

Office for
Students



Regulatory Notice 1

Access and participation plan
guidance for 2019-20

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Foreword

Everyone should have the opportunity to build a good life for themselves and to reach their potential, regardless of their background and identity. This is important for individuals, for a cohesive and just society, and for a productive economy. But for many people, and in many places in England, where you start from profoundly affects your life chances and, in future, this could be compounded by changes in the employment market.

This is the social mobility challenge and higher education is central to how our country approaches that challenge.

Higher education provides knowledge, credentials, networks and skills for successful careers. It challenges assumptions, inspires creativity and nourishes personal growth for fulfilling lives. Higher education is both a gateway to a rewarding life, and rewarding in itself. It transforms lives, and not only for students who undertake residential study and go on to mobile careers; it is just as important for higher education to improve the lives of people who want to study at home, to live and work in the community where they grew up, and to upskill later in life.

But higher education can also entrench disadvantage for those who cannot access a course that is right for them or do not fulfil their potential during and beyond their studies. This is the case for far too many students and it is profoundly affected by factors such as socioeconomic status, household income, ethnicity and disability, which often intersect.

Higher education could compound the social mobility challenge in the future, or be central to its solution. This will depend on how higher education providers work with schools, communities and employers, how they support students at each stage of the student lifecycle, and how they deploy their resources, evidence and expertise. And, ultimately, it will be judged by whether there is a significant reduction in the gaps in access to, success in and progression from higher education, which exist between the groups that are underrepresented at each stage and other students.

This is the focus of our work on access and participation within the Office for Students, which particularly supports the first objective in the new Regulatory Framework for higher education and is empowered through the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 and the access and participation regulations.

Access and participation plans, which are a condition of registration in certain categories and on which this publication provides specific guidance, are key to this of course, but equally we will work to improve access and participation through the commitment to all students from all backgrounds that extends through all of our regulatory conditions and activities.

We will apply pressure, through our assessment of access and participation plans, for higher education providers to reduce the gaps in access, success and progression, and to improve and sustain their practice in this area. But we will also provide support for the sector-wide activities that are needed to underpin this improvement, for example the availability and use of data and evidence, collaborative

working between higher education providers and with schools and employers, and the development and sharing of innovative and effective practice.

As Director for Fair Access and Participation, it is my job to decide whether or not to approve plans, and to agree the steps to be taken by providers to achieve progress. It is a great privilege for me and my colleagues who will be joining the Office for Students to support students and higher education in this way, and to build on the progress made by the Office for Fair Access. We intend to be rational, proportionate and evidence-based and, where it is necessary to secure the interests of students, to use the powers to intervene that are granted to us by the 2017 Act – powers that are more wide-ranging than those of the former regulator.

The Act and the new Regulatory Framework equip us to develop a bold new approach to supporting social mobility through higher education. So we will engage during the coming year with students, higher education providers and the vibrant third sector in this area, to identify how we will achieve this, both through the pressure we apply through access and participation plans and our sector-wide support. Unlocking the imagination and ambition of the next generation of students depends on this, so we are determined to deliver on it.

Chris Millward

Director for Fair Access and Participation

Office for Students

Introduction

1. This regulatory notice sets out guidance on the preparation of an access and participation plan for consideration by the Director for Fair Access and Participation. It will help you to understand what you need to include in your access and participation plan, how to submit it for consideration, and what happens after that.
2. This guidance will apply to you if you are currently one of these:
 - a higher education institution funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) during the academic year 2017-18, or that will be funded by the Office for Students (OfS) in 2018-19
 - a further education college or sixth form college directly funded by HEFCE in the academic year 2017-18, or that will be directly funded by the OfS in 2018-19
 - a provider designated for student support by the Secretary of State and regulated by the Department for Education (DFE) in the academic year 2018-19 (sometimes referred to as an 'alternative provider')
 - a new provider not currently regulated by HEFCE or by the DFE, which intends to register with the OfS in 2018-19.
3. The guidance is issued by the Director for Fair Access and Participation, on behalf of the Office for Students, under section 29 of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA).

Who needs an access and participation plan?

4. HERA requires all providers of higher education in England that charge above the basic tuition fee cap to have an approved access and participation plan. Such providers must have in force an access and participation plan approved by the OfS in accordance with HERA and take all reasonable steps to comply with the provisions of the plan.
5. This requirement is identified in Condition A1 of the OfS Regulatory Framework.
6. You will therefore need to produce an access and participation plan if:
 - you are a higher education provider in England
 - and
 - you are applying to be registered in the Approved (fee cap) category of the Register
 - and
 - you are intending to charge fees **above the basic amount** for qualifying students on any qualifying course in 2019-20.

7. We currently require a new access and participation plan for each year of student entry. Each such plan remains in force and is monitored in relation to all students who entered your organisation in the year it covers. This means that you will need to meet the requirements of your 2019-20 plan for the entire duration of study for the students who enter in 2019-20.
8. If you have access agreements previously agreed with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA), please note that these remain relevant to students covered by those agreements.
9. Approved providers and Approved (fee cap) providers charging fees up to the basic amount do not need an access and participation plan. If you fall into one of these categories, you must instead prepare and publish an access and participation statement, which we also currently require for each year of student entry. For further information, see Condition A2 of the Regulatory Framework, and 'Regulatory Advice 7: Advice on preparing your 2019-20 access and participation statement' (OfS 2018.07).
10. Postgraduate only providers that do not offer any qualifying courses do not need to prepare an access and participation plan or statement.
11. If you are a provider delivering higher education through a subcontractual arrangement you do not need to produce your own access and participation plan but your lead provider must name you in its own plan to ensure that the condition that applies to you can be satisfied.

What is an access and participation plan?

Access and participation plans set out how higher education providers will improve equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education. They include the provider's ambition for change, the measures it will put in place to achieve that change, the targets it has set and the investment it will make to deliver the plan. Having an approved access and participation plan is a requirement of registration with the OfS for certain categories of higher education provider.

What are 'qualifying students' and 'qualifying courses'?

Access and participation plans only apply to 'qualifying persons' on 'qualifying courses'. These are defined by The Student Fees (Qualifying Courses and Persons) (England) Regulations 2007, amended in particular by The Student Fees (Qualifying Courses and Persons) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008.

Qualifying students includes most Home and EU students, but excludes students from outside the EU. They are defined in Regulation 5 of the Student Fees (Qualifying Courses and Persons) (England) Regulations 2007, amended in particular by The Student Fees (Qualifying Courses and Persons) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008.

Postgraduate students (apart from postgraduate initial teacher training students) should not be included in your access and participation plan or the supporting resource plan but you may wish to discuss them with regard to equality and diversity – see page 26.

Qualifying courses includes most undergraduate courses and postgraduate initial teacher training, but excludes other postgraduate courses. They are listed as designated courses in the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2011, Schedule 2, as amended.

Basic and maximum fee levels

The government specifies the basic and higher fee caps each year.

The government has not yet announced the student finance package (including fee caps) for the 2019-20 academic year and we anticipate that any decisions may not be taken until after the registration deadline. For the purposes of your access and participation plan, we ask that you assume the current fee caps will remain the same as in 2018-19. In the event that there are changes to the fee caps for 2019-20, or the broader student finance package, we will ask you to confirm any changes to your fees and the financial support you give to students at that point.

For reference, the basic and higher tuition fee caps for qualifying new and continuing students for the 2018-19 academic year can be found in 'Regulatory Advice 2: Registration of current providers for 2019-20' (OfS 2018.04).

How to use this guidance

12. The guidance is in two parts:
 - **Part A** defines our approach to regulation through access and participation plans and the approval process for such plans.
 - **Part B** sets out what must be included in an access and participation plan for it to be approved.
13. It is intended to be read in conjunction with the OfS's Regulatory Framework (OfS 2018.01) which sets out in full the approach that we will take to the registration and regulation of providers.
14. You may also wish to consult 'Regulatory Advice 6: Good practice advice on the preparation of access and participation plans for 2019-20' (OfS 2018.06) for further advice on developing access and participation plans.

Action

15. If you wish to submit an access and participation plan for assessment, you must do so in line with the process published for OfS registration: see 'Regulatory Advice 2: Registration of current

providers for 2019-20' (OfS 2018.04) and 'Regulatory Advice 3: Registration of new providers for 2019-20' (OfS 2018.05).

Part A: Our vision and goals for access and participation plans

Our objectives for access and participation

16. The Office for Students (OfS) is the new independent regulator for English higher education. In all of our work, we aim to ensure that all students, from all backgrounds – particularly the most disadvantaged – have the opportunity to access, succeed in, and progress from higher education. Our ambition is that everyone should be able to study at an institution that meets their needs and aspirations, that all students are supported to succeed in their studies, and that the higher education sector delivers on the promise of higher education as an engine for social mobility and a gateway to a better life for those who undertake it.
17. To ensure that both the sector and individual providers deliver positive outcomes for all students from all backgrounds, the OfS will focus on delivering four primary regulatory objectives which are set out in the Regulatory Framework (OfS 2018.01):

The four primary regulatory objectives

All students, from all backgrounds, and with the ability and desire to undertake higher education:

- are supported to access, succeed in, and progress from, higher education;
- receive a high quality academic experience, and their interests are protected while they study or in the event of provider, campus or course closure;
- are able to progress into employment or further study, and their qualifications hold their value over time;
- receive value for money.

18. The OfS has a statutory duty to have regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity in connection with access to and participation in higher education (section 2 (1)(e) of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA). This recognises that:
 - the expansion of higher education and the steps that have been taken to widen access and improve success and progression have increased opportunity for students, but have not secured equality of opportunity for all, and this extends through all stages of the student lifecycle
 - in order for individuals to unlock their potential, they need not just to gain access to higher education, but also to have a successful experience during their studies and to progress onwards to enriching lives and careers.
19. Our approach to access and participation will address the risk that the first of the OfS's primary regulatory objectives will not be met for students from underrepresented groups. We aim to reduce

the gaps between underrepresented groups and other groups in terms of access to, success within and progression from higher education.

20. Reducing these gaps will require the higher education sector to use smart, evidence-based practice, and to engage in sustained and in-depth relationships with schools and students from early years, and with communities, employers and other agencies.
21. We expect our regulatory pressure, therefore, to focus on the outcomes achieved by higher education providers, but also to support the sector to improve its use of evidence so we can be confident that investment has the intended effect.
22. We expect that the ambitions, activities and investment included in access and participation plans will be a crucial means for providers to deliver on their responsibility to support students from underrepresented groups and thereby to unlock their potential. However, access and participation plans are just one of our regulatory levers and represent just one element of our wider strategy to achieve our objectives for access and participation.

Underrepresented groups

Throughout this guidance we refer to ‘underrepresented groups’ as a general term. We use this term, which is identified as the focus of the access and participation plans within the governing regulations (section 32 of HERA and section 2 of the Higher Education (Access and Participation Plans) (England) Regulations 2018¹) to include all groups of potential or current students where we can identify gaps in equality of opportunity in different parts of the student lifecycle. In determining the groups falling within definition, we have given due regard to students who share particular characteristics that are protected under the Equality Act 2010².

For 2019-20 access and participation plans, we consider underrepresented groups of students to include students who share the following particular characteristics where data shows gaps in equality of opportunity in relation to access, success and/or progression:

- students from areas of low higher education participation, low household income and/or low socioeconomic status
- students of particular ethnicities
- mature students
- disabled students

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2018/9780111162422

² The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Further details can be found at <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics>

- care leavers.

We aim in all of our work to be evidence-based and never lose sight of the individuality of each student. Therefore we expect providers to consider the way in which these characteristics combine to increase underrepresentation. For example, we know that white males from lower socioeconomic groups are among the most underrepresented in higher education. We include within our definition, therefore, male and female students in combination with the characteristics above.

In addition, there are groups of students where there is specific evidence that barriers exist that may prevent equality of opportunity. These are also included in our definition of underrepresented groups:

- carers
- people estranged from their families
- people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- refugees
- people with specific learning difficulties and mental health problems
- children of military families.

There are also students from groups with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 where data is not collected at a national level or there are gaps in disclosure in the current national data, for example in relation to religion and belief and sexual orientation, which currently prevents us from determining whether they are underrepresented at different points of the student lifecycle³. Where this is the case, we are committed to enhancing our understanding and further developing our approach to access and participation plans if we identify further underrepresentation.

Our approach to this, together with our approach to student safeguarding, will be described in our forthcoming equality objectives and action plan. In the meantime, you may include measures in your access and participation plan to support these groups where you have evidence that they are underrepresented at any point of the student lifecycle within your organisation. Further information on the available data can be found in 'Equality impact assessment: Regulatory framework for higher education' (OfS 2018.09).

³ The protected characteristics for which we do not have national data on underrepresentation in higher education are gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

23. Given this approach, our priorities across each stage of the student lifecycle are:

Access

- To increase the entry rates of students from underrepresented groups to higher education, in particular reducing the participation gaps for those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds and at higher tariff providers, where they are widest.
- To reverse the decline in higher education participation by mature students from underrepresented groups.

Success

- To improve the non-continuation rates of students from underrepresented groups, particularly those from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities, and to reduce the gaps between these groups and other students.
- To reduce the attainment gaps between students from underrepresented groups, particularly those from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities, and those from other groups.

Progression

- To improve the rates of progression of students from underrepresented groups, particularly those from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities, into graduate-level employment or further study, and to reduce the gaps between these groups and other students.
24. Underpinning these aims is our expectation that providers will develop increasingly sustained and in-depth relationships with schools from early years, with communities, employers and with other agencies, together with our commitment to sector-wide support for improving evaluation and evidence-based practice.

Our developing approach to access and participation plans

25. To drive progress towards our objectives, we are developing an ambitious, student-focused and risk-based approach to requirements for access and participation plans.
26. We will take a strong and proportionate approach to the approval and monitoring of access and participation plans and expect them to be:
- ambitious and strategic
 - evidence-led
 - credible and sufficiently resourced
 - securing continuous improvement.
27. Our approach will develop over time. In this first year of the OfS and access and participation plans, the format of the plans is similar to the access agreements that were agreed with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) in previous years. We are maintaining continuity with a number of aspects

of OFFA's approach to access agreements. This includes our approach to targets, investment, coverage and frequency of plans.

28. However, access and participation plans are new documents and you should read this guidance carefully to understand how our approach differs to those previously taken by OFFA. There are significant differences in our expectations compared to OFFA's, including:
- an increased focus on outcomes, with expectations based on a combination of our assessment of your current performance and the credibility of your own assessment of performance
 - a stronger focus on reducing the gaps in success and progression, as well as access
 - a broader range of regulatory powers, the use of which will be determined by the OfS's assessment of the risk that a provider will breach one or more of its ongoing conditions of registration
 - an expectation that providers will secure continuous improvement (see below for a clarified definition of this).
29. We expect providers with 2018-19 access agreements to maintain and build on their existing ambitions and successful approaches in their 2019-20 access and participation plans, where these are supported by their current performance.
30. We also anticipate that many providers that have not had access agreements in the past will wish to apply for access and participation plans for 2019-20. These providers will need to make initial commitments as part of their first access and participation plan and review these in future years.
31. During 2018, we will conduct a strategic assessment of our approach to access and participation, including the access and participation plans, and consider further reforms to be implemented from the 2020-21 plans onwards. This will look at how the plans can most effectively work in concert with our other regulatory levers to improve equality of opportunity in student access, success and progression for underrepresented groups. A key concern will be to determine how we can best regulate access and participation plans in a manner that is consistent with the OfS's broader commitment to outcomes focused, proportionate and risk-based regulation of higher education providers.
32. We expect that this review will result in a change in our approach to setting and monitoring targets and trajectories. It may also lead to different requirements between providers according to their progress on access, success and progression, both in terms of the frequency and nature of plans.

Our expectations regarding continuous improvement

33. The OfS's Regulatory Framework sets out its intention to regulate individual providers to ensure a baseline of protection for all students and the taxpayer. Beyond that threshold the OfS will encourage and enable autonomy, diversity and innovation. However, the OfS's regulatory approach also seeks to deliver social and policy objectives in areas where market mechanisms may not succeed. We are clear that the improvements in access and participation that students and society require will not be delivered by the market alone. This means that we will take direct regulatory action to drive improvement in this area beyond that necessary to preserve a minimum baseline.

34. So the assessment and approval of access and participation plans will focus strongly on looking for providers to demonstrate continuous improvement. We will also use other conditions of registration, for example those on quality, and through our sector wide regulatory activities, for example the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) to reinforce this focus on access and participation. If we identify concerns within an access and participation plan that we consider relevant to other OfS conditions of registration, we will ensure that these are given full consideration within the assessment and monitoring of these other conditions.
35. Your access and participation plan must demonstrate continuous, year-on-year improvement in your access and participation work, through action to:
- reduce the gaps in access, success and progression for underrepresented groups among your own students
 - improve your practice, including through better evaluation and sustained engagement with schools from early years and with employers.
36. We expect you to regularly review your activity and prioritise investment towards those areas where you identify the greatest inequalities in student access, success and progression.
37. We expect you to develop your understanding of the national data on patterns of access, success and progression, together with your own data and insights, in order to identify and to respond effectively to your particular challenges.
38. We expect you to deliver activities that are demonstrably effective, strategically focused, evidenced and that clearly address the ambitions set out in your plan (see 'Your access, success and progression measures' on page 29 for more detail). You will need to evaluate your activities robustly to make sure they continue to be effective. We expect you to draw on expertise and relationships from across and beyond your organisation, including academic researchers and data specialists.
39. We will regularly review the evidence on patterns of access, success and progression in order to determine the priorities for our work. And a central aspect of the OfS data strategy (see the OfS's information duties, OfS Regulatory Framework (OfS 2018.01)) will be to work towards improving our understanding of access, success and progression across higher education.
40. We will focus on creating the sector-level conditions for continuous improvement by:
- producing evidence and effective practice guidance, and creating opportunities to promote its use
 - supporting and promoting the development of national systems such as the Higher Education Access Tracker
 - establishing an Evidence and Impact Exchange to support the commissioning, sharing and take-up of robust evidence and practice.

A strong and risk-based approach

41. The OfS's risk-based approach is central to how we interact with providers. Our general approach to risk assessment, and how this will determine our use of powers of intervention, is set out in the Regulatory Framework (OfS 2018.01).
42. We will consider risk that students do not have equal opportunity to access, succeed in and progress from providers when approving access and participation plans and we will seek more stretching targets, more extensive measures and greater investment from higher risk providers.
43. When approving access and participation plans, our view of risk to equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups not improving will be informed by:
 - the extent of the gaps between different student groups in respect of access, success and progression, on the basis of local and national data and other forms of evidence
 - the rate of progress in narrowing those gaps
 - the ambition and credibility of your plan, including your self-assessment of performance.

How to submit your access and participation plan

44. You are required to submit two documents in relation to your access and participation plan:
 - access and participation plan (Microsoft Word document)
 - access and participation plan resource plan (Microsoft Excel file).

There is more information about these in Part B of this guidance.

45. You should submit these documents as part of your application for registration. For instructions see section 6 of 'Regulatory Advice 2: Registration of current providers for 2019-20' (OfS 2018.04).

How we will assess your access and participation plan

46. In line with HERA Schedule 1, the OfS Board has delegated authority for its access and participation functions to the Director for Fair Access and Participation.
47. Once we receive your access and participation plan, we will consider it against the requirements set out in Part B of this guidance.
48. Following submission, we will contact you to discuss any unclear or missing information or where a plan is not approvable in its current form.
49. We will then give you the opportunity to make amendments or provide further evidence. All such discussion and challenge will take place at draft plan stage. You will need to ensure that the appropriate staff – with sufficient levels of authority (or delegated authority) to make decisions about targets, levels of investment, and other aspects of the plan – are available until you have an approved plan.

50. The Director for Fair Access and Participation will then decide whether your plan meets the requirements set out in Part B of this guidance and can be approved.

Our approach to assessment and use of context

51. This guidance sets out our expectations for all providers. However, the Director will take the particular context of a provider into account when determining whether a plan is approved.

52. We have reflected the diversity of higher education providers by setting expectations that focus primarily on what a provider is expected to demonstrate, rather than specifying how this should be done.

53. You should design your plan in a way that is appropriate for your size and turnover, mission and level of higher fee income from qualifying students. If this means you are concerned that you will be unable to fully meet the expectations in a particular area of the guidance you should discuss this with us prior to submission of your plan.

54. We will critically review your plan and its credibility for delivering the continuous improvement we require for the plan to be approved.

55. We will apply the following principles when assessing access and participation plans:

General principles

56. All access and participation plans must be ambitious, strategic, evidence-led and supported by sufficient investment.

57. We expect you to produce a credible plan that works in your own context.

58. We do not expect you to have fully fledged plans for all your activities at the point of submission, but will expect you to describe what you are going to do in 2019-20 and the evidence for choosing this type or these types of work.

59. We recognise that your practice will be developing and improving and this is particularly relevant for providers that did not previously produce an access agreement.

60. We appreciate that providers who did not previously have access agreements may have further to travel to meet our expectations and this will be considered when we assess your plan.

Specific considerations

Assessment of current performance

61. We expect you to base your assessment on the best data available to you, and to make clear what that is and how you intend to develop your use of data in future. We recognise that providers that have not previously had an access agreement may not be able to draw upon the same range of data to support their assessment of performance as other providers but we will expect you to have improved your use of data in future years.

62. If you have not yet, or only recently, started teaching you should base your performance assessment on your own market analysis and national data.

63. All providers should note the requirements to provide and publish certain information as part of the transparency information condition of registration (see 'Regulatory Advice 8: Guidance for providers about condition of registration F1: transparency information' (OfS 2018.08)).

Ambitions

64. Your plan must demonstrate clear long-term ambitions, including for your improved performance over the next five years. This should include what you are seeking to achieve in 2019-20.
65. For providers that have not previously had an access agreement, your ambitions may accelerate in future years.

Evaluation

66. If you do not currently evaluate an aspect of the activities and support you describe in your access and participation plan, you should consider whether this meets the expectations in our guidance and describe any changes you will need to make to meet these by 2019-20.
67. For providers that have not previously had an access agreement, if you do not currently conduct evaluation you must include in your plan your commitment to evaluating all of your activities and support measures and the concrete steps you will take to implement this.

Student consultation

68. You need to ensure that students will be active partners in developing, implementing and evaluating your access, success and progression work.
69. We recognise that not all providers will have a formal student representative body. However, we anticipate that, for most providers, you will be able to build on the formal engagement you have had with your student body.
70. If you have not yet, or only recently, started teaching you will need to describe how student consultation will form part of your delivery of your access and participation plan.

Activities

71. For providers that have not previously had an access agreement, we will consider commitment to future activities to be credible if they build on the effective practice examples included in 'Regulatory Advice 6: Good practice advice on the preparation of access and participation plans for 2019-20' (OfS 2018.06), wider research and/or your own evidence of what has worked in your organisation.
72. All providers are required to demonstrate that the efforts they make to improve access and participation are sustained, including through improving engagement with schools to support and access and employers to support progression. We recognise that providers may need time to develop such arrangements, but expect that, as a minimum, a strong commitment is made to introduce them within 2019-20. It may be that this is initially best achieved in collaboration with other partners.

How we will tell you the Director's decision on your access and participation plan

73. You will be informed during the registration process of the Director's decision either to approve your access and participation plan, or that he is minded to refuse it.

Publishing your plan

74. If we approve your plan, we will send you a copy of the approved access and participation plan with the targets and fee data you include in your resource plan appended.
75. You must publish this in a manner which makes it conveniently accessible to students and prospective students. We expect that this will be in a prominent position on your website.
76. We will publish a link to all approved access and participation plans on the OfS Register.

What to do if your access and participation plan is not approved

Where the Director is minded not to approve your plan

77. If the Director for Fair Access and Participation is minded not to approve your plan he will inform you, giving reasons.
78. You may, within 28 days, make representations to the Director as to why he should approve the plan and/or modify the plan and resubmit it.
79. The Director must then consider the representations or modifications to the plan (or both) and having considered them inform you whether or not he approves the plan.
80. If you chose not to make representations or modify and resubmit your plan, the Director must inform you within a reasonable time whether or not he approves the plan.

Review of decisions

81. Decisions whether to approve plans are in the first instance provisional.
82. If your plan is not approved you may apply to the review body, appointed by the Secretary of State, for a review of that decision.
83. A provisional decision becomes final where you accept the provisional decision or do not apply for a review within 28 days beginning with the date of the provisional decision.
84. Where you apply for a review of a provisional decision the review body must complete the review within a reasonable time and may issue a recommendation upon completion of the review. The Director must reconsider his provisional decision having regard to any such recommendation and must issue a final decision within a reasonable time.
85. The grounds on which the governing body may apply for a review are that the provider:
 - presents a material factor for consideration which for good reason it had not previously drawn to the attention of the Director

or

 - considers that the Director had disregarded a material factor which he should have considered

or

- considers that the provisional decision is disproportionate in view of all the relevant facts which were considered by the Director.

Revising or changing your access and participation plan after approval

86. Providers may, at any time after a plan has been approved, apply to the Director for approval of a variation of that plan.
87. The Director will consider the plan and will inform the provider whether or not it approves the variation of the plan.
88. A variation of a plan takes effect only if approved by the Director.

Monitoring access and participation plans

89. We will monitor the implementation of your plan as part of our overall approach to risk-based monitoring of registered providers. We anticipate that this will mean asking you to complete a specific monitoring process in relation to your 2019-20 access and participation plan, but the level of detail required is likely to be influenced by our view of risk (see page 13).
90. Further information about our overall approach to monitoring, and how we will monitor previously agreed access agreements, will be published in due course.

Part B: Requirements for approval of an access and participation plan

91. This guidance sets out what we will have regard to when deciding whether to approve an access and participation plan.
92. As discussed in Part A, we recognise that the content of 2019-20 access and participation plans will vary between providers. Each access and participation plan will be informed by the circumstances of the individual provider, and the characteristics, needs and views of its potential and current students.
93. Your access and participation plan should be based on your own assessment of your performance in relation to access, success and progression for students from underrepresented groups, your access and participation strategy and the targets – including annual milestones – you have in place to achieve the strategy. Within our guidelines, we expect you to determine the focus of your strategy, based on national and local data, and to decide on your precise level of investment and how and where you invest it to achieve the greatest impact.
94. The Director for Fair Access and Participation will ultimately decide whether the information you provide is sufficient to approve your plan.

What your access and participation plan should look like

95. You are required to submit two documents in relation to your access and participation plan:
 - access and participation plan (Microsoft Word document)
 - access and participation plan resource plan (Microsoft Excel file).

Access and participation plan

96. Your plan must be a single Microsoft Word document that should not normally exceed 20 pages of A4. There is no minimum length requirement, and we anticipate that the length of the plan will vary depending on factors such as:
 - the scale and ambition of what is being proposed
 - the size of the higher education provider
 - the level of inequality in access, success and progression at the provider.

Resource plan

97. Alongside your access and participation plan, you must also submit a resource plan using an Excel template. This resource plan will form part of the evidence we consider to determine whether to approve your plan. For providers with a 2018-19 access agreement, a template with some prepopulated information will be emailed to your named contact. For providers without a 2018-19 access agreement, this will be a blank template.

What your access and participation plan must contain

98. Section 2 of the Higher Education (Access and Participation Plans) (England) Regulations 2018 sets out the statutorily required contents of an access and participation plan. We have included this as Annex A for ease of reference.
99. We require you to provide specific information in your access and participation plan to address the issues we will consider when deciding whether to approve a plan. The following guidance sets out what this specific information is.
100. If you wish, you can use our access and participation plan template, which is available in 'Regulatory Advice 6: Good practice advice on the preparation of access and participation plans for 2019-20' (OfS 2018.06). Use of the template is not a requirement for approval, but the template is designed to help you make sure you have included all the necessary information, and to make it easier and faster for us to find this information during assessment.
101. The following guidance is divided into sections that reflect the template structure. Each section contains:
- a checklist of the information we need in order to assess your plan
 - explanatory notes on how to meet these requirements.
102. Further information on effective practice in relation to a number of these elements can be found in 'Regulatory Advice 6: Good practice advice on the preparation of access and participation plans for 2019-20' (OfS 2018.06).

1. Assessment of current performance

Checklist of requirements

Your access and participation plan must include an assessment of your current performance across the whole student lifecycle. This assessment must include:

- identification of those underrepresented student groups, or subgroups, among your own students where there are gaps in equality of opportunity in relation to access, success and progression
- an up-to-date assessment of your performance in improving access, success and progression for those groups or subgroups.

We will expect your assessment to cover the underrepresented groups identified on page 8. As a minimum, you should focus your assessment on groups of students who share the following particular characteristics:

- those living in areas of low higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

- students of particular ethnicities
- mature students
- disabled students
- care leavers.

In making your assessment, where you have access to the data, we expect you to examine:

- the intersections of characteristics to identify more accurately gaps in access, success and progression for particular groups of students (e.g. where examination by a single characteristic may mask or underestimate the extent of a gap that needs addressing for a particular group). This may particularly include intersections between income, ethnicity, low participation areas and gender, though you may choose to look at other intersections, including the full range of protected characteristics
- how your current performance compares to sector-wide data (and benchmarks where appropriate).

You should base your assessment on:

- your outcomes reported in the latest national data, including that from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), UCAS and TEF metrics, and how this compares to previous years
- other data (including internal data) that offers a more detailed understanding of your applicants and student body, for example the UCAS multiple equality measure
- relevant findings from qualitative and quantitative research.

You may also wish to include in your assessment a wider set of student groups where national data indicates there are particular equality gaps and support needs that can be addressed in an access and participation plan, including:

- carers
- people estranged from their families
- people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- refugees
- people with mental health problems, specific learning difficulties and/or who are on the autism spectrum
- children from military families.

Explanatory notes

103. You must demonstrate in your access and participation plan that you understand your own performance and have developed your strategy for continuous improvement. For details of how we define 'continuous improvement' see page 11.

104. We expect that your assessment of performance will use available resources, including nationally available data together with your own data and research (both qualitative and quantitative), to understand the inequalities in access, success and progression at your organisation.

105. This assessment will inform:

- which underrepresented groups you need to target
- where you can identify success to build on
- where there are areas for improvement
- the levels of investment you plan to direct to each stage of the student lifecycle.

You will need to ensure that, where your access and participation plan discusses activity and investment, it strongly relates to/is based on this assessment of performance in context (for more guidance on how to do so, see 'Your access, success and progression measures' on page 29).

106. We will form our own judgement of your performance based on your data and assessment, together with our own analysis of nationally available data. We will challenge your assessment of performance if it does not, in our view, address areas where we have identified concerns.

107. We will not approve your plan, or may apply a specific condition of registration, if we think your assessment of your current performance is not credible.

108. Our judgment of risk in relation to your access and participation plan will be influenced by the credibility of your self-assessment of performance and our assessment of your performance.

109. Good practice advice on what constitutes a credible assessment of performance in an approvable access and participation plan can be found in 'Regulatory Advice 6: Good practice advice on the preparation of access and participation plans for 2019-20' (OfS 2018.06).

2. Ambitions and strategy

Checklist of requirements

Your access and participation plan must outline how you will respond to the areas for development identified in your assessment of current performance (see above). It must demonstrate the changes you aim to achieve and your strategic approach to doing so. This must address the whole student lifecycle (access, success and progression) and be based on the evidence you have provided in your assessment of performance.

You must include information on:

- your strategic ambitions for access and participation within your own organisation and the contribution you will make to the priorities we have identified
- which underrepresented groups you will be specifically targeting in your access and participation work, and at which stage(s) of the student lifecycle
- how the work identified in your access and participation plan will complement work funded through other sources and conducted in collaboration with other organisations
- how you will ensure continuous improvement, including through the evaluation of your access and participation plan measures and through your sustained engagement with schools and employers
- how you will monitor your performance against the measures set out in your access and participation plan
- how your access and participation plan will support and benefit from your broader equality and diversity strategy
- how you have consulted with students from a range of backgrounds in the development of the plan and how you will work with them to deliver it.

Explanatory notes

Ambitions

110. This section of your access and participation plan must set out your objectives for sustained change within your own organisation and the contribution you will make to the priorities we have identified for access, success and progression. We anticipate that this will be the longest section of your access and participation plan (or, if not using our template, that it will make up the majority of the text).
111. We expect the ambitions you identify to secure continuous improvement by reducing the gaps in access, success and progression for underrepresented groups among your own students, and improving your practice (see page 11 for more details about continuous improvement).
112. We expect your goals to be stretching and we will not approve access and participation plans that are insufficiently ambitious.
113. We expect those providers with the weakest records on access, success and progression to set the most ambitious goals and to contribute most.
114. When developing your ambitions, you should consider your performance in terms of rate of change. In our assessment of the credibility of your plan, we will want to understand how you will address negative, no or limited progress on reducing the gaps in access, success and progression among your own students. If you are making progress on reducing gaps for particular groups of students, but this rate of change is slower than progress in the wider sector, then you should ensure that your ambition is sufficiently stretching to achieve faster progress.

115. The level of ambition identified within your plan will influence both the Director for Fair Access and Participation's decision whether to approve the plan, and our assessment of risk in relation to your access and participation plan (see page 13).

Target groups

116. In your access and participation plan you must set out:

- which groups of students you are prioritising
- the stage(s) of the student lifecycle at which you are prioritising support for these groups.

117. In doing so, you must make clear how this correlates with your assessment of your performance and the priorities we have identified for access and participation (see 'Assessment of current performance' on page 19). We expect your target groups to be consistent with your assessment, where appropriate taking into account how intersections identify gaps in access, success and progression for particular groups with more than one identified characteristic. We expect you to focus on those student groups where you identify the gaps in access, success and progression to be widest among your own students and where there is the greatest potential to address these patterns, both within your own organisation and across the sector as a whole.

118. 'Regulatory Advice 6: Good practice advice on the preparation of access and participation plans for 2019-20' (2018.06) sets out an overview of groups we have identified as facing inequalities in access, success or progression, and some effective practice for addressing their needs.

Collaborative working

119. All higher education providers have a role to play in ensuring that the priorities we have identified for access and participation (see Part A) are addressed.

120. This is particularly important in relation to the effort to improve access to higher education, because this begins from early years, and pupils and students need objective advice on the options available to them at each stage. Collaboration between providers and other stakeholders (such as schools, colleges and the third sector) is crucial for sustained engagement with schools and for students to receive high quality, impartial advice and guidance relating to higher education. Collaboration also helps to increase coverage and avoid duplication.

121. You must set out your commitment and approach to collaborative working in your access and participation plan. You must also include clear information on the collaborative activities you have in place, or that are in development, and the organisations and networks with which you have formal collaborations.

122. We expect that investment in collaborative activity identified in access agreements approved previously by OFFA will continue within 2019-20 access and participation plans, unless there is a clear justification otherwise.

Ensuring continuous improvement through evaluation

123. Evaluation is crucial for an evidence-led, strategic approach to access and participation, and an essential element of our expectations for continuous improvement from all providers. There are many reasons why you should evaluate, including to:

- understand what works well and what could be improved
- develop your knowledge of whether and how activities are effective
- test new and innovative approaches
- inform future practice
- demonstrate impact and justify the money invested, including to students
- develop and contribute to the sector's knowledge.

124. You must provide an overview of the approach you are proposing to ensure robust evaluation of the measures set out in your plan, including:

- how your evaluation programme helps you to understand whether you will meet your ambitions and goals
- a description of your evaluation programme for 2019-20, including how you will build on previous evaluations
- how you will evaluate the financial support you give to students in 2019-20, including how you will build on previous evaluations
- the mechanisms you have put in place to enable the outcomes of your evaluation to influence practice, both within your own organisation and across the sector.

125. You should demonstrate an understanding of what you are trying to achieve and how you will measure success against your goals.

126. Your evaluation strategy should be built into your activities and support measures from the start to ensure you are able to understand and measure their impact and contribution towards your goals.

127. You should demonstrate that the methods by which you evaluate the impact of your access, success and progression activities and financial support are appropriately robust and focused on impact in terms of demonstrable changes in behaviour (such as improved access, continuation, attainment, progression to postgraduate study and graduate employment) rather than, for example, solely gathering opinions from students.

128. In your evaluation of the financial support you give to students, we strongly encourage you to use the toolkit resources that have been developed by OFFA and will be taken forward by the OfS⁴, although you may use other methods if you can provide evidence that they are robust.

129. Where you undertake work that does not directly impact on your own organisation, we expect you to implement, in collaboration with partners where appropriate, a range of evaluative methods – both qualitative and quantitative – to demonstrate the impact of such work.

⁴ www.offa.org.uk/universities-and-colleges/guidance/financial-support/financial-support-evaluation-toolkit/

130. We expect evaluation to be an area of continuous improvement, so you should demonstrate how your evaluation strategy is evolving and how you share evidence with others. We strongly encourage you to collaborate with other providers, organisations and researchers, as well as making use of relevant expertise within your own organisation, to design effective ways of capturing the sustained impact of your activities.
131. It is important that you are able to apply the outcomes of your evaluation. We do not expect that every activity or support measure is successful and we recognise that different providers have different contexts and opportunities for innovative practice. In your access and participation plan, we want to see reflective practice that demonstrates how you are using the lessons from previous activities and programmes to improve future ones. You should have systems and processes in place so that the findings of your evaluation can influence future practice.
132. 'Regulatory Advice 6: Good practice advice on the preparation of access and participation plans for 2019-20' (OfS 2018.06) gives further advice on effective practice in evaluation.

Monitoring the delivery of your plan

133. In order to demonstrate that you satisfy Condition A1 of the Regulatory Framework (OfS 2018.01), you must ensure that you are taking reasonable steps to comply with the provisions of your plan.
134. The Regulatory Framework sets out the following behaviours that may indicate compliance with the condition. The provider:
- is delivering the objectives and targets in its plan;
 - has a governing body that is appropriately engaged with monitoring of performance against the provisions of its plan;
 - is taking reasonable steps to comply with the provisions of its plan and has taken appropriate action where it appears that the intentions of the plan may not be delivered;

so you must therefore describe the monitoring arrangements you have in place in your access and participation plan.

135. As indicated in the 'Student consultation and involvement' section of this guidance (see page 27), it is important that students (including their unions and representatives) are sufficiently consulted on the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the plan and must therefore be included in these arrangements.

Equality and diversity

136. There are strong links between access and participation, which is focused on groups underrepresented in higher education, and equality and diversity, which is focused on characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010. You must, therefore, include within your access and participation plan:
- an explanation of the interaction between your access and participation plan and your equality and diversity strategy

- evidence that you have considered the impact of your activities and support measures on students with protected characteristics, for example through an equality impact assessment
- evidence that you have paid due regard to equality and diversity in designing your access and participation plan, as is your responsibility under the Equality Act 2010.

137. You may, if you wish, describe your approach to addressing inequalities among your current postgraduate students and your staff within your description of your broader strategy for equality and diversity.

Aligning your access and participation strategy and equality and diversity strategy

138. Your access and participation plan can help to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. People who share protected characteristics can be underrepresented in higher education in overall numbers, more likely to leave before finishing their course, less likely to achieve the highest qualification classifications and/or less likely to be employed or in further study after graduation than those who do not. There are clear benefits in, and many opportunities for, aligning your equality and diversity strategy and access and participation strategy.

139. In demonstrating how your access and participation strategy and equality and diversity strategy align, you should explain how your access and participation plan activities and support measures help to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 and those who do not. You should demonstrate how your equality objectives relate to the strategic ambitions and target groups set out in your access and participation plan.

Impact on those with protected characteristics

140. You should provide evidence, such as information taken from equality impact assessments, on the possible equality implications of your activities and support measures. It is particularly important to understand the impact of any proposed changes to your activities and support measures and what steps you will take to remove or minimise any adverse effects.

141. The overview should evaluate your current access and participation initiatives in relation to protected characteristics to highlight any differences in how your access and participation work impacts on different groups. This should inform decisions on targeting aspects of your access and participation work on particular groups of prospective and current students.

Legal requirement

142. The Equality Act 2010 requires higher education providers to take equality issues into account when designing policies (including internal policies) and services, and to review such issues regularly. We will not regulate whether you meet your legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010, but we expected you to demonstrate in your access and participation plan that you have executed these responsibilities.

143. Under the Equality Act 2010, all publicly funded education providers must comply with the general duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty. This means that you must have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

144. Providers not covered by the Public Sector Equality Duty must commit in their access and participation plans to meet the above requirements and the general duties. Providers that are not covered by the Public Sector Equality Duty may include activity that is additional to their legal requirements within their access and participation plan investment (please see page 32 for more detail on investment).

145. The OfS does not give legal advice. If you are unsure whether you are meeting your legal obligations under the Equality Act, you should seek your own legal advice, or contact the Equality and Human Rights Commission⁵.

Student consultation and involvement

146. Students make a significant personal and financial investment in their studies, and the funds devoted to access and participation plans could otherwise be devoted to teaching and other forms of student support. We expect, therefore, that you will involve students as active partners and cocreators in developing, implementing and evaluating your access, success and progression work.

147. You must include details of the following in your access and participation plan:

- how you have provided your students with the opportunity to express their views about the content of your plan before it was submitted for approval and what steps you took as a result
- how you will involve students in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the access and participation plan
- how you will ensure that students from a range of backgrounds are included in your consultation on and delivery of your plan.

148. It is important that students have meaningful and informative opportunities to feed into your plan. We would normally expect you to collaborate with your student union or student representatives, though we recognise there are other ways of engaging with your students.

149. We encourage student unions and student representatives to comment on their consultation and involvement in the provider's access and participation work. This information may be provided within the access and participation plan or as a separate submission. If provided, we will use this submission as supporting evidence in our assessment to understand whether your plan has met

⁵ www.equalityhumanrights.com/en

the student consultation and involvement expectations set out above. Providers must make this opportunity clear to their students unions or other representative bodies.

150. Further information for student unions and representatives is included in 'Regulatory Advice 6: Good practice advice on the preparation of access and participation plans for 2019-20' (OfS 2018.06).

3. Targets

Checklist of requirements

You must set stretching, clearly defined targets that reflect your ambitions and strategy, and that focus on the desired outcomes and impact of your programmes. You should include these in Table 8 of your resource plan template.

Your resource plan must include:

- stretching targets that are closely aligned to those areas where you have identified significant gaps within your own student population, or that contribute to the priorities we have identified for access and participation. This may involve higher resolution targets that combine multiple dimensions of disadvantage – for example, access for white males from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds
- targets for each stage of the student lifecycle where you have identified significant gaps in access, success and progression
- at least one access target relating to entrants (rather than applications). While you may include state school indicators alongside other measures of disadvantage, you should not use this as your only target on entrants
- at least one outcomes focused target to raise attainment in schools and colleges
- at least one target relating to sustained outreach programmes
- at least one collaborative target set in conjunction with partner organisations, where this work is undertaken.

Your targets must be:

- stretching
- proportionate to the gaps you have identified with regard to access, success and progression
- measurable on a consistent basis, with baseline data where possible
- set over five years and include annual or interim milestones to help you monitor whether you are making progress.

Where appropriate, you may also set activity-based targets that record outputs rather than outcomes (i.e. increasing the number of beneficiaries you support rather than impact of activities).

Explanatory notes

151. You should enter your targets into Table 8 of the resource plan. Details of how to complete this table are provided in the resource plan notes in Annex B of this document. Table 8 will be merged with your access and participation plan Word document, so you do not need to also write your targets out in full in your Word document.
152. The Director for Fair Access and Participation will use the targets you set when judging the ambition and credibility of your plan.
153. The Director will not approve targets where they do not appear to match the ambition expected from each provider (see 'Ambitions and strategy' on page 21). We will expect your milestones to demonstrate continued ambition and progress across all years, and we would not expect to see the ambition of your targets plateau at any point.

Note for providers with access agreements for 2018-19

154. As we are expecting to ask all providers to change their approach to targets next year (see 'Our developing approach to access and participation plans' on page 10 for more information), we do not expect providers with access agreements for 2018-19 to make changes to targets for 2019-20 and we do not expect any extension to targets beyond their existing timespan. You should, though, review existing targets in light of your self-assessment and, where appropriate, set new ones to ensure your targets reflect your ambitions and strategy.
155. Access agreements approved for 2018-19 included targets and milestones for 2019-20 and beyond in many cases. We will expect you to maintain these targets and milestones unless you can justify that they have become obsolete. If you wish to make any such changes to your targets you should contact registration@officeforstudents.org.uk to discuss this.

Note for providers that do not have access agreements for 2018-19

156. If you did not have an access agreement approved in 2018-19, you will not have existing targets to pursue. We expect you to set targets for your 2019-20 plan that respond robustly to your self-assessment, that are stretching and demonstrate your ambition. We recognise, however, that these targets may be provisional in nature, and you will have an opportunity to review these in light of our planned reforms next year.

4. Your access, success and progression measures

Checklist of requirements

In your access and participation plan you must give an overview of the activities and support you will undertake in 2019-20 to achieve your goals and contribute to the priorities we have identified for access and participation. This should not be an exhaustive list of your activities or full details of your financial support packages but must include:

- a demonstration that you have a credible approach to delivering your ambitions and strategy, prioritising activities that will support the student groups and stages of the student lifecycle where you most need to improve, as identified in your assessment of performance
- an outline of your sustained activities and how these are designed to achieve the goals set out in your ambitions and strategy section. This must include what you will do to raise attainment to support entry into higher education for underrepresented groups
- a description of the financial support for students you are including in your access and participation plan and how this contributes to your strategy and goals
- a description of how these measures have been informed by evidence, including the data and evidence on which you have based your decisions to offer these activities or support, particularly the specific evidence you have to support the use of any financial support you are planning to offer to students
- some detail of how your activities or support are targeted at underrepresented groups and how they will support you to achieve your ambitions and targets.

Explanatory notes

Credible approach to delivering your ambition

157. You must demonstrate that the range of activities and support measures you plan to undertake in 2019-20 is a credible and effective response to the challenges you have set in your ambition and strategy.

158. You should choose activities that demonstrate a robust, strategic approach to improving access and participation. Details of the kinds of activities that might feature in a plan can be found in 'Regulatory Advice 6: Good practice advice on the preparation of access and participation plans for 2019-20' (OfS 2018.06); although it is not a requirement for approval that you take account of this guidance, we encourage you to do so when developing this part of your plan.

159. You do not need to describe all of the activities you will be running in 2019-20, but you should ensure that the examples you provide demonstrate that you are prioritising activities that will support those student groups and at those stages of the student lifecycle where improvement is most needed, as identified in your assessment of performance.

160. This section should provide a clear understanding of how your activities will support you in making progress. As we develop our risk-based approach from the 2020-21 plans, we may require less information of this kind from those providers we identify to be lower risk.

Evidence-led approach

161. It is essential to invest in activities and support that will have the greatest impact on the groups of students and the stages of the student lifecycle where you identify the need for most improvement. So your access and participation plan must demonstrate how your evaluation programme has informed your decisions on where to invest in activities and support measures. We expect you to demonstrate that the activities and support in which you are investing will secure the greatest impact for your target groups, and how you expect they will lead to positive outcomes.

162. You should use your own evaluation findings to design the activities that you describe in your access and participation plan, alongside evidence from multiple sources including research findings and evidence from other providers (see 'Ensuring continuous improvement through evaluation' on page 23). You may wish to identify where evidence of an activity's impact has resulted in changes to the design of the activity, improving how activities are targeted, or discontinuing a scheme because it was not having the anticipated impact and reinvesting that money in different activities.

163. When assessing a plan, we will focus on the outcomes of your access and participation activity, and whether you have set out plans that will realistically enable you to achieve your ambitions.

Sustained activities

164. Your access and participation plan must include a combination of measures that not only have an immediate impact on your own performance across the whole student lifecycle, but will also help to address the priorities we have identified for access, success and progression across the sector as a whole (see Part A).

165. We know from evaluation activity that sustained, carefully planned programmes of outreach are more likely to have a successful impact than one-off interventions. We therefore encourage sustained and coordinated activities to support access that work with potential applicants including young and mature learners, their parents and carers, other advisers and communities, over a number of years from primary school age upwards. We encourage similarly sustained and coordinated activities with communities, employers and other agencies to support progression into work.

166. Your plan must include information on your sustained outreach activities, including how you are working with younger age groups from early years onwards, and with other organisations.

167. Collaboration is an effective way of delivering this type of work and can help to ensure regional or national coverage.

168. Prior educational attainment is a key predictor of participation in higher education and we want higher education providers to consider what more they can do to raise attainment for underrepresented groups to support entry into higher education.

169. These activities must be appropriate to the context of the provider. For example, if you do not have entry requirements based on educational attainment you should focus your efforts on supporting underrepresented groups to achieve in the area of your specialism.

170. We expect all providers, in particular those with the weakest performance on access, to demonstrate how they are developing deeper relationships with schools and colleges to raise attainment and enable more students from underrepresented groups to enter higher education if they wish to. We encourage providers also to take account of this engagement with students and their understanding of students' backgrounds within their entrance requirements.

171. We also expect that we will see greater numbers of higher education providers sponsoring schools (either as a main sponsor or co-sponsor) or with advanced plans to do so.

172. Advice on effective practice in working with schools to raise attainment and other sustained activities can be found in 'Regulatory Advice 6: Good practice advice on the preparation of access and participation plans for 2019-20' (OfS 2018.06).

Contextual information

173. The use of contextual information is a positive and effective way for providers to improve access while maintaining excellence. Many institutions already do so, to help identify and secure the entry of students with potential from underrepresented groups. Many use this information to make applicants lower offers than they would normally. Many also use it to better inform their targeting and outreach activities. We welcome and encourage the use of contextual information so long as you consider individuals on their merits and your procedures are fair, transparent and evidence-based.

174. If you choose to use contextual information in relation to improving access, and/or supporting success and progression, you may include the extra costs in your access agreement (for example, monitoring and evaluation costs).

Financial support

175. We expect you to provide a clear rationale in your access and participation plan for how your investment in financial support for students will help to reduce the gaps in access, success and progression among your own students. As with other activities and support measures, you must describe how the financial support in which you are investing contributes to your strategy and goals, including evidence of its impact.

176. If you include financial support in your access and participation plan, you must have evaluation programmes in place to determine how your financial support contributes to your goals and to demonstrate how evidence from previous evaluations has informed your decisions on your proposed financial support packages for 2019-20 (see 'Ensuring continuous improvement through evaluation' on page 23).

5. Investment

Checklist of requirements

In your access and participation plan you must set out the level of investment you intend to make in 2019-20. You must include:

- the total investment you will make through your access and participation plan in 2019-20, both in cash terms and as a proportion of higher fee income disaggregated investment, in cash terms and as proportion of higher fee income, that shows how much you will spend on access, success, progression and financial support
- the investment you will make in access and participation beyond that identified within your access and participation plan.

Our judgement on whether the level of investment identified within your plan is appropriate will be influenced by the proportion of higher fee income that it represents.

In your resource plan, you are required to complete a forecast of investment across a four year period (see the guidance on completing your resource plan in Annex B for more information).

Explanatory notes

177. Through your assessment of your own performance, you will have developed your ambitions and strategy. You will also have chosen activities and support measures to address the areas where you most need to improve and the priorities we have identified for access and participation. Your investment in access, success and progression activities, and in financial support, must be designed to support this.

Investment levels

178. We identify the level of your investment in access and participation by looking at the proportion of your higher fee income that you are committing to spend on measures in your plan. Your higher fee income for each student is the difference between the basic fee cap and the fee you intend to charge your students.

179. In this first year of access and participation plans, we will continue with the approach to investment adopted by OFFA for the assessment of access agreements. We will, however, review our approach during 2018 in order to determine how best to set expectations for investment, while delivering a more outcomes focused and risk-based approach that secures improvements in access, success and progression for students from underrepresented groups.

180. For the 2019-20 plans, we will continue with the approach to guideline overall investment set out in the table below, which applies to both full time and part time students. These guidelines are not intended to establish precise levels of investment. Rather, they show lower, middle and higher points on a continuum.

Guideline investment levels for 2019-20 access and participation plans

Proportion of students from underrepresented groups	Guidelines for investment (as a percentage of higher fee income above the basic fee)
Low	30%
Average	22.5%
High	15%
Postgraduate ITT (any proportion*)	10%

* By definition, postgraduate initial teacher training (ITT) trainees already have experience of higher education, and many postgraduate trainees will be entitled to training bursaries.

181. There is no requirement to ringfence set amounts for full time higher education, part time higher education and postgraduate ITT, or for you to describe the amount you will spend on individual activities or in support of particular groups of students. You are only required to set out your overall levels of investment across each stage of the student lifecycle and on financial support.

182. If you propose to spend significantly below our guidelines, we will need to discuss your investment with you before we can approve your access and participation plan.

183. For those providers with access agreements in 2018-19, any decrease in investment, even where your overall investment still reflects our broad guideline levels, must be based on strong progress in reducing the gaps in access, success and progression for students from underrepresented groups. If you are proposing any such change, you should contact us before you submit your access and participation plan, providing your justification for this. We will consider the information you provide and advise you how to proceed.

Balance of investment between access, success and progression activities and financial support

184. The balance between the investment you allocate to access, success and progression activities and to financial support must reflect the priorities identified through your assessment of performance.

185. We expect your investment to reflect your performance across the student lifecycle and your evidence for this to be provided in your access and participation plan.

186. For those providers with a 2018-19 access agreement, any significant change in the balance of investment should be based on robust analysis of your performance across the student lifecycle. If you propose to make significant changes to the balance of your investment across the student lifecycle, you should contact us before you submit your access and participation plan, providing your justification for this. We will consider the information you provide and advise you how to proceed.

What investment can you include in your access and participation plan?

187. Ahead of the review we plan to undertake during 2018, the guidelines on what you can count as investment through your access and participation plan maintain the approach adopted by OFFA for access agreements.

188. In order to be counted in your access and participation plan, investment must fulfil **both** of the following two criteria:

- it must support underrepresented groups
- it must be committed from higher fee income or other sources such as charitable donations⁶.

189. You should not include public funds, including OfS grant allocations and the National Collaborative Outreach Programme.

⁶ For providers with previous access agreements we expect investment in 2019-20 to continue broadly in line with previous commitments. You may therefore continue to include investment on access and participation activities that started after the introduction of variable fees in 2006 ('additional' activities) and investment on activities that you previously funded through other means where these funding streams have been reduced or discontinued will not be included in your access and participation plan. We will be monitoring changes in commitments to investment from previous access agreements and will challenge providers where there are material changes.

190. You should not include any investment to support postgraduate students, apart from that which either:

- relates to postgraduate students on fee-regulated initial teacher training courses

or

- forms part of a direct progression pathway from undergraduate study, which should be recorded as progression investment in your resource plan.

191. You should not include investment on marketing and advertising and general recruitment work that cannot robustly be evidenced as specifically supporting access and participation.

192. Higher education providers that employ Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) methodology should not allocate central and estates costs or apply sustainability adjustments as applied in TRAC.

Reasonable adjustments for disabled students

193. You have a statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students to make sure they are not discriminated against. We expect, therefore, that all providers will meet this commitment, and the cost of reasonable adjustments will not be countable within your access and participation plan investment.

194. You may, though, include investment where your activities and support measures go beyond what would be considered reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.

Targeting financial support

195. Financial support included in your access and participation plan must be closely targeted on students from underrepresented groups. You may, of course, give financial support to any students you see fit, but you may only include this investment in your access and participation plan if the criteria for eligibility include an aspect of underrepresentation. For example, you could not include an award given solely to recognise academic, sporting or musical achievement; but you could include an award that recognised academic, sporting or musical achievement specifically by students within a group that you have identified as a target for your access and participation plan.

196. For a more detailed description of what types of investment may be included in your access and participation plan, see 'Regulatory Advice 6: Good practice advice on the preparation of access and participation plans for 2019-20' (OfS 2018.06).

6. Provision of information to students

Checklist of requirements

Your access and participation plan must include details of how you will:

- give prospective and current students information on the financial support available to them from any source

- give prospective students information on the fees for the duration of their course
- publish your approved plan in a way that is easily accessible to both current and prospective students.

Explanatory notes

Provision of information to students about fees

197. For the purpose of access and participation plans, there is a statutory requirement (see Annex A) for providers to make available to prospective students, before they commit themselves to undertake a higher education course, information about the aggregate amount of fees that the provider will charge for the completion of that course. This includes the fees that will be charged and the financial support that students are entitled to as a result of the provisions within an access and participation plan.

198. The information you include in your resource plan (see ‘Resource plan’ on page 37) about fees should be sufficiently detailed to allow prospective students to foresee possible changes to the level of tuition fees and how they could affect them. For example, if you will or may increase students’ fees annually with inflation you must include a clear, accessible statement explaining this. This statement should link the potential increases to an objective verifiable index, such as the Retail Prices Index (RPI-X) for inflationary rises, so that students are able to understand how their fees are expected to change.

199. If you do not expect any increase in fees for 2019-20 entrants in subsequent years, you should include a statement confirming this. This will provide clarity for students that no information has been omitted and allow for easy comparison between courses.

Provision of information to students about financial support

200. The information you provide on financial support should explain any eligibility criteria and set out the level of financial support you will offer to students from underrepresented groups in each year of their studies.

201. You should make sure it is clear how students, including prospective students, can apply for the financial support that you offer, even if you automatically assess students for their bursary eligibility using information provided on their student loan application form. You should make clear if you rely on students agreeing to share their financial information with you.

Continuing students

202. Continuing students must continue to receive the financial support that was advertised to them when they applied, subject to any inflationary increases or decisions to increase the support offered. You may not reduce the package for any continuing student for which you made provision within a previous access agreement.

Students at newly merged providers

203. Registered providers need to report planned mergers to the OfS as a reportable event. When they do so it is likely that the newly formed organisation will need to submit a new access and participation plan, regardless of whether one or both of the individual providers previously had an approved access agreement or access and participation plan.

204. In all cases, continuing students must receive support that is at least equal to the support they received at their original provider. If a merger takes place during the application cycle, prospective students must receive support at least equal to the support available at the time they accepted their offer.

Changes to subcontractual and validation arrangements

205. Subcontractual and validation arrangements can change. Students who have started a course that is subcontracted to a new provider, or whose validating partner changes during their studies, should remain on a financial support package equal in value to, or greater than, the package advertised when they originally applied for the course.

7. Resource plan

Checklist of requirements

In order for your access and participation plan to be approved, your resource plan must include all the information requested in all tables, except that which is marked as optional.

Explanatory notes

Tuition fees

206. Your resource plan must include information on:

- the level of tuition fees for the first year
- how, if at all, fees may change for future years
- how any such changes will be calculated.

207. We will publish the fee information you include in your resource plan as part of your access and participation plan, if approved. We ask, therefore, that you do not include fee information within your Word document as well.

208. Your resource plan is part of your access and participation plan submission. The information you provide in your resource plan will be assessed and will form part of the Director's decision whether to approve your plan.

209. It is your responsibility to ensure you have correctly recorded the information you provide in your resource plan.

210. For detailed advice on completing the tables in your resource plan template please refer to Annex B.

Annex A Extract from The Higher Education (Access and Participation Plans) (England) Regulations 2018

1. The following text is taken from the regulations approved by Parliament in relation to the content of access and participation plans that comes in to force in April 2018.
2. The full regulations can be found at http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2018/9780111162422/pdfs/ukdsi_9780111162422_en.pdf.

Content of plans

2.—

(1) A plan relating to an institution must set out the objectives of the institution, determined by its governing body, relating to the promotion of equality of opportunity.

(2) A plan relating to an institution must include provisions requiring the governing body of the institution to do the following—

(a) to take, or secure the taking of, the measures set out in the plan to attract an increased proportion of its total number of applications from prospective students who are members of groups which, at the time when the plan is approved, are underrepresented in that institution or in higher education;

(b) to take, or secure the taking of, the measures set out in the plan to support successful participation in higher education by specified prospective students and students;

(c) to provide, or secure the provision of, the bursaries and other forms of financial assistance set out in the plan to students undertaking a higher education course at the institution;

(d) to make the arrangements set out in the plan to make available to students undertaking a higher education course at the institution and prospective students wishing to undertake such a course information about financial assistance available to them from any source;

(e) to make the arrangements set out in the plan to make available to prospective students, before they commit themselves to undertake a higher education course at the institution, information about the aggregate amount of fees(b) that the institution will charge for the completion of that course;

(f) to monitor and evaluate, in the manner set out in the plan—

(i) its compliance with the provisions of the plan; and

(ii) its progress in achieving the objectives set out in the plan by virtue of paragraph (1);

and

(g) to provide the OfS with such information as it may reasonably require from time to time regarding the contribution that the institution has made towards furthering equality of opportunity.

(3) The measures referred to in paragraph (2)(b) may include the provision of appropriate assistance to students during higher education courses regarding the educational, employment or other opportunities that may be available during or after completion of those courses.

(4) In paragraph (2)(b) “specified prospective students and students” are prospective students and students who are members of groups which, at the time when the plan is approved, are underrepresented amongst those who—

(a) complete higher education courses at that institution or at registered higher education providers; or

(b) otherwise participate successfully, in the view of the OfS, in higher education provided by that institution or by registered higher education providers.

Annex B Guidance on completing your resource plan

General notes for completing all tables

1. You are only required to complete cells that are shaded yellow. White sections will autopopulate based on the data you enter into the yellow cells.
2. You should not copy and paste cells within the workbook as this can corrupt or overwrite the validation checks. You can, however, copy and paste into the white formula bar box (which can be found just below the command ribbon at the top of the Excel window).
3. The OfS will publish the information you provide in Table 3 (Summary of 2019-20 course fees) and Table 8 (Targets and milestones) as part of your access and participation plan. The OfS will also publish a financial information summary in an outcomes report.

Table by table guide to completing your resource plan

Fair processing notice and contact details

Action

- Provide the names and contact details of two people in your institution who can be contacted to discuss the information provided in your access and participation plan and resource plan.

Table 1a and Table 1b

Full time courses: Fee levels and student numbers

1. The government has not yet announced the student finance package (including fee caps) for the 2019-20 academic year. You should therefore base your fees on the current 2018-19 fee levels. For reference, the basic and higher tuition fee caps for qualifying new and continuing students for the 2018-19 academic year can be found in section 2 of 'Regulatory Advice 2: Registration of current providers for 2019-20' (OfS 2018.04) and 'Regulatory Advice 3: Registration of new providers for 2019-20' (OfS 2018.05).
2. The government recently held a consultation on the provision of accelerated degree courses in higher education, including a proposal that the annual higher and lower amounts allowed for accelerated provision in each academic year should be set at a level greater than the fee cap for longer courses. While the fee levels for the 2019-20 academic year are yet to be set by government, the consultation proposes the following higher fee levels for these courses:
 - no TEF award: £10,800
 - TEF award: £11,100.

Therefore we ask that providers include fee information for accelerated courses based on these limits.

Actions

- In cell D5, you must tell us whether you will have, or expect to have, a TEF award in 2019-20.
- Use Table 1a to record all courses that are delivered directly by your provider.
- Use Table 1b to record all courses for which you are the lead provider, but where the courses are delivered through a different provider in a subcontractual ('franchise') arrangement.
- Ensure you include all course types that will run in 2019-20 onwards. For example, include both sandwich years and Erasmus/study abroad years.
- Where you will be charging different fees for the same course type, enter each course fee in a different row.
- Enter the course fees for all your full time courses, including courses charged below the basic fee cap, as well as those charged above. Any course fees that are below the basic fee will be highlighted in purple.
- Complete the estimated number of full time students at each fee level. This should be a count of all students for each academic year, not just new entrants.
- Include all qualifying students on qualifying courses⁷ that will be studying at your institution.
- You should not account for fee waivers, if you have any, in this table – you can record these in Table 6a.
- The information you enter in these tables will be used to autopopulate Table 3. This table will be published as part of your access and participation plan document. Text you enter in the additional information column (column C in Table 1a, column D in Table 1b) to distinguish between fee levels for the same course type must be free of abbreviations and technical language so that potential students and the wider public can understand it easily.

Explanatory notes

3. Tables 1a and 1b provide a forecast of your student numbers at each fee level you charge. Information provided in these tables is used to calculate the amount of higher fee income (HFI) at your institution, and to state the fees you will charge for each course type for new entrants in 2019-20.

⁷ See page 4 for a definition of qualifying students and courses.

4. In Table 1a, all providers must indicate in cell D5 whether they will hold, or have applied for, a TEF award in 2019-20. The answer you give to this question will ensure the correct fee caps are applied to your courses.
5. In column B you must select a course type from the drop down list:
 - first degree
 - foundation degree
 - foundation year/Year 0
 - HNC/HND
 - CertHE/DipHE
 - postgraduate ITT
 - accelerated degree
 - sandwich year
 - Erasmus and overseas study year
 - other.
6. In columns D to G in Table 1a, and E to H in Table 1b, you are asked to provide a forecast of student numbers across a four year period. Each column represents all students in the academic year, not just new entrants.
7. When completing these tables, it may be useful to start by listing each course type and fee level you will be charging in the academic year 2019-20. We want to understand where you have different fees for each course type. You may have more than one fee against a single course type in 2019-20 because:
 - you charge different fees depending on subject, faculty, location or some other variable
 - you have increased your fees year on year for entrants; in this case, in 2019-20 you may have first year students paying one fee, second year students paying another, third year student paying yet another fee and so on.
8. When you have entered all the fees to be charged in 2019-20, across the entire cohort, you are ready to project your student numbers forwards. Your forecasts for student numbers should only be based on your 2019-20 fees. You **should not** attempt to forecast what fees you will charge in years subsequent to 2019-20, either due to increased fees for new entrants, or due to inflationary increases for continuing students. You **should**, however, include any anticipated growth or decline in student numbers in your forecast. This will provide us with a 'steady state' forecast of your student numbers and higher fee income, based on your 2019-20 fee levels.

Examples of completing a fee table

9. Below is an example of a provider with students on the same course type being charged different fees depending on the year they started their course. In this example, each fee has been entered on a different row. You can also see the forecast student numbers for previous fee levels gradually decline, while the student numbers for the 2019-20 entry fee gradually increase:

Example 1

Table 1a - Full-time courses: fee limits and student numbers								
Row	Please select the course type from the drop-down list.	Where you charge a range of fees for the same course type, please provide more information e.g. subject or faculty groupings.	Total predicted number of qualifying students in each academic year				Does this fee apply to 2019-20 entrants?	Course fee
			2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23		
1	First degree		1,000	0	0	0	No	7,000
2	First degree		1,000	1,000	0	0	No	7,500
3	First degree		1,000	1,000	1,000	0	No	8,000
4	First degree		1,000	2,000	3,000	4,000	Yes	8,500
5								

10. The example below shows a provider that has two fee levels for different bachelor degrees, which differ by subject, faculty or some other variable. You should record each fee on a separate row, and use column C to describe what the fee applies to:

Example 2

Table 1a - Full-time courses: fee limits and student numbers						
Where you charge a range of fees for the same course type, please provide more information e.g. subject or faculty groupings.	Total predicted number of students in each academic year				Does this fee apply to 2019-20 entrants?	Course fee
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23		
Course fee level A	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	Yes	9,250
Course fee level B	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	Yes	8,500

11. In all cases, you should use column H in Table 1a, and column I in Table 1b, to indicate where the fee you have recorded is one that will be charged to 2019-20 entrants (as opposed to historical fees that are only being charged to continuing students who started in earlier years).
12. Where a fee is the same for new entrants in 2019-20 and students that started in earlier years, you should put all the student numbers on the same line and answer 'Yes' in column H in Table 1a, or column I in Table 1b.
13. You may take account of anticipated withdrawals by reducing the number of students in the following year. For example, if you had 100 students charged a particular fee and estimate that 10 might not continue into the subsequent year, exclude these 10 students from your numbers of students in that subsequent year.
14. If you do not enter a particular course type, we will assume that this course type is not run at your institution and you will not be able to charge above the basic fee for this course type.

Table 1b Full time courses (sub contractual): fee levels and student numbers

Actions

- Use Table 1b to record all courses for which you are the lead provider, but where the courses are delivered through a different provider in a subcontractual ('franchise') arrangement.
- Record the name and UK Provider Reference Number (UKPRN) of the sub contractual partner in column C.
- If you deliver courses on behalf of another organisation as part of a subcontractual agreement, you do not need to enter anything in this table. These courses will be recorded in the lead provider's access and participation plan and resource plan.
- Do not account for fee waivers in this table – you can record these in Table 6a.

Explanatory notes

15. The general instructions for completing this table are given on page 40.
16. In column C you should record the name and UKPRN⁸ of the provider where the sub contractual provision is delivered. This must be included for all course types listed in this table.

Table 2 Part time courses: fee levels

Actions

- For the purposes of this table, we only need to know the fees for your part time qualifying courses by course type. You do not need to disaggregate between different intensities of study. You only need to record courses where you charge part time students above the basic fee level.
- The full time equivalent course fee is the fee per 120 credits (equivalent to a full year of study), or fee for the duration of the programme if less than 120 credits.
- The information you enter in these tables will be used to autopopulate Table 3. This table will be published as part of your access and participation plan document. Ensure that text you enter in the additional information column (column D) to distinguish between fee levels for the

⁸ UKPRNs for all providers can be found on the UK Register of Learning Providers website (www.ukrlp.co.uk).

same course type is free of abbreviations and technical language, and that it can be easily understood by potential students and the wider public.

- Do not account for fee waivers in this table – you can record these in Table 6a.

Explanatory notes

17. For part time students, the full time equivalent (FTE) fee means the fee per 120 credits (equivalent to a full year of study), or fee for the duration of the programme if fewer than 120 credits. The FTE course fee is not regulated for part time courses, but this information will help us to better understand your part time fee structure.
18. Current fee regulations prohibit any institution from charging a part time student more than £6,935 in an academic year, or £6,750 for providers without a TEF award, (see section 2, 'Regulatory Advice 2: Registration of current providers for 2019-20' (OfS 2018.04) and 'Regulatory Advice 3: Registration of new providers for 2019-20' (OfS 2018.05)), regardless of how many credits are taken or the intensity of study.
19. In column B, you should list all course types for which you will charge a part time fee. Use column C to indicate where this part time provision is delivered by a franchise partner. You do not have to enter anything in this column if you are the franchisee that delivers this provision.
20. In column E, you should use the drop down list to indicate where this fee is one that will be charged to new entrants in 2019-20.
21. Where you are not clear about whether you will have any part time students paying more than the basic fee, we recommend that you include course type and fee information in Table 2, to avoid having to seek approval retrospectively. This might apply, for example, where a part time student took more modules in a year than was typical, or because they switched from full time to part time due to extenuating circumstances. In such circumstances we would not require any predicted data or targets from you relating to these students, but you would need to report, in your monitoring return, on any unexpected spend that occurs.

Table 3 Summary of full time and part time course fee levels for 2019-20 entrants

Actions

- This table summarises the fees you will charge to 2019-20 entrants only. The information provided in this table is generated from the information you included in Tables 1a, 1b and 2.
- You must include a statement that clearly says whether you will, or will not, be inflating fees for 2019-20 entrants in subsequent years.

- Check that you have entered all course types and fees that will be charged to 2019-20 entrants in Tables 1a, 1b and 2.
- Ensure that the descriptions you have given to any of your fee levels are clear and free of technical language or abbreviations.
- This table will be published as part of your access and participation plan.

Explanatory notes

22. Table 3 shows the fees you have set for 2019-20 entrants, which will apply to them for the duration of their studies. This information in this table is drawn from the information you have entered in to Tables 1a, 1b and 2.
23. You must include a statement that makes it clear that you will, or may, apply annual increases for continuing students in line with an appropriate inflationary measure (within the appropriate maximum fee cap).
24. You should consider carefully the wording of this statement, and wording in other published materials, to ensure that potential applicants understand what fees they will be paying for the duration of their course, before they apply.
25. You should check that this table includes all the fee levels that will be charged to 2019-20 entrants, and no others.
26. As this table will be published, you should ensure that any of the additional information you have included to differentiate between different fee levels for the same course type is clear and easily understandable. It should be free of technical language or abbreviations that might not be understood outside your institution.

Table 4 Summary of student numbers and higher fee income

Actions

- In Table 4a, row 17, provide a forecast of your total number of qualifying part time students for each academic year. In row 18, record how many qualifying students will be charged a fee above the basic rate of £4,625, for providers with TEF in 2019-20, or £4,500 for providers without TEF in 2019-20.
- Do not include students studying at an intensity of less than 25 per cent full time equivalent, or students studying a course that leads to a qualification equivalent to or lower than one they already hold.
- In Table 4b, record the forecast amount of higher fee income (HFI) you will receive from part time students who will be charged over the basic fee in each year.

- Do not leave any yellow cell in Table 3a blank – if you do not have a figure to input please use 0 (zero).
- In the optional commentary box, provide an explanation if your student numbers fluctuate over the four year forecast. Providers with a 2018-19 access agreement should also provide further information if the total number of students (full and part time) charged above the basic fee has substantially changed from the forecasts made in your 2018-19 access agreement resource plan.

Explanatory notes

27. Table 4a and 4b autopopulate with your full time student numbers and fees from the information you provided in Tables 1a and 1b.
28. You are required to enter student numbers and higher fee income for part time students.
29. To reflect the maximum fee levels of £6,935 (or £6,750 for providers without TEF) for part time courses, the amount of higher fee income you record in this table should be less than or equal to £2,310 (or £2,250) per student: the maximum fee minus the basic fee: £6,935-£4,625 (or £6,750-£4,500).

Table 5 Access, success and progression investment forecasts

Actions

- In Table 5a, record your forecast for your total investment in access, success and progression activities and support measures for each year, from all funding sources.
- Record how much of your access, success and progression activity investment in each year will be funded through your access and participation plan.
- In Table 5b we ask you to record investment on activities to support underrepresented and disadvantaged students into postgraduate study, but it is not mandatory to complete this table.
- Please do not leave any yellow cell in Table 5a blank – if you do not have a figure to input please use 0 (zero).

Explanatory notes

30. In Table 5, we are looking to understand your total investment in access, success and progression activities and support measures from all areas of funding. This will enable us to collect consistent information across the sector to assess and understand the areas in which investment in access and participation is being made, across each stage of the student lifecycle.
31. Against each activity category, forecast the total amount you will invest in activities (this may include public funds, such as OfS grant allocations and the National Collaborative Outreach

Programme), and how much of your activity investment is made through your access and participation plan.

32. The 'amount of total which is APP countable' for access, success and progression will then be used to calculate your overall access and participation investment, in Table 7, in cash terms and as a proportion of your higher fee income.
33. For details of what you may include in your count of access and participation plan expenditure, see 'Investment' on page 32.
34. In Table 5b you are invited to include a forecast of investment on activities to support underrepresented and disadvantaged groups into postgraduate study, but the table is not mandatory.

Table 6 Financial support investment forecasts

Actions

- Record your forecast for investment in financial support for students from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups.
- Record your expenditure by the following types:

- bursaries, scholarships and 'in-kind' support (for example, discounts on accommodation or other institutional services such as providing laptops for students)
- fee waivers (including free or discounted foundation years).

- Split your expenditure into the student categories listed in the return, and only record expenditure on financial support for these students:

- students with a household residual income up to £25,000
- students from other underrepresented groups. Only include students in this category when:

- a. the household income is unknown and you cannot make estimates
- b. household income is between £25,001 and £42,875

c. household income is above £42,785, but the student was from another disadvantaged group.

- Do not leave any yellow cell in Table 6a blank – if you do not have a figure to input please use 0 (zero).
- In Table 6b we ask you to record financial support investment on postgraduate students, but it is not mandatory to complete this table.

Explanatory notes

35. This table will enable us to understand how your financial support is targeted, and what types of financial support packages you offer.
36. Where possible, record forecast financial support investment by the income group of the beneficiary (e.g. those with a household income of less than £25,000), rather than as ‘students from other underrepresented groups’.
37. Some providers offer students a choice about the form in which they receive financial support – for example, between a fee waiver and a cash bursary. Record your forecast for this type of financial support in rows 24 and 25 of Table 6a.
38. Where you are the lead provider in a subcontractual (‘franchise’) arrangement, you should include any investment in financial support for students on your franchised courses.

Table 7 Investment summary

Action

- Tables 7a, 7b, and 7c are autopopulated using the data you have entered in previous tables. Please check that the summary data fits with your understanding of your balance of investment, and total investment as a proportion of your higher fee income. If it does not, review the data you have entered in the previous tables.

Explanatory notes

39. The summary data in these tables is derived from the information you have provided in earlier tables. If your levels of investment as a proportion of higher fee income are not what you were expecting, review the data you have entered in previous tables. You may need to review the student numbers you have entered in Tables 1 and 2, as this will determine the amount of higher fee income shown in Table 7. You should also review the investment forecasts you have made in Tables 5 and 6.
40. The ‘Investment’ section (page 32) give broad guidelines on the investment levels we would expect, which we will look at when assessing your level of investment as a proportion of your

higher fee income. While our guidelines are not precise minimums, we will be concerned if you propose to spend substantially less and we will need to discuss this with you before we can approve your access and participation plan. The Director will use the information in these tables, alongside your targets and information set out in your access agreement, to inform the decision to approve your access and participation plan.

41. If there are significant fluctuations in your levels of investment between years, please provide an explanation in the optional commentary box. The calculations in Table 7c relate to fees charged only to full time students.

Table 8 Targets and milestones

Actions

- If you had an access agreement approved for 2018-19, these tables will be prepopulated using the information you provided in your 2018-19 access agreement resource plan.
- Providers with existing targets from a previously approved access agreement should note:

- any changes made to prepopulated targets and milestones will be highlighted with blue text
- provide a reason for any changes in column N if blue text is highlighted
- do not overwrite an existing target with a new one.

- If you are setting targets for the first time in your 2019-20 access and participation plan, or you are a provider with a 2018-19 access agreement that chooses to introduce a new target, you should ensure each target has:

- a lifecycle stage
- a main target type
- a data source
- a baseline year
- details of whether or not the target is collaborative
- milestones set across five years.

- Also note that:

- any new targets will be highlighted with green text
- reference numbers will autopopulate for each target
- each individual target must be self-contained, within one row of the table
- you should not leave any blank lines in between targets.

- If you wish to give some contextual detail about your targets, include this in the commentary box following Table 8b.
- Table 8 will be published as part of your access and participation plan.

Explanatory notes

42. Information on what to include in your targets can be found in the 'Targets' section on page 28.
43. If you are setting a target for the first time in your 2019-20 access and participation plan, you should include milestones across five years. This will enable us to understand the trajectory and ambition of your targets.
44. If you have an approved 2018-19 access agreement, the resource plan you complete as part of your access and participation plan will be prepopulated with your existing targets and milestones. You should not remove or amend existing targets from your resource plan, except where the OfS has approved such changes. We will only agree to a change of existing targets in exceptional circumstances. For example, we might permit a change if the programme being measured is discontinued or the target otherwise becomes obsolete.
45. All of your targets should clearly define what data has been used to form them, including information on whether the data underpinning your targets is based on an external source, such as Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data, or is internally gathered.
46. In Table 8a you must set stretching, clearly defined targets relating to areas you have identified for improvement in your assessment of performance and ambitions and strategy. These may include targets relating to:
 - access, such as applicants or entrants
 - success, such as non-continuation or attainment
 - progression, such as graduate level employment or further study.

These targets should be statistical and measure your performance for particular groups or subgroups of students that face underrepresentation. You may choose to focus your targets on specific groups, or on reducing disparities between groups or subgroups.

47. In Table 8b, you can provide targets for outreach, success and progression work (including collaborative work where appropriate) or other measures to support your progress towards increasing access, success and progression. These should be measurable outcomes-based targets and should focus on the number of beneficiaries reached by a particular activity/programme or the number of schools and/or employers worked with, and what the outcomes were, rather than just recording the nature and number of activities.

Table 9 Sponsorship arrangements

Actions

- In Tables 8a, 8b and 8c we are looking to understand any current and future academy school sponsorship arrangements and/or how many free schools, university technical colleges (UTCs) or studio schools you have established or plan to establish. If you have no existing sponsorship arrangements or plans to develop new arrangements, leave this table blank.
- When completing this table, ensure you have:

- entered an Edubase Unique Reference Number for each school you list
- noted the school type, sponsor type, phase and trust name for each school
- in Table 8b, entered the expected opening date of the school.

- In Table 8c, we are looking to understand your plans and aspirations with regards to the number of schools you will sponsor or free schools you will establish. You do not have to provide specific details where your plans are still at an early stage. Rather, we would like to know the scope of your ambitions in this area, and whether you foresee your involvement in the schools sector to grow.

Explanatory notes

48. You should read the information on page 31 regarding our expectations about your activity to raise attainment for underrepresented groups to support entry into higher education. The information gathered in these tables will be used to improve our understanding of where that work is currently being done through formal relationships with schools and colleges. It will also allow us to understand how the contribution of higher education providers with access and participation plans is likely to grow and develop to support the schools sector over time.
49. The information you provide in these tables will be shared with the Department for Education.

Validation and assurance

Actions

- Review the validation tab to ensure you have correctly recorded all the information we require in your resource plan.
- A senior member of staff who has not directly been involved in compiling the access and participation plan and resource plan must confirm that all the information provided has been internally validated and the information has been signed off and approved as correct.

Explanatory notes

50. Your access and participation plan and resource plan must be approved by an appropriate senior manager before submission, to ensure the information is validated independently by someone other than the person responsible for compiling the return. For example, approval could be received from your Vice Chancellor or Principal, your Deputy or Pro-Vice Chancellor, or your Finance Director. Please state who has approved your access and participation plan and resource plan in the final section of your resource plan template.
51. It is up to each institution to determine its own process for checking the accuracy of the information it provides. This could be through internal audit, a report to the head of the institution, a governors' group or a steering committee. All information is subject to audit and you should ensure that the way you validate your information meets your own internal audit requirements.



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