

## **ACCESS AGREEMENT 2016-17**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The University of Westminster was founded in 1838 as the Polytechnic Institution in London's Regent Street, where its headquarters building is still used as a base for full-time and part-time students today. The University's modern history began in 1882 when Quintin Hogg re-founded the Polytechnic to establish a new model for public education, building on the pattern of his Free Schools, by helping to establish 12 polytechnics in London by 1903. His aim was to provide educational, sporting and social facilities for working adults. The commitment to Quintin Hogg's aim of providing access to learning for those who could benefit, irrespective of social class or income, is a core principle honoured today by staff and Governors of the University.

1.2 The University's Access and Outreach measures encompass recruitment, including the design of pathway programmes into HE, and activities which support student retention and development of students. Monitoring reports illustrate that Westminster's approach is being sustained and enhanced despite significant changes in the operating environment. The participation of young first degree entrants from under-represented groups, including those from state schools and colleges, is over 96% of the new entrant cohort each year of whom some 50.4% are drawn from socio-economic classes 4, 5, 6 and 7, with 5.1% from Lower Participation Neighbourhoods.

1.3 The planned activities set out below accord with the University's Widening Participation Strategic Assessment submitted to HEFCE in June 2009, and the Interim Widening Participation Strategic Statement for 2012, re-confirmed in 2013. They also provide direct continuity with the current Access Agreement and the annual monitoring reports by which progress towards its achievement is tracked. Student diversity will remain a core objective in the University's revised Strategic Plan *Westminster 2020*.

1.4 The standard fee for full-time first degree new entrants in 2016-17 is planned to remain at £9k per annum. Some four year degree students who benefitted from Westminster's Course Fee Waivers as members of the first cohort of new fee regime students will be completing their studies in 2016-17. In total some 77% of new entrants in 2012 were beneficiaries of this scheme of whom 52.5% received full state support funding for their studies. Analysis of the students in this cohort will inform the annual monitoring reports for 2016-17.

1.5 The 2016-17 Access Agreement continues to reflect Westminster's founding mission and long-term commitment to access and learning opportunities across diverse communities in London and beyond - in the UK, other EU states, and internationally. Social cohesion

within the University community is an important aim: applicants from the widest possible range of backgrounds will continue to be recruited and selected across all subjects.

1.6 Overall the University remains committed to investing approximately 20% of its additional fee income in access, outreach and student success and progression measures for the cohort of students to be recruited for 2016-17.

1.7 Westminster re-affirms its commitment to provide clear and information on fees and funding to prospective students, their families, sponsors and advisers, on its website from Summer 2015 for potential applicants for admission in 2016.

1.8 Guidance has been sought from current students, including the University of Westminster Students' Union (UWSU), on the design of the student support package. This includes the criteria for selection of Westminster Scholars, and the levels of information advice and guidance needed on the new loan arrangements and the aggregate cost of tuition and costs while studying. Student feedback has informed the development of the Learning Futures project, led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, which will transform Westminster's UG learning model from 2016-17.

1.9 Beneficiaries of the National Scholarships Programme (NSP) will be continue to be supported, in parallel with an extensive range of targeted initiatives to support the selection and development of new students.

1.10 Students from lower income households, as defined in the period 2006 -2011, remain entitled to a Bursary of either £329pa or £400pa and individuals completing their courses will continue to be supported with annual payments until they have completed their studies at the University.

1.11 Students from families whose income has been recorded as £42.6k or £50k per annum (where they are entitled to any part of the maintenance grant) continue to receive bursaries in recognition of the higher living and salary costs in the capital. Care Leavers, Disabled students, and students progressing from Access to HE courses have also been prioritised in the allocation of financial support.

1.12 The University's progression model will be sustained in 2016-17 and the NSP scheme will be continuing with support for the student completers in the 2014-15 and 2015-16 cohorts. The shift to a cash choice for NSP students in their second and third years has proved popular (£1500 pa). The Westminster Achievement Awards of £1000 pa have also been a significant contributor to student retention and a motivator for FT and some PT students to maintain their high performance. The new Distant Horizons fund to support outward mobility amongst Home students will be increased from £35k to £100k to resource the costs of travel, passport and visa or to augment Erasmus+ grants. The University's new Global Engagement Strategy encompasses an Outward Mobility Strategy which includes promotion of short term mobility, towards a University-wide target of 20% participation by 2020. The Westminster International Networks initiative provides the framework for students to plan their exchanges and study or work abroad periods, and participation will be monitored to determine to what extent this assists development of employability attributes, and also interview and job offers following graduation.

1.13 Student views have been canvassed through focus groups with Student Ambassadors, Student Associates assisting in schools and colleges, and students reaching out to London's migrant communities as well as through the University of Westminster Students' Union (UWSU). The consensus is that students still feel they would benefit more from extension of infrastructure support for extra-curricular activities such as internships and work shadowing, short study abroad programmes, and extension of volunteering opportunities. Development of employability and community engagement attributes are valued more highly by students than reduced fee levels. Westminster's partnership with UWSU embodies a shared commitment to find new and more effective ways of explaining the new fee regime and the University's policies which underpin its approach to access and outreach, and student retention and development.

1.14 University of Westminster staff contribute significantly to collaborative outreach activities. This includes project development, research and practitioner groups led by the policy group *Linking London*, and shared delivery of events for schools organised by *AccessHE*.

1.15 The University of Westminster's policy commitments and planned access and outreach activities directly support the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010 using positive action as part of its retention and development model. The University has identified more ambitious milestones to evaluate its collaborative activities supporting access and outreach, through strategic planning within the Westminster Group, and designing in progression through links at course level, as well as supporting potentially vulnerable groups such as disabled students and care leavers.

1.16 Systematic communications with primary and secondary schools are planned through the design and production of online materials and engagement activity. These materials will link learning projects with employability initiatives through content authored by experts within the University and the Westminster Group of Associate Colleges. The materials will be refreshed and regularly updated so that the University hosts a professional network for teaching staff in London schools. Building on its Network for Languages scheme there will be extended programmes for teachers scheduled as 'twilight' professional development activities. This includes co-funded activities which leverage wider impact such as the London Schools Excellence funded Professional Language Networks, which support schools in less advantaged areas in six London boroughs.

1.17 Longer term outreach plans and promotional material will be focused on primary school pupils as well as Year 7, 8 and 9 pupils, their families and carers, to address the need for earlier Independent Advice and Guidance (IAG) with information on career pathways and skills development for work as well as study. This will include pathway mapping to FE Colleges (including some Key Stage 4 subjects) as well as Key Stage 5 pathways to FE and HE study.

1.18 The Westminster Group of Further and Higher Education Colleges deliver courses for learners from 14 years of age and the University's leadership of the group delivers a long term strategic focus for young and mature learners in London. Data analysis commissioned by Linking London demonstrates that in the period 2005 -2009 progression to the University of Westminster by learners from FE Colleges formed 7% of the total across London. Of these students 9.6% had completed Access to HE courses and 23.6% had completed BTEC

National Diploma qualifications. The University remains committed to increasing the proportions of these HE learners from vocational routes to ensure opportunities remain open for students from the broadest range of backgrounds. FE Colleges are recognised for providing a supportive learning environment for people with protected characteristics. Particular support is being focused on progression from Access to HE programmes to help safeguard mature students' opportunity for access to a University place. This aspect of planning is informed by formal Westminster Group meeting discussions.

1.19 One of Westminster's longer term aims is to support progression to PG study for students who join the University from an FE College. However the impact of higher post-graduation debt in the period 2015 -20 is likely to impact negatively on PG progression. Typically graduates defer PG study for some years after completing their Bachelor's degree, especially women. Targeted support for women and learners from minority ethnic groups will therefore be augmented year-on-year. In 2016-17 it is intended that the progression of women graduates into STEM Masters will be supported through the PG Study Support Scheme as well as the University's Athena Swan programme.

1.20 Integrated data handling will yield insight reports for longer term strategic planning in addition to the analytical reports used for monitoring purposes. This will inform collaborative target-setting not only between schools and the University but also with the Westminster Group of Colleges. Although dependence on Lower Participation Neighbourhood (LPN) data has been perceived as a complex issue in the capital cross-mapping of different data sources can yield a reliable interpretation of local changes when outreach plans are reviewed and adjusted. The increasing targets for LPN rates in 2016-17 in an environment characterised by lower overall participation by learners from lower socio-economic groups is therefore realistic.

1.21 Through the extension of targeted outreach to primary schools and more secondary schools and through the University's sponsoring role for the Sir Simon Milton Westminster University Technical College (UTC) in Victoria, it is envisaged that in steady state by 2018/19 some 5% of the University's Higher Fee Income will be invested in more broadly focused outreach activities. This will be targeted to reach younger learners and communities with little or no experience of advanced vocational and academic higher education and those disadvantaged through less security of employment. In the local catchment areas for the University 68% of young learners speak English as an additional language, and 79% are from ethnic backgrounds other than White British. Some 65% of the local wards in the borough of Westminster have deprivation levels higher than the national average. The increased demographic growth forecast of 15% of 16-19 year olds by 2020 focuses the initiatives on close partnership links across local communities and educational providers at all levels to meet education and employability needs of young Londoners. The University's track record of raising aspiration and attainment through the Aimhigher programmes provides a sound base from which to plan and monitor these newer initiatives.

1.22 This Access Agreement and the plans for expenditure to support its implementation in 2016-17 focus on students deemed to be countable for Access Agreement purposes.

## **2. SUPPORT FOR STUDENT SUCCESS AND PROGRESSION**

### **Westminster Group progression pathways**

2.1 The Westminster Group was established in the mid-1990s and expanded and revised in 2010-11. Westminster Group Associate Colleges are located close to the University of Westminster's campuses in Central and North West London. The seven Further and Higher Colleges in the Westminster Group are:

- City of Westminster College
- College of North West London
- Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College
- Hackney Community College
- Harrow College
- Kensington and Chelsea College
- Uxbridge College

2.2 The development of new strategic partnerships between the University and the individual colleges reflects the particular strengths of each college. Progression pathways to Higher Education are being consolidated within the Westminster Group for new entrants in 2016 by adapting courses for joint delivery. Higher Apprenticeship and Degree Apprenticeship pathways are also being explored. Customised final Bachelors Honours year programmes are being designed for students progressing from Higher Nationals and Foundation Degrees. These are strategic long term partnerships underpinned by a shared commitment to vocational, technical skills and academic education.

### **Westminster's Great Start**

2.3 Personalised support for new students was introduced in 2014-15 through a special partnership with the Students' Union (UWSU) in a scheme called "The Great Start". This forms a key element of Westminster's retention and development model, building on the Higher Education Academy (HEA) funded "Sense of Belonging" project delivered with Queen Mary London and London Metropolitan University in 2011. Individual student ambassadors will be recruited, selected and trained as FANS - Friends of Arriving New Students - to help them settle in and make the most of their time at the University.

2.4 *Great Start 2*, the new scheme being planned for delivery from 2016-17 is expected to benefit 49% of UG new entrants in accordance with Learning and Teaching Strategy and the pan-University Learning Futures project. Core modules on key skills related to the student's subject will replace course related materials. Support for team work and group dynamics as well as independent information search skills, delivered in partnership with library staff. Course-based societies are also being expanded for 2016-17 to consolidate student communities around cohort groups, with the support of an Intern based in the Students' Union. Support for students will be targeted with data analysis conducted by the University's Marketing Insight team and Planning Office. Focus groups scheduled as diary groups each fortnight will ensure continuity of feedback from groups of 12 students in each

Faculty; this cross-section will ensure diversity of representation and the written feedback from the group will help ensure a rapid response to issues raised, thereby supporting success and progression. Short-term outward mobility will be supported by UWSU, building on its previous Westminster Enterprise Challenge scheme; students from course-based societies will be encouraged to bid for endorsement of their project at both concept and completion stage. This aligns with the University's Outward Mobility Strategy newly introduced from 2015-16.

### **Westminster Inspiration Network**

2.5 The Westminster Inspiration Network (WIN) was developed for 2014-15 as a peer-assisted learning programme which includes Skills Learning Cafes, IT Skills projects and Disability Buddies, with targeted support directed for areas of greatest need. The newly configured Learning Support team has developed this programme to improve retention and also progression, and from 2016-17 it will be operational across all five faculties.

### **University of Westminster Associates in Schools**

2.6 Student Associates are recruited and selected to work as classroom assistants in schools and colleges, particularly in local areas with high indications of disadvantaged communities. This supports the need to increase selection of students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPNs). This scheme, formerly funded through Aimhigher and by the Training and Development Agency (TDA), has been revised to operate as a scheme solely for University of Westminster students and it is wholly resourced by the University. This scheme complements local student initiatives in the University's faculties some of which are sponsored by external organisations such as the Royal Society.

### **Volunteering, internships, work shadowing, study abroad**

2.7 Volunteering connects students with their own community as well as other local groups and provides opportunities for learning and development. It creates platforms for community engagement and gives students and the University the opportunity to raise aspirations and widen participation in the wider community. This year, Westminster students continued to give their own time to take part in a broad range of volunteering activities. In response to student feedback additional support will be focused on providing opportunities for students to identify and take up internships and work shadowing opportunities.

### **Westminster's Scholarships programme**

2.8 The University's Scholarships scheme was introduced in 2006 to safeguard the interests of academically able students by providing yearly support through a competitive scholarship. This award winning scheme has been adjusted during the last five years to accord with the retention and development model. Scholarships will continue to be allocated to applicants from the Westminster Group of Associate Colleges. Westminster's Achievement Awards, which give recognition for students' success in completing Level 4 and Level 5 will continue to form a core feature of the Scholarships Programme.

2.9 In 2016-17 it is planned that financial support for students will total £1,170,500, of which £1,583,825 will be in the form of cash awards (normally payable in the final year of study), with £130,675 in fee waivers, and £28k for University accommodation fees. The



criteria for all awards require demonstration of academic excellence and financial need. Where feasible the Household Income criteria align with those set by Student Finance England (SFE) as the threshold for any level of maintenance support is a maximum of £42,620pa. However Awards for Care Leavers and for Platinum Scholars are benchmarked to the National Scholarship Programme (NSP) criteria is a maximum Household Income of £25k pa. Student feedback has influenced the proportion of each award given in case in their final year: this has increased to 75-90%, and where applicable fee waivers form only 10-15% of an award. Where a student opts for an accommodation award this represents 25% of their total payment.

## 2.10 Scholarships for students who demonstrate financial need

*Care Leaver Bursaries* are provided as a £750 cash award for those aged 25 years or under on entering HE. Typically within a £25K pa budget a maximum of 33 awards might be granted in 2016/17 as one-off payments.

*The Care Leaver Scholarship for Fees* also supports a Care Leaver progressing to a Masters programme within the University of Westminster. One Full Tuition Fee Award will be granted in in the range of £10 -17k.

*Access Scholarships* support students with a documented disability irrespective of funding allocated from other sources. Typically four students will benefit from a £3k award per academic year in cash or fees.

*Westminster Platinum awards* provide cash or a tuition fee contribution for students with household incomes of less than £25k. Typically 15 undergraduates will benefit from awards of £6000 per academic year.

*Westminster Gold awards* provide cash or a tuition fee contribution for students from under-represented groups and/or those who can demonstrate financial need. Typically 20 undergraduates are expected to benefit from awards valued at £4000 per academic year.

*Westminster Silver awards* provide cash for living expenses or towards tuition fees. Typically 25 undergraduates from under-represented groups and/or those who can demonstrate financial need are expected to benefit from awards valued at £2,000 per academic year.

*Distant Horizon Awards* enable students who have not studied or worked abroad to take part in international academic or career related events or activities overseas. Typically 100 students are expected to benefit from grants up to a value of a value of £1000.

*Westminster Achievement Awards* support undergraduates progressing to the next level of study (first year to second year or second year to third year). Typically 300 students are expected to benefit from a £1000 cash payment.

*Education for All* is a fee only scholarship for students aged 25 or under with Discretionary Leave to Remain in the UK or EU, who cannot access the necessary financial support to take up their University of Westminster place. One Full Tuition Fee Award will be provided in 2016/17 with the fee value determined by the course).

## 2.11 Support for Part-Time students

*Westminster Part-Time Undergraduate Fee Scholarships* provide cash or a tuition fee contribution for those studying at least 50 per cent of the full-time programme. Typically six awards valued at £2,000 each are expected to be granted in 2016-17.

Westminster Part-Time Scholarships for Masters students provide a full tuition fee award (of variable value according to the fee level); typically four awards will be granted in 2016-17.

Westminster Part-Time Half Fee Scholarships for part-time Masters students provide a half tuition fee award (of variable value according to the fee level); typically two awards will be granted in 2016-17.

## 2.12 Additional support schemes

These scholarships, bursaries and grants are supplemented by individual donor awards for students with hidden or specific disabilities, or those who are disadvantaged and come from further and adult education colleges.

Subject specific awards are also provided for Masters or Graduate Diploma applicants who are high achievers with financial need in, for example, Law and Psychology.

## 2.13 Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)

The model of support for students with recorded disabilities is changing and a transitional approach will be adopted in 2015-16 and 2016-17 as further changes relevant to 2015-16 are yet to be announced by BIS or SFE. Means-tested bursaries towards laptop costs will be provided through a dedicated budget to support up to 250 new entrants with a £200 bursary each. Reasonable adjustments will continue to be made to support disabled students but a greater focus on inclusive learning will be delivered through the University's Learning Futures programme which will be implemented from September 2016. It has been proposed that the role of the Disability Support Tutors in each Faculty is revised, and that a new role of Disability Champions is scoped for introduction in 2016-17. Delivery processes within the University are also being reviewed, and more technology based support for academic purposes and academic support processes are likely to be the main focus of Disability Learning Support operations.

## 2.14 Westminster Additional Grants Scheme

Formerly the Access to Learning Fund (ALF), the Additional Grants Scheme will resource grants between £100 and £3,000 for Home students to assist those students in financial difficulty. General living costs such as rent, travel expenses, childcare costs or course related costs can all be supported but the grant cannot be used to pay fees. FT Undergraduate students must have applied for the maximum student support available from Student Finance England including the Maintenance Loan. PT students must be studying at least 25% of a FT programme of study and must also have applied for the PT Tuition Fee Loan from Student Finance England. Postgraduates must have applied for the full £10,000 Professional and Career Development Loan or similar graduate study loan and be studying for at least 50% of the credits needed for their target qualification to be eligible for an award. All applicants must demonstrate financial need and they will receive a proportional award relative to the shortfall between their expenditure and their income, with priority case students benefitting from larger value grants.



## **Employability and Learning Support**

2.15 The staff teams have been expanded to ensure that placement officers can support students in all five faculties. The Volunteering team and the Talent Bank job vacancy service have also been expanded. Other 'enablers' of employability include the Westminster Inspiration Network peer assisted learning and academic study skills teams. Disabled students benefit from life skills coaching, and it is intended that future bursary schemes should provide specific support for this group to ensure that a student who has disclosed a disability can be supported to take part in a global work experience opportunity in another EU country or within London. A new framework is being designed to capture the gap analysis in data for its review in the context of changes to the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA). The funding available from 2016-17 is forecast to increase from £250k to £600k pa as the University assumes responsibility for some financial support for disabled students. A University Leadership and Management Forum is scheduled for Autumn 2015 to raise awareness of the needs of this student group, and a community of practice is being hosted by Westminster in collaboration with other London HEIs.

## **Student Support and Well-Being**

2.16 This team has been expanded including the range of Interfaith Advisers and the provision of access to the University's Health Service delivered in partnership with the Marylebone Health Centre GPs and other professional staff. The Learning Support team will continue to provide Digital Training to help students make the most of online resources specifically through Blackboard, the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Plans to extend Academic Writing Skills support across all five faculties with the engagement of Literary Fellows are also under discussion. Students who need help with temporary financial hardship challenges will continue to be supported in 2016-17 through the Westminster Additional Grants Fund of £100k pa.

## **Routes into Languages**

2.17 Westminster's long-standing commitment to Modern and Applied Language study is recognised by applicants and their families despite the national decrease in those studying languages at A level and in HE. Progression to HE has been sustained in part by the Routes into Languages scheme funded by HEFCE and co-directed by the University of Westminster with SOAS. Outreach events funded and co-funded by the University of Westminster to complement the London regional activities (such as Employability Activity Days, Film and Cultural Study Days, Careers in Languages Days) have included film screenings, poster events, and exhibitions well as Language Immersion Saturdays for GCSE, Four Day Easter Language Revision Workshops for A-level. Typically 2 -5 participants of a total of c125 -150 in the Easter Language Revision Workshops at AS and A2 level in French, Spanish and German progress to HE study at Westminster each year. The Network for Languages programme, which has supported Modern Languages teachers in London Schools, has been extended with £600k funding from the Mayor of London's Office for the period 2014-16. The University is committed to sustaining this support for teachers through the Network for Languages, co-funded by the London Schools Excellence Fund. A new co-founded HEFCE Catalyst programme designed collaboratively with the universities of Southampton and

Newcastle is also expected to provide innovative pathways into Modern Language study at HE level.

### **Sharing best practice**

2.18 Through active membership of sector organisations Westminster has both contributed to and benefitted from debates and research on best practice in Access and Student Success at HE level.

2.19 Within Linking London events University of Westminster colleagues have been key contributors to Initial Advice and Guidance (IAG) practitioner meetings. Specific additional initiatives include Maths GCSE drop-in session, and completion of Student Finance application forms, both of which involve Student Ambassadors; and, collaboration on best practice in admission of Access to HE adult learners aged 24 +. Collaborative research on data on progression from FE to HE, and Apprenticeship progression has also been facilitated by Linking London through a longitudinal study.

2.20 Although Westminster has contributed previously to the development of monitoring processes through its Aimhigher projects further exploration of how the toolkits for evaluation of access work can be used in the new fee regime environment has been undertaken through the facilitation of the National Educational Opportunity Network (NEON) and AccessHE. The University is a subscriber with Board membership of these leading organisations, both of which will continue to be supported in 2016-17.

2.21 Care Leavers will continue to be given dedicated support and advice in 2016-17, including scholarship funding. The University is committed to subscribing to the Frank Buttle Trust, which has re-conferred its award for Care Leaver support at Westminster.

2.22 Enhancement of targeted support will be realised through the implementation of Caseworker Connect software, to draw on statistical analysis and flag carers and students estranged from their families and those from EU migrant families, as well as care leavers, students with disabilities and FE College leavers. This will be augmented by lifecycle monitoring of students in cohort groups.

### **Sir Simon Milton Westminster University Technical College**

2.23 Westminster is the sole University sponsor of the Sir Simon Milton Westminster UTC, now scheduled to open in newly designed flagship building in September 2017. Our involvement in this development partnership is at the heart of the University's outreach commitments. It is expected that the appointed Principal Designate will lead the outreach relationship building from January 2016, in partnership with the University's Outreach team.

2.24 The University Technical College in Westminster represents a major investment in the University's outreach activities. The ethos of the UTC will draw its inspiration from Sir Simon Milton, the highly esteemed and influential former leader of Westminster City Council, who sought to re-motivate young people to take responsibility for their own development and contribute to the social cohesion of disadvantaged communities. The University's activities in sponsoring the Sir Simon Milton Westminster University Technical College will also provide a significant hub for learners, their families and companies in the UTC's Employer Alliance.

2.25 An unrivalled Employer Alliance supports this development through contributions to curriculum design in the specialisms of transport engineering and construction engineering and management. Opportunities for internships and mentoring are being planned alongside technical challenges to integrate academic and technical skills learning with Network Rail as the lead employer, together with Transport for London, Crossrail, BT Fleet, Land Securities, Sir Robert McAlpine, and Alstom. Students will be better prepared for the job market and will be able to keep open opportunities for further study in Colleges as well as University throughout their four years at the UTC.

2.26 The new UTC will be an influential professional and education community, and the only UTC in the heart of London's West End, specialising in transport engineering and construction management. Current and former University students will be invited to contribute to the new UTC learning environment through the Graduate Mentoring Scheme from 2016-17. Partnership development between the UTC and local Academies, Free Schools and Studio Schools will also be fostered by the team of University staff involved in the UTC. Transition Summer Schools will be co-hosted by the University in 2017.

2.27 The City of Westminster College, a founding member of the Westminster Group in the 1990s, is the lead college partner. A revised curriculum offer in Engineering is being planned for delivery by the College for 2016-17 for female and male students, and to meet the needs of students from low participation neighbourhoods in the Borough of Westminster in addition to the UTC.

2.28 The University's leadership of the design and development of the UTC has been resourced primarily on a pro bono basis by the University of Westminster and its Employer Alliance partners, with additional funding from its charity partner, the Sir Simon Milton Foundation. DfE approval for the UTC to open in 2017 was re-affirmed in 2015.

### **3. Monitoring and Evaluation arrangements**

3.1 Progression, Achievement and Employability are monitored routinely in relation to the KPIs identified at University level. The strategic objectives set at Faculty and subject level are monitored annually as part of the planning cycle. The performance of the academic portfolio is monitored in parallel with the performance of students. Internal statistics are benchmarked with Unistats data at course level. Outreach activities are informed by analysis of applicant and student data by feeder institution and borough, drawing on data provided through the DfE, HESA, the Student Loans Company, the GLA, and London Boroughs. From 2015/16 greater focus will be given to recording the impact of Access and Student Success initiatives.

3.2 The Director of Higher Education Policy is the senior postholder with responsibility for the University's policy on Access and Widening Participation, reporting directly to the Vice-Chancellor.

3.3 The Learning and Teaching Committee is the lead body on behalf of the University's Academic Council with responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the Access Agreements and the Widening Participation Strategic Statements. The annual Student Equality and Diversity reports are based on multivariate analysis of student characteristics and these reports inform University policy and strategy on Access and Widening Participation. Annual monitoring reports are considered by the Quality Review Committee which reports directly to

Academic Council. Papers are also prepared for the University Executive Board (UEB) both for discussion and debate, and for information on the resource allocations which support this core area of the University's activities.

3.4 Monitoring data is rigorously analysed and interpreted through the processes described. Yet the difficulty of demonstrating causality can hamper demonstration of the success of specific interventions. Changes in applicant and student behaviour during transitional periods between funding regimes inevitably pose greater challenges in terms of forecasting. The incompleteness of some data sets arising from students electing not to declare certain types of personal information, and the limitations of data on wards in metropolitan areas can also limit the applicability of some reports. For these reasons the University is working closely with peer institutions, both individually and within sectors groups such as AccessHE , Linking London and Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) to share findings and case studies, and to set collaborative milestones and targets which can be contextualised by reference to broader studies of admissions, retention, achievement and graduate destinations.

3.5 Westminster's assessment of its performance against commitments made in earlier Access Agreements indicates that although the University's admission criteria have been raised to ensure that the students admitted are capable of completing their studies in the standard timeframe for registration the proportion of students drawn from Lower Participation Neighbourhoods has not diminished significantly at this stage. However there are notable demographic shifts in London, and these include families dependent on housing benefit who are obliged to move to outer boroughs and the surrounding area beyond the M25. It is therefore anticipated that greater efforts will be needed to motivate students from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to take their place in a University environment.

3.6 Students are represented on the Learning and Teaching Committee. Regular collaborative meetings are also held between the University's Director of Higher Education Policy and the President of the University of Westminster Students' Union (UWSU) and the UWSU Manager to take forward initiatives to support the recruitment, selection and development of students from a diverse range of backgrounds, particularly those from less advantaged communities.

### **Milestones and targets**

3.7 Longitudinal monitoring of academic progression by First Degree cohorts provides evidence of continuous achievement year-on-year. This analysis measures progression by gender, age, ethnicity, and protected characteristics for Westminster's annual Diversity report. It is notable that in the period 2009-12 academic progression of 83 -85% has been achieved by young (>21 years) female students and 78 -81% by young male students from lower socio-economic categories (SEC 4-7). This relates directly to more demanding admissions criteria which help ensure academic success.

3.8 It is significant however that these achievements have not compromised diversity across the student body. Some 50% of students are still drawn from SEC4-7 groups and over 96% of students join Westminster from a state institution.

3.9 Diversity of the student body is also reflected in the broad range of qualifications on entry. Typically the UCAS tariff of new entrants comprises A level scores only for some 52%

of the cohort, and the average tariff score across the University in 2014 was 320+ points, although this average masks much higher tariffs in individual subjects. Other entrants hold a combination of vocational and academic qualifications, and some mature learners hold no previous formal qualifications. From 2016-17 the range of qualifications on entry will be retained as a target to be monitored through the Access Agreement so that this diversity within the student community at Westminster can be captured formally.

### **Retention and development**

3.10 The introduction of the Friends of Arriving New Students (FANS) scheme formed part of the University's continuing efforts to ensure that students make a successful transition from their earlier learning environment to reduce the risk of them withdrawing in their first year. Analysis of student's educational attainment and family background indicates that students from families whose household income is higher than £25k per annum as equally vulnerable as those whom lower income groups, often as they are expected to assume greater family responsibilities when their timetable is more flexible at university level. Detailed analysis of student non-completion by subject has yielded insights specific to particular communities. Therefore the FANS programme has been funded for all student beneficiaries not solely for those on full state support.

### **Collaborative Outreach**

3.11 Westminster is extending its collaborative access and outreach activities over the next three years. In partnership with HEFCE, Linking London and AccessHE through the National Networks for Collaborative Outreach a more targeted focus on 'cold spots' - those areas of lower participation with potential students with protected characteristics. The Westminster project will provide clearer line of sight information, advice and guidance on job types and sectors for employment for easy access by pupils, teachers and families. It will also draw on links with the Sir Simon Milton Westminster University Technical College and its Employer Alliance as well as with other London universities sponsoring UTCs and Academies. Greater focus on primary schools is being directed through the appointment of new staff in the Outreach team.

## **4. Equality and Diversity**

4.1 Westminster's framework of policies which safeguard and develop diversity within the University community address the principles which underpin equality in terms of gender, race, religion and belief and disability. Sexual orientation is also encompassed in the diversity policies and the University's commitment is recognised by the title *Stonewall Diversity Champion*.

## **5. Conclusion**

Westminster's 2016-17 Access Agreement plans continue to reflect a shift from student financial support to long-term infrastructure development to support access and outreach as well as student success and progression leading to graduate level employability. Collaborative outreach forms a significant part of this, ranging from initiatives designed with FE College members of the Westminster Group, to Faculty led partnerships with London primary and secondary schools.