Newcastle University
Summary of Access Agreement (2012-13)

Context:

1. In the Access Agreement approved by the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) in July 2011, we confirm our commitment to widening participation (WP) and fair access, and the belief that ability should be able to access opportunity, regardless of circumstance. We wish to encourage able, highly-motivated and enthusiastic students of all ages, and from all backgrounds and contexts, to apply to our degree programmes.

2. **Our University Mission** is to be a world-leading research-intensive university, to deliver teaching and facilitate learning of the highest quality and to play a leading role in the economic, social and cultural development of the North East of England. As a world-leading civic university, our aim is to marry excellence with relevance and to respond to the needs and demands of civil society. We see our activities in WP and fair access as a natural consequence of our aims and values.

3. The North East of England remains the region with the lowest national level of participation in higher education. As a civic university which engages fully with our community, the city and the region, Newcastle University has a rich and wide-ranging history of large-scale and successful regional widening participation (WP) activity dating back to 1993, including programmes such as Students into Schools, PARTNERS, the Graduate Ambassadors and a diverse portfolio of subject-specific outreach and engagement with regional schools and colleges.

4. We also play a leading role in national and regional collaborative work to promote WP and fair access. Newcastle University leads the groundbreaking Realising Opportunities scheme, a national fair access programme through which twelve highly-selective research-intensive universities work together to promote WP. In the North East, we are leading a new network of universities to embed the good work delivered through the Aimhigher programme, which ended in July 2011.

5. The University’s overall progress in WP is measured and monitored annually through the national performance indicators produced by the Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA). The table below summarises the 2010 indicators, and also shows that, for students entering Newcastle University from the North East, where most of our WP activity takes place, we significantly exceed the national benchmarks. There is a direct correlation between intensity of outreach and diversity of intake.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Under-represented group (as measured by HESA)</th>
<th>% of entrants</th>
<th>National benchmark</th>
<th>Figure for students from the North East</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State schools and colleges (young entrants)</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
<td>80.9%</td>
<td>91.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower socio-economic groups (NS-SEC 4-7) (young entrants)</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>30.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low participation neighbourhoods (LPNs) (young entrants)</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. The main challenges for Newcastle University in achieving overall WP progress are geography, recruitment patterns and demographics. A relatively sparse regional population, together with our national recruitment profile and reputation, mean that only 23% of entrants (21% of young entrants) are from the North East, so the impact of our activity in the region is very much diluted when the total intake is analysed. This has been a key factor in our relatively slow progress towards overall HESA benchmarks over the past ten years.

7. The plans and targets in our Access Agreement mean that we expect to spend (on average) approximately 33% of our additional fee income above £6,000 on access measures, including additional outreach and financial support (fee waivers, scholarships, bursaries). These financial commitments amount to approximately £12 million per annum once steady state is reached and include match-funding of the Government’s National Scholarship Programme (as part of this expenditure). In addition to the financial commitments, the University must demonstrate real, measurable progress towards stretching targets in terms of the diversity of our student profile.
8. The plans in the 2012 Access Agreement include an ambitious range of activities which both build on existing activities with proven impact and allow for innovation and development. The proposals include, in summary:

- **Enhancing and further developing our WP work in the region**
  
  *Including: More intensive activities and visits, including targeting of school governing bodies and senior management teams; Conferences for teachers; Events for parents; Targeted (Laidlaw) scholarships; Working with younger pupils (from year 6); Subject-specific outreach.*

- **Significantly expanding the geographical reach and impact of our WP outreach activities**
  
  *Expanding PARTNERS from 113 schools/colleges to 200 by 2014-15; Expanding the Graduate Ambassador scheme from 4 in 2010-11 to 20 by 2014-15; Targeting more schools (500 by 2015-16) in more regions (to include Merseyside, East Midlands, West Midlands and Greater London); Events for parents and teachers in each target region; Contribution towards travel costs for target schools to encourage attendance at University events.*

- **Continuing our commitments to regional and national collaborative WP activities**
  
  *Continuing to lead the national Realising Opportunities scheme; Leading a regional collaborative approach to working with schools and colleges in the North East (focus on younger-age pupils).*

- **Supporting fair access to the professions**
  
  *Discovery Days for key professional disciplines; Online information to raise awareness for WP students; Further developing our links with alumni and company partnerships.*

- **Enhancing our work to support student retention, skills and success**
  
  *Additional student internships (paid employment within the University), work placements and other employment opportunities; Developing our University-wide support for skills development and articulation as part of the overall 'student offer'; Providing additional hardship funds to supplement the Access to Learning Fund (from 2013-14).*

- **Financial support through a scholarship scheme that offers a balance of fee waivers and cash bursaries**
  
  *More than £30 million (including government's National Scholarship scheme) provided in financial support over five years from 2012, targeted at the lowest income families, including those entering through PARTNERS or Realising Opportunities or from identified Low Participation Neighbourhood; National Scholarships and (agreed after the Access Agreement was approved) our new Promise Scholarship and Laidlaw Scholarships (part-funded by Lord Laidlaw).*

9. In preparing plans for the Access Agreement, we have taken account of best practice in the delivery of outreach and needs-based financial support, WP and fair access in the US, Canada, South Africa and Australia. We are confident that our plans and targets are ambitious and stretching, yet realistic, and that their impact will be significant, both in terms of our profile in the target regions and for our overall progress towards the HESA benchmarks:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target group</th>
<th>2009 baseline</th>
<th>HESA benchmark (2009)</th>
<th>2012-13 target</th>
<th>2016-17 target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State schools/colleges</td>
<td>71.5%</td>
<td>81.4%</td>
<td>72.8%</td>
<td>84.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS-SEC 4-7</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>23.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Participation Neighbourhoods</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>12.19%</td>
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</tbody>
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Lesley Braiden, Director, Marketing and Communications Directorate, April 2012.