



Queen Mary University of London

Access Agreement 2016-17

Submitted April 2015

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## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This is Queen Mary's Access Agreement for 2016-17. It demonstrates the College's commitment to maintaining its strong tradition and good track record in supporting widening participation and fair access in the face of higher tuition fees and the new arrangements for funding higher education introduced in September 2012. It builds on the 2015-16 Access Agreement submitted to the Office for Fair Access (OFFA), sets out Queen Mary's tuition fee charges for new entrants from September 2016, and describes the programme of additional access measures that will be put in place to ensure that the College continues to recruit and support talented students from all backgrounds.
- 1.2 The National Strategy for Access and Student Success was published by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in April 2014. The three overarching themes of a whole student lifecycle approach, the need for evidence-based practice, and the importance of effective collaboration and partnership are reflected throughout this access agreement, and addressed specifically in sections 4 and 6.

## SECTION 2: TUITION FEE CHARGES FROM SEPTEMBER 2016

### 2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 Queen Mary University of London's five-year Strategic Plan makes it clear that widening participation is at the heart of the College's vision and ambitions. It sets out Queen Mary's plans to achieve the highest international standards in education and research, while continuing to serve its local communities through public engagement and the promotion of opportunity to individuals less favoured by financial or social background. These objectives reflect Queen Mary's ethos, as summarised below:

**“QMUL has a proud record of providing a university education of the highest quality to a diverse population of students, including many from backgrounds lacking financial or social privileges. We celebrate the resulting diversity of our student body and aspire to be recognised as a prime destination for high-achieving students from lower participation backgrounds.”<sup>1</sup>**

- 2.1.2 According to 2013-14 HESA undergraduate student data, 57% of Queen Mary's students from known ethnicities are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups, and 10% of undergraduate students have declared themselves as disabled. Women make up 52% of the undergraduate student cohort. In addition, we have an excellent record in attracting talented students from a wide range of social backgrounds. We are proud of the diversity of our students and of our reputation in promoting widening participation and the social mobility that this supports.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Queen Mary University of London, Strategy 2014 – the next five years', strategic aim 1 page 6

## 2.2 Charges for tuition fees for new entrants in 2016-17

- 2.2.1 Queen Mary's proposed tuition fees for new entrants from September 2016 are set out in Table 1 of the 2016-17 Resource Plan. These are for full-time students only, as Queen Mary does not currently offer part-time undergraduate courses.
- 2.2.2 Queen Mary has an excellent track record in outreach and widening participation and a strong commitment to supporting students throughout the course of their studies. The cost of maintaining and enhancing performance in these areas is included in this methodology.
- 2.2.3 For 2016 entrants the College is proposing to charge £9,000 for all full-time courses. Year 3 of one course (F153: MSci Pharmaceutical Chemistry) is designated as a full-time year with learning in the workplace, and the fees for this year only will be £4,500.
- 2.2.4 Students on year-in-industry placements will be charged £1,800 for this year for all courses.
- 2.2.5 Year-abroad students will be charged £1,350 for the year that they study abroad.

## 2.3 Real-terms inflationary increases from 2017-18

- 2.3.1 Tuition fees for new entrants for all courses will be £9,000 from September 2016. Subsequently, Queen Mary will apply annual increases to fees each year in accordance with the inflationary increases allowed by Government regulations.

## SECTION 3: EXPENDITURE ON ADDITIONAL ACCESS AND RETENTION MEASURES

### 3.1 Assessment of Queen Mary's access and retention record

- 3.1.1 Queen Mary has a strong record in recruiting students from under-represented groups, and we work hard to support student retention, success and progression. As in the 2015-16 Access Agreement, we have assessed our proportion of under-represented students as slightly above average, and our record on retention as in need of further improvement. Evidence for this assessment is found in the table below, which uses HESA data for the two-year period from 2012-13 to 2013-14.

	Queen Mary actual performance	HESA benchmark for Queen Mary	HESA location-adjusted benchmark for Queen Mary
<b>2013-14 entrants</b>			
young full-time first-degree entrants from state schools	<b>86.6%</b>	83.9%	81.2%
young full-time first-degree entrants from low-participation	<b>4.6%</b>	7.9%	4.6%

	Queen Mary actual performance	HESA benchmark for Queen Mary	HESA location-adjusted benchmark for Queen Mary
neighbourhoods (POLAR 3)			
young full-time first-degree entrants from National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification groups (NS-SEC) 4-7	<b>34.7%</b>	25.3%	26.8%
2012-13 young full-time first-degree entrants not in higher education in 2013-14	<b>5.7%</b>	3.7%	
<b>2012-13 entrants</b>			
young full-time first-degree entrants from state schools	<b>85.8%</b>	83.9%	81.4%
young full-time first-degree entrants from low-participation neighbourhoods (POLAR 3)	<b>4.1%</b>	7.9%	4.0%
young full-time first-degree entrants from National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification groups (NS-SEC) 4-7	<b>34.6%</b>	25.5%	26.8%
2011-12 young full-time first degree entrants not in higher education in 2012-13	<b>5.1%</b>	3.5%	

### 3.2 Estimate of expenditure on additional access and retention measures

- 3.2.1 In 2016-17 we will commit 30% of the additional fee income raised from tuition fees above the basic fee level to support additional outreach and retention measures. Details of how this significant level of additional investment will be spent are set out in Tables 4 and 5 of the 2016-17 Resource Plan. The total countable expenditure for the 2016-17 Access Agreement is £9.027 million.

## SECTION 4: PROGRAMME OF ADDITIONAL ACCESS MEASURES

### 4.1 Demonstrating a strategic approach

- 4.1.1 Research has indicated that widening participation activities have the greatest impact if they are delivered in a sustained way, as part of a long-term partnership with target schools. The importance of this is also highlighted in the National Strategy for Access and Student Success. In 2016-17 Queen Mary will deliver an extensive outreach programme that will focus on raising student aspiration and achievement and on providing appropriate information, advice and guidance to support students in making the right choices for successful progression to higher education. This will combine projects involving a wide range of schools and

colleges with the development of long-term structured interventions with a smaller number of partner schools.

- 4.1.2 In 2016-17 Queen Mary will remain a high-level strategic partner with two schools: the Drapers' Academy in Havering and St Paul's Way Trust School in Tower Hamlets. As the lead education partner in St Paul's Way, Tower Hamlets' first Foundation Trust School, senior members of staff from the College chair the Trust Board and the Governing Body, and we support the school through a balanced programme of short- and long-term initiatives. The College will also continue to work with the Drapers' Company as co-sponsor of the Drapers' Academy in Havering. Our support includes the provision of three governors, the involvement of academic staff and continued support for the development of the sixth form.
- 4.1.3 Both schools continue to do well, and now have students enrolling at a range of universities following the introduction of A-level programmes. Queen Mary remains committed to supporting their ongoing improvement and success through these strategic partnerships.
- 4.1.4 In 2015 Queen Mary produced a new five-year Widening Participation and Enhancing Opportunities (WPEO) Strategy, which sets out our institutional approach up to 2020. Further details can be found on the QMUL website: <http://www.arcs.qmul.ac.uk/docs/policyzone/150851.pdf>. The strategic priorities of the WPEO Strategy, supported by the work undertaken within the Access Agreement are:
- Maintaining a whole-institutional approach to widening participation throughout the student lifecycle and working collaboratively to achieve this
  - Developing longer-term and more intensive interventions, ensuring these are embedded and sustainable
  - Reviewing the targeting of all areas of work to ensure that it is focused on those who would benefit most. This will be done by:
    - redefining the targeting methodology for outreach work, using school-based and individual indicators
    - refining the targeting for student retention and support work
    - using data about the progression of graduates to support the development and delivery of work focused on graduate outcomes
  - Grounding work in available research and data and growing the evidence base through better evaluation and monitoring of widening participation work throughout all areas of the student lifecycle

## **4.2 Widening participation and outreach programme**

- 4.2.1 The 2016-17 outreach programme will address the strategic priorities described in section 4.1. Examples of our longer term targeted work are:
- (i) Queen Mary will continue to work closely with St Paul's Way Trust School and the Drapers' Academy, offering an intensive programme of

outreach support to students studying secondary and post-16 education in both schools. We will also continue to support teachers at both schools.

- (ii) We are developing a programme of intensive support for primary-age children. This currently includes the delivery of a Primary Coding Club and Reading Challenge. We aim to prioritise our primary school work to benefit our long-term partner schools. The formation of the Drapers' Multi-Academy Trust (which includes primary schools) and the development of St Paul's Way into a through school from Reception to Year 13 has allowed us to do this more effectively.
- (iii) We have developed long-term projects such as *Bridge the Gap*, an access to dentistry project that started in September 2012 and in 2013-14 was expanded to include Medicine. This work is targeted at partner secondary schools and colleges and their feeder primary schools, and aims to raise aspirations and awareness of dentistry and medicine as career pathways among students from groups that are significantly under-represented within the profession. It offers age-appropriate interventions at Years 5-6, Year 8, Years 9-10 and Years 11-12. All students who have completed the *Bridge the Gap* programme, and who meet Queen Mary's minimum entry requirements, will be guaranteed an interview for a place on the undergraduate dentistry or medicine course. In addition, it is anticipated that an alternative entry offer for up to four places on the course will be made available for students who have completed the programme. This will be up to two grades lower than the standard entry offer, and only students who have completed the whole programme will be eligible. The project works with experienced external partners such as Kids Company, who will provide support for the mentoring strand.

4.2.2 Care leavers are significantly under-represented in higher education. Queen Mary is continuing to enhance its work to support the progression of young people in care and care leavers. We originally worked with Buttle UK to design and implement a new programme of support measures, including improved data collection on care leavers. Queen Mary now has a defined package of support for prospective students embedded within the College and we remain committed to maintaining this despite the discontinuation of the Buttle UK Quality Mark Scheme. Our strategy includes proactively contacting students who declare via the UCAS tick box to advise them of the provision available. We have also set up our own monitoring of students at pre-enrolment to capture additional information as required.

4.2.3. We have been developing a growing number of outreach events for young people in care, care leavers, their carers and local authority staff. Collaboration has been central to this and we now have established links with local authorities and the Greater London Authority (GLA) to continue this work. Students in Year 12 now benefit from intensive one-to-one support via the Undergraduate Shadowing Scheme. Additionally, Queen Mary has played an active role in supporting the development of the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL). We remain committed to supporting the Network as it develops, and the associated National Network for Collaborative Outreach.



4.2.4 In addition to the intensive work with partner schools detailed above, we will deliver a broader outreach programme targeted at students from lower socio-economic groups, students from low-participation neighbourhoods and students who are the first in their family to consider university. This programme includes the innovative work of the *Centre of the Cell* (a bioscience education centre at the heart of our medical school). It is supported by an ongoing review of our schools and college targeting methodology to ensure we are working where we can add most value. In 2016-17 we will continue to develop this full range of activities, including work from primary school upwards:

- Primary
  - An enhanced primary campus visit programme for schools
- Secondary
  - An enhanced secondary school campus visit programme piloted in 2014-15 specifically to support Year 8 and Year 9 students making GCSE choices
  - Developing subject specific support to feed into that offered for post-16 students
- Post-16
  - Continuing to provide enhanced subject-specific support through intensive and multiple interventions, for example a Summer School with pre- and post-event follow-up activities, and the *Bridge the Gap* Programme
- Transition
  - Offering a programme of transition activity to students in Years 12 and 13 in key target schools and colleges. This programme of work will continue to add value and support other areas of the outreach programme, for example by including care leavers in this activity.
- Work with parents and carers
  - Queen Mary has always recognised the importance of parents' and carers' influence on young people's aspirations and future education. We have incorporated parents and carers into our general information, advice and guidance work where feasible. In 2016-17 we will roll out a programme of specific work for parents and carers. This work will be based on a pilot in 2015-16, which will inform future activity to ensure maximum benefit

4.2.5 In 2014-15 we piloted online applications for our intensive outreach programmes. This enables us more easily to gather detailed information about the applicant's socio-economic background and whether the student has any close family members who have been to university. Additionally, through our engagement in the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) database we can now undertake further post-code profiling of potential outreach participants. Students are selected if there is good evidence that they are in one or more of key target widening participation groups. Whole-group activities are targeted at schools that have a high percentage of students from low-participation neighbourhoods, or who are entitled to free school meals. The ongoing refinement of our schools/college targeting ensures we are working with appropriate cohorts.

- 4.2.6 In 2016-17 Queen Mary has allocated £205,000 for the outreach programme delivered through the central widening participation team. This will allow for the continuation and expansion of work with parents and carers and development of further in-depth programmes. Measurable outcome-based targets have been set for these activities and these are set out in Table 7b of the Resource Plan.

### **4.3 Student retention, success and progression**

- 4.3.1 We are committed to supporting student retention, success and progression, and we will deliver a programme of activities to enhance this. The work continues to build on the knowledge obtained from academic schools through research initiatives to support delivery of a range of interventions to address retention, success and progression. These will include a focus on areas such as effective skills support, attendance support, and academic advising and pastoral support. All projects funded to support this will have a detailed project plan with specific targets and milestones. This work will be monitored and evaluated through Queen Mary's Engagement, Retention and Success Project Group.
- 4.3.2 Queen Mary's Disability and Dyslexia Service will support students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia and dyspraxia, from the point of application through to graduation. The Disability and Dyslexia Service includes a full-time Mental Health Co-ordinator who leads on support for students with mental health issues, as well as managing support for students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders, e.g. Asperger's Syndrome. The service will assist applicants to the College and contact each successful applicant who declares a disability to begin the process of identifying the support that the student will need to engage successfully with their academic programme. Once the student has enrolled, the Disability and Dyslexia Service will work with them to ensure that they have access to the reasonable adjustments to which they are entitled and to support them in realising their academic potential. The service takes Queen Mary's strategic objectives as they relate to employability very seriously, and works with students to ensure that they graduate with independent learning skills.
- 4.3.3 Queen Mary has noted the recent series of announcements from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills on the changes that will take place to the allocation of the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) from September 2015. We will assess the impact that this will have on our students, and we have made provision in the £300,000 allocated to the Student Hardship Fund to address any issues arising from this. This includes a project on making our curricula as inclusive and accessible as possible by working collaboratively with academic schools and faculties to ensure that none of Queen Mary's students face any barriers to their learning experience.
- 4.3.4 Queen Mary's Students' Union runs multiple schemes every year which contribute to the transition of school leavers into university as well as enhancing retention and success. One example is the annual peer-mentoring scheme which pairs first-year students with students in the later years in the same academic school to provide support. The scheme trains current students to provide advice and guidance to new students, helping them develop confidence and make a smooth transition into university life. The Students' Union also runs the Halls

Representatives Scheme alongside Residential Support, which aims to increase opportunities to meet people in residences and create additional support networks for students.

- 4.3.5 The Students' Union runs a scheme aimed at enhancing student employment. Working with Queen Mary's Student Services department, the Students' Union has developed and piloted the QM Skills Award. This provides additional training opportunities for students engaged in areas such as societies, volunteering, club sport, and student representation as well as allowing them to log their activity and then reflect on the skills they have developed in the context of their future employment or progression to further study. The Award is similar in nature to, but more comprehensive than, the HEAR adopted by some other HEIs.
- 4.3.6 A specific area of focus for progression work is to target students in receipt of a QMUL bursary for additional support. An analysis of the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey showed that, when compared against degree outcome, bursary holders were less likely to progress into a graduate-level job than those who did not receive a bursary. As a result Queen Mary's Careers & Enterprise Centre is piloting projects to address this issue whilst continuing to monitor progression outcomes for bursary holders. The evaluation and monitoring of this work will determine the specific support delivered to bursary holders in future years.

#### **4.4 Collaborative working between institutions**

- 4.4.1 Queen Mary understands the impact of well-targeted collaborative work with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and other external partners. The University of Warwick and Queen Mary entered into a collaborative agreement in 2012, and a substantial branch of this partnership is widening participation. Both institutions' outreach teams are continuing to share good practice and draw on experience of working to widen participation in two quite different geographical areas to enhance and strengthen existing initiatives and approaches. Following successful evaluation of our collaborative summer school we have continued to deliver a five-day residential summer school split across both institutions' campuses. Maintaining a focus on medicine and health pathways, this collaborative event will allow participants to understand better different subject and career options as well as exposing these participants, who will be likely to consider only local universities, to a different region and the idea of geographical mobility. Queen Mary and the University of Warwick will continue jointly to evaluate all collaborative activities to ensure that plans for activity in 2016-17 are evidence-based.
- 4.4.2 We will continue to commit resources to collaborative work with charities and other external organisations involved in widening participation and access. This will include groups such as Into University, a well established programme that supports young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to progress to higher education. We will continue to work in partnership with the Brilliant Club, which recruits, trains and places PhD students in non-selective state schools and sixth-form colleges serving low-participation communities. The programme delivers university-style tutorials to small groups of students to help them develop the

skills, confidence and ambition needed to secure places at top universities. We will also support the Barts Cancer Institute and their collaboration with the Access Work Placements Project, to embed their week-long summer school programme giving Year 12 students first-hand experience of medical research.

- 4.4.3 Queen Mary has previously held the Buttle UK Quality Mark for supporting the progression to higher education of young people who have been in care and care leavers. Having played an active role in local and national networks since 2013, we will continue to work in collaboration with national bodies such as the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers, and across London with Local Authorities, HEIs and other relevant organisations. As highlighted in section 4.2.2, we will increase our programme of outreach work in this area whilst continuing to contribute to the local, regional and national agenda.
- 4.4.4 Queen Mary is part of the Russell Group Widening Participation Association, which has provided a forum for collaborative work across these highly selective institutions for many years. As well as providing peer support for senior widening participation staff, the group plans and delivers collaborative activity including the biennial Teachers' Conference and practitioner networks. The group has agreed a 'Proof of Concept' project with HEFCE to develop and deliver CPD materials for teachers to support progression to selective universities, funded by the National Networks for Collaborative Outreach. If successful, this may be extended to include selective courses more generally.

#### **4.5 Financial support for 2016-17 entrants through the Queen Mary Bursary Scheme**

- 4.5.1 Queen Mary will provide targeted financial support for students from low-income backgrounds through the Queen Mary Bursary Scheme.
- 4.5.2 The Queen Mary Bursary Scheme will offer a £1,571 cash bursary per year of study to 2016-17 undergraduate entrants who come from households with a residual income of £25,000 or less, and who qualify for a full non-repayable higher education maintenance grant.
- 4.5.3 We believe that students from slightly better-off backgrounds also need financial support to help with the costs of study. The Queen Mary Bursary Scheme for 2016-17 undergraduate entrants will therefore offer a cash bursary of £1,256 per year of study to students who come from households with residual incomes of between £25,001 and £42,600 and who qualify for a partial non-repayable higher education maintenance grant.
- 4.5.4 In subsequent years, we expect to apply the annual inflationary increase announced for tuition fees to both the Queen Mary £1,571 bursary and the Queen Mary £1,256 bursary.
- 4.5.5 The Queen Mary Bursary schemes described above will apply to full-time undergraduate students who start a course at Queen Mary in the academic year 2016-17. Students who started a course before the 2016-17 academic year, and who are already in receipt of a bursary, will continue to receive their bursaries

based on the current schemes described in the relevant Access Agreement.

- 4.5.6 Queen Mary will provide a Hardship Fund of £300,000 to provide assistance for students who may need extra financial support to access and remain in higher education. The fund will be used to assist students who need extra financial help to meet specific costs that are not already met from statutory or other sources, to help students in financial hardship by providing emergency payments for unexpected financial crises, and to intervene in cases where a student may be considering giving up their course because of financial problems. As described in section 4.3.3, provision has also been made within this allocation to address issues arising from changes to the Disabled Students' Allowance from September 2015.
- 4.5.7 We recognise that we commit a high level of resources to student support, and we will monitor this for impact. We have committed funding to research the correlation between socio-economic background and student success, and this will cover the potential impact of financial support for low-income students.

#### **4.6 Use of contextual data in admissions**

- 4.6.1 We are committed to attracting the most able students from a range of backgrounds, and to ensuring that our admissions processes are able to identify students of outstanding achievement and potential. We are undertaking ongoing work following a research report by SPA (Supporting Professionalism in Admissions) on the use of contextualised admissions in higher education<sup>2</sup> and a specific consultant's report commissioned for QMUL, which examined the evidence base, the approaches, practice and methodologies used and provided a framework of recommendations that we are currently exploring in detail. The development of a contextualised admissions policy is being overseen by the Marketing Recruitment and Admissions Group (MRAG) chaired by the Vice Principal (Teaching, Learning and Student Experience) to ensure responsibility and accountability for this development. Final responsibility for approval of the policy rests with the Senate.
- 4.6.2 The focus of our work in 2015-16 is on developing policy and procedures for ensuring that data about care leavers and applicants from schools targeted for support in our WPEO Strategy is available at the point of selection and, for offer holders, at the point of confirmation with a view to ensuring that this is used consistently and appropriately to inform admissions decisions. We envisage piloting the use of these contextual data during 2016-17 with a view to full implementation in the following cycle. Alongside this, we will continue to explore the potential to use contextual data factors relating to school performance and the applicant's performance in relation to this as part of our wider commitment to developing a contextualised admissions policy.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Contextualised Admissions: Examining the Evidence', Published by SPA, October 2013

## **4.7 Level of investment as compared to arrangements for previous years**

- 4.7.1 Queen Mary will in 2016-17 once again commit 30% of the additional fee income raised from tuition fees above £6,000 to support additional access and retention measures, and the detail of how this will be spent is found in Tables 4 and 5 of the 2016-17 Resource Plan. The total countable expenditure for the 2016-17 Access Agreement is £9.027 million.
- 4.7.2 It is recognised that a high percentage of this expenditure is allocated to student financial support. Queen Mary fully understands the importance of outreach work, and therefore commits substantial resources to support this in addition to the funding allocated through the 2016-17 Access Agreement. This is set out in Table 4 of the 2016-17 Resource Plan.
- 4.7.3 Examples of this additional spending are the resources committed to areas of work such as the links with St Paul's Way Trust School and the Drapers' Academy and additional outreach work that takes place with local post-16 institutions. We also allocate substantial financial support to the award-winning Centre of the Cell biomedical outreach centre based in the School of Medicine and Dentistry. Academic schools offer taster days and lectures, summer schools, targeted workshops and activities organised around events such as National Science and Engineering Week. Other activities include *cs4fn* (computer science for fun), an innovative widening participation campaign that uses the web, printed magazines and a programme of school outreach activities to inspire young people about computer science and its interaction with other disciplines such as mathematics, physics, biology, philosophy and psychology.
- 4.7.4 Queen Mary Centre for Public Engagement has a major focus on outreach work. It builds upon the extensive tradition of the College in public engagement that can be traced back to the foundation of the People's Palace in the 19th century, and continues to the present day with established activities that include the Centre of the Cell, *cs4fn*, People's Palace Projects and the Mile End Group. It further reinforces Queen Mary's commitment to engaging with individuals and groups outside the College including schools, government agencies and politicians. The Centre for Public Engagement pulls together existing components of excellence in outreach and engagement activities throughout the College and enhances their profile. It supports student retention, widening participation and social mobility at all levels. Further details are found at <http://www.qmul.ac.uk/publicengagement/>

## **SECTION 5: PROVISION OF CLEAR INFORMATION TO EXISTING AND PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS**

### **5.1 Provision of clear information to existing and prospective students**

- 5.1.1 Queen Mary is committed to the clearest possible communication of information to all our students. Information on new tuition fees levels and financial support arrangements from September 2016 will be available on the Queen Mary website from July 2015, together with information about fee levels and financial support for existing students. All information will make it clear that no student will be required to pay fees until after graduation and until they reach specified minimum

thresholds of earnings.

- 5.1.2 We will provide clear information to applicants and students about Queen Mary's courses and entry requirements so they are able to understand exactly what they will be studying. This will be provided as web-based information and through our printed prospectus. To support this there is work ongoing to ensure a clear and coherent content strategy for all Queen Mary communications.
- 5.1.3 Provision of clear and accurate information to teachers and to parents and carers is important, as they are in a position to advise and influence students about the financial as well as academic aspects of their future studies. This can play a crucial determining role in deciding whether or not to progress to higher education. This work is undertaken across the Institution, for example by colleagues in the Advice and Counselling Service who provide information to offer holders and current students, and the UK Student Recruitment Team who provide information, advice and guidance for schools and sixth-form colleges through regular publications such as a parents' and carers' guide and communications targeted at teachers and career advisers. Academic Schools also provide information to prospective students, parents and carers, and teachers who wish to find out more about their courses and studying at Queen Mary.
- 5.1.4 Sessions on student finance are incorporated into outreach activities and included in information, advice and guidance work with schools and colleges.
- 5.1.5 We will ensure that clear and timely information on our tuition fee levels and financial support for students is provided for UCAS and the Student Loans Company to enable them to populate their applicant-facing web services.

## **SECTION 6: MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

### **6.1 Current monitoring and evaluation strategy**

- 6.1.1 Queen Mary currently monitors the measures set out in its access agreement by:
  - (i) using annual HESA statistics and data provided through Queen Mary's Student Information System as clearly measurable evidence of progress towards meeting targets and milestones set out in Annex B.
  - (ii) rigorous evaluation of individual outreach and retention projects, with full evaluation reports produced for each project to inform future planning and to ensure effective targeting
- 6.1.2 In addition, Queen Mary is in the process of joining the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT). Being part of HEAT will provide us with a single database for recording data on outreach activities, including at individual participant level. In the short term, this will allow us to make efficiencies in how we record and report on our projects and, in the long term, it will enable us to track participants in our outreach initiatives through their education journey, should they enter HE. This will provide us with a significant new insight, as previously we have only been able to monitor the trajectory of participants if they enrolled in study at Queen Mary. Over the long term, we believe that this information will further improve

our understanding of the impact of different initiatives and feed back into future project planning.

- 6.1.3 The senior strategic group responsible for monitoring the access agreement is the OFFA Access Agreement Monitoring Group, which is chaired by the Vice Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning).

## **6.2 Developing a more evidence-based framework for widening participation**

- 6.2.1 The approach described in section 6.1 has provided Queen Mary with a sound basis to evaluate the effectiveness of individual widening participation activities, develop and improve them when necessary, and assess them for value for money. Additionally, since the publication of our 2015-16 Access Agreement, we have invested resource in a new post within our widening participation team dedicated to driving this work forwards. This new team member is currently in the process of developing a five-year evaluation and monitoring strategy which will run alongside our 2015-20 Widening Participation and Enhancing Opportunities Strategy. This document will build upon the work set out in our existing Evaluation and Monitoring Strategy, extending its remit to include the evaluation of financial assistance measures in addition to that of outreach initiatives. As acknowledged elsewhere in this document, Queen Mary commits a high level of resource to bursaries and as such considers assessing the impact of this kind of support to be of high importance.
- 6.2.2 One example of our approach to evidence-based evaluation is the access to medicine and dentistry programme *Bridge the Gap*, which started in September 2012. A PhD student registered at Queen Mary is undertaking a four-year study of the programme as the basis for her research. The study will follow *Bridge the Gap* between 2013 and 2016. It will involve the collation of documents and resources developed for the project, and interviews with selected stakeholders (including the children and young people involved in the scheme) over the four-year period. The study will provide a longitudinal evidence-based evaluation of the scheme, and help inform subsequent thinking about widening participation interventions.
- 6.2.3 As part of the Evaluation and Monitoring Strategy we have committed to working closely with our key partner schools to assess the impact of our long-term work. Queen Mary invests a great deal in these relationships, and so do our partner schools. This provides an ideal opportunity to work together on meaningful evaluation. In particular, we will work with the Drapers' Academy and St Paul's Way Trust School to evaluate the long-term impact of selected programmes such as the Information, Advice and Guidance programme at the Drapers' Academy.
- 6.2.4 We will embed evidence-based evaluation into our programme of work to support care leavers. Despite the phasing out of the Buttle UK Quality Mark, we will continue to undertake monitoring and reporting on care leavers within our student population. We are continuing with work to establish strong links with local authorities, which will help us to engage in a sustained work programme with young people in care and care leavers. Clear monitoring and evaluation arrangements will be built into this from the beginning to gather agreed data from participants and relevant quantitative data from local authorities. In addition,



membership of HEAT will for the first time allow us to track participants in our intensive Undergraduate Shadowing Scheme (aimed specifically at looked-after young people and care leavers) through to Higher Education.

- 6.2.5 In these ways we will ensure that evidence-based evaluation is embedded into new projects as well as long-term partnership work. Our strategy directs the development of a common framework for the evaluation of established projects such as our summer-school programme, transition activities, information, advice and guidance work and school-visit programme. This will feature greater emphasis on an approach that sees evaluation as an integral part of project planning, built in from the earliest stages and sustained past the project end, encompassing robust data collection processes, qualitative research methods such as surveys and focus groups, and tracking participants to assess long-term impact. In developing the framework we will use existing resources and research evidence, and will seek to disseminate any useful findings from our own research back into the sector in order to contribute to the growing body of knowledge around what works in widening participation to higher education.

## **SECTION 7: TARGETS AND MILESTONES**

### **7.1 Setting targets and milestones**

- 7.1.1 OFFA Guidance on producing 2016-17 Access Agreements indicates that existing targets should be reviewed and, where appropriate, new stretching targets should be in place up to 2019-20. Queen Mary has chosen to maintain a number of the challenging targets agreed previously, and extend these to 2019-20. We have updated existing target baselines to reflect current progress, and we have set new stretching targets and milestones for these and new areas of work. The targets and milestones are set out in Tables 7a and 7b of the 2016-17 Resource Plan.
- 7.1.2 We have a strong record in attracting students from three main groups identified as under-represented in higher education: state-school students, students from NS-SEC classes 4-7, and those from low-participation neighbourhoods. We understand the challenge of sustaining this in the light of the substantial increase in tuition fees from September 2012 and our institutional objective of enhancing the quality of undergraduate intake through higher entry requirements for competitive courses. The targets and milestones for these target groups are set out in Table 7a. These are to remain significantly above the HESA location-adjusted benchmarks for students from state schools and NS-SEC groups 4-7, and to achieve a yearly percentage increase in the proportion of students from low-participation neighbourhoods using the POLAR 3 categorisation.
- 7.1.3 We believe that all of these targets are challenging in the context of the current HE environment and Queen Mary's position as a leading research institution. Additionally, the re-categorisation of low-participation neighbourhoods based on the implementation of POLAR 3 data has had a significant impact on HEIs that target outreach activities at students based in London, where there are now fewer postcodes in Quintile 1. It is because we recognise the challenge of maintaining our above-sector benchmarks performance in widening participation that we have

chosen to allocate a high percentage (30%) of the additional fees to access measures.

- 7.1.4 The proportion of first-year full-time first-degree students at Queen Mary in receipt of the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) has increased over the three-year period from 2010-11 to 2013-14. We aim to ensure that this progress can be maintained in light of uncertainty over the DSA and any further changes to tuition fee charges. We have set a target to ensure that this increase is maintained over the next five years. Recognising that DSA is the current HESA Performance Indicator for Disabled Students, Queen Mary will retain this as our institutional measure. This will be reviewed should there be any further confirmed changes to DSA in the future.
- 7.1.5 Queen Mary has committed significant resources to supporting and improving student retention, success and progression. This is reflected in a target to improve the successful completion rate for our students over a five-year period. For this target we will use baseline and reporting data from our own Student Information System rather than HESA data, as this will allow us greater flexibility to generate and analyse detailed reports.
- 7.1.6 The outreach programme targets detailed in table 7b highlight new and existing areas of work with increased challenge in the reach and depth of the outreach activity undertaken. The targets are developed to offer challenge and flexibility predicated on a growing evidence base from within and outside Queen Mary.

## **SECTION 8: CONSULTING WITH STUDENTS**

### **8.1 Involving students in drawing up the Access Agreement and organising outreach activities**

- 8.1.1 We value the contribution made by Queen Mary's students to both the planning and delivery of our widening participation programme. Submission of the 2016-17 Access Agreement was managed by an OFFA Access Monitoring Group that was chaired by the Vice Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning) and reported directly to Queen Mary's Senior Executive. The group comprised appropriate senior managers from the College and two representatives from Queen Mary's Students' Union: the President and the Vice President for Welfare.
- 8.1.2 We aim to develop our capacity to facilitate more student involvement in widening participation activities and build on our partnership with the Students' Union by collaborating more closely on some of the Students' Union initiatives aimed at enhancing retention, success and progression detailed in section 4.3.

## **SECTION 9: EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

### **9.1 Compliance with responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010**

- 9.1.1 The purpose of the 2016-17 Access Agreement is to support and encourage progression to higher education from groups currently under-represented. Three

main target groups identified as under-represented in higher education are state-school students, students from low participation neighbourhoods, and students from NS-SEC Groups 4-7. Students with disabilities are also under-represented in higher education, and there is a specific target to improve the representation from this group of students. The access agreement also supports a fair access policy that seeks to ensure that all applications are assessed fairly to identify whether they are appropriately qualified to succeed in the relevant academic programme. No aspect of this access agreement is likely to have an adverse affect on any member of the nine key groups defined as having protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

9.1.2 Queen Mary is an international and diverse community, and promoting equality is essential to make it a world-class institution. We are committed to providing an environment for students and staff where respect is shown to all and where everyone is enabled to achieve their full potential. The College has a comprehensive action plan to ensure that it fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010, and this supports the objectives of the 2016-17 Access Agreement in a number of key areas. There are detailed actions plans to:

- enhance gender equality for staff and students
- reduce the attainment gap by ethnicity and investigate the withdrawal of black and minority ethnic students
- enhance access to Queen Mary's buildings and virtual environment
- ensure that disabled students and staff feel supported at work and study, and that disability awareness is raised among students and staff
- promote a culture in the College where staff and students can be themselves
- ensure adequate facilities and policies are in place to allow the practice of religion and promote good interfaith relations
- ensure students of different ages have access to support and facilities required

9.1.3 Full details of work in each of these areas can be found at <http://www.hr.qmul.ac.uk/equality/equalityobjectives/index.html>

9.1.4 All the activities in the widening participation programme described in the Access Agreement are open to everyone in the target cohorts of under-represented groups. Selection is based on this alone, and applicants are judged against clear criteria that are discussed and agreed with participating schools and delivery partners. All activities are advertised widely to targeted schools and colleges to ensure maximum take-up.

9.1.5 Activities described in the strategy have been designed to ensure that they will appeal to everyone in the relevant target groups. For example, science and engineering summer schools are designed to cover a wide range of engineering subjects to try to encourage higher take-up from girls, who often do not apply for these activities in the same numbers as boys. Section 6 of the Access Agreement describes how all outreach projects will be evaluated rigorously, and patterns of take-up will be monitored as part of this process.