



## **Access Agreement 2017-18**

## PART 1: NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY IN CONTEXT

- 1.1 This Access Agreement between Newcastle University and the Office For Fair Access (OFFA) covers the period from 1 September 2017 until 31 August 2018. It relates to **Home undergraduate and PGCE students entering the University from September 2017**. The University may review the provisions and commitments of this Access Agreement in the event of a change in government policy.
- 1.2 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. As a **world-class civic university**, we aim to marry excellence with relevance and to respond to the needs and demands of civil society.
- 1.3 **Our record of Widening Participation in the North East is outstanding. We not only significantly exceed all of the national WP benchmarks in terms of the WP profile of North East entrants, but we also continue to make good progress against the overall benchmarks.** We have been working for more than 20 years with schools and colleges, from primary through to sixth form, to promote progression, participation and flexible access in the North East, which has the lowest young participation in HE rate in England at 33% in 2011-12 (compared to the national average in England of 38% and a rate in London of 48%). However, further disaggregation of our data shows that participation rates for young white working class males are particularly low and there is an under-representation of females into science and engineering based courses.
- 1.4 We play **a leading role in national and regional collaborative partnerships** to promote WP and fair access. Newcastle University leads Realising Opportunities - an award-winning national fair access scheme involving 15 universities, working together to promote access for WP students to research intensive universities. In the North East, we lead the North East Raising Aspiration Partnership (NERAP), through which the five universities in the region aim to ensure that all young people in the North East have the opportunity to make informed decisions about Higher Education. Using the National Networks for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO) funding, we have expanded our reach through NERAP to include young carers, estranged students, a progressive programme for primary schools, and additional activities to support care-leavers and their influencers.
- 1.5 We attract **students of high ability and potential from all parts of the UK**, though just over half are from the three northern regions of England: the North East, Yorkshire & Humberside and the North West. Our expanded outreach activity has contributed to an excellent WP profile for students from this broader Northern region.
- 1.6 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 in the context in which they have been achieved.
- 1.7 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. Fair access issues and relevant data are considered throughout the cycle by the relevant University committees. See Part 8 for further information.
- 1.8 Whilst national research shows that financial support does not have a significant impact on access to Higher Education, our institutional research indicates that it does support retention and progression post-entry. With this in mind, and in anticipation of a 50% reduction of Student Opportunity funding (circa £0.5m for Newcastle University), we are proposing to reduce the proportion of Access Agreement spend in this area, ensuring however that the new model will continue to support a similar proportion of our students. Details of this proposed approach can be found in Part 3.
- 1.9 The University offers its students **challenging, flexible and relevant degree programmes**, taught by experts whose research enriches the learning environment, and using methods and facilities that are accessible for all.

- 1.10 As the diversity of our student population increases, so too does our **commitment to providing enhanced study skills and pastoral support for our students**, so that all students, particularly those with additional or complex needs, have the maximum opportunity to be successful in their studies.
- 1.11 Our commitment to providing education for life is demonstrated by extensive voluntary, accredited or paid 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 Careers Insights Programme has been extended to support graduate-level outcomes for all WP students, not just those entering through our PARTNERS Programme. Our strengths in enterprise education and vocationally-relevant programmes are reflected in our **excellent record of graduate employability**.
- 1.12 The University takes a **strategic, whole-institution approach** to widening participation and fair access. Promoting, encouraging and supporting diversity is embedded in the University's key strategies: *Vision 2021*, the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy, the Equality Strategy and the Student Recruitment Strategy. The Access Agreement itself has been developed by a **cross-University Working Group, supported by expert Sub-Groups**, involving representatives from the Students' Union, Student Advice Centre, Faculties and key Student Services, reflecting the importance of a seamless and coherent student journey throughout the student lifecycle.

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

- 2.1 In the academic Year 2017-18, Newcastle University will charge an annual tuition fee of £9,000 for full-time undergraduate degree programmes and the full-time Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme. This fee applies to Home undergraduate and PGCE students entering Newcastle University in 2017 and to returning undergraduates who entered from 2012 onwards.
- 2.2 The fee for returning undergraduate 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 fifth year of the five-year programmes in Medicine and Dentistry; and the four-year accelerated Medicine degree for graduates. Owing to changes in the NHS Bursary funding, the undergraduate degree in Speech and Language Sciences will be included in the Access Agreement arrangements from 2017-18 onwards.
- 2.4 Placement Year fees for students entering Newcastle University from 2012 onwards are as follows:
- Students on a part-year work or study abroad placement, including a part-year ERASMUS placement, (where the rest of the year is spent at Newcastle University), will pay the normal full fee for their programme of study.
  - Students undertaking a full year work placement or study abroad year which is additional to the standard programme, and which does not contribute to the final degree classification, will pay a fee of £1,000.
  - Students on the four-year Business Accounting and Finance programme provided in collaboration with PriceWaterhouseCoopers will undertake a placement year spread over years 2, 3 and 4 of the programme. The fee will be £9,000 in year 1 and £6,333 in each of years 2, 3 and 4.
  - Students on a full year work placement or study abroad year that is fully assessed and contributes to the final degree classification, replacing a year of study in Newcastle, will pay fees as follows:
    - Students studying for a full year overseas or on an ERASMUS placement: £1,350
    - Students on a non-ERASMUS business / industry placement year: £1,800
  - An optional 'year out' in which the student suspends study (i.e. is not registered with the University) incurs a zero fee.

The Placement Year fee is reviewed annually.

<sup>1</sup> This funding is in the form of a National Health Service (NHS) bursary  
University of Newcastle upon Tyne, trading as **Newcastle University**: Access Agreement for 2017 entry (Revised March 2016).

- 2.5 The University's fee levels, scholarships and financial support for eligible students are reviewed each year. Our fee levels may be increased or amended in future years if the Government raises the maximum fee cap amount or changes fee levels or fee policy.
- 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 2017.
- 2.7 The University's estimated fee income above the basic fee is summarised below:

| Year   | 2016-17     | 2017-18     | 2018-19     | 2019-20     | 2020-21     |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Total (estimated) number of students paying above the basic fee</b> | 14,494      | 15,098      | 15,404      | 15,627      | 15,975      |
| <b>Total fee income <u>above the basic fee</u></b>                     | £42,447,936 | £44,209,193 | £45,141,755 | £45,810,755 | £46,008,755 |

*Note: These figures include Accounting and Finance students (fee £6,333 years 2-4) and Placement year students and do not take account of any future increases in the fee cap.*

## PART 3: ACCESS, STUDENT SUCCESS AND PROGRESSION METHODS

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

- 3.1 Our estimated Access Agreement expenditure 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 remains appropriate to maintain expenditure within the broad outlines shown in the table below, and to ensure that the expenditure (excluding bursary costs for returning students who entered Newcastle University prior to 2012) is on average between 32% and 33% of fee income above the basic fee.
- 3.2 We review our level of investment on an annual basis, taking into account progress towards the targets set in this Access Agreement, emerging priorities 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 five years from 2015-16. All planned expenditure is OFFA-countable.

| Activity / Scheme   | 2016-17            | 2017-18            | 2018-19            | 2019-20            | 2020-21            |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Outreach, Admissions and Fair Access (incl. staffing, infrastructure, evaluation) | £3,309,541         | £3,527,093         | £3,737,082         | £3,976,562         | £4,027,835         |
| Retention and success (incl. staffing /infrastructure)                            | £1,986,424         | £2,370,170         | £2,729,539         | £2,997,820         | £3,148,654         |
| University matched funding contribution to the National Scholarship Programme     | £482,681           | £124,269           | £8,898             | £4,296             | £0                 |
| Other (non-NSP) student financial support for students entering from 2012         | £8,181,908         | £8,179,570         | £7,969,844         | £7,680,763         | £7,546,312         |
| Bursary commitments to pre-2012 entry returners                                   | £37,450            | £0                 | £0                 | £0                 | £0                 |
| <b>Total estimated expenditure on Access Agreement commitments</b>                | <b>£13,998,004</b> | <b>£14,201,102</b> | <b>£14,445,363</b> | <b>£14,659,441</b> | <b>£14,772,801</b> |
| <b>Expenditure as % of income above the basic fee</b>                             | <b>33.0%</b>       | <b>32.1%</b>       | <b>32.0%</b>       | <b>32.0%</b>       | <b>32.0%</b>       |

- 3.4 The University's total contribution to WP and fair access includes outreach, disability support and student success activities funded by the HEFCE Student Opportunity allocation and collaborative funding, which contributes to our overall WP strategy.
- 3.5 The financial commitments in the table above do not include the additional indirect costs of employing additional Graduate Ambassadors / staff to deliver activity (office space, infrastructure, utilities etc).

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

#### Pre-Entry

- 3.6 On the basis of our assessment of our performance pre-entry, a focus on programmes of outreach that encourage the intake of WP students remains a key priority in our 2017 Access Agreement.
- 3.7 The University's progress in WP is measured and monitored annually through the national HESA performance indicators and through the OFFA monitoring processes. In addition, the University undertakes an annual assessment of progress in WP, based on UCAS application and entry data.
- 3.8 The table below summarises the University's performance from 2013 to 2015 against the latest HESA benchmarks (where available) and other priority groups. The table is based on our own analysis of UCAS data relating to the whole cohort and key target regions.

|   | Year (and total intake) | State Schools and Colleges (young entrants) | Lower socio-economic groups (NS-SEC 4-7) (young entrants) | Low participation neighbourhoods (LPNs) (young entrants) | Students from black/minority ethnic backgrounds (all ages) | Students declaring a Disability (all ages)                                     | White, Working Class, Male, Quintile 1 (% out of all) |
|---|-------------------------|---|---|--|--|--|---|
| <b>HESA Benchmark 2014-15</b>                         |                         | <b>83.10%</b>                               | <b>25.50%</b>   | <b>7.70%</b>   | <b>N/A</b>   | <b>N/A for all declaring disability (5.9% benchmark for in receipt of DSA)</b> | <b>N/A</b>  |
| <b>Whole cohort</b>                                   | <b>2013</b>             | 3009/3994                                   | 746/3404  | 337/3971   | 370/4224   | 314/4238   | 162/4213  |
|   | <b>4238</b>             | <b>HESA = 74.0%</b>                         | <b>HESA = 21.8%</b>                                       | <b>HESA = 8.1%</b>                                       | <b>8.76%</b>   | <b>HESA = 5.0%</b>   | <b>3.85%</b>  |
|   | <b>2014</b>             | 2738/3641                                   | 694/3406  | 332/3857   | 373/4247   | 338/4267   | 190/4092  |
|   | <b>4522</b>             | <b>HESA = 74.5%</b>                         | <b>HESA = 20.3%</b>                                       | <b>HESA = 8.7%</b>                                       | <b>8.78%</b>   | <b>HESA = 5.5%</b>   | <b>4.64%</b>  |
| <b>North East only</b>                                | <b>2013</b>             | 727/769                                     | 232/646   | 159/763  | 78/885   | 50/889   | 92/882  |
|   | <b>889</b>              | <b>94.54%</b>                               | <b>35.91%</b>   | <b>20.84%</b>  | <b>8.81%</b>   | <b>5.62%</b>   | <b>10.43%</b>   |
|   | <b>2014</b>             | 673/721                                     | 210/662   | 156/779  | 80/884   | 54/890   | 99/890  |
|   | <b>890</b>              | <b>93.34%</b>                               | <b>31.72%</b>   | <b>20.03%</b>  | <b>9.05%</b>   | <b>6.07%</b>   | <b>11.12%</b>   |
| <b>From North East, North West, Yorks &amp; Humbs</b> | <b>2013</b>             | 1769/2014                                   | 477/1696  | 268/2005   | 180/2160   | 125/2169   | 134/2160  |
|   | <b>2169</b>             | <b>87.84%</b>                               | <b>28.13%</b>   | <b>13.37%</b>  | <b>8.33%</b>   | <b>5.76%</b>   | <b>6.20%</b>  |
|   | <b>2014</b>             | 1719/1961                                   | <b>427/1762</b>   | 261/2065   | 170/2198   | 132/2210   | 158/2208  |
|   | <b>2210</b>             | <b>87.66%</b>                               | <b>24.23%</b>   | <b>12.64%</b>  | <b>7.73%</b>   | <b>5.97%</b>   | <b>7.16%</b>  |
|   | <b>2015</b>             | 1951/2196                                   | <b>517/1939</b>   | 254/2216   | 217/2381   | 178/2390   | 98/2387   |
|   | <b>2390</b>             | <b>88.84%</b>                               | <b>26.66%</b>   | <b>11.46%</b>  | <b>9.11%</b>   | <b>7.45%</b>   | <b>4.11%</b>  |

|   |             |               |                 |              |               |              |              |
|---|-------------|---------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| From target regions excluding the North East (NW, Y&H, M'side, E Mids, W Mids, Grtr London) | <b>2013</b> | 1620/2104     | <b>355/1784</b> | 138/2098     | 225/2171      | 165/2177     | 57/2172      |
|   | <b>2177</b> | <b>77.00%</b> | <b>19.90%</b>   | <b>6.58%</b> | <b>10.36%</b> | <b>7.58%</b> | <b>2.62%</b> |
|   | <b>2014</b> | 1502/1947     | <b>331/1737</b> | 131/2039     | 202/2103      | 152/2113     | 71/2110      |
|   | <b>2113</b> | <b>77.14%</b> | <b>19.06%</b>   | <b>6.42%</b> | <b>9.61%</b>  | <b>7.19%</b> | <b>3.36%</b> |
|   | <b>2015</b> | 1714/2178     | <b>370/1887</b> | 133/2200     | 237/2277      | 172/2283     | 43/2280      |
|   | <b>2283</b> | <b>78.70%</b> | <b>19.61%</b>   | <b>6.05%</b> | <b>10.41%</b> | <b>7.53%</b> | <b>1.89%</b> |

(Note: percentages are based on known data in each category, so the denominator differs in each case. Figures are Newcastle University figures unless indicated as = HESA))

3.9 Our WP performance overall for 2015 entry continues to show good progress towards the HESA benchmarks for state schools and lower socio-economic groups, indicating that the targeted expansion of our outreach and WP activity is taking effect. Progress towards the benchmark for students from LPNs has been less evident, reflecting the fact that over half of our LPN intake comes from the North East (representing only 21% of our total intake). The number of offers made by the University to identifiable WP students (PARTNERS, Realising Opportunities and LPN) has increased again, by 8.3% for 2016 entry, compared to the same point last year.

3.10 Newcastle University continues to perform extremely well in terms of WP intake from the North East, the region with the lowest young progression rate to HE in England. It is in the North East that our most intensive outreach work takes place. For this cohort, we already significantly exceed the HESA benchmarks, but 2015 data also shows progress in each category. This record reflects our delivery of an intensive, progressive and sustained programme of activity over many years (for example through the PARTNERS programme, Graduate Ambassador scheme and associated outreach, outlined in Appendix 1).

3.11 Figure 3.11 (a): Distribution of young entrants to Newcastle University, 2015 Entry

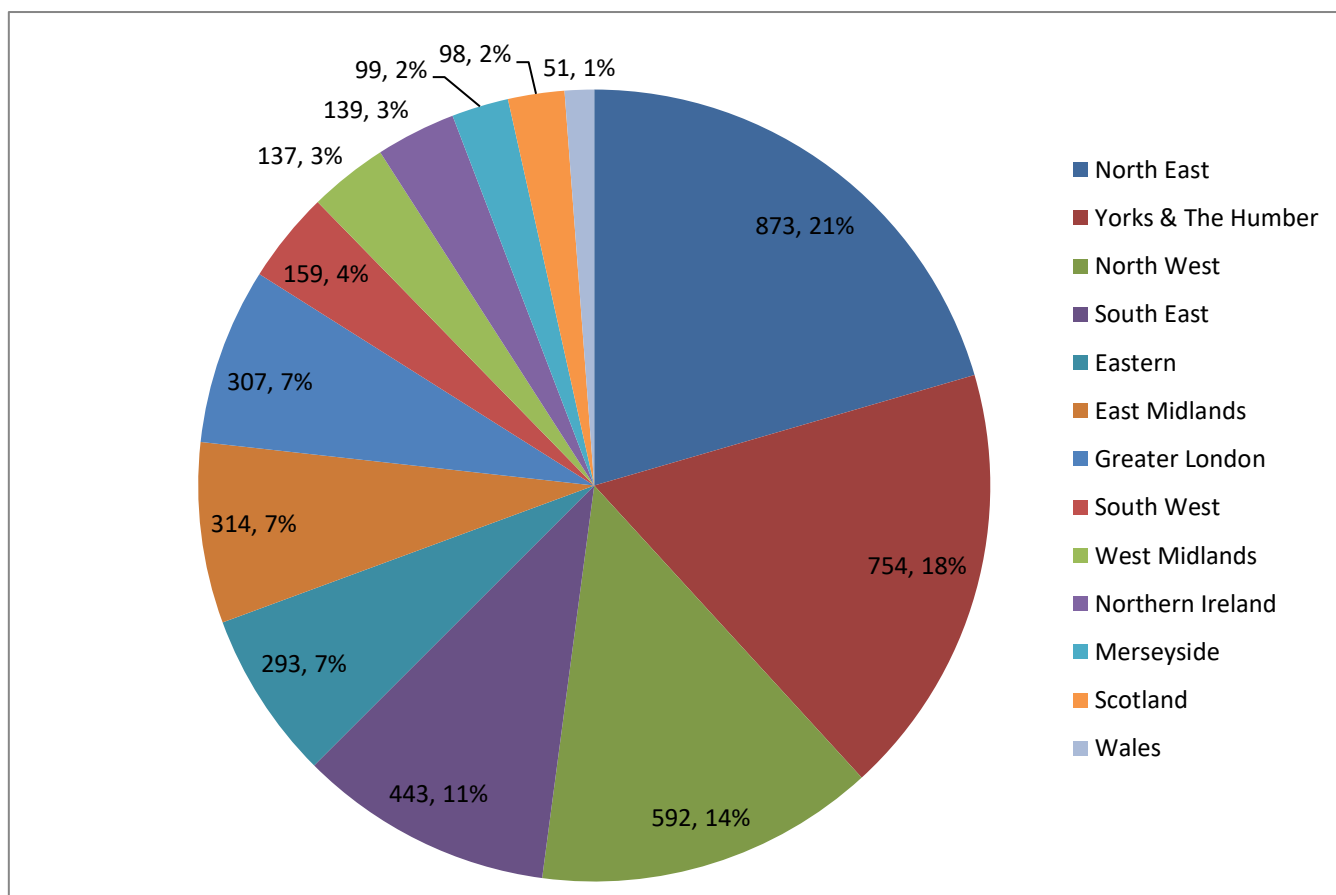
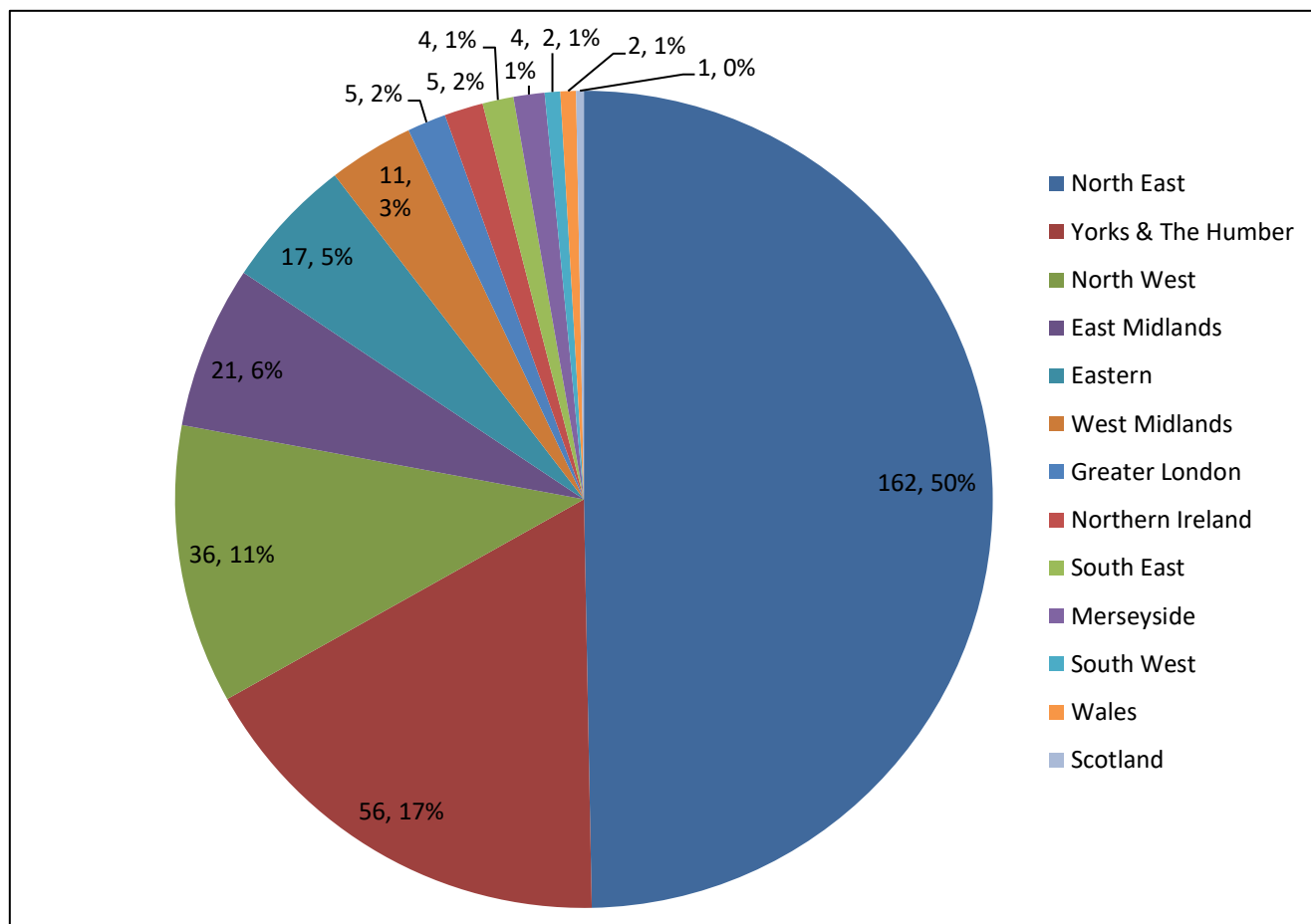


Figure 3.11 (b): Distribution of LPN young entrants to Newcastle University, 2015 Entry



- 3.12 Figure 3.11(a) shows the distribution of young entrants to Newcastle University in 2015 by region of domicile. Approximately 21% of our 2014 young entrants were from the North East (reflecting the relatively sparse regional population), but slightly more than half (53%) of all 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 against our benchmarks.
- 3.13 Figure 3.11(b) shows the distribution of young LPN entrants to Newcastle University in 2015 by region of domicile. Approximately 78% of our LPN entrants come from the three northernmost regions of England, again likely to be a result of our targeted WP outreach work.
- 3.14 Overall, the charts show that the University has a strong national recruitment profile and reputation, and this has an impact on our overall WP performance. Despite the fact that only 21% of our 2015 intake was from the North East, this accounted for 50% of our total LPN intake (49% in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, 38% in Faculty of Medical Sciences and 56% in the Faculty of Science Agriculture and Engineering). Detailed analysis by region demonstrates the challenge of WP in regions that are geographically more remote. For example, the South East is the fourth largest provider of the University's students (11%) yet only accounts for 1.2% of LPN intake (only four individual students). The impact of our intensive outreach activity in the Northern region is therefore diluted when the total intake is analysed, a key factor affecting our progress towards overall HESA benchmarks over the past ten years.

- 3.15 For this reason, if we are to increase our overall profile of WP students, we must continue to deliver intensive outreach activity beyond the North East and into our other identified target regions (broadly the North West, Yorkshire & Humberside, Merseyside, West Midlands, East Midlands and in Greater London through our new campus). As part of this, it has been important for us to take into account the 'cold spots' identified by HEFCE, using this data in our strategic approach to targeting schools and colleges.
- 3.16 Data from our UG home student population highlights some stark differences across subject disciplines, and in particular for some courses that support access to the professions. For example, using POLAR 3, LPN Quintile 1 data<sup>2</sup>, intake from 2012 to 2014 has declined for Dentistry (from 3.9% to 1.4%) and Architecture (from 6.2% to 5.8%). Although LPN intake for Chemical Engineering, Marine Sciences and Technology and Mechanical Engineering, is showing an upward trend over the same years, it still remains low (6.1%, 6.3% and 8.3% respectively) compared to the University average of 8.8%. LPN intake to Medicine however has shown a steady increase from 7.2% to 13.3%. This reflects the intensive outreach we have developed and delivered to support WP students from a young age into Medicine.
- 3.17 For 2014 entry, 49% of Newcastle's applicants were female and 51% were male. Applications from females were higher in Medical Sciences (58%) and in Humanities and Social Sciences (55%) but considerably lower in Science, Agriculture and Engineering (29%). Further disaggregation of intake data also demonstrates an under-representation of females into our Science and Engineering Faculty at 30.7%.
- 3.18 The proportion of BME applications to Newcastle University for 2014 entry has increased slightly to 14%. However, the sector's rate was much higher at 26%. Proportions of BME applicants also differed by Faculty for 2014 entry, with 25% in Medical Sciences, 14% in Science, Agriculture and Engineering and 9% in Humanities and Social Sciences.
- 3.19 Participation rates for young white working class males from low participation areas are well below the national participation average, and at Newcastle University have shown a steady decline over the last three years from 3.85% to 2.88% (using POLAR 3, Quintile 1 to define working class, as this will become the only available indicator).
- 3.20 The number of students participating on our PGCE programmes has declined in recent years as a result of changes in teacher training provision. Original objectives for Newcastle University for this cohort were to increase diversity in terms of male and BME applicants and also to support retention of these under-represented groups. The University has shown progress in both areas for this cohort, however percentages become skewed as numbers drop. On reflection, and given emerging priorities for white working class males and BME students across the lifecycle and across all disciplines (backed up by the University's data), we are proposing to monitor performance for these groups across the whole student body, rather than singling out PGCE cohorts.

### **Post-Entry**

- 3.21 Newcastle University has a strong record of student retention, progression and success, which are therefore not the primary focus of our Access Agreement (although very significant funding overall is invested in student support). Our Access Agreement is aligned with expected Student Opportunity Funding changes and overall University resource planning, so that we can provide all our students with a portfolio of support, with more emphasis and tailored support for those who have additional or complex needs.
- 3.22 HESA performance indicators for 2013/14 show that just 3.0% of our young entrants were no longer in HE after one year (compared with a benchmark of 3.4% and a UK average of 6.0%). We have, however, identified some trends and differences associated with particular groups of students. For example, there is a greater tendency for students to withdraw at this stage if they are mature (7.8%, UK average 11.8%) or from a low participation neighbourhood (4.3%, UK average 8.2%).

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<sup>2</sup> UCAS Exact data, Newcastle University applications, 2012-14



- 3.23 Non-continuation for undergraduate students at Newcastle from BME backgrounds was 16% compared to 10% for white students, and their satisfaction level was lower at 89% in the 2014 NSS, compared to 91% for white students. The same was true of students declaring a disability, with a satisfaction rate of 88%. Non-continuation rates were higher for students who were receiving DSA (11%) and the rate was higher again for those students who were disabled but not in receipt of DSA (16%).
- 3.24 Through analysis of our data, we have observed a significant increase in the number and proportion of students requiring additional tailored support. The number of undergraduate students declaring a long term mental health difficulty has more than doubled between 2012 and 2015 from 54 to 115 (53% increase). The number of students who declare multiple disabilities has increased from 18 to 24 in that same period (25% increase), and the number of undergraduate students declaring a specific learning difficulty (eg Dyslexia) has increased from 685 to 887 (a 23% increase). The number of students declaring an Autistic Spectrum Disorder alone between 2012 and 2015 has increased from 33 to 49 (32% increase). Whilst this is a welcome indicator of the increasing diversity of our student body, we recognise the need to review the support we provide.
- 3.25 We are developing appropriate support mechanisms to respond to these increases. As well as being committed to the provision of inclusive teaching strategies across all disciplines, including Technology Enhanced Learning, we have developed specific programmes to support students with hidden disabilities. For example, for students with Asperger's, those on the autistic spectrum and those with long term mental health problems, who often find transition particularly challenging, we have put in place a programme of support over the induction period. This focuses on early familiarisation with the accommodation, campus and city, independent living skills, the opportunity to access student societies to develop relationships in a safer environment and contact with expert staff to support them through this period. In 2013-14, we introduced innovative holistic support mechanisms for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) via 3 schemes: **The Autism/Asperger's Support Network (AASN); Social Mentoring; and a pre-registration Transition Event for new students.** These new schemes enable students to become collaborative partners in the development of their support provision during their studies at Newcastle. All initiatives have provided a robust platform for transition to independent forms of social and peer engagement to enhance the university experience and support retention. We anticipate increased participation in 2015/16, and are monitoring and evaluating the longer-term impact on social integration, academic success and retention for these students.
- 3.26 Further analysis of the data will help us to develop other programmes of support for vulnerable students in future Access Agreements.
- 3.27 A literature review of study skills to identify best practice and focus groups with staff and students, undertaken by the University in 2014, identified the need to make the provision of study skills for students more coherent. Staff from a variety of services (Library, Wellbeing, Maths Aid, Writing Development Centre, IT Services) and the Students' Union are working together to achieve greater coherence through a virtual study skills centre with a "no wrong door" approach to support.
- 3.28 The University's excellent overall record of student retention reflects the investment of significant resources in supporting student progression and success at the University. An increase in this resource, both in financial and staffing terms, particularly for those under-represented and/or vulnerable groups, has been built into the 2017 Access Agreement (including the provision of financial support for students declaring a disability and requiring additional support during their studies).

### **Graduation and Success**

- 3.29 Overall, Newcastle graduates have an outstanding employment record with 94.1% of our 2014 UK/EU graduates progressing to employment or further study within six months of graduating. With an emphasis on developing employability skills, our excellent reputation with employers, and access to a multi-award winning Careers Service, our graduates are in a strong position in the world of work. Our students are offered a wide range of options to help them gain skills and experiences and we are always seeking to develop and expand the opportunities for them to undertake work experience.

- 3.30 In view of our current record, this again is not the main focus of our 2017 Access Agreement, but emerging evidence suggests there may be work to be done in supporting the success of those from under-represented groups. National research on WP student progression and success indicates that inequalities experienced by many WP students continue at University. In a 2013 report entitled *The Paired Peers Project Report*<sup>3</sup> written by a research team from UWE and the University of Bristol, the authors note that *“social class inequalities continue at university. It is not simply a matter of capacity to adjust to formal learning processes. Inequalities are experienced and maintained through differences in awareness of, and capacity to participate in, the ‘student experience’.* They go on to discuss work placements: *“...whether paid or unpaid, internships and placements are hard to come by. Success depends very often on personal contacts, through family, relatives and friends. Here is where those from upper-middle-class backgrounds can benefit hugely”*. A study carried out by the Institute of Fiscal Studies<sup>4</sup> states that *“ten years after graduation, the average gap in earnings between students from higher and lower income backgrounds was £8K per year for men and £5.3K for women”*.
- 3.31 The Careers Insights Programme has been expanded and is now offered to all WP students at Newcastle University. This programme supports students from induction through to employment, by providing employer mentoring, networking opportunities, employer links, as well as sessions designed to build confidence and enhance employment skills. Students on the programme also have the opportunity to apply for a bursary to help them take up work placements, and, where appropriate, to attend external conferences and workshops.
- 3.32 Whilst WP students at Newcastle (including PARTNERS students) are successful on their degree programmes and in their search for employment, and a considerable number go on to undertake postgraduate study at the University, we note that overall, WP students have a lower rate of employment in *graduate-level jobs* than the wider student population (69% compared with 73% according to the most recent figures).
- 3.33 Further disaggregation shows that fewer students from target WP groups achieved a first or 2:1 degree classification. For example, 75% of BME students achieved a first or 2:1 compared to 86% of white students (a gap of 11%); this figure was 84% for disabled students compared to 86% for non-disabled students (a gap of 2%). Furthermore, 76.2% of white working class males achieved a first or 2:1 - this figure was 9% below the University average of 85.3%. It also differed considerably to the attainment of white working class females with 86.3% of those achieving a first or a 2:1 degree classification.
- 3.34 In terms of employment outcomes, using the 2013/14 DHLE data, BME students, disabled students and those from LPN backgrounds perform less well compared to the University’s total UK undergraduate population. 94.1% of all Newcastle UK undergraduates for this year were in positive destinations (compared with 85% for BME, 83% for disabled and 89% for LPN students), with 79.1% in graduate level work or study (compared to 75% for BME, 65% for disabled and 70% for LPN students).
- 3.35 There has been a significant increase in the proportion of PARTNERS graduates who are employed in graduate-level positions<sup>5</sup>; 70% in comparison to 53.8% for the 2013 cohort. This figure is much closer to the University average than ever before, and we believe is the result of our focus on this issue.
- 3.36 The 2013/14 DLHE data indicates that 26.8% of PARTNERS graduates are in further study. This figure is significantly higher than the University figure of 17% and the national average of 14%. For BME undergraduate students from Newcastle University, this figure is 21%, for disabled students (18%) and for students from LPNs (25%).
- 3.37 The University is planning further investment in strategies to build upon and sustain this positive trajectory.

<sup>3</sup> ‘The Paired Peers Project (2010-2013): A degree generation?’, Bradley et al, July 2013

<sup>4</sup> ‘How English domiciled graduate earnings vary with gender, institution attended, subject and socio-economic background’, Britton et al, 13 April 2016

<sup>5</sup> Based on The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide categorisation of ‘graduate level’, which includes those taking further study as a ‘graduate level’ position.

## PART 4: TARGET GROUPS AND APPROACH

### 4(a) Target Groups and Approach

4.1 For the purposes of this Access Agreement, the University's outreach work, support and financial investment across the lifecycle 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** or the **Realising Opportunities Scheme**
- Young entrants from **Low Participation Neighbourhoods and/or low income backgrounds**
- Students from **black and minority ethnic groups**
- Students with a **disability**
- **Looked After Children** / those who have experienced local authority care and **Estranged Students**
- **Young Carers**
- **White working class males**
- **Under-represented groups in particular subject areas, identified by University data**

Our WP and student success activities also seek to support and / or engage the following groups: younger-age pupils including those in primary schools; students who are parents; mature students; teachers and senior management teams in schools/colleges; parents and other influencers of potential students. Our admissions policies also support access for students from these target groups as well as refugees and asylum seekers.

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 having an impact on the proportion of entrants from the state sector. Progress is monitored annually through our own analysis and on publication of HESA performance indicators.

4.2 Based on our assessment of our access and retention record, our approach in the 2017 Access Agreement focuses on four key objectives:

- **To raise the aspirations and expectations of young people and their influencers in the North East; support informed decision making and increase the numbers applying and entering HE in the region.**
- **To increase WP student applications and intake to Newcastle University.**
- **To enhance student support for vulnerable groups to improve retention rates and degree classifications for WP students, underpinned by a better understanding of the issues affecting WP student progression.**
- **To develop skills for life to support transition into graduate-level employment or further study for WP students at Newcastle University.**

4.2 Milestones and targets relating to our approach are set out in Tables 7a and 7b of the Resources Plan.

#### 4(b) Access Agreement 2017-18 Summary of Key Priorities

Based on an assessment of our access and retention record outlined in section 3 (b), the key issues, objectives and activity priorities for Newcastle University's 2017 Access Agreement are summarised in the tables below, and illustrated in Appendices 1 - 4.

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| <b>Issue 1: The North East of England continues to have the lowest progression rate to Higher Education in the country</b>   |
| <b>Evidence:</b> North East HE Progression data  |
| <b>Objective:</b> To raise the aspirations and expectations of young people and their influencers in the NE; support informed decision making and increase the numbers applying and entering HE in the region  |
| <p><b>Key Priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Continue to Lead the North East Raising Aspiration Partnership involving the five universities in the region</b> to ensure that every young person in the North East has access to activities that support progression, and can make informed choices about Higher Education (this activity may be expanded from January 2017, subject to a successful bid to HEFCE for funding in June 2016)</li> <li>• Develop further our <b>University-wide programme of long term, sustained outreach</b> (from primary upwards). Include in the programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Targeted activity to encourage girls into STEM subjects</b></li> <li>○ <b>New work with identified target groups</b> e.g. care leavers, disabled students, student parents/carers, BME students, young carers and white working class boys</li> <li>○ <b>Outreach that supports access to the professions</b> e.g. the Medicine Mentoring Programme for local Year 12 students and an interactive outreach programme for Year 8/9 for Offshore and Marine Engineering</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Work with teachers and parents to <b>encourage study skills development and promote attainment-raising</b></li> <li>• <b>Provide high quality information</b> to support informed decision making (online, print, digital and social media and CRM communications)</li> <li>• Continue to <b>develop the evidence base</b> to understand the barriers for groups of WP students and what works in terms of HE outreach (e.g. Gypsy Roma Research in the School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences, unconscious bias research in Dentistry)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Impact measures:</b> Longitudinal tracking of beneficiaries through our programmes via the HEAT database and HESA statistics; pupil and teacher evaluations and no. of activities and interventions delivered for number of beneficiaries.  |

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| <p><b>Issue 2: Newcastle is making good progress in WP and significantly exceeds its benchmarks in terms of students from the North East, but it does not meet all of the national WP benchmarks and, in the case of students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods, there has been a drop in numbers in 2015</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Evidence:</b> HESA data; UCAS application/intake data; Newcastle University Equality and Diversity Report</p>  |
| <p><b>Objective:</b> Increase WP student applications and intake to Newcastle University</p>   |
| <p><b>Key Priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Extend the geographical reach</b> of our outreach work, including the further development of the Students' Union Back to Schools Project, Teachers' Toolkit and other digital outreach</li> <li>• Work with <b>Newcastle University London</b> to encourage applications and intake to the new campus, particularly for students from a BME background</li> <li>• Continue to <b>lead and develop the national Realising Opportunities Programme</b>, involving 15 universities supporting the "most able least likely students" into leading universities. Increase participant numbers in order to maximise intake</li> <li>• Continue to offer the <b>PARTNERS Programme Supported Entry Route</b> to eligible students in all schools and colleges in England. Amend eligibility criteria to include young carers and estranged students</li> <li>• Continue to offer schools 1000+ places per year on <b>intensive outreach activities (including residential summer schools) that support individual students from under-represented groups</b>. New developments in 2017 will include subject-specific mentoring for courses leading to professions such as Medicine and Engineering</li> <li>• Ensure the <b>University Admissions Strategy</b> supports the recruitment of WP students and those with protected characteristics cited in the Equality and Diversity Act, through the <b>University-wide use of contextual data in admissions</b>, to enable <b>reduced grade offers</b> and <b>special consideration for WP students at Confirmation and Clearing</b></li> <li>• <b>Better understand the Newcastle WP picture</b> in terms of applications, intake, progression and success for WP and Equality and Diversity groups and by subject-specific groupings</li> <li>• <b>Maximise current student input</b> in outreach development and delivery</li> <li>• Continue to <b>develop the evidence base</b> to inform activity and resource allocation</li> <li>• <b>Provide high quality information</b> about Newcastle University to support informed decision-making</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Impact Measures:</b> No. of schools/colleges reached (and engaged); Applications, offer rates and intake of WP students to Newcastle University from target schools; Intake through PARTNERS &amp; Realising Opportunities and longitudinal tracking of students; Pupil and teacher evaluation; The University Admissions Strategy; Number of Graduate / Student Ambassadors employed; Statement of Partnership from Newcastle University Students' Union; Newcastle University's Equality and Diversity Report</p>  |

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| <p><b>Issue 3: National evidence shows that post-entry, WP students do not perform as well in terms of retention and degree classification as non-WP students. This is also the case for WP students at Newcastle University</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Evidence:</b> PARTNERS Progress statistics; Evaluation of the Performance of PARTNERS and other WP Students at Newcastle University Academic Years 2004/05 – 2012/13, ECLS; NU Equality and Diversity Report; The Higher Education Academy ‘Undergraduate retention and attainment across the disciplines’ Report 2014; Differences in degree outcomes: Key findings – HEFCE, March 2014</p>  |
| <p><b>Objective: Enhance student support for vulnerable groups to improve retention rates and degree classifications for WP students, underpinned by a better understanding of the issues affecting WP student progression</b></p>  |
| <p><b>Key Priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of <b>targeted and appropriate financial support for students</b>. Reduce spending on bursaries/scholarships to lower the proportion of spend, offset the reduction in Student Opportunity funding and increase on-course support for WP students and vulnerable groups</li> <li>• <b>Support for disabled students</b> in the context of changes to the Disabled Student Allowance</li> <li>• Provision and awareness-raising of <b>coherent academic study skills support</b> for students, to improve awareness of and increase the number of referrals. Also included is a review of the current provision to ensure it meets the needs of the students and the curriculum</li> <li>• Develop <b>inclusive teaching strategies</b> across all disciplines, including comprehensive staff training. This includes investing in <b>Technology Enhanced Learning</b> to provide flexible pedagogies appropriate to subject disciplines to enhance the student learning experience for all students</li> <li>• Provision of <b>tailored support for students with additional support needs</b> (e.g. in transition and induction, additional financial advice, mental health support and practical support for disabled students)</li> <li>• Further development of innovative holistic <b>support mechanisms to support students with Autism Spectrum Disorder</b> via three schemes: The Autism/Asperger’s Support Network (AASN); Social Mentoring; and a pre-registration Transition Event for new students. These schemes enable students to become “collaborative partners” in the development of their own support needs at Newcastle</li> <li>• <b>Continue to review the evidence base for student support provision</b> and identify gaps in evaluation, including investigation of student performance/retention by qualification, subject area and, where possible, by WP group (disabled students, NS-SEC 4-7, students from LPN and mature students)</li> <li>• <b>Student withdrawal Task and Finish Group</b> established to provide additional help for students to ensure that appropriate support has been provided and the student is making an informed choice to withdraw</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Impact Measures:</b> % of students in receipt of financial support; Evaluation of impact of financial support inc. Promise Scholarships; Report on the development (and impact) of Academic Study Skills support project and no. of students accessing current services; University retention rates; National Student Survey and UG New Entrants Survey results, in particular student experience and satisfaction levels; Retention of students declaring a disability and those with autism; Newcastle University Equality and Diversity Report.</p>  |

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| <p><b>Issue 4: Once WP students graduate, a smaller proportion go into graduate-level employment than their non-WP counterparts. This is also the case for WP students at Newcastle University</b></p>   |
| <p><b>Evidence:</b> PARTNERS Progress statistics; Evaluation of the Performance of PARTNERS and other WP Students at Newcastle University Academic Years 2004/05 – 2012/13, ECLS; DLHE statistics; FutureTrack longitudinal research project 2008-2014, HECSU; The 'Paired Peers Project', University of Bristol and UWE 2013</p>  |
| <p><b>Objective: Develop skills for life to support transition into graduate-employment or further study for WP students at Newcastle University</b></p>   |
| <p><b>Key Priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extend the <b>Career Insights Programme</b> to all WP students to support the development of employment skills, work experience, employment networks and confidence</li> <li>• <b>Increase the engagement of WP students in careers-led activity</b> through better communication with targeted groups</li> <li>• Maximise the number of <b>on-campus employment and volunteering opportunities</b> providing work experience for students</li> <li>• Increase the number of <b>placement opportunities for all undergraduate students</b></li> <li>• Align systems and data in order to <b>track students from application through to destination outcome according to WP group</b>. Using this data to identify issues and develop strategies accordingly</li> <li>• Use Postgraduate Graduate and Student Ambassadors to <b>develop and deliver a programme of activities for current WP students that raises awareness of PG study opportunities</b>. This will include campus- based events, PG cafes (student-led themed events), enhanced digital information (blogs, videos and student stories) and drop-in advice sessions on how to apply</li> <li>• <b>PG Scholarships</b> for UK taught and research masters' students targeted at under-represented groups. This is not Access Agreement funded, but illustrates the commitment of the University to WP across the whole student lifecycle and access to the professions</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Impact Measures:</b> No. of students engaged with the Career Insights Programme (and by 18-19 those entering graduate employment); Number of WP students engaged in careers-led activity; Number of students employed/volunteering; UUK research outcomes; number of WP students progressing to PG study and employed at graduate level.</p>   |

## PART 5: FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

- 5.1 The University has committed to reduce spending on financial support by removing Promise, Laidlaw and Access Scholarships from 2017 entry. The savings from this will be ring-fenced to scope, identify and address issues relating to student progression and success, subject to the outcome of any changes in external circumstances. Ideally, this will result in more staff resources in Student Wellbeing and more investment in providing study skills support for students. In future years, this will also be used to cover the anticipated reduction in Student Opportunity funding.

- 5.2 The University will continue to provide targeted financial assistance to students from lower income backgrounds and under-represented groups, despite a reduction in funding in this area. Students entering the University in 2017, who are ordinarily resident in the UK/EU and to whom the home rate of tuition fee applies (subsequently referred to as 'home students') will be eligible for scholarship support according to the criteria below. We are anticipating this to be circa. £5.5m, allocated to 3,630 undergraduates in the form of Opportunity Scholarships (approximately 27.5% of students).
- 5.3 Although recent 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 burden and debt for individuals. It is also clear that students favour money that supports their living costs, rather than fee discounts. Our financial support for 2017 entry focuses on the provision of cash bursaries to provide optimum support and student choice.
- 5.4 Our overall package of support provides: targeted financial support for the duration of undergraduate study; additional funding for hardship support; and an extended range of paid placements and work opportunities on campus. We have also reviewed and minimised additional costs to students as well as providing financial support towards the costs of compulsory field trips, and participation bursaries for low income students wanting to get involved in student clubs and societies.
- 5.5 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).
- 5.6 Our Student Financial Support for **2017 entry Home fee undergraduate students** is as follows:

| Household Income       | Amount of Award        | a) <b><u>Newcastle University Opportunity Scholarships for home students</u></b> |
|------------------------|------------------------|--|
| <b>Up to £25,000</b>   | <b>£2,000 per year</b> | Paid as a <b>cash bursary</b> to all eligible UK/EU domiciled entrants in 2016   |
| <b>£25,001-£35,000</b> | <b>£1,000 per year</b> | Paid as a <b>cash bursary</b> to all eligible UK/EU domiciled entrants in 2016   |

- 5.7 Students eligible for a Newcastle University Opportunity 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.
- 5.8 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>6</sup>. Specifically:
- 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 Opportunity Scholarships in the year(s) when they receive NHS funding. This includes the fifth year of the five-year programmes in Medicine and Dentistry.
- 5.9 Students undertaking a placement year where the fee payable is £1,000, £1,350 or £1,800 (see Section 2.4 above) are not eligible for a Scholarship during the placement year.
- 5.10 As part of our ongoing commitments as an exemplary accredited Buttle UK institution (a commitment that continues now the Buttle UK award has ended), 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 success.
- 5.11 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.

<sup>6</sup> This funding is in the form of a National Health Service (NHS) bursary  
 University of Newcastle upon Tyne, trading as **Newcastle University**: Access Agreement for 2017 entry (Revised March 2016).



- 5.12 From the information which we have about our current students, we estimate that ca. 27.5% of our new entrants in 2017 are likely to receive financial support (compared to the projected 32% under the old model).
- 5.13 Evaluation will be undertaken re Newcastle University's revised financial support model in order to monitor the impact of these changes.
- 5.14 The University's financial support schemes are reviewed annually and may be revised again to reflect changing circumstances, student needs, numbers and/or government support arrangements.
- 5.15 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 [Subject Scholarships](#) website and on individual subject websites. We include payments to relevant students in our annual monitoring return to OFFA.
- 5.16 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 who are not eligible for TA support. PGCE students who suffer financial hardship whilst at Newcastle University can apply for relevant support.
- 5.17 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.
- 5.18 Continuing students who entered Newcastle University prior to 2017 will continue to receive financial support as specified in the relevant Access Agreement for their year of entry.

## **PART 6: TARGETS AND MILESTONES**

- 6.1 The University uses five sets of data for milestones, monitoring and evaluation:
  - UCAS application and intake datasets;
  - 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).
  - Destination of Leavers Higher Education Leavers (DLHE) data
  - Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) HESA track datasets
- 6.2 Our main Activity Targets focus on delivery linked to the key priorities. Targets have been refined, extended and, in a number of cases, added to, in order to reflect new and emerging priorities. They also reflect our focus on the whole student lifecycle.
- 6.3 The University's outreach activities target schools/colleges in the identified regions but a key focus is also to promote fair access and increase the diversity of our overall student intake. We work closely with teachers to target individual students from LPNs, to ensure that we particularly encourage these students to apply to and enter Newcastle University, as well as working with our recruitment team at our London campus to maximise engagement with BME students. Where available, we also use IMD data and other indicators, such as eligibility for Free School Meals and Pupil Premium data, to help us refine our targeting.
- 6.4 In setting regional intake targets for LPN students, we also expect to have a positive impact on the University's overall intake figures for students from LPNs.
- 6.5 Assessing progress against targets has been made more challenging in 2015 by ongoing issues relating to data protection, ownership and in particular the availability of UCAS data. This is particularly the case in our work to assess the impact of the Realising Opportunities Scheme on participating student behaviour.

- 6.6 Making progress towards intake targets has been challenging in the context of a rapidly changing external environment. In particular, Newcastle University, like our partner schools and colleges, is concerned about recent changes to the school curriculum and exam structure, and the possible negative impact this may have on student attainment. We already have concrete evidence of this in terms of the disappointingly low number of students who achieved the grades required to progress to a research intensive university via Realising Opportunities in 2015, and believe that the impact on WP intake in future could be even more significant, despite participating universities (including ourselves), giving lower offers to WP students. We are concerned that lower attainment in schools and colleges may make it more difficult for selective universities to capitalise on the flexibility offered by the removal of student numbers controls.

## **PART 7: APPROVAL, MONITORING AND EVALUATION ARRANGEMENTS**

- 7.1 This Access Agreement has been considered and approved by Professor Suzanne Cholerton, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Learning and Teaching and Chair of the Undergraduate Recruitment and Admissions Monitoring Committee. All Access Agreement commitments have been agreed at the University's Executive Board and will be reported to Senate and Council, both of which include student representation.
- 7.2 The University's performance against targets and HESA benchmarks is monitored annually by the University Recruitment and Admissions Committee. This includes a particular focus on progress towards targets relating to WP intake overall and intake from the broad North.
- 7.3 The University reports to OFFA each year through the annual monitoring processes.
- 7.4 Within the University, the effectiveness of the outreach and financial support schemes included in the Access Agreement is reviewed and evaluated annually by the Undergraduate Recruitment and Admissions Monitoring Committee (UGRAMC) and reported to Executive Board, Senate or Council as appropriate. Recommendations for revisions to the Access Agreement are considered and agreed by UGRAMC (or its Chair) and by Executive Board and then submitted to OFFA for approval.
- 7.5 Equality and Diversity issues are also considered by UGRAMC annually, upon receipt of the Annual Equality and Diversity Report in March. Where appropriate, equality impact assessments are undertaken and the outcomes and recommendations fed into the University's Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee and the Access Agreement Working Group.
- 7.6 A crucial strand of the work of the University's outreach team is to focus on monitoring and evaluation to ensure that resources are targeted to maximise impact. Our evaluation plan implements the use of common questions to compare short term impact across year groups, as well as using a range of quantitative and qualitative measures to evaluate all aspects of our approach to fair access long term. The purchase of the collaborative HEAT database, and its use across the University, enables us to track the impact of our outreach work throughout the student life-cycle. Our evaluation framework enables us to focus 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.
- 7.7 Our more intensive, residential events are over-subscribed, which enables us to utilise the group of students who are eligible for the event (as they meet our widening participation criteria) but are unable to attend because of number restrictions, as a control group. In the coming year, we will be able to draw comparisons against those who attended the event and those who did not.
- 7.8 The outreach team have worked with colleagues in the School of Mathematics and Statistics to undertake detailed analysis on the range of individual eligibility criteria used to identify appropriate students for the PARTNERS Programme. As a result, in 2014, a sophisticated 'fitted probability' model was implemented, in order to determine social, economic and financial deprivation based on postcode. This allowed various postcode variables to be considered on weighted basis, in order to identify pre-entry students who would later be confirmed as 'WP' using post-entry data.

- 7.9 In addition, colleagues in our School of Education, Communication and Languages Sciences and Equality and Diversity Team have conducted research into the performance of WP students (including students from our PARTNERS Programme supported entry route) at the University. We work with them closely to inform our evaluation framework.
- 7.10 The University also commissions independent evaluation and research on issues, initiatives and new developments, and outcomes are reported to OFFA as part of the annual monitoring processes.

## **PART 8: EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

- 8.1 Consideration of Equality and Diversity plays an important part in the development of the Access Agreement. Colleagues with responsibility for the University's responsibility under the Equality Act sit on the Access Agreement Working Group and are members of the Data Analysis Sub-Group.
- 8.2 The University produces an annual Equality and Diversity Report, looking at both staff and student populations. The findings and recommendations are reported to the University Recruitment and Admissions Monitoring Group, to be addressed and built into any Access Agreement commitments.
- 8.3 As a direct result of OFFA guidance this year the report included detailed analysis of gender, ethnicity, disability, age, LPN and socio-economic class. A copy of the report is available to OFFA upon request.
- 8.4 Initiatives to support access, progress and success have been developed as a direct response to these findings, prioritising for the first time this year: outreach activity to support white working class males; a post-entry programme to support degree outcomes for all WP students and support for vulnerable groups (particularly those with hidden disabilities, such as mental health disorders, autism, Asperger's, epilepsy, and Attention Deficit-Disorder or Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder).
- 8.5 The University, in partnership with Arthur's Hill Federation Primary Schools, Middlesex University, Helsinki University, Montpellier University and the People to People foundation in Romania, is undertaking research into the Gypsy Roma community to explore poor participation and persistently low achievement in education as well as the decline of home language use in primary classrooms. This will be used as a pedagogic tool to raise attainment of pupils whose home language differs from the official language of schools. The project will begin in the UK using high quality dual language learning techniques, and the results from this will act as a springboard to develop a future approach to working with this community.

## **PART 9: PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS AND THEIR INFLUENCERS**

- 9.1 Key to the success of our initiatives to promote and safeguard fair access is the provision of clear, timely and accurate information about all aspects of Higher Education, including student finance. Our aim is to support potential students, parents, teachers and advisers to make informed decisions. We will provide relevant information to UCAS, the Student Loans Company, UCAS Teacher Training and other relevant bodies as required.
- 9.2 We have been working with senior leaders from schools and colleges in the North East to support curriculum change at both at Key Stage 4 and 5, providing sessions to support independent learning and practical skills for prospective HE students.
- 9.3 Our printed 2017 Undergraduate Prospectus is supplemented by our [Guide to Student Finance](#). The Guide is revised bi-annually to reflect any mid-year changes.
- 9.4 For younger students, our printed literature now includes a mini-prospectus, a city guide "*My kind of toon*" as well as On Course to Newcastle facebook page, which includes contributions from a team of student bloggers.
- 9.5 Our website for schools and colleges, as well as prospective students and their parents, is now fully mobile responsive, and includes a postcode 'look up' tool so that students can check their eligibility for identified access and financial support schemes.

- 9.6 We continue to invest significantly in innovative digital developments to ensure that students are fully-informed about their HE choices, the courses we run and the financial support available. Potential and current students contribute to user testing processes to ensure that digital information is clear and easy to understand. We run a range of marketing campaigns on social media, aimed at raising awareness and encouraging applications from prospective students. This includes new initiatives to promote specific courses, for example an eighteen-month campaign is being trialled, engaging with students ‘from investigation to registration’ through a range of multi-media content. In addition, the use of new channels (Snapchat & YikYak) and industry developments (live video streaming, 360 videos) ensure that campaigns remain cutting-edge and relevant to the audience. All applicants who receive an offer of a place receive timely and relevant further information, with additional information on financial support for identified WP applicants.
- 9.7 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 (currently 449) of downloadable resources, subject-specific taster events and activities to encourage HE progression, accessible through a single, searchable database.
- 9.8 Our outreach teams and trained undergraduate Graduate Ambassadors visit schools and colleges to give presentations to teachers and pupils about all aspects of applying to HE including student finance, and provide finance information at Open Days and post-application visit days. Our programme of activities has been developed to include events that support informed subject choice at key stages, in particular for students in the North East, where progression to HE is low. Our innovative Postgraduate Graduate Ambassador scheme enables us to provide targeted information and sessions informing current WP students about opportunities for postgraduate study.
- 9.9 New entrants and eligible continuing students are reminded through a variety of channels about the fees and financial support schemes relevant to them for each year of study at the University. We also provide one-to-one financial / budgeting support to WP students.

## PART 10: CONSULTATION WITH STUDENTS

- 10.1 Student consultation and engagement are a vital part of our annual Access Agreement planning and WP delivery processes throughout the student life cycle.
- 10.2 We have a high ratio of staff - student committees, ensuring regular engagement in all aspects of learning and teaching. This enables a pro-active rather than re-active approach to support student retention, progression and success.
- 10.3 The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Chris Brink, meets regularly with our Sabbatical Officers to ensure good communication, and ensure that the “student voice” is heard at the highest level.
- 10.4 The Education Officer and Welfare Officer of the Students’ Union are members of the Access Agreement Working Group and are also responsible for the development and delivery of key outreach and retention activities aligned with the University’s Access Agreement objectives. Their Statement of Partnership is attached as Appendix 4.
- 10.5 Appendix 3 illustrates the roles our students take throughout the student lifecycle to support outreach, student progression and success. Students are fundamentally involved in each stage:
- Pre-Entry as student ambassadors; mentors; developers of WP activity; tutors in schools; and for market research;
  - Post-Entry as representatives; advocates and peer mentors;
  - Graduation and Success: as staff (Graduate Ambassadors), fundraisers, placement providers and role models for future prospective students.
  - We regularly gather and use student opinion and feedback. Questionnaires and surveys to prospective and current students, focus groups, student representatives and increasingly, feedback via social media, inform all of the WP and student success activity outlined in this Access Agreement.

## APPENDICES

**Appendix 1: Key Outreach Activities at Newcastle University**

**Appendix 2: Helping Students Make Informed Choices: Long-term sustained outreach & collaboration**

**Appendix 3: Supporting Student Progression and Success: Priority activities across the student lifecycle**

**Appendix 4: Statement of Partnership from Newcastle University Students' Union**

## Appendix 1: Newcastle University: Key Outreach Activities

### ACCESS PROGRAMMES

**PARTNERS PROGRAMME:** Newcastle University's access scheme for students from under-represented groups who have the potential to succeed at Newcastle University. Established in 2000 as a regional programme, in 2015 the [PARTNERS Programme](#) was expanded to become an open-access WP programme for eligible students from *all* schools and colleges in England. A basket of eligibility criteria is employed to identify appropriate students for the programme, taking into account information relating to their social, economic, financial and personal background. In particular, students from target groups are identified as eligible for the Programme: care leavers; estranged students; young carers and students with a disability. In addition, a sophisticated 'fitted probability' model, to determine social, economic and financial deprivation based on postcode, was implemented in 2014 as a result of detailed analysis undertaken by colleagues in the School of Mathematics and Statistics.

The Programme culminates in an Assessed Summer School at the end of Year 13, successful completion of which forms part of a student's (reduced) offer of a place at Newcastle. The scheme provides access to all University degrees and involves a combination of academic teaching and assessment, transition skills development and peer mentoring.

**REALISING OPPORTUNITIES:** Newcastle University is the lead institution for [Realising Opportunities](#), a collaboration of 15 leading research intensive universities working together to deliver a national compact scheme to promote social mobility. Realising Opportunities (RO) is underpinned by a robust evaluation framework which incorporates contextual data, student feedback and the tracking of students through UCAS. This award-winning programme provides support for over 900 students per year through interventions designed to raise aspirations, develop skills and enable them to demonstrate their potential to succeed at a research intensive university. Interventions are offered locally and nationally and include a National Student Conference, support from a trained student e-mentor and an academic assessment. Successful completion of RO results in the potential of a lower offer worth up to 40 UCAS points from all 15 participating universities.

### COLLABORATION

**NORTH EAST RAISING ASPIRATIONS PARTNERSHIP:** Newcastle University leads the [Raising Aspirations Partnership](#), a regional collaboration involving Newcastle University, Northumbria University, the University of Sunderland, Durham University and Teesside University. Part of HEFCE's National Network for Collaborative Outreach, it aims to ensure every young person in the North East has the opportunity to make informed decisions about higher education, as well as supporting their advisors and influencers. Specific target groups include: care-leavers, estranged students, young adult carers, white working class males and disabled students.

**RUSSELL GROUP ADVANCING ACCESS PROJECT:** Newcastle University is one of 24 universities working together to develop continuing professional development (CPD) resources for teachers and advisors to support student progression to selective universities. The [Advancing Access](#) project will specifically utilise teacher CPD to drive widening participation and fair access with schools and colleges in identified geographical 'cold spots' and/or less advantaged areas with low levels of progression to higher education.

### OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

**SUBJECT-SPECIFIC OUTREACH & TEACHERS' TOOLKIT:** Faculties and Academic schools play a vital role in WP and outreach, delivering the essential academic content of our key WP access programmes and events, in addition to a range of subject-specific interventions on-campus and in-schools. Subject-specific 'strands' have been introduced to the Year 12 residential programme to allow able students to specialise, particularly in STEM subjects. All subject-specific activities offered, including extensive resources developed by our staff in the University libraries, are listed on [Teachers' Toolkit](#) – a unique online resource that brings together everything the University offers to schools in one place. Modern Languages, Maths and Science are particularly well-represented on Toolkit.

**TARGET GROUPS:** Much of the on-campus activity, such as residential summer schools and student shadowing, is targeted at widening participation students, using a range of eligibility criteria relating to the social, economic, financial and personal circumstances of the individual. In addition, a range of events are delivered to specific

target groups, such as girls interested in Engineering and the 'Choices Together' programme for young people in care. In particular, as part of the North East Raising Aspirations Partnership, the University is involved in the delivery of a progressive range of events, including a residential experience, for young carers, and a range of events to support the KS2 to KS3 and KS3 to KS4 transition of white, working class boys from 'cold spots'.

**ACCESS TO THE PROFESSIONS:** Newcastle University is involved in a number of initiatives to improve access to courses that lead to specific careers. The University offers an intensive mentoring programme for Year 12 WP students who are interested in Medicine, in addition to on-campus Medicine and Dentistry interactive events for Year 9 to Year 13 students. Similarly, the Law school offers a mentoring programme for local students, including visits to employers. As part of the North East Raising Aspiration Partnership, the University is delivering a programme for Year 8 and 9 Gifted and Talented students within 'cold spot' schools to focus on Offshore Marine and Low Carbon Renewables, an area of high regional growth, to encourage them to think about career opportunities within the regional economy.

**PROGRESSIVE ACTIVITY:** Newcastle University offers a progressive programme of events and activities for students in schools and colleges nationally, beginning in Year 5, as well as for parents, carers and teachers. We have worked with teachers, our students and graduates to develop a range of informative and interactive activities, both on-campus and for delivery in-schools, to inform students about higher education and develop skills to help them with key transition stages in school and beyond. The programme of activities is reviewed regularly, using a comprehensive and robust evaluation framework and those that have impact are extended where possible, such as our successful residential events for over 1,500 students annually in Years 8 to 12. Similarly, the introduction of a career-focused event for Year 9 students, looking at subject choices and decision-making has been well-received and will continue to be developed and extended in the coming year.

**STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS:** In 1993 Newcastle University established [Students into Schools](#), a scheme that provides undergraduate students as tutors in schools, offering positive role models and classroom support. Approximately 140 tutors spend a minimum of 70 hours working in schools for academic credit. In addition, Newcastle University's Students' Union (NUSU) leads a scheme to encourage current students to go into their former or local schools to talk about university life and the opportunities available. The scheme also provides NUSU Participation Bursaries to remove financial barriers to first year WP students who wish to join clubs and societies and engage in student life.

**CAREER INSIGHTS:** The [Careers Insights programme](#) offers WP students at the University the opportunity to start building their career and confidence by gaining relevant work experience, exploring a range of opportunities and building strong networks with employers on a local, national and global level. In addition, the Career Insights Bursary offers financial support to enable WP students to take advantage of work experience opportunities.

### **SUPPORTING RESOURCES**

**GRADUATE AMBASSADORS:** Every year since 2006, the University has employed [Graduate Ambassadors](#), a team of recent Newcastle University graduates to deliver interactive face-to-face outreach activities to young people and their parents, particularly in schools across the UK. Currently, the University employs 14 Ambassadors, enabling us to extend outreach geographically and target key regions across the UK. The scheme is designed as a Graduate Training Scheme so Ambassadors gain valuable employability skills to help in their future careers. We are extending this scheme to have two Graduate Ambassadors at our Newcastle University London campus, to support us in making progress towards our BME intake target.

**STUDENT AMBASSADORS:** 150 of our current undergraduate students from all disciplines are employed on a part-time internship contract each year. They support the extensive range of outreach delivered by the University.

**SOCIAL MEDIA:** Social media plays an important role in supporting our work with prospective students, enabling communication and information on a national stage. Our [On Course to NCL](#) website provides information and guidance for students aged 14 to 18, and includes current student bloggers. We are in the process of developing specific social media support for parents.





#### LONG-TERM SUSTAINED ACTIVITY - PRIMARY TO YEAR 13

##### A UNIVERSITY-WIDE APPROACH



TARGETING **950**  
SCHOOLS/COLLEGES



**166** STUDENT PLACEMENTS  
IN SCHOOLS



**132** ONE-DAY CAMPUS BASED EVENTS  
FOR **8,614** STUDENTS, INCLUDING  
**180** SUBJECT TASTER SESSIONS



**547** MENTEES WORKING WITH  
**110** PEER MENTORS IN  
**13** SCHOOLS



**71** ATTAINMENT-RAISING  
EVENTS FOR **1,847** STUDENTS



**6** RESIDENTIAL EVENTS  
WITH **1,586** ATTENDEES



ENGAGEMENT WITH  
**201,704** STUDENTS



**950** SCHOOL VISITS  
FOR **156,298** STUDENTS



HIGH QUALITY PRINT/ONLINE  
INFORMATION TO SUPPORT  
STUDENT CHOICE



STUDENT AMBASSADORS  
ENGAGED WITH  
**15,879** STUDENTS



REACHING **2,312** PEOPLE  
FROM TARGETED WP GROUPS



UNIVERSAL USE OF CONTEXTUAL  
DATA IN ADMISSIONS

## WORKING COLLABORATIVELY



### THE PARTNERS PROGRAMME

Our national PARTNERS Programme has supported **8,929** students since its launch in 1999. **3,289** students have entered Newcastle University through this route and **1,800** have successfully graduated.



### REALISING OPPORTUNITIES SCHEME

Lead institution, working with **15** selective institutions. Supported **4,148** students through the award-winning programme with **81%** of graduates receiving a First or 2:1.



### NORTH EAST RAISING ASPIRATION PARTNERSHIP

Lead institution in Partnership with the **5** universities in the North East. A programme of activities and support for pre-16 students and vulnerable groups delivered for **21,196** students and **12,059** teachers.



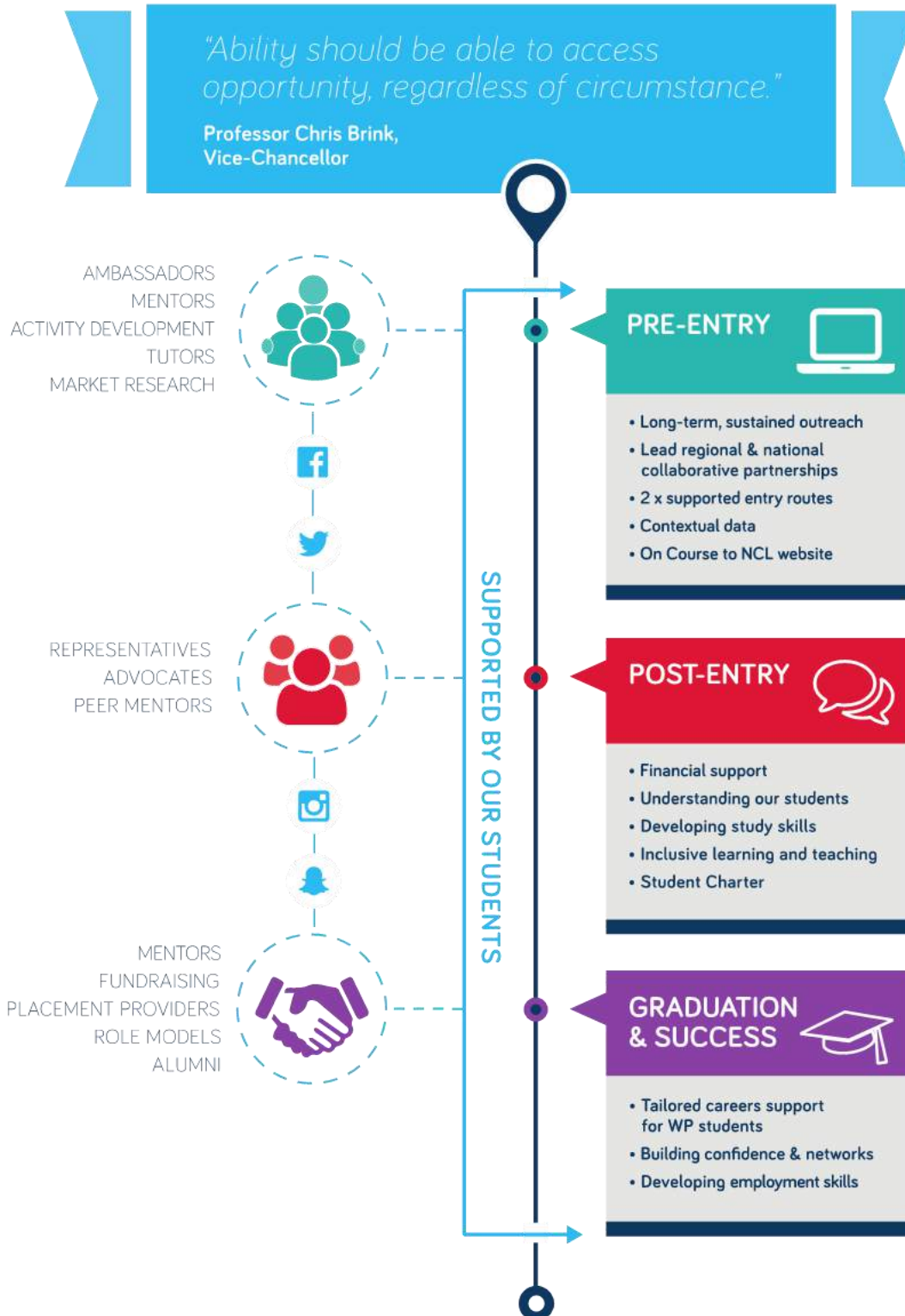
### ACADEMIES, TRUSTS AND GOVERNORS

Working intensively with **1** Academy and **2** Learning Trusts to shape curriculum and support progression. University staff are actively encouraged to work as governors in local schools and the University works with SSGOS to match staff with schools that have governor vacancies.



### ADVANCING ACCESS PROJECT

Working together with **24** Russell Group universities to provide teacher and advisor CPD to support learner progression to selective institutions. **700+** schools/colleges identified from target 'cold spots'.



## Appendix 4: Statement of Partnership from Newcastle University Students' Union

### Statement of Partnership from Newcastle University Students' Union

Newcastle University Students' Union is closely involved in and consulted with during the planning and implementation of all access and retention activities. There continues to be a permanent full-time member of staff (the Widening Access Co-ordinator) based in the Students' Union who manages and delivers various access and WP projects. This has ensured that the Students' Union and its members are very much involved in any plans for access, student success, progression and financial support from the early stages. Examples of the work of the Students' Union in supporting access and student success are given below.

The Welfare & Equality and Education sabbatical officers, as well as the full-time Widening Access Co-ordinator sit on the University's Access Agreement Working Group and have regular meetings with the Student Recruitment Team. Student representatives also sit on **over 70 University boards, forums and committees**, including Senate, Council and Court. In addition, the sabbatical officer team meet with the Vice-Chancellor once a month to represent the wider student population at an institutional level.

The outreach programme **NUSU: Into Schools**, led by the Students' Union has now been running for two academic years. The project involves both alumni and current students of Newcastle University visiting either their former or local schools to inspire current pupils to consider Higher Education. In 2014-15, the scheme enabled 14 student groups and alumni to deliver widening participation projects to 32 schools and approximately 2100 young people between the ages of 10-18. In 2015-16, NUSU: Into Schools has already grown in size and scale, impacting more young people and volunteers across the UK – highlighting the commitment by the Union for entirely student-led access and outreach.

The 2015-16 academic year has also seen the launch of **Inclusive Newcastle** – a Students' Union led disability sport project. Inclusive Newcastle provides a wide range of sporting services for students to remove the barriers those with mental or physical disabilities may face. Working closely with local clubs and organisations, the inclusive sporting programme is aimed at all abilities and includes the delivery of para-sports, a qualified support team and a sports mentor pairing scheme. In 2016, the Inclusive Newcastle programme gained Associate Membership status of the English Federation for Disability Sport, the only Students' Union so far nationally to do so.

**NUSU Participation Bursaries** were awarded to 275 Stage 1 UK undergraduates during 2015-16, an increase of 9% on the previous year. The bursaries were awarded to those from widening participation backgrounds (specifically low income students and Care Leavers). Eligible students received a bursary of £200 to enable them to join clubs and societies and/or to fund additional costs such as sports kit, equipment and travel. Recipients are consulted for their opinions through surveys and focus groups annually. The popularity of the bursary has meant that additional eligibility criteria (home postcode) will be added to the application process in future years to ensure that funding reaches the most 'WP' students.

In 2016-17, NUSU will begin to explore ways that we can support our **local and commuter students**, to ensure that our services remain as inclusive as possible to all and that these students feel represented by their Students' Union.

In conclusion, we support the 2017 Access Agreement in its current form and all of the outlined activities as methods to support student access, retention and success at Newcastle University. As a result of the lack of demonstrable effect nationally, we also support the decision made to change the university bursaries offering.

**Luke Allison & Matthew Price**

**Welfare & Equality Officer 2015-16 & Education Officer 2015-16**

**Newcastle University Students' Union**

**1<sup>st</sup> April 2016**