



Department for
**Employment
and Learning**
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SKILLS
TO SUCCEED

Access to Success

**SECOND ANNUAL
STATEMENT ON WIDENING
PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER
EDUCATION**



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CONTENTS

Foreword

Dr Stephen Farry, Minister for Employment and Learning	2
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1. Introduction

Higher Education in Northern Ireland	5
Implementation of Access to Success	11

2. Access Agreement Monitoring Reports for 2013-14

Expenditure	20
Higher Fee Income	21
Access Agreement Expenditure	21
Bursaries/Scholarships	21
Additional Outreach	22
Reallocated Funds	23
Targets and Milestones	23

3. Widening Access and Participation Plans for 2016-17

Bursaries/Scholarships versus Outreach	27
New Post-entry retention initiatives	28
Research	28
Organisational Development	29

4. Future Direction for Widening Participation

Areas for further development	31
Key Performance Indicators	32
Improved data gathering	32
Institutions' evaluation of plans and activities (Output Measures)	33

Appendices	35
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MINISTER'S FOREWORD



In 2012, I launched **Access to Success**, my Department's strategy for widening participation in higher education to all who have the capacity to succeed and to benefit from it. This is the second annual report on the implementation of that strategy and examines the progress made in the 2013-14 academic year. The report looks forward to the actions to be taken to improve recruitment and retention of underrepresented student groups in 2016-17.

I am very pleased to note that our monitoring of performance shows continuing progress over the first two years of the strategy. Collectively our universities and

colleges have either met, or are on target to meet, the targets and milestones that they set in their access agreements for 2013-14. It is particularly pleasing to note the increased enrolments from some of the most underrepresented groups such as those from the most disadvantaged areas as measured by the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures.

There are a lot of detailed statistics in this report. But the important thing to note about these numbers is that they are not just numbers. They represent real people. They represent increased opportunities to improve lives, enhance social mobility and the realisation of greater equality of opportunity for all in Northern Ireland.

Widening participation in higher education has always been an economic imperative as well as a matter of social justice. Diversity in the student body enriches the universities and colleges, and our economy and society more generally, as well as the students themselves.

2015 has been a difficult year for the higher education sector in Northern Ireland. Reductions to block grant have resulted in lower levels of resources across the sector and increased pressure on activities and ultimately reductions in student places at our universities.

Recognising the competing pressures within the widening participation agenda, I reduced the minimum required level of reinvestment in widening participation programmes from 20% to 10% of additional fee income. However, I have made it clear to institutions that reductions in spend in this vital area should come from increased efficiencies and that there should be no reduction in targets or outcomes.

In the coming year, I give a renewed challenge to our universities and colleges to build upon their successes and get to grips with the remaining differential outcomes for the underrepresented groups. I urge our higher education providers to more closely align their work on outreach and access with student progression and success. I encourage greater investment on those activities focused on the lower Multiple Deprivation Measure quintiles, disabled students, adult returners and young males from disadvantaged backgrounds. Institutions should continue to channel their investments towards students from low income background and other underrepresented groups and to rebalance that investment towards outreach, aspiration and attainment raising to encourage increased applications from these groups.

The impact that **Access to Success** has had on entry rates for disadvantaged students demonstrates that widening participation can be a powerful lever for change. We need to strive to maintain Northern Ireland's leading position in access to higher education. We need to further build upon the progress to date to ensure that higher education is accessible to all that can benefit from it, regardless of their personal or social circumstances.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Farry". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

DR STEPHEN FARRY
MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

1. INTRODUCTION



1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress towards widening participation in higher education since the publication of **Access to Success**. It also presents the results of the Department for Employment and Learning's monitoring of the Universities' and Further Education Colleges' Access Agreements for the 2013-14 academic year, as well as reflecting on the current position and looking forward to the 2016-17 academic year.
- 1.2 Widening participation in higher education by students from those groups which are currently under represented, in particular students from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with disabilities and learning difficulties, is one of the Department's key strategic goals. The Department's vision for widening participation is that any qualified individual should be able to gain access to the higher education that is right for them, irrespective of their personal or social background.

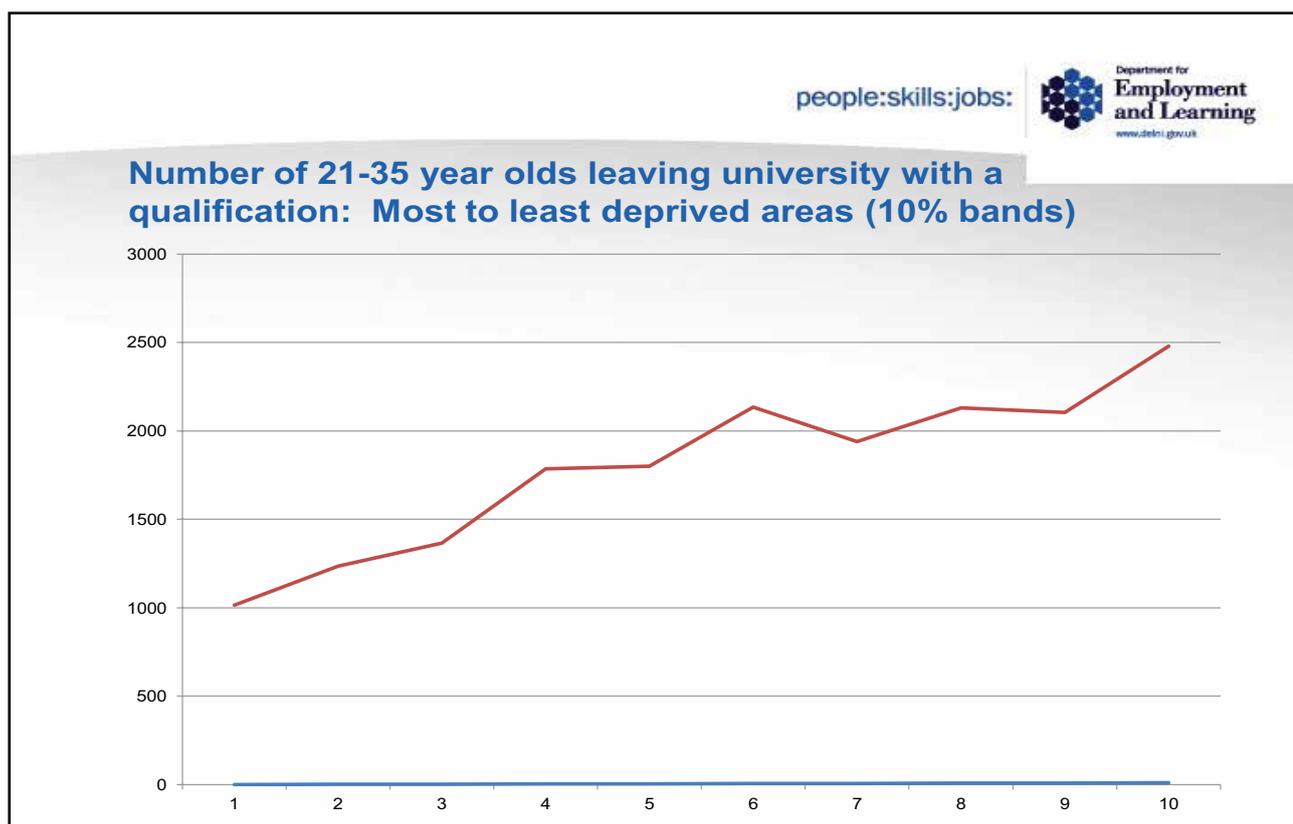
Higher Education in Northern Ireland

Enrolments

- 1.3 The longer term picture of participation in higher education has been one of significant, indeed dramatic, growth. In 1990 roughly 25% of 18 year olds entered higher education. By 1999 that figure had risen to 45%. Since 2010 it has remained fairly constant at between 48% and 50%.
- 1.4 Over the last five years there has been between 51,000 and 52,000 students enrolled in higher education in Northern Ireland. In addition to the approximately 14,000 Northern Ireland domiciled students accepted onto under-graduate higher education programmes each year, there are approximately 4,000 students undertaking Open University programmes and an additional 8,000 students from outside Northern Ireland, as well as post graduate student enrolments.
- 1.5 84% of students enrolled at local higher education institutions are from Northern Ireland. Approximately 6% are from non-EU countries, while 5% are from the Republic of Ireland and 4% are from Britain.
- 1.6 Female student enrolments tend to dominate in subjects allied to medicine, languages and education, where they make up 71% to 86%. Male students predominate in subjects such as Engineering (80%), Computer Science (74%), and Architecture, Building and Planning (72%).

- 1.7 Northern Ireland has the highest participation rate of any area of the UK and has the best record of attracting students from low-income backgrounds into higher education.
- 1.8 Northern Ireland attracts more first time degree entrants (almost 40%) from the lower socio-economic groups than the UK average of 33%. Ulster University does particularly well at 46% compared to Queen’s at 32%. Both local universities outperform their UK competitors when compared to their Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) benchmark institutions in Britain.
- 1.9 However, although there has been success in achieving the objectives of raising the motivation, aspirations and performance of students who otherwise may not have considered going to higher education; there remain some stubborn pockets of underrepresentation, including from areas of high economic deprivation.

Figure 1: Number of 21-25 year olds leaving university with a qualification



Source: DEL Analytical Services

- 1.10 It has long been known, at an international level, that there is a social gradient in access to universities, with more affluent students performing better in terms of both enrolment and progression in higher education. The extent of the gradient in Northern Ireland is demonstrated in the graph (Figure 1).
- 1.11 **Access to Success** introduced the use of Multiple Deprivation Measure (MDM) indices to measure participation in higher education across Northern Ireland society. The MDM are recorded using a basket of economic and social measures and are grouped into deciles and quintiles of equal population size¹.
- 1.12 As the table below demonstrates, in 2013-14 only 13.6% of total higher education enrolments² in Northern Ireland came from the most deprived quintile of local society. By contrast, 24.3% of enrolled students came from the least deprived quintile. There were smaller variations in the middle quintiles but with an unerring bias towards greater participation from the least deprived sections of society. In an ideal world of “all things being equal” one might expect 20% participation rates from all five quintiles.

Table 1: 2013-14 HE Enrolments

Multiple Deprivation Measure in five equal sized bands of 20%	
Quintile 1 – Most Deprived	13.6%
Quintile 2	17.5%
Quintile 3	21.3%
Quintile 4	22.4%
Quintile 5 – Least Deprived	24.3%
Unknown Postcode	0.8%

Source: DEL Delivering Success Through Excellence (6th Annual Report)

- 1.13 On a more positive note, university undergraduate enrolments from Quintile 1 demonstrate a modest improvement from 14% in 2012-13 to 14.2% in 2013-14, while all quintile 1 undergraduate enrolments, including HE in FE, rose to 14.6%. Northern Ireland still out performs Britain where, in 2013-14, around 11% of undergraduates came from the most disadvantaged quintile – up from 9% a decade earlier.

1 It should be noted that this is not a perfect measure because these data are based on geographical areas which may contain small pockets of affluence within a more general area of deprivation, or vice versa.
 2 Includes post graduate students

Retention and progression

- 1.14 Increasing applications and enrolments from under-represented, more deprived student groups is only part of the widening participation challenge. While many more people from deprived areas are applying successfully to higher education, their premature drop-out rates are a continuing problem. Consequently success rates in achieving higher education qualifications are also disproportionately lower for students from the most deprived areas.
- 1.15 The statistics in this area are incomplete and a number of research areas are in development to provide a better evidence base. However, the HESA data indicates that the local non-completion rate in higher education is around one person in ten. Non-completion rates are higher within widening participation target groups and this is evidenced by the lower proportion of students from the most deprived areas who gain a higher education qualification as demonstrated in the table below.

Table 2: NI domiciled students, aged 21-35, gaining qualifications by deprivation quintile 2013-14

Multiple Deprivation Measure	Number gaining a qualification	Number in the population	% gaining a qualification
Quintile 1 – Most Deprived	2,250	79,195	2.8%
Quintile 2	3,150	78,100	4.0%
Quintile 3	3,935	79,645	4.9%
Quintile 4	4,070	73,045	5.6%
Quintile 5 – Least Deprived	4,585	58,280	7.9%
Total	17,990	368,265	4.9%

Source: HESA 2013-14 : 2011 NI Census

- 1.16 In 2013-14, less than 3% (2,250) of young people aged 21-35 from the most deprived areas gained a university qualification compared to almost 8% (4,585) from the least deprived areas.
- 1.17 No single reason has been found which explains why students drop out of higher education. It is believed that various personal, social and academic factors interact to cause student drop out. The evidence shows that students from the most deprived areas are just as capable as their counterparts from more affluent backgrounds but that a variety of external factors, not least social and financial factors, can combine to cause them to disengage and to choose other options.

- 1.18 A logical regression analysis³ of the performance of students from different social backgrounds shows that compared to those from the most deprived areas, other students can be expected to perform better. For example, the more affluent the area in which an individual lives, the better their chance of success, after taking into consideration other student and college characteristics.
- 1.19 The Department is working with the universities, through **Access to Success** and other initiatives, to increase the proportion of applicants from the lowest MDM quintile and to provide additional post-recruitment support for successful applicants to improve the retention and success rates for widening participation students. Section 3 examines in greater detail some of the work that is being done to counteract these trends.

Higher Education in Further Education Colleges (HE in FE)

- 1.20 Higher education encompasses enrolments for Level 4 to Level 8 qualifications. Level 4 is typified by programmes such as the Certificate in Higher Education (HNC) and similar industrial qualifications. Level 5 includes Diplomas in Higher Education (HND) and Foundation degrees. Level 6 refers to Bachelor degrees, while Levels 7 and 8 cover postgraduate Master degrees and Doctorates respectively.
- 1.21 Regional Further Education Colleges are the primary providers of intermediate level (Levels 4 and 5) higher education qualifications in Northern Ireland. Over the past four years the number of higher education enrolments at Further Education Colleges has increased each year, from 11,004 in 2010-11, to 11,576 in 2013-14. Higher education in Further Education Colleges (HE in FE) accounts for approximately 20% of all higher education enrolments in Northern Ireland.

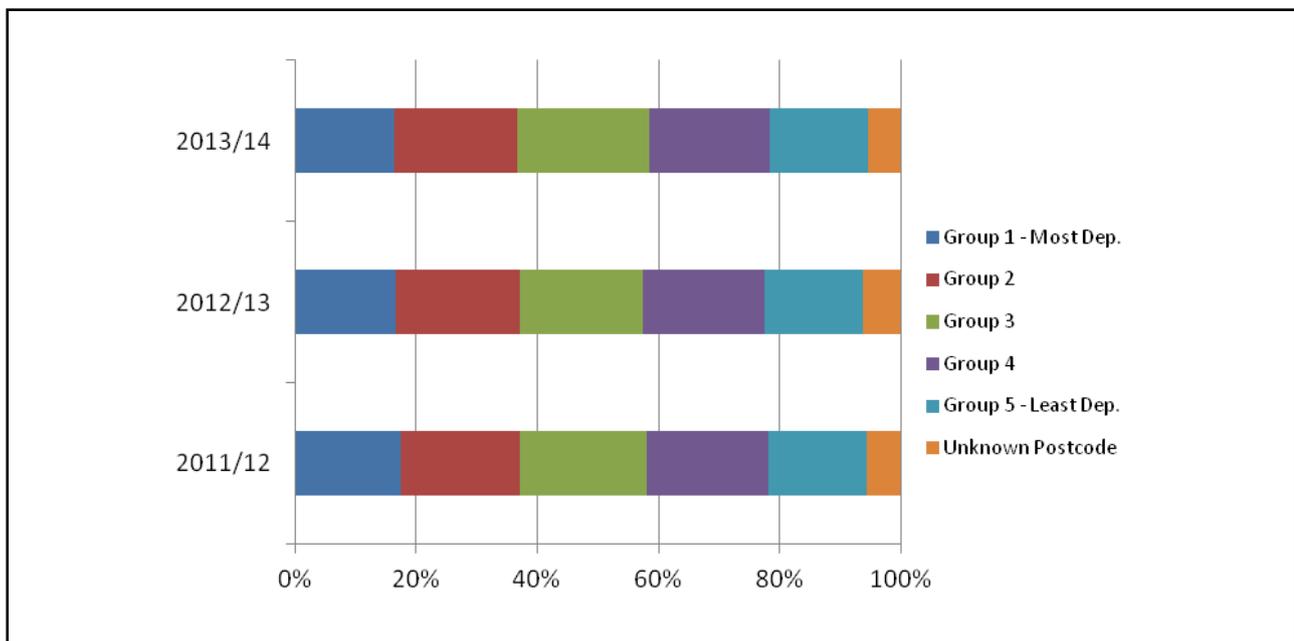
Table 3: HE in FE Enrolments by FE College and Academic Year

FE College	Academic Year			
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
BMC	3,771	3,513	3,324	3,285
NRC	1,173	1,388	1,548	1,511
NWRC	1,537	1,628	1,560	1,682
SERC	1,364	1,469	1,588	1,498
SRC	1,860	1,901	1,857	1,905
SWC	1,299	1,417	1,576	1,695
FE Sector Total	11,004	11,316	11,453	11,576

Source: DEL Analytical Services

- 1.22 Level 4 accounts for approximately one-third of all HE in FE enrolments. Level 5 around 60%, with the remainder at Level 6. Well over 90% of HE in FE enrolments are at sub-degree level but this is likely to change in the future as colleges develop part-time Level 6 programmes to meet the needs of local employers.
- 1.23 Gender split is fairly even in HE in FE enrolments but females tend to dominate in Health, Public Services, Care and Retail Enterprises. Male dominated subjects include Engineering, Manufacturing Technologies and Construction and the Built Environment.
- 1.24 As a sector, HE in FE tends to have a more equal balance of enrolments across the MDM with almost 20% of the student body coming from each of the quintiles from least to most deprived. However, this is largely due to compensating effects between colleges and masks an imbalance with high recruitment from the most deprived in Belfast and the North West with much lower enrolments from quintile 1 in the east of Northern Ireland.

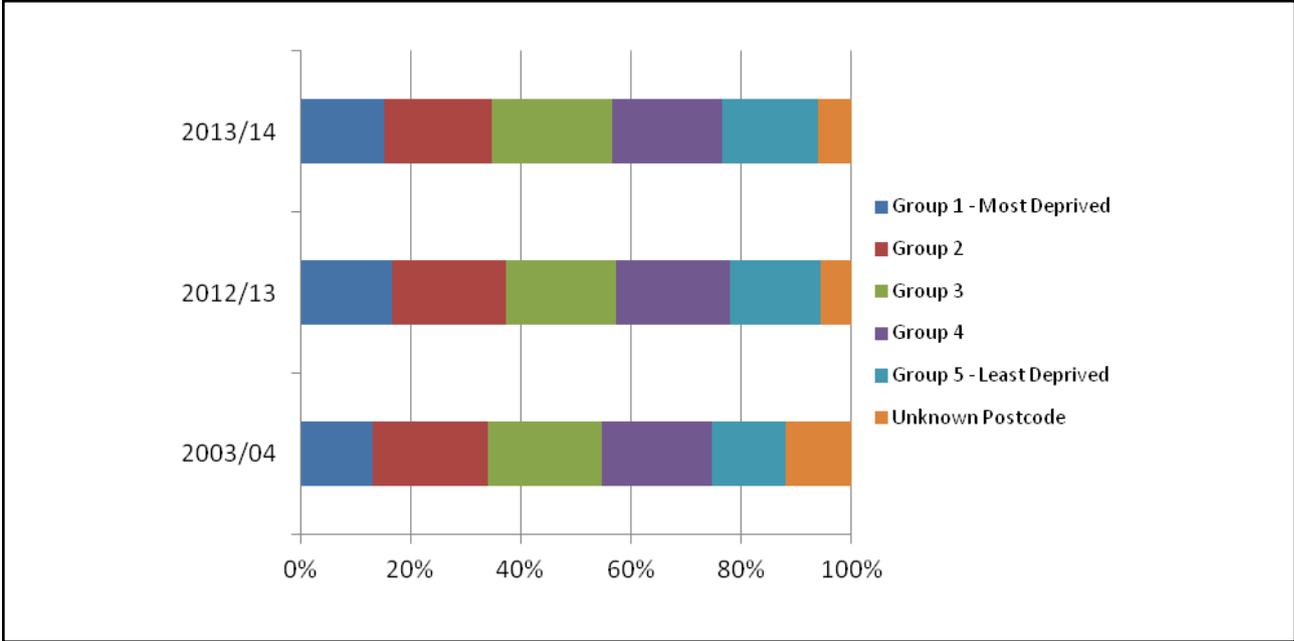
Figure 2: HE in FE enrolments at NI FE Colleges by Deprivation Quintile



Source: DEL Analytical Services

- 1.25 The retention, achievement and success rates of students from the most deprived 20% of areas are remarkably similar, although in all cases a few percentage points below those from less deprived areas. There may be a number of factors at play in this regard, including a more homogeneous level of ability among students at HE in FE. However, it may also be due to smaller student numbers and the higher levels of pastoral and other support provided by the colleges.

Figure 3: HE in FE full achievements at NI FE Colleges by Deprivation Quintiles



Source: DEL Analytical Services

Disability

1.26 The proportion of higher education students in receipt of Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA) in Northern Ireland is much lower than in other regions, with only 4.7% of all full-time undergraduates in receipt of DSA in 2013-14 compared to a UK average of 6.5%. Self-assessed disability is on the increase from around 2,600 students in 2009-10 to 3,300 in 2013-14, (or 6.9% of the student body). Students registered for DSA will automatically be included in all higher education institutions’ support measures for disabled students. However, self-assessed disabled students may not seek any additional support until a problem arises with their education. All of the local higher education providers have policies and procedures in place to support disabled students.

Implementation of Access to Success

1.27 The Department published **Access to Success**, the integrated Regional Strategy for widening participation in higher education in 2012. The overall thrust of the strategy is to focus, as much as possible, on individual students; with the overarching aim of trying to help local higher education providers to work to common definitions and measures for widening participation, while developing their own unique approaches within a common framework.

Data reporting

- 1.28 It is a key tenet of **Access to Success** that reliable and consistent information is available to all stakeholders to clearly identify successful initiatives and to accurately measure progress year on year. A number of improvements to data quality were advanced during the year.
- 1.29 Working in conjunction with the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Administrative Data Research Centre (ADRC), the Northern Ireland Research Statistics Agency (NISRA), Queen's and Ulster University, the Department has begun a project to link census information with Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) data in order to study the longer term trends in educational achievement. This key action is related to getting better data on participation and will allow a student's educational outcomes to be related to their parental, family and social circumstances. This work will be developed further in 2016.
- 1.30 The Department, in conjunction with key local stakeholders and internationally recognised experts, has undertaken a review of all pre and post-entry data that is currently gathered in respect of participation in higher education. A working sub-group has identified and taken steps to address specific gaps in the existing sources to be able to monitor progression into higher education for each target group.
- 1.31 The Department is also represented on a key HESA/HEFCE working group to redefine the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for all higher education institutions in the United Kingdom. Significant progress has been made on the KPI's related to widening participation. The preliminary results have been shared with all universities and HESA will begin collating the new data sets from 2016.
- 1.32 The next stage of this work will be to focus on how to better identify individuals in need of support. The local working group will seek to develop an approach that will recognise the personal circumstances of an individual applicant to higher education with the aim to devise a system that should be able to recognise and take account of multiple disadvantages to determine the correct package of support for the individual. There has been considerable interest in, and support for, this work from all major UK agencies including HESA, HEFCE and UCAS.

Raising Awareness and Aspirations

- 1.33 Examination of qualifications gained at Level 3 indicates that there are currently talented people from disadvantaged groups who could apply to higher education but who are disproportionately not doing so. Some will have made a conscious and rational decision to follow another path but the evidence suggests that many will have been put

off by social or other perceived barriers. In order to generate more applications from under-represented groups it is necessary to raise awareness of the accessibility of higher education and its power to improve one's career prospects, earnings potential and quality of life.

- 1.34 Working in conjunction with higher education providers, the Department has developed and implemented Reach Higher, a centralised promotional campaign to raise awareness of the potential value, and accessibility, of higher education to all in the community. The Reach Higher campaign centres on two real-life students who represent two of the key widening participation target groups – young working class males and mature adult returners. It includes TV, radio, digital media and outdoor advertising and promotes the message that higher education is for everyone who can benefit from it and is not reserved for an economically advantaged elite.
- 1.35 The campaign was temporarily suspended in 2015 due to severe budgetary constraints around all Executive approved advertising and promotional campaigns. The Reach Higher campaign resumed in the first quarter of 2016.

Helping to Raise Attainment

- 1.36 Even with high aspirations, the key to successful application to higher education is the strength of the second level qualifications gained at school. Although this is primarily a matter for the Department of Education and the school sector, the Department provides considerable financial support to our Universities and Further Education Colleges to support widening participation in higher education.
- 1.37 The Reach Higher campaign is further augmented by the new **R.E.A.C.H.** programme which offers project funding, on a competitive basis, to encourage higher education institutions to develop new community outreach initiatives in schools, colleges, communities and the workplace designed to raise the educational attainment levels in under-represented communities to better enable entry to higher education.
- 1.38 **R.E.A.C.H** includes special project funding for programmes which allow the universities to develop partnerships with non-selective, post-primary schools in disadvantaged areas to raise awareness of the benefits of higher education and to help pupils attain the necessary qualification for entry.

Disability

- 1.39 Representatives from the local higher education institutions, the students unions and disability action groups, have been engaged in work to develop an agreed set of parameters across all providers that will define circumstances in which the institutions might give additional consideration to an application for admission.
- 1.40 The group has examined a number of programmes of exceptional application for disabled students currently operating in both Ireland and Britain. Discussions have centred on the potential for a centralised process that would employ medical, educational and disability experts help to determine any educational disadvantage which may have been suffered by disabled applicants to higher education in Northern Ireland.
- 1.41 Universities are autonomous bodies and have a responsibility in law to set their own admissions criteria, therefore participation in a centralised process must be on a voluntary basis. Nevertheless, agreement to participate in a regional system that could recognise the educational disadvantage suffered by some disabled applicants might permit the selection process at individual higher education institutions to proceed with a fuller consideration of the applicant's future potential.
- 1.42 The project working group is currently exploring the possibility of developing a pilot route of exceptional application for disabled students for introduction in the 2017-18 academic year.

Widening Access and Participation Plans

- 1.43 The Northern Ireland legislation⁴ on student fees requires all higher education institutions that wish to charge more than the basic higher education fee, to secure the Department's approval for a formal plan that details the steps that the institution will take to promote widening participation in higher education. The "Approved Plan" must detail the activities that individual institutions will undertake to promote fair access to higher education through outreach work and financial support to students.
- 1.44 Up to 2012, the Department contracted with the UK Office of Fair Access (OFFA), to benchmark Northern Ireland's institutions' Approved Plans against other UK institutions. That contractual agreement also covered the monitoring of an institution's performance against the commitments in their Approved Plans. However, following the publication of **Access to Success**, and the introduction of much higher student fees in Britain, the Department has revised the reporting arrangements for local higher education institutions.

4 The Education Student Fees (Approved Plans) Regulations 2005

1.45 2015-16 saw the full introduction of the annual Widening Access and Participation Plans (WAPP) which are provided by all of the DEL-funded higher education providers in Northern Ireland. In line with Key Action 11 of **Access to Success**, the Department has amalgamated the former Access Agreements (AA) and Widening Participation Strategic Assessments (WPSA) into a single annual submission.

1.46 The Widening Access and Participation Plan is a three-part document.

- Part One, contains a narrative description of the institution's strategic approach to widening participation and its place within the organisational mission, set in a three-year context.
- Part Two, provides a detailed breakdown of anticipated income and expenditure for the next-but-one academic year⁵, for specific programmes that will improve equality of access for all qualified applicants. It also includes details of the initiatives to promote sustained progression of students thought to be at risk of non-completion. The information in this section is provided at least 18 months ahead of the relevant academic year in order to allow for publication in advance of students applying to courses.
- Part Three, is a monitoring report that provides a detailed breakdown of income and expenditure on widening participation for the last academic year for which records are available. In time this will allow for direct comparison with the detail provided in part two of their previous WAPP.⁶

1.47 Institutions are asked to report on all direct and indirect expenditure on widening participation initiatives and programmes. For consistency of comparison with previous years direct expenditure equates with former Access Agreement, while indirect expenditure will compare with WPSA spend. For additional detail on these definitions see appendix A.

5 For example, a WAPP submitted to the Department for approval in early 2015 would relate to the academic year 2016-17.

6 It is important to note that the Part Three Monitoring report is retrospective and is based on information gathered on the previous academic year. Parts One and Two are forward looking, specific for one year and a more general view of an institution's longer term strategy. In this way the WAPP can cover up to a five-year time span. It is expected that as time passes and reports accumulate this will provide a very transparent and accountable view of progress towards widening participation.

Investment in Widening Participation Activities

- 1.48 The individual institution's expenditure detailed in its approved WAPP covers only the percentage of higher fee income that universities and colleges target at under-represented students, or potential students, as identified in **Access to Success**. Therefore the WAPP will include the bursary/scholarship and outreach expenditure targeted at DEL countable groups⁷.
- 1.49 There is no set amount that an institution must spend on widening participation. That is to allow for flexibility of approach across the institutions. However, the Department does regulate a minimum amount of the additional fee income should be reinvested in widening participation, with an expectation of higher investment levels from those institutions with the furthest distance to travel to attract students from under-represented groups. The minimum amount of reinvestment will vary from time to time with the level of funding available and the degree of success achieved in widening participation across the sector.
- 1.50 During 2015, the Minister recognised the competing pressures within the widening participation agenda and reduced the minimum required level of reinvestment in widening participation programmes to 10% of additional student fee income. This would provide institutions with a greater degree of flexibility in their approach and sought to protect recruitment numbers at a time of reduced resources from central Government.
- 1.51 While the primary source of funding for widening participation investment comes from additional student fee income, the Department also provides supplementary premium funds in the block grant in recognition of the additional costs that can arise after the recruitment of widening participation students. The widening participation premium assists with the costs of retaining those students who are at a greater risk of not completing their chosen course. In addition, the Department pays a widening access premium to enable the institutions to provide specialist equipment and/or specific support to student with disabilities or learning difficulties. The level of the premia is determined by the numbers of widening participation or disabled students enrolled at the institution.
- 1.52 In 2014-15 the combined premia to the universities and university colleges was £1.73m. In addition, the **R.E.A.C.H** programme has allocated up to £3.5m over five years in additional support to universities to encourage new and innovative educational attainment-raising programmes at school, college, community and the workplace.

⁷ For a description of DEL countable groups please see the attached Glossary of Terms

Improving Retention and Progression

- 1.53 **Access to Success** recognised that there was a steady decline in student successful outcomes as the levels of deprivation increased. There was also a high correlation between widening participation students and the risk of non-completion. While there is no single over-arching reason for student drop-out the evidence shows that retention is generally better in institutions that monitor attendance and where academic staff routinely follow up non-attendance. Indications are that institutions now routinely monitor attendance for all students in line with the recommendation of **Access to Success**.
- 1.54 Within the WAPP process, the Department monitors the development of additional support measures for students to sustain their continuing participation in higher education. **Access to Success** places a clear expectation on the higher education institutions to provide supplementary support systems for these students as they enter into and progress through higher education. This support should be tailored to individual needs and based on identified multiple disadvantages with the emphasis on value for money in each support initiative rather than large cash bursaries for individuals. All higher education providers outline their plans for these support arrangements for widening participation students through Key Action 11, the introduction of the annual Widening Access and Participation Plan.
- 1.55 The Department continues to work with all higher education providers to develop and launch philanthropic bursary programmes. The aim is to work with local employers and other interested groups to help to develop local bursary programmes within disadvantaged communities. Over the last year, seven additional such bursary programmes have been developed at institutions and are promoted to prospective applicants through the Reach Higher programme.

Foundation Degrees

- 1.56 Foundation degrees are the Department's preferred qualification at intermediate level higher education. They are designed, developed and delivered with significant input from local employers to ensure that they meet the needs of local industry and commerce.
- 1.57 Foundation degrees form the basis for the new Higher Level Apprenticeships. They also make an important contribution to widening participation by making higher education, and consequently higher level skills, readily available to employers and employees at a local level. Since 2012, there has been a steady increase in part-time enrolments, attracting larger numbers of adult returners to higher education.

- 1.58 Excellent progress has been made on **Access to Success** targets to expand enrolments on Foundation degrees. A wide ranging and highly successful promotional campaign ran from the beginning of 2013 to the middle of 2015. The aim of this programme was to increase enrolments of Foundation degrees to 2,500 by 2015 from a baseline of 1,147 in 2010. The most recent enrolment figures show that the year on year increase in Foundation degree enrolments has continued, standing at 2,955 for Academic year 2014/15.
- 1.59 The Department's lead role in this project has now come to an end and the responsibility for future promotion activity has passed to the local FE Colleges. Working together in a coordinated manner the sector has undertaken a variety of promotional opportunities, including press and online advertising with new case studies; careers fairs, recruitment and employer events. The Department has made available a small amount of funding to produce a new "talking heads" video to promote Foundation degrees and Higher Level Apprenticeships that will be used by the colleges in their individual marketing campaigns.

Conclusion

- 1.60 Good progress has been made across all of the key actions flowing from **Access to Success**. The Department remains committed to a future vision of a sector in which those people who are most able but least likely to participate are given every encouragement and support to achieve the necessary qualifications to apply to, and to benefit from, higher education.

2. 2013-14 ACCESS AGREEMENT MONITORING REPORTS



2. 2013-14 ACCESS AGREEMENT MONITORING REPORTS

Expenditure

2.1 There is a legal requirement for institutions with approved Access Agreements to inform the Department, (and previously OFFA) about the extent to which they have met their financial obligations and to report on their progress and milestones.

2.2 Institutions are asked to report on:

- total higher fee income broken down by number of students in each fee category;
- expenditure on bursaries and scholarships to students on lower incomes and other cohorts;
- the number of students in receipt of bursaries and scholarships by income and cohort;
- expenditure on additional outreach activities listed in the Access Agreement;
- unspent financial commitments to be reallocated to subsequent years; and
- progress against own targets and milestones.

2.3 For the 2013-14 academic year, seven higher education institutions had approved Access Agreements. They were:

- Belfast Metropolitan College
- Queen's University, Belfast
- South Eastern Regional College
- South West College
- St Mary's University College
- Stranmillis University College
- Ulster University

Table 4

	2012-13	2013-14
Additional Fee Income	£54,486,062	£57,091,465
Number Fee Paying Students	29,261	28,800
Access Agreement Expenditure	£13,579,275	£12,683,444
Percentage of additional fee income invested	24.9%	22.2%
Average percentage of additional fee income invested per institution	31.8%	29.2%

Higher Fee Income

2.4 In 2013-14, the income generated from fees charged above the basic fee level was £57.1m, up from £54.5m in 2012-13. The number of fee-paying students covered by Access Agreements dropped back to 28,800 from a high point of 29,261 in 2012-13. There was an inflationary increase in the maximum fee and there were also increases in fees charged for full-time Foundation degrees and other HE in FE courses at lower levels, i.e. sub-degrees.

Access Agreement Expenditure

2.5 Overall expenditure by higher education institutions on Access Agreements dropped back to £12.5m from £13.5m in 2012-13, but still representing a sustained level of investment among institutions at around 29% of their higher fee income. Precise levels of required investment are not set out in legislation, nor does the Department specify what investments individual institutions should make. The policy is to give institutions the operational freedom to determine, within the broad Departmental guidance, what should be the appropriate levels and areas of investment for them. For the academic year 2013-14, institutions have more than met the Department's expectations for the reinvestment of a minimum 20% of additional student fee income in widening participation support to less advantaged students.

2.6 Access Agreement expenditure can be disaggregated into three main elements; bursaries and scholarships, additional outreach and unspent funds reallocated to subsequent years. (See Table 5)

Table 5

	2012-13	2013-14
Bursaries / Scholarships	£9,264,760	£9,425,050
Outreach Investment	£4,314,515	£6,662,463
Reallocated funds from previous years	£nil	£1,984,616

Bursaries/Scholarships

2.7 Spend on bursaries/scholarships increased slightly across most institutions and amounted to £9.4m in 2013-14 compared to £9.26m in 2012-13. The design of institutions' bursary programmes, beyond the minimum bursary level set by the Department, is for individual universities and colleges to determine.

The Department expected that it would cost even the most diverse institutions with high levels of students receiving full grant, no more than 10% of their additional fee income to deliver the minimum bursary. In the event institutions used an average of between 8% and 22% of their total additional fee income in this way. The Department is satisfied that most institutions met or exceeded their own commitments on bursary support.

- 2.8 The levels of bursary payments fell at most institutions during the period. This reflects a growing trend among higher education institutions to re-evaluate their widening participation programmes to redirect support from cash payments to less disadvantaged students into programmes of outreach to under-represented communities. The largest drop in bursary payments was at Ulster University, while the largest increase in outreach activity spend was at Queen's University. Ulster, Queen's, Stranmillis and South Eastern Regional College all increased the number of students receiving bursaries but paid significantly smaller individual amounts.
- 2.9 Across all institutions 12,405 full time students received a bursary payment in 2013-14. The level of bursary awards depended on the personal circumstances of individual students and ranged from a high of just under £1,000 at St Mary's University College to a minimum bursary of just over £200 at South Eastern Regional College. The average institutional bursary was £544 in 2013-14.

Additional Outreach

- 2.10 Institutions have increased their focus on investment in additional outreach activities in line with the strategic direction outlined in **Access to Success**. The universities and colleges deliver programmes that work directly with pupils and students in non selective post primary schools in order to support attainment. The aim is to assist potential applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds to maximise their potential to benefit from higher education.
- 2.11 The 2013-14 monitoring of Access Agreements recorded an increased spend on outreach activities across almost all of the institutions from £4.3m in 2012-13, to £5.2m in 2013-14 – an increase of around 20%. This is a very welcome development as research has shown that well-targeted outreach is the key to sustained improvement in access to higher education. The Department will be keen to see such programmes developed further in subsequent years.

Reallocated Funds

- 2.12 Institutions are required to reallocate funds when they have spent less than they had predicted on elements within their Access Agreement. This may occur when institutions spend less than they had forecast on particular activities or programmes due to changed priorities or other reasons. Whatever the reason, institutions are obliged to meet all of their financial commitments in-year or to reallocate any unspent funds to a subsequent year.
- 2.13 In 2013-14, reallocated funds amounted to £1.05m or around 8% of total funds committed in the Access Agreements. There were no reallocated funds in 2012-13.

Targets and Milestones

- 2.14 As the table below demonstrates, there was improvement against all of the widening participation performance indicators in 2013-14. Participation of all undergraduate students from Quintile 1 has improved to 14.7% of the total student body, while participation from Quintiles 1&2 has improved to 33.2%. Disabled enrolments have increased slightly to 6.9% and the percentage participation of adult returners has increased to 27.4%.
- 2.15 Participation among young males remains stubbornly low for both Catholics and Protestants. However, total participation for all young males rose from 2.66% in 2012-13 to 2.74% in 2013-14. It should be noted that there are many more young catholic males in the Quintile 1 population. Therefore, while young protestant males are statistically underrepresented, young catholic males are numerically underrepresented. Nevertheless, the numbers of persons participating in higher education from both groups is considerably lower than might reasonably be expected.

Table 6: Widening Participation Key Performance Indicators.

	2012-13			2013-14		
	Unis	HE in FE	Total	Unis	HE in FE	Total
MDM Quintile 1	14.0%	16.8%	14.6%	14.2%	16.1%	14.7%
MDM Quintile 1&2	31.8%	37.1%	33.0%	32.2%	36.4%	33.2%
Disability Declared	7.0%	6.0%	6.8%	7.1%	6.4%	6.9%
Young Males (C)	1.7%	1.6%	1.7%	1.7%	2.0%	1.6%
Young Males (P)	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%	0.4%
Adult Returners	22.7%	43.0%	27.4%	22.9%	42.3%	27.4%

- 2.16 Each year, as part of their monitoring returns, institutions are also required to report on their progress towards their own targets and milestones. Universities and colleges set their own targets in their Access Agreements based on their individual profiles of participation and the identified areas where they need to improve to achieve improvements in recruitment and/or retention. When considering whether targets are sufficiently ambitious the Department takes a view of the overall participation profile of the institution, its performance in outreach activities at various stages of the educational pipeline and the distance it has to travel to achieve a balanced student body.
- 2.17 It is important to bear in mind that monitoring reports are retrospective. The Department collects data at the end of each academic year to capture all that the institutions have delivered in the previous year. Therefore, public reporting of actual progress can be considerably in arrears at the academic year end.
- 2.18 There is no single measure that best captures progress because the institutions are diverse and Access Agreements vary significantly in their content depending on what an individual institution is trying to achieve. The setting and achieving of annual targets must be viewed in the context of changing demographics, trends within the local and national educational systems, the wider social and economic environment, and the characteristics of the individual institution.
- 2.19 Measuring universities' and colleges' progress in widening participation, particularly at the level of the individual institution, is very complex because of the large number of individual factors and circumstances that influence an institution's performance. Furthermore, the range of targets and milestones that each university or college sets itself varies considerably as a result of the differing institutional strategies across the sector. At the same time there are currently few stable indicators against which performance can be measured.
- 2.20 In addition, institutions currently find it difficult to disaggregate the impact of individual initiatives and access measures from the many variable factors influencing participation.
- 2.21 The Department recognises that monitoring performance is complex. However, because of the growing public interest in institutions' access performance the Department is reviewing and refining the monitoring methods to increase the focus on outcomes to ensure a greater consistency of reporting and to make it more transparent in future years. More detail on this work is contained in Section 4.

3. WIDENING ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLANS FOR 2016-17



3. WIDENING ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLANS FOR 2016-17

- 3.1 Beginning in 2014, every higher education institution in receipt of funding from the Department for Employment and Learning is required to submit an annual Widening Access and Participation Plan (WAPP) for approval, regardless of the level of fee being charged for their higher education courses.
- 3.2 Given the different reporting period covered by the new WAPP arrangements and to ensure continuity with earlier reporting and monitoring arrangements, every institution was required to submit, and have approved, an old-style Access Agreement covering the period to August 2015. These Access Agreements will be monitored as normal during the transition period.
- 3.3 For the 2016-17 academic year institutions were asked to estimate:
- the total higher fee income broken down by number of students in each fee category;
 - expenditure on bursaries, scholarships or additional financial support to students on lower incomes and other cohorts;
 - the number of students in receipt of bursaries, scholarships or additional financial support to students by income and cohort;
 - expenditure on additional outreach activities as previously listed in the Access Agreement;
 - new expenditure on additional post-entry retention and progression support for widening participation students; and
 - expenditure on research to improve the setting of targets and milestones.
- 3.4 Institutions were also asked to detail direct expenditure on their own widening participation initiatives grouped into categories covering outreach, post-entry retention and progression and research. Institutions also provided a narrative on each initiative outlining the activity type, target groups, estimated spend and anticipated outcomes. Staffing costs are usually included within the programme spend but additional central administration costs can be listed separately.
- 3.5 For the 2016-17 academic year, 10 higher education institutions anticipate that they will earn additional fee income by charging higher than basic level fees. They are:
- Belfast Metropolitan College
 - Northern Regional College
 - North West Regional College
 - Queen's University

- South Eastern Regional College
- Southern Regional College
- South West College
- St Mary’s University College
- Stranmillis University College
- Ulster University

Table 7

	2016-17
Estimated Additional Fee Income	£61,944,261
Estimated Number Fee Paying Students	30,181
Estimated WAPP Expenditure	£8,611,160
Estimated Percentage of additional fee income invested	13.9%

- 3.6 The key to a successful institutional widening participation strategy lies in the better targeting of available resources to those most in need. The available evidence suggests that if additional assistance is too widely available it can actually exacerbate the difficulties and increase the challenges for those in widening participation groups.
- 3.7 The anticipated expenditure for 2016-17 can be disaggregated into four main elements; bursaries and scholarships, additional outreach, new expenditure on additional post-entry retention and institutional research into widening participation.

Bursaries/Scholarships versus Outreach

- 3.8 The University of Essex used multivariate logistical regression to analyse the relationship between bursaries and retention for enrolments between 2006 and 2013. The evaluation found that students in receipt of a bursary were more likely to continue on their course compared to those who did not. It was found that bursaries had the greatest effect among female students, older mature students and students from lowest participation neighbourhoods.
- 3.9 **Access to Success** found that while bursaries were useful in supporting students during their studies and contributed to retention success, they were of little influence in persuading less affluent students to apply to higher education in the first instance.
- 3.10 Spend on bursaries/scholarships is set to reduce across most institutions. However, in most cases, that reduction is offset by a significant increase in anticipated spend on new outreach activities at both school and community levels and in post-retention support to disadvantaged students.

3.11 Direct outreach and attainment raising activities in low participation communities have been proven to be much more successful vehicles in helping under-represented groups gain access to higher education. The rebalancing of spend from widespread bursaries to more targeted outreach and post-entry support for widening participation students is wholly in line with the regional strategy outlined in **Access to Success**.

New Post-entry retention initiatives

- 3.12 Failure to complete a chosen course of study can be an expensive business for all involved, resulting in a loss of time, money and other resources for the student, the university or college, and the Department as the ultimate funding body.
- 3.13 **Access to Success** found that there is a balance to be struck between widening participation while improving retention. Students from different backgrounds need different support structures to complete their courses successfully.
- 3.14 The Department welcomes the anticipated new expenditure to ensure that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are retained and supported to successfully complete their course.

Research

- 3.15 In addition to the work being undertaken within the implementation of **Access to Success** to improve data gathering, the institutions have also indicated that they are undertaking significant levels of work to improve the information they hold on their own student body to help establish key baselines and to improve target setting for future years.
- 3.16 A number of the institutions have outlined plans to develop their understanding of widening participation students' needs in order to improve delivery of support structures. This includes;
- building databases to allow the monitoring and tracking of participants and the collection and analysis of demographic data;
 - delivering qualitative interventions with potential students, their parents and their teachers;

- developing structured, flexible evaluation techniques for use in outreach activities;
- pursuing data-sharing arrangements with schools and colleges to gather additional information on attainment and progression outcomes; and
- undertaking research into the effectiveness of their widening participation activities.

Organisational Development

- 3.17 All of the higher educational institutions involved in the preparation of the Widening Access and Participation Plans reported that while the process was much more demanding, it was also much more beneficial in helping them to focus on the needs of the students and what they should be doing to fulfil their widening participation obligations.
- 3.18 Almost all of the institutions reported that they have reorganised the widening participation reporting structures within their university or college to include greater oversight of this work by the senior management team. This is a welcome development that indicates a much greater focus on this important area within the institutions.

4. THE FUTURE DIRECTION FOR WIDENING PARTICIPATION



4. THE FUTURE DIRECTION FOR WIDENING PARTICIPATION

Areas for further development

- 4.1 There has been very considerable progress made in the widening participation agenda over the last few years. Enrolments from most underrepresented groups have improved and institutions are making good progress with student retention and success.
- 4.2 Ongoing evaluation of the Reach Higher promotional campaign indicates a significant increase in the awareness of the accessibility of higher education among underrepresented groups. Outreach activities by the higher education providers are on the increase and there is evidence of increased enrolments from adult returners and part time Foundation degree students.
- 4.3 The new annual Widening Access and Participation Plan (WAPP) submission from the institutions is working well and most institutions report better planning and coordination of widening participation initiatives within their own management structures.
- 4.4 However, with the increasing pressure on Departmental budgets and the reductions in funding to the higher education sector, it is clear that institutions will not be able to continue to invest their current high levels of expenditure on widening participation activities. At present most institutions invest considerably more than the 10% minimum required, with the average anticipated expenditure in 2015-16 at 17.5% of additional fee income.
- 4.5 In response to the reductions in block grant, the universities have indicated that student numbers will fall over the next three years. There is a pressing need to ensure that the burden of these reductions does not fall disproportionately on those from more disadvantaged backgrounds.
- 4.6 On a positive note, the Department's plans to introduce enhanced student finance arrangements for part-time undergraduate and taught postgraduate students from 2017/18 onwards should have a significant positive impact on the widening participation agenda. A more accessible support package for part-time students in particular, will enable more people from underrepresented groups to study at a pace which suits them and will help them to balance their studies with other commitments.

Key Performance Indicators

- 4.7 It is clear that if higher education institutions are to meet the Minister's expectations of no reduction in student widening participation outcomes, they will need to further improve their targeting and focus their limited resources on the most disadvantaged underrepresented groups.
- 4.8 To assist the institutions' planning, the Department will provide each of the higher education institutes with the latest available verified key data pertaining to that institution's performance in enrolling students from identified under-represented groups. Individual institutions will be expected to use this data, together with any other evidence it has been gathering for itself, to analyse critically its own participation profile and to identify any weaknesses, or areas for further improvement, in terms of attracting new applicants from under-represented groups to achieve a more diverse student body.
- 4.9 Each institution will have a different profile of enrolment across the identified target groups and will face its own unique set of circumstances in terms of widening participation. Consequently, each institution will have its own unique set of targets for improvement. The Department will expect to see evidence of mitigating actions contained within each of the Widening Access and Participation Plans to address key areas of underrepresentation.
- 4.10 The Department will continue to monitor all of the key Performance Indicators (KPI) for widening participation with a particular focus on the **Access to Success** KPI's related to Multiple Deprivation Measures (MDM), disability, young males from disadvantaged areas, adult returners and care experienced young persons.

Improved Data Gathering

- 4.11 Several institutions have recorded new initiatives in their Widening Access and Participation Plans to improve their collection of student data for targeting purposes. The Department recognises the value in the use of UK wide benchmarks available through UCAS or HESA, and is very much involved in the work to redefine the KPIs for the higher education sector. In line with that work, the Department will cease to measure participation using Standard Economic Classifications (SEC) from 2016-17 and will focus on the MDM for a more in-depth analysis of local participation trends.

- 4.12 The Department, in conjunction with the local providers of higher education and other key stakeholders at UK level, is undertaking a major project within **Graduating to Success** to develop sector-wide data collection and comparison tools. This work includes the initiation of a longitudinal study of educational attainment to identify patterns of disadvantage when applying to higher education.
- 4.13 Project 17, as it is known, also includes a review of the current methods for the collation of data pertaining to access to, and participation in, higher education with a view to the better identification of widening participation students based on multiple disadvantages and including an assessment of individual needs.

Institutions' evaluation of plans and activities (Output Measures)

- 4.14 The current legislation governing Higher Education Student Fees places a duty on the Department to monitor and report on financial and other inputs to improve widening participation performance at institutions. However, the Department is keen to broaden the existing reporting structures to put a much greater emphasis on outputs and student outcomes to allow institutions to be fully recognised for the very significant progress that is being made in this area.
- 4.15 The Department will seek to place a higher emphasis on outcomes by providing better data support and an increased challenge to institutions on their performance. The increased commentary and transparency required by the WAPP reporting processes provides both greater accountability and increased recognition for institutions in their efforts. The higher level of information available also helps to inform the dialogue and actions to improve performance through an improved understanding of what works to widen participation in higher education.
- 4.16 A key challenge for the institutions, and the Department, will be to find ways to better understand and measure the extent to which progress is being made in widening participation both in recruitment to, and progression through, higher education.
- 4.17 Institutions are empowered to design and deliver initiatives and activities for disadvantaged students that best suit their circumstances and objectives. However, that diversity of approach inevitably leads to complexity in evaluation.

- 4.18 Going forward, the Department will wish to see higher education providers undertake formal evaluation processes to assess the effectiveness of their own widening participation initiatives using the four-level Kirkpatrick Model.⁸
- 4.19 In the Kirkpatrick Evaluation Model, Level One measures participants' reactions to the programme and is essential to productive engagement. Level Two assesses the extent to which participants have learned; for example, have they advanced in skill, knowledge and attitude toward participation in higher education? Level Three measures the transfer that has occurred in the participants' behaviour due to the programme, while Level Four measures the outcomes in terms of increased application rates, decreased drop-outs and improved student success.
- 4.20 Use of the Kirkpatrick Model evaluation should always begin at level one and then move sequentially through levels two, three and four using the information gained in the previous level as a base for the next level evaluation. Over time the analysis becomes more rigorous as experience and budgets allow.
- 4.21 The Department will also work with the institutions to collectively measure the impact of institutions' work and thereby ensure that future investments are focussed on the activities that deliver the most impact. This will involve having more in-depth conversations with the institutions about what works best to improve access, retention and student progression to give more meaningful support to institutions in developing their plans and to have more evidence-based discussions about their progress. The Department will seek better ways to ensure the dissemination of best practice across the sector by way of seminars, working groups and other medium.
- 4.22 The Department expects that this information will be used to improve targeting of specific under-represented groups. It is important to note that while it is useful to record changes in participation of under-represented groups on an annual basis, the true impact of many types of interventions can only be demonstrated when more intensive evaluation work is carried out with particular cohorts over a longer timeframe.

8 Donald Kirkpatrick 1994

APPENDICES

Appendix A	Glossary of Terms	37
Appendix B	Institutional Breakdown of Additional Fee Income and Widening Participation Expenditure for 2012/13 and 2013/14	43
Appendix C	Institutional Breakdown of Types of Widening Expenditure for 2012/13 and 2013/14	45
Appendix D	Expenditure on Bursaries/ Scholarships in 2012/13 and 2013/14	47
Appendix E	Projected Additional Fee Income and Anticipated Widening Participation Expenditure in 2014/15	49
Appendix F	Institutional Breakdown of Additional Fee Income and Widening Participation Expenditure for 2015/16 and 2016/17	51

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Glossary of Terms

Access Agreement

These set out how a university or college plans to protect and promote fair access to and participation in higher education for people with low income backgrounds and other groups that are currently under-represented at the institution. It includes the tuition fees they intend to charge, the milestones and objectives the institution chooses to use to monitor its progress and working estimates of the higher fee income and what is intended to be spent on widening participation. All publicly funded institutions must have an approved widening participation (Access Agreement) plan.

Additional measures or expenditure:

By 'additional' we mean measures funded by income from student tuition fees from previous access agreements that the institution will continue to deliver, plus any new measures that are to be delivered in future years. Institutions may also include measures that were previously funded through other means; for example, collaborative working.

Basic (Standard) level of fee:

The level of tuition fee up to which an access agreement is not required, for example £1,425 in academic year 2013-14; £1465 in academic year 2014-15; £1510 in academic year 2015-16; and £1555 in academic year 2016-17.

Baseline:

The actual performance recorded in the institutions latest monitoring report.

Bursaries:

A grant or scholarship paid to a student by an institution

Cohort:

Usually this refers to a group of students that enters education in a particular year, for example the 2014-15 cohort

Contextual Information or Contextual Data:

Information used by institutions which puts attainment in the context of the circumstances in which it has been obtained; this is mainly information about educational, geo-demographic and socio-economic background.

Countable Spend (OFFA)

The OFFA definition of countable spend includes; fee waivers, free/discounted foundation years, bursaries, scholarships and in-kind support (including discounts on accommodation and other institutional services such as the provision of laptops).

- Countable Spend (DEL)
- The DEL definition of countable spend includes the following types of expenditure on widening participation students
- Bursary payments / Scholarships / Fee-waivers
- Student credit (bookshop/IT equipment discounts, etc)
- Additional support for Care leavers
- Additional support for Disabled students (not covered by DSA or other DEL financed support)
- Tailored induction programmes for WP students
- Free accommodation for WP students
- Targeted outreach programmes to improve attainment and attract students from under-represented, (expenditure should include apportioned direct staffing costs – including basis for that apportionment)
- Targeted student retention programmes aimed at improving the retention and progression of WP students, (expenditure should include apportioned direct staffing costs – including basis for that apportionment)
- Consumables (group work materials, training aids, IT equipment)
- Administration costs for widening participation support staff that cannot be directly attributable to programmes, (such costs would be expected to be quite low and certainly not greater than 10% of overall direct expenditure).

Direct Expenditure:

Direct expenditure will equate to “Countable” Access spend and can include costs directly attributable to the institution’s outreach activities with targeted under-represented groups or disadvantaged persons, as well as post recruitment costs such as bursaries, fee waivers, in-kind support, pre-paid credit arrangements, targeted mentoring or pastoral care programmes.

Entrant/year of entry:

When we refer to entrants, or year of entry, we mean the academic year in which students started their course.

Fee cap:

The maximum regulated fee that can be charged under an access agreement for example Home / EU students up to £3,575 in academic year 2013-14; 2013-14; £3685 in academic year 2014-15; £3805 in academic year 2015-16; and £3925 in academic year 2016-17.

Fair access:

Equality of opportunity for all those who have the potential to benefit from higher education, irrespective of their background, schooling or income. This term is often used with reference to the uneven distribution of under-represented students between institutions across the higher education sector, in particular, where entry requirements are high and the pool of applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds is relatively small.

Fair access work:

Work aimed at improving access of under-represented groups to your institution or institutions like yours (whether measured against the background population, or the background population of qualified people).

FEC:

Further Education College

Fee-regulated courses:

Those full-time courses that are subject to regulated fees.

FTE:

Full-time equivalent

HEI:

Higher education institution

Higher fees/higher level of fee:

Tuition fees above the basic level and up to the higher fee cap for example Between £1,425 and £3,575 in academic year 2013-14; 2013-14; £1465 and £3685 in academic year 2014-15; £1510 and £3805 in academic year 2015-16; and £1555 and £3925 in academic year 2016-17.

IAG:

Information, advice and guidance

Indirect Expenditure:

Indirect expenditure will equate to that currently included in the Strategic Assessment. Such expenditure will include, (but not be limited to), other miscellaneous student support and administration costs such as:

- Generic student support services (excl DEL countable)
- Support for student bodies
- Student employability programmes
- Facilitation Costs

Long-term outreach: Activities which target younger age groups and work with the same students over a sustained period of time, for example over a number of years through different types of activities.

Milestones:

The yearly goals institutions set within targets in order to track progress.

Office for Fair Access (OFFA)

The Office for Fair Access was established under the Higher Education Act 2004. Its role is to safeguard and promote fair access to higher education in England through the approval and monitoring of Access Agreements and the promotion of related good practice.

Outreach:

For the purposes of an access agreement, outreach work includes any activity that involves raising aspirations and attainment among potential applicants from under-represented groups and encouraging them to apply to higher education. This includes outreach directed at young or mature students aspiring to full or part-time study. We particularly encourage sustained, co-ordinated activities that work with pupils and other potential applicants over a number of years.

PI:

Performance indicator

Scholarships:

A sum of money awarded to a student on the basis of academic merit, to help with expenses incurred to facilitate study.

Staffing Costs (Administration): [OFFA definition]

Expenditure on staffing in central WP units/departments, and/or on staff which spend all or a fixed proportion of their time on WP work, and which cannot be allocated to directly delivering a particular activity, should be listed separately and categorised under the WP staffing and administration category. Expenditure on staff working directly on a particular activity, such as student ambassadors, mentors or summer school staff and staff delivering outreach events or carrying out work designed to improve student retention and success, should be included within expenditure against that activity, which will be categorised under the appropriate category. This may mean that costs for some members of staff are split between different categories, where some but not all of their work involves directly delivering particular activities

Student success:

Measures that ensure that students access the full benefits of higher education by completing their studies, and improve academic outcomes and employability.

Student population covered by access agreements: Full-time home/EU undergraduate students.

Target:

A set objective which an institution has committed to track over a five year period.

Target Groups:

Target groups may vary for each higher education provider but should be drawn broadly from groups identified in Access to Success.

Under-represented groups:

Groups that are currently under-represented in higher education at the national level rather than at a particular institution or course, including (but not limited to):

- people from lower socio-economic groups SEC 5-7 or from neighbourhoods where higher education participation is low (areas of high deprivation)
- disabled people (physical, sensory, learning)
- adult returners, particularly work based learners
- people who have been in care.
- young, protestant males (from areas of high deprivation)

Variable fees:

The full-time undergraduate tuition fees payable to an institution. Variable fees were introduced by the Higher Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2005.

For 2013-14, fees could be set between: £0 and £3,575 for Home / EU full-time students; and up to £9,000 for full-time students from England, Scotland and Wales studying in Northern Ireland.

Variance:

The difference between actual spend and estimated spend, demonstrated by either a number or percentage.

Widening Access and Participation Plan (WAPP)

A plan setting out how institutions will increase the participation in HE of those groups who are under-represented through bursary and/or other financial support and widening participation activities such as outreach, retention and success and research activities.

Widening Participation (WP):

Actions taken to improve the representation of under-represented students in higher education.

Institutional Breakdown of Additional Fee Income and Widening Participation Expenditure for 2012/13 and 2013/14

Institution	Additional Fee Income		No of Fee Paying Students		Access Agreement Expenditure		% Additional Fee Income Invested	
	2012/13	2013/14	2012/13	2013/14	2012/13	2013/14	2012/13	2013/14
Belfast Metropolitan College	£1,445,030	£1,718,450	1,528	1,384	£441,725	£504,765	30.6%	29.4%
Queen's University Belfast	£23,131,017	£23,841,000	11,873	11,450	£5,341,700	£5,333,434	23.1%	22.4%
St Mary's University College	£1,823,475	£1,812,450	894	843	£589,656	£474,646	32.3%	26.2%
South Eastern Regional College	£415,810	£476,270	488	526	£87,802	£124,729	21.1%	26.2%
Stranmillis University College	£1,682,595	£1,756,550	807	817	£362,590	£360,034	21.5%	20.5%
South West College	£154,740	£199,391	441	531	£105,015	£118,238	67.9%	59.4%
Ulster University	£25,833,395	£27,287,354	13,230	13,249	£6,650,787	£5,764,422	25.7%	21.1%
Total	£54,486,062	£57,091,465	29,261	28,800	£13,579,275	£12,680,268	/	/
Average	£7,783,723	£8,155.923	/	/	£1,939,896	£1,811,467	31.8%	29.3%

Institutional Breakdown of Types of Widening Participation Expenditure for 2012/13 and 2013/14

Institution	Bursaries/ Scholarships		Outreach Investment		Underspend to be Reallocated	
	2012/13	2013/14	2012/13	2013/14	2012/13	2013/14
Belfast Metropolitan College	£190,820	£104,765	£250,905	£400,000	£0	£0
Queen's University Belfast	£4,129,300	£3,449,417	£1,212,400	£1,884,017	£0	£0
St Mary's University College	£517,799	£400,498	£71,857	£74,148	£0	£0
South Eastern Regional College	£14,802	£40,229	£73,000	£84,500	£0	£0
Stranmillis University College	£193,050	£230,776	£169,540	£129,258	£0	£75,218
South West College	£65,830	£62,388	£39,185	£55,850	£0	£35,762
Ulster University	£4,153,159	£3,001,432	£2,497,628	£2,551,066	£0	£936,728
Total	£9,264,760	£7,289,505	£4,314,515	£5,178,839	£0	£1,047,708

Expenditure on Bursaries/ Scholarships in 2012/13 and 2013/14

Institution	2012/13	Students in receipt of bursary	Average bursary paid	2013/14	Students in receipt of bursary	Average bursary paid
Belfast Metropolitan College	£190,820	609	£313	£104,765	405	£259
Queen's University Belfast	£4,129,300	5,031	£821	£3,449,417	5348	£645
St Mary's University College	£517,799	499	£1,038	£400,498	409	£979
South Eastern Regional College	£14,802	131	£113	£40,229	175	£230
Stranmillis University College	£193,050	176	£1,097	£230,776	245	£942
South West College	£65,830	322	£204	£62,388	291	£214
Ulster University	£4,153,159	4,935	£842	£3,001,432	5532	£543
Total	£9,264,760	11,703	/	£7,289,505	12405	/
Average	/	/	£632	/	/	£544

Projected Additional Fee Income and Anticipated Widening Participation Expenditure in 2014/15

Institution	Anticipated Fee Income	No of Fee Paying Students	Access Agreement Expenditure	% Additional Fee Income Invested
Belfast Metropolitan College	£1,715,215	1514	£472,000	27.5%
Queen's University Belfast	£24,039,000	3250	£5,360,000	22.3%
St Mary's University College	£1,923,000	866	£470,000	24.4%
South Eastern Regional College	£492,557	557	£133,003	27%
Stranmillis University College	£1,880,340	833	£500,907	26.6%
South West College	£170,000	565	£154,000	90.6%
University of Ulster	£27,500,000	13631	£5,978,886	21.7%
Total	£57,720,112	21216	£13,068,796	/
Average	/	/	/	34.3%

Institutional Breakdown of Additional Fee Income and Widening Participation Expenditure for 2015/16 and 2016/17

Institution	Additional Fee Income		No of Fee Paying Students		Access Agreement Expenditure		% Additional Fee Income Invested	
	2015/16	2016/17	2015/16	2016/17	2015/16	2016/17	2015/16	2016/17
Belfast Metropolitan College	£1,724,220	£1,784,875	1,460	1,445	£173,400	£179,250	10.1%	10.0%
Northern Regional College	£170,280	£321,075	172	332	£25,730	£48,500	15.1%	15.1%
North West Regional College	£396,000	£679,470	400	710	£53,000	£279,000	13.4%	41.1%
Queen's University Belfast	£26,570,000	£23,122,200	12,280	10,825	£4,479,000	£4,034,000	16.9%	17.4%
St Mary's University College	£1,985,175	£2,047,680	865	864	£426,421	£401,347	21.5%	19.6%
South Eastern Regional College	£500,630	£524,430	557	580	£132,237	£136,826	26.4%	26.1%
Southern Regional College	£279,180	£548,100	282	580	£34,000	£70,970	12.2%	12.9%
South West College	£317,050	£501,675	549	565	£118,900	£125,242	37.5%	25%
Stranmillis University College	£1,950,750	£2,042,940	850	862	£240,234	£296,945	12.3%	14.5%
Ulster University	£30,018,960	£30,371,816	13,712	13,418	£3,000,000	£3,619,169	10.0%	11.9%
Total	£63,912,245	£61,944,261	31,127	30,181	£8,682,922	£9,191,249	/	/
Average	/	/	/	/	/	/	17.5%	19.4%

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THE DEPARTMENT:

Our aim is to promote learning and skills, to prepare people for work and to support the economy.

This document is available in other formats upon request.

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