deserve, and extend our high quality and progressive outreach, retention and financial support activities as indicated in this Agreement, we would expect to charge new intake full-time HEU undergraduate students a fee of £9,250 in 2017/18. The University will review and agree its fee levels annually. Fees

are likely to increase annually by the maximum rate approved by the Government. We estimate that our intake of full-time undergraduate students in 2017/18 will be in the region of 5200.

For courses which include a placement year studying or working, we will charge a standard fee of £1,385 (15% of the standard fee) for Erasmus programmes and £1,850 (20% of the standard fee) for non-Erasmus programmes for the year of the placement, based on the fee the student is paying.

The University does not intend to charge fees in excess of £4,625 in a single academic year for any regulated part-time programmes. The University does not offer part-time study for Bachelor level qualifications, with Undergraduate part-time provision classified at sub-degree level.

## **Access and Student Success measures**

### **(a) Assessment of our Access and Retention Record**

The following self-assessment demonstrates our strategic, institution-wide approach to widening participation. It is underpinned by a firm belief that our performance should be placed against that of institutions most similar to us in the Russell Group. Comparison against the sector as a whole underplays both the success we have achieved and, crucially, the clear commitment we have to fair access and widening participation. Assessing our access and retention record only against the HESA Performance Indicators (PIs) distorts our commitment and success with, in particular, outreach. This self-assessment, therefore, is based on a broader assessment of our outreach activities, much of which has been highly successful in raising students' aspirations and encouraging applications to other HEIs. We use both external PIs and internal impact assessments to monitor, review and refine our approach to widening participation to ensure the University's activity is impactful and relevant to the context in which the University is operating.

#### HESA Performance Indicators

Our performance in the three main HESA performance indicators ranks us amongst the top performing English Russell Group universities. We have made significant progress over the past 6 years in improving the proportion of young people from under-represented groups admitted to UG study. Latest (14/15 HESA PI) data show that 22.8% of our students are from low socio-economic groups, and 80.3% from state schools. 6.2% of our population are from low participation neighbourhoods and we have the 4<sup>th</sup> largest UG BME population in the Russell Group

Once students have started their study journey, the University is committed to ensuring that students continue and complete their journey. 96.8% of our full-time first degree entrants in 12/13 (latest data available at time of writing) remained in higher education the following year. This exceeds our location-adjusted benchmark and our continuous efforts to improve retention have seen us match or exceed our benchmark each year since 2007. This demonstrates that whilst not being complacent, we can be confident that our current retention activities are highly effective in supporting our students. Continuation rates for cohorts of WP-students (e.g. low participation neighbourhoods) are comparable to this overall figure, and, in some cases (e.g. Access to Birmingham students) students show a higher continuation rate than their non-A2B peers. Analysis has however identified that further work is necessary to support students entering with BTEC qualifications; further detail is provided in later sections regarding our new initiatives in this area.

### **(b) Expenditure on Access and Retention Measures**

This Access Agreement proposes expenditure of c. £13.6m by 2017/18, which will include additional investment on outreach and retention activities of around £4.9m per annum, and a progressive package of financial support totalling over £8.6m by 2017/18 for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. We estimate that by 17/18 this package will offer generous, flexible support to around 5200 students, or c. 30% of our undergraduate population.

In particular, we are continuing our investment in the following activities, which are outlined in more detail in the following section.

- Ongoing development of our flagship Access to Birmingham (A2B) programme with the addition of new pilot activities to support academic attainment and final entry to the University;
- Funding the continuation of the most effective Aimhigher activities and network supporting regional activities;
- Continuing to be a major partner in the Realising Opportunities Programme
- Drawing on robust evaluation, continuing to develop our 'Forward Thinking' progressive programme with Gifted and Talented WP students;
- Investing in our Internship programme and growing our programme of Routes to the Professions' activities, building on particular success with our Access to Medicine activity;
- Continuing to build on our monitoring and evaluation capability through the work of our Officer with responsibility for evaluation and work with our Aimhigher team;
- Expanding our capacity to implement contextual admissions

#### Proposed Contribution Band

We are proud of our strong access and retention record, and which has been highly commended by both HEFCE and the QAA for being progressive and sector-leading. On the basis of this assessment, we feel the combination of our performance compared to our peers and the scale and impact of our outreach activities places us in a position to propose a contribution level of c.30% of our Additional Fee Income, or £900 per student per annum. This will be invested into our access and retention measures.

#### Financial Support

Our financial aid package is highly targeted. We will use over £8.6m of our own resource to deliver a set of awards which will not only improve the recruitment of disadvantaged students onto our programmes but will also, crucially, support their retention.

Our distinctive, high quality student experience has a significant residential component which enables our students to be fully embedded within an international community of scholars. We are committed to alleviating the financial barriers which prevent our most disadvantaged students from participating to the same extent as their more advantaged peers. Therefore, the University will offer fully subsidised University accommodation (to the value of £5,915) for all care leavers or an enhanced cash award of £3,000.

#### Chamberlain Awards

In 2017/18 the University of Birmingham will be continuing with our successful Chamberlain awards programme and continue to extend our support to those students who would have qualified for a National Scholarship in previous years. All of our Home students, first and subsequent years, who have residual household incomes of between £0 and £36,000, will be eligible for a Chamberlain Award of between £2,000 and £1,000.

We would seek to continue to provide the same level of financial support to eligible students covered by this Access Agreement during any study year abroad, which is a component of the programme for which they have registered. Where students on a year abroad would have otherwise qualified for a Chamberlain Award, the maximum award will be to the value of £2,000.

#### Overall Financial Support

The University will attempt to provide the financial support outlined above to all eligible students, but will apply an upper limit to the level of total expenditure in any single financial year. This limit will be based on the commitment to fulfilling the proportionate spend of additional fee income outlined in this agreement. Priority for awarding bursaries will be given to Care Leavers and for students from households with the lowest incomes. All students wishing to be means-tested for their statutory support are encouraged to apply as soon as possible, and by no later than 31st May 2018.

### **(c) Outreach Activities**

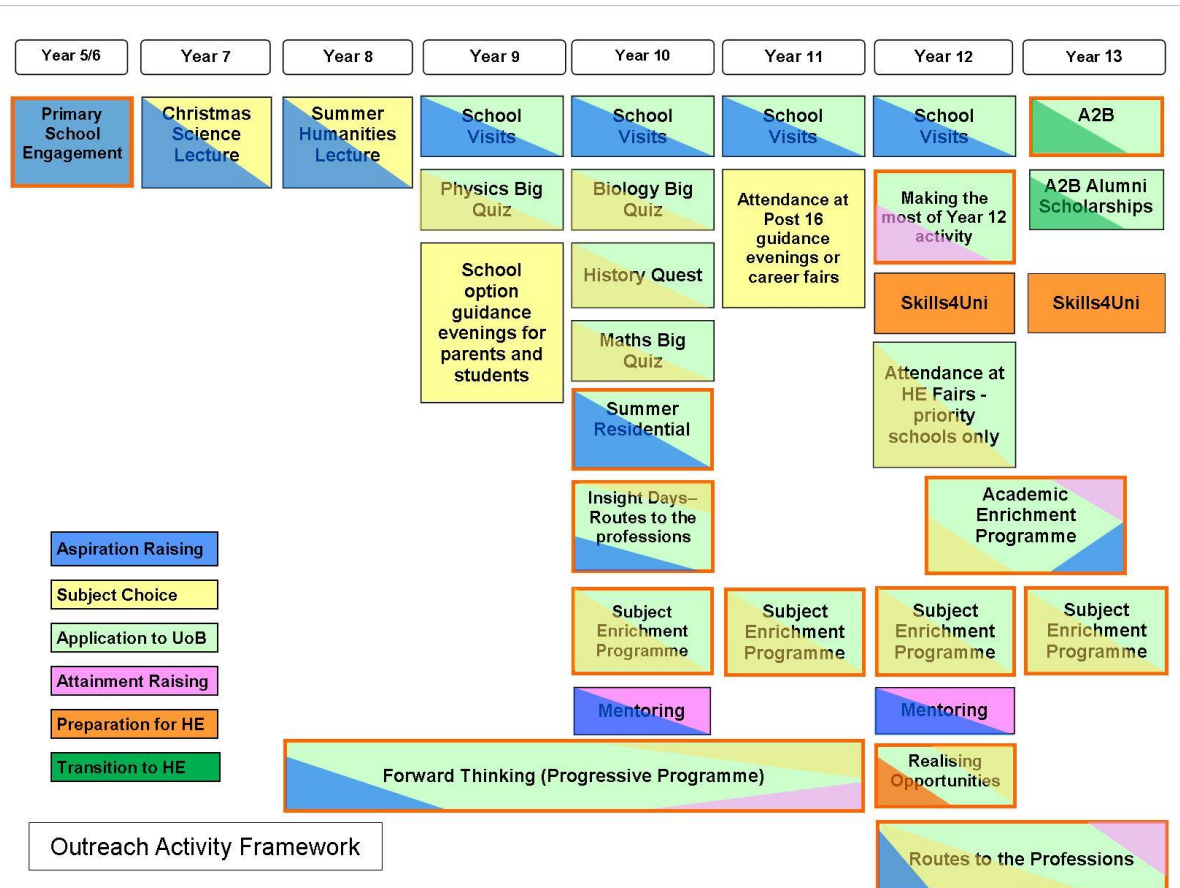
### Growth in Outreach

We believe that the following section demonstrates the University’s robust, strategic approach to improving access, including activity undertaken with younger age groups.

The University is proud of its comprehensive suite of outreach activities which support sector-wide progression as well as progression to research-intensive universities and where appropriate the University of Birmingham. We will continue to focus our additional investment on our proven progressive and intensive outreach programmes to strengthen our position amongst English Russell Group universities. We are reviewing our activities to see where we can increase engagement by some of the most under-represented groups e.g. white disadvantaged males, in order to contribute to the ambitions that the government has nationally for the sector.

Our activity includes work with pre-16s, post-16s, specific access to the University of Birmingham and collaborative activity both locally and nationally. We believe that this range of activities ensures a spread of interventions throughout the educational career of a young person from year 6 to year 13. It also offers a ‘ladder of engagement’, starting with low engagement visits to campus, and extending into intensive courses that lead to University admissions and takes full account of our continued aim to compensate for the removal of funding from the national Aimhigher initiative, and the funding constraints placed on schools.

In our activity diagram below those areas highlighted in red are those activities which we have been expanding or continuing to offer post-Aimhigher since the introduction of the new fee regime.



### Pre-16 Activity: Primary Activity

Our higher education aspiration activity begins with our Primary Engagement activity which targets year 6 students in primary schools which feed our key secondary schools and introduces the concept of higher education. Following feedback from schools this has moved from being delivered in schools to being on campus. We are also working collaboratively with Aimhigher partners to develop on-line activities to complement face-to-face engagement.

#### Pre-16 Activity: Forward Thinking Programme

Research has shown that the impact of widening participation activity is greatest when students participate in a programme of sustained interventions, rather than one-off activities. The Forward Thinking Programme is a progressive programme of activity with students in Years 8 to 11. It has a particular focus on supporting progression to selective institutions. Each year the schools select five Year 8 students to take part in the programme who are deemed to be both 'Gifted and Talented' within their school cohort, but also meet socio-economic indicators of disadvantage. Students are encouraged to think about their future education and career path in order to make informed decisions about progression to university, and to help motivate them to succeed at school and achieve their potential. Students take part in a mixture of on-campus activity, mentoring by undergraduates, and advice and guidance to support decision making. They are then encouraged to continue to engage in wider outreach activities available to students in Year 12 and 13.

We are very pleased that in 2015 this programme had grown to 600 students from 39 local partner schools. Our ongoing robust evaluation of the programme and its activity has led us to set the optimum number of schools and pupils for this intervention, ensuring a quality programme and sustained activity. We feel that this is 600 pupils drawn from 35 schools; with a programme of school replacement to maintain this level if any school leaves the partnership.

Our evaluation demonstrates the positive contribution the intervention is making, with students outperforming similar peers. In 2015, 108 students in cohort 5 from 21 schools completed the final year of the programme. 95% came from families with no parental HE experience, 73% lived in low youth participation neighbourhoods and 61% experienced multiple disadvantage. When looking at 5 GCSEs including English and Maths attainment, Forward Thinking students have outperformed the KS4 attainment of peers in all Birmingham Local Authority schools, all peers in the Forward Thinking schools and the high attainers in FT schools (*93.8% compared with 54.3%, 48.8% and 85.7% (2015 DfE Data) respectively*). Post-16 destinations were obtained for 58 students (54% of cohort). All students progressed onto Level 3 study (95% studying A levels).

#### Pre-16 Activity: Summer Schools

Residential activity is a proven intensive, but high impact intervention designed to improve aspiration, knowledge and understanding of HE study. We provide 200 places across four summer schools for year 10 students. 150 of these are funded entirely by the University and 50 receive a contribution from schools as part of our Aimhigher partnership.

Our 50 place Aimhigher Summer School is a general introduction to higher education, whilst our institutionally funded places include 100 dedicated to the Health Professions, and 50 focussing on how arts and social science subjects can lead to professional careers. Student activity is complemented by parents' events to brief parents and carers with more than 300 attending. We use this opportunity to promote the benefits of HE and distribute materials on financial support. Both our partnership and institutional residential activity is subject to rigorous targeting, monitoring and evaluation, but we now face challenges in accessing data through UCAS to enable ongoing tracking of students to the point of UCAS application and acceptance.

#### Pre-16 Activity: Mentoring

We have a suite of mentoring interventions where our undergraduate students support school pupils in local schools and colleges. This is done through our Aimhigher partnership, as a component of the Forward Thinking, Routes to the Professions and Academic Enrichment programmes. Much of the activity is face-to-face individual mentoring, complemented by the use of the e-mentoring system provided by Brightside. We use a common programme of training and a range of support materials to maximise this resource. For our undergraduates there is a comprehensive training and support programme and the activity can be accredited through the Personal Skills Award.

#### Pre-16 Activity: Campus Visits

The University's Outreach team also organise a number of large scale events for pupils in years 7-11, known as the RAISE Programme (Raising Aspirations in Secondary Education). They provide a first contact with University life and include Year 7 Christmas Science lectures; Year 9 Physics Big Quiz; Year 10 Biology Big Quiz; Year 10 Maths Quiz; and Year 10 History Quest Day. In addition, we run a programme of school visits to campus tailored to suit school needs. For our school visits we carry out additional participant monitoring to ensure schools are targeting appropriate students and that students from BME backgrounds and those with disabilities are appropriately represented in line with our duties under the Equality Act.

#### Pre-16 Activity: Young Adult Carers

The University of Birmingham, working with Nottingham University, introduced new activity in 2015 with Young Adult Carers. Young adult carers are young people aged 14-25 who care, unpaid, for a friend or family member who could not cope without their support. We are working with community support groups to provide bespoke outreach activity to raise aspirations, and working to identify existing University of Birmingham students who have this additional responsibility to enable us to better understand and support their needs to enable successful outcomes.

#### Post-16 Activity: Academic Enrichment Programme

Each year, the Academic Enrichment Programme supports 100 able WP students, boosting their academic performance and enabling them to apply to high quality degree programmes, often associated with the professions. Initially funded by philanthropic donations, the success of this programme means that it is now an integral part of the University's fair access activity. This is a long term intervention supporting students during year 12 and 13 beginning with a 5-day summer residential and followed by e-mentoring; support with university applications; and study skills support.

The Academic Enrichment Programme is now a well-established, proven programme in its 10<sup>th</sup> year. Over the last 10 years 350 students have progressed to study at the University of Birmingham, with a further 250 going on to study at other Russell Group institutions.

#### Post-16 Activity: Year 12 Higher Education Insight

The University is currently running a 3 year pilot for a 50 place summer school for WP students from outside of the West Midlands. Evaluation from our current WP activity with such students, including the Realising Opportunities Programme, indicates that although students are encouraged to apply to us, their final choice is often to attend their local research-intensive university. We are very experienced at running exciting and engaging residential activities and we are keen to promote and encourage geographical mobility. The key measure of success for the future continuation of this programme will be whether students go onto enrol at the University of Birmingham. In 2016 we will review the outcomes from the pilot to decide whether we continue the activity or reinvest the funds elsewhere.

#### Post-16 Activity: Routes to the Professions

Our Routes to the Professions programme (R2P, launched 2012/13) underpins our commitment to supporting students from less advantaged backgrounds to access professional careers. The programme is designed to enable new pathways to be added in a flexible way to enable us to respond dynamically to student needs. An important focus of this new programme is the development of professional links to the associated employment area.

Our Medicine Programme includes an initial Year 10 Insight Day. Then in year 12 and 13 we have a programme involving practical workshops, support for applications and interviews, student shadowing, mentoring from medical students and support with accessing placements. Placements are supported with preparation and post-event reflective workshops. The Law Programme is similar, and will also demonstrate how a wide variety of degree choices can lead to this profession. We are delighted that we are now able to offer participants a one week internship with a local law firm during the summer, and in 2015 18 students participated in this opportunity. They are supported

with placement preparation, as well as follow-up reflection activity to support future UCAS and job applications.

Participants are eligible to apply to us through our Access to Birmingham Scheme.

Our medicine activity was featured as a case study in 'A Journey to Medicine Outreach Guidance, Medical Schools Council Selecting for Excellence' publication. 145 medicine students have been supported over 3 cohorts with 44% of completers enrolled to study medicine and 82% progressing to a selective university. Entrants to Medicine through our Access to Birmingham programme increased from 12 in 2014 to 28 in 2015. 61 law students have been supported over 2 cohorts with 45% from cohort 1 progressing to study Law at university and 55% progressing to a selective university.

#### **(d) University Training School**

In September 2015, following University capital investment of £2.6m, the University Training School (UTS) opened its doors to over 330 secondary and sixth form students recruited from across the city. With year 7 pupils drawn from four specially identified nodes of under-provision and low socio-economic scores across the city and sixth form students from 66 different secondary schools, the UTS exists to advance the educational attainment and aspiration of Birmingham's young people. 74% of the intake population are from the most disadvantaged IMD neighbourhoods; 38% are from neighbourhoods with low proportions of 18/19-year-olds entering HE. 5% of the Year 7 intake are looked-after or previously looked-after children, or have a statement of special educational needs and the school community reflects over 30 ethnic groups.

From day one, the links with the University of Birmingham have been cemented. On-campus induction activities introduce the University and raise aspirations from the start. The School's governance structure reflects the strong integration of University and School. The Advisory Committee is chaired by the PVC (Social Sciences) and has a membership drawn from across the University. Senior University staff sit on the School's Board of Governors.

Students have access to the intellectual and physical resources of the University. University staff contribute to five hours of weekly 'enrichment activities' (such as subject clubs, master classes and assemblies on cutting edge research projects) timetabled into the standard teaching day and which are designed to develop the extra-academic skills needed for successful transition to work or further study. Sixth form students receive 1-2-1 support from the University careers service, offering advice and guidance on access to HE, apprenticeships and alternative options after sixth form. Students are given advice on choosing the right university, preparing personal statements, as well as understanding the costs of university. The School building itself includes space for University researchers and trainee teachers to work and interact with students, further facilitating integration between the School and University activities.

The School aims to be a centre of excellence for teacher training and CPD. In collaboration with University staff, the School is leading on establishing a new integrated model of University-led and School-based teacher training. Teachers are encouraged to be research active, developing research-informed and research-informing teaching practice. Subject leaders have University academics 'partners' to deepen their knowledge of their subject to enhance the learning experience, and in turn inform the development of the University's UG programme to ensure our offering continues to reflect the needs of current sixth form students and supports successful transition to HE.

The School also undertakes outreach activity with local primary schools. Specialist subject leaders provide GCSE master classes to supplement subject knowledge and offer early intervention to raise aspirations.

#### **(e) Access**

##### Access to Birmingham (A2B)

The current A2B scheme is recognised as an excellent achievement with a demonstrable track record of success. It has been commended by the QAA and HEFCE and widely used by other institutions as

the model of best practice on which they have based similar schemes. It helped create the Realising Opportunities collaborative programme, for example, and in 2013 was shortlisted for the Times Higher Education WP Initiative of the Year. It is aimed at applicants from less advantaged backgrounds who are identified by their school and teachers as having the intellectual potential to succeed at Birmingham. A2B applicants undergo an intensive programme and receive an entry grade offer which is usually two grades below the standard offer. The scheme includes an A2B scholarship that is awarded to A2B students who achieve the standard offer grades for their course. This has been increased from £1200 to £1500 in 2016. Our data shows that the year we introduced the scholarship to the scheme, retention and completion of the scheme by students showed a step change which has been maintained ever since. Students greatly value this highly targeted financial support, and schools also value the additional incentive it provides to encourage students to achieve as academically highly as they can.

In 2015, 365 students entered the University via this route (our largest A2B intake to date), representing 6.2% of the overall intake. We are mindful that over the next few years this cohort may be adversely affected by the A level curriculum reforms and the general turbulence experienced by our local schools which are already seeing a downward trend in GCSE attainment. We are therefore committed to continuing to maintain our intake at 6% of overall first year full-time entrants. Our annual monitoring of applications in line with our equality duties shows that approximately 75% of A2B applicants were from ethnic backgrounds other than white in 2014/15, 4.7% declared a disability, and 9 disclosed that they had spent time in local authority care or were living independently. We are further focussing some of our A2B engagement to increase our proportion of white males from disadvantaged backgrounds, and students who reside in a Polar 3 quintile 1 area.

#### Broader Use of Contextual Data

We are conscious that our current contextual offer is limited to students in the West Midlands region through our A2B Scheme. It is therefore our intention to introduce a nationwide WP contextual offer one grade below the standard prospectus offer.

Our aim is to introduce this for the 2017 admissions cycle and we have already begun to progress this work; however it will be dependent on the introduction of a paperless admissions system including an automatic link to the data to enable the flagging of eligible students.

In 2016 we entered into a Mutual Recognition Scheme with Nottingham such that applicants to Birmingham and Nottingham who had completed identified intensive programmes with either institution would be afforded additional recognition at the point of application. At Birmingham all eligible applicants received an offer one grade below the standard offer for the course. Students who have participated in interventions at Birmingham e.g. our Higher Education Insight Residential for students beyond the West Midlands, who are not eligible for our A2B Scheme, have also been given this recognition. At confirmation and clearing, when borderline cases are being reviewed, priority is given to students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods. In 2015 18.8% of all borderline cases taken were from Polar 3 quintiles 1 or 2 (with 6.6% from quintile 1).

#### Supporting Access and Success of Vocational Learners on BTEC Level 3 Pathways

Recent UCAS and institutional data show that the number of students applying to university with BTEC qualifications is increasing. At the University of Birmingham, in 2014/15, students entering with BTEC qualifications accounted for 3.4% (225 heads) of the intake population; marking a 105% growth since 11/12, as compared to an overall intake growth of 12% across the same period. Feedback from some of our local schools and colleges suggest that there is an increase in students following this pathway and that this is likely to grow further with the introduction of linear A levels. There is evidence that BTEC students do less well at university than those entering through traditional A-levels. Data has shown that non-continuation rates for this population have been consistently higher than that of A-level students, and increased from 17% to 25% between 11/12 and 13/14. Some of the potential reasons for this may be lack experience of unseen written exams and a lack of some of the skills required for successful progression, skills that those following more traditional A level routes are more likely to have developed.



In response we have reviewed and improved our information to applicants holding BTEC qualifications in our prospectus and on our website. We have reviewed the new BTEC specifications with our Admissions tutors and created some new web-based materials to support BTEC applicants. We are also piloting some focussed HE support for BTEC students in some of our partner schools and colleges and developing materials to support a more successful transition to study at the University of Birmingham, as well as supporting these students with appropriate skills training during their study lifecycle, such as central exams skills training to support students who may be less familiar with traditional exams and school-based seminars to supplement learning. We are beginning to see the impact of these initiatives; we have seen the non-continuation rate for BTEC students fall to 19% (from 25%) in 14/15.

#### Postgraduate WP Activity

There is a perception that the poorest students may be deterred by increased undergraduate fees and debt. The University will seek to strengthen diversity by expanding participation of under-represented groups in all postgraduate programmes through the development of targeted recruitment and retention strategies. We will expand success in recruiting and retaining under-represented students at UG by extending this to PG WP development. We will provide focussed outreach and communications activity targeting A2B students and those who entered the University at UG via WP backgrounds, prioritising them for the financial support that is available. The University has produced a new Postgraduate Strategy and WP is identified as a theme within this.

#### Partnership Activity: Realising Opportunities Programme

The University of Birmingham is a member of Realising Opportunities (RO), a unique collaborative partnership of research-intensive universities developing and delivering a national fair access scheme which promotes social and geographic mobility for students from under-represented groups. RO has a robust evaluation framework which incorporates contextual data, student aspirations and the longitudinal tracking of students through the HEAT database and UCAS.

The award-winning Realising Opportunities Programme, developed through shared best practice, provides support for students through interventions designed to raise aspirations, develop skills and enable them to demonstrate their potential to succeed at a research-intensive university. These interventions are offered locally and nationally and include a National Student Conference, ongoing support and encouragement from a trained student mentor and an assessed academic element. Successful completion of RO will result in additional consideration given to applications through UCAS from all partner universities, and the potential for an alternative offer worth up to 40 UCAS points.

Each participating institution has committed future funds to ensure the on-going delivery of RO to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019. For 2017/18 this will be a maximum of £37,000 per partner.

In October 2015, UCAS undertook analysis of applicant data for RO students. The results demonstrated that RO is robust in its dual targeting of high attaining students from disadvantaged backgrounds; provided evidence of elevated application, offer and entry rates for RO students applying to HE against a UCAS-identified control group; highlighted that RO seems to 'neutralise' background differences across the different measures of disadvantage, and suggests that RO participants are more successful at getting offers from research-intensive universities.

#### Aimhigher

The University of Birmingham will continue the collaborative Aimhigher West Midlands partnership established in 2011/12 with Aston, BCU and UCB, and now including Worcester. The partnership met its yearly milestones in 2014/15 and is on course to do so again in 2015/16. We therefore confirm our intention to engage 1,000 disadvantaged young people in Aimhigher's intensive activity in each year from 2017/18 to 2020/21. We will also take steps to increase the proportion of white disadvantaged males within this cohort, whilst maintaining our strong engagement with learners from BAME heritage backgrounds.

The University of Birmingham will jointly fund Aimhigher with a contribution of £35,000 in 2017/18 and will be intimately involved in its governance and management. The outreach activities delivered through the partnership will complement Birmingham's own extensive programme of widening access and fair access measures outlined elsewhere in this Agreement.

The partnership is exploring ways to sustain the wider collaborative work it undertakes with a further 7 regional institutions as part of the NNCO initiative, HEFCE funding for which ceases at the end of December 2016.

#### Advancing Access

The University of Birmingham is a partner in Advancing Access, a national collaboration of 24 selective universities. We are working together with schools and colleges to develop and deliver CPD for teachers and advisors that supports student progression to selective universities and courses. Advancing Access has a particular focus on schools with low levels of progression to such universities. We are delivering the majority of CPD events and resources online to allow easy access for all schools, regardless of their location.

Advancing Access complements the excellent work already carried out at University of Birmingham and other partner institutions by engaging those areas that have historically been hard to reach and may be in geographic 'cold spots'. It is a cost-effective approach to equipping teachers and advisors with the information they need to advise students with confidence. Initially funded through HEFCE's collaborative outreach network scheme, further funding options are currently being explored.

#### Widening Access to STEM Degrees

In 2012, the University established a STEM Education Centre to continue national aspects of the work first established through the National HE STEM Programme. The focus of the programme included curriculum development for improved retention and success of students on STEM degrees, and also on promoting applications to STEM degrees among UK school students, in particular through projects aimed at testing and piloting strategies to stimulate interest among under-represented groups of young people (from Years 7-13) in taking science degrees, and building their capability and self-confidence in this area. University 'STEM Ambassadors' supported the 2015 Big Bang Fair hosted at Birmingham's NEC, the UK's largest celebration of STEM and a platform for encouraging young people to pursue STEM study and careers.

#### **(f) Student Success**

The University has an excellent record on retention. As noted above, latest available HESA PI data show that 97% of our full-time first degree entrants are in higher education in the following academic year and a projected completion rate of 92%, which exceeds our benchmark. The main reason for this is the high quality of our learning and teaching coupled with excellent academic support and personal tutoring in our Schools. Our academic support is complemented by specialist student services (e.g. counselling; disability services; support for care leavers and parents), our Student Mentor system, the Funding, Graduation and Awards Office who provide a range of budget management tools, and the advice services provided by the Guild of Students.

Following a joint initiative with the Guild of Students to understand the impact of additional course costs, the University has responded to concerns regarding printing, textbook and field trip costs through investment in free printing credit allocations, increased central library provision of core textbooks, and student subsidies for field trips, alongside options of low or no cost field trips.

#### Academic Skills Development and Support

The University offers a broad range of targeted study skills training as part of its Library Services. The Academic Skills Centre (opened in 2012/13) within Library Services offers drop-in advice, one-to-one appointments, generic workshops and embedded training developed in direct partnership with Schools. The ASC supports UG students from all disciplines with their academic transition to the University, progression to higher years, and academic attainment by developing their writing and study skills. Examination resit support is also offered as part of its programme. The Centre incorporates a successful Maths Skills Centre (MSC) that assists students in developing their

numerical and statistical abilities as well as offering examination resit support as part of its programme. With an increased focus on embedding skills training at programme and School level, total use of the ASC/MSC has increased 160% from 13/14 to 14/15, to 10,233 interactions. The ASC coordinates a programme of Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS), available across all Colleges. A wide range of online study skills, mathematics and statistics resources are also available through the ASC/MSC, some of which have been developed with the direct involvement of students. The Academic Skills Gateway was launched in 2015/16, providing an online, open-access portal to the University's training resources, with additional content developed as part of this initiative to cover the full range of skills support offered.

The Centre has enabled us to offer targeted support for at-risk cohorts and has contributed positively to the University's suite of retention activities. For example, part-time students can access general academic and writing skills support outside of core hours, and induction sessions are offered for mature students. Analysis of usage data to-date indicates the Centre's services are utilized comparatively more by mature, BME, disabled, low SEC and A2B students, demonstrating its contribution to the University's wider strategy for student access and success.

#### Enhanced Academic Support Tutoring

We continue to invest in an enhanced academic tutoring system, primarily aimed at year 1 students, based on existing best practice within the University. Students have regular meetings in small groups (usually fewer than 15) with an academic tutor to work on specific problems, texts and issues arising from their curriculum. In addition all students have regular (at least one each term) 1:1 meetings with their personal tutor to discuss academic progress across their programme of study. This is contextualised to specific disciplines, but all tutorials provide the opportunity for students to receive feedback, enhance their learning capabilities, and develop transferable skills and the confidence to employ them. The tutorial system can provide an early indication if a student is experiencing difficulties and appropriate information, advice and guidance from the range of University support services (e.g. the Academic Skills Centre, School Welfare Services and the Student Hub) can be given. We have targeted Schools with particularly challenging student-to-staff ratios and cohorts with lower retention rates. Tutorials also identify academic potential and talent, and signpost students to further opportunities to develop their skills, interests, and engagement in the life of the University and the wider community. Personal tutors also work closely with the University's Careers Network to provide tutees with opportunities to engage in early career planning and CV writing.

As part of the on-going commitment to improving personal tutoring, the University introduced the role of Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor for Student Experience in November 2015. Subsuming and enhancing the former role of University Senior Tutor, the DPVC (Student Experience) – under the guidance of the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Education – provides strategic leadership and support on issues related to personal tutoring across the campus and is working to advance an integrated approach to personal tutoring and pastoral care throughout the University. This DPVC works with colleagues in Student Services, CLAD and Library Services (ASC) on a range of progression and retention- focussed initiatives.

#### Improving Students' Transition to HE

The University tutorial system is underpinned by a commitment to support students through their transition to higher education. The University is currently developing an integrated pastoral care network, due for launch in 2016/17, which will integrate ongoing reviews of students' transition to HE within a broader network of tutorial support meetings. A wide range of Guild of Students, Careers Network, Library Services, and Student Services activities underpin this, with support programmes for academic writing, numeracy, maths and statistics, as well as online study skills, personal development resources and language tuition.

We are also committed to further developing our student orientation guides, the Welcome website which covers a wide range of activities that provide an introduction to life at Birmingham, our Staying Local event for new students, and a range of wellbeing and support campaigns. Additionally,

we run an effective Student Mentors scheme and a Guide to Effective Learning website (now incorporated within the Academic Skills Gateway) that provides a range of support on the learning experience for new students. Focus groups conducted with mature students and student parents have identified opportunities for new induction and transition activities that have been incorporated from 12/13 onwards. These include coffee mornings and workshops (with free child care also provided). The Guild of Students and the University have worked closely to further develop and enhance the provision of networking events and activities within the first term at the University. Three dedicated welcome events (targeted at mature students, student parents and students living at home in the local area) have been held by the Guild since 2014, not only to ensure students are fully aware of the services available to them, but also to foster peer-to-peer connections early in the study life-cycle.

Students are informed clearly of their rights and responsibilities as active participants in academic tutorials, and the system is part of our robust quality assurance procedures. It is also intended to have an impact on our ability to attract students from disadvantaged backgrounds as we will be able to demonstrate that we focus our transition and academic support on students as individuals rather than on students in groups defined by their background.

The University ensures there is a system of welfare support in Colleges and every School has a Welfare Tutor available as a referral point for any student experiencing difficulties. Welfare tutors advise students on a range of issues, primarily pastoral rather than academic, and will signpost to other professional services. They are supported in their role by staff from Student Support and have access to a daily telephone consultation service and regular drop-in advice and debrief sessions. In September 2014 the College of Arts and Law launched its Professional Services Staff-Student Mentoring Scheme. The scheme pairs interested student mentees with a Professional Services mentor. This scheme aims to aid students' transition to university by providing students with the support of a neutral and supportive adult who is knowledgeable about the University and who is not a peer, nor directly connected with students' programmes. The scheme also provides Professional Services staff with an opportunity to support the student experience and/or to meet students in a different capacity. The scheme is in its pilot period and informal feedback from both mentors and mentees indicates that the scheme has helped students gain confidence in taking their first steps into university life.

The University is working to enhance its training and development provision for Welfare Tutors and Reasonable Adjustment Contacts (School- and College-based staff overseeing implementation of reasonable adjustments) to support their roles and share good practice. Additional targeted training sessions are also offered, for example Asperger's Awareness. The University is currently undertaking an audit review of such student support arrangements (Student Support Agreement Process Fix) to identify areas of improvement, and ensure our services offer the most efficient and effective service to students.

#### *Inclusive Curriculum*

The Inclusive Curriculum Working Group (ICWG) was established in Spring 2014 to explore how 'inclusivity', in its widest possible sense, might be more effectively embedded within the curriculum and with a view to better supporting staff. The work of the group covers disability, diversity, international and part-time students, socio-economic status, gender, religion, and LGBT. The remit of the Group is to explore how inclusivity may be better, and more naturally, embedded within core areas of University activity including the provision of accessible learning materials and resources, teaching delivery, assessment and feedback, personal tutoring and student access.

#### *Additional Support for Mature Students and Those with Caring Responsibilities*

The University offers a number of targeted support initiatives for mature students and those with children or other caring responsibilities. There is a dedicated webpage for mature students considering applying to the University and a mature student ambassador attends Open Days to give first-hand advice. Through A2B, mature students are invited to a separate guidance event before working on their assignments and are also invited to a morning induction in September to help them

navigate Welcome Week. Tailored advice about studying as a mature student is also provided. Additionally, there is an intranet webpage with video and useful links which students can use once they are at the University. This also raises the profile of the needs of mature students for staff.

The Guild of Students has a dedicated elected Support Officer and runs a Student Parent and Carers Association as well as a PG and Mature Student Association. Focus groups for undergraduate mature students identified specific support needs and consequently a bespoke academic skills session has been developed by the Academic Skills Centre and a dedicated web presence is being scoped. Access to PG study spaces has also been arranged.

### Employability

The University has invested in its employability strategy, recognising that improving access to the professions should be a key outcome of our distinctive student experience. From an initial £3.5m investment, a range of initiatives have been defined to respond to increasing student expectations in this area. A further £1m investment into the new Employability Strategy for 2016/17-2019/20 will enable the University to continue to enhance its offer while also bringing in new posts that will directly support students from Widening Participation backgrounds through more effective analysis of graduate destinations data, increased engagement with regional SMEs, greater curriculum development and increased global reach with employers. The University was awarded the Times 2016 University of the Year for Graduate Employment.

The University's award-winning Personal Skills Award (PSA), which is an employer-recognised standard, supports students to develop, recognise and articulate their professional skills effectively in preparation for work experience and the graduate job market, and has grown from 350 to 1,800 students over the past five years. The past year has seen the addition of the PSA (Foundation) which provides a series of innovative online skill development modules open to all undergraduate students at the institution. The PSA is supported by a representative range of graduate employers that provide skill sessions, interview support, and contribute to the development of our online curriculum.

The suite of bursary support now available enables students to undertake internships or work experience during their summer vacation. This includes the fully funded Global Internship Programme which offers students the chance to intern in top organisations across the world, giving students a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to gain experience on a global scale. Working in large multinationals or in niche areas where experience is difficult to gain, the Programme is open to students from all backgrounds and enables them to experience internationalisation without financial constraints.

Unique to the University of Birmingham are our Gateway Work Experience Bursaries, targeted at priority WP student groups (defined as A2B students, registered disabled, leaving care, first generation of the family into higher education, in receipt of a grant or scholarship, lone parent and ethnic minorities) offer up to £2000 to fund extra-curricular placements throughout the year.

We fund a wide variety of work experience across a range of sectors and professions both in the UK and overseas including the arts, health care, community development, scientific and biological research, marketing and international development opportunities. The scheme has seen, and continues to see, great successes, with students securing places, on their own merit, ranging from a Public Affairs intern with the US Navy in Washington to providing comprehensive health services to rural communities in Ghana. To date 865 bursaries have been awarded and paid directly to students with all recipients showing significant increase in communication and team-working skills with 83% of students reporting an increase in their knowledge, confidence and competence as a direct result of their work experience.

In addition to the bursary programmes, we also source bespoke internships for our students as well as actively promoting opportunities to the student population. The University of Birmingham has an institutional Unpaid Internship Policy which ensures that all University sourced and generated

internships are paid. Analysis of the income that our students gain via these opportunities shows that this now produces over £600,000pa.

The University works with a range of regional, national and international employers to promote equal access to the best jobs. Skills training and mentor programmes run jointly with partner employers promote diversity and support students in gaining the skills, experience and confidence to succeed in their chosen career. Employer partners include PwC, Jaguar Landrover and IBM as well as regional employers such as Sanctuary Housing and the Birmingham Childrens' Hospital.

Careers Network at the University of Birmingham is increasingly focussed on evidence-based, targeted development of services and support. Employability 'Action Plans' are produced annually for all academic Schools. These plans are developed alongside academics to identify areas of focus over the coming year and are based on a combination of graduate destination data, student demographics and labour market intelligence. To give just one case study, analysis of recent employment data at academic School level highlighted an employability gap within the School of Law for locally domiciled, female, BME students. This led to targeted interventions at School level to address this, with the introduction of dedicated mentoring and updating of reference materials to ensure case studies are relevant and relatable to the defined cohort. Work has also been undertaken to ensure that local law firms are equally represented at University employment fairs to ensure that students are exposed to relevant and appropriate employment opportunities.

Much of the investment we are committed to in relation to employability, and in particular our expanded internship programme, is specifically aimed at improving access to the professions for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. It therefore not only supports our efforts to improve student retention and success, but also acts as a significant part of our outreach and recruitment activity by making us more attractive to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

## Targets and Milestones

On the basis of our strong track record in outreach that places us in the upper quartile of the English universities of the Russell Group, we believe that it is important that we are judged by our relative performance in the HESA Performance Indicators. We will therefore aim to maintain our position in the top quartile of the English universities of the Russell Group for the life of this Access Agreement. In addition, we are proposing a number of internal targets which will not only satisfy OFFA guidelines but will also contribute to our monitoring of effective outreach activities:

- Increase the proportion of young people from our pre-16 progressive activity target group progressing to level 3 programmes;
- The proportion of young people from our pre-16 progressive activity target group applying to a FT place in HE is greater than local average for young people from socially disadvantaged groups;
- Increase the percentage of students engaged in our post-16 outreach programmes applying to the University of Birmingham;
- Growth in the percentage of entrants via our Access to Birmingham Programme;
- Ensure that the continuation rates of students who entered via Access to Birmingham is equal to that for the overall cohort;
- Increase the percentage of students who entered via Access to Birmingham gaining a 2.i or 1<sup>st</sup> (with due regard given to the context of the qualification with which the student entered the University);
- Improve the proportion of students who entered via Access to Birmingham gaining a graduate level job within 6 months of graduating.

Through these targets we will demonstrate the impact of our outreach and retention activity at each of the key stages between 'first contact' with the target group for our pre-16 progressive activity through to their first job after graduation. By monitoring progress at each of these key points, we will be able to identify where appropriate interventions need to be made to improve our approach to our outreach and retention activities.

## Monitoring and Evaluation Arrangements

The widening participation agenda, retention rates and success across the student lifecycle are overseen by the University's Student Access and Progress Committee. The Committee chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) and with representation from the Guild of Students, receives and considers regular reports and analysis of institutional performance in a range of areas (such as continuation rates, student equality benchmarks, HESA performance Indicators, student experience surveys, outreach activity evaluation, etc.). In addition, the University Education Committee, also chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) and with representation from the Guild, receives an annual progress report, approves WPSA and OFFA reporting and considers the annual report from the Academic Skills Centre.

Within the University's Outreach team there is a dedicated Officer with specific responsibility for evaluation; this post works closely with Outreach Officers and with Aimhigher on the evaluation of activities.

The Outreach Evaluation Strategy for 2015-2018 supports our commitment to evidence-based practice in widening participation and outreach, and to facilitating a culture of learning and continuous improvement. We are committed to generating evidence-based information from timely and robust evaluations to inform and support our outreach work. The overall aim of the Evaluation Strategy is to provide a framework for producing high quality evidence-based monitoring and evaluation information to support learning, improvement, innovation, accountability and strategic decision-making. The key objectives of the strategy are to:

- Support the generation of evaluation evidence to improve fair access to higher education by:
  - Understanding what we do;
  - Identifying what approaches work in promoting fair access and social mobility;
  - Identifying where we can improve to increase the effectiveness of our widening participation policies and interventions; and
  - Supporting strategic decision making and allocation of resources.
- Provide direction on our approach to evaluation to ensure information generated is robust, relevant and useful
- Provide a framework for future evaluations and linking them to strategic decision-making by setting out the key focus areas for evaluations and the main evaluation questions they will seek to address
- Provide a plan for outreach evaluations over the next 3 years, which will be reviewed and updated annually.

We have a comprehensive evaluation programme for our Access to Birmingham programme including monitoring of applications through to acceptance and tracking students through to graduation and employment.

Aimhigher West Midlands undertakes comprehensive evaluation of the impact of its interventions via a PhD-linked research project including both control and experimental groups. Tracking suggests that engagement in Aimhigher intervention during Key Stage 3 and 4 generates increased aspiration towards higher education (+12.5% above non-participants) and improved KS4 attainment. The proportion of Aimhigher-engaged Pupil Premium learners attaining 5 GCSEs at A\* - C including English and maths exceeded that of regional Pupil Premium learners over the three years 2011/12 to 2013/14. Research<sup>1</sup> suggests that ongoing GCSE reform over the period of this Agreement (the introduction of a 9-point grade system and Progress / Attainment 8 measures) will reduce national attainment, and that this may have a disproportionate impact on outcomes for disadvantaged learners. We have re-framed our GCSE impact targets to reflect past performance and the likely impact of ongoing curriculum reform. Our tracking of beneficiaries into higher education has been delayed by the refusal of UCAS to release learner level data. This has necessitated the use of HESA data, allowing us to track our first cohort, who entered higher education in 2013 and were retained

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<sup>1</sup> <http://centreforum.org/live/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/education-in-england-web.pdf>



for 6 months. We have revised our targets accordingly and have also removed the NS –SEC measure for this target.

The Realising Opportunities Pilot project has undergone extensive evaluation looking at the outcomes for learners and the wider impact of the partnership. This continues to inform the future of the scheme.

## Equality and Diversity

Our students and staff are key to achieving excellence and to delivering the objectives outlined in our Strategic Framework 2015-2020. Our linked Equality Scheme recognises the need to encourage each and every student to flourish whilst removing barriers to success. Equality is central to our core mission to be a global force in teaching and research, and the creation of a new Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor for Equalities to lead institutional development in this area reflects that commitment.

The University's Equality Scheme 2016-2020 has been developed around themes of inclusiveness, attainment, flexibility and embedding. As part of the development of the objectives we consulted with students to identify actions they felt the University should take to improve equality; and we have sought to address this feedback in our objectives. Progress against objectives will be reviewed annually as part of the Equality and Diversity Assurance Report to Council.

The University has been taking action to address the 11.5% (2014) attainment gap between BME students and white students achieving a first or upper second class honours degree. We have delivered innovative mentoring and employability schemes for BME students, providing them with practical skills and role models for success in the workplace. The BME ambassador scheme, an initiative part-funded by the HEA, involves students engaging with staff in Schools and Departments to consider actions that can be taken to improve BME student inclusion, representation, engagement and to promote race equality. This project has been widely cited across the UK HE sector as an example of good practice in engaging and listening to BME students.

A website dedicated to supporting the success of BME students was launched in 14/15, and a supporting online platform for staff will be launched in 2016 with the aim of capturing, monitoring and evaluating the impact of ambassador activity. In 2015, School Equality and Diversity Champions have been tasked with working with BME student ambassadors to identify the issues that impact on their experiences, and have been asked to develop an action plan that identifies activities to make a positive difference. There are over 200 BME students who are ambassadors and 10 College student leads. Ongoing institutional resource has been earmarked for the project and, following the launch of the online portal, the project will be evaluated in July 2017.

The ethnicity attainment gap is a sector-wide issue and forms much of the focus of work with students on equality issues in universities today. This is an area of activity that we will continue to pursue in relation to our work towards the ECU's Race Equality Mark. During 2016, we will evaluate current initiatives, such as the BME ambassador scheme, and deliver sessions for staff on understanding and developing race equality for students. We will, however, expand this work to identify and address differences in completion rates and attainment amongst other groups, such as LGBT and trans students, mature students, disabled students and those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Around 6% of all University of Birmingham students have dependents. The University is one of only a handful that collects this information at registration and we are therefore now able to monitor the progression and retention of student parents. Since 2010, the University has helped support student parents establish a Guild Association, produce a pregnancy, maternity and paternity policy, and work towards a more inclusive curriculum that recognizes the needs of students with caring responsibilities. From 2015/16 we have further enhanced the support offered to student carers. Students will be identified at the point of registration (through self-selection), and offered support from the Vulnerable Student Officer who will work with the student to develop a Carer's Support



Plan and will oversee implementation of the Plan within the student's home School. This development has been informed by consultation with student carers and Welfare Tutors.

LGBT students have been supported by a mentoring scheme that was launched in 2012 called 'Come Out, Stay Out'. In 2015 there were around 25 professional mentors, most being University staff, supporting over 30 student mentees. Around 3% of students identified as LGB in 2015, whilst over 50% did not select the option to tell us their sexual identity at registration. Students are encouraged to disclose, and information is available at registration to explain the benefits of informing the University. In addition we are developing and promoting trans-inclusive practices, including gender-neutral facilities and developing activities to improve understanding amongst our wider community of trans issues.

To support the development and promotion of religious literacy and integration on campus the University has worked with a number of community organisations including local mosques and religious schools. The University's Good Campus Relations Group comprises of members from community groups and works towards the promotion of understanding and representation of different faith groups. The University has an excellent data collection and analysis system and, as part of its annual review of academic programmes, ensures that Schools consider the recruitment and performance data of students in the protected characteristics and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Schools report issues emanating from the data to the University's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, chaired by the PVC (Education); the Committee then monitors how the Schools work towards making improvements. This process is supported through targeted Student Equality Reports, which are disseminated to Schools outlining any identified issues.

We are fully committed to ensuring that anyone with the aspiration and ability can gain access, progress and achieve success at the University regardless of any disability. As a result of the proposals around the reduction in funding and support by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in the form of the Disabled Students' Allowances from 2016/17 onwards, a panel of specialist and senior staff, chaired by the Director of Student Services, was convened. This Group, launched initially in September 2014, has continued to meet during the 2015/16 academic year. The focus of the work is to review the government proposals to ensure that the University gives full consideration to how it will continue to support its disabled students in the light of reductions and amendments to the Disabled Students' Allowance.

The challenges of creating a physically accessible campus have been highlighted by students and staff in the Equality Scheme consultation as a key priority for the University, and we have undertaken significant work to improve accessibility across campus. During 2016 we will develop a forum for students and staff to raise accessibility issues and to comment on campus developments to ensure the diverse needs of our community are reflected.

### **Provision of Information to Prospective Students**

The priorities for communications to prospective students are that we provide clear and timely advice and information which is enhanced by our extended programme of face-to-face communications with students in school and their advisors, including parents and teachers. Market research continues to be conducted with students, prospective students and their parents in the development and focus of our messages, our choice of information channels and to determine which information is of most importance to prospective students.

Recruitment activities for the 17/18 cohort of students are already underway. The Guild contributes to the Undergraduate Prospectus for all potential students. Details of fees and funding arrangements are available on the University website; details are regularly updated as part of the Key Information Set initiative. Subscribers to our online customer relationship management system (CRM) are provided with personalised messages about fees and funding packages as well as the opportunity for online chat sessions with Funding Advisors. The University provides information to UCAS and the SLC in order to populate their information channels.

Face-to-face contact is recognised as one of the most influential channels of information, providing opportunities for prospective students and their parents to understand the fees and funding regime. We ensure that University recruitment staff are experts in the current arrangements at Government and University level.

Advisors on each of the outreach programmes are kept up-to-date on all aspects of student fees and support so that they can provide detailed and expert advice to students (and, wherever possible, their parents) participating in the A2B programme, as well as the other progressive programmes outlined in this document. We have provided authoritative information about the fees regime which has ensured that younger students have not been deterred from considering a university career in the future for fear of debt.

Finally, at the point at which the OFFA Agreement is confirmed, the University will produce a 'Money Matters' booklet. The booklet provides information about the fee, the University's financial package including sport and music scholarships and a link to our searchable funding database, alongside an explanation of the statutory support package offered by the Student Loans Company. It forms a key part of the communications to our WP students, and is distributed at all talks, visits and events, and made available online. The booklet is well received and is an essential part of our recruitment activity.

### **Consultation with Students**

Representatives from the Guild of Students have been engaged in the drafting of this Agreement. This Access Agreement is considered at a number of senior University committees which include formal representation from the Guild of Students, including the Vice-President (Welfare). The initiatives and activities detailed in this document are formulated following extensive evaluation of student feedback. For instance, the University developed the "Students with Children" Welcome and Orientation event following feedback from the Student Parents and Carers' Group. The "Student Survival Guide" was written by students for students, and many of our students are ambassadors who actively contribute to our range of outreach and WP activity. Our financial support package is informed by evaluation and student feedback, as well as findings from financial surveys.