Access Agreement [2018/2019]

1. INTRODUCTION

1. Reaseheath College (RHC) is a specialist Land Based Further Education College delivering Higher Education (HE) in related disciplines. HE awards at RHC are validated by the University of Chester (UoC) and Harper Adams University (HAU). Since the first access agreement the College published in 2012/13, RHC has received direct funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) for students enrolled on programmes validated by Harper Adams University. Conversely, and in conjunction with these programmes, UoC submitted OFFA access agreements that included reference to students studying at RHC, but they have previously remained UoC numbers, franchised to RHC.

2. In September 2016, the College federated with the University of Chester in order to form a strategic alliance and was newly approved as the *University Centre Reaseheath* (UCR). This will allow the College to better utilise resources to co-deliver courses with areas of commonality between the two organisations and increase joint student numbers even further through strategic responses to joint bidding opportunities. This maturation of relationship with UoC now means that from the start of the academic year 2018/19, UoC will no longer be returning any new UCR students in their access agreement. RHC will return all new UCR students from this date (except for two BSc programmes of study, whereby the first year is studied solely at UCR, with the subsequent two years being delivered at UoC). It is predicted that this amendment to access arrangements will culminate in an additional 400 students being returned in our access agreement over a two year transition period from 2018/19.

3. UCR students currently returned in the UoC access agreement for 2017/18 (enrolling in September 2017) will be eligible for the UoC Bursary, the value of which is £1,500 per BSc student, and £1,000 per FdSc student, paid at £500 per year over the duration of their studies. UoC will continue to report on these students until the completion of their studies. Conversely, from 2018/19, all UCR students will be eligible for 'The Deal @ Reaseheath' (see section 5 *Financial Support*).

4. This access agreement will evaluate the College's performance to date and deliver clear messages about how we are seeking to develop priorities, expenditure and targets to demonstrate our commitment to making further progress, in a more expedited and timely fashion.

5. In framing this access agreement, UCR has given due care and consideration to the impact of these proposals on prospective students with protected requirements/attributes, including those of disability, minority ethnicity, age, gender, and to those from disadvantaged/low income backgrounds.

6. UCR is a well-respected, important part of the local community and economy. 58% of our Graduates move on to Graduate level work or postgraduate study after leaving us. Our

relationships with the industries we serve are a vital part of the curriculum design process and delivery of our degree programmes. Indeed, recognising the potential of our applicants has always been at the heart of our mission to recruit the most able students from the most diverse backgrounds.

7. We remain determined to achieve a more diverse student community, recognising the social, educational and cultural benefits this confers to the individual and institution. We acknowledge the barriers that persist for many and will continue to examine our admissions procedures, entry routes and curricula to ensure that those with the potential to succeed at the College can do so. We will do everything we can to make University Centre Reaseheath as attractive to those from underrepresented groups as it is to those from 'traditionally represented' backgrounds.

8. UCR has a strong track record of engaging with schools in the local community, both through the Schools Liaison team and the pre-16, key stage 4 team. There are currently 148 learners across year 10 & 11 on pre-16 courses at Reaseheath College.

9. UCR is a member of Higher Horizons, a collaborative network of eight Universities and Colleges that work together to engage and support schools with outreach activities to help broaden horizons of young learners into further and higher education. The network was formed as part of the National Networks for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO) Project and the network participants have continued with their work since funding ceased in December 2016.

10. The College developed its first access agreement in 2012/13. Subsequent revisions reflected a review of our student finance package, in light of the first year of operation, a comprehensive review of long term measurement of widening participation and changes to the government grant package. The new financial environment in 2014/15 necessitated a more fundamental review, the outcomes of which were reflected in our 2015 access agreement. Plans were further refined in response to significant environmental changes and our own plans for student number growth and outcomes were reflected in both our 2016 and 2017 agreements.

11. The climate in which the 2018-19 access agreement is written in is one of rapid change. The removal of student number control, demographic change and uncertainty regarding the outcomes of the Government's Higher Education Bill, create challenges in long term planning.

12. The 2018-19 access agreement continues the College's commitment to invest a greater proportion of additional fee income into outreach than in previous agreements and reduce the amount allocated to our funding package. Following consultation with the StAR Council (Student Academic Representatives) and the College's Student Association, there was an extension of the College's bursary from 2016-17 onwards such that it will reach all 'OFFA countable' groups. This will continue in 2018-19.

13. In terms of student success, we seek to offer all of our students an environment in which they can optimise their academic and personal potential and our collegiate structure supports the creation of cohesive student communities and promotes students' personal well-being and personal development. Our Learning and Teaching Strategy aims to develop students' intellectual skills, resilience, self-awareness and self-assurance as well as the ability to form networks which will help close the social gap for all of our graduates. Our non-continuation

rate following year of entry is 11.4%, which is on a par with the HESA benchmark and in relation to our comparators.

14. In terms of progression, the College HE Strategy is clear that '*we will give our students opportunities to gain experience that will prepare them better for employment or further study.*' This includes enhancing students' employability throughout their time at Reaseheath by engaging with development opportunities offered by departments, colleges and the Careers Service. We will also further develop opportunities for students to spend time studying abroad through our Experiential learning initiatives across curricula.

15. Within the College, responsibility for the Access Agreement is as follows (Table 1):

Table 1. Illustrated representation of responsibility for OFFA Access Agreement quality assurance processes

Body	Responsibility	Membership
HE Committee	Sign-off of OFFA Agreement prior to submission	HE Governor (Chair); Members of the College Governing Body; Members of the College Senior Management Team;
HE Senior Management Team	Preparation and submission of the OFFA Agreement; monitoring of progress towards target and coordination of OFFA-related activity across the institution	Assistant Principal/Dean of Higher Education (Chair); Members of the College Executive Team; cross-College representation from Student Association, Student Recruitment and Admissions, Student Support Services and Finance
HE Curriculum Group	Development and operation of mechanisms designed to enable effective targeting of outreach activity and measurement of impact in order to enable effective use of resources [Targeting, Tracking, Monitoring and Evaluation]	Assistant Principal/Dean of Higher Education (Chair); Members of the College Senior Management Team; cross-College representation from cross-College representation from curriculum areas; Student Association, Student Records and Data Officer; Learning Resources Managers; Higher Education Support Team and Finance

16. This access agreement outlines our strategic priorities for 2018-19. It takes a whole-institution approach across the student lifecycle. The document reflects on those interventions with greatest impact and explores the strategic rebalancing of spend to support access, student success and progression and demonstrates our commitment to long term outreach. We highlight the provision of support for mature and part time students, students with

disabilities as well as those accessing professional courses. We recognise the impact of multiple indicators of deprivation and are determined to develop a rigorous approach to assess and overcome the impact of such intersectional variables at every stage of the student life cycle.

2. FEES, STUDENT NUMBERS AND FEE INCOME

2.1 Fees

17. The total value of planned widening participation related expenditure for 2018-19 onwards is based on the assumption that the College will charge an annual tuition fee for new entrants of £9,250 (increasing annually in line with inflation where permitted) for all home fee status students on undergraduate programmes (Table 2). Our policy intention in future years will be to review our fee level vs. the fee cap as it is inflated (RPI-X) and set a new fee level up to and including that cap. The College reserves the right to increase fees each subsequent year by no more than the rate of inflation in line with government guidance and any cap on tuition fees applied by the government. This will be kept under review subject to the final outcomes of the Government's Higher Education Bill.

Table 2. Tuition Fees for 2018/2019

Course Type	Full Time	Part Time
BSc programmes	£9,250	£4,625
BSc Top up programmes	£7,650 (Internal) £9,250 (External)	£3,825 (Internal) £4,625 (External)
BSc Foundation (Year 0) programme	£8,250	£4,125
Foundation Degree programmes	£7,860	£3,930
FdSc Countryside Conservation and Recreation Management		£3,570
Professional Certificates		£3,930
Sandwich placement year	£1,230	

2.2 Student Numbers

18. Based on historical trends in student number data across the past three years, the College is estimating that the enrolled student demographic for 2018/19, will comprise the following:

a. 79% students are studying at a full-time intensity with a further 21% students studying part-time;

b. The population is made up of 32% male students and 68% female students, giving a male to female ration of around 1:3;

c. 46% identified as mature students, i.e. 21 years of age or over as at the 31st August 2016;

2.3 Fee Income

19. Students will not, for the duration of their course, be subject to any increase in the fee beyond that indicated in this access agreement. Students completing Foundation Degrees at Reaseheath College in July of 2018 who are progressing and continuing straight onto a BSc Top Up programmes within the institution will be charged the same tuition fee that they were for the Foundation Degree. First time entrants to Reaseheath on BSc Top Up programmes will be charged the full fee listed in the fee table.

20. Students who commence a HE programme in 2018/19 which includes a one year sandwich placement will normally undertake the sandwich placement in 2019/20. Students will be subject to a fee of £1,230 which reflects the reduced contact between student and lecturer in that year.

21. Tuition fees for home fee status students studying on a part time basis will be calculated on a pro rata basis, using the £9,250 fee as the full time equivalent rate. In practice, the maximum fee charged to any part time student as a result of this will be £4,625. If a student studies at a higher intensity than 50 per cent (the standard pattern), but below 75 per cent (and therefore not deemed to be part time) the maximum fee would not exceed £6,935.

22. It is anticipated that undergraduate tuition fees will generate an 'additional' income above the basic fee of approximately £792,848 in 2018-19.

3. ACCESS, STUDENT SUCCESS AND PROGRESSION MEASURES

23. In 2018-19, University Centre Reaseheath will invest approximately 32.1% of its additional fee income in additional access measures to include financial support for students from low-income backgrounds and a comprehensive programme of activities to support outreach, retention and progression of students from underrepresented groups.

24. University Centre Reaseheath is determined to invest additional fee income strategically in order to achieve maximum impact. We have taken an evidence-based approach, analysed current performance and prioritised interventions with a proven track record. As an institution with relatively low proportions of students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups we have focussed activity and investment on those areas in which we need to make progress against targets.

3.1 Expenditure

25. In order to fund the activity described below and make progress against our targets, the College plans to invest a total of £244, 804 in additional access measures in 2018/19, representing 32.1 per cent of total income from additional fees.

26. A high level summary of how this investment will be attributed in 2018/19 is provided in Table 3 below. The amounts quoted would rise annually with inflation if fee levels were to rise to reflect inflation.

Table 3. Outreach Investment attributed to academic year 2018/19.

Outreach Activities	Expenditure Forecast (£)
Student Access Expenditure forecasts	**£20, 088**
Student Success Expenditure forecasts	**£20, 916**
Student Progression Expenditure forecasts	**£50, 000**
Financial Support	**£153,800**
Total Reinvestment	**£244, 804**

3.2 Student Access

27. We strongly believe that a collective approach by HE, working with schools, colleges and the FE sector, is crucial particularly in raising aspirations among young people and in defining the signals which groups of institutions and the HE sector as a whole give about what might be possible.

28. Our focus on conversion from application to intake has also delivered significant success. In order to make progress against our widening participation progress measures, the College will continue to take a holistic and contextualised approach to admissions. In 2016/17, only 5% (15) applications were rejected, indicating that our entry tariff point system is inclusive, fair and transparent. It should be noted that we will reaffirm our commitment to contextualised admissions and are actively exploring how we can effect real change in the demography of our HE student body.

29. Students are recruited regionally (60% within a 50 mile radius), nationally (38.6%) and internationally (1.4% - due to the specialist nature of the programmes offered). The College plays a key role in promoting the attainment of higher-education qualifications within the local area. In 201/17, 25% of first year cohorts recruited onto HE programmes at the College derived from POLAR 1-2 geographic areas. 40% of HE students studying at the College are identified as mature students, i.e. over 21 years old with the gender ratio of the student population being 68% female and 32% male. The College's HE demographic for BME students is reflective of the Cheshire region, in that the BME population is less than 1% , meaning recruitment is difficult in this area. 20% of our students declare a disability, defined as either physical or learning, with 53% of this demographic representing declared students claiming Disability Students Allowance (DSA).

30. Given this context, University Centre Reaseheath's strategy for Widening Participation has been deliberately built around a combination of aspiration and attainment-raising activity in local schools (often undertaken in collaboration with other local HE providers and designed

primarily to widen participation in the Higher Education sector generally) and more targeted activities, designed to attract the most able students to Reaseheath. As outlined below, in recognition of the need to improve application and intake rates for students from under-represented groups, our investment in access, student success and progression will increase from 2018/19 onwards.

31. Work with young people at school broadly consists of a structured series of interventions at two critical stages. Programmes targeted broadly at Years 9 – 11 aim to demystify higher education, raise awareness of subjects and routes and the variety of provision, increase the self-confidence and self-esteem of students involved, and raise aspirations for lifelong learning. They also lay the groundwork for progression to higher education by encouraging appropriate subject choices. Programmes for students in Years 12 and 13 concentrate on the transition to higher education, with a particular emphasis on building confidence in applying to research-intensive, selective universities. Other areas of our work focus on mature learners and those returning to study. We have also been developing our support for care leavers and young carers. Our range of programmes will serve both national sector and University Centre Reaseheath objectives in widening participation, and our targeted schools activity will be centred around those educational establishments situated within POLAR 1-2 quintiles (see section 4 *Raising Attainment and Aspirations*).

32. The College actively promotes STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects within schools through 'road-show' activities aimed at encouraging the STEM curriculum content at Reaseheath, which is not always apparent to student looking for courses. Indeed, the College's STEM Steering Group plays an active role here in liaising with curriculum areas in developing enrichment activities for these events, which also tie in well with national initiatives, such as 'Science Week' in supporting STEM learning for all young people within the Cheshire East locality.

33. We intend during 2018/19 to maintain the current range of the College's outreach, access and retention activities, which include:

- Work with schools designed to raise aspiration and attainment locally, regionally and nationally
- programmes focused specifically on access onto University Centre Reaseheath programmes
- provision of high-quality information, advice and guidance for prospective students to ensure that students are making informed choices at all transition points
- work with parents, teachers and advisers
- a higher education environment which promotes retention and successful completion
- activities focused on building employability skills

All our activities share common characteristics:

- Clear aims
- Appropriate targeting
- Embedded evaluation measures to enable impact assessment
- On-going relationships
- Involvement of parents, teachers and advisors
- Involvement of current University Centre Reaseheath student ambassadors

- Taster sessions elements in many programmes

The College is also considering its response to Higher/Degree-Level Apprenticeships taking into account both the opportunities and the challenges presented by an alternative to traditional full-time campus-based degree programmes.

3.3 Student Success and Progression

34. Our work on student retention and success builds on our outreach and access work through the provision of support and skills training which maximises students' potential to complete their degrees successfully. A summary is provided in Table 4 below:

Table 4. Summary of Student Success Activities

Main Focus	Programme or Activity
Academic support and skills development	Study Skills Workshops Personal Academic Tutelage system Peer support Learning Resources Centre Library Reading Strategy
Pastoral support	Personal Academic Tutelage system College internal support system Higher Education Support Team (HEST) Services Student Welfare and Wellbeing Workshops Peer support Counselling services to improve student mental health
Financial support	Bursaries and access to financial assistance funds throughout programme
Employability	Employability strategy Internships Careers Advice and Guidance Volunteering College internal support system

35. Our College support system facilitates all stages of the student lifecycle and aids in meeting the needs of today's students, providing structured and coherent support from arrival through to graduation. Our College teams engage with students in an active and targeted way on enrolment and this is continued through our networks of Second and Third Year Students who will buddy new students in their early weeks of study.

36. Peer support is recognised as having a positive impact on students' sense of belonging and connection to their peers. The implementation of a mentor buddy system for HE students in 2015/16 allowed Level 4 students to be 'paired up' with L5 students to support first year students with the rigours of academia and help to alleviate transitional concerns. The impact of this approach was not effectively measured or documented within the NSS, but the College's SES qualitative and quantitative results for first year, continuing and top-up students, indicated a clear improvement in the support and guidance (Q10, 86%), and advice on study choices (Q12, 80%), which were both above the national and FEC sector averages for

2015/16. These processes helped to facilitate discussions with first year students in respect to second year study choices, such as optional modules, work placement and assessment preparation, enhancing both their engagement and academic experiences.

37. The College offers workshops that provide academic support on specific topics: including writing skills, study skills, drafting a revision schedule and writing for exams. We are also looking to pilot an academic mentoring programme, matching first year students with a second or third year student on their course who might be able to advise on, for example, resources and strategies they found particularly useful. The College will also be running Mental Health First Aid sessions to train both staff and students to spot early signs of mental health conditions among their peers and signpost them to the correct support service, which will help to improve student and staff resilience.

38. In order to ease the transition to higher education and ensure retention rates amongst mature learners increase, we will continue the student support activities we have developed in recent years. Bespoke study skills sessions and information on student funding, employability and managing the demands of study and childcare will be provided in welcome week. To provide additional transition support for mature students we offer a pre-entry induction programme to build their confidence prior to starting their course through a series of workshops and talks from various academic and support services around the College. The programme has been planned on the basis of recent feedback from mature students. There is also a separate mentoring scheme for non-resident mature students who, due to their circumstances, are not always able to access College mentoring activities. A calendar of social and support activities provided by the College will be provided at the mature students' induction event. This will raise awareness of the range of provision and serve to remind mature students that there are regular events for them throughout the year.

39. Our commitment to supporting care leavers will also continue. In 2018/19, all such students will have the support of a personal academic tutor and will be provided with mentoring and advocacy support from point of application to graduation.

40. At a macro level, work will continue to improve student support and wellbeing. This will include: guidelines for personal tutors supporting first years through transition; a College wide working group on student well-being with a specific work strand on support for students with enduring mental health difficulties; a study skills project to support students' academic support and development; and increased support for mature students.

41. As a provider of initial teacher training, we are strongly committed to maintaining and developing an inclusive approach to recruitment of our PGCE trainees. We wish to provide young people in schools with a range of role models so that the career and life chances of young learners are enhanced, and to develop attitudes in young people which celebrate diversity. We regard 'non-traditional' to include a variety of individuals and groups including those with disabilities; BME individuals; those from low income families and areas of the country with below average HE participation rates; and groups that are currently under-represented in specific subject areas (*e.g.* females undertaking Agriculture and Countryside programmes and males on Food Manufacturing programmes). Our initiative on enhancing our male HE student population within the next five years will be further encouraged through the diversification of STEM-related programmes across curricula, such as Sports Coaching, Protective/ Public Services and Rail Engineering.

42. Transitional support through the production of varied bridging activities afforded to students from Level 3 to level 4 in 2014 enhanced satisfaction scores in Academic Support during 2015 even further, with all three questions scored above both the national and FEC sector benchmark in 2014/15 by an average of 4% per question. These activities included invitations to open days and summer schools, transition workshops, 'taster' assessment and feedback for existing level 3 students and Access to HE programmes. Students going on to level 6 also receive support to facilitate the transition to Honours degree study. SES student-inclusive analysis over the last couple of years confirms that first year and top-up students found these transitional arrangements very useful in preparing them for higher-level study.

43. A number of initiatives and interventions were actioned between 2015/16 and 2016/17 to help improve student retention and achievement:

- *Attendance monitoring*
  Sector wide evidence confirms that students who actively engage in their studies increase their chances of succeeding in their studies, with a positive correlation seen in the relationship between attendance and achievement. This is accentuated in students who come from non-traditional higher education backgrounds. Classroom management techniques including the review of assessment strategies and initiatives to enhance the use of digital technologies within the classroom were trialled during 2016/17 to encourage and affirm student engagement and retention across HE provision. Discussions within the College Course Manager Quality Group meetings suggested that the advancement of the College VLE might be linked to targeted absenteeism in certain programmes of study.

- *Expanded out of class support*
  Student satisfaction in the NSS in relation to the question "I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies" (Academic Support) saw a 3% improvement between 2015 and 2016 (84>87%).One of the College's most effective strategies involved expanding its out-of-class academic support *via* HEST. The goal was to improve the programme success rates across curriculum areas, without lowering academic standards. This was provided through additional professional and peer tutors, increased access to online tutoring resources *via* the VLE and individual support, providing more entitlement that is equitable and access to support for all students. The number of students visiting HEST increased by 16% between 2014/15 (96 students registered) and 2015/16 (112 students registered).

- *Set up early alert procedure and student coaching*
  A number of HE Faculty and HEST staff investigated methodologies and processes whereby students who were red flagged in 1:1 tutorials and who needed help getting back on track were targeted and supported in a timely and efficient manner. In 2015/16, an easy-to-use system via the College's Pro-Monitor (tutorial) software was implemented which alerted tutors and course managers when a student started to struggle in their studies. The College found that students who received early alerts were most successful when they also took advantage of other resources, such as the out-of-class support, offered to them by HEST, and these same students were more likely to complete their studies

44. 100% of the College's academic staff delivering HE hold (80%, N=45), or are working towards (14%, N=8), a teaching qualification. In 2014, the College's Scholarly Activity Scheme was introduced to further enhance this activity by encouraging staff to display a sound understanding and up-to-date knowledge of their subject and/or professional practice and draw on scholarship, research and professional activity to facilitate student learning. As a result of this initiative, 64% (n=38) of academic staff currently delivering on HE programmes, have either obtained or are working towards a higher-level qualification (MSc/PhD). By promoting the professional development of its academic staff, the College also recognised the active engagement of the student as learner/partner in equipping them for employment and life in general. This provided a shift in pedagogic practice within the HE provision, with the emphasis moving to how students actively make sense of what they are taught, rather than passively accruing knowledge.

45. We are committed to ensuring an outstanding experience throughout the student life cycle for all students at the College. We will continue to work with our students and their representatives to ensure all needs are being met. We will take an evidence-based approach to the development of new student success interventions and will respond to them as the need arises. In 2018/19, we are taking a whole institutional approach to this issue, including examining pricing structures and allocation processes for residences.

46. 89% of our graduates were in employment or further study 6 months post completion of their degree programme. A number of new steps were taken in 2016/17 to further enhancing our graduate outcomes:

1)   A small group devolved from the HE Course Manager Quality Group identified and developed a series of employability outcomes which articulate against the specified intended learning outcomes across each level of study within the curriculum. These embedded employability key skills aimed to foster and develop a culture of progression and life-long learning. The themes developed across each award level allow students to recognise their own personal, academic and career development achievements in completing their assessed learning outcomes within modular coursework components. These employability outcomes were presented to academic staff at the 2017 Annual Learning and Teaching Conference and will be piloted within the HE Faculty departments in 2016718.

2)   A revised tutorial system (providing distinctive guidance for staff on the needs of students across each level of undergraduate study) was created by the HE Quality Enhancement Manager. This was discussed and approved at HE Curriculum Group and highlights graduate attributes as an important domain of the student learning experience. Employability is advanced through a balanced developmental focus on attributes, knowledge, skills and communicated identity across each level. This new process will be implemented across the HE provision in 2016/17. Further work will be progressed with curriculum areas to encourage every student to identify how their own unique academic experience makes them more suitable for employment.

4. RAISING ATTAINMENT & ASPIRATION

47. In 2018/19, University Centre Reaseheath will continue to develop our strategy, working with local children, young people and teachers, explaining where food comes from and its

relationship to good health and wellbeing. We are passionate about education that ensures farming is sustainable, whilst protecting and promoting the countryside. We do this through changing the perceptions of pupils, staff and parents. Agriculture and Food are the biggest manufacturing sector in the UK, and will require many new entrants in the next decade. Consequently, the College has a key role to play, about inspiring young people to consider a career in a sector, which is increasingly technical and highly skilled.

The College will target schools within the local region, particularly those in low POLAR scoring areas (1-2 quintiles). Our programme will include all curriculum areas in developing *in-situ* CPD activities for teachers – in conjunction with Farming and Countryside Education (FACE) – to help raise attainment in English, Maths and Science subjects and heighten the perception of these subjects being fundamental in acquiring higher-level jobs within the sector. This work with schools and young people is highly successful because of the immediate and widespread benefits of visits to the outdoors, and of using food, farming and the countryside to support many aspects of the curriculum.

48. Our STEM Society Group delivers learning zone sessions at the 'Big Bang' Science Event in Liverpool (a POLAR 1-2 quintile locality) to provide young people from all backgrounds have the aspiration, knowledge and skills to thrive, with more progressing into STEM-related careers.

49. As part of the College's wider involvement in the Government's AgriTech Strategy, and its continued commitment to help the UK become a world leader in agricultural technology, innovation and sustainability, we put on Year 10 taster days – to which we educate parents and pupils in how the land-based sector contributes to tackling global challenges such as climate change and food security.

50. Conducive to this activity, the College also has a prominent role in the *Agriculture Careers Live* events held across the country. The focus of this activity is to raise awareness of the importance of STEM subjects within the agricultural sector to both prospective students and parents. This year (2016/17), the College invested heavily in promoting programme recruitment and careers in agriculture at a Careers Live event in the West Midlands (another POLAR 1-2 quintile locality), with the purchase of a virtual reality simulator, which allowed pupils and parents to takes on the role of a farmer and use STEM derived skills to harvest their crops and sell them in order to expand their farming enterprise (*e.g.* machines, fields, animals and buildings).

Feedback collated from the day found that 86% of those attended now considered land-based jobs as more important than they realised, and 78% stating that they had changed their perception of the qualifications involved in career within agriculture.

51. The College will be building on this resource development in 2018/19 by evaluating ways in which it may harness similar digital technology investment to raised educational awareness and enhance recruitment across other 'traditional' land-based curriculum areas, such as countryside, food and horticulture.

52. The College also works closely with the Cheshire East Local Education Authority in supporting young people not in mainstream school education (*e.g.* excluded and home-taught students) in enhancing KS4 level attainment workshops. This has been a very successful

initiative for the College and in 2016/17, we were tutoring 120 excluded, home taught or cared for pupils, whilst also developing their awareness of land-based industries and the careers they offer. The College will aim to continue these successful developmental workshops in 2018/19 by increasing the number of young people not in mainstream education in receivership of this tuition (see section 6 – Targets and Milestones).

5. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

53. As part of the College's strategy to widen participation we have made a clear commitment to ensuring that as fees increase, students with genuine financial need are able to access excellent advice and appropriate financial assistance. It is our aim to ensure that no student has a legitimate reason to be deterred from applying to University Centre Reaseheath because of their inability to meet the costs of living and studying here.

54. Our Student Finance and Marketing Team's analysis of the costs of living and studying in and around the Nantwich/Crewe area suggests that, for those students in lower income groups, our core student finance packages (see sections 5.1 to 5.6 below), combined with state support (tuition fee loans and maintenance grants/loans) and some part-time working should ensure that eligible students have sufficient funding at their disposal to cover normal tuition and maintenance costs while at the College.

55. In considering a student's decision to enter higher education at the College, a small-scale internal research project conducted by the Marketing dept. and the HE Office found that although the cost of HE is an important consideration, the extent of its influence is often outweighed by other factors such as the appropriateness of the programme of study, the likelihood it will lead to a job, the location of the institution and/or the possibility to remain living at home.

56. Conversely, the College aims to conduct some preliminary research to explore the impact of the Reaseheath Bursary on prospective student decision-making in 2017/18, through focus groups with local schools and Access to HE students, as well as collating information derived from the results of the 1st Year Student Induction Survey. The initial findings of said research will hopefully aim to provide some indication of the weighting that bursary provision influences applicant decision making, in addition to the importance placed on contributing factors such as course, grade requirement, location of the institution and outreach work conducted by the College.

57. The College will also be looking to monitor how it effectively measures the impact and success of the financial support packages it provides HE students between now and 2018/19, through enhancing its MIS reporting systems and the triangulated collaboration between MIS, HE academic services and curriculum areas. Such evaluative measures will include both achievement of intended award outcome, as well as grade attainment (proportion of 1st/2:1 profiling for BSc and Distinction/Merit profiling for FdSc students).

58. Nevertheless, MIS data recorded from academic year 2015/16 suggests that of the 75 students in receivership of financial support (either through the *Reaseheath Bursary* [section 5.2] or *Aspire @ Reaseheath* [section 5.3]), 66 (89%) either successfully progressed onto their continuing year of study, or completed their intended award outcome. This percentage

compares favourably with those FT students not in receivership of financial support packages, with 67 (83%) of that student demographic either successfully progressing onto their continuing year of study, or completing their intended award outcome.

59. It would appear from work conducted during 2016/17 by the HE office in unison with the HE Student Academic Representative (StAR) Council that financial concerns have a limited direct impact on retention. The College looked at specific amounts of financial support it provides alongside retention data and found that there was no correlation between levels of support and withdrawal. However, financial support can have a tangential effect, as it could influence the role of other stressors, such as juggling part-time work with study and ability to engage with the College, on students' lives. Reaseheath College is committed to removing financial barriers to studying higher education. The College's programme of additional financial support is designed to reach those who most need it and provide them with targeted, meaningful assistance. An identified underspend from the National Scholarship Programme (NSP) of £52,500 reported within the 2014/15 Monitoring Return, will continue to be invested into the following programmes of financial support in 2018/19, as well as contributing to outreach activity including, but not limited to, postgraduate progression.

The College's core financial support package for students entering the College in 2018 will provide:

5.1 The Deal @ Reaseheath

60. The Deal @ Reaseheath is only available to full-time first year entrants onto a higher education programme of study who report a household income of £25,000 or under (excluding internal BSc Top-up students). All eligible students must declare and share this information on the Student Loans Company (SLC) Portal.

This financial package of support is worth £1,000, and comprises:

- £20 print credit (received upon enrolment)
- £80 allocation on course materials [consisting of a USB pen, a study skills textbook and subject-specific core text for their programme] (received in January)

2. Each student receives funding for a secondary qualification to the value of £300**

3. The Reaseheath Bursary (5.2)

**Applicable to those courses who engage with secondary learning qualification provision. Value is indicative across the length of the course and not an annual contribution.

5.2 The Reaseheath Bursary

61. This financial package is available to new entrants beginning in 2018/19, who report a household income of £25,000 or under. The bursary is paid in two instalments of £450 (in January and April) to those students who meet the aforementioned criteria and have an attendance of 90% and over. This bursary is available to eligible students for every consecutive year of study, subject to household income. Each academic year, eligible students must declare and share this information on the SLC Portal.

5.3 Aspire @ Reaseheath (ARHC)

62. ARHC is available to all internal Level 3 students who progress onto a FT HE programme of study in September 2018.

These students will receive a £500 bursary paid via BACS transfer in January of their first academic year only. These students will need to have an attendance average of 90% or over.

5.4 Study Tour Support Fund (STSF)

63. This bursary is designed to support students who might struggle to meet the costs of study tours. This would be made available to those who are from households with income under £25,000 and whose study tour contributes to academic credit, within programmes across both the College's validating partner institutions. The support provided would be a percentage contribution and the corresponding value will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

5.5 Fee Contributions

64. The College is continuing to commit to a three-year investment in partial fee waivers to increase participation from key demographics and OFFA target groups. Over £10,000 per year (attributed to paragraph 53) has been made available and will be distributed evenly across all eligible new entrants (to provide transition support across levels) and this will continue up to 2019/2020.

Eligible students must report a household income of £25,000 or under and declare and share this information on the SLC Portal, demonstrating their eligibility through the confirmation of student loan entitlement and supplementary evidence. Students will be informed of this partial fee waiver amount via an Award Notification Letter, and this amount will be deducted from their student loan in January. As an indication of the approximate fee waiver for students beginning in 2018/19, our 2016/17 data recorded that approximately 30 students would have met the eligibility criteria in 2016/17, which would have resulted in a deduction of approximately £330 per student, from their first year tuition fees only. This estimated figure will obviously vary slightly based on the number of eligible students.

While we are confident that, for most students, this package should provide an appropriate level of support, we are, in addition to the core package, investing in hardship funds (see section 5.6 below) to provide an additional safety net for those UK students who, through no fault of their own, find themselves in financial difficulty during their studies.

5.6 The HE Student Assistance Fund (SAF)

65. The Student Assistance Fund (the Reaseheath Trust) exists as an emergency hardship fund that can be used by all FT and PT HE students, regardless of who validates their programme of study, who are experiencing financial hardship.

The SAF is accessed via submission of an application form and evidence to support the application. The amount available is decided purely on a case by case basis.

Any underspend from internal additional financial support packages will be re-invested into the SAF, maximising the financial support afforded to students and accentuating the College's continued commitment to improving student access and success measures.

All these amounts are valid for 2018/19. Eligibility will be determined in accordance with the SLC assessment of household income for state support purposes.

In parallel with arrangements for 2018/19 described here, we will continue to honour financial commitments to students admitted to the College on support packages described in previous access agreements.

6. TARGETS AND MILESTONES

66. In developing the 2018/19 access agreement the College has taken the opportunity to review and update our progress measures in relation to widening participation, ensuring all milestones are both stretching and achievable. We consider these targets to be ambitious in view of our location, size and specialist subject and vocational provision, and will continue to set stretching targets as outlined in Table 7 of the College's Resource Plan. In identifying our targets, we have concentrated on the areas where we feel we need to make the most progress, with a focus on access, retention and student success.

67. In line with the strategic priorities outlined in this agreement we aim specifically to increase applications in the following areas:

- Students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds
- Mature students
- Part-time Students
- Disabled Students

68. Progress measures for each of these categories (which include measures designed to enable us to monitor conversion from application to intake) are provided in the resource plan. In setting long-term progress measures for such groups, we were mindful of the base from which we start, the finite number of students within each group and the importance of committing to targets we could realistically achieve.

6.1 Targets relating to applicants, entrants or student body (Table 7a)

1. Monitor the number of full time students receiving a bursary

69. UCR provides an extensive package of support for students who record low-income backgrounds. The refinement of this target is to truly understand the reach of bursary support across HE at UCR. Monitoring will be via the SLC portal. This target has been modified to show the whole numbers of students in receivership of a bursary, to be more explicit in ensuring that our ambitions are well maintained and transparent. We are predicting 80 students to receive a College bursary in 2018/19, which we aim to increase by 11% to 90 by

2019/20. As the College has a high proportion of students in receivership of bursaries, this target is not stretching us statistically, and so this target will be discontinued from 2020/21.

2. Improve percentage of full time students from OFFA target groups.

70. This target has been amended from 2017/18 to allow us to reduce the number of targets addressing the same area.   Underpinning this target is a commitment to increasing engagement with white working class boys and black and minority ethnic groups. Data will be collated and monitored using information sectors such as the progression data of our L3 learners onto HE qualifications (highlighting data such as geographical location, MIS Polar Scoring). The College is predicting that 39% of its FT students will be derived from under privileged/disadvantaged groups/wards in 2018/19, which we will aim to increase by 3% (as a target value) to 42% by 2021/22.

3. Improve the progression percentage from Access to Higher Education and Year 0 programmes onto HE courses, both internally and externally.

71. The access diploma had proved to be successful in enabling student progression to higher education. 2015/16 is the baseline year for this recalibrated target, the percentages of which has been calculated using College data systems and UCAS data. We are predicting a 30% progression target in 2018/19, which we will aim to increase to 50% by 2021/22.

4. Maintain baseline percentage value in respect of students with disabilities, defined as either physical or learning.

72. The majority of students with disabilities at UCR have a Specific Learning Disability. Indeed, a significant proportion of students at Reaseheath College access additional learning support via the Disabled Students Allowance. 10% of the 2016/17 first year cohort are identified as being in receipt of Disabled Students Allowance (DSA). The Higher Education Support Team (HEST) are exploring various models which will enable a support provision to be in place when the DSA stops, as it is anticipated to do so, for bands 1 and 2 by 2017. In 2018/19, we are predicting that 25% of the student body will have a declared physical or learning disability, with that figure being maintained by 2021/22, irrespective of our predicted increase in student numbers. Monitoring of this target will be derived and maintained via the College data systems from applicant and enrolment data.

5. Monitor additional support measures to ensure improved retention and achievement / (%) drop in withdrawals.

73. Recognising the importance of the whole student lifecycle and of the need to make continuing progress with retention rates, we have committed ourselves to enhancing course management support and the introduction of early intervention at the point of a student expressing their intention to withdraw, which was successfully trialled in the 2015/16 session and had a positive impact. This will continue and become integrated practice. Currently, the College has an annual retention target of 85% and we aim to increase our year on year retention to 89%, by reducing our withdrawal rate by 11% by 2021. To help support this work, the College is investing in increased student support, and will be monitoring its impact.

6. Maintain the proportion of non-white students from 2014/15 (2%) by 2019/20.

74. This target has proved persistently difficult to achieve as, demographically, the geographic location of the institution, coupled with the specialist nature of its provision, does not attract BME students. The county BME population is currently <1% and this target will continue to be challenging due to our location away from a major urban centre. This target has been a perpetual struggle for the College to attain, due to both geographic location and the specialist nature of our programmes. Therefore, this target will be discontinued from 2020/21.

7. Monitor the number of students engaging in KS4/Pre-16 vocational activity. Increase participation on these programmes, aiming for 5% growth year on year up to 2020.

75. Reaseheath College will continue to develop and promote the benefits of higher education, by continuing and growing our pre-16/KS4 work. The college will monitor the intake of 14 - 16 yrs old recruited onto our specialist vocational programmes on an annual basis, via MIS, Marketing and curriculum area reports and provide bespoke access to aspirational activity that promotes the benefits of higher education. The College currently has 146 learners enrolled on pre-16/key stage 4 programmes and the College has reviewed and reset targets in this access agreement. The pre-16 and key stage 4 team have recently undergone realignment within the organisation, which will allow for new, specific, progression activity and monitoring taking place.

8. To increase the percentage of all mature undergraduate entrants with no prior HE experience.

76. The baseline data in 2015/16 showed that 155 students (43%) of the overall HE student population) were classed as Mature students with no prior HE experience. This target is based upon student enrolment data, which is categorised by 'First year - not previously taken any HE course'. We have set ourselves a target of 50% by 2018/19, a proportional increase of 16.3%, with a focus on increasing this target further to 52% in 2021/22. We will hold specific events that focus on this demographic group of students to promote HE.

9. Increase the percentage of mature students enrolling onto undergraduate programmes (new and continuing) and higher and degree-level apprenticeships.

77. Applications from mature students have dropped (in line with a national decline) from 2012-13 onwards. In order to increase applications from mature students, the College will continue to invest in a range of outreach activities. In 2018/19, this will include; information sessions to Access students in local and regional Further Education Colleges and running specific 'drop in' sessions at the College for prospective applicants, providing information, advice and guidance on applications, childcare, funding and accommodation.

78. This target recognises the extent to which mature students rely on institutional sources of information and consider this in terms of website design, contents and other publicity and information strategies. Working with our Marketing Team, the College is working on producing targeted marketing materials that specifically address the concerns of that group. This output will be tested and created in consultation with current mature students. However, when monitoring these annual changes we acknowledge the difficulty in comparing a linear reduction against a small population size which will show volatility from year to year. The College will focus more heavily on the recruitment of prospective mature students. On-campus recruitment events will be designed to appeal to all types of prospective student and regular tours of the campus will be run throughout the year for those who have been unable to attend

an open event. The College is keen to devise and facilitate a pre-induction workshop for mature students and will be addressing that in its 2018/19 targets.

10. Improve the percentage of first year full-time students from POLAR 1–2 geographic areas.

79. The College is well placed geographically to address and reach POLAR 1-2 areas through its outreach work, in addition to our work undertaken with the NNCO. Investment and smarter recording of applicant data means we can measure more accurately where our students come from and how we engage with them.

11. Increase first year student intake onto part time higher education provision to 60 by 2020.

80. A key area for development for the College in terms of its strategy, the part time programme offer will increase as will our work with employers to be able to provide courses that respond to those who need to work and study. The baseline data of 2016/17 was 40 students enrolling onto PT programmes at the College. We aim to increase this to 50 by 2018/19 (a 25% increase), which we are then aiming to further enhance to 65 by 2021/22.

12. Maintain baseline progression (number) of students from level four to five

81. We aim by 2021 to increase the continuation rate at UCR of students from level four to five by 120 students (71>195; across both FdSc and BSc awards). In order to reach this overall increase in annual progression, we will initially aim for an increase of 10% for the 2018/19 entrant cohort (an increase of 7 first year students progressing onto their second year of study, using 2016/17 (71) as a baseline figure. However, when monitoring these annual changes we acknowledge the difficulty in comparing a linear increase against small population sizes in certain programmes of study, which will show volatility from year to year. Performance will be measured using data derived from awards assessment board outcomes.

13. Maintain baseline progression (number) of students from level five to six.

82. We aim by 2021 to increase the continuation rate at UCR of students from level five to six by 98 students (17>135; across both FdSc and BSc awards). In order to reach this overall increase in annual progression, we will initially aim for an increase of 32% for the 2017/18 entrant cohort (an increase of 8 second year students progressing onto their third year of study), using 2016/17 (17) as a baseline figure. We have also retained a number of student success intervention progress measures including peer mentoring coverage and peer assisted study sessions.

14. Increase the proportion (%) of white males from socio-economically, disadvantaged backgrounds on HE programmes of study (both full time and part time).

83. We will add a new target relating to the admission of full time and part-time white males from socio-economically, disadvantaged backgrounds on HE programmes of study (both full time and part time). We aim by 2021 to increase the proportion of white males from socio-economically challenged backgrounds by 9% (9 to 18%), using 2016/17 (9%) as a baseline figure. This target is based upon student enrolment data, classified by both ethnicity and SOC standing (groups 5-8).

6.2 Other Milestones and Targets (Table 7b)

1. Monitor the participation of students identified as requiring additional support in prerequisite knowledge bases (e.g. science/practical skills).

84. There was no identified requirement to undertake additional support ahead of the 2016/17 academic session. However, the College is mindful of a difference in achievement in science based modules between students on Foundation Degrees and Bachelor's and will seek to address this in in its 2018/19 targets. In acting on the above, year to year progression will be tracked and targets have been set to monitor progress.

2. Monitor the (%) success rates (via intention to study) of students who disclose mental health issues in their current year of study.

85. 'Intention to Study' refers to those students who complete their year of intended study first time of asking, without need for postponement, deferral or reassessment. This target has been enhanced from the previous access agreement (written in 2015/16) which did not stipulate a proportional target or plan of action in how this target was to be strategically measured and monitored.

3. Enhance the proportion (%) of full-time graduates obtaining highly skilled employment or further study.

86. This target is based upon the College's DLHE data from 2015/16. Those graduates moving into professional/managerial SOC categorised employment (sectors 1-3) will identify the highly skilled employment measure. Monitoring will be derived from i-graduate and evaluation will be derived from seasonal analysis conducted by the HE Student Records and Data Officer. Post-graduate study will be monitored via information gleaned from exit tutorials from course managers with completing students. This target will be re-evaluated from 2020/21.

4. Enhance the number of CPD activities involving school staff across curriculum areas

87. This target is based upon encouraging teachers within schools to engage in the College's CPD activities it puts on to change the perception of the land-based sector and the qualifications required to obtain jobs within land-based industries. Monitoring and evaluation will be derived from feedback from the sessions and the number of teaching/careers guidance staff participating in the activities from within the targeted schools. This target will be re-evaluated from 2020/21.

5. Increasing the number of young people not in mainstream education in receivership of KS4 tuition

88. In 2016/17, the College were tutoring 120 excluded, home taught or cared for pupils, whilst also developing their awareness of land-based industries and the careers they offer. The College will aim to continue these successful developmental workshops in 2018/19 by increasing the number of young people not in mainstream education in receivership of this tuition. This target will be re-evaluated in 2020/2021.

University Centre Reaseheath will also be conducting a number of initiatives to investigate the following student success and progression activities:

- *Increase student engagement with DSA-funded specialist student support.*
  Relating to the number of students taking up DSA-funded specialist support, such as 1:1 learning development.

- *Monitor the number of students requiring exam concessional support in light of the post-DSA funded environment.*
  Relating to the number of students requiring exam concessional support, such as additional time, readers, scribes, note-takers, IT equipment and prompts.

- *Monitor the effectiveness of non DSA-funded study skills support for those students not diagnosed with a learning disability, but require academic skills development and mentoring.*
  Relating to those students who receive specialist 1:1 non DSA-funded support, for those students not diagnosed with a specific learning disability.

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION ARRANGEMENTS

89. The Dean of Higher Education, Higher Education Curriculum Area Manager, Quality Enhancement Manager and Higher Education Student Records and Data Officer are responsible for the delivery of this agreement and the College is committed to monitor compliance and progress against the milestones. As a small and specialist HE provider, the work set out in this agreement is incorporated into the activities of 'mainstream' functions and departments and, accordingly, constitutes a 'whole institution approach', as there is no dedicated team that solely progresses our ambitions to promote access, success and progression for all student groups.

90. Progress will be measured throughout the year regarding key milestones, as part of the College's normal quality compliance/ assurance processes. The major targets/milestones relate to data collection and analysis. Progress being measured against targets set will be reported in an annual report to the College's Higher Education Academic Board. The report includes:

a) Financial data summarising recruitment, awards made to students via bursaries and awards.

b) Outreach activities that have been undertaken during the year

c) Progress made against institutional milestones and objectives relating to student success, progression and widening participation

Student cohort data including Equality and Diversity Impact Measurements (EDIMs) are regularly reviewed in addition to the specific targets identified as part of this Access Agreement throughout the quality assurance cycle. Termly progress reports will be produced for the HE Senior Management Team and HE Curriculum group meetings in order to monitor impact. We have revised the annual reports that are prepared in relation to enrolment, completion, continuation and achievement to more precisely align reporting to our HE (Governor's) Committee on progress against the targets associated with enrolment and student success. The integration of the Student Records and Data Officer from October 2016 has increased our

capacity for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of our activities, so that resources can be directed to maximise impact.

Further specific monitoring and evaluation activity will continue to be undertaken to support the College's main widening participation activities. The College's Annual Academic Overview Report is a thorough critical analysis of key performance indicators and a range of data linked to student cohort. This highlights areas for further focus and enhancement on an on-going basis.

The College's Single Equality Scheme aims to proactively embed equality in the culture and systems of our organisation by ensuring that policy-making, service delivery and employment practice are all equality orientated. A proactive and systematic approach to undertaking Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) is in place for existing and new policies.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

91. University Centre Reaseheath is committed to providing a positive experience for all students, where individuals are treated with courtesy and consideration and where difference is valued and diversity respected. We expect the highest standards from our students and are resolutely committed to complying with the Equality Act 2010 and eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.

92. The College has made a strong commitment to advancing equality and representation of disadvantaged groups. The College fulfils its commitments under the Equality Act 2010 by integrating equality and diversity considerations into all decision-making processes and into the development of strategy and policy across the institution. Equality analysis must be undertaken on all policies and activities and committee cover sheets require reference as to how equality related issues and relevant equality data have been taken into account.

93. The College's curriculum-derived Self-Assessment Reports (SARs) process also provides reporting at course level covering the following characteristics: gender/sex; age; disability; and ethnicity. At the start of the 2016/17 academic year, the College began collecting additional information from students as part of online registration. Caring responsibilities, gender identity, sexual orientation and religion or belief are the areas now included.

94. We are also developing an extensive and sophisticated approach to monitoring our students' attainment and progression to ensure that we better understood their experience with us. It also allows us to consider interventions based solidly on evidence and monitor the impact of initiatives. Students with protected characteristics will continue to be included in all outreach work funded by the College's 2018/19 access agreement. In order to meet the needs of prospective students with disabilities, we will ensure that all outreach activities are inclusive and accessible, making relevant adaptations as appropriate.

95. The approaches and interventions outlined in this access agreement positively impact upon equality and diversity within the College in a number of ways. We are committed to taking a whole institution approach to the issue as we know that our widening participation and equality and diversity efforts are likely to focus on the same groups of students who share a protected characteristic that is underrepresented. Understanding where this crossover exists

and coordinating work that seeks to reach and support these groups will increase the impact of resources used. Critically, it will also ensure a smoother path for students so that they are supported to achieve the best possible outcomes and have a positive experience whilst at the College.

96. In order to ensure that students with particular protected characteristics are supported, we implement (and publish) a range of policies including fitness to study, as well as guidance for members of staff working with students from under-represented groups (such as transgender students, for example).

The College's current work includes:

- providing students on the autistic spectrum with transferable skills to prepare them for seeking and securing employment, through the enhancement of coping strategies and academic skills development;
- the College Higher Education Support Team (HEST) is exploring options for mitigating the impact of changes to the Disabled Students Allowance. These will include more inclusive practice as well as lecture capture and other assistive technology solutions to enable independent learning strategies. We will also continue to maintain internal dyslexia support services ;
- training for staff in teaching students with disabilities;
- measures to support the retention and progression of students with disabilities by facilitating links between the mental health awareness and support available to students at the College.

9. PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

97. The College understands the importance of providing clear, accurate and up to date information to all prospective applicants. Such detail is particularly important to those students from under-represented groups who may be more debt averse than those from 'traditional' backgrounds. Details of tuition fee levels and of the financial support available to students will be routinely published in our prospectus and on our website.

98. Our *Financial Support* pages on the College website includes information to enable students to work out the likely costs of studying at Reaseheath and to identify the various sources of funding (including both government and University Centre Reaseheath support) which they might be able to draw on to support themselves during their studies.

99. Information on tuition fees and financial support available to students will also be made available, in a timely way, to UCAS and to the SLC, as they reasonably require, populating their applicant-facing web services. The College will also communicate information relating to student finance in the following ways:

- through the provision of Key Information Sets (KIS);
- student funding presentations in targeted low performing schools;
- pre application open days;
- recruitment events;

- widening participation interventions;
- part of the College's pre and post offer holder visit days.

100. Information is also included regarding support both academic and pastoral available at the College. For existing students the College has a dedicated student finance team and proactive student services team that are housed in a bespoke building, providing dedicated advice and guidance to existing students.

101. For prospective students, the College holds open days, offer holder days, bridging courses and attend education fairs, schools, College career days, and other events relevant to recruitment. At all these events, printed information is available regarding the College's position on tuition fees, the Student Assistance Fund and other forms of financial support. Information regarding tuition fees and financial support available will be sent to all applicants receiving an offer of a place.

102. All staff involved in recruitment and admissions will receive on going updates and training regarding tuition fees and additional financial support. Information will also be made available via the UCAS website where possible. The college provides IAG, Information, advice and guidance to perspective and existing students and is the holder of full MATRIX accreditation.

10. CONSULTING WITH STUDENTS

103. A preliminary draft of this agreement was shared with members of the Student Association at UCR through a routine meeting with the senior staff. Particular attention was given to the balance of available expenditure committed to supporting student success and financial support, and to the basis upon which financial support might best be organised. Subsequent input will come through StAR (Student Academic Representative) involvement in the HE Academic Board meetings at which this agreement is formally considered, approved and monitored.

104. Many of the strategic themes included in this document (specifically in relation to: the BME attainment gap; the impact of enduring mental health issues; and the importance of a diverse and representative curricula) have been championed by our student body through the College's new strategy development process and thus included in the agreement. We will continue to work with our students to implement the commitments outlined in the document.

11. SUMMARY

105. This access agreement outlines our strategic priorities for 2018/19. It takes a whole institution approach, covers the student lifecycle, reflects on those interventions with greatest impact, explores the strategic rebalancing of spend to support access, student success and progression and demonstrates our commitment to long term outreach. We have included an assessment of our current performance against targets and articulate our planned response to the challenges faced. We demonstrate our collaborative work within and outside the higher education sector and highlight the provision of support for mature and part-time students. We reaffirm our commitment to working with our students to develop and deliver our work to

diversify the HE student body and are mindful of the very close links with institutional equality and diversity efforts.

106. It is hoped that this Agreement demonstrates the College's determination to recruit the most able students from the most diverse backgrounds and reinforces our long-term commitment to widening participation and student success. The College has taken account of OFFA's strategic guidance in the development of this access agreement and the targets it sets out for 2018/19. Those targets are ambitious and take account of both our strategic mission and our resource.