

Access and Participation Plan 2019-20



Assessment of current performance

*Demonstrate that you **understand your own performance** and have developed your **strategy for continuous improvement**. This section will inform the rest of your plan. **Do not** include information on how you will address your performance, or details of your activities and support measures, as these can be described in later sections.*

Introduction

Farnborough College of Technology's HE provision is delivered as 'University Centre Farnborough' (UCF). UCF is a small HE provider delivering HE to around 350 students with a retention rate of around 94%. We deliver Degrees validated by The University of Surrey as well as HND's and Teacher Training Courses validated by The University of Greenwich. Our students are overwhelmingly local people as we don't have any accommodation for those wishing to relocate.

The Governing body of Farnborough College of Technology sets out a plan to widen access to Higher Education for students from under-represented groups and support such students whilst on programme.

The Agreement has been developed in accordance with the institution's policy on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, designed to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Higher Education Regulations 2018. Monitoring of the Access Agreement will be undertaken by the Senior Management Team.

The UCF will undertake to spend a minimum of 15% of the tuition fee income above the basic fee cap on widening access measures. The UCF will also contribute further resources to support activities to widen access. This reflects the success of the UCF in widening participation through the current range of measures.

Context

The UCF firmly locates Higher Education (HE), both prescribed and non-prescribed, at the core of its mission. It is linked to its other provision; Further Education and workplace learning. Higher Education activity explicitly supports the Mission and Strategic Aims.

The institution's mission is to be 'A Community University that serves businesses and people across the area' and its vision is to ensure that '100% of programmes help people gain skills and experience to be successful in life'.

The UCF kept its tuition fees at, or below, the basic fee level until 2014-15. The UCF decided to charge fees above the basic fee level both to reflect the rising costs of delivering high quality HE programmes and the need to improve opportunities for wider participation in HE provision.

The widening participation benchmarks stated reflect the areas that the UCF wishes to focus on as part of its widening participation strategy. The institution, as a provider of further education for Level 3 students on a range of vocational and A Level programmes, seeks to raise the aspiration of students to progress to HE. For many students, the opportunity to study at the UCF is both appropriate for their circumstances and provides them with a good opportunity to achieve a degree with strong employment prospects.

The retention rates for students enrolled on degree programmes are already high compared to national benchmarks. Focus on raising the levels of retention of specific groups identified will form part of our strategy. The UCF will also focus on raising success levels of students progressing between Level 5 and 6 and to subsequently achieve their qualification.

UCF recruitment from low participation neighbourhoods in the two lowest quintiles is higher than the national benchmarks. However, there are further opportunities to engage more effectively with those residents closest to the UCF. This will be best achieved in collaboration with partners, especially the HEON.

The UCF wishes to facilitate the progression to HE for disabled students and to maintain and extend the accessibility of our provision to appropriately qualified applicants. This will be achieved through the development of tailored recruitment processes and promotion of HE opportunities linked to successful interventions made.

The UCF wishes to focus on widening participation in HE from a locally significant Nepali population defining themselves within the "Other Asian" category. It is anticipated that there will be an overlap in interventions targeted at the Nepali population and those residents in low HE participation neighbourhoods.

The Access Agreement sets out milestones as a measure of progress for 2018-19 and for subsequent years in the appended spreadsheet.

UCF Performance

The UCF successfully supports students to succeed in their first year and last year the first year cohort had 15% of students with a disability or learning difficulty, this is above the national average of 12%. UCF focusses on supporting students who might not be accepted at larger Universities with a particular emphasis on tutorial support and small group sizes. The overall level of non-completions is around the national average for young and mature entrants but relates to an inclusive attitude to applicants. Enhanced tutorial support is provided to HE students in the first year, alongside good access to study skills workshops. The UCF assures itself of continuous improvement regarding the quality of teaching through the provision of qualified and experienced teachers and regular management-led observation of teaching practice, almost all of which is judged to be 'good' or 'outstanding'.

Area for Development: We wish to prioritise the resources apportioned to the retention of students and to maintain high levels of success.

The UCF has provided excellent opportunities for participation for students recruited from local authority wards in the two lowest quintiles for UK average rates of HE participation, as reported in HESA Polar 3 tables. The percentage of new entrants from

these low participation areas was at 21% compared to a national average of 11.4% for the current intake.

Area for Development: We wish to prioritise the resources apportioned to the targeting of students from the most disadvantaged areas.

The UCF is located in an area with a significant minority Nepali population who define themselves in the 'other Asian' category. The UCF has successfully widened participation with this group into its FE level provision. Through targeted intervention, the UCF continues to work to raise aspiration amongst this group to progress to HE and is maintaining 2% of 'other Asian' students in the current intake. UCF has been working with HEON to target Nepali students with Nepali language promotions to engage with the Nepali community. The current rate of participation in HE has been stable over the last four years. We have renewed our focus on this population in partnership with the HEON widening participation group led by University of Surrey. The numbers of students applying to study HE from the institution's own FE population remains steady at over 20%. This is likely to be a factor in the UCF's success in recruiting students from low participation areas since, characteristically, students drawn from the two lowest quintiles of HESA Polar 3 Local Authority Wards are more likely to study near to home. We will seek to continue to increase both the numbers of the institution's own students progressing to HE and their number as a share of the intake.

Area for Development: We plan to further target support for progression through enhanced tutorials and provision of information related to opportunities at the UCF and the availability of bursary funds as well.

The UCF provides good support to students with disabilities, though the overall participation of students who define themselves as having a disability was showing a reducing trend it has now started to increase again. It should, however, be noted that the previous reductions in the proportion of students defining themselves as having a disability and/or learning difficulty coincides with changes to data collection approaches; which may have led to the under-reporting of some disabilities. The resources and expertise developed to support the FE students is available to support HE students to succeed. The support is a key element in the maintenance of our good levels of retention and success for students in their first year as reported above. There is clear awareness amongst staff and students that early notification and intervention will help transitions to be successful. Students have opportunities to disclose needs at application, enrolment and during tutorials.

Area for Development: We plan to ensure that UCF is a positively inclusive place that those with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities see as a good option given the small group sizes and pastoral support available.

The UCF began offering its own bursaries in 2015/16. The total number of bursaries supported by the Offa-countable funds was capped, however, further matching funds were allocated to ensure that all applicants judged to be eligible received support. Sponsored work-based students are not eligible for bursaries. In 2015/16 a total of 21 students received £2,000 in phased payments once attendance and participation thresholds had been met. Almost all of the bursary recipients received the full maintenance grant element of funding and were, therefore, eligible for continued support in 2016/17, under the Access Agreement in place in that year. In 2017/18 63

students were awarded the first instalment of the £2000 bursary with 60 students getting the second payment.

Evaluation of the impact of this financial support confirms both that the support is reaching those in the greatest need and also that there is a significant positive impact on completion by these students. All of the 21 students who received bursaries in 2015/16 successfully completed their year of study. The non-completion rate for those students receiving bursaries is significantly lower than the overall non completion rate of 17% in 2016/17.

The UCF has been successful in widening participation over the last four years and will consolidate the improvements achieved through successful interventions. The targets and milestones set for the 2017-18 Access Agreement continue to be relevant and stretching as we seek to attract students with characteristics identified as priorities for widening participation. In particular, the UCF wishes to sustain the work established through the University of Surrey-led Higher Education Outreach Network (HEON) recently awarded with extension funds by the Office for Students.

Continuous Improvement

The monitoring of the overall HE strategy, including the implementation of the Access Agreement, is undertaken by the HE Working Group (HEWG). The Group consists of managers delivering the HE curriculum and those overseeing quality. The Group is chaired by the Dean of HE who reports on its activities to SMT and relevant committees of the Corporation.

The Dean of HE reports to HEWG to monitor the progress of the Access Agreement milestones and to determine any new actions that may be required. Members of HEWG are provided with information to enable them to judge whether objectives have been met. No further resources are required to accommodate this scrutiny. Evidence from an evaluation will be used by HEWG and SMT to review the implementation of the Access Agreement. This evaluation will be used to shape policy decisions about strategies to widen participation, to achieve equality and diversity objectives and to report to the Office for Students. The widening participation interventions will be evaluated for their success and this will inform the priorities for subsequent Access Agreements with OfS.

Ambition and Strategy

*In this section, outline how you will respond to the areas for development identified in the **assessment of current performance** section of your access and participation plan. Demonstrate the changes you aim to achieve and your strategic approach to doing so, addressing the whole student lifecycle (access, success and progression) and based on the evidence you have provided in your **assessment of performance**.*

This Access Agreement sets out how the UCF intends to continue to widen access to Higher Education and support student success during 2019-20. The Agreement continues to articulate with the institution's policy on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

The HE student population illustrates a continuing commitment by the UCF to ensure participation of under-represented groups. The key areas for development have been maintained as focussing upon:

- a) those without an immediate family experience of participation in HE

- b) those living in disadvantaged socio-economic localities
- c) those drawn from specific under-represented Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities
- d) those with a specific Learning Difficulty or Disability (SLDD)

Access: We aim to target funds at initiatives to increase the numbers of students from low participation neighbourhoods or from the Nepali Community. We will also be developing initiatives to encourage those with disabilities or those with a learning difficulty as well as those progressing from Level 3 from our own community of FE students. Our Bursary offer will also be widely communicated with those from low participation neighbourhoods to ensure that cost is minimised as a barrier to entry.

Success: We aim to target success by developing progression initiatives focussed on further improving non continuation rates for full time HE Students. We aim to track students who are displaying the warning signs of non-completion of poor attendance and poor attainment. These students will be offered 1:1 time with a progress coach.

Progression: We aim to enhance our progression guidance for HE students ensuring that Information, Advice and Guidance for students completing their HE courses is carefully targeted at those who are unsure of their next steps.

Access, student success and progression measures

In this section, give an overview of the activities and support measures you will undertake in 2019-20 to achieve your objectives and the priorities we have identified for access and participation

Financial support for students

For 2019-20, funds will continue to be targeted to Year 1 students. The UCF will aim to match-fund from its own resources the bursaries for progressing students to ensure that there are sufficient resources available for other outreach and on-course support activities.

- The UCF will provide a capped number of phased cash bursaries of up to £2000 (pro-rata FTE of 120 credits for part-time students) for new HE students that receive SFE maintenance loans. This will be paid for in the first year of their studies only, subject to successful engagement and attendance. The number of bursaries awarded will be capped in accordance with the resource plan attached. Where sufficient funds are available, students not supported by SFE loans may be offered a bursary, subject to acceptable evidence of family income equivalent to the threshold for receipt of SFA maintenance loan.

Applications must be received by the published closing date. Applications will be ranked according to the size of maintenance loan awarded by Student Finance England and then in order of receipt.

- The UCF will provide a capped number of phased cash bursaries of up to £2000 (pro-rata FTE of 120 credits) capped in accordance with the resource plan for 2019-20 for continuing HE students that received the maximum maintenance loan.

Facilitating progression of FE Level 3 students into HE

The UCF has good arrangements to provide Level 3 students with advice regarding writing CVs, interview techniques, work experience and placements to help them develop their employability skills. Tutorials have been used to assist students to write their UCAS personal statements. Activities currently include:

- working with further education students within the institution at all levels to promote progression options to HE study, including Higher Level Apprenticeships.
- providing internal progression events.
- providing 1:1 support for Level 3 students researching HE opportunities, completing UCAS applications and confirming appropriate HE progression routes.
- providing 1:1 support for Level 3 students to develop their CV, undertake job searches, develop their interview techniques and networking skills.
- engaging with other local Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) to facilitate other high quality progression routes for Level 3 students.
- targeting widening participation cohorts with strategies to raise participation levels in HE.
- Working with the HEON project students from HE cold spots are being targeted, particularly in the Aldershot area.

Outreach Activities

In 17-18 UCF has been collaborating with the University of Surrey, Royal Holloway University, The University of the Creative Arts, Guildford College and NESOT to create a partnership as part of the HE Outreach Network (HEON). The institution received a small amount of funding and has benefited from the work of the network. This partnership was successful in bidding for funds to support a number of low participation local authority wards in Aldershot, north Hampshire in addition to the Surrey wards.

It is our intention to use some Access funds to support the continuation of the wider work undertaken by the network.

In 2019-20 we plan to fund outreach activities to support key stages in the student cycle. The activities will focus on the widening participation of under-represented groups. The following groups have been prioritised:

- a) those without an immediate family experience of participation in HE
- b) those living in disadvantaged socio-economic localities
- c) those drawn from specific under-represented Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities
- d) those with a specific Learning Difficulty or Disability (SLDD)

The local population of Rushmoor has a relatively large Nepali resident group that falls into the 'other Asian' category for Black and Minority Ethnic Groups. The majority of the general population of Aldershot are resident in an area of low HE participation, according to HESA POLAR3 data and therefore potential beneficiaries of widening participation activities differentiated for socio-economic status. Approximately 10% of the residents of the Borough of Rushmoor have a Nepali heritage. The UCF has been successful in raising the participation of students from a Nepali heritage at FE Level 3.

We aspire to raise levels of participation for this group in our HE provision and are leading on a project with HEON to this end.

The UCF plans to target its aspiration-raising activities with priority groups that form part of the Level 3 student population currently studying at the institution, feeder schools and sixth form colleges. It will also continue to develop the curriculum in areas where Nepali students already study at Level 3. For example, the newly validated Foundation Degree in Healthcare Practice prepares students for new roles in the NHS progressing from Level 3 National Diploma in Health and Social Care.

The widening participation activities will include:

1. working with the HEON partnership to raise aspiration, motivation and achievement amongst key groups including those of Nepali heritage currently studying in schools and colleges in target wards and those resident elsewhere.
2. strengthening of progression routes from feeder schools into Further Education and vocationally-relevant Higher Education, prioritising those highlighted by OfS as serving local authority wards with low participation in HE and/or lower than expected GCSE attainment at Key Stage 4.
3. attending HE awareness raising events in schools and colleges to provide talks and taster activities to promote a wider awareness of HE opportunities.
4. providing enhanced Information, Advice and Guidance, to include financial matters, at open events in local schools, colleges and careers fairs.
5. exploring the development of new links with selected local primary schools serving areas of low HE participation to promote awareness, raise aspiration and promote attainment.
6. jointly marketing, with partners, HE opportunities for prospective students from areas of low HE participation.

Raising attainment in schools

In accordance with the strategic need for HE providers to contribute to raising attainment in schools, the UCF is developing its existing strong partnership links with its local schools. The work of the UCF is particularly focussed on raising attainment for young people who are more likely to be motivated by a strongly vocational strand in their learning. The institution has, therefore, established an offer of vocational courses for young people in years ten and eleven. These courses will be undertaken on one day each week, whilst the young person also continues with the full range of studies at their school. The provision has been established as a partnership between the institution and a wide range of secondary schools across the local area.

The provision will seek to raise the attainment of young people aged 14 to 16 and to motivate them to aspire towards post-16 study and, then, to higher education. Courses for young people will be delivered in vocational areas which offer a progression route through FE and HE levels of study. The provision began in the 2017/18 academic year and focussed on young people who are lacking motivation for traditional academic study. In a number of vocational areas it is intended that the provision will specifically raise attainment amongst a key target group identified as 'white males from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds'. As a mixed economy institution offering both FE and HE programmes, relationships with local schools are strong. At the current time the direct sponsorship of a local school is not being considered, as the institution feels that offering provision for young people in partnership with a range of schools is the most effective strategy for raising attainment.

The initial success criteria for the provision has been met with over 50 young people in years ten and eleven attending courses during 2017/18. The target for next year is at least 100 and initial indications show that we are likely to achieve that figure. The work is being monitored and evaluated through an examination of the attainment levels of these young people and their levels of progression into FE study. Therefore, after the first year is complete for this new provision, the UCF will develop a specific outcomes based target for the raising of attainment.

Retention and success activities

In-year first year retention and success levels across Higher Education programmes within the UCF was 92% in 2016-17. The UCF will continue to enhance the support provided for students especially those drawn from the widening participation cohorts to maintain this high level of success in subsequent years. Activities will include:

1. dedicated on-programme HE Additional Learner Support (ALS) provision.
2. study skills sessions delivered as an integral part of the induction and forming part of the extended programme of induction at course level.
3. additional on-programme and 1:1 study skills sessions.
4. close monitoring of attendance patterns and follow up of unexplained absences by tutors and curriculum managers.
5. provision of health and counselling services.
6. provision of nursery places for students with children.
7. further development of the VLE to support and extend learning opportunities.
8. Provision of enhanced 1:1 information for late applicants to HE and enhanced on-programme support.

Fees

All full time fees have been notified to applicants via the UCAS website and have been provided to Student Finance England. The UCF displays fee information on its public website.

Full-time fees

The fees for full-time HE programmes (120 credits) will be £8000 per annum for 2018-19, Fast Track degrees over a period of 2 Years are charged at £8000 for 180 credits which equates to £5333 for 120 credits. Higher Nationals will be charged at £5000 per 120 credits and work-based programmes which will be charged at £6000 per 120 credits.

Part-time fees

Part time students will normally be charged as above on a pro-rata basis. The maximum fee for part-time students will not exceed the Government's maximum tuition fee level for part-time students (currently £6,935).

Investment

*In this section, set out the level of investment you intend to make in 2019-20. See page 32 of the guidance for a checklist of what you must include in this section. Through your **assessment of performance** you will have developed your **ambitions and strategy** and chosen **activities and support measures** to address the areas*

where you most need to improve, and to support the priorities we have identified. Demonstrate how your investment in access, student success and progression activities, and in financial support, reflect these.

The UCF successfully supports students to succeed, last year the first year cohort had 15% of students with a disability or learning difficulty, this is above the national average of 12%, we recognise that this is above the national average but we wish to focus on improving further. The percentage of new entrants from low participation areas was at 21% compared to a national average of 11.4% for the current intake. This is again a very positive picture but we aim to continue and build on this with further targeted action. We aim to further invest in maintaining 2% of 'other Asian' students in the current intake with an ambition to lift this to 3%.

Investment

In order to increase access and retention the UCF commits significant funds and resources to a range of activities to achieve these aims. The full details of planned expenditure are contained in the related Resource Plan. The estimated spend on access, student success, progression and financial support is £135,600 are summarised as follows:

- Access – Total funds of £12,500 are estimated for spend on access initiatives in 2019/20, including those initiatives which aim to increase numbers of students who are from low participation neighbourhoods, or from the Nepali community, or Disabled, or progressing from Level 3 courses within the institution.
- Success – Total funds of £36,000 are estimated for spend on success initiatives in 2019/20, focussed on further improving non continuation rates for full time HE students.
- Progression - Total funds of £2,000 are estimated for spend on progression initiatives in 2019/20, focussed on enhancing the information, advice and guidance provided to HE students on their future career options.
- Financial Support - Total funds of £85,100 are estimated for spend on financial support in 2019/20, focussed on the provision of bursaries for students with household residual incomes up to £25,000.
- We will be working with the HEON project, led by the University of Surrey, on initiatives to improve the HE participation of students from Polar 1 and 2 areas and particularly targeting Nepali students.

UCF further commits funds to develop and enhance the UCF Study Centre to make it more accessible with improved facilities.

Provision of information to students

See page 35 of the guidance for a checklist of what you must include in this section. Describe how you will meet our requirements to provide information to prospective and current students and how you will publish your approved plan.

Provision of information to prospective students

The UCF is committed to publishing clear information on fees and the financial support available to students. The Head of HE attends Level 3 group tutorials in the final year explaining the opportunity to progress to an HE Course at UCF and the opportunity to take advantage of a bursary. The UCF website is used as the primary source of

information to prospective students from outside college. Information about the Access Agreement will be published together with details of financial support available. Staff providing information, advice and guidance, including admissions tutors, will be provided with information about the Access Agreement and the various sources of financial and other sources of support available. The UCF is committed to providing timely information as required to UCAS and the Student Loan Company.

Current students have been consulted in the development of the Access and Participation plan and this has been made a standing item at Boards of Study. Students will also have access to the Access and Participation Plan through the college website.

NOT CURRENTLY BEING INCLUDED

The participation of students from these groups has been tracked over a number of years, since the publication of the first Access Agreement. The overall position for new entrants to HE at the UCF during the last four years can be summarised as follows:

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Non completions	12%	14%	17%	14% estimate
New starts Polar 1 and 2	21%	23%	30%	21%
New starts Ethnicity 'Other Asian'	3%	5%	3%	2%
New starts disability/learning difficulty	27%	14%	12%	15%
Farnborough students progressing to HE	28%	24%	27%	22%

Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target? (drop-down menu)	Baseline year (drop-down menu)	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)
				2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	
Improve the non-continuation rates following the year of entry for full time HE students studying at the College.	No	2012-13	13%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	
Increase the proportion of full time HE students enrolled from the neighbourhood with the two lowest categories of participation	Yes	2012-13	29%	38%	40%	40%	40%	40%	
Increase the proportion of full time HE "other Asian" students from a Nepali background studying at the College.	Yes	2012-13	3%	5%	5%	5%	6%	6%	
Increase the proportion of full time HE students enrolled having a declared disability.	Yes	2012-13	18%	21%	21%	22%	22%	23%	
Increase the number of full-time Level 3 students studying at the College progressing into full-time HE.	No	2012-13	61	65	70	71	72	73	The original milestones are for specific numbers of students, rather than percentages. Therefore, with a reduction in the total number of HE students in the UCF, the yearly milestones have been adjusted. This accords with the figures agreed for 2017/18.

Setting targets and milestones

The first of a series of publications giving the widening participation and non-continuation indicators for HE provision registered at HEFCE-funded further education colleges (FECs) in England was published in August 2012. The indicators in this Access Agreement are informed by data submitted to HEFCE by the UCF in the 2016-17 Individualised Learner Record (ILR) and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) published analysis of student records.

Evaluation

This Access Agreement has been prepared by the Dean of Higher Education (HE) with the involvement and agreement of the Senior Management Team (SMT). The Dean of HE reports directly to the Principal.

Student Consultation

The UCF uses a wide Range of strategies to consult with and engage its students in debate about the approach to widening participation. This Access Agreement was an agenda item for discussion at Boards of Study in the Sprint Term. Minutes were kept and student comments taken into account in producing this access agreement. Other formal strategies include the election of student governors to sit on the Corporation Board, student representation on each of the institution's deliberative committees and an active HE Forum where student representatives have an opportunity to debate a range of issues. Students are, therefore, provided with a range of opportunities to reflect upon the strategies being implemented and to make recommendations on new approaches to meet the terms of the Access Agreement.

Equality and Diversity

The UCF is committed to meeting the general and specific duties contained in The Equality Act 2010. We believe that all students and members of staff should have the opportunity to fulfil their potential whatever their background, identity and circumstance. We are committed to creating a community that recognises and celebrates difference within a culture of respect and cooperation. We appreciate that a culture which promotes equality will create a positive environment and a shared sense of belonging for all who work, learn and use the services of the institution.

The Agreement has been judged to have a positive impact on widening participation with possible adverse effects having been effectively minimised. Further impact assessment will be undertaken periodically