

This Access Agreement between Newcastle University and the Office For Fair Access (OFFA) covers the period from 1 September 2013 until 31 August 2014 (academic year 2013-14). It relates to Home (UK and eligible EU) undergraduate and PGCE students entering the University from September 2013 and also indicates the University's financial support arrangements for continuing UK/EU students who entered in 2012.

Continuing UK/EU students who entered Newcastle University prior to 2012 (between 2006 and 2011) should refer to the University's separate Access Agreements for the relevant years of entry for further details of fees and the related schemes that apply to them.

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## **PART 1: CONTEXT AND PRINCIPLES**

- 1.1 Newcastle University is committed to widening participation (WP) and fair access, and our strategies and activities are based on our 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.
- 1.2 **Our University Mission** is to be a world-class 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-class 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.
- 1.3 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, we have been working for the past 19 years with schools and colleges in the North East to promote progression, participation and flexible access.
- 1.4 We also have a leading role in national and regional collaborative work to promote WP and fair access. Newcastle University leads Realising Opportunities, a national fair access programme through which twelve highly-selective research-intensive universities work together to promote WP. Realising Opportunities won the coveted Times Higher award of *Widening Participation Initiative of the Year* in 2011. In the North East, we are leading a new collaborative network of three universities to embed the good work delivered through the Aimhigher programme, which ended in July 2011.

- 1.5 We wish to attract and retain students of high ability and potential from all parts of the UK, and typically around 79% of our young (under 21) undergraduates come from outside the North East.
- 1.6 Our admissions policies and practices are based on principles of integrity and fairness, and involve the assessment of each applicant's ability, achievements and potential.
- 1.7 Our Access Agreement commitments and our Admission policies take account of our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. The targets in our Access Agreement are broadly aligned with those in our Single Equality Policy. Relevant aspects of our progress in fair access are reported to the University's governing bodies through our annual Equal Opportunities Monitoring report. For example, figures on the applications, offers, admission and degree attainment of students from minority ethnic backgrounds are analysed and monitored, including benchmarking against our main comparators. A similar analysis is undertaken for students who record a disability, and those from lower socio-economic groups or low participation neighbourhoods. Equality impact assessments are carried out in relevant areas of work relating to admissions and fair access.
- 1.8 We recognise that many students may have concerns about the financial costs of Higher Education. Our scholarships and bursaries will provide financial support for up to a third of our students by 2016-17.
- 1.9 We know that many talented and able people do not feel confident about applying to university. This may be because they have no family experience of higher education, are from a neighbourhood or school where few people go to university, or because they lack confidence about their ability to achieve the necessary entry requirements for a university like Newcastle. We are committed to investing in additional outreach work with schools and colleges to encourage more people to achieve their potential and enjoy the life-long benefits of higher education.
- 1.10 For those who choose to study at Newcastle University, we are confident that we offer challenging, exciting and relevant degree programmes, taught by experts whose research enriches the learning environment for all of our students. The overall 'Newcastle experience' is underpinned by our strong commitment to the provision of education for life. We provide outstanding opportunities for our students to add value to their academic studies by gaining additional skills and experience which will prepare them for rewarding careers. Our strengths in enterprise education and vocationally-relevant programmes are reflected in our excellent record of graduate employability.
- 1.11 These commitments and principles set the context for this Access Agreement, details of which are shown in the sections which follow.

## PART 2: FEE LIMITS AND FEE INCOME ABOVE £6000

- 2.1 In the academic Year 2013-14, Newcastle University will charge **an annual tuition fee of £9,000** for all of its eligible full-time undergraduate degree programmes and for its full-time Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme. **This fee applies to Home (UK and EU) undergraduate and PGCE students entering Newcastle University in 2013 and to returning undergraduates who entered in 2012.**
- 2.2 The fee for **returning students** who entered the University prior to 2012 (i.e. between 2006 and 2011) will be £3,465.
- 2.3 The provisions of this Access Agreement do not apply to certain programmes (or parts of programmes) funded under contract by the Department of Health<sup>1</sup>. At Newcastle University, this includes the following programmes or years which are fully or partly NHS-funded: the undergraduate degree in Speech and Language Sciences; the Higher Education Diploma in Dental Hygiene and Therapy; and the fifth year of the five-year programmes in Medicine and Dentistry; and the four-year accelerated Medicine degree for graduates.
- 2.4 For students who entered Newcastle University in 2012 or 2013, **Placement Year fees** are as follows:
  - a) A (compulsory or optional) full-year undergraduate placement (normally between Stages 2 and 3) incurs a fee of £1,000 (a discount of £8,000 from the normal fee of £9,000). This includes full-year placements organised under the ERASMUS scheme.

<sup>1</sup> This funding is in the form of a National Health Service (NHS) bursary

- b) An optional 'year out' in which the student suspends study (i.e. is not registered with the University) incurs a zero fee.
- c) A full-year placement which is fully-assessed and which attracts a full-year's credit that contributes to the final degree result incurs a fee of £9,000. This rule applies principally to four-year integrated Masters' programmes with a total of 480 credits (across four years of 120 credits per year). Students undertaking such a placement in Stage 3 as a fully-accredited industry placement or year abroad at a higher education institution will be awarded a Placement Scholarship, in the form of a fee discount, for the year concerned. The minimum amount awarded as a Placement Scholarship will be £2,000, and the maximum £4,500. The amounts are determined by the academic School concerned. Full information is published online.
- d) A part-year placement / study abroad period (eg a semester) where the student spends the rest of the year at Newcastle University incurs a fee of £9,000 for the whole year. This rule also applies when the placement semester is arranged under the ERASMUS scheme.

2.5 The University's fee levels and any associated scholarships and other financial support offered to eligible students are reviewed each year. **We expect fee levels to increase annually in line with the fee cap amounts specified by the Government for each year.**

2.6 Once approved, the approach to fees described in this Access Agreement will remain in force for the duration of study of undergraduate students who enter Newcastle University in 2013.

2.7 The University's estimated fee income above £6000 per student is summarised in this table, which shows:

- Total students paying the new fee level over a five-year period, assuming an annual intake of 3972 countable Home (UK/EU) undergraduates and 196 PGCE students, and taking account of attrition rates and participation in placement years.
- The total fee income (calculated on the basis of £9,000 per student; excluding placement years at £1,000)
- The total fee income above £6000 per student.

Year	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Number of students paying £9,000	4168	7963	11214	12614	12655
Total fee income at £9,000 per student	£37,512,000	£71,667,000	£100,026,000	£113,526,000	£113,895,000
Total fee income <u>above</u> £6,000 per student	£12,504,000	£23,889,000	£33,642,000	£37,842,000	£37,965,000

Note: These figures do not take account of any future annual inflationary increases in the fee cap.

## PART 3: ACCESS ASSESSMENT AND ADDITIONAL EXPENDITURE

### 3(a) Expenditure on additional access and retention measures

3.1 Our estimated expenditure on additional access and retention measures is based on our current assessment (see section 3(b) below) of the University's overall performance in WP and fair access, from which we conclude that it is appropriate to invest approximately 32% of our additional fee income over £6,000 per student (on average, over the five-year period from 2012-13) in additional access and retention measures.

3.2 We plan to review our level of investment on an annual basis, taking into account progress towards the targets set in this Access Agreement and the development of new ideas and initiatives, for which we have made a commitment through an Access Innovation Fund.

3.3 The table below shows our financial commitments (based on 32% of additional fee income above £6,000, plus bursary commitments to pre-2012 entry returning students) and current estimates of planned expenditure in broad categories over five years from 2012. **All planned expenditure is OFFA-countable.**

Activity / Scheme	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Outreach, Admissions and Fair Access (incl. staffing, infrastructure, evaluation)	£2,061,795	£3,114,175	£4,191,746	£4,432,560	£4,470,892

Retention and success (incl. staffing /infrastructure and hardship support)	£134,587	£437,840	£691,403	£718,403	£755,599
Access Innovation Fund	£0	£200,000	£300,000	£300,000	£300,000
University matched funding contribution to the National Scholarship Programme	£855,000	£1,740,850	£1,560,305	£1,697,893	£1,720,762
Other (non-NSP) student financial support for students entering from 2012	£870,000	£2,181,400	£3,871,270	£4,977,317	£5,284,558
<b>Total estimated expenditure on Access Agreement commitments</b>	<b>£3,921,382</b>	<b>£7,674,265</b>	<b>£10,614,724</b>	<b>£12,126,174</b>	<b>£12,531,812</b>
<b>Expenditure as % of income above £6,000</b>	<b>31.36%</b>	<b>32.12%</b>	<b>31.55%</b>	<b>32.04%</b>	<b>33.01%</b>

3.4 In addition to commitments to students entering from 2012, the University will also meet the costs of bursaries for returning students who entered prior to 2012, estimated to be as follows:

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Bursary commitments to pre-2012 entry returners	<b>£3,200,000</b>	<b>£1,750,000</b>	<b>£600,000</b>	<b>£125,000</b>	<b>£35,000</b>

3.5 The financial estimates and commitments shown above do not represent the University's total contribution to WP and fair access. Outreach and retention activities and the institutional infrastructure funded by the HEFCE WP premium, which supports our baseline WP strategy, are included in our Interim Widening Participation Strategic Statement (to be submitted to HEFCE in June 2012).

3.6 The financial commitments in the table above do not include the indirect costs of employing additional Graduate Ambassadors / staff to deliver activity. We estimate these real costs to the University (in terms of office space, infrastructure, utilities etc) to amount to approximately £45,500 in 2012-13 increasing to £166,500 per annum in steady state (from 2015-16).

### 3(b) Assessment of our access and retention record

3.7 The University's progress in WP is measured and monitored annually through the national HESA performance indicators and through the annual OFFA and HEFCE monitoring processes. In addition, the University undertakes an annual appraisal of progress in WP, based on UCAS application and entry data.

3.8 The table below summarises the latest HESA performance indicators (2010 entry), relating to the overall profile of young students from key under-represented groups, and also shows that, for students entering Newcastle University from the North East, where most of our current WP activity takes place, we significantly exceed the national benchmarks.

Under-represented group	% of entrants in 2010	National benchmark	Figure for students from the North East
Lower socio-economic groups (NS-SEC 4-7) (young entrants)	20.1%	23.7%	30.44%
Low participation neighbourhoods (LPNs) (young entrants)	7.5%	7.0%	19.9%
Students from black and minority ethnic backgrounds (all ages)	7.59%	N/A	10.63%
Students in receipt of the Disabled Students' Allowance (all ages and cohorts)	3.3%	4.3%	4.31% (students indicating a disability)

3.9 Analysis of the students from POLAR2 QYPR groups 1 and 2 (on which the weighting of HEFCE WP premium funding is based) shows that, in 2009 (our baseline year), 19.35% of our young entrants overall were from these groups (and 41.14% of entrants from the North East).

3.10 The main diversity challenges affecting PGCE access are: participation of men in primary teaching; and participation of black and minority ethnic (BME) groups.

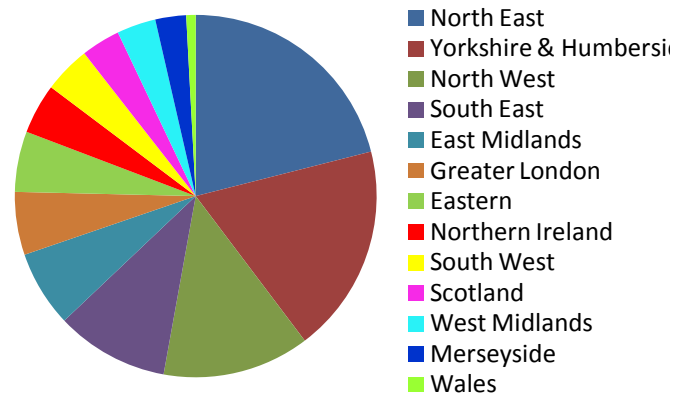
3.11 Recruitment of men into the Primary PGCE programme has been buoyant, with the average proportion of men on this course, over six years, higher than the average for the sector as a whole.

3.12 For both the Secondary and Primary PGCE programmes, benchmarking data for the recruitment of BME students shows a recruitment percentage not significantly different statistically from the average percentage for the North-East region, though both fall short of the statistics for the sector as a whole. This particular challenge has been addressed in recent years by the collaborative regional MERIT scheme

(Minority Ethnic Recruitment into Teaching in the North-East) which seeks to encourage BME participation in teaching and provides pre-application support (see [MERIT North East](#)) and was recognised as good practice by the former Teacher Development Agency (TDA).

3.13 The main challenges for Newcastle University in achieving *overall* WP progress in the undergraduate population are geography, recruitment patterns and demographics. A relatively sparse regional population, together with our national recruitment profile and reputation, mean that, typically, 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.

*Figure 1 (right) shows the distribution of entrants to Newcastle University in 2010 by region of domicile. Although only 23% of the total, students from the North East nevertheless constitute the largest regional intake group. Other key target areas, Yorkshire, Humberside and the North West, also provide a significant percentage of the total intake.*



3.14 Our evidence shows that there is a direct correlation between intensity of outreach and diversity of intake. For example:

- Overall applications from PARTNERS<sup>2</sup> schools have increased by 60% since the programme began in 2000; and the data above shows that benchmarks are considerably exceeded in the North East, where most of our outreach takes place.
- Applications from schools targeted and visited by the Graduate Ambassadors<sup>3</sup> have increased by 123% and intake by 131% (2009 figures) since the start of scheme in 2005-06.

3.15 To achieve significant progress in our overall fair access profile, it is essential to:

- Continue and further develop our work in the North East
- Extend the geographical reach and extent of our successful WP outreach, building on the elements that we know have impact and are scaleable.

Our specific proposals are included in Section 4 which follows.

3.16 Newcastle University has a strong record of student retention. HESA performance indicators show that 3.9% of our 2009 young entrants were no longer in HE after one year (compared with a benchmark of 4.3% and a UK average of 7.2%). There is a slightly greater tendency for students to drop out if they are mature or from a low participation neighbourhood.

3.17 Retention of students on PGCE programmes is generally good. The non-completion rates for the Secondary 2008, 2009 and 2010 entry cohorts were 1%, 4% and 7% respectively. Whilst these appear to indicate a worsening trend, analysis of reasons for withdrawal indicated that trainees who failed to complete the course did so mainly for personal rather than professional or academic reasons. For the Primary PGCE programme, non-completion rates over three years (2007-2009 cohorts- latest figures available) have been steady at 6%.

<sup>2</sup> and <sup>3</sup>: Summary information about the University's key WP outreach programmes (PARTNERS, Students into Schools, Graduate Ambassadors and Realising Opportunities), is provided in Appendix 1.

## PART 4: ADDITIONAL ACCESS AND RETENTION MEASURES

### 4(a) Target Groups

4.1 For the purposes of this Access Agreement, the University's *additional* outreach work and financial investment are aimed particularly at students of high ability and potential from the following groups:

- Eligible students entering Newcastle University through the **PARTNERS Supported Entry Route** (including mature students and those with a range of relevant educational or other personal disadvantage factors)
- Eligible students entering Newcastle University through the **Realising Opportunities Scheme**
- Students from **low participation neighbourhoods**
- Students from **lower socio-economic groups and/or lower income backgrounds**
- Students from **black and minority ethnic groups** (including PGCE entrants)
- Students with a **disability**
- **Looked After Children/** those from a care background

Whilst we have not specifically identified students from state schools and colleges as a WP target group in this Access Agreement, our targeted outreach activities are expected to have an impact on the proportion of entrants from the state sector. Progress will be monitored on publication of HESA performance indicators.

4.2 The **additional measures** described in this Access Agreement specifically aim to:

- Increase the number and proportion of applicants and entrants with appropriate qualifications, ability and potential, from target under-represented groups from all parts of the UK, and contribute to an overall increase in regional rates of progression to higher education
- Encourage more students from lower-income or low participation backgrounds to feel confident that they will receive adequate levels of financial support if they choose to study at Newcastle University

4.3 Milestones and targets relating to these aims are shown in Section 6 below.

### 4(b) Outreach and Fair Access

4.4 Our outreach plans aim to:

- Continue and further develop the existing outreach activities supported by the University (including identified activities supported through previous Access Agreements from 2006 to 2011)
- Continue key University activities previously funded by the national Aimhigher Programme (including some support for school travel costs)
- Build upon current activities that have proven impact, can be significantly scaled up, have clear metrics, and minimise additional burdens for Faculties and Schools, rather than creating new, unproven schemes
- Support fair access to the professions, through the provision of information and awareness-raising activities in relevant disciplines
- Operate schemes that can be presented in a persuasive, coherent way to schools and colleges
- Provide an appropriate infrastructure for delivery of our expanded activities, both in the central services (eg Marketing and Student Recruitment Directorate) and in Faculties and Academic Schools.

4.5 Appendix 1 summarises existing outreach schemes.

**Planned activities:** (specific targets are included in Part 6 and in Annexes B and C)

- i) Expand the successful Graduate Ambassador Scheme, to extend geographical reach, impact and number of schools / colleges targeted
- ii) Extend the PARTNERS Programme and the number of entrants through the supported entry route.

- iii) Further develop and grow (in size and number of events) a range of outreach activities including:
  - Residential summer schools
  - Face-to-face and e-mentoring programmes, Student Ambassador schemes, teacher activities, marketing materials and campaigns (including digital and social media)
  - Conferences for parents and teachers in target regions
- iv) Further develop events such as 'Discover Days' to promote fair access to key professional areas.
- v) Provide coherent and comprehensive resources, information and event booking facilities for teachers and advisers, through our re-developed and re-launched [Teachers' Toolkit](#)
- vi) Raise the University's profile and its outreach and access activities among school governors and head teachers. This will include supporting and encouraging more University staff to take on school governor roles, together with targeted publicity and events / meetings.
- vii) Contribute to the travel costs of identified schools and colleges, to encourage and facilitate students' attendance at Visit Days and WP events on campus.
- viii) Support the ongoing development of relationships with identified Academies and Trust Schools.
- ix) Encourage the participation of BME groups in teaching, through involvement in the MERIT initiative.

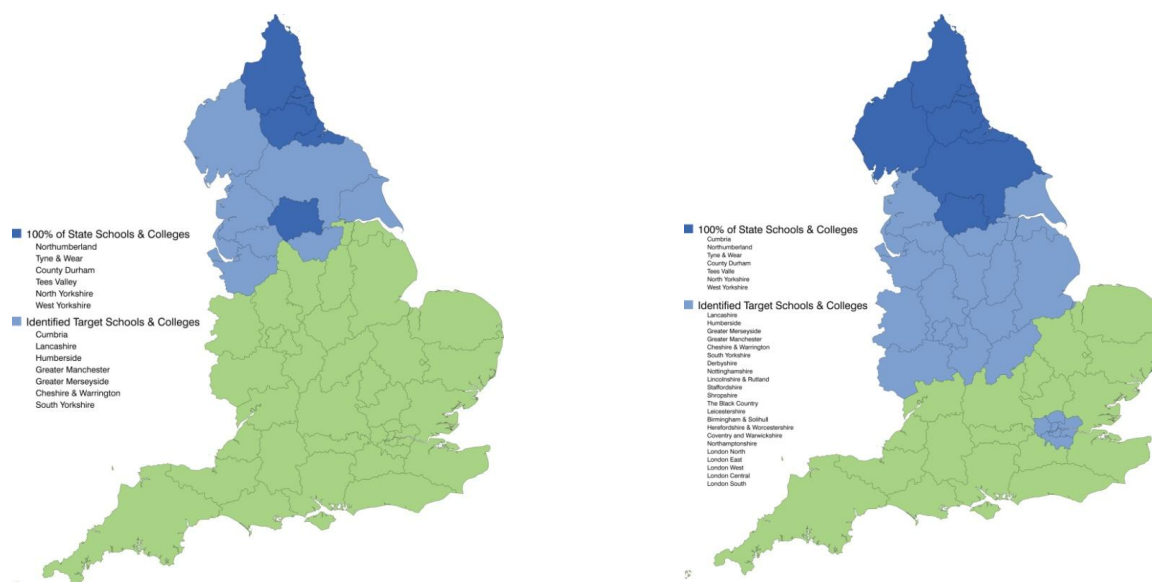
4.6 The University's continuing outreach commitments, as part of previous Access Agreements, include a diverse and large-scale programme of subject-specific outreach and WP activities delivered by our Faculties, Academic Schools and Professional Services. These activities will be continued in 2013-14, and the scale of activities will expand in line with increased participation in PARTNERS and Realising Opportunities. Further details are provided in our Interim Widening Participation Strategic Statement to be submitted to HEFCE in June 2012.

4.7 The geographical reach and impact of these activities will be significantly extended by these proposals:

#### **Current target areas**

#### **Planned target areas from 2012-13**

(Dark blue areas are those where the University works / will work with 100% of state schools and colleges; light blue areas are those where the University works/ will work with a number of identified target schools/colleges)



### **4(c) Collaborative Outreach Networks and Activities**

4.8 We are fully committed to networks and collaborative WP and fair access schemes, in order to:

- Have a co-ordinated and coherent approach that makes sense to schools and colleges and minimises the burden on individual institutions

- Contribute to a more generic WP agenda, especially with regard to younger (i.e. pre-16) pupils, where the aim is to raise aspirations and promote progression to higher education in general and address issues of low aspiration and attainment in the North East
- Create opportunities to influence and shape policy through the collective impact of a genuinely collaborative approach (eg through the Realising Opportunities Project).

**Planned activities [see also Appendix 1]:**

- Continue to lead the national Realising Opportunities programme with a view to sustaining and expanding the programme in the longer term if evaluation is favourable
- Building on previous regional Aimhigher partnerships and activities, lead a collaborative network of three universities (Newcastle, Northumbria and Sunderland) to deliver a coherent programme of outreach aimed at pupils in Year 11 and below, in support of the broader WP agenda in the North East.
- Support and publicise a co-ordinated, collaborative approach to outreach and progression through a range of activities in collaboration with the International Centre for Life, Great North Museum, Hatton Gallery and Moorbank Botanical Gardens, Newcastle Science City and closely aligned with the extensive STEM outreach programme delivered by the Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering).

#### **4(d) Admissions**

4.9 The admissions process plays an important role in determining the entry profile of the University's students. To maintain integrity in admissions, it is important to stress assessment of **the ability and potential of individuals**, with due consideration of context.

4.10 The University has extensive experience of assessment of contextual data to inform admissions tutors' decisions about individual applicants.

**Planned activities:**

- Continue the provision of alternative offers through the PARTNERS and Realising Opportunities schemes (which include additional indicators of academic potential alongside a reduced conditional offer)
- Continue to take account of contextual data and information in assessing the ability and potential of individual applicants.
- Take careful account of the WP impact of HEFCE's student numbers controls when determining the allocation of core quota numbers to individual subject areas, to allow for the targeted admission of WP students who are made a reduced conditional offer.

#### **4(e) Student Retention, Skills and Success**

4.11 Measures to support student retention, success and employability are part of a broader strategy to support all students. WP students are likely to benefit from such measures on a proportionate basis, so activity and expenditure recorded in this Access Agreement reflects just a proportion (approx 30%) of the University's overall development work in this area.

4.12 Whilst the proposals below are new developments, it is important to note the extensive range of existing support for success, retention and employability (eg academic skills support, Student Wellbeing Service, Library, Student Progress and Careers Service), as well as local support provided by academic schools. This ongoing support is a critical part of the Newcastle University student experience and the 'education for life' provided for our students.

4.13 Student placements and projects provide a valuable opportunity for students to develop employability skills and earn money towards their living costs. The University already provides many such opportunities for students (eg the Student Ambassadors; the Alumni 'Phonathon' teams; Careers Service Ambassadors etc). More opportunities are being provided across the University and we aim to offer up to



200 new paid opportunities per year by 2016-17. This is an important part of the skills development opportunities offered to all of our students (from which we anticipate that WP students will benefit on a proportionate basis).

- 4.14 The programme of skills development opportunities available is being expanded, bringing together subject-specific knowledge and expertise with the Graduate Skills Framework, the ncl+ portfolio, engagement, volunteering, academic skills, skills for life and skills for work. These opportunities are at the heart of the concept of 'Education for Life' and underpin what we mean by the Newcastle University Student Experience. They are promoted to current students through our [Student Opportunities](#) web pages, which also enable students to understand and articulate their skills and progress.

**Planned new activities from 2012:**

- i) Develop and fund an expansion of student internships and placements (paid employment within the University) as part of a broader work experience scheme contributing to the overall 'student offer'.
- ii) Provide a 'recruitment agency' service (Jobs on Campus (JobsOC)) whereby high-quality students may be recruited into a range of employment opportunities across the University
- iii) Promote the (expanded) Graduate Ambassador, Student Ambassador, Student Tutoring and Mentoring (central and School / Faculty-based) schemes to WP students as a means for them to develop employability skills and also contribute pro-actively to the fair access agenda
- iv) Develop our University-wide opportunities for skills development and articulation as part of the overall 'student offer', including our Career Development Module (which is also being piloted as a supernumerary module). This will benefit WP students on a proportionate basis.
- x) Continue the delivery and further development of services that support students' academic skills post-entry: Maths Aid and the Writing Development Centre
- xi) Finally, we anticipate that higher fees may mean that there are greater calls on our Access to Learning Funds, which we will supplement through the provision of additional Hardship Funds

## **PART 5: FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS**

### **5(a) Students entering from 2013**

- 5.1 The University is committed to providing financial assistance to students from lower income backgrounds and target under-represented groups. Students entering the University in 2013, who are ordinarily resident in the UK and to whom the home rate of tuition fee applies (subsequently referred to as 'home UK students') will be eligible for scholarship support according to the criteria below. EU (Non-UK) students who meet the eligibility criteria may be awarded the fee discount element of relevant Scholarships. They are not eligible for cash bursaries or accommodation discounts.
- 5.2 Newcastle University participates fully in the National Scholarship Programme.
- 5.3 Although research undertaken by OFFA indicates that cash bursaries may not have any impact on students' choice of institution, our assessment of the applications for hardship support over the past five years suggests that bursaries play an important part in reducing the financial burdens and debt for individual students. This is supported by a Student Wellbeing Service survey of Newcastle's bursary recipients which shows that bursaries have a significant impact in alleviating student hardship and supporting retention. It is also clear from recent national research on financial incentives, and a survey undertaken by the National Union of Students (in which a significant number of Newcastle University participated) that students favour money that supports their living costs, rather than fee discounts that will only have a marginal impact in terms of eventual loan repayment and no impact at all on their monthly repayments once they start work. Our proposals for financial support take account of this evidence and include fee discounts and an emphasis on cash bursaries to provide optimum support.

- 5.4 It will take time to evaluate how potential applicants (especially those from target WP groups) react to the new fees environment and numbers control arrangements. We will continue to review our approach to financial support in subsequent years in the light of our experience from 2012-13 onwards.
- 5.5 In addition to Government support available, our proposed overall package of support for our students provides: targeted financial support for the duration of undergraduate study; additional funding for hardship support; and a wide range of paid placements and work opportunities on campus. In addition, we have reviewed and minimised additional costs to students and are providing financial support towards the costs of compulsory field trips.
- 5.6 Our 2013-14 plans include new initiatives introduced since publication of our 2012 Access Agreement.
- 5.7 Newcastle University will fulfil all of its commitments to returning students who entered prior to 2012. Full details are included in the Access Agreement for 2011 entry, available here: [2011 Access Agreement](#)
- 5.8 Newcastle University's Student Financial Support for Home fee undergraduate students entering from 2013-14 is summarised as follows:

Household Income	Amount of Award	a) <b>Newcastle University Scholarships and National Scholarships</b>
Up to £25,000	£3,000 in Year 1  £2,000 per year from Year 2 onwards	<p>In the first year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students who live in University-owned accommodation will receive an <b>accommodation discount of £2,000 and a cash bursary of £1,000.</b></li> <li>Students who do not live in University-owned accommodation will receive a <b>fee discount of £2,000 and a cash bursary of £1,000</b></li> </ul> <p>From year 2 onwards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All eligible students will receive a <b>fee discount of £500 and a cash bursary of £1,500 per year</b></li> </ul> <p>For eligible students from England or the EU (non-UK), the First Year Scholarships and the Fee Discounts from Year 2 onwards will be a <b>National Scholarship</b>, funded by the Government with matched funding from Newcastle University.</p> <p>Scholarships for students from other parts of the UK, and the Cash Bursaries for all recipients from year 2 onwards will be in the form of a <b>Newcastle University Scholarship</b> funded by the University.</p>
£25,001 - £35,000	£1,000 per year	A <b>Newcastle University Scholarship</b> paid as a <b>cash bursary of £1,000 per year</b>

Household Income	Amount of Award	b) <b><u>Newcastle University Access Scholarships</u></b>
Up to £42,600	£500 per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For UK Home Undergraduates who live in a Low Participation Neighbourhood or who enter through the PARTNERS supported entry route or the Realising Opportunities scheme.</li> <li>Paid as a <b>cash bursary</b> in addition to any Scholarship for which students may be eligible under (a) above</li> </ul>

Household Income	Amount of Award	c) <b><u>Newcastle University Promise Scholarships and Laidlaw Scholarships</u></b>
Up to £15,000	Up to £9,000 per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Up to 20 <b>Promise Scholarships</b> awarded to students of high ability from very low income backgrounds</li> <li>Paid as a <b>fee discount of £4,500 per year</b>, plus a <b>cash bursary of £4,500 per year</b></li> <li>In addition to meeting household income criteria, students must achieve (or have already achieved) at least grades AAB at A level or equivalent and meet specific other criteria.</li> </ul>
N/A	Up to £9,000 per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full fee-waiver <b>Laidlaw Scholarships</b> for <u>any</u> entrant to Newcastle University from identified schools with over 90% of students from the 13,000 most deprived wards (based on 2010 IMD data) who achieve the grades required for entry to Newcastle University through the PARTNERS Programme supported entry route. (Currently: Walker Technology College and Excelsior College.)</li> </ul>

- 5.9 Students eligible for a Newcastle University Scholarship, National Scholarship or Access Scholarship will be identified on the basis of their UCAS application and household income information provided by the Student Loans Company. Students do not have to apply separately, but must submit financial information to Student Finance England (or equivalent body in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland) for assessment.
- 5.10 Students eligible for consideration for a Newcastle University Promise Scholarship will be invited to submit a two-stage application. Further information is provided online: [Promise Scholarships](#)
- 5.11 Students eligible for a Laidlaw Scholarship will be identified automatically and do not have to apply separately. These scholarships are funded 50% by Newcastle University and 50% by Lord Laidlaw.
- 5.12 The Student Financial support arrangements described in this Access Agreement do not apply to students studying on certain programmes (or parts of programmes) funded under contract by the Department of Health<sup>4</sup>. Specifically:
- Students funded by the NHS for any part of their programme are not eligible for a National Scholarship.
  - Students on the graduate entry accelerated medicine degree are not eligible for funding under the provisions of this Access Agreement.
  - Students funded by the NHS for any part of their course are not eligible for Newcastle University Scholarships, Access Scholarships, Promise Scholarships or Laidlaw Scholarships in the year(s) when they receive NHS funding. This includes: all years of the undergraduate degree in Speech and Language Sciences; the Higher Education Diploma in Dental Hygiene and Therapy; and the fifth year of the five-year programmes in Medicine and Dentistry
  - Students undertaking a placement year where the fee payable is £1,000 are not eligible for a Scholarship during the placement year.
- 5.13 As part of our commitments as an accredited Buttle UK institution, we will provide financial support to students who have experienced local authority care (and who meet relevant criteria) either through the Access Agreement scholarship schemes or through the University's hardship fund arrangements.
- 5.14 All students will be informed of available scholarships at various stages in the UCAS application cycle: on application; on receipt of an offer, and during the conversion stage. This will include information about the National Scholarship Programme, eligibility criteria, and how and when payments will be made.
- 5.15 From the information which we have about our current application and entry patterns, we estimate that approximately 29% of our new entrants in 2013 are likely to receive financial support. This will increase to at least 31% by 2016-17.
- 5.16 The University's financial support schemes will be reviewed annually and may be revised to reflect changing circumstances, student needs, numbers and/or government support arrangements.
- 5.17 In addition to financial support schemes included in our Access Agreement commitments, we also offer a range of other awards, bursaries, scholarships and prizes to recognise outstanding achievement (on entry or during the course). Some of these are targeted at students from lower income backgrounds or other under-represented groups. Further information is available on our website: [Subject Scholarships](#) and on individual subject websites. WP students will benefit from these awards on a proportionate basis, and we will include payments to relevant students in our annual monitoring return to OFFA.
- 5.18 All of Newcastle University's PGCE programmes fall into the subject categories where generous Teaching Agency (TA) Training Bursaries are available for students who gain a good degree classification. We support this drive for excellence and do not offer additional bursaries to students who are not eligible for TA support. PGCE students who suffer financial hardship whilst at Newcastle University will be able to apply for relevant support.
- 5.19 As part of our overall plans to minimise the additional costs faced by students from 2012, the University has agreed that individual students will no longer be responsible for the costs relating to checking by the Criminal Records Bureau. For PGCE students with household income up to £42,600, the

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<sup>4</sup> This funding is in the form of a National Health Service (NHS) bursary

costs of CRB checking will be funded as part of our Access Agreement commitments. These costs are included in our Faculty commitments.

## 5(b) Continuing Students who entered in 2012

5.20 As a consequence of our review of financial support for 2013-14, we have re-assessed our financial support arrangements for 2012-entry UK<sup>5</sup> students. Our scheme for 2012 entry was constrained by the small number of National Scholarship awards and funding available. We have changed our support arrangements for certain groups of 2012 entrants, from their second year of study onwards, to reflect our greater emphasis on cash bursaries, and to offer some support to a number of low-income students to whom it was not possible to make any award in 2012-13 because of funding limitations.

5.21 The revised scheme for 2012 entrants will be as follows for the students described below (from 2013):

Household Income	Amount of award (from year 2)	d) Revised support for relevant students who entered in 2012 (changes from Year 2 of study)
Up to £16,000 approx.	£2,000 per year	(For the 455 NSP recipients from 2012) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>£1,000 as a fee discount and £1,000 as a cash bursary.</li> </ul>
Up to £25,000	£1,000 per year	Any UK students who entered in 2012 but who did not receive a National, Access, or Promise Scholarship in 2012-13 (approx 120 individuals) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cash bursary of £1,000 per year from year 2 onwards</li> </ul>

5.22 Students who were awarded an Access Scholarship or Promise Scholarship in 2012-13 will continue to be funded according to the provisions of the [2012 Access Agreement](#) which contains further information.

## PART 6: TARGETS AND MILESTONES

6.1 The University uses three sets of data as its baseline for milestones, monitoring and evaluation:

- UCAS application and intake datasets purchased annually by the University
- HESA Performance Indicators concerning student intake (supplemented, where more detailed analysis is required, by the University's own data if available)
- Data provided by the Student Loans Company regarding eligibility of students for financial support (supplemented where appropriate by the University's own data relating to payments to students outside the Student Loans Company system).

6.2 The parameters for considering these data sets will be maintained in successive years to enable meaningful comparisons to be made.

6.3 The activity and impact targets shown below have been reviewed and revised in the context of our Access Agreement plans and our Interim Widening Participation Strategic Statement (June 2012) reflects the same approach to give consistency between the two documents.

## 6(a) Activity Targets

6.4 Our Activity Targets over the period from 2012-13 to 2016-17 are summarised below, and focus on key areas of new activity linked to the impact targets.

- 10 Graduate Ambassadors to be appointed in 2012-13, growing to 20 from 2014-15
- 300 schools/colleges to be targeted and visited in 2012-13, growing to 500 from 2015-16
- Expansion of PARTNERS to approx. 200 schools / colleges by 2015-16.
- Successful leadership, development and ongoing implementation of the Realising Opportunities programme for 12 research-intensive universities

<sup>5</sup> Eligible EU (Non-UK) recipients of the National Scholarship will continue to receive their award as a fee discount of £2,000 in year 2, £1,500 in year 3 and £1,500 in year 4.

- e) Expansion of residential Summer Schools, with places for up to 900 participants by 2016
- f) Expansion of events for parents and teachers in line with regional targeting and expansion plans
- g) Provide targeted financial support for 29% of entrants (2013-14), increasing to 31% (2016-17)
- h) Provision of new paid placement opportunities for WP students (approx 70 extra by 2016-17) as part of a broader programme of opportunities available to all students
- i) Maintain Buttle UK accreditation for work to support Looked after Children
- j) Approx. 105 students from black or minority ethnic groups to apply to the University through the PARTNERS Supported Entry route in 2013.
- k) Organise an annual awareness-raising event for deaf and disabled students and their advisers, from 2012-13, through the regional partnership between Newcastle, Northumbria and Sunderland Universities.
- l) Set up the initial programme, structure, operating framework, partnership agreement and KPIs for the regional collaborative group by autumn 2012.

## 6(b) Impact Targets

- 6.5 The stretching targets set in the 2012 entry Access Agreement have not been changed in this Agreement for 2013-14. Whilst we are confident that we will be able to deliver the planned outreach activities, it must be noted that the introduction of HEFCE's numbers control arrangements in response to Government's policy creates a potential conflict between 'AAB+ recruitment' and WP. We believe that there is a significant risk that our WP impact targets may not be achieved, and that, in 2012 and 2013, there may even be a decline in the proportion of entrants from target groups. We will carefully monitor the impact of these inherent tensions on our 2012 intake, and will review our 2014 targets if necessary.
- 6.6 The University's planned outreach activities will target state schools/colleges in the identified regions. All students from the targeted schools or colleges will be affected by these activities, whether or not they are from a target under-represented group. In addition to targeting the schools/colleges themselves, we will work closely with the teachers concerned in order to target the individual students from LPNs and those considered to be from lower socio-economic backgrounds (NS-SEC groups 4-7), to ensure that we particularly encourage these students to apply to and enter Newcastle University.
- 6.7 Of these two latter groups, only those from LPNs can be accurately identified at the pre-application stage (by postcode) in a way that exactly replicates how they are identified and measured for HESA's performance indicators. In preparing this Access Agreement we have set specific impact targets for each of the target regions, based on students from LPNs. Where available, we will also use IMD data and other indicators (eligibility for Free School Meals, Pupil Premium information) to help us to refine our targeting.
- 6.8 Our overall targeting activity, our focus on particular schools and our work with teachers mean that we can be confident that, in setting targets for LPN students, we will also have a positive impact on the University's overall intake figures for students from LPNs and from NS-SEC groups 4-7. Thus we include below some estimated overall targets and milestones for these and other target groups.
- 6.9 Numbers and impact in individual regions are likely to fluctuate year on year. We have combined our regional targets outside the North East to give overall impact targets, using young entrant LPN intake figures for 2009 entry as the baseline. Achievement of specific regional application and intake targets which underpin this approach will also be monitored by the University.

Region/ Target group	Indicator	Baseline figures (2009 entry)	2012-13 target	2014 milestone	2016-17 target
PARTNERS/Realising Opportunities	Successful entrants	285	300	440	520
North East	LPN entrants (%)	145 (19.6%)	149 (19.9%)	164 (20%)	170 (20%)
Regional target areas (outside the NE)	LPN entrants (%)	105 (5.83%)	117(6.39%)	149 (7.47%)	179 (8.33%)
Low Participation Neighbourhoods	Proportion of overall young intake	7.9% (benchmark 7.0%)	8.3%	11. %	12.2%

NS-SEC 4-7	Proportion of overall young intake	20.1% (benchmark 23.6%)	20.5%	22%	23.3%
Black/ Minority Ethnic (all ages UG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall intake %</li> <li>North East intake %</li> </ul>	6.8% 10.6%	7.0% 11.0%	7.5% 11.5%	8.0% 12.0%
Black / Minority Ethnic (PGCE)	Percentage of Intake	2%	2%	3%	3.5%
Students receiving Disabled Students' Allowance	Overall intake and percentage	2.5% (benchmark 3.9%)	2.6%	2.8%	3.0%
PGCE entrants (%) with income below £25K		34.5%	35%	36%	37%
PGCE entrants (%) with income £25K to £42.6K		12.1%	12.5%	13.5%	14.5%
Non-continuation of students from LPNs		4.2% (benchmark 4.8%)	4.0%	3.8%	3.6%
Non-completion of PGCE maximum		6% (secondary); 7% (primary)	6%	6%	6%

## PART 7: MONITORING AND EVALUATION ARRANGEMENTS

- 7.1 The plans in this Access Agreement have been considered and agreed by the University's Executive Board and Undergraduate Admissions Monitoring Group and Student Finance Committee, and will be reported to University Teaching, Learning and Student Experience Committee (UTLSEC), Senate and Council.
- 7.2 The University's performance against targets and HESA benchmarks will be monitored annually on receipt of UCAS data and annual Performance Indicators.
- 7.3 The University will report to HEFCE and OFFA each year as required by the respective annual monitoring processes for the Interim Widening Participation Strategic Statement and Access Agreement.
- 7.4 Within the University, the effectiveness of the outreach and financial support schemes included in the Access Agreement will be reviewed and evaluated annually by UTLSEC and reported to Executive Board, Senate or Council as appropriate. Recommendations for revisions to the Access Agreement will be considered and agreed by UTLSEC (or its Chair) and by Executive Board (if appropriate), and then submitted to OFFA for approval.
- 7.5 Independent external evaluation of particular initiatives or new developments may be commissioned, and the outcomes will be reported to OFFA as part of the annual monitoring processes.

## PART 8: PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

- 8.1 A key to the success of our initiatives to promote and safeguard fair access is the provision of clear, timely and accurate information about student finance to potential students, parents, teachers and advisers. We also make a commitment to provide relevant information to UCAS, the Student Loans Company, the GTTR and other relevant external or statutory bodies as required.
- 8.2 Our printed 2013 Undergraduate Prospectus contains general information about student finance which is available at the time of publication. This is supplemented by our comprehensive **Guide to Student Finance** for 2013 entry, which includes information about fees, government financial support, the Newcastle University Scholarships, Access Scholarships, Promise Scholarships, the National Scholarship Programme, Access to Learning / Hardship Funds, student loans and other ways of funding study. It also provides advice on budgeting and financial management. A copy of the Guide is sent with the Undergraduate Prospectus to all enquirers and to all UK schools and colleges. Copies are available at all HE recruitment fairs, parents' evenings, school visits, University Visit Days, post-application open days and other relevant events. The Guide is revised as necessary during the year to reflect any changes in our financial support scheme and in government student support arrangements.
- 8.3 Our website includes up-to-date information, including a PDF version of the *Guide to Student Finance*. It includes clear information about eligibility criteria for our financial support schemes, together with a 'look up' tool to enable students to find out whether their postcode of domicile is in a Low Participation Neighbourhood. Potential and current students contribute to our user testing processes to ensure that the information is clear and easy to understand.

- 8.4 All applicants who receive an offer of a place receive relevant further information which explains the full range of scholarships and other awards available. We are further developing our use of social media as a means of communication with students.
- 8.5 We regularly review and develop our website to include resources or information about student finance and other relevant topics for those who advise students. Our online Teachers' Toolkit is being further developed to provide a rich source of resources and events through a single portal.
- 8.6 Our student recruitment, WP teams and trained Graduate Ambassadors visit schools and colleges to give presentations to teachers and pupils about student finance matters. The Graduate Ambassadors also provide student finance information at post-application open days.
- 8.7 The University contributes to Student Finance seminars provided within the region and works to reinforce positive messages about student financial support alongside Government national publicity schemes.
- 8.8 New entrants and eligible continuing students are reminded about the fees and financial support schemes relevant to them for each year of study at the University. This ranges from information provided at the pre-arrival and registration phase, to email, web and face-to-face publicity throughout the year.

## **PART 9: CONSULTATION WITH STUDENTS**

- 9.1 Student engagement and consultation have been an important part of our planning processes. There is student representation on the planning group which oversees the Access Agreement.
- 9.2 In particular, in reviewing the proposed financial support arrangements, the University has taken account of the outcomes from two key surveys:
- In March 2011 an online web questionnaire was issued to 3,159 students who had received University Bursaries in February 2011: 922 students responded (29.2%).
  - Respondents were very positive about the impact and effectiveness of bursaries on the student experience. University bursaries may not have significantly influenced university choice but they prevented a large number of students from experiencing financial difficulty and helped them to remain on their courses so cutting drop-out/improving retention. In particular:
    - 89% (822) reported that having a University Bursary prevented them from experiencing financial difficulty, prevented them from getting into further debt or ensured they did not have to drop out of University to obtain employment.
    - 61% stated that receiving a University Bursary meant they did not need to work part-time, thereby allowing them to concentrate on their studies to a greater extent and, hopefully, produce improved academic outcomes.
    - 94% indicated that receiving a University Bursary demonstrated the University's wish to help students from less well off backgrounds.
  - Newcastle University students (932 respondents) contributed to a National Union of Students survey ('The Pound in your Pocket'), and 69% of undergraduates favoured a cash bursary over a fee discount; a further 14% favoured a combination of cash and fee discounts.
- 9.3 The President and Education Officer of the Newcastle University Students' Union have made a direct contribution to the bursary planning process and the planning group, and are submitting to OFFA an independent assessment of this Access Agreement, in which they also comment on the National Scholarship programme.
- 9.4 We regularly consult current and prospective students when designing our website and publicity.

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**Attached: Appendix 1 - Summary of key WP schemes at Newcastle University**



## Appendix 1: Newcastle University: Key Widening Participation Schemes

### PARTNERS

The PARTNERS Programme was developed in response to HEFCE's requirement (in 1997-98) that all universities should develop institutional WP strategies, and has now been in operation for 12 years, involving 100% of North East FE colleges and schools with a sixth form, all of Kirklees Local Authority (West Yorkshire), plus a number in Cumbria (113 in total). All Newcastle University subject areas are involved in PARTNERS, which has evolved to become the umbrella scheme for a diverse range of related aspiration-, attainment- and participation-raising activities for pupils of all ages (see [PARTNERS](#)). More than 2,000 students have entered Newcastle University through the PARTNERS supported entry route since 2000.

Alongside our PARTNERS developments, a succession of government and HEFCE initiatives (eg Regional WP projects, Excellence in Cities, Excellence Challenge, Partnerships for Progression, HE Summer Schools, and, most recently, Aimhigher) provided the framework, and the funding, for collaborative regional programmes to promote WP and progression to higher education. Newcastle University has played a major leading role in these developments throughout the past 12 years (see below also).

### Graduate Ambassadors

The most significant large-scale outreach scheme introduced in our 2006 Access Agreement was the Graduate Ambassador scheme. Each year a team of new Newcastle University graduates is appointed to target key regions, extending the geographical reach and impact of the University's WP (and broader recruitment) activities through visits to schools and colleges to deliver presentations and interactive workshops for pupils. Topics include: the benefits of investing in their future through participation in Higher Education; student finance issues, including the financial support scheme; student life (to dispel myths and misconceptions); and the 'Newcastle experience' about which, as very recent undergraduate students, they will be able to give credible and contemporary information. 2012-13 will be the eighth successive year of the Graduate Ambassador Scheme.

The Graduate Ambassadors are fully trained, and undertake many other relevant roles, including work with local schools and colleges, involvement in the PARTNERS Programme and Summer Schools, contributing to relevant University recruitment publicity materials, and the development of projects, resources and materials to support our WP work. They also contribute to post-application events, offering accommodation tours and talks on student finance to applicants and their parents. In doing so, they gain valuable employability skills preparing them for their own future careers.

Further information is available here: [Graduate Ambassadors](#)

### Student Ambassadors

The Graduate Ambassadors programme is supplemented by the **Student Ambassador** scheme. Approximately 150 current undergraduate students are employed on a part-time internship contract each year. They support the wide range of WP and student recruitment events on campus and also attend schools and colleges to talk about higher education choices, student finance and the student experience. Some of the Ambassadors have a particular focus on support for STEM-based outreach. They also provide support for our Summer School and Master Class activities. Opportunities for students to participate in the Student Ambassador scheme are also an important element of our work to support student retention, success and skills development.

### Students into Schools, Colleges and Community

Newcastle University has a rich and wide-ranging history of large-scale and successful widening participation (WP) activity dating back to 1993, when the Students into Schools Programme (a joint initiative with Northumbria University) was established, providing undergraduate students as tutors in local schools to offer positive role models and classroom support. In 2009-10, some 230 Newcastle University undergraduates worked in 140 school / community settings through Students into Schools and provided 10,295 hours of support to 11,500 pupils. Further information is available here: [Students into Schools](#)

### Realising Opportunities

Newcastle University leads the groundbreaking Realising Opportunities programme, a unique collaboration of 12 research intensive universities working together to promote fair access and social mobility of students from under-represented groups. Realising Opportunities was awarded the Times Higher **Widening Participation Initiative of the Year** in 2011.

University of Newcastle upon Tyne, trading as **Newcastle University**: Access Agreement for 2013 entry (May 2012). 16



The Realising Opportunities programme provides support for students through interventions designed to raise aspirations and enable them to demonstrate their potential for success at a research intensive university. These interventions are offered both at their local participating university, and nationally, so that the student can tailor the programme to meet their own needs and interests. The programme includes a national conference which is a compulsory element for all participating students.

Each student is supported through the programme by a student e-mentor. The mentor, an undergraduate student from one of the 12 universities, provides ongoing support and encouragement. Successful completion of Realising Opportunities, which includes a robust academic element, will lead to students receiving an alternative offer through UCAS from Newcastle University (typically worth up to 40 UCAS points). [Other participating universities may have a slightly different approach.]

The Realising Opportunities Partnership has unanimously agreed that the 12 participating institutions will commit to future funding, continuation of the programme, and the development of a Business Plan which will ensure the on-going development of the programme to 2016. Each of the 12 universities has agreed a financial contribution of £35,000 to support delivery in 2012 -13.

More information is available on the [Realising Opportunities website](#).

### **Subject-specific outreach**

Faculties and Schools play a vital role in WP and outreach activities, delivering the essential academic content of many WP programmes and events, and are an essential part of our PARTNERS Programme, Realising Opportunities and Students into Schools schemes.

As part of our Access Agreement commitments, we provide funding to Faculties and Academic Schools so that the enthusiastic champions of our WP and outreach work can be supported in their contribution to activities such as: Master Classes; Summer Schools and other residential events; development of exciting materials to enthuse young people about learning; visits to schools and colleges; pre-application open days, taster events and conferences for students; subject-specific development activities for teachers; and work to encourage, retain and 'nurture' applicants from target groups to maximise their opportunities for progression. Most of this funding derives from additional student fee income (and is thus included in this Access Agreement), whilst the rest is University core funding.

Examples of activities are included in our Widening Participation Strategic Statement (to be submitted to HEFCE in June 2012)

### **Regional collaborative network**

Newcastle University is working with the universities of Northumbria and Sunderland to develop a collaborative programme of aspiration-raising activities for students in year 11 and below. The aim of these activities is to promote progression to higher education (rather than to a specific institution), building on the strong collaborative approach which was the hallmark of involvement in the former Aimhigher programme. Although in the early stages of development, the partnership is now in the process of consultation with schools to find out what they most need, and is consulting existing regional partnerships in order to determine what works best and optimise the legacy benefits of Aimhigher.

A full-time co-ordinator (jointly-funded) has been appointed. The next stage is to determine an appropriate operational structure, identify programme content and set targets and KPIs for monitoring and evaluation. The detailed programme is being considered but is likely to include one-to-one mentoring, work with looked-after children, a regional conference for teachers and advisers; support for deaf and disabled students, use of student role models (building on schemes such as Students into Schools), attendance at careers evenings and parents' events and aspiration-raising events on the three university campuses.

The network will engage with heads of years 8 – 10, local authority contacts and careers contacts in schools, and will include work with organisations such as Schools North East.

The partnership and an initial programme will be in place for the start of the 2012-13 cycle.