The University of Sheffield

Access Agreement 2013/14
Section 1: The current context

1.1 Introduction

The University of Sheffield is a highly selective institution with a strong track record of attracting and retaining students from under-represented groups in Higher Education (HE). The University has a long-standing commitment to widening participation and fair access, not only to its own programmes of study, but also to HE in general. This strongly reflects the University’s Mission, Vision and Identity and the foundation on which the University was built:

*The University of Sheffield has roots going back to 1828 and was founded formally in 1905 via penny donations from the local citizens. The aim was to bring higher education within reach of the children of the people working in the great industries of Sheffield, to give support to those industries and to serve as a centre for the study of diseases. The University is proud of its origins and continues to value the role it has come to play in its city and region.*

The University continues to play a key role within the city and the region and has a strong sense of civic responsibility. This is demonstrated, amongst other things, through the broad ranging initiatives we deliver collaboratively with schools, colleges and other local HE providers in order to widen participation to higher education, as well as a continued, strong commitment to part-time adult higher education.

Our approach to working within the city/region was recognised and acknowledged when we were awarded the Times Higher Education University of the Year, 2011. Judges said that the University “stood out as a result of a strategy based on its values and rooted in its founding principles” and praised our “determination and grit” in focusing on our local community. The judges found it to be a quality, research-led university, and a community with values, confidence, flair and “its sleeves rolled-up.”

1.2 A changing environment

In developing the Access Agreement for 2013/14, the University has reflected - after a busy and turbulent twelve months for the Higher Education sector - on how recent changes within the sector may impact on our ability to deliver on our aspirations for widening participation and fair access. In doing so, we have considered the following issues:

Firstly, the University has increased its entry requirements in several areas in recent years in response to increased demand from applicants. Over half of the University’s intake is now from applicants with the equivalent of A-level grades AAB or above. We know that the majority of such students are from higher socio-economic backgrounds. For example at Sheffield, over two thirds of our AAB+ students are from households with income over £40,000 p.a.

Secondly, since we wrote our 2012/13 Access Agreement, there have been far-reaching changes to the way student numbers are controlled. We fear that the removal of quotas on the recruitment of students with A-levels of AAB or above, together with the maintenance of a strict core quota for all other students, has the potential to damage widening participation efforts here. Students with non-standard qualifications (such as Access to HE), as well as students who have achieved good grades despite a difficult family or educational background, face increased competition for places within the non-AAB core from a large group including often highly qualified EU students, holders of the Cambridge Pre-U and so on. The University’s ability to

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1 See full Mission, Vision and Identity at http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/strategicplan/mvi
respond flexibly and positively to some students from widening participation backgrounds is therefore likely to be constrained from 2012 onwards.

Thirdly, our regular consultations with local schools and colleges confirm that there is still much confusion and misunderstanding about how the new fees and funding system will work. Schools and colleges report that some pupils have withdrawn from the UCAS process as a direct result of the higher fees.

Fourthly, we know that applications from UK-domiciled applicants both generally and to the University of Sheffield have declined by around 7% for 2012/13 compared to 2011/12. Early research by market research group Opinion Panel\(^2\) suggests that students from less privileged backgrounds are now disproportionately more likely than pupils from wealthier backgrounds to reconsider their decision to enter HE, and/or to apply to local and/or less expensive universities and/or to consider more vocational routes (including apprenticeships) rather than ‘academic’ degrees. The University’s financial support for such students, and in particular its use of generous first year fee waivers, is designed to help overcome these sorts of obstacles. However the shift to a high fees environment nationally has the potential to reduce the number of students from less advantaged backgrounds choosing to study at research-intensive institutions such as the University of Sheffield.

Fifthly, the loss of Aimhigher funding has led already to a loss of outreach coordinator roles in schools, colleges and Local Authorities. Our partnership work with schools and colleges has become more difficult and time consuming, and therefore less efficient.

It is, clearly, too early for us to know how recruitment will turn out in 2012/13. Nonetheless, for all of the above reasons, and despite our long-standing commitment to widening participation and fair access, we are increasingly cautious about our ability to maintain current levels of performance in the new environment.

**Section 2: Fee levels**

**2.1 Full-time programmes**

The University proposes that new UK and European Union students starting their studies in September 2013 will be charged £9,000 per year in tuition fees. This is applicable to all full-time undergraduate programmes apart from our foundation programmes, as well as being applicable to students entering the PGCE. Continuing students, who entered the University prior to September 2012, will not be subject to these higher fees.

Details of the foundation routes are as follows:
- Our Medicine foundation gives students with a non-scientific background the necessary basic scientific knowledge to read for the MBChB degree. It is based at Sheffield College and the fee will be £6,000.
- Our Science & Engineering foundation programmes are for students who have not studied maths and sciences to Advanced Level. Successful completion of the programme leads to an offer for first year entry of a number of mainstream degree courses. The fee for these programmes will also be £6,000.

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\(^2\) How have higher tuition fees affected the decision-making process of 2012 applicants? Opinion Panel, Feb 2012
We plan for full-time fees to increase each year for all students in line with inflation/within the limits of any guidance provided to us.

2.2 Part-time programmes
Following a review of part-time fees the University intends to charge £3,375 per 60 credits (£6,750 full-time equivalent). A new programme of financial support is being introduced (see Page 10 below).

We plan for part-time fees to increase each year for all students in line with inflation/within the limits of any guidance provided to us.

2.3 Sandwich years and study abroad
Students on overseas placements (Study Abroad) or placement years in the UK entering the degree programme in 2012/13 will be charged at a fee of £1,350 and £1,100 respectively.

Subject to OFFA approval, students entering the MChem Chemistry with Study in Industry from 2012/13 will be charged at a fee of £3,000 for the year in industry. The proposed fee is based on the fact that during the year in industry on this course, the University delivers 30 credits of assessed material, visits the students and supports them throughout the year.

We will continue to review these fees on an annual basis.

Section 3: Assessment of overall position
In order to reach an appropriate spend on widening participation for this agreement, the University has evaluated its performance in widening participation against a range of measures, including:

- Official recruitment and retention figures as published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA):
  - performance against our widening participation benchmarks
  - performance against our peers
  - absolute performance in relation to the diversity of our intake.
- Internal statistics on applications and offers:
  - By gender
  - By ethnic background
  - By age
  - By disability
  - By socio-economic group

This analysis has covered full-time students, part-time students and students on Initial Teacher Training courses (Postgraduate Certificate in Education).

3.1 Performance relative to the rest of the sector – HESA benchmarks
- The University has high retention rates, being in the top third of Universities in England and Wales overall on the various measures, 8th in the Russell Group+\(^3\) and exceeding its benchmarks.

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\(^3\) Russell Group+ refers to current membership plus new members from 2012 (Durham, Exeter, Queen Mary and York)
- The University performs well on recruitment of students (both young and mature) from low participation neighbourhoods, being in the middle third of Universities in England and Wales, fourth in the Russell Group+ and exceeding its benchmarks.
- It is in the top third and again exceeds its benchmarks for recruitment of part-time mature students from low participation neighbourhoods. It is third in the Russell Group+.
- The University is in the bottom third of institutions in England and Wales for recruitment of pupils from state schools, but second in the Russell Group+, and exceeds its benchmark in this area.
- The University is in the bottom third of institutions in England and Wales for recruitment of students from lower socio-economic groups and for recruitment of students in receipt of disabled students’ allowance (DSA) and does not meet its benchmarks in these areas.
- The University is in the bottom third of institutions in England and Wales for recruitment of students from black and other minority ethnic backgrounds. There is no benchmark set for this area.
- The University is also in the bottom third for retention of part-time mature students, (10th in the Russell Group+), although the numbers are small and the University does exceed its benchmark in this area. Further investigation will be undertaken to identify how we can improve this position in future years and to enable us to set targets for 2014 and beyond.

This position is broadly unchanged compared to our performance as analysed for our 2012/13 Access Agreement. However as noted above, we believe there are a number of factors, both internal and external, that may contribute to a change in performance in years to come.

### 3.2 Internal analysis of admissions and offer data

For 2013/13 we have in addition carried out an analysis of admissions and offer data in order to refine further our understanding of our position. Internal data of this sort does not allow us to benchmark against peers and the national position, however it does allow us to look at more recent trends as well as carry out a more granular analysis of our position for widening participation. Our initial analysis has identified some apparent trends which will need further investigation. We note for example:

- an under-representation of students from black and other ethnic minority backgrounds in applications to some disciplines.
- that mature applicants appear less likely to receive an offer from the University than younger applicants.
- that with regard to students with a disability, there is a positive trend of year on year applications increases since 2008, with applicants in receipt of DSA just as likely as all other applicants to receive an offer, accept their offer and go on to register.
- that applications from students in lower socio-economic groups declined in many areas in the period 2008 to 2011.

We are keen to develop further targets in these areas, but will need to carry out further analysis in order to understand the causes of any shifts and trends before these targets can be agreed.

### 3.3 Assessment relating to our ITT provision

In accordance with OFFA guidance we have recently undertaken an analysis of the diversity of our PGCE intake. Here we found that there were no significant areas of under-representation, but we have committed to working towards increasing our intake of students from the most deprived areas (based on Indices of Multiple Deprivation) as well as increasing the intake of students from black and other ethnic minority backgrounds.
3.4 Financial commitment to additional access and support measures

Based on our analysis of absolute and relative performance against benchmarks, we have noted that our overall performance is broadly unchanged since our 2012/13 analysis, but that changes to the HE environment mean that maintaining or improving performance is likely to become even more challenging.

In this context we are therefore proposing to devote 27.8% of additional fee income from full and part time undergraduate degrees to access measures (including financial support).

Following our analysis of widening participation and our ITT provision, and recognising the additional state support available to students on PGCE courses, we propose to spend 10% of the additional fee income associated with our PGCE intake.

Our overall proportion of additional fee income devoted to access and retention is therefore 27.6% in 2013/14.

Our financial forecasts for 2013/14 indicate that the OFFA countable budget for our widening participation work (excluding government contribution to the National Scholarships Programme) will be in the region of £10.4 million, which we propose to allocate across our activities as follows:

- Outreach: £2.3 million (22%)
- Retention and progression support: £1.4 million (14%)
- Financial support to students: £6.7 million (64%)

Section 4: Future plans

4.1 Evidence-based approach

The evidence base for “what works” in widening participation is still relatively small. Our future plans take account of the evidence provided by organisations such as the Sutton Trust\(^4\) and OFFA\(^5\) as well as our own internal evidence of what has worked within our own institution, for example data relating to the progression of participants of a range of our outreach programmes, especially those on our long-term, intensive programmes. The University shares with both OFFA and the Sutton Trust the view that these sorts of programmes result in a higher level of progression of students from under-represented groups into HE.

However, recognising the limited amount of research evidence, we have created a Widening Participation Research & Evaluation Unit (WPREU) within the University. The WPREU is developing quantitative and qualitative research into the long-term impact of our widening participation initiatives, in conjunction with research experts. This research will inform future investment into outreach and retention activities.

4.2 Additional access and retention measures

\(^4\) Sutton Trust Submission to Sir Martin Harris: Widening Access to Selective Universities, 2010
\(^5\) What more can be done to widen participation to selective universities”, OFFA, 2010/03
Our future plans for access and retention build on our success over recent years. They can be split into five broad categories:

- Outreach and widening participation programmes, including collaborative outreach
- Contextual data
- Retention and support activity
- Support for progression into graduate level employment or postgraduate study
- Financial aid

### 4.2.1 Outreach and widening participation programmes

Our concerns about a worsening environment for widening participation have not lessened our determination to reach and support those prospective students who have the most to gain from our interventions. This is demonstrated in the approach to outreach and widening participation programmes highlighted below.

#### Geographical focus

The University has a longstanding commitment to working with schools and colleges in the city/region, and this will continue to be the primary focus of our face to face outreach activity. However, through continued and expanded collaboration with other selective HEIs, we are able to offer a range of outreach opportunities to students from further afield, e.g. Yorkshire and the Humber (through our Excellence Hubs partnership with the universities of Leeds, Hull and York) and nationally through our active role in the Russell Group.

In addition to such outreach initiatives, we have implemented a more systematic approach to the use of contextual data in the admissions process. We are now able to highlight students from disadvantaged backgrounds from across the UK, allowing us to reach under-represented groups of students on a national basis (see 4.2.2). Our financial support for students will also apply to students nationally not just locally.

#### Targeting of our outreach programmes

Our general approach to targeting for participation on our outreach programmes is to target students who would benefit most from the involvement. The approach to targeting is in line with the HEFCE targeting guidelines\(^6\), but will vary according to the nature of the initiative. For example, our primary school activity targets young pupils and their parents in the more deprived areas of our region. Our 11-16 activity will generally target schools that have a lower progression of students to HE, or sit within more deprived areas, or have lower attainment rates for pupils. Our post-16 outreach programmes will generally target individual students who meet a number of widening participation criteria, regardless of the school or college they currently attend. We also have an element of outreach and schools liaison activity that will be offered more broadly to all students/schools and colleges, where there is a need to convey accurate and timely information regardless of a young person’s background. Over time, we anticipate that our targeting model will be refined further, in line with the research findings of the WPREU.

#### Targeted outreach for access to selective courses / careers / professions

The major expansion in our outreach activities builds on our experience of running successful, intensive programmes, such as our long-running and successful access to medicine programme (SOAMS) which was introduced in 2001. These profession-specific programmes target cohorts

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\(^6\) Higher Education outreach: targeting disadvantaged learners. HEFCE, 2007/12
of students from under-represented groups in order to increase their chances of entry to demanding, professionally focused courses including Medicine, Dentistry and Law. During 2012/13 the University will develop Faculty-based widening participation plans, targets and initiatives that will help us to achieve our overall University targets for access, retention and progression. In particular, each of our five Faculties will develop sustained discipline-based programmes, based on our well-established and successful models of delivery. The University has committed c. £900k to fund the implementation of these Faculty-based initiatives in 2013/14.

- **Embedding activities previously supported through additional funding streams**

The University has committed to underwrite the costs associated with delivering some of the successful programmes we implemented under Aimhigher. For example, we have continued to fund our long-term, intensive programmes in Law and Architecture. We have already committed significant funds to pilot a mentoring and placement programme to replace both the Aimhigher funded Aimhigher Associates Scheme and the TDA funded Student Associates Scheme. Having piloted this scheme in 2011/12 we intend to roll this out further in the coming years. This initiative will play a key part in expanding our widening participation provision to encompass progression to postgraduate study (PGCE).

- **Collaborative working with other HEIs**

The University has committed to maintain and further develop our successful regional and national partnerships. These include:

- the creation of the new HE Progression Partnership (HEPP), in collaboration with Sheffield Hallam University and other stakeholders in the city/region
- the Excellence Hubs partnership (between the Universities of Leeds, York, Hull and Sheffield)
- wider collaboration with other Russell Group HEIs.

The HEPP brings together previous stakeholders in our Aimhigher partnership so that we can continue to work together in a coordinated manner. The University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University will jointly fund this partnership to ensure that outreach activity, particularly in relation to financial IAG and impartial information and advice about progression to HE, continues to be delivered to those who need it most in a cost effective manner. This work will encompass working with young people and prospective adult learners.

The Excellence Hubs partnership will continue to target high achieving students from currently under-represented groups within the region to encourage and facilitate progression of the “most able, least likely” group of students to selective HEIs. A key aim of this work will be to encourage young people to consider entering selective HEIs and to better prepare them for study at a research-intensive university.

The University will also work with partners across the Russell Group, to provide up to date and accurate information to prospective students, parents, teachers and other advisers in schools and colleges.

- **Links with Schools and Colleges**

The University has developed strong links with schools and colleges over a number of years. In addition to the operational links we have, we have more recently emphasised the strategic nature of the relationships between the University and schools and colleges in the region. For example:

- our annual Schools and Colleges conference provides an opportunity for teaching and guidance staff to be updated on developments both at the University of Sheffield and in the
wider sector

- "REACH", our e-newsletter is available to all staff in schools and colleges
- Head teachers and Principals are invited to attend a series of consultation events to discuss issues that are affecting the schools/colleges and the HE sector with the Vice Chancellor and our Pro-Vice Chancellors.

We believe that these opportunities facilitate effective two-way communication and help us to develop stronger partnerships with our key stakeholders.

- **Part time provision**

For over fifty years the University has had a strong commitment to part-time degree provision delivered by its Institute of Lifelong Learning (TILL). Following discussions earlier this year, the University has reaffirmed its support for TILL and will be appointing a new Director shortly. TILL's work with mature students with no previous HE qualifications and from low income backgrounds will be further strengthened by the introduction of substantial fee waivers for many students (see 'Financial support for part-time students', below.)

### 4.2.2 Contextual Data

Contextual information sets an application in its educational and/or socio-economic context, allowing Admissions Selectors to take into account challenges an applicant has faced in their education and the effect of such challenges on their performance in qualifications.

After the completion of a significant research project in 2011, the University has implemented a contextual data scheme designed to:
1) effectively highlight students from disadvantaged backgrounds
2) enable admissions selectors to make informed holistic decisions which take into account the challenges an applicant has faced.

As part of the above the University is using a broad range of data which includes residence in an area with low participation rates in Higher Education (POLAR2), residence in a deprived neighbourhood (Indices of Multiple Deprivation rankings) and participation in the University's outreach programmes (e.g. ADOPT, Discover, SOAMS).

In addition, the University has established a Disrupted Studies process which allows applicants to let us know if they have experienced issues of a personal, social or domestic nature that have affected their post-16 studies. This information is then used alongside other contextual data in the selection process.

### 4.2.3 Retention and support activity

The University has committed significant effort to support and retention activity, as demonstrated by our strong performance against non-continuation benchmarks. Examples of the support we offer to students to facilitate their transitions into and through the University include:

- Orientation programme for students, with particular emphasis on local students, commuter students and mature students
- Peer mentoring activity for a range of target groups including mature students, disabled students and local students
- Academic skills support, including targeted and tailored maths support
- Counselling service available to all students but with specialist support for students with mental ill health
• Financial support and specialist one to one advice for students facing financial difficulties

A new development for students entering the University from 2012 is ‘301’ – the Student Skills and Development Centre. This facility will provide opportunities for students to acquire and further develop skills in a range of areas, including Maths and Statistics, modern languages, employability skills and leadership skills. 301 will also provide access to Dyslexia Support, Mentoring Support, a Writing Advisory Service and an Information Service.

4.2.4 Progression support – targeted careers guidance

The Careers Service will provide information, advice and guidance to students from widening participation backgrounds at pre-entry stage and will work collaboratively with central Outreach staff at key points such as Year 9 (options) and Years 11, 12 and 13. In addition the Careers Service will develop and deliver a range of resources (for example in relation to the graduate labour market) to support teachers and other influencers who assist pupils in making decisions about HE.

In order to enhance the knowledge and awareness of students of the need to gain relevant skills and experience for entry into specific professions, the Careers Service will also deliver a programme of support during their time at the University to assist their transition into the graduate labour market. Tailored workshops will be delivered for specific target groups and students will also have access to additional individual guidance sessions.

4.2.5 Financial Aid

Financial Support for Full-time Students

Our proposals for financial support are specifically aimed at widening participation students and are broadly the same as those proposed in our 2012/13 Access Agreement, which were developed by assessing to what extent financial aid can overcome barriers to participation for under-represented groups.

The financial aid package we intend to retain for 2013/14 caters primarily for:
• Students from less advantaged and low income backgrounds.
• Looked after children/care leavers.

Our packages include a combination of fee waivers and bursaries and will be available on a sliding scale to students from households with incomes up to £42k p.a. We estimate that by 2015, approximately 40% of our full-time, Home/EU undergraduate intake will receive some form of financial aid from the University each year.

• National Scholarships Programme (NSP) contributions

Most of our NSP funds will be used to continue supporting our commitment to provide full first-year fee waivers to the most disadvantaged students, assessed against a combination of postcode (measured against the Indices of Multiple Deprivation [IMD]) and household income. As the available funds for the NSP increase in 2013 and 2014, we will extend access to the scheme by including more IMD postcodes and/or relaxing income thresholds.

For 2013/14 entry students from deprived areas with household incomes of up to £25k will be eligible for an NSP award for their first year of study. Students in the most deprived areas (as measured by IMD) will receive an award of £9,000 and students in a second tier of deprivation will receive an award of £6,000.
The £9,000 award is made up of £3,000 NSP contribution, £3,000 match funding from the University plus an extra £3,000 from the University to make up the equivalent of a full fee waiver. We expect around 175 students will receive this level of support. In line with NSP guidelines, this total can be taken as a full fee waiver or can be taken as a combination of a part fee waiver and part bursary or discount against University accommodation. Students with household income under £25,000p.a will also be eligible for a University bursary (see below).

The £6,000 awards consist of the £3,000 NSP contribution plus the £3,000 match funding from the University. In line with NSP guidelines, this award can be taken as a partial fee waiver (or full fee waiver in the case of the Engineering foundation) or can be a combination of part fee waiver and part bursary / help towards accommodation costs. We expect that around 160 students will receive this level of support. Students with household income under £25,000p.a will also be eligible for a University bursary (see below).

NSP funds will also be used to support care leavers (aged under 21) with an award of £9,000 in their first year, with an option to take this as a full fee waiver or as a combination of a part fee waiver and part bursary or discount against University accommodation. We expect that around 25 students will receive this level of support. These students will also be entitled to a University bursary in line with their household income (see below).

Finally, we will also use NSP funds to support part-time adult learners with no previous HE qualifications and from low income backgrounds (see below).

Information on our financial support packages will be provided to prospective students, parents/carers, teachers, IAG providers and current students using a variety of methods.

- **University Bursary Scheme**

In addition to the NSP packages, the University will offer a bursary scheme to students with a household income of up to £42k. These bursaries are allocated purely on the basis of household income and do not depend on a student coming from a low IMD area. The bursary amounts are highlighted below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household income</th>
<th>£0-£18,000</th>
<th>£18,001-£25,000</th>
<th>£25,001-£30,000</th>
<th>£30,001-£35,000</th>
<th>£35,001-£42,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University bursary scheme</td>
<td>£1,400</td>
<td>£1,100</td>
<td>£750</td>
<td>£600</td>
<td>£500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Financial Support for Part-time students**

The University has a long established and successful Institute for Lifelong Learning which delivers the majority of the University’s part-time undergraduate provision including both foundation courses and degrees. Part-time fees at the University of Sheffield for 2013/4 and beyond will rise to the equivalent of £6,750 full-time equivalent. In order to ensure that part-time students from low income backgrounds are not deterred from pursuing HE, the University has put financial support packages in place, as follows:
• **Foundation Programme**

For students whose gross household income is less than £25,000 per year, the University will offer a full fee waiver. Eligible students will therefore pay no fee to complete the foundation programme.

• **Certificate**

Students with a household income of less than £25,000 per year who have not previously successfully completed a higher education qualification (at the level of or above the level of the intended study) will receive a fee waiver (£3,375) for the first 60 credits. Students will be expected to pay £3,375 in the 2nd year of study, and students will be able to apply for a Tuition Fee Loan to cover this cost.

• **Part-time degree programmes**

For students with a household income of less than £25,000 with no previous higher education qualifications at the level of or above the level of the intended study there is a full fee waiver (£3,375 per 60 credits) for the first 60 credits and the final 60 credits. This usually equates to year 1 and year 6 of study. Students will also be eligible to apply for a Tuition Fee Loan to cover the cost of years 2 to 5.

Students with a household income of less than £18,000 p.a. with no previous higher education experience and qualifications will receive a full fee waiver (£3,375 per 60 credits) for the first 60 credits and the final 60 credits plus a 50% fee waiver for the remaining 240 credits. Students will also be eligible to apply for a Tuition Fee Loan to cover the cost of years 2 to 5.

There is a considerable degree of uncertainty around the likely intake of part-time adult learners in 2013/14, however our current projections suggest that 65-70 students will benefit from these fee waivers in 2013/14, equivalent to just under half of the projected total part-time undergraduate population.

**Section 5: Targets & Milestones**

5.1 **Targets**

Our key aims in relation to widening participation are to:
- increase our recruitment of academically capable students from the lowest socio-economic groups
- grow the number of students with disabilities entering the University
- maintain our strong performance in recruitment of students from low participation neighbourhoods
- maintain our mature student intake
- maintain our intake of students from black and other minority ethnic groups.

The targets we set for 2012/13 reflected our aspiration to maintain our strong position with regard to HESA benchmarks and other institutionally driven targets, specifically to:
- increase recruitment from students from socio-economic groups 4-7,
- sustain our success in relation to attracting students from state schools and low participation neighbourhoods.
We noted our concern in setting the 2012/13 targets that the changing fees regime would make it more difficult to maintain our strong position in relation to widening participation and we note again this year that a number of factors are likely to further militate against some aspects of widening participation in the future. However at the time of writing this Agreement, we do not know what our student profile will be in 2012/13, let alone 2013/14. We therefore propose to maintain our commitment to work towards the targets agreed for 2012/13 and beyond. We may however wish to revisit and rebase these targets as necessary in the light of our 2012 intake.

For 2013/14 we are now in a position to include more detailed targets around our collaborative efforts with other HEIs, in particular for the work we are undertaking with Sheffield Hallam University.

Please see Annexe B, table 6a for details of our quantitative targets.

5.2 Milestones
We continue to be committed to expanding our outreach provision across all sectors (primary school activity through to post-16 activity), expanding our retention, support and progression activity for post-entry students and undertaking research into the impact of our activity to inform future policy and practice. Our milestones set out how we will deliver on the proposals for growth and development in these areas.

Please see Annexe B, table 6b for details of our milestones.

Section 6: Monitoring and evaluation arrangements

The University will monitor activity and generate evidence of impact in a number of ways.

- On an ongoing basis, quantitative data will be used to measure outputs (e.g. number of participants, number of activities, number of schools and colleges involved) to assess the level of activity undertaken against the numerical targets we set.
- We will also use a range of evaluation techniques to measure the effectiveness of individual activities and longer-term widening participation programmes as a way of measuring the impact of the work we undertake. This will include paper and electronic surveys of participants and attitudinal surveys of participants on intensive programmes.
- Data will be monitored and tracked to longitudinally assess the progression and success of students who participate in outreach programmes and/or progress to the University, using admissions, enrolment and progression data from the University’s internal student records system. This process of tracking and monitoring will be strengthened following the introduction of the Research and Evaluation Unit.
- The WPREU will contribute to and oversee short-term research and evaluation activity, to provide a more consistent and formal approach to impact assessment and continuous improvement for both centrally and departmentally delivered outreach programmes. Results of formal research undertaken by the WPREU will be published as a way of sharing good practice within the sector.
- Progress will be monitored through our own internal governance structures and reported to the OFFA on an annual basis. Monitoring of progress against targets and milestones set out in the Access Agreement will be undertaken by the Admissions and Outreach Sub-Committee of Learning & Teaching Committee, which formally reports to the University’s Senate.
- Monitoring of collaborative activity will also take place as part of regular Board and Steering Group meetings for both the HEPP and for the Excellence Hubs partnerships.
Section 7: Provision of information to prospective students
The University commits to providing accurate and timely information to prospective students, parents, teachers and other advisers, through a range of communications channels, as highlighted in the table below. This information enables prospective students to make informed choices about what and where to study.

We also commit to providing accurate and timely information to UCAS and Student Finance England to ensure that up to date information is available at all times.

We communicate to current students, primarily through web-based resources, to ensure that they are effectively supported throughout the duration of their studies, including for example links to money management tools to help them budget effectively.

A summary of what and how we communicate to students is provided below:
## Provision of information to prospective students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Time in Cycle</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Time span</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prospective students, teachers and other advisers, parents</td>
<td>Pre-application</td>
<td>Talks in schools and colleges at Careers events, HE Events, Parents Evenings.</td>
<td>Annual schedule – as requested by schools and colleges as part of our HE Support Programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-application</td>
<td>UG Prospectus: general information about the University plus useful resources for prospective students, parents, teachers and advisers. Includes references to web pages containing up to date fees and finance information. These web pages include: Finance <a href="http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/undergraduate/finance">http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/undergraduate/finance</a> Bursaries <a href="http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/bursaries/">http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/bursaries/</a></td>
<td>Mailed out to schools and colleges in March and then throughout the year. Distributed through UCAS HE Conventions March – July. Distributed at outreach and recruitment events, including University Open Days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre- application</td>
<td>In collaboration with the HE Progression Partnership, slides are provided for staff in schools and colleges for their own use. These provide up to date information regarding the financial aspects of students entering higher education.</td>
<td>Updated as appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-application</td>
<td>Updated finance booklet for 2014 entry</td>
<td>Will be made available at the start of 2013 academic year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-application</td>
<td>Finance talks at four University-wide Open Days.</td>
<td>Open days: June, July, September.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre- and post-application</td>
<td>Talks and workshops provided at the University’s Annual Schools and Colleges Conference for teachers and advisers from schools and colleges in the city/region</td>
<td>June/July 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre- and post-application</td>
<td>Information provided at regular opportunities for school and college staff to interact with University staff, e.g. the VC Consultation programme</td>
<td>Various times throughout the academic year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre- and post-application</td>
<td>Updates on the University’s “Schools and colleges” pages regarding the introduction of the new fees regime and what this will mean for prospective students.</td>
<td>Continuous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre- and post-application</td>
<td>Finance web pages provide illustrative examples and ‘ready reckoners’ (bursary and fee waiver calculators), as well as other money management tools for students.</td>
<td>Continuous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-application</td>
<td>Finance talks and information distributed at Departmental Open Days for applicants.</td>
<td>Throughout the year – mainly December to May.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current students</td>
<td>Post-entry</td>
<td>Orientation talks, web pages, face to face appointments.</td>
<td>Ongoing – throughout the year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 8: Consultation with the student body

The University benefits from very strong relationships with our student body and has consulted with the Students’ Union throughout the process of developing the 2013/14 Access Agreement. The President of the Students’ Union has been involved in our Access Agreement working group to represent the views of our student body and to recommend changes to our approach for the benefit of our students. One example is the way in which we have changed our approach to provision of the NSP scholarships based on feedback about fee waivers. We have agreed that students will be able to choose how they receive their NSP packages for full and part fee waivers. We originally stated in the 2012/13 Agreement that this would be as a full fee waiver. On the advice of the Students’ Union we will now make the NSP packages available as full fee waivers or as part fee waiver and part bursary (within the NSP guidelines). We have also agreed to implement this approach for students entering the University in 2012 rather than waiting until 2013 entry, to provide students with more choice. In discussing this issue with the Union we have also committed to the development and delivery of collaborative financial advice workshops for prospective and current students to ensure that students are in a position to make an informed choice about which option to select.

Section 9: Consideration of Equality and Diversity

Our Access Agreement and our commitment to widening participation and access is fully consistent with our strategic commitment to Equality and Diversity as set out in our 2009-2012 “Excellence Through Inclusion” strategy, in particular the overarching objectives of:

- developing a fully inclusive University community which recruits and retains talented staff and students from all sectors of society
- supporting that talent, ensuring it can be developed within a positive and supportive culture that encourages everyone to flourish and reach their potential.

The University’s current approach is to integrate inclusion into University strategies, reinforced by the overarching, institutional equality strategy.

Our Access Agreement is therefore one example of an institutional strategy that complies with this approach in that it:

- Integrates inclusion through its commitment to support specific student groups including female students in engineering, students with disabilities, students from black and other ethnic minority groups and mature students.
- Is driven by careful measurement of data/metrics and monitoring.