



Keele  
University

## **Access Agreement**

2016/17

April 2015

**Keele University**  
**Access Agreement 2016/17**

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# 1 Introduction

1.1 Keele University is renowned for its exciting approach to Higher Education, beautiful campus, strong community spirit and excellent student life. Observing Keele's founding ethos of 'the pursuit of truth in the company of friends', the University is committed to the transformative capacity of education for individuals, communities and society and to the equality of opportunity.

1.2 Our University Mission is to provide a high quality educational experience for students shaped by outstanding research, contributing positively to social, environmental and economic agendas locally, nationally and internationally. As we seek moderate growth in our student population we will build upon our already successful work in recruiting and retaining students of high ability and potential from the broadest possible backgrounds.

1.3 The North Staffordshire area, namely the conurbations of Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme, has some of the lowest levels of participation in Higher Education in the country. As a university that aims to engage fully with our community, we have been working with schools and colleges in the region to promote progression, participation and fair access for many years.

1.4 Keele generally performs well in the HESA Performance Indicators, compared to its benchmark and the UK overall, on both widening participation and retention. On the three main widening access indicators (state schools or colleges, NS-SEC, LPN) Keele is above benchmark for two but below benchmark for NS-SEC. Keele's LPN percentage has fallen from 14.1% in 2012/13 to 12% in 2013/14 but has increased again to around 13.7% in 2014/15.

1.5 In 2012/13 the percentage of students graduating from Keele with a First or Upper Second class degree was 68.4% which is below the UK average (70.2%).

1.6 During the last 12 months the University has continued to invest in both outreach and retention activities. We remain committed to delivering appropriate and targeted activities across these areas, whilst further developing ease of access to help and support throughout a student's interactions with the University, from the earliest engagements at Key Stage 2 through to Key Stage 5 transition projects, and on campus advice and support.

1.7 This 2016/17 Access Agreement provides the University with an opportunity to make explicit its strong and established commitment to supporting Widening Participation (WP) and the whole student lifecycle. We will continue to achieve this commitment by placing a significant emphasis upon the delivery of proven and effective outreach and access work, by offering valuable, relevant and targeted financial support, and by committing to the continued development and delivery of effective and valued services that improve retention and encourage student success.

1.8 This Agreement builds upon earlier Access Agreements and explicitly focuses on the development of activity and services to support students in the following broad areas:

- **Student Financial Support**
- **Outreach and Access**
- **Retention and Success**
- **Progression**

1.9 Whilst we recognise the importance of focusing our attention on the delivery of activity within these highlighted areas, the University believes in delivering a seamless approach when supporting students into, through and beyond Higher Education. As such, we will develop and refine existing, as well as planned, activity ensuring efficiencies are made. Access work will be delivered in partnership by colleagues working across our professional services teams and at different stages of the whole student lifecycle, details of which are in the sections that follow.

## **2 Student Consultation**

2.1 As part of the development of this Access Agreement we have consulted with both university staff across our three Faculties, within central services and Keele Students' Union (KeeleSU). Keele University has an excellent working relationship with its Students' Union and its role and influence in developing and supporting the delivery of key aspects of our outreach, retention and progression activities is evidenced in this Agreement.

2.2 To enable us to take the views of our students into consideration in the production of our Access Agreement, in 2014 we developed an Access Agreement Student Survey, which has been updated and distributed again for 2015. The survey includes question that relate to the whole student life cycle, from pre-entry guidance and support to how well prepared students feel for life after graduation. In 2015 it was sent to all current undergraduate students and generated 215 responses.

2.3 In 2014, students from widening participation cohorts, particularly those who indicated that they were in receipt of the Keele Bursary (i.e household incomes <£25,000) were invited to attend one of two focus groups in order to provide us both with their own personal experiences, and the views of their fellow students, as well as to provide us with proposals for how we should be working in future, to ensure that all students can experience University, should they wish, and that they are presented with the best opportunities to develop, progress and succeed. The Vice President (Welfare) from Keele SU ran the Focus Groups, which were transcribed and the findings used to inform the development of this Agreement. We will look to include Focus Groups again for this purpose in 2016, to ensure we are combining quantitative and qualitative feedback from students.

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

3.1 Keele proposes to charge a flat fee of **£9,000** for all home/EU students to all new entrants in 2016/17. We estimate a student intake in 2016/17 of 1,685 at this fee level. We will apply annually the permitted rise set out by the Government to maintain the fee level in real terms and advise students that their fee will rise in line with any permitted increases in the regulated fee.

## **4 Investment and Allocation**

4.1 Keele University has a history of performing up to and beyond its HESA benchmarks and has a strong reputation in outreach. The nature of the institution (pre-92, campus based, with full-time course dominance) means that a lower proportion of students from WP target groups study at Keele than is the sector average.

4.2 It is this analysis of the University's position within the sector, which has led to the identification of circa **24%** additional fee income to be invested in the work outlined in this

Access Agreement and for this funding to be split in 2016/17 as follows:

<b>Financial Support</b>	<b>Access</b>	<b>Student Success</b>	<b>Progression</b>
<b>48%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>17.5%</b>	<b>9.9%</b>

4.3 These additional tuition fee funds mean that we can continue to improve our strong record in outreach Widening Participation activity, whilst engaging in better-targeted retention and student success work.

## **5 Student Financial Support**

5.1 Keele University recognises the importance of providing targeted financial support to students in situations where it adds value to their experience at university, reduces debt, supports retention and limits the concerns associated with financial insecurity such as anxiety and stress.

5.2 As part of broad work around measuring impact we have initiated a blended evaluation approach. This is providing us with greater awareness insight and understanding of our student's experiences of money at all stage of the student lifecycle which in turn is enabling us to respond effectively and confidently put in place future provision with the confidence that it will have impact and be meaningful for Keele students. Research in the form of surveys and campaign activity across the University during the 14/15 Academic Year has provided us with valuable local context with regard to money and its impact upon the student experience.

5.3 In line with recent developments in the sector, we are considering more effective means of delivering financial support packages to students.

5.4 These proposals are based on an estimated 2016/17 expenditure of £1,663,300 on direct financial support for all qualifying students.

5.5 The University has developed a financial proposal of bursaries, scholarships and other targeted financial support as follows:

### **5a) Keele University Bursary**

We want to ensure that students with the lowest household incomes have access to additional financial support. We have continued to award a £1,000 Keele University Bursary per year to all English students who are liable to pay the full tuition fees, have a gross annual household income below £25,000 and who are eligible to receive a maximum maintenance grant or Special Support Grant from Student Finance England in 2015. This will be continued in 2016/17 and the university is exploring how a proportion of this award could be ring-fenced to better enable students to balance the competing financial demands that come with studying a degree. This will for instance, put control in the hands of our students in terms of where and how they choose to spend their money as part of a wider cashless payment project at the University.

**Estimated Cost** £1,285,500 (c. £405,000 total estimated spend on new students)

### **5b) Keele Study Abroad Bursary**

As part of our commitment to providing an international opportunity as part of our curriculum, we provide additional bursary support for students from our target groups assist them with the additional costs associated with studying abroad as part of one of our exchange schemes. Students from targeted groups can apply for a £1,000 Study Abroad Bursary.

**Estimated cost:** £20,000 for one year.

### **5c) Sandwich Year Courses**

The sandwich year fee is capped at £1800. This applies to only a small number of students on BSc Human Biology, BSc Neuroscience and BSc Biochemistry.

### **5d) Care Leavers Bursary**

Keele offers a progressive Care Leavers Bursary from £1,000 to £2,000 in the 3rd year for students who have been in care for at least six months consecutively over the age of 14 and in care on their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. In 2013/14 13 students received the care leavers' bursary and this number increased to 19 in 2014/15. Based on the increased number of care leavers coming to the University we hope to be able to sustain this increase in 2016/17 by continuing our pro-active work and engagement with this student group.

**Estimated Cost 16/17** £37,500

#### **Exclusions and Additional Conditions:**

- The financial support in this Access Agreement applies to new entrants to Keele in 2016 that are eligible for student financial support and student loans via Student Finance England.
- Students normally resident (i.e. domiciled) in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland will not be eligible for Keele bursaries and scholarships, since students domiciled in these countries are subject to funding arrangements which are likely to exclude them from having to find the full tuition fee.
- It is also proposed that we restrict bursaries to students in receipt of English student support.
- Foundation Year students will receive any support for which they qualify for the full 4 year duration of their course.
- Access to these student support packages are subject to successful progression, which in the case of students who repeat years will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- We may apply fee increases in line with the amount set by the Government each year.

### **5e) Keele Excellence Scholarships**

Keele awards Excellence Scholarships to students who attain excellent grades in their pre-entry qualifications. If eligible, students can receive both a Keele University Bursary of £1,500 and an Excellence Scholarship of up to £2,000 a year for each year of undergraduate study at Keele. The Scholarships are rewarded based on qualifications only, and a number of these will be awarded to students from a low income or low participation background. We include qualifications such as the BTEC Access to Higher Education Diploma, and other Level 3 BTEC and OCR awards.

## **5f) Keele Travel Fund**

In 2014/15 Keele established a travel fund to support applicants from lower income backgrounds in attending recruitment events and current students with unexpected/high travel costs that are part of their course. This was funded using carried-forward NSP underspend in the 2014/15 academic year as a pilot project. This fund has received excellent student feedback from those who have benefited from it. We are committed to continuing to support students throughout their lifecycle with travel related expenses, where possible and are planning to support pre-entry travel with this aim.

## **5g) Keele Hardship Fund**

Following the decision to disband the Government's ring fenced Access to Learning Fund allocation, the University has committed to maintaining a fund to support students experiencing financial hardship. This fund will enable greater flexibility than in previous years and include significant provision to disabled and international students. This will be funded from within student success expenditure and will be a variable sum which will be based on assessment of demand.

### **Evaluation of Financial Support:**

5.6 It is recognised that the University is investing heavily in financial support. A research project is ongoing to understand the impact of bursaries and scholarships on access, student retention, success and progression. We do not as yet have longitudinal data relating to the impact on progression as we are only two complete years into the scheme but this is something that will be evaluated when the data is available in autumn 2015.

5.7 Over the past year we have surveyed Keele applicants to better understand their feelings about financial support and its importance to them in accessing Higher Education. We have also included survey questions in the decliners' survey relating to the bursaries and scholarships offered by Keele and therefore have information we can use in planning for future years.

## **6) The Provision of Financial Information**

6.1 We recognise the importance of providing students, their supporters and other key stakeholders with relevant information, advice and guidance on tuition fees and the financial support available from Student Finance England and Keele University. We are striving to ensure that information is transparent, informative and readily accessible at appropriate points, in order that students are able to make informed, timely decisions in regard to their future destination of choice for Higher Education.

6.2 A new Money Advice and Guidance team was established within Student Services in 2014, to focus on proactive financial support, advice and money education. The service aims to increase engagement with students in relation to finance and funding. The team have collaborated with Keele Students' Union to deliver an increased range of events to engage with students. A money education mailing list has been set up to share money advice and saving tips with students and increase student engagement by promoting events. Innovative use of digital media and engaging student campaigns have also helped to raise the profile of this service and what it offers to Keele students.

6.3 Information relating to the financial support provided by the University is provided generally through the University's website and is highlighted to all prospective students during key

engagement activities such as campus visits, Pre-arrival events, Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) sessions in schools/colleges, direct mailing to enquirers and within the prospectus. Detailed information is made available in hard copy and electronic format for all applicants who receive an offer of a place.

- 6.4 The University has continued to maintain the enhanced information on its website in relation to course costs. A new webpage has been developed which includes clear details about additional costs per course, such as field trips or travel to placements. In addition, costs related to printing/photocopying and binding and costs for graduation are clearly outlined.
- 6.5 In order to ensure that prospective students from all backgrounds are confident and well-informed about the costs of Higher Education and the financial support available, we offer a range of resources including booklets, trained 'Finance Specialist' Student Ambassadors, and talks on Open and Visit Days. Sessions are also provided to learners, carers and advisers in school and college settings. In 2014 we also developed a Mature Students booklet and in partnership with Bet365 a local students leaflet which includes information on Bursaries.
- 6.6 In addition, the University has developed SAM (Student Advisory Model), accessible via [www.ask-sam.ac.uk](http://www.ask-sam.ac.uk) providing financial (and other) information for all students studying in England or applying to University (see section 9.35).
- 6.7 For the 2014/15 Academic Year we were able to use NSP underspend for three time-limited roles to enhance our support in relation to student financial information, advice and guidance, sitting within Outreach and Student Support to focus on the provision of one to one money guidance and support to under-represented groups. Despite not being able to fund a continuation of these posts, a number of activities and resources were developed, and these will be integrated into our mainstream outreach provision wherever possible; for example, finance activities that were developed will now be available to schools/colleges as part of our KLASS/eKLASS project. These will be added at the end of the academic year to ensure that a legacy is left from the NSP funded role.

## **7 Outreach and Access**

- 7.1 As identified in our earlier Access Agreements, Keele University is committed to raising aspirations and awareness amongst all potential student cohorts currently under-represented in Higher Education, to enable them to make informed and effective decisions regarding their further educational and career choices. Given the proven value of the current outreach and access work being undertaken this Access Agreement outlines our plans to further develop and strengthen the current offer in line with recommendations made by the recently published Strategy for Access and Student Success (April 2014) and the OFFA strategic plan 15-20 (March 2015). Keele's strategic plan for 2015-2020 and its marketing and communications operating plan, within which outreach and recruitment activities sit, prioritise the equality of educational opportunities, working collaboratively with key partners to this aim to provide a highly supportive environment for students from all backgrounds throughout the student life-cycle and base developments on evidence-based impact.
- 7.2 As indicated in the Introduction, Keele generally performs well in the HESA Performance Indicators on Widening Participation compared to its benchmarks, and has therefore set challenging targets as shown in Table 7 of the Resource Plan (Targets and Milestones). We have found, however, that in the rapidly changing Higher Education environment these targets have



become more difficult to achieve. We are, therefore, keeping them under regular review and will use an evidence-based approach to adjust or expand our outreach and access activities where review demonstrates that to be necessary.

- 7.3 The University has developed a ladder of engagement (Appendix A) which summarises our existing outreach schemes targeted at different groups including learners, parents/guardians and teachers/advisers.
- 7.4 Outreach work is strategically embedded across the University. Academic schools and faculties are supported by the central outreach team in the delivery of subject-specific outreach and, where appropriate, WP targeting. In 2014/15 OFFA-accountable funds have been made available to support targeted activity within academic schools, with additional investment in staffing planned over a two-year period to further develop outreach work aimed at Widening Participation. Each Faculty now has an individual outreach strategy and developed activities, which they can bid for money from the central outreach team in order that these activities be realised. This has proved extremely effective in engaging a broader base of outreach activity to deliver to our target schools.
- 7.5 The Faculty of Health has a full time Faculty Outreach and Schools Liaison Administrator, who work to coordinate all Health School teams' activity and liaise with the central Outreach team, to support the Faculty's Outreach and Widening Participation Strategy. This has greatly enhanced the Faculty's outreach activity. The Faculty hosts a range of Summer Schools and taster days throughout the year and liaises with a wide range of Schools and Colleges and NHS providers.

#### **7a) Targeting of Outreach Activity**

- 7.6 Keele University aims to ensure that where resources are identified specifically to deliver Widening Participation activity, this activity is focused and meets, as a minimum, HEFCE targeting guidelines. Keele University intends to maximize the impact of Widening Participation activity by focusing resources on a target group of learners with the potential to benefit from Higher Education and who come from under-represented groups. We shall ensure best use of finite resources by more effective targeting of potential WP applicants for example Access to HE Learner Conference, Family Fun Day for lone parents and Care Leaver events.
- 7.7 We have recently established a travel fund to support students from WP cohorts in travelling to and from events and activities held at Keele, as we have recognised that, in previous years, travel costs have been a barrier to participation. Depending on the success of this scheme, we plan to continue with this approach in 2015/16.
- 7.8 Intensive learner activities, such as our residential Summer Schools, continue to be directly targeted at students from WP groups – which Keele has suggested for 2015/16 as:
- **Young students from low socio-economic groups**
  - **From a low income/low participation neighbourhood**
  - **Eligible for free school meals**
  - **Looked after children or a recent care leaver**
  - **SEN status/disability**
  - **Access to HE and mature learners (over 21)**
  - **Home educated**
  - **Travelling community member**
  - **Political refugee**
  - **Students who receive the pupil premium**
  - **Learners from deprived or low participation postcode areas (POLAR3 and IMD)**

- **Disabled students**
- **Minority ethnic students**
- **Mature students**
- **Young carers**
- **Student parents**

7.9 We also offer, where appropriate, activity aimed at apprentices and work based learners and students with non-traditional, qualifications. We have initiated progression agreements with local colleges, with one signed and three other being targeted at the time of this agreement being submitted. These agreements outline the various routes students will be eligible for from the courses and non-traditional qualifications available at each FE College.

7.10 We have also worked closely with organisations that work directly with young people from underrepresented groups, including Virtual Schools for looked after children, and Local Carer's Associations to target young carers. We have arranged specific activities for looked after children including the White Water Writers literacy project (<http://whitewaterwriters.com>) which allows a group of 10 young people to write and publish their own novel within five days, facilitated by university students. In 2013/14 we worked in collaboration with Shaftesbury Young People at Stoke to run this project with a group of looked after children and have already scheduled the project to run again in 2015/16. We aim to continue working with the White Water Writers Project and Shaftesbury Young People at Stoke to continue providing this high impact outreach project which not only raises the young peoples' aspirations and self-esteem but also builds their academic skills in writing. For 2016/17 we will continue to build on these relationships and targeted activities and evaluate their impact.

7.11 In November 2014 Keele Outreach held its first Mature Student campus event, and all who participated found it useful and insightful as to what University is really like. Access course leaders have told us they are eager to implement an activity such as this into their scheme of work, and so we have decided to target one of our annual conferences at local Access to HE learners, instead of them all being aimed at KS3 learners. Following feedback we have scheduled this for September 2015 (in order to be able to include Personal Statement workshops) and we currently plan for this to be an annual activity.

7.12 A ranking exercise is undertaken every two years to prioritise schools and colleges which have high 'WP' scores, calculated by looking at data relating to socio-economic backgrounds; The Data utilised includes POLAR 3 (low participation areas), Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility, partner performance (National Qualifications Framework Level 2 and 3 results), and information on targeted postcode areas defined as 'deprived' (IMD). The Recruitment, Outreach and Access team currently works with a targeted list of 48 Sixth Form Centres and Further Education Colleges and 34 Secondary Schools. Primary Schools are also a key priority and all primary schools in the local area that have a proportion of pupils eligible for FSM above the national average are seen as a key priority. In 2014/15, so far, the Recruitment, Outreach and Access team have worked with over 30 primary schools.

7.13 Data continues to be collected on participants for all outreach activity. This is used to monitor whether the aim of not less than 70% of participants being from a WP background is met and will be used to evaluate the appropriateness of our targeting. The new targeted way of working has proven highly effective since its launch and during the 2013/14 academic year has improved the percentage of WP learners accessing our outreach schemes. For campus-based events in 2012/13, the percentage of learners who, through postcode analysis, counted as WP cohort was 45%. For 2013/14, to date, this percentage has increased to 58.3%. While this figure

still falls below our target of 70% this figure has been lowered due to a few identifiable factors (for example, one school bringing learners from a partner school who are not a target institution). Our Evaluation Strategy has been developed for 2014/15 to measure the effectiveness and impact of activities and we have developed this strategy further for 2015/16 by including a pilot Quality Monitoring project. This project allows us a more in-depth analysis across all of our outreach activity with regards impact, efficiency and effectiveness. For the 'Level 1 – low impact' activities we offer, we are also evaluating whether using the school postcode as the WP indicator, rather than the postcode of every learner on these events, would allow for more time and resource to focus on the delivery and effective targeting on Level 2 and 3 'high impact' activities.

## **7b) Outreach into Schools**

- 7.14 Current undergraduate students are trained to deliver the Keele Ambassadors in Schools Scheme (KLASS). Ambassadors deliver these sessions in the classroom environment. Under this programme, schools can select, free of charge, the sessions that they feel are most in line with the needs of their students. They make their selection from a menu of age-specific sessions (provided for Key Stages 2 to 5) covering topics across finance, careers, courses at HE, post-16 options and general introduction to HE.
- 7.15 We also have developed a range of eKLASS materials, which are available to all schools digitally and act as lesson plans to assist teachers/tutors/advisers to deliver quality IAG sessions to all age groups.
- 7.16 During 2014/15 all KLASS and eKLASS materials were revised, with plans to continue this development into 2016-17. Full lesson plans and support materials are now available for these sessions through our website and so can be used by non-target schools. The KS2 sessions have been shared with our 'Explore University' HEI partners for use with partner schools across the scheme. As an activity with proven success, as well as providing current students with opportunities to gain experience and develop graduate attributes, this form of in-reach to schools will be retained.
- 7.17 Over the last year we have continued to provide University representatives, including staff, students and parent ambassadors at school and college events including Parents, Careers and Options Evening, an activity that has seen us attend more than 60 events in 2014/15 so far. Given the high demand for these activities, and our increased focus on working with advisers and the provision of personalised Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) in schools, we are developing resources for use at these events. We are also reviewing who attends events at 'high priority' partner schools and colleges and will endeavour to provide a member of staff rather than student ambassadors to attend these events.
- 7.18 We have continued to develop our Governors' Network, to support Keele employees who represent the University on school governing bodies. Keele currently has a network of around 30 school governors, and has plans to further develop this area of work in the coming years. We are keen to match Keele staff skills with those required by particular school governing bodies and also to use curriculum links to support schools in which there are challenges with a particular area of study. On the 27<sup>th</sup> April 2015 we are set to drive a new launch for this activity, with SGOSS involvement and staff guidelines developed.

7.19 In the Spring of 2015, Keele Outreach delivered a pilot 20-hour parental engagement project, funded by Staffordshire Country Council Community Learning Trust, based on family learning principles involving parents, children and staff from a local primary school. This project had two main aims: to raise aspirations of parents promoting self-improvement and enabling ambition for further study as well as encouraging parents to help raise the attainment of their young children and to inspire them onto an educational pathway leading to further and higher education. Based on findings and recommendations following a longitudinal evaluation of the pilot, the intention is to further develop the project as one of our outreach programmes to other primary schools in disadvantaged areas.

7.20 We are also exploring further development of specifically targeted activities for under-represented groups, for example our Squirrel Project with young carers and a Family Fun Day with lone parents and mature learners.

### **7c) Outreach Partnership Working**

7.21 We continue to work collaboratively with partners both internally and externally including Keele SU, the Keele Science Learning Centre as well as our geographical partners including Staffordshire University, our local FE colleges and partner schools.

7.22 In 2013/14 we expanded our work with the primary age group, through the launch of 'Explore University' (formerly called the 'Primary to Higher Education' or 'P2HE' scheme) in collaboration with Staffordshire University, the University of Wolverhampton and Harper Adams University. The project is targeted at eight primary schools within the region that have high percentage of pupils in receipt of free school meals. The offer includes events for Year 5 and 6 learners to raise aspirations and develop an awareness of university at this young age. The intention in 2015/16 and onwards is to continue to develop this project and track the learners throughout their educational journey through offering projects at relevant stages.

7.23 In addition Keele is working with other HEIs to deliver events for young people from the Cheshire, Warrington, Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Stoke areas. The HEIs in this partnership (Keele University, Staffordshire University, University of Chester, University of Derby, Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU), Reaseheath College and Somerville College, Oxford) work collaboratively to offer jointly organised and delivered campus visits to target schools across the region as well as targeted events for young people in Care. Events are jointly evaluated and are an integral part of the individual university's outreach programme for schools in the region. In addition to the learner-focused events, this group is valuable for sharing good practice.

7.24 In 2014 we were confirmed as the lead institution for our NNCO, Higher Horizons, as well as continued to work with the Explore University NNCO. We have appointed a single point of contact role (SPoC) and are exploring how to most effectively measure the impact of the network and its activities, both quantitatively and qualitatively and set up a web presence to help schools navigate the range of activities available to them. We hope to support the development of the partnership to ensure effective, collaborative support, avoiding duplication and maximising impact. We aspire to continuing this partnership and supporting roles, post-HEFCE funding by exploring how else they could be supported within the network.

## **7d) Mentoring**

7.25 In 2016/17 we will continue to build on a culture of mentoring developed over a number of years and provide opportunities for learners and University students to engage in mentoring relationships. We currently have 155 active relationships and are on target to meet the target of 200 set for the 2014/15 academic year.

7.26 Although our eMentoring platform will continue for the 2014-15 Academic Year, the mentoring through ambassadors face to face with groups of young people is proving popular and impactful for mentees. Ambassadors are matched with schools and are mentoring groups face to face over the whole academic year. We are therefore exploring how an alternative range of online interventions, such as webinars and virtual sessions, could replace the eMentoring offer for all schools, including non-target schools and offer a broader range of support throughout the student journey. We are also piloting homework clubs using Student Ambassadors.

7.27 Learners in Year 13 who apply to Keele and meet/accept their offer will be given the opportunity to take part in the University's centrally managed Peer Mentoring programme. This will involve them being matched to a Keele student mentor who will provide support during their transition to Higher Education.

7.28 In 2014/15 the Keele Mentors programme supported approx. 950 mentees in their transition to Keele University through the recruitment of around 600 of our current students to act as Keele Mentors. The scheme aims to provide support through pre-arrival communication as well as face to face contact and ongoing support. The scheme is currently accessible to all incoming Undergraduate and Postgraduate Research Students but will be expanded to offer peer support to Postgraduate Taught students for the 2016/17 academic year. In 2015/16 we also directly targeted the Keele Mentors scheme at Leave of Absence returners to support returning students with their transition back into university as well as actively promoting the scheme to students from particular groups such as care leavers, off campus students and mature students. Following on from the success of this initiative we will continue to target these groups to offer this additional support in 2016/17. Feedback has been sought via a range of methods and has focussed upon the impact of mentoring for both those requesting a mentor and current students acting as Mentors. Feedback from mentees indicates that the security of having a mentor was a significant factor in them settling in effectively to life at Keele. The experience for mentors was perhaps more striking with many mentors expressing that the role has had a profound impact upon them with regard to increasing their confidence as well as engagement within wider university life.

## **7e) Campus Events**

7.29 Feedback and qualitative impact evaluation has indicated that campus experiences are the most highly valued service for schools and colleges. We will, therefore, continue to offer opportunities for learners to engage in campus-based experiences. These fall into five broad categories:

- **Cross-curriculum support**
- **Generic aspiration raising**
- **Subject-specific academic taster sessions**
- **Residential events and summer schools (see section 7f)**
- **Targeted events – BTEC/ACCESS/Care Leaver**

- 7.30 It is intended that a core package of free campus based experiences, such as Learner Conferences and Academic Taster Sessions, will continue to be offered to target schools and colleges and be developed annually based on partner needs.
- 7.31 Advice from our Education team has been sought in the development of our Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3/4 events to ensure that the planned offer for schools supports the National Curriculum.
- 7.32 Keele recognises the national need for aspiration and attainment-raising in specific areas, such as Medicine. The University established a 'Medpath' scheme in 2012/13, which has seen medical students working closely with the Skills Academy at the Royal Stoke University Hospital, part of the University Hospital of North Midlands NHS Trust to deliver Widening Participation activities to local school children interested in Medicine as a career. This project continues to develop and a similar project has been set up in the School of Pharmacy.
- 7.33 Existing access activity will continue to focus on aspiration raising and attainment, such as internal and external events including careers advisor talks, summer schools, mentoring, providing insight into healthcare careers and providing work experience. The Faculty Outreach team work closely with a range of external organisations including local NHS providers, schools and colleges, and other key education and health partners. The Faculty Outreach team hosts Careers Adviser seminars, and a range of taster days and Summer Schools which give IAG to pupils, teachers and careers advisers on the Faculty's main undergraduate programmes in Medicine, Pharmacy, Physiotherapy, Nursing, and Midwifery. Additionally, each year the University holds a Medical Careers Information Day entitled "So you want to be a doctor", whereby school children can gain an insight into studying Medicine. The Medical Careers Day attracts over 250 school pupils, aged between 14 and 17, from over 40 schools all over the UK.
- 7.34 The University continues to develop its programme of outreach in STEM subjects, and has a strong track record of activity delivered in this area. In 2011, we were nominated for a prestigious T.H.E. Award for our innovative Science and Engineering Mentoring project and plan to further build on our work in this area in 2015/16, with on-campus engagement activity based around the Keele Earth and Space Observatory, the Sustainability Hub and the Keele Science Learning Centre.

#### **7f) Residential Experiences and Summer Schools**

- 7.35 It is noted that the Summer School programme previously delivered by Aimhigher was highly effective and a successful evidence-informed and supported intervention. In addition, research published by the Sutton Trust in 2012 found that summer school attendees were more likely to engage with the university application process overall: 93% ended up applying to – and 84% registering at – university, compared to 88% and 68% respectively of unsuccessful applicants to the programme.
- 7.36 The University's 'Unifest' 2-night residential experience, introduced in 2012, continues to be a popular and high-impact engagement activity. In 2014 it attracted 91 Year 10/11 students (100% WP) from 9 schools across the North West of England, the Midlands and Wales. This intensive programme has a very positive effect on aspiration. After the event 64% stated that the event had broken down all fears that they had about university, with 87% stating that Unifest had encouraged them to apply to come to university. For Unifest 2015 applications are high (currently at 174) and we are hopeful to have another 100% WP cohort. We are also

working alongside colleagues in Psychology at Keele to more rigorously evaluate the project.

7.37 The University expanded its programme of residential activities in 2014, replacing what was its Compact Scheme 'Access to Keele' ('A2K'), with a summer residential called 'Uniskills' aimed at Key Stage 5 (Year 12) WP learners, supporting them in developing realistic expectations about the move from school/college to university, and also to train them in the skills necessary to make a smooth transition into Higher Education. The first event attracted 89 Year 12 students (88% WP) from 19 schools across the North West of England, the Midlands and Wales (2 learners were in, or had previously been in care of the Local Authority). This intensive programme had a very positive effect on learners: 45% stated that the event had broken down all fears they had about university, and 82.2% stated that they now knew enough to apply to come to university. For Uniskills 2015 applications are also high (currently at 130) and we are hopeful to meet our WP target of 70% or over.

7.38 Staff and students from our School of Psychology are developing the evaluation tools used for our residential activity. We put pre- and post-attitudinal surveys in place for 2014 but also further expanded the evaluation methods used to include an analysis of the Facebook group, Facebook polls and an interactive video booth. Data captured through these studies, along with the comprehensive literature review that took place 2014/15 has support us in the development of our residential programme for 2015/16. Learner details are captured for these activities and will be built into tracking.

#### **7g) Access to Medicine**

7.39 In 2014/15 the medical school took over responsibility for running the Access to Medicine course. It has been re-launched under the name of Steps to Medicine.

7.39.1 The aims of the course are to:

- **Identify from our catchment area, students with the potential to succeed in medicine from a WP background**
- **To increase the students' chances of success through e-mentoring and an application skills day**
- **To prioritise interviews and adjust grades in order to provide a level playing field when competing against applicants from selective and fee paying schools.**
- **To ensure prior to application that students understand medicine as a career and the rigours of the course**

7.39.2 The content of the course will include:

- **E-mentoring provided by an existing medical student**
- **A day learning how to deal with the application process and the interviews**
- **A day attending the Medicine Careers Day (Free of charge)**
- **An PBL event followed by the writing of a magazine style article**
- **A meet the professionals' day at the Skills Academy UHNS.**

7.39.3 In order to be prioritised for interview the students will need to remain in contact with the e-mentor and attend at least 3 out of 4 events and complete the magazine style article. Our widening participation initiative (Medpath) is student led. Medpath students are heavily involved in helping to run Steps and they are also actively seeking to recruit next years' participants when raising aspirations in schools. Currently there are 15 students on the course, which has so far been well attended. The involvement of Medpath students on the study days and through e-mentoring has helped to maintain the interest and enthusiasm of the pupils on the course.

## **7h) Community Engagement**

- 7.40 The Community Legal Outreach Collaboration Keele (CLOCK) was launched by the Law School in 2012 to enable Keele students to provide vital help and support to disadvantaged communities through legal research, policy work and community legal education, while strengthening employability skills. The scheme includes a project called 'Clock-In', a collaborative commitment to develop community legal education projects to share in schools, colleges, university and wider communities and a variety of social and legal issues. To date, the programme has helped over 2000 cases, currently taking around 12 requests a week.
- 7.41 Keele launched its first ever Community Day in 2012. The event in 2013 attracted more than 1,500 visitors on campus and in 2014 this increased significantly to over 5,000. The event will run again in May 2015.
- 7.42 The Keele Observatory is open to the public on Tuesday evenings and Saturday afternoons. Visitors are able to use the telescope and engage with Keele Astrophysicists. During the BBC 2 Stargazing fortnight, the observatory ran a number of events, including hosting over 100 people during the eclipse.
- 7.43 The World War One Regional Group is a collaboration network that consists of Keele University, Staffordshire University, Stoke on Trent City Council & The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery. Its aims are to remember the local input and impact that the Great War had through a number of outreach activities based at the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery during the five centenary years of 2014, 15, 16, 17 & 18. Keele's Outreach & Geo-science teams were instrumental in creating a walk in trench at the Museum in 2014 to launch the project. Following funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund there is a re-launch on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> April that all Keele's Partner schools have been invited to attend, along with the local community. Input will see 12 activities delivered by Keele staff and Staffordshire University staff. [www.csistike.org.uk/the-event/](http://www.csistike.org.uk/the-event/). Frequent events and activities will follow thereafter, many of which are currently in the planning stage.

## **7j) Student Ambassador Scheme**

- 7.44 The Keele Student Ambassador scheme employs approximately 300 students, a third of which are from WP backgrounds themselves (IMD data), in a variety of paid and voluntary roles. Many of the University's Widening Participation activities, as outlined in this Agreement, involve using current Foundation Year, undergraduate or postgraduate student ambassadors as positive role models to raise the educational and career aspirations of learners from primary through to post-16. By recruiting across all faculties, courses, ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds, we ensure the Ambassadors reflect the diverse population of the University, as well as the pupils we work with in schools and colleges. An intense training programme for Ambassadors exists, which is re-visited on an annual basis, with continuous professional development and specialist role training opportunities available to them throughout the year. The scheme also allows Ambassadors to get involved in a range of challenging and rewarding projects, all of which help them develop transferable skills, gain valuable extra-curricular experience and enhance their CV; supporting their future careers. Opportunities include open days, school talks and workshops, Higher Education fairs, one-to-one support, careers fairs, residential events, subject specific academic taster sessions, administrative support, student panels, on campus events, study skills sessions, project work and research.



### **7k) Summary of Additional Planned Outreach Developments in 2016/17**

- Further development of collaborative working and outreach programmes, including the primary scheme in partnership with other regional HEIs, including the NNCO Keele are leading, Higher Horizons
- Further development of faculty outreach and Widening Participation strategies to support projects working with teachers and advisers
- Continued investment and development of enhanced evaluation plans and tracking, with additional resources to monitor effectiveness and impact of outreach activity across the whole student lifecycle
- Closer working between Outreach and Student Support teams to join up mentoring schemes to assist transition
- Following a review of pilot NSP-funding Finance projects, we plan to increase investment in resources aimed at raising awareness of student finance and providing accurate and timely Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) to target groups of under-represented students

## **8) Information for Prospective Students and Advisers**

- 8.1 We believe that providing high quality, timely and impartial Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) is of utmost importance and therefore in the spirit of the collaborations outlined above will continue working with Staffordshire University, in particular, to ensure that this is delivered coherently for local learners.
- 8.2 We recognise it is not only the learners who need support with Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) but influencers such as parents, carers and school practitioners too.
- 8.3 Keele University has a nationally recognised Parent Ambassadors scheme which recruits parents and carers who currently have children enrolled on HE courses or recent graduates, but have limited personal experience of HE themselves. This project was recently highly commended at the NEON Annual Awards 2015. These Ambassadors attend events, primarily in schools and colleges, where they will interact with other parents and carers who have concerns about their children progressing to Higher Education. They also continue to be engaged in campus-based activity (for example, open and visit days or arrivals days) and community-based activity. We will continue to develop this scheme, which has been grown by 4 ambassadors in 2014/15.
- 8.4 Certain activities have been created that involve teachers and offer them Continuing Professional Development, which supports them in providing quality IAG to learners. These include training events and conferences, the development of resources and a teacher/lecturer

mentoring scheme. In 2015/16 and 2016/17 we will build upon the work undertaken to date to enhance the subject networks and relationships between school and college staff and University specialists.

## **9) Retention, Success and Progression**

9.1 Keele University is proud of its record with regard to retention, success, student satisfaction and employability and routinely performs above its benchmarks. In 2014 the University was ranked joint 1<sup>st</sup> in the UK for overall student satisfaction (National Student Survey). The University, recognises, however that students can find the experience of Higher Education to be both daunting and challenging. As such, we are committed to ensuring that Keele students receive transparent and detailed information about support services and pertinent student issues in advance of, through transition and throughout their student lifecycle. Whilst new developments are included below, it is important to note the extensive range of existing support for success, retention and employability (Student Support Services, Advice and Support at Keele (ASK), Wellbeing Services, Library, Careers and Employability etc.), as well as local support provided by academic schools.

9.2 In recent years, the University has worked hard to create leading edge student services that provide support in a variety of ways, in order that students are better able to respond to the challenges they encounter whilst at University. Work relating to retention, success, student support and employability, forms a significant strand of the University's 2015-20 Strategic Plan and continues to be embedded within programmes and across the Institution, thus demonstrating the University's intention to ensure that all support initiatives and services, impact positively upon the experience of all Keele students.

9.3 Keele provides a comprehensive range of pre- registration IAG and support through its outreach and Open/Visit Day programmes. Following this, a comprehensive transitions support programme includes pre-arrival events which provide transition and social support for all students with specific targeting of mature, local, care leavers and disabled students. Feedback from Keele Students as part of our 2015/16 Student Consultation has indicated that some students do feel anxious about coming to University with 'money', 'workload' and 'making friends' being of most significant concern. These themes have been picked up and addressed through the pre-arrivals events, as well as our established Keele Mentors scheme which offers one on one pre-arrival peer support. Further online IAG is provided through both the Keele Welcome and Student Services web pages as well as through the SAM portal (see section 9.30-1 below). The University will continue to improve and build on its transitions support including dedicated web pages for targeted student groups, online resources, Welcome Guides and transition events. Upon arrival, students experience the Keele Welcome which incorporates a comprehensive social, academic and support programme all aimed at ensuring a smooth transition for incoming Keele students is achieved.

9.4 The University's Learning and Teaching Committee, ensures that the curriculum, assessment and learning and teaching styles are inclusive and take into consideration the diversity of our Keele student community. The University's Personal Tutoring system is designed to provide students with thorough academic support and guidance as well as more focused attention to specific student support needs. Work is undertaken across the University academic community to analyse data relating to the Student experience of underrepresented student groups through Curriculum Annual Review & Development (CARD) in order to consider how to improve student retention and success. The Distinctive Keele Curriculum ensures that students have the opportunity to engage in an embedded development programme, which aims to prepare

students for graduate life but also to enable them to better prepare for and navigate the many transitions they encounter throughout their student experience.

- 9.5 This work is complimented by support delivered through dedicated professional student services which include financial support, disability and dyslexia support, careers guidance, counselling and emotional wellbeing services and other information, support and guidance services.
- 9.6 The University continues to build on these high quality support services and in 2016/17 we will use Access Agreement funding to further develop and extend our provision to those students who are in need, but might not necessarily access support services when they experience difficulties that could ultimately lead to withdrawal or them not achieving their potential. Evidence from a wide range of staff who work with students at the University suggests that those from non-traditional backgrounds and young male students are least likely to seek help from the various support services or professionals. We will aim to provide such students with more and alternative opportunities to engage and present.
- 9.7 As such, for the 2014/15 academic year, the University recruited specific posts to focus upon the experiences of both Vulnerable Students (those not engaging with services) and Under-represented Students (including Care Leavers, Asylum Seekers, Black Minority ethnic Students, and Transgender etc.). The purpose of these roles was to act as a first point of contact to these student groups, but to also carry out research into the experiences of particular students groups, in order that effective support frameworks were developed for relevant services, and that more relevant and effective support was delivered. The posts worked across Outreach and Student Services Departments, connected with key stakeholders within and beyond the University in order to ensure that all areas that impact upon the student experience were consulted, that the interaction with students is better understood and that the student experience is accounted for within this work. This work has better enabled the University to understand the decisions and experiences had by particular students throughout their educational experience, from early years education through to post graduation. This has led to the improvement and development of support and IAG for specific targeted groups.

#### **9a) Supporting Care Leavers, Estranged Students and Asylum Seekers**

- 9.8 The University has worked hard to enhance the experience of Care Leavers and Estranged Students throughout the Student Lifecycle. Following on from the extension of our Buttle Quality Mark until September 2016, work has continued to ensure that we see an increase in students applying, being admitted, progressing through their Keele experience and finding Graduate Level employment. For the 2014/15 academic year we have seen the number of Care Leavers applying to Keele – increase from 100 to 125, and the number enrolled has risen for the second year in a row from 10 to 19. Whilst these appear to be small numbers they reflect the low levels of care leavers applying to University, whilst reflecting the work being undertaken in the University to ensure that barriers are removed and that the aspiration to attend University can become a reality.
- 9.9 We are also seeing an increased number of Looked after Children attending outreach events, increased contact with applicants, and increased contact with students upon arrival at Keele. Care leavers are offered opportunities to engage throughout the recruitment cycle with many engaging in funded bespoke visit days and taking advantage of application/interview advice from the University's Care Leaver contact. With the student's permission we are also liaising more closely with Local Authorities and Personal Advisers to ensure Care Leaver students and their support workers are receiving the correct information, advice and guidance and ensuring that

necessary support is in place prior to the students arrival at the University. We have also identified dedicated contacts with the Careers and Employability Service to provide specific careers advice and support with the aim to support care leaver students with planning their future post-graduation. This is an area of support which we aim to continue to develop in 2016/17.

9.10 The University is working in close partnership with the charity Article 26, which aims to help Asylum Seekers to access higher education. This is an area we are deeply committed to and as such we have identified a dedicated contact within the University to ensure that students receive the right support and opportunities and that we be able to continually improve our services to such students. Students from these groups are able to access specialist support on debt, finance, help with health costs, housing, and welfare benefits from Advice and Support at Keele (ASK). For the 2014/15 academic year the tuition fees for one Asylum Seeker have been waived for the length of their Undergraduate study. We plan to offer one further annual tuition fee waiver to a new undergraduate student from an Asylum Seeker background in 2015/16 and hope to be able to sustain this level of support in the future.

9.11 The University is currently working in collaboration with the organisation Stand Alone to develop a package of support for Estranged Students. In order to provide this support we have allocated a dedicated contact for these students within Student Support Services.

## **9b) Supporting Mature Students**

9.12 Mature students are a relatively small but important part of the student body. Following on from the success of the University's pre-arrival events for Mature Students, a comprehensive range of support has been introduced in the 2014/15 academic year and will be further developed into 2015/16 and beyond. A specific role created in the University to act as a main contact point for Mature Students, has enabled us to better understand the experiences our Mature Students face as well as recognise the gaps in their experience. Targeted mentoring for mature students has been created for 2014/15 and will continue into 2015/16 and beyond. Work has commenced with key stakeholders, in particular between the Students' Union as well as Support and Outreach teams to consider the delivery of more joined up working from pre-application through to post graduation. A close working relationship has been established with the Mature Student Representative as well as the Chair of the Mature Student Society. Greater care from an earlier point is intended to ensure that the specific nature of the Mature Students experience be made more transparent from an earlier point and that the continuation of support and activities throughout and in preparation for employment will improve retention and raise the satisfaction levels of this group of students. A Mature Student Guide to Keele has been created and has been shared with local colleges to allow the flow of information at an earlier point for those students considering attending Keele. Mature Students leaving work and entering HE are able to be supported with specialist advice on debt, finance, housing welfare benefits, and more from Advice and Support at Keele (ASK).

## **9c) Supporting Student Parents and Students with Caring Responsibilities**

9.13 Embedded within increased support for Mature Students is a commitment to increasing support services for student parents. Keele is fortunate to have an on-site state-of-the-art Day Nursery facility to provide child care for those with young families. During the 2014/15 academic year work has been ongoing to increase the opening hours of the Nursery to cater for students with late exams and agreements have been made to enable student parents and carers to sit exams at an earlier time, where possible, so as not to impact on their caring responsibilities.

- 9.14 During the 2014/15 academic year, focus groups were carried out with this student group to gain a better understanding of their needs and inform our practice. Research was carried out around student engagement with the Nursery to try and increase student numbers and as part of the 2015/16 Access Agreement we will be putting in place funding to subsidise day care and crèche provision.
- 9.15 Student parents are able to access specialist support with childcare costs, welfare benefits, debt, finance, housing welfare benefits from Advice and Support at Keele (ASK). Specific information, advice and guidance has been developed for student parents that has been embedded into our webpages in order to provide targeted support and increase engagement with this group. We have also incorporated a question into our pre-enrolment form for 2015/16 which will allow us to directly target support for student parents and identify student parents to obtain feedback. In 2014/15 we have introduced Family Fun Day events in order to further engage our student parents and their families with the University and to promote the support and facilities available for this group. Further development and evaluation of these events will continue to take place to measure the impact.
- 9.16 Throughout 2014-15 we have been working with external agencies such as local carers associations and the Carer's Trust in order to develop the support we provide for students with caring responsibilities. We have increased targeting of pre-entry outreach and information and advice to provide specific support for this group via dedicated webpages and a dedicated contact. For 2015/16 we will also be incorporating a question in our pre-enrolment form to help us to identify students with caring responsibilities and allow us to target and provide specific communication and support. We will seek to increase engagement with this group in order to ensure we are gauging the needs and requirements of our students to improve the support we provide.

#### **9d) Induction and Support through Transitions**

- 9.17 The transition from school, college or when returning to education can be particularly demanding for many students. Keele is committed to ensuring that students are supported through this process as well as through the many other transitions they encounter throughout their student experience. Extensive work has been undertaken across the University to ensure that communication provided throughout application, arrival and through our student's time at Keele is relevant, coordinated and complimentary.
- 9.18 The University's Induction Management Group has developed a Student Induction Strategy which makes explicit the aims of induction and aims to ensure that a seamless, relevant and joined up welcome experience for students is achieved. The strategy considers the impact of transition on all students, but ensures that there is particular focus upon the experience encountered by under-represented students.
- 9.19 As part of the Keele Welcome programme there is a range of events open to all students, in addition to targeted events for specific student groups including mature students, student parents, local and commuter students as well as a number of alcohol free events. These events provide opportunities for students to meet other students and help them in their transition into University.
- 9.20 A comprehensive programme which includes local trips, social events on campus and workshops i.e. employability and wellbeing has led to those involved developing positive long

term relationships and has ensured that these students stay connected with relevant support services in the University.

9.21 The students engaged have provided feedback via surveys and regular discussion groups, which has indicated a clear correlation between their engagement on the programme along with friendships developed, and their continuation and success within their degree programmes. As a consequence, further resource will be allocated to this project for the 2014/15 academic year to ensure that it continues to have a positive impact upon the experience of students with Asperger's Syndrome at Keele.

9.22 Students have indicated in both the University's Welcome Survey as well as the Access Agreement 2015/16 Student Consultation that they feel that it is necessary for work to be developed within University Residences as well as within the off-campus environment to ensure that opportunities better exist for students to develop communities and form lasting friendship groups. The University operates an established Residence Support Service which aims to provide peer support for students within their accommodation. In 2014/15 we piloted student led Halls Events and Activities teams in each Hall of Residence through which students volunteered to plan and organise a range of different halls based activities to help develop hall communities. Following evaluation, it is envisaged that in 2015/16, this scheme will be further developed into a Halls Council based system of peer support and engagement that will build on the Community feel in each hall of residence and allow students to engage with social activities, volunteering and sport. In addition, students will be empowered to engage with their student peers and to communicate their views and issues to the University through a series of regular Hall Operational Group meetings. These meetings will allow the Hall Council members to address their views to relevant departments, such as Accommodation and Security teams as well as the Student Support teams. This will be developed in conjunction with KeeleSU to ensure that there is a seamless connection between social activities within halls and social activities happening centrally.

9.23 For 2014/15 an integrated programme of IAG was delivered as part of a pre-arrival support week for all students but with specific sessions targeted for under-represented students. Feedback from students attending our pre-arrival events has suggested that whilst the specific focus of pre-arrival events for mature and local students is appreciated, that it would be of greater use for students to be able to 'pick and choose' from a suite of sessions and activities. As such, we will develop a programme which provides opportunities for students to meet and engage with those who have shared interests but also deliver a range of sessions focussed upon key issues impacting upon the student experiences, i.e. living with others, disability support, language of HE etc. Students with disabilities, receiving disability related welfare benefits, are able to get specialist benefits advice from Advice and Support at Keele (ASK).

#### **9e) Student Support and Wellbeing**

9.24 The welfare and wellbeing of our students is priority at Keele. We are committed to ensuring that we work proactively to address wellbeing issues before they become problematic whilst at the same time ensuring an effective response to students who are struggling with aspects of their life and/or who might be experiencing crisis.

9.25 The University values the impact that proactive, group based initiatives can have on students experiencing mental health problems; an issue that is often accompanied with embarrassment and shame. A sports related self-development project called 'It's a Goal' was piloted in the 2013/14 academic year. Due to the success of this project and impact upon the participants it

was embedded into the programme of support managed by the University's Counselling and Emotional Wellbeing Service. Delivered in partnership between North Staffordshire Combined Health Care, Stoke City Football Club and Keele, this is an example of an initiative which has a specific remit of engaging hard to reach groups, in this instance young men, a group who it is shown are at greater risk of attempting suicide and who are less likely than females to engage in traditional forms of support and therapy.

- 9.26 Keele takes the wellbeing of its students very seriously, reflected by significant changes introduced at the University to ensure that students are aware of and feel able to access support, and that the supporters of our students, i.e. Personal tutors, Parents etc., feel able to provide effective advice, support and referrals to professional wellbeing services.
- 9.27 This commitment is reflected in an increase in staffing provision within the University's Counselling and Emotional Wellbeing Service – an increase in Counselling staffing as well as Mental health Support and Health Promotion expertise will enable the University to both respond to students requiring support with a mental health problem but also work proactively to raise awareness of mental health problems, reduce the stigma so often associated with mental health and work with staff and students to improve aspects of University life that can lead to an increase in Mental health issues, such as examinations and key transition points i.e. holidays, graduation etc.
- 9.28 The University has invested in the training of eight members of staff to become Mental Health First Aid Instructors. Staff and students across the University will be trained to be able to provide support and help to others experiencing the early warning signs of a mental health problem. Training began in June 2014, implementation being during the academic year 2014/15 and beyond. Staff involved span the University Professional Services, Academic Community and the Students' Union. This collaborative approach to mental health support and campaigning follows on from the University and the Students' Unions signing of the Time to Change pledge in October 2013.
- 9.29 In order to ensure that work relating to Mental health, Student Crisis and the provision of effective support for vulnerable students, the University has recruited a Student Engagement Officer, whose overarching aim was to establish an institutional response strategy for students deemed to be vulnerable who have not engaged with any service or for whom existing support strategies have proved unsuccessful, but also to carry out research with the intention of developing a model of best practice, in order that such students do receive the most appropriate support possible. This role also works as part of the Critical Incident Support team, providing a key part in providing effective, professional and sensitive support to students who are experiencing crises. A key part of the role is also that of supporting the supporters of students, i.e academic colleagues, administrative staff, parents etc in order that an effective support plan can be actioned for students.
- 9.30 Keele Nightline is a confidential Listening and Information Service, available to all Keele Students, run by trained student volunteers. We operate between the hours of 9pm and 3am, every night during the semester, a time when few other services are available.

#### **9f) Peer Support**

- 9.31 As well as support services delivered by the University, we recognise that peer support is invaluable and that the vast majority of students' time will be spent either formally or more usually informally with other students. Being a campus-based University we recognise that

society and sporting activities form a valuable contribution to the student experience and student success. With 154 societies, KeeleSU has recently launched an award where societies can gain stripes for outstanding work in a particular area. There are five stripes based around community, inclusion, sustainability, development and partnership. The Inclusion stripe is gained by societies who have "Taken positive steps to increase membership and include as many members as possible." So far, four societies have attained their community accreditation and dozens are working towards achieving this stripe by the end of the 2014-15 academic year.

9.32 Keele SU has made specific efforts to include students that don't traditionally engage, without ignoring or neglecting their current membership or other student groups. These students include, but are not limited to, disabled, international, post graduate, parent or carer, mature, satellite, non-campus. The Community stripe is gained by "Taken active steps to make a positive impact in the community. This can be through involvement with activities and events at Keele University, but they will also have made an impact on the wider community by engaging with activities, campaigns and events at a local, national or international level. They may have engaged with community groups and have helped to promote Keele students as valued members of the community."

9.33 In the 2014/15 academic year KeeleSU will be looking to develop a similar initiative to be rolled out to sports clubs which will both recognise the existing work they do around student retention and success and further encourage more work within this area.

9.34 Keele is the only university to have a designated Volunteer Centre Branch within its Students' Union. During 2013/14 10,000 volunteer hours were undertaken by students. Street Team, a Student Led Service, achieved its community stripe in October 2014. The service assists students with getting home at night; supporting both the Keele Community and local community by ensuring the safety of those students they help. Street Team work with University Security and police services and have also assisted a number of other universities in the establishment of similar initiatives, such as York St John University, University of York, St Andrews University and Staffordshire University. There are a number of student led support services at Keele and we are committed to working with those services to ensure they are able to deliver the best service possible to students.

#### **9g) Support through Technology**

9.35 The University is engaged in an innovative and exciting project, which aims to provide relevant and effective information, advice and guidance throughout the student journey. SAM (or, Student Advisory Model) will deliver an effective online support service, by providing students with responses to questions asked with regard pertinent student issues such as Money Management and Student finance, Student Accommodation, IT, Student Transition and Welfare Support via a virtual student adviser in the form of a virtual avatar. The avatar SAM also directs students to relevant on-line support materials and other resources.

9.36 Students engaged in the development of the project have indicated the value that SAM will provide to students 24/7, particularly those who are not engaged with support services, or who feel unable to disclose particular issues or concerns, either in advance of arriving at University or when studying here at Keele. SAM was made available to all UK HE students in December 2013 and a version with bespoke Keele responses and resources has developed for the 2014-15 academic year. The Avatar will act as another member of Keele's support staff and being able to provide students with general support but also being able to support and assist students with various specific requests relating to the student experience, i.e. assisting with key processes such



as taking a period of leave, and referring and booking appointments for students at relevant services. All of which can be achieved anywhere with the service being accessible on all mobile devices.

## **9h) Employability**

- 9.37 We will continue to invest in student employability and build on existing good practice within the University and the sector to deliver an ambitious career development, employer engagement and enterprise support programme to ensure that timely, relevant and accessible provision is available across our student and graduate community.
- 9.38 Whilst we consistently perform well in measures of graduate employability, we are committed to offering unemployed and underemployed graduates a comprehensive package of support to ensure they have the skills and knowledge that employers seek in their graduate recruits. The Careers and Employability Team, working in partnership with the Employer Engagement Team, will build upon the success of its established programme of employability support and offered a range of new initiatives for graduates during 2014/15 which include an intensive three day training and development opportunity for this target group. These activities will include careers guidance, psychometric testing, and skills development and, where appropriate support to access graduate internships.
- 9.39 We work to help all students, including those from under- represented groups, develop their career potential and to achieve successful career outcomes and a Careers Adviser has been recruited with a specific remit to lead on supporting under-represented students. This role works in partnership with Student Support staff to extend support to discreet groups of students with additional needs. Work is now successfully embedded which offers support to students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) and Asperger's students by delivering targeted employability support. This involves the delivery of specific skills and careers focused group sessions, as well as one to one guidance enabling this group of students to successfully enter a challenging graduate job market.
- 9.40 Student work opportunities provide a valuable opportunity for students to develop employability skills and earn money towards their living costs. The University already provides many such opportunities for students (Student Ambassadors; Students' Union Job Shop, Roles in the Students' Union etc.). This is an important part of the skills development opportunities offered to all of our students (from which we anticipate that WP students will benefit on a proportionate basis).
- 9.41 Keele will continue to support the range of opportunities accredited by the HEAR (Higher Education Achievement Report) outside of students' academic studies that enhance employability. The Activities department in KeeleSU supports students to enhance their HEAR. The number of students volunteering and engaging in these activities continues to grow, however we are keen to further develop targeted approaches to ensure that we are actively engaging with WP students.
- 9.42 A particular area of focus is around the Students' Unions democratic structures and ensuring that they are accessible to WP students. ASK's membership of Advice UK is contingent on it having an Equal Opportunities policy. The Students' Union is currently undergoing a review of its structures with the hope of increasing participation and engagement, particularly amongst hard to reach students. The University are keen to work alongside the Students' Union to ensure that WP students are supported and well equipped to stand in, and participate in Students' Union elections and democracy.

9.43 The Activities department in KeeleSU ran the first ever Society and Sports training conference in September 2013. Accommodation costs were met for those attending who needed it. The conference ran again in September 2014 with 305 students attending.

**9i) Summary of Additional Planned Retention, Success and Progression Activity in 2016/17**

- As part of a broader work experience scheme contributing to the overall 'student offer', further develop and promote an expanded range of work experience, internship, mentoring, volunteering and employment options
- Promote the Student Ambassador, Volunteering, Keele Mentors schemes to WP students as a means for them to develop employability skills and also contribute pro-actively to the fair access agenda
- Develop our University-wide opportunities for skills development and articulation as part of the overall 'student offer', including Away Days delivered as part of the Distinctive Keele Curriculum. This will benefit WP students on a proportionate basis
- Co-ordinate, develop and better promote Student and Academic Support services available to support students' academic skills post-entry (e.g. In-Addition Math's Support and the Write Direction, Student Learning Service)
- Develop a comprehensive, transparent communications strategy to ensure that incoming Keele students be provided with information about a range of pertinent student issues, i.e. money, debt, homesickness
- Provide targeted one-to-one information and support for students at risk of dropping out at various transition points (e.g. those with Asperger's, autism, mental health problems, disabilities; and those who are care-leavers, estranged students, asylum seekers, mature students, student parents or students with caring responsibilities); one-to-one follow-up, support and online information to supplement initial induction; mentoring for disabled students; preventative measures such as advice on financial management; Disability workshops; stress management programmes; and targeted support for 'at risk' WP students identified through attendance monitoring
- Provide individual face-to-face financial advice and support to WP students
- Expand resources for provision of mental health advice, targeted particularly at those from under-represented groups
- Further develop the Halls Life project to promote student integration and involvement in Halls Communities, provide opportunities for students to be involved in a comprehensive and inclusive programme of social and sport activities. This will also provide opportunities for student engagement and participation through the creation of Halls Councils.
- Further develop and support student led initiatives such as Society Stripes
- Develop a comprehensive strategy to increase engagement of WP students in the co-curriculum (HEAR, societies, sport, volunteering, SU democracy)

## 10) Fair Access and Contextual Information

- 10.1 Keele University develops proactively its processes to support applications from and admission of the 'most able, least likely' students, ensuring that all students who have the potential to succeed in Higher Education have an equal and fair opportunity to do so.
- 10.2 Keele University has trialled the use of contextual data in a small number of traditionally highly selective recruiting programmes since 2012. Recently, a standardised report has been developed across all applications which draws through contextual data to ensure that at an individual applicant level data is presented in a routine manner and flags students on agreed University criteria as to how they can potentially be supported further in the application process. Data on this report includes: performance of the applicants school at GCSE and A level or equivalent, postcode data on low participation neighbourhoods and data that identifies whether the applicant has been looked after/in care (as indicated on the UCAS form). This process is delivered in a clear, transparent and fair way to meet the needs and requirements of students coming from disadvantaged WP backgrounds. Keele does not practice differential offer-making as a result of contextual data being considered.
- 10.3 In order to expand and explore further the use of contextual data in 2015/16 across the University, a further series of pilot activities will be co-ordinated for other selective courses. These pilot activities will draw on the work being carried out nationally by SPA (Supporting Professional Admissions), other institutional good practice and datasets provided by UCAS.
- 10.4 Keele University has offered a Foundation Year (FY) since its establishment in 1949, enabling students to study for their degree over four years. The current FY programmes focus on students who have taken inappropriate pre-university subjects for the degree they wish to study, or who enter Keele with non-traditional qualifications, or are from WP backgrounds.
- 10.5 Keele has in the past developed a number of Progression Agreements with local FE colleges. In 2014/15 we have already reviewed and renewed one agreement and are in the process of finalising a second with others planned for the coming months ahead of the 2015/16 academic year. These aim to ensure clarity around progression routes from non-A level qualifications.

## 11) Collaboration

- 11.1 In recent years, the University has established strategic partnerships to increase student access to its provision in the region. It has well-developed collaborative arrangements with a number of regional HEIs and FE colleges and sees partnership and collaboration as central to its mission. We will also seek opportunities to explore 'out of region' partnerships with both universities and post-16 providers that have a strategic fit with Keele's curriculum offer.
- 11.2 Our various partnerships have been designed to expand the range of provision across the region, and have led to the dissemination of good practice, shared project delivery and the encouragement of complementary provision.
- 11.3 As described in the above 'Outreach and Access' section (7), Keele University is working with other HEIs regionally to deliver outreach events. Events are jointly evaluated and are an integral part of the individual universities outreach programme for schools in the region.

11.4 The University is also an active member of organisations including HELOA, FACE and NEON; managers and practitioners from the Outreach and Student Support teams regularly attend conferences, training and workshop sessions to further knowledge and share good practice.

## 12) Monitoring and Evaluation

12.1 Consistent with our core strategic aims, we are committed to ensuring thorough and systematic analysis of all our activities to ensure they meet the expectations and needs of our stakeholder groups. All of our outreach activities will be both qualitatively and quantitatively evaluated against the expected outcomes. We will use this evidence based research to influence our future outreach activities and programmes.

12.2 As part of developments around our Widening Participation Strategic Assessment (WPSA), we developed our 2014/15 Evaluation Strategy. This proven and robust methodology will be adopted to evaluate and monitor progress against this Access Agreement based on the following core principles:

- **Monitoring and evaluation must be embedded in all activities from the outset**
- **Recognition of the role of monitoring and evaluation in shaping future strategy and progress as demonstrated by the process cycle**
- **Producing annual monitoring reports - that publish data showing the types, level and cost of interventions - is key to demonstrating progress against the strategic assessment and Access Agreement**
- **Ensuring Keele's policy developments are clearly evidence based, with the majority of activity being informed by analysis of existing practice, exploration of national research and institutional based research**
- **The University recognises the importance of effective and rigorous monitoring and evaluating of the existing and proposed work that is documented in this Access Agreement.**

12.3 It is also recognised that, in preparation for the effective monitoring of this Access Agreement, further investment relating to data capture and analysis needs to be prioritised to ensure the effectiveness of our activities against their stated aims. This will also be important in the dissemination of evidenced based good practice across the sector.

12.4 In 2013/14 we began working with staff and students from the School of Psychology to develop for a programme-wide evaluation process for our Outreach work, which was closely aligned to recently-published national guidance from HEFCE and OFFA. This work has been ongoing in 2014/15 and planned to continue through 2015/16 and beyond (see 7.38).

12.5 It is also recognised that working collaboratively with other institutions and sector practitioners enhances the evaluation process and we will continue to share publicly our findings of interventions that work. In particular however, a collaborative approach to evaluation will be sought explicitly for those projects being delivered in partnership through our Higher Horizons network.

12.6 An Outreach and Widening Participation Working Group was established in 2012/13 and has been heavily involved in the evaluation and development of this and subsequent Access Agreements.

12.7 Overall responsibility for the University Access Agreement rests with the University Executive Committee, with the development, delivery and monitoring of the Agreement's content being the executive responsibility of the Director of Marketing and Communications.

### **13) Equality and Diversity**

13.1 The University has undertaken a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) on this Access Agreement in line with the Keele EIA procedure. The EIA has been used to identify any possible barriers to participation in the Access Agreement, and explored opportunities to advance equality and foster good relations. The EIA will be reviewed and monitored on an on-going basis as part of the monitoring and review arrangements of the Access Agreement.

13.2 The University acknowledges the legislative context supporting how we improve access, retention and student success among people from 'under-represented' groups and works proactively to meet its duties under the Equality Act 2010 (the Act) and Public Sector Equality Duty. In 2014, the University reviewed the existing equality objectives and progress against the associated action plan. In line with the University's strategic planning, a new Equality & Diversity Strategy and action plan has been developed, and the final draft will be approved by the University in the spring. The new strategy includes overarching aims on inclusive and accessible campus and supporting students from all backgrounds. Recent activities have included events to highlight and promote International Women's Day, International Day for Disabled People, National Care Leavers' Week, LGBT History Month, Black History month and Holocaust Memorial Day.

13.3 Within the new Equality & Diversity Strategy there is a commitment to further develop collaborative approaches and join up the design and evaluation of our Equality and Widening Participation strategies. The process for the development of these strategies is currently being explored by the relevant staff at the University to ensure they are more closely aligned and specific targets/actions relating to improving access from under-represented groups (for example, females to science subjects) are jointly agreed. It is hoped that this particular piece of work will contribute towards strengthening the University's Athena SWAN Charter ambitions.

13.4 The University has in place robust procedures for assessing the impact of its policies on protected groups under the Act and has in place comprehensive arrangements for the management and completion of equality impact assessments (EIA), including the use of an online system and a package of training for relevant staff. The EIA process should help to identify both positive and negative outcomes and can help ascertain where outcomes can be prevented or justified within the permits of the law.

13.5 Equality and Diversity training is a compulsory element of the Student Ambassador training, there is a newly developed Ambassador role for the support of disabled students, and an Equality and Diversity statement is incorporated into Terms and Conditions of working with partner schools and colleges. Further planned developments include the introduction of Equality Impact Assessments for all outreach activity (<http://www.keele.ac.uk/eia/>).

13.6 Progress against all objectives is monitored annually by the University Equality and Diversity Sub Committee of Council, and published as part of the University's Annual Equality and Diversity Reports which can be found on the University's equality and diversity web pages. The Outreach Working Group has representation from Equality and Diversity staff, and the terms of reference have been amended to include an annual review of the 'Student Equality and Diversity Profile Report'.

Keele University  
April 2015

# Appendix A

