ACCESS AGREEMENT

2016-17

Royal Agricultural University

1 Introduction

1.1 Context

The Royal Agricultural University (RAU) is the oldest agricultural college in the English-speaking world. The RAU took a strategic decision to move to public status in 2001. This offered opportunity to widen access and promote agricultural education and careers to students from diverse backgrounds, with a continuing aspiration to:

> *"…lead the development of teaching and research in agriculture, agri-business, equine, food, and land & property management[1]."*

The small Cotswold campus provides a unique and community-centred learning environment for courses delivered at foundation, undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The RAU has steadily increased in student numbers over the last two decades, with forty countries now represented in the student body. Current growth aspirations articulated in the RAU's 2014-2019 Corporate Plan represent a significant opportunity and challenge.

The RAU offer adopts a practical, applied and career orientation, priding itself on *'career-focused courses [that] are designed and updated to meet the changing needs of the employment market and combine academic excellence with practical application'*[2].

1.1.1 A commitment to widening access and participation

The RAU has a continuing strategic commitment to widening access and participation across the *student lifecycle*, which is embedded at the highest level in the Corporate Plan 2014-2019. Specifically:

- ***Strategic priority 1 - To develop an outstanding and sustainable academic environment for study and work both on and off-campus through increases in the numbers of high quality students and staff.***
    - Make the RAU the institution of choice for students wishing to study in the areas we serve:
        - Continuing to **promote widening access** to the University's courses
        - **develop and broaden the methods of learning** for a **wider range of students** nationally and internationally through **distance and blended learning**, using the range of existing and developing technologies
        - continuously review and improve the UK and overseas **student experience**, including assessment and development of the student journey from initial interest through to application and enrolment
        - further develop the **system for interacting with careers advisors in schools and colleges**
        - ensuring that courses are intellectually relevant, equipping students with skills of **enterprise and entrepreneurship**, innovation, sustainability and leadership to further **enhance graduate level employment**
        - ensuring courses and **employer links** make graduates highly sought after: ready to have real world impact.

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[1] *http://www.rau.ac.uk/the-rau/history-heritage*
[2] *http://www.rau.ac.uk*

- **Strategic priority 2 - *To develop a range of unique, industry-relevant and accessible courses***
  - To extend its portfolio of courses that meet the requirements of students and industry:
    - *provide a **range of financial and other support** through bursaries, scholarships and other appropriate means to **widen access to courses***
    - review and develop undergraduate courses including opportunities for 'top-up' degrees at Cirencester or by **flexible or distributed learning**
    - develop the range of **sub-degree courses** offered by the University.

1.1.2   Widening access and the recruitment agenda

As necessary in its position as a small and specialist institution, the RAU recruits heavily from the national base. We have partnerships with Further Education Colleges (FECs) across England, primarily with the purpose of validating degrees and offering top-up programmes to FEC-delivered foundation courses. These sites have been identified for further collaborative opportunities and a targeted stream of widening participation work.

Currently, outreach (access) activity of the widening participation agenda is primarily locally-focused and concentrates on activities targeted at the secondary school level. We have identified opportunities to redesign activity to leverage existing relationships and target more effectively.

To ensure we make *faster progress*[3], the strategic approach presented in this Access Agreement is one of alignment with institutional drivers and embedding widening participation across the institution.

The RAU believes that increased diversity brings a range of experiences, skillsets and cultures that contribute to rich learning environments. We recognise our contribution to national priorities, including upward social mobility and economic productivity outcomes. We would also like to expressly recognise widening participation in terms of university business outcomes, for example as a contributor to core institutional drivers such as recruitment and community engagement; teaching and learning; and research and innovation. Over the course of the next three-to-five years, we seek to shift the dominant narrative of widening participation, and associated metrics, to be inclusive of business outcomes and positive contributions to institutional processes and operations. We will increase institutional understanding of how the widening participation agenda contributes to corporate agendas and KPIs, so that it can be effectively engaged with and leveraged for increased impact; institutionally and collectively for the sector.

1.1.3   On being a Small and Specialist Institution

We see our Small and Specialist institution status as an opportunity to make a distinct contribution to the widening participation agenda nationally, using a thematic base for showcasing the value of higher education through the lens of our niche land-based disciplines.

We have identified an opportunity to leverage and capitalise on our specialisms and disciplinary expertise, providing a rich range of targeted outreach programmes to identified schools and colleges,

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[3] *OFFA Strategic Priority as identified in the OFFA Strategic Plan 2015-2020 http://www.offa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/OFFA-Strategic-Plan-2015-2020.pdf*

which can be shared nationally with the possibility of being linked to national networks. Reorienting to include a national approach will help to address the particular challenges we face as a small and specialist institution in our capacity to deliver outreach work. These are:

- Lower levels of resourcing (financial, staff, infrastructure)
- Smaller staff base which requires 'mix-mode' roles, where one staff member is responsible for a wide range of agendas/ priorities
- Need for capacity building in ensuring staff skills are aligned to the mission of small and specialist institutions
- Lack of visibility in community due to capacities of larger institutions in proximity
- Some challenges in engagement with schools /colleges due to narrow and specialist focus.

We are developing capacity, resource, support infrastructure; and information and guidance to learners regarding the nature of *small and specialist* institutions. This supports raising awareness and aspirations through delivery of a focused, thematic higher education widening participation agenda.

1.1.4   Our opportunity

There is a great opportunity to recalibrate widening participation activity at the RAU. In recognition of the need to improve activity, the RAU commissioned a comprehensive external review of our widening participation programme and its wider operational context from September 2014 to February 2015. As the primary area of need, the review focused on the *Access* area, and included investigations at four levels: strategic, structural, operational and human capacity. A series of progressive recommendations have been produced, which inform this Access Agreement and which align to OFFA strategic priorities. Implementation of these recommendations enables the RAU to make *faster progress* on outcomes, through increased efficiency and effectiveness; building capacity in systems and staffing; increasing collaboration (internal and external); and, building understanding through exploration of and contribution to data, evidence and research.

1.2 Background

1.2.1   Policy, market orientation, disruptive innovation and the skills agenda

Higher Education Institutions are operating in a volatile policy environment and are endeavouring to manage a number of complex effects of concurrent and linked policies and their consequences. Marketisation of higher education and how institutional decision-making processes are inflected by the daily realities of a system based on choice and competition are now central challenges.

Of major significance, removal of the student number cap from 2015-16 will challenge universities to operate effectively in a more competitive market. Paul Clark, Director of Policy, Universities UK is quoted saying:

> "*Universities have entered a world of deregulation and increased competition. They have had to respond rapidly to these changes, in order to operate effectively in the more market-based system which now underpins the core business of educating undergraduate students. At the same time, student expectations have rightly increased, and there is growing awareness of the importance of the*

transition from university to the labour market. This in turn is recognition of the vital role that universities play in driving economic growth."[4]

This confluence of market orientation and drive by Government to see universities make a more direct contribution to the economic, employability and skills agendas, in the face of difficult global economic conditions, has pushed additional new pressures onto university administrators and academics. Universities are now required to respond to new market demands for, of and by students, globally and domestically. The widening participation agenda is not divorced from these drivers.

Integration of widening participation commitments in the new fees regime (2012) continues to craft a business case narrative, resulting in many institutions fully embracing a culture of widening participation, through a *whole-of-institution approach* and coherent frameworks across key domains of *Access, Success* and *Progression*. This *student lifecycle* approach, from outreach/transition and induction through to completion and exit, has become the dominant narrative framing many student-focused interventions and strategies in higher education. The RAU acknowledges that widening participation extends beyond access; that what happens through university and what outcomes are achieved also matter.

However, challenges for widening participation remain: to build on and sustain progress; to ensure participation and success of particular groups; to deliver fair access to high dividend courses and institutions; and to deploy finite resources equitably and effectively in a period of fiscal restraint[5].

Whilst the widening participation agenda is in the 'public good' domain, the intensification of competition in the HE sector globally, and disruptive innovation (Christensen & Eyring, 2011; Christensen & Weise, 2014), which is reducing the cost of education delivery and access, will drive institutions to seek new markets in the domestic landscape. This makes many of the target areas for the widening participation agenda potential markets, as is being pushed by wider policy shifts towards recruitment (rather than equity) agendas (McCaig, 2014).

1.2.2 National priorities, strategy and guidance

Most recently, publication of the National Strategy for Access and Student Success (April, 2014)[6] has provided guidance on priority areas, which have been integrated into OFFA strategic priorities[7] for the 2015-2020 period. The seven priorities are considered, reflected and mapped against the strategic and operational approach articulated in this Access Agreement.

Government investment in the new National Networks for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO) in 2014-15 represents a further opportunity to increase collaboration and partnership across the sector, and with Further Education Colleges (FECs) as partners. Overarching objectives are:

- National coverage to all state-funded secondary schools and colleges
- Increased awareness of opportunities to access outreach activity and simplification of process

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[4] *McCaig, C., & Taylor, C. (2014). Evaluating the impact of number controls, choice and competition: an analysis of the student profile and the student learning environment in the new higher education landscape.*
[5] *Allen, L., & Storan, J. (2005). Widening Participation: A rough guide for higher education providers.* http://www.actiononaccess.org/download.Php *2013: i*
[6] *https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/299689/bis-14-516-national-strategy-for-access-and-student-success.pdf*
[7] *OFFA Strategic Priority as identified in the OFFA Strategic Plan 2015-2020* http://www.offa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/OFFA-Strategic-Plan-2015-2020.pdf

The Networks offer opportunity to craft the new widening participation programme through leveraging Networks infrastructures. In particular, this would attend to HEFCE call for:

- Sustainable infrastructures and engagement with Networks post funding
- Call for innovative practice in approaches to collaboration and partnership
- Linking into other Networks for further collaboration
- Building capacity in partner institutions towards more coordinated, coherent and sustained outreach programmes.

The RAU see this as an opportunity to be developed over the next two years. The RAU is a member of the University of Gloucestershire-led Network "GROWS" (*Gloucestershire Reaching Out With Schools*).

1.2.3   National funding schemes and investment in *Financial Support*

In a response to sector-wide research, evidence and OFFA guidance, the RAU is commencing a progressive transition of funds away from *Financial Support* in favour of increased spend in *Access*. This has been aided by the conclusion of the National Scholarships Programme (NSP) from 2015-16, and represents a more strategic approach to investment of funds in areas where most improvement is required to ensure appropriate outcomes are achieved. This said, we will establish monitoring mechanisms regarding financial support to better understand impact and add to sector understanding; particularly in the small and specialist context.
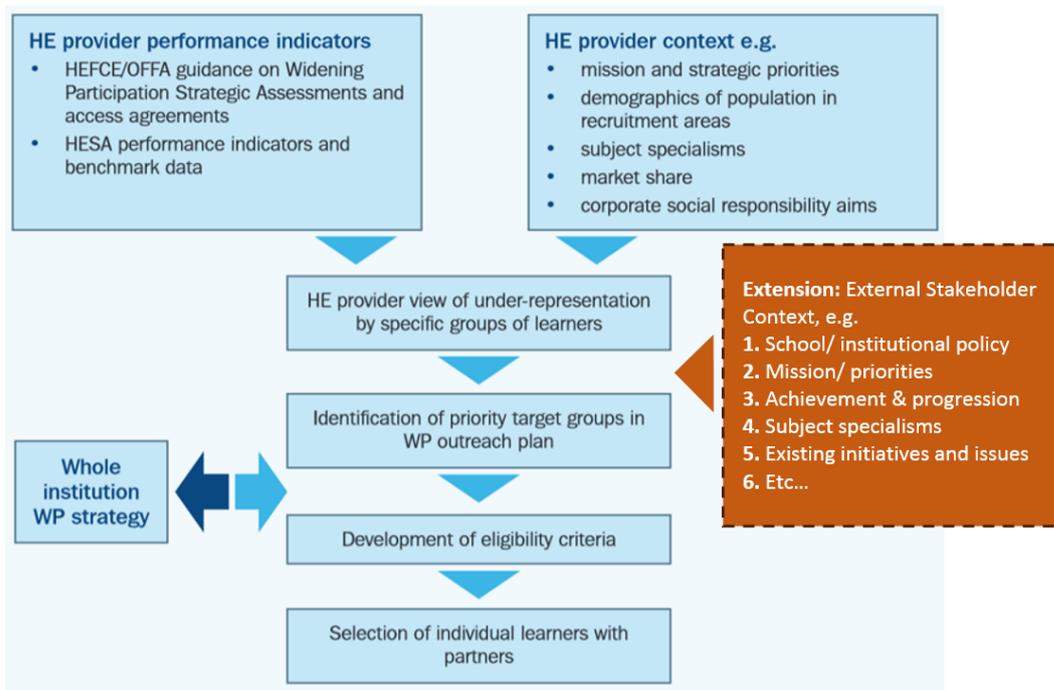
2   Our Strategic Approach

As stated, the RAU acknowledges a need to enhance and progress its widening participation agenda. To this end, the WP Review team has mapped the following strategic approach, which applies an embedded *whole-of-Institution* methodology and seeks to better align three key overarching agendas:

1. OFFA strategic priorities with regards to widening participation
2. University corporate agenda and drivers
3. Stakeholder goals and drivers (e.g. local community, schools, further education colleges, etc.)

2.1 Underpinning framework

The following conceptual framework guides thinking to inform the development of an embedded, tailored and targeted approach to widening particiaption activity and investment. The resulting *whole-of-institution* embedded agenda links to specific objectives, metrics and aspirations for various Schools and Departments in the university; for the university as a whole, and for identified external key stakeholders. The first phase, already in implementation since February 2015, attends to alignment of agendas (1) and (2) above; in the diagram below these are *HE provider performance indicators* and *HE provider context*, respectively. As a more rigorous programme of widening participation activity and partnerships in the *Access* domain are established over the immediate- to short-term, agenda (3) above, or the *"Extension: External Stakeholder Contexts"* identifed below will be shaped and integrated on a continuous action learning cycle.

2.2 Mapping the strategy and establishing priorities

The proposed strategic approach aligns directly to OFFA's articulated priorities, as contained in the OFFA Strategic Plan. The university proposes to apply OFFA priorities as either:

1. **Conceptual frameworks**, namely:
    a. The Student Lifecycle approach
    b. Whole of Institution approach; or,

2. **Strategic themes**, namely:
    a. Emphasis on long-term [early] outreach
    b. Effective collaboration
    c. Smarter, evidence-based spend
    d. Equality and diversity
    e. Stretching targets to make faster progress

Aligned projects are scoped, constructed and implemented accordingly, using a programmatic planning methodology. Recommendations from the WP Review are mapped against OFFA priorities.

3   Fees, student numbers and fee income

OFFA Strategic Priorities attended to	-	*Faster progress*

3.1 Fees and fee income

The Royal Agricultural University intends to continue to charge £9,000 per annum for full time undergraduate study for students commencing in 2016-17 and for full time continuing undergraduate students. These charges will apply irrespective of mode or qualification type.

Part-time study charges are on a 'per module' basis students studying on a part time or fractional basis, which is typically four (4) modules per annum. The maximum charge per annum is therefore £4,950 based on four modules.

3.1.1   Fee increases

Course charges will be reviewed annually and may rise in line with inflation and any other permitted increases announced by Government each year.

3.2 Student Numbers

The university is actively seeking to increase student numbers, currently working towards an ambitious target of 1,174 domestic under-graduate students by 2019-20. This represents a 42 per cent increase on the projected 2015-16 student number, which is estimated to be 824 domestic under-graduates. In the 2016-17 academic year, the university anticipates approximately 934 full-time undergraduate students (including foundation degree) and three (3) new regime part-time students.

4   Access and student success measures

OFFA Strategic Priorities attended to	- *Whole of institution approach*
	- *Student lifecycle approach*
	- *Long-term, sustained [early] outreach*
	- *Effective collaboration*
	- *Smarter, evidence-based spend*
	- *Faster progress*

This section provides performance assessments (based on published HESA data); descriptions of activity; and priorities and targets for each of the Access Agreement focus areas: *Access, Student Success, Progression* and *Financial Support.* It also provides information on future investment and activity strategies, based on assessment and review of our performance. In exploring these assessments and in setting out performance against HESA benchmarks, we point to a number of significant factors that should be duly considered:

- The RAU is a niche land-based institution, with a history of service to the land-based industries. As a public institution it is relatively young (2001).
- The university is a small institution, and has grown significantly over the past two decades. In April 2013 it reached its 1,000 students target and was granted University status.
- The land-based disciplines offered at the university have not traditionally attracted students from widening participation target backgrounds; there is much perception-shifting work to be undertaken (including increasing understanding regarding the "Royal" tag in the university's name, which might constitute a barrier for some target groups).
- Some of the methodologies the university has put in practice to encourage access and widen participation have not yet brought large changes in results in the student data; however the

commitment to, for example, providing a range of degree routes (e.g. foundation degrees, access programmes) and to ensuring access for students with vocational qualifications through equitable admissions processes is considered core business. The university has a significant per cent of new students annually who are accepted with vocational qualifications.

- In acknowledgement of the need to make *faster progress*, the university already commissioned a comprehensive WP Review from September 2014 to February 2015. The university acknowledges we are at a point on a journey, and has made significant commitment to ensuring we build our widening participation efforts and outcomes, evidenced by a complete redesign and realignment of the agenda across the *whole institution*.

4.1 Access

4.1.1 Performance assessment - participation

Absolute performance against HESA benchmark

The RAU continues efforts to progress towards HESA benchmarks in target student categories, setting and striving to achieve stretching targets. The table below provides a summary of performance in identified target groups against HESA locally-adjusted benchmarks, from 2009-10 to 2013-14.

Target group	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
% full-time first degree entrants from **state schools or colleges**	-	-	54.5	50.3	47.6
HESA Local-Adjusted Benchmark			*84.5*	*81.5*	*83.8*
% full-time first degree entrants from **NS-SEC classes 4-7**	-	-	40.7	35.8	35.0
HESA Local-Adjusted Benchmark			*32.0*	*34.6*	*33.9*
% full-time first degree entrants from **low participation neighbourhoods** (POLAR 3)	4.3	2.2	3.7	3.8	2.1
HESA Local-Adjusted Benchmark	7.8	9.0	8.9	9.2	9.7
% **Mature** full-time first degree entrants with no previous HE and from **low participation neighbourhood** (POLAR 3)	4.0	5.1	0.0	-	2.4
HESA Local-Adjusted Benchmark	5.3	9.8	4.3	-	7.7

Students from State Schools

The university's student body make-up has been fairly consistent over the last three years, with approximately half of students coming from private, and half from the state schooling systems. As an identified target area, and as addressed throughout this Agreement and in the annexed *Resource Plan*, the university is committed to increasing the number and percentage of students from state schools. By 2016-17, we aim to have increased the current (2013-14) 47.6 percentage to 55 per cent.

To this end, we are increasing investment and effort not only driven from the widening participation team but from resource in the recruitment area, and linking strategically with RAU academic Schools.

The data indicates an underserved group of students in the state school system from which additional students may be drawn. There is significant potential to engage with targeted state schools to increase recruitment from the state schools sector, requiring a targeted recruitment strategy that increases investment flow and identifies priority schools (based on, for example, widening participation target criteria, identified curriculum alignment, progression rates and disciplines and/or identified student

aspirations). This is an area that widening participation activity can drive, as part of a targeted effort in a broader recruitment and engagement agenda.

Students from low income (NS-SEC 4-7) backgrounds

The university performs well against the HESA locally-adjusted benchmark in the target category of full-time first degree entrants from NS-SEC classes 4-7, and in 2013-14 we are pleased to note performance of 35 per cent, which represents 1.1 per cent over-achievement against benchmark (33.9 per cent). That said, we are conscious of a decreasing trend in this data set over the 2011-12 to 2013-14 period, and have therefore set targets in this area which attend to reversing this emerging trend and maintaining performance above benchmark.

Students from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR 3)

We have set targets to increase our percentage of students from low participation neighbourhoods (using the POLAR 3 method) to 8 per cent by 2016-17. We see potential to increase efforts particularly into our local Quintile 1-3 POLAR 3 areas. This will enable us to focus efforts and increase our current performance of 2.1 per cent towards alignment with HESA benchmark. Attending to the discrete mature student group is a priority in this strategy to progress current performance at 2.4 per cent.

In the local and immediate catchment area, the three major centres of Gloucester, Swindon and Bristol have areas of low HE participation and have been identified as key target areas for activity. A localised approach as part of the new widening participation programme is imperative. We see significant room for development of the widening participation programme to better align with local agendas in order to address performance. For example, a local approach would leverage the LEP through applying the lens of employability and entrepreneurship, which also serves to address employability concerns of target cohorts. It is envisaged local employers may be identified for partnerships and contribution.

The university also has a local further education college in its immediate proximity, which draws approximately 50 per cent of its cohort from the target Swindon area. The university seeks to increase collaboration with the College to mutually beneficial outcomes.

It is also worth noting our intention to develop a robust and complementary national approach to widening participation, which mirrors our inclusive national intake. We have a unique job to do in widening participation in relation to showcasing and increasing access to our specific disciplines and also to raising awareness and understanding of studying at a small, campus-based niche institution.

Mature students with no previous HE from low participation neighbourhoods

Increasing widening participation activity with employers seeks to address participation of mature learners, alongside the development of increasingly flexible and industry-informed course offers, which appeal to needs of mature learners in up-skilling or re-skilling for career progression outcomes.

Interpreting the data and progressing towards targets

In order to inform our approach and understand these 2013-14 data in real terms, we have interpreted the above findings into student numbers to make crude estimations on **minimum** additional numbers required to progress the university's performance towards HESA benchmarks. These data offer some guidance, however should be treated with caution and as base line minimum as they assume "no change" in other student group data and are based on student numbers of 230 young full-time first degree entrants; and for the mature target group, 40 full-time mature entrants.

Target group	RAU performance (2013-14) %	HESA Locally-adjusted benchmark (2013-14) %	Student numbers required to progress to benchmark
full-time first degree entrants from **state schools or colleges**	47.6	83.8	55% = +17 students 60% = +29 students 70% = +52 students 80% = +76 students
full-time first degree entrants from **NS-SEC classes 4-7**	35	33.9	*Benchmark met and exceeded*
full-time first degree entrants from **low participation neighbourhoods** (POLAR 3)	2.1	9.7	4% = +4 students 7% = +11 students 9% = +16 students 10% = +18 students
Mature full-time first degree entrants with no previous HE and from **low participation neighbourhood** (POLAR 3)	2.4	7.7	4% = +0.5 students 6% = +1.5 students 8% = +2.25 students

4.1.2   Performance evaluation – Outreach and partnerships

The university has continued to provide a range of responsive outreach activities, and has maintained links with local target schools and colleges. We acknowledge our place and responsibility as a part of, and to be engaged with, our local community. With regards the widening participation agenda, a concentration at the local level recognises that students from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR 3) are 25 per cent more likely to study from home.

The university has undertaken a range of outreach activities, including parent's evenings, road shows, careers fairs, community shows, school visits, primary school experience days, HE experience days and summer schools. New additions in taster days, including our "Farm-to-Fork", "Horrible Histories" and "Climate" days have been popular. We have also delivered a range of workshops and guidance sessions. We have increased employment of student ambassadors, and continue to use ambassadors in our outreach activities, as key influencers of the young people with whom we wish to engage. Over the last year, we reached over 2,500 students in a range of engagement activities.

In particular, developments have included a collaborative programme in supporting achievement and raising awareness of higher education in the discipline of Business, through local *"E4 Business and Entrepreneurship Projects"*. We see this as strategic work which supports core institutional agendas and our offer in the School of Business and Entrepreneurship.

We continue to support and contribute to the national STEM agenda and priorities, particularly through a range of *subject taster* and *subject enrichment* outreach activities and through our ongoing participation in our local FEC STEM Board. For example, we are working with the *Engineering Development Trust (First Edition STEM Programme)* to develop a range of STEM-focused activity.

We have also commenced development of an *Environmental Studies Programme* with local schools and the Forestry Commission, with a view to supporting *achievement* outcomes particularly at A-Level.

Collaboration

The University is working with the University of Gloucestershire to effectively collaborate to deliver long-term outreach, operating at a wider regional level to reach a larger number of learners and

particularly those in pre-16 education and from under-represented groups. In this collaboration, which has been strengthened by the formation of the Gloucestershire-led NNCO Network "GROWS", we commit to partnership principles and supporting and collaborating on a range of activities. We hope to continue the successful collaborative work of the Network once funding has ceased in 2016-17, and we are currently collaborating with this sustainability in mind.

The RAU has strategic and formal partnerships in place with five Further Education Colleges (FECs) for whom we validate degrees and in some cases offer top-up programmes to bachelor level. We support access through these networks, and we have identified an opportunity to further leverage the FEC partnerships to further our widening participation work.

The RAU has also commenced partnership development with the local Gloucestershire County Council Children in Care team and the Virtual Schools Network (VSN) to explore collaboration to promote, encourage and support higher education access and participation for young people in or leaving care. Whilst this is a new relationship, we have progressed a number of activities to lay a platform and we are in consultations towards formation of a partnership. We recognise the low levels of participation in higher education amongst young people who are in or leaving care, as well as the barriers faced by those students who are care-givers. We are committed to supporting these target groups, highlighted by OFFA as a priority group. This has been reflected in the *Resource Plan* Targets and Milestones.

The University continues to support development of *Careerpilot* and *Lifepilot* websites as mechanisms to provide information advice and guidance to target audiences. The partnership, underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will be known as the *Careerpilot/Lifepilot Subscribers Group*.

In addition to recognising the good practice being undertaken, this Access Agreement draws from the WP Review conducted in 2014-15, which provides impetus for redesign, up-scaling and aligning our widening participation programme across the institution. This will offer great opportunity to leverage our capacities and embed widening participation as core business.

Key findings from the WP Review
There were a number of key items of note including, for example:

- There is room to develop robustness and structure of programmes in collaboration with key stakeholders (e.g. internally Schools; externally schools and community organisations).
- The university may increase activity delivered at the *early outreach* phase, which has a strong supporting evidence base warranting investment and which is a key priority in a long-term, sustained programme of support and development for target students.
- Opportunities to build on work progressed in curriculum alignment and enhancement, which positively impacts on *achievement raising* amongst target cohorts.
- Develop interactivity of "stall-style" events; situate activity within a broader programme offer.
- Opportunity to develop a more coherent framework of activity, which has increased potential to positively impact upon target cohorts. The suite of activities is being redesigned, and there is great opportunity to develop particularly in the area of strategic underpinning and collaboration with key partners.

The WP Review considered the widening participation programme as a whole and assessed its design in terms of effectiveness and coherence. The review evaluated the programmatic, departmental and institutional orientation towards equity outcomes, which provide insight as to how the programme is enabled (supported) and/or stagnated (hindered) by institutional context. There are opportunities for improved effectiveness in programme coordination across the university, improved communication and evaluation as well as an improved orientation towards its equity orientation. The targets and strategic approach contained in this Access Agreement address these challenges comprehensively.

4.1.3   Priorities in 2016-17 *Access*

The university has identified a number of priorities for *Access*, which will consolidate, embed and build upon activity progressed in 2015-16. We will continue to address issues found as part of our performance assessment on an ongoing basis.

The university will continue to increase investment in outreach work, particularly building into successes of 2014-15 and 2015-16 activity. By 2016-17, we expect that our reach into key partners will have significantly increased, with national coverage. We also envisage that we will be operating under a robust targeting system, which allows us to effectively and appropriately direct our efforts and leverage opportunities for increased return on investment. Our partnerships will have significantly increased in breadth, and will include for example, employers, councils and youth support agencies.

As part of this programme redesign, we would expect a number of targeted and scaffolded activities to be in place, for example:

- Working with parents and carers programme
- Looked after children/ care leavers aspirations and development programme
- Engaging mature and adult learners
- School Awards scheme
- Professional Development Series for teachers and school/college staff
- Curriculum alignment projects – *"uni at school"* initiative
- Careers, Employability, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship challenge programme
- *Innovate!* Programme linked specifically to increasing use of the Rural Innovation Centre (RIC) and leveraging the local Agri-tech agenda

Priorities are as follows:

1. Following redesign and significant development in 2015-16, continue to enhance the *Access* programme of activities in-line with recommendations from the WP Review and other emerging opportunities, which includes ongoing attention to:
   a. Further embedding and enhancing strategic alignment across the institution
   b. Reviewing the new governance, reporting and monitoring model
   c. Continued capacity development at the systems and human levels
   d. Continue and enhance communications, engagement and partnership development
   e. Ongoing programme and activity development, including targeting, evaluation and monitoring, which is based on significant partnership development over the 2015-16 period, and a developing evidence base.

f. Consider and advise on specific institutional mechanisms and programmes, such as contextual admissions processes and the development of new course offerings.

2. Increase and monitor engagement with widening participation activity internally, as part of the new embedded, *whole of institution* approach. This includes:
   a. Showcase and recognition of engagement; celebrating success
   b. Review and monitoring embedded metrics model (launched 2015-16)
   c. Continue to implement and review systems and structures that promote ease of access and participation in the agenda
   d. Ongoing provision of guidance that targets and drives the agenda and aligns with core institutional objectives
   e. Working with academic Schools to continue to pilot activities and projects to encourage access to our niche university courses that have more traditional cohorts.

3. Continue to develop research and evidence base for *Access* activity, including implementation and review of effective targeting, and implement effective monitoring, evaluation and data capture systems. This includes exploration of student tracking mechanisms. The university will endeavour to leverage and exploit the university's existing data capture systems including capacities in CRM to provide pre-entry data and target student support and advice.

4. Building from practice in 2015-16, continue to enhance and widen external partnerships and collaboration, particularly at the local level and with target priority schools and colleges; and, exploring deeper partnerships and collaborations at the national level.

5. Continue to review practice developed in 2015-16 across strategy, management and operations; particularly, explore community and key stakeholder information and data to improve the university's practices in relation to raising aspirations and achievement within under-represented groups and communities in priority POLAR3 areas (for example Swindon and Gloucester) through sustained information, advice and guidance, activities, events and campaigns, and support for continuing professional development in schools and colleges.

4.2 Student Success

4.2.1 Performance Assessment – Retention and Success

The university has a strong reputation in securing high rates of retention for all students. In 2012-13, we achieved 97.3 per cent of young full-time first degree entrants continuing study following their year of entry. For mature students, this figure was 100 per cent. A proportion of those not continuing at the RAU also stay in higher education generally, which we view as positive attrition.

We have a consistent high performance in retaining students (measured by HESA Table 3a), and we have generally out-performed the HESE benchmarks by a significant figure. The graph below illustrates our performance since 2006.

Non-continuation following year of entry: full-time first degree entrants
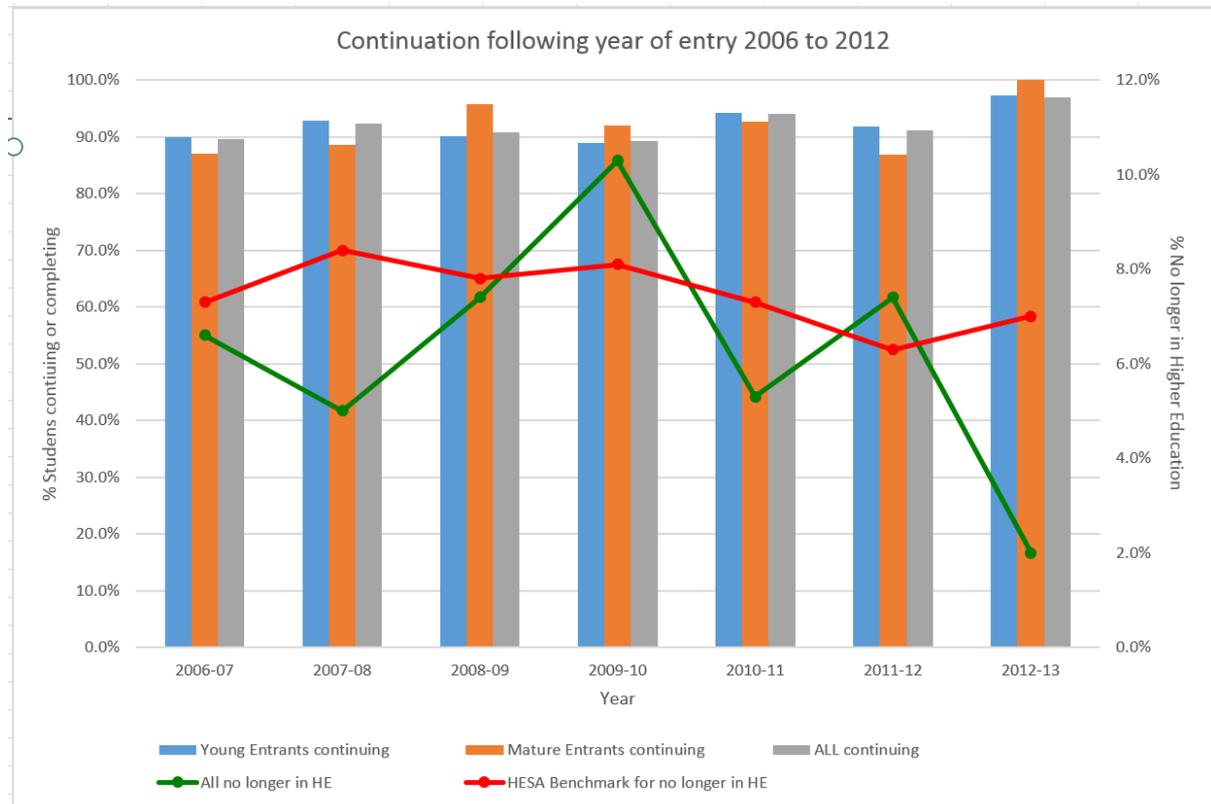
With the exception of years 2009-10 and 2011-12, the RAU has exceeded the HESA benchmarks for the percentage of students no longer in higher education, as illustrated by the line graph markers (right-hand x-axis). The 2012-13 latest data shows exceptional performance against benchmark in this category. In going deeper into the available data, we are pleased to note that our high performance in retention is maintained for students from low participation areas (based on POLAR 3 method), at 97.2 per cent continuing in 2012-13.

We continue to provide a highly personalised, responsive student support service, with dedicated staff members at the central and academic School level. Students are supported with the provision of general support, learning requirements, teaching and learning mentorship, financial support, counselling and medical, employability support and development, spiritual and cultural development and support, and other pastoral services.

The university will build on its excellent track record and reputation to ensure student support and success strategies are in place for increasing and widening student base, which includes monitoring success and completion of target groups to ensure gaps in outcomes are proactively addressed.

4.2.2   Performance evaluation – Retention and Success

The university adopts an integrated approach to inclusive learning, teaching and support strategies which are embedded into standard practices and available to all students. The university's commitment to inclusive teaching practice is embedded in teaching and learning and is driven by inclusive pedagogical frameworks. There is particular focus on experiential and practical learning, with employability and skills developed integrally to the curriculum.

The personal tutor system, whereby new students may be allocated an academic personal tutor upon commencement, continues in operation across the university. There is currently much anecdotal evidence (and supporting literature) that this programme contributes to our retention performance.

As previously shown, the proportion of disabled students at the university is significantly higher than HESA benchmark, at 12.8 per cent in 2013-14 compared to the benchmark of 8.3 per cent. We also support a significant additional percentage of students with dyslexia. The university continues to provide an excellent level of service to support students with disabilities, as evidenced by our high rate of retention. We encourage disabled students to disclose their circumstances early and endeavour to get supporting arrangements in place as quickly as possible. To this end, the university has two staff members who provide a range of ongoing support.

We are aware from experience that our ability to offer financial support has resulted in retention of students who would have postponed or discontinued studies. The university therefore recognises the value of continuing a level of financial support. However, as described later in this section, we have adopted use of more flexible fee and accommodation waivers in addition to bursaries; that said, we have retained some bursary offer as an alternative for those from low income backgrounds and for those in the 'squeezed middle'. Commitments in this Access Agreement relate to further reviewing and developing our financial packages offer, to ensure appropriate levels of scaffolded support across the *student lifecycle*, in order to retain our excellent levels of retention; and, support linked to employability and achievement outcomes that contribute to progression.

We acknowledge the importance of the transition-in phase of the *student lifecycle* as a critical juncture for student participation and ongoing success. The university has redesigned its admissions process to ensure a more streamlined, efficient process that isn't as daunting to new students (see Section 8). Our support and development activities around the transition-in phase include the student "My RAU" portal; various information, advice and guidance literature; a full O-week programme; pre-induction days; "Experience Days" for students with an offer; taster experiences; and, connecting with parents, carers and extended family. These events offer opportunities to connect with the campus community, including a wide range of academic and support staff.

Across the whole degree, academic, learning and pastoral support is available to all students. In particular, the university hosts a responsive range of additional study skills workshops, which are provided on a group-level basis and by request can be facilitated one-to-one. These sessions are offered as extra-curricular activities, or are embedded into some of the university curricula. The careers and employability service also provide continuing advice and support to students, up to three years after graduating. Availability of part-time employment on and off the campus is promoted and students looking for employment during their studies, as well as career development, are supported.

That said, there is potential to explore current service design and particularly to evaluate and monitor more effectively. As the RAU moves towards its aspirational recruitment targets over the next five years, and particularly with increased and recalibrated efforts to widen participation, we are acutely aware of the need to continuously review and develop our provisions in student support and success.

To this end, the university is currently undertaking a review of services, with a view to developing a more efficient and effective, cohesive, evidence-based and enhanced service model, which integrates a range of best practice. It is envisaged that this will be in place over the coming twelve months. Target

groups for widening participation will be particularly considered, and it is envisaged that a diverse range of students will be provided consultation opportunities to inform the resulting models.

Areas identified for development and improvement

Although the WP Review focused on the *Access* domain of the widening participation agenda, it was undertaken in and considered the wider context, including success and progression measures. Findings and recommendations are being used to inform service development; particularly in light of our commitment to maintain outcomes for continuation and success against a background of increasing and widening participation at the university; and are as follows:

- Development and enhancement of the widening participation agenda to provide **targeted support** across the *student lifecycle*:
    - Phase 1 – Pre-entry
    - Phase 2 – Offers, enrolments and acceptances
        - Focus area is the applicant / student journey (transition to university)
    - Phase 3 – University experience (success)
        - Focus areas are personal tutor system, provision of student support and career and employability support and development
    - Phase 4 – Graduate outcomes (progression)
        - Focus area linking to employers and industry

- Further **embedding widening participation into academic programmes** and curriculum, e.g:
    - Course offer (development of, course name, communications and messaging)
    - Subject/module curriculum design
    - Pedagogy/ andragogy

- Recognition **for widening participation in teaching and learning** practice improved through a reward and recognition programme, acknowledging good practice in different areas, e.g.:
    - Academic teaching practice – inclusive curriculum
    - Best widening participation advancing team
    - Support programme practice

- Enhanced **research agenda with widening participation outcomes**. Recognition and awareness of widening participation can be improved through making small, targeted research grants available to researchers (particularly internal academics), for specific research related to widening participation outcomes.

- Development of the **careers and employability strategy**, working across academic curriculum to embed employability in a systematic way and attend to outcomes for target groups.

- Development of **consultation strategy and platform for staff and students**, to enhance engagement with a range of issues and challenges and particularly in issues related to access, participation, success, financial support and progression of different target groups.

- Development and implementation of a range of **metrics and indicators** regarding widening participation outcomes, as embedded into core institutional monitoring and metrics systems, and which are positioned in all stages of the *student lifecycle.*

4.2.3   Priorities in 2016-17 *Retention and Success*

The university has identified the following key priorities for student success and retention:

1. In-line with implementation and development of the new cohesive student services model, **review** developments over 2015-16 and **ensure provision particularly for target cohorts** and progress an inclusive, informed, engaged best practice retention and success agenda.

2. Enhance **staff development** in themes related to inclusive practice, to ensure course and curriculum design, and assessment, feedback and student support recognise the diverse backgrounds of students.

3. Develop **student engagement and consultations** for purposes of developing the widening participation agenda and providing effective and targeted support for students.

4. Implementation of an **institutional research project looking at retention and success**, to help identify retention risk characteristics and student achievement against profiles. It is envisaged that this analytical approach to monitoring, coupled with feedback from students, will reveal a series of pilot projects that will be developed and implemented proactively.

5. **Review and development of contextual admissions** processes. The university is a recruiting rather that selecting institution, and we typically receive applications from a broad range of backgrounds and abilities. We aim to make all applicants standard offers and pay particular attention to work experience and other factors detailed in personal statements, applying concessions for mitigating information relating to educational or personal disadvantage.

4.3 Progression

Employability at the university is a key pillar of our offer, and we pride ourselves on the opportunities we are able to offer all students with regards employment and employment experiences both throughout their degree programmes and post-graduation. The employability agenda is an integrated programme that operates in-curriculum and at co-curricular and extra-curricular sites. It includes specific curriculum-linked and assessed activity; career development and planning support; personal and professional development; access and engagement opportunities with employers; and a range of available employment options.

4.3.1   Performance assessment – Graduate destinations

The university is ranked in the top ten per cent nationally for graduate employability, and in 2013-14 we maintained a high level of progression at 96.3 per cent of rate of full-time students in employment or further study six months after graduation.

Graduate employment is a primary focus, and is included as a key item in the corporate plan 2015-2020. An area which will be further considered, particularly in relation to target student progression, is that of employability of graduates and more deeply, what jobs they are securing and where they are being employed. The policy agenda has been flagged by HEFCE[8] that student employment in jobs at graduate level and in degree-relevant areas will become a larger issue. This will assist in the development of an enhanced employability strategy, into which considerations for a diverse range of students will be mapped. It is envisaged that the result will be the development of a Careers & employment strategy that works across the curriculum to embed employability in a systematic way

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[8] *Conversation with officers in HEFCE's widening participation unit February 2015*

and position RAU students as premium employment prospects in their field. As part of this, we undertake to monitor progression outcomes for different student groups, and ensure any identified gaps in progression are addressed.

4.3.2 Priorities in 2015-16 *Progression*

Identified priorities in the area of progression are:

1. **Data capture and monitoring** to better explore, understand and compare/contrast progression of different target groups and according to student attributes.
2. In-line with institutional development of the **careers and employability strategy**, ensure support and development strategies for, and consideration of, students from widening participation backgrounds, including:
   a. Provide support to secure and incentivise work placements
   b. Establishment of a career / professional mentor programme (leveraging alumni and employer partnerships)
3. Enhanced **links and partnerships with employers**, including inward investments.

4.4 Activity investments and underpinning evidence

4.4.1 Literature and good practice

There is much research, literature and good practice guidance on 'what works', which provide principles for building effective and impactful widening participation programmes. Key practices, taken into account and to be employed in this Access Agreement, in the WP Review and in redesign of the university's widening participation programme and strategy, include:

- Targeted and progressive programs including intensive support
- Reaching out to mature learners and employees
- Identifying and working with key influencers and role models
- Working to address identified attainment gaps
- Clear strategies for delivering information, advice and guidance
- Collaborative and engaged community partnerships which are *integrative* or *transformational*
- Creating a sense of belonging and identity, particularly at transition in (orientation)
- Simple financial support packages coupled with information
- Starting employability support at pre-entry
- Strategies for monitoring and evaluation; collaboration between academics and practitioners
- Application of findings to part-time as well as full-time learners

Particularly in the *Access* area, the university is applying the findings of a recent review of the literature on widening participation (Moore et al. 2013), which identified a number of items that contribute to successful widening participation programmes. Of particular note:

1. Consistent and sustained interventions with structured and coherent frameworks
2. Early interventions
3. Partnership activity
4. Access to HE-related information, advice and guidance (IAG)
5. Reaching out to key influencers, evaluating interventions

6. Acknowledgement that friends, family and peers have an important supporting role
7. Addressing retention and success by approaches which develop peer relations; staff-student interaction; identity as successful HE learners; and, a career-relevant HE experience.
8. Ensuring employer engagement in widening participation and the employability of graduates.

4.4.2   Recommended approach and practices: guidance to providers

Of particular relevance to this Access Agreement, Moore et al. (2013) encouraged higher education providers, management practitioners to:

- **Higher education providers and management:**
  - Continue to examine organisational culture and to **explore the fitness for purpose of current structures** and practices
  - Continue to enhance and **embed organisational widening participation** strategies
  - Ensure that **clear targeting** strategies are in place where appropriate (e.g. in relation to outreach and progression activities) and link these to **evaluation processes**
  - Continue to join **policy with practice and research with action**.
  - Build on and **enhance existing partnership** practices, both within and outside the organisation
  - Support and **add value** to existing provision
  - Engage a **wider range of 'influencers'**.

- **Practitioners:**
  - Continue to contextualise and **apply** what is already known about **'good practice'**, e.g. in relation to retention and success
  - Strive to foster sound **learning relationships** and continue to **engender high expectations** and to support aspirations
  - Develop outreach programmes that are **'professional' and engaging**
  - Support the development of **better monitoring and evaluation** (including linking with academics for **research** purposes)

These items are taken into account in the development of the widening participation programme along with items below, which have been identified in the *OFFA Key Statistics on 2015-16 Access Agreements* document as best practice items. These have been mapped across the *student lifecycle*:

The student lifecycle		
Access	**Success**	**Progression**
Tracking the progress of students that attend outreach schemes who subsequently apply to university	Implementation of infrastructure such as online support and flexible learning	Interview skills training and workshops
Assessing the attainment of students who have been reached by access activity	Examining withdrawal, degree outcome, and employability rates for students from underrepresented groups, before and after introduction of student success and progression schemes	Information sessions about postgraduate study and careers
Collaborations with local employers	Specific activity and support targeting mature and part-time learners	Collaborations with local employers

Interview skills training and workshops	Careers elements built into curricula	Volunteering opportunities
Careers advice targeted at students from underrepresented groups	Entrepreneurship and business skills courses and training	Bursaries to enable students to attend interviews
Use of contextual information in admissions	Analysing the impact of financial support schemes on access and retention	Careers advice targeted at students from underrepresented groups
Academic staff conducting research within institutions on the range of issues affecting under-represented and disadvantaged groups	Development and expansion of part-time and flexible provision	Entrepreneurship and business skills courses and training
	Academic staff conducting research within institutions on the range of issues affecting under-represented and disadvantaged groups	Employability and progression support directed at mature and part-time learners
	Whole institution focus groups to research and develop good practice in relation to supporting p/t and mature students	
	Targeted financial support for mature and p/t learners	

4.5 Investment Strategy for Access & Student Success

In 2016-17, the RAU proposes to allocate 30.3 per cent of additional fee income to access, student success, progression and financial support measures.

We propose a shift in weighting of investment across access, student success, financial support and progression in accordance with our performance assessment and a *smarter, evidence-based spend* strategy; and in consideration of current research and evidence regarding the impact of institutional financial support (scholarships, bursaries and waivers), which states that:

(i)   Financial support is not the most significant determinant in either the decision to apply to higher education or in the choice between institutions

(ii)   Students receiving financial support have comparable non-continuation rates with students who do not receive financial support[9]

This said, we recognise the need for further institutional evaluation and research to be undertaken regarding the impact of financial support and undertake to conduct our own institutional evaluations over the 2015-2016 academic year and beyond.

4.5.1   Spend across access and student support measures

It is predicted that for 2016-17 the total higher fee income investment in outreach and student success will be £850,779. The following table provides a broad overview of the university's proposed investment in outreach and student success over the next five year period (2015/16-2019/20), including the percentage of total fund allocated to each area.

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[9] *Nursaw Associates (2015) What do we know about the impact of financial support on access and student success? Report to the Office for Fair Access*

	2015-16	% of HFI	2016-17	% of HFI	2017-18	% of HFI	2018-19	% of HFI	2019-20	% of HFI
Access expenditure	£252,542	10.2	£400,119	14.3	£466,709	15.0	£525,754	15.7	£551,800	15.7
Student success expenditure	£39,614	1.6	£78,620	2.8	£87,410	2.8	£100,463	3.0	£105,440	3.0
Progression expenditure	£9,904	0.4	£42,118	1.5	£46,827	1.5	£50,231	1.5	£52,720	1.5
Expenditure on financial support	£426,371	17.2	£329,922	11.8	£335,594	10.8	£334,875	10.0	£351,465	10.0
Total expenditure	£728,431	29.4	£850,779	30.3	£936,540	30.0	£1,011,323	30.2	£1,061,424	30.2

4.6 Financial support for students

The university is committed to ensuring all students are successful in their studies, and to minimising negative attrition. Particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, we recognise that the upfront costs of study at Phase 2 on the *student lifecycle* "Offer, Acceptances, Enrolments"; and also costs embedded in successive years of study (e.g. materials, study trips and work placements), constitute potential barriers to access and ongoing participation. Whilst the impact of financial support packages has been found to be negligible in terms of influencing student choice of whether and where to participate in higher education, at the institutional level there is evidence for the positive impact of financial support on retention, student experience and employability. The RAU undertakes to further investigate these issues to gain better understanding of the benefit of financial support.

4.6.1 Objectives

We identify the following strategic objectives in relation to provision of financial support to students:

1. Seek to increase the number and level of other financial support and development packages, and particularly to seek ways in which to add value to financial support packages; for example, through professional development or employer connectivity linked to scholarship awards.
2. Develop financial support strategies for disadvantaged students and at-risk learners that are responsive and flexible to meet changing needs.
3. Monitor, evaluate and critically assess the impact of institutional financial support packages to gain better understanding of outcomes and to inform future practices; and, consult with the student body specifically regarding how financial support can be improved, tailored and leveraged for outcomes that support student success and progression.

4.6.2 Performance evaluation: scholarships and bursaries

The university has consistently targeted bursaries, scholarships and waivers at students from the lowest income households, where income is <£25,000. In addition, we have actively sought to establish and guide scholarships and awards from other income streams (e.g. philanthropic) to prioritise the most disadvantaged students. The range of scholarships are provided on the website.

In addition, the university has provided and continues to provide:

1. A hardship fund, which is available to disadvantaged students experiencing short-term financial difficulties and pressure and which is accessible at any point in the academic year.
2. Free professional financial support and advisory services at the individual level, provided by an accountant who is familiar with the higher education sector.
3. Opportunities for students to undertake part-time paid employment on campus, for example in facilities, administrative and/or student ambassador positions.

As part of the previous Access Agreement, the university also provided two types of "student project" style bursaries, prioritising students from disadvantaged backgrounds. These bursaries were intended to enhance employability and professional skills. In monitoring uptake and outcomes for these bursaries, we have found that gaining interest from relevant target groups has been difficult and that the bursaries being provided in isolation rather than being integrated with required support and development structures, has potentially led to low take-up. We were also concerned that these bursaries were available to a very small cohort. In conjunction with this, and as previously stated, we propose to progressively reduce the level of investment in *financial support*. As such, these project bursaries will discontinue in favour of, for example:

1. ***Investment in Access*** e.g. a target school Encouragement Awards programme.
2. ***Investment in Progression***, particularly contributing to development of a more strategic approach to careers and employment. We undertake to explore the provision of targeted financial support packages as an element of developing the employability strategy.

4.6.3   Priorities 2016-17 *Financial Support*

The university has identified a number of key priorities, as follows:

1. **Review the scholarship and bursary strategy** across the years of study and across different income levels and cost of living variances to promote progression and success through:
   a. Strategic targeting and development of an evidence base informing decision making.
   b. Flexibility of packages across student fee and/or accommodation waivers, scholarships and other grants that are responsive to individual student need.
   c. Appropriate scaffolded model of financial support (which takes into account differences in grant/loan entitlement) over the life of the degree. This may replace the current one-off fee or accommodation waiver provided in first year only.
   d. Ensure relevant, targeted financial support is provided across the student lifecycle:
      - **Access:** Ongoing development and implementation of school Awards programme to target schools.
      - **Student Success:** Ensure financial support is correctly targeted to the most disadvantaged; ensure appropriate and timely allocation of Awards and access to funding; ensure scaled allocation that seeks to address funding gaps.
      - **Progression:** development and implementation of financial support packages that are targeted towards supporting employability and post-graduate outcomes, throughout the life of the degree; embedded as part of strategic development of the careers and employment agenda.

2. **Review the employability and degree-relevant skills acquisition financial incentives** across all programmes to ensure support for targeted students.
3. Continue development and implementation of **data capture, analysis and monitoring** system; and, development of research into impact of financial support. Key stakeholders include:
   a. Students (and particularly scholarship target groups), including current and prospective students, and alumni. Explores, for example: impact and fund use;

financial barriers and influence of financial support on choice; and, opportunities for employer sponsorships and/or value-add, respectively.

b. Staff, with an emphasis on understanding 'cost hotspots' across degree programmes; financial implications of any work integrated learning and/or study tour requirements; and previous experience of supporting students with regard to financial disadvantage.

4.6.4 Spend on fee waivers, bursaries and scholarships

As previously stated, the university will progressively reduce the percentage of funds allocated to *Financial Support*. The following table illustrates the proposed range of financial support packages offered by the university for 2016-17.

Award type	Amount per student (new and continuing)	Brief description
Fee or Accommodation Waiver: *Financial Disadvantage*	£1,000 to £3,000 **per annum**	Waiver at transition to university and at commencement of each year thereafter to support disadvantaged students with household income <£25k p/a. Students must also fulfil a minimum of two Eligibility Criteria*.
Fee or Accommodation Waiver: *Means Tested*	£1,500 **first year only**	Waiver at transition to university for students not in receipt of any other support with household income between £25,001 and £42,600 p/a. Students must also demonstrate financial need by fulfilling a minimum of one Eligibility Criteria* or by providing other supporting evidence and statement(s).
Skills Bursary	£250.00 **First and second year only**	Bursary to support students in the acquisition of degree relevant professional skills to enhance employability and progression and complement academic programme. Available to all students. Where additional bursaries are available, priority will be given to disadvantaged students (as identified by either of above methods).

* Eligibility Criteria:

1) First generation higher education student
2) Family background NS-SEC group 4-7
3) Specified school or college
4) Students with a disability
5) Low higher education participation neighbourhood background (POLAR3)
6) Member of a minority ethnic group
7) Mature student
8) Part-time student
9) Care leaver / care giver

5 Targets and milestones

OFFA Strategic Priorities attended to	-	*Student lifecycle approach*
	-	*Faster progress*
	-	*Collaboration*
	-	*Long-term, sustained [early] outreach*

Targets and milestones are contained in the Access Agreement Resource Plan, annexed. Given our performance assessment, the university has set stretching targets in the *Access* domain, that

acknowledge our position but which represent a commitment and effort to make *faster progress* institutionally, as well as contributing to the sector.

The university acknowledges that more progress is required to achieve a more socially representative intake, and this journey will also require ensuring iterative consideration and improvement of student success and progression measures to ensure maintenance of high performance in these areas. Although targets are stretching, through adopting recommendations of the WP Review (which align with the OFFA Strategic Plan priorities), we are confident and committed to progressing outcomes.

6   Monitoring and evaluation arrangements

OFFA Strategic Priorities attended to	-	***Whole of institution approach***
	-	***Smarter, evidence-based spend***
	-	***Faster progress***

The recent WP Review constituted a major evaluation project, informing our performance assessments. A number of recommendations regarding future monitoring and evaluation processes were made, which will be implemented over the next year and onwards. Where appropriate and relevant, the university will continue to apply the models and practice identified as part of the WP Review as a means by which progress can be measured. We will continue to review policy, best practice and emerging literature to add robustness and ensure relevance of our evaluation systems.

6.1 An institutional framework

Following the WP Review, monitoring and evaluation of the Access Agreement and widening participation agenda is currently being integrated more strategically into a wider institutional framework, which is inclusive and embedded across the university. In interpreting the implementation of a *whole of institution* approach and framework, the university considers:

1. **Location:** Activity is located at all relevant sites across the institution, which means in academic Schools; key professional and administrative/supporting Departments; and, in key Governance areas.
2. **Levels:** Activity is located at all levels of the institution, including governance and strategic; managerial; operational (programmatic) and administrative.

This institutional framework provides the opportunity for multiple layers of accountability and transparency, as well as shared ownership of the widening participation agenda and outcomes.

In particular, this includes implementation of the recommended range of institutional metrics which will require exploration of performance measures from the relevant corporate level frameworks and strategies, for example:

- The Corporate Plan and its annexures
- Academic School strategies and planning documents
- The Equality Plan and Diversity Assessments
- Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy

- Marketing and Recruitment Strategic and planning documents

As such, are building a more robust evidence base and deepening the institutional approach to widening participation. It is envisaged that this will also help to identify further areas for investigation and an engaged solution-orientated approach to progressing widening participation outcomes.

Institutional level evaluation is underpinned by evaluation of programmatic elements (projects and activities), which include qualitative and quantitative assessment and analysis.

6.1.1 Aims and objectives

The university identifies the following objectives in progressing monitoring and evaluation:

1. Establish institutional **monitoring and evaluation mechanisms** for widening participation outcomes, which are embedded into existing institutional performance frameworks across relevant **locations** and **levels** of the institution.
2. Ensure **strategic governance** of the Access Agreement and access, success and progression agendas generally to ensure the university is an inclusive, diverse and sustainable institution.
3. **Enhance communication** flow up- and down-stream so that:
   a. Operations, programmes and administrations align with and contribute to achievement of strategic priorities, high-level performance metrics and governance;
   b. Strategy and governance is informed by operations, programmatic evaluations, stakeholder consultations (internal and external), and administrative processes.
4. **Evaluate and assess performance** in relation to **collaborative** and partnership work.
5. Ensure the **dissemination and recognition of successes** in widening participation through celebration of achievement and recognition and reward mechanisms.

6.1.2 Monitoring through an embedded metrics model framework

The WP Review recommended a detailed set of institutionally-mapped metrics for widening participation, as an embedded strategy for performance assessment and to deliver *faster progress* and *smarter, evidence-based spend* using a *whole of institution* and *student lifecycle* approach. The WP Review provided a comprehensive list of measures to assess performance.

This model is being implemented, and will result in established metrics across the following domains:

- Institutional Measures *e.g. Change in recruitment levels from state schools*
- Strategic Measures *e.g. WP engagement in Corporate Plan*
- Departmental / Managerial measures *e.g. Reporting controls in place*
- Programmatic Operational Effectiveness *e.g. Project Plans in place for all activity*
- Compliance and Reporting *e.g. Reporting to Government, management and committees occurring regularly and on time; collection of relevant data and evidence*
- Engagement *e.g. Partnership Agreements in place with External Stakeholders*
- Operational Efficiency *e.g. Productivity: Events/Activity/FT Employee Trend Assessment*
- WP Effectiveness/ Outcome Measures *e.g. Design Evaluation Matrix for Outreach (DEMO)*
- Aspiration raising and pre-university *e.g. Increase aspirations of attending university amongst under-represented groups*

- Applications and Transition *e.g. Increase applications from under-represented groups*
- University Experience and Progression Assessment *e.g. Proportion of students satisfied with standard of learning and teaching support and assessment*
- Graduate Success Assessment *e.g. Employability statistics (DLHE)*

6.2 Institutional processes for monitoring, evaluation and reporting against targets and milestones

Performance outcomes are currently reported and monitored through the Registrar (Recruitment), who reports to the Academic Registrar and through to the University Executive via the Vice Principal. There is also reporting to Academic Board and Board of Governors when required; these Boards are inclusive of student representation.

Performance measures in the *student success* domain (including retention) are monitored by academic Schools and at corporate level through Academic Board and the Senior Management Group. These operational arrangements are complemented by the university's planning, monitoring and review cycle, including annual quality review.

The *progression* domain and graduate destinations is operationally monitored by the careers and employment team, with reporting and review/ monitoring line to the Academic Registrar and through to the university Executive.

At the individual activity level, staff and teams responsible for delivery evaluate their achievement and assess this against performance measures.

6.2.1 A Collaborative approach to redesigning institutional reporting, monitoring and evaluation

The university realises an opportunity to establish increasingly rigorous and transparent and consistent reporting mechanisms across the institution.

Reporting processes and templates

The university is implementing a refreshed Monitoring and Reporting Model, which will include a range of underpinning templates for reporting at all levels, as well as incorporating recommendations regarding metrics and function of the Inclusivity, Equity and Diversity (IED) Committee, as described in this section and in Section 7. We are also considering a reporting and monitoring model as related to our external partners and partnership work.

Planning, reporting and monitoring of widening participation funds invested across the institution

As part of the WP Review, the university was provided with a *Widening Participation Guidance, Funds Application and Monitoring* toolkit, which is currently being implemented.

The toolkit enables academic Schools and relevant Departments to apply for funding to support widening participation activity through a structured process. The toolkit ensures accountability and transparency of funds allocated across the institution by ensuring funds have dedicated activity plans,

objectives and metrics (milestones and targets); lead responsible officer(s); and follow the established internal reporting and acquittal process and provided templates. Guidance provided as part of the toolkit ensures that applications for activities are strategically aligned with the institutional widening participation agenda, and respond to key identified areas of priority or need.

The aggregation of activity monitoring will provide an assessment of performance against institutional targets and milestones contained in the Access Agreement. To support this process, representative officers will be established across the institution, for example in each academic School. These bring together key staff covering outreach, equality and diversity, teaching and learning, student support and progression to support annual monitoring and reporting to HEFCE and OFFA.

6.3 Responsible persons

Following an inclusive *whole of institution* approach, the university has embedded responsibility for commitments contained in the Access Agreement as per the following table. At the corporate level overarching responsibility for the Access Agreement rests with the **Principal** working closely with the **Vice Principal** and **Academic Registrar**.

Institutional location & level	Responsible person(s)	Responsible for
Governance Executive	**Principal, Vice Principal**	Review, input and approve Access Agreement and return.
Governance Executive	Company Secretary	Student numbers and financial data. "Assurance" contact officer for OFFA.
Governance Committees	Governing Council Senior Management Academic Board	All responsible for receiving/ reviewing data & reporting. Input and contributions to strategy as required. *All committees have student representation.*
Governance Committee	Inclusivity, Equity and Diversity Committee	Receiving, providing input and reviewing strategy and programmes. Consideration of equality and diversity, including provision of relevant data *IED Committee has student representation.*
Registry and Admissions Senior Management	**Academic Registrar**	Provision of student data and key information; data analysis. Strategically contribute to, review and approve Access Agreement. Overarching Budget responsibility. Provide information to and gain approval from executive. Delivery of documents (Access Agreement, return, etc.) to OFFA. Management responsibility for widening participation delivery team, strategy and programme.
Academic Schools Senior Management	Deans of Schools (4) - *School of Agriculture, Farming & Environment* - *School of Equine and Equine Science* - *School of Real Estate & Land Management* - *School of Business & Entrepreneurship*	Strategic input and embedding widening participation into academic School plans, including setting metrics. Receive and review reporting on widening participation performance for respective Schools; contribute to solving challenges and/or recognition of achievements. Provision of lead/contact person(s) for widening participation and direction for academic School staff engagement with widening participation, including contribution to drafting of School widening participation reports.
Registry and Admissions Management, Operations & Administration	Widening Participation Management and Delivery Team	Preparation, coordination and drafting of strategy, budget and programme planning; gain approval from senior management. Provision of guidance, advice and recommendations on widening participation to senior management, based on interrogation and analysis of data; and, research and best practice exploration. Ensuring the construction and implementation of a *whole-of-institution* approach across the *student lifecycle*, attending to *Access, Student Success* and *Progression*.

		Management and operational delivery of the widening participation programme and commitments. Facilitation and relationship management across the institution and with external partners, including new partnership with the University of Gloucestershire for Networks for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO). Reporting internally and externally; monitoring outputs, outcomes and impact, including draft Access Agreement. Ongoing liaison with OFFA, as required.
Marketing and Recruitment Department Management, operations and administration	Head of Marketing and Recruitment	Management of Widening Participation delivery officer. Strategic input and integration with wider recruitment agenda. Operational contribution to the *Access* elements, including Recruitment staff engagement with widening participation activities. Ensure provision of relevant information regarding activities, etc. and responsibility for website information.
Registry and Admissions Operations and Administration	Admissions team	Operational contribution to the *Access* and *Student Success* (particularly at transition-in) elements, including delivery of activity. Ensuring equitable, fair and accessible admissions processes, including contextual admissions method. Provision of relevant, up-to-date admissions/ financial information.
Registry and Admissions Operations	Careers and Employment team	Operational contributions to the *Progression* elements, including staff engagement in delivery of activity.

6.4 Evaluation in the *Access* domain

The widening participation team ensure that ongoing evaluation and action learning review takes place across activities in the *Access* area. These evaluations are incorporated into internal reporting, including reports to, for example, the Inclusivity, Equity and Diversity (IED) Committee; and, the annual institutional widening participation report. Whilst this area will be reviewed as part of the institutional evaluation framework described in Section 6.2, current practices include:

- Output measures
    - o Number of events, activities
    - o Number of participants
    - o Number of partners (e.g. schools)
- Outcome measures
    - o Number of student applications/ enrolments from target backgrounds
    - o Feedback via surveys to participants and teachers and student ambassadors
    - o Case studies

6.4.1 Collaborative evaluation in *Access*

As part of the remodelling of evaluation and monitoring process and methodology, the university undertakes to explore, agree and establish collaborative evaluation processes with partners and stakeholders. It is envisaged that these mechanisms will not only ensure evaluation, but contribute to meaningful stakeholder engagement, through establishing vision and performance goals; sharing understanding and best practice; and, agreeing a set of evaluative tools for implementation.

6.5 Composite list of all current evaluative and reporting practice

Type	Level	Description
Pre- and post- event Questionnaires	Operational	Feedback (questionnaire / verbal / groups) is collected pre- and post-outreach events

Student ambassador & delivery staff ratings	Operational	Feedback (questionnaire / verbal / groups) is collected post-outreach events
Event Reports	Operational	Individual outreach event reports collated to draw out participant, visiting staff and RAU staff / ambassador evaluations and to inform future practice
Student Feedback	Operational	RAU Student feedback from committees and groups, including course representatives, members of Inclusivity, Equality and Diversity, the student union and student feedback forums
National Student Survey (NSS)	Management	Data from NSS used to inform practice and development
Student Performance Report	Management	Annual report detailing student academic performance
Collaborations Report	Management	Full annual report detailing provision, co-ordination and delivery on collaborative activity. Recommendations for further collaborations, development of existing practice and future investments
WP Annual Report	Management	Annual report to Governing Council and SMG detailing provision over year and offering recommendations for future activity
Student Registration system reporting	Management	Student data system has reporting mechanisms; identification of under-represented students, applicants and entrant data, students accessing financial and non-financial support measures
WPSS monitoring return	Management	Annual report on WPSS targets
Access Agreement return	Management	Annual report on Access Agreement milestones and targets
Review and Impact Assessment	Strategic	Bi-annual review of services and provision, including impact assessment in context of wider institutional objectives

7 Equality and diversity

OFFA Strategic Priorities attended to	-	*Equality and Diversity*
	-	*Whole of institution approach*
	-	*Smarter, evidence-based spend*
	-	*Faster progress*

The university's corporate plan 2015-2020 affirms our commitment to inclusion, equity and widening access as part of the university's mission and as a core institutional responsibility. The university is dedicated to providing opportunity for all and is committed to maintaining fair and equal access to the higher education experience for all those who wish to access it. We believe this is morally right, socially responsible and positively contributes to business outcomes, efficiency and effectiveness and a rich and diverse teaching and learning environment.

7.1 Institutional review, analysis and reporting

The university publishes an annual equality report and conducts reviews of diversity impact, which are based on a *whole-of-institution* approach and which are contained as action plans in the RAU Equality Plan (2014-2017). Responsibilities and commitments under this Plan are reviewed by the Inclusivity, Equality and Diversity (IED) Committee, who undertake to monitor progress on a bi-annual basis.

The Equality Plan sets an institutional intention to ensure that the services the university provides take account equality duty factors, and provides the monitoring mechanism to review performance against protected characteristics covered by the duty.

The university has been facilitating and delivering events to increase visibility and awareness, recognise and celebrate its commitment to inclusivity, equality and diversity. The main annual event is a whole staff and student body day conference, which brings the campus community together to share achievements, exchange knowledges, and discuss issues of inclusion and equality particularly in the higher education context, but also wider into employability and professional development.

7.2 Inclusivity, Equality & Diversity and integration with the Access Agreement

The widening participation agenda is closely aligned with the Equality Plan and diversity assessments, and is incorporated specifically as an area for continuous review. Equality is embedded and intrinsic to the widening participation agenda at the university, given the nature of the work and target groups served. The Access Agreement contributes to the university's equality and diversity commitment and outcomes across the *student lifecycle*.

Many of the protected characteristics are reflected in the Access Agreement targets and milestones, with specific targets for example to ensure access, financial support, success and progression for students from under-represented backgrounds such as mature students and care leavers, as well as students from low income backgrounds and areas where participation in higher education is low.

7.2.1 Monitoring impact on equality and diversity – current status

Equality and diversity issues are monitored by the university's Inclusivity, Equity and Diversity (IED) Committee, which also monitors and provides a reporting line mechanism for the widening participation agenda. The widening participation team are currently required to produce activity reports at all IED meetings (held quarterly), where activity and reporting is considered in relation to wider equality and diversity issues.

7.2.2 Monitoring impact on equality and diversity – opportunities for development

The WP Review identified recommendations regarding improving and enhancing the way in which the widening participation team currently report into and communicate with the IED Committee.

The *Inclusivity, Equity & Diversity (IED) Committee* is the one formal consultative mechanism with the potential for facilitating institutional engagement and review of widening participation in relation to wider equality and diversity issues. However it has been identified that there is much potential to leverage the IED Committee and enhance its engagement in:

- Formal consultation and strategic discussions about the widening participation programme which have potential to align with and move the WP agenda into core business
- Wider priority issues or understanding of the national landscape for widening participation in the context of the university
- Co-creating solutions and identifying potential areas for leverage, development and/or innovative practice and research
- Celebrating achievements in the areas of widening participation as it relates to a diverse and inclusive institution, and formal recognition of staff engagement across the institution.

This forum can be leveraged further to support the strategic widening participation and equality agenda. The IED Committee also has a crucial role to play in the dissemination of the widening participation and equality and diversity message. The university will:

1. Increase the level of **understanding of the value of widening participation** to the university corporate mission and values.
2. Increase the appreciation of the **value added to wider university aspirations** in a fully engaged widening participation agenda.
3. Increase **coherence and ability to engage** in widening participation across the university.
4. Increase the **incentive to engage** in the widening participation agenda by implementing a strategy for School and Departmental engagement.

8 Provision of information to prospective students

| OFFA Strategic | - | *Student lifecycle approach* |
| *Priorities attended to* | - | *Effective collaboration* |

8.1 Our Commitment

The Royal Agricultural University is committed to publishing a range of clear and accessible information for our existing and prospective students, and particularly to ensuring access to information regarding fee charges and financial support packages offered.

The university also affirms its commitment to provide relevant well-timed accurate information to UCAS and the Student Loans Company (SLC) to enable key bodies to populate course databases in a timely manner to inform applications.

8.2 Methods and tools

The university employs a range of tools and distributes information to prospective students via multiple channels.

Over the past year, the university has concentrated on process improvement, and also product and service improvement, in relation to informing and communicating with students particularly at the transition-in phase of the *student lifecycle*. We have applied the notion of *"the applicant journey"*, conceptualising this to be from initial contact with the university (for example, request for a prospectus), to enrolment. Whilst this project is still in progress and under review, the university has already established and launched:

1) An *Applicants Portal* for all students who are offered a place at the RAU (conditional or unconditional), with access is via the 'My RAU' tab on the website homepage.

   The *Applicant Portal* is a micro-site offering applicants up-to-date information and help regarding their application and next steps for accepting their place; applying and paying for accommodation, fees and funding; and registration and induction. Information is updated regularly to ensure that the portal provides a conversion tool, not only positively impacting students but fostering a whole-of-institution approach by helping to bridge identified gaps and improving service alignment between the Marketing and Admissions teams.

2) A new *Prospective Student and Applicant Communications Plan*, mapping information and communications to students and identifying/addressing gaps in information provision. Particularly, fees and financial support feature in communications (print and digital/email).

The university undertakes to build upon this work to further target, tailor and refine information to enable prospective students to make timely, informed decisions about university study. Particularly, we will seek to establish better mechanisms for data capture, transfer and application from outreach activity (*Access*), with an emphasis on understanding and responding to emerging barriers and challenges particularly for our under-represented target groups; and developing relevant and targeted resources further downstream into the *Access* agenda.

8.2.1   Tools and channels

<u>Online and digital</u>

The RAU website has dedicated fees and financial support areas accessed through prominent homepage links. Our webpages provide up-to-date and detailed information, including:

- Fees, financial support and Student Finance England (SFE)
- Scholarships, waivers, bursaries and loans
- Support, information, advice and guidance
- Admissions and enrolment processes
- Entry requirements
- Student support and pastoral care
- Information and support for students with disabilities
- Career development and employability
- Access and outreach
- Courses and prospectus
- Open days, applicant days and other events

The information on the website is regularly reviewed and updated.

<u>Printed materials</u>

Literature specifically containing information on fees, finance and financial support, and a range of other supporting information, is available at recruitment and engagement events and on-campus open events (e.g. open days, applicant days and community events). These materials are also readily available by request on the website.

As a key recommendation of the WP Review, and in acknowledgement of the need to build capacity in the *Access* area, a range of resources have been developed which include specific themes of *Affordability* and *Access* to university. Resources are scaffolded across school years 8 to 12, with the *Affordability* theme, for example, aiming to develop financial awareness. Activities assist students with budgeting, sourcing accurate information and developing vital skills in navigating the system. They aim to remove financial uncertainties as a deciding factor in choosing higher education.

<u>Face-to-face</u>

The university has dedicated staff who provide offer information, advice and guidance to prospective and enrolled students. Advisers have a presence at many recruitment events and deliver talks for example in schools and community, and at on-campus and career/ university 'fair' events. RAU

Student Ambassadors also receive specific training on university finance and draw upon their recent personal experiences of university fees and affordability, transferring knowledge and information to the students and key influencers (parents, teachers) with whom they work in schools and community.

9   Consulting with students

OFFA Strategic Priorities attended to	-	*Student lifecycle approach*
	-	*Effective collaboration*
	-	*Smarter, evidence-based spend*

The Royal Agricultural University places high value on the student voice and has a number of established mechanisms by which student consultations take place across the student body.

9.1 Current consultation points and mechanisms

The Student Union and its various student representatives constitute the central formal mechanism for student consultation. In particular, student welfare and support staff work with the Union to ensure ongoing knowledge exchange, consultation, feedback and action learning towards institutional improvements across teaching and learning, social welfare, support and development.

Students also sit as representatives for consultation on a range of major university committees, including the university Governing Council; Inclusivity, Equality and Diversity (IED) Committee; Academic Quality and Standards; and, Academic Board.

In addition to this *whole-of-Institution approach*, the university has a dedicated Student Management Committee with student representatives from each academic programme, from each year level. This committee is chaired by the Principal.

The university also has consultation capacity at the pre-entry and post-graduation phases. Our cohort of student ambassadors (60 students), who support delivery of outreach activities, provide valuable insight and reflection for activities undertaken with target schools, colleges and community. Consultation with ambassadors occurs through informal action learning process following events, which helps to improve our activity under the Access Agreement particularly in the *Access* domain.

The views and input of our diverse and well-connected alumni are also valued and encouraged, with an emphasis on consultation that informs the future direction of the university and its developing offer; and, leveraging the diverse range of knowledge of the employment market into which our alumni are embedded and networked. This is a valued component of our alumni consultations, which impacts positively upon the career development and experience outcomes for our undergraduate and postgraduate students. The university has an established alumni base of approximately 12,000. There are formal mechanisms for consultation and engagement through, for example: monthly e-newsletters and an annual magazine for which they are encouraged to send stories and feed back into; invitations to a range of events; conversation and feedback forms via the website; and specific telephone campaigns seeking input, feedback and contributions to the university.

9.2 Consultation performance and opportunities

9.2.1 Performance

With the exception of consultation with student ambassadors through ongoing action learning, the current model of consultation relies on interpretation of general input from students at the above 'meeting' points, and then application for widening participation outcomes, for example:

- Input from Academic Board and Academic Quality and Standards includes consultation on inclusive teaching practice; employability in the curriculum (work integrated learning through placements, etc.); and academic support and resourcing particularly for equity groups.
- The Inclusivity, Equity and Diversity (IED) Committee specifically addresses issues for widening participation across access, student success, financial support and progression. Student representatives are invited to feed into and comment upon widening participation activity development and reports.

Committees operate on a quarterly basis, with student representatives at all meetings.

9.2.2 Opportunities and Priorities

There is opportunity to better target and progress the sophistication and level of student consultations for benefit of the university as a whole, and to specifically address elements of and issues for widening participation, across the student lifecycle.

The university is responding to input from our student body, and to recent data from the National Student Survey (NSS), and are progressing a strategic approach to improving student consultation.

We have identified four overarching Aims:

1. **Broadening Consultations:** Establish the mechanism for increasing the volume of student voice, providing consultation opportunities for larger, diverse cohorts to engage.
2. **Deepening Consultations:** Provide opportunities for feedback and input along the journey as a continuum (across the student lifecycle), rather than relying upon specific formal and time-measured input points, e.g. committees and meetings.
3. **Targeting Consultations:** Ensure a meaningful and targeted range of topics or 'challenges'.
4. **Engaging Consultations:** Ensure consultation is engaging and empowering, contributing to a unique and cohesive university community, a sense of belonging and ownership. Providing consultative opportunities that engage students in a meaningful way with regards to developing their employability, professional and personal skills.

Widening participation will seek to embed into this agenda, aligning specific objectives (e.g. deeper consultation regarding the type, timing and level of financial support packages) and metrics with these aims; and both contributing to, and leveraging from, the development of platforms and processes towards improved student consultation. The university will also monitor and provide feedback to students regarding, for example, the impact of their contributions in terms of product or service redesign and/or process realignment and improvement.

9.3 Development of a strategic approach to consultation

Student consultation points identified in Section 8 are reflective of a whole-of-institution approach across the student lifecycle. We have identified a constructive opportunity to fully articulate, embrace

and leverage this framework for purposes of student consultation to improve and progress widening participation activity. The following diagram illustrates this construct, applying the *student lifecycle* model and providing examples of key topics which are positioned in their relative domains of *Pre-Entry (Access); University Experience (Student Success);* and, *Graduate Outcomes (Progression)*.
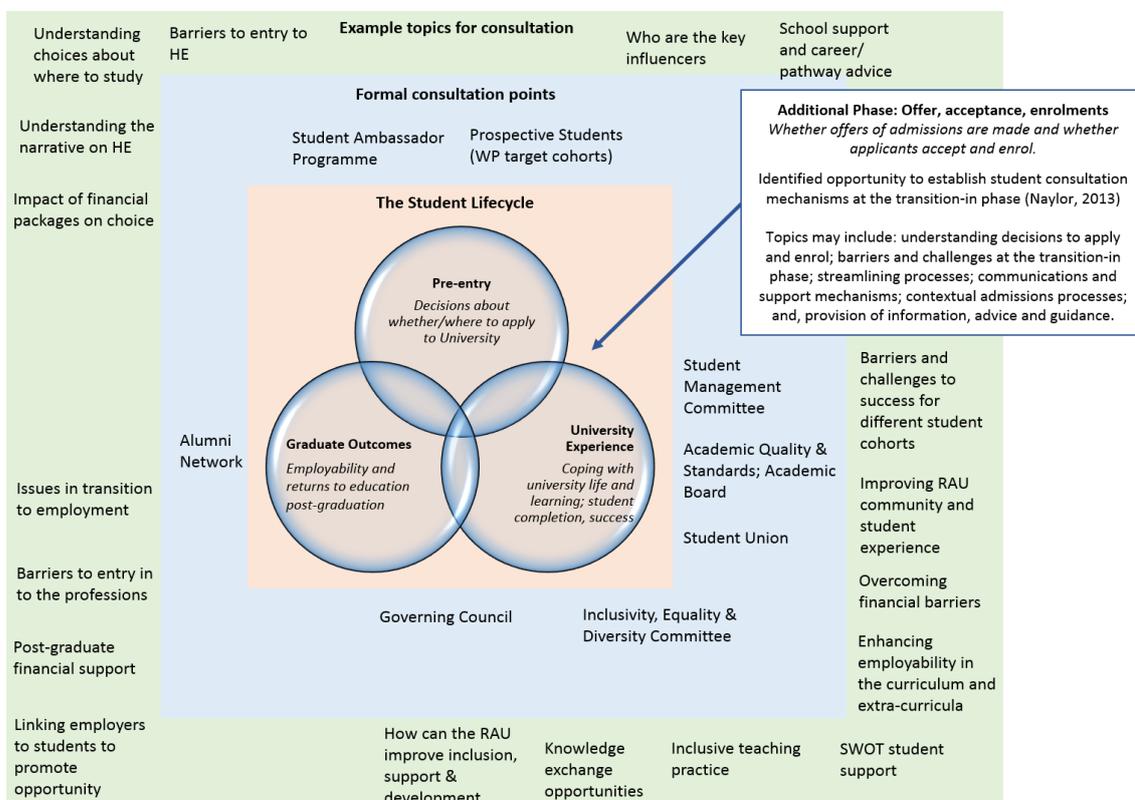
END.

Table 7 - Targets and milestones

Institution name: The Royal Agricultural University

Institution UKPRN: 10005545

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

Reference number	Please select target type from the drop-down menu	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
						2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	
T16a_01	**HESA T1a** - State School (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	Increase percentage of enrolments from state schools.	No	2013-14	47.6%	53%	55%	58%	60%	65%	Updated milestones according to latest data. Increasingly challenging target to progress HESA benchmark
T16a_02	**HESA T1a** - Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3) (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	Increase percentage of enrolments from areas where participation in HE is low, and particularly in local Quintile 1-3 areas. Measure from new POLAR3 method (replaced POLAR2).	No	2013-14	2.1%	7%	8%	9%	10%	14%	Updated milestones according to latest data. Increasingly challenging target to progress HESA benchmark
T16a_03	**HESA T1a** - NS-SEC classes 4-7 (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	Increase percentage of enrolments from all low-income backgrounds, i.e. students in receipt of non-repayable support	No	2013-14	35%	39%	40%	40%	42%	43%	Updated milestones according to latest data.
T16a_04	**HESA T2a** - (Mature, full-time, first degree entrants)	Increase percentage of enrolments from mature students who are new entrants.	No	2013-14	18.1%	19%	19%	21%	22%	25%	Updated milestones according to latest data.
T16a_05	**Other statistic** - Location (please give details in the next column)	Increase percentage of enrolments from local target areas.	No	2012-13	20%	20%	21%	21%	22%	23%	Updated milestones according to latest data.
T16a_06	**Other statistic** - Care-leavers (please give details in the next column)	Increase number of enrolments from students who are leaving care / in care. Reflects OFFA target priorities, working towards new partnership with local county council and Virtual Schools Network, which may lead to collaborative target in future years.	No	2014-15	0	1	2	3	3	4	Number not percentage.
T16a_07	**HESA T3a** - No longer in HE after 1 year (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	Ensure low level of non-continuation/ completion is maintained, with the increasing number and widening of enrolments anticipated in our targets.	No	2013-14	97.3%	97.5%	97.5%	97.5%	97.5%	97.5%	Updated milestones and adjusted benchmark according to 2013-14 HESA Table 3a data "% who continue or qualify at same HEI" column

Notes

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

Table 7b - Other milestones and targets.

Reference Number	Please select target type from the drop-down menu	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
						2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	
T16b_01	Strategic partnerships (eg formal relationships with schools/colleges/employers)	Partner in National Networks for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO) University of Gloucestershire-led partnership with 3 FECs serving 30+ state schools	Yes	2015-16	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	The RAU has maintained relationships, contributed to the partnership provided required IAG and/or activities to support School engagement
T16b_02	Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Partnerships with target state schools and colleges, with Partnership Frameworks and Activity Plans in place	No	2015-16	0	15	18	25	30	33	Number of partnerships
T16b_03	Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Relationships with national target state schools and colleges, with min. 2 visits p/a	No	2011-12	5	18	20	25	30	35	Number of schools or colleges with relationship
T16b_04	Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Relationships with other relevant organisations, e.g. employers, councils, youth services, trusts, community learning programmes/ centres, etc.	No	2015-16	n/a	3	4	6	8	10	Number of organisations with relationship
T16b_05	Outreach / WP activity (summer schools)	Establishment and delivery of extended on-campus activities with overnight accommodation at halls of residence to increase awareness and aspiration to higher education	No	2011-12	2	40	60	80	100	120	Number of participants
T16b_06	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Delivery of a range of targeted outreach activities that apply the 5A framework and are scaffolded across school Years 7 to 13, and for mature learners	No	2014-15	n/a	4000	6000	8000	10000	12000	Number of meaningful participant engagements (not including 'footfall' at large fairs)
T16b_07	Contextual data	Review and formalise contextual admissions process to ensure access and recognition of education disadvantage at the application/ offer stage	No	2015-16	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Review is complete. Process is formalised and provides equity of access for students who have disrupted or disadvantaged educational backgrounds
T16b_08	Student support services	Redevelopment of support service structures and programmes; implementation of strategy for Student Transition, Retention and Experience, embedding targeted support in the curriculum and paying particular attention to teaching and learning.	No	2013-14	91.8%	96%	97%	97%	97%	97%	HESA Table 3a data "% who continue or qualify at same HEI" column
T16b_09	Operational targets	Review and implement data capture and monitoring system for more robust datasets and to build understanding and an evidence base for future practice.	No	2014-15	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Data capture and monitoring system is effective and efficient, and relevant for reporting and programme evaluation and design needs
T16b_10	Operational targets	Increase consultations and engagement with students; promotion of student voice in relation to evaluating and designing widening participation practices. Implement mechanisms for this to happen.	No	2014-15	not available	50	75	80	100	120	Number of RAU students inputting on WP and Access Agreement measures/ programmes
T16b_11	Operational targets	Increase consultations and engagement with external stakeholders (pupils, teachers, schools, parents, community, etc) in relation to evaluating and designing widening participation practices. Implement mechanisms for this to happen.	No	2014-15	not available	2	3	4	6	8	Number of external stakeholder consultation forums for inputting on WP and Access Agreement measures/ programmes
T16b_12	Management targets	Scope, identify and conduct research to inform practice and contribute to institutional and sector knowledge in the widening participation space	No	2014-15	0	1	2	2	3	3	Number of research projects /studies completed
T16b_13	Management targets	Embed widening participation across the institution, including framework agreements; activity planning and acquittal mechanisms; and, embedded metrics	No	2014-15	0	4	5	6	6	6	Number of academic Schools and administrative Departments with activity plans and metrics
T16b_14	Management targets	Ensure effective coordination and management of the widening participation programme at the strategic level. Includes reporting structures to the highest level; effective deployment of funds; monitoring and achievement of targets and milestones; embedding across the institution and across the student lifecycle in a coherent way; and, ensuring human and system capacities are effective and efficient for purpose.	No	2014-15	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	The institution is making "faster progress" towards targets and milestones and the widening participation programme is strategically aligned and contributing to institutional goals and drivers

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