HARPER ADAMS UNIVERSITY
ACCESS AGREEMENT – 2017 - 2018

1. Introduction and context

1. The mission of Harper Adams University over the 2015-20 period is to provide, 'World leading higher education and research for the delivery of sustainable food chains and rural economies'. Our vision for 2020 is that Harper Adams will be:
   - 'Closely engaged with the industries, professions and organisations that comprise the global agri-food chain and the UK rural economy to deliver a high quality and inclusive learning environment that enhances personal development and employability;
   - A recognised centre of research excellence, especially in the application of science and technological advances and;
   - A trusted source of independent and authoritative commentary to inform public and policy debate on agri-food, animal welfare, land, environmental and rural business matters.'

2. At the time of writing, the University has about 2,681 undergraduate students actively studying on predominantly full-time sandwich programmes, of whom about 89% are home / EU students. First degree and Foundation Degree programmes are offered at the University's rural campus, based on a working estate, near Newport in Shropshire. There

3. Expenditure on additional access and retention measures

12. In setting out our commitments to widen access and support student success, it must be recognised that Harper Adams is a small and specialist institution with a unique subject mix and an associated high cost base. The income derived from the maximum fee level that we are permitted to charge is less than the combined income that we have previously received from HEFCE's teaching grant and the fees which students paid before 2012/13. It will be necessary to focus available funds on those activities that we have evaluated will have most impact on student enrolments, success on-course, progression into employment or further study, for a population that reflects the rural economy that Harper Adams is established to serve. The consequence of this is that the proportion of fee income spent on access agreement activities has declined over time as a result of a combination of these factors, to a steady state of around 24% by 2020-21, in line with our assessment of our access record (paragraphs 15-19) and affordability. If either the rate of teaching grant or maximum tuition fee declines, we will have to review the commitments herein.

13. Whilst we are not permitted to charge more than £1,850 for the placement year, we calculate the cost of preparing students for placement and supporting them and employers during the placement year to be in the region of £3,000 a student. Some under-represented and disadvantaged student groups are more challenging to support. We are, nonetheless totally committed to sandwoTdDceed,3ning te

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neighbourhoods are overwhelmingly urban, and also; (2) reflects how remote, rural inhabitants are more likely to attend boarding schools, which are predominantly independent of the state sector. This distorts our performance indicators related to state schooling and LPN, and is a consequence of our rural catchment, in line with our institutional mission. Most mature students study with us on a part-time basis on unregulated programmes which are outside the scope of this agreement. Our access targets, therefore, take account of our mission and associated catchment, as well as a whole student life cycle approach, in relation to relative levels of on-course success and post-course progression. In relation to the targets that we have outlined in Table 7 of the resource plan:

a. The proportion of all full time undergraduate students in receipt of the Disabled Students' Allowance in 2014/15 increased to 18.7% from 15.7% in 2009/10, and in excess of the benchmark of 9.2% (HESA Table T7). It constitutes the eighth highest proportion of any English higher education institution. With revisions to the Disabled Students' Allowance, we intend to utilise an alternate measure of disability, as set out in Table 7 of the resource plan. We anticipate that, from 2017-18 onwards, fewer disabled students will benefit from applying for the allowance, as the significant costs associated with supporting disabled students are transferred to institutions. We consider that maintaining levels of access by disabled students at 19% will be very challenging, based on the concerns we have heard from disabled applicants concerned about the changes to funded support.

b. The proportion of young full time undergraduate entrants from NS-SEC classes 4-7 was at 46.8% in 2014/15, against our benchmark of 39.5% (HESA Table T1b). This represents the nineteenth highest proportion of any UK higher education institution and the third highest statistically significant 'over-performance' on the benchmark. We aim for an enrolment rate of 49% for all new entrants from NS-SEC classes 4-7 by 2019/20. Although HESA will no longer be publishing this indicator from 2016/17 onwards, we will continue to monitor our own performance on this benchmark, in order to evaluate its reliability as an indicator when compared with the alternative access measure(s) we will adopt. Paragraph 17 outlines our early assessment of whether there are alternative measures that are applicable to our rural context.

c. Despite high levels of disadvantage or under-representation, based on OFFA criteria, the proportion of young full time first degree entrants who remained in HE in 2014/15 after one year of study in 2013/14, was 94.5% (HESA Table T3a), which was above our benchmark indicator at 93.5%. We are, nonetheless, concerned to ensure that all students, whatever their background, are as likely as others to meet their potential and succeed in their first year studies. For example, our small cohort of mature students on regulated courses had a lower success rate at 78.3%, which was below the sector mean (84.1%) and our benchmark (85.8%). We aspire for all student groups to be within three percentage points of the mean for the whole cohort. Accordingly, in working to improve overall continuation rates, we shall monitor the first year success rates of identified 'at risk groups', as set out in paragraphs 36-41 and target support to identified 'at risk' individuals.

d. Of particular concern to..728 -1.144.6 (nu) Tc 0 Tw (t)-6.6 (e a)10.5.2 (t)-6.n (a1 m)-5.9 (on)1-0

19. We will work to improve the retention rate of students from lower achieving programme areas, especially those in the ‘other undergraduate’ category and mature students as identified by our Academic Board. Whilst many students on these programmes enter with modest entry qualifications and some are poorly prepared for HE studies through their level three learning, initial indications are that our work to achieve these improvements is yielding results. We have invested in additional student data analysis and planning capacity which has assisted in identifying other variables, including other student characteristics and curricula design and delivery features, to enable us to better target our work in improving student success outcomes further. This ambition is addressed both through the activities we intend to put in place, as set out in paragraphs 36-41 below, and the milestones and targets set out at Table 7 in the resource plan.

4. Access Measures

Pre-applicant outreach activity

20. The University has always been highly committed to promoting access, not only to Harper Adams, but to the wider land-based and food sectors. The agriculture, food and land-based focus of our course provision traditionally attracts those from farming and/or rural communities with their own demographic characteristics, which are not representative of the wider UK population, as set out in paragraphs 15-17. Whilst we have been extremely effective in supporting students from NS-SEC groups 4-7 and those with disabilities successfully through their higher education and into professional employment, our natural rural recruitment base means that some of the other common measures of ‘access success’, and associated benchmarks cannot, reasonably, be applied to Harper Adams. Of the 2012, 2013 and 2014 new entrant cohorts, we have calculated that 68-72% of our students fell into at least one OFFA-countable group of disadvantage or under-representation, even though we exhibit, relative to some broader subject-based institutions, lower levels of new entrants from low participation neighbourhoods and state schooling backgrounds, because of the rural dimensions of our subject base, our location and the natural rural backgrounds of our students.

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significantly raised footfall and which, in particular, attracted school groups to visit the stand. In March 2016, this initiative won The Guardian University Awards category for best communications campaign.

x Using social media, in particular Facebook and Twitter, to engage young people pro-actively and develop a two-way dialogue. In particular, we are looking to actively participate in Q&A sessions around particular subjects which young people are most engaged with. 9b 3

31. The last twelve months saw the development of a new partnership with the Smallpiece Trust. This is a charity which specialises in encouraging young people into careers in engineering. In particular they reach out to talented young people from urban areas. Although not specifically 'WP' focused, the very nature of where they recruit from means that they do communicate to a very broad demographic. Last year over 70 pupils participated in the programme on campus and in 2016 around 60 are expected to attend.

32. A new initiative being trialled in 2016 is 'Harper Adams Means Business'. This is a programme targeted at year 12 pupils aiming to introduce them to the idea of business related careers in the food and farming sectors. The programme is being promoted to a range of schools, although local schools with a high percentage of disadvantaged and under-represented students are being targeted.

33. In April 2016, the university hosted the first ever Youth Entomology Conference. Around 200 young people attended and 129 were from schools with a high percentage of disadvantaged pupils. We were pleased to receive extensive TV coverage for this initiative, which we hope will inspire young people to study this specialist subject area.

34. Each year the university hosts a number of pupils undertaking work experience. To date in 2016, we have hosted 18 pupils registered for work experience, of whom 15 are from schools with a high percentage of disadvantaged pupils.

35. From 2016/17 onwards, we anticipate that new undergraduate courses in mechanical engineering and geography will be more attractive than some of the more heavily land-based programmes for which we are

health support, policy development and guidance to other staff. This welfare provision has been very well received and has been extended further and has, undoubtedly, enabled a number of students to continue with their studies, despite significant mental health problems. We are investing in online ‘triaging’ support which should enable the work of the counselling and mental health specialists to focus on those students in most need of one-to-one, ‘face-time’, support. More generalised support offered through the Student Services team has taken place and will be maintained for the foreseeable future, so that students have easy access to advice and guidance on a range of pastoral, accommodation, health, personal and financial concerns. Changes to our chaplaincy service will also strengthen our pastoral support to students further. Inevitably, these services are called upon most heavily by those from disadvantaged or under-represented backgrounds. Our use of internal data to identify individual students from groups who have been at higher risk of leaving early, with a view t

Honours programmes, were also more likely to achieve at first of upper second class level.

41. We have a commitment to improve the on-course success rates of all our students, including those who are considered ‘OFFA-countable’. Our analysis of student achievement variables confirms that receipt of means-tested financial support has not proven to be effective in improving chances of success. Our assessment to date is that other factors such as age on entry, disability and type of entry qualificatiit 8.s

48. Harper Adams also invests significant effort into generating scholarship funds through its Development Trust, predominantly through securing industry-sponsored awards, some of which are also linked to salaried placement or employment opportunities. In 2015/16, 106 awards to the value of £360,000, funded by 70 sponsors, were distributed to students primarily in their second year of studies. Whilst these are primarily merit-based awards to students who are already enrolled, under-represented and disadvantaged students benefit disproportionately from these awards. This serves to demonstrate another way in which our connections with industry benefit our students and links financial support to enabling opportunities which improve personal development and graduate employment opportunities.

5. Targets and Milestones

49. The targets (5.01 to 5.14) [illegible]