



# Access Agreement 2016-17

## Introduction and Summary

1. York St John University has been widening access to higher education since its founding as a Teacher Training College by the Church of England in 1841:

*“as the most powerful means of remedying the existing defects in the Education both of the Poor and Middle Classes of Society, to establish a School for the purpose of Training Masters in the Art and Practice of Teaching”.*

2. Now as a modern, progressive and rapidly expanding University, the same values and principles are at the heart of our mission which states that:

*“York St John is committed to the provision of excellent, open and progressive higher education that embraces difference, challenges prejudice and promotes justice ... Building on this foundation the University commits itself to provide widely-accessible opportunities for lifelong learning, underpinned by scholarship and research.”*

3. In moving forward with our new five year strategic plan, widening access and increasing participation continues to be a key within our Strategic Aim of enhancing and sustaining our University Community. Our Key Performance Indicators in this area are monitored regularly at operational and strategic levels and we are pleased to report that we remain above or close to national and benchmark levels in almost all areas.
4. York St John is continuing to grow and now has over 7000 students. It is maintaining healthy application : place ratios and is attracting talented students. The University is also generating positive trends in student retention, completion, achievement and, especially, in graduate employment where over 70% of York St John graduates progress directly into graduate-level employment.
5. The University has set its Home full time undergraduate tuition fee for 2016-17 at £9,000 per year. In accordance with its core principles, we will reinvest a significant proportion (43%) of our additional income into outreach activities and retention support. The impact of this is to reduce our actual average fee level to approximately £8,300 in 2016-17.
6. We aim to expand significantly our outreach and retention activity, especially through expansion of our current collaborative provision. We believe this is vital to not only raising aspiration, awareness and applications from minority and under-represented groups. We also aim to ensure they ‘stay the course’ and gain the maximum benefit from their higher education experience. Having switched the focus of our expenditure from fee waivers to a balanced model of bursaries, outreach and retention, we will continue to improve targeting as well as embedding monitoring and evaluation as a core principle in the work we do, with an emphasis on longitudinal tracking and analysis, further details of which are contained throughout this document.

## **Context**

### ***York St John in its Community***

7. York St John sits in the heart of its community – geographically, culturally and economically. The City of York has a growing population, estimated in 2013 by the Office for National Statistics at just under 200,000, and is relatively prosperous with relatively low unemployment compared to the regional and national averages and a ranking as the fourth least deprived city in England; however, there are distinct pockets of deprivation. Two fifths of York’s population live in areas that are in the least deprived 20% in England while 7% (approximately 13,000 people) live in areas classified as being among the 20% most deprived areas in the country.
8. The proportion of the population from a Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) background living in York is much lower than the national average, at around 10%, but this too has grown significantly in the last decade. In particular there has been significant growth in those originating in Eastern Europe and in Traveller communities.
9. The surrounding sub-region of North Yorkshire is predominantly rural in character, with a population of 600,000 at the last population estimate. It is also relatively affluent but, like York, has significant pockets of deprivation. Only 7.6% of the population is from a BME background.
10. York St John University has traditionally recruited a significant proportion of its students from this region (approximately 55%) although in recent years there have been increasing numbers from contiguous regions and from those much further away. The more ethnically and socially diverse populations of West and South Yorkshire are well-served by more local Higher Education Institutions but remain areas in which we will continue to deliver widening participation and student recruitment activity.

### ***Partnership Working***

11. York St John is an enthusiastic supporter of collaborative approaches and participates in a wide range of strategic partnerships. Four of the most significant, in the context of this agreement, are:
  - York Economic Partnership: our Vice Chancellor sits on this strategic partnership set up to promote economic growth within the city. This gives us up-to-date labour market information, as well as intelligence about supply and demand issues around graduate skills. We also contribute to the discussions within the two Local Enterprise Partnership areas within which we fall (Leeds City Region, and York and North Yorkshire).
  - Yorkshire Universities: our Vice Chancellor chairs this collaborative partnership of the 11 HEIs in Yorkshire and the Humber (<http://www.yorkshireuniversities.ac.uk/> ). Its high level aims include the promotion of higher education, widening engagement, and strengthening graduate employability.
  - Higher York: our Vice Chancellor chairs this collaborative partnership of both Universities and both FE Colleges in York, together with City of York Council (<http://higheryork.org/> ), which has existed since 2002. York St John University also houses the Secretariat.
  - York Cares: York St John, through its Director of Marketing, is a Board Member of this business-led charity that promotes and coordinates volunteering and philanthropic activity across the city (<http://www.yorkcares.co.uk/>).

The University maintains a wide range of other collaborative partnerships and membership of relevant networks. These are set out in more detail in Section 5.

## Strategic Plan and Investment

12. The activity of York St John University is driven by a clear Mission and set of Values, the achievement of which is supported by four “Strategic Aims”, of which ‘Community’ covers the University’s commitment to Widening Access and increasing Participation.
13. Each Strategic Aim in turn drive annual Faculty and Departmental Operating Plans which include specific Widening Participation (WP) objectives and targeted actions to support the overarching aims.
14. The University will continue to invest in these areas. In total, we expect to spend 45% of our fee income above the basic level in areas relevant to this agreement, as set out below:

Category	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Fee waivers & bursaries	£3.7m	£2.3m	£1.0m	£0.7m	£0.7m
Access, student success and progression	£2.6m	£2.7m	£2.8m	£2.8m	£2.9m
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£6.4m</b>	<b>£5.0m</b>	<b>£3.7m</b>	<b>£3.5m</b>	<b>£3.6m</b>

As is clear from the above table, following analysis of its own and OFFA’s research, the University intends to refocus a proportion of its expenditure away from fee waivers and bursaries and into long-term programmes which enhance outreach, progression and student success.

## Current Performance

15. York St John University monitors closely the KPIs relevant to this Agreement. In most of these areas our current performance is either very close to our benchmark, or is improving. The latest available data is set out below, with performance from 2006-07 as a comparator.

Area of focus	Baseline	Objective
% of young people from state schools on FT UG programmes	93.8%	94.3%
% of young people from NS-SEC groups 4-7 on FT UG programmes	29%	29.5%
% of young people from low participation neighbourhoods (LPNs)	12%	12.5%
% continuation rate	93.6%	94.1%
% mature students	29.3%	29.8%
% UK domiciled black and minority students	3.3%	3.8%

16. The above table indicates an extremely positive picture. The University is able to demonstrate significant progress since 2006-07 and is performing above benchmark in the majority of areas. In recruitment terms York St John exceeds benchmark for recruitment of young people from state schools and low participation neighbourhoods. We then support students to remain on course and achieve good results – our continuation and completion rates are some of the best in the sector.

While recruitment of UK-domiciled BME students has increased we acknowledge this is an area for further improvement. This will remain a priority area for further action, as noted in paragraph 41.

Our graduate employability rates are also amongst the best in the sector.

17. Evaluation of our current performance has led us to three strategic conclusions in relation to this Access Agreement. The University should:
- Extend its programme of long-term outreach activity to ensure it delivers relevant interventions for all target groups, including younger school ages, mature students and key stakeholders and advisers;
  - Improve its targeting of outreach activity, particularly to address groups where its performance is weaker and/or for groups with the greatest risk of non-progression to HE. We will also refocus activity in geographic areas, those in the city of York and its surrounding hinterland, which provide the best potential for students to progress to York St John;
  - Improve its monitoring and evaluation, particularly by developing qualitative analysis and refocusing feedback from case study work to inform longitudinal studies, improve long-term tracking and enable better analysis of impact;
  - Develop a fuller programme of outreach and student success interventions which focus on the full student journey, including a refocusing of expenditure to broaden and deepen outreach and student success activity. This strategic decision, which continues the change signalled in our previous Access Agreements, is reflected in the expenditure profiles in this Agreement.

## Fees, Student Numbers and Fee Income

18. York St John University will set the following fee levels for those entering the University in September 2015:

Course type	Fee
All undergraduate full-time first degree students on HEFCE allocated honours programmes, and Initial Teacher Training at undergraduate level, and PGCE	£9,000
Foundation degree students in Education & Theology*	£3,500

*\*The fee rate for Foundation degree students in Education & Theology has been set at this level because these programmes have been developed in conjunction with a range of partners and are primarily targeted at specific mature audiences with no previous experience of higher education. These students will therefore not be eligible for the fee waivers set out in this agreement but may be eligible for other bursaries.*

19. Part time students will be charged an appropriate proportion of the £9,000 fee, up to a maximum of £6,750. The University currently has only a small number of part time students and therefore it is likely that very few who will be charged more than the basic fee of £4,500.
20. Undergraduates who started at York St John before September 2013 will be charged £8,500 or its pro rata equivalent. We have elected not to apply an inflationary increase to this amount.
21. We have continued to set a single fee rate for our undergraduate provision and will not, therefore, charge differential fees based on subject area. We believe this is easier for students to understand and ensures there are no artificial barriers to students who might wish to change courses.
22. The total number of full time students at this University who will be paying the fees set out above, with or without waivers, is projected to remain around 4,000 to 2020. Fee income above the basic (£6,000) level is projected to be around £11m. Further and fuller details are contained in the Annex.

## Student Financial Support

### YSJ Bursaries

23. York St John University will continue to provide financial support for students. The YSJ bursary will be available to all eligible full-time students, other than those studying for a PGCE (who may be eligible for support from other sources) and a small number of Foundation Degree students as explained in paragraph 18 above. Students will continue under the fee and YSJ Bursary scheme operating at the time they first join the University, until the completion of their award. The bursary will be paid in two equal instalments in February and May of each academic year. They will not be limited in number: anyone who qualifies will receive the bursary.
24. The YSJ Bursary scheme for students starting in 2015 will be awarded following assessment of residual financial income. The parameters of the scheme have been simplified to enable it to be easily understood by potential students and also to ease administration.

Residual annual family income	YSJ Bursary per annum for full-time students from 2016/17 onwards
£0-25,000	£500

*\*This figure will be increased in line with the upper limit for statutory maintenance grants.*

25. Part-time students studying equivalent courses at intensity levels between 25% (30 credits) and 75% (90 credits) will be eligible for proportionate bursaries. There are in fact very few such students at York St John. Students studying below 25% are not eligible for bursaries; students above 75% are considered to be full-time for the purposes of the bursary provisions. Using projections based on our historic recruitment data, we estimate that 40% of our students will be eligible for a bursary.
26. The National Scholarship Scheme (NSP) was used previously to target potential learners from specific under-represented groups. Following the discontinuation of the scheme the University will continue to target key under-represented groups but has refined its list and will now focus on the following groups as part of its programme of enhanced and broadened outreach activity:
- Care leavers;
  - Black and minority ethnic groups;
  - Students with the lowest residual household income;
  - Disabled students, particularly those from lower socio-economic groups;
  - Travellers;
  - Mature learners entering full time programmes
  - Learners entering part-time programmes with no previous experience of HE.

### Average Tuition Fee

27. This comprehensive package of student support will mean that the estimated *average* fee for undergraduate honours degree courses at York St John University is will be around £8,300 in 2016-17.

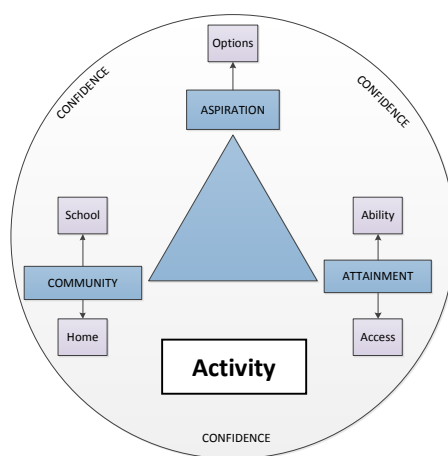
## Outreach Work

### Strategy and Investment

28. York St John University has a comprehensive strategy for widening participation, in addition to the financial support outlined above. As previously indicated, and notwithstanding our continued excellent performance in the majority of key indicators, the University has decided that it is right to look to at review and explore alternative models of funding support. This will be undertaken over the period of this agreement, and any outcomes will be implemented and supported in future agreements.
29. Our Outreach work is based on experience and best practice. Much of it is conducted in collaboration with others, through Higher York and other partnerships. Within the University activity is coordinated and led centrally with a series of supporting initiatives delivered by our Faculties, all of which are required to set out how they are contributing to the overall strategy within their Annual Operating Plans.
30. Overall our work is successful as evidenced by our performance against targets and benchmarks; however, following our own evaluation and analysis, allied to consultation with key stakeholders, we recognise that we must do more. We must: fill gaps which exist in our current programme; ensure all activity is targeted, engaging and delivered with enthusiasm; and monitor and evaluate with rigour to ensure our activity delivers sustained impact.

Our model of engagement focuses on a 3-point engagement plan designed to focus activity on community engagement, raising aspirations and raising attainment. Figure 1 illustrates our approach.

Figure 1



All activity will have evaluation embedded throughout and will be reviewed against the 3-point plan, including assessment of both impact and progress – itself necessitating detailed tracking.

In addition to activity being developed with the model at its core, it must always fulfil a specific role during a key phase in the widening access process – a 4-phase process which we define as ‘the journey’.

- #1 – Laying the initial foundations, aimed at Key Stages (KS) 1/2
- #2 – The start of the HE journey – KS3
- #3 – Moving through key phases of HE information gathering and preparation – KS3/4
- #4 – Our new compact scheme for school/college years 12/13 (please refer to para. 40).

As this work progresses it is our aim to develop a fully integrated programme of outreach activity which engages with school/college pupils from an early age and moves with them throughout their pre-HE experience.

31. Our work is already targeted; however, we acknowledge this must be enhanced to ensure we deliver maximum impact to target groups. In addition we will introduce detailed monitoring, tracking and evaluation to enable us to more accurately measure the success of our interventions. During 2016-17 we will continue to be:
- Working in schools and colleges in low socio-economic areas, particularly through our school/college and mature student compact schemes (currently under development);
  - Continuing our successful programmes to “influence the influencers”, especially foster parents and professional case-workers;
  - Developing our work to widen access to the professions;
  - Working to support developments in the 14-19 curriculum, with more focus on subject-specific conferences and taster days, and the introduction of key interventions appropriate for all school years from Year 6 and upwards;
  - Developing further our programmes to recruit and support groups that are under-represented in our cohorts, including UK-domiciled BME students, mature students, disabled students and care leavers.

Further details and examples are given below.

### ***Collaboration and Partnerships***

32. As previously indicated, York St John University is an enthusiastic participant in a number of strategic collaborative partnerships, including the York Economic Partnership and Yorkshire Universities. The Higher York Partnership is particularly significant in the context of this Agreement: the first element in its mission is to *“complement the activities of partners in order to facilitate access to higher-level learning, progression and provision through innovative joint-working”*. Higher York has a detailed action plan and has instituted a number of practical initiatives to improve progression and transition routes between the institutions, and to promote Higher Education in local schools and colleges. Its website also operates as a portal for students. This has further been strengthened through its work as a SPoC (Single Point of Contact) through the NNCO (National Networks for Collaborative Outreach).
33. In addition, we have bilateral partnership agreements with the University of York, York College and Askham Bryan College and we work with the University of York and the University of Hull within the North Yorkshire Coast Higher Education Collaboration. Our work with York College is supporting the development of new access and foundation degree programmes as well as the creation of new and bespoke progression routes in specific subject areas. These developments will be supported by a programme of widening access interventions and will be aimed at a range of target groups, but in particular will target mature learners and key vocational areas.
34. Other partnerships and memberships relevant to this agenda are listed below:
- NYBEP Ltd (York and North Yorkshire Business Education Partnership) – promoting employability and higher education in schools throughout York and North Yorkshire;
  - York Cares Ltd – promoting employee volunteering. We will be deepening our involvement with programmes overseen by York Cares, including the Children’s University – which involves student volunteers working in deprived primary schools – and Starting Blocks, which offers opportunities and mentoring to Care Leavers;

- North Yorkshire CC LAC/Care leaver – support work across the region for these groups
  - York Mind – Supporting 16-25 years with experience of mental illness
  - NEON (National Education Opportunities Network) – we are members of this network;
  - FACE (Forum for Access and Continuing Education) – we are Institution Members;
  - Wakefield Widening Participation Group – we attend this consortium of schools and HEIs in Wakefield;
  - Yorkshire and Humber Opening Doors to Health Professional Education Network – we contribute to this network coordinated by the Local Education Training Board (formerly the Strategic Health Authority) which consists of the Region’s two Teaching Hospitals and the HEIs that deliver Health Professional Degrees;
  - HELOA (Higher Education Liaison Officers Association) - we are members of this association;
  - Sangat Community Centre in Keighley – we have a continuing relationship to support the community with information and short programmes
35. In addition, all four of our Faculties maintain their own networks and partnerships, many of which are relevant to the widening participation agenda. For example: the Faculty of Education and Theology works in over 1300 settings with local authorities, schools and other organisations; and the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences has strategic partnerships with a range of NHS bodies including the Local Education Training Board. Work in these two Faculties is particularly aimed at improving access to courses that lead to professional careers.

### ***Examples of Outreach Activity***

36. The University undertakes and participates in a range of outreach programmes.
- York St John is a partner in **Green Apples**, a successful, innovative partnership involving all of York’s Further and Higher Education partners as well as the Local Authority, Higher York (*see paragraph 11*) and targeted local primary and secondary schools. This initiative is now funded directly by the partners, with the main contributions coming from the two universities. It is a progressive programme of interventions focusing mainly on Years 9, 10 and 11 but which also addresses transition points, such as those from primary to secondary school and, where appropriate, secondary school to college. Schools with higher proportions of pupils meeting WP criteria receive more from Green Apples – e.g. mentoring, transport provided, overnight residential accommodation – so activity is targeted towards those most in need. The programme is evaluated regularly and students and school staff influence the development and shape of the initiative so that it continues to target those local young people who may have the potential but not the aspiration to progress to university. Enhanced Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) is also an important element of this programme.
  - The North Yorkshire Coast Partnership, launched in 2011, is collaboration between the Universities of York St John, Hull and York which seeks to ensure continuation of activity for learners. The activity supports an area of relative deprivation in North Yorkshire and is coordinated from the University of Hull’s current Scarborough campus. Provision has been expanded since the partnership was launched and further developments are planned including family engagement projects, mentoring, subject revision support and taster events targeted at low socioeconomic groups.
  - The University continues to take a leading role in the **‘York Cares’** partnership, which has established the **York Children’s University** within the city and surrounding area. This is affiliated to the National Children’s University programme which aims to raise aspirations amongst primary aged children from year 3 upwards and to establish links between work ambitions and education. Additional activities through York Cares include mentoring for those at risk of



becoming NEET, the primary reading development programme known as '**Right to Read**', and a range of social inclusion projects.

- York St John University will continue to deliver **Summer School** residential activities, aimed at schools with high Indices of Multiple Deprivation. These will raise aspirations and/or be subject focused, with additional support for those from low socioeconomic backgrounds.
- York St John's four faculties, in addition to the work coordinated, also deliver a range of valuable interventions.
  - The **York St John Business School** is introducing a range of outreach work which to date has included: new relationships with feeder schools; funding YSJ students to go back to their school or college to talk about studying languages at University ("Routes Into Languages"); Signing Workshops to Mature Learners; and continued work with Refugee Action York to increase the access of English language learners to Higher Education opportunities.
  - The **Faculty of Arts** runs taster sessions in a range of subjects. Its Community Theatre programme includes engagement with level 2/3 students, and assessments covering areas such as engaging with potential NEET students, primary pupils and with parents.
  - The **Faculty of Education and Theology** also runs taster sessions, including a Religious Studies Sixth Form Conference. Further developments include the delivery of Foundation Degree modules in community settings aimed at mature and BME learners. Students from this Faculty are regularly placed in hundreds of school settings across our catchment area, and act as ambassadors for the institution and for Higher Education.
  - Taster sessions and student placements are also a feature of the work of the **Faculty of Health and Life Sciences**. In addition: it holds a 3-day summer school with year 10 students around the theme of Access to the Healthcare Professions; some Counselling students work with Looked After Children in schools; and the Psychology Department offers STEM Masterclasses for pupils in years 8-10.

### ***Targeted Outreach Work with Under-represented Groups***

37. In addition to the activity described above, York St John is continuing to develop and expand the volume and depth of its interventions across a range of under-represented groups. Planned developments which will be introduced by 2015/16 at the latest include the following.

- **Young people from lower socio-economic groups and low participation neighbourhoods (LPNs)** will be targeted by our new Compact Scheme. The scheme will be introduced with local schools and will take the form of an 'assisted entry' scheme. School pupils who engage with a range of aspiration and awareness-arising activity and who submit a piece of assessed, reflective work will receive UCAS-tariff point credit to smooth their entry into the University. This will develop a clear progression pathway and will reward and encourage students with potential from less-advantaged groups.
- Linked to the compact scheme is the desire to develop a coordinated and targeted programme of interventions which commence in primary school and continue through secondary school. In addition to raising awareness and aspirations among young people, the aim will be to provide schools with a range of support which will help them to build engagement and improve student achievement rates. This programme of planned and regular activity will also be designed to support enhanced monitoring, evaluation and tracking.
- **Care Leavers** – York St John remains proud of its track record in working with Care Leavers, Looked After Children, and a range of relevant agencies. The University holds the Buttle Trust quality mark and is committed to maintaining this for the remaining length of its existence. Outreach activity covers a range of interventions from aspiration-raising through to retention support for current students. Over the course of this Agreement, we will continue to deepen the relationship with the two new "Virtual Schools" for Looked After Children in York and in North

Yorkshire, and will continue to work with their influencers, i.e. professional support workers and foster carers.

- In addition to the compact scheme for school students, the University also plans to introduce a similar scheme for **FE-based learners**. This will be targeted at young people and mature learners and will also take the form of an 'assisted entry' scheme. In addition, with a specific focus on **mature learners**, the University will continue to offer bespoke information sessions, Campus tours and IAG around the theme "Is HE for me?"
- **Disabled learners** – the University works with local specialist teaching teams to raise aspirations, confidence and knowledge amongst young disabled people. This includes the opportunity for students to visit York St John for a day to learn about university life and the support available. The visits include discussions with existing disabled students around the realities of being a disabled student in higher education. Potential students also learn about Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) and managing their support alongside their studies. The University also sends information out to the local schools with information about accessing DSA support if they choose to attend university.
- **Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) students** – we will continue to work closely with local communities from which HE students are under-represented; however, it is the University's intention to ensure this important work benefits from improved targeting so that outreach can be delivered to communities for whom it has real impact and benefit. We will therefore continue to deliver projects across the region and with a range of communities, with an increased focus on those within the York area which has included working with refugees and asylum seekers. As part of our BME-focused work we will continue to monitor admissions closely to ensure our work has impact and that progression to the University is supported appropriately and is not hindered by avoidable barriers.
- One such example of our developing BME group is our developing work with the **Traveller** community. This under-represented group is often overlooked but is one which demonstrates potential to succeed in higher education. As a result the University is introducing a range of initiatives through which we will seek to increase engagement with this important and growing community.

## Student Retention and Success

### *Strategy*

38. York St John University recognises that success for under-represented groups is not just about access but also about transition, retention and fulfilment after graduation. For this reason, the University's Student Support and Enterprise and Employability strategies include a number of objectives relating to enhancing the success of students from WP backgrounds within a context of inclusive service delivery. The result is that the University has an excellent record of supporting students to make progress in their studies, advance from year to year, and ultimately achieve a good degree.
39. The University undertakes an annual Student Engagement Survey targeting 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate, postgraduate and International students. The survey complements the results of the National Student Survey (NSS) and improves our understanding of the student experience and enables the University to target priority areas for enhancement. In particular its adoption of a holistic approach to capturing and evaluating student experiences enables us to evaluate in particular the experiences of particular under-represented groups. An example of its impact comes from the finding that disabled students in receipt of DSA were significantly more engaged with their studies than either disabled students without DSA support or non-disabled students. This led to the University redoubling its efforts to ensure maximum possible take-up of the benefit.

40. The University has also participated in the Higher Education Academy (HEA)-led “*Student retention and success change programme*”, which builds on the outcomes of the *What works? Student retention and Success programme*. The programme provides an opportunity for higher education providers in the UK to work with the Higher Education Academy, Action on Access and the National Union of Students over a three year plus period. The aim is to improve student engagement, belonging, retention and success during the first year through to completion, and to evaluate the process and impact of change.
41. In addition the University continues to analyse the reasons for different outcomes for particular groups. As a consequence of this analysis the University has developed the ‘**First in Family**’ project, which specifically targets students who have not had experiential support from their family as a first generation attendee and may arrive at the University with, for a multiplicity of reasons, less developed skills and knowledge to enable them to navigate and succeed within a university environment. The project includes a range of planned interventions designed to improve confidence, build skills and develop a sense of community and belonging. In particular students will be supported with: additional HE orientation (physical and cultural); communication; coaching to develop ‘tools’ to overcome challenges; and opportunities to build effective support networks.
42. Through these specific strategies and our evaluative tools, York St John University is committed to the development of targeted interventions with students from under-represented groups: from pre-entry advice and guidance, through transition support for high risk groups, to supporting student success and progression in line with the University’s inclusion and employability agendas. Examples of other interventions are detailed below.

### **General Interventions to promote retention and success**

43. The following actions and activities form part of our Student Support plan:
  - *Pre-advice and guidance*: we are continuing to develop the already effective information and guidance we offer prior to entry, through online activities and opportunities to meet staff and existing students before arrival. Additional measures are triggered at this stage for potentially vulnerable groups (see below).
  - *Transition*: induction programmes now extend beyond the first weeks of term, with interventions and support in specific subjects for under-represented groups. A ‘Buddy’ scheme is being progressively rolled out to ensure that all new students, particularly those from widening participation groups, have access to a peer mentor to facilitate their induction and engagement with their courses. In addition, we are continuing to exploring peer assisted study support within module groups.
  - *Progression*: we have introduced specific support measures which deliver an integrated and focused approach to inclusion and retention and which utilise a variety of communication methods including social media and blogging. In addition the Study Development Team undertakes research into the additional needs of BME and other under-represented groups with the aim of identifying ways to enhance learning support services to improve student retention and success.
  - *Success*: our work in developing student employability has been enhanced. We have established, and will develop further, a very successful graduate internships programme and a programme of coaching and mentoring for students new graduates, supported by alumni. We have also enhanced the support we give to students to find work placements, particularly for those on courses where these are not automatically built into the programme. Our Careers and Employability Service works with all under-represented groups and assists with CV building/writing and accessing internships and volunteering opportunities, including specifically

focused activity to support disabled students to develop employability skills and secure work placements.

44. The University enjoys a close and productive relationship with the Students' Union which has enabled regular and embedded partnership working to support student retention, engagement and success.

### ***Specific work with targeted groups***

45. In addition to the interventions described above, we will continue to offer the following targeted support:

- **Disabled Students:** York St John is keen to attract a broad range of disabled students/applicants and has a reputation for its inclusive approach. We have robust systems in place to support this group of learners throughout the student lifecycle. Support systems are publicised through a range of sources and we make efforts to build relationships with potential students as early as possible. We recognise the importance of transition issues for this group of students and have recently developed activities to ensure that the move into higher education does not present undue barriers. These include an Early Start programme for students on the autism spectrum, a Disclosed Mental Health project and the development of Learning Support Plans for all disabled students.

As a result of the changes to funding arrangements which have been proposed in recent communications from the Government, it is important that support for disabled students moves towards more embedded activities within our provision. Consequently, the University is reviewing a number of ways in which this can be achieved including an inclusive teaching, learning and assessment framework.

- **Mature Learners:** York St John's Widening Participation Advisor works jointly with the Students' Union to maintain effective links between the mature student population and the Faculty Rep scheme, including providing training for the reps. We will support the Students' Union to develop an effective society for mature students to engage socially and academically, and to aid with the transmission of information about opportunities to enhance academic potential and employability. This will be supported by our two current social networks for mature students and student parents.
- **Care Leavers:** York St John is proud to have been considered 'exemplary' by Buttle UK and we will continue to take a full-lifecycle approach to supporting care leavers, as well as estranged and formerly homeless students. This begins at (or before) the point of application, through transition into the university, 1:1 mentoring and maximising opportunities for success, to enhancing employability and supported transition out. We will continue to collaborate with our colleagues in NorthCLASS and the NNECL to maximise the impact of this work.
- **Students with caring responsibilities:** York St John recognises that students with care responsibilities face significant additional barriers during their time at university. We will be implementing a system for self-disclosure at the point of enrolment and provide a dedicated first point of contact in Student Services to help with student carers' academic, practical and financial concerns, and link with external support.
- **Black and Minority Ethnic Students:** we continue to review all aspects of our retention and success programmes to ensure that we are implementing best practice in relation to students from all the protected equality categories, including the BME cohort.
- **First in Family:** All first year undergraduates who come from a low income background, a POLAR 1-2 neighbourhood and are of the first generation of their family to attend university are invited to participate in York St John's First in Family Programme. The programme aims to enhance a sense of belonging and achievement, and encourage the uptake of opportunities to increase cultural and academic capital.

## **Targets and Milestones**

46. Our detailed targets and milestones are set out in the Annex. In headline terms, it remains our intention to maintain and ideally improve our performance across the board; however, current performance is very strong and we anticipate it will be difficult to continue to improve in all areas. For example, we already recruit a very high percentage of students from state schools and to continue to increase this figure will present an extremely difficult challenge.
47. The area where we feel we have most scope to improve our performance is the percentage of UK domiciled students from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Our milestones therefore include a steady increase in this percentage, and will be the subject of targeted actions, as set out in more detail in the preceding Sections.
48. In all of the areas covered by this Agreement we have, however, maintained our target trajectories as outlined in our previous Access Agreement and which are included in the Annex.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

49. The University monitors progress against the targets in this Agreement at a variety of levels within our decision-making structures, up to and including our Vice Chancellor's Group and the Governing Body. The targets form part of our comprehensive risk management system which is monitored formally several times a year, and within which any variations in performance above or below certain tolerance levels are flagged up using a traffic light system. Other Committees, including the Academic Board and the Enhancement of Student Experience Committee, monitor the planned activities in more detail.
50. The Pro Vice Chancellor has executive responsibility for the delivery of this Agreement. Operational responsibility is shared between the Director of Marketing and Student Recruitment, the Deputy Director of Student & Staff Services, and the Deans of our Faculties.
51. The University has established systems for evaluating progress against all of its strategies, and ensures that it keeps abreast of best practice. Where appropriate, we have followed HEFCE directions to improve our evaluative techniques. As indicated at several points in this Agreement, evaluation of the detailed implementation of previous Access Agreements has led to adjustments in our policies and priorities in certain areas. This is a continuous process and has resulted in the ongoing development of an in-depth evaluative model which will not only enable judgements to be made about individual interventions, it will also commence the process of building detailed tracking of groups and individuals into all that we do. In time this will enable qualitative judgements to be made about the longer-term impact of our work – particularly its impact on the aspirations and academic attainment of potential students from targeted under-represented groups.

## **Equality and Diversity**

52. York St John aims to inspire all our students to reach their full potential and to be an inclusive community with a strong sense of belonging. Our 2015-2020 Strategy commits us to continue to diversify our student population and advance equality of opportunity between different groups of people. These objectives underpin our Access Agreement and the steps we are taking to address underrepresentation of specific groups, to improve student success and to make York St John a great place to study for all. For example, the targeted approach to BME population and the further development of our student support as outlined in the Access Agreement will make our community more welcoming and inclusive of people with diverse ethnic backgrounds.

53. Our direction and action is informed by the information we collect around protected characteristics, our intake and the progress that our students make. We publish institutional equality data related to the student population and the student lifecycle annually on our website<sup>1</sup> and, in addition, we provide specific information internally, through our internal data analysis and management system. We run equality reports on student surveys and, for 2014-15, all Faculties were required to include equality and diversity as a key theme in their Annual Evaluative Reports. The data are regularly reviewed through our Progress and Risk Management system.
54. In 2014-15, York St John updated the Equality Analysis toolkit to make our decision-making more robust in relation to measuring equality impact and identifying steps to advance equality of opportunity. The Equality Challenge Unit is a vital resource and we use a range of networks to access information and share best practice. Conducting Equality Analysis on our policies and main procedures periodically helps us to monitor and evaluate progress. For 2014-15 a major exercise has been carried out on our admissions to better our understanding of the equality profile of our applicants and their journey through the application process until enrolment. This will enable us to prioritise steps to address underrepresentation, of BME students in particular.
55. To enhance oversight and to drive the equality agenda forward, York St John has an Equality and Diversity Steering Group, chaired by the Chief Operating Officer, which includes the Director of Marketing and Student Recruitment, which helps to align Widening Participation with Equality and Diversity. The EDSG reports to the Strategic Leadership Team and, through its chair, to the Governing Body. Additionally the network of Equality Champions, of whom one is based in the Directorate of Marketing and Student Recruitment, supports an institution-wide approach to equality, diversity and widening participation. All staff have face-to-face equality and diversity training.
56. Student engagement is formalised through the representation of the Students' Union on the Equality and Diversity Steering Group and the Equality Champions network. The Equality and Diversity Adviser delivers workshops to Programme Reps and Sports and Societies as part of their induction; this raises awareness amongst students about the nature of discrimination and their role in promoting equality and inclusion.
57. York St John undertook research around the BME attainment gap, involving Widening Participation staff, and has agreed a BME student success plan, which includes steps that should benefit the wider student population. We also set up a working group to consider our response to the changes to the Disabled Students' Allowance and their recommendations will inform an inclusive teaching and assessment framework while we will continue to meet specific needs of groups of students and individual students where this is required. Student Services have established a Disabled Students' Forum to provide a platform for disabled students to have their say about improving procedures and practice at York St John.
58. York St John is proud to have entered the Top 100 of the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index and to have been recognised as a gay-friendly university in the 2014-15 Stonewall's 'Gay By Degree' guide. We believe that this demonstrates that we work hard to be an inclusive university for all students.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.yorks.ac.uk/equality-and-diversity/equality-and-diversity/equality-information-students.aspx>

## **Provision of Information**

59. York St John University works with Higher York, City of York Council and North Yorkshire County Council to ensure that high quality and appropriate Information, Advice and Guidance is provided amongst schools and colleges and other networks within the area. There is a specific Information, Advice and Guidance project for 14- 19 year olds within York supported by the University and other partners.
60. We provide prospective students and their families with clear information about fees and finance packages and there is an individualised approach to admissions handling to ensure appropriate information is provided. Information is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it remains up to date, including that which is included on the University's website. For example, this includes illustrations of the net costs of studying undergraduate programmes at the University, taking into account estimates for the cost of living and the total financial support that will be available.
61. This information is also developed into printed materials and information packs around Student Finance and Support. A brief summary is included in the undergraduate prospectus with signposting back to the website and direct contacts for further information. The brochure and pack will be used in our liaison activities with a particular focus on under-represented groups. The detail available on the website and in the Student Finance Support pack will also be used as the basis for advice and guidance through talks, seminars and workshops targeted at parents, key target widening participation groups, prospective students, advice and guidance professionals, school staff and others who may have a key influence on student decision making not only in areas of student recruitment but also in new areas of activity.
62. Advice and support is not confined to prospective students. Additional information for new students is provided as an embedded feature of the schedule of induction, both prior to and after arrival. Additional support for current students is clearly signposted, and Student Services staff work closely with the Students Union to provide appropriate welfare guidance and support. We will also explore the use of appropriate additional media to ensure that we can respond quickly to queries.

## **Consultation with Students**

63. York St John University takes its relationship with the Students' Union (SU) and with the wider student body very seriously. Representation of students is built into all levels of the University's decision-making structures. The Sabbatical Officers regularly meet with the Vice Chancellor's Group (VCG) and are represented on the Academic Board, Examinations Board and Standards Review Board. There is also representation on the Committees of Ethics and Environment, Equality and Diversity and the Enhancing Student Experience Committee (ESEC) and Appeals Boards.
64. The current SU strategy has five strategic themes: Being A Member, Community and Life Skills, Academic Achievement, Professional Development and Employability and Welfare, Support and Advice. All of these are relevant to the Widening Participation agenda. Recommendations from the SU are put into action wherever possible: for example, as a result of specific feedback, the University now stages a specific welcome event for mature students in Freshers' Week, and has also introduced a 'Buddy Up' mentoring scheme.
65. The Student Union is also a member of the Student Community Partnership within York, covering Askham Bryan and York Colleges as well as the University of York and York St John University. The key aim of the partnership is to address issues common to all students and support integration and working within the broader city. Promoting good citizenship and building a supportive community is a central pillar of their work, which is the core of an inclusive and welcoming student experience.

66. In relation to this Access Agreement, specific student consultation has taken place with SU sabbatical officers who work closely with Student Support Services and Widening Participation/Student recruitment staff. This has included discussions regarding the current financial support packages, the level of outreach and student success interventions the University undertakes, and the shared aim for increased involvement by students in the full range widening access activities. The outcomes of such discussions are reflected in some of the developments outlined in this Access Agreement.



**Table 7 - Targets and milestones**

Institution name: York St John University

Institution UKPRN: 10007713

**Table 7a - Statistical targets and milestones relating to your applicants, entrants or student body**

Reference number	Please select target type from the drop-down menu	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
						2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	
T16a_01	HESA T1b - State School (Young, full-time, undergraduate entrants)	% young, FT UG from state schools	No	2012-13	95.3	95.5	95.7	95.8	95.9	96	
T16a_02	HESA T1b - NS-SEC classes 4-7 (Young, full-time, undergraduate entrants)	% young, FT UG from lowest NS-SEC groups	No	2012-13	34.5	35	35.5	36	36.5	37	
T16a_03	HESA T1b - Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR2) (Young, full-time, undergraduate entrants)	% young, FT UG from LPN	No	2012-13	16.7	17	17.3	17.6	17.8	18	
T16a_04	HESA T3a - No longer in HE after 1 year (All, full-time, first degree entrants)	Continuation rate	No	2012-13	94.4	94.7	95	95.3	95.6	96	
T16a_05	HESA T2a - (Mature, full-time, all undergraduate entrants)	% mature students	No	2012-13	9.8	10.2	10.6	11	11.5	12	
T16a_06	Other statistic - Ethnicity (please give details in the next column)	% UK domiciled black and minority ethnic students	No	2012-13	3.9	4.4	4.8	5.2	5.6	6	

**Notes**

Alongside applicant and entrant targets, we encourage you to provide targets around outreach and student success work (including collaborative work where appropriate) or other initiatives to illustrate your progress towards increasing access, student 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 worked with, and what the outcomes were, rather than simply recording the nature/number of activities.

**Table 7b - Other milestones and targets.**

Reference Number	Please select target type from the drop-down menu	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
						2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	
T16b_01	Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Green Apples: a successful innovative partnership involving all local FE and HE partners as well as the Local Authority, the North Yorkshire Business and Education Partnership, Higher York and local primary and secondary schools. This is a progressive programme of interventions, mainly focused on Year 9-11 but also involving pupils from year 6 upwards.	Yes	2013-14	433	700	710	720	730	740	Numbers of students engaged with the Green Apples programme.
T16b_02	Outreach / WP activity (summer schools)	Year 10 aspiration raising residential	No	2011-12	60	65	70	75	80	80	Gradual increase in numbers to become stable at 80 for this identified group
T16b_03	Outreach / WP activity (summer schools)	Part of a broader series of work with schools which are in the lowest POLAR quintiles, have high levels of FSM and a low GCSE attainment level	No			30	35	40	45	50	
T16b_04	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	North yorkshire work with schools negotiated through a consortia, expanded to include Selby (NYCHEC)	No	2013-14	11	12	13	14	15	15	To appropriately expand the geographical reach while at the same time become more targetted within schools, this would result in limited growth in numerical targets but would be more focussed on need
T16b_05	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Access to the professions and other taster day sessions	No	2012-13	83	90	95	100	105	110	
T16b_06	Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Work with Care Leavers and supporters	Yes			Support 100% of careleavers who are referred	Support 100% of careleavers who are referred	Support 100% of careleavers who are referred	Support 100% of careleavers who are referred	Support 100% of careleavers who are referred	Improve support for Care Leavers in conjunction with North Yorkshire County Council LAC
T16b_07	Management targets	Improve data capture methods and build coherent longitudinal tracking	No	2015-16			HEAT fully implemented				Implement HEAT tracking and improve data collection across all projects.

**Optional commentary on milestones.**

This box is character-limited to 1000 characters; however, we are happy for you to upload additional 'supporting information' as a separate Word/pdf document.