

This Access Agreement between Newcastle University and the Office For Fair Access (OFFA) covers the period from 1 September 2014 until 31 August 2015 (academic year 2014-15). It relates to Home (UK and eligible EU) undergraduate and PGCE students entering the University from September 2014 and includes the University's financial support arrangements for continuing UK/EU students who entered in 2012 and 2013.

Continuing UK/EU students who entered Newcastle University prior to 2012 (from 2006) should refer to the University's Access Agreement for their year of entry for details of financial support schemes that apply to them.

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## PART 1: CONTEXT AND PRINCIPLES

- 1 Newcastle University is committed to widening participation (WP) and fair access. We believe that **ability should be able to access opportunity, regardless of circumstance**. We aim to admit able, highly-motivated and enthusiastic students of all ages, and from all backgrounds and contexts, and to provide **education for life**, leading to strong retention and employability outcomes and optimum opportunities for our graduates to fulfil their career aspirations, within the North East or further afield.
- 1.1 As a **world-class civic university**, we aim 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 and our commitments to social renewal. We are committed to investing in measures to encourage student access and success, so that more people have the opportunity to achieve their potential and enjoy the life-long benefits of higher education.
- 1.2 **Our record of Widening Participation in the North East is excellent.** As a civic university which engages fully with our community, the city and the region, we have been working for the past 20 years with schools and colleges to promote progression, participation and flexible access in the North East, which has the lowest national level of participation in higher education in England.
- 1.3 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 former Aimhigher programme.

- 1.4 We attract **students of high ability and potential from all parts of the UK**, though at least half are from the three northernmost regions of England: the North East, Yorkshire & Humberside and the North West.
- 1.5 Our admissions policies and practices are based on principles of **integrity and fairness**, in which each applicant's ability, achievements and potential are carefully assessed.
- 1.6 Our Access Agreement commitments and our Admissions Policy take account of our responsibilities under the **Equality Act 2010**. The targets in our Access Agreement are reflected in our Single Equality Policy in terms of the admission of under-represented groups. Relevant progress in fair access is considered by the Fair Access Committee and 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.
- 1.7 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 2017-18.
- 1.8 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. Our commitment to providing education for life is demonstrated by extensive 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**.
- 1.9 These commitments and principles set the context for our Access Agreement.

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

- 2.1 In the academic Year 2014-15, 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 2014 and to returning undergraduates who entered in 2012 or 2013.**
- 2.2 The fee for **returning students** who entered the University prior to 2012 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>. This includes the following fully or partly NHS-funded programmes or years: the undergraduate degree in Speech and Language Sciences; the Higher Education Diploma in Dental Hygiene and Therapy; the fifth year of the five-year programmes in Medicine and Dentistry; and the four-year accelerated Medicine degree for graduates.
- 2.4 **Placement Year fees** for students entering Newcastle University from 2012 are as follows:
  - a) The fee for a (compulsory or optional) full-year undergraduate placement (normally between Stages 2 and 3) is £1,000. This includes full-year ERASMUS placements.
  - b) An optional 'year out' in which the student suspends study (i.e. is not registered with the University) incurs a zero fee.
  - c) The fee payable for a full-year placement which is fully-assessed and which attracts a full-year's credit that contributes to the final degree result is £9,000. This rule applies mainly 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 (minimum £2,000, maximum £4,500). The amounts are determined by the academic School concerned. Full information is published [online](#).

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

- d) The fee payable for a part-year placement / study abroad period (eg a semester) where the student spends the rest of the year at Newcastle University is £9,000 for the whole year. This rule also applies when the placement semester is arranged through the ERASMUS scheme.

2.5 The University's fee levels, scholarships and financial support for eligible students are reviewed each year.

**Our fee levels may be increased in future years if the Government raises the maximum fee cap amount.**

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 2014.

2.7 The University's estimated fee income above £6000 per student is summarised below:

Year	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Total (estimated) number of students paying £9,000	3989	7947	11624	13271	13590	13712
Total fee income at £9,000 per student	£35,901,000	£71,523,000	£104,616,000	£119,439,000	£122,310,000	£123,408,000
Total fee income <u>above</u> £6,000 per student	£11,967,000	£23,841,000	£34,872,000	£39,813,000	£40,770,000	£41,136,000

Note: These figures exclude students undertaking placement years (fee £1,000) and do not take account of any future 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 six-year period from 2012-13) in access and retention measures.

3.2 We will 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.

3.3 The table below shows our financial commitments and current estimates of planned expenditure in broad categories over six years from 2012. **All planned expenditure is OFFA-countable.**

Activity / Scheme	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Outreach, Admissions and Fair Access (incl. staffing, infrastructure, evaluation)	£2,061,795	£3,260,083	£4,420,936	£4,663,462	£4,817,443	£4,953,984
Retention and success (incl. staffing /infrastructure)	£134,587	£578,882	£892,236	£963,728	£1,020,006	£1,044,781
University matched funding contribution to the National Scholarship Programme	£855,000	£1,681,802	£1,902,038	£2,060,117	£2,070,084	£2,080,969
Other (non-NSP) student financial support for students entering from 2012	£4,070,000	£3,950,270	£4,566,105	£5,164,736	£5,418,310	£5,484,801
<b>Total estimated expenditure on Access Agreement commitments</b>	<b>£7,121,382</b>	<b>£9,471,037</b>	<b>£11,781,315</b>	<b>£12,852,043</b>	<b>£13,325,843</b>	<b>£13,564,535</b>
<b>Expenditure (excl. bursaries for returning students) as % of income above £6,000</b>	32.77%	31.87%	31.94%	31.95%	32.59%	32.97%

Average over 6 years: 32.35%. Costs from 2015 are broad estimates only at this stage.

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	2017-18
Bursary commitments to pre-2012 entry returners	£3,424,000	£1,872,500	£642,000	£133,750	£37,450	£0

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 Student Opportunity allocation, which supports our baseline WP strategy, are included in our updated Interim Widening Participation Strategic Statement.

- 3.6 The financial commitments in the table above do not include the indirect costs of employing additional Graduate Ambassadors / staff to deliver activity (office space, infrastructure, utilities etc), estimated to be 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 (2011 entry) and our analysis of 2012 entry UCAS data, including key WP target regions.

*(2011 figures shown in italics and brackets where relevant)*

Under-represented group	National HESA sector benchmark (2011)	2011 entry (HESA)	2012 entry (our own analysis of UCAS data)	2012 entry from target regions <u>excluding</u> the North East (NW, Y&H, M'side, E Mids, W Mids, Greater London)	2012 entry from North East, North West, Yorks & Humbs	2012 entry from the North East only
State Schools and Colleges (young entrants)	80.6%	69.2%	70.5%	72% <i>(73.3% in 2011)</i>	83.7% <i>(85.2% in 2011)</i>	90.4% <i>(91.9% in 2011)</i>
Lower socio-economic groups (NS-SEC 4-7) (young entrants)	22.8%	19.5%	19.7%	16.9% <i>(17.2% in 2011)</i>	24% <i>(23.9% in 2011)</i>	34.1% <i>(32.6% in 2011)</i>
Low participation neighbourhoods (LPNs) (young entrants)	6.8%	7.3%	7.3%	5.4% <i>(5.4% in 2011)</i>	10.7% <i>(11.7% in 2011)</i>	18.5% <i>(19.3% in 2011)</i>
Students from black/minority ethnic backgrounds (all ages)	N/A	7.6% (UCAS data)	7.9%	9% <i>(8.1% in 2011)</i>	7% <i>(7.7% in 2011)</i>	7.5% <i>(8.6% in 2011)</i>
Students with a Disability (all ages)	4.7% (in receipt of DSA)	4.1% (in receipt of DSA)	7.1% (indicating a disability)	6.5% (indicating a disability) <i>(5.8% in 2011)</i>	5.9% (indicating a disability) <i>(5.9% in 2011)</i>	6.4% (indicating a disability) <i>(6.7% in 2011)</i>
Students from Polar2 groups 1 and 2 (determines HEFCE Student Opportunity Funds)	N/A	N/A	18.7%	15.2% <i>(16% in 2011)</i>	26.5% <i>(27% in 2011)</i>	41.7% <i>(41.5% in 2011)</i>

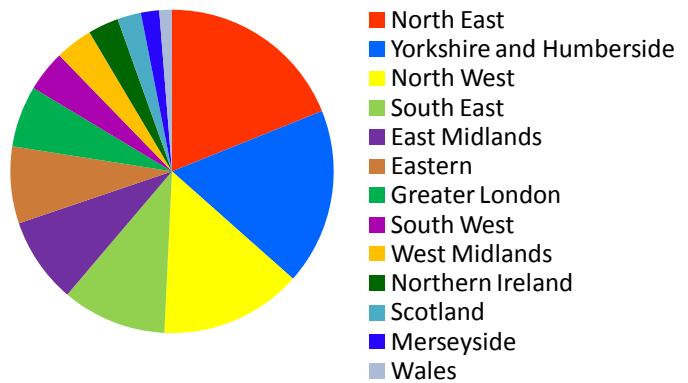
- 3.9 Newcastle University has an excellent record of Widening Participation in respect of students entering from the North East, where most of our intensive outreach work takes place, and for this cohort **we significantly exceed the HESA benchmarks for the three main performance indicators**. This record reflects our delivery of a progressive and sustained programme of engagement and activity over many years (for example through our PARTNERS programme and Students into Schools activities).

- 3.10 Approximately 19% of our 2012 young entrants were from the North East (reflecting the relatively sparse regional population), but slightly more than half (51%) of all young entrants were from the three northernmost regions of England: the North East, Yorkshire & Humberside and the North West, which have been the focus of our extended WP outreach and targeting activities. **Analysis of this larger cohort also shows strong WP performance, ahead of the sector benchmarks.**

- 3.11 Newcastle University has a strong national recruitment profile and reputation, and this has an impact on our overall WP patterns. Detailed analysis by region demonstrates the challenge of WP in regions that are geographically more remote. Students prepared to travel significant distances to study at a non-local institution are typically more likely to be from families, school contexts or neighbourhoods with a strong pattern of HE participation. For example, the WP profile of our students from the South East is well below the sector benchmarks (45.3% from state schools / colleges; 13.5% from NS-SEC 4-7; 2.33% from LPNs), yet this region is the fourth largest provider of the University's students. Thus it is no surprise that the impact of our outreach activity in the Northern region is diluted when the total intake is analysed. This has been a key factor in determining our progress towards overall HESA benchmarks over the past ten years.

For this reason, **our WP targets in this Access Agreement focus on our performance in the key target regions**, although we expect regional progress to have a longer-term impact upon our overall WP profile.

*Figure 1 (right) shows the distribution of young entrants to Newcastle University in 2012 by region of domicile. Although only 19% of the total, students from the North East constitute the largest single regional intake group. The North East, Yorkshire & Humberside and the North West together provide more than half of the total intake. The target outreach regions in this Access Agreement (North East, North West, Yorkshire & Humberside, Merseyside, West Midlands, East Midlands and Greater London) currently constitute 72% of the total intake.*



- 3.12 As anticipated, the introduction of £9,000 fees, coupled with student numbers management and the 'AAB+ deregulation', had a discernible negative impact on WP progress in 2012. The buoyancy of application numbers to Newcastle University for 2013 entry (up more than 14%), together with a lower grade threshold of ABB for unregulated numbers, suggests that this may be a temporary effect. We will, however, continue to monitor progress and may review our targets for future years if appropriate.
- 3.13 The main diversity challenges affecting PGCE access are: participation of men in primary teaching; and participation of black and minority ethnic (BME) groups.
- 3.14 Recruitment of men into the Primary PGCE programme has been strong: 24% of the 2011 entry cohort, and 40% of the 2012 cohort, with the average proportion of men on this course, over six years, higher than the national average (in 2012, 22.4% of all accepted primary PGCE students were men).
- 3.15 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 (13% approx). The secondary PGCE cohort included 4% from BME backgrounds in 2012, and the Primary cohort 5%. 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).
- 3.16 Newcastle University has a strong record of student retention. HESA performance indicators show that just 3% of our 2010 young entrants were no longer in HE after one year (compared with a benchmark of 3.4% and a UK average of 6.3%). There is a slightly greater tendency (7.5%) for students to drop out if they are mature (UK average 11.6%) or from a low participation neighbourhood (6.5%; UK average 8.9%), compared with 2.6% for those from other neighbourhoods (UK average 5.9%). **Our 2014 Access Agreement places greater emphasis on work to support retention and student success.**
- 3.17 Newcastle graduates have an excellent employment record, with 93.4% of our 2011 UK/EU graduates progressing to employment or further study within six months of graduating. Of those in employment, 34.4% were employed in the North East.
- 3.18 Retention of students on PGCE programmes is generally good. The non-completion rates for the Secondary 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 entry cohorts were 1%, 4%, 7% and 3.25% respectively. For the Primary PGCE programme, non-completion rates over three years (2007-2009 cohorts) were steady at 6%, but increased to 8.24% in 2010 before dropping significantly to 2.4% for the 2011 cohort.

## 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 the University through the **PARTNERS Supported Entry Route** (including mature students and those with relevant educational or other personal disadvantage factors) or the **Realising Opportunities Scheme**
- Young entrants from **low participation neighbourhoods, 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 who have experienced local authority care

Our WP and retention activities also seek to support and / or engage the following groups, though we have not set specific progression targets or milestones for these cohorts:

- Mature students
- Younger-age pupils, including those in primary schools
- Students who are parents
- Teachers and senior management teams in schools/colleges
- Parents and other influencers of potential students

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 to Newcastle University with appropriate qualifications, ability and potential, from target under-represented groups in key regions;
- Contribute to an overall increase in awareness and aspiration among under-represented groups;
- Contribute to an increase in regional (North East) rates of progression to higher education;
- Provide appropriate financial, academic, employability and wellbeing support to students from under-represented groups who 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 Evaluation of our activities and performance to date, together with the data analysis summarised above and supported by national evidence, show a strong correlation between intensity of outreach and diversity of intake. Our outreach strategies to achieve progress in our access profile therefore 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), including key University activities previously funded by the national Aimhigher Programme;
- Build upon current activities that have proven impact, can be significantly scaled up and have clear metrics for evaluation, as well as developing new approaches (eg **digital and social media** to engage 'hard-to-reach' groups; **creative practice in the classroom**; further extension of our outreach to **primary schools**);
- Support fair access to the professions, through the provision of information and awareness-raising activities in relevant disciplines;
- Deliver activities 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.

### Summary of planned activities:

**New activities from 2014 are highlighted in bold text** and specific targets are included in Part 6 and in Annexes B and C

- i) Expand the successful [Graduate Ambassador Scheme](#) and the [PARTNERS Programme](#)<sup>2</sup>, to extend geographical reach, impact, number of schools / colleges targeted and the number of entrants through the supported entry route;
- ii) Further develop and grow (in size and number of events) direct outreach activities including: Residential summer schools; Face-to-face and e-mentoring programmes; Student Tutors working in schools; Student Ambassador schemes; teacher events; marketing materials and campaigns; Conferences for parents and teachers in target regions;
- iii) Significantly develop our web, social media and digital outreach to engage WP students (UK-wide) who may be difficult to reach through direct face-to-face activity;**
- iv) Promote employability and fair access to the professions through: 'Discover Days'; Providing additional careers advice and information (through events, drop-in sessions and post-application open days) to WP students, their parents and teachers, to support HE choices; delivering enterprise challenge events for pre-HE students (as part of existing events); supporting undergraduate WP students to source work experience /placements, including involvement of our alumni; Raising awareness of PG study and financial support opportunities for WP students;**
- v) Support attainment by piloting the use of undergraduate students as tutors in local schools to support specific subject learning (eg for Mathematics and Modern Languages);**
- vi) Offer the use of University premises to local primary and secondary schools (eg laboratories and other academic facilities and venues for awards ceremonies), so that they begin to see University as a natural 'home' for some of their activities;**
- vii) Provide coherent and comprehensive resources, information and event booking facilities for teachers and advisers, through our **re-developed and re-launched** [Teachers' Toolkit](#);
- viii) Raise the University's profile and its outreach and access activities among school governors and senior managers. This will include supporting and encouraging more University staff to take on school governor roles, together with targeted publicity and events / meetings;
- ix) Contribute to the travel costs of identified schools and colleges, to encourage student attendance at events on campus;
- x) Support the ongoing development of relationships with identified Academies and Trust Schools;
- xi) Pilot an outreach programme from Primary school age in collaboration with the charity Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE), including a Student Book Project, to measure the impact of creative learning practices on WP students' aspirations, attainment and choices at key transition points;**
- xii) Deliver (by our Students' Union) a new project through which current students and recent alumni visit their former school / college to raise awareness, accompanied by representatives of student societies;**
- xiii) Work with local FE colleges, employers, other partner organisations and the community to strengthen FE and Mature progression routes into Newcastle University;**
- xiv) Work with students, parents and teachers (pre-HE) to raise awareness of students with disabilities, to encourage early disclosure and access to support mechanisms;**
- xv) Encourage the participation of BME groups in teaching, through involvement in the MERIT initiative;
- xvi) Undertake market research in relevant areas (eg to establish a framework for involvement of our alumni in WP outreach, as part of the 'Giving to Newcastle University' portfolio).**

4.5 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

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<sup>2</sup> [Appendix 1](#) summarises our key current outreach schemes.



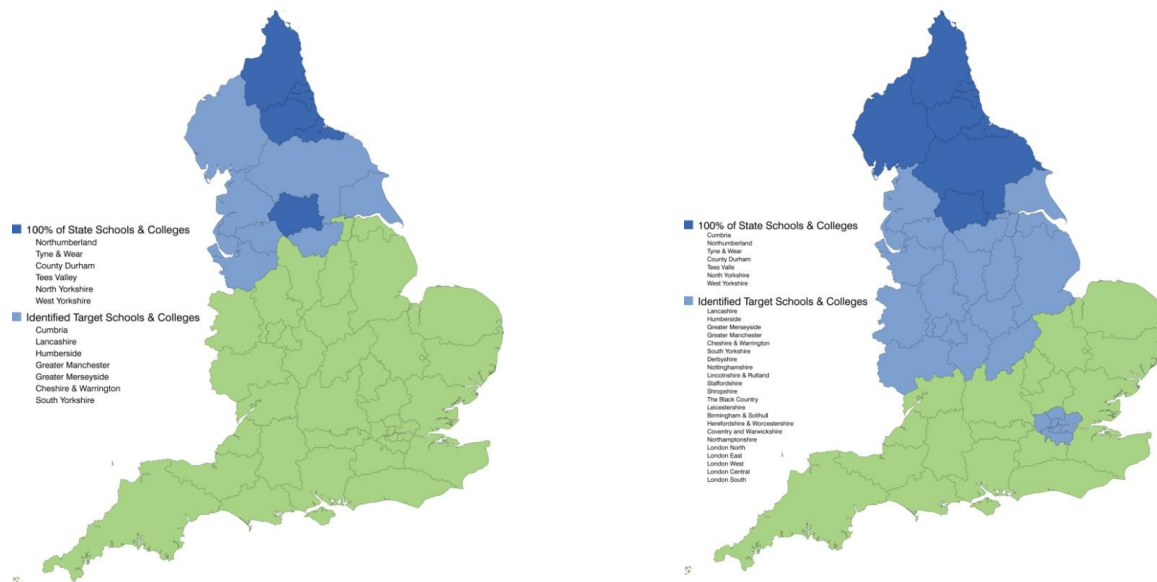
Faculties, Academic Schools and Professional Services. These activities will be continued in 2014-15, and the scale of activities will expand in line with increased participation in PARTNERS and Realising Opportunities. Further details are provided in our updated Interim Widening Participation Strategic Statement (first submitted June 2012).

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

#### **Pre-2012 target areas**

#### **Target areas from 2012-13 onwards**

(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**

4.7 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, especially in the North East, rather than changing the entry profile of Newcastle University;
- Create opportunities to influence and shape policy through the collective impact of a genuinely collaborative approach (especially through the [Realising Opportunities Programme](#)).

#### **Summary of planned activities [see also Appendix 1]:**

**New activities from 2014 are highlighted in bold text**

- Continue to lead the national Realising Opportunities programme, **expanding in line with recommendations from the favourable evaluation of the pilot phase**;
- 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, identified groups and influencers, and deaf / disabled students, in support of the broader WP agenda in the North East ([Raising Aspirations Partnership \(RAP\)](#));
- Support and publicise a co-ordinated, collaborative approach to outreach and progression through a range of activities in collaboration with organisations such as the International Centre for Life, Great North Museum and Newcastle Science City (closely aligned with the extensive STEM outreach programme delivered by the Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering).



#### 4(d) Admissions

- 4.8 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.
- 4.9 The University has extensive experience of assessment of contextual data to inform admissions tutors' decisions about individual applicants.

##### **Summary of planned activities:**

- i) 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);
- ii) Continue to take account of contextual data and information in assessing the ability and potential of individual undergraduate applicants in all subject areas;
- iii) 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 and those with non-traditional qualifications which are outside HEFCE's 'ABB+ equivalence' list.

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

- 4.10 Underpinning our approach to student retention and success is commitment to holistic and coherent engagement with our students throughout the student life-cycle. The value proposition which we offer our students is that **we provide education for life** through a fully-rounded, enjoyable and formative student experience in which students feel part of a supportive learning community. This is particularly important for students from 'WP' backgrounds.
- 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 reflect just a proportion (approx 30%) of the University's overall development work in this area.
- 4.12 Whilst new developments are included below, 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.
- 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 (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.
- 4.15 Our 2014 Access Agreement includes an increased emphasis on targeted support for WP students in terms of student progress and wellbeing (eg academic support, transition, induction, one-to-one financial advice, mental health support).

### **Summary of planned activities funded or part-funded through the Access Agreement:**

#### **New activities from 2014 are highlighted in bold text**

- i) As part of a broader work experience scheme contributing to the overall 'student offer', **further develop and promote an expanded range of work experience, internship, employer mentoring, volunteering and employment options, including a scheme to promote preparation for graduate careers, targeted specifically at WP students;**
- ii) **Further grow our '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 available as a supernumerary module). This will benefit WP students on a proportionate basis;
- v) **Co-ordinate, develop and better promote (including an online 'one-stop-shop') the academic services available to support students' academic skills post-entry (eg [Maths Aid](#); [Writing Development Centre](#));**
- vi) **Provide targeted one-to-one support for students at risk of dropping out at various transition points (eg those with Aspergers, autism, mental health problems, disabilities; and those who are care-leavers or student parents); one-to-one follow-up, support and online information to supplement initial induction; mentoring for disabled students; preventative measures such as advice on financial management; Disability workshops; stress management programmes; and targeted support for 'at risk' WP students identified through attendance monitoring;**
- vii) **Provide (through our Students' Union) bursaries for students from low-income backgrounds to encourage WP students to participate in student societies and sports teams;**
- viii) **Provide individual face-to-face financial advice and support to WP students;**
- ix) **Expand resources for provision of mental health advice, targeted particularly at those from under-represented groups;**
- x) 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 in 2013 and 2014**

5.1 The University provides generous financial assistance to students from lower income backgrounds and target under-represented groups. Students entering the University in 2013 and 2014, 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 OFFA research indicates that cash bursaries may not affect students' choice of institution, our assessment of the applications for hardship support over the past five years shows that bursaries play an important part in reducing the financial burdens and debt for individuals. It is also clear 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. Section 9 provides more evidence to support these observations. Our proposals for financial

support take account of this evidence and include both fee discounts and cash bursaries to provide optimum support.

5.4 It is too early to assess the impact on potential applicants (especially those from target WP groups) of the new fees environment and numbers control arrangements. We will 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 overall package of support 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. We have also reviewed and minimised additional costs to students and provide financial support towards the costs of compulsory field trips.

5.6 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 on the OFFA website).

5.7 Our Student Financial Support for 2013 or 2014 entry Home fee undergraduate students is as follows:

Household Income	Amount of Award	a) <b>Newcastle University Opportunity Scholarships (incorporating 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 Opportunity Scholarships and the Fee Discounts from Year 2 onwards will be funded through the Government's <b>National Scholarship Programme</b>, together with additional matched funding from Newcastle University.</p> <p>Opportunity Scholarships for students from other parts of the UK, and the Cash Bursaries for <u>all</u> UK recipients from year 2 onwards will be funded by Newcastle University as part of the Access Agreement commitments.</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 <u>or</u> who enter Newcastle University 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</b> per year, plus a <b>cash bursary of £4,500</b> per year</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><b>Laidlaw Scholarships</b> awarded to <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>

- 5.8 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 in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland) for assessment.
- 5.9 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 Scholarship](#)
- 5.10 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.
- 5.11 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>3</sup>. Specifically:
- Students funded by the NHS 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-funded) Opportunity 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.
- 5.12 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) through our Access Agreement funds to support student retention.
- 5.13 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.
- 5.14 From the information which we have about our current students, we estimate that ca. 30% of our new entrants in 2014 are likely to receive financial support, increasing to ca. 32% by 2017-18.
- 5.15 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.
- 5.16 In addition to our Access Agreement financial support schemes, we also offer a range of 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.
- 5.17 All of Newcastle University's PGCE programmes fall into the subject categories where generous Teaching Agency (TA) Training Bursaries are available for well-qualified students. We support this drive for excellence and do not offer additional bursaries to students not eligible for TA support. PGCE students who suffer financial hardship whilst at Newcastle University are able to apply for relevant support.
- 5.18 In order 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 Disclosure and Barring Service (formerly Criminal Records Bureau). For PGCE students with household income up to £42,600, the DBS costs will be funded as part of our Access Agreement Faculty commitments.

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<sup>3</sup> This funding is in the form of a National Health Service (NHS) bursary

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

5.19 Our review of financial support from 2013-14 onwards led us to reassess our financial support for 2012-entry UK<sup>4</sup> students. Our 2012 scheme was constrained by the small number of National Scholarship awards and funding available. We have changed our scheme for eligible 2012 entrants, from their second year of study onwards, to reflect our greater emphasis on cash bursaries, and to offer some support to a small number of students who did not receive an award in 2012-13 because of funding limitations.

5.20 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 £23,000 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. 60 individuals) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cash bursary of £1,000 per year from year 2 onwards</li> </ul>

5.21 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 for milestones, monitoring and evaluation:

- UCAS application and intake datasets purchased annually by the University;
- HESA Performance Indicators concerning student intake;
- Data provided by the Student Loans Company regarding eligibility of students for financial support (supplemented by the University's own data relating to non-SLC payments to eligible students).

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 also reflect the broader context of our Interim Widening Participation Strategic Statement (June 2012).

### 6(a) Activity Targets

6.4 Our main Activity Targets from 2012-13 to 2016-17 are summarised below, and focus on key areas of activity linked to the impact targets. (Our Access Agreement includes a wide range of other broader activity developments for which it is more difficult to articulate numerical or measurable targets. However, progress in these areas will be summarised in the relevant monitoring returns in due course.)

- 18 Graduate Ambassadors to be appointed in 2014-15
- Number of schools/colleges targeted and visited to grow to ca. 500 by 2016-17
- Expand PARTNERS to ca. 200 schools / colleges by 2015-16.
- Successfully lead the Realising Opportunities programme for 12 research-intensive universities; Expand membership by up to two additional universities per year from 2013-14.
- Expand residential Summer Schools, with places for up to 900 participants by 2016
- Expand events for parents and teachers in line with regional targeting and expansion plans
- Provide targeted financial support for ca. 30% of entrants (2014), increasing to 32% (2017-18)
- Provide new paid placement opportunities for WP students (approx 70 extra by 2016-17) as part

<sup>4</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.

of a broader programme of opportunities available to all students

- i) Maintain Buttle UK accreditation for work to support Looked after Children
- j) Ca. 110 students from black or minority ethnic groups to apply to the University through the PARTNERS Supported Entry route in 2014.
- k) Organise an annual awareness-raising event for deaf / disabled students and advisers, through the regional partnership of Newcastle, Northumbria and Sunderland Universities.
- l) 10 students to make two visits each to their former school / college in 2014-15, and 5 Alumni to make one visit each (through a new outreach programme delivered by the Students' Union);
- m) Develop a new Facebook page, supported by the Graduate Ambassadors, to engage and support WP students throughout the university application process (by 2013-14)

## 6(b) Impact Targets

6.5 In accordance with the OFFA guidelines, the targets set in the 2012 entry Access Agreement have not been changed in this Agreement. Our plans and targets are ambitious and stretching. Whilst we are confident that we will be able to deliver the planned outreach commitments, it must be noted that the introduction of £9,000 fees coupled with HEFCE's numbers control arrangements creates a potential conflict with our WP aspirations, and we have already seen a decline in the proportion of some under-represented groups in 2012. We will continue to monitor the impact of these inherent tensions, and will review our targets if appropriate for 2015 onwards.

6.6 The University's planned outreach activities will target state schools/colleges in the identified regions, and **our principal focus is on the targets that relate to the North East and the other target regions**. All students from the targeted schools or colleges will be affected by these activities, whether or not they are from a key under-represented group. We will work closely with teachers to target 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 our target regions, based on students from LPNs. Where available, we will also use IMD data and other indicators (eg eligibility for Free School Meals, Pupil Premium data) to help us to refine our targeting.

6.8 Our extended regional targeting activity, our focus on particular schools, our work with teachers and an enhanced focus on the use of social media to extend the reach of our activity mean that we can be optimistic that, in setting regional 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. We include below some estimated overall targets and milestones for these and other target groups.

6.9 The expected cumulative impact of progress towards targets for regional expansion has been taken into account in the table below. Numbers and impact in individual regions are likely to fluctuate year on year. We have therefore 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 and reported as appropriate in future Access Agreements and monitoring returns.

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: APPROVAL, MONITORING AND EVALUATION ARRANGEMENTS

- 7.1 The plans in this Access Agreement have been considered and agreed by the University's Executive Board, and will be reported to University Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (ULTSEC), Senate and Council (these latter three all include student representation).
- 7.2 The University's performance against targets and HESA benchmarks is monitored annually on receipt of UCAS data and annual Performance Indicators. This includes a particular focus on progress towards targets relating to the North East and other identified regions or groups of regions.
- 7.3 The University reports 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 are reviewed and evaluated annually by ULTSEC (through the Fair Access Committee) and reported to Executive Board, Senate or Council as appropriate. Recommendations for revisions to the Access Agreement are considered and agreed by ULTSEC (or its Chair) and by Executive Board (if appropriate), and then submitted to OFFA for approval.
- 7.5 The University is taking further steps to establish a robust framework and context for evaluation of its Access Agreement activities and impact. These include:

**a) Establishment of a Centre for Research into Social Mobility (CRSM)** to build closer links between research, policy and practice at Newcastle.

- The CRSM will be established under the aegis of the University's [Institute for Social Renewal](#) which is the focus for the University's research activity in this key societal challenge theme.
- Our Access Agreement contribution to this development will include a pilot project of Graduate Ambassador interventions from primary school to undergraduate study, to research whether creative practice in learning and teaching can positively influence the confidence, aspirations, attainment and effective choices of WP students at all stages from primary through to HE delivery. This project, to be delivered in collaboration with the charity [Creativity, Culture and Education](#), aims to achieve three outcomes: actual impact on aspirations and choices, as a result of the interventions; a contribution to the research outcomes of the Research Centre; and a direct contribution to the establishment of a robust and holistic evaluation and research framework which will support all of our WP evaluation work, covering both fair access and outcomes in terms of retention, employability and social and geographical mobility.

**b) Appointment of a full time member of staff in the University's outreach team to focus on monitoring and evaluation.** The work in this area in 2012-13 includes:

- Articulating "what success looks like" in relation to the University's WP activity;
- Conducting an audit of relevant WP research and good practice in monitoring and evaluation in collaboration with other HEIs (March – June 2013), in the context of the student life cycle, in order to identify and address gaps in the University's approach to evaluation;
- Working collaboratively with other HEIs and education organisations to develop a robust Evaluation Strategy that: focuses resource on activity that maximises impact; takes account of

equality and diversity issues; and ensures that the outcome of evaluation directly informs the development of future activity;

- The scoping, purchase and tailoring to the needs of Newcastle University of the H.E.A.T. (Higher Education Access Tracker Service) database developed under Aimhigher, co-ordinated by the University of Kent and currently used by 13 Higher Education Institutions (April-June 2013);
- The development, in conjunction with the Student Finance Team, of a framework for evaluation of all WP activity (outreach and financial support) (July 2013).

#### 7.6 Implementation of the Evaluation Strategy (from 2013-14) will include

- Annual monitoring of the University's performance against widening participation targets and benchmarks; and monitoring of the relative progression rates of students from particular groups (eg minority ethnic groups; deaf / disabled students);
- Detailed tracking of individual students from pre-entry to employment from the key WP workstreams: eg PARTNERS programme supported entry route, Realising Opportunities, Promise Scholarships and in due course, the Raising Aspiration Partnership (particularly focusing on Care Leaver progression);
- Randomised control trials on a number of the University's outreach activities (those where strict eligibility criteria are necessary for participation) to establish causation between interventions and student progression to higher education.

7.7 Independent external evaluation of particular initiatives or new developments may also 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 will provide relevant information to UCAS, the Student Loans Company, the GTTR and other relevant external or statutory bodies as required.

8.2 Our printed 2014 Undergraduate Prospectus contains general information about student finance and is supplemented by our annual **Guide to Student Finance**, which includes information about fees and financial support from the government financial support and the University. It also provides advice on budgeting and financial management. Copies are sent to all enquirers and all UK schools and colleges, and are available at all relevant events. The Guide is revised bi-annually to reflect any mid-year changes.

8.3 Our website has up-to-date information, including a [PDF version of the Guide to Student Finance](#). It includes clear information about eligibility criteria for scholarships, with a postcode 'look up' tool so that students can find out if they live in a Low Participation Neighbourhood. Potential and current students contribute to user testing processes to ensure that web 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 support available. We are investing significantly in CRM and social media developments to ensure that students are fully-informed about the financial support available.

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](#) provides a rich source of resources and events through a single portal.

8.6 Our student recruitment and WP teams and our trained Graduate Ambassadors visit schools and colleges to give presentations to teachers and pupils about student finance and provide student finance information at Visit Days and post-application open days. From 2013, this will be supplemented by online support through our social media channels.

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. From 2013-14, we are also appointing an additional financial adviser to provide one-to-one financial / budgeting support to WP students.

## PART 9: CONSULTATION WITH STUDENTS

9.1 Student engagement and consultation are an important part of our annual Access Agreement planning processes. In particular, in reviewing the proposed financial support arrangements, the University has taken account of the outcomes from three key surveys:

- In March 2011 an online questionnaire was issued to 3,159 students who had received University bursaries in February 2011. 922 students responded (29.2%) and were very positive about the impact and effectiveness of bursaries on the student experience. University bursaries may not significantly influence university choice but they prevent many students from experiencing financial difficulty and help them to remain on their courses, thus improving retention. In particular:
  - 89% 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 a University Bursary meant they did not need to work part-time, allowing them to concentrate more on their studies with, hopefully, improved academic outcomes.
  - 94% indicated that University Bursaries demonstrated the University's wish to support students from lower-income backgrounds.

- In March 2013, a survey was sent to 2012-entry UK undergraduates who had received either an Access Scholarship or a National Scholarship (under the terms of our 2012 Access Agreement). Whilst the number of recipients and respondents (first year only) was smaller than for the 2011 survey, the results reinforced the 2011 outcomes. Of the respondents who received a National Scholarship, 74.5% said that the tuition fee discount eased their concerns about future debt levels and 94.5% expressed a preference for either a cash bursary or a combination of fee discount and cash bursary (rather than just a fee discount):

*"Although the National Scholarship did not single-handedly save me from financial crisis, it did nevertheless help enormously in funding the cost of living. It gives you peace of mind."*

- Of the respondents who received an Access Scholarship, 82.1% stated that the cash bursary element had prevented them from experiencing financial difficulty:

*"Quite simply, I don't think I would have been able to afford all the new things I needed to be able to work effectively and my grades would have suffered as a direct consequence of that"*

- Newcastle University students (932 respondents) contributed to a National Union of Students survey ('The Pound in your Pocket') in 2012, and 69% of undergraduates said that they favoured a cash bursary over a fee discount; a further 14% favoured a combination of cash and fee discounts.

9.2 The President, Education Officer and Welfare Officer of the Students' Union are members of the Access Agreement Planning Group and are also taking responsibility for the development and delivery of key outreach and retention activities. Their Statement of Partnership is attached as Appendix 2. The Access Agreement Planning Group will continue to meet during the year to oversee implementation progress.

9.3 In liaison with the Students' Union we are developing a formalised route for consultation with a wide group of students, to enable us to seek their views on a range of issues, including the Access Agreement.

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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 13 years, involving 100% of North East FE colleges and schools with a sixth form, plus selected schools / colleges in Cumbria, Yorkshire and Greater Manchester (133 in total). All Newcastle University subject areas are involved in PARTNERS, the umbrella scheme for a diverse range of related aspiration-, attainment- and participation-raising activities for pupils of all ages. The PARTNERS supported entry route has enabled 2,309 WP students to enter Newcastle University since the programme was established in 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 13 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 outreach 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 are able to give credible and contemporary information. 2014-15 will be the tenth successive year of the Graduate Ambassador Scheme. From 2013, some of the Graduate Ambassadors will work with identified subject areas to promote outreach and retention.

Often from WP backgrounds themselves, 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, communicating with potential students through social media, 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.

### 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. Up to 200 Newcastle University undergraduate students participate each year, mostly for academic credit through a Career Development Module, typically providing more than 11,000 hours of support to more than 8,500 pupils. Further information is available here: [Students into Schools](#)

### 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 (submitted to HEFCE in June 2012).

### **National Collaboration and partnership: REALISING OPPORTUNITIES**

Newcastle University is the lead institution for Realising Opportunities (RO), a national collaborative Partnership of 12 research intensive universities working together to promote fair access and social mobility of students from under-represented groups. The Partnership was awarded the Times Higher Education Widening Participation Initiative of the year 2011 and in October 2012 featured as an example of good practice in Alan Milburn's report 'University Challenge: How Higher Education Can Advance Social Mobility'.

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. The programme includes a National Student Conference and each student is provided with ongoing support and encouragement by a student mentor who is an undergraduate student from one of the 12 universities.

Successful completion of RO, which includes a robust academic element, will result in additional consideration given to applications through UCAS from all 12 universities, and in the case of Newcastle University, eligible applicants will receive alternative offer in which successful participation in RO contributes up to 40 UCAS points or equivalent towards the grades needed for entry.

Realising Opportunities has a robust evaluation framework which incorporates contextual data, student aspirations and the tracking of students through the UCAS process. In 2013 an academic research team will be appointed to provide an overarching academic evaluation study for RO.

Each of the 12 participating Realising Opportunities institutions has committed future funds to ensure the on-going delivery and development of RO to 2016 (an agreed financial contribution of £42,092 per institution to support delivery in 2014 – 2015). From 2013, the partnership is expecting to expand its membership by up to two additional universities per year to increase the geographical coverage of the scheme.

**Collaborative Target:** For the first time the Partnership has set a joint target with regard to progression to research intensive universities (RIU)\*. Our aim is that 36% of students starting the RO Programme in Year 12 in 2013 will progress to an RIU in 2015 and that 38% of students starting RO in Year 12 in 2014 will progress to an RIU in 2016.

\*defined by membership of either the Russell Group or the 1994 Group.

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

### **Regional collaborative network: RAISING ASPIRATIONS PARTNERSHIP**

Newcastle University is a member of the [Raising Aspirations Partnership \(RAP\)](#), a regional collaborative Partnership of three universities (Newcastle University, Northumbria University and the University of Sunderland) working together to support young people and their influencers from widening participation backgrounds to make informed decisions about Higher Education.

The Partnership works with young people between the ages of 10 and 16, along with their parents, carers, teachers and advisers through a series of progressive, interactive and engaging activities. Interventions range from one-off information sessions to six-week programmes designed to build the confidence of young people and give them the information they need to make decisions about their future.

Each of the three Partner institutions has committed future funds through their Access Agreements to ensure the on-going delivery and development of the Raising Aspirations Partnership until 2017.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Statement of partnership from Newcastle University Students' Union**

Access, outreach and retention have become greater areas of interest for the Students' Union following recent changes in the Higher Education landscape, with a greater need to focus on how we engage future students. Due to the increase in tuition fees we need to ensure we are able to aid prospective students in an understanding that Newcastle University is an accessible option, and the subsequent ways we guarantee these students have a positive student experience.

In previous years of Access Agreement planning the Students' Union has been involved in several meetings of consultation before approving the final draft for approval. However this year the students union has been directly involved at multiple levels in planning, supporting the creation and delivery of access and retention activity throughout the year. There have been three sabbatical officers who have had the chance to provide formal student feedback through representation on the working group for the project and formal engagement in key decisions that have been made. Ideas of new directions that we could be exploring have been discussed and generated by groups of students through the Students Unions representative system. The University and the Students' Union have taken an active step in the direction of partnership and the Students' Union has been co-creators in some of the key ideas presented in this access agreement for 2014/15.

The National Union of Students research *Pound in Your Pocket*, where Newcastle University held the highest respondent level, presents evidence that cash bursaries are favoured by students as the means of financial support as opposed to fee waivers which bear no impact upon a students financial burden when trying to afford accommodation and living costs. Therefore student feedback was integrated into the Access Agreement and so bursaries have been adopted, with fee waivers not being the main level of financial support. The University offers three levels of financial scholarships those from low income backgrounds, those from low participation backgrounds and promise scholarship students who will receive a fee waiver of half of their tuition and a bursary of £4,500. The university through their UCAS offer will make it known that students can be eligible for the National Scholarship Programme and other scholarships the University offers, so that they have an informed choice about the support available to them. The University has also made a commitment to care leavers, a group which face further barriers to education. As financial support is one of the biggest hardships students face the Students' Union is reassured to see such high levels of support offered by Newcastle University to our students.

The Students' Union fully supports the figure of 31.94% of income from tuition fees above £6000 to be allocated to access and retention activities which reflects a commitment to and importance of this activity. One of the biggest assets of the Access Agreement 2014/15 is the identified need to shift from focusing purely on the widening participation students, but to further groups of students who face barriers to entering Higher education. For instance mature students may not necessarily be economically disadvantaged but the Access Agreement accepts that they face different barriers, having to balance a work life balance. This year the University and the Students' Union having jointly worked to make the campus student friendly through various initiatives, realise that student parents are a group who are less likely to enter Higher Education, and make an assurance of outreach activities to these groups. Although these groups of students are 'harder to reach groups' we are excited that the University is considering all types of students and how diverse a campus we are aiming to achieve. The Access Agreement 2014/15 aims to introduce a wider scope to outreach activities, with plans to extend geographically which schools we are reaching through Graduate Ambassadors, Partners, and the Student Union scheme where Alumni and students return to their old school. There is also a commitment to reach prospective students at an earlier age, with plans to approach primary school children. Through targeting young people who are least likely to progress into Higher Education at an earlier age we will be able to develop their understanding of university as part of a continuous process.

This year's Access Agreement focuses on a student lifecycle approach, considering the entirety of the student journey from initial interest to leaving Higher Education, rather than solely prospective students. Through discussing the barriers that various types of student groups face at each stage of their University journey and the possible interventions which might alleviate these, we were able to create new levels of support to aid retention. The Students' Union has committed to implement participation bursaries, as central to delivering a rounded student experience is the opportunity to be involved in extra curricular activities, however we have



identified that financial difficulty can be a barrier to involvement. The aim of this initiative is to support retention and success, to make us more accessible to all students and in ensuring all groups of students feel supported during their time at Newcastle. There are various initiatives the University are employing to ensure that students aren't facing a financial burden and increase employability through job opportunities and placements.

Various targets have been compiled as a way of measuring the success of each of the schemes and initiatives in this agreement, ensuring that we do widen participation and create an accessible route for prospective and current students, regardless of their background. The experience of working with the University has been extremely positive and beneficial, a relationship which will continue to grow in future years ensuring that the student voice is at the heart of the Access Agreement, both fully consulted and fully integrated.

**Laura Perry (President)**

**Rachael Thornton (Education Officer)**

**Esta Innes (Welfare and Equality Officer)**

Newcastle University Students' Union

8 April, 2013.