



# **University of Suffolk Access Agreement 2018-19**

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## University of Suffolk Access Agreement 2018-19

This agreement sets out how the University of Suffolk will safeguard and promote fair access to all of its HEFCE-funded full-time and part-time undergraduate programmes, recognising the need to support students throughout their whole student lifecycle. This agreement is submitted on behalf of the whole University of Suffolk Learning Network.

### 1. Introduction

The University of Suffolk exists as a Learning Network comprised of the campus in Ipswich, and provision offered within East Coast College, Suffolk New College and West Suffolk College. The University was established in 2007 as University Campus Suffolk (UCS) with degrees validated by the University of East Anglia and University of Essex, but was awarded Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP) in 2015 and HEFCE designation and University Title in 2016. UCS became the University of Suffolk in August 2016, with the first cohort of students admitted in September 2016.

The University of Suffolk aims to be a beacon of excellence attracting students from Suffolk and beyond, helping to reverse the net export of graduates and the low post-16 participation rate which has adversely affected Suffolk for many years. Widening participation continues to be central to the mission of the University of Suffolk, and the profile of its student population reflects this. The University has a high proportion of under-represented students, and there is a broad mix of students across the undergraduate student body. The University has ambitious targets for student access, success and progression.

The University of Suffolk student body is diverse and inclusive. We can report that 25.8% of the student population are studying part-time and 60.7% are mature (over the age of 21)<sup>1</sup>. 12.1%<sup>2</sup> of students come from ethnic minorities against a background figure for Suffolk of 4.8%<sup>3</sup>.

The University reported in the 2015-16 Monitoring Return that 14.8% of our students disclosed a disability, and 5.7% of full-time undergraduate students were in receipt of the Disabled Students Allowance<sup>4</sup>. Almost all young (18-21 year old) students came from a state school in 2015-16 (98.9%)<sup>5</sup> and 27.9% are from low participation neighbourhoods<sup>6</sup>. The majority of students are from the eastern region, with 55.1% from an IP postcode in 2015-16<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Internal University of Suffolk data

<sup>2</sup> Internal University of Suffolk data

<sup>3</sup> Suffolk Demographic Profile, published January 2015 available at <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/assets/suffolk.gov.uk/Your%20Council/Plans%20and%20Policies/Equality%20and%20Diversity/2014-12-09%20Suffolk%20Diversity%20Profile.pdf> Accessed 6 March 2017

<sup>4</sup> HESA UKPIs\_2015-16\_Widening-participation.xlsx Table T7

<sup>5</sup> HESA UKPIs\_2015-16\_Widening-participation.xlsx Table T1a

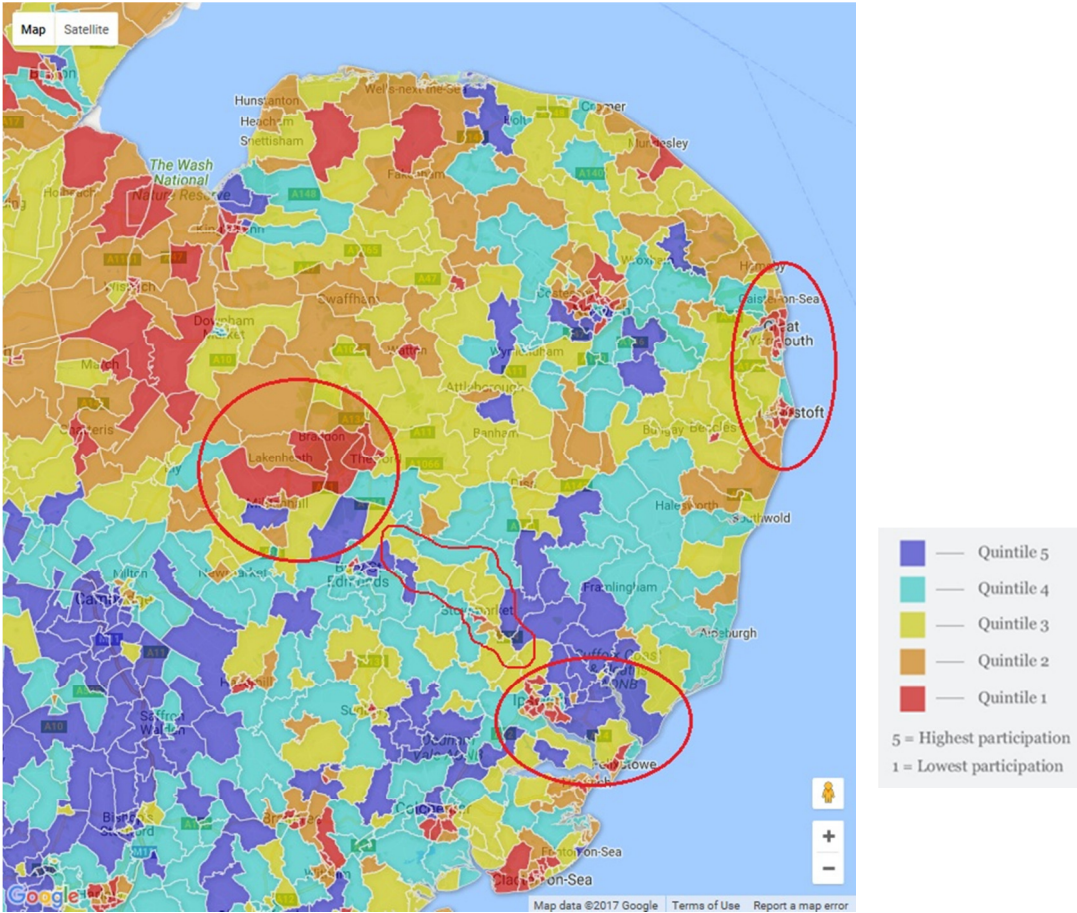
<sup>6</sup> HESA UKPIs\_2015-16\_Widening-participation.xlsx Table T1b

<sup>7</sup> Internal University of Suffolk data

**2. Regional Context**

Despite the image of Suffolk being a county of affluence, 52 of Suffolk’s Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are ranked in the most deprived 20% in England, of which 21 LSOA’s are ranked in the worst 10% deprived areas<sup>8</sup>. In Great Yarmouth, 20 of the 61 LSOAs are ranked in the most deprived 20%, of which 16 are in the most deprived 10%. The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) shows that 50 of Suffolk’s LSOAs are in the most deprived 20% of areas, of which 19 are in the most deprived 10%; and in Great Yarmouth, 19 LSOAs are in the most deprived 20% of which 12 are in the most deprived 10%<sup>9</sup>. Looking specifically at Education, Skills and Training, 106 (24%) of Suffolk’s LSOAs are in the most deprived 20% of which 54 (12%) are in the most deprived 10%; and 29 of Great Yarmouth’s LSOAs are in the most deprived 20% of which 19 are in the most deprived 10%.

HEFCEs young participation area map<sup>10</sup> shows that although there are areas of Suffolk where there is a good level of young people participating in higher education, there are significant areas of low participation including in the centres of Ipswich, Felixstowe, Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth, and along the A14 corridor.



<sup>8</sup> English Indices of Deprivation 2015, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015> accessed 08 March 2017.  
<sup>9</sup> Supplementary Indices – Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index and Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index 2015, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015> accessed 08 March 2017.  
<sup>10</sup> <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/yp/POLAR/Map.of.young.participation.areas/>

In January 2017, the Government identified Ipswich as one of 12 opportunity areas having been identified as a 'social mobility coldspot' in the Social Mobility Index<sup>11</sup>. The index shows that only 23% of children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) achieved five good GCSEs including English and Maths; only 31% FSM young people achieved two or more A Levels and only 15% FSM young people progressed to higher education by age 19.

Suffolk has experienced low participation rates in higher education for some time and areas of Suffolk show considerable gaps between GCSE attainment and expected participation rates in HE. The University is a partner in a National Collaborative Outreach Project (NEACO: Network for East Anglian Collaborative Outreach) to raise participation rates across Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Suffolk is a county where secondary schools are often in remote small towns serving populations which include sparsely-populated rural areas; and urban areas characterised by low skill/low wage economies and an under-representation of graduate level jobs<sup>12</sup>.

The University of Suffolk was created specifically to widen access and raise aspirations across the region, and we have worked with a range of partners to do this, including Suffolk County Council, New Anglia LEP, schools and colleges, and local community groups. In 2016, 32.5% of English 18 year olds were accepted into higher education<sup>13</sup> and the East of England experienced a large increase in participation rates to hit 32.4%<sup>14</sup>. However, we know from the HEFCE gaps analysis<sup>15</sup> and the young participation map above that the overall participation rate hides areas of extremely low participation. The University of Suffolk's outreach activity will therefore continue to work alongside the new NEACO activity to address participation rates, while also working with the local economy to support the growth of graduate employment opportunities across Suffolk and East Anglia.

The University of Suffolk will continue to develop the curriculum to focus on areas that are closely aligned with the regional economic and New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP) priorities, particularly STEM and Higher/Degree Apprenticeships. The University has worked with NALEP on the establishment of the Ipswich Waterfront Innovation Centre (IWIC) which opened at the Ipswich campus in autumn 2016. The IWIC will support new business and bring together students and employers, providing opportunities for students to engage with employers throughout their studies and as they move towards graduate employment.

In 2015-16, the University's overall in-year retention rate was 93.5% and the achievement rate was 86.7%<sup>16</sup>. We recognise that this represents negative performance but are aware that our high proportion of non-traditional students means that some of our students require more support to stay on-course than others. We are continuing to invest in student support and are developing an institutional Progression Strategy which aims to identify students early in the process who will need additional support, and implement the strategy as early as possible to ensure students can succeed on their course. We also wish to report on

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-index> (Published January 2016)

<sup>12</sup> NEACO Consortium Document, submitted to HEFCE in October 2016

<sup>13</sup> UCAS End of Cycle Report 2016, p. 16 available at <https://www.ucas.com/sites/default/files/eoc-report-2016-final.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> UCAS End of Cycle Report 2016, p. 48

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/yp/gaps/>

<sup>16</sup> University of Suffolk Access Agreement Monitoring Return 2015-16, submitted January 2017

continuation data for full-time first degree entrants 2014/15 which is currently at 85.7% for all undergraduate students and 85.5% for all mature undergraduate students. It is acknowledged that these figures are gradually increasing but need improvement, and this has guided the decisions over access expenditure proposals which are discussed further in section 4.3.

### **3. Fees, Student Numbers and Fee Income**

The University of Suffolk has participated in Year Two of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). In line with this we propose to increase tuition fees to the maximum fee cap in 2018/19. As confirmation of the inflationary rise for 2018/19 is outstanding, the fees proposed are as outlined below, with the inflationary rise indicated as '+':

- £9,250+ for full-time Bachelor's degrees and DipHEs;
- £8,750+ for part-time (pro-rata) for Bachelor's degrees and DipHEs;
- £8,220+ for full-time Foundation degrees and CertHE courses;
- £8,220+ for part-time (pro-rata) Foundation degrees and CertHE courses;
- £1,850+ (pro-rata) for a sandwich year including a placement in the UK;
- £1,385+ (pro-rata) for a sandwich year including a placement studying abroad;
- £6,168+ (pro-rata) for HND/HNC and ITT courses.

We respect the views of the National Union of Students (and our own Students' Union) on the potential impact of escalating fees; however we, along with the rest of the sector, are facing escalating inflationary pressures on our cost base and wish to ensure that we can maintain our student services. Increased fees will enable us to continue to invest in the policy areas which are relevant to TEF performance measures. As the demand for Foundation degrees is largely employer led, we are continuing with a lower level of fees to attract students from this market; these courses are predominantly delivered in our county-wide Partner Colleges. The same principle applies to our HND/HNC and ITT courses. We are also continuing to maintain a fee differential between our part-time and full-time Bachelor's degrees and DipHEs as we believe this market is more price sensitive.

We will clearly state in our communications with students that we will not increase fees for continuing students to the maximum fee cap set by the Government for each subsequent academic year. This means that students joining the University will have a fixed fee for the duration of the course on which they enrol in 2018/19.

### **4. Access and Student Success Measures**

#### **4.1 Assessment of access and retention record**

The University of Suffolk has a high proportion of under-represented students. In 2018-19 the University plans to spend 23.5% of higher fee income on additional access and retention measures.

This assessment is based on the following measures and indicators of students at the University of Suffolk:

- 28% (15/16) of young full-time undergraduate entrants are from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3 Quintile 1, students aged under 22 on entry);
- 15.3% (15/16) of mature full-time undergraduate entrants have no previous HE and are from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3 Q1) (benchmark 9.9%);
- 25.8% as of March 2017 of the University's students are part-time (2016-17 academic year).
- 21.1% (15/16) of part-time young undergraduate entrants have no previous HE and are from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3 Q1) (benchmark 16.4%);
- 12.1% as of March 2017 (2016-17 academic year) of the University's students come from ethnic minorities;
- 98.8% (15/16) of young full-time students come from state schools;
- In Suffolk the number of young people in Local Authority Care (LAC) progressing to university each year is consistently very low and there is considerable work to do in this area. The University reported 14 Care Leavers studying at the University of Suffolk in 2015/16, an increase from 11 in 2014/15.
- Deprivation levels in much of Suffolk and Great Yarmouth remain high. 72 of Suffolk and Great Yarmouth's Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are ranked in the most deprived 20% of the country, and 37 LSOAs are ranked in the worst 10% of deprived areas in the country<sup>17</sup>
- A high number of students in Suffolk and Great Yarmouth in low participation groups are first generation HE students

#### **4.2 Strategic approach to access and student success – the balance between widening participation, fair access and retention**

The University has an excellent track record in admitting students from a range of backgrounds, but we recognise that more work needs to be undertaken that focusses on specific groups of under-represented students (listed in section 5.1) and therefore outreach will remain a key priority for the University. However, we recognise that our monitoring return has shown negative performance in aspects of retention, success and progression. We will therefore focus on developing a cohesive approach to identifying students who are likely to need additional support in order to successfully remain at University with positive outcomes.

The University is developing a new Progression Strategy, with the specific aim of integrating current and proposed activities relating to outreach and access, induction, attendance, retention, progression, student satisfaction and employability. We will be looking for examples of innovation and best practice from the wider HEI community and will tailor the strategy to the specific characteristics of our student population. We expect that this new Progression Strategy will play a key role in improving our retention and achievement rates. Initial activity will be in place for 2017 entrants but policies, activities and interventions will be rolled out from 2017/18 and is expected to have an impact on all students. The Progression Strategy will be closely aligned to our Academic Strategy, which will in turn inform our learning and teaching frameworks, ensuring our learning and teaching supports the lives and multiple demands of our under-represented students.

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<sup>17</sup> English Indices of Deprivation 2015, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015> accessed 08 March 2017.

### 4.3 Expenditure on access, progression and student success measures

In 2018-19 the total institutional expenditure on access, student success and progression measures will be approximately £2.25 million, and this is broken down in the table below.

Anticipated expenditure on new access and retention measures:	
- Access expenditure	£344,000
- Student success	£605,000
- Progression	£366,000
- Financial support measures (bursaries)	£935,000
Total Institutional Expenditure in 2018-19	£2,250,000

#### 4.3.1 The balance between non-financial measures and financial support

In 2018-19 the University of Suffolk plans to further rebalance its resources and expenditure to reflect guidance outlined in the OFFA strategic priorities.

The University of Suffolk recognises the research that was carried out for OFFA (2010/06)<sup>18</sup> which indicated that bursaries do not have an impact on the likelihood of disadvantaged young people choosing to go to university, and accepts that this is likely to be accurate for our students. However, our experience is slightly different from the OFFA report (2014/02)<sup>19</sup> regarding the effect of bursaries on retention rates. Our own data shows that the overall withdrawal rate of all University of Suffolk students in 2015/16 was 12.38% compared to 6.75% of bursary-recipients, representing a decrease in withdrawals for bursary recipients compared to 2014/15. We recognise that additional outreach and/or success measures may also have an impact on the likelihood of these students to withdraw, but we believe that bursaries are still an important part of the wider support offered to the students.

The University will continue to offer financial support to students, but the balance of spend will continue to prioritise non-financial support measures with expenditure on financial support at c42% in 2018/19. A higher number of students is expected to be eligible for financial support with the inclusion of the previously NHS-funded students, but this level of spend will allow activity expenditure to increase compared to 2017/18. Details of the proposed bursaries are given under paragraph 7.2. Expenditure on non-financial support measures is planned to be just under 60%.

<sup>18</sup> OFFA (2010/06) Have Bursaries Influenced Choice Between Universities?

<sup>19</sup> OFFA (2014/02) An Interim Report: Do bursaries have an effect on retention rates?



## 5. Outreach and Access

### 5.1 University of Suffolk Outreach Activity

The University of Suffolk is committed to providing aspiration and attainment raising activities for under-represented groups in Suffolk and Great Yarmouth, and will expand our work to include state schools in Essex, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire. We recognise that information, advice and guidance (IAG) plays a key role in supporting informed choices of young people and mature students<sup>20</sup> and we will continue to focus on delivering excellent IAG support across all of our activities. We will continue to work in a structured way with schools and colleges with low progression rates, as well as with communities with low participation rates, including mature and part-time students. It is proposed that a proportion of the additional fee income will be allocated to specific measures designed to increase access.

The University will invest approximately £344,000 in outreach and access in 2018-19.

Outreach activity will include:

- Continued growth of long term sustained outreach activity with young people from primary age upwards in carefully targeted schools and colleges in Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire. Schools and colleges will be targeted based on HEFCE Cold Spots data showing overall low participation rates in HE.
- Development and expansion of our Summer Schools and on-campus events, including subject conferences and taster events, with developments based on evaluation and tracking data.
- Expansion of Progression Agreements to formalise academic engagement and, where possible, curriculum support with schools, for increased attainment and progression into HE.
- Continuation of subject-specific aspiration-raising activity, including the Health and Social Care Conference, STEM activities, and the Creative Arts Conference.
- Expansion of the Subject Ambassador Scheme, where students deliver academic taster sessions for younger age students both on- and off-campus.
- Production of publications to provide information to target groups, including: returning to learning (aimed at mature and/or part-time students); student finance; the UCAS application process; and parents' information.
- A pre-application conference aimed at mature students undertaking an Access to Higher Education course.
- Family Awareness events aimed at young people in Years 8-10 and their parents, held in locations across the county to ensure access for families from under-represented areas.
- Additional outreach activity with targeted community groups, including mature students, care leavers, young carers, and ethnic minority groups.
- Activity across the Partner Colleges to promote higher education for mature and part-time students, and return to learning.
- Specific activity in Partner Colleges to increase progression rates of level 3 learners into HE.

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<sup>20</sup> Social Mobility Advisory Group (2016) *Working in Partnership: Enabling Social Mobility in Higher Education*, available at <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2016/working-in-partnership-final.pdf>

- Resources, including maintaining outreach staff and the general Student Ambassador scheme.
- Activity and resource to support the data required for the Equality and Diversity Committee.
- Continued work with schools to support governance structures, as outlined in section 5.2.

In 2017-18, the University committed to a range of new activities that we aim to continue in 2018-19 subject to the successful outcome and evaluation of those activities. Some of those activities were piloted in 2016-17 and will continue based on evaluation, but the following two projects will begin in 2017-18. We will use evaluation and tracking data to develop the following activities to ensure their success. Those activities are:

- Activities and promotional material to provide information about the changes to funding for health courses, as students from low-income families are likely to be most concerned about the changes particularly as the academic year limits the amount of part-time work health students can undertake while on course.
- Expansion of two projects working with students from minority ethnic groups, and young white males from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

#### *New Activities for 2018-19*

In 2018-19, the University will undertake new activities to promote Higher and Degree Apprenticeships. We expect Apprenticeships to play a role in increasing the participation rate of young people in Suffolk and will develop materials to promote these opportunities across the county.

In 2018-19, the University also aims to develop a fund to support outreach students in attending on-campus open events and interviews. We recognise that students from low-income backgrounds are often unable to attend interviews or events that require significant travel, and that this may limit their opportunities to progress to the university or course that is right for them. Eligibility criteria for support from this fund will be based on students being within one of the target groups below.

The University will be starting a new project in 2018-19 to raise attainment of young people in Suffolk – more information is provided in Section 5.3.

#### *Targeting Activity*

The University's outreach activity has historically worked with full year groups where possible, as Suffolk's low participation rate has meant that almost all of our outreach work is with low-participation neighbourhoods. However, the creation of a National Collaborative Outreach Project (as outlined in Section 5.5) will allow the University to work in collaboration to deliver activity in a more targeted way. Where possible, the University's outreach work will specifically work with students who do not meet NEACO criteria. These will include:

- Students from low income families, with particular emphasis on students from households with an income of less than £25,000.
- White males from economically disadvantaged backgrounds

- Students with a physical or specific learning disability
- Students who are first in their family to consider progressing to HE
- Mature students
- Prospective part-time students
- Students who live in, or have recently left, local authority care
- Students from military families and ex-military
- Students from ethnic minority groups
- Young carers
- Refugees, and students from gypsy and Traveller communities

The University of Suffolk will also work with the parents, carers and supporters of students within these groups, and will work with key stakeholders in Suffolk to further identify opportunities to engage with under-represented students.

We will ask schools to select students from these groups for participation in outreach activity, and will use HEAT to ensure that we are tracking our activity and the progression of these students into HE. We recognise that Suffolk has a historic challenge of low participation in HE, and that positive results from these activities are not likely to be seen for some time.

## 5.2 Sponsoring Schools

The University of Suffolk has an excellent track record of supporting governance structures in schools, and will continue to do so in 2018-19. An internal review in 2016 found that at least 20 members of staff hold governance roles in schools across the East of England, with additional staff holding roles as Enterprise Advisors as part of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership; and we expect this number to grow. We continue to work closely with schools to raise the aspirations of students to progress into higher education. However, as set out in '*Schools that Work for Everyone*' (Department for Education, 2016: 17)<sup>21</sup> the University recognises that we should carry out more work to support improvements to local education provision.

The University will carry out research in 2018-19 to identify options for sponsoring a new school or providing sponsorship for an existing school. The University has excellent employer links and we hope to consider our options for supporting a school in partnership with local employers.

## 5.3 Raising Attainment

The University aims to support attainment in local schools and colleges, particularly as we recognise that GCSE attainment is a strong predictor of the likelihood of young people

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<sup>21</sup> Department for Education (2016) *Schools that Work for Everyone*, Government Consultation. Available at [https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/schools-that-work-for-everyone/supporting\\_documents/SCHOOLS%20THAT%20WORK%20FOR%20EVERYONE%20%20FINAL.PDF](https://consult.education.gov.uk/school-frameworks/schools-that-work-for-everyone/supporting_documents/SCHOOLS%20THAT%20WORK%20FOR%20EVERYONE%20%20FINAL.PDF)

progressing into higher education<sup>22</sup>. We have previously delivered sustained mentoring activity to support attainment, but have been unable to evidence any impact. We therefore plan to pilot a new project in 2017-18, which will be expanded in 2018-19. Our schools and colleges have specifically identified concerns about attainment in GCSE English and our project will therefore focus on this area. We recognise that achievement of GCSE English at Grade C/4 or above can be essential for progression into university or employment. Using a mix of trained Student Ambassadors and staff, we will support at least two schools and colleges in 2018-19 in intensive English support for students otherwise unlikely to achieve Grade C/4. We will pilot this with at least one school or college in 2017-18, and will use evaluation and tracking to develop the project for 2018-19. The indicator of success will be an increase in the grades achieved based on the predicted grades of students prior to their participation in the project.

## 5.4 Evaluation and Monitoring

The University of Suffolk has subscribed to the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) service which assists Higher Education Institutions in England to target, monitor and evaluate their outreach activity. We will continue to invest in HEAT to ensure the continued monitoring of activity.

The University of Suffolk records data about its outreach and participants on the HEAT database. This is entered into the HEAT longitudinal tracking system which matches records on individual outreach participants to administrative datasets spanning Key Stage 2 data through to postgraduate study and employment. Tracking reports received from HEAT help the University to better understand the relationship between our outreach provision and the attainment and progression of disadvantaged young people. We are able to track student progression to any HEI in the UK so that we can assess the extent to which we are contributing to the increased participation rates of disadvantaged young people as a whole.

Being part of the HEAT service also enables the University to engage with collective WP sector research. By using data from all members as an aggregate, the HEAT service is now able to explore new multi-dimensional ways of defining under-representation, disadvantage and differential outcomes and the effect that outreach can have on different groups of participants.

By subscribing to HEAT, our aim is to take a more evidence-based approach to developing and evaluating outreach delivery so that we can continue to invest in outreach activities that optimise progression with disadvantaged cohorts.

We will continue to use enhanced pre- and post-event feedback methods, including discussions and evaluation forms, to determine the success of our activities. Evaluations will be used to determine the types of activities that should be maintained, and will support the enhancement of our activities through an ongoing process of review and development.

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<sup>22</sup> Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2015). *Socio-economic, ethnic and gender differences in higher education*. Available at: <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/24685/1/BIS-15-85-socio-economic-ethnic-and-gender-differences.pdf>

The University will also continue to purchase UCAS data to improve our understanding of patterns and trends of HE participation of young people across Suffolk and the east of England.

## **5.5 Collaborative Outreach and Opportunity Areas**

### *National Collaborative Outreach Project*

The University of Suffolk is a partner in the Network for East Anglian Collaborative Outreach (NEACO) alongside the University of Cambridge, Anglia Ruskin University, University of East Anglia and Norwich University of the Arts. NEACO will place a network of Higher Education Champions (HECs) into target schools across Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and ten HECs will be based in Suffolk. The University of Suffolk's outreach activity will work alongside the NEACO project to ensure that young people who are not NEACO priority students will continue to receive aspiration-raising activity, particularly where they are in one of the University's target groups.

NEACO is expected to work with full cohorts in Years 9-11 in targeted state schools in Suffolk, but will work with very targeted students in Years 12 and 13. The University of Suffolk will continue to deliver targeted work for Years 9-11 where students meet one of the characteristics outlined in section 5.1. The University will continue to undertake aspiration-raising activity for Year 12 groups of state-school students not supported by NEACO. The introduction of NEACO will provide the opportunity for the University to widen our outreach to provide activity across a broader geographical area, including state schools with target students in Norfolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire, particularly where those students are not supported by NEACO or other collaborative outreach projects. The University will also work alongside NEACO to identify community groups and networks within the lower participation areas in Suffolk, where we can expand part-time and mature outreach activity.

We have requested in the Targets and Milestones to remove the collaborative target on joint teachers' activities. The NEACO project will undertake a range of work with teachers, which will replace our existing collaborative target.

### *Opportunity Areas*

Ipswich has been identified as one of the Department for Education's Opportunity Areas, although a Programme Director for Ipswich has not yet been appointed, which has limited the planning of activity. The University will work alongside the Programme Director to understand the Opportunity Area priorities and how to undertake activity that complements their work without blurring boundaries. The University will continue to focus specifically on the target groups identified in section 5.1.

### *Other Collaborations*

The Leaders of the County, District and Borough Councils have committed a fund to reduce education and skills deprivation in four areas of Suffolk, three of which are in Ipswich and one on the coast in Lowestoft. The University and NEACO are working with this group as the

priorities for the fund are developed in order to ensure all aspiration-raising and outreach work across Suffolk complements each other.

The University will continue to work with University partners and other stakeholders to deliver work to raise aspirations and attainment, and to improve the success and progression rates of our students. We are working closely with the New Anglia LEP to develop our portfolio within the strategic and economic priorities of the local area and to up-skill the Suffolk workforce. We have been working with the University of East Anglia on annual collaborative Care Leavers/Looked After Children events, and will continue to do this in 2018-19. We will also continue to work collaboratively with other East of England HEIs on outreach events for younger year groups and mature students, and will be involved with the Eastern Region Care Leavers Group.

The University of Suffolk is a proactive member of the Higher Education Liaison Officers Association (HELOA). HELOA is the professional association of HE staff who provide information, advice and outreach activities to prospective students, their families and guidance advisers. Good practice around access and outreach is shared amongst members regionally and nationally.

The University's new Ipswich Waterfront Innovation Centre (IWIC) is creating new collaborative opportunities for employers to work with our students, which is developing our students' employability skills and increasing their understanding of applying their academic knowledge to the world of work. The development of Higher and Degree Apprenticeships is expected to increase the University's engagement with employers, with the benefit likely to be felt across the University.

## **5.6 Courses and modes of study**

The University has successfully applied to join the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers, and will deliver the first Higher and Degree Apprenticeships from spring 2017. We recognise that Apprenticeships will play a key role in widening access to higher education amongst groups in Suffolk who might not otherwise consider university, while also giving the opportunity to increase the skills of the existing workforce. We will continue to develop our offer for 2018 and beyond, outside our initial focus on business, health and ICT.

The Government has also recently published information on accelerated degrees<sup>23</sup>, which the University of Suffolk will be considering as part of the development of our portfolio. We recognise that two year degrees could be of particular benefit for students who have financial concerns about university.

The University of Suffolk continues to make the majority of our degrees available to part-time students, but has experienced a decline in part-time applications and enrolments since 2012. We are pleased that maintenance loans will be available to part-time undergraduate students

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<sup>23</sup> Department for Education (2017) <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/two-year-university-courses-come-a-step-closer> and Institute for Employment Studies (2017) *Accelerated Degrees in Higher Education*, available at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/595638/Accelerated\\_Degrees\\_Case\\_Study\\_Report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/595638/Accelerated_Degrees_Case_Study_Report.pdf)

from 2018-19 and will invest in the development of information to promote part-time study. The University will also continue to participate in a range of events in the local community to promote different study options, including part-time study, apprenticeships, and accelerated degrees.

## **6. Student Success and Progression**

In total, the University of Suffolk plans to spend £971,000 on student progression and success measures in 2018-19.

The University has identified that retention and achievement rates have shown negative performance over the past three Monitoring Returns<sup>24</sup> and we are therefore working on the development of a Progression Strategy based on the findings in the HEFCE *'Delivering opportunities for students and maximising their success'* report<sup>25</sup>. We acknowledge that mature students, male students, students who applied through Clearing, and those with a disability (other than a specific learning difficulty) have been historically most likely to withdraw. However, we also know that the majority of our students could be considered as 'under-represented' students on the basis of specific characteristics or their progression from low-participation areas or schools. The Progression Strategy therefore aims to work across the student population, and with specific target groups, to improve the factors that can lead to differential outcomes in higher education, including engagement with teaching and learning; academic and independent learning skills; expectations and self-confidence; and cultural and social capital. The initial actions from this new Progression Strategy will be in place for new entrants in academic year 2017/18, and will roll out across all year groups.

### **6.1 Preparation for HE Activities**

The University of Suffolk will be expanding our Get Ahead pre-induction Study Skills programmes. The programmes will be promoted to all new students to the University as the majority of our students are from state schools or under-represented backgrounds, but we will target follow-up activity to key groups. Target students will be contacted three weeks after attendance on Get Ahead and will be supported to undertake additional engagement with Learning Services to develop their study skills. During 2017-18 we will have piloted an embedded-induction, with mandatory attendance for some course areas with follow up academic development modules during semesters 1 and 2. Following evaluation of the impact on retention and achievement, this will be rolled out more widely in 2018-19.

We will also be purchasing Lucid LADS Plus<sup>26</sup> and associated software to improve the screening of our students from disadvantaged backgrounds, to aid the early identification of any problems. The use of such software to identify students support needs at the earliest stage of engagement with the University, will help us to ensure that our students not only receive appropriate third party support but will also allow us to be able to effectively signpost

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<sup>24</sup> University of Suffolk Monitoring Return 2015-16

<sup>25</sup> HEFCE (2015) *Delivering opportunities for students and maximising their success: Evidence for policy and practice 2015-20*. Available from <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2015/201514/>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.lucid-research.com/p/124/lads-plus>

and monitor the learning of students, increasing or adapting support to meet ongoing and evolving needs.

The Student Services team will be developing a programme to provide early orientation for students with disabilities, with a residential option available for students if required. Students will be able to rehearse student support arrangements and develop an understanding of the campus before the majority of students arrive.

The University's Student Services and Infozone will continue to enhance the support available to students throughout the student lifecycle. Student Services will support outreach activities and Open Events to promote early disclosure of disabilities, and to promote the services available to support student success and progression into employment. The Infozone offers information about educational opportunities to all enquirers, helping potential students to identify pathways into HE and aspire to achieve higher level qualifications and ultimately to enter graduate level employment. It will continue to offer information, advice and guidance to current students about all aspects of student success and progression, in particular those aspects traditionally seen as barriers to HE, including finance, disability and learning difficulties.

## **6.2 Student Success**

The University will invest £605,000 in retention and success measures, including £246,000 in relation to students declaring a disability (further detail provided in 6.3):

- Reviewing and developing the format of pre-entry study skills and bridging modules for prospective students and increasing the number of students who participate in these;
- Improve the availability of pre-entry online learning services to foster increased understanding and self-confidence in teaching and learning;
- Purchase of Blackbullion software to support financial literacy assessments and workshops;
- Expansion of the use of LEGO Serious Play to explore challenges and barriers to learning and potential solutions;
- Seeking student feedback through focus groups on all aspects of the student experience that impact retention, and implementing changes as appropriate;
- Introduction of a new transition buddying programme and a new Suffolk Life Mentor Scheme to create more peer-led activities (more information below);
- Expansion of the Peer-Assisted Student Success (PASS) Scheme to provide an essential peer support network (more information below);
- Increased learning equipment available for students to borrow to enhance their experience;
- Increased availability of counselling services;
- Development of an integrated and cohesive programme of extra-curricular support and workshops designed around course timetables, including academic, information and digital literacies;
- Enhance the Bystander Programme to foster a community of support and success across the University;



- Support for Mental Health Advisors and Counsellors to undertake specialist mental health training to maintain professional registration and enhance professional development;
- Expansion of Mental Health First Aid training for staff to ensure a wider group of staff is able to support students, and run a range of events and training to promote positive mental health and equality and diversity, including: Mental Health Awareness events, staff training on responding to disclosures of sexual violence, 'Consent Matters' training;
- Development of a programme for students, including psycho-social learning to challenge limiting beliefs and manage anxiety, and provide career coaching and mental health first aid;
- Improve the range of materials available to provide information and support to students, particularly in mental wellbeing, with more self-access and online support available, including investing in an online Mental Health platform;
- Collaboratively across the University's network of Partner Colleges continue to develop our Learning Services and Student Services to actively engage students and provide robust means for personal, professional and academic development and success;
- Further development of Infozone Online via the Enquiry Service Desk (ESD) and Student Guides to improve access to information, advice and support services;
- A continued focus on inclusive learning approaches and practices to benefit all students, including students with disabilities, those with English as an additional language or students with caring responsibilities.

The University also will continue to invest in attendance monitoring software and associated procedures to allow early identification of students at risk of withdrawing, and timely implementation of support measures. Students will be contacted automatically following a seven day period of non-attendance, progressing to intervention from personal tutors.

The University's Progression Strategy aims to bring all aspects of outreach, success and progression together to improve student engagement and success throughout their academic life-cycle. Students will be introduced to support and learning services as early as possible in the application process, and will continue to receive 'induction' sessions in these services throughout their course. For example, additional sessions relating to research skills will be timetabled for periods when first assignments are being introduced. Extra-curricular support will also be timetabled alongside course timetables to facilitate easy access while balancing other learning or personal constraints and responsibilities. Learning opportunities will include the development of underpinning academic and literary skills, including critical thinking, self-confidence, emotional intelligence, reflexivity and employability, for example. Additional 'hands-on' IT support sessions will be made available during Induction to ensure students can quickly and easily have access to University systems through their own devices. The University will continue to invest in the expansion of these activities and develop mechanisms whereby such activities can be recognised as achieved on the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR).

Students will be introduced early to a range of supports. We will be piloting Suffolk Life Mentors in 2017-18 to develop a programme of peer-led activities, with Mentors trained to focus on a range of areas, including BME, mental health, disability, finance, careers and employability. Mentors will choose their expert area and will encourage target students to attend activities. Students will also be introduced during Induction to Academic Skills

Advisors, subject-specific Librarians and their Peer-Assisted Student Success (PASS) Leaders. The PASS Scheme will be further expanded in 2018-19 to increase the number of courses involved. PASS Leaders at the University are paid for their time and access a range of training throughout the academic year, which is passed to their wider cohort through peer mentoring.

With an understanding that some students join courses with little notice and after the normal start date, the University is committed to running a number of catch-up or repeat sessions for students to access. These sessions offer a bespoke introduction to the University and its services, focussing on the specific needs of late students.

The University will be developing the availability of support services on the intranet to ensure access for students who are typically unlikely to access support in person. The University will further develop plain English and user-friendly Student Guides with interactive elements to enhance student access to information using dedicated Articulate Storyline software. The Infozone Online service enables students to access information and advice quickly and online. Students are able to self-book and self-manage advisory appointments, giving greater autonomy. We will continue to invest in the system to ensure it meets the needs of students, providing a quality service and easy access to academics and support services.

The Mental Health Adviser will expand Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) accredited courses for a wider range of staff as well as students, who will be supervised to promote general mental wellbeing and offer peer-to-peer support. Learning opportunities are being expanded to build on the existing workshops in self-esteem, communication and managing exam stress. There is a continued requirement to provide specialist support for students and training for staff as student need dictates.

The University is committed to cyclical review of all policies and procedures, seeking to make changes and developments which both ensure consistency with sector standards, but also innovate and develop practices whenever possible. At the core of all policies and procedures is the student experience. Significant changes were made to Assessment Regulations at the start of the 2016-17 year, elements of which will directly impact student progression between academic years. The University will continue to monitor the impact of these changes on all student groups.

### **6.3 Student Success: Disability**

The University of Suffolk will invest £246,000 in disability and equality and diversity activities. These will include:

- Disability advice and DSA application support during the pre-entry process to increase the proportion of students arriving with support already in place;
- Supporting staff awareness of disability by expanding staff development training including: continuation of Mental Health First Aid, Autism Awareness, and inclusive learning practices;
- Training staff to conduct diagnostic learning assessments;

- Expanding and replacing some of the current loan equipment, including Digital Voice Recorders, tablet devices and other appropriate technologies, and exploring implementation of a centralised lecture capture function;
- Development of an orientation programme for students with disabilities to attend before the beginning of term, providing the opportunity to experience the campus and student support before the majority of students arrive;
- Increased information provided to set expectations of the support services and resources available to students throughout their course;
- Bespoke inductions for students with Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASCs) or other disabilities, to aid transition and orientation;
- Diagnostic learning assessments and identification of strengths and challenges, including screening for exam concessions. Diagnostic assessments will be made available for students to take to their graduate workplace to support provision of reasonable adjustments;
- Provision of non-medical help (NMH), study-support assistance and note-taking;
- Specialist Mentoring where disabled students cannot demonstrate eligibility requirements for DSA;
- Continued commitment to fortnightly case management for complex or at-risk cases, managing risk and identifying early interventions;
- Support for Disability advisors in the University to study for National Autistic Society core modules to ensure that all Disability Advisors have a minimum level of specialist training;
- Staff will be supported in developing experience of assistive technology to further support students;
- Review, evaluation and improvement of the 'Fitness to Study' procedure following initial implementation in 2017-18.

The reforms to Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) intended to rebalance the responsibility from Government funding to Higher Education Institutions. The University DSA working group made recommendations for further development in a number of areas, including:

- 'Disability Awareness' training for staff;
- Mainstreaming adjustments and embedding inclusive learning practices;
- Reasonable Adjustments.

The University continues to develop resources and processes, which are outlined above. The reinvigorated debate on inclusivity offers the opportunity to develop inclusive learning practice which also supports the diversity of learning approaches and needs of our wider student population.

The University is committed to improving the experience of students with disabilities and continues to maintain the staffing resource in Student Services in recognition of the continuing need from students presenting with disabilities as the institution has grown. Students presenting with physical, learning and mental health disabilities can all access specialist advice and support and there is a well-established process for agreeing and supporting reasonable adjustments that is embraced and understood across the institution. Findings from retention data and student focus groups, shows that students with reasonable adjustments are less likely to withdraw and focus groups held with students identified that

students felt there should be greater promotion of services. Work will continue to develop ways to promote disability support and reasonable adjustments to prospective and current students. Staff will work with students to gain their feedback on services.

#### **6.4 Progression: Careers and Employability**

The University of Suffolk will invest £366,000 in careers and employability activities, which will be available to all students, but targeted at students from under-represented groups where possible; these includes support for disabled students. These will include:

- Introduction of career decision-making readiness in induction sessions in first year, to introduce the idea of employability and career-planning at the beginning of the programme, and embed this throughout each year of the course;
- Increased use of LinkedIn and Twitter for early employment-based networking throughout the student experience;
- Development of opportunities for students to practice their employability skills, including networking with employers, panel events, mentoring, and internships;
- Students with diagnostic assessments will be supported with taking their assessments to graduate workplaces for support with adjustments and planning;
- We will grow the internship and placement opportunities available within the University;
- The current online Job Shop to which the University subscribes will cease to operate in August 2018. Alternative platforms will therefore be reviewed to ensure promotion and access to opportunities can be maintained;
- Enhance the programme of extra-curricular workshops to encompass self-reflection, opportunity, and understanding of labour markets;
- Encourage the recording of all extra-curricular activities and applying the activities and skills to the job market;
- Development of a peer-led mentoring scheme to specifically focus on employability skills;
- Investment in promotional programme to increase employer engagement with internships and placements and increased events for students;
- Specialist careers and employability post/s;
- Employer Liaison Adviser;
- Making the Careers Service more accessible for graduates and link up with local support services to increase the support available for graduates who are still seeking employment.

A significant aspect of the University's approach to improving the success of students from disadvantaged backgrounds is the attention to careers and employability advice. As reported in the last Access Agreement, research shows that students from a widening participation background often require more support in developing career management skills than other students, specifically around self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy<sup>27</sup>. Further research has found that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds tend to leave career planning to the end of their studies, and have a reluctance to participate in activities specifically aimed at boosting their CV<sup>28</sup>. Our experience continues to reflect both of these

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<sup>27</sup> Brown, M. (2014) *Higher Education as a tool of Social Mobility*. Centre Forum. Available at <http://www.centreforum.org/assets/pubs/he-as-a-tool-of-social-mobility.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Greenbank, P. (2015) Still focusing on the 'essential 2:1': exploring students attitudes to extra-curricular activities. *Education & Training*, Vol. 57, Iss. 2, pp.184-203

pieces of research and much of the work of the Careers and Employability team is focussed on developing earlier careers interventions through working with course teams, and providing increased levels of 1:1 activities.

The University will focus on embedding employability within the Academic Strategy, ensuring that students are encouraged to plan for graduate employability from the beginning of their course. We will continue to expand the Graduate Development Programme, which has already embedded well into individual subjects areas in the University. The Employment Liaison Advisor will continue to work directly with local and national employers to increase the number of quality internships available to students, and the Careers and Employability team will support students in submitting successful applications for these opportunities.

We will continue to increase activity relating to progression into postgraduate study, as the Postgraduate Loan makes postgraduate study more feasible for students from low participation backgrounds. The University will be supporting postgraduate students in becoming Graduate Teaching Assistants, providing graduate students with financial support but also importantly providing undergraduate students with postgraduate role models. Activities and information sessions are planned to promote postgraduate study, covering both taught and research options, and these will be promoted to students from the beginning of Level 4.

The International Office continues to support academic links with EU Universities to grow opportunities for international student exchange, supporting students' development of cultural capital and international awareness. Additional resource allocated to the promotion and administration of Erasmus+ raises students' awareness and aspirations to such opportunities.

The terms of reference for all Faculty Boards and Committees were reviewed to ensure that they reflect Chapter B4 of the QAA Quality Code: 'enabling student development and achievement'. Ensuring that supporting all students' personal, academic and professional development is a core area of discussion and focus. The B4 mapping document recording key processes and developments is kept under regular review and scrutiny of the Learning Teaching and Assessment Group (LTAG).

## **7. Financial Support for Students**

### **7.1 NSP Financial Support**

All planned NSP expenditure should now be complete, however there may be some deferred expenditure relating to awards not taken up for the previous cohorts.

### **7.2 Other Financial Support**

As outlined in Section 4.3.1, the University will be continuing to offer a bursary as we recognise that our bursary recipients have better retention rates than our general student population. However, we have a considerable number of underrepresented students and not all are eligible for the bursary. It is likely that the bursary is only one aspect of ensuring the success of our students, and we will therefore maintain the bursary amount at £500 per student per year to support success and retention.

While feedback from our students suggests that the current cash bursary is appreciated, the University is participating in discussions with organisations that offer options to target the type of spending for which students can use their bursary. We will continue to research the options and will determine the specifics of our bursary before September 2017 in order to be able to communicate the offer to applicants early in the application cycle.

The University will continue to operate the following eligibility criteria for students to receive the University of Suffolk Bursary:

- Studying a full-time undergraduate degree programme;
- Assessed through Student Finance England as having a household income of £25,000 or less;
- Living in the UK.

If applications for the bursary exceed the number of allocations available, awards will be subject to additional academic criteria.

#### *Looked After Children Bursary*

This will be offered to students who live or have lived in local authority care. The bursary will be £500 each year of undergraduate study.

### **7.3 Evaluating Financial Support**

The University recognises that future decisions on financial support must be underpinned by evidence of a positive impact, and while our own internal data indicates a positive effect, we look forward to using the new tools provided via Sheffield Hallam University<sup>29</sup> to evaluate the effectiveness of our bursaries.

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<sup>29</sup> Sheffield Hallam University (2016) *Closing the gap: understanding the impact of institutional financial support on student success*. Available from: <https://www.offa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Closing-the-gap-understanding-the-impact-of-institutional-financial-support-on-student-success.pdf>

## **8. Target and Milestones**

### **8.1 Measuring Disadvantage**

The University of Suffolk can report that in 2015-16, 27.9% of young full-time entrants were from POLAR3 Quintile 1, which compares against 18.5% of all English students from POLAR3 Q1 in 2015 and 19.5% in 2016<sup>30</sup>. The University had set targets based on NS-SEC until 2019-20, which committed to maintaining the current mix of students until 2017-18, with a slight increase in target until 2019-20. We will therefore aim to increase the proportion of POLAR3 Q1 entrants to 24% in 2018-19 and 24.5% by 2021-22.

### **8.2 Targets and milestones relating to applicants, entrants or student body**

The following targets are until 2021-22, with measurable milestones at the end of each year. These targets include full and part-time students.

- The University will maintain the in-year retention rate of 95%.
- The University will increase our in-year achievement rate by 0.5% per year, reaching 95.79% in 2021-22.
- The University will increase continuation by 1% per year to reach 96.6% in 2021-22.
- The University will increase the number of students who disclose a disability by 0.5% each year.
- The University will increase the number of students from a BME background by 0.25% per year, reaching 13.98% by 2021-22.
- The University would like to continue the target of increasing the number of Care Leavers by 2 students per year, but would like to change the benchmark year to 2012-13. The University experienced an anomalous increase in care-leavers in 2013-14 but aims to increase the number of care-leavers to 26 by 2021-22.
- The University will maintain its undergraduate full-time drop-out rate at 9%.
- The University would like to alter the employability target to increase graduate employability to 75% in 2021-22.
- The University will increase the proportion of students from POLAR3 Quintile 1 backgrounds to 24.5% by 2021-22.
- The University will add a new target of increasing the number of young male students from POLAR3 Q1 backgrounds on full-time undergraduate courses to 300 by 2021-22. This is against a benchmark of 279 in 2015-16.

### **8.3 Other targets and milestones**

The following targets are until 2021-22, with measurable milestones at the end of each year.

- The University will contribute towards raising the aspirations and attainment of young people in Suffolk, and ultimately progression of Suffolk students into further and higher education. We will contribute to increasing the number of young people in Suffolk

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<sup>30</sup> UCAS End of Cycle Report 2015, p. 92; and UCAS End of Cycle Report 2016, p. 92

progressing to HE by 1% each year. It should be noted that this target relies on Suffolk County Council continuing to collect this data.

- The University will increase the number of outreach activities it runs for schools and colleges by 5% each year.
- The University will increase the number of paid internships for students by 5 each year.

#### Amended targets

- The University would like to amend the target of maintaining the number of summer schools to a target based on the number of participants. We would like to increase the number of participants on summer schools by 5 per year. This will allow us to amalgamate and expand existing successful activity and to report on participants rather than the number of activities.
- The University would like to amend the collaborative target below regarding conferences.
- We would like to remove our collaborative target of developing a shared training plan for teachers and hold an annual collaborative teachers conference. The University has delivered collaborative teachers targets for many years, but we are now working with our collaborative partners in the NCOP consortium. We would like to remove this target to ensure the University of Suffolk is not replicating NCOP work.

#### Collaborative targets

- The University will run one joint summer school or campus visit per year with other regional HEIs.
- The University will continue to run two collaborative events with other regional HEIs, but would like to amend the target to refer to 'events' rather than 'conferences' to give the University and our collaborative partners more flexibility to deliver events that are more likely to be successful.

#### New Targets and Milestones

- The University will deliver attainment-raising activity for GCSE English, with two schools/colleges in 2018-19 (up to 100 students), increasing to four by 2020-21 (up to 250 students) and maintaining at that number.
- The University will deliver an outreach project for one group of 20 BME students in 2017-18 and will increase by 15 students per year, maintaining at 75 by 2021-22.

## **9. Monitoring and Evaluation Arrangements**

### **9.1 Institutional monitoring arrangements**

The University of Suffolk will monitor compliance with the commitments made under this agreement and its progress against targets and milestones. The following indicators will be monitored annually:

- The retention, achievement and continuation rates of full-time and part-time undergraduate students;
- The socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender, age, disability status and entry qualifications of its new entrants;



- The graduate employability rates and progression of full-time and part-time undergraduates;
- Quantity and impact of outreach activities taking place in each year.

The University of Suffolk carries out monitoring of the Access Agreement via annual reports submitted by the University of Suffolk Registrar and Secretary to the Executive and Board, which are also reviewed by the University of Suffolk Senate.

## 9.2 Evaluation

The University recognises the recommendation of the Social Mobility Advisory Group<sup>31</sup> that universities make better use of data across all aspects of the student lifecycle to identify gaps and to be able to assess the effectiveness of work on social mobility. The University is therefore developing evaluation methods and tracking procedures to ensure that we continue to invest in activity that has a demonstrable and positive impact on our targets. Evaluation and monitoring data will be collected for all initiatives and activities by the following methods:

- Pre- and post-evaluation questionnaires to assess impact of all activity including collaborative work. Evidence relating to changes in attitudes and aspirations as well as long term changes in progression will be focussed on.
- Using the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) to enable better tracking of all students involved in outreach activities. It is expected that this will enable the University to accurately report on the success of both our own and our collaborative activities.
- Evaluation of attainment and destination data provided by SCC.
- The purchase of UCAS data relating to destinations and demographic data of applicants in Suffolk for comparative purposes against University of Suffolk applicants and enrolments.
- The Management Information Team provides statistics on socio-economic data relating to retention and attainment.
- The Equality and Diversity Committee reviews data on ethnic minority, age and disability and other protected characteristics – with specific working groups looking at retention and progression.
- The Student Experience Committee, on which there is representation from University of Suffolk students, evaluates the entire student lifecycle, from pre-admission to graduation. The Committee considers a wide range of data, including NSS and Internal Surveys/Research to identify both academic and non-academic areas that can be improved upon.
- The Retention Working Group reviews and monitors data on retention and works to provide students with a positive induction experience.

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<sup>31</sup> Social Mobility Advisory Group (2016) *Working in Partnership: Enabling Social Mobility in Higher Education*, available at <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2016/working-in-partnership-final.pdf>

As noted in section 7.3, the University recognises that future decisions on financial support must be underpinned by evidence of a positive impact, and we therefore plan to use the new tools provided via Sheffield Hallam University<sup>32</sup> to evaluate the effectiveness of our bursaries.

## 10. Equality and Diversity

All University of Suffolk policies are subject to equality impact assessment and draw upon consideration of the access, success and progression of students, broken down by protected characteristics. This also includes consideration of academic appeals, complaints, academic misconduct, and professional misconduct and these are reported to Academic Board.

The University monitors how its duties under the Equality Act 2010 are implemented and evaluated through the Equality and Diversity Committee which enjoys a diverse membership across the institution and includes some key partners co-opted from the community. Work of departments such as the Outreach and Student Services teams continue to report into the Equality and Diversity Committee providing a holistic view of Equality and Diversity issues across the institution. Much work has been undertaken to capture and analyse a broader range of protected characteristics of students in order to inform marketing and recruitment activities, curriculum development, and the tailoring of support to suit a range of needs. Continuing to develop an inclusive culture in HE remains an institutional priority. Monitoring of student attendance and other mechanisms to identify students at risk continue to be enhanced. Marketing and recruitment activities target and engage closely with specific community events where diverse groups are represented with the aim of raising aspirations and progression into higher education.

All staff involved with the recruitment of students receives training which emphasises the need to ensure that discrimination, either direct or indirect, is not exercised during any recruitment processes.

Much work has been done to support applicants and students with disabilities and the University regularly reviews its compliance with the expectations of the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the Equality Act 2010. All marketing literature and digital media, including the website, is fully compliant with accessibility guidelines. All students are able to access the physical environment in which they study, learn, live and take part in the social life of the institution. The University continues to invest in information and advice for applicants to ensure that they are aware of the reasonable adjustment process, Disabled Students Allowances and are encouraged to disclose as early as possible.

The University of Suffolk supports a multi-faith Chaplaincy representing a wide range of faiths. There is provision for private prayer and community worship and a programme of activities and clubs for different groups and effective links with local faith groups. The latter is important to students from outside Suffolk, particularly for refugees, who find comfort from linking to established networks nearby. The Chaplains are very visible in the university community, enhancing the wellbeing service provided by Student Services, and welcoming

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<sup>32</sup> Sheffield Hallam University (2016) *Closing the gap: understanding the impact of institutional financial support on student success*. Available from: <https://www.offa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Closing-the-gap-understanding-the-impact-of-institutional-financial-support-on-student-success.pdf>

students of all faiths or no faith. In particular, strong links with the local mosque have proved very useful in furthering understanding of the needs of our Muslim students. In conjunction with the Students' Union, the chaplaincy is looking to develop the number and range of events held annually on campus to mark important festivals. The chaplaincy has also started to work with a number of academic teams, for example looking at potential conflicts between faith and professional practice for Mental Health students.

## **11. Provision of information to prospective students**

The University of Suffolk is aware of its responsibilities within the Consumer Rights Act 2015, and is implementing recommendations made by the Competition and Markets Authority for HEIs. As part of this, the University is committed to clearly informing prospective applicants and existing students of tuition fees and financial support, and additional course costs.

Information is being made available in durable formats from course webpages, with additional downloadable durable information provided where relevant (e.g. information on bursaries and financial support). An online student handbook has been developed and made available, moving away from a printed document. This ensures consistent information is supplied to students regarding the University. This document is accompanied by a dedicated course handbook which is also published online. The University ensures that all information published in our wide range of channels is accurate. The channels ensure that all prospective students, their families and advisors, can access information in a method that suits them. The University publishes information via the website, the printed prospectuses, associated documentation (including policy documents), social networks and other online tools. The University also commits to providing UCAS and SLC with information as required to populate their applicant-facing web services and databases.

Applicants will be given information about the minimum associated costs that they should plan for in order to successfully pass their course. This information will be available for applicants via the downloadable course information from the University website. Applicants and prospective students will also be provided with information about the financial support and advice available to all students at the University.

The Infozone gives a single, coherent point of contact and it provides both current students and applicants with a well-established Student Support service including specific student financial and welfare advice. The Infozone-online service also provides an enhanced service and FAQs. Pro-active Recruitment and Admissions teams support and advise applicants through the admissions process. The Infozone and Student Recruitment and Outreach team provide an IAG service to students and applicants, as well as to members of the public, both online and in person. The Careers and Employability team provide IAG support to students' right through their student life cycle and progression beyond HE. All services are promoted actively on both the University website and through the staff and student intranet. The Learning Network also provides an IAG service to potential applicants about the University of Suffolk and HE in general, and progression onto postgraduate study.

## **12. Consulting with the Students' Union**

The University of Suffolk consulted with the Students' Union during the design process of this Access Agreement. University staff attended a meeting with the Students' Union President to discuss changes to the Access Agreement. Feedback focused on the University's Progression Strategy highlighting increased support and investment in disability and equality and diversity activities, and the introduction of the Suffolk Life Mentor programme.

The Students' Union "acknowledges and supports the University in all aspects outlined within the Access Agreement for 2018-2019. We are pleased to see the continuation of financial aid this academic year as well as opportunities for students to feedback and evaluate their student experience".

As the University continues to expand and develop, it is important to continue consultation with students and the Students' Union will remain supportive of this by promoting and discussing the monitoring of the Access Agreement through Student Council.