

Nottingham Trent University

Access Agreement 2018-19

Introduction

Nottingham Trent University (NTU) will be charging a fee in excess of £6,000 for all new entrants to full-time undergraduate degree programmes for the academic year 2018-19.

This Access Agreement provides information about expected fee income from home/EU students and about the University's plans for using a proportion of that Higher Fee Income (HFI) above £6,000 to:

- develop and deliver programmes of targeted outreach across the student life-cycle, some involving collaborations with other institutions
- provide clear information and guidance on a range of issues to potential and enrolled students
- provide financial support to UK students from lower income households
- monitor, evaluate and maximise the effectiveness of these strategies.

The University's Strategic Plan 2015-20: *Creating the University of the Future*, has the major ambition of *creating the opportunity* for all our students to develop the knowledge, skills, and resilience they need to play a positive role in society. Under this aim we are working to improve student success and progression for historically disadvantaged student groups. This complements the work we are doing at the access stage of the student lifecycle. Thus this Access Agreement embodies the strategic direction of the University.

Principles and assumptions

This Access Agreement is based on a number of principles and assumptions. These include:

- that the reduction of Student Opportunity funding will be compensated to a certain extent by the new student premium and thus will not require the University to significantly reduce the outreach and financial support proposals outlined in this document
- variation from forecasts of student numbers and fee income will be reflected in changes to expenditure on measures across the student lifecycle
- all expenditure detailed in this Access Agreement, including institutional spend on outreach, success and financial support, meets the required guidance.

should there be changes to these assumptions, revisions to the proposals outlined in this document would need to be made.

Fees, student numbers, fee income and Resource Plan

Given that the results of TEF 2 are not due until May 2017, the University has assumed that the following fees (per annum) will apply to home/EU students enrolling in higher education for the first time for the academic year 2018-19:

- £9,250 for a full-time undergraduate Bachelor's Degree programme
- £9,250 for a full-time Foundation Degree programme
- £9,250 for a full-time postgraduate Teacher Training programme
- £9,250 as the full-time equivalent (FTE) fee for a part-time undergraduate Bachelor's Degree programme

- £9,250 as the full-time equivalent (FTE) fee for a part-time Foundation Degree programme.
- £9,250 as the full-time equivalent (FTE) fee for a part-time postgraduate Teacher Training programme.

It is noted that once the TEF 2 results are published in May 2017, the university may change the proposed fees for academic year 2018-19 in the light of the TEF 2 outcomes.

The fee for all undergraduate students, including students on Foundation Degrees, and for postgraduate ITT students beginning a part-time course at Nottingham Trent University in the academic year 2018-19 will not exceed £4,625 per annum.

The level of the tuition fee for the second and subsequent years of the course may rise in line with inflation or fee caps changes as permitted by Government.

Undergraduate students entering in 2018-19 will be charged £1,385 for a year-long sandwich work placement or study year abroad.

We deliver some Foundation Degrees in partnership with other organisations. The fees for these programmes are £9250.

The University's forecast of new enrolments to full-time undergraduate programmes for 2018-19 is 7508. Within this total number, 513 are expected to enrol on Foundation Degrees.

Informed by HESA data, our own student data, comparative information and by OFFA guidance, the University proposes to commit 21.0% of additional undergraduate fee income to support access, student success and progression measures in 2018-19.

Full details of our fees, income and expenditure are in the Resource Plan.

Access, student success and progression summary

Nottingham Trent University recruits a diverse undergraduate population. The proportion of our young students from disadvantaged backgrounds (based on HESA performance indicator data) has consistently been above sector averages and within HESA benchmarks. The latest HESA PIs (for 2015-16 entry) confirm that we have maintained our already strong recruitment of students from disadvantaged backgrounds (see Appendix 1).

Latest HESA performance indicator data suggest that there has been a further increase in the percentage of our students in receipt of the Disabled Student Allowance (DSA), from 3.7% of 2011-12, to 6.5% of 2015-16 full-time first degree students (see Appendix 1).

The University recruits a considerable proportion of students from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups. In 2014-15, 23% of our home first degree full-time undergraduate new entrants were from BME groups, compared with the national sector average of 22% (Equality Challenge Unit data).

In 2014-15, 44% of our home first degree full-time UG new entrants were male, reflecting the sector as a whole (Equality Challenge Unit data).

The proportion of our students who are aged 21 and over is lower than the sector average (NTU 12% of full-time first degree entrants; all England HEIs, 20% according to 2015-16 HESA PIs).

Data obtained from Student Finance England indicate that in 2015-16, 36% of our full-time home UG students were from households with incomes of less than £25,000 per annum and as many as 25% were from households with incomes of less than £15,000.

Statistical analysis of our academic progression and achievement data identified significant gaps for male students, BME students, students from low socio-economic backgrounds and students entering via the BTEC pre-entry qualification route. We have investigated these trends at a more detailed level, including the analysis of disparities at academic school level. Gaps persist when controlling for other entry characteristics, including pre-entry qualifications. We have also looked at the intersectionality between the different students groups and found evidence of multiple dimensions of disadvantage. For example, just 31% of male, BME, WP students coming through the BTEC qualification route achieved a good degree in 2015/16, compared with 83% of female, white, non-WP students coming through the A-Level route. Consequently, our Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) agreed a number of principles to set out the University’s position in terms of how we endeavour to address the current progression and achievement gaps and provide a framework within which academic Schools can progress specifically identified projects. This culminated in our eight academic Schools developing pilot projects aimed at ‘success for all’. The best practice identified in these pilots are being rolled out and developed across the University along with systemic University-wide interventions. The Success for All project is overseen by a steering group encompassing senior academic and professional services staff, and chaired by our Vice-Chancellor. To facilitate the Success for All initiative we have redistributed some funds from our financial support provision to these interventions and thus expenditure on the Student Success and Progression stages of the lifecycle is increasing considerably. See Table One.

Table One: Increase in expenditure on Student Success and Progression stages of the lifecycle 2015/16 – 2019/20.

Lifecycle stage	15-16		19-20	
	% spend of HFI	Total amount	% spend of HFI	Total amount
Student Success	1.4	£747,000	4.6	£2.7m
Progression	0.4	£232,000	2.1	£1.2m

Further information is provided in stage 7: First year experience and moving through the course section of this agreement.

We have also analysed our graduate destination trends and have identified that female, BME, students from low socio-economic backgrounds and those going through the BTEC qualification route are less likely to have progressed to further study or professional / managerial occupations. This has also informed our employability interventions targeted at disadvantaged groups. Further information is provided in stage eight: Progression to employment of further study for further information.

In November 2016, our use of strategic data to inform ‘success for all’ students across the student life cycle and beyond was recognised with a prestigious Global Equality & Diversity Research Award for our ‘*outstanding contribution to equality and diversity in the workplace*’.

Our evaluations have reinforced that students who had taken part in numerous outreach activities fared better in their Key Stage 4 assessments (in comparison to their predicted performance) than those students who had taken part in ‘one-off’ interventions. There is also emerging evidence of an association between participation in several NTU interventions and an increased likelihood of widening participation students progressing to HE, both within our own institution and across the sector per se. Mindful that a sustained,

planned programme of outreach can have a more successful impact than one-off interventions, many of our outreach programmes, including Students in Classrooms, Children's University, NTU Progression and our pilot 'PEPPER' interventions (see Stage two – Secondary pre-16 phase for further information) are aimed at raising the knowledge, skills and attainment of targeted learners over the long-term.

Strategic relations and course provision

NTU has purchased an alternative provider offering qualifications at Levels 1 – 4 in creative industry education and training. The University is planning significant investment in this business, trading as 'Confetti', particularly in its learning resources which already offer state of the art studios, equipment and media technologies.

The acquisition of Confetti offers a unique strategic partnership to co-develop educational and employability opportunities. These include:

- Access to a significant pipeline of talented FE students, many from widening participation backgrounds
- Student enterprise nurtured through partnerships with the creative business community and business development initiatives
- Student achievement is rewarded through paid internships with Confetti Media Group businesses
- Opportunities for students to work on live commercial briefs
- Intern schemes for interior and product design students
- Student access to music industry professionals, gaining unrivalled insights into the workings of a professional label.

In addition, we have been having detailed discussions with a sixth form college and two secondary schools about the potential for NTU to sponsor a Multi-Academy Trust. Issues currently under consideration are:

- The adverse financial impact of the sixth form college 'academising'
- Advice received from the Regional Schools Commissioner's deputy
- Due diligence for all parties.

Concluding this was not possible in the timescale set by the Further Education Area Review and so this work will continue with an investment from the University on consultants to explore options.

We are developing our provision of higher and degree level apprenticeships, focusing on levels 6 and 7, with our provision aligned to our Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) key sectors of economic focus. We have successfully qualified onto the SFA's new Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP). We currently offer four degree apprenticeships which will expand throughout 2017-18. Degree apprenticeships are delivered through either day/block or online and blended learning allowing for apprentices to work and study at the same time. We are working closely with employers to offer more opportunities for the non-traditional learner. Furthermore, we are taking a holistic look at the support provided to the students on these courses and oversight of all aspects of these courses will come from the Trent Institute of Learning and Teaching (TILT).

We have also developed an Access to HE course in Land Based Sciences. Students are from a range of non-traditional backgrounds and all of them have received offers through UCAS for their chosen undergraduate courses from September 2017. We will be extending our Access portfolio, with an Access to Science programme already being planned.

NTU also delivers undergraduate part-time courses and courses that are full-time but delivered flexibly, which allows students to study them alongside work. These include the Law flexible Learning course and our part-time Social Care course.

Outreach provision across the student life-cycle

There is no single ideal indicator of widening participation and therefore we use a combination of factors. For the majority of our high volume interventions, we target at the school level using a combination of socio-economic criteria. These include the use Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), Education, Skills & Training (EST), Income Deprivation Affecting Children (IDACI) and Participation of Local Area (POLAR) data to ascertain the proportion of schools' pupils who reside in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. We also take account of the percentage of pupils on free school meals and schools' attainment.

More intensive activities, such as summer schools, Pathways to Law and NTU Progression need to be targeted at the learner level. This is usually done via application forms, with all applicants given a 'WP rank' based on a weighted combination of several geographical, financial, personal and educational characteristics. This typically includes a combination of ACORN, IMD and POLAR geographical proxies, as well as individual indicators such as free school meals / post-16 bursary eligibility, disability and care status. We also take account of the Level 3 study route, targeting those learners going through the vocational route, such as BTEC qualifications.

OFFA have encouraged HEIs to consider setting targets for white disadvantaged boys as this group of young people are considerably under-represented in higher education. We therefore conducted analysis on the extent to which white disadvantaged boys are currently engaged in NTU's outreach provision. Our analysis showed that at NTU, it is disadvantaged males that are under-represented in outreach provision, (in comparison to disadvantaged females). Furthermore, our most recent ethnicity progression analysis shows that for NTU, the progression of BME students is lower than their white counterparts. We believe it would raise ethical issues if we were to target white male students when BME male students are equally under-represented. Therefore, we will ensure that our provision attracts and is suitable for disadvantaged male young people and all ethnic groups.

At the Student Success stage of the lifecycle we target both on characteristics, such as socio-economic disadvantage but also on other indicators. This includes entry qualification, because our evidence demonstrates that male, BME and widening participation students disproportionately come through for example, the BTEC route. We also track students' engagement with their learning via the NTU Student Dashboard (see stage seven). Disengaged students are disproportionately the very 'success for all' target groups, thereby enabling us to target student behaviours instead of, or as well as, student characteristics.

At the Progression stage of the lifecycle we target based on a combination of geographical deprivation and financial data.

Our programmes of activity address all stages of the student life-cycle: access to higher education; student success in higher education and progression into graduate employment or further study. At the Access stage our activities form a constructively-aligned sustained programme, with each activity building on the learning from the previous session. The style of learning delivered within the sessions is based on research-informed pedagogical practice; the focus is on developing skills and character through enquiry-based and cooperative activities which places emphasis on the student taking control of their own learning, in particular the 'flipped classroom' approach. This approach, in which young people explore and discover answers for themselves through independent and group work, better prepares them for the style of learning they will encounter in higher education.

This work is delivered to target schools and we also run programmes (Children's University and the Progression 14-19 scheme) for specific target individuals. These programmes direct individuals to our broader provision and provide specific bespoke activities for participants. Further details are given in stages 1 – 5 of this Agreement.

We recognise the importance of sustaining collaborative arrangements with other HEIs, in order to avoid duplication and reduce unnecessary approaches to schools and colleges. We are a member of the East Midlands Widening Participation Research and Evaluation Partnership (EMWPREP) and the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT). These two services assist Higher Education Institutions in England to target, monitor and evaluate their outreach activity. We record data about our programmes and individual participants which is longitudinally tracked and matched to administrative datasets spanning Key Stage 2 data through to postgraduate study and employment. The tracking reports received help us to better understand the relationship between our outreach provision and the attainment and progression of disadvantaged young people. Membership of these groups enables us to take an evidence based approach to planning outreach delivery so that we can continue to invest in outreach activities that optimise progression with disadvantaged cohorts.

We are part of the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Collaborative Outreach Project (DANCOP), part of the HEFCE-funded NCOP initiative. Other members of this project are the universities of Derby and Nottingham, local Further Education Colleges, councils and the Local Enterprise Partnership. The DANCOP programme includes a range of additional support delivered through the third party providers and measures to increase uptake of existing provision. Our submission for this project was commended by HEFCE.

Furthermore, the area of Derby has been nominated as one of the Government's new 'Opportunity Areas'. Although discussions over these areas is at an early stage, some scoping work has been completed and has identified the early years of education as a priority. There is a strong expectation that there will be considerable collaboration between the two projects and NTU will be able to feed directly into the programme through the DANCOP.

In addition to activity undertaken with these networks, we will continue to deliver a number of local outreach interventions in partnership with the University of Nottingham. These include our successful collaboration on the Sutton Trust Pathways to Law scheme, our Family Suppers and Growing Lives initiatives and our work on the Students in Classrooms scheme which provides our collaborative target.

We value long-term outreach. Our programme of activities works with schools and individuals, starting at primary schools and running through to post-16 study. For those participants who move on to study at NTU, our programme continues to support them throughout their studies and into professional and managerial employment or further study.

NTU has excellent initiatives for student success and progression and is further developing them. By 2018/19, the University will have undertaken major developments with the Success for All programme of work. This programme addresses unexplained disparities in student progression and attainment, particularly focusing on the following groups: gender, ethnicity, disability, age, socio-economic status and entry qualification (BTEC). This programme combines local initiatives and systemic University-wide interventions and more details are given in 'Stage seven: First year experience'.

An analysis of the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey has shown that at NTU, a year-long work experience delivers professional and managerial employment outcomes for widening participation students that are equal to their non-widening participation counterparts. However, year-long sandwich placements are not

available in a significant number of employment sectors, and where they are available many widening participation students face considerable barriers in accessing them.

To start to address this, the University has determined that every student will undertake an assessed work experience or placement and from 2017-18 core employability content and experiences will be embedded into every course, achieved through the curriculum refresh process. This will ensure all students, irrespective of background will receive essential employability skills and access useful developmental experience of employment. More details are given in 'Stage eight: Progression to employment'.

It is also important to us that we contribute to the sector's progress in this field. Our pre-entry programmes, are designed to further increase the numbers progressing to higher education in general. We also regularly speak at conferences, symposiums and visit and host other universities to discuss best practice.

Stage one: Primary phase

Our primary programme has been developed to follow school guidelines and attracts acclaim from teachers, pupils and parents alike. The programme introduces pupils to the benefits of higher education and life as a student. Pupils attend a two day summer school in Year 5 and a campus visit, focussing on transition, at the end of year 6. We also run the Nottingham Trent Children's University which facilitates 7 – 14 year old pupils' participation in extra-curricular learning. This learning can take place at school or at a range of 'public learning destinations' such as museums and stately homes.

The primary programme is coordinated at a strategic level with the University of Nottingham which enables us to target different schools, maximising the impact of our collective work rather than duplicating effort. This arrangement also allows for a greater sharing of ideas and expertise in how to give primary cohorts the best possible service.

Stage two: Secondary pre-16 phase

Support for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 continues with activities including summer schools, campus visits and skills development sessions. Our NTU Progression Scheme for 14-19 year olds, continuing the work of the Children's University, creates a sustained programme of extra-curricular activity.

In order to accelerate our progress in this area we are developing a 'character education' programme. Our PEPPER initiative will develop a range of character traits associated with the headline characteristics of: **P**urpose, **E**ffort, **P**ositivity, **P**ersonal responsibility, **E**nquiring mind, **R**esilience.

Prior attainment is a significant factor in young people's ability to progress and succeed in higher education. Our Raising The Grade conferences have been very successful in this aim. The concept of these conferences is simple. We hire highly skilled teachers with experience of the curriculum and thus knowledge of the areas in which pupils struggle. These teachers then deliver revision conferences in those areas to target pupils. We have recently expanded this model to include 'Revise Wise' sessions of revision techniques and are thus equipping pupils with the skills and knowledge to raise their attainment.

In order to increase the pace and scope of our attainment-raising work, we are looking to develop or expand this 'Raising the Grade' model further. This may be done in conjunction with the our new Nottingham Institute of Education (NIOE). 'Raising the Grade' forms the basis of our attainment-raising target which we intend to develop for the 2019-20 Access Agreement. Options under consideration for this developed target include NIOE impact targets through to the percentage of NTU Outreach participants making above average (value-added) progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. These would be evaluated

via participant tracking in partnership with HEAT. Please note the methodology we would use for this, if chosen, is subject to change as the method for calculating value-added is likely to be modified when Progress 8 is introduced.

Furthermore, we will also be developing our generic mentoring programme into an academic mentoring programme. We will also be introducing personal tuition and/or access to revision websites onto our Progression 14-19 scheme.

We continue to provide clear, impartial information and advice to better equip parents and carers in supporting their children and students as they progress to employment, further and higher education. In partnership with the University of Nottingham, we will continue our programme of 'Family Suppers', which enable families of Year 10 pupils to experience a university environment for themselves and find out more about the process of progression to higher education (entry requirements, choice of institution and courses, financial support and student life) in a relaxed and informal setting.

Our work to support vulnerable groups is broad and robust. It has two strands. The main focus of the work is to provide knowledge and expertise to University staff in order to inform the design of our activities, ensuring they are accessible and appropriate for participants with physical or emotional barriers to learning and that staff are trained appropriately. However, we also run a small number of activities for particular cohorts:

- our Well aHead initiative works in the area of mental health; further details are given in 'Stage 5: Pre-entry support activities' section of this Access Agreement.
- our Growing Lives initiative, delivered in collaboration with the University of Nottingham, will continue to support looked-after children in Nottinghamshire. Over several targeted events, Growing Lives informs young people, foster carers and care professionals of the support available at HEIs for looked-after children. As part of this work NTU will continue to be a member of the East Midlands Care Leaver Activities and Student Support (EMCLASS) network.

Stage three: Post-16 phase (including particular target groups)

Our post-16 programme consists of a range of interactive activities on topics such as finance and UCAS. It also consists of practical workshops that support effective decision making, essential for progression to certain courses and professions, and developing skills and characteristics for higher education.

Our provision features the benefits of part-time work. We promote the fact that loans for part-time courses are available and we also promote part-time courses and courses that are full-time but delivered flexibly, which allows students to study them alongside work.

For a number of years our work at this stage has included a focus on progressing into postgraduate study and employment. Numerous activities at this level give information on postgraduate study, including highlighting undergraduate integrated masters qualifications which take students from university entry level to Masters level eg at NTU the four year Masters of Chemistry course. We give information on options for both specific courses and routes for certain careers, for example law, teaching and architecture and for more general masters courses.

This is supplemented by our NTU Work Inspiration Scheme, which provides one or two-week placements to students aged 14 to 21. The scheme combines the experience of working in areas such as forensics, fashion and astronomy with immersion in an HE environment to inspire and motivate participants to succeed, whichever career path they choose. There has been considerable demand for this scheme from partner schools

which we anticipate will continue. Furthermore we are developing this scheme by running a pilot which places students with disabilities into positions within the University.

For our programmes for individuals, we are developing 'pathways' type programmes into high-tariff courses and courses which lead to the professions, for example, the Sutton Trust Pathways to Law programme. We are also developing character and skills development programmes. The Progression 14-19 scheme is the umbrella structure for all these programmes.

We intend to continue our work for mature and part-time students. Our 'Return to Learning' programme consists of information, attainment-raising and skills-development activities which are specifically designed for and targeted at mature learners. This programme will include activity for mature students at various stages of their learning journey and then focus on guiding them through their university pre-entry year, including a final post-application/transition session.

Individuals who are in local authority care, or who have experience of mental health difficulties are also able to access one-to-one advice, guidance and practical support on issues relating to their progression to higher education, on a referred or self-referral basis.

These programmes are considerably enhanced across all stages through CPD opportunities for teachers and practitioners and through the involvement of NTU staff and students. Our Nottingham Trent Volunteering and Students in Classrooms programmes enable staff and students to deliver a broad range of support including generic classroom assistance, specific help with literacy and numeracy, bespoke projects for schools and a school governor programme.

Stage four: Applications and admissions

Our internal analysis has determined that, after controlling for other entry characteristics, there is no evidence of any deviations from expected offer rates for disadvantaged, BME, mature and disabled applicants. Encouragingly, therefore, there is no evidence of unintended bias against widening participation and equality groups arising from our admissions procedures.

As advocated by Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA), in 2012-13 we undertook in-depth analysis of historical data relating to our applicant trends and established statistical relationships between prior attainment and subsequent achievement of NTU's widening participation and equality groups. We have since updated this analysis including conducting a major piece of analysis as a result of UCAS releasing the equality and diversity datasets to provide further intelligence in this regard. As an institution, we already recruit a diverse student body and we proactively use contextual data for targeting our outreach initiatives. Informed by our evidence, we are not currently planning to embed the use of contextual data within our admissions policy. However, as a measure of good practice all central admissions staff have had training in how to avoid 'unintended bias'. We plan to extend this to all courses with some devolved admissions elements.

Stage five: Pre-entry support activities

We engage with applicants who identify specific transition support needs from the point of offer acceptance, providing early individualised contact with designated staff, assistance with arranging financial support, making practical arrangements and the opportunity to be introduced to a range of support services. This early contact is complemented by a number of targeted pre-entry networking and information events for disabled and autistic students, entrants identifying mental health difficulties and mature full time undergraduate entrants.

We will continue to develop our range of targeted transition support initiatives for specific groups in 2018-19:

- adults and young people with mental health difficulties - we will maintain existing partnership networks and work with potential applicants in this target group, including the development of outreach and transition activities with young people supported by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) hospital school and the Nottinghamshire Healthcare Recovery College
- students with autistic spectrum conditions - we will continue to develop our interventions for students with autistic spectrum conditions (ASC) and will continue to offer targeted pre-entry support for autistic students and their families
- disabled students - we will continue to develop and extend our pre-entry and transition support for disabled students, including offering information and advice activities within NTU pre-and post-application open days, broadening the range of pre-enrolment and on-arrival events to provide guidance and encourage peer support for students with shared experiences
- care leavers/estranged students - we will maintain our infrastructure for outreach and transition support for young students entering HE/NTU from local authority care and will develop our interventions with students who are estranged from their families, including consideration of the Standalone pledge.

We are aware that engagement in these activities relies on early disclosure by students of their specific identities and requirements. We will therefore continue to monitor the impact of these approaches, developing a range of opportunities for students to identify their specific support issues and receive specialist assistance with making appropriate access arrangements. We will continue to monitor impact by tracking the Year One experience of students engaging with these various activities to identify significant risk points where further proactive intervention might be appropriate.

'Starting at NTU' is an online one-stop-shop resource to support students through the pre-entry period. The resource provides a location for students to complete essential administrative processes, but also provides advice and information about matters such as financial support and targeted content for student groups such as disabled or mature students. Starting at NTU is also designed to help bridge the academic transition to university by raising student awareness about learning in higher education and being a university student.

The academic transition is further supported by induction microsites for each course, which offer information about specific learning, teaching and assessment approaches, provide an induction timetable and a pre-entry activity designed to help students to start to engage with their course. These pre-entry activities are designed to give students the opportunity to practise independent learning and research skills. The pre-entry activities are completed as part of the course induction (Stage six of this Access Agreement). Pre-entry social transition is supported through links to social networking groups organised by the Students' Union and links to the University Welcome Week programme.

Stage six: Induction

NTU invests considerable resources in supporting students' initial induction. Our work supports both the social and academic transition to becoming a university student.

Our research suggests that early in the student lifecycle, student anxieties are often primarily social. Students are concerned about fitting in, belonging to the institution, their course and their accommodation. Therefore, we place great emphasis on creating student communities, both within and beyond the course.

Welcome Week is a programme of social, sporting, cultural and academic activities designed to engender a sense of belonging to the institution and help students begin to construct peer support networks. The week is delivered jointly by NTU and the Nottingham Trent Students' Union.

Welcome Week offers both activities aimed at the widest possible group of students and events targeted at specific student groups. We offer activities that integrate all students, but recognise that some groups of students may have additional needs to help foster a sense of belonging and therefore also offer some targeted activities. These include:

- mature student social events
- increasing the profile and range of activities on offer by clubs and societies
- providing events that enable students not living in halls (often local and from historically-disadvantaged backgrounds) to engage with the social programme more easily, by providing early evening meeting places so that they can initially meet in small groups.

In addition to the range of strategies we currently use to improve the welcome experience for students from historically-disadvantaged backgrounds, we have made the 'Welcome Week innovation pot' a permanent feature. This is money that students and staff can bid for to fund their ideas for new, innovative Welcome Week events and initiatives targeted at students with lower-satisfaction with Welcome Week. Successful initiatives are embedded into provision.

Transition and induction activities and processes will be enhanced by the CERT initiative outlined in Stage seven: First year experience. This will be a step change in how the Academy, the Student's Union and Professional Services collaborate to improve student retention and engagement at scale.

The University invests time in staff development and the production of teaching resources to improve the academic transition taking place during student induction programmes. Staff members are encouraged to reduce the amount of time they spend delivering lectures during the induction week and place more emphasis on small group activity and improving social cohesion within the course. Overall we have seen a reduction in the use of lectures during this week and the growth of more interactive course practices (for example field trips and integrated projects). We believe that this has contributed to the overall increase in satisfaction for all students (including those from widening participation backgrounds) with the early university experience. NTU will continue to deliver staff development and learning resources to improve new student induction.

Stage seven: First year experience and moving through the course

By 2018/19, the University will have undertaken major developments with the Success for All programme of work. This programme addresses unexplained disparities in student progression and attainment, particularly focusing on the following groups: gender, ethnicity, disability, age, socio-economic status and entry qualification (BTEC). This programme combines local initiatives and systemic University-wide interventions. These include:

- Effective and timely use of data
- Integration into the University strategic plan
- Evidence-based approaches to interventions
- Developing staff understanding and agency

This work has subsequently developed in the following ways:

- We are reviewing every undergraduate course against a Curriculum Refresh Framework, which is resulting in most courses being redeveloped and revalidated for 2018/19 entry

- To support the development of inclusive curricula and pedagogy, 8 specialist educational developers have been appointed, each working within one School and sharing findings and practice across the institution
- A Success for All steering group has been established as sub-committee of the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC). This new group oversees the programme and directs systemic developments. One significant example is a new Collaborative Engagement and Retention Team (CERT). This team will not only address student retention but also student engagement and 'success' by combining our strong course identity, excellent extra-curricular programmes and expertise in student data analytics into a University-wide peer support programme. This will be established for 2017/18 and fully expanded in 2017/18.
- Additionally, each area is creating a local plans to address attainment disparities. Each school has a plan for 2016/17, with professional services following. For example, Libraries and Learning Resources plan includes the launch of *Skills for Success*, a new website, to support writing, maths and referencing.
- From 2016/17 to 2018/19, NTU will lead a collaborative project on student success, with Anglia Ruskin University and University of Bradford: *Scaling up active collaborative learning for student success*.
- Development of the use of learning analytics continues, with the NTU Student Dashboard providing students and staff with a greater understanding about how students are engaging with their courses using a range of metrics. There are three core aims: to improve student progression; to increase students' sense of belonging to their courses; and to increase attainment. Dashboard data also offer a strategic resource, particularly for considering approaches to improve student outcomes. In 2016/17, student use of Dashboard in particular has increased significantly and students are reporting that they change their behaviour in response to reviewing their engagement data.

Success for All continues to be supported by the Trent Institute of Learning and Teaching (TILT); TILT combines developmental activity, such as sabbatical schemes and an annual conference, with strategic grassroots-led opportunities for staff to work together around particular issues. Success for All is also supported by experts across a number of services, particularly the Centre for Academic Development & Quality (CADQ), Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI), Schools, Colleges Community Outreach (SCCO) and Student Support Services (SSS). The combination of grassroots activity, expert support and formal governance for the programme is ensuring that Success for All is an integral part of developments at NTU.

This programme will continue to develop in 2018/19, as follows:

- The majority of undergraduate courses re-specified in Curriculum Refresh will enrol their first cohort of students. We will assess the likely impact of inclusive course design on progression and attainment, initially by using the engagement metrics in the NTU Student Dashboard.
- Use of the NTU Student Dashboard will be embedded in routine practice for students and staff, with an emphasis on encouraging engagement, early intervention and targeting of support.
- CERT will offer a fully-developed service across the University.

The University will continue to offer a range of academic support to help students succeed in their studies including one-to-one study advice in academic writing and maths, workshops covering study support and information literacy and a range of online resources.

We will continue to provide proactive and responsive service interventions to support students who are contemplating withdrawing from their studies. These interventions are directed at students who are unsure about their course choice post-enrolment and those who require further practical and specialist advice or support about their options to get back on track - or take time out and return to study at a more appropriate point.

Stage eight: Progression to employment or further study

An analysis of the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey has shown that at NTU, a year-long work experience delivers professional and managerial employment outcomes for widening participation students that are equal to their non-widening participation counterparts. However, year-long sandwich placements are not available in a significant number of employment sectors, and where they are available many widening participation students face considerable barriers in accessing them.

To start to address this, the University has determined that every student will undertake an assessed work experience or placement and from 2017-18 core employability content and experiences will be embedded into every course, achieved through the curriculum refresh process. This will ensure all students, irrespective of background will receive essential employability skills and access useful developmental experience of employment.

We intend to further expand our work-experience provision for widening participation students. Therefore we will continue to pilot a range of interventions initiated in 2016-17 in order to determine the most appropriate provision for widening participation students in 2017-18. The pilots are designed around enabling access to short term but high quality work experiences and include a summer internship between year 2 and their final year, a bursary to support students undertaking short but unpaid work experience and, in partnership with City and County Councils, a series of real business challenges provided by local SMEs.

Outside of the OFFA agreement but intrinsic to the support of our WP agenda, NTU is building on the success of previous graduate internship schemes by offering to unemployed and under-employed graduates six week paid, graduate level internships with employers. These internships are supported with skills and personal development workshops together with career guidance for all of the participants. The initial trial suggests higher than expected participation of WP graduates and encouraging employment outcomes.

Financial support

NTU Bursaries

The University will provide financial support to new, eligible full-time undergraduate students paying the maximum home tuition fee, who have a residual household income of £25,000 or below in their year of entry (as confirmed by their national student finance service). Financial support is to help students who may be deterred from going to university by the cost. Therefore it seems right that the qualifying criteria for this support is financial and household income is the best method to identify students' financial circumstances. Other methods are proxies. Furthermore, many students with protected characteristics are from more economically disadvantaged backgrounds and so will receive the support.

The value of each NTU bursary will be £750 for each year of the course, provided recipients are eligible in their year of entry on the basis of assessment of household income and other criteria¹.

¹ In order to be eligible for an NTU Bursary a student must have a household income level in their year of entry (as assessed by their national student finance service) of £25,000 or less and must be:

- enrolled as a new entrant in 2018-19 on a full-time undergraduate degree or full-time Foundation degree course at NTU; and
- paying, whether directly or by Fee Loan, the full 2018-19 tuition fee for their course

The University will provide additional bursaries for students from particular backgrounds or circumstances to ensure that financial support is directed to where it is most needed. We will provide an additional targeted £500 bursary specifically for new entrants who have been “looked after” since the age of 16, under the care of a local authority. We will also continue to provide an ‘Article 26’ Scholarship scheme under which we will provide some financial support for two students from an asylum-seeking background but who do not have access to student finance from the UK government (terms and conditions will apply).

Continued eligibility for an NTU Bursary in subsequent years will be dependent on the student remaining fully enrolled on their full-time undergraduate degree or full-time Foundation degree course at NTU. Students required to repeat a year of study will be considered eligible for a bursary provided they are eligible for tuition fee support from their national Student Finance Service. Bursaries will not be paid during sandwich year work placements.

Students who are assessed as not being eligible to receive an NTU Bursary in the first year of their course but who satisfy the eligibility assessment criteria in subsequent years will be eligible to receive an NTU Bursary for the year in which they are assessed as eligible and, subject to the provisions set out above, for subsequent years.

These provisions will apply to students who begin their full-time undergraduate programme at NTU on or after 1 August 2018. Students who began their full-time undergraduate programme at NTU before 1 August 2018 will be subject to the financial support arrangements detailed in our Access Agreement applying to their year of entry.

In designing the financial support provisions outlined above, we have undertaken detailed statistical analysis to attempt to gauge any potential impact of the form of financial support (direct financial support vs. fee waiver support) on student progression rates. Our findings demonstrated a statistical association between eligibility and higher rates of progression for students who received direct financial (bursary) support from the University, when compared with students who received fee waiver support. We plan to conduct further research into this using the new OFFA financial support tool. We have been advised to do this using HESA data which will be released later this year. In the meantime, this evidence - combined with continued consultation with the Students Union - supports our decision to offer direct financial (bursary) support to eligible students.

Discretionary Financial Support Fund

The University will provide a discretionary financial support fund managed by Student Support Services to the sum of £600,000 in 2018-19. This fund will provide on-course financial assistance to students who may be at high risk of withdrawing from their studies for financial reasons, including students who are unable, perhaps for reasons relating to disability, mental health difficulties or family commitments, to supplement their financial support through part-time or vacation employment. Eligibility for this assistance will be means-tested and key criteria for awards will continue to be developed and reviewed in partnership with the Nottingham Trent Students’ Union.

These bursaries and allocations may be adjusted in line with other inflation-linked changes in fees and other national student support provision.

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- have UK home status for student funding purposes and are eligible to receive a tuition fee loan and a maintenance loan from their national Student Finance Service.

Targets and milestones

We have challenging and stretching targets across all stages of the student life-cycle. These targets have been established following lengthy discussion with senior management, relevant heads of department and the University's Strategic Data and Intelligence Manager.

We have considered a wide range of factors when setting these targets including:

- a significant analysis of our undergraduate student body
- benchmarks where possible, including HESA performance indicators, NTU's latest student success trends and our collaborative partners (in particular the University of Nottingham, the East Midlands Widening Participation Research and Evaluation Partnership and Children's University)
- our successes and commendations, including by OFFA in 2014
- a significant institutional commitment to all stages of the student lifecycle, as indicated in our 'Success for All' initiative
- our extensive experience in this field. Having been proactive in widening participation for over 15 years we have a great deal of institutional knowledge as to what is achievable.

Monitoring and evaluation

We wrote an evaluation plan covering the period 2014-15 to 2018-19, in line with the National Strategy for Access and Student Success. This plan recognises the importance of embedding evaluation measures across each stage of our student life-cycle; from pre-entry outreach interventions, to student retention & success initiatives and, finally, progression to further study or employment in the professions. Along with producing ongoing evidence of the impact of our interventions, the main priority of our evaluation strategy, as set out in the plan, is to ensure that we systematically use data and evidence to inform our access, student success and progression provision.

Against the backdrop of the above, we undertook a literature review into the growing field of character-based education in 2016. The literature pointed to a strong association between growth mind-set and improved educational attainment. This led to an internal discussion around the possible application of incorporating character-based provision within existing outreach work. This culminated in the development of our pilot outreach programme, PEPPER which is an amalgamation of the positive psychology literature, marketed in a memorable and attractive form. Evaluation of the programme has been an integral part of its development and has been embedded from the offset.

We are one of ten higher education institutions that subscribe to the East Midlands Widening Participation Research & Evaluation Partnership (EMWPREP). In 2016, we have also joined the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) service to provide us with further opportunities to enhance our evidence base. As part of these partnerships we have access to online databases which permit the systematic collection and recording of activity and participant data. This facilitates the monitoring of our targeting procedures to ensure those that are most in need of support are accessing our interventions. We also track participants' attainment and progression to HE, which underpins our monitoring and evaluation strategies and evolving Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and use the results to inform future provision. We are also one of five institutions taking part in the OFFA funded and Warwick led research aimed at developing a common evaluation methodology, which further demonstrates our commitment.

Whilst, in isolation, our attainment and HE progression tracking does not permit us to claim a causal effect on participant success due to other potential influential factors, this builds on our 'layers of evidence', with the research findings triangulated using other

(qualitative) methodologies. Moreover, we are looking into the feasibility of embedding randomised controlled trials as part of our PEPPER programme (see above), which may provide more concrete evidence of the impact on learner attainment and progression.

We will systematically track our former outreach participants who have progressed to NTU undergraduate study in terms of their subsequent success whilst at university. We will ascertain any association between participation in our outreach programmes and any deviation from average retention and attainment rates. This will provide an indication of the extent to which the interventions are preparing students for the transition to HE and contributing to their subsequent success. We will supplement the findings of the above tracking exercise by interviewing a sample of former participants who are now studying an undergraduate course at NTU, to gain further insight into the long-term impact of the activities.

NTU's Schools, Colleges & Community Outreach (SCCO) Department's access, student success and progression interventions are delivered via four main projects; Nottingham Trent Volunteering, NTU Progression team, Schools & Colleges Outreach and The Progression Team. These projects will be evaluated (both individually and collectively) via the quantitative tracking methodologies noted above. Where appropriate, these findings will be triangulated with various project-specific evaluations, using a variety of research methodologies. The findings of these interventions will be fed back to inform ongoing programme development.

We have undertaken a small scale evaluation of our financial support. However, the findings were inconclusive, not least due to regular changes we've made in our financial support systems. We will, however, make use of OFFA's new financial support evaluation tool.

We regularly evaluate aspects of the student experience through a range of research methodologies. These permit analysis by socio-economic and demographic data such as gender, age, ethnicity, disability and social class, providing an opportunity to explore the student experience for different groups.

Interventions aimed at improving the success of students with protected equality & diversity characteristics and those from widening participation backgrounds (as part of the 'Success for All' and 'BTEC Champions' initiatives) are evaluated at the local academic school level, with support from an external evaluator, NTU's Centre for Academic Development & Quality (CADQ) and SCCO. The research explores emerging themes and informs how we can further enhance the success of students from the noted historically disadvantaged groups.

The NTU student dashboard, which is designed to help students and staff understand how well students are engaging with their studies, uses software to track students' engagement using a series of triggers, including door swipes, library book loans, VLE use and dropbox submissions. We have recently updated our statistical analysis and found further evidence of a very strong correlation between engagement, as defined by the dashboard, and subsequent student retention and attainment. The dashboard, therefore, correctly identifies students most at risk of early withdrawal and low attainment. Importantly, these students are disproportionately male, BME, widening participation and from the BTEC pre-entry qualification route; i.e. the very student groups identified as having lower rates of retention and achievement and thus the focus of 'Success for All'. This permits us to target student behaviours for intervention. We are in the process of evaluating such interventions via the systematic tracking of students' subsequent attendance, retention and attainment trends, triangulated with qualitative feedback from tutors, student support services colleagues and students themselves.

Equality and diversity

Nottingham Trent University is a vibrant place to study, deeply enriched by the diversity of perspectives, cultures and backgrounds brought by its students, staff, visitors and local communities. We are committed to embedding equality and inclusion in all of our practices and aim to establish an inclusive culture, that celebrates diversity, is free from discrimination and based on the values of dignity and respect. Core equality, diversity and inclusion principles, and aligned values are evident throughout the day to day life of the University, its policies, initiatives and strategic goals.

Our commitment to inclusivity is seen clearly, for example, in our Strategic Plan where we detail our commitment to ensuring an inclusive environment characterised by dignity, inclusion and equality of opportunity. We believe that for us to succeed in our ambition to 'Create the University of the Future', equality, diversity and inclusion must be embedded throughout the organisation. We believe that every member of the University community can make a difference and contribute to the success of this vision.

The implementation of robust policies relating to inclusion, for example NTU's 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy' and 'Dignity and Respect Policy' is one of the key ways in which we seek to meet both our statutory equality responsibilities and our own aspirations for an inspirational, inclusive learning and working environment. In addition to policies, the University has practices and embedded ways of working fundamentally designed to ensure inclusion and fairness. For example, equality analysis is a routine part of the development of new policies, practices and plans right across the University.

In relation to the University's Access Agreement, the priorities identified are fully aligned with the our strategic priorities and statutory equality objectives and in particular, with our objective *"to understand and improve, where possible, the full academic experience of disadvantaged students from application to employment"*.

The achievement of this objective involves coordinated and collaborative effort from all academic Schools and relevant professional services, with the development of relevant action plans to take forward the University's commitment to narrowing identified progression and attainment gaps for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The progression and attainment gaps for certain student groups (in particular black and minority ethnic [BME], male and widening participation students groups) are of genuine and immediate concern for NTU from both an equality point of view and from an overall student success point of view.

As detailed elsewhere in this document, we have a very active University-wide initiative in place called 'Success for All'. The University has invested significant resource in this initiative and an Educational Developer has been appointed in each school to support the school in taking forward its practical proposals commitment to addressing disparities in progression and attainment.

In advance of the implementation of this Access Agreement, we are in the process of establishing systems to monitor the access, progression and achievement of students from those protected groups for whom we do not yet have institution-wide data sets, such as Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. The university starting monitoring student Religion and Belief from the start of the academic year 2015-16. The University hopes to be monitoring Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity by 2017-18, following consultation with appropriate student equality groups.

We continue to seek to improve consultation with student equality groups from an academic development perspective, to ensure that appropriate support mechanisms are in place for the successful progression and achievement of disadvantaged students.

We will continue to assess the equalities impact on significant proposed changes to the Access Agreement and to monitor and address any significant differential impact of these changes on the equality groups.

Provision of financial information to prospective students

The University is committed to providing clear and accessible information to all prospective and current students, detailing exactly what they will have to pay and what financial support will be in place for the duration of their programme of study. This includes arrangements for NTU bursaries and loans and grants provided by national funding authorities. The University plans to publish confirmed information for potential 2018-19 entrants immediately following formal acceptance of this Access Agreement.

The University will also supply such complete and timely information to UCAS and SLC as they may reasonably require to populate their applicant-facing web services.

Under current Access Agreement arrangements, we have extended our financial advice services to provide a high quality information service to all potential students and their parents/sponsors offering:

- dedicated Fees and Funding web pages, with information on tuition fees and related financial information, frequently asked questions and key contacts
- finance talks and workshops to young people and their parents/carers. We will distribute hard copy literature (guides and fact sheets) to targeted schools and colleges
- highly-visible coverage of financial matters at university open events, including all pre- and post-application events, with Money Matters stands, staffed by financial support advisers and a programme of comprehensive briefing talks for prospective applicants and their parents/sponsors, detailing tuition fees and the financial support and loan repayment arrangements
- on-line, face-to-face and telephone enquiry services for applicants and enrolled students, to respond to individual queries on fees and funding issues
- on-line enrolment and payment facilities through "My ntu", providing individualised notification of fee liability and payment arrangements.

We will continue to develop our comprehensive 'Managing your Money' web pages and activities, which emphasise the importance of financial capability for students.

Consulting with students

We have consulted with the Nottingham Trent Students' Union (NTSU) Executive on the overall structure of the Access Agreement and had further discussion on the financial support and outreach provision elements of the proposed expenditure.

The University will continue to work in partnership with the Students' Union to ensure that the eligibility criteria for this assistance are appropriately targeted, fair and responsive to student need.

The NTSU Executive has also provided key feedback to inform the development of the academic tutoring system and will contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of this initiative through the University's Student Executive Forum, which meets termly to consider key issues arising from student fora in Schools and comprises Student Union Executive members, members of the University Executive Team and heads of key University services.

The CERT initiative is a joint project with the NTSU, with three members of the Executive sitting on the project steering group. The NTSU were particularly instrumental in ensuring the 'community' element of the scheme was based around courses.

Appendix 1: Summary data for NTU against national means and benchmarks for participation of under-represented groups and non-continuation rates following year of entry.

Table 1: Participation of under-represented groups: % young full-time first degree entrants (from HESA T1a)

	2012-13			2013-14			2014-15			2015-16		
	NTU Actual	NTU B'mark	England HEI Mean	NTU Actual	NTU B'mark	England HEI Mean	NTU Actual	NTU B'mark	England HEI Mean	NTU Actual	NTU B'mark	England HEI Mean
State Sector Schools	93.1	93.1	89.0	94.2	93.7	89.4	93.7	93.9	89.6	93.7	94.1	89.8
LPN (Low participation neighbourhoods) POLAR3	12.8	12.0	10.9	12.7	12.3	10.9	12.8	12.7	11.3	12.8	13.1	11.3

Table 2: Participation of under-represented groups: % mature full-time first degree entrants (from HESA T2a)

	2012-13			2013-14			2014-15			2015-16		
	NTU Actual	NTU B'mark	England HEI Mean	NTU Actual	NTU B'mark	England HEI Mean	NTU Actual	NTU B'mark	England HEI Mean	NTU Actual	NTU B'mark	England HEI Mean
No previous HE & from LPN POLAR3	18.3	11.7	11.6	17.8	12.3	11.9	19.5	13.5	12.8	18.9	13.1	12.2

Table 3: Non-continuation following year of entry: full-time first degree entrants (from HESA T3a/T3b)

	2011-12			2012-13			2013-14			2014-15		
	NTU Actual	NTU B'mark	England HEI Mean	NTU Actual	NTU B'mark	England HEI Mean	NTU Actual	NTU B'mark	England HEI Mean	NTU Actual	NTU B'mark	England HEI Mean
Young students	4.5	6.3	5.7	4.5	6.2	5.7	5.5	6.7	5.9	5.2	6.9	6.3
Mature students	9.9	11.5	10.3	12.6	13.8	12.0	8.7	13.4	11.8	10.5	13.0	11.6
Young students from LPNs	6.0	7.7	7.9	5.1	7.8	7.7	6.1	8.3	8.2	6.7	8.7	8.8
All students	5.2	7.0	6.6	5.6	7.3	7.0	5.9	7.5	7.1	5.8	7.6	7.4

Table 7: Participation of UK domiciled students in higher education who are in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance: full-time first degree entrants (from HESA T7)

	2012-13			2013-14			2014-15			2015/16		
	NTU Actual	NTU B'mark	England HEI Mean	NTU Actual	NTU B'mark	England HEI Mean	NTU Actual	NTU B'mark	England HEI Mean	NTU Actual	NTU B'mark	England HEI Mean
All students	5.3	6.8	6.5	6.0	7.3	6.9	6.3	7.4	7.3	6.5	7.3	7.1