ACCESS AGREEMENT 2013-14

Fair Access, Widening Participation and Student Success at Aston University

This Access Agreement

- ensures that approximately 67% of Aston students will be entitled to Aston University Scholarships.
- underlines Aston’s commitment to challenging widening participation targets, and to transforming the lives of students from a wide range of backgrounds.
- proposes a subsidised tuition fee of £1,000 for a year of employer-based learning (via a placement year) which students will be strongly encouraged to take up - emphasising the critical role placement years and work-based learning play in creating employable graduates.
- commits Aston to improving completion and retention rates from current high levels.
- underpins Aston’s core strategic objective of delivering ‘Accessible Excellence’ through the provision of Scholarships targeted at students from low income families as well as those who are high achievers. We predict that 16% of students will receive scholarships aimed at low participation groups AND Aston Excellence scholarships aimed at those entrants with AAB+ or equivalent qualifications.
- Continues a programme of regional collaboration, building on the successful AimHigher partnership.

Introduction

Aston University has a long-standing commitment to widening participation which is deeply embedded within the University’s strategy. At the same time, Aston has also been successful in its efforts to increase the quality of entrants to its programmes. The University’s integrated approach extends across the ‘student lifecycle’: from aspiration-raising outreach, mentoring and masterclass work with schools and colleges, to provision of a wide range of academic, learning, social and financial support services whilst at University, including enhancing employability and entrepreneurship, supporting career development and providing a sector-leading careers service, through to continuing careers support into our graduates’ early careers and alumni mentoring. We want to extend opportunities for successful participation in our excellent programmes to all who are capable of benefiting from them regardless of their background. We are committed to transforming the lives of our students and focussed on giving them a great start in their futures.

Aston University has invested in excellence in teaching and learning to provide innovative support to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. As a result, the University’s completion rates now consistently exceed our benchmarks. Table One below outlines Aston’s record on access, retention and graduate employment success.

Over the past six years, Aston University has committed an increasing proportion of its resources to enhancing the student learning experience. We are already allocating additional funds to replace AimHigher and to continue collaborative work with three other Birmingham HEIs as part of the new Aimhigher West Midlands Partnership.

Our widening participation and retention support is evidence-based, building upon research commissioned and conducted by the University and its collaborative partners into the experiences
and needs of under-represented students within Higher Education (e.g. reports to Aston’s Learning and Teaching Committee by Ingleby, 2009 and Gorman, 2011).

Table One: Aston University’s record on Access, Retention, Student Success and Widening Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Aston University</th>
<th>HESA benchmark for Aston</th>
<th>UK Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% from low participation neighbourhoods (LPN)</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>8.7%*</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% from social classes NS-SEC Classes 4,5,6 &amp; 7</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>30.6%*</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% from state schools</td>
<td>90.6%</td>
<td>87.2%*</td>
<td>88.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% projected to complete or transfer</td>
<td>91.2%</td>
<td>90.2%</td>
<td>86.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% no longer in HE following year of entry</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate level employment within 6 months of graduation</td>
<td>87.7%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HESA PI data 2009/10 www.hesa.ac.uk
*Location adjusted benchmark

Aston combines close and important links to the local community (over 40% of students are from the West Midlands region, including 23% from the Birmingham area) with an international reputation (22% from outside the EU). Over 90% of home students starting full-time first-degree courses at Aston in 2010-11 came from state schools, with over 37% from the four lowest socio-economic groups. Over 57% of our current students are entitled to a maintenance grant, with around 42% entitled to full grants. At the same time the University has a strong retention record, over 95% of entrants were still in Higher Education following their year of entry (2009-2011 average), and an excellent employment record, 87.7% of employed graduates entering “graduate level employment” within six months of graduation (Sunday Times University Guide 2013, based on 2009-10 HESA DLHE Data).

Our agreement encompasses

- Accessible Excellence
- Outreach and Widening Participation
- Retention and Progression
- Placements and Employability

Our milestones are arranged around these four pillars. (See Table 5a in Annex B). We aim to maintain our reputation for widening participation in an increasingly competitive HE arena, whilst strengthening our entrance standards and enhancing further the quality and vocational relevance of programmes. We will invest further in improving the retention, degree achievement and graduate employment success of our students beyond their current high levels.

ACCESS AGREEMENT 2013/14: COMPONENT ELEMENTS

Aston pioneered the four year placement degree programme over 40 years ago and remains the leader in this type of degree programme. A placement year enables Aston students to spend the third year of their course off campus, either undertaking a work or study placement. Placement
programmes make Aston graduates highly employable – indeed around 35% of our students are offered graduate positions with their placement companies - and underpin strong relationships with business, industry and the professions. Research carried out at Aston shows that sandwich programmes increase the employability of our graduates and improve their final degree grades (Driffield, Foster and Higson, 2011.) Our fee proposals seek to enhance further this position, and encourage more students to take placements, despite the increased length of the degree course and concerns over ‘student debt’. 

1. Fee limits and fee income above £6,000

i. We propose that our full-time Home/EU undergraduate tuition fee is £9,000 pa in 2013/14. This fee will rise by an inflation rate set by HEFCE/BIS.

ii. Our four-year sandwich degree programmes enable students to spend the third year on industrial/professional placement. Our placement fee for Home/EU students will be set at £1,000 (a heavily subsidised rate compared to actual costs for those students entering in 2013/14 when they go on placement in 2015-16. This includes students who take a work or study placement year overseas. The fee figure will rise by inflation for those students entering Aston University in 2014 and beyond.

iii. According to HESA PI data released in July 2011, Aston has the highest percentage of students enrolled on sandwich courses, at just under 60%, of any UK university. This £1,000 tuition fee level is aimed at encouraging students to take the academically and vocationally beneficial option, irrespective of family income or social background. The £1,000 fee level set by Aston for integrated placement years was endorsed by the recommendations made by the Wilson Review of Business-University Collaboration (BIS, February 2012).

iv. Aston University is piloting an innovative range of integrated Masters programmes for where a year’s placement is combined with academic study (at a much more intensive level than is associated with the conventional placement year). This will enable Aston students on specific programmes to gain an MEng or MSc qualification in four years, whilst also gaining relevant professional experience. The tuition fee for the placement/study year on these courses will be £4,500 for those students undertaking this in 2015/16. This figure will rise by inflation for those students taking this option in 2016/17 and beyond.

v. Home/EU students following full-time Foundation Degree programmes will be charged a fee of no more than £6,000 from 2013/14. This fee will rise by an inflation rate set by HEFCE/BIS.

vi. Aston also wishes to support and encourage students to undertake EU ERASMUS year abroad programmes in future and would welcome further guidance on this issue from HEFCE and BIS as soon as possible so we can set our year abroad fees.

vii. Fees for Part Time students will be set at the same rate as Full Time students on a pro-rata basis. Foundation Degree students will be charged at a pro rata fee of £6,000.

2. Expenditure on additional access and retention measures

In 2013/14, Aston plans to invest 27.5% of its fee income above £6,000 into Aston University Scholarships, outreach, retention and employability. Tables 3a-d in Annex B show the projected additional income accruing from variable fees for the period 2012/13 to 2016/17 and the estimated amount allocated in the form of scholarships and support for academic activities, including improvements to facilities.

In 2013/14 this investment will take the form of:

i. £3.2M in OFFA countable Scholarships and financial support, including significantly exceeding Aston’s NSP allocation. The University will increase its hardship funds to assist students who experience unforeseen financial difficulties during the course of their
studies. Overall expenditure on outreach and retention activities rising to £2 million by 2015/16.

ii. Modern foreign language tuition for all students entering Aston from 2012-13 at no additional cost to the student. This will be provided by Aston’s Languages for All Programme at a cost to Aston rising to £1.4M within 3 years. This offer is a central feature of Aston’s Widening Participation strategy, ensuring that all students have access to critical language and cultural training, building up their employability and intercultural competence as part of our strategy to provide education for effective ‘Global Citizenship’. National graduate employment and employer surveys show that those students who study a language or have language competence increase their chances of gaining graduate level employment (HEFCE, 2008). This is particularly important for our home students, a significant proportion of whom have not had the opportunity to study an additional language at school.

3. Additional Access Measures

Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of Widening Participation at Aston are embedded within the University’s Learning and Teaching and Employability Strategies. Priorities include:

- maintaining wide accessibility to our programmes and offering flexible delivery tailored to individual needs
- understanding student performance issues and implementation of improvement plans
- innovative curriculum design and delivery, to support the needs of a diverse student population and to develop essential, high level employability skills
- continuous improvement and enhancement of learner support systems to enable student achievement, including promoting mentoring
- extending targeted placement preparation support, and career management support and guidance
- enhancing student employability outcomes through: opportunities for entrepreneurship training and experience; promoting work-based learning opportunities; enhancing the value of placements; and employer and alumni engagement.

3.1 Outreach

a. We will be undertaking the following targeted work, building on our current track record. Key targets for activities are listed in Table 5b of the Access Agreement document.

i. Each academic School will target key feeder schools and colleges to use successful role models from the student body and alumni to promote recruitment of pupils from widening participation backgrounds and those with excellent entry qualifications, focusing in particular on extending access to SIV and STEM subjects.

ii. Master classes and Student Conferences will continue to be a major part of our provision. Over 750 students from target schools and colleges will take part in 2013/14.

iii. Over 1,500 students in Year 7-13 will visit our campuses for HE experience days, again from target schools and colleges.

iv. We will appoint an Information, Advice and Guidance Schools Liaison Officer in 2012/13 to work with target schools across the UK (although maintaining a regional focus) to strengthen or complement other advice and guidance support. This will focus on Year 8-12 students including year 9 options and GCSE choices.

v. We will expand the number of student mentors working in targeted regional schools and colleges, both in person and via e-mentoring, beyond the numbers planned as part of the Collaborative Outreach Activities outlined below. 55 student mentors will be working with
up to 300 learners by 2013/14. This is in addition to more than 60 volunteer student tutors and e-mentors.

vi. We will make the key elements of study skills and online revision support available to students who apply to Aston through UCAS. Applicants will be enabled and encouraged to interact with the University through online study support resources and a Progression Enhancement Programme. This support will be specifically targeted to students from the lower socio-economic groups and from schools/colleges whose performance is below the UK average at GCSE and A level. The Learner Enhancement Team offers pre-entry support to Access to Higher Education Programme students from feeder colleges and to mature students.

vii. The Aston University Engineering Academy (a University Technical College), which opens in September 2012, will provide a crucial pipeline from local schools in low participation areas to degrees and apprenticeships in engineering. From Spring Term 2013 more than 30 Aston students will act as volunteer mentors/tutors for learners at the Academy.

viii. Aston organised the annual Birmingham UCAS Higher Education Guidance Convention from 1995 to 2007, in 2009 and 2011, when over 12,000 Year 12 students and their advisers attended. We have already bid to UCAS to host and part-fund this annual event in 2013 and will bid again for 2015. This event is open to all West Midlands schools and colleges, the majority of which have significant percentages of students from the four lowest socio-economic groups.

ix. There will be further development of the Routes into Languages programme (led from Aston in the region), aimed at promoting languages in schools.

x. Additional STEM Ambassadors will be recruited to encourage the study of maths, science and engineering in schools. The number will rise to 30 by 2013/14.

xi. We will continue to provide outreach to the very young (and their parents) to ensure they recognise university as part of their future. Activities will include our involvement in the Children’s University, Aston Olympics, staff and student volunteering in primary and junior schools and out of school clubs.

xii. We intend to monitor closely our efforts to maintain and enhance participation from under-represented groups and to this end we have employed a member of staff in the Planning and Management Information Team to provide information and support to our monitoring and research efforts in this area.

b. Collaborative Outreach Activities

Aston University will continue the collaborative partnership established in 2011 – 12 with University of Birmingham, Birmingham City University and University College Birmingham to take forward the legacy of Aimhigher. The Aimhigher West Midlands partnership has established itself and exceeded its baseline year targets, having engaged over 500 disadvantaged young people from more than 50 schools. Going forward, the partnership will sharpen its focus on learners in Years 9 to 11, and seek to consolidate established links with 20 schools to deliver activities in an intensive and coherent programme in line with the Learner Progression Framework.

The partnership will also deliver less intensive activities to a larger numbers of young people in response to demand from schools. The Aston University will jointly fund this with an increased contribution of £35,000 in 2012-13 and will continue to be intimately involved in its governance and management. Opportunities to engage other HEIs in elements of the Aimhigher programme will be pursued, as will opportunities to align with and sustain other relevant initiatives. These partnership activities will complement Aston University’s own extensive programme of widening access and fair access measures outlined elsewhere in this agreement.

Aston University takes an active role in the work of HELOA (The Higher Education Liaison Officers’ Association) with a member of Aston’s Schools Liaison team elected as Midlands
Chairperson in 2012. HELOA is the professional association of higher education staff who provide guidance and information to prospective higher education students, their families and advisers. HELOA has in excess of 800 members from over 130 UK Universities and Higher Education Institutions. HELOA has a code of practice which encourages collaboration, good practice and ethical standards.

c. **Admissions Policy and ‘Accessible Excellence’**

Aston’s Admissions Policy aims to be fair and transparent and to enable the University to meet (and to exceed) both the widening participation and state school benchmarks at the same time as maintaining high entry standards. This underpins our reputation for ‘Accessible Excellence’.

As outlined in Table 1, above, Aston consistently exceeds benchmarks on state school entry, socio-economic groups and non-continuation, despite increasing competition for places and a higher UCAS tariff on intake. Average UCAS tariff points have increased from 313 points in 2002 to 380 in 2010 (Source: Complete University Guide 2012/13).

### 3.2 Student Retention, Employability and Success

i. Aston’s retention and employability record remains amongst the best in the country, but we are committed to improving this, recognising that with a step change in the level of loans to be repaid, failing to complete a degree becomes an even greater worry for students and families than it is today. We are setting ourselves ambitious stretch targets for retention and employability (see Table 5a), because we see this as the best way to build on Aston’s expertise in these areas and provide students, particularly from under-represented groups, with a strong start in their professional life.

ii. From 2012/13 Aston is committed to offering further specific support for student retention by appointing additional teaching and academic staff in our academic Schools. This will supplement existing academic personal tutors, and student engagement initiatives to identify where students need additional support in their academic and personal lives. The University’s learning and teaching committee has developed a Personal Tutor Policy including proactive interventions at key transition points in student learning.

iii. We will continue to ensure that all new staff undertake the HE Academy-accredited Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice, and raise the number of academic staff who are Associates or Fellows of the HE Academy beyond the current 40% level (already above the national average).

iv. We have increased the level of support in the Maths Drop-In Centre (part of the Learning Development Centre) by appointing student maths mentors following the model of our highly successful writing mentors and IT programming support.

v. Aston has over 1,000 active student peer mentors working with other Aston students in earlier years. We aim to increase this number to at least 1,500 by 2013-14 and continue to offer mentoring to all undergraduates throughout the student lifecycle.

vi. We will roll out our innovative Engineering CDIO interactive learning programme and our intercultural communication workshops across all four academic Schools.

vii. We will invest up to £1.4M in the next three years to offer free modern foreign languages tuition to all first year undergraduate students.

viii. Our NSP package seeks to increase the number of students who live in university managed accommodation on campus. This will help to ensure that more of our students living away from home would benefit from personal and social support on campus via our Residence Tutors and other pastoral services, which our internal research shows helps to maximise their performance (Arya and Smith, 2004).

ix. Aston has reorganised its Placements, Careers and Employability activities to enable an increase in the number of students taking a period of work experience integrated into
their degree, to embed employability and life skills more effectively into the curriculum, and to contribute to the delivery of the increased graduate employability targets set out in Table 5a.

x. Aston also supports students to develop their Enterprise and Entrepreneurship skills through a variety of events and workshops through to business incubation and development. Nurturing these skills ensures our graduates have a range of skills to fully prepare them for their future.

xi. Our Students’ Guild Job Shop offered over 14,000 term time job opportunities in 2011/12. The Job Shop vets the opportunities it offers to ensure both the nature of the work and the number of hours involved makes it suitable to take on alongside full-time study, and that the student will gain employability skills from the experience. This service will continue to be funded by the University beyond 2012.

xii. Aston University has been awarded the Buttle Trust UK Quality Mark, demonstrating our support for Care Leavers. Aston is also a key member of the West Midlands Care Leavers Network. The network enables staff from the region to share good practice in this area.

3.3 Aston Scholarships and other financial support for students

a. National Scholarship Programme (NSP)

Aston University proposes to offer 235 Scholarships in 2012/13 as part of the National Scholarship Programme (NSP) in addition to the allocation of 147 scholarships from the Government. We will use our matched contribution to offer a fee-free placement year and increase the number of scholarships awarded.

Aston’s NSP offer will be as follows:

- £3,000 tuition fee discount in year one
- £1,000 tuition fee discount in 2015/16 for the Aston sandwich placement year. As already explained, Aston is planning to charge a fee for the placement year of £1,000. Students on Optometry or Pharmacy (where a pre-registration year replaces the placement year), or MEng/MSc courses with an integrated placement study year will be given a £1,000 tuition fee discount in year three.

Recipients must be:

- English domiciled students with residual household incomes of up to £18,000, claiming the maintenance grant (including mature students and care leavers, as assessed by Student Finance England through HEBSS) and
- Opting to live away from the family home on campus in year one.

The Aston NSP is particularly designed to support students who feel that they cannot afford to attend a University away from their home. It is only available to students who live in University managed campus residences for the duration of their first year (and have paid residences fees for the full year). The scheme will also support care leavers who live in University accommodation. From 2012-13 we intend to review our residences costs to all students. For example internet access in residences (supplied by an external provider) will be set at a nominal fee subsidised by the University.

We have had to focus the scholarships on students who live away from home because of the relatively small number of scholarships we have in relation to the socio-economic mix of our students. 30% of current Aston first year undergraduate students are assessed as having a family income of up to £18,000, whilst the NSP provision will only be available for around 11.6% of first
year undergraduates. The section below describes our approach to supporting other students in this low income category.

Other Aston Scholarships

b. Aston Advantage Scholarships

As indicated above, the National Scholarship (NSP) provision will only cover less than half of the number of Aston students from backgrounds with family incomes up to £18,000. For this reason in 2013/14 we will continue to fund Aston Advantage Scholarships of up to £2,000 for all other first year Home/EU students paying full deferred variable tuition fees with household incomes of up to £18,000.

These Aston Advantage Scholarships will take the form of:

- £1,000 tuition fee discount from the first year fee of £9,000
- £1,000 fee discount in 2015/16 for the Aston sandwich placement year. Students who undertake the placement year will be qualified for this fee discount. Students on Optometry or Pharmacy (where a pre-registration year replaces the placement year), or MEng/MSc courses with an integrated placement study year will be given a £1,000 tuition fee discount in year three.

c. Aston Progression Scholarships

For 2013/14 the University will offer an Aston Progression Scholarship of £500 pa to all Home/EU students paying deferred variable tuition fees who are in receipt of full or partial state support – i.e. with household income of up to £42,000. This support will be guaranteed in each year of study where a tuition fee of £9,000 is charged, subject to satisfactory academic performance. Students who receive National Scholarship Programme support and Aston Advantage Scholarships in year one will receive this further support via an Aston Progression Scholarship in subsequent years. Based on historical access trends it is anticipated that over 45% of students paying deferred variable tuition fees at Aston will be entitled to these Aston Scholarships or the National Scholarship Programme.

Aston Progression Scholarships will provide:

- £500 tuition fee discount in each year of study where a tuition fee for £9,000 is charged.

Aston Scholarships have been structured in this way for the following reasons.

- The current Government plans for interest charges on fee and maintenance loans are for RPI plus 3% while students are studying, with possible variable levels of interest after graduation. A £500 Aston fee discount would effectively mean that Home/EU students’ fee loans would not increase in interest each year based on a typical interest rate of just over 5% if fees are set at £9,000 (£1,000 for the placement year). In a typical financial period this would mean that on graduation students would not “owe” more than they originally borrowed in fee loans after three or four years of study at Aston.

Students will be assessed for eligibility through the Higher Education Bursary and Scholarship Scheme (HEBSS) or equivalent which is administered by the Student Loans Company.

d. Aston Placement Scholarships

All Home/EU students who undertake an unpaid sandwich work or study placement year in the UK
or overseas will receive an additional tuition fee discount of £1,000. Those in receipt of a placement fee reduction via the Aston NSP or Aston Advantage Scholarships will not be entitled to an Aston Placement Scholarship as well. Again this is intended to encourage more Aston students to take the placement option which we know is beneficial to their success as graduates.

e. Aston Excellence Scholarships

All Home/EU students entering Aston in 2013/14 with at least AAB grades at ‘A’ Level or equivalent* will be entitled to Aston Excellence Scholarships. Entrants in receipt of NSP, Aston Advantage Scholarships and Aston Progression Scholarships will also be entitled to receive Aston Excellence Scholarships if they have gained at least AAB grades or equivalent. This will further promote the principle of accessible excellence. We anticipate that 16% of students from widening participation backgrounds will benefit from Aston Excellence Scholarships IN ADDITION to other forms of Aston scholarship support.

Aston’s Excellence Scholarships will be as follows:

- £1,000 tuition fee discount in each year of study where a tuition fee for £9,000 is charged (normally amounting to £3,000 for a standard 4 year sandwich programme)
- £1,000 tuition fee discount in 2015/16 for the Aston sandwich placement year. As already explained, Aston is planning to charge a fee for the placement year of £1,000. Students on Optometry or Pharmacy (where a pre-registration year replaces the placement year), or MEng/MSc courses with an integrated placement study year will be given a £1,000 tuition fee discount.

* AAB equivalence will be assessed in accordance with the HEFCE definition used in its student number control methodology for 2012 entry.

4. Targets and Milestones

Our Targets and Milestones are set out in Table 5 of Annex B. We are committing to OFFA targets which maintain our current access levels whilst improving retention and employability.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

Key targets are already in place for the main strategic themes of Aston’s 2020 Strategy. The University’s Executive and Council meetings currently monitor a range of indicators, including widening participation, retention/continuation rates, degree attainment, employability, and student satisfaction levels. The detailed monitoring and analysis of widening participation activity is carried out across two University Committees: Business and Community Engagement, and Learning and Teaching. The ‘OFFA Targets’ in this agreement will become those used for Executive and Council KPIs. The stretch targets will be used for individual and departmental objectives.

Aston has invested in evaluation and reflection on the impact of all its key initiatives, including outreach, retention and student success:

- Surveys across the whole student life cycle are carried out by our market research team, and lead to action plans to address issues
- our Director of Student Experience reviews the impact of our services on students in order to implement improvements
- the Planning Office will draw together all the monitoring of this Access Agreement.
- as referenced throughout the text of this Agreement, Aston academic staff will continue to
carry out research on the impact of our activities on student achievement. This research will inform the further development of our approach.

- the regular meetings between the Chief Operating Officer, the Vice-Chancellor, and Aston Student Guild Officers, and reports from Guild Senate, will provide rapid feedback on student concerns and any problems with implementation of the new support schemes.
- Aston University has consulted with current Aston students via meetings with Guild Executive and Sabbatical Officers. University Council and Senate have also been consulted. Both these bodies include Student and Alumni representatives. 2012 and 2013 entry UCAS applicants will be consulted via applicant surveys. These prospective student views will influence our Access Agreement decisions for 2014 and beyond.
- in addition, the Aimhigher West Midlands Partnership has developed a comprehensive impact and evaluation plan which will monitor student engagement in partnership activities, track the progression of those learners with whom the partnership works most closely, evaluate the overall effectiveness of the partnership activity and disseminate good practice. Evaluation will include both quantitative and qualitative measures and will provide evidence to partner HEIs and schools engaged in the programme.

6. Provision of information to students

Aston has arranged its provision of information and guidance to students in two key areas:

a. Pre-Arrival
i. Applicants are informed of the nature and level of tuition fees, bursaries and awards via the prospectus, the University website and special promotional leaflets. Finance talks feature as part of a programme of secondary school visits and HE guidance evenings for parents in schools. The University also provides pre-entry information and guidance on financial matters through Open Days and events for parents and teachers on the Aston campus.
ii. For entry in 2012 and beyond the University expanded the amount of printed information about scholarships, fees and bursaries to ensure that key messages are read by potential students and disseminated to their parents, advisers and carers.
iii. The University has developed a Guide for Parents which includes information on financial matters, and will be updated in the light of 2013 entry changes as and when they are formally confirmed: www.aston.ac.uk/parents.
iv. Pre-entry financial guidance is provided by the Advice & Representation Centre (ARC) in the Students’ Guild, Financial Support Officers in The Hub Student Advice Centre and by University recruitment staff.
v. Aston is committed to the national KIS (Key Information Sets) initiative. This will be linked in to development of an applicant portal which will allow better communication with students, pre-application and pre-arrival.

b. Post-Arrival
i. The Hub (our one-stop student advice point) and the ARC provide face-to-face financial, and other, advice and guidance to all Aston students throughout the year, including advice on the Aston Scholarship and Bursary schemes.
ii. The Financial Assistance Unit in the Hub oversees the provision of additional financial assistance for students in the form of funds, trusts and bursaries, all of which are targeted and allocated on the basis of need.
iii. Students are informed at enrolment and re-enrolment of their position in relation to the information on their HEBSS record concerning their eligibility for Aston Bursaries and Scholarships.
iv. The student portal (MAP) is used as means to communicate with students about their entitlements during the on-line enrolment and re-enrolment processes. Messages are sent to all potentially eligible students individually reminding them of their entitlement and informing them of any problems with their HEBSS records which might affect the payment.
of their Bursaries or Scholarships.

v. The University has invested in a co-ordinator for the Students' Job Shop and in research into the level and impact of debt and part-time work upon Aston University students. Information generated from these sources will be used to improve our support and advice to students.

Equality and Diversity

Aston University takes seriously its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and, in particular, its duty to have due regard to the need to ‘Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act’, ‘Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a ‘protected characteristic and those who do not’ and ‘Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not’.

We value and celebrate the diversity of the Aston community. One of our key aims is to enable students, whatever their background, to develop as critical, reflective learners who will make a difference in the global workforce. Aston’s Annual Equality Report, 2012, illustrates the ways in which we have been working to meet both the University’s Equality and Diversity objectives and fulfil our legal duties. In line with our legal obligations we published our Equality objectives in April 2012: http://www1.aston.ac.uk/staff/equalops/monitoring/

Five of our objectives are concerned primarily with student participation, retention and success and focus on: student attainment and ethnicity; promoting Interfaith understanding; improving the student experience for disabled students; developing and promoting Aston as a ‘Gay friendly’ place to work and study; Widening Participation: ensuring high potential students from all backgrounds can gain the benefit of university education and social mobility that comes with professional careers. Our initial equality analysis for this Access Agreement has focused on the way that we are proposing to administer Aston scholarships. It does not identify any evidence of potential adverse impact for students with specific protected equality characteristics. We are conscious however that the overall changes in University funding and fee structures may present challenges for students from some backgrounds, students with certain family responsibilities, or at different stages of their career. We are concerned in particular to monitor the potential impact on students from under-represented ethnic groups, mature students, disabled students and students with families to support.

Our monitoring resource and processes have been strengthened (see 3.1 xii) to ensure that we are able to identify any changes in intake, retention and degree outcomes over the coming years and take appropriate action where required.

References

Arya, R. and Smith, R. (2004), ‘Living at Home: an investigation into the degree to which University facilities are used by students living off campus’, Aston Widening Participation Working Group.
Gorman, P. (2011), ‘Enhancing the Student Experience: Giving students a voice and asking the right questions’, Learning and Teaching Committee, February 2011.
Wilson, T. ‘Wilson Review of Business-University Collaboration’ Department of Business Innovation and Skills, 28th February 2012
### Table 6 - Milestones and targets

#### Notes:
- Table 6a - Statistical milestones and targets relating to your applicants, entrants or student body (e.g. HESA, UCAS or internal targets)
- Please select milestone/target type from the drop down menu.
- Description (500 characters maximum)
- Is this a collaborative target?
- Baseline over
- Baseline data
- Yearly milestones/targets (numeric where possible, however you may use text)
- Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
- If you have made any changes to the prefilled data around your milestones/targets, or included additional milestones/targets, please indicate why here.

#### Validation checks:
- 10. A reason for changing any prefilled data must be recorded in column L for both tables 6a and 6b.
- Validation check passed.

#### Institution name: Aston University
Institution UKPRN: 10007759

#### Table 6 - Milestones and targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6a - Statistical milestones and targets relating to your applicants, entrants or student body (e.g. HESA, UCAS or internal targets)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please select milestone/target type from the drop down menu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State School (HESA Table T1b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS-SEC (location adjusted) (HESA Table T1a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPN (location adjusted) (HESA Table T1a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non continuation: All (HESA Table T3a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projected outcomes (HESA table T5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please give details in the next column)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please give details in the next column)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Validation checks:
- 10. A reason for changing any prefilled data must be recorded in column L for both tables 6a and 6b.
- Validation check passed.

#### Notes:
- These tables have been pre-populated using the information you provided to us in your 2012-13 access agreement.
- You will, however, need to consider whether you wish to amend or add targets to reflect:
  - the inclusion of part-time and/or ITT courses within your access agreement
  - any significant changes to the nature and size of your cohort, for example in response to changing student number controls
  - more joint targets around collaborative outreach work
  - targets to improve equality and diversity in your access agreement

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### OFFA Access Agreement 2013/14 - Annexes B & C

Institution name: Aston University
Institution UKPRN: 10007759

#### Validation checks:
- 10. A reason for changing any prefilled data must be recorded in column L for both tables 6a and 6b.
- Validation check passed.

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### Table 6 - Milestones and targets

#### Validation checks:
- 10. A reason for changing any prefilled data must be recorded in column L for both tables 6a and 6b.
- Validation check passed.

#### Notes:
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  - any significant changes to the nature and size of your cohort, for example in response to changing student number controls
  - more joint targets around collaborative outreach work
  - targets to improve equality and diversity in your access agreement

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### Table 6a - Statistical milestones and targets relating to your applicants, entrants or student body (e.g. HESA, UCAS or internal targets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please select milestone/target type from the drop down menu</th>
<th>Description (500 characters maximum)</th>
<th>Is this a collaborative target?</th>
<th>Baseline over</th>
<th>Baseline data</th>
<th>Yearly milestones/targets (numeric where possible, however you may use text)</th>
<th>Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)</th>
<th>If you have made any changes to the prefilled data around your milestones/targets, or included additional milestones/targets, please indicate why here.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State School (HESA Table T1b)</td>
<td>To meet or outperform HESA benchmark for the % of students from state schools whilst maintaining entry quality</td>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>90.6</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS-SEC (location adjusted) (HESA Table T1a)</td>
<td>To meet or outperform HESA benchmark for the % of students from NS-SEC 4,5,6 &amp; 7 whilst maintaining entry quality</td>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPN (location adjusted) (HESA Table T1a)</td>
<td>To meet or outperform HESA benchmark for the % of students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods whilst maintaining entry quality</td>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non continuation: All (HESA Table T3a)</td>
<td>To meet or outperform HESA benchmark for non-continuation rates of all students</td>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projected outcomes (HESA table T5)</td>
<td>To meet or outperform HESA benchmark for % of students projected to complete or transfer</td>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>97.2</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>To increase percentage of Full time employed graduates in graduate level employment (including further study)</td>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please give details in the next column)</td>
<td>To increase percent of eligible students who undertake a dissertation, work placement or study period abroad</td>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table 6b - Other milestones and targets

Alongside applicant and entrant targets, we encourage you to provide targets around your outreach work (including collaborative outreach work where appropriate) or other initiatives to illustrate your progress towards increasing access. These should be measurable outcomes based targets and should focus on the number of pupils reached by a particular activity/programme, or number of schools worked with, and what the outcomes were, rather than simply recording the nature/number of activities.

### Please select milestone/target type from the drop down menu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description (500 characters maximum)</th>
<th>Is this a collaborative target?</th>
<th>Yearly milestones/targets (numeric where possible, however you may use text)</th>
<th>Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)</th>
<th>If you have made any changes to the pre-filled data around your milestones/targets, or included additional milestones/targets, please indicate why here.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outreach / WP activity (summer schools)</strong></td>
<td>Number of targeted learners accessing intensive residential activities on campus. Learners will be targeted by state school and from schools/colleges with 60% or more of students who live in disadvantaged IMD postcodes</td>
<td>2010-11 60 60 100 100 120 120 120</td>
<td>Some of this activity may be part of the Aimhigher West Midlands Partnership mentioned below under collaborative activity.</td>
<td>No change. Collaborative activity now called Aimhigher West Midlands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)</strong></td>
<td>Number of learners accessing masterclasses and subject enrichment activities. Learners will be targeted by state school and from schools/colleges with 60% or more of students who live in the most disadvantaged IMD postcodes</td>
<td>2010-11 700 700 750 1000 1000 1000 1200</td>
<td>Activity is partly dependent on continued demand from Schools, Colleges, Academies and learners and use of Pupil Premium and other funding for cover, transport etc.</td>
<td>Activity is partly dependent on continued demand from Schools, Colleges, Academies and learners and use of Pupil Premium and other funding for cover, transport etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)</strong></td>
<td>Visiting campus for general HE experience days and aspiration raising events. Learners will be targeted by state school and from schools/colleges with 60% or more of students who live in disadvantaged IMD postcodes</td>
<td>2010-11 1500 1500 1500 2000 2000 2000 2000</td>
<td>Activity is partly dependent on continued demand from Schools, Colleges, Academies and learners and use of Pupil Premium and other funding for cover, transport etc. Demand has been extremely high under the Aimhigher arrangements.</td>
<td>Activity is partly dependent on continued demand from Schools, Colleges, Academies and learners and use of Pupil Premium and other funding for cover, transport etc. Demand has been extremely high under the Aimhigh arrangements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)</strong></td>
<td>Guidance in schools and colleges. Number of visits to schools and colleges where 60% or more of students are from IMD postcodes as above. These include parents evenings, Y9 options evenings, HE Guidance sessions. This is to complement or replace lost funding and staffing in careers and Connexions services.</td>
<td>2010-11 20 50 60 70 70 70 70</td>
<td>Some of this activity will be part of the Aimhigher West Midlands Partnership mentioned below under collaborative activity. This figure may rise as and when more schools across the city contribute to the HE Progression Partnership. This figure is present dependent on funding from Schools and Schools will be highly targeted as part of the Partnership mentioned below.</td>
<td>Some of this activity will be part of the Aimhigher West Midlands Partnership mentioned below under collaborative activity. This figure may rise as and when more schools across the city contribute to the HE Progression Partnership. This figure is present dependent on funding from Schools and Schools will be highly targeted as part of the Partnership mentioned below.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)</strong></td>
<td>Intensive mentoring in schools and colleges as part of the Aimhigher West Midlands Partnership. Number of mentors working (assume 5 learners/mentees per mentor). This figure includes activities such as after school clubs, STEM ambassadors, e-mentors. This figure refers to Aston Student Mentors and not learners.</td>
<td>2010-11 50 25 25 25 25 25 25</td>
<td>Activity is partly dependent on continued demand from Schools, Colleges, Academies and learners and use of Pupil Premium and other funding for cover, transport etc. Demand has been extremely high under the Aimhigher arrangements.</td>
<td>Activity is partly dependent on continued demand from Schools, Colleges, Academies and learners and use of Pupil Premium and other funding for cover, transport etc. Demand has been extremely high under the Aimhigher arrangements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)</strong></td>
<td>Intensive mentoring in schools and colleges - Aston specific mentors funded by Aston or other sources. Targeted as above.</td>
<td>2010-11 0 20 30 30 30 30 30</td>
<td>This figure may become part of the collaborative partnership numbers if more schools contribute to HE Progression Partnership funding. This figure refers to Aston student mentors and not learners.</td>
<td>This figure may become part of the collaborative partnership numbers if more schools contribute to HE Progression Partnership funding. This figure refers to Aston student mentors and not learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)</strong></td>
<td>Student Tutoring and e-mentoring - less intensive volunteer tutors and mentors working in target schools and colleges on academic and aspiration support via the existing student tutoring scheme at Aston</td>
<td>2010-11 50 60 70 70 70 70 70</td>
<td>Activity is partly dependent on continued demand from Schools, Colleges, Academies and learners and use of Pupil Premium and other funding for cover, transport etc. Demand has been extremely high under the Aimhigher arrangements.</td>
<td>Activity is partly dependent on continued demand from Schools, Colleges, Academies and learners and use of Pupil Premium and other funding for cover, transport etc. Demand has been extremely high under the Aimhigher arrangements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)

| Number of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds engaged in intensive activity with collaborative partnership using a basket of indicators | Yes | 2010/11 | 500 | 500 | 750 | 1000 | 1000 | 1000 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aimhigher West Midlands is a Partnership of 4 HEIs working to provide a programme of progression support to Year 9, 10 and 11 learners in at least 20 local schools. The partnership will also engage significant numbers of young people aged 14-19 in element of its programme. | No change. Collaborative activity now called Aimhigher West Midlands. **Targets clarified** within the partnership of 4 HEIS. |

### Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)

| Proportion of engaged young people from disadvantaged backgrounds engaged attaining 5 x GCSE Grade A* to C inc. English and maths is greater than local average for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, using a basket of indicators | Yes | 2010/11 | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aimhigher West Midlands is a Partnership of 4 HEIs working to provide a programme of HE progression support to Year 9, 10 and 11 learners in at least 20 local schools. This medium-term impact target applies to the cohort of young people age 14-16 engaging in the Aimhigher programme, the first of whom will not complete KS4 until 2013/14, and data on their outcomes will not be available until early 2015 (see above) | No change. Collaborative activity now called Aimhigher West Midlands. **Targets clarified** within the partnership of 4 HEIS. |

### Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)

| Proportion of engaged young people from disadvantaged backgrounds engaged attaining 5 x GCSE Grade A* to C inc. English and maths is greater than local average for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, using a basket of indicators | Yes | 2010/11 | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aimhigher West Midlands is a Partnership of 4 HEIs working to provide a programme of HE progression support to Year 9, 10 and 11 learners in at least 20 local schools. This medium-term impact target applies to the cohort of young people age 14-16 engaging in the Aimhigher programme, the first of whom will not complete KS4 until 2013/14, and data on their outcomes will not be available until early 2015 (see above) | No change. Collaborative activity now called Aimhigher West Midlands. **Targets clarified** within the partnership of 4 HEIS. |

### Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)

| Proportion of engaged young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in intensive activity target group applying for FT place in HE is greater than local average for YP from disadvantaged backgrounds, using a basket of indicators | Yes | 2010/11 | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aimhigher West Midlands is a Partnership of 4 HEIs working to provide a programme of HE progression support to Year 9, 10 and 11 learners in at least 20 local schools. These long-term impact targets are reportable from 2014/15, as our cohort increases in numbers through to 2016/17. | No change. Collaborative activity now called Aimhigher West Midlands. **Targets clarified** within the partnership of 4 HEIS. |