



Summary of OFFA’s Strategic Guidance for Developing 2017-18 Access Agreements

Due: noon on Wednesday 27 April 2016

What’s new in 2017-18 access agreements

- ‘Ensure an increased focus on outcomes’
- Greater emphasis on evidence and evaluation, both to evaluate your access work and to contribute to the sector’s knowledge of best practice
- Examine multiple indicators of disadvantage
- Do more to increase BME participation, success and progression
- Widen access for white males from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Consider students with mental health problems, Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)
- Improve support for mature/part-time students
- Increased focus on the student life-cycle, including progression and retention
- Compensate for changes to NHS bursaries

Key Terms by Frequency of Appearance

Key Term	Frequency
Collaborative	13
Lifecycle	12
Part-Time	12
White males from disadvantaged backgrounds	8
Black Minority Ethnic	5
Mature	5
Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)	3

Targets

New expectations

- Use multiple indicators of disadvantage
- Minimum of one target addressing the student lifecycle
- Minimum of one target for long-term outreach
- Minimum of one target for collaborative work
- Minimum of one statistical target around entrants
- New targets should be set across five years with annual milestones
- Discuss any new target or changes to existing targets with OFFA

Changes to existing milestones and targets

- You can ‘choose to extend existing targets up to 2020-21’ but do not let ‘targets plateau’
- Discuss with OFFA before submitting any changes to obsolete targets in 2017/18 agreement
- Because HESA will no longer publish NS-SEC, you should consider an alternative indicator if you are using NS-SEC as an indicator

Changes to the fair access landscape

- Increase the participation of white males from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Improve the outcomes for BME students
- Increase the rate of progress for widening participation of disadvantaged students
- Higher tariff universities must ‘scale-up’ the number of disadvantaged students entering
- Decline in part-time/mature students is ‘bad news’

Key priorities for 2017-18 agreements

Primary focus is on outcomes

- OFFA will evaluate your institution’s progress by examining the progress you have made against the targets you have set and also against HESA performance indicators
- OFFA will also examine your institution’s contribution to the sector as a whole, including: evaluation work, contributions to best practice, long-term outreach work and also plans for collaborative activity.

- Identify where you're struggling, and state how you will rectify any shortcomings

Use latest evidence to support your access agreement

- Use national data in conjunction with your own monitoring and evaluation data
- You must demonstrate consideration of race equality in your curriculum

Target white males from disadvantaged backgrounds

- OFFA and BIS have highlighted white males from disadvantaged backgrounds as a group that needs targeting

Regions with low participation rates

- Use Hefce analysis and interactive maps to target these areas

Maintain or increase expenditure on activities

- Since Hefce might be required to reduce student opportunity funding by up to 50%, you should include any 'assumptions (about funding) that you based your plans on' and consider which activities would be unaffected by cuts in student opportunity funding
- Redistribute resources away from financial support when you lack strong evidence that such financial support is 'having an impact'
- Changes and uncertainties in the funding landscape prompts OFFA to allow for greater flexibility around an institution's planned activities.

More focus on long-term outreach

- Increase your focus on primary age students and provide long-term support for students
- Increase your institution's involvement in the governance of schools and colleges
- Higher tariff institutions should focus less on financial support, instead they should 'scale-up' activities and build relationships with schools and colleges

Mature and part-time students

- Consider how your institution can attract part-time and mature learners while also developing flexible modes of study (evening classes, weekend modules, online learning)
- Ensure that disadvantaged students are aware of degree apprenticeship opportunities

Further support across the student lifecycle

- Increase focus on progression support in addition to reducing non-completion rates
- Consider new ways to support disadvantaged students across the whole student lifecycle

Progression to postgraduate study

- Include in your access agreements efforts to support progression of your own disadvantaged undergraduate students into postgraduate study

Take a collaborative approach to fair access

- Develop collaborative evaluation and targets to display effectiveness of collaborative work
- 'NNCOs have provided an opportunity to help schools and colleges find out about outreach opportunities for their learners'
- All institutions should 'build on and strengthen collaborative arrangements...either through continuing to invest in NNCOs, and/or through other collaborative partnerships or networks'
- Use Hefce-led evaluations of NNCOs and your own evidence to determine value for money

Changes to NHS bursaries

- New maintenance/tuition loans for nursing, midwifery and allied health professional courses mean these students should now be included in access agreements

Additional under-represented target groups

- Students with mental health disabilities, Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD), autism spectrum and Asperger Syndrome
- Students with 'carer' responsibilities
- Estranged young people
- Students from gypsy and Traveller communities
- Refugees