

**2020/21 Fee and Access Plan Application Template**

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Fee and Access Plan for 2020/21 reflects the values of our 2018-23 Strategic Plan – Transformational, Creative and Innovative, Inclusive, Ambitious and Collaborative. The sub-strategy of the Strategic Plan, the Learning and Teaching Strategy forms the basis of many of the specific activities outlined in this FAP.

The Aberystwyth University Fee and Access Plan for 2020/21 supports transformational student success in all its forms. The activities supported through the plan have been chosen in order to develop a timeline of support for all our undergraduate students from application through to graduation and employment or further study. We have identified particular under-represented groups for whom we deliver specific provision or tailor more widely-available provision, in order to ensure that barriers to success are broken down both prior to entry and during their studies.

The Fee and Access Plan for 2020/21 reflects major investments to be made by the University to support widening access, the delivery of excellent student experience and student success and the equipping of our students for employment and life beyond their degree. Key priorities under each section of the plan, and key initiatives which respond to these priorities are outlined below:

### 1.1 Ensuring Equality of Opportunity:

- At application stage:

**Key Priorities** - breaking down barriers to access to higher education whether financial, social or physical; innovative engagement with students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

**Key initiatives responding to this priority** - Aberystwyth Summer University, Targeted Admissions, provision of a bursary programme to break down financial barriers.

- During study:

**Key Priorities** - ensuring optimum support for students with different backgrounds to achieve their best, providing financial, academic and pastoral support as required, supported by innovative IT resources.

**Key initiatives responding to this priority**- Improved data usage for attendance monitoring to address retention, an Aber Hardship Fund to provide financial support to students at risk of withdrawal..

- After graduation :

**Key Priorities** - breaking down barriers to accessing excellent careers, through targeted employability support

**Key initiatives responding to this priority** – development of Integrated Degrees to encourage take-up of integrated year in industry opportunities,

Schemes to provide work experience opportunities and skills building, CareerTrack data capture.

- Ensuring opportunities to learn and to excel through the medium of Welsh.

**Key initiative** - Aberystwyth Integrated Strategic Plan for the Welsh Language.

## 1.2 Promoting HE:

- At application stage :

**Key Priorities** - undertaking innovative subject-based interactions with schools; encouraging ambition and enhancing aspiration

**Key initiatives responding to this priority** – Aberystwyth Entrance Scholarships

- During study:

**Key Priorities** - promote student success through a range of iterative student feedback and performance review processes, innovative teaching methods and excellent learning resources.

**Key initiatives responding to this priority** - electronic attendance monitoring, peer benchmarking and the ApAber mobile app, learning spaces and library resources.

- After graduation:

**Key Priorities** - promoting student employability

**Key initiatives responding to this priority** - increasing numbers of programmes with integrated years abroad, work experience programmes and CareerTrack data capture.

- Ensuring opportunities to learn and to excel through the medium of Welsh.

**Key initiative** - Aberystwyth Integrated Strategic Plan for the Welsh Language.

## 2. DURATION OF PLANS

Fee and Access Plans are 'in force' from the date of approval and have effect from the academic year to which the plan relates. This 2020/21 plan will be in force from the date of HEFCW Approval in June/July 2019, subject to variations approved by HEFCW as part of its annual variation processes, and in effect in the academic year 20/21 (from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021).

### 3. FEE LEVELS

Aberystwyth will charge the maximum fee level for Full-time Home Undergraduate and PGCE students covered by this plan, which covers the period 2020/21 only. The maximum fee is governed by the Welsh Government, and is currently £9,000. Any increase in the FT Home/EU and PGCE fee for 2020/21 or future years of the course will be tied to the maximum inflation-linked fee rise, to be set by Welsh Government. Aggregate fees for the whole duration of the course will depend on the length of the programme (most of our UG programmes are three or four years long), and whether or not the programme includes a Study Year Abroad (current fee is £1,350) or a Year in Industry (current fee is £1,800), and whether there are inflation-linked increases as outlined above.

At the time of writing this fee also applied to students from non-UK EU countries; this may have changed before the Fee Plan comes into force.

For Undergraduate programmes with an integrated study year abroad, the Study Year Abroad is charged at 15% of the maximum fee, in line with HEFCW guidelines.

For Undergraduate programmes with an integrated year in industry/integrated year in professional practice, the fee for the sandwich year is charged at 20% of the maximum fee, in line with HEFCW guidelines.

Fees for UG programmes which are offered at less than maximum (including those at our Franchise partners) may be subject to annual review, which could result in increases of never more than inflation or 5% year on year (whichever is the lower). At the time of writing some courses delivered by our Franchise Partner, Coleg Gwent are delivered at £7,500.

Information on fees may be found on the University's website at <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/undergrad/before-you-apply/fees-finance/tuition-fees/#2018-19>. [Fee Terms and Conditions, including a section on fee increases, may be found at https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/undergrad/terms-conditions/](#)

Tuition fees for Home/EU undergraduates are regulated by the Welsh Government. The University will amend all Home/EU undergraduate Tuition Fees in line with any alteration advised by the Welsh Government. We comply with CMA guidelines in the development of all communications.

### 4. STUDENT PARTNERSHIP

Aberystwyth University engages with its Students Union and the wider student body throughout the year in a wide range of ways, both formal and informal. All students are encouraged to feed back on their experiences and contribute ideas and suggestions to help shape their education. Our Strategic Plan 2018-23 commits to 'further improve the student experience in close partnership with the Students' Union, putting the student voice at the heart of our activity.' We uphold the core principle of the *Wise Wales Statement on Partnership for Higher Education (2014)* that '*students should be active participants in the learning process, rather than passive recipients of knowledge*'.

#### 4.1 The Student Charter

The annually updated Student Charter encapsulates the importance of effective student representation, with a commitment to involve student representatives as full partners in our committees and structures.

<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/student/charter/>

Additionally, the Students' Union and University sign a Relationship Agreement, based on ten agreed principles. Principle 4 states that 'AU recognises that AberSU is the primary voice of students and will ensure that AberSU is consulted in a timely fashion before decisions are taken with impact on students'. Embedding the student voice within our governance processes is a way to ensure that the University adheres to this principle.

<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/media/departmental/governance/studentsunion/2018-08-01---Relationship-Agreement-1.pdf>

#### 4.2 The Student Voice in Quality Assurance, Quality Enhancement and Governance

At the highest level, regular meetings between the University Executive officers and Students' Union officers take place. These provide opportunities for the Students' Union to ensure that the student voice is being heard by senior management and ensure that there is close collaborative working on issues which contribute to student success. As well as these meetings of the two executives, there are informal frequent meetings between the Vice-Chancellor and the Students' Union president.

Within the University's formal structure there are student representatives appointed by the Students' Union on most of our major committees, including:

- Council and its sub-committees,
- Senate (which is the main body responsible for Learning and Teaching Strategy)
- Institute (Faculty)-level representatives who participate in discussions of key elements of quality assurance (including approval of new study schemes and their annual monitoring and review)
- Departmental representatives who participate in the Staff Student Consultative Committees, where student concerns can be raised and addressed in discussion with departmental staff. The academic representatives' work is an important part of the work of the Students' Union in ensuring the student voice is fully heard.
- Academic Representatives receive training and support for their role from the Students' Union. They are responsible for representing students at course, year group or subject area level, or may have responsibility for representing specific cohorts such as Joint Honours students or Mature students.
- Learning and Teaching Strategy (Student Success Plan). The Learning and Teaching Strategy is implemented through various work strands. There are student representatives on the delivery groups of all relevant strands.

#### 4.3 Listening to the wider Student Voice for the Fee and Access Plan.

The Student Voice Group (SVG), which is comprised both of Students' Union and AU staff, has a remit of triaging and analysing student comment and feedback received through the following main routes:

- i. Staff Student Consultative Committees (the academic representative system)

- ii. The University's Your Voice Matters feedback scheme.

*Your Voice Matters* is a university-wide approach to student engagement which encourages students to suggest ways in which activities and processes at the University can be improved. Your Voice Matters comprises two elements:

- *Tell Us Now* - an anonymous online portal through which students can contribute ideas and comments. This is essential to monitor the realisation of initiatives.
- *Module Evaluation Questionnaires* - centrally-coordinated surveys are run for each undergraduate and integrated masters module, enabling a wealth of data and information to inform both departmental and the overall AU approach to improving the student experience.

The SV Group analysis, and recommendations from the Group, is provided to all staff involved in academic leadership and planning, and feeds up to senior management. The analysis informs strategic decisions about levels of investment, including Fee and Access Plan expenditure. The feedback loop to the student (about action taken) is closed through a regular communications campaign which keeps students informed on how their voices are driving change.

#### **4.4 The Student Voice in agreeing the Fee and Access Plan 2019/20**

The priorities and content of the 2020/21 Fee and Access Plan has been fully discussed with our Students' Union Officers, who endorsed the planned investments described and welcomed the renewed emphasis of our objectives on the Student Voice and on wellbeing. The SU is kept abreast of the responses to the Student Voice achieved through the SV Group. Meeting with the Student's Union enables clarity on where the Fee and Access Plans align with the priorities, campaigns and concerns of the Students' Union.

The Students' Union President and Welsh Culture Officer/UMCA President also sit on the University's Council, which approved the final version of the 2020/21 Fee and Access Plan.

The University works with a number of partners to deliver Undergraduate provision across Wales and recognises its responsibilities towards those students. We work closely with all our partners to ensure the quality of both the provision and the student experience. The requirement to engage appropriately with the student voice is embedded in our partnership agreements and we are assured that their processes for student representation are robust and that students have a mechanism through which their needs can be expressed and met. We are also confident that the level of investment at the Partner Colleges meets Fee Plan requirements. Partners participate, for example, in our Module Evaluation Questionnaires, as well as having other ways of engaging with the student voice. At Coleg Cambria this takes the form of student representation on the Higher Education Operational Group. Student feedback is also received via the Module Evaluation Questionnaires and through 'mock NSS' surveys. Additionally, our Students' Union is active with students at our franchise partners.

#### **4.5 How information on fees and financial support is communicated to students;**

Clarity on the level of fee and available financial support is provided through:

- i. Prospectus information.
- ii. Dedicated pages on the University website.

- iii. Key Information Sets on course pages (which are linked to UCAS pages).
- iv. Presentations and designated enquiry desk at Open Days and Visiting Days; and dedicated area on the Virtual Open Day.
- v. Applicants receiving offers of a place at Aberystwyth University are sent individual letters as part of the admissions process in which the fee level for their course is confirmed.
- vi. Offer holders are also informed of the Terms and Conditions which are applicable to all students commencing their course during their year of entry, making the contract between the University and the student more transparent. These terms and conditions include detailed information on fees, including fee status and any changes to fees. This is in line with Competition and Marketing Authority guidelines.
- vii. Fees, bursaries and awards are widely advertised through our Open Days and Visiting Day and through our virtual Open Day presentations on the web.
- viii. Details of fees and the financial support available is included in the 'Information for Successful Applicants' booklet which is sent by post to applicants at the point of making an offer.

Communicating fees to prospective applicants, particularly those from widening-access backgrounds who may be more debt-averse, is vital in order to ensure that students make an informed, confident choice about University. We are acutely aware of the pressures which students face. Additional communications include:

- ix. We explain the fee levels and student support available through our schools liaison activities (including the details of the different levels of support available to Wales and Rest of UK domiciled students), including presentations to schools and colleges;
- x. Specific communications to students from a care background or estranged from their family, Young Adult Carers and students with disabilities who may be able to access additional support.
- xi. Applicants are provided with information about support they can receive during their studies, including access to on-campus work opportunities, the hardship fund and financial planning advice.

## 5. THE RATIONALE (INCLUDING STRATEGIC APPROACH)

Our over-arching aim through the 2020/21 Fee and Access Plan is to invest fee income strategically in activities which will support all undergraduate students from application through to graduation and beyond, promoting student success for all AU undergraduate students, regardless of background. Our Strategic Plan 2018-23 provides a strong focus on the University's place in society, making it clear that we *'imbue our graduates with an academic training and the values of a global and national citizenship.'*

### 5.1 Review of Previous Fee and Access Plans

Aberystwyth University is proud of the achievements of previous fee plans, which have led to a steady improvement in a number of our student success Key Performance Indicators over the last four years. The twin aims of the Fee and Access Plans are to widen access to university and to improve the student experience and we have been pleased to note the

following improvements as a result of investment and activities supported through our Fee and Access Plans.

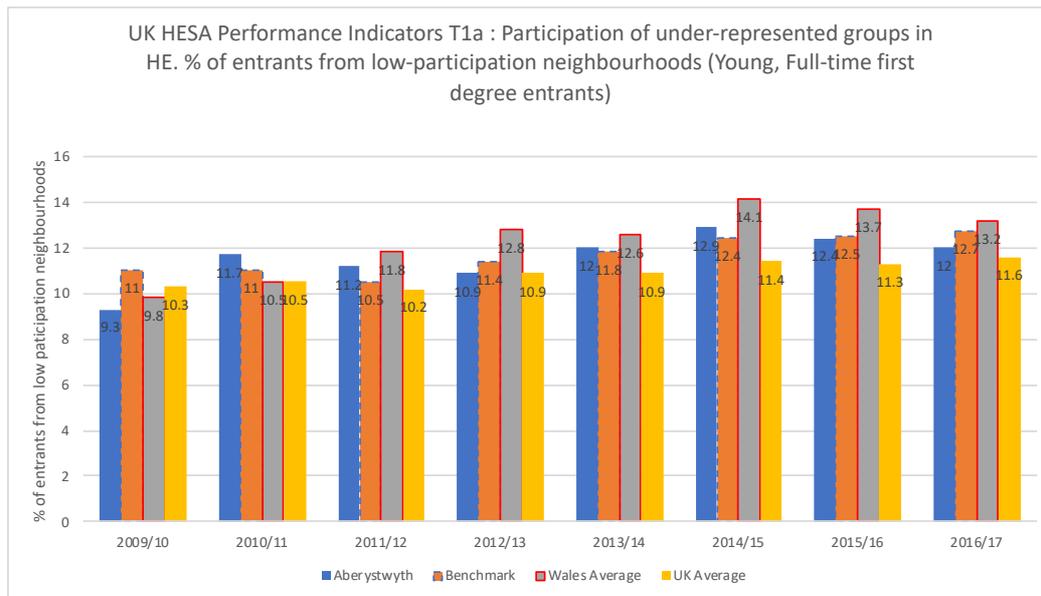
**Access to higher education is widening**

In successive plans we have invested in a range of activities aimed at encouraging young people from groups under-represented in Higher Education to broaden their aspirations, from one-off sessions based in the community to our six-week Summer University programme for pupils identified as at risk of under-achievement. We have also provided targeted care to students from care-backgrounds, starting pre-entry and have worked with schools in low participation areas to help their students reach their full potential.

We monitor the impact of these activities using a number of metrics. Through continued mentoring of participants in the Summer University we have been able to monitor the success of this scheme in enabling students to achieve. More than 93% of the 2016/17 cohort successfully continued to some level of further education (including Higher Education) or employment or returned to Level 3 study to pursue new options or re-sit with greater confidence.

We have been glad to see increases in participation across several groups identified as being under-represented in Higher Education. We have committed through our Fee and Access Plans to continuous investment in the accessibility of our buildings and estate and in teaching and learning equipment to support students learning needs, as well as in support such as note-taking, specialist mentoring, study skills tuition and help from Department Disability Co-ordinators. We have monitored the success of this work through recruitment data to check that we are breaking down physical and social barriers to entry for students with a disability (in the latest national Higher Education Statistics Agency performance indicators (for entrants in 2017/18) we continue to perform above the expected benchmark set for us in this area). 10.8% of our students in 2017/18 were recorded as being in receipt of Disabled Students Allowance (our expected benchmark performance was 7.6%). We also seek feedback from our students on the services they receive through an annual internal survey asking service users whether the help they received was efficient and helpful.

We have invested in work with schools that targets students from areas where families are likely to have no previous experience of Higher Education. This last is used by the Higher Education Statistics Agency to measure the performance of HEIs across the UK. We aim to remain close to the benchmarks set for us by HESA in this indicator, which take into account contextual factors which can affect success in this indicator.



### *Future improvements*

Though we remain above the UK average for recruitment of students from under-represented neighbourhoods, we aspire to meet or exceed the benchmark set for us and to remain level with the average performance of Welsh HEIs. Accordingly, we have set out in this plan commitments to widening access and a programme of schools activities designed to help us retain current performance and make progress towards these targets.

The Fee and Access Plans work together with the University's Reaching Wider Programme Plans for 2018/19 to 2020/21, through which we outline provision to widen access aimed primarily at people of all ages living in the bottom two quintiles of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation and at looked-after children, care leavers and young carers. In 2017/18, 7.6% of our students came from the areas in the bottom quintile of WIMD and 21.1% from areas in the bottom 2 quintiles. In both measures we remain below the Welsh average and aim to improve our performance through investment in targeted work for learners in these areas.

### **Recruitment processes are fairer**

Alongside work with schools and following careful research into our admissions data, we have introduced an inclusive admissions policy which recognises the individual nature of each application we receive. Our criteria for contextual offers for undergraduate schemes are published online and aim to ensure that our admissions policies are fair and inclusive and take account of available information to identify applicants with potential regardless of background. Our entry criteria can be found at <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/undergrad/during-your-application/step-by-step-guide/contextual-offers/>.

### **Welsh medium education is promoted and supported**

We have continued to invest in Welsh medium provision and 21.8% of our teaching staff FTE are now able to teach through the medium of Wales, double the figure of 10.8% for the rest of Wales (Stats Wales website). In 2017/18, just over 400 students were studying at least 5 credits through the medium of Welsh, of whom 315 were studying at least 40 credits. Against the background of a national dip in the number of students taking A-levels through the medium of Welsh we are striving to encourage more students to take advantage of the Welsh medium courses on offer at Aberystwyth. We have promoted Welsh medium education through our marketing activities, welcome events for Welsh medium students and through our Welsh Medium Academic Plan, which identifies our priorities for Welsh medium

provision and includes targets for all departments. We have also introduced new Welsh medium scholarships to encourage greater take-up of Welsh medium provision and we work closely with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. Our ambition for the future is to support more students to study at least some of their course through the medium of Welsh. As well as measuring Welsh medium recruitment, we canvass the opinion of our students on their satisfaction with the opportunities provided to study through the medium of Welsh. In the 2019 National Student Survey, 74% of respondents to the question 'As a Welsh Speaker or Learner I am satisfied with the opportunities I was given to study through the medium of Welsh' indicated that they agreed, placing Aberystwyth above the average for Welsh Universities in the survey (71%). Through continuing investment in our Welsh medium resources and teaching we aim to further improve our performance in this area.

### **The Promotion of Higher Education – Improving Higher Education for the Good of the Student Experience**

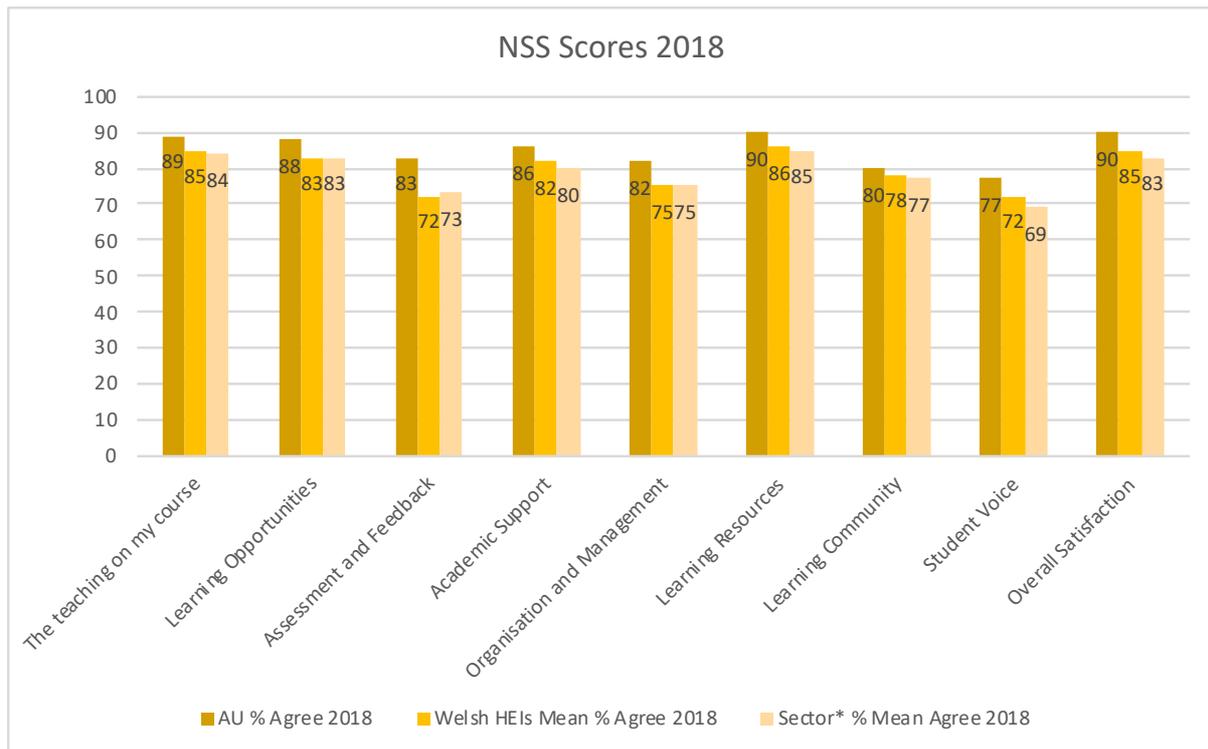
The promotion of higher education is about improving what we offer through our academic provision, support services and learning and teaching environments and resources, to ensure that students from all backgrounds are supported to succeed and have the best opportunities to pursue their chosen careers. As a result of investment in this work through previous Fee and Access Plans we have seen the following impacts.

#### **Student satisfaction with remains high**

Through successive plans we have invested in improving the living and learning experience of our students. We have improved our estate through the upgrading of teaching spaces, installation of more electronic learning and teaching resources, investment in online learning technologies and lecture capture and the development of more flexible learning and social spaces. We have also invested in the refurbishment of our Hugh Owen Library, at the heart of our campus. In response to student feedback, we have invested in changes to the opening times of our library and in additional print and digital resources.

We have measured the success of these changes through close monitoring of student feedback and through the rising average satisfaction scores in the National Student Survey.

In the 2018 NSS (the last results available at the time of writing this plan), Aberystwyth scored above the average for Welsh HEIs in all question banks. This reflects investments from fee plans in online learning, continuous improvement of our learning and teaching environment, activities to improve our personal tutor systems and investment in our library and IT systems.



\*Note that in the above 'sector mean' represents the mean scores from the 133 HEIs included in the Sunday Times Good University Guide

Achieving this has required substantial investment and we are committed to ensuring that the student experience remains of the quality that our students expect, to keep our teaching and learning spaces in excellent condition and to keep pace with technological advancement, changing student need and teaching pedagogy. For this reason, we will continue to invest in our estate, in our learning and teaching spaces and materials and in other areas of academic support through our Fee and Access Plans.

**Aberystwyth graduates remain employable and are succeeding in their careers**

We have also used Fee and Access Plans to invest in activities that support graduate employability (including careers support and our work placements programme) and have seen steady but significant improvement in the metrics that measure this. One major initiative has been CareerTrack, which enables us to assess the level of career readiness of all students at the entry point of each academic year. Students are surveyed on their future plans and the results of the survey are used to tailor careers opportunities, and promote services that will help students to prepare for their future careers or identify potential career paths. Data for 2017/18 showed that 52% of students entering their third year were still undecided about their future and this figure had reduced to 21% by the time the students took an exit survey at graduation time.

The success of our employability activities has been evidenced by steady improvement in both the national measures of graduate employment. The Employment Prospects Indicator (EPI) measures the proportion of graduates who are in work or further study six months following their graduation. This has steadily improved over the past three surveys :

Students Graduating in	% in work or further study
2017	96.8%
2016	95.4%
2015	92.1%

We have also seen an increase in the proportion of those in employment or further study which where the employment or further study is of professional level (the Graduate Prospects Indicator).

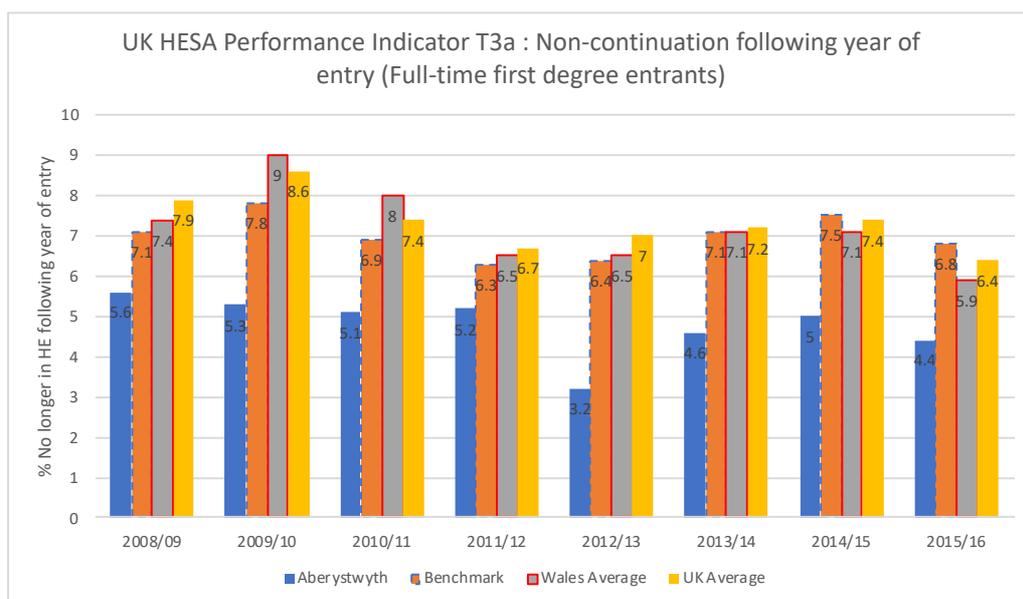
Students Graduating in	% in work or further study where this is of professional level
2017	78.6%
2016	75.6%
2015	68.2%

*Further work*

Whilst proud of this record, and of the achievements of our graduates, we acknowledge the ever increasing pressure of the job market on graduates and we consider that continued investment is needed to ensure that we are able to support our students so that, on graduation, they have the best possible grounding for their future careers.

**Students are supported to succeed in their studies**

A good student experience is also reflected in a higher number of students completing their degrees successfully. Completion and retention rates, as measured by the Higher Education Statistics Agency remain among the best in the sector and through strategic and targeted investment, we seek to maintain and improve on this record. As can be seen from the following graph, Aberystwyth has performed better than the UK average, Welsh Average and the benchmark set for it by HESA, consistently performing 2% points better.



As part of our work to improve retention, we have invested in previous years in changes to our personal tutor system, including an online system to support this and to provide better statistics on attendance and student performance. We are committed to improving our understanding of in-year withdrawal and reducing it through early intervention of our student support services and have been pleased to see that between 2016/17 and 2017/18, in-year withdrawals fell from 4.3% of FTUG students to 4.1%.

## 5.2 Levels of Investment

To build on the improvements we have made to our infrastructure and activities, we have, in successive Fee and Access Plans, sought to develop Plans which enable continuous improvement in activities that support students at all stages of their University life. The objectives of the plan map onto to Welsh Government objectives for supporting students in Wales, and map onto the student journey from pre-entry and aspiration to graduate employability and further study.

The anticipated level of investment in the categories of provision is based on the following principles :

We plan to spend between 15% and 17% of Fee and Access Plan income on our Fee and Access Plan activities.

A substantial proportion of Aberystwyth's Undergraduate students fall into one or more of the categories of groups under-represented in Higher Education. Our work to support Equality of Opportunity for these students through the Fee and Access Plan recognises and responds to a number of barriers to access :

- Financial Barriers – The Department for Education's data on destinations of Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 students in 2016/17 found that while 46% of students from a background identified as disadvantaged (and eligible for pupil premium funding) progressed to Higher Education after Key Stage 5, this was five percentage points lower than their peers. Our Fee and Access Plan for 2020/21 includes provision for bursary and hardship funds, money advice and the provision of work opportunities, to ensure that we have a package of activities which responds to the financial concerns of prospective students.
- Social Barriers – Students from widening access groups often have less 'social capital' than other students. They may lack confidence in their own ability and, particularly in the case of students who are first in family to go into Higher Education, may need extra support and encouragement to negotiate the application process or choose an appropriate course. We will invest in activities that address this, including schools work, activities aimed at specific learner groups (including care leavers) and aspiration-raising activities, including some which are subject-specific.
- Physical Barriers – In order to ensure that no student who may choose to study at Aberystwyth is deterred from this by inaccessibility, we invest in our physical estate and in ensuring that computing and IT equipment supports and is accessible to all students.

Spend on areas identified as supporting the Promotion of Higher Education (student experience) aligns with our strategic objectives (as set out in our Strategic Plan 2018-23) for improving the student experience through investments in our estate and infrastructure (including our digital strategies), investing in the learning and teaching experience and innovative teaching technologies, embedding employability skills to ensure that students have the best possible opportunity to pursue their chosen careers and keeping the student voice at the heart of our activity through supporting activity which involves our students in shaping their HE experience.

Areas of investment will be reviewed annually and will focus on improving performance in, promotion of Higher Education through responsiveness to student voice and satisfaction, retention, achievement and employability.

### 5.3 Embedding and Aligning the Fee and Access Plan strategically

#### **Strategic aims**

The Aberystwyth University Strategic Plan 2018 -23 aims to “empower students to develop as independent learners in a supportive, inclusive and creative bilingual community in order to achieve their potential. Students will graduate as independent critical and free thinkers with both discipline-specific and transferable skills.” A copy may be found at <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/strategicplan/>.

The core objectives of our Strategic Plan are :

#### *Education and Student Experience*

The activities in this Fee and Access Plan under Objective B2 below (*Improve the quality of learning and teaching, including technologies to improve the learning and teaching experience*) will contribute to our Strategic Plan objective to develop our undergraduate provision that leads to graduate-level employment. Furthermore, it contributes to our aim of nurturing innovative teaching and learning and encouraging staff to develop in pedagogy that drives continual improvement in the learning and teaching experience. Investment in employability under Objective B3 (*Strengthen Graduate Employability*) contributes to our commitments to embed employability skills across our programmes, develop opportunities for work experience, and volunteering.

Widening access activities supported through the Fee and Access Plan also contribute to the objectives of the Strategic Plan. Objective A2 (*Provide high quality academic, welfare and financial support to groups under-represented in HE*) will form part of the support network, valued by our students to help us achieve our Strategic Plan objective of improving the student experience. Further contribution will be made to this by Fee and Access Plan Objective A3 (*Improve the higher education experience for students from under-represented groups*), whilst our continued investment into student voice activities under Objective B1 (*Support and Promote the Student Voice*) will support our Strategic Plan aim to keep the student voice at the heart of our activity.

#### *Contribution to Society*

Our Fee and Access Plan Objective A1(*Promote wider and fairer access to higher education*) includes a range of activities targeted at raising the educational aspirations of groups under-represented in higher education. These activities support the stated commitment in our Strategic Plan to improving access to higher education

and encouraging participation, as well as our objective to work with schools to enhance learning across Wales.

Our strategic plan also commits us to improving the impact that we make on the politics, culture economy and public services of Wales and on strengthening working between town and gown through partnership activities and student volunteering. These objectives will be supported by our Fee and Access Plan's commitments under Objective B3 (Strengthen graduate employability) which aims to improve the skillsets of our students so that on graduation they are fully prepared to contribute to the life, culture and economy of Wales and the wider world, and by encouraging students to engage in work experience and volunteering activities to broaden their skillsets.

#### *Welsh language and culture*

We have a strong and proud history of delivering education through the medium of Welsh and remain committed to promoting the language and culture of Wales. Our Strategic Plan outlines our commitment to this, through the promotion of the development of Welsh-medium academic provision and facilitating an environment that enables students to choose to live and learn through the medium of Welsh. This commitment to the Welsh language and culture is mirrored in the Fee and Access Plan in Objective A5 (*Support Welsh Medium provision and encourage take-up of Welsh Medium Courses*).

#### **Finance and Infrastructure**

Our Strategic Plan acknowledges that in order to ensure the success of the objectives outlined, the strategy must be underpinned by a robust financial sustainability that enables planned investment in the estate and infrastructure to improve the experience of students and staff. The Fee and Access Plans spend reflects this principle that estates and infrastructure spend should result in improvements in the learning, teaching and living environment of our students and contribute to their success.

### **5.4 The Learning and Teaching Strategy**

During 2019/20 we will be developing our new Learning and Teaching Strategy, building on the success of our Student Success Plan, an initiative which underpinned and provided a clear strategic steer for activity in many previous Fee and Access Plans. Through the Student Success Plan we achieved improvements in our Personal Tutor system, our use of Learning Analytics, the quality of our learning and teaching spaces and our student support provision (including in mental health provision). This work has been under review in 2018/19 and the new Learning and Teaching Strategy will provide a clear vision for the enhancement of our Learning and Teaching environment, support structures and processes for the period from 2019 onwards.

### **5.5 The Strategic Equality Plan**

During 2019/20 we will be reviewing and refreshing our Strategic Equality Plan, drawing on lessons learned to identify the best activities in which we should be investing in order to provide an inclusive learning and teaching environment, promoted through our recruitment processes, estates management, student support approaches and communications.

## 5.6. Groups Under-represented in Higher Education

We recognise the following groups as under-represented in higher education and/or requiring additional support. These groups are either already recognised by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) as a national indicator of low participation performance in HE or identified by other external bodies as needing additional support to engage with and enter higher education, or they may be groups which Aberystwyth has traditionally found it difficult to recruit.

- Students from areas where families are likely to have no previous background of HE. These are recognised by HESA as a national low participation performance indicator. The latest data available from HESA (for AY 2016/17) shows that 26% of our entrants were from low participation neighbourhoods). Activities targeted at these students will focus on raising aspirations and ensuring transparent information to encourage application to HE, as well as providing practical support WISERD's report on *Access to Higher Education in Wales* (2015) noted that students from the most deprived areas of Wales are up to 7.5% less likely to participate in HE than those from the least deprived areas. .( Relates to Annex B Targets 3,4,5)
- Students within the bottom quintile of lower super output areas in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation. The latest data indicates that c.10% of our Welsh domiciled students are from these areas and targeting potential learners in these areas will be a focus of the work we carry out through our Reaching Wider Programme, which, from 2019/20, will be aligned with our Fee and Access Plans.(Relates to Annex B Targets 1,2)
- Students with disabilities (around 17% of our FTUG Home/EU students declare a disability). Students with disabilities are also recognised by HESA as a national low participation performance indicator (in the latest published HESA Performance Indicators, 10.8% of our FTUG First Degree students were recorded as being in receipt of Disabled Student Allowance, against an expected benchmark of 7.6%). Activities targeted at these students will focus on ensuring equality of access and responsive support throughout the student journey. (Relates to Annex B targets 8, 9,10)
- Mature Students (around 12% of our students are registered as mature – in that they are 21 or over at age of entry). HESA recognises mature students as a national low participation group. These students may have particular support needs having been out of education, entered via non-traditional routes, or have additional care responsibilities. Adult learners are recognised as being a priority group through the Reaching Wider Programme. Encouraging more adult learners to return to education will help us respond to Welsh Government priorities for a more highly skilled workforce and will build confidence in learners who may have withdrawn from education for a range of reasons. (Relates to Annex B target 7)
- Students from lower income families. As noted above, students from lower-income families are less likely to enter HE. (Relates to Annex B target 12)
- Students from a care background or estranged from their family, and Young Adult Carers. These students make up a small number of our student cohort, but have particular needs as they lack the support that most of our students receive from family. According to a 2014 UCAS report, only 6% of care leavers enter HE (compared with 40% of the general population). UCAS identifies the barriers to entry as being lack of information about available support. We work hard through our Centre for Widening Participation and Social Inclusion to ensure that they are

provided with the support they need to fulfil their potential. (Relates to Annex B target 6)

- Students from minority ethnic backgrounds (around 19.3% of our students).
- Welsh medium students (around 10% of our FT Home/EU students declare themselves as 'fluent'.) Part of our work through the 2019/20 Fee and Access Plan is to increase the number of fluent students who take up some form of their studies through the medium of Welsh, as well as students who have good Welsh but lack confidence in using it academically and professionally. (Relates to Annex B targets 14, 15)
- We also recognise the additional support which is needed by students with non-traditional qualifications and students entering on Year 0 programmes. With the correct support these students can progress to do well and much of our Fee and Access Plan aims to provide opportunities for students to reach their full potential (Relates to Annex B target 27).

Fee Plan investments support these students in two ways:

- Through activities targeted at groups under-represented in higher education and intended to widen access and improve retention.
- Through activities accessible by all students but where the specific needs of students from under-represented groups are given additional attention to ensure that all potential barriers to access are removed and where the potential benefits to students under-represented in higher education are emphasised. There are also activities which, though accessible to all students, are more likely to be accessed by students who need additional support (e.g. our Student Support services activities).

### **5.7 Reaching Wider**

As part of our proposed spend on promoting wider and fairer access to higher education (Objective A1), we will continue to invest in the work of the Reaching Wider partnership programme, through our programme plans to 2020/21.

Through our Reaching Wider Programme Plan 2018/19 to 2020/21, we have set out a programme of activities focused on the following groups

- Post-16 young people in our region, focused on those who fall in the two lower quintiles of the WIMD at school and LSOA level
- Adults without Level 4 qualification (providing progression to Level 4 provision and above)
- Looked after children Wales-wide, care leavers and young carers.

The Programme Plans include a range of activities including:

- Pre-entry work with looked after children,
- Additional Open and Visit Day support for those from Widening Access backgrounds,
- Targeted work to attract Reaching Wider groups to our flagship Summer University programme,
- Enrichment days and schools visits in targeted schools,
- Support for the Welsh Baccalaureate Experience in target schools
- Work to assist with transition from secondary to HE.

Throughout this Fee and Access Plan, where work is partially or wholly supported through our Reaching Wider programme, we will indicate this.

Through our Reaching Wider Programme plans, we will work closely with partner HEIS and local partners working with post-14 education, with a view to breaking down barriers to HE and raising educational aspirations and success for people in priority groups. Heavily targeted Reaching Wider activity will provide for specific hard-to-reach groups, whilst the more general schools and widening access activities will cater for a wider cohort. Prospective students who may not fall into the specific categories of need identified by Reaching Wider, then, will still be provided for.

**5.8. How we will measure success**

We are committed to robust review of our Fee and Access Plan. Activity within the Fee and Access Plan is regularly reported to University Committees, many of which are sub-committees of our Executive, Senate or Governing Body :

Fee Plan Activity	Committee Responsible
Widening Access	Recruitment and Marketing Board
Scholarships and Bursaries	Fees and Scholarships Group
Welsh Language	Welsh Language Operational Group Welsh Medium Provision Committee
Student Experience	Student Experience Committee
Technology Led Teaching	Technology Enhanced Learning Group

Additionally, we have introduced a Fee and Access Plan Monitoring Group, which includes representation from the University Executive and the Students’ Union. This meets three times a year to monitor the progress of activity and expenditure. The group also has a mandate for reviewing whether the activities we include in our Fee and Access Plans are effective in addressing the Plan’s objectives of breaking down barriers to access, supporting students to succeed and improving the student experience. The monitoring group will be tasked with developing a report to be made available to our Executive and Governing Body on the progress of our Fee and Access Plan activities and their effectiveness, to feed into an annual review of Fee and Access Plan priorities. Our governing body also receives our Annual Monitoring Statement on the Fee and Access Plans, which includes assurance about compliance with fee plan objectives and fee levels.

In monitoring the success of our Fee and Access Plans the group will take into account:

- Progress towards the targets set out in successive plans.
- The metrics set out in section 5.6 above, seeking to identify whether the activities supported by the Fee and Access Plan are having a positive impact on the groups identified for support by it. Some of these metrics will be benchmarked against the performance of other Welsh or UK HEIs.
- Feedback from students via our MEQs, internal surveys and other student engagement data collections (e.g. NSS), including text comments which relate to activities supported through the Fee and Access Plan.

The data gathered will be accompanied by reflective evidence from key members of staff involved in leadership of Fee and Access Plan activities as well as from Students’ Union Officers.

## Objectives and Provision

**In the event of lower fee income, some deliverables may be affected.**

### **A) Measures to support individuals under-represented in Higher Education and ensure Equality of Opportunity**

*1) Promote wider and fairer access to higher education, raising educational aspirations and helping to prepare students from under-represented groups for higher education.*

#### **Aberystwyth Summer University (relates to Aberystwyth Reaching Wider Programme Plans)**

During 2019/20 our Summer University programme will be reviewed, building on research undertaken into the first fifteen years of this scheme, which has a proven track record of raising aspiration and confidence amongst students with no family history of higher education. Potential new models of delivery will be considered and targets for 2020/21 will be set. The scheme is for Welsh-domiciled students from low participation neighbourhoods or from a care background, but consideration is also given to other priority groups, including those, from low income families, from under-represented ethnic groups and students declaring a disability.

#### **Aspiration Raising Activities (relates to Aberystwyth Reaching Wider Programme Plans)**

Fee and Access income will continue to support our work in widening participation and social inclusion. Close working with the Reaching Wider North and Mid Wales partnership (through the three year strategic plan) will continue to add value to these activities and raise aspiration in groups not served by the partnership's central funds.

As well as working closely with the Reaching Wider partnership, Aberystwyth has commitments to Reaching Wider through its own Reaching Wider Programme Plans for 2018/19 to 2020/21. As part of the Aberystwyth Reaching Wider Programme Plan we are committed to a range of outreach activities in Wales, including Adult Education programmes in the community, residentials and day workshops targeted at young people identified at risk of low achievement, tailored Advice and Guidance sessions held in schools and colleges to help participants make confident decisions about their future, and enrichment Days.

Fee Plan funds will contribute to raising the aspirations of students from groups under-represented in higher education, encouraging children to see Higher Education as a viable choice.

This will also include adults in Wales who have no level 4 or above qualification and include advice and guidance, as well as first steps confidence building courses.

**Support for care leavers, looked-after-children, recognised Young Carers and Stand Alone/estranged/unsupported young people (Aberystwyth Reaching Wider Programme Plans)**

We will provide students from a care background, young carers, and students estranged from their families with access to a pipeline of support from pre-application (including priority to our residential programmes and support at Open Days and Visit days) through the application process, support on arrival (with named contacts to help students settle in) and ongoing support through their university career.

Our Aber Care Leaver (and associated groups) Bursaries offer provide financial support to ease the pressure on students who often lack other avenues of support.

**Foundation Years**

From September 2019, we plan to increase the number of degrees with Foundation Year entry which are available as additional pathways to our existing schemes. Degrees with a foundation year are a valuable tool in HE for widening access in enabling students who wish to pursue a degree but may lack the necessary qualifications to build their skills in an introductory year. A range of study skills modules is included in the foundation year and we are investing in the development of this to ensure that it is tailored to the needs of these students in building confidence and maximising their success of progression. In the 2020/21 cycle we will review the success of this initiative with a view to continuous improvement of these schemes.

**Aber Schools Talks in disadvantaged areas (relates to Aberystwyth Reaching Wider Programme Plans)**

Schools Liaison staff work in partnership with schools to provide talks and workshops to students, teachers and advisors on a range of university-related topics, to ensure that students from all backgrounds have access to the information and tools they need to make the right choices about higher education, seeking in particular to engage with students who are first in their family to go to University or who, for some other reason, lack the social capital of their peers. The team works to help students make sense of the UCAS process and navigate the complicated journey of choosing and applying to universities, provides advice on sources of funding and helps with drafting personal statements. Mock Interview sessions help students to build confidence, and talks on money management help to break down financial barriers. The aim is to ensure that no student is disadvantaged at application stage through lack of access to information or support. Applicants receive an explanation about Targeted Admissions, whereby students from Pathway Schools in Wales and the bottom 40% worse performing schools in the Rest of the UK receive reduced offers.

**Intended Outcomes**

Our aim is that the schemes will contribute to the widening access objectives set in this Plan by :

- Building the confidence of the participants and adding to their skillset, increasing the likelihood that they will progress to higher or further education or enter the workplace.

- Contributing to the University's performance in recruiting from groups recognised as under-represented in Higher Education, including low participation neighbourhoods, students from a care background, mature learners,
- Contributing to the retention of students from a care background at the early stage of the academic year – the investment in support for care leavers is designed to help them settle into University life and reduce the potential for withdrawal in the early transition stage of the University year.

*2) Improve the retention of students from groups under-represented in higher education and support their progression and completion through the provision of high quality academic, welfare and financial support*

### **Financial Support**

Our bursary and awards programme has historically been targeted to support widening participation and student success to ensure that, as much as possible, there is equality of opportunity for all prospective students. Our bursary programme is currently under review and decision on the form and precise focus of support from 2020 onwards will be communicated via our bursaries website and other communications routes, but our priority will continue to be on groups under-represented in higher education. We review our bursary provision regularly to ensure that bursaries are provided to those students who are most vulnerable to hardship during their studies, assessed on a basis of need and whether students are able to access differential levels of maintenance support from devolved jurisdiction or local authority sources. The bursary support forms part of a targeted overall package designed to address the risk of non-continuation of students from low-income or LPN areas and other priority groups.

### **Hardship Funds**

To supplement our widening access activities we are committed to providing support for those who find themselves in financial difficulties whilst at University. To this end, we continue to provide a hardship fund aimed at providing relief to students who encounter financial difficulties due to extenuating academic, personal or family circumstances. This takes the form of grants to supplement any shortfall between income and essential outgoings, short term grants for students experiencing delays in receipt of student funding or "Aber card top ups" for emergency situations where students find themselves without money for food. The fund is particularly relevant to students from disadvantaged backgrounds or estranged students/care leavers etc who do not have family support to fall back on during a financial crisis or difficulty. Without this fund students might otherwise consider withdrawing from University or seek work opportunities which could hinder their academic progress.

### **Financial Advice**

We continue to support an Advice, Information and Money Service, which administers the University's Student Hardship fund and provides a range of advice and information to students through 'drop in' advice sessions, and by telephone and email.

## **Welfare and Accessibility Support**

### **Accessibility Support**

Specialist support services supplement the above. Our Accessibility Service coordinates the support needs/reasonable adjustments of disabled students, those with chronic health conditions and specific learning differences and is currently building expertise on supporting transgender students. Included in this service is the 121 support provided to disabled students via the Disabled Students Allowance which in February 2019 achieved an accreditation score via DSA QAF of 98.85%

In addition to the Hardship Fund the University also sets aside an amount for 1-2-1 support for disabled students who are not eligible for the Disabled Students Allowance or who are waiting for a decision regarding their eligibility for DSA. This fund enables students to receive a range of enabling support (such as a specialist mentor or tutor) on an interim or longer term basis, thus supporting progression and attainment.

For students who believe they may be dyslexic, but who are concerned about the cost of paying for a full Educational Psychologist Assessment the University's Accessibility Service provides free 1-2-1 screening. The outcome enables students to make an informed decision as to whether to proceed to a full assessment which would facilitate access to a range of reasonable adjustments which in turn would support retention and course completion

### **Mental Health Support**

While not duplicating statutory provision, our Student Wellbeing Service provides support for students who have a diagnosis of an enduring mental health condition or who are experiencing short term emotional/psychological issues in connection with student life. In addition to 1-2-1 sessions with a qualified mental health practitioner or counsellor, the Service also provides a range of workshops for students on common themes such as low mood/managing change/exam stress as well as supporting staff in their interactions with students in distress. The Service works closely with the local Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment Service at Hywel Dda Health Authority to ensure students who have experienced a crisis receive a seamless service on return to University.

The focus of these services is to support academic excellence while promoting social and emotional development, so that our students leave university with a toolkit of skills and competencies for their life after graduation.

These services are advertised via talks to new students, presence at open days, Freshers' Fairs, student handbooks and in various events around campus.

### **Acclimatisation for Students with Aspergers/Autism**

We will continue to support and develop our 2-day acclimatisation event for prospective students with Aspergers/Autism and their families, to aid the smooth transition to University life. This will form part of our work to ensure equality of opportunity for students with particular and often complex learning support needs,

to ensure that they are still able to demonstrate their ability and fulfil their potential.

We plan to duplicate this approach to include an acclimatisation event for students with mental health issues.

## **Academic Support**

### **Peer Mentoring Schemes**

Working closely with the Students' Union the University has established a University wide departmental peer mentoring scheme. This supplements our existing Signpost Mentoring Schemes (which primarily supports students from underrepresented groups, e.g. care leavers/estranged students) and our specialist mentoring schemes which support students with social communication issues and mental health issues. As well as providing an additional support mechanism for students the mentoring opportunities also assist student mentors in developing transferrable employability skills.

### **Aber Skills Hub**

We will continue to develop and maintain an on-line Study Skills Hub, developed through a strand in the Student Success Plan, which provides students with access to a range of skills development information before arrival and throughout their first year (essay writing, presentation skills, referencing etc). The Hub aims to help students prepare for success. Engagement with the hub is encouraged through a range of student communications, including Welcome Week Information, Information Services advice, Departmental handbooks and advice and the personal tutor system. The Hub provides training and support on how to avoid Unfair Academic Practice and Plagiarism

In particular, the Hub aims to address the problem of students not wishing to ask for help with skills through perceived stigma and embarrassment. Use of the Skills Hub is monitored through statistics provided by the AberLearn Blackboard and Content Management System Teams. The Aber Skills Hub in particular addresses the needs of those students who are from low participation neighbourhoods or are the first in their family to go to university, as well as providing additional support to those students who entered university on a low tariff and/or non-traditional qualification and may need additional help to improve their performance

### **Intended Outcomes**

Our aim is that the schemes will contribute to the widening access objectives set in this Plan by :

- Reducing the risk that students from low income backgrounds will need to withdraw from their studies due to financial hardship, or will need to take additional paid work which may interfere with their academic success.
- Providing an additional safety net for those students who may not fall into a protected group but may find themselves in need. We recognise that any student may, as a result of particular circumstances, find themselves in need and try to remain flexible to help students on the basis of individual need.

- Providing practical skills to students who may not have learned budgeting etc prior to university.
- Removing physical barriers to access so that students with a disability are not disadvantaged. Improving learning outcomes for students with access needs and reducing withdrawal.
- Some areas of provision, e.g. mentoring programmes, are open to all students, but they are often of greater relevance to students from priority widening access groups. We want to ensure that no student falls through the net of support and, whilst tailoring certain activities to the specific needs of students from low participation and other priority backgrounds, some of these schemes remain more widely open, to ensure that we capture all students in need.

3) *Improve the higher education experience for students from under-represented groups.*

**Estates work to improve accessibility**

Welcoming, accessible spaces are essential to promote the success of students from under-represented groups, We are committed to continuing to improve access to our Estate for our students, staff and visitors and to ensuring that our students encounter no physical barriers to accessing education as well as to ensuring that spaces are welcoming and comfortable for study. Our estates work supports inclusive curriculum, including the regular use of lecture recording and hearing loops, enabling students with a wide range of physical and learning needs to access their study materials when and how best suits their particular needs. We will continue to invest in accessibility infrastructure to assist with this.

**Aber Students Union Grant**

In addition to the support services offered through the University, students are able to access support through the Students' Union, including the frontline Nightline Peer Advisory Service and academic support *via* the support of over 300 course and departmental representatives.

We will work to ensure that we follow best practice and HEFCW guidance in the funding of our Students' Union to ensure that it is able to support students and contribute effectively to the development of an excellent student experience at Aberystwyth.

**Intended Outcomes**

Our aim is that the schemes will contribute to the widening access objectives set in this plan by :

- Reducing the physical barriers to education faced by students with disabilities, investing in estates works which will work for them.
- Ensuring that no student is moved to withdraw from their education on the grounds of feeling unwelcome, and that all our students feel valued and confident.
- A more equal, supportive and inclusive Higher Education experience.

- The Students' Union grant supports all students, but the support and campaigning services provided with the element covered in this part of the Fee and Access Plan is of greater benefit to students in groups where the risk of withdrawal may be higher. We are proud of the work our Students' Union does to raise the student voice and campaign for their rights, and our academic representatives work hard to ensure that even the least confident student is able to make their voice heard.

4) *Support the progress to employment or further study of groups under-represented in higher education.*

**Encouraging and Enabling Students from Widening Participation Background to Engage with Work Programmes At Home and Abroad**

With a 10% increase in the number of students registering for industrial year programmes between 2018/19 and 2019/20, there is an anticipated year-on-year increase that needs to be supported. From CareerTrack data taken in 2018/19, it is noted that the percentage of students from WP backgrounds who have participated in overseas experiences is half of that for the wider cohort of students. Also, a slightly higher percentage of those from WP backgrounds have had no work experience at all. In addition, the percentage of students who have declared a disability who have had no previous work experience is significantly higher than for the remainder of the cohort. This further highlights the need to clearly identify and target these specific students with activities that will encourage and support them in undertaking such options. The primary focus for 2020/21 will be to work on a one-to-one basis with these students to identify and assess a range of opportunities and to prepare the students to make effective applications for these options. An increased focus on identifying and promoting summer internships, study abroad opportunities and the various travel awards offered by the University will be prioritised.

The continued roll out of the content of module CD20110 to prepare students to compete effectively for industrial year / Year in Employment Scheme placements and to recognise the planning that is required to prepare for the world of work will target a greater number of academic departments as their industrial years commence and progress. By merging elements of this with the approach taken by Aber+, the aim is to increase engagement by those with declared differences and from WP backgrounds. The industrial year skills module is open to all, but it is our experience that this provision is of particular benefit to students who may enter university with low social capital or with few aspirations to work abroad. We are able to target messages to specifically appeal to students from Fee and Access Plan priority groups and schemes such as the AberForward Summer Scheme will focus on those with little or no work experience (a category into which a higher percentage of under-represented groups fall).

AberForward Summer Scheme will continue to focus on those with little or no work experience. As a higher percentage of under-represented groups fall into this category then priority will be given to them to engage with the scheme.

Promotion of the Year in Employment Scheme will be enhanced to ensure that students from disciplines that don't offer an integrated industrial year can also

benefit from this important experience. As well as individual support by Careers Consultants to identified students, a greater emphasis will be placed on promoting vacancies and utilising ApAber to disseminate opportunities.

If subscription continues to GoingGlobal, then enhanced promotion of the international opportunities offered on this portal will also be fed into the preparation and promotional activities noted above.

An existing example of collaboration is the Aber+ Scheme. This scheme is a collaboration between the University's Accessibility Service and Careers Service to support disabled students (in particular those with social communication issues such as Asperger's Syndrome) in their engagement with the Careers Service. The approach taken by Aber+, to deliver activities in familiar surroundings and within the comfort zone of academic departments, will support and increase engagement of those with disclosed disabilities and will be expanded into academic departments to support the work of preparing students to undertake significant work experience.

The success of the GO Wales scheme at Aberystwyth in particular highlights the need for and value of dedicated support for under-represented groups and those most vulnerable to the vagaries of the graduate employment market. Closer collaboration between the Careers Service, Accessibility Service and Wellbeing Service under the Aber+ banner will aid the sustainability of such provision services given the uncertainty surrounding funding for GO Wales from 2022.

#### **Targeting Careers Support at Students from Under-represented Groups**

The year-on-year increase in the number of students engaging with the Careers Service in longer length interventions such as guidance interviews and GO Wales appointments (one hour per intervention), as opposed to shorter and quicker drop-in style services, further highlights the need for the bespoke services offered to our students to be continued and enhanced. With further emphasis being placed on providing services to under-represented students where they are most comfortable engaging with the Careers Service, resources will be re-allocated appropriately across more diverse locations to encourage enhanced interactions.

Work will continue to embed skills recognition into the curriculum and to include the AberGrad Skills Checklist in a range of activities as well as within curriculum content. Enhanced personal tutoring provision utilising the AberGrad Skills Checklist and Planning Grid, inclusion of these into core modules on a wider range of degree disciplines, as an integrated part of the CD20110 module and in on-line module provision are all elements that will increase student awareness of their skills so that they are able to articulate these more effectively when competing for graduate level jobs and applying for further studies.

#### **Wellbeing and Confidence Building workshops**

For students such as those who are disabled, have social communication issues, or students experiencing emotional/psychological issues, the skills development activity already provided by the Careers Service will be enhanced by:

- Workshops run by the Wellbeing Service on issues such as managing change, anxiety or low mood or boosting confidence.

- Development of skills in areas such as time management and organisational skills delivered 1-2-1 during specialist mentoring or specialist study skills sessions within the Accessibility Service
- “Work” experience opportunities provided to students who are recruited as either Signpost or departmental peer mentors

#### **Intended Outcomes**

Our aim is that the schemes will contribute to the widening access objectives set in this Plan by :

- Building confidence and life and work skills and improving the employment prospects of students from under-represented groups.

#### *5) Support Welsh Medium provision and encourage take-up of Welsh Medium Courses.*

#### **Support for Welsh Medium provision**

Through investing in Welsh medium provision we will seek to protect the provision already available and also to develop further modules so that as broad a range of subject areas as possible can be delivered through the medium of Welsh. In particular, we will continue to work to improve the availability of Welsh Medium provision in STEM subjects. Our Centre for Welsh Language Services provides practical support to academic departments in developing modules, courses and projects through the medium of Welsh as well as providing the resource for the development of more Welsh medium materials. The Centre supports the wider use of Welsh across the university through workshops and short learning sessions with a view to increasing the proportion of staff who are able to offer a bilingual service to our students.

Our Welsh Language Integrated Strategic Plan (approved in 2015) aligns to a very distinct strand of our new Strategic Plan, but runs parallel and closely aligned to the Learning and Teaching Strategy. The integrated strategic plan may be found at <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/media/departmental/cwls/pdfs/IntegratedStrategicPlanForTheWelshLanguage.pdf>

In addition to our own investments, we acknowledge the valuable work with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol and will maximise the opportunities presented by the Coleg, including investment opportunities funded by the Coleg for new staff and provision, PhD scholarships and support for the take-up of the Linguistic Skills Certificate beyond those students funded through the CCC.

#### **Intended Outcomes**

Our aim is that the schemes will contribute to the widening access objectives set in this plan by :

- Expanding Aberystwyth’s bilingualism, ensuring both that we are able to provide more academic and service provision through the medium of Welsh and also that we can encourage more students to opt for Welsh medium teaching. Investing in Welsh medium teaching and learning resources helps ensure that there is more Welsh medium material in a wider range of academic subjects.

## B) Measures to Promote Higher Education

### 1) *Support and promote the student voice.*

#### **Students Union Support**

We will continue to support the work of our Students' Union to improve the student experience, including their work to encourage students to engage with extra-curricular activities through the provision of entertainment and sports activities and other societies. Engaging with these activities supports the student experience in a multitude of ways, including improving physical and mental health, contributing to retention through reducing feelings of isolation and building communities and building inter-personal skills and confidence levels. All of this can contribute to a student's academic success as well as to their overall health and wellbeing. Our students union also engenders a campaigning ethos, putting the student voice at the heart of its activities and encouraging students to engage fully with the University, making their voice heard and becoming partners with the University in their education.

#### **Your Voice Matters – putting the student voice at the centre**

We will continue to provide and develop a range of services around the student voice under the umbrella "Your Voice Matters". The key aim is to provide platforms that will help us to engage our students to work with us in improving their student experience.

- Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs) - help students influence curriculum design and shape their education. All undergraduate modules are surveyed, with each module coordinator writing an action plan in response to the questionnaire.
- Tell us Now (TUN) – enables students to feedback anonymously to the University about any aspect of their student experience. A team triage and analyse the information and liaise with departments to ensure that issues raised are followed up.
- Your Voice Matters (YVM) - a communications campaign which outlines how student feedback is used to improve the learning and teaching experience.
- Students' Union Academic reps and Staff-Student Consultative Committees (SSCCs). We will also continue to work with the Students' Union on standardising the reps system and SSCCs. This includes standardisation on rep elections, training, role descriptions, SSCC meetings, minutes and agendas. These allow for dialogue on all aspects of the student experience.

**Intended Outcomes**

Our aim is that the schemes will contribute to the Promotion of Higher Education objectives set in this Plan by :

- Improving the student experience through increasing the academic success of our students and contributing to their health and wellbeing, resulting in continuing levels of satisfaction and low withdrawal rates.
- Encouraging high levels of engagement from the student body with our feedback schemes and the academic representation schemes

*2) Improve the quality of learning and teaching, including technologies to improve the learning and teaching experience*

**AberLearn and ApAber and other Online Learning Technologies**

Through our ApAber mobile app we will continue to support a broadening of student access to their own data. Developed in response to student requests for easier access to day-to-day information. ApAber supports the Students' Union voting for Student Union Officers and Course Representatives and provides easy access to Academic and Exam timetables, AberCard Balances, Attendance records, student engagement and teaching room locations. We will continue to evolve the app in response to student feedback.

We will continue to invest in work which enhances the teaching and learning environment. This includes our virtual learning environment (VLE) which gives learners access to a wide range of learning resources and activities, such as presentations and course documents, audio/video content (including lecture recordings), online activities (e.g. tests, discussion boards), and reading lists. The E-learning Group, within Information Services, provides training and support to staff to ensure that all technology-enhanced learning (TEL) activities reflect best practice. We will explore the use of in-class polling software to promote active learning within lecture and seminar settings. This will include providing support and training for staff designing polling activities as well as exploring options for central provision of polling software.

On-line learning enables a more flexible approach to learning to support retention and achievement. Using tools such as lecture capture, polling software and VLE-based activities, academic staff are able to use face-to-face sessions as active learning opportunities rather than being used for the delivery of content.

The Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit (LTELL), housed within Information Services, works with academic colleagues to ensure the consistency of students' experience of TEL, as well as a range of other pedagogic enhancements. An annual Technology-Enhanced Learning conference is held each summer, with other similar good practice sharing events held throughout the rest of the year (including Academy Forums and a Mini Conference) giving staff the opportunity to share their experiences and learn from best practice across the Institution (and beyond).

AU delivers several programmes using Distance Learning and on-line methods and will continue to support AU academic units wishing to deliver content through on-line

distance learning. The E-learning Group offer training sessions designed specifically for those who create online content for Distance Learning students.

### **Upgrades to IT Provision and Library resources**

We will invest funding for our library provision and learning resource, support for reading list software and associated services and information literacy skills development opportunities for students. We will ensure our opening hours meet the needs of our students, including investment in 24/7 opening during term time.

We will invest in IT infrastructure and services to meet the needs of our students and the changing use of technology in Higher Education.

### **Intended Outcomes**

Our aim is that the schemes will contribute to the Promotion of Higher Education objectives set in this Plan by :

- Ensuring that we are able to provide students with a better equipped digital estate, with high quality resources, engaging with modern technology and listening to the needs of its student body in the provision of new resources. This promotes Higher Education in Wales as a destination of choice and improve the quality of the learning and teaching provision we are able to offer to students.

### *3) Strengthen graduate employability .*

#### **Careers Support**

Working collaboratively with colleagues across the department and institution, the Careers Service will provide students with a range of opportunities to aid and support them in developing appropriate skillsets that will meet future employers' needs. In addition, activities that empower students to recognise their skills and to be able to articulate these to future employers and further study course providers will be prioritised. In addition to those referenced in A8 above, these activities will include:

- Bespoke and tailored career education programmes that meet the specific needs of students in our diverse academic disciplines
- Skills development workshop programme across the entire academic year
- Development workshops to enhance their application-related skills
- Employer-led workshops and presentations on-campus across the year
- Promotion of recruitment and information fairs across the UK
- Preparatory instruction for securing industrial year /Year in Employment Scheme placements
- Support on securing summer internships
- Specialist guidance skills to empower students to make rational and informed career choices
- Provision of AberConnections as a portal for students to access all vacancies, workshops and employer-led events throughout the year,

guidance appointments, drop-in times, as well as register interest in placements and industrial years

- Facilitation of eMentoring opportunities
- Promotion of international vacancies and opportunities

With students requesting larger Careers Fairs rather than bespoke Faculty based ones, the development of 2 major fairs each year will continue to be monitored as to its usefulness. A broader range of employers will be approached and all efforts will be made to increase the numbers in attendance. With a representative range of employers covering all disciplines, potential career options for all subject areas will be provided. In addition, efforts will continue to ensure that the employers in attendance represent public, private and third sector as well as diverse sized organisations.

### **Work Placements and workshops**

Support with integrated industrial years and the Year in Employment Scheme continues, as noted previously. Much focus will also be directed towards summer internships, an increasing number of which are appearing for students ending their first year of undergraduate studies. Increasing engagement with such schemes will also support the uptake of industrial year placements. The Careers Service will work with the Accessibility Service to ensure that disabled students, care leavers or transgender students are not disadvantaged in finding placement opportunities.

With the Year in Employment Scheme approaching its 44<sup>th</sup> year, efforts will continue to promote this to all students whose departments do not currently offer integrated industrial year programmes.

Support will continue for those on integrated industrial years, with the further development of the CD20110 module and development of on-line provision for students to utilise in accordance with their own needs and time frames.

AberForward Summer Scheme will focus on providing work experience to those who have little or no prior experience and are vulnerable in competing for opportunities in the broader labour market.

The AberForward Boost Camp will provide a final impetus to students: with declared disabilities, from WP backgrounds, with little or no work experience, as well as those who have failed to engage with the Careers Service during their studies. In a final attempt to help students prepare for their next steps, the Boost Camp aims to present students with their impending options and with strategies that will help them compete in the graduate labour market.

AberWorks continues to offer paid casual work to students during their studies, providing financial aid to many and useful practical work experience across a range of occupations.

### **Entrepreneurial Support and work with Local and National Employers**

The network of professional bodies, employers, alumni and organisations with whom the institution operates continues to develop. With close ties to such professional bodies as the Institute of Student Employers, National Association of Student Employment Service, Enterprise Educators UK, and the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services there is much work done nationally and in regional groups to develop effective networks that enhance the career prospects

of students in Wales. Regional Welsh groups exist within these bodies to focus attention on the Welsh context, especially within AGCAS where AGCAS Cymru Wales (established in the Autumn of 2017) is forging ahead with ensuring that the regional agenda is at the forefront of the work being undertaken by Careers Services in HEIs in Wales.

The collaborative CRM system utilised internally by both the Careers Service and the Research, Business & Innovation department ensures the best possible utilisation of links with employers and organisations across Wales, in particular with SMEs that are so vital to the economy of the region. Their involvement across the campus directly with students and within the curriculum provides additional opportunities for students in to engage directly with employers and to develop their commercial awareness.

Additional networks are being formed and up-dated on a regular basis via continued participation in a number of regional task and working groups such as the Ceredigion Economic Regeneration Strategy group, the Mid Wales Growth Deal Forum, Business Wales, Antur Teifi, Be the Spark, Mid Wales Enterprise Hub, Aberystwyth Innovation & Enterprise Campus, etc.

**CareerTrack**

CareerTrack data continue to provide a rich source of information on the career thinking of students. The data also provides insights into the geographical regions that students feel are likely to be their location post-graduation. This allows the Career Service to explore labour market intelligence related to the main geographical regions of interest to students who are nearing the point of graduation. Making students more aware of the choice open to them in a larger graduate labour market will be the focus of much attention, providing data directly to students to show them where vacancies exist and which geographical regions could provide potential futures for them as next stapes.

**Intended Outcomes**

Our aim is that the schemes will contribute to the Promotion of Higher Education objectives set in this Plan by :

- Building the reputation of Welsh HE as a home for quality graduates with high level skillsets.

*4) Encourage aspiration to higher education amongst potential students.*

**Aber Schools Talks**

As well as work to ensure students from all backgrounds have access to the information and tools they need to make the right choices about higher education, our schools liaison teams will continue to work with schools across the UK providing curriculum-enhancing work and facilitating access to academics to help foster academic engagement and enthusiasm for their subject amongst A-level students.

**Entrance Scholarships**

We offer scholarships and awards to encourage excellence and aspiration, based on competitive application and an examination.

**Intended Outcomes**

Our aim is that the schemes will contribute to the Promotion of Higher Education objectives set in this Plan by :

- Breaking down assumptions that HE is only for specific groups.
- Providing help and advice to students in navigating the application system.
- Encouraging students to strive for excellence in their academic endeavours.

*5) Improve the student experience through initiatives to enhance wellbeing.*

**Mentoring and the Personal Tutor system**

The University provides a range of support service to facilitate student progression and attainment. Each student is allocated a Personal Tutor in their academic department. A sub-group of the University’s Student Experience Committee has a remit for monitoring and enhancing the operation of the scheme

**Estates work to improve the student experience**

We will continue to invest in our estate, ensuring that our learning and teaching spaces are fit for purpose and keep in step with changing demands for flexible spaces required by modern teaching techniques. We will also develop our estate so that the student experience is supported by spaces which encourage group working, quality leisure experiences and sporting activities for health and mental well-being. In 2020/21 we anticipate that we will be working through a cohesive strategy for development of the key social areas, improving connectivity between spaces and the quality of social space to revive a sense of civic place that support students wellbeing and the living and learning experience.

We consider the management of our estate to be an important factor in the health and wellbeing of our students and in supporting the Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship agenda. We will work in partnership with our Students’ Union, as well as home-grown initiatives to promote biodiversity, reduce waste and encourage energy efficiency

**Sports Centre**

Fee and Access Plan funds will be used to continue free membership of the on-campus Sports Centre to students in Aberystwyth University residences. Since introducing this innovation in 2017/18, use of the Sports Centre has doubled; and specific sessions have been put on to encourage all students, whatever their previous background in terms of physical activity, to participate in Sport.

**Intended Outcomes**

Our aim is that the schemes will contribute to the Promotion of Higher Education objectives set in this Plan by :

- Promoting health and wellbeing, contributing to a positive environment on campus and an excellent student experience and improving student performance through encouraging a good work/life balance.
- Providing a campus environment that reflects our commitment to sustainability.
- Embedding the principles of Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development through encouraging sustainability and care for the environment.

2020/21 fee and access plan application submission to HEFCW <sup>1</sup>	
Date of Governing Body approval:	02/09/2019
Governing Body authorised signature:	
Date:	02/09/2019

**Institutional fee and access plan 2020/21****Table A: Fee levels and fee income and investment, 2020/21**

Institution name: #REF!  
 Institution UKPRN: 10007856

This Annex must be completed whether or not you have specified fee levels in your fee and access plan. Institutions that have not specified fee levels must complete this document using their forecasted fee income for 2020/21. We accept these figures are forecasts only and not a fee level commitment.

Data relating to FT UG and FT PGCE (QTS) courses that you have control of, that come under the current fee regime in 2020/21, are to be returned in this table.

If you provide courses that have a year out, such as a year out on an industrial placement, or a year abroad, and different fee levels are charged for these years, this should be taken account of in calculating the average fee and the total fee income returned on this table.

For further guidance and definitions used in this table, please see **Section Four** of the guidance.

Have you specified fee levels in your fee and access plan? See paragraph 75.	Enter Yes or No
	Yes

a) What is your highest proposed fee rate for:

	£
Full-time undergraduate	9,000
Full-time PGCE (QTS)	9,000

b) Will the proposed fees in a) (above) be charged for all full-time undergraduate higher education and PGCE (QTS) provision at your institution or provided on your behalf?

	Enter Yes or No
Full-time undergraduate	No
Full-time PGCE (QTS)	Yes

c) If no, what is your average (mean) fee per full-time undergraduate and PGCE (QTS) student likely to be?

	£
Full-time undergraduate	8,835
Full-time PGCE (QTS)	9,000
All FT UG/PGCE (QTS) students in plan	8,838

d) What current fee regime income do you expect to receive in 2020/21? You should include all fee income received per full-time undergraduate and PGCE (QTS) student.

	£
Full-time undergraduate	41,646,900
Full-time PGCE (QTS)	900,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>42,546,900</b>

e) Please provide details of how much fee income you expect to invest in relation to equality of opportunity and promotion of higher education. Where higher education providers had 2019/20 plans the proportion of total income invested in 2020/21 must be at least the proportion invested in 2019/20. For those applicants, HEFCW has provided below the 2019/20 amount and percentage of total income.

	2020/21		2019/20	
	£	% of total income	£	% of total income
Total amount to be invested in:				
Equality of opportunity	3,502,000	8.2%	3,968,000	7.7%
Promotion of higher education	3,453,000	8.1%	4,625,000	9.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,955,000</b>	<b>16.3%</b>	<b>8,593,000</b>	<b>16.7%</b>

If the proportion to be invested in 2020/21 is less than in 2019/20 please provide commentary below (e.g. inclusion of evaluation costs in 2019/20)

Extensive investment in learning and teaching space improvements during the period 2014/15 to 20/16/17 increased the amount spend in these areas. We note that we continue to spend in excess of the 15% expected

**Institutional fee and access plan 2020/21****Table B: Fee and access plan income forecast expenditure, 2020/21**

###

Institution UKPRN: 10007856

Forecast expenditure of the fee income returned in Table A, provided against the categories below, is to be returned in this table.

**Guidance note**

This table collects investment committed to achieve each objective that is specified in your fee and access plan (see paragraphs 102 to 106), investment committed to evaluate fee and access plans, investment committed for Reaching Wider Partnerships and student financial support.

Please input your **chosen objectives** in the table below and the forecasted income for 2020/21 to be invested to deliver these objectives.

Those institutions that have not specified fees in their plan should complete the table based on the fees they expect to charge for 2020/21. This does not commit institutions to these fees.

**Investment to deliver objectives to improve equality of opportunity must relate only to groups under-represented in higher education.**

Student financial support activities will be a part of the applicant's total investment in objectives to support equality of opportunity and/or the promotion of higher education (as set out in Table B (a) and (b)). Table B (d) below asks an applicant to separately identify forecast investment in student financial support activities **already included** in (a) and (b).

Applicants should set out their level of expenditure against each objective. All objectives will need to have expenditure returned against them.

Where expenditure is forecast against more than one objective, it should be split between objectives. Total expenditure against a) and b) should match the equivalent returned in Table A.

For further guidance and definitions used in this table, please see **Section Four** of the guidance.

**2020/21 fee and access plan income forecast expenditure**

## a) Equality of opportunity

	2020/21	2019/20
	£	£
<b>Objectives to improve equality of opportunity</b>		
1. Promote wider and fairer access to higher education, raising educational aspirations and helping to prepare students from under-represented groups for Higher Education (includes Reaching Wider Partnership expenditure set out in section e below)	455,000	
2. Provide high quality academic, welfare and financial support to groups under-represented in higher education, improving retention and supporting progression	2,250,000	
3. Improve the higher education experience for students from under-represented groups	450,000	
4. Support the progress to employment or further study of groups under-represented in higher education	287,000	
5. Support Welsh Medium provision and encourage take-up of Welsh Medium courses	60,000	
6. Other, for example fee and access plan evaluation	0	
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,502,000</b>	<b>3,968,000</b>
Percentage of forecast expenditure to be spent on Equality of Opportunity		

## b) Promotion of HE

	2020/21	2019/20
	£	£
<b>Objectives to promote higher education</b>		
1. Support and promote the student voice	390,000	
2. Improve the quality of learning and teaching, including technologies to improve the learning and teaching experience	1,300,000	
3. Strengthen the employability of graduates from Welsh HEIs	523,000	
4. Encourage aspiration to higher education amongst potential students	650,000	
5. Improve the student experience through initiatives to enhance wellbeing	590,000	
6. Other, for example fee and access plan evaluation	0	
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,453,000</b>	<b>4,625,000</b>
Percentage of forecast expenditure to be spent on Promotion of higher education		

## c) Evaluation

	2020/21
	£
Investment in evaluating the effectiveness of fee and access plans	

## d) Total forecast expenditure of 2020/21 fee and access plan income, a) + b) + c)

	2020/21	2019/20
	£	£
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,955,000</b>	<b>8,593,000</b>

## e) Reaching Wider

	2020/21	2019/20
	£	£
Investment to support Reaching Wider Partnership	147,986	147,986

## f) Student financial support (already included in a) and b) above)

	2020/21		2019/20	
	£	Anticipated student numbers supported	£	Anticipated student numbers supported
Fee waivers			0	0
Bursaries	1,200,000	1,800	1,500,000	2,700
Scholarships	550,000	650	650,000	730
Hardship funds	200,000	280	200,000	320
Provision of financial management advice and skills	40,000	650	40,000	400
Other financial support			0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,990,000</b>	<b>3,380</b>	<b>2,390,000</b>	<b>4,150</b>
Percentage of forecast expenditure to be spent on student financial support	28.6%		27.8%	

If the proportion to be invested in 2020/21 is less than in 2019/20 please provide commentary below:

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