

**Office for
Students**



2017-18 access agreements and student premium funding

**Guidance on how to complete your
monitoring return**

Reference OfS 2018.49

Enquiries to app@officeforstudents.org.uk

Publication date 13 November 2018

Contents

Introduction	3
What this document is about	3
Deadline for action	3
Why do we ask you to do this?	3
What has changed since the previous monitoring return?	4
Partnership arrangements	5
What do I need to do now?	6
Table-by-table guide to completing your monitoring return	6
Table 1: Full-time courses – fee levels and student numbers	6
Table 2: Student numbers and fee income	8
Table 3: Access and participation activity expenditure and hardship expenditure	9
Table 4a: Expenditure on financial support for under-represented groups	14
Table 4b: Number of students receiving financial support, by underrepresented group	16
Table 5a: Access agreement expenditure summary	17
Table 5b: Explanation of differences between predicted and actual expenditure	17
Table 7: Access agreement milestones and targets	18
Table 8: Commentary on progress against access agreement targets and milestones	20
Table 9: Financial support– evaluation, evidence and impact	21
Table 10: Effective practice	22
How to submit your return	23
Where to find your return template	23
Validating your monitoring return	24
Submitting your return	24
What happens once you have submitted your form	25
How the Freedom of Information Act affects monitoring returns	25
How the information will be used	25
List of abbreviations	27

Introduction

What this document is about

1. This document sets out the information that the Office for Students (OfS) requires from providers that had an approved access agreement from the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) for 2017-18 and from providers that received student premium funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) for 2017-18. This applies to the following premiums:
 - premium to support successful student outcomes: full-time
 - premium to support successful student outcomes: part-time
 - disabled students' premium.
2. Providers that had an OFFA-approved access agreement **and** HEFCE student premium funding in 2017-18 should follow **all** the guidance in this document about what to submit and how. Providers that did not have an access agreement but had the student premium funding and more than 100 full-time equivalent directly HEFCE-funded student numbers need to follow the guidance for Table 3 only. We will provide a separate monitoring return for these providers.
3. From 1 April 2018, the OfS began to exercise some of the powers of its predecessor bodies HEFCE and OFFA. The OfS's regulatory framework, published in February 2018 (OfS 2018.01), will not come fully into force until 1 August 2019¹. Between 1 April 2018 and 31 July 2019 ('the transitional period'), providers are to be funded and regulated through a combination of the powers and duties carried forward from the previous legislation as well as some of powers conferred by the new Higher Education and Research Act 2017.
4. More information regarding monitoring arrangements during this transition period can be found in 'Regulatory Notice 2: Regulation up to 31 July 2019 of providers that were previously funded by HEFCE' (OfS 2018.12)².

Deadline for action

5. All monitoring returns must be submitted via the OfS provider portal at <https://extranet.officeforstudents.org.uk/Data/> by **noon on Wednesday 23 January 2019**.

Why do we ask you to do this?

6. If a provider has an access agreement for 2017-18 or before, approved by the Director of Fair Access to Higher Education, the OfS will use the information submitted in the access agreement monitoring return to determine whether the provider has complied with the provisions in its access agreements. All providers with access agreements are required to

¹ Available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/securing-student-success-regulatory-framework-for-higher-education-in-england/.

² Available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-notice-2-regulation-up-to-31-july-2019-of-providers-that-were-previously-funded-by-hefce/.

report on the extent to which they have met the obligations set out in those agreements, and on the progress they have made against their milestones and targets.

7. We are collecting information through this monitoring return for the purposes of:
 - a. Understanding whether providers have met the provisions of the access agreements in force in 2017-18.
 - b. Transparency, for the interests of students.
 - c. Enhancing the OfS's understanding of effective practice in the sector.
8. Providers in receipt of the student premium funding are required to submit a monitoring return so that we can ensure that the funds are accounted for and being used appropriately³.
9. It is the provider's responsibility to ensure that correct data is returned to the OfS. Where data does not match our expectations, based on access agreements and previous monitoring returns, we will contact you for further detail and clarity. The OfS may also undertake data assurance reviews if it has concerns about the quality of a provider's data. For further detail about how we may investigate concerns about the integrity or quality of a provider's data, see Annex F of OfS 2018.12⁴.
10. The information submitted in the monitoring return will inform the OfS's understanding of a provider's risk of breach of condition A1 of the Regulatory framework. Where relevant, this information may also be used to inform our understanding of a provider's risk of breaching other initial or ongoing conditions of registration.
11. In line with our approach to transparency, we will seek to publish sector and provider-level outcomes from the information provided in the monitoring return.

What has changed since the previous monitoring return?

12. The OfS is reviewing its approach to regulating access and participation in English higher education. We have consulted on our proposals, which include a reformed approach to monitoring, in 'A new approach to regulating access and participation in English higher education: Consultation' (OfS 2018.33)⁵. We plan to publish our response to the consultation in December, and the outcomes will inform our approach to future access and participation plans and monitoring.

³ As referenced in OfS 2018.12, paragraph 9.a in section 1 replicates and replaces the provisions of HEFCE's Memorandum of assurance and accountability (HEFCE 2017/08).

⁴ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-notice-2-regulation-up-to-31-july-2019-of-providers-that-were-previously-funded-by-hefce/.

⁵ Available at <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/a-new-approach-to-regulating-access-and-participation-in-english-higher-education-consultation/>.

13. Because of the timings of the consultation and its outcomes, and the transition period of the OfS's regulation, the monitoring of 2017-18 access agreements and student premium funding will remain similar to monitoring in previous years.
14. However, we have made some changes to our monitoring return this year. We have reduced the information we collect to reflect the duty to observe the principles of best regulatory practice to ensure our activities are transparent, accountable, proportionate and consistent, and to allow providers more time to focus on the requirements of their 2020-21 access and participation plans. Some changes also reflect feedback received during our consultation on access and participation.
15. For example, we have sought to minimise regulatory burden, particularly by:
- removing tables where we have identified links with the upcoming access and participation plan submission
 - pre-populating information where possible
 - reducing the detail of information required in some tables.
16. Notably, we have removed the table focusing on evaluation of activities. This does not reflect a reduced focus in this area, but rather the fact that we will be asking providers to complete an evaluation self-assessment as part of the 2020-21 plan submission.
17. The provider's accountable officer, as defined through initial condition E3, is expected to provide assurance on the accuracy of the data returned to us. The accountable officer will also need to declare that the provider's governing body has monitored its compliance with the provisions of the provider's access agreement, as set out in the Higher Education Act 2004, as amended.
18. Our approach to access and participation plan monitoring is likely to change further in future years. More information on our proposed changes and recent consultation can be found on the OfS website⁶. We will contact providers where these changes require specific action.

Partnership arrangements

19. The provider responsible for the students included in the access agreements and monitoring returns depends on the type of partnership arrangement in place:
- a. **In a validation arrangement**, responsibility for reporting rests with the provider making the course available and teaching it, and with which the student will have the full contractual relationship for the provision of education. It is the responsibility of this provider to ensure that its own access agreement is fully adhered to.
 - b. **In a sub-contractual arrangement**, responsibility for reporting rests with the provider that makes the course available and with which the student will have the full contractual relationship for the provision of education. Any other provider that is contracted to provide

⁶ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/improving-access-and-participation/our-future-approach-to-access-and-participation/.

some teaching on a course would not require an access agreement relating to that course. It is the responsibility of the lead provider to ensure that its own access agreement is fully adhered to.

- c. **For joint courses**, responsibility for reporting rests with all the higher education providers in England within the partnership that together have responsibility for the provision of educational services to the student.

What do I need to do now?

20. Download the tables you need to fill in from the OfS provider portal at <https://extranet.officeforstudents.org.uk/Data/>.
21. Complete all relevant parts of your monitoring return, checking it carefully against this guidance. If in doubt, ask us for clarification at app@officeforstudents.org.uk. Detailed guidance on filling in the return is given in this document; there are also prompts on the tables themselves.
22. Further instructions on how to submit your monitoring return using the OfS provider portal are available in paragraphs 133 to 135. For your reference, a PDF copy of the monitoring return template is available to download alongside this document at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/2017-18-access-agreements-and-student-premium-funding-guidance-on-how-to-complete-your-monitoring-return/.

Table-by-table guide to completing your monitoring return

Contact information

Action

23. Please read the fair processing notice on the front page of the monitoring return.
24. Complete the details of two provider contacts who have been involved in the completion of the monitoring return. If we need to clarify any of the information returned to us, we will contact these two people in the first instance.

Table 1: Full-time courses – fee levels and student numbers

Action

25. For each course type and fee level, record the number of full-time students at your institution under the current system (i.e. post-2012 entrants) in the 2017-18 academic year, broken down by their year of entry.
26. Include all regulated home and EU full-time undergraduates studying at your institution in 2017-18, including initial teacher training. This includes students paying below the basic fee level.
27. Where students have not completed a full year or programme of study and therefore not paid full fees, but have paid some fees in 2017-18, count these students in Table 1 against the full

fee course line. You must use Table 2b to record any negative adjustments to fee income above the basic level. (See the notes for Table 2 for details of how to record these.)

28. You do not need to record students who entered earlier than 2013-14. We would not normally expect institutions to include large numbers of student entries in 2013-14, unless they had substantial numbers of students on five-year courses.

Explanatory notes for Table 1

29. Table 1 represents a 'snapshot' of full-time students paying a fee in the 2017-18 academic year. Information provided in this table is used to calculate the amount of higher fee income at your institution. Information recorded in this table will be used to identify potential fee breaches. It is your responsibility to ensure the information provided in this table is accurate. You should refer back to the fees agreed in your 2017-18 access agreement.
30. Your Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) status for 2017-18 has been built into your provider's monitoring return. Providers that participated in TEF Year One will have a basic fee cap of £6,165 and a higher fee cap of £9,250 for first degrees in 2017-18. Providers that did not participate in TEF Year One will have a basic fee of £6,000 and a higher fee cap of £9,000 for first degrees in 2017-18.
31. Higher fee income per student (column L) is calculated automatically in relation to the fee level for a course, and is equal to the higher fee charged minus the basic fee.
32. To encourage greater consistency in the way that fees are reported to us, we have pre-populated this table with the course types, franchise information, additional description and course fees from your 2017-18 access agreement resource plan. We don't expect you to make changes to this information unless the actual fees charged were different from those approved in your 2017-18 access agreement. However, if changes are necessary, replacement text will appear in blue. New text will appear in green.
33. If you have significant student numbers and resulting higher fee income in 2017-18 compared with those for students who entered before 2013-14, please contact the OfS to discuss how this information can be included in your calculations and monitoring return.
34. The information in this table will inform our understanding of whether providers have complied with the tuition fee limits set out in their approved agreements. If a provider breaches these limits and it charges qualifying students more than the permitted amount, the OfS can impose a penalty, which is either to withhold teaching grant, or require the provider to repay an amount calculated in accordance with the formulae specified in the Student Fees (Approved Plans) (England) Regulations 2004. For more information on our formal sanctions, please refer to OfS 2018.12.

Fees to include

35. You should include all fee income from 'qualifying persons' on 'qualifying courses'⁷.

⁷ These are defined by The Student Fees (Qualifying Courses and Persons) (England) Regulations (statutory instrument 2007 No. 778, as amended in particular by statutory instrument 2008 No. 1640.

Fees to exclude

36. The following should **not** be recorded in Table 1:

- a. Fee income from courses and persons **not** covered by the Regulations⁸, such as students not eligible for student support on the basis that they were eligible to apply for a healthcare bursary and students studying a course which leads to a qualification equivalent to or lower than one they already hold ('ELQ' students).
- b. Students who were no longer studying in 2017-18.
- c. Students studying part-time (these are included in Table 2).
- d. Fee waivers given to students (these will be recorded in Table 4).

Sub-contractual arrangements

37. In a sub-contractual ('franchise') arrangement, the lead provider is responsible for reporting on its franchised courses. For these courses, the lead provider should include the name and UK Provider Reference Number (UKPRN) of the franchise partner. If you are a provider that has courses franchised from another provider, do not include these courses in your return as these will be recorded in the lead provider's return.

Table 2: Student numbers and fee income

Action

38. In Table 2a, record the number of current-system fee-regulated part-time students at your provider in the 2017-18 academic year, by year of entry. In the next row, record how many of these students were charged a fee above the basic rate of £4,500 (for providers without a TEF Year One award) or £4,625 (for providers with a TEF Year One award).

39. Do not include:

- students studying at an intensity of less than 25 per cent full-time equivalent
- students studying a course which leads to a qualification equivalent to or lower than one they already hold (ELQ students).

40. In Table 2b, record the amount of higher fee income received from part-time students who were charged over the basic fee in 2017-18. This is not automatically calculated.

41. In Table 2c, please tell us if the total number of students (full and part-time) charged above the basic fee in 2017-18 has substantially changed from the revised predictions made in your 2018-19 access agreement resource plan.

⁸ The current regulations are the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2011 (statutory instrument 2011 No. 1986), as amended (in particular by statutory instrument 2014 No. 2765). These regulations govern the types of course that can attract student support, and the conditions that qualify a higher education provider's students to receive it.

42. In Table 2d, record any negative adjustments to higher fee income. For example, if a full-time student paying the maximum fee of £9,250 withdrew and paid fees of £8,000, you would include them in your student count in Table 1 but also record a negative adjustment of -£1,250.
43. You only need to record negative adjustments for the purposes of calculating higher fee income, so students who withdrew and paid fees below the basic rate (e.g. current system full-time students paying fees below £6,000 (for providers without a TEF Year One award) or £6,165 (for providers with a TEF Year One award) in 2017-18) should not be recorded in Table 1 or Table 2b.
44. If you have provided fee waivers to students, please do not use the negative adjustments in Table 2b to account for these. You should record fee waivers in Table 4.
45. Where negative adjustments have been recorded, you must provide a brief explanation for this adjustment in the commentary box in Table 2d.

Explanatory notes for Table 2

46. Table 2b auto-populates with your full-time student numbers and fees from the information you provided in Table 1.
47. To remain within the maximum fee levels for part-time courses in 2017-18, the amount of higher fee income should be less than or equal to £2,310 per student (for providers with a TEF Year One award) or £2,250 (for providers without a TEF Year One award): this is the maximum fee minus the basic fee. We have included a basic credibility check to flag if this has been exceeded as an average fee. It remains your responsibility to ensure you are correctly recording this information.
48. The information in this table will inform our understanding of whether providers have complied with the tuition fee limits set out in their approved agreements. If a provider breaches these limits and charges qualifying students more than the permitted amount, the OfS can withhold teaching grant or require repayment of a multiple of the sum overcharged.

Table 3: Access and participation activity expenditure and hardship expenditure

Action

49. In Table 3a, record your provider's expenditure on access, success and progression activity in 2017-18 from all funding sources⁹, using the categories provided. 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.

⁹ All sources of funding can include funding from higher fee income under access agreements, student premium funding, funding from other sources such as fee income (over and above that included in access agreements), other teaching funding, and external sources such as charitable funds or funds from other organisations.

50. Please also indicate how much of your access, success and progression activity expenditure in 2017-18 was funded through investment countable under your access agreement, and how much from the student premium funding.
51. In Table 3b, provide the expenditure that has occurred to support disabled students against the expenditure categories provided. This table will enable the OfS to understand providers' expenditure on core, ongoing work to support disabled students and on work to expand and improve their provision towards an inclusive model of support for disabled students. Please also indicate how much of your support for disabled students was funded from your disabled students' premium in 2017-18.
52. In Table 3c, report your expenditure on supporting students experiencing financial hardship from all funding sources. Indicate how much of your hardship expenditure was funded through your access agreement countable funding and how much from your student premium funding in 2017-18. Please also indicate the total number of students receiving hardship funds.
53. Please ensure that your total 'of which uses student premium funding' figure in Table 3d does not exceed the total student premium funding provided to you for 2017-18; this figure is provided above Table 3a.
54. In Table 3e, report all expenditure on widening participation (WP) activity that was delivered collaboratively. By collaborative activity, we do not just mean collaboration between providers of higher education. We would normally expect collaborative activity to include a number of partners rather than being between a single higher education provider and schools, colleges or other stakeholders receiving outreach activity. Collaboration could be formed in a number of ways, for example between a higher education provider and several further education colleges, other higher education providers, employers, third sector organisations, schools, colleges, training providers, or local authorities.

Explanatory notes for Table 3

55. The expenditure you report on access, success, progression and hardship under your access agreement should only relate to funds committed from higher fee income and other new and additional (post-2006) sources of funding. It should relate to:
- access and participation activities that started after the introduction of variable fees in 2006 ('additional' activities)
 - expenditure on activities that you previously funded through other means where these funding streams have been reduced or discontinued
 - expenditure from new and additional sources other than fee income, such as charitable donations.
56. You may include relevant staffing and overhead costs. Do not apply full economic costing.
57. Please do not include any funding allocated to you under the National Collaborative Outreach Programme, as this funding is being monitored separately.
58. We appreciate that much of the work that you do to improve access, success and progression is embedded in the core activities of many providers, so it may be difficult to disaggregate

access and participation expenditure into the categories and apportion spending against your access agreement and the student premium funding. We appreciate that you may need to use estimates; if so, please ensure they are as accurate as possible.

59. While most providers will be undertaking activity covering all of the categories, we understand that some, in particular smaller providers, may not carry out work that falls under every category.
60. The information in this table will inform our understanding of whether providers have complied with the provisions of their access agreement and met the terms and conditions of funding, and will demonstrate transparency. This information may also inform our understanding of a provider's risk in relation to condition A1.

Examples of activities in each category

61. Examples of activities that would belong in each category include the following.

Access activity (Table 3a)

62. Examples of access activities include:

- a. **Outreach work with schools and young people:** Mentoring programmes with schools and young people; summer schools, campus visits, taster days and masterclasses; compact programmes and progression agreements with schools and colleges; work with looked-after children and care leavers.
- b. **Outreach work with communities and adults:** Taster days and visits for adults; community projects; progression agreements aimed at adults progressing from further education; work with employers aimed at progressing adults into higher education.
- c. **Outreach work with disabled students:** Mentoring programmes with disabled students; summer schools, campus visits, taster days and masterclasses; compact programmes and progression agreements aimed at disabled students progressing from further education.
- d. **Strategic relationships with schools:** Strategic partnerships between schools and higher education providers such as sponsoring of an academy or trust, university technical college or free school.
- e. **WP staffing and administration (access activity):** Staffing costs for WP units that cannot be allocated to directly delivering an outreach activity, such as monitoring costs; partnership support costs in relation to outreach activities.

Student success activity (Table 3a)

63. Examples of student success activities include:

- a. **Support for current students (academic and pastoral):** Activity to improve continuation and equality of outcomes for different groups; induction and transition programmes; provision of study skills; student services expenditure for the benefit of access and participation target groups (for instance on financial or mental health advisers); peer mentoring programmes; developing inclusive curricula and learning resources.

- b. **Support for disabled students:** Provision of advice and support to disabled students; developing accessible learning resources and inclusive learning and teaching environments.
- c. **WP staffing and administration (student success activity):** Staffing costs for WP units that cannot be allocated to directly delivering a student success activity, such as monitoring costs; partnership support costs in relation to student success activities.

Progression activity (Table 3a)

64. Examples of progression activities include:

- a. **Support for progression from higher education into employment or postgraduate study:** Support with internships for students from access and participation target groups; mentoring programmes designed to facilitate entry into employment or postgraduate study.
- b. **Support for progression of disabled students:** Support with internships for disabled students; provision of advice and support to help disabled students into employment or postgraduate study.
- c. **WP staffing and administration (progression activity):** Staffing costs for WP units that cannot be allocated to directly delivering progression activity, such as monitoring costs; partnership support costs in relation to progression activities.

Student success expenditure for support for disabled students (Table 3b)

65. Examples of student success expenditure for support for disabled students include:

- a. **Ongoing, core work to support disabled students:** Ongoing, core work to support disabled students throughout their student lifecycle; from before entry into higher education through to the support they receive while on their course of study, including to help them progress into postgraduate study or employment.
- b. **Expansion of disability services (additional staff, training and resources):** Expansion to faculties and departments to increase capacity and resource to support disabled students. For example: the recruitment of additional staff for particular responsibilities such as accessibility, disability support, disability tutoring, development of inclusive curricula, mental health, non-medical help such as peer mentoring, study skills, developing and promoting assistive technology, dyslexia; particular training for staff on inclusive design and understanding mental health; resources for supporting disabled students and resources for staff to become more inclusive.
- c. **Expansion of assistive technologies:** Expansion of assistive technologies for lecture capture, assistive software and voice recorders. For example: induction loops; speech recognition software or transcription packages (changing voice to text); text-to-speech software; mind mapping software (to help organise ideas graphically and with planning and organisation); word prediction software; software to enlarge text and zoom in; programs to support essay writing (guides with animated tutorials and tools such as subject dictionaries and bibliographic references); recording software; note-taking software; document conversion software; document reading software.

- d. **Improvement of inclusivity of teaching and learning:** Staff specialising in inclusive support such as providing training, raising awareness and promoting the aims of inclusive learning and teaching across faculties; strategies to assure quality and embed inclusive practices including learning walks, observations of teaching (including peer observations), filming of teaching for self-evaluation and self-improvement and sharing of good practice; inclusivity review built into course design and curriculum development.
- e. **Creation or extension of learning support posts:** Learning support posts to enable the provision of wider support for students such as study skills workshops that complement one-to-one sessions. For example: help with academic literacy; critical and reflective writing; research skills; finding, using and referencing resources; effective study technique; assignment planning and structuring; time management and organisational skills; optimising memory; revision and examination techniques; communicating in different media; coping strategies.
- f. **Other:** Accessibility of estates; wellbeing interventions with students such as regular events, workshops and courses focused on particular issues (such as stress management); development of a mental health strategy; peer mentoring; supporting student transition to higher education; financial support for students for purchasing IT equipment or software.

Hardship expenditure (Table 3c)

66. Examples of hardship expenditure include:

- a. **Support for students in hardship:** Provision of information, advice and guidance for students with ongoing financial problems; financial support for students in unexpected hardship that might impact on their participation in higher education, in the form of grants or loans for general living cost such as rent, food, and utility; course-related costs such as childcare costs, books, materials, and travel.
- b. **WP staffing and administration (hardship):** Staffing costs for WP units that cannot be allocated to directly delivering a hardship activity, such as monitoring costs; admin support costs in relation to finance activities such as making payments.

Activities spanning multiple categories

67. If you have undertaken activities that could fall under more than one of the predetermined categories (such as an outreach programme that targets both young people and adults), please make a judgment on which category is most appropriate and ensure that the activity is consistently placed under this category in future monitoring returns. The activity must not be double-counted.

Disabled students' premium

68. In 2017-18, the disabled students' premium was increased from £20 million to £40 million. This increase in funding is to support providers to transition towards an inclusive model of support for disabled students. Table 3b will help the OfS understand providers' use of this funding towards core and ongoing work and work to expand and improve support for disabled students. Therefore we would expect all providers to report expenditure that has occurred to support disabled students against the categories in the table.

69. If this work is delivered separately from other WP work, in terms of staffing and infrastructure, please collect the relevant information for this monitoring return. This will enable us to gain a full picture of all access and participation expenditure.

Using the WP staffing and administration category

70. Examples of expenditure under 'WP staffing and administration' include:

- non-staffing costs of running central WP units and departments
- staff development costs for staff in such units and departments
- costs related to supporting collaborative partnerships
- costs of evaluation and monitoring activity.

71. Where possible, record expenditure on staff working directly on a particular access, success or progression activity, and on hardship, against the appropriate category. You should only record expenditure under WP staffing and administration where the activity cannot be allocated to other categories. This will enable us to understand the expenditure on staff that cannot be attributed to an expenditure category.

72. This may mean that costs for some members of staff are split between different categories, where some but not all of their work involves directly delivering particular activities. In these circumstances, you should judge the percentage of staff time allocated to activities.

Table 4a: Expenditure on financial support for under-represented groups

Action

73. State your total expenditure between 1 August 2017 and 31 July 2018 on financial support for students from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups. A definition of underrepresented and disadvantaged groups relating to the 2017-18 access agreements can be found on the archived OFFA website¹⁰.

74. Record your expenditure by the following types:

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

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

- a. Students with a household residual income up to £25,000.

¹⁰ See <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20180511111534/https://www.offa.org.uk/glossary/>.

- b. Students from other underrepresented groups. Only include students in this category when either:
 - i. Household income is unknown and you can't make estimates.
 - ii. Household income is between £25,001 and £42,875.
 - iii. Household income is above £42,875 but the student was from another underrepresented or disadvantaged group.

Explanatory notes for Table 4a

- 76. Where possible, record financial support expenditure 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'.
- 77. Please note that this table has been updated from previous monitoring returns and now collects the information as a total for all students in 2017-18, rather than split out into different entrant years. Ensure that you are recording figures for all students receiving financial support in 2017-18 and not just 2017-18 entrants.
- 78. In order to comply with the provisions of your access agreements, you will need to have provided students the financial support you committed to in the relevant access agreement for the duration of their studies. For example, the fees and financial support set out in your 2014-15 access agreement applies to 2014-15 entrants in subsequent years of study.
- 79. If you do not know the beneficiary's household income, but you award financial support based on other measures of underrepresentation that are countable as part of your access agreement, or if you award financial support regardless of a student's household income, you may still be able to make estimates. For example, if you award financial support to students who are care leavers, you may not have information on household income, but you may still be able to estimate expenditure for each category. You may need to apply a weighting if your experience indicates that beneficiaries are unlikely to be evenly distributed across the different categories.
- 80. Where figures are based on estimates, declare this in your monitoring return and briefly explain your calculations.
- 81. The information in this table will inform our understanding of whether providers have complied with the provisions of their access agreement and of a provider's risk in relation to condition A1, and will demonstrate transparency.

Expenditure to include

- 82. Franchiser ('lead provider') institutions should include financial support for students on their franchised courses.

Expenditure to exclude

- 83. The following should not be included in Table 4a:
 - a. Expenditure on financial support for students with residual household incomes above £42,875 who aren't from an underrepresented group.

- b. Any payments reported to OFFA in previous monitoring returns. You should only count expenditure in the year in which the benefit was received.
- c. Expenditure that is not awarded directly to students in order to provide a financial benefit, for example expenditure on the overall improvement of services for students and broader retention measures.
- d. Ring-fenced funding received from the government.
- e. Expenditure on historical bursaries and scholarships where funding was established before the introduction of variable fees and has continued, and which are not funded through higher fee income or an institution's own fundraising.
- f. Expenditure to students not covered under the Student Fees (Qualifying Courses and Persons) (England) Regulations 2007, such as students not eligible for student support on the basis that they were eligible to apply for a healthcare bursary.
- g. Hardship expenditure. This is captured in Table 3.

Table 4b: Number of students receiving financial support, by underrepresented group

Action

- 84. Record the total number of students from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups who received financial support in 2017-18.
- 85. Allocate students to the student categories listed in the return, using estimates where necessary in the same way as set out in paragraph 75.
- 86. In some cases, a student's circumstances may have changed after they received an award; for example, their residual household income may have been reassessed during the academic year, or they did not complete a full year or programme of study. You should include these students in your return based on their household income at the time they were originally assessed for financial support.
- 87. Include beneficiaries who received financial support in the form of bursaries and fee waivers, through your access agreement.
- 88. Please report the number of beneficiaries rather than the number of awards, so if you give a student more than one award, you should only count them once. Where a student receives an award based on income plus a non-income-related award, you should record them only once based on their income-related award.
- 89. The 'Total number of students in receipt of financial support, as a proportion of the total number of students' row will automatically calculate the proportions of students receiving financial support. Please check these to ensure they are in line with your expectations. A validation check will flag if the proportions exceed 100 per cent.

Table 5a: Access agreement expenditure summary

90. Table 5a pre-populates with the predicted levels of expenditure from your 2017-18 access agreement resource plan and auto-populates the actual levels of expenditure from the information you provided in Tables 1 to 4. The difference between your predicted and actual level of expenditure is shown in cash terms and as a proportion of higher fee income. This table shows the provider-level data that we will include in our monitoring outcomes report for institutions with access agreements.

Action

91. Please check that the figures shown are in line with your expectations.

Table 5b: Explanation of differences between predicted and actual expenditure

92. Table 5b indicates whether your total expenditure, access, success and progression expenditure and your financial support expenditure are in line with the predictions you set out in your 2017-18 access agreement. This is considered both in cash terms and as a percentage of your higher fee income.

93. The statements in Table 5b auto-populate. If you have spent more than 5 per cent below or 20 per cent above your prediction, either in cash terms or as percentage of higher fee income, you are required to provide an explanation. For example, if your prediction was £100,000 and your actual expenditure was lower than £95,000 or higher than £120,000, **or** your proportional expenditure was predicted to be 10 per cent of higher fee income and your actual expenditure was lower than 9.5 per cent, we require you to give a commentary.

94. When providing a commentary, we ask that you use the free text boxes to explain the broad reasons for this difference and the impact this has had on your ability to deliver access agreement commitments. Where there have been significant levels of variation from the amount or proportions of expenditure agreed in past access agreements, we may seek to investigate this further with you.

95. The information in this table will inform our understanding of whether providers have complied with the provisions of their access agreement and of a provider's risk in relation to condition A1, and will demonstrate transparency.

Table 6: Overall investment in widening participation activity and financial support

96. This table auto-populates with information collected in Tables 1 to 4. No action is required but you may wish to review this information as a credibility check of the data provided earlier in the return.

Table 7: Access agreement milestones and targets

Action

97. Report on progress against the targets and milestones set out in your 2017-18 access agreement, or targets that have been added to subsequent agreements. These include:
- a. High-level outcomes milestones or targets relating to your applicants, entrants or student body – for example, those based on Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), UCAS or similar data that you use to measure the outcomes of your access and participation work.
 - b. Other milestones and targets – for example those relating to outreach activity, lifelong learning, or institutional management and mission.
98. For each of your targets, you should do the following:
- a. Provide milestone figures showing your progress against the target.
 - b. If it is not possible to record a figure for 2017-18 (e.g. if HESA performance indicator data has not yet been published), include the most current data available to you and make a note in the description column.
 - c. Select a statement that clearly reflects your actual progress against each milestone, from the available classifications:
 - i. **Overall target met or exceeded (target year reached)**. Only use this category if both the following apply:
 - 1) The target year has been reached (i.e. is 2017-18).
 - 2) You have met or exceeded the target.
 - ii. **Overall target met or exceeded (target achieved earlier than anticipated)**. Only use this category if both the following apply:
 - 1) The target year has not yet been reached (i.e. is 2018-19 or later).
 - 2) Your most recent milestone has met or exceeded the target.
 - iii. **Yearly milestone met – on course to meet overall target**. Only use this category if both the following apply:
 - 1) The target year is a future year (i.e. is 2018-19 or later).
 - 2) You have met or exceeded the 2017-18 milestone.
 - iv. **Progress made – but less than anticipated**. Only use this category if both the following apply:
 - 1) Your performance has improved relative to the baseline.
 - 2) Your performance is below the 2017-18 milestone you set.

- v. **No progress made against baseline.** Use this category if your 2017-18 performance is the same as the baseline.
- vi. **Performance is below baseline.** Use this category if your 2017-18 performance is below the level set out in the baseline¹¹.
- vii. **Target discontinued.** Use this category for prefilled targets that have been removed or superseded (e.g. targets using Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) 2 methodology).

99. To minimise burden, this table has been pre-populated with the targets you reported to us in your 2016-17 monitoring return. If you did not have an approved access agreement for 2016-17, you will need to complete this table manually. You should refer to the target table of your approved access agreement resource plan. This will show the yearly milestones for 2017-18.

100. If you added new targets to your 2018-19 access agreement, you will need to add these on separate rows of the table and ensure all columns are completed for the new targets. You should review the approved target table from your 2018-19 access agreement to ensure that you have included all targets relevant to 2017-18.

101. Please review the information included in columns B, C and D to ensure that your targets are accurately categorised. For further information on the definitions of categories, see the glossary on the archived OFFA website or in 'Regulatory Advice 6: Good practice advice on the preparation of access and participation plans for 2019-20' (OfS 2018.06)¹². Note that the target group 'multiple' refers to 'multiple dimensions of disadvantage' where there is the intersection of two or more forms of disadvantage.

Explanatory notes for Table 7

102. This is an assessment of your provider's progress against its targets and milestones. The classifications provided should clearly reflect your actual position for each target.

103. If the progress description you select for a target does not match the performance suggested by the data, we will contact you to discuss this and you may need to revise and resubmit the monitoring return. Please follow the directions in paragraph 98 to select appropriate categories. If you are unsure about how to classify your performance in a particular area, please contact the OfS to clarify this.

104. As in previous years, we will publish the information included in Table 7 on the OfS website as part of our outcomes. You can see what was published last year at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/monitoring-outcomes-offa-access-agreements-and-hefce-funding-for-widening-access-for-students-from-disadvantaged-backgrounds-improving-retention-and-improving-provision-for-disabled-students-for-2016-17/.

¹¹ Note that for non-continuation targets, this category will apply where your performance is higher than the level set out in the baseline.

¹² See <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20180511111534/https://www.offa.org.uk/glossary/> and www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-advice-6-good-practice-advice-on-the-preparation-of-access-and-participation-plans-for-2019-20/.

105. We recognise that you might meet all your financial commitments and access plans under your access agreement but not achieve your targets and milestones. When we are analysing your progress, we will consider whether you have met your commitments and whether you have made progress towards your milestones. The OfS is developing its approach to understanding access and participation performance.

106. The information in this table will inform our understanding of whether providers have complied with the provisions of their access agreement and of a provider's risk in relation to condition A1, and will demonstrate transparency.

Table 8: Commentary on progress against access agreement targets and milestones

Action

107. Where you have recorded the progress against your targets in Tables 7a and 7b as having exceeded or matched that anticipated progress (categories i to iii), no further action is required.

108. For any target where you have recorded less progress than anticipated, no progress or negative progress (categories iv to vi), complete Table 8 to:

- a. Provide explanations where progress has been less than anticipated, and set out the action you have taken to improve.
- b. Set your progress in some context, for example to explain how it may have been influenced by external factors such as changes to government policy (e.g. inclusion of midwifery, nursing and allied health entrants from 2017-18 in access agreement numbers).

Please limit this commentary to a maximum of 1,000 words.

Explanatory notes for Table 8

109. Our recent consultation on our proposed new approach to regulating access and participation, OfS 2018.33, includes significant changes to our approach to targets. We encourage providers to examine the progress they have made against existing targets, the practices which have supported progress against milestones and where no progress or limited progress has been made, and the key factors which have influenced this and how this will inform future practice. This is particularly important as you seek to develop ambitious and credible targets in your upcoming access and participation plan.

110. In line with the approach set out in our Regulatory framework, we have applied a risk-based approach to regulation. You are thus no longer required to provide commentary on the progress of all your targets, but only where anticipated progress has not been made.

111. You should clearly indicate to which targets your explanations relate.

112. The information in this table will inform our understanding of whether providers have complied with the provisions of their access agreement and of a provider's risk in relation to condition A1, and will demonstrate transparency.

Table 9: Financial support – evaluation, evidence and impact

Action

113. We are keen to understand the impact of financial support programmes and will continue to collect evidence each year. However, this table is optional if you reported on the findings from an evaluation of your financial support in your 2016-17 monitoring report. We expect all other providers to complete this table. The information provided in this table will be used to inform our understanding of a provider's risk in relation to condition A1.
114. In Table 9a, select the statement which most closely reflects your approach to evaluating your financial support in 2017-18. If you selected option e., provide details of how you evaluated.
115. Only select option f. if you have recorded no expenditure on financial support in Table 4.
116. In Table 9b, using the drop-down option, state whether you have used the financial support evaluation toolkit:
- If you have used any one or more of the OfS data model, OfS survey, or OfS interview questions, select 'yes' and complete Table 9c.
 - If you have not used the OfS tools, select 'no', provide a brief commentary to explain why, and complete Table 9d.
117. Using the drop-down options, select which methods you have used in your evaluation.
118. In **Table 9c**:
- As you may evaluate a variety of different support packages, we ask that you report on the findings for your largest financial support provision.
 - Describe the type of financial support that you have evaluated, e.g. 'A bursary of £1,000 to students with household income under £25,000'.
 - If you conducted a statistical analysis using the OfS toolkit data model, select the results from the drop-down menu.
 - If you used the OfS toolkit interview questions or OfS toolkit survey, provide a summary of your key findings.
 - Provide a brief description of how you have used the findings of the evaluation to inform practice.
119. In **Table 9d**, we are keen to understand how you have evaluated your financial support, and how any results of this have influenced your financial support schemes.
120. This question relates to evaluation carried out in 2017-18; should you wish to provide a similar example to that in your 2016-17 monitoring return, please ensure the example is sufficiently updated with developments made in the past year.
121. Set out the following for one example:

- a. What you were trying to understand? (e.g. 'To what extent did our £1,000 cash bursary improve the attainment levels of recipients?'). To understand the impact of your scheme, this evaluation question should be linked to the success criteria of the programme you were running – i.e., to what extent did your programme achieve its aims?.
- b. How you evaluated the activity or programme – i.e. the methods you used (e.g. a programme of observations and interviews; tracking changes in retention rates for participants).
- c. Your key findings and evidence of impact (e.g. evidence of improved retention rates; behavioural change in participants).
- d. How the results of the evaluation have informed practice (e.g. better targeting of participants; refinement of the programme; scaling up or down of activity).

Explanatory notes for Table 9

122. A high proportion of the sector's access agreement expenditure is currently spent on financial support, so the OfS is focusing on analysing, understanding and sharing evidence relating to its impact. Your monitoring return will contribute to the body of evidence in this area.
123. The responses you provide have informed our evidence and good practice work, for example, in the development of our 'Understanding the impact of institutional financial support' project and supporting workshops. As part of this project, a common set of measures and survey tools were developed to support institutions to evaluate financial support and to make the outputs of evaluation more comparable. These tools became available in December 2016.
124. In the 2017-18 monitoring return, we are interested in understanding the developments in the evaluation of financial support over the past year and the impact of the OfS financial support evaluation tools. The information you provide will be used to inform our understanding; institutional level data will not be published, though we may publish aggregated data.

Table 10: Effective practice

Action

125. We are keen to understand where there is effective practice which is reducing gaps in outcomes for those from underrepresented groups. This table is optional and provides you with an opportunity to share particularly positive and/or transformative practice.
126. Complete Table 10 to provide a brief description of activities or practice which have had demonstrable impact. This may include notably innovative activities to support specific groups, e.g. those which are targeted at specific, identified needs, or practice which may support a range of groups, e.g. contextual admissions, using learner analytics to target at-risk students with relevant interventions and support, developing inclusive curricula frameworks.
127. Specify the main underrepresented group at which the programme or practice is targeted. Additional target groups should be added as free text in Column C.
128. Specify whether the programme or practice focuses on a specific lifecycle stage, or whether it applies to multiple stages of the student lifecycle.

129. Each box is limited to 200 words; we ask that you provide only top-level information such as:

- specific target group (e.g. care leavers; refugees; students with specific learning difficulties)
- types of activities (e.g. involving students in researching an inclusive curriculum; a student ambassador programme; a residential transition programme)
- aim(s) of the programme (e.g. to improve retention rates; to provide guidance on higher education; to help students to adjust to higher education).
- impact(s) of the programme or practice (e.g. the demonstrable impact for students or changes you have made to future approaches)
- how your effective practice is being shared, either to inform future practice in your institution or with others in the sector.

Explanatory notes for Table 10

130. The information provided in this table will contribute to the body of evidence about 'what works' in access and participation. We will use this information to contribute to our mapping of activity in the sector, and to help identify areas of effective practice in providers. We may seek to contact you for further information at a later date.

131. We would not necessarily expect you to have examples for each of the student groups listed, and we are not seeking exhaustive lists of existing practice. Rather, we are seeking examples of sector-leading practice.

132. We ask you to indicate for which underrepresented group the activity or practice is targeted to understand how approaches vary according to the barriers faced by different groups. Where your practice applies to a number of underrepresented groups, indicate the main target group in column A and list other groups for which there is significant benefit in column C. For example, inclusive curricula may benefit all student groups, but the aim of refreshing existing curricula may relate to specific underrepresentation of different ethnicities or based on sexual orientation.

How to submit your return

Where to find your return template

133. The tables for you to fill in are available to download from the OfS provider portal at <https://extranet.officeforstudents.org.uk/Data/>. Sample tables are available alongside this document at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/2017-18-access-agreements-and-student-premium-funding-guidance-on-how-to-complete-your-monitoring-return/.

134. For you to download the tables, your OfS provider portal user administrator will need to give you access to the relevant group. The OfS will email step-by-step instructions on accessing the return once it is available to download.

135. If you have any technical queries relating to the use of the OfS provider portal that cannot be resolved by your OfS provider portal user administrator, email portal@officeforstudents.org.uk.

Validating your monitoring return

136. The provider's accountable officer, as listed under Condition E3 of the OfS's Regulatory framework, must assure the monitoring return. The accountable officer is expected to confirm that the information provided is accurate and has been compiled in accordance with the OfS's guidance.

137. The accountable officer will also need to declare that the provider's governing body has monitored its compliance with the provisions of your access agreement, as set out in the Higher Education Act 2004, as amended.

138. The accountable officer should complete the requested contact details to indicate that assurance has been provided.

139. If you have not registered with the OfS, an appropriate senior manager should assure the submission.

140. All information is subject to audit (see Annex F of OfS 2018.12)

141. We do not require you to submit a signed paper copy.

Submitting your return

142. Submit your completed monitoring return via the OfS provider portal at <https://extranet.officeforstudents.org.uk/Data/> by **noon on Wednesday 23 January 2019**.

143. If you have any technical queries relating to the use of the OfS provider portal, use the contact details in paragraph 135.

Returning your monitoring templates on time

144. Providing accurate data to report on progress against your access agreement is a statutory requirement, and it is important to submit your return by the deadline.

145. If your access agreement monitoring return needs to be approved at a meeting of your governing body or other relevant committee after the deadline of 23 January 2019, you may submit a draft electronic copy of your monitoring return with a request for a limited extension to the deadline for your final version.

146. Tables 3a, 3b and 3c of this return will collect the monitoring information the OfS needs to ensure that the student premium funding is accounted for and used appropriately.

What happens once you have submitted your form

How to tell your return has been submitted successfully

147. When you have successfully uploaded your return, you will see an automated message on the OfS provider portal confirming this.

We will collect and share some information centrally

148. In order to inform our monitoring, the OfS will use information from the Student Loans Company on the number of students from lower-income backgrounds at each provider. We will also use sector data from HESA, UCAS and others to monitor progress across the sector and identify any emerging patterns over time.

149. The OfS, where relevant, may share information with other partners, such as the Department for Education.

We may need to contact you for further information

150. We may need to ask you for further information about your return if, for example, some of the information or data:

- is unclear
- does not seem to make sense from our knowledge of your access agreement or student premium funding
- is inconsistent with centrally collected data.

The results of the monitoring process will be published

151. In the interests of transparency, we will seek to publish information on the outcomes of 2017-18 access agreements and student premium funding in summer 2019. You can see what was published last year at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/monitoring-outcomes-offa-access-agreements-and-hefce-funding-for-widening-access-for-students-from-disadvantaged-backgrounds-improving-retention-and-improving-provision-for-disabled-students-for-2016-17/.

How the Freedom of Information Act affects monitoring returns

152. The OfS is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000, data protection legislation and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. If we receive a request for information related to your application then we will ensure any information that is exempt is protected. Where appropriate we will consult with you. Further information about the Freedom of Information Act is available at www.ico.gov.uk.

How the information will be used

153. The data gathered through the monitoring process supports a number of important functions in the OfS. These are outlined below:

- a. Assessing whether you have broadly met the commitments set out in your agreement. Where you have not done so, we will expect to see a reasonable explanation or appropriate review and readjustment of plans, or both.
 - b. Improving our understanding of trends in access agreement expenditure and outcomes across the sector.
 - c. Gathering examples and evidence for our topic-focused online resources, and other projects to support and inform the sector about effective practice.
 - d. Looking at the progress you have made towards your targets and milestones, with a greater focus on trends rather than single data points. If the trend indicated by your monitoring return shows that you are making limited progress or regressing, we may wish to talk to you about this further, if we are not already in dialogue.
 - e. Factoring your current performance against expectations, and specifically whether your access agreement plans are sufficiently addressing any areas of concern, when assessing the practicality of individual elements of your next access and participation plan.
 - f. Informing our continuing dialogue with providers.
154. The OfS will use qualitative data analysis software to help analyse monitoring returns. This will enable us to gain a more meaningful understanding of the work being done across the sector, and to provide more in-depth analysis on providers' approaches.
155. The OfS will also use your return to improve our understanding of:
- a. Provider expenditure on access and participation activity, including how providers bring diverse groups of students into higher education and support them through their study to achieve successful outcomes. We will look at the impact of this expenditure and how providers are evaluating it, and the wider evidence available on the impact of access and participation activity and funding. This will help us continue to build our evidence base on what works best to improve fair access and participation
 - b. How your expenditure under your access agreement and student premium funding fits into the wider context of your total spending.
156. The OfS will use the access and participation activity and hardship expenditure data to understand the activity providers are engaged in, its cost and how the student premium funding is used towards funding it. This data is an essential element of demonstrating the effectiveness and impact of student access, success and progression¹³ through which the higher education sector will be able to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of its widening participation activity.

¹³ For more information on the outcomes framework see <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20180319115455/http://www.hefce.ac.uk/sas/inequality/effect/>.

List of abbreviations

ELQ	Equivalent or lower qualification
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
OFFA	Office for Fair Access
OfS	Office for Students
POLAR	Participation of Local Areas
TEF	Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework
UKPRN	UK Provider Reference Number
WP	Widening participation



© The Office for Students copyright 2018

This publication is available under the Open Government Licence 3.0.

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/