Edge Hill University

ACCESS AGREEMENT 2018-2019

JULY 2017

'Creating and Harnessing Knowledge to deliver Opportunity'

2018/19 Access Agreement

Section 1:   Context

Edge Hill University has been a champion of Widening Participation since its establishment in 1885 as the country's first women's non-denominational teacher training college. We have always attracted and supported a diverse student body with the majority of our students coming from Widening Participation groups. The theme of *Opportunity for All* is thus central to the University's Mission and, in order to effectively maximise the impact of our resources, it is crucial that, wherever possible, we mainstream our support for disadvantaged students as an integral element of our core business. We therefore take a strategic, whole institutional approach across the entire student journey wherever possible in order to deliver an outstanding, holistic student experience.

The University continues to perform significantly above benchmark against Widening Participation criteria and it is our intention to maintain our position over the life of this Agreement, notwithstanding the challenging political, competitor and demographic environment we face over the coming years.

In recent years there have been substantial changes in externally available funding, which we would have historically drawn upon to support our students: the withdrawal of the National Scholarship Programme, the withdrawal of the Access to Learning fund and changes to the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA); from 2017 we'll see changes to the funding of Nursing and Allied Professions moving from NHS bursaries to Tuition fee and maintenance loans. Changes such as these will inevitably have an impact on students from underrepresented groups, and as an institution we have taken swift action to ensure we mitigate the impact felt by students by these changes.

Notwithstanding the unprecedented level of turbulence, we remain steadfastly committed to our mission to deliver opportunity for all and expect the majority of our students to continue to come from widening access priority groups. Our primary objective therefore is to maintain our focus on recruiting and supporting students from a diverse range of backgrounds both to maximise their potential at University and to progress into graduate level employment or further study to enhance their life chances.

Section 2:   Fee Levels

The University intends to charge all students undertaking full-time honours degree and PGCE programmes £9,250 per annum. Fees for Foundation Degrees (including those offered at partner colleges) will be set at £6,165 per annum. Fees for sandwich years and year abroad will be £1,850 and Erasmus will be £1,385.

Fees for part-time students undertaking first degrees and PGCEs are based on the number of credits undertaken in any one year of study (to a maximum of £6,935).

The University will apply annual increases in line with the amount set by government each year and will communicate this to new and continuing students in an appropriate and timely manner.

As part of our strategy to support progression, we will encourage further study for Edge Hill students by providing both current students and alumni with generous fee remission on the cost of their Master's programmes with the University.

Section 3:   Assessment of Access, Success and Progression Measures

In assessing our current position, we are using statistics derived from HESA as well as our internal data which is used in annual monitoring and enhancement activities.

In recent years the University has made good progress against the widening access targets we have set in our annual Access Agreement. We take a whole lifecycle approach to our activities and ensure that we mainstream support and resources wherever possible.

The University is proud of its widening participation heritage and we remain committed to providing equality of opportunity for all who would benefit from a higher education experience. For those areas which we identify as priority targets in this Agreement, we set out our current performance below:

3.1   Access to Higher Education

We believe that we can play a significant role in the sector in addressing the participation deficit amongst under-represented groups in higher education and it is our intention to sustain our performance, in challenging circumstances, in relation to State School entrants, young entrants from Low Participation Neighbourhoods and mature entrants from Low Participation Neighbourhoods:

Lifecycle Stage	Target Description	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Access	Young, full-time first degree entrants from State Schools	98.6%	99.1%	98.9%
	Young, full time entrants from LPNs	20.8%	21.5%	20.4%
	Mature full-time first degree entrants from LPNs	18.7%	21.7%	19.5%

3.2 Student Success

We have made good progress in relation to the student success targets we have set in previous Access Agreements but we recognise that we still have significant work to do in relation to closing the continuation rate gap between A Level and BTEC entrants where, in some areas, A Level students perform significantly better than BTEC entrants. This is in spite of BTEC candidates generally entering the University with higher UCAS tariff scores. Given the relatively high correlation between BTEC students and those from disadvantaged background, we have this as a priority area.

We are also committed to making further progress on the attainment rate for BME students in comparison to the attainment for white students.

Lifecycle Stage	Target Description	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Student Success	Continuation rate for Yr1 BTEC/A level Entrants	79.7%/89.4%	78.7%/90.8%	79.1%/91.4%
	Attainment rate for BME/White Students	43.7%/67.8%	50.2%/70.6%	53.5%/70.7%

3.3 Student Progression

The University continues to perform well against benchmark measures for progression. Our performance is pleasing given the location of the University, in the North West of England, where the majority of our students come from disadvantaged backgrounds, including 40% from NS-SEC 4-7[1]; and in excess of 20% from some of the most disadvantaged wards in the country[2].

Although we consider we have a particular strength in supporting such individuals to maximise their potential, both through their attainment at University and in the labour market, they are often inherently disadvantaged in the labour market due to their lack of mobility. Most 'choose' to seek local employment with, on average, 80% of our graduates remaining in the North West after graduation[3]. This is partly because of social and family ties but often also because they lack the financial support to move away from home. Relocation to London and the South East in particular, is financially prohibitive for most. This is relevant as Southern/Eastern regions[4] have consistently higher employment rates than Northern/Western regions, with the latter typically trailing by approximately 7%[5].

Whilst we will seek to at least sustain our position in relation to progression to employment/further study, we recognise that we have further work to do in some areas in relation to graduate level employment measures, despite the excellent progress made in recent years.

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[1] HESA PIs: young FT UG entrants averaged over the last 3 years
[2] HESA PIs: young FT UG entrants 2014-15 from low participation neighbourhoods (LPNs)
[3] HESA DLHE Full-time UG UK domiciled EHU leavers-average over the last four years
[4] Excluding London
[5] Jul-Sept 2016 the NW employment rate was 7.2% cf 78.4% for SE. In 2015, the percentage of the population in the SE in HSE was 49.2%; in London 53.1% cf 41.7% for the NW. Sources NOMIS HSE data showing percentages in highly skilled employment from 2004-15.

Lifecycle Stage	Target Description	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Progression	Progression to employment/further study	93.5	93.7	95.3
	Progression to graduate-level jobs	58.6%	63.4%	70.9%

3.4   Expenditure

In recent years, several sources of external funding for disadvantaged students have been be withdrawn and this has the potential to disproportionately impact on students in our target groups. Notwithstanding this, the University remains committed to supporting access, success and progression and expects to continue to commit around 15% of additional income from new system first degree students to these activities. Given our success in attracting students from non-traditional HE backgrounds however, we consider it imperative to ensure that such students are effectively supported to succeed and progress in an ever competitive employment market. Whilst investing further in response to the government schools agenda, we will deliberately focus our expenditure to place an increased emphasis on success and progress. We estimate we will commit a sum approaching £4.5 Million for 2018/19, balanced across Access, Success, Progress and financial support.

The above reflects our intention to continue to replace, in its entirety, the Access to Learning Fund through our own Hardship Fund and to ensure we continue to support disabled students who may no longer have access to DSA in the future; we also believe that students from non-traditional backgrounds are more likely to require additional support to access opportunities which will enhance their employability and we will therefore continue to develop and promote our institutional 'Student Opportunity Fund' to facilitate this. Whilst our bursaries and scholarships schemes will continue to support access and success for particular groups, such as Care Leavers, we will also seek to attract and reward excellence, wherever it may be found. See section 4.4 for further details.

Section 4:   Future Approach to Access, Success and Progression

At the time of writing this Access Agreement, the University is undertaking a review of our Widening Participation Strategy, the outcomes of which will drive our targets in the years to come.   It is our intention to publish our new Widening Participation Strategy by Autumn 2017 with final approval from Academic Board in December 2017.

In identifying our future priorities, we have undertaken analysis of our past performance and considered both the internally and externally available evidence on the effectiveness of different forms of financial support; we have also considered the external environment within which we are likely to be operating, including the competitive environment, the likely impact on student numbers and on the potential for growth. On the basis of this analysis, we have identified our future strategic priorities and, through our Performance Indicators, those areas where we feel we can make the most significant contribution.

4.1 Access and Outreach

4.1.1 Working with Schools and Colleges

The University currently has a very extensive network, working with approximately 2500 schools per year, across all age phases, to raise aspiration and attainment. This work involves working with our partner schools on activities such as specific outreach, as well as engaging directly with children and young people and supporting the raising of the quality of teaching and learning within schools. Current activities with schools include; in school presentations and workshops; on campus subject taster days; revision support classes and team teaching with school staff.

We also facilitate and deliver 11 Secondary subject networks, which meet at least three times per year, and offer a platform for subject-level enhancement, an opportunity for networking and foster a rich learning community.

Furthermore the University makes extensive use of its Arts Centre and Sports Centre, as well as other specialist facilities, to support schools and colleges across the North West with teaching, learning and civic engagement. We also facilitate summer residentials for Year 12 students to enable them to make an informed decision about accessing Higher Education. We work closely with our Confucius Institute to engage schools in the development and learning of an international curriculum and culture.

Our approach to raising aspirations will remain focused on working closely with schools and colleges, identifying and nurturing potential. In this way we seek to increase the number of applications received from under-represented groups, particularly: young people from low participation neighbourhoods, Care Leavers, and students with disabilities. We recognise and support outreach as a long term priority and will continue to plan and deliver on this basis.

Whilst we will continue extensive outreach activity to reach as many schools as possible in the North West, we recognise the need to work more intensively with some schools where the barriers to HE are more profound. We have, therefore, developed a younger age progressive programme, 'HE Futures', for students in Year 9-11 to ensure awareness and aspiration to progress to HE is achievable.

4.1.2 Proposed plans in response to government agenda: Raising Attainment in schools

Given the nature of the scale, scope and intensity of our existing engagement with schools across England, we are keen to ensure that our future plans do not divert resources, nor undermine the excellent relationships we have built over many years. We do not therefore intend to sponsor a single new or free school as part of our Access Agreement commitments. We are however, strongly committed to raising attainment within schools and colleges through our significant partnerships, support and activities with schools.

We believe our work to raise attainment in schools works in synergy with raising aspiration, and through our existing provision we have a good knowledge and understanding of what interventions contribute to raised attainment. In addition to continuing our extensive outreach and partnership work with schools, we recognise that adopting a long-term sustained approach

and working with a smaller number of schools in a more intensive way will enable us to better track whether our interventions are having the desired effect on attainment.

We are therefore creating a new model of working with schools which will seek to build upon our existing relationships and focus on raising attainment through three key initiatives, each of which are important to driving school level performance:

a. Supporting and strengthening school leadership through:

- CPD activity for school leaders
- Opportunities to work with academics on whole school improvement initiatives, classroom observations and team teaching opportunities

b. Supporting teachers through intensive subject level enhancement:

- Identifying areas where University staff can share expertise and knowledge based on requirements of the curriculum
- Opportunities to use University facilities to enhance the learning experience e.g., use of Technology Hub, library resources, laboratories
- Offering additional training sessions for example: integrating technology in the classroom; behaviour management

c. Supporting students through direct pupil intervention with the cohorts which need it most:

- Subject masterclasses
- Revision techniques
- Mentoring from current University students
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Our priority area for this more intensive work with schools will be in Merseyside as attainment within the Liverpool City Region, whilst improving, is below the national state-funded sector average of 57.7% for five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C including Maths and English[6]. Our intention is to work with up to 8 schools across the primary and secondary phase. We will select two localities in Merseyside with similar demographics and educational challenges in order to conduct investigative analysis on the effectiveness of interventions and to foster a culture of collaboration and commitment to raising standards across the City Region. The outcomes of this approach will help us determine whether this model can be replicated in similar contexts in order to raise standards in more schools.

To ensure we are working with schools where we can have most significant impact in boosting attainment, selection of schools will be based on them meeting a number of criteria including:

- Consideration of performance data at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. (We will take account of data in relation to national and local averages)
- Percentage of pupils in receipt of free school meals

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[6] www.gov.uk Revised GCSE and equivalent results in England: 2015 to 2016

- Consideration of recent Ofsted outcomes
- Geographical location, focusing on schools located in POLAR Quintile 1 or 2 areas

Once schools are selected, a relationship manager from the University will work with the schools to identify their needs and tailor interventions accordingly, according to the menu of options detailed under a-c above.

In addition to the targeted approach detailed above we will also work to improve school level attainment in a broader sense, through a fourth initiative of **supporting school governance and encouraging University staff into governor roles**. An initial scoping exercise is underway to ascertain how many University staff are already school governors. Once this has been established we intend to develop a training programme to support existing governors, and those who are interested in becoming governors, as we are aware of the impact good governance can have on raising school attainment. Our programme of support might include, for example, sessions on how to interpret and analyse school level data and how to provide effective challenge and scrutiny. We'll identify the key needs by working with existing school governors and Head teachers.

In order to have a positive impact on attainment a long term, sustained commitment is necessary and multiple interventions may need to be deployed. We therefore appreciate it will take time to see significant results from this work. To ensure we are making positive progress we will undertake a multi-intervention approach to monitoring and evaluation and develop a robust evaluation framework to monitor progress and evidence impact. We will utilise quantitative and qualitative data along with a range of attainment measures from data sourced from the school. This information will act as a baseline from which we can assess whether the interventions are having a positive impact. As part of the evaluation strategy we will ask schools to provide a reflective account of their perception of the effectiveness of interventions. We will utilise these accounts as case studies where appropriate, and adopt, develop or reject methods before any wider implementation.

In the initial stages of the relationship we will work to ensure:

- Evidence of an engagement plan with those schools selected to participate
- Demonstration of SMART targets
- Uptake of interventions available through the menu of options

4.1.3 Other Access priorities

In addition to the interventions and activities detailed above, the University will continue to offer our Preparing for HE programme which provides opportunities for mature students, to gain the necessary skills and confidence for degree level entry onto a range of Undergraduate Programmes. This intense programme, funded by the University, recruits well with the majority progressing and completing successfully. Allied to this, specific project work around Service Leavers is also underway, as is a project to make alternative offers to unsuccessful applicants who apply to very high-demand subjects (such as Midwifery).

We will continue to operate an online mentoring scheme, available for all applicants but particularly targeted at those which the evidence suggests are most vulnerable, typically due to family background. Applicants are matched with a 1st or 2nd year student mentor, studying on their preferred course wherever possible. Mentors support mentees in exploring their course choice and responding to queries about university. As well as responding at an individual level, we use the intelligence gathered from this process to inform our mainstream communications and pre-empt any concerns; thus ensuring both personalisation and consistency of provision to all students.

The University understands the value of strong, sustainable and collaborative working and strives to work in partnership where possible to ensure best value and enhanced opportunities and experiences for the young people we work with.

The University has a long history of working in partnership with other HE partners and education providers across Lancashire, Cumbria and Merseyside to support young people in raising their aspirations and attainment. Building on the work of National Networks for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO), we are committed to working collaboratively with other partners to provide a strong programme of collaborative outreach activity for the young people in our local communities. This includes working together to deliver the following programmes:

- A Disability Conference for young people, their parents or carers and school staff on access to higher education and the support available for young people with a range of disabilities (including learning difficulties and mental health problems)
- A Health Professions programme looking at the patient and student journey to support students to access the health professions. Working closely with the NHS Better Care Together team, the event allows young people to explore the range of health professions available to them and to engage with academic staff, professional staff from the NHS and Social Care and university students.
- Looked After Children CPD Workshops for Foster Carers and Social Workers to ensure they are well equipped to support the young people in their care with the right information and guidance to support their next steps into higher education.
- Regional CPD Workshops for practitioners and stakeholders with an involvement or interest in widening participation and social mobility. The bi-annual workshops will ensure that all staff and organisations working with young people have the chance to find out about activities happening to support young people and are kept up to date about key information and context regarding our own local regions.

In addition, we have committed to working closely with other HE providers within Lancashire, Cumbria and Merseyside to share best practice and to be open and transparent about the schools we are engaging with to ensure that as a sector we are reaching the widest possible cohort of students. This will include working closely with colleagues within the Lancashire and Merseyside National Collaborative Outreach Programmes (NCOPs) and to ensure that activities are targeted at students who may not benefit from activity already offered under the new NCOP provision. We will continue to analyse and review the needs of the students within our local region and where gaps or needs are identified we will work collaboratively with others to address this as appropriate.

4.2   Student Success

The underlying principle of our approach to retention and student success is to engender, from the very outset, a sense of belonging both within the institution and within the relevant subject area. We will further embed our pre-entry mentoring scheme in order to better support potentially vulnerable students from the outset. We will continue to actively monitor the concerns of these students, even before they commence their studies, to provide the support they require. This will further inform our future mainstream communications strategies with applicants and students and will help inform our early proactive student support strategies.

Our activities remain evidence-based and we have undertaken extensive research into the student experience in the very early days of their attendance. We will use the outcomes of this research to further enhance the early student experience to ensure we effectively engage students during their enrolment, at Welcome Sunday, Freshers' Week and throughout their induction. In doing so, we recognise the importance of taking a whole institutional approach across central support services such as Academic Registry and Student Services as well as the primary focus at Departmental and Programme level. Working in partnership with the SU is also vital as they make an invaluable contribution to creating an early sense of belonging through their investment in Freshers' Week and in engaging students in a broad range of groups and societies.

Recognising the impact concerns about money can have on student success, we have recently invested in Blackbullion, a tailored online Student Financial Education Service designed to give students the crucial money management know-how that will serve them prior to starting university, whilst at University, and also assist them into transitioning into their working life. Financial education can make a real difference by equipping students with the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to make sound financial decisions, to weigh up risk and reward, and understand how personal finances affect other areas of their lives. Through empowering students to take control of their finances we can positively impact on the student experience as well as retention, attainment and employability. Success of this online tool will be gauged through monitoring the retention and success of students who engage with the service.
Student 'money-buddies' have also been employed in supportive roles to work with their peers to promote the services and support available to students who may be struggling financially. Evaluation will include gaining qualitative feedback from students on the impact this tool has had on supporting their living and learning experience and their life skills.

. Care Leavers are offered a wide variety of support including targeted pastoral and financial assistance by the University (plus enhanced access to on campus accommodation). Potential students who are identified as Care Leavers have access to a dedicated point of contact who will support them through their student journey and we are committed to extending this support to young people estranged from their families.

With the appointment of a new Student Transitions and Support Adviser in 2017, the in-depth work carried out by this post holder to identify specific groups of students and work on removing the barriers faced by them will be well underway and we expect to see improvements in terms of more disadvantaged students taking advantage of the support services available to them.

We will continue to develop our Health and Wellbeing services for students in line with sector best practice. Further embedding of new structures and teams to support students both in and out of hours will contribute to the retention and success of all students but specifically those with additional wellbeing needs.   Measuring outcomes from therapeutic interventions in wellbeing and counselling services will provide data at an individual student level.

The specific targets we have selected for consideration follow from a review of our current performance and are continued from previous years. Whilst we have made major improvements in retention overall and closed what were significant gaps in relation to some characteristics in the past (gender, disability, age), through our ongoing monitoring and enhancement work, we are aware that we have not yet made sufficient progress in our ambition to close the differential retention rate for YR1 A' Level and BTEC entrants. Furthermore, we aspire to see further progress in our work to eliminate the attainment gap between BME and white students in degree outcomes. We are committed to instigating cross-institutional working groups with robust KPI requirements to address these issues and we continue to monitor progress through our Committee structures and quality processes.

4.3   Student Progression

The University Employability Strategy will continue to ensure that employability is embedded into our curriculum. All academic departments produce Employability Plans, with departmental Employability Leads working with central Careers Consultants to ensure we proactively support students in developing employability skills throughout the student journey. Careers Consultants will also be working with departmental Employability Leads on a range of new initiatives to help students develop their employability skills, engage with employers and other external organisations and create more volunteering and placement opportunities.

SaPRA – an on-line Skills and Personal Reflective Activity tool has been created to help students develop a better understanding of their own skills and abilities, identify areas for development, and assemble personalised evidence related to their acquisition of Personal, Employability and Digital Skills. This is particularly useful in flagging up students who have been disadvantaged or had fewer opportunities to access employability learning and experiences. Academic departments have enthusiastically embraced this and currently 9 bespoke versions have been developed.

Personal development in terms of confidence building, and developing essential employability skills, is at the heart of our employability strategy. A continuing objective is to increase the number of academic societies allowing students the opportunity to take greater ownership over their learning experience by moulding their extracurricular activity. As well as increasing engagement levels we are committed to working with our society groups in order to recognise their skills and to ensure that the skills gained in this area are transferable and articulated well in order to enhance students' employability. As well as the direct, tangible benefits which will come from this to individual participants, these activities will play a major role in building the community and providing opportunities for engagement. They thus support both student retention and success as well as progression.

Ensuring equality of opportunity for all students is a fundamental part of our ethos and we recognise that for many, apparent 'opportunities' are inaccessible due to financial constraints. In 2017, we therefore introduced of 'The Student Opportunity Fund', specifically designed to fund extracurricular activities. This funds study enhancement activity for all students at Departmental level to ensure consistency of experience and opportunity (e.g. field trips for biologists, visits to Parliament for politics students, enterprise competition fees for business students, trips to Brussels for law students, film festivals for film and TV students, theatre visits for drama students); it also supports individual students to take life-enhancing opportunities. There are no constraints on how this element of the fund can be used except that there must be a tangible benefit to the students individually or collectively, most often in terms of developing their employability skills. At an individual or group level, this fund is used to support students in a range of ways: to take unpaid internships, to perform artistic works (such as at last year's Edinburgh Fringe), deliver papers at overseas conferences, to support internal summer research internships for undergraduates or to take advantage of overseas cultural visits, for example to China. For many of our students, such opportunities would be entirely theoretical without financial support and such experiences are often transformational, exposing students to new cultures, experiences and ways of seeing the world.

In 2017/18, the University will seek to appoint a new member of staff in Careers, who will work alongside other new post-holders in Student Recruitment and Student Services. The post holder will offer dedicated support to non-traditional learners in our priority groups. This we believe will provide a more holistic joined-up approach to students with particular characteristics across each stage of the student journey, supporting them to take advantage of the opportunities available to them.

4.4   Financial Support

In reviewing our investment in financial support, in recent years we have particularly considered the need to truly enable access to those from low participation neighbourhoods by establishing a resource to fund attendance at University selection processes and assistance with costs such as applying for DBS clearance. We ensure that students from non-traditional backgrounds are not only presented with opportunities.

In deciding how to apply our resources, we have agreed that our financial support package should deliver a number of outcomes, in accordance with our Mission, to enable engagement, reward excellence and support enhancement:

4.4.1   Enable Engagement
Our support models will ensure that all applicants and students who wish to engage with us are enabled to do so, whether pre-entry or once on course and financial circumstances should not act as a barrier to doing so. We will:
- Ensure no applicant is excluded from participating in our recruitment processes due to financial hardship through the provision of a fund that supports attendance at interviews, auditions or other selection processes.
- Retain scholarships for student studying our Progression into HE

Programme (Fastrack) who have demonstrated particular commitment in the face of adversity.

- Retain our Care Leavers' Bursaries of £1000 pa.
- Review and enhance our hardship fund and seek to ensure that no student is forced to leave their course for reasons of genuine financial hardship.

4.4.2 Attract and Award Excellence

The quality of our University is, in no small part, driven by the quality of our students and the skills, capabilities and attitudes they bring. We believe that, regardless of background, students excel in a diverse range of fields. We will seek to attract and reward those students who excel in any field *and,* use their skills to make a contribution to the University by:

- Retaining the 'High Achievers Scholarship': £1000, payable on entry to all full-time students who achieve 144 UCAS points in a single sitting.
- Retaining our Entrance Excellence and On Course Scholarships of £2000 for students who excel in any area and are prepared to make some contribution to the EHU Community, for example, as an Ambassador or through supporting a club or society. This both contributes to a vibrant student community and enhances the employability skills of the individual.
- Retain our Chancellor's Scholarships: £2000 payable to students who make an outstanding contribution to University life.

4.4.3 Support Enhancement

As above, a key way in which we can better support our students' long term life chances is by providing greater opportunities through extra curricula experiences and by helping students build employability skills and capabilities. We will:

- Continue to invest significantly in our *Student Opportunity Fund* to enable students to exploit opportunities that will help enhance their academic experience by improving their employability; examples might include support in accessing Study Abroad opportunities or to participate in an unpaid internship.

Section 5: Milestones and Targets

5.1 Targets

Success can be measured in many ways, not all of them easily translated into simple performance indicators and, given the level of uncertainty in the external environment, we will need to keep this Agreement and the specific targets under regular review. The targets we have selected are those where we feel we can make the greatest impact. We have sought to have a diverse range of targets and considered at which stages of the student journey we feel the greatest focus is required.

5.1.1 Access

- Maintain current levels of young, full time entrants from State Schools.

- Maintain current levels of young, full time entrants from LPNS.
- Maintain current levels of mature, full time entrants from LPNS.
- Maintain the recruitment level of Care Leavers into the University

5.1.2 Long Term Outreach
- Increase investment in outstanding outreaching activity across primary, secondary and further education age-phases with school and college partners to raise aspiration and attainment levels at level 2 and 3.
- From 2017/18 we will introduce a pre-16 progression programme targeting WP students from Y9-Y11. The scheme will aim to recruit an initial 100 participants in Year 9 and 100 in Year 10 in 2017/18, increasing to 300 participants in 2018.

5.1.3 Raising Attainment
- Increase the number of schools with an engaging with the drive to raise attainment
- Evidence of an engagement plan with those schools selected to participate
- Demonstration of SMART targets
- Uptake of interventions available through the menu of options
- Increase the number of Edge Hill University staff who perform roles as Governors in local schools and colleges

5.1.4 Collaborative Work
- Sustain our involvement with NCOP projects in Merseyside and Lancashire, seeking further opportunities to secure the long term future of these networks, including targeted work in the Government-identified Opportunity Areas.
- Sustain collaborative work (outside of NCOP) with local HE/FE providers to provide HE opportunities in local communities, working with distinct groups such as disabled students, care experienced young people and their key influencers.
- Increase the scale of our partnership with the Brightside Trust to extend mentoring opportunities to a greater number participants being mentored

5.1.5 Student Success
- Align continuation rates for Yr1 A' Level and BTEC Entrants.
- Align attainment rates for BME and White students.

5.1.6 Progression
- Maintain progression rates to employment/further study.
- Increase progression rates to graduate level jobs.

5.2 Milestones

Full details of the milestones we will set for the above targets can be found in Table 7 of the attached Resource Plan.

Section 6:   Monitoring and Evaluation

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Student Experience) & University Secretary will have the lead responsibility for ensuring delivery of the Agreement. In line with standard University practice, discrete projects designed to support delivery will be subject to an annual effectiveness review and may be revised or terminated in the light of the outcomes. Formal monitoring and evaluation will be through appropriate sub- committees of Academic Board which have student representation, most notably through Learning & Teaching Committee, Fees & Bursaries Group and Student Experience Subcommittee. Revisions to targets and milestones will be considered and approved as part of the formal monitoring process. Revisions to the financial commitments will be subject to approval by the Board of Governors prior to submission to OFFA.

6.1   Outreach Evaluation

The University continues to review its approach to evaluating outcomes as we seek to move beyond quantitative participant feedback and student data into longitudinal tracking and the development of case studies.

In developing our Widening Particpation strategy, we seek to further utilise the Kirkpatrick framework of evaluation covering Reaction, Learning, Behaviour and Results, ensuring the application of knowledge/skills learned and demonstrating impact.

Edge Hill University is a member of the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) membership service which assists Higher Education Institutions in England to target, monitor and evaluate their outreach activity. We will record data about outreach and participants on the HEAT database which feeds into the HEAT longitudinal tracking system matching records on individual outreach participants to administrative datasets spanning Key Stage 2 data through to postgraduate study and employment. Being part of the HEAT service also enables the University to engage with collective WP sector research. By using data from all members as an aggregate, the HEAT service is now able to explore new multi-dimensional ways of defining under-representation, disadvantage and differential outcomes and the effect that outreach can have on different groups of participants.

6.1.2: Instant Formative Feedback

We will continue to monitor student and teacher feedback from school and college visits to measure suitability and aid future planning of activities and events. Pre and post evaluation is carried out during intensive interventions where an increase in participants' knowledge and skills is assessed. The nature of approach when working with schools and colleges is flexible to the needs of the school and group, therefore activities are tailored to the particular audience, meaning feedback is bespoke to that particular activity.

6.1.2: Monitoring Effectiveness of Targeting

Using our data analysis and business intelligence function, we will track annually, application levels from widening participation schools which will enable us to judge whether our targeting of activity is accurate.

By subscribing to HEAT we can take an evidence based approach to planning outreach delivery so that we can continue to invest in outreach activities that optimise progression with disadvantaged cohorts.

6.1.3   Monitoring Effectiveness of Impact

We will continue to track and analyse the number of WP applications we receive (using POLAR analysis of applicants' home postcodes), the number of WP offers made and the number of WP acceptances there are – all in relation to total volume. This, coupled with our HESA benchmark and annual monitoring, will give us a clear indication of how we are performing.

Tracking reports received from HEAT will help the University to better understand the relationship between our outreach provision and the attainment and progression of disadvantaged young people. We will aim to track student progression to any HEI, including this institution, so that we can assess the extent to which we are contributing to the increased participation rates of disadvantaged young people as a whole.

6.2   Student Success Evaluation

A number of targeted evaluation projects take place across the University each year which are designed to understand the impact of a range of student support strategies and interventions including: hardship support, inclusion support, health and wellbeing and learning support.

In 2018/19, a number of specific interventions and projects will be piloted, and the monitoring and evaluation of these will be essential in determining what works and where we should focus our efforts in future years. The new Transitions and Support Advisor will work with colleagues from across the University to improve the data captured which allows us to identify students from particular groups. We anticipate this will enable us to improve the way that we communicate, support and monitor the achievement of these students and provide a more detailed and sophisticated set of data for making decisions.

With the changes to DSA the University has looked for innovative new ways to efficiently support our disabled students. Two new roles established by the University in 2016/17 have been crucial to supporting disabled students utilising technology and with enhanced academic skills provision. By 2018/19, we will have been able to fully evaluate the effectiveness of this new model of support (developed through the new roles) on the retention and success of our disabled students and refine it as needed. We will also look to monitor the impact on our students' independent learning capabilities. More widely we will continue to evaluate our services to ensure they meet student need and demand.

6.3   Student Progression Evaluation

The University's Employability Strategy recognises the importance of positive job outcomes not only for individuals and their families, but also as a driver of transformative change for local and global economies. Our commitment to securing student employment rates amongst the best in the sector can be evidenced by the data[7] which indicates 95.3% of Edge Hill graduates in work or further study six months following graduation, 1.6% more than in 2013-14 and 1.4% higher than the national average.

Overall between 2012/13-2014/15 we saw a 7.8% improvement in the percentage of full time graduates gaining highly skilled employment. Specifically, we have seen the following percentage improvements in highly skilled job outcomes for students by the following characteristics, over the period: first degree +12.3%; young +8.5%; male +9.9%; disabled +2.1%; disadvantaged +8.2%[8] We are thus supporting many more of our students into graduate level employment, including those who are traditionally disadvantaged in the labour market and we are exceeding sector norms.

Whilst the data is positive, we would suggest our current performance is particularly impressive when set against key contextual information, the most pertinent of which are the individual and collective impact of: the characteristics of our student population, their mobility and the graduate jobs market in the region.

Whilst continuing to strive to improve on this performance, a new postholder will be charged with further developing our methodologies to evaluate the long term impacts of the interventions we make on student's employability.

6.4   Evaluation of Financial Support

The provision of our financial support is annually evaluated. We pay particular attention to previous research in this area including the outcomes of our work with CFE Research in Year 4 report on the 'Evaluation of the National Scholarships Programme'[9], that confirms that the financial support packages offered by different institutions have had limited impact on applicant decision-making. Therefore, given our success in attracting students from non-traditional HE backgrounds our decision to focus increased expenditure on success and progress (through the Student Opportunity Fund) is well-informed.

The monitoring process for 'The Student Opportunity Fund' has been established, linked to the student record system and will allow the University to evaluate the impact of the fund in terms of student success, retention and progression by the end of the academic year. Qualitative feedback will be gathered from those students who receive awards about the impact it has had on their student experience and how it will enhance their employability. In the long term, the University will track individual students who receive awards from the fund by characteristic and to determine the impact on graduate employment

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[7] DLHE 2014-15
[8] TEF metrics rebuild from individualised data files
[9] CFE Research and Edge Hill University. 2016 Evaluation of the National Scholarship Programme: Year 4 Report to HEFCE, Bristol: HEFCE.

With regards to our Hardship Fund, particular consideration is given to the awards made to students from priority groups which includes students with children (particularly single parents); disabled students; care leavers; students with caring responsibilities; students from foyers or students who are homeless; students receiving final year loan rate; mature and part time students. In addition we are able to track the retention and success of those students who receive awards and regularly gain qualitative feedback from students about the impact the funding has had on their ability to remain on their programme of study.

Section 7: Provision of Information to Perspective Students

The University communicates with current and perspective students through a range of channels and media to ensure key messages are communicated and understood. This year, we will invest significantly in a new Student Engagement function to better coordinate communication with students and their supporters. We will continue to adhere to the principles of Plain English in all communications.

We are committed to providing timely, accurate and meaningful information in a durable medium to ensure that students are well placed to make informed decisions about what and where to study and the support offered by the Institution. This includes ensuring that accurate information is displayed through third party channels.

Section 8: Consultation with the Student Body

The development of this agreement has incorporated consultation with the University community including the SU through both formal (committee) and informal meetings. In particular, direct input from the Students Union has been provided in the initial drafting of the Agreement and student representatives have commented on and approved the Agreement through their representation in the formal Committee structure, including on the Board of Governors.

Section 9: Equality and Diversity

This agreement has been considered in the light of our public sector equality duties and aligns with our Equality and Diversity Policy. These aspects are firmly embedded in the culture of the University which has a strong tradition of welcoming students from all backgrounds. In terms of protected characteristics, we have noted that national fees policy may have impacted adversely on mature student demand and we are seeking to maintain support for this group at a local level.

The University actively monitors the operation of its recruitment processes, as well as retention and attainment of students from a wide range of backgrounds, including, specifically, those with protected characteristics. Data is analysed at individual academic department

level through our annual monitoring processes. Data on Equality and Diversity and the differential impacts on students by characteristic is also considered by our Board of Governors. Given the diversity of our student body, our preference is to mainstream appropriate support wherever possible. The analysis of performance by characteristics however, is used, where necessary, to inform appropriate actions targeted at particular groups, through for example, our annual Retention Plan. We have recently recruited a statistician to assist in the disaggregation of multiple characteristics to better enable identification of cause and effect to further enhance our interventions.

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