

DURHAM UNIVERSITY

ACCESS AGREEMENT WITH THE OFFICE FOR FAIR ACCESS 2015/16

Context

1. Durham is a highly selecting institution, with demanding degree programmes and a high ratio of very highly qualified applicants per place. The University works hard to identify those with the greatest merit and potential amongst applicants from all backgrounds.
2. Our approach is twofold. Firstly, through our various outreach initiatives we are generating applications from students with merit and potential from under-represented groups who might not otherwise apply to us.
3. As an example of its work in this area, over the last three years the University has developed a Supported Progression Compact Scheme, which provides a progression route for a targeted cohort of the most able, but least likely to apply students from the North East and Cumbria. Through this scheme the University is making a significant contribution towards increasing applications from state schooled students from NS-SEC categories 4-7 from a region that has the lowest HE participation rate in England¹.
4. The University recognises the value of highly targeted outreach activity, spends proportionally more on this than is typical across the sector, and has evidence of its effectiveness through the evaluation of outcomes. The University also recognises that the higher graduate contributions consequent on a £9,000 fee makes financial support more important than before the fee rise, and therefore includes significant additional financial support packages to support enrolments from its target access groups.
5. Secondly, the University adopts a holistic approach to its assessment of merit and potential, including the use of information about the context of prior academic achievement. Academic achievement and future potential are critical factors in determining which applicants receive an offer of a place. Significant resource has therefore been dedicated to developing the effective use of contextual information in admissions in order to provide selectors with sharper tools to identify merit and potential. It is noteworthy that since the University began using contextual information, the quality of student intake, as measured by average tariff scores, has risen.

Section 1: Fees, student numbers and fee income

6. The University intends to charge a tuition fee of £9,000 for all full-time Home/EU undergraduate new entrants in 2015/16.

¹ The North East has the lowest participation rate for young entrants to HE in England, at 29.4% compared to the England average of 34.2% (see <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/wp/ourresearch/polar/polar3data/>). The rate for the North West (which includes Cumbria) is 32.5%, which is also less than the national average.

7. The University does not plan to recruit part-time undergraduates, but should this position change, then it would charge a pro-rata fee up to a maximum of £6,750, representing 75% intensity.
8. The University intends to charge a tuition fee of £9,000 for all full-time PGCE entrants in 2015/16.
9. For Home/EU undergraduates undertaking a year abroad as part of their degree programme, the University will charge 15% of the maximum tuition fee, which means those entering in 2015/16 will be charged a year abroad tuition fee of £1,350 (subject to any government approved inflationary rise).
10. For Home/EU undergraduates undertaking a placement year as part of their degree programme, the University will charge 20% of the full-time fee during their placement year, which means those entering in 2015/16 will be charged a placement year tuition fee of £1,800 (subject to any government approved inflationary rise).
11. In order to maintain the value of the fees in real terms, the University will apply annual increases in line with inflation and any permitted rises each year set out by the Government.

Section 2: Access and student success measures

2.1 Assessment of the University's Access and Retention Record

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

State School Entrants

14. The University regards an increase in the proportion of young, full-time first degree entrants from a state school background as key to increasing proportions of a number of other under-represented groups. Against an adjusted sector average of 75.7%, the University's proportion of young, full-time first degree entrants from a state school background was 63.4% in 2012/13. The proportion of young students from state schools and colleges has improved by a noteworthy 4.2 percentage points in 2012-13 after one year of stagnation. Factors contributing to this improvement include the impact of our Supported Progression Compact Scheme and other fair access activity, the improved success rates of state school students in securing an offer, and the unprecedented post qualification position in August 2012. Given the grade

distribution characteristics of school types and the high levels of achievement required to enter Durham it is unlikely that the scale of increase experienced in 2012-13 can be repeated in future years, but we aim to consolidate this one-year achievement.

Low Participation Neighbourhoods

15. The proportion of new entrants to the University from POLAR3 Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPN) in 2012/13 was 5.1%, compared to the adjusted sector average of 6.8%. The LPN proportion increased by 0.2 percentage points compared to the previous year and is a measure where the University has improved its performance against an initial figure for 2008/9 for the following three years.

Social class

16. The HESA KPI relating to social class is derived from the applicant's self-declaration of parental occupation, according to which they are classified into the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) groups. It is an important indicator but a problematic one, because a large proportion of applicants do not provide a self-declaration and the self-declaration is not validated. Moreover the University does not get access to the information until after the end of the admissions cycle, so that it cannot be used as part of the contextual data for applications. In 2012/13, 12.5 % of Durham's young home/EU entrants declared themselves to be from the NS-SEC 4-7 classifications, which was 7.0 percentage points below the adjusted sector average. The number of young entrants declaring themselves to be from NS-SEC categories 4-7 has declined by 30 students when compared to the previous year, notwithstanding the growth in state school and college entrants and the improvement in Low Participation Neighbourhoods. The decline in NS-SEC 4-7 classified enrolments matches a decline in the proportion of applicants retrospectively classified as NS-SEC 4-7, suggesting that the issue for the University is one of attracting suitable applicants in this category.
17. In order to overcome the problematic nature of the HESA KPI, the University has adopted the ACORN data set (A Classification of Residential Neighbourhoods) as a means of identifying socio-economic disadvantage in the admissions cycle for 2013 entry. In view of its segmentation by detailed postcode it is hoped that it will provide good contextual data for decision-making and a more precise indicator of how the University performs in attracting students from adverse socio-economic circumstances. The University will monitor this indicator over subsequent admissions cycles with a view to adopting it for future targets and milestones.

Mature Students

18. The proportion of full-time mature entrants who have come from a low participation neighbourhood (POLAR 3) and do not have a previous HE qualification was 15.8% in 2012/13, significantly exceeding the adjusted sector average by 3.3 percentage points. This is attributable in large part to the University's Foundation Centre, which targets home applicants who have few or no formal qualifications, or have experienced a break in their education.

Students in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance

19. The proportion of full-time first degree students in receipt of disabled students' allowance in 2012/13 was 5.6%, an increase of 1 percentage point on the previous year and exceeding the adjusted sector average of 4.9%.

Non-continuation rates

20. Student retention is one of the University's key strengths. 1.5% (2012/13) of its young full-time first degree entrants did not continue with their studies beyond their first year, which is better than the adjusted sector average of 2.6%. Financial reasons account for only a tiny proportion of withdrawals; the majority are academic or personal. In absolute terms the retention rates of mature students and students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods are not as strong but in both cases close to the adjusted sector average.

Projected Outcomes

21. The University's projected first degree completion rate is 90.1% (2012/13). If account is taken of those projected to transfer to another institution, such as Durham's cohort of Phase 1 medical students to Newcastle University, Durham's projected completion rate is 95.8% which outperforms the adjusted sector average.

Conclusion

22. There is evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of the University's approach to fair access, particularly in relation to the work it has undertaken under the previous access agreements such as the Supported Progression Compact Scheme, and the University has an enviable record in student retention. Given the University's current student profile with respect to participation from state schools and lower social classes, the University's future work will continue to focus on access to Durham from these under-represented groups, using collaboration with schools and colleges and the involvement of our own current students as the key means to achieve this.

2.2 Expenditure

23. The Office for Fair Access guidance suggests that if an institution has a low or very low proportion of under-represented students, it should spend between 30 and 35 per cent of its fee income above £6,000 per fee on access commitments. The University is working towards a figure of 31% in 2015/16. Therefore, with a fee of £9,000, this will approximate to a total of £9.8 million per annum, which will be divided between financial support packages and access outreach activity.
24. As part of the annual review of its access agreement, the University will consider the impact of its access activities, and if appropriate adjust the individual activities and the level of financial commitment.

The balance between non-financial measures and financial support

25. For some time the University has recognised the value of highly targeted outreach activity, and has spent proportionally more on this in its access agreement than was typical across the sector. This has been shown to be effective through the evaluation of outcomes (see section 2.3 below). Therefore the University will, through this access agreement, continue to commit more resource to targeted outreach activity in absolute terms. It also recognises that the higher graduate contributions consequent on a £9,000 fee makes financial support more important than before the fee rise. The University therefore intends to include significant additional financial support packages to support enrolments from the target access groups. The University believes that offering high value financial support packages to applicants who are recruited through its outreach activity will reinforce the impact of its other access measures. Moreover, the University is collaborating in a research project to evaluate what impact bursaries have on student retention.
26. Following the ending of the National Scholarship Programme and the subsequent adjustments of the University's bursary offerings, there will be a period of transition to a steady state position on student financial support. By 2017/18, the University estimates that, on the assumption that this 2015/16 agreement is renewed, it will be committing approximately £5.4 million per annum to financial support packages. £1.5 million of this sum will provide bursaries for those students who progress from the Supported Progression Compact Scheme. The remaining £3.9 million will be targeted at students from households where the income is below £25,000 per year.
27. The University would like to commit funding to bursaries for students who progress from the Sutton Trust Programme, but depending on the level of reduction in HEFCE's Student Opportunities Allocation this may not be possible, since a priority would be given to backfilling commitments funded by this allocation. No commitment is therefore made in this agreement.
28. By 2017/18 the University estimates that it will be spending of the order of £4.5 million on fair access activity, the details of which are set out below. It will continue to commit funding to researching, developing and evaluating the methods it uses in assessing merit and potential in its selection processes, enhancing the service it provides to inquirers and applicants from under-represented groups as they progress through the admissions cycle, and to evaluating the efficacy of its widening access measures. The University would like to commit funds to develop placement opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds as a means of enhancing their employment prospects, and it will continue to develop study skills support for students in the under-represented groups, particularly students progressing from the Supported Progression Compact Scheme and the University's Foundation Centre programme.

2.3 Overview of Outreach

29. In 2015/16, the University will continue to develop its programme of well-targeted and high quality outreach activities, with a focus on enhancing applications to Durham University from a specific range of backgrounds. The University recognises that its access activities play a broader

- role in extending educational opportunities to those from non-traditional backgrounds but the specific target is to promote fair access to Durham by increasing applications from students from state schools, LPNs and NS-SEC 4-7 backgrounds who do not traditionally apply to Durham.
30. The feedback from participants has shown that activities which work best in raising aspiration and attainment are those where there is continuous, direct engagement of students and teachers with the University: in particular summer schools, teacher conferences and the Supported Progression Compact Scheme with its series of residential events.
 31. The University is increasing the level of engagement with parents and carers. As key opinion-leaders, parents can be critical to a young person's understanding of their options. We know from our application data that most parents and guardians of participants in our targeted outreach activity do not have a traditional experience of higher education and many will never have had the chance to visit a university. We will run a pilot scheme in which the parents of Year 11 students from state schools in Hartlepool will stay a night in a Durham College. The parents will see what a university like Durham can offer and receive information that will empower them to support their child through Year 11 to Year 13. Hartlepool has been chosen as it is a comparatively small area, but with some high levels of social deprivation. The outcome will be evaluated using focus groups to determine whether the pilot was an effective and well-received intervention. More broadly, the University is aware of the need to enhance the information, advice and guidance provided to all stakeholders in the HE application process, and we were therefore pleased to receive very positive feedback when parent specific guidance was introduced in our Open Days.
 32. The University is continuing to focus on sophisticated evaluation and analysis in order to demonstrate impact. Outreach activities such as Supported Progression (see below) have been successfully running for long enough now to see a tangible impact in terms of student enrolments and achievement. By the end of the 2014 calendar year it will be possible to analyse the final performance of the first students studying three year degree programmes who came through the Supported Progression scheme. This will provide evidence of the value of Durham's outreach programmes and potentially indicate ways to improve the scheme further.
 33. In its evaluation of impact, the University benefits from involvement with the Sutton Trust (see paragraphs 39-43). Collaborating with the Sutton Trust gives access to a greater body of research as well as data from UCAS about the Sutton Trust's Summer School Programme, which allows the University to track which other highly selective universities, if not Durham, that students who have benefited from a Durham summer school have chosen. From 2014 we will participate in the Trust's Common Evaluation Framework which is detailed below.
 34. In summary, the University will continue to use additional tuition fee income to provide:
 - a dedicated team of staff working specifically on realising the aims of the fair access plan,
 - progression schemes involving regular targeted contact with students,
 - dissemination of financial information to applicants and prospective applicants,
 - highly targeted residential summer schools,
 - school and college visits,

- the expanded Foundation Centre programme, offering a direct progression route into Durham degrees for LPN, mature, and non-traditionally qualified students ,
- conferences and events for teachers who support higher education progression,
- engagement with students from schools in areas of significant disadvantage in order to stimulate an interest in STEM subjects,
- activity with children and young people from Early Years Foundation Studies onwards.

The Compact Scheme

35. The University's flagship access scheme remains the Supported Progression Compact Scheme, which is a series of intensive activities focussed on the most able, least likely to apply, disadvantaged students from targeted areas. It aims to increase applications from students from state schools, Low Participation Neighbourhoods, and NS-SEC categories 4-7 in a region that has the lowest HE participation rate in England. Impact will be achieved both with students participating in the scheme and among their peers at school or college, as one of the intended outcomes of the scheme is removing publicly-held real and perceived barriers to accessing a Durham degree. The Scheme provides an integrated portfolio of contacts with individual students starting in Year 10, continuing until Year 13 and then beyond registration at the University.
36. The most recent cohort to complete the programme started with 188 Year 12 participants, with 131 of these students successfully completing the summer school. We had 112 Supported Progression applications to study at Durham (compared to a target of 80 applications) leading to 69 students enrolling at Durham in October 2013 (against a challenging target of 70). We hope to continue to build upon this success by striving for greater numbers of successful enrolments. The University has used a methodical approach to its compact scheme, basing development on evaluation of impact, and through this we have been able to recruit under-represented students without compromising on the University's high academic standards.
37. In 2014/15, the University aims to consolidate its success so far by making improvements to the Scheme. Most notably, we will be putting more emphasis on helping students with attainment to ensure that they achieve the best results from their Level 3 qualifications. We will also be significantly expanding the programme with the addition, in 2014, of a second parallel programme which will increase the number of students enrolled from a notional 150 to 240. This will see us hold two residential Easter Academies and two residential Summer Schools.
38. We also intend in 2014 to redevelop our Pre-16 Supported Progression work to include more interactions with parents and teachers, as well as looking at effective ways to prepare students for their post-16 choices. We intend to find one or more suitable partner HEIs to collaborate with and therefore add value to our current Pre-16 activities.

Sutton Trust Programme

39. As a national counterpart of the compact scheme's regional focus, Durham University hosts a Sutton Trust summer school for Year 12 students. The week long summer school is designed to give bright students from non-privileged homes an experience of a leading university. The aim is to equip students, most of whom will be the first in their families to go on to higher education,

with the confidence, knowledge and insight to make high quality applications to highly selecting universities.

40. A high proportion of students from the Sutton Trust summer schools enrol at one of the participating institutions. Visiting Year 12 students are supported by an enthusiastic team of Durham Student Ambassadors, led by an experienced management team.
41. Durham University has a long history of working with the Sutton Trust and aims to continue this collaborative work in future years with new activities. Last year, 20 of the 88 applicants who had previously participated in the Sutton Trust summer school registered at Durham University in October 2013. To strengthen the impact of the activity, the University decided to support the Sutton Trust scheme by awarding a guaranteed offer to any student who successfully participated in the scheme. This is a major development for a highly selective University such as Durham and means that 81 Sutton Trust students currently hold an offer from Durham University for 2014 entry.
42. In August 2014 we will add a second summer school to this programme, as well as creating further interactions with participating students beyond the summer school. In this way we hope to increase the number of students involved, as well as the value of the experience. In particular, we hope to raise the number of participating students to 240 compared to 168 in 2013.
43. 2014 will also see the University increase its level of collaboration with the Sutton Trust. Having already in 2013 volunteered to engage in pilot projects of e-mentoring and the Trust's Academic Apprenticeships project², in September 2014 we will host a conference for state school teachers and advisers with a focus on increasing knowledge, skills and resources specifically within the area of independent learning skills developed through delivery of qualifications like the Extended Project Qualification. Part funded and fully supported by the Sutton Trust, we hope that this will be a strong addition to our portfolio of partnership working and demonstrates a commitment to explore and redress issues of progression of under-represented students to highly selective universities like Durham.

Insight

44. To complement Supported Progression, and to meet the demand created by the Scheme's success, an additional programme of support was established in 2012/13 for students who apply to the Supported Progression Compact Scheme, but who do not meet all of the eligibility requirements. Durham University recognises that students who do not meet every eligibility requirement may nevertheless benefit from additional support. This programme is open to Year 12 state schooled students in the North East, Cumbria and North Yorkshire.
45. The programme delivers useful resources, information about studying at Durham University and advice on preparing applications to University to over 500 students.

² This programme addresses the inequalities in under-represented students writing UCAS [Personal Statements](#) and seeks to increase the number of offers made by elite universities to candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Guidance Information provided through Open Days

46. Durham University's campus-wide Pre-Application Open Days were established in 2011 to provide high quality opportunities to visit the University. They are open to students from all backgrounds, though one of the key intentions is to make the University more accessible to those who might not typically see Durham as an opportunity, possibly as a result of low aspiration or reduced access to high quality information, advice and guidance. As well as providing college tours and visits to academic departments, these Open Days are designed to deliver key guidance in areas including student finance, career planning and Higher Education advice for parents and carers. There is a particular focus on providing information on student finance and student support arrangements, to ensure that cost does not become a perceived barrier for students from low income backgrounds.
47. In 2013 approximately 25,000 visitors attended Durham's pre-application Open Days in both Durham City and at Queen's Campus, Stockton. The Open Days are actively marketed to state schools throughout the country.
48. A travel bursary was introduced for those attending Pre-application Open Days in 2013 and in receipt of the 16 – 19 Bursary or the EMA (Scotland). It is our intention to retain this for future Pre-application Open Days. In addition it is our intention to expand this provision to the Post-offer Open Days held in March, to ensure those in receipt of an offer from Durham University are appropriately supported with costs associated with these events which are designed to build knowledge, confidence and provide further opportunities to reassure applicants.

Durham University Library and Museums

49. Outreach and engagement work is delivered by the Learning Team of the University Library and Museums. The team engages with over 20,000 children and young people each year (over 22,000 in 2013) via a varied range of school workshops, project based work and weekend and holiday activities. The sessions are designed to engage the children with the collections of the University to provide an informative, fun and interactive learning opportunity. The feedback from schools is excellent and since 2009 the number of visits has increased by over 300%.
50. The overwhelming majority of participants are from state schools within the North East, although schools from outside of the region (London, Doncaster, Wigan and many schools in North Yorkshire) also visit. The age range of children and young people is equally diverse, ranging from Early Years Foundation Studies to A level. Since 2011 there has been a focus on ensuring that all children are aware that they are visiting a university and that their experience is a positive one to reinforce messages about the accessibility of Durham University.
51. The Learning Team also run a popular programme aimed at local Year 12 and 13 students. Under the terms of this programme, they are invited to attend a training session on research skills and using the facilities of the University Library. Once they have attended one of these sessions they are then welcome to use the University Library and its resources for their study throughout the year.
52. The Library will continue to provide this support to local schools and seek new ways of engaging with additional children and young people via the development of new sessions, increased

outreach work and identifying how best to support students at Key Stages 3-5 who want increased involvement. A recent example of this is working with approximately 950 students in local schools, along with some of our students in engineering, maths and physics, on an engineering project tied into our Robots exhibition at the Palace Green Library.

Science Outreach

53. Durham University has a strong track record of supporting science in schools with the aim of stimulating interest in science at primary and secondary school level. Current activities build on our world-class scientific research and teaching, involving the local community in the excitement of science. There is a particular focus on working with schools, including engagement with primary schools. The Science Outreach team has visited one in three secondary schools and more than one on ten primary schools in the region.
54. One of the Science Outreach team's access schemes is Science into Schools. This is a series of modules offered across the Faculty of Science to third and fourth year undergraduates. A primary aim of the module is to develop a range of key skills in the student and to offer an early taste of teaching science to those interested in pursuing it as a career, or for other career pathways where public understanding of science is required. School students will meet undergraduate role models who aim to inspire them to study science at university. The students spend 40 hours on placement in a local school (typically a half-day per week over 10 weeks) working with a partner teacher. The school is provided with a knowledgeable and enthusiastic student who will offer practical assistance in the classroom and help to engage the pupils in science, especially in their own area of expertise. During the placement, from January to the end of March, the student undertakes a Special Project, the nature of which is based upon the needs of the school and the skills of the undergraduate student, and must be related to the area of expertise of the student. For the Academic year 2013-15, a total of 55 students were enrolled on the modules, 36 of whom were placed in Primary Schools.
55. Durham also holds an annual Schools' Science Festival which aims to stimulate interest and encourage wider participation in science, and to support the next generation of scientists from the local area. School students from across the region who participate in the Durham University Schools' Science Festival follow a demanding programme of engineering projects including design, building and testing, and a range of hands-on science and technology activities. The Festival is designed for the target audience of Year 9 and Year 10 students. It is anticipated that the Festival will continue to develop and grow.

Sports Outreach

56. Durham University's Sports Department has established an outstanding reputation in outreach. Through this work, sport has been used to engage a wide range of disadvantaged groups, such as children in care. Sport also works closely with local schools and sports clubs to extend opportunities, with 150 registered student volunteers playing an active role at the heart of this work.

Evaluation of Long-term Outreach Work

57. Demonstrating the impact of programmes such as the Supported Progression scheme is relatively straightforward, as we can track a steady rise in the number of students who apply having participated in these schemes. It is more difficult to measure the impact of longer-term outreach work such as that with Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. Nonetheless we believe there are some legitimate ways of doing so. For example, we will look to survey the teachers of the school groups that engage with our museums, asking about the visit's effect on the perceptions of the school children about universities. We can also investigate whether applicants to our Supported Progression Scheme and other programmes have had any prior contact with the University to see whether any previous engagement with the University has had an impact.
58. One focus of our outreach work in 2013/14 has been a comprehensive review of evaluation methods and ways of demonstrating impact. 2014 will see the first cohort of Supported Progression students graduate and we intend to complete an evaluation of their journey from initial interaction to employment or further study. We are also utilising focus groups rather than standard feedback forms with an emphasis on thorough stakeholder analysis, so that we know we are asking the right questions of the right people. This means ensuring that parents, guardians, teachers, advisers, student mentors and academic staff in the University all have input into the overall evaluation, rather than just the student participants.
59. To ensure a comprehensive evaluation, national comparisons will be utilised alongside our local monitoring and internal evaluation. We will continue to be able to track our performance through our collaboration with the Sutton Trust and data from UCAS. We have also agreed to participate in the Sutton Trust's new Common Evaluation Framework (CEF) which is being designed and executed by Durham University's Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (CEM). This new framework will allow the University to feed into a highly sophisticated, national programme of evaluation which can be used to assess impact and to monitor good practice at other institutions.

Contextual Information

60. Durham University uses contextual data in admissions and has already developed systems to use this data in its selection process to ensure that applicants with the greatest merit and potential for undergraduate study receive offers.
61. The University intends to pursue these developments further by looking at all the predictors of success at undergraduate level as a basis for selection. The University is employing the services of its Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (CEM), which is the largest independent provider of educational monitoring systems in the world and provides specialist research and evaluation services to a wide range of organisations including universities.
62. In its use of contextual information, the University has replaced POLAR2 and POLAR3 data with the ACORN data set as the socio-demographic indicator. This is providing more precise contextual data in the selection of both UCAS applicants and applicants for the Supported Progression Scheme.

Student retention and success

63. The University has committed a modest level of resource to ensuring that it maintains its excellent retention levels. Post-entry support measures will be targeted on study skills support for students in the under-represented groups. The University hopes that these measures will play an indirect role in encouraging under-represented groups to apply, who may be unnecessarily concerned about their ability to cope with a demanding programme of studies.

Progression

64. The University would also like to commit resource to develop placement opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds as a means of enhancing their employment prospects. This targeted progression activity will be delivered through our Careers, Employability and Enterprise Centre. The scale of this activity will depend on adjustments required to respond to the anticipated reductions in HEFCE Student Opportunity Allocations

Collaboration

65. The University believes very strongly that a collaborative approach to fair access can be highly effective. With a great deal of excellent work taking place within the University we have been careful to foster links with like-minded groups who share our appetite for helping students from under-represented backgrounds to apply to high-demand universities. We will continue to work collaboratively with key partners, as well as actively developing new partnerships, including:
- Local, regional and national staff in schools and colleges
 - Gifted and Talented Co-ordinators in schools and colleges
 - An increased emphasis on the role of parents, guardians and other opinion leaders
 - The National College for Teaching and Leadership
 - Teach First
 - The Open College Network (through the Foundation Centre)
 - The Sutton Trust (and indirectly through the Sutton Trust with the Wolfson Foundation)
 - Universities in the Sutton Trust Summer Schools Group
 - The Brightside Trust
 - Buttle UK
 - The Who Cares Trust
 - The Russell Group (especially through the Russell Group Widening Participation Association and the Russell Group Admissions Forum)
 - Supporting Professionalism in Admissions
 - HELOA
66. We actively target state schools across the UK to offer engagement activity that is both informative and provides support to those students who might otherwise not consider Universities such as Durham. Additionally we are committed to strengthening our collaborative work with teachers, which underpins the success of many of our access programmes. We continue to work with groups of schools such as the Grammar Schools Heads Association and

successfully expanded delivery of engagement events for teachers with the introduction of 'regional hubs'. This ensures staff within areas of the country such as the South East of England are provided with localised opportunities to develop effective relationships with Durham University. This activity will be expanded to the South West to ensure a wider reach. In addition we host a number of conferences for teachers, ranging from day events to residential subject-specific conferences both on site and within regional hubs. Through these we can share important information, advice and guidance, enhance teaching practice and deepen shared understanding of developments in curriculums. The links we have established through these conferences and visits to individual schools and colleges has also enabled us to develop a network of schools and colleges with which we maintain regular contact, building on face-to-face interactions.

67. As has already been outlined the Sutton Trust is one of the University's most important partnerships, as through the trust we are able to work with a number of high demand universities on issues of access. The Sutton Trust Summer Schools group includes Cambridge, Kings College London, University College London, Bristol, Edinburgh, Imperial College, Nottingham, Royal Veterinary College and St Andrews. The universities meet and communicate regularly. We work on similar programmes, facilitated by the Sutton Trust, and so are able to share good practice and future programme developments. The inclusion of UCAS in the Sutton Trust's Summer School group ensures that we are able to track student progress easily should one of our summer school students apply to another Sutton Trust university. Our partnership with the Sutton Trust has led to the development of pilot projects that allow for collaborative working. Working on the development of e-mentoring alongside the Universities of Nottingham and Bristol has allowed us to share resources. Additionally this pilot gives us the opportunity to engage with the Brightside Trust. We are also part of the Sutton Trust's pilot for Academic Apprenticeships, which will give us an opportunity to work with Bristol, Kings College London and University College London.
68. The University joined the Russell Group in 2012 which has already lead to greater provision of access activities such as Future Scholar Awards (formerly DUX), in which high performing pupils in Year 9 are invited to visit a Russell Group university, accompanied by a teacher or another member of staff. Durham is involved in the Russell Group Widening Participation Association which allows for the sharing of good practice and resources with all the universities in the group working on access issues. In addition to regular meetings there are other events throughout the year that focus on developing successful common approaches to access work. Already we have agreed to participate in the Group's annual conferences for teachers by providing expert guidance on applying to University. As a relatively new member of this group it is hoped that over time this forum will lead to even greater collaborative working with other high demand universities. The University is also an active member of the Russell Group Admissions Forum, through which we are able to discuss and share best practice in delivering an admissions process that supports identifying the strongest students from all backgrounds, including the use of contextual information. This enhances our active engagement with the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions organisation, through which we continue to share best practice, most recently in a further review of the use of contextual information.

69. The University has made significant progress in supporting care leavers. As a group, care leavers have always been implicitly part of our access work. However, now the University intends to look into more active ways that we can support care leavers to gain access to universities like Durham. We have already been proactive in encouraging applications from care leavers to our access programmes, giving them added priority in selection for these programmes. We have also had some productive discussions with Buttle UK as well as providing information for the Who Cares Trust Handbook. We are looking to be recognised with the Buttle UK Quality Mark as recognition of our commitment to care leavers. Through this we hope our access work will become yet more inclusive.
70. During 2014 the University is redeveloping its Pre-16 Supported Progression work. As well as making our provision more effective and better targeted, we are currently investigating possibilities for collaboration with other HEIs. We believe that collaboration that supports Pre-16 access work is of great value in offering a greater variety of information and opportunities to young people by working with complementary institutions. We are currently considering partners who might share our goals and vision for access, particularly partners who will support our work with important stakeholders such as parents and teachers.

2.4 Financial Support for Students

71. The University concluded, following consultation with its Students' Union, that the loan arrangements available through Student Finance England make fee waivers a less attractive offer to prospective students, whereas packages that provide financial support in cash or in kind are preferred.
72. Durham is a residential, collegiate university and participating in a college community is an integral part of the student experience. For this reason, living in college in the first year is a regulatory requirement for most students. Therefore, financial support will be targeted at facilitating this participation, by offering the support in the form of free or subsidised college accommodation, where appropriate.

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

73. The University has a financial bursary scheme for students who progress from the Supported Progression Scheme who receive £5,500 per annum for the duration of their course. Any students progressing from the scheme who also qualify for funding from the Durham Grant Scheme will have their combined total bursary and scholarship amount capped at £5,500. It is estimated that in 2015/16, 90 new entrants per year will be offered the bursaries, which, over the three or four years of their programmes, will cost approximately £1.5 million. In their first year, students will normally be offered the bursary in the form of a subsidy for college accommodation.

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

74. Through the Durham Grant Scheme, the University will provide financial support packages of £2,000, either as subsidised accommodation and related institutional services or as a cash bursary, to all home³ undergraduate students entering in 2015/16, for each year of study, where the residual household income is below £25k per annum (as assessed by Student Finance England in accordance with its guidance on Assessing Financial Entitlement). Approximately 620 new students will be in this category in 2015/16.

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

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

Total Commitment for Financial Support

76. The accumulation of new arrangements through successive access agreements will reach steady state in 2017/18, at which point the total commitment for financial support under the various Access Agreements will be of the order of £5.4 million.

Total Countable Expenditure

77. The commitment to financial support of about £5.4 million and the commitment to outreach, evaluation and retention activities of about £4.6 million give a total commitment under the access agreement under steady state of approximately £10 million. All this expenditure is countable under the guidance provided by the Office for Fair Access. It consists of expenditure in previous access agreements that the University is continuing to make and expenditure on new access and student retention measures consistent with the guidance. In view of the uncertainty over the future level of the HEFCE Student Opportunity Allocation, the University will review the detail of its commitments when the HEFCE funding level is known and make adjustments accordingly, nonetheless honouring the student financial support commitments stated in this agreement.

Section 3: Targets and Milestones

Access Targets

78. The University is committed to making sustained progress in increasing the proportion of students from under-represented groups.

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

79. The OFFA guidance suggests that, in choosing what targets and milestones to use to evaluate the effectiveness of access measures, the University might consider both the HESA Key Performance Indicators and other statistical measures. The HESA KPI where the University is furthest from its adjusted sector average is the proportion of young state school or college entrants, followed by the KPI for the proportion of entrants from socio-economic classifications NS-SEC 4-7. The University regards an increase in the proportion of young, full-time first degree entrants from a state school background as key to increasing proportions of a number of other under-represented groups. The University will therefore set milestones and longer-term targets for its HESA state school or college and NS-SEC performance indicators, supported by milestones and targets for its Supported Progression Compact Scheme. The University anticipates that the achievement of the Supported Progression Compact Scheme milestones will lead to consequent improvement in the HESA KPIs. In a future access agreement, the University is likely to supplement the NS-SEC 4-7 indicator with a more accurate measure deriving from the use of the ACORN dataset, once a baseline has been established.
80. The University therefore reaffirms its aim, as stated in the 2013/14 Access Agreement of increasing the proportion of state school or college and NS-SEC 4-7 enrolments relative to the HESA KPI figures for 2009 entrants. The HESA measure counts students from state schools or colleges as a proportion of those who are Home/EU fee status, UK domiciled, and under 21 years of age; and similarly for NS-SEC 4-7. The University's targets are:
- a. To maintain the recent one-year increase in the proportion of young entrants from state school or college as measured by the HESA KPI at 63% and to reduce the number of percentage points below the HESA KPI adjusted sector average (the 'benchmark') to 11.7 by 2017/18.
 - b. To increase the proportion of entrants from NS-SEC 4-7 as measured by the HESA KPI to 15.2% by 2017/18 and to reduce the number of percentage points below the HESA KPI adjusted sector average (the 'benchmark') to 3 by 2017/18.
81. Proportional intermediate milestones for entrants from state schools and colleges and from NS-SEC classifications 4-7 are set for each academic year. Given the progress already made in the state school proportion, the challenge will be to maintain this level of participation beyond a single year.
82. The targets relating to the Support Progression Compact Scheme are as follows:
- a. Applications to Durham from those students who participated in the Supported Progression Compact Scheme. From the 2015/16 application cycle: 105 per year
 - b. Enrolments at Durham from those students who participated in the Supported Progression Compact Scheme. From 2015 entry: 90 per year
 - c. Enrolments at other selective universities from those students who participated in the Supported Progression Compact Scheme, selective universities being defined by entry tariff score, as those with an institutional average of 375 tariff points or more. From 2015 entry: 5 per year
83. Proportional intermediate milestones in the period up to the target year have been set for each academic year.

84. The targets relating to counterpart outreach schemes to Supported Progression (e.g. Sutton Trust Summer School, Insight) are as follows:
 Minimum number of places on the schemes offered in 2015/16: 850
85. The targets relating to the number of children and young people involved in Museums educational outreach activity are:
 Minimum number in 2015/16: 7,400
86. Proportional intermediate milestones in the period up to the target year have been set for each academic year.
87. The University will also evaluate the effectiveness of ACORN data in identifying disadvantage and consider additional uses for this data to support fair access.

Retention Target

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

Section 4: Monitoring and Evaluation Arrangements

89. The University is employing the services of its School of Applied Social Sciences and its Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (CEM) to undertake evaluation and monitoring. The Centre, which works with schools nationally, has access to very large quantities of relevant background data against which to evaluate the University's access measures. The University is also collaborating in a research project to evaluate the retention benefits of bursaries.
90. Policy in respect of widening access is developed by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) through the University Executive Committee, the Education Committee and Senate, the latter two having student membership. Operational performance in respect of widening access is monitored by the same governance structures.
91. The Student Recruitment and Admissions Office has institutional responsibility for the implementation and delivery of measures to promote access to the University. Evaluation of impact is embedded in all access programmes from the outset and it is through continuous monitoring and analysis that we improve and expand our outreach work. As access programmes mature we are receiving more data which by 2014/15 will provide a comprehensive narrative of our progress in meeting our access targets.

Section 5: Equality and Diversity

92. The focus of this Access Agreement is on representation from state schools and lower socio-economic groups. Durham University is aware of its commitments in this respect and also its duties under the Equality Act 2010 to advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not. It is recognised that BME and disabled

people are statistically overrepresented within lower-socio economic groups, and as such this Access Agreement is another mechanism to help the University develop its approach to diversity and equality.

93. Analysis shows that when BME students apply to us they are just as likely as comparably qualified white applicants to receive offers; however the University receives relatively low proportions of applications from this cohort of students. Consequently we have undertaken some very targeted outreach activity with schools with a higher than average proportion of BME students, which is helping our understanding of what activity is likely to deliver the greatest impact. We are reviewing our student recruitment activities with the intention of focussing on those schools that are likely to assist in terms of increasing the numbers of BME students applying. It is our intention to recruit BME role models from within our current student body and alumni, increase engagement with targeted schools and offer enhanced outreach and on-campus activity for pupils and teachers. This builds on the University's existing approach to promoting widening access through targeted activity. We have also started to analyse data to understand our performance in the context of our comparators and to monitor success rates of registered BME students.
94. Durham is committed to promoting diversity and equality. The Pro Vice Chancellor (Education) has overall responsibility for the agenda, chairing the Diversity and Equality Advisory Group (DEAG) and leading the continuing improvements in our approach across the institution. This Group reports to University Executive Committee and to University Council. Through this, diversity and equality is overseen at the highest levels within the University. The University has also developed an Equality and Diversity Strategy and appointed a Dean for Equality and Diversity in October 2013. Part of our Strategy includes the setting of seven key objectives, one of which is that "we will collaborate with partners to see a continued increase in students coming to the University from our targeted under-represented groups".
95. Durham has clear HR policies, effective team working and delegated responsibility for the agenda across the University and it is making progress in key areas. Examples of the University's commitment to equality and diversity include our Foundation Centre, joining Stonewall's Diversity Champion programme, achievement of Two Tick accreditation and receipt of a University wide bronze Athena SWAN award, a process which was led by the Science Faculty on behalf of the University.
96. The University's primary activity relating to mature students is the Foundation Centre. A key strand of the Foundation Centre's activity is to help mature learners return to education and there is direct progression from the Foundation Centre onto all University degree programmes.
97. The University is committed to the principles of inclusion and encourages applicants from disabled students. We have a proven track record of providing tailored support packages for individual students and arranging appropriate support. The University recently reviewed the impact of its process for making reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled applicants were increasingly aware that adjustments for their disability can be made and so they could be confident that these would be put in place. As a consequence, a revised process for making reasonable adjustments for disabled students was identified and implemented in October 2012. The Disability Support Service works proactively with students who declare a disability

prior to enrolment to ensure all reasonable adjustments are anticipated, assessed and implemented in a timely manner. There is a dedicated team of specialists to support both disabled students and we aim to capture information regarding student disclosure at any point in the student lifecycle.

98. As noted in paragraph 19 above, the University also performs well in recruiting Home/EU undergraduate students who are eligible for the Disability Support Allowance (DSA), increasing to 5.6% in 2012/13 against an adjusted sector average of 4.9%. Internal analysis of students with a declared disability also indicates a rising proportion of disabled students at the University. The University remains committed to improving its record of attracting disabled students and will seek continual improvement against this benchmark by ensuring continued investment in outreach activities and in-house support provision.
99. The University dovetails its support for disabled students with the University's wider approach to Equality and Diversity through the membership of DEAG. Senior staff overseeing disabled student support are represented on the Group and influence the strategic direction adopted by the University in this area. A recent consequence of this collaboration was the establishment of an Access Review Group with responsibility for enhancing the accessibility of the University's estate for disabled staff, students and visitors. The Group has budgetary responsibilities and reports to DEAG.
100. The requirement to identify and address diversity challenges within each department and college has been part of the annual planning process for some time and Durham has recently completed a review of how to begin developing key aspects of the curricula to meet the needs of a diverse student body more effectively. The approach seeks to embed diversity and equality across the institution as illustrated by the University's response to the Equality Act 2010, with the successful delivery of this Access Agreement being acknowledged as one of the key diversity priorities for the University.
101. The University views impact assessments as having an integral role in ensuring that our policies, procedures and practice operate to support our diversity objectives. We also recognise their effectiveness in ensuring fairness and improving organisational effectiveness as well as helping us meet our legislative duties. We will complete an equality impact assessment of our Access Agreement and the Supported Progression Compact Scheme in 2014.
102. The University collects, collates and publishes annual admissions statistics that include reporting on ethnicity, sex, declared disability and age group. Through this the University can monitor its admissions process to ensure that there is fairness and consistency of treatment for applicants from all backgrounds and that admissions decisions are made on academic grounds. These statistics are reported annually to Education Committee, which reports to University Senate.
103. Participation in some of our access activities is only restricted to students on the basis of school type and NS-SEC category 4-7. This focus enables our activity to be targeted towards our milestones, which in themselves reflect backgrounds which are under-represented in the University's student profile. We will ensure that protected characteristics are recognised in the design and the selection decisions for entry to these activities.

Section 6: Provision of Information to Prospective Students

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

Section 7: Consulting with Students

108. The foundation of all outreach work at the University is our student body, and our Colleges provide a locus for the activities in which our current students engage with our target students. Almost all access activities involve undergraduate students as guides and role models. Durham has a Student Ambassador scheme that offers a high level of training and support to enable Durham students to engage with the fair access agenda. Every fair access residential activity will involve undergraduate mentors who provide academic and pastoral support to the school students taking part. Increasingly Student Ambassadors are being included in the planning process and are creating more activities that are student-led as part of Durham's residential access activities programme. We have also developed the role of "sabbatical officer" within the Student Recruitment and Access Office, whereby three recent graduates are recruited for a year to the Access and Student Recruitment team. This provides a strong student input through appointing staff with recent experience of the decisions that a young person will have to make between 14 and 18 years of age.
109. Through its evaluation mechanisms the University is able to gather feedback from students participating in our access activities to inform the future development of these, so that they best meet the aims of the University and the needs of students we are working with.
110. In drafting the 2012 Access Agreement, the University consulted with Durham Students Union. The Students' Union was consulted in detail on their preferred options for student financial support. It supported the University's conclusion that given the loan arrangements available through Student Finance England, fee waivers are a less attractive offer to prospective students, whereas packages that provide financial support in cash or in kind are preferable. In each of the successive versions of the original 2012 agreement, including this one, the Students' Union officers were consulted again.

Access agreement 2015-16 resource plan (submission 1st May 2014)
(Table 7) Targets and milestones

Institution name: University of Durham

Institution UKPRN: 10007143

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

Number	Please select target type from the drop-down menu	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
						2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	
1	HESA T1a - State School (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	Percentage proportion of young state school or college entrants in the academic year as measured by the HESA KPI	No	2009/10	59.2	63	63	63	63		In view of the unpredictable effect of the new fee regime, the HESA KPI targets are expressed in terms both of the overall proportion of students and the distance from the HESA KPI benchmark (see next target). Having significantly improved our performance in 2012/13, our revised target is to consolidate this position in a time of significant volatility in the recruitment environment and 14-18 curriculum reform.
2	HESA T1a - State School (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	Percentage pts below the HESA KPI benchmark for young state school or college entrants	No	2009/10	14.8	13	12.5	12	11.7		
3	HESA T1a - NS-SEC classes 4-7 (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	Percentage proportion of NS-SEC 4-7 entrants in the academic year as measured by the HESA KPI	No	2009/10	12.8	14	14.5	15	15.2		This HESA KPI is particularly challenging because UCAS does not provide access to NS-SEC classification at the point of application, preventing this contextual information being used to inform the selection process. As an indicator of disadvantage, the University plans to change from using POLAR2 to using ACORN data, which is more precise and therefore it is presumed will assist in moving towards this target. Nonetheless the KPI remains problematic because the contextual information is not directly available in the selection process.
4	HESA T1a - NS-SEC classes 4-7 (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	Percentage pts below the HESA KPI benchmark for NS-SEC 4-7	No	2009/10	5.4	4.2	3.7	3.2	3		
5	Other statistic - Applications (please give details in the next column)	Applications in the admissions cycle to Durham from those who participated in the Supported Progression Compact Scheme	Yes	2009/10	0	105	105	105	105		
6	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	New enrolments in the first year at Durham from those who participated in the Supported Progression Compact Scheme	Yes	2010/11	0	90	90	90	90		
7	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	Enrolments at other selective universities (average institutional tariff points on entry 375+) from participants in the Supported Progression Compact Scheme	Yes	2010/11	0	5	5	5	5		
8	HESA T3a - No longer in HE after 1 year (All, full-time, first degree entrants)	Maintain the current excellent non-continuation rate	No	2009/10	2%	Maintain 2%	Maintain 2%	Maintain 2%	Maintain 2%		

Notes

Alongside applicant and entrant targets, we encourage you to provide targets around outreach and student success work (including collaborative work where appropriate) or other initiatives to illustrate your progress towards increasing access, student success and progression. These should be measurable outcomes-based targets and should focus on the number of beneficiaries reached by a particular activity/programme or the number of schools worked with, and what the outcomes were, rather than simply recording the nature/number of activities.

Table 7b - Other milestones and targets.

Number	Please select target type from the drop-down menu	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
						2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	
1	Operational targets	Number of schools targeted as potential participants in the Supported Progression Scheme	Yes	2009/10	9	70	75	80	80		
2	Contextual data	Evaluate the effectiveness of ACORN data in identifying disadvantage and consider additional uses for this data to support fair access	No			Evaluate effectiveness	Start to implement any outcomes of the evaluation	Complete			
3	Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Minimum number of places offered each year to counterpart outreach schemes to Supported Progression (e.g. Sutton Trust Summer School, Insight)	Yes	2011/12	170	850	850	850	850		
4	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Minimum number of children and young people involved in Museums educational outreach activity	No	2011/12	7000	7300	7400	7500	7600		

Optional commentary on milestones.
This box is character-limited to 1000 characters; however, we are happy for you to upload additional 'supporting information' as a separate Word/pdf document.