Open University Access Agreement
2018/19

About the Open University
The Open University (OU) is the largest provider of distance learning in the UK with over 174,000 students across the four nations of the UK. Its mission is to be ‘open to people, places, methods and ideas’ and its open access policy enables this to be fulfilled. The average age of an OU student is currently 28. Many of the initiatives that are undertaken to widen participation to the OU therefore have adult and part-time learners as their focus, recognising however that many of our students will present multiple factors of disadvantage. Exploration of this intersectionality, both through quantitative and qualitative approaches is a critical element in our widening access and success activity. The financial support packages, research and partnership working outlined in this Access Agreement have a far-reaching impact on students, learners and the higher education (HE) sector more widely.

Open access presents challenges to ensure that students, who come to the university from diverse backgrounds and with different educational experience, start their journey with us in the right place to enable them to be successful. The university invests a considerable amount of resource from its additional fee income to support this. Most students at the OU study part-time, paying a proportion of the full time equivalent (FTE fee, £5728, annually). Whilst this low fee encourages greater participation in HE, it means that the University must make strategic choices as to where additional support is most needed. This is offered primarily through financial support on Access modules and bursary scheme for those on a qualification pathway. Other activity presented in this Access Agreement is funded through business as usual across the institution.

Key figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proportion of all new students 2016/17 (UK) (%)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low socio economic students¹</td>
<td>18.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black and minority ethnic (BME)</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>17.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carers²</td>
<td>3.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students in Secure Environments</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low previous educational qualifications</td>
<td>32.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ POLAR3 Quintile 1 and no previous higher educational experience
² Caution as students self-declare their carer status and numbers are low. Objective under the Equality Scheme to increase the number of students declaring themselves as a carer
Governance

Widening Access and Success (WAS) is embedded across the University and integral to the institutional strategy - : Students First - and to core strategic objectives: Teaching Excellence and Innovation, Student Experience and Academic Excellence. A review of University curriculum has WAS embedded within it. WAS priorities continue to be focussed on students from the following backgrounds within the specific context of part-time adult learners:

- low socio-economic status
- disabled
- black and minority ethnic
- carers
- students in secure environments
- students with low prior educational qualifications

Institutional monitoring and evaluation of WAS activity falls within the remit of the WAS team in the Learning and Teaching Innovation (LTI) Portfolio under the leadership of the PVC: LTI. An institutional steering group provides direction and a reporting line into the Student Experience and Education Committees. The WAS team communicate government and institutional WAS priorities to faculties, through faculty roadshows and provide programme-level specific WAS data to them. Improvements to this process for 18/19 will include sharing of good practice from examples within the institution and across the sector. There are also plans to expand the roadshows to Student Support Teams (SSTs), Student Recruitment and Support Centres (SRSC), regional and nation offices. There is a clear alignment with the University’s Equality and Diversity Objectives to reduce the degree awarding gap for black and disabled students and the WAS team will continue to work closely with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team to support their targets.

Support for Students

*The Access Programme*

The OU’s Access Programme consists of three multi-disciplinary modules designed to support students who have been out of education for some time and with low or no prior educational qualifications, into HE. The modules are offered at half of a standard university module fee (£716 per module) and a full fee waiver is available for those students who live in England, have a household income of less that £25,000 per year and have no prior HE experience. Our data shows that students who passed their Access module consistently outperform those who did not do Access, at OU Level 1 (CQF level 4). This is particularly marked in some curriculum areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module presentation at Year 1</th>
<th>Passed Access (%)</th>
<th>New to OU (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct 2014 (14J)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 2015 (15B)</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 2015 (15J)</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 2016 (16B)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Internal data demonstrates that students who had completed and passed an Access module were better prepared for the first year of their degree programme in terms of confidence in themselves and their academic ability, understanding of the subject and of university processes, than students who went straight into Level 1.

“I have made a comment to my tutor that for the first time in my life I was actually starting to enjoy the challenge of maths. For someone who was always bottom of the class in maths, this is an achievement…”

STEM Access Student

It has been long-established, across the University, that students on J presentations (commencing in October) outperform students on B presentations (commencing in February). For adult learners with children, the Easter and summer holidays interrupt study patterns.

Through the WAS Steering group we continue to evaluate whether the Access programme is fit for purpose for groups traditionally excluded from university.

Key figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students on the Access Programme (new)</th>
<th>2016/17 Proportion of all students (FTE) (n=970) %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low socio economic students(^3)</td>
<td>20.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black and minority ethnic (BME)</td>
<td>12.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>26.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carers(^4)</td>
<td>5.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students in Secure Environments</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low previous educational qualifications(^5)</td>
<td>60.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Entry Project

The Entry project, which has been funded to ensure that students make the right study choices, is particularly important given the diversity of educational experience each student brings to their study. The overarching aim of the project is to ensure that students start their study in the right place to enable them to go on to successfully achieve their qualification aim. This is particularly important for students from disadvantaged backgrounds coming into the university apprehensive in terms of financial commitment and duration of studies.

The main outputs to date are:

- Development of a set of diagnostic tool(s) to ensure that students start in the right place
- Development of a wider range of Open Educational Resources (OERs) to better prepare applicants for study
- Outbound calling campaigns to provide assurance that applicants have been fully aware of their options

Evaluation of the two outbound calling campaigns suggests that students valued the interaction with

\(^3\) POLAR3 Quintile 1 and no previous higher educational experience
\(^4\) Caution as students self-declare their carer status and numbers are low. Objective under the Equality Scheme to increase the number of students declaring themselves as a carer
\(^5\) Lower than 2 A levels
the learning advisors which involved advice and guidance on where to start their study journey and signposting to informal learning preparatory resources. These resources have now been collated and placed on the Student Recruitment and Support Centre’s Knowledge Management System (KMS) and are also now part of the script for responding to new enquirers phone calls. This will be an invaluable source of preparatory support for students starting their study journey in 2018/19.

In parallel with the October 2017 campaign the Entry Project released a free short course to help students prepare to become distance learners titled ‘Am I ready to be a distance learner?’ this course is signposted via the KMS, and integrated into prospect conversion emails, new student cafés, student support Interventions and social media. Since its release in mid-August 2017 the course has had over 3,500 unique visits, a high course enrolment number and significantly high completion rate. At the same time the project in conjunction with Marketing released the online tool ‘Am I ready for success’ a tool to help prospective students self-assess a starting point for HE study that will support their long term success. To date this tool has had over 10,000 visits and the Access modules have seen a significant rise in traffic to their webpages.

**Bursary scheme**

The OU’s bursary scheme offers successful applicants £1000 towards a 60 credit module or £500 for 30 credit modules. The bursary scheme is specifically aimed at support students from disadvantaged backgrounds who come into the university without having studied on the Access programme. It is offered to any student who meets the following criteria:

- No more than £25,000 annual household income or are in receipt of a qualifying benefit
- Resident in the UK
- New to Open University study
- No existing HE qualification
- Study intention is towards an Open University undergraduate qualification
- Intention is to study at a minimum of 25% intensity (at least 30 credits per academic year)

And at least two of the following:

- Disabled
- From an ethnic minority (Black, Asian, Mixed or Other non-White category)
- Female and intend to study a qualification in a STEM subject (science, technology, engineering or mathematics)
- Male and intend to study a qualification in Nursing or a subject allied to Medicine, Arts, Social Sciences, Law, Education or Languages.

The scheme offers bursaries to 50 students starting in 2017/18, 50 students starting in 2018/19 and 50 students starting in 2019/20, worth a total of £3,000 to each student for 180 credits of study, at an overall value of £450K.

**Students in Secure Environments (SiSE)**

SiSE student numbers have been affected by changes to funding arrangements in recent years, notably the criteria for student loan eligibility which requires students in secure environments to be within 6 years of their release date. The Open University has been working hard to secure grant funding to support students with their first Level 1 module and therefore to extend the start date of their study and are delighted to have secured £600,000 from the Garfield Weston Foundation, as well as £300,000 from OUSET, which provides grants for 150 students per year over 3 years. This sits alongside the funding offered by the Prisoners’ Education Trust which supports students on Access
modules. These two initiatives mean that we are seeing a revival of student numbers (with 1047 students registered for October 2017 modules) and our focus over the coming year will be on student progression, particularly once students are released from prison. We are working closely with students to determine the most appropriate means of support and have been pleased to welcome several students to Walton Hall recently to share their experiences.

Disabled students
The Securing Greater Accessibility (SeGA) team was set up in 2011 to provide an ‘access hub’ for the sector, focusing on embedding accessibility for disabled students in teaching and learning across the University. In addition to supporting module teams through training, guidance and consultancy, SeGA played a pivotal role in the creation of the Open University Student Accessibility Policy, which confirms the OU’s approach to promoting accessibility and ensuring that students are effectively supported.

Cross university collaboration between (amongst others) SeGA, faculties, learning material production teams, and teams directly supporting students, ensures work continues on projects and initiatives that improve accessibility and the student experience. Examples include ensuring alternative ways for disabled students to take part in a learning activity if necessary, the continuing development of a university-wide reasonable adjustment request process, and identifying the needs of students unable to engage in study via the main module delivery method, such as online.

There has been a significant increase in the number of students who declare mental health difficulties (10326 students in November 2017). The Access programme is upskilling tutors to respond to the needs of these students and teams that work with disabled students are participating in an annual programme of tutor training events to raise awareness of the available support.

Engagement with the learning needs of disabled students continues to be embedded in support systems, from initial entry at the appropriate starting point level, through to progression in qualifications pathways to achievement of study goals and into employment. The careers service continues to develop its support for disabled students in line with support for all students.

Services and support for disabled students are extensively described and promoted through online and print resources for enquirers and students; these are being refreshed and updated. Via these resources students can also access information on relevant study skills, such as using computers for study, and any particular study requirements on a module or subject area, such as the need to use software to create graphs.

Students identifying themselves as disabled carry out a self-assessment largely through the online resources to declare and describe their disability and additional requirements they may need. Students are strongly encouraged to tell the University about their needs arising from a disability and improvements are being made to make it easier for students to do this, and to update what they have already told the university, at any time. Separate identification processes are used to identify special requirements in relation to examinations and residential schools.

The triage based Disability Support Team, established in October 2016, acts on the information provided by students regarding their disability and study needs. A disability profile is written in partnership with the student and this is used to drive adjustments to materials, services and support from other parts of the university. This includes Student Support teams who provide targeted learner support and study intervention according to the identified individual students’ requirements, Associate Lecturers, faculty teams and other disabled student services teams that provide additional examination and assessment support, alternative format versions of study materials, and auxiliary
aids and services such as equipment loans and communication support. All teams continue to develop close, and collaborative working relationships in order to provide a seamless journey for our disabled students.

Informal learning
The OU’s commitment to be open to all is demonstrated by the development of free online resources which aim to support students and learners on their educational journey.

OpenLearn
The OpenLearn website hosts over 1000 free HE courses and attracts 6 million visitors a year. The primary objective supports the OU’s mission to be open to people, places, methods and ideas by providing access to good quality free educational materials. There is increasing focus on developing effective pathways that promote successful progression to formal learning.

OpenLearn’s entry level courses are designed to give confidence, prepare learners for HE study and help develop the skills needed to get back into the workplace. Our Badged Open courses receive over 15,000 visitors each month and 69% of these learners do not have an existing HE qualification. The courses are proving extremely popular with the 22% of learners that declare a disability, and preliminary evaluation suggests that students welcome the opportunity to learn at a pace that suits them, in their preferred environment.

All OpenLearn courses can be started instantly and do not require learners to register or give any personal details. They are free and open to all, and those who register can also gain statements of participation to evidence their learning. Around 55% of those taking the badged courses have stated they intend to share their achievements with an employer or prospective employer and 65% of all OpenLearn users state that “using the materials has improved their confidence in their ability to study”.

PEARL and free online resources
During 2015 to 2016 the OU was funded by the National Network for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO) initiative to develop the nation-wide resource ‘PEARL’ (Part-time education for adults returning to learn), a website to provide resource for adults looking for primarily part-time educational opportunities to improve their career and life chances. A further six free online courses were developed under this project targeting potential learners in low-paid professions. These resources continue to be supported by the OU and promoted through the various networks that members of the WAS team are engaged with. Feedback from the learners suggests that the model adopted for the six free online courses, whereby learners receive badges after short chunks of learning, appears to be conducive to learners from WAS backgrounds in developing their confidence and sustaining their motivation. This outcome will inform the development of further courses specifically aimed at WAS students.

Key figures
In the year since the launch of the assets (2016) there have been:

- 7225 unique browsers to the PEARL website
- 10,422 unique browsers to the six SPN free course website pages
- 1,040 learners enrolled on the six SPN free courses
- 273 individual badges
- 114 statements of participation (issued at the end of a free course)
Making your learning count

We are currently piloting a multidisciplinary module that links informal learning through micro courses into formal credit. "Making your learning count" (YXM130) invites students to experience 150 hours of free learning of their choice. We ask students to describe what they have learned, reflect on how they learned, and make use of online media in their submissions.

This new module is designed to encourage students to become more effective lifelong learners as they learn from courses designed specifically for that context. We offer this 30 credit module for £700, making it an accessible and appropriate means of helping learners engage with formal education. It is half the price of a typical OU module, and about a third of the price of most modules elsewhere. A pedagogical decision was taken to deliberately emphasise assessment as learning, not of learning. This module offers opportunities for the OU to partner with organisations to support specific cohorts of students, as well as individual learners. For example, we are discussing potential collaborations to support students in secure environments and through our Social Partnerships Network (see below).

Research and Scholarship

The OU’s Access Observatory acts as a hub for research and scholarship around widening access and success. In addition to the international journal for Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning, the widening participation conference and regular seminar series, it includes the Access Observatory Blog where academics within the university and their wider networks provide thought-provoking pieces for discussion amongst academics and practitioners within the field.

Journal

Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning (WPLL) is the UK’s only international journal with a specific focus on widening participation and lifelong learning and is managed by the Widening Access and Success team at the OU. It publishes academic and innovative practice papers through three issues a year and offers a supportive environment for newer researchers to develop their academic writing skills. It makes a significant contribution to the field of widening participation and lifelong learning, sharing good practice amongst the sector and connecting academics and practitioners across the world. Special editions have been produced with OFFA⁶, UALL⁷ and SEEC⁸.

Conference

Further support for the sector is provided by the OU’s non-profit biennial widening participation conference, which provides a platform for established and newer researchers to share their knowledge and experience of widening participation initiatives and connects academics and practitioners across the world. The 2018 conference ‘Is Widening Participation Enough?’ invites academic and innovative practice papers on the following themes:

1. Digital inclusion
2. Progression - the social mobility conundrum and access to postgraduate studies
3. Skills gaps
4. Widening participation through informal learning and the recognition of prior learning
5. Ethical dilemmas of targeting widening participation students – policy and practice

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⁶ Student Financial Support, Volume 13, Number 3, October 2015
⁷ Annual editions produced in collaboration with UALL and based on presentations at the UALL conference
⁸ Recognition of Prior Learning: in partnership with SEEC, Volume 19, Number 3, November 2017
Seminars
The WAS team deliver an annual programme of widening participation seminars for both internal colleagues and academics and practitioners across the sector. The seminars are free to attend and provide an opportunity for networking and sharing current practice and academic thinking around the subject of widening participation. Themes have included

- The recognition of prior learning
- Informal learning
- The BME degree awarding gap
- Supporting carers
- Widening participation language and terminology
- Students from low socio-economic backgrounds
- HE in further education (FE)
- First in family
- Adult and part-time learners

Research projects
Disabled students
In 2017 the SeGA team (supported by funding from the Well-being, education and language studies programme WELS) carried out a mixed methods scholarship project to investigate the language and terminology disabled students feel most comfortable using when discussing disability and support needs, contrasting that with the language the University used. The results of the project are informing the renovation and updating of various student-facing forms of communication, including forms, student-facing websites and staff terminology guidance.

SeGA is also supporting the HEFCE-funded project Embedding and Sustaining Inclusive Practices in STEM (Inc STEM) in investigating how STEM curricula can be more inclusive and accessible through case study examples of good practice, both at the OU and across UK higher education. As part of this collaboration, SeGA ran a project to capture a cross-sectional baseline of University staff’s perceptions and practices surrounding accessibility. This data, as well as feeding into the Inc STEM project, is being used to highlight areas where training and/or interventions are needed. It will also form the beginning of a longitudinal project to measure changes in accessibility practices and perceptions over time in order to continually inform practice and professional development.

Part-time and adult learning in HE
Academics at the OU continue to engage in discrete projects that will contribute to sector-wide understanding of some of the challenges around part-time, adult education. Research funded by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) in 2014/15 exploring the needs of part-time learners continues to inform debates in this area, particularly given the dramatic decline in part-time numbers over the past five years. The research identified part-time students as heterogeneous with a range of characteristics for which traditional full time, face to face study is not an option. These characteristics include:

- Disability
- Caring responsibilities
- Geographical immobility
- Debt aversion
- The need to earn and learn
This research continues to inform sector policy and practice regarding the importance of part-time learners and the unique nature of the HE provision that is required in order to enable them to access and succeed in HE.

Adult outreach
A recent collaborative project funded by OFFA explored the impact of outreach to access HE for disadvantaged adult learners. Five institutional case studies were developed across four institutions (the OU, University of Bristol, University of Leeds and Birkbeck, University of London) and a toolkit developed for use across the sector to help HE providers to develop their support for disadvantaged adult learners coming into HE and evaluate its impact. The findings from this project have been disseminated widely across the sector following completion of the project.

Partnerships and networks
Sector representation
The University is well represented across the HE sector within networks with a primary focus on widening participation and lifelong learning. We have an active role on the Forum for Access and Continuing Education (FACE) Executive, Action on Access and lead on the research strand of the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning (UALL). We have developed a strong relationship with Universities UK and OFFA through our work around adult and part-time learners, which has culminated in collaborative events to showcase research outputs as evidence of good practice and encourage debate across the sector at policy and practitioner level.

External validation networks
The OU’s validation service has expanded significantly in the last year increasing from 11 validated partners to 33 since the last Access Agreement. We have agreed to support the expression of interest in Institutions of Technology for the colleges of Middlesbrough, Hull, Bradford (as wider West Yorkshire consortium), Milton Keynes and New College Durham. These institutions offer students alternative routes through education via vocational training programmes. Institutional monitoring returns do not currently offer a process to easily extract data in terms of the proportion of widening participation students such partnership activity attracts. An initiative to develop this process is underway for which progress will reported in the 2019/20 Access and Participation Plan. A list of academic partnerships can be found on the register of collaborative provision http://www.open.ac.uk/about/main/sites/www.open.ac.uk.about.main/files/files/ecms/web-content/about-register-of-collaborative-provision.xls

Social Partnerships Network (SPN)
The OU is founder and coordinating member of the Social Partnerships Network (SPN). Work to attract students to the OU, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, is primarily done at scale through this network. The Network members work together to develop strategies and activities that lead to the creation of a more diverse educational system, able to meet the needs of learners from any background, supporting lifelong learning, social mobility and workplace learning to improve economic growth. There are currently 11 partners all of whom share a firm commitment to widening access and social inclusion.

- Action on Access
- Association of Colleges

9 New members joined in 2017
Together they have a combined potential reach to over seven million people. The SPN work together to host events that bring together policy-makers and employers with a view to supporting adult learners from disadvantaged backgrounds into HE.

Raising attainment
The OU is an open entry university primarily attracting a large number of adult learners. Attainment raising for prospective students is therefore not relevant in this context. However the university is committed to ensuring equality of outcomes for all groups of students and supports this by monitoring data and identifying the gaps in attainment between different student cohorts (see monitoring and evaluation below). Projects to explore possible reasons for the gaps are identified through the WAS steering group and managed by the WAS research and evaluation team.

Monitoring and evaluation
Monitoring of widening access and success activity is undertaken through the WAS steering group which meets three times a year and formally reports to the university’s Student Experience Committee. The steering group receive data reports on registrations, completions and attainment for our WAS students. This data is also presented to Boards of Study through faculty roadshows, which compare Board of Study level data with institutional averages. An action plan identifies high level activity being undertaken to support students from WAS backgrounds, including evaluation of initiatives, and is regularly monitored for progress. The WAS annual report aggregates this work and is used as an internal document disseminated widely across the institution. Based on institutional data, discrete projects are identified through the WAS Steering Group and acted upon within faculties through the Heads of Student Success and the WAS Research and Evaluation team. The findings of these projects are disseminated across the institution with a view to sharing good practice.

As a result of monitoring data through the steering group it became evident that there were potential overlaps between student groups and that additional analysis of institutional data was required to explore the extent to which students present multiple factors of disadvantage. This work is currently being progressed within the Quality Enhancement team with a view to targeting support at our most vulnerable students. Work to develop a Widening Access and Success and Equality and Diversity dashboard is continuing in collaboration with the Strategy and Information Office. The facility will enable the manipulation of this data to reveal the extent of this issues faced by some of our most vulnerable students. The dashboard will be available to faculties, within their standard faculty dashboard and will support them, alongside the faculty roadshows to identify the key challenges for their students in terms of recruitment and attainment.

\[10\] New members joined in 2017
Evaluation is embedded within all initiatives that are being undertaken across the institution. Systemic evaluation is undertaken through the Student Experience on a Module Survey and the National Students’ Survey and findings are acted upon accordingly. The OU’s quality enhancement systems – the Annual Quality Review, the 6 yearly Periodic Programme Review and the involvement in external examiners within and across modules and programmes, ensures that our offer is rigorously evaluated. Recommendations from such reviews are translated into an action plan which is monitored for progress at regular Board of Studies meetings.

**Targets**

We are committed to maintaining the proportion of undergraduate students from disadvantaged backgrounds in the student population to a minimum of the 2010/11 baseline. Our target is taken from those students who are registered at module start which was 17.5% of students from disadvantaged backgrounds in 2017/18 and 17% in 2016/17. Data reported in the 2016/17 monitoring return suggest that the proportion of new undergraduate students from disadvantaged backgrounds is 17.52%. Marketing campaigns have been implemented in 2017/18 with a view to improving this proportion. For 2018/19 we wish to keep the target of 17.5%. However, we recognise that a disproportionate number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds do not make it to the point where they are liable for their fees (25% fee liability point). We propose to undertake exploration into the reasons for this occurrence during 2018/19.

Activity to support the objective of reducing the black degree awarding gap from 30.6% in 2016 to 25% in 2022/23 and the degree awarding gap for disabled students from 4.8% to 3% degree awarding gap is currently being implement through the appointment of a Senior Project Manager. Due to the timescale of OU students completing their degrees, the impact of this work may not be felt for some years.

**Fees and financial support**

Fees in England for entrants to the University in the 2018/19 academic year are £5,856 for a full-time equivalent academic year, with 60 and 30 credit modules charged pro rata, excepting the 30 credit level zero access modules which will be charged at £732. Fees in England for students who began their studies before 2018/19 and who are on regulated fees are £5,856 for a full-time equivalent academic year and again these are pro rata depending on the credit module size. These fees cover the cost of all course materials and tuition. The only study costs not covered by the fee relate to a small number of set books for a limited range of modules.

This fee structure sets a single fee for undergraduate courses of the same credit and provides a simple framework which is easy to communicate. The exception to this is the Access Curriculum priced 50% of the full 30 credit fee. The Open University believes this strategy creates the optimum balance of educational and financial considerations, whilst also ensuring the social justice mission of the University. Forecast spend on financial support is £3,004,128. £1,502,064 of this contributes to subsiding the fee for Access at half the university norm to OFFA countable students. Half contributes to funding 1,974 free places.

The Open University Students Association was consulted during the fee setting process, and is represented on the University’s Council, where all strategic business decisions are taken.

Despite keeping our fees to the lowest level possible, the 2018/19 fees continue to represent a very significant increase on fees prior to 2012, and, combined with the ending of statutory fee grants, creates an increased level of risk for potential students. Sector and institutional intelligence suggests that this creates barriers to entry for students who are disadvantaged (particularly adult learners, the
core market of OU students), have low levels of income, low levels of confidence in their ability to succeed in HE study, and who are averse to the risk of taking out loans. For these reasons, we initially made a major investment in subsidising fees for the first phase of undergraduate study for targeted students through our Access to Success Route, and following the withdrawal of NSP this has been replaced with our own full fee waiver scheme for students on Access modules from 2014/15 onwards. In 2018/19 it is forecast that 1974 free places on Access modules will be taken up, at an additional cost of £1,502,064.

We will review these rates each year and if appropriate, will increase them in line with inflation and in accordance with the rates set by the Government.

The OU’s flexibility of study and presentation start dates means that a small number of students can register on a greater than full time intensity of study (more than 120 credits) within an academic year, where this happens students will not be able to select a chosen path of study that exceeds the maximum part-time fee cap (for those who have TEF rating of Meets Expectations) which will be £6,750 in 2018/19.

The full-time Nursing Degree (England) will continue to be offered with a maximum fee of £9,000 per year.

Countable expenditure
Our countable expenditure is focused on students recruited through the Access route (£1,251,720 subsidising fees plus £1,251,720 fee waivers) and our total spend is £2,503,440. For part-time students with regulated fee we forecast that we will have 78,141 which 11,125 will have fees above the basic level. This will be £9,849 of fee income above the basic fee. For full-time students with regulated fee we forecast that we will have 224 all of which will have fees above the basic fee. This will be £672,000 of fee income above the basic fee. In total fee income above the basic fee will be £10,521,000.

Managing risk
A Risk and Issue Management register will be maintained to enable any risk and/or issue that may prevent the reported activities from being delivered, to be identified and mitigated. The Risk and Issue Management Register will be monitored and responded to by the WAS Steering Group.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference number</th>
<th>Stage of the lifecycle</th>
<th>Main target type</th>
<th>Target type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Is this a collaborative target</th>
<th>Baseline year</th>
<th>Baseline data</th>
<th>Yearly milestones</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T16a_01</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)</td>
<td>Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>The proportion of all new undergraduate students who have no previous higher education qualification (expressed as Full-time Equivalent) and who live in the 20% of areas with the lowest proportion of 16-74 year-olds with a Higher Education qualification (based on POLAR 3). Baseline year 2010/11.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Other (please give details in Description column)</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T16a_02</td>
<td>Student success</td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Other statistic - Ethnicity (please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>Close the gap between the proportion of black students and white students obtaining a ‘good pass’ on undergraduate modules at levels 2 and 3 from 30.6% to 25.0% by 2022/23</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student success</td>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>Other statistic - Disabled (please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>Close the gap between the proportion of disabled students obtaining a ‘good pass’ on undergraduate modules at levels 2 and 3 from 4.8% to 3% by 2022/23</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
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</tbody>
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