# 2019 - 20 Access and Participation Plan

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## Section one: Assessment of Current Performance

### Current Performance

1. The University of Sussex has made good progress in fair access and participation over the past five years and has received awards for the quality of work undertaken[1] around access,

increase access and reduce gaps in attainment for OfS countable student groups. Our performance in relation to work with target groups is set out in the remainder of Section One.

## Context of our Access and Participation Plan

4. In reviewing our Access and Participation Plan

**Table 1: POLAR 3 – Applications and Placed students at the University of Sussex (source: UCAS end-of-cycle data)**

| | | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q1 | Applications | 7.1% | 7.4% | 7.8% | 8.3% | 8.5% | 8.0% |
| | Placed | 5.7% | 7.2% | 8.5% | 7.8% | 8.3% | 8.4% |

**Table 2: POLAR 3 - Applications and placed students at high-tariff institutions (source: UCAS end-of-cycle data)**

| | | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q1 | Applications | 7.7% | 7.7% | 8.1% | 8.1% | 8.1% | 8.3% |
| | Placed | 6.4% | 6.5% | 7.0% | 6.8% | 7.1% | 7.4% |

9. We have seen a notable rise in intake from students who come from Q1 neighbourhoods, and we note that the proportion of the Q1 acceptances is higher than the proportion of Q1 applications. This is the reverse of other high-tariff institutions, who admit a smaller proportion of Q1 students than the share of applications from the same quintile.

## Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicity (BAME) Students

10. Drawing on the UCAS end of cycle report, Table 3 below shows that in terms of Ethnicity we have seen a greater diversity in our intake and applications each cycle between 2012 and 2017. Sussex has seen an increase in BAME applicants from 22.8% in 2016 to 23.4% in 2017 and an increase in acceptances from 17.9% to 18.2%. The 2017 cycle saw the proportion of applications who are from UK students defining themselves as something other than White go above 25% for the first time.

11. Whilst rising numbers of students from BAME backgrounds are accepting places, acceptances have fallen amongst students identifying themselves as Black. Although we achieve a higher proportion of BAME acceptances than other high-tariff institutions, we recognise there is work to do in this area and our strategy and measures will be developed accordingly.

12. HESA data provide evidence that Undergraduate UK domiciled first year entrants increased by 45% overall from 2012/13 to 2016/17, with an increase in BAME students over the same period from 375 to 686, representing an 83% increase. This growth was achieved due to a combination of access activity and the removal of student number control. We are pleased to have significantly increased BAME students to over 18% of UK domiciled UG entrants to Sussex, noting in 2016/17 the BAME population was 16% across the UK population. BAME participation will remain a key priority for the 2019/20 Access and Participation Plan.

**Table 3:**

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## Mature Students

13. The proportion of full-time mature students (over 21 on 1st August on year of entry) LPN-domiciled first-degree entrants was 11.8%, an improvement from 11% in 2015/16. However, the latest published HESA data for 2016/17 shows an issue with mature student performance, with the figure of 11.8% entrants being 1.6% below our Location Adjusted Benchmark (albeit an improvement of 1% on 2015/16 performance). UCAS end of cycle reporting suggests that this is a national issue which has been flagged by both UCAS and the Office for Students (OfS) as a matter of concern to the sector. Our aim continues to be for 12.2% of our students to be LPN mature learners.

## Students in Receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance

14.

**Table 6: Students in receipt of care leavers' support package (Source: University of Sussex internal datasets)**

| | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Recipients | 24 | 28 | 25 | | | |

b. 11.5% attainment gap for students from BAME backgrounds (and within this, 18% for Black students and 15.6% for Asian students).
c. 3.5% attainment gap for students from POLAR3 Qs1&2.
d. 2.6% attainment gap for students with a disability.

21. In terms of our success metrics, Tables 8 and 9 below set out data based on TEF3 metrics, providing evidence of sustained excellent performance of disadvantaged students at Sussex,

24. Graduate employment or further study levels rose for care leavers from 75% to 100% between 2012 and 2016. It should be noted that these were comparatively small numbers and data are based on respondents to the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey.

25. We continue to take an interest in Access, Success and Progress for white males from the most disadvantaged areas. However, we recognise that, similar to BAME, white males are not a homogeneous group, and, as part of our review, we plan to use the year ahead to understand better the nuances within this group of students, considering factors such as nationality, ethnicity, geographic location, cultural identity and prior educational experience. This will enable us better to devise and deliver appropriate opportunities and support at each stage of the student lifecycle.

26. We have a well-established evaluation strategy to understand better the successes of our access programme. We use the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT)[3] tracking tool to determine the rates of progress to higher education from our cohorts of target participants. We have recently received the first report from HEAT about our performance in this area, tracking our first cohort of 209 students.

27. Overall, our HEAT analysis has shown that we have seen a 43% progression rate to university. Of those who progressed, 24% came to the University of Sussex, with 66% of all progressing students going on to higher-tariff universities. Of our tracked students, 46% of students who lived in POLAR4 Q1 or 2 areas progressed. Of this group, 61% went to a high-tariff institution.

28. We maintain robust evaluation of our high intensity projects, using focus groups and longitudinal surveys to understand the depth of impact on participants. We ask academic colleagues to evaluate specific activities to ensure continuous improvement. Academics are also involved in the design of evaluation tools, securing formal evaluative feedback from school and college staff.

29. Through evaluation we have secured a strong evidence base for our distinct strands of access activity: student ambassador programme; summer schools; revision days; collaborative programmes; subject enrichment activities; campus visits; information, advice and guidance events; extended programmes and staff CPD activities.

30. We will review our fair access and participation measures this year to ensure we continue to exhibit good practice in the sector. Whilst utilising recent national research on the impact of financial support for students and prior guidance from the Office for Fair Access, we also recognise that more in depth analysis of our own financial support package to students is required. In addition to increasing analytical capacity to evaluate the impact and outcomes, we will seek to utilise the OFFA toolkit to evaluate further the efficacy of our financial support package.

## Section two: Ambition and Strategy

### Strategic Context

31. At a time of significant change in the sector, the Unive
our new Strategic Framework to 2025: The pillars upon which the new Strategic Framework rests Learn to Transform, Research with Impact, Engage for Change, Build on Strengths have ambition and creativity interwoven throughout, and the new Strategy Framework to 2025 provides an opportunity to ensure an evidence based and

[3] www.heat.ac.uk.

46. Our Access an

53. We will ensure that our financial support packages are easy to understand, clear, accessible and effectively communicated to maximise applications to and uptake of support.

54. As indicated in paragraph 51, the financial support on offer to students

represented student groups identified by OfS are not homogenous
teaching and learning strategy and student experience strategy will ensure the highest quality experience for all our students. Our Student Experience teams will deliver effective systems and strategies which identify vulnerable students for early intervention.

62. Our data analyst will take steps to ensure that our activities and services are carefully monitored in order to understand the engagement of different groups of students with this support. Where gaps in engagement are identified, particularly where correlated with differential outcomes, clear strategies are being developed to effectively communicate the range of activities available and improve uptake.

## Consultation with students

63. Consultation to agree the Access and Participation Plan 2019/20 has primarily been through

representation on the Access, Success and Progress Group, which has two student representatives: a ; and a representative who is a First Generation Scholar. The Access, Success and Progress Group,

identify as being from a BAME background.

77. We have a number of activities which seek to address access issues for other target groups, which are detailed in paragraphs 99-103.

78. As noted in Section One, we have identified gaps in attainment between students in OfS countable groups and our wider student population, specifically amongst students from BAME backgrounds and those who have been in the care of a local authority. We have stated our aim to reduce attainment gaps for

attainment raising support in a way that suits their individual requirements. We have embedded principles of attainment raising into our team structure.  This will see all activities designed and delivered in a way which considers all opportunities to raise attainment.  Our partner schools will benefit from curriculum

Brilliant Club,[10] of which we are the founding HEI partner, and Access HE[11] which provides additional support for students from a care background and with a disability.

## Widening access to medicine

96. The University shares a collaborative outreach project with the University of Brighton, based in the Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS), and will continue to offer the BrightMed programme to state school pupils in Sussex from Year 8 to Year 13. In line with the recent announcement of the expansion in medical school places, BSMS will be expanding the scope and reach of its BrightMed programme outside of Sussex, working with young people in Kent, Surrey, South London and Hampshire from 2019 onwards. Each year in excess of 300 students from our partner schools apply for, and are accepted on, a course at Sussex.

97. In addition to these targeted projects, we are exploring strategic alliances with schools which go beyond our current partnership model. By providing intensive outreach in a small number of schools, or clusters of schools, in areas of high deprivation and / or low progression, such as The Hastings Opportunity area, we will aim to make a significant difference to both the attainment in those schools and the culture of progression to higher education.

## Fair and contextualised admissions policy

98. Our aim is to ensure that we maintain a culturally diverse undergraduate student community that is open and welcoming and which will continue to attract and support talented students to pursue our courses successfully. Sussex has a long tradition of welcoming applicants with varied qualifications and backgrounds. We work towards this by:

    providing educational opportunities for all types of students satisfying the criteria of the policy - irrespective of their previous educational attainment - and reviewing each application individually on its merits;
    recruiting a diverse community of undergraduates with regard to gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, socioeconomic background and disability;
    providing specific progression routes for identified groups, including mature students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds in the locality and region.

99. **Foundation Years Online Pre-Arrival Platform**
The central Foundation Years programme at Sussex is currently piloting an on-line pre-

of Sussex, a dedicated care leaver co-ordinator supports individual students with their transition to the University and introduces the student to the care leaver contact in the Student Life team ensuring students access the range of services available.

101. **Mature students**

Enhancing our work with mature students is a priority for 2018/19. A cross-university working group has been established to identify how best to support mature students through access, success and progression. We will commission a research project working with focus groups to understand more about the challenges and barriers with a view to creating a bespoke structured coherent programme. We plan for this to be undertaken by Ph

105.

Careers and Employability Centre staff work together to offer an extensive programme of face-to-face and online self-service workshops to develop subject mastery, academic integrity and research skills. In the 2016/17 academic year, over 1,551 students attended over 65 Skills Hub workshops and there were over 285,063 page views of Skills Hub materials.

115. Teaching and learning at Sussex nurtures, challenges and transforms our students. Our graduates, from diverse backgrounds, consistently achieve outstanding outcomes with regard to degree performance and progression into graduate level work and postgraduate study.

## Academic skills

116. The University will seek to embed Academic Study Skills in the curriculum. Additional support will also be provided online through the Skills Hub and physical resources through workshops and materials. In 2017/18, we have increased the staffing of Academic Skills and are looking to develop a centrally-located skills hub in the future. We are co-ordinating with key stakeholders including the Library, Technology Enhanced Learning, Academics, and the Careers and Employability Centre.

## Academic advising

117. We continue to develop our communication plan with academic advisers particularly using the University virtual learning environment. Academic advisers are able to signpost *FGS* students to mentst. t

123. We propose to increase means-tested funding in the following year for summer placement students who would otherwise be relying on UK-based earnings at that time to supplement funds to support themselves in term time.

124. There is a range of work experience opportunities for *FGS* students. As well as increasing

students with more family links into valuable work experience.

## Events

125. We offer a range of opportunities for students to engage with University services and external organisations. These include recruitment fairs, skills development sessions and motivational alumni talks. In addition to the above programmes, we provide additional support mechanisms for targeted student groups:

Mature students - Careers and Employability Consultant with an additional Mature Student Support specialist portfolio, creating additional online resources and workshops.

Disabled students -

and support us in achieving our objectives in these areas. We will use this investment flexibly to address areas of weakness as they are identified, but commit to staying within the guidelines for use of the funds. We will discuss any significant proposed changes with OfS.

130. A summary of forecasted expenditure in support of our Access and Participation Plan from 2019/20 to 2022/23 is included below. This investment is shown on the basis that the higher tuition fee remains level at £9,250. Should the Government allow maximum fees either to increase beyond this level or reduce over the period for students who are covered by this Plan, the University would expect to continue to charge the revised maximum fee and will review investment levels accordingly.

**Table 11: Summary of Access and Participation Plan expenditure**

| | | | | | | | | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T16a_01 | Access | State school | **HESA T1a** - State School (Young, full-time, first degree entrants) | To ensure we remain 2% above Location Adjusted Benchmark | No | 2014-15 | 86.7% | 2% above LAB | 2% above LAB | 2% above LAB | 2% above LAB | 2% above LAB | Following discussions with OfS, we have amended our target for state school entrants. We will aim to achieve 2% above our location adjusted benchmark. This represents a commitment to an ambitious but realistic mix of students from state and independent schools, ensuring we remain ahead HESA KPIs in the years going forward. |
| T16a_02 | Access | Socio-economic | HESA T1a - NS-SEC classes 4-7 (Young, full-time, first degree entrants) | To increase the proportion of NS-SEC groups 4-7 from 22.5% to 25% | No | 2014-15 | 22.5% | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | We need to remove this target as NS-SEC |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T16b_06 | Progression | Socio-economic | Student support services | Funded internships and work placements for First-Generation Scholars involved in one or more opportunities by their final year | No | 2014-15 | 20% | 30% | 30% | n/a | n/a | n/a | This target will be replaced by T16b_09 from 2017-18 onwards |
| T16b_07 | Access | Socio-economic | Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column) | | | | | | | | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| T16b_11 | Access | Socio-economic | Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column) |