Writtle University College
Access and Participation Plan 2019-20

Contents

Introduction and context

1. Writtle University College is a small, specialist provider based in Chelmsford, Essex. We have been providing land-based further and higher education for more than 120 years. We were awarded taught degree awarding powers in March 2015, prior to which our HE provision was validated by the University of Essex. The first cohort of undergraduate students studying for a Writtle University College award enrolled in September 2017 and will complete in summer 2020. We offer undergraduate courses in the areas of Agriculture, Animal Science, Bioveterinary Science, Equine Science, Environmental Arts and Crafts, Horticulture, Landscape Architecture, Sports Studies and Veterinary Physiotherapy.

2. The University College has around 800 HE students enrolled on a range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The small size of the institution and the high cost base of our provision means that we have limited resources to assign to highly targeted and/or standalone activities; our access and participation efforts are instead concentrated on institution-wide measures to improve outcomes for all students, in line with the areas for improvement identified through HESA data, TEF metrics and our own assessment of performance. Nonetheless, we recognise the need for more concentrated and targeted efforts in some areas to close persistent and specific gaps in access and student success.

3. This access and participation plan marks a shift in our approach to widening participation activities following the appointment of a new vice-chancellor and self-evaluation guided by the new regulatory framework. We embrace the role we play as a driver of social mobility and we believe we have a valuable contribution to make as a specialist provider in the East of England region. In 2019-20 and future years we will ensure that access and participation activity, and our approach to equality and diversity more broadly, is treated as fundamental to what we do, and that its value is recognised by all members of our community.

Assessment of current performance

4. Our assessment of current performance is based on the latest information taken from our student records system and using external datasets available from HESA and the Office for Students. The small size of our undergraduate student body (typical intake to first degree courses is around 190 students) poses a number of challenges with respect to evaluation and monitoring. This is particularly the case when it comes to understanding the performance of some under-represented groups, where there is insufficient data to inform statistical analysis. For this reason, the assessment which follows is, unless otherwise stated, based on institution-level data aggregated over a five-year period.

5. The limitations of small datasets mean that it has also been very difficult to conduct meaningful analysis about the intersections between under-represented groups. Though we have been able to draw some conclusions based on multi-factorial analysis, our

assessment of performance is largely focused on the access, success and progression of each under-represented group.

6. Our assessment of current performance references, but does not exclusively focus upon, the targets and milestones in this Access and Participation Plan. We are in the process of reviewing these targets and expect to publish a suite of new targets and milestones in our 2020-21 Access and Participation Plan.

<u>Access and outreach</u>

7. In 2017-18, 71% of our total home/EU undergraduate entrants were from one or more under-represented groups.

8. Writtle University College recruits the vast majority of its home/EU undergraduate population from the local region. Just over two fifths (43%) live within a 20 mile radius of the University College, with the vast majority of these students coming from just three districts: Chelmsford, Southend-On-Sea and Colchester. Two thirds (66%) live within a 40 mile radius.

9. Overall, our proportion of young students recruited from low-participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3 quintiles 1 or 2) is 33% and our proportion of mature students recruited from areas of low adult HE qualifications is very similar, at 34%. Of these three areas, Southend-On-Sea has a particularly low rate of HE participation and we are pleased to have maintained the number of students recruited annually from this part of East England. Amongst our students recruited from Southend-On-Sea, 77% are from low-participation neighbourhoods.

10. We continue to recruit the large majority of our undergraduate intake from state schools and colleges, which is unusual for a small specialist provider with our subject mix. According to latest available HESA data, 96% of our first-degree entrants were from state schools and colleges compared to a location-adjusted benchmark of 90%. In addition, around two thirds of our full-time entrants are admitted with low-tariff or no-tariff qualifications.

11. As a higher education institution that also provides further education, we are well placed to promote HE participation amongst our FE learners and support their transition to HE-level study. However, the current rate of progression from eligible FE courses to HE within WUC is not as high as we would like it to be, at around 14%. Our overall FE to HE progression rate (at WUC or elsewhere) is 41%.

12. The proportion of our first degree entrants aged 21 and over at point of entry is 21%; this increases to 28% when including other undergraduate awards. Unfortunately, we have seen declining numbers of mature students over the last five years, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of the undergraduate student body. This reflects national trends in England over the same period. Whilst we have seen drops in the number of mature student entering both full-time and part-time courses, the overall decline in part-time enrolments has undoubtedly undermined our efforts to sustain

mature student numbers, given that the vast majority (over 90%) of our part-time learners are mature.

13. Despite the overall decline in mature student enrolments, there is a significant variation across subject areas. Half of undergraduate students on our Horticulture and Agriculture courses are mature at the point of entry, with a third of Agriculture students aged 25 and over. Our ability to increase mature student numbers will in part depend on our ability to grow overall student recruitment to these areas, which is proving challenging due to the national decline in these subjects. Our biggest recruiting degree courses, Animal Sciences and Equine Sciences and Veterinary Physiotherapy, largely attract young students (school/college leavers), which mirrors the enrolment pattern for these subjects more broadly.

14. Over the last five-year period, the University College has recruited a total of seven students identified as care leavers. We have a generous bursary scheme in place to support these learners during their studies. The number of care leavers does not allow us to assess our performance with retaining and supporting these individuals, relative to the rest of the student body. However, we always seek to identify and address the additional support needs which may be required by care leavers and we are committed to gathering more qualitative evidence about the experiences of these students.

15. We continue to face challenges with the recruitment of BAME students to undergraduate programmes. On average only 4% of our recruitment to first degree programmes comprises BAME students, rising to 11% for other undergraduate programmes. One of the difficulties we face with diversifying the ethnic profile of the University College is our traditional catchment areas of Essex and the East of England, where overall there is a low proportion of BAME individuals[1]. We know this to be compounded by our subject mix, with land-based programmes and associated careers often being perceived as traditionally 'white' domains and sometimes unattractive to students from non-rural areas. We recognise that building a critical mass of BAME students at the University College will require us to recruit students from more urban districts, and particularly from Greater London, which is not an area in which we have typically been active.

16. Around 22% of our undergraduate first-degree intake has a declared disability, though on average only 9% are in receipt of disabled students' allowance (close to our benchmark of 10%). Around three quarters of all disabled students declare their disability to be a mental health condition or a learning difficulty. The numbers registering a mental health condition have increased year-on-year and we have seen a rising demand for counselling and other mental health support, which, if current trends continue, we may struggle to meet through our current in-house services.

Student success

17. The University College offers a welcoming, friendly and supportive environment for learners. The small size of the institution allows strong student-staff relationships to be

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[1] See http://www.ukcensusdata.com/essex-e10000012#sthash.1DBgVPV0.dpbs. According to 2011 Census data, the proportion of the population identifying as non-white in Colchester and Southend-on-Sea is 8%; in Chelmsford it is 6%.

formed more quickly than they might be elsewhere, which we think plays a crucial part in helping learners to 'settle in' to HE study and to build a sense of belonging. Our overall non-continuation rate has improved over the last two years and, with the exception of BAME students, we see no significant difference in first-year retention rates for students from under-represented groups.

18. We know that differences in student success between undergraduates from BAME and white backgrounds begins to emerge from the first year of study, with a significant difference in non-continuation rates between these two groups. This gap further widens with respect to degree completion rates and degree attainment (classification), which is of concern to the University College. The small number of BAME entrants makes it difficult to conduct any meaningful analysis at a subject level, or at the intersections between ethnicity and other demographic characteristics. However, we do know that our BAME students do not report lower satisfaction rates through the NSS, and in fact have higher satisfaction rates with 'academic support' than do our white students, as shown in our TEF Year Two metrics. We recognise the need to gather robust qualitative feedback from BAME students to help us better understand the reasons for these differences and how we might be able to provide more tailored support to close this student success gap.

19. Our analysis of degree completion rates (the proportion of students from any given cohort who go on to complete their degree) shows that, in addition to BAME students, disabled students are on average less likely to successfully complete their degree. This gap between disabled and non-disabled students persists across all of our subject areas and continues through to degree attainment, where on average we see an eight percentage point difference between the proportions of good honours degrees awarded to disabled and non-disabled students. Amongst the population of disabled students at the University College, we know that degree attainment is lowest for students with learning difficulties, which suggests that more support may be required for this group at levels 5 and 6.

20. Whilst there is no significant difference between the non-continuation rates and degree completion rates of young and mature entrants, we see a wide discrepancy with respect to degree attainment. Young students significantly underperform against mature students and also typically present lower NSS satisfaction rates with teaching, assessment and feedback and academic support. The attainment gap is particularly marked for young students from low-participation areas, with only 39% of first degree qualifiers obtaining a good honours degree, compared to 56% of young students from higher participation areas, and compared to 66% for mature students overall. Thus, whilst it is pleasing to see the success of our mature student cohort, we are concerned that some young students may not be achieving their potential whilst at the University College – which may in turn diminish their chances of securing graduate-level employment or further study.

Progression to graduate employment and further study

21. As a specialist and vocationally-oriented HE provider, student employability is core to our mission and values. However, we recognise that progression into graduate-level

employment and further study represents the greatest area for improvement for the University College. We must also aim to increase overall employment and further study rates.

22. Initial analysis of our latest (2016-17) DLHE data indicates that overall employment and further study for UK domiciled leavers obtaining first degrees is 91%, which is a slight decrease from the 94% reported in 2015-16 (HESA table E1a). However, for the same population, graduate-level employment and further study is calculated to be 51%, which is a significant improvement on the previous year.

23. The small graduating cohort means that it is not possible to meaningfully analyse graduate destinations across demographic groups without aggregating data across multiple years. We know from our aggregate TEF metrics that all students, with the exception of disabled students, have lower than benchmark rates of progression into employment or further study. Likewise we know that rates of progression into highly skilled employment and further study need to be improved for all of our students.

24. We are pleased that the majority of our graduates choose to enter the land-based and outdoor industries. However, it is often difficult for graduates in these industries to secure high-paying and/or professional-level starting positions. There is an associated problem that our graduates may have successfully embarked on careers aligned to their degree subject, for example in horticulture, farming or landscape architecture, which are not considered to be 'professional' occupations according to SOC2010 classification. Jobs in the land-based and outdoor industries are also typically lower paying than those in other sectors, which we see reflected in both our DLHE and LEO datasets.

25. Notwithstanding these limitations, we know that more of our students should be aspiring to – and securing – higher-level graduate roles. Some of our students experience financial pressure to obtain employment as soon as possible after graduating, which can mean that they accept their first offer of employment rather than 'holding out' for a better-paid or professional-level role. This pressure is more likely to impact students from lower socio-economic groups. Others may not have the confidence and cultural capital they need to compete for certain graduate positions.

26. Given the nature of our subjects, we expect and encourage a significant number of our graduates to set up their own small business or to enter family-run businesses, either straight after graduation or later on in their careers. We currently provide business support and advice embedded within our modules, but we would like to do more to support this aspect of our students' progression and to ensure that our students are well equipped to enter their chosen professions as owners and directors of their own businesses.

27. More general employability content is embedded in all of our undergraduate programmes, with timetabled classes dedicated to personal and professional development, the achievement of curriculum-based professional skills and engagement with employers. Career pathways and progression to postgraduate study are also addressed in personal tutoring sessions. However, the employability support offered by our central careers service retains a more traditional 'careers advising' approach, with

limited staffing resource spread across FE and HE learners. We recognise that this approach no longer best serves our HE students and must be refreshed and enhanced.

Ambition and strategy

28. Writtle University College aspires to deliver a range of specialist and practical subjects to a diverse cohort of FE and HE students, enabling them to contribute directly and expertly to the challenges facing the UK's land-based industries. On our beautiful 220-hectare campus we combine best-in-class facilities and professional working environments with an inclusive, safe and welcoming environment for our learners. Our small size provides challenges when it comes to targeting access and student success activities, but it has the crucial benefit of allowing us to provide a highly personal and supportive learning environment.

29. We are proud of our heritage as an agricultural college, but know that we must continue to broaden our appeal by promoting the wide range of rewarding and valuable careers available in the land-based and outdoor industries. We have a duty to help diversify these sectors, which are still often seen as the preserve of white, rural middle-class populations, by providing learning opportunities and career pathways for under-represented groups. The diversification of our student (and staff) body benefits all learners and prepares them to be ethical citizens with a strong sense of responsibility, both towards each other and towards the environment.

30. We know that our small scale and regional focus will mean that results are not immediate. Though step-changes in performance will be identified and delivered wherever possible, we must establish a continuous-improvement approach to securing incremental change which makes the best use of our limited resources. To be successful in this, we must have the buy-in of our staff and the continued support of our student body. In future, the achievement of our ambitions and strategy for access and participation will be sponsored and overseen directly by the Vice-Chancellor, signalling the importance of this activity for the University College.

Access and outreach

31. Sustained access and outreach work plays an important part in removing barriers to HE entry. We know that strong relationships with schools and colleges over a long period of time, starting at the primary school level, is an effective way to raise aspirations and widen access. However, our ability to build such relationships with targeted schools and colleges is restricted both by our specialist nature, as many schools would prefer to work with a broad-based HE provider, and by our limited resources, as we cannot always afford to dedicate staff time to highly targeted outreach activities at the expense of more general recruitment efforts.

32. The effect of our partnership activity with schools and colleges, including our involvement with the Essex National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP), is nonetheless dependent on the geography, demography and attainment levels at the institutions we are able to work with. We will seek to build sustained partnerships with a

small number of additional schools and colleges in areas in low participation neighbourhoods, and/or with high proportions of white working class and BAME pupils relative to the local area. Practically, we know that these relationships will be more easily sustained, and more meaningful, when the school or college is located relatively close to the University College.

33. Across all of our outreach and recruitment activities we commit to challenging preconceptions and stereotypes about the subjects we offer and about HE-level study in general. Through thoughtful design and use of recruitment materials, student ambassador-led events and the messages conveyed by all of our staff, we aim to show that successful higher-level study and employment in the land-based and outdoor industries are not restricted by disability, age, ethnicity or social background.

34. As a provider of FE as well as HE, we are in the fortunate position of being able to directly influence the aims and ambitions of our own FE learners when it comes to progression into higher education. We will do more to identify under-represented learners amongst our FE student body and to nurture and support those with the ability to succeed at HE level to ensure they do not face barriers to university entry, either at Writtle University College or elsewhere.

35. We will be creative and innovative in trying to spark the interest and ambitions of prospective students from under-represented groups. For example, we will use our expertise and facilities in sports studies to engage with a larger white, working-class male audience, building local partnerships with sports clubs and organisations to support this engagement. We will promote and facilitate more visits to our specialist campus facilities, which include equine stable and stud facilities, riding arenas, our canine therapy centre, the latest agricultural technology and a variety of livestock, helping to demonstrate to prospective students from all backgrounds that HE study can be active, hands-on and highly practical.

36. We will address low educational attainment by developing new routes into degree-level study for students with low achievement at level 3, and for mature students with no formal qualifications. We currently see a significant number of students enrolling on certificate and diploma programmes because they do not meet the entry requirements for a first degree, and who then do not move beyond level 4 study because they are often not equipped with the core skills and knowledge to succeed at the higher levels of degree study. Using our expertise across our FE and HE teams, we will develop a year-long HE foundation programme to equip more students with the English, maths, academic writing and critical thinking skills they need to enrol on degree-level programmes in their chosen subjects.

37. We will continue to offer a part-time mode of study across some of our undergraduate programmes but will closely monitor the financial viability of these pathways against the backdrop of declining part-time enrolments across the sector. We recognise that part-time study can be an important entry route to HE for mature learners, but we believe that our mature learners may be better served through a combination of work-based and flexible full-time study options, alongside short-course and unregulated learning opportunities for those who do not want to commit to degree study. We are committed to

developing level 6 and level 7 apprenticeships as the relevant standards are approved and believe these will be an important contributor to improved progression opportunities for mature students in the land-based industries.

Student success

38. Our strategy for student success is founded upon a whole-institution approach which prioritises improved outcomes for all learners. This reflects the high proportion of 'OFFA-countable' students enrolled at the University College, our small size, the limited resources which we have to deliver bespoke support and new projects, and our benchmarked performance indicators, which demonstrate a need to improve outcomes for all groups of students.

39. We nonetheless recognise that improving outcomes for some under-represented groups may not be fully addressed by embedded, whole-institution activities, because the reasons for these attainment gaps are complex and may require more direct and/or specialist support. We will identify a small number of projects and interventions to address the specific attainment gaps identified in our current assessment of performance. These will be resourced where we judge there to be the best chance of positive outcomes and will be robustly monitored and evaluated.

40. In addition to targeted interventions aimed at improving outcomes for particular student groups, we will improve the training we provide to staff on how to handle learners who may require additional and specific support during their studies. Though the University College fosters a strong ethos of inclusivity, the practical and operational aspects of managing 'non-standard' support requirements, particularly for disabled students, needs to be more joined up across the institution. For example, academic staff may not always be confident about the reasonable adjustments that can be put in place for a learner, recognising the practical nature of our degree programmes and the range of facilities and equipment involved. This can lead to delays and uncertainty for an applicant/student, which could be remedied by improved training and advice.

41. We are committed to raising the aspirations of our learners and believe this is an on-going process which extends beyond the research and application process, through to each level of HE study and onto graduate employment. There is a risk that some of our students from under-represented groups consider enrolment on a degree programme to be a 'destination' of sorts, and who then lack the confidence or soft skills to achieve the best possible degree outcome and secure entry into a graduate-level career. We know that our young students from low-participation neighbourhoods are just as likely as other groups to progress through their programme and complete their degree, but fewer of them will secure a 1st class or 2:1 award.

42. We will launch institution-wide, multi-year campaigns to sustain the aspiration-raising process beyond the point of entry. These will be focussed upon developing study skills and confidence levels in approaching examinations, reducing module failure rates by setting strong expectations around assessment attempts, and steering students to stay on track and to complete 'on time'. We know that such campaigns require consistent leadership from academic staff and must be reinforced in a variety of settings.

43. The majority of our undergraduate students enter with BTEC or other vocationally-oriented qualifications, with only around one fifth entering with A/AS level qualifications. BTEC students are at higher risk of early withdrawal and we know that our pedagogical approaches must be well-suited to this group, whilst also serving students with other level 3 qualifications, or students with no formal qualifications who have completed access or foundation programmes. The University College has a direct and practical approach to managing teaching style and quality, linked in part to the fact that we are used to observing, assessing and reporting on teaching quality at FE level. Our Head of Learning and Teaching will continue to focus her time on enhancing and tailoring our teaching and assessment methods, developing learning resources and training staff on how to enhance in-classroom support for different groups of students.

44. We will commit more staff time and resources to supporting students' transition to the second and third years of degree study. Our efforts to induct and support students into HE study has so far focussed on the first year of study in an effort to build cohort identity and minimise first year withdrawals. However, we know from quantitative and qualitative evaluation that some of our students struggle to make the transition from the first year of degree study and to adapt to the more independent learning and critical thinking required at levels 5 and 6. Such students are more likely to be from an under-represented group. We will work with our Students' Union to develop a framework for managing year-on-year transition which helps to communicate study changes and new expectation to students and better signposts available support. We will address increased demand for academic writing and other study support skills at levels 5 and 6, in particular as students approach the capstone project element of their degree.

45. In addition to the academic and professional skills which are crucial to the attainment of our HE learners, we are cognisant of the rise in mental health conditions reported by students, and of more general wellbeing issues which may negatively impact on degree completion and attainment. We will seek to bolster our in-house support to cope with growing demand and we will continue to work with local partners in Essex to signpost students to appropriate external services. We will also seek to integrate sessions on mental health, wellbeing, stress-management and resilience into all undergraduate tutorial classes and to provide mental health first aid training for student-facing staff.

46. Our strategic approach to improving outcomes, and in particular for closing achievement gaps for students from under-represented groups, will wherever possible be evidence-based and subject to monitoring and evaluation. We will apply to our HE learners the more 'student-centred' approach to tracking learning outcomes which is normally found in FE, and with which we are very familiar. We will aim to identify and track those students at higher risk of withdrawal or non-completion and to provide more proactive support and advice. We will invest in new software and analytical capacity in order to do this.

Progression to graduate employment and further study

47. We are ambitious for our students and we want to ensure that all WUC graduates are equipped with the subject knowledge, professional skills and personal confidence to

pursue rewarding careers in their chosen fields. And as one of the oldest specialist institutions in the UK, we know that our graduates make an important contribution to the industries we serve and to our regional economy. Based on assessment of our current performance in this area, we will prioritise student progression amongst all of our student support and widening participation activities. We are in the process of significant changes to how we provide employability and enterprise support for our students, including increased investment which is detailed below.

48. The practical, vocational focus of our degree programmes, combined with our excellent estate and facilities, should provide our students with a significant advantage in the employment market. Our on-site practice facilities provide students with the opportunity to gain hands-on, industry-relevant experience whilst at the University College. We seek to manage these facilities in a manner which reflects the professionalism and rigour of a 'real' workplace environment. We will also leverage our estate and facilities to engage employers and industry partners, either by hosting them on campus, or by mobilising our expertise and equipment.

49. We have a number of supplementary professional competency courses available to our degree students which equip them with industry-standard skills and help to provide more direct routes into professional employment. However, the cost of additional certification such as this means that it often cannot be covered by the regulated undergraduate tuition fee, which already fails to meet the high costs of specialist facilities, equipment and teaching. We currently provide bursaries to offset the cost to students of some professional certificates and will monitor the effectiveness of this spend.

50. Our portfolio of foundation degrees is an important aspect of how we provide routes into employment for our undergraduate learners. Our foundation degree students are more likely to be mature, disabled and from BAME backgrounds than are our first degree students. Over the last three years we have redesigned our foundation degree provision, withdrawing programmes which we did not feel provided the right combination of academic and workplace skills and launching a refreshed approach to the qualification. We plan to extend our foundation degree offering over the next 3-5 years, which we believe will make an important contribution to access, success and progression for students from under-represented groups.

51. The trailblazer for our redesigned foundation degree offer is our Foundation Degree in Cycling Performance, which follows a different academic calendar to the rest of our undergraduate provision. Academic study is scheduled to fit around the competition season in professional cycling so that students are available to train, compete and work in the cycling industry at key points in the year. We are about to launch similar foundation degrees designed around the aerial performance and outdoor activity industries, with plans to do the same for horse rider performance. As many of the land-based and outdoor industries follow defined seasons, by synchronising our academic delivery we can make it easier for our students to access and progress into those sectors.

52. As noted above, we embrace the fact that many of our graduates will choose to set up their own businesses or to enter family-run companies. We will commit to provide

enhanced support for these students in the form of business start-up advice, workshops on practical business skills and a range of events to encourage enterprise and innovation amongst our student body.

53. Though most of our graduates choose to enter employment, as opposed to further study, we have a scholarship scheme for our graduates to encourage progression to postgraduate programmes at the University College. Whilst this scheme does not fall within the scope of APP 'eligible' spend, it forms an important part of our commitment to supporting progression pathways for our students.

54. We will continue to build strong, long-lasting relationships with our alumni, many of whom remain in the local area after graduation. We believe that our alumni can play an important role in helping to raise the career aspirations of our current students, as well as providing practical advice, mentoring, internship and volunteering opportunities. We will make particular efforts to engage successful alumni who have come from under-represented groups.

Access, student success and progression measures

Access and outreach

55. In 2019-20 we commit to sustain and build upon our existing outreach work with schools and colleges. We have relationships with a range of partners across the Essex region and will continue to work with these same institutions to provide information, advice and guidance (IAG) and to deliver aspiration-raising events including careers fairs, taster days and interview preparation.

56. By 2019-20 we will also aim to have established a small number of additional partnerships with schools or colleges which have high proportions of BAME pupils and/or high proportions of white, working class male pupils. We know that these partnerships will need to be targeted and carefully planned and developed – we will begin this process in 2018-19, using our own networks and those available through the NCOP. To support this approach, we will also review the diversity and representation of our student ambassadors, who play an important role in our access and outreach activity. We will provide additional support and incentives for students from under-represented groups to join our team of ambassadors.

57. Wherever possible we will encourage and support schools and colleges to visit the University College, as we believe that seeing our impressive estate and extensive facilities first-hand is a powerful tool in raising aspirations and debunking myths about higher education. We will continue to develop the reach and impact of our annual 'Discover Writtle Day', which involves a wide array of staff and current students providing information, tours, subject-specific workshops and demonstrations of our equipment and facilities. We will also continue our successful 'Food and Farming Event', which is attended by an array of local partners and schools.

58. From 2018-19 we will launch the Writtle Skills Show, an annual event focused on raising attainment amongst year 9, 10 and 12 pupils at the beginning of their GCSE or A-Level/equivalent studies, with a particular emphasis on attainment in STEM subjects. The Skills Show will be open to pupils from a wide range of local colleges and schools and we will seek to grow the range and impact of the event over time. We do not yet have established metrics and processes for measuring the outcomes form our attainment- and aspiration-raising activities and this is something we commit to develop over the next year, so that by 2020-21 we are able to set meaningful outcomes-based targets in this area.

59. However, the reality is that schools and colleges often do not have the time and resources to organise visits to multiple HE providers and are inclined to focus such visits on large, broad subject-based universities in the area. We will do more to seek partnership opportunities with universities in our region so that we can combine efforts to reach a wider population of learners. We have already begun this approach in our Sports Studies subject area, collaborating with a large London university and our partner college SEEVIC to deliver outreach targeted at first-in-family applicants to higher education.

60. Across 2018-19 and 2019-20 we will develop and embed a refreshed partnership with Active Essex to widen the reach and impact of sports participation and education. This project will target children who have reduced opportunities to participate in sport, focussing upon primary and secondary schools in more deprived areas of the county. The partnership will also provide volunteering opportunities for current WUC students.

61. With respect to collaborative activity, we will also continue to work with our regional NCOP, Make Happen, to deliver collective outreach and IAG events and we will continue to take part in the STEM Ambassadors scheme. We will continue to subscribe to, and work with, the Higher Education Liaison Officers' Association (HELOA). We are also keen to strengthen our partnership with other universities and colleges in our region to deliver collaborative outreach work.

62. We will do more to support under-represented learners in our own FE community to transition to HE study, either at WUC or elsewhere. We will target under-represented FE students for additional information, advice and guidance. We will also introduce a new access and outreach post to support progression to HE for under-represented groups in our targets schools and colleges, as well as within our own FE student body.

63. We will continue to provide generous financial support for care leavers and mature students, as we believe that this targeted funding, paid as a cash bursary, provides practical support for students who are less likely to have the financial backing of friends and family and more likely to have additional responsibilities alongside their studies. We will significantly increase the number of bursaries available to our mature learners.

64. By 2019-20 we will launch our new integrated foundation year, targeted at low-tariff and mature learners who have the aspiration to enter higher education but do not yet have the entry qualifications to begin a degree programme. We expect this programme to open up opportunities for learners who would otherwise not enter higher education, or

who currently enrol on certificate and diploma programmes but do not progress to a degree. We will wrap relevant outreach activity around this programme and will extend our Mature Students 'Return to Learn' Bursary to support students enrolling on the foundation year.

Student success and progression to graduate employment and further study

65. During 2018-19 we will design and implement a new Centre for Student Success, so that by 2019-20 the Centre is fully operational and able to make a significant contribution to academic and employment outcomes for our students. The Centre for Student Success will take a whole lifecycle approach to supporting outcomes for HE students at the University College, combining existing staff resource with a series of new appointments and additional investment.

66. The Centre for Student Success will focus upon enhanced student success and progression activities for all students, but will also provide some capacity to design and deliver targeted activities to certain under-represented groups. We will, for example, establish a mentoring scheme which aims to enhance support networks for BAME and disabled students. We will liaise with other HE providers to understand their experience of delivering these sorts of activities so that we are able to recognise and learn from good practice. We will take a continuous improvement approach to this work, piloting and evaluating new activities before we enhance, extend and embed them across the institution.

67. We will invest in software licences and staff training to roll out the use of ProMonitor for our HE learners. This software allows integrated tracking of learner engagement and success and is currently used effectively by our FE staff. We will use ProMonitor alongside the recently enhanced analytical capacity in our Management Information and Systems team to provide more rigorous monitoring of student outcomes across under-represented groups. We will apply 'at risk' flags based on our current assessment of performance, as well as known risk factors in the sector, so that we can proactively intervene where we believe that a learner may benefit from additional or different support.

68. We will closely monitor the use of our counselling and welfare services during 2018-19 and 2019-20 and will supplement our in-house resource where increases in demand make this necessary. We know that effective welfare provision combines general, proactive wellbeing and mental health support with more specialist services such as counselling, allowing problems to be addressed at an early stage followed by effective signposting to the right internal or external service.

69. The small size of the University College means that almost all staff, across both academic and professional service teams, form relationships with students and play an important role in providing frontline pastoral advice and support. We will provide enhanced staff training in relation to disability support, mental health and general wellbeing issues, so that all staff feel equipped to initially handle student concerns or queries and can signpost students to the correct specialist information and support.

70. We will increase our HE-specific skills support from planned 2018-19 levels and will better promote and signpost this service within the new Centre for Student Success. We will target additional academic tutoring at students where past evidence and current performance data suggests that there may be an increased risk of non-completion, and where we believe that targeted support can contribute to increased attainment levels. We will also look to develop a Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) scheme, drawing on good practice from across the sector.

71. Through the delivery of our new Employability & Enterprise Strategy, to be launched in 2018-19, we will strengthen the quality and quantity of embedded employability content in our curriculum and will provide access for students to a wider range of employability services. This will include centrally coordinated but subject-specific CV building, interview practice, enterprise and skills development workshops, as well as institution-wide mentoring and volunteering schemes.

72. We will develop and expand our relationships with employers and local organisations to provide volunteering, internship and work placement opportunities for our students. We will strengthen industry advisory panels, where they currently exist, and expand these to cover all subject areas in the University College.

73. We will establish a small but targeted bursary scheme to support students from low income households to meet some of the additional costs associated with developing their progression opportunities. This is likely to include the costs of supplementary skills awards and professional certificates, as well as the costs of travelling to interviews and engaging with unpaid internships.

74. Over the next year we will be refreshing our institutional key performance indicators as part of our new WUC Strategic Plan. We will be setting a number of targets and milestones in relation to graduate employment and further study and we will ensure that our 2020-21 access and participation plan includes at least one target in this category.

Equality and diversity

75. The WUC Equality Policy is an important enabling factor for the University College's wider access and participation work. Our Equality & Diversity Steering Group was involved in the formulation of this access and participation plan, which clearly intersects with and our equality and diversity objectives in some areas, for example with respect to closing the attainment gap between students of different ethnicities and improving the campus experience for disabled students. Our Equality & Diversity Steering Group will be involved in the monitoring of our access and participation commitments and our annual Equality & Diversity report will be aligned with reports received by our academic board and board of governors on access and participation.

76. We are concerned to improve our understanding of how certain protected characteristics which have not typically been well reported in HE, such as sexual orientation, religion/belief and gender reassignment, can affect students' experiences of university

and their academic outcomes. We have recently decided to start collecting student information on these characteristics, which over time will allow us monitor performance amongst these groups, in addition to those more commonly identified as 'under-represented' within the HE sector.

77. The University College is cognisant of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the commitments made in our access and participation plan, financial and otherwise, extend beyond our legal duty to protect students and staff from discrimination and to make reasonable adjustments. The majority of the activities and support measures in our access and participation plan are founded upon a whole-institution, inclusive approach to student support, which reflects the themes of our Equality Policy. In practice this means that we will be highly flexible in how we provide services and support to students to ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to benefit from them. However, we will also be proactive in reaching out to students from different groups to mitigate the risk that student 'self-selection' for additional support reinforces existing inequalities. Wherever possible we will collect data and report on the use of WUC services by students with protected characteristics to identify trends and address any discrepancies. This be very closely monitored with respect to our new Centre for Student Success.

78. We also take very seriously our safeguarding responsibilities, for both our FE and HE students. The work of our Wellbeing & Safeguarding team crosses over with both our equality & diversity duties and our access and participation activity. We are planning to extend the work of this team through the addition of a night warden service, which we believe will better support students with a range of needs on an extended basis.

Investment

79. In 2019-20 we commit to investing 20 percent of our higher fee income (HFI) on access, student success and progression activity. We expect to maintain this level of investment over the forecast period. This represents an investment of £379,532 in cash terms, comprising: £45,728 access investment (2.4% of HFI); £145,328 student success investment (7.7% of HFI); £61,976 progression investment (3.3% of HFI); £126,500 investment in financial support (6.7% of HFI). In addition to this expenditure, we also expect to invest around a further £209,000 in access and participation activity which will be funded through government grants.

80. Over a quarter of our investment will fund the establishment of our new Centre for Student Success, including new posts and resources to support student mentoring, peer assisted leaning, HE study skills, employability advice and enterprise support. In practice this investment will begin in academic year 2018-19, with the new service fully embedded by 2019-20. This investment will also cover the software licensing costs associated with the roll-out of existing ProMonitor software to our HE learners.

81. We will increase our investment in access and outreach by around 40%, through the creation of a new post dedicated to supporting progression for under-represented students amongst our target schools and colleges. This new post holder will also work to

target under-represented learners amongst our own FE student body and will provide enhanced information, advice and guidance to encourage progression to HE study, either at WUC or elsewhere. This increased investment will also support the gathering of better quantitative and qualitative data on the impact of our outreach activities.

82. Finally, we have re-profiled our investment in financial support to better align our scholarship and bursary package with our priorities for access and student success. We have decided to remove small bursary awards (£200-£300) for students with household incomes between £25,000 and £40,000, as we have no evidence to demonstrate that these bursaries are having a significant impact on retention or progression. We will instead divert that resource to increased support for mature learners, in an effort to stall the decline in mature enrolments and to ensure that more mature students can benefit from cash awards to support the costs of HE study. We will deliver a fivefold increase in mature student bursaries from 2019-20 and will commit to monitoring the impact of this bursary scheme to inform our financial support strategy in future years. We will also continue our generous bursary package for care leavers.

Evaluation and monitoring

83. The University College will adopt a new and more robust approach to evaluating its access activities, beginning in academic year 2018-19 and fully embedded by 2019-20. Each of the strategic ambitions and goals in our 2019-20 access and participation plan has been translated into a work stream which is owned and managed by a member of senior staff and includes operational targets, a qualitative and quantitative monitoring plan, direct student involvement and (in some cases) a defined budget. A report on each work stream is presented to regular meetings of an Access and Participation Task Group, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, where progress is scrutinised and decisions taken based on available evidence.

84. For example, our commitment to establish a Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) scheme will be led by our Director of Student Success, who will produce an operational plan approved by the WUC Academic Board and subsequently monitored by the Task Group. This member of staff will work closely with our Students' Union Academic Officer to set SMART objectives for the scheme and ensure that robust evaluation of its impact is included in the design phase of the project. We will liaise with other HE providers to understand 'what works' in terms of effective evaluation for commonplace interventions such as PALs.

85. Our suite of bursaries and scholarships will be evaluated through a project led by our Finance and MIS team. We will analyse applications, enrolments and student outcomes for all recipients of WUC bursaries and scholarships in 2019-20 to determine correlations between financial support and student success, with outcomes compared across academic years. This will be supplemented by student interviews and focus groups to help us understand the practical benefits (and limitations) of the financial support we offer and how this affects student behaviour. In some cases where numbers are very small, for example with recipients of our Care Leavers' Bursary, we are limited to qualitative feedback to help us understand the impact of the scheme.

86. The University College has recently invested in increased analytical capacity and a member of our MIS team is allocated to support each work stream. Wherever possible this includes quantitative evaluation using student data, although as noted earlier it is often difficult for the University College to generate statistically significant analyses due to small numbers. We will also look to make use of the evaluation toolkit resources developed by OFFA and taken forward by the OfS. Where we have clear evidence that an activity is yielding positive results for one or more under-represented groups, we will be agile in re-profiling our investment to grow and embed that activity; where the opposite is true, we will curtail a work stream/project so that resource is diverted to more effective activity. In practice, we know that it can take a long time (in some cases several years) to fully understand whether an intervention is having a positive impact on student behaviour.

87. We will closely monitor the establishment and impact of the new Centre for Student Success through robust operational planning. It is particularly important that we understand the impact of the Centre's work as it forms the basis for much of our additional investment in 2019-20. To help us do this, we will establish a Student Success Advisory Board, to include student, alumni, employer and other external input. From 2018-19 we will also produce an annual report on access and participation activity for our board of governors.

Student consultation

88. The main channel for student input into our 2019-20 access and participation plan has been through the deliberations of our academic committees, where students are represented by members of the WUC Students' Union. We commit to increasing student involvement in the formulation of future access and participation plans, primarily through our new HE Student Council, which will be established in 2018-19. We will also make targeted use of student focus groups and questionnaires to drive input on particular aspects of our WP activity.

89. Students will be closely involved in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of our 2019-20 access and participation plan. We will make use of our newly-formed HE Student Council to provide students with the chance to feedback on existing projects and to offer ideas for new activities and initiatives. As noted above, we will also be asking each member of staff with responsibility for delivering an aspect of the 2019-20 plan to work closely with a student representative throughout implementation and evaluation. Students will form part of our Student Success Advisory Board, which will be established in 2018-19 to monitor the establishment and impact of our new Centre for Student Success. Students will also continue to be represented on WUC academic committees where access and participation activity is routinely monitored.

90. Throughout our monitoring and evaluation work we will proactively identify and incentivise student involvement from students with a range of backgrounds – and in particular we will seek to match students to projects and initiatives where their own background and experiences are directly relevant to the target group we are aiming to

support. We recognise that student engagement can be more challenging for certain groups, for example mature students with caring responsibilities and other commitments, and so we will be flexible in working around our students' availability.

Provision of information to students

91. We commit to publishing clear, accessible and timely information for applicants and students on the fees that we charge and the support that we offer, including our range of bursaries and scholarships. Will publish this information through a range of media including via UCAS and the Student Loans Company, our webpages and through our publications and social media channels. This information will be available in advance of the 2019-20 admissions cycle, consistent with consumer law requirements.

92. Our agreed access and participation plan, along with our access agreements from previous years, will be clearly published on our website.

Table 3 - Summary of full-time and part-time course fee levels for 2019-20 entrants

Institution name: Writtle University College

* course type not listed.

Full-time and part-time course fee levels for 2019-20 entrants.
Please enter inflationary statement in the free text box below.
The University College will apply annual inflationary increases to tuition fees based on the Retail Prices Index (RPI).

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£9,250
Foundation degree		£9,250
Foundation year / Year 0		£9,250
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		£9,250
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*
Franchise full-time course type:	**Additional information:**	**Course fee:**
Foundation degree	SEEVIC - 10005736	£9,250
First degree		*
Foundation year / Year 0		*
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		*
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*
Part-time course type:	**Additional information:**	**Course fee:**
First degree		£6,935
Foundation degree		£6,935
Foundation year / Year 0		£6,935
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		£6,935
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*

Table 8a - Statistical targets and milestones relating to your applicants, entrants or student body													
Reference number	Stage of the lifecycle (drop-down menu)	Main target type (drop-down menu)	Target type (drop-down menu)	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target? (drop-down menu)	Baseline year (drop-down menu)	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
								2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	
T16a_01	Access	Socio-economic	HESA T1a - NS-SEC classes 4-7 (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	Maintain the percentage identified in NS-SEC 4-7 tables (HESA table 1a) at above 39% and grow this to 44.5 % by 2019/20.	No	2012-13	31.9%	41%	44.5%	NA	NA	NA	Whilst the College retains its ambitions to achieve a total of 44.5% of its students from postcode areas with relative deprivation by 2019/20, we fell 7% short of our target in 2015/16. As HESA is no longer publishing NS-SEC 4-& WP data, a new target has been set using POLAR3 data.
T16a_02	Student success	Other (please give details in Description column)	HESA T3a - No longer in HE after 1 year (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	To reduce the overall non-completion rate so that the College performs within the top 40% of English HEIs, with a long term aim of reducing the overall non-completion rate to 5% by 2019/2020.	No	2012-13	8.5%	9.0%	8%	6%	5%	5%	In 2015/16, 13.8% of all first degree entrants did not continue. This has increased slightly so the university college is putting place a wealth of actions to ensure this increase is reversed moving forward.
T16a_03	Access	Ethnicity	Other statistic - Ethnicity (please give details in the next column)	The proportion of the HE student body drawn from black and ethnic minority groups should be substantially greater than the proportion of black and ethnic minority groups in the regional population from which the College draws many of its students. This currently stands at approximately 3.7% (regional and local population census data). The College will endeavour to 1) maintain the proportion of black and ethnic minority students above 12% and 2) to increase this to 15% by 2019/20.	No	2011-12	11.5%	17.5%	18%	18.5%	19%	19%	Given the land based nature of the subjects offered by the College with students being largely drawn from rural and semi-rural populations with low proportions of black and ethnic minorities in their populations achieving these targets will be challenging. In 2015/16 13.3% of the student body drawn from black and minotrity groups.
T16a_04	Access	Disabled	Other statistic - Disabled (please give details in the next column)	To maintain the proportion of HE students who declare a disability at 17% and increase this to 20% by 2019/20 (data from Writtle College Student records - Unit-e)	No	2012-13	17.1%	19.5%	20%	21%	22%	22%	In 2015/16 17.2% of the student cohort had a declared disablity.
T16a_05	Access	Mature	Other statistic - Mature (please give details in the next column)	To maintain the proportion of our Higher Education students aged 21+ at 40% or greater. (data from Writtle College Student records - Unit-e)	No	2013-14	44%	41%	42%	43%	44%	44%	The baseline of 44% for 2013/14 represents the 5th consecutive year of decline from a value of 64% in 2009/10. As part of its access related activities the University College wishes to initially reduce and then stop the decline at a figure of around 40%. This figure was 41.2% in 2015/16
T16a_06	Access	Part-time	Other statistic - Part-time (please give details in the next column)	The college aims to grow its part-time enrolment from 3% to at least 5% of home students. (data from Writtle College Student records - Unit-e)	No	2014-15	3%	6%	7%	7%	9%	9%	Target achieved with 5% of students enrolled are on part time courses
T16a_07	Access	Other (please give details in Description column)	Other statistic - State School (please give details in the next column)	The College aims to increase the total percentage of eligible Writtle College FE students progressing to HE at Writtle and elsewhere above the 2013/14 baseline value of 25%. The College has set a long term goal of ensuring the over 35% of eligible Level3 leaners successfully enter HE. (data from Writtle College Student records - Unit-e)	No	2013-14	25%	32.5%	34%	34.5%	35	35%	This target has been exceeded with 32.7% of FE students progressing on to a Higher Education course.
T16a_08	Access	Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)	HESA T1c - Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3) (Young, full-time, other undergraduate entrants)	The College aims to increase recruitment from LPN from the baseline value of 10.6% to above 16% by 2019/20.	No	2014-15	10.6	14.9%	16.1%	17.0%	18%	18%	This is a demanding but achievable target. In 2015/16, the University College is currently performing above the location adjusted benchmark of 11.0 with prcentage from low participation neighbourhoods at 12.4% (Table T1b 2015/16) This target and associated milestones will replace T16a_01 once the publication of NS-SEC classes 4-7 data from HESA is no longer available.

								Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					
Reference Number	Select stage of the lifecycle	Main target type (drop-down menu)	Target type (drop-down menu)	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
T16b_01	Access	Multiple	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	To sustain our education outreach activity (in terms of volume and variety) at the high level attained in previous years, to deliver at least 30 events benefiting 5,000 participants annually.	Yes	2014-15	30 events	30 events	30 events	30 events	30	30 events	
T16b_02	Access	Low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Within our outreach activities to run at least 10 activities that target and are designed to raise aspiration and participation among learner from regional 'cold-spot' low-participation neighbourhoods identified by HEFCE.	Yes	2014-15	6 events	10 events	10 events	10 events	10	10 events	10 events aiming to reach at least 15 students at each event - 150 - this also includes developing relationships and hosting evetns fow Schools such as William Edwards
T16b_03	Access	Mature	Lifelong learning	Within our outreach activities to run at least 5 activities that promote and support the take up of higher education by part-time students and mature return to learning students.	Yes	2014-15	0 events	5 events	5 events	5 events	5	5 events	5 events aiming to reach at least 8 mature learners at each event - 40
T16b_04	Multiple	State school	Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Work with students in KS3 from schools predominently situationed in POLAR3 areas to improve attainment of disadvantaged and under-represented groups to enable them to apply to HE if they wish to.	Yes	2017-18	1	5 events	5 events	5 events	5 events	5 events	Events aminig to reach at least 15 students at each event so a total of 150 students.
T16b_05	Access	Attainment raising	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Deliver annual Writtle Skills Show event, aimed at year 9, 10 and 12 pupils in local schools and colleges. The Skills Show will aim to raise aspiration and ability to enter HE by supporting attainment raising at the beginning of the GCSE and A-Level cycle, with a particular focus on STEM subjects. Pupils from local schools and colleges will be invited, using NCOP networks and support, with numbers to expand as the event is developed over time.	Yes	2018-19	200 attendees	200 attendees	250 attendees	300 attendees	350 attendees	400 attendees	

Table 8b - Other milestones and targets.

Optional commentary on milestones.
This box is character-limited to 1000 characters; however, we are happy for you to upload additional 'supporting information' as a separate Word/pdf document.

Our targets for 2021-22 have been rolled forward to 2022-23. Whilst the above areas/activities remain important to our strategy and ambition, we intend to conduct a comprehensive review of all targets and milestones in time for the 2020-21 Access and Particpation Plan, with the expectation that many of them will change. Over the next year, the University College will be launching a new strategic plan and suite of KPIs, which will inform refreshed targets for WP activity. We will ensure that targets and milestones from 2020-21 address each of the APP categories.
Our access and participation plan notes that "Over the next year we will be refreshing our institutional key performance indicators as part of our new WUC Strategic Plan. We will be setting a number of targets and milestones in relation to graduate employment and further study and we will ensure that our 2020-21 access and participation plan includes at least one target in this category".