



Access Agreement 2016-17

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 2016 until 31 August 2017. It relates to **Home undergraduate and PGCE students entering the University from September 2016**. The University may review the provisions and commitments of this Access Agreement in the event of a change of government or 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, and we significantly exceed all of the national WP benchmarks in terms of the WP profile of North East entrants**. 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%).
- 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 leading universities, which work together to promote access for WP students to research intensive universities. In the North East, we lead the North East Raising Aspiration Partnership, 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.
- 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 University's Undergraduate Recruitment and Admissions Monitoring Committee and progress is reported to the University's governing bodies through our annual Equal Opportunities Monitoring Report.
- 1.8 We recognise that many students may have concerns about the financial costs of Higher Education. Our scholarships and bursaries provide **financial support for up to a third of our students**.
- 1.9 The University offers its students **challenging, flexible and relevant degree programmes**, taught by experts whose research enriches the learning environment.
- 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 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** involving representatives from the Students' Union, 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 2016-17, 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 2016 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 Health¹. This includes the following fully or partly NHS-funded programmes or years: the undergraduate degree in Speech and Language Sciences; the Higher Education Diploma in Dental Hygiene and Therapy; the fifth year of the five-year programmes in Medicine and Dentistry; and the four-year accelerated Medicine degree for graduates.
- 2.4 Placement Year fees for students entering Newcastle University from 2012 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.
- 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 2016.
- 2.7 The University's estimated fee income above the basic fee is summarised below:

Year	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Total (estimated) number of 'new system' students paying more than the basic fee	13,761	14,344	14,712	14,875	14,917
Total 'new system' fee income above the basic fee	£40,221,800	£41,947,250	£43,030,600	£43,499,300	£43,625,300

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

PART 3: ACCESS ASSESSMENT AND ADDITIONAL EXPENDITURE

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 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	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Outreach, Admissions and Fair Access (incl. staffing, infrastructure, evaluation)	£3,342,725	£3,331,204	£3,382,699	£3,442,361	£3,486,329
Retention and success (incl. staffing /infrastructure)	£1,566,013	£1,973,613	£2,027,061	£2,107,341	£2,149,599
University matched funding contribution to the National Scholarship Programme	£930,637	£505,341	£142,739	£9,809	£3,796
Other (non-NSP) student financial support for students entering from 2012	£7,374,025	£8,174,754	£8,542,158	£8,737,005	£8,777,287
Bursary commitments to pre-2012 entry returners	£133,750	£37,450	£0	£0	£0
Total estimated expenditure on Access Agreement commitments	£13,347,151	£14,022,362	£14,094,659	£14,296,517	£14,417,012
Expenditure (excl. bursaries for returning students) as % of 'new system' fee income above the basic fee	32.85%	33.25%	32.75%	32.87%	33.05%

- 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, which contributes to our overall WP strategy.
- 3.5 The financial commitments in the table above do not include the indirect costs of employing additional Graduate Ambassadors / staff to deliver activity (office space, infrastructure, utilities etc).

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 2016 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 2012 to 2014 against the latest HESA benchmarks (where available). 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)
HESA Benchmark 2013-14		82.9%	25.0%	7.4%	N/A	N/A for all declaring disability (5.8% benchmark for in receipt of DSA)
Whole cohort	2012 3697	2406/3400 70.76% (HESA: 70%)	572/2961 19.32% (HESA: 19.2%)	263/3466 7.59% (HESA: 7.4%)	287/3672 7.82% (N/A)	272/3697 7.36% (HESA: 4.5%)
	2013 4238	3009/3994 75.34% (HESA = 74.0%)	746/3404 21.92% (HESA = 21.8%)	337/3971 8.49% (HESA = 8.1%)	370/4224 8.76% (HESA = N/A)	314/4238 7.41% (HESA = 5.0%)
	2014 4267	2738/3641 75.20%	694/3406 20.38%	332/3857 8.61%	373/4247 8.78%	338/4267 7.92%
North East only	2012 785	606/667 90.85%	189/568 33.27%	130/686 18.95%	59/779 7.57%	49/785 6.24%
	2013 889	727/769 94.54%	232/646 35.91%	159/763 20.84%	78/885 8.81%	50/889 5.62%
	2014 890	673/721 93.34%	210/662 31.72%	156/779 20.03%	80/884 9.05%	54/890 6.07%
From North East, North West, Yorks & Humbs	2012 1929	1476/1761 83.82%	366/1540 23.77%	198/1791 11.06%	138/1920 7.19%	113/1929 5.86%
	2013 2169	1769/2014 87.84%	477/1696 28.13%	268/2005 13.37%	180/2160 8.33%	125/2169 5.76%
	2014 2210	1719/1961 87.66%	427/1762 24.23%	261/2065 12.64%	170/2198 7.73%	132/2210 5.97%
From target regions excluding the North East (NW, Y&H, M'side, E Mids, W Mids, Grtr London)	2012 1892	1277/1784 71.58%	258/1564 16.50%	101/1812 5.57%	166/1884 8.81%	126/1892 6.66%
	2013 2177	1620/2104 77.00%	355/1784 19.90%	138/2098 6.58%	225/2171 10.36%	165/2177 7.58%
	2014 2113	1502/1947 77.14%	331/1737 19.06%	131/2039 6.42%	202/2103 9.61%	152/2113 7.19%

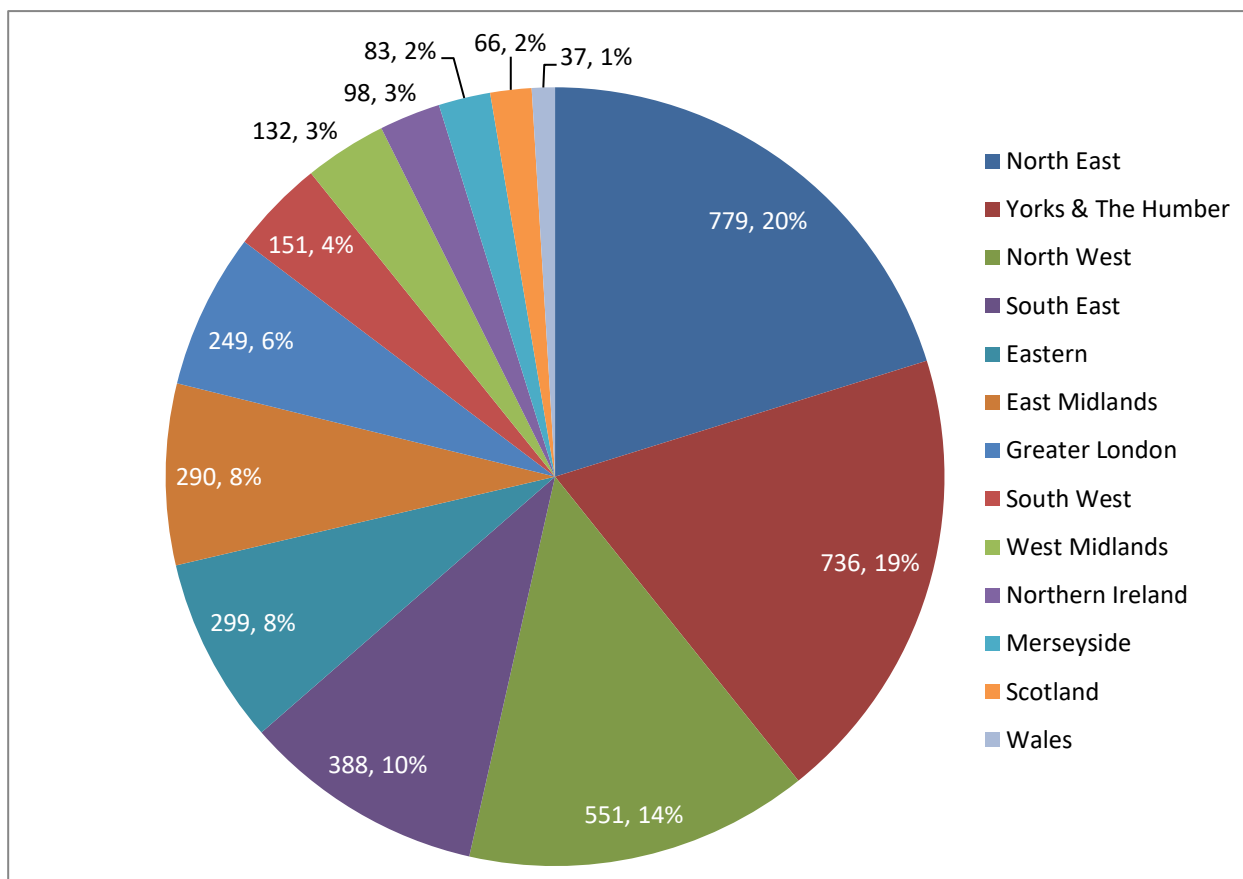
(Note: percentages are based on known data in each category, so the denominator differs in each case)

3.9 Our WP performance overall for 2013 and 2014 entry has shown good progress towards the HESA benchmarks for state schools and low participation neighbourhoods, indicating that the targeted expansion of our outreach activity is beginning to take effect. Progress towards the (ever-increasing) benchmark for lower socio-economic groups has been less evident, perhaps reflecting the fact that it is impossible to target this group of students prior to entry. The number of offers made by the University

to identifiable WP students (PARTNERS, Realising Opportunities and LPN) has increased again, by 9%, for 2015 entry.

3.10 Newcastle University continues to perform 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, even though the 2014 figures indicate a slight fall against the three main performance indicators, we significantly exceed the HESA benchmarks. 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 Distribution of young entrants to Newcastle University, 2014 Entry



3.12 The chart above shows the distribution of young entrants to Newcastle University in 2014 by region of domicile. Approximately 20% 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 Overall, the chart shows that the University has a strong national recruitment profile and reputation, and this has an impact on our overall WP performance. Detailed analysis by region demonstrates the challenge of WP in regions that are geographically more remote. For example, the state school profile of our students from the South East is well below the sector benchmark (52.8% against a benchmark of 82.9%), yet this region is the fourth largest provider of the University's 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.

3.14 For this reason, if we are to increase our overall profile of WP students, we must continue to extend our 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 Greater London).

3.15 For students on our PGCE programmes, there are two main diversity challenges affecting access to teacher training: participation of men in teaching and participation of black and minority ethnic groups

(BME). Recruitment of men into teaching has shown an encouraging increase in recent years from 30% in 2010/11 to 37% in 2012/13. However, numbers are still relatively low: out of 126 PGCE students in 2014, 83 were female and 43 male. In terms of BME intake, numbers are relatively low. 8 out of 126 (6.3%) are from a BME background. These low numbers reflect the regional provenance of our PGCE students. Whilst our Access Agreement does not include specific activities to promote PGCE diversity, we monitor BME and male intake to teacher training, as well as on overall completion rates, and have set targets which reflect this focus.

Post-Entry

- 3.16 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 supporting students. Our Access Agreement articulates with the Student Opportunity Funding and overall University resource planning to ensure that we provide all students with a broad-ranged portfolio of support with enhanced emphasis on those who have additional or complex needs.
- 3.17 HESA performance indicators show that just 2.4% of our 2013 young entrants were no longer in HE after one year (compared with a benchmark of 3.2% and a UK average of 5.7%). We have, however, identified some trends and differences associated with particular groups. For example, there is a slightly greater tendency for students to drop out at this stage if they are mature (8.3%, UK average 11.9%) or from a low participation neighbourhood (4.8%; UK average 7.7%).
- 3.18 Through analysis of our data, we have observed a significant increase in the number and proportion of students requiring additional support. The number of undergraduate students presenting with long term mental health difficulties for example, has more than doubled between 2010 and 2014 (from 44 to 91). The number of students who declare multiple disabilities has increased from 9 to 35 in that same period, and the number of undergraduate students declaring a learning difficulty (eg Dyslexia) has increased from 647 to 797 (a 19% increase).
- 3.19 We are developing appropriate support mechanisms to respond to these increases. For example, for students with Asperger's, those on the autistic spectrum and those with long term mental health problems, who often find transitions particularly challenging, we have put in place a programme of support over the induction period, focused 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. **Further analysis of the data will help us to develop other programmes of support for vulnerable students in our 2016 Access Agreement.**
- 3.20 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.
- 3.21 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, has been built into 2016 Access Agreement (including planning for anticipated changes to the Disabled Student Allowance).**

Graduation and Success

- 3.22 Overall, Newcastle graduates have an outstanding employment record with 93.7% of our 2013 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.
- 3.23 In view of our current record, this again is not the main focus of our 2016 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* 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”.

- 3.24 Focus groups undertaken at Newcastle University as part of the Pilot Careers Insights programme introduced last year, together with research conducted by our School of Education, Communication and Languages Sciences into the performance of WP students at the University, appear to back up these findings. Whilst WP students (including PARTNERS) 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).
- 3.25 **Further investment is therefore being made by the University as part of this Access Agreement to build the evidence base for WP students in terms of graduation and success, and to develop strategies to support success in WP student progression into employment and further study.**

PART 4: ADDITIONAL ACCESS AND RETENTION MEASURES

4(a) Target Groups and Approach

- 4.1 For the purposes of this Access Agreement, the University’s outreach work and financial investment are aimed particularly at students of high ability and potential from the following groups:
- Eligible students entering the University through the **PARTNERS Supported Entry Route** or the **Realising Opportunities Scheme**
 - Young entrants from **low participation neighbourhoods, lower socio-economic groups 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.

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.

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 2016 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 overall numbers applying to university from the North East**
 - **To increase WP student applications and intake to Newcastle University**
 - **To improve student engagement, support and retention, underpinned by a better understanding of WP student progression, including appropriate financial support**

- **To develop skills for life and support the successful transition into employment and/or further study for WP students at Newcastle University.**

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

4(b) Access Agreement 2016 – 17 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 2016 Access Agreement are summarised in the tables below, and illustrated in Appendices 1 - 3.

Issue 1: The North East continues to have the lowest progression rate to HE in the country
Evidence: North East Progression to HE data; tracking data through HEAT database
Objective: To raise the aspirations and expectations of young people and their influencers in the NE, support informed decision making and increase overall numbers applying to university from the NE
Key Priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on developing our University-wide programme of long term, sustained outreach (primary upwards) • Lead the North East Raising Aspiration Partnership, involving the five North East universities and education stakeholders, to ensure that every young person in the North East makes informed decisions about Higher Education • Additional targeted pre-entry support for identified WP groups (care leavers, disabled students, BME students, student parents/carers, parents, teachers and other influencers) • Working with schools/colleges to support and encourage study skills development, attainment raising and informed student choice • Provision of high quality information to support informed decision making • Continue to develop the evidence base to understand what works in the context of HE outreach
Impact Measures: No. of beneficiaries reached each year; No. of activities and interventions delivered; Pupil and teacher evaluation; Long term tracking of participants through HEAT database.

Issue 2: Newcastle University is making good progress in WP and significantly exceeds its benchmarks in the region, but it does not meet all its national WP benchmarks
Evidence: HESA Benchmark data; UCAS application/intake data; NU Equality and Diversity Report
Objective: To increase WP student applications and intake to Newcastle University
Key Priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend the geographical reach of our outreach work, including the further development of the Students’ Union <i>NUSU: Into Schools</i> project, Teachers’ Toolkit and other digital outreach developments • Extend the PARTNERS Programme Supported Entry Route to eligible students in all schools and colleges in England (increasing from 203 to 900+ schools and colleges by 2016-17) • Continue to lead and develop the national Realising Opportunities collaborative WP Programme involving 15 leading universities targeting “most able least likely students” • Further develop the University Admissions Strategy to support WP recruitment and fair access, including University-wide use of contextual data in admissions • Better understand the WP picture in terms of the University’s performance in terms of WP, Equality and Diversity groups and subject-specific groupings

- **Maximise student input** in activity development and delivery
- Continue to **develop the evidence base** to inform activity and resource allocation
- **Provide high quality information** about Newcastle University to support informed decision-making

Impact Measures: No. of schools/colleges reached (and engaged); No. of students on supported entry routes; intake through PARTNERS / Realising Opportunities; Applications and intake of WP students to Newcastle University; Pupil and teacher evaluation; Approved Admissions Strategy; Number of Graduate / Student Ambassadors employed; Statement of Partnership from Newcastle University Students' Union.

Issue 3: National evidence now suggests that, post-entry, WP students do not appear to perform as well academically as non-WP students

Evidence: 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

Objective: To improve student engagement, support and retention, underpinned by a better understanding of WP student progression

Key Priorities:

- Provision of appropriate **financial support**
- Provision (and awareness raising) of **coherent academic study skills support** for students
- Provision of **targeted support for students with additional support needs** (eg in transition, induction, engagement, financial advice, mental health support and disabled participation in sport)
- **Support for disabled students** in the context of anticipated changes to the Disabled Student Allowance
- **Review the evidence base for student support provision** and identify gaps in evaluation
- **Investigate student performance/retention** by qualification, subject area and, where possible, by WP group (disabled students, NS-SEC 4-7, students from LPNs and mature students)
- Review the process and learning from **student Exit Interviews**

Impact Measures: % 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; Annual Equality and Diversity Report.

Issue 4: Once they graduate, a smaller proportion of WP students go into graduate-level employment than their non-WP counterparts (nationally and at Newcastle)

Evidence: 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

Objective: To develop skills for life and support the successful transition into employment and/or further study for WP students at Newcastle University

Key Priorities:

- Evaluate and adapt the **Career Insights Pilot Programme** to help WP students develop employment skills, work experience and confidence
- **Increase the engagement of WP students in careers-led activity** through better communication with

targeted groups

- Maximise the number of **on-campus employment and volunteering opportunities** for students
- Provide **placement opportunities for more undergraduate students**
- **Promote WP progression into postgraduate study** through targeted information and activities
- **Commission national research with the UUK** into differential outcomes beyond graduation

Impact Measures: No. of students engaged with the Career Insights Programme; Number of WP students engaged in careers-led activity; Number of students employed/volunteering; UUK research outcomes

PART 5: FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

- 5.1 The University provides generous financial assistance to students from lower income backgrounds and target under-represented groups. Students entering the University in 2016, who are ordinarily resident in the UK and to whom the home rate of tuition fee applies (subsequently referred to as 'home UK students') will be eligible for scholarship support according to the criteria below.
- 5.2 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 burdens and debt for individuals. It is also clear that students favour money that supports their living costs, rather than fee discounts that will only have a marginal impact in terms of eventual loan repayment and no impact at all on their monthly repayments once they start work. Section 9 provides more evidence to support these statements. Our financial support for 2016 entry focuses on the provision of cash bursaries to provide optimum support and student choice.
- 5.3 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 and provide 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.
- 5.4 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).
- 5.5 Our Student Financial Support for **2016 entry Home fee undergraduate students** is as follows:

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

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

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

- 5.6 Students eligible for a Newcastle University Opportunity Scholarship or Access Scholarship will be identified on the basis of their UCAS application and household income information provided by the Student Loans Company. Students do not have to apply separately, but must submit financial information to Student Finance England (or equivalent in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland) for assessment.
- 5.7 Students eligible for consideration for a Newcastle University Promise Scholarship will be invited to submit a two-stage application. Further information is provided [online](#).
- 5.8 Students eligible for a Laidlaw Scholarship will be identified automatically and do not have to apply separately. These scholarships are funded 50% by Newcastle University and 50% by Lord Laidlaw.
- 5.9 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 Health². 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, Access Scholarships, Promise Scholarships or Laidlaw Scholarships in the year(s) when they receive NHS funding. This includes: all years of the undergraduate degree in Speech and Language Sciences; the Higher Education Diploma in Dental Hygiene and Therapy; and the fifth year of the five-year programmes in Medicine and Dentistry.
- 5.10 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.
- 5.11 As part of our ongoing commitments as an exemplary accredited Buttle UK institution (a commitment that will continue after the Buttle UK award ends), 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.
- 5.12 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.
- 5.13 From the information which we have about our current students, we estimate that ca. 30% of our new entrants in 2016 are likely to receive financial support, increasing to ca. 32% by 2017-18.
- 5.14 The University's financial support schemes are reviewed annually and may be revised to reflect changing circumstances, student needs, numbers and/or government support arrangements.

² This funding is in the form of a National Health Service (NHS) bursary

- 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 2016 will continue to receive financial support as specified in the relevant Access Agreement for their year of entry.
- 5.19 In our 2016 Access Agreement, we commit to developing further our institutional evidence base on the impact of our financial support.**

PART 6: TARGETS AND MILESTONES

- 6.1 The University uses three 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).
- 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, made more stretching, based on progress made to date.
- 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 and, where possible, those considered to be from lower socio-economic backgrounds (NS-SEC groups 4-7), to ensure that we particularly encourage these students to apply to and enter Newcastle University.
- 6.4 Of these two latter groups, only those from LPNs can be accurately identified at the pre-application stage (by postcode) in a way that exactly replicates how they are identified and measured for HESA's performance indicators. In preparing this Access Agreement we have set specific impact targets based on students from LPNs. Where available, we also use IMD data and other indicators (eg eligibility for Free School Meals, Pupil Premium data) to help us to refine our targeting.
- 6.5 In setting regional targets for LPN students, we also expect to have a positive impact on the University's overall intake figures for students from LPNs and from NS-SEC groups 4-7.
- 6.6 Assessing progress against targets has been made more challenging in 2015 by ongoing issues relating to data protection and ownership with UCAS. This is particularly the case in our work to assess the impact on student behaviour of the Realising Opportunities scheme.
- 6.7 Making progress towards intake targets has been challenging in the context of a rapidly changing external environment. In particular, Newcastle University, like many of 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 have already seen evidence of this in terms of the disappointingly low number of students who successfully progressed to research intensive universities via Realising Opportunities in 2014, and believe that the impact on WP intake in future could be even more significant. We are concerned that lower attainment in schools and colleges

may make it more difficult for the most selective universities to exercise the flexibility potentially provided by the removal of student numbers controls.

PART 7: APPROVAL, MONITORING AND EVALUATION ARRANGEMENTS

- 7.1 This Access Agreement has been considered and agreed by 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 based on UCAS data and annual Performance Indicators. 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 An important 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. 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 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: PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

- 8.1 A key to the success of our initiatives to promote and safeguard fair access is the provision of clear, timely and accurate information about student finance to potential students, parents, teachers and advisers. We will provide relevant information to UCAS, the Student Loans Company, UCAS Teacher Training and other relevant bodies as required.
- 8.2 Our printed 2016 Undergraduate Prospectus is supplemented by our annual [Guide to Student Finance](#). The Guide is revised bi-annually to reflect any mid-year changes.
- 8.3 Our website includes a postcode 'look up' tool so that students can check their eligibility for some access and financial support schemes.
- 8.4 We are continuing 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. All applicants who receive an offer of a place receive relevant further information, with additional information on financial support for identified WP applicants.
- 8.5 We regularly review and develop our website to include resources or information about student finance and other relevant topics for those who advise students. Our online [Teachers' Toolkit](#) provides a rich source (currently 449) of downloadable resources, subject-specific taster events and activities to encourage HE progression, accessible through a single, searchable database.

- 8.6 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 Visit Days and post-application open days. Our innovative postgraduate Graduate Ambassador scheme enables us to provide targeted information and sessions informing undergraduate students about opportunities for postgraduate study.
- 8.7 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 9: CONSULTATION WITH STUDENTS

- 9.1 Student consultation and engagement are a vital part of our annual Access Agreement planning and WP delivery processes throughout the student life cycle.
- 9.2 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 objectives. Their Statement of Partnership is attached as Appendix 4.
- 9.3 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.
- 9.4 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

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

PARTNERS PROGRAMME: Newcastle University's access scheme for WP students who have the potential to succeed at Newcastle University. Established in 2000, the [PARTNERS Programme](#) is being expanded to become an open-access WP programme for eligible students from *all* schools in England (growing from 203 schools and colleges in the North to 900+ nationally). The Programme culminates in an Assessed Summer School, successful completion of which forms part of a student's offer of a place at Newcastle. The scheme provides access to all University degrees. At Newcastle, the progressive programme of outreach, of which PARTNERS is one element, begins with aspiration-raising work with primary schools delivered by University staff, students and graduates, and Tyne and Wear Museum staff on behalf of the University. The programme includes mentoring, shadowing, talks, taster events and residential summer schools, and offers interventions up to Year 13 and into University.

NORTH EAST RAISING ASPIRATIONS PARTNERSHIP: Newcastle University leads the [Raising Aspirations Partnership](#), a regional collaboration involving Newcastle University, Northumbria University, University of Sunderland, Durham University and Teesside University. Part of HEFCE's new National Network for Collaborative Outreach, it aims to help young people in the North East make informed decisions about university.

REALISING OPPORTUNITIES: Newcastle University is the lead institution for [Realising Opportunities](#), a collaboration of 15 leading research intensive universities working together to run 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 students 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 mentor and an academic assessment. Successful completion of RO results in the potential of an alternative offer worth up to 40 UCAS points from all 15 participating universities.

RUSSELL GROUP WP COLLABORATION: The RG WP Association has undertaken collaborative work across the 24 selective institutions for many years. As well as providing peer support for senior WP staff, the group runs collaborative activity including the biennial Teachers' Conference and practitioner networks and has agreed a project with HEFCE to develop CPD materials for teachers to support WP progression to selective universities.

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. 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. There are currently 449 resources on Teachers' Toolkit.

GRADUATE AMBASSADORS: In 2006, the University set up the [Graduate Ambassador Scheme](#), appointing a team of six Newcastle University graduates to deliver interactive face-to-face outreach activities to young people and their parents. Currently, the University employs 16 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.

STUDENT AMBASSADORS: 150 current undergraduate students are employed on a part-time internship contract each year. They support the extensive range of outreach delivered by the University, including an intensive three year mentoring programme for 500+ students.

NUSU: INTO SCHOOLS: The Students' Union leads a scheme to encourage current students to go into their former school 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.

STUDENTS INTO 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.

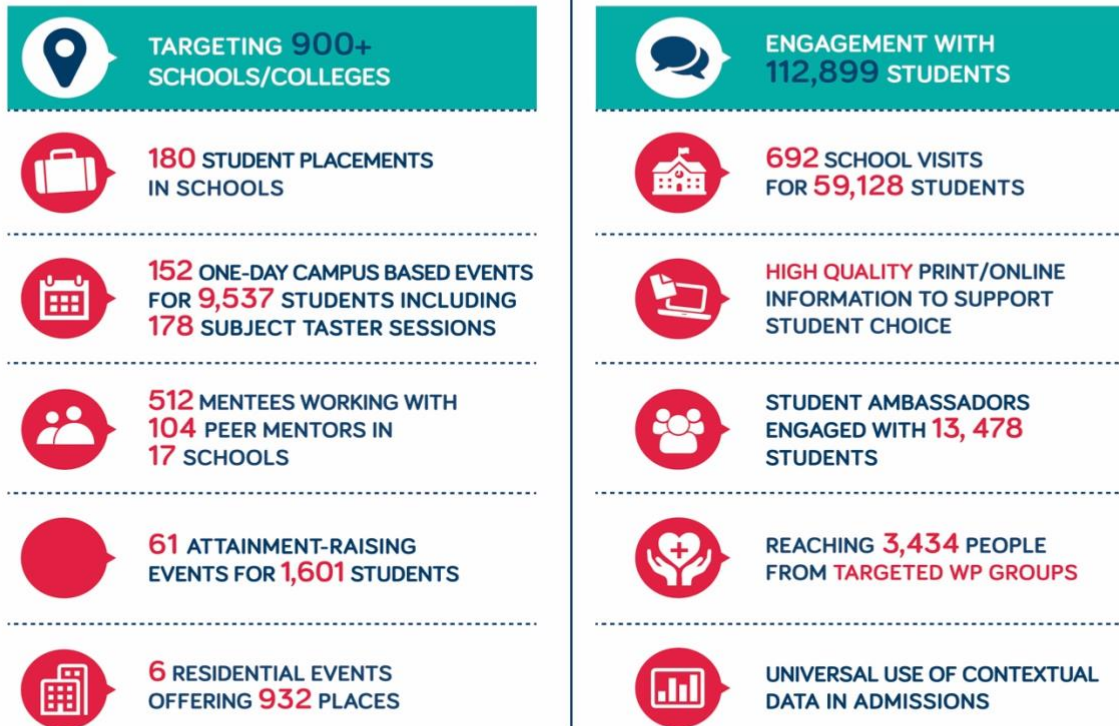
CAREER INSIGHTS: A pilot programme for PARTNERS students run by the Careers Service to help build the employability skills, networks and confidence of WP students in the University.



HELPING STUDENTS MAKE INFORMED CHOICES

LONG-TERM SUSTAINED ACTIVITY - PRIMARY TO YEAR 13

A UNIVERSITY-WIDE APPROACH



Figures shown relate to 2013-14

WORKING COLLABORATIVELY

THE PARTNERS PROGRAMME



Our PARTNERS Programme, established in 1999, has supported **8,288** students since its launch. **2,900** students have entered Newcastle University through this route and **1,596** have successfully graduated so far.

REALISING OPPORTUNITIES SCHEME



Lead institution working with **15** selective universities. Supported **3,127** students. **56%** of cohort 2014 applied to Research Intensive Universities.

NORTH EAST RAISING ASPIRATION PARTNERSHIP



Spearheaded the Partnership bringing together the **5** universities in the North East.

ACADEMIES AND TRUSTS



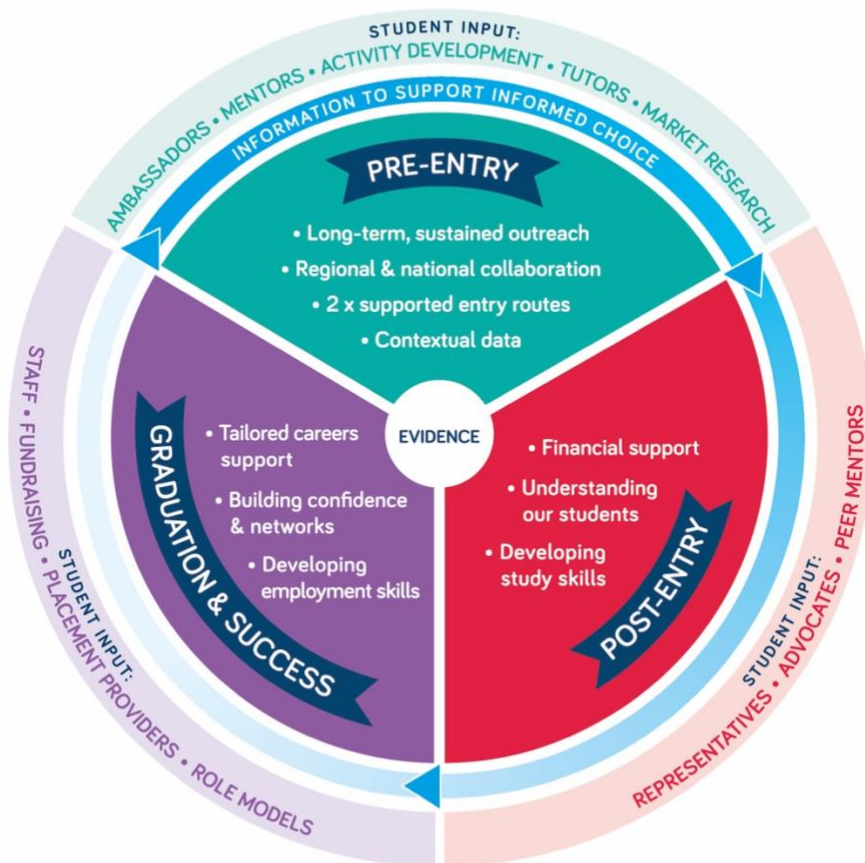
Working intensively with: North Tyneside Learning Trust, The Ouseburn Learning Trust & Excelsior Academy.

Figures shown relate to 2013-14

Appendix 3: Supporting Student Progression and Success

"Ability should be able to access opportunity, regardless of circumstance."

Professor Chris Brink,
Vice-Chancellor



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

The Students' Union is involved at multiple levels in the planning and delivery of access and retention activities. It is represented on the University's Access Agreement Working Group and has been more involved in developing WP activities than ever before. A key element of this involvement has been the creation of the full time role of Widening Access Co-ordinator in the Union. Having a dedicated member of staff working on Access and WP projects has meant that the NUSU has developed excellent links with the University, local schools and the wider partnership of regional universities on this agenda. Examples of the work of the Students' Union in supporting access and student success are given below:

The project **NUSU: Into Schools** was set up in 2014-15 and is run by the Students' Union. It involves both alumni of Newcastle University and current members of sports clubs and societies returning to their old schools to give talks and run interactive sessions. This has allowed our diverse student body to make an impact on current pupils by inspiring them to consider Higher Education. The content of the visits has varied from a student officer running a mock general election in a school to a member of our mental health society mentoring pupils as they prepared for a live poetry event. The visits have been praised by teachers for their unique content and the fact that they are led by previous pupils of that school - so the young people find it easier to relate to students. Next year, based on evaluation from the pilot, the Students' Union plans to expand the scheme and develop new student-led events on campus.

At the start of the 2015 academic year, we introduced a scheme to provide **transition packs** for low income students who choose to live at home and attend the University. This programme is funded by University alumni and is a positive step aimed at getting students engaged from the outset of their University life in NUSU activities, starting with Freshers' Week. We are keen to continue this work in order to help students develop skills which add to our students' employability and enhance their future prospects.

Also in 2014-15, the Union introduced the **NUSU Participation Bursary Scheme**. 250 bursaries of £200 were awarded to eligible UK undergraduate students to enable and increase participation in sports clubs and societies. 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. Feedback from the scheme has been overwhelmingly positive with many students indicating that they would not have been able to get involved in these activities if they had not had access to this funding. This reflects a focus by the Union on retention and success by encouraging involvement in university life and fostering a sense of community.

The Welfare & Equality Officer has organised two conferences, '**Mind the Gap**' (mental health) and '**Inspiring Women**'. The Union worked in collaboration with the University to identify appropriate target schools to invite to the event. The nature of these conferences is that they are fully inclusive.

Our Athletic Union Officer (Caleb Jones) is currently developing a **Disability Sport programme for 2016**. The programme, which aims to increase engagement in sport for disabled students, is a step in the right direction to support students who previously may have felt unable to engage in sport.

To conclude, we support the decision to keep University bursaries the same as they were this year. We also fully support the range of activities set out in the 2016 Access Agreement designed to encourage widening participation student success at Newcastle University and beyond.

David Morris & Olivia Jeffery
Education Officer and Welfare & Equality Officer,
Newcastle University Students' Union
2nd April 2015