

OFFA
November 2015/07

HEFCE
November 2015/31

Guidance

This document sets out the information we need from institutions for the monitoring of access agreements, Student Opportunity allocation and end-of-year monitoring of the National Scholarship Programme (NSP) for 2014-15.

The deadline to submit your monitoring return is noon on Wednesday 20 January 2016.

How to complete your 2014-15 monitoring return

**Access agreements, Student
Opportunity allocation and the
National Scholarship Programme**

Alternative formats

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Published by the Office for Fair Access and the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

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How to complete your 2014-15 monitoring return

Access agreements, Student Opportunity allocation and the National Scholarship Programme

To

Heads of higher education institutions in England

Heads of further education colleges in England

Of interest to those responsible for

Implementation of access agreements, widening participation, National Scholarship Programme, Heads of Finance

Reference

OFFA November 2015/**07**
HEFCE 2015/**31**

Publication date

November 2015

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Introduction

What this document is about

1. This document sets out the information that the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) and Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) need from institutions for the monitoring of access agreements, Student Opportunity (SO) allocation and the National Scholarship Programme (NSP) for 2014-15.
2. Institutions that had an OFFA-approved access agreement **and** SO allocation **and** NSP funding in 2014-15 should follow **all** the guidance in this document about what to submit and how to do so. Other institutions need only submit **some** of this information. HEFCE will contact these institutions separately with detailed instructions.

Deadline for action

3. All monitoring returns must be submitted via the HEFCE extranet at <https://data.hefce.ac.uk> by **noon on Wednesday 20 January 2016**.

Why do we ask you to do this?

4. There is a statutory requirement for institutions with access agreements to report to OFFA on the extent to which they have met the obligations set out in those agreements, and on the progress they have made against their milestones and targets.
5. OFFA and HEFCE need to know about your overall investment in widening participation (WP) activity, and how much of this was funded from your OFFA access agreement and how much from the HEFCE SO allocation in 2014-15. Setting out your total expenditure on access, student success and progression enables you to demonstrate the breadth of your work in these areas, and helps us to understand how your access agreement expenditure and SO allocation fit within your overall WP investment.
6. Information about the NSP is required by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). It helps the Department to report on the NSP to the Secretary of State and other Ministers. HEFCE uses the return to gain assurance that funds have been used appropriately, and to collect information from participating institutions on their NSP schemes and recipients.

What has changed since the previous monitoring return?

7. We have made some changes to our process and return this year that reflect strategic priorities and help to improve our data collection and analysis. We have limited these changes to ensure greater consistency in the process and in the data collected. We have consulted with contacts at institutions to help ensure that administrative burden is minimised.

Access agreement monitoring

8. We have made some small changes to the monitoring tables to make them more user-friendly (for example, reducing the burden of reporting on old system entrants by consolidating old system students into a single column).
9. In the tables about evaluation and equality and diversity (Tables 10-12), we have refined and restructured some of the questions to ensure that we can carry out better qualitative analysis of institutions' responses. This improved analysis will allow us to better support institutions with information about effective practice.

SO allocation monitoring

10. From 2014-15, the Access to Learning Fund (ALF) was incorporated into the HEFCE SO allocation. Institutions are expected to use their SO allocation not only to contribute towards their costs in supporting students to achieve successful outcomes, but also to address the needs of students facing particular financial hardship. In order to understand the investment institutions are making in this area, we have included a new table in the monitoring return, Table 3b, with a new expenditure category called 'support for students in financial hardship'.
11. HEFCE is interested in understanding the nature, scale and impact of new models of interaction between higher education (HE) and schools, such as HE providers sponsoring academies, federations and trusts, establishing university technical colleges and setting up free schools. To understand the investment institutions are making in this area, we have included a new expenditure category called 'Strategic partnerships with schools' in the access

section of Table 3a of the monitoring return. The data provided by institutions will support our ongoing research and engagement with higher education providers¹ in this area.

NSP monitoring

12. The 2014-15 end-of-year return includes five extra tables (Tables 20-24) to capture information on students from the 2013-14 cohort who received NSP awards in 2014-15. Tables 25-29 capture information on students from the 2012-13 cohort who received subsequent year NSP awards in 2014-15. Institutions that awarded NSP awards to the 2012-13 and 2013-14 cohorts in their first years of study only do not need to complete these tables.

13. Tables 14, 20 and 25 (individualised data) now include a column for NUMHUS² (for HEIs) and aim sequence number³ (for FECs). Further guidance on these can be found in paragraphs 160-163 of this guidance.

14. Tables 14 and 20 (individualised data) now include columns for institutions to indicate whether they intend to provide subsequent year awards to NSP recipients in 2015-16 (Table 14, Column L and Table 20, Column K). Table 14 also has a column to indicate whether NSP recipients will receive an award in 2016-17 (Column M).

Future arrangements for HEFCE monitoring and evaluation activity

15. HEFCE indicated last year that it would review the information it required from institutions in respect of the SO allocation. Since then, HEFCE has been working with researchers and institutions to determine how we might improve the quality of the information requested from institutions to enable the impact of the SO allocation, and other expenditure on widening participation, to be fully evaluated and understood.

16. In July 2015, HEFCE published a student opportunity policy report⁴ detailing the recommendations from a series of research studies⁵. The policy report describes what HEFCE will do to work with and support the sector to address the challenges identified in the research studies and crucially, to develop systematic and robust ways to measure the impact and effectiveness of the interventions made by HE providers, taking into account the developing Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and the Funding Councils' Quality Assessment Review.

17. There was a strong consensus across the research studies HEFCE commissioned that, while we know from national data that the sector has made significant progress in terms of widening access and improving retention and institutions clearly recognise

1. See: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/Events/Name,103837,en.html>

2. NUMHUS (or the Student Instance Number) complements the HESA Unique Student Identifier (HUSID) to identify the separate courses that individuals take. (https://www.hesa.ac.uk/component/studrec/show_file/10051/E%5E_%5ENUMHUS.html)

3. The sequence number of the learning aim which complements the learner record number (LRN) to identify the separate courses that individuals take

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ilr-specification-validation-rules-and-appendices-2014-to-2015> (p.98).

4. 'Delivering opportunities for students and maximising their success: Evidence for policy and practice 2015-2020' (HEFCE 2015/14, available at www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2015/201514/).

5. The five research reports are:

- Causes of differences in student outcomes', Kings' College London, University of Manchester and the ARC network, July 2015, available at www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/Year/2015/diffout/
- Support for higher education students with specific learning difficulties', York Consulting Ltd and University of Leeds, July 2015, available at www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/Year/2015/spld/
- Understanding provision for students with mental health problems and intensive support needs', Institute of Employment Studies and University of Lancaster, July 2015, available at www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/Year/2015/mh/
- Student opportunity outcomes framework research: In-depth study', CFE Research, July 2015, available at www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/Year/2015/sodepth/
Student opportunity outcomes framework research: Data return project', CFE Research, July 2015, available at www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/Year/2015/sodataret/.

the need for better evidence to underpin policy and practice, there is little evidence to date of interventions and approaches being systematically evaluated. This is a fundamental concern and one that is shared by institutions.

18. The research concluded that, in the short to medium term, the data return HEFCE currently receives from HE providers in respect of their investment in student opportunity activity was sufficient to account for public funding, as long as steps were taken to improve and increase significantly the evaluative evidence of the effectiveness and impact of activity. In light of this recommendation⁶ and the current policy context, the monitoring information requested of institutions in relation to their expenditure of SO allocation in 2014-15 remains largely unchanged from last year.

19. HEFCE's work to develop and enhance the evidence the sector generates regarding the impact and effectiveness of activity to widen access, improve retention and students' success and support progression to employment and further study will be scoped so that it aligns with the TEF and quality assessment developments and we will provide further guidance to the sector on this in due course.

What is the future for NSP monitoring returns?

20. As set out in 'National Scholarship Programme update for participating institutions' (HEFCE Circular letter 24/2013), the NSP closed at the end of the 2014-15 academic year. The funding was repurposed from 2015-16 to provide support for postgraduate study. The 2014-15 end-of-year monitoring is the final HEFCE monitoring exercise for the NSP. However, institutions funding NSP recipients in subsequent years are asked to honour their commitments and should continue to fund NSP students for subsequent years as outlined in their original funding agreements.

Green Paper

21. As you will be aware, the Government has recently published a Green Paper, [Higher education: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice](#). This consults on proposed changes to higher education regulation in England, including legislation to establish an Office for Students. In the meantime, both HEFCE and OFFA will continue to conduct their business as usual and the evidence we are seeking in this monitoring guidance is central to this. You should, therefore, complete the return as usual and OFFA will be sending out access agreement guidance for 2017-18 early next year. HEFCE and OFFA are currently considering the Green Paper proposals and look forward to working with Government, the sector, students and others as the proposals are discussed and debated. Both organisations will continue to work to ensure that all students who have the ability to achieve success in higher education have the opportunity to do so.

⁶. [Student opportunity outcomes framework research: data return project](#), CFE Research, July 2015.

Getting started

Do you need to complete a monitoring return?

22. All higher education institutions (HEIs) and further education colleges (FECs) that had an access agreement **and** SO allocation **and** NSP funding in 2014-15 must follow this guidance and complete a **full** monitoring return.

23. If your institution did not have an access agreement for 2014-15 but had more than 100 full-time equivalent (FTE) directly HEFCE-funded student numbers **and** received an SO allocation **and/or** an NSP allocation, you need only complete **some** sections of the monitoring return. HEFCE will contact you separately to advise about this.

Partnership arrangements

24. For partnership arrangements, any requirement to submit a monitoring return falls:

- a. **In a validation arrangement**, on the institution making available and teaching the course, and with which the student will have the full contractual relationship for the provision of education.
- b. **In a sub-contractual arrangement**, on the institution that makes the course available and with which the student will have the full contractual relationship for the provision of education. Any other institution that was contracted by the first to provide (some of) the teaching on the course would not require an access agreement relating to that course, although it will be the responsibility of the first institution to ensure that its own access agreement is fully adhered to.
- c. **For joint courses**, on all the HE providers in England within the partnership that together have responsibility for the provision of educational services to the student.

What do I need to do now?

25. Download the tables you need to fill in from the HEFCE extranet at <https://data.hefce.ac.uk>. Further instructions are available in paragraphs 230-242, "How to submit your return". For your reference,

PDF copies of the monitoring return tables are available to download alongside this document at www.offa.org.uk/publications.

26. Complete all relevant parts of your monitoring return, checking it carefully against this guidance. If in doubt, ask us for clarification (for contact details, see the front of this document). Detailed guidance on filling in the return is given in this document. There are also prompts on the tables themselves.

Table-by-table guide to completing your monitoring return

How to complete the access agreement and Student Opportunity allocation monitoring return for 2014-15

Table 1

Full-time courses: fee limits and student numbers

Action

27. In Table 1, please record the fees you charged to full-time students in 2014-15 and how many students were charged this fee, broken down by year of entry. Include all course fees, both above and below the basic fee levels. Where you have different fee levels for different courses, set these out at each different fee level – for example, by degree type where you have different charges for first degrees and sub-degrees, or by subject or faculty groupings.

28. Include all regulated home/EU full-time undergraduates studying at your institution in 2014-15, including initial teacher training (ITT) and undergraduate social work students.

29. Table 1 represents a 'snapshot' of the students paying a fee in the 2014-15 academic year, so should not normally include large numbers of students on courses which started in 2011-12 or earlier, unless you have substantial numbers of students on four or five-year courses.

30. Where students have not completed their courses and therefore not paid full fees but have paid some fees in 2014-15, count these students in Table 1 against the full fee course line, and use Table 2b to record any negative adjustments to fee income above the basic level. Please see the notes for Table 2 for details of how to record these.

Explanatory notes for Table 1

31. The 'fee income above the basic fee per student' column in Table 1 is calculated for you automatically when you enter fee levels, and is equal to the higher fee charged minus the basic fee. For example, if you charged the maximum fee of £9,000 for new system students in 2014-15, the 'fee income above the basic fee per student' is £3,000 (£9,000-£6,000). Table 2 provides totals for the number of full-time students and fee income above the basic fee, using the information you have recorded in Table 1.

Fees to exclude

32. The following should **not** be recorded in Table 1:

- fee income from courses and persons not covered by the Higher Education Act 2004, such as students not eligible for student support on the basis that they are eligible to apply for a healthcare bursary
- students studying a course which leads to a qualification equivalent to or lower than one they already hold ('ELQ' students)
- students who were no longer studying in 2014-15
- students studying part-time (these are included in Table 2).

Do not account for any fee waivers that you gave to students – these will be recorded in Table 4.

Franchise arrangements

33. In a sub-contractual ('franchise') arrangement, franchiser institutions are responsible for reporting on their franchised courses. For franchised courses, please select the name and UK Provider Reference Number (UKPRN) of the franchise partner from the drop-down list, or alternatively type the UKPRN of the provider. If you are an FEC that has courses franchised from an HEI, do not include these courses in your return as these will be recorded in the HEI's return.

Table 2

Student numbers and fee income

Action

34. In Table 2a, please record the number of fee-regulated part-time students you had at your institution in 2014-15, and how many of these students were charged a fee above the basic rate of £4,500.

35. In Table 2b, please record the amount of higher fee income received from part-time students who were charged over the basic fee in 2014-15. For example, if a student paid £5,000 in 2014-15, the higher fee income is £500 (i.e. £5,000-£4,500).

36. In Table 2b, please record any negative adjustments to higher fee income, and briefly explain this adjustment in the commentary box in Table 2c. You should use this table where the formulas in Table 1 mean that the total higher fee income figures provided in Table 2b are not accurate. For example, if a student paying the maximum fee of £9,000 withdrew and paid fees of £8,000, you would include them in your student count in Table 1 but also record a negative adjustment in Table 2b of £1,000. You only need to record negative adjustments for the purposes of calculating higher fee income, so where students withdrew and paid fees below the basic rate (e.g. new system full-time students paying fees below £6,000 in 2014-15) do not record these students in Table 1 or Table 2b.

37. In Table 2c, please tell us if the total number of students (full and part-time) charged above the basic fee in 2014-15 has substantially changed from the revised predictions for 2014-15 made in your 2015-16 access agreement resource plan. Where the number of students charged above the basic fee is more than 20 per cent above or below your predictions, please provide an explanation in the commentary box.

Explanatory notes for Table 2

38. Fees for the following students are not regulated, and should not be included:

- pre-2012 part-time students
- students studying at an intensity of less than 25 per cent full-time equivalent
- students studying a course which leads to a qualification equivalent or lower than one they already hold.

39. If you have provided fee waivers to students, please do not use the negative adjustments in Table 2c to account for these. You should record fee waivers in Table 4.

Table 3

Widening participation activity expenditure and hardship expenditure

Action

40. In Table 3a, please record your institution's expenditure on access, student success and progression activity in 2014-15 from all funding sources, using the categories provided. This will enable us to collect consistent information across the sector to assess and understand the areas in which investment in WP is being made, across each stage of the student lifecycle (access, student success and progression).

41. Please also indicate how much of your access, student success and progression activity expenditure was funded from your access agreement and how much from the HEFCE SO allocation in 2014-15.

42. In Table 3b, please report your expenditure on supporting students experiencing financial hardship from all funding sources. Please indicate how much of your hardship expenditure was funded from your access agreement and how much was from your HEFCE SO allocation in 2014-15. When calculating the expenditure funded from your access agreement, please count

only financial support given to students in financial hardship and not any costs relating to provision of information, advice and guidance for students with financial problems.

43. Please ensure that your total 'of which uses HEFCE SO allocation' in Table 3c does not exceed the total HEFCE SO allocation provided to you for 2014-15.

44. In Table 3d, please report on all expenditure on WP activity that was delivered collaboratively. By collaborative activity, we do not just mean collaboration between providers of higher education. We would normally expect collaborative activity to include a number of partners rather than being between a single higher education institution and schools, colleges or other stakeholders receiving outreach, but collaboration could be formed in a number of ways, for example between one higher education institution and several further education colleges, other higher education providers, employers, third sector organisations, schools, colleges, training providers, local authorities and so on.

Explanatory notes for Table 3

45. The expenditure you report on OFFA-countable access, student success, progression and hardship should only relate to funds committed from higher fee income and other new and additional (post-2006) sources of funding. It should relate to:

- WP activities that started after the introduction of variable fees in 2006 ('additional' activities), or
- expenditure on activities that you previously funded through other means where these funding streams have been reduced or discontinued, for example collaborative activities previously funded under the Aimhigher programme or through Lifelong Learning Networks
- expenditure from other new and additional sources other than fee income, e.g. charitable donations.

46. You may include relevant staffing and overhead costs. Do not apply full economic costing.

47. Please do not include your funding allocated under the National Networks for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO) as this funding will be monitored separately.

48. We appreciate that much of the work that you do to improve student success and progression, such as retention, attainment and employability, will be embedded within your teaching and learning practices. Similarly access, student success and progression are embedded in the core activities of many institutions, so it may be difficult to disaggregate WP expenditure into the categories and apportion spend against your access agreement and the SO allocation. We appreciate that you may need to use estimates; if you do so, please ensure they are as accurate as possible.

49. While most institutions will be undertaking activity covering all of the categories, we understand that some institutions, in particular smaller ones, may not carry out work that falls under every category.

Examples of activities in each category

50. Examples of activities that would belong in each category include (but are not limited to):

Access activity (Table 3a)

a. Outreach work with schools and young people

Mentoring programmes with schools and young people; summer schools, campus visits, taster days and masterclasses; compact programmes and progression agreements with schools and colleges; work with looked-after children and care leavers.

b. Outreach work with communities and adults

Taster days and visits for adults; community projects; progression agreements aimed at adults progressing from further education; work with employers.

c. Outreach work with disabled students

Mentoring programmes with disabled students; summer schools, campus visits, taster days and

masterclasses; compact programmes and progression agreements aimed at disabled students progressing from further education.

d. **Strategic relationships with schools**

Strategic partnerships between schools and HE providers such as sponsoring of an academy, federation or trust, university technical college or free school.

e. **WP staffing and administration (access activity)**

Staffing costs for WP units that cannot be allocated to directly delivering an outreach activity, such as monitoring costs; partnership support costs in relation to outreach activities.

Student success activity (Table 3a)

a. **Support for current students (academic and pastoral)**

Activity to improve retention and equality of outcomes for different groups; induction and transition programmes; provision of study skills; student services expenditure on WP target groups (for instance financial or mental health advisers); peer mentoring programmes; developing inclusive curricula and learning resources.

b. **Support for disabled students**

Provision of advice and support to disabled students; developing accessible learning resources and inclusive learning and teaching environments.

c. **WP staffing and administration (student success activity)**

Staffing costs for WP units that cannot be allocated to directly delivering a student success activity, such as monitoring costs; partnership support costs in relation to student success activities.

Progression activity (Table 3a)

a. **Support for progression from higher education into employment or postgraduate study**

Support with internships for students from WP target groups; mentoring programmes designed

to facilitate entry into employment or postgraduate study.

b. **Support for progression of disabled students**

Provision of advice and support to help disabled students into employment or postgraduate study.

c. **WP staffing and administration (progression activity)**

Staffing costs for WP units that cannot be allocated to directly delivering progression activity, such as monitoring costs; partnership support costs in relation to progression activities.

Hardship expenditure (Table 3b)

a. **Support for students in financial hardship**

Provision of information, advice and guidance for students with on-going financial problems and financial support for students in unexpected hardship that might impact on their participation in HE in the form of grants or loans for general living cost such as rent, food, and utility; and course related costs such as childcare costs, books, materials, and travel)

b. **WP staffing and administration (hardship)**

Staffing costs for WP units that cannot be allocated to directly delivering a hardship activity, such as monitoring costs; admin support costs in relation to finance activities such as making payments.

Using the WP staffing and administration category

51. Examples of expenditure under 'WP staffing and administration' include (but are not limited to):

- non-staffing costs of running central WP units and departments
- staff development for staff in such units and departments
- costs related to supporting collaborative partnerships
- costs of evaluation and monitoring activity.

52. Where possible, record expenditure on staff working directly on a particular access, student success, or progression activity against the appropriate category. You should only record expenditure under WP staffing and administration where the activity cannot be allocated to other categories.

53. This may mean that costs for some members of staff are split between different categories, where some but not all of their work involves directly delivering particular activities. In these circumstances, please make a judgement of the percentage of staff time allocated to activities.

Provision for disabled students

54. We would normally expect all institutions to report expenditure to enhance provision for disabled students. If this work is delivered separately from other WP work in your institution, in terms of staffing and infrastructure, please collect the relevant information for this monitoring return. This will enable us to gain a full picture of all WP expenditure.

Activities spanning multiple categories

55. If you have undertaken activities that could fall under more than one of the pre-determined categories (such as an outreach programme that targets both young people and adults), please make a judgement on which category is most appropriate and ensure that the activity is consistently placed under this category in future monitoring returns. The activity must not be double-counted.

Table 4

Expenditure on financial support

56. For this year's monitoring, we have consolidated Tables 4a-g into three tables, Tables 4a-4c.

57. The data you provide in this table will help us to monitor that you have met your commitments to individual students.

58. We will publish the number of 'OFFA-countable' beneficiaries at individual institutions in our monitoring outcomes report, alongside the

proportion of higher fee-paying students this number represents. It is therefore important to base your estimates on a reasonable methodology. We may indicate in the monitoring outcomes report where figures are based on estimates rather than known.

We will give you data to help you complete Table 4

59. As in previous years, we will send you Student Loans Company (SLC) income distribution data for your institution to help you complete Table 4. This data will be available via the HEFCE extranet. This will set out the numbers and proportions of (UK-domiciled) old and new system students at your institution who applied for state finance in 2014-15, broken down by household income bands as set out in paragraph 63 for both new system students and old system students.

60. If your institution subscribes to the full administrative service offered by the Higher Education Bursary and Scholarship Scheme (HEBSS), we will also tell you how many bursary holders your institution has paid through HEBSS, and your overall HEBSS expenditure. Again, this will be broken down by household income bands.

Table 4a

Expenditure on financial support for under-represented groups

Action

61. Please state your actual expenditure between 1 August 2014 and 31 July 2015 on financial support for old and new system students from the under-represented groups listed in the glossary at the back of this guidance. Include all NSP expenditure (Government and institutional contributions).

62. Record your expenditure by the following types:

- i. Bursaries, scholarships and 'in-kind' support (for example, discounts on accommodation or other institutional services such as providing laptops for students).

ii. Fee waivers (including free/discounted foundation years).

63. Split your expenditure into the student categories listed in the return, and only record expenditure on financial support for these students:

a) Students in receipt of the maximum maintenance grant. The income threshold for the maximum maintenance grant varies according to year of entry.

- for entrants in 2006-07 and 2007-08, those with a residual household income in 2014-15 of up to £18,360
- for entrants from 2008-09 onwards, those with a residual household income in 2014-15 of up to £25,000.

b) Students in receipt of a partial maintenance grant. The income threshold for a partial maintenance grant also varies according to year of entry. For old system students, please report on residual household income up to the 2014-15 threshold of £50,706. This will enable us to make comparisons with expenditure in previous years. Please therefore provide information on financial support as follows:

- for entrants in 2006-07 and 2007-08, those with a residual household income in 2014-15 of between £18,361 and £50,706
- for entrants from 2008-09 to 2011-12, those with a residual household income in 2014-15 of between £25,001 and £50,706
- for entrants from 2012-13 onwards, those with a residual household income in 2014-15 of between £25,001 and £42,620

c) Students from other under-represented groups (which could not be included within categories a or b above). Please only include students in this category when either:

- household income is unknown and you can't make estimates, or
- household income is above £42,620 (new system students) or above £50,706 (old system students), but the student was from another disadvantaged group.

64. Please also state how much of your Government NSP allocation was spent on financial support in 2014-15, for full-time and part-time students. Record **only the Government NSP expenditure**, not what your allocation was, and do not include spending from the match funding provided by your institution. Please cross-refer to Table 14 to ensure that the information provided is consistent.

Explanatory notes for Table 4a

65. Wherever possible, please record financial support expenditure by the income group of the beneficiary, rather than as 'students from other under-represented groups'.

66. Where figures are based on estimates, declare this in your monitoring return and briefly explain your calculations.

67. Please record expenditure as follows:

- i. Where you know the household income of the beneficiary – whether it relates to a means-tested payment or a non-means tested payment – you should allocate expenditure to the relevant income bracket.
- ii. If you do not know the beneficiary's household income; if your institution provides financial support awarded on other measures of under-representation that are countable by OFFA; or if you award financial support regardless of a student's income, you may still be able to calculate estimated expenditure. Use the SLC income distribution data to work out the proportion of students who are likely to fall into each income group. For example, if you award financial support to students who are care leavers, you may not have information on household income, but you may still be able to

estimate expenditure for each income group. You may need to apply a weighting if your experience indicates that beneficiaries are unlikely to be evenly distributed across income groups.

- iii. Expenditure should only be listed under 'students from other under-represented groups' where you know that the students are from an under-represented group but household income is unknown and you can't make reasonably confident estimates. There should be very few entries in this category: in 2013-14, only around 1 per cent of students who received financial support were recorded in this category.

Expenditure to include

68. Franchiser institutions should include financial support for students on their franchised courses.

Expenditure to exclude

69. The following should not be included in Table 4a:

- expenditure on financial support for students with residual household incomes above £42,620 (new system students) or £50,706 (old system students) who aren't from an under-represented group
- any payments reported to OFFA in previous monitoring returns – you should only count expenditure in the year in which the benefit was received
- expenditure that is not awarded directly to students in order to provide a financial benefit, for example expenditure on the overall improvement of services for students and broader retention measures
- ring-fenced funding received from the Government
- expenditure on historical bursaries and scholarships where funding was established before the introduction of variable fees and has continued and which are not funded through higher fee income or an institution's own fundraising
- expenditure to students not covered under the Higher Education Act 2004, such as students not eligible for student support on the basis that they are eligible to apply for a healthcare bursary.

Table 4b

Number of students receiving financial support, by under-represented group

Action

70. Please record the number of old and new system students from the under-represented groups set out in the glossary at the end of this guidance who received financial support in 2014-15.

71. Please allocate students to household income brackets, using estimates where necessary in the same way as set out in paragraph 63.

72. In some cases, a student's circumstances may have changed after they received an award, e.g. their residual household income may have been reassessed during the academic year, or they did not complete a full year or programme of study. You should include these students in your return based on their household income at the time they were originally assessed for financial support.

73. Please report the number of beneficiaries rather than the number of awards, so if you give a student more than one award, you should only count them once.

74. Where a student receives an award based on income plus a non income-related award, you should record them only once based on their income-related award.

75. The 'Total number of students in receipt of financial support, as a proportion of the total number of students' row will automatically calculate the proportion of students receiving financial support. Please check these to ensure they are in line with your expectations. The proportions should not exceed 100 per cent.

Table 4c

Student choice expenditure for 2014-15 entrants

Action

76. Please indicate where you gave 2014-15 entrants a choice about the type of financial support that they received.

Explanatory notes for Table 4c

77. A number of institutions offer students a choice about the form in which they receive financial support – for example, between a fee waiver and a cash bursary. OFFA may contact you to find out more about the choices that students made.

Table 5

Access agreement expenditure summary

Action

78. Tables 5a, 5c and 5d populate automatically, based on the data you've provided in Tables 1-4. They show the institution-level data that we will include in our monitoring outcomes report for institutions with access agreements. Please check that the figures shown are in line with your expectations.

79. In Table 5b, we have pre-populated the statements about whether your access, student success and progression spend is in line with the prediction for 2014-15 from your 2015-16 access agreement. If it is more than 10 per cent below or 20 per cent above your prediction, explain the broad reasons for this difference in the text boxes provided (e.g. you should provide this explanation if your prediction was £100,000 and your actual spend was lower than £90,000 or higher than £120,000).

Table 6

Overall investment in widening participation activity and financial support

Action

80. Table 6 populates automatically, based on the data you have provided in previous tables. It summarises your institution-level expenditure on WP activity and financial support, including through OFFA-approved access agreements and the HEFCE SO allocation. Please check that the figures shown are in line with your expectations.

Table 7

HESA performance indicators

Action

81. For HEIs, Table 7 will be pre-populated with your institution's HESA performance indicator (PI) data. You may wish to check these figures.

82. No trend data is currently available for FECs, so there will be no data in the tables. No action is required of FECs.

Explanatory notes for Table 7 (for HEIs only)

83. For HEIs, we have provided data from the following HESA tables to give a context for your institution's overall performance on access and student success:

- HESA Table 1b – the percentage of young, full-time undergraduate entrants from state school, from National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) 4-7 and from low participation neighbourhoods (LPNs)
- HESA Table 2b – the percentage of all part-time entrants from low participation neighbourhoods
- HESA Table 3a – the percentage of all entrants no longer in higher education following year of entry

- HESA Table 3b – the percentage of entrants from low participation neighbourhoods no longer in higher education following year of entry.

84. We have also included the location-adjusted benchmark, and a '+' or '-' marker to establish how well an HEI is performing in the higher education sector. This is the same marker that is used in the published HESA PI tables.

85. The data on low participation neighbourhoods is based on POLAR3 data. Please note that the 2014-15 data for entrants and 2013-14 data for non-continuation is not given, because it will not have been finalised before the submission deadline for the returns.

Table 8

Access agreement milestones and targets

Action

86. Please report on progress against the targets and milestones set out in your 2014-15 access agreement, or targets that have been added to subsequent agreements:

- statistical milestones/targets relating to your applicants, entrants or student body – for example, those based on HESA, UCAS or similar data that you use to measure the outcomes of your WP work
- other milestones and targets, e.g. those relating to outreach activity, lifelong learning, or institutional management and mission. Where there are a number that are similar, you may amalgamate these for your monitoring return.

87. For each of your statistical milestones/targets, you should:

- provide milestone figures showing your progress against the target for 2014-15. If it is not possible to record a figure for 2014-15 (e.g. if HESA PI data has not yet been published), please include performance data prior to this wherever

possible, e.g. for academic years 2010-11 to 2013-14

- indicate if it is a collaborative target or not. By collaborative targets, we do not just mean those shared between providers of higher education. We would normally expect collaborative targets to include many stakeholders rather than be between a single HEI and schools, colleges or other stakeholders receiving outreach, but collaboration could be formed in a number of ways, for example between one HEI and several FECs, other higher education providers, employers, third sector organisations, schools, colleges, training providers, local authorities and so on
- select a statement that clearly reflects your actual progress against each milestone, from the available classifications:
 - Overall target met/exceeded. Only use this category if:
 - the target year has been reached (i.e. is 2014-15 or earlier)
 and
 - you have met or exceeded the target.
 - Yearly milestone met – on course to meet overall target. Only use this category if:
 - the target year is a future year (i.e. 2015-16 or later)
 and
 - you are on course to meet the target
 and
 - you have met or exceeded the 2014-15 milestone.
 - Progress made – but less than anticipated. Only use this category if:
 - your performance has improved relative to the baseline

and

- b. your performance is below the 2014-15 milestone you set.
- iv. No progress made against baseline data to date. Use this category if you have not made meaningful progress relative to your baseline data.
- v. Long-term trend shows negative performance. Use this category if your 2014-15 performance is below the level set out in the baseline.
- vi. N/A. Use this category for prefilled targets that are not applicable for some reason (for example, where they were removed or superseded).

88. For your convenience, Tables 8a and b are pre-populated with the milestones and targets you reported against in last year's (i.e. 2013-14) monitoring return, including your yearly milestones data. Where the prefilled targets have been revised, select 'N/A' and enter the revised targets on a separate row of the table. Do not delete any of the prefilled data in order to enter a revised target and do not add a revised target over the top of a removed target, even if it is similar.

89. If you added new targets to your 2014-15 access agreement, please add these on separate rows of the table and ensure all columns are completed for these new targets. Do not delete any of the prefilled data in order to remove a target and do not add a new target over the top of a removed target, even if it is similar.

90. If you have updated your 2014-15 access agreement milestones and targets in a more recent access agreement, you may wish to refer to this in Table 8. However, you must still report on the milestones and targets relating to your 2014-15 access agreement.

Explanatory notes for Table 8

91. This is a self-assessment of your institution's progress against its targets and milestones. The classifications provided should clearly reflect your actual position for each target.

92. If the progress description you select for a target does not match the performance suggested by the data, we will contact you to discuss this and you may need to revise and resubmit the monitoring return. Please follow the directions in paragraph 87 to select appropriate categories. If you are unsure about how to classify your performance in a particular area, please contact your institution's Policy Adviser in OFFA to clarify this.

93. OFFA recognises that you might meet all your financial commitments and access plans under your access agreement but not achieve your targets and milestones. When we are analysing your progress, OFFA will consider whether you have met your commitments and if you have made progress towards your milestones. It will also take into account any contextual information you provide in Table 9, as well as the position of the higher education sector as a whole.

94. OFFA asks for yearly milestones back to 2010-11 because it is interested in long-term trends. However, we recognise that you may not be able to populate all of these if you do not have data for those years.

Table 9

Commentary on progress against access agreement targets and milestones

Action

95. Please use Table 9 to:

- comment on your overall progress made against the targets
- set your progress in some context, for example to explain how it may have been influenced by external factors
- comment on the key factors that have led to successful outcomes

- provide any explanations where you have not met targets or where progress has been less than anticipated, and where appropriate, set out the action you have taken to improve in these areas.

Please limit this commentary to a maximum of 1,000 words.

96. OFFA may contact you to gain a better understanding of the situation if the information you give us is not sufficient to allow us to gauge your progress.

97. As in previous years, OFFA will publish your commentary on its website, alongside the data in Tables 7 and 8. You can see what was published last year at www.offa.org.uk/institutions-self-assessments-and-commentaries.

Table 10

Access, success and progression activities: evaluation, evidence and impact

Action

98. Please use Table 10 to provide a brief commentary on your evaluation activities for 2014-15, including:

- an assessment of your approach to evaluating your access, student success and progression activities and programmes over the past year (Table 10a)
- an assessment of the types of activities you used in your evaluation in 2014-15, using Kirkpatrick's evaluation model (Table 10b)
- your key findings from an evaluation of an access, success or progression activity/programme (Table 10c).

Explanatory notes for Table 10

99. For 2014-15 access agreements, we asked institutions to provide an overview of how you would evaluate the measures in your agreement, following OFFA's guidance that well-designed evaluation is crucial to making further progress and ensuring long-term value for money. Table 10 provides you with an opportunity to set out the work you have done in this area.

100. We are keen to understand more about the approach you take to evaluation. We are interested in hearing about your best example of how you have used evaluation to inform your activities, and encourage you to reflect on your evaluative work and improvements that could be/are being made.

101. Please note that we are interested in evaluation of your work rather than simply how you monitored your practice; the definition we have used is from the HEFCE/Progression Trust toolkits for practitioners (https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/evaluation_3rd.pdf):

- Monitoring is the collection and analysis of data during a project and the comparison of this data against the targets and plans made for WP. Monitoring is part of project management, and helps to ensure cost-effectiveness and project progress.
- Evaluation is about making an assessment of the effectiveness and impact of what has been done. Data gathered for monitoring purposes is often utilised as part of evaluations, but the aims of the two activities are different.

102. We understand that different institutions' evaluation strategies will be at different stages. The information provided in Table 10a will help us to understand more about this at a sector-wide level, and how we can offer further support to institutions in this area.

103. The information you provide in Table 10b will give us a clearer picture of the levels of impact institutions are gaining from their evaluation work. We use Kirkpatrick's evaluation model as a framework for this. For more information on Kirkpatrick's model, and other useful information on

evaluation methods, we recommend the series of toolkits available from www.heacademy.ac.uk/retention-archives. They draw on resources created by Aimhigher and the Lifelong Learning Networks while reflecting the current climate.

104. Table 10c provides an opportunity for you to highlight your best example of how you have used evaluation of an access, student success or progression activity/programme in the new system (i.e. from the academic year 2012-13 onwards) to inform your approach, and to set out the key findings. We are keen to understand how institutions from across the sector are using evaluation to help meet their WP objectives.

105. In last year's monitoring return, we collected and analysed detailed information about institutions' evaluation practice. The responses we received were valuable, and have informed our evidence and good practice work over the past year (our topic briefings, for example). The responses we received were, however, quite varied, because of how the questions were framed. We have therefore developed Tables 10c and 11 further to make the questions clearer.

106. We will use the information you provide in Table 10c to help build our understanding of evaluation across the sector, allowing us to champion examples of effective practice and support institutions better to develop and refine their activities.

107. Please set out, for one example:

- the activity or programme – this can be from any stage of the lifecycle (e.g. residential summer school for Year 11 pupils)
- the evaluation question you were seeking to answer (e.g. 'To what extent did summer school attendance contribute to the likelihood of a pupil applying to our university/college?')
- a brief description of the methodology you used (e.g. a programme of observations and interviews; tracking changes in application rates for participants)
- your key findings (e.g. evidence of improved application rates; behavioural change in participants)

- how the results of the evaluation have informed future action and effectiveness (e.g. better targeting of participants; refined summer school programme; scaling-up of activity)
- who was responsible for the evaluation (e.g. WP practitioner team, with support from pro-vice chancellor for education and student experience and oversight from recruitment and access committee).

108. You might also point to instances where you have decided to undertake a particular activity as a result of evidence from evaluation collected elsewhere or at a national level.

109. When discussing findings from evaluation, please do not extensively describe the activities, numbers of events and/or numbers of participants; rather, concentrate on evidence of impact from the work.

110. When reporting on findings from evaluation, please concentrate on providing evidence of long-term impact, such as:

- the improved attainment of participants
- evidence of long-term impact on attitudes and aspirations
- the tracking of participants to higher education.

111. For example, you might include evidence of: the impact on learner attitude of outreach programmes in partner schools; evidence of progression of learners from participation in outreach programmes to enrolment at an institution; evidence of how retention rates for students from disadvantaged backgrounds compare to rates for all students at an institution; how retention rates for students taking part in a particular scheme compare to rates for the student body as a whole; evidence of improved employment/further study outcomes for participants.

112. Please note that while evidence from pre-and post-event questionnaires is essential for institutions in planning, its use is more limited in demonstrating impact, particularly when used for one-off events.

113. If you do not yet have such evidence of longer-term impact, you should briefly discuss how

you plan to put in place processes to collect it in future.

114. We understand that institutions undertake work that does not have a direct impact on recruitment to their own institution. Where this is the case, we would expect you to use a range of evaluative methods, both qualitative and quantitative, to demonstrate the impact of such work. Evidence might include improved academic attainment in partner schools, or increased applications to higher education in general from such schools.

Evaluation in FECs

115. We understand that for many FECs, WP is often based more on internal progression than on specific activities, so they may place less emphasis on evaluation. However, we are interested in understanding the specific contribution that FECs make to WP and how you most successfully support internal progression; we would like any information or evidence that you have on the impact of your WP work, including from the perspective of internal progression. Other appropriate evidence of the impact of your work could include, for example, progression and retention rates for groups of students who have received extra support for the transition from further to higher education, or the improvement in progression and retention rates over time after such support has been put in place. You should also include brief details of plans to put into place more extensive evaluation processes, where these aren't currently in place.

Table 11

Financial support: evaluation, evidence and impact

Action

116. In Table 11a, select the statement which most closely reflects your approach to evaluating your financial support for 2014-15. If you selected option (e), please provide details of how you evaluated.

117. In Table 11b, we are keen to understand more about how you have evaluated your financial support, and how any results of this have influenced your financial support schemes.

Explanatory notes for Table 11

118. A high proportion of the sector's access agreement expenditure is currently spent on financial support, so OFFA is focusing on analysing, understanding and sharing evidence around its impact. Your monitoring return will contribute to the body of evidence in this area.

119. The structure of Table 11b mirrors that of Table 10c. Please see paragraph 107 for details of how to complete this for an example of your financial support.

Table 12

Equality and diversity activity

Action

120. Please complete Table 12a to indicate where you have a specific, targeted activity or programme aimed at people with particular protected characteristics and people from other target groups. For each, please specify whether you have specific access, student success or progression activities for them. We will use this information to contribute to our mapping of activity in the sector, and help identify areas of practice in universities and colleges.

121. In Table 12a, please only indicate activities or programmes that are aimed at particular groups, rather than wider activity which incidentally happens to include those groups. For example, if an outreach scheme is targeted at low-income, mature students, you should select 'age', even though some number of students with additional protected characteristics (e.g. mature pregnant learners, mature LGBT learners, etc.) may also benefit from the activity. As another example, if you

have a general programme for raising degree attainment, this should not be included in the grid; however, a specific targeted project to improve attainment for BME students should be.

122. If you would like to outline the groups covered by broad, non-specific, or mainstreamed work over the lifecycle which does not fit into Table 12a, you can list these in the optional comments box below Table 12a.

123. In Table 12b, please give your best example of an access agreement-supported programme that supports people with protected characteristics. Examples can be from any part of the student lifecycle (i.e. access, student success or progression). Please do not use examples of financial support, as these were covered in Table 11. Your example can be from a specific, targeted programme (such as one indicated in the grid in Table 12a), or from evaluation of the impact of a broader/mainstreamed programme on a particular group.

you to set out the groups covered by your broader programmes if you wish.

126. In Table 12b we are interested to hear examples of activity in 2014-15 that attracted and supported the success of students with specific protected characteristics and how activity in your access agreement helped you meet your equality and diversity requirements for all students. For example, you could describe an equality and diversity activity designed to address retention rates for different groups of students, or activity linked to attainment and employment gaps between different groups of students.

Explanatory notes for Table 12

124. We want to understand how institutions are investing in equality and diversity activity to address issues impacting on students with specific protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010. This will help to inform our policy and enable us to highlight effective practice in this area.

125. We will use this information to contribute to our mapping of activity in the sector, and help identify case studies of practice for specific groups in universities and colleges. Although Table 12a is focused on programmes directed at specific groups, this should not be viewed as a criticism of broader programmes or embedded support for different groups. If your institution has broad access programmes targeting multiple groups, or mainstreamed student success/progression activities, you may find that you do not have much to record in the grid. This is not a concern for us and we will not look unfavourably on your institution as a result. The optional comments box below Table 12a allows

How to complete the NSP final monitoring return for 2014-15

127. If you received an NSP allocation in 2014-15, you should submit information for your institution on:

- institutional criteria used to select NSP recipients, in addition to the national criteria
- individualised data on NSP recipients
- final NSP spending
- the breakdown of NSP expenditure
- how many 2014-15 entrants received awards
- delivery of your NSP awards
- how many 2013-14 and 2012-13 entrants received awards in subsequent years

128. You are asked to fill in all the yellow-shaded cells. The white cells either are pre-filled with data from your 2014-15 initial return and 2013-14 end of year return or will calculate automatically from the information you provide.

129. Before uploading your return, you should check the validation sheet to ensure that the validation checks have been passed and the tables have been completed correctly. If you have a legitimate reason for failing validation, **please give an explanation in the box provided at the bottom of the validation page, referring to the validation number that has failed.**

130. It is possible for your workbook to be verified with some validation errors, provided you have recorded a reason. We may need to get in touch with you to talk about the errors however.

131. You will also need to check your return after you have submitted it, to ensure that the post-submission validation checks made during the upload process have been passed. Errors may be generated at this stage because the data you provide in the return does not correctly match with HESA or ILR data. **If there are any errors, please investigate the errors, amend and re-upload your original return to the HEFCE extranet.** Alternatively if there are legitimate reasons for failing these errors in post-submission validation, please give an explanation in the box provided at the bottom of the validation page on your original submission and reload.

132. You will not be able to upload the NSP section of the monitoring return before mid-December 2015. This is because the 2014-15 end-of-year individualised return is linked to HESA and ILR data which HEFCE needs to process before this submission. HEFCE will contact institutions to inform them when the monitoring return can be uploaded. The deadline for submission is **noon on Wednesday 20 January 2016.**

Table 13

National and institutional criteria

Action

133. From the list provided in Table 13, choose the criteria that your institution has used to select eligible students from the 2014-15 cohort for an NSP award, in addition to the national criteria. You can do this by selecting 'Yes' in Column C 'Did you use this criterion at your institution?'. These criteria groupings have been pre-determined based on what institutions have previously told us have been used by the sector. For the description of criteria groups see Annex A.

134. Please state whether each criterion was mandatory (Column D) by selecting either 'Yes' or 'No' from the drop-down list in each cell.

135. If your institution prioritised one criterion over another, state the order in which they were ranked using the drop-down menu in Column E (with number 1 the most important).

136. If a criterion you have used is not listed, use the last three rows of the table (30-32) to enter such criteria. Please ensure your criteria do not fall into one of the listed categories before using this option (refer to Annex A).

137. If you would like to provide a description of these criteria, complete Column F.

Explanatory notes for Table 13

138. The information in Table 13 will provide us with a comprehensive view of the type of criteria used to select 2014-15 entrants under the programme.

139. If you are only using the national criteria to select NSP recipients, you do not need to complete this table.

140. We are keen to understand how institutions used their chosen criteria, so please only select criteria that you used when deciding allocations. For example, if a student awarded the NSP receives other benefits, but this was not on your list of institutional criteria, do not select 'Other benefits' as one of the criteria used. Conversely, if you were using 'Other benefits' as one of your criteria, but not 'Carer', a student who was in receipt of the Adult Dependent Grant should be reported as meeting the criterion 'Other benefits' rather than that of 'Carer'.

141. The national eligibility criteria threshold for household income is £25,000. Do not select this criterion if you used the national threshold for your NSP scheme. Only select this criterion if your eligibility threshold fell below £25,000, and then select one of the options in Column F to provide further information.

Table 14

Individualised data

Action

142. Please ensure that this table is **completed before subsequent tables in the workbook**, as data from this table will automatically populate further tables in the return.

143. Please state whether all students met national and mandatory institutional criteria by answering the two questions at the top of the table. We will need to discuss with institutions who answer 'no' to these questions the nature and reasons for any variation.

144. Please provide individualised data for students who received an award, ensuring

that all mandatory yellow cells in the table are completed. This table should only include the individualised data for those students who entered higher education in 2014-15 **and** received an NSP award.

Column A

145. In Column A you may provide an institutional student identifier for your own reference, although this is optional.

Column B

146. Higher education institutions should provide the HESA Unique Student Identifier (HUSID) for each student in Column B. Further education colleges should provide the Learner Reference Number (LRN). This will allow us to link the information with HESA and ILR data. Please see paragraphs 156-159 for more information.

Column C

147. Higher education institutions should provide the NUMHUS for the course for which a student received an NSP award in Column C. This field complements the HUSID field to identify the separate courses that individuals take. The NUMHUS requested for this return is the same as that returned in your HESA student record. Please see paragraphs 160-161 for more information.

148. Further education colleges should in Column C provide the aim sequence number (AimSeqNumber) for the course for which a student received an NSP award in Column C. This field complements the LRN field to identify the separate courses that individuals take. The aim sequence number required for this return is the same as that returned in the ILR that your institution returns to the Skills Funding Agency. Please see paragraphs 162-163 for more information.

Column D

149. Please select the academic year of entry for each student in Column D. This should only be 2014-15.

Columns E to G

150. Please specify the amount of the award that was given from the government allocation in Column E, from your institution's minimum matched funding in Column F and from any additional matched funding in Column G. This should not include matched funding committed to be delivered in subsequent years (2015-16 onwards). Please note that it is not possible to carry forward any government underspend as this is the final year of the programme.

Columns H to K

151. Please specify how an award was allocated to each student, by entering the amount spent in each of the categories:

- fee waivers or discounts (Column H)
- discounted accommodation or other institutional services (Column I)
- financial scholarships or bursaries (Column J)
- free or discounted foundation year (Column K).

152. If you did not make an award against a category, enter a zero in the relevant cell.

Columns L to M

153. Please specify whether the student will receive subsequent year NSP payments in 2015-16 (Column L) and 2016-17 (Column M).

Columns N to AS

154. In the last part of the table (Columns N to AS), indicate which institutional criteria each student met. This part of the table includes all the criteria groups. However, only the institutional criteria which you marked as used but not mandatory in Table 13 will be highlighted and open for modification.

Explanatory notes for Table 14

155. The data from this table will be linked with your HESA and ILR data return, which will allow us to analyse the characteristics of NSP recipients and

compare them with the rest of the higher education population. It also enables us to gain assurance that public funds are being correctly allocated to eligible students.

HUSID and ILR

For higher education institutions

156. The HUSID number requested for the monitoring return is the same as that returned to HESA. All undergraduate students entering institutions should be assigned a HUSID number by the institution on entry. The HUSID number is transferred with the student to each institution of higher education that he or she may attend. If a student is unable to recall their HUSID number, your registrar or Management Information System team should be able to provide you with this information. HESA also operates a HUSID look-up service which you can use to obtain the number. The monitoring return will contain a validation check to ensure that the HUSID is valid; we may also ask for an explanation where no match can be made between a student and the HESA student record.

157. More information on the student identifier is available from the HESA website at:

https://www.hesa.ac.uk/component/studrec/show_file/14051/a%5E_%5EHUSID.html

For further education colleges

158. Please record the student's LRN. This is the unique student identifier used on the ILR that your institution returns to the Skills Funding Agency. Your registrar or Management Information System team should be able to provide you with this number. The LRN is a maximum of 12 digits long.

159. More information on the LRN is available on page 28 of the 2014-15 ILR specification at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ilr-specification-validation-rules-and-appendices-2014-to-2015>

NUMHUS and aim sequence number (AimSeqNumber)

For higher education institutions

160. The NUMHUS complements the HUSID field to identify the separate courses that individuals take. The purpose of the NUMHUS is to distinguish and

link episodes of study by the same student at the same institution between years. The NUMHUS required for this return is the same as that returned in your HESA student record.

161. Further information on the NUMHUS can be found on the HESA website at:

https://www.hesa.ac.uk/component/studrec/show_file/14051/a%5E_%5ENUMHUS.html

For further education colleges

162. The aim sequence number (AimSeqNumber) field complements the LRN field to identify the separate courses that individuals take. The aim sequence number required for this return is the same as that returned in the individualised learner record (ILR) that your institution returns to the Skills Funding Agency.

163. Further information on the aim sequence number can be found on page 102 of the 2014-15 ILR specification at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ilr-specification-validation-rules-and-appendices-2014-to-2015>

Table 15

Summary of allocation and funding spent

Action

164. If relevant, record any funds that were carried forward from underspending on the 2012-13 cohort in subsequent years (Cells D18 and E18). This includes any funds that were planned to be spent on the 2012-13 or 2013-14 cohort in 2014-15 but were not, being subsequently used instead for the 2014-15 cohort. The total amount in row 18 of the NSP_overview_1415 tab, should match the 'Funds to re-allocated to 2014-15 cohort' row in Table 26 (row 18 of the NSP_overview_1213 tab).

165. Please record how much additional matched funding you wish to carry over to use on the 2014-15 cohort in subsequent years (Cell E21). If you have additional matched funding that you would like to

redirect to outreach and retention activities, please complete cell E22.

Explanatory notes for Table 15

166. Table 15 will automatically calculate the total spend and underspend for NSP 2014-15, as well as the amount to be reclaimed by HEFCE through grant adjustment (if applicable). If applicable, the grant adjustment will be processed in spring 2016.

167. Table 15 is pre-populated with information from your institution's 2014-15 initial NSP intentions monitoring return, your 2013-14 end of year return and the individualised data you input in Table 14.

168. Figures for the funds you have spent in 2014-15 on the 2014-15 cohort, including the government allocation, minimum required matched funding and any additional matched funding, will be automatically recorded based on the information you have provided in Table 14 (individualised data).

169. You are permitted to redirect your **additional** matched funding underspend for the NSP to outreach and retention activities. If you intend to do this, please indicate in the table how much of your additional matched funding will be redirected in this way.

170. If any of the cells in this table are red it means you have entered some incorrect figures, please check and amend before submitting your return. Further details of the errors can be found on the 'Validation' tab.

Table 16

Explanation for underspend

Action

171. If you report underspend from your government allocation for 2014-15, you should fill in Table 16 to describe the reason for this.

Explanatory notes for Table 16

Government underspending

172. As 2014-15 is the final year of the NSP, any government allocation underspend is unable to be

carried forward and will be reclaimed by HEFCE in spring 2016 and returned to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

Matched funding underspending

173. You can spend any matched funding underspend on 'topping up' the value of existing awards for the 2014-15 cohort in subsequent years. You should deliver this matched-funding in accordance with the government rules for the programme, your own institutional criteria and the information you have provided to students. You should also ensure that allocating the underspent funds in a particular way does not disadvantage students from one cohort compared with another.

174. There is more flexibility in how the **additional** matched funding underspend is used. It may be spent on the NSP (topping up the value of awards for the 2014-15 cohort in subsequent years), outreach, retention and student success activity, or a combination of the above.

Table 17

Breakdown of NSP expenditure

Action

175. Where the matched funding for the 2014-15 cohort is being delivered in subsequent years (2015-16 onwards), you should report this in Column F, broken down across the menu of five options.

Explanatory notes for Table 17

176. The information you submit in Table 17 will help us understand how the sector has allocated the NSP.

177. The first two columns of white cells in Table 17 (Columns C and D) are pre-populated with your planned breakdown of the 2014-15 NSP allocation. This information is taken from your 2014-15 initial return.

178. Actual expenditure for 2014-15 will automatically be calculated from the information you provide in Table 14 (individualised data), broken down across the menu of four options for the

combined government NSP allocation and institutional matched funding.

179. For the purposes of the 2014-15 initial monitoring (submitted in December 2013), institutions allowing their students to decide how they wanted the NSP to be delivered were asked to report this expenditure under the 'student choice' category. This was because the actual choices of the students were not yet known. The timing of the 2014-15 end-of-year monitoring allows us to establish the final position of this expenditure under the 'student choice' category. We will now expect you to report it according to how these funds were actually drawn down by students. However, you should continue to use the 'student choice' category for predicted expenditure for funding yet to be delivered in subsequent years (Cell F38).

Table 18

Number of 2014-15 entrants receiving awards

Action

180. Please provide the actual headcount of full-time and part-time students, and the full-time equivalent (FTE) number of students, who entered HE and received an award in 2014-15. If any students interrupted their studies during the academic year, record their FTE as if they had completed the year (for example a full-time student should be recorded as 1 FTE, even if they did not complete the year).

Explanatory notes for Table 18

181. In the 2014-15 initial intentions monitoring return, we asked you to provide the headcount and FTE numbers of students who were predicted to receive NSP awards. We are now asking you to provide the actual headcount of full-time and part-time NSP recipients for the 2014-15 cohort.

182. The white cells in this table are pre-populated with planned figures from your 2014-15 initial intentions monitoring return.

Table 19

Delivery of your NSP awards

Action

183. Please indicate how you have delivered your 2014-15 NSP awards by selecting one of the predetermined categories from the drop-down menu in each yellow cell. An additional information box is available if you wish to provide further details on your delivery of awards (for instance, if you are delivering different schemes at two campuses). If you have selected option 6 'A range of delivery methods' on row 51, option 4 'Range of awards' on row 53 or option 5 'A range of the options above' on row 55, please provide an explanation of what these are in the additional information boxes.

Explanatory notes for Table 19

184. We have predetermined categories for each question, to provide comparable information about how the NSP is being delivered across the sector.

185. The white cells in this table are pre-populated with planned delivery information from your 2014-15 initial monitoring return.

Table 20

Individualised data for the 2013-14 cohort

Action

186. Please only complete tables 20-24 **if you provided subsequent NSP awards to 2013-14 entrants** in 2014-15.

187. Please ensure that this table is completed **before Table 21** in the workbook, as data from this table will automatically populate Table 21.

188. Please provide individualised data for the 2013-14 entrants who received a subsequent year award in 2014-15, ensuring that all mandatory yellow cells in the table are completed.

Column A

189. Optionally, for your own records, you may provide an institutional student identifier in Column A.

Column B

190. Please provide the HUSID or LRN for each student in Column B. This will allow us to link the information with HESA and ILR data. (See paragraphs 156-159 for guidance on how to locate these numbers).

Column C

191. Please record the NUMHUS (for HEIs) or aim sequence number (for FECs) for the course for which a student received an NSP award in Column C. This field complements the HUSID/LRN field to identify the separate courses that individuals take. The NUMHUS requested for this return is the same as that returned in your HESA student record (HEI) or ILR (FEC). (Please see paragraphs 160-163 for guidance on how to locate these numbers).

Column D

192. Select the year of entry for each student in Column D. This should only be 2013-14.

Columns E to G

193. Please specify the amount of the award that was given from the government allocation in Column E, from your institution's minimum matched funding in Column F and from any additional matched funding in Column G. This should not include matched funding committed to be delivered in subsequent years (2015-16 onwards). Please note that it is not possible to carry forward any government underspend as this is the final year of the programme.

Columns H to J

194. Please specify how an award was allocated to each student, by entering the amount spent in each of the categories:

- fee waivers or discounts (Column H)
- discounted accommodation or other similar institutional services (Column I)

- financial scholarships or bursaries (Column J).

195. If you did not make an award against a category, enter a zero in that cell.

Column K

196. Please specify whether the student will receive subsequent year NSP payments in 2015-16.

Explanatory notes for Table 20

197. For the second year, HEFCE is collecting data on expenditure in subsequent years relating to the previous (2013-14 and 2012-13) cohorts of students. If you have awarded payments of the NSP to 2013-14 entrants in 2014-15, fill in the tables 20 – 24 contained within the tabs entitled 'NSP Individualised 2013-14' and 'NSP overview 2013-14' in your workbook (green and yellow tables). If you only awarded the NSP to 2013-14 entrants in their first year (2013-14), you are not required to complete these tables.

Table 21

Summary of allocation and funding spent

Action

198. Please record the amount of subsequent year funding planned to be spent on the 2013-14 cohort after the 2014-15 academic year (row 17).

199. Please provide details if you plan to re-allocate any of this funding to the 2014-15 cohort (row 18).

200. If you had underspend that was originally allocated for subsequent year spend on the 2012-13 cohort but was reallocated to the 2013-14 cohort, please provide details of this in row 19. These figures should match the figures provided in Table 26, row 17.

Explanatory notes for Table 21

201. The white cells in this table are pre-populated with the planned spending from your 2013-14 end-of-year monitoring return, and the information provided in Table 20 of the individualised returns.

Table 22

Explanation for underspend

Action

202. If you report any underspend from your subsequent year allocation for the 2013-14 cohort in 2014-15, you should fill in Table 22 to describe the reasons for this.

Explanatory notes for Table 22

Government underspending

203. As 2014-15 is the final year of the NSP, any government allocation underspend is unable to be carried forward and will be reclaimed by HEFCE in spring 2016 and returned to BIS.

Matched funding underspending

204. You can spend any minimum and additional matched funding underspend on 'topping up' the value of existing awards for the remaining 2013-14 cohort or 2014-15 cohort in subsequent years. You should deliver this matched-funding in accordance with the government rules for the programme, your own institutional criteria and the information you have provided to students. You should also ensure that allocating the underspent funds in a particular way does not disadvantage students from one cohort compared with another.

Table 23

Breakdown of NSP expenditure for subsequent years

Action

205. If there are 2013-14 cohort students who are continuing their studies after 2014-15 and will continue to receive the NSP in 2015-16 or

beyond, please record this information in Column E, broken down by the four options available.

Explanatory notes for Table 23

206. The white cells in Column C are pre-populated with planned subsequent year spending for the 2013-14 cohort. This information is taken from Table 16 of your 2013-14 end-of-year monitoring return.

207. Actual expenditure for 2014-15 will automatically be calculated from the information you provide in Table 20, broken down across the menu of three options for the combined government NSP allocation and institutional matched funding.

Table 24

Number of 2013-14 entrants receiving awards

Action

208. Please provide the actual headcount of full-time and part-time students, and the FTE number of 2013-14 entrants who received a subsequent year NSP award in 2014-15. If any students interrupted their studies during the academic year, record their FTE as if they had completed the year (for example a full-time student should be recorded as 1 FTE, even if they did not complete the year).

Table 25

Individualised data for the 2012-13 cohort

209. **Please only complete tables 25-28** if you provided **subsequent NSP awards** to **2012-13 entrants** in 2014-15.

Action

210. Please ensure that this table is completed **before Table 26** in the workbook, as data from this table will automatically populate Table 26.

211. Please provide individualised data for the 2012-13 entrants who received a subsequent year award in 2014-15, ensuring that all mandatory yellow cells in the table are completed.

Column A

212. Optionally, for your own records, you may provide an institutional student identifier in Column A.

Column B

213. Please provide the HUSID or LRN for each student in Column B. This will allow us to link the information with HESA and ILR data. (See paragraphs 156-159 for guidance on how to locate these numbers).

Column C

214. Please record the NUMHUS (HEI) or aim sequence number (FEC) for the course for which a student received an NSP award in Column C. This field complements the HUSID/LRN field to identify the separate courses that individuals take. The NUMHUS/aim sequence number requested for this return is the same as that returned in your HESA student record or ILR. (Please see paragraphs 160-163 for guidance on how to locate these numbers).

Column D

215. Please select the year of entry for each student in Column D, this should only be 2012-13.

Column E

216. Please specify the amount of award that was given to 2012-13 cohort students in 2014-15.

Columns F to H

217. Specify how an award was allocated to each student, by entering the amount spent in each of the categories:

- fee waivers or discounts (Column F)
- discounted accommodation or other institutional services (Column G)

- financial scholarships or bursaries (Column H).

218. If you did not make an award against a category, enter a zero in that cell.

Explanatory notes for Table 25

219. For the second year, HEFCE is collecting data on expenditure in subsequent years relating to the previous (2013-14 and 2012-13) cohort of students. If you have awarded payments of the NSP to 2012-13 entrants in 2014-15, fill in tables 25 - 28 contained within the tabs entitled 'NSP Individualised 2012-13' and 'NSP overview 2012-13' in your workbook (pink and yellow tables). If you only awarded the NSP to 2012-13 entrants in the first year, (2012-13) second year (2013-14) or both, you are not required to complete these tables.

Table 26

Summary of allocation and funding spent

Action

220. Please provide details in Cell 16 if you plan to spend any of this funding on the 2012-13 cohort after 2014-15 (i.e. in 2015-16 and beyond).

221. Please provide details if you reallocated any of this funding to the 2013-14 (Cell C17) and 2014-15 cohorts (Cell C18) respectively.

Explanatory notes for Table 26

222. The white cells in this table are pre-populated with the planned spending from your 2013-14 end-of-year monitoring return, and the information provided in Table 19 of the individualised returns.

Table 27

Explanation for underspend

Action

223. If you report any underspend from your subsequent years allocation for the 2012-13

cohort in 2014-15, you should fill in Table 27 to describe the reasons for this.

Explanatory notes for Table 27

Government underspending

224. As 2014-15 is the final year of the NSP, any government allocation underspend is unable to be carried forward and will be reclaimed by HEFCE in spring 2016 and returned to BIS.

Matched funding underspending

225. You can spend any minimum and additional matched funding underspend on 'topping up' the value of existing awards for the remaining 2013-14 cohort or 2014-15 in subsequent years. You should deliver this matched-funding in accordance with the government rules for the programme, your own institutional criteria and the information you have provided to students. You should also ensure that allocating the underspent funds in a particular way does not disadvantage students from one cohort compared with another.

Table 28

Breakdown of NSP expenditure for subsequent years

Action

226. If there are 2012-13 cohort students who are continuing their studies after 2014-15 and will continue to receive the NSP in 2015-16 or beyond, please record this information in Column E, broken down by the four options available.

Explanatory notes for Table 28

227. The white cells in Column C are pre-populated with planned subsequent year spending for the 2012-13 cohort. This information is taken from Table 21 of your 2013-14 end-of-year monitoring return.

228. Actual expenditure for 2014-15 will automatically be calculated from the information you provide in Table 25, broken down across the

menu of three options for the combined government NSP allocation and institutional matched funding.

Table 29

Number of 2012-13 entrants receiving awards

Action

229. Please provide the actual headcount of full-time and part-time students, and the FTE number of 2012-13 entrants, who received a subsequent year NSP award in 2014-15. If any students interrupted their studies during the academic year, record their FTE as if they had completed the year (for example a full-time student should be recorded as 1 FTE, even if they did not complete the year).

How to submit your return

Where to find your return template

230. The tables for you to fill in are now available to download from the extranet at <https://data.hefce.ac.uk>. Sample tables are available for information only alongside this document at www.offa.org.uk/publications.

231. In order to download the tables, you will need one or more 'group keys' (codes that ensure you can access the correct tables for your institution). OFFA and HEFCE will send your group keys to you directly following the publication of this guidance.

232. Alongside the templates, we will also send step by step instructions on using the extranet. If you have any technical queries relating to the use of the extranet, please contact Marnie Chivers for OFFA queries (e-mail: marnie.chivers@offa.org.uk tel: 0117 931 7055) or Matthew Eagles for NSP/SO queries (e-mail: m.eagles@hefce.ac.uk, tel: 0117 931 7291).

Validating your monitoring return

233. Each completed part of your monitoring return must be approved by an appropriate senior manager before submission, to ensure that the information is validated independently by someone other than the person responsible for compiling the return. For example, approval could be received from your Vice-Chancellor/Principal, Deputy or Pro Vice-Chancellor or Finance Director. Please state who has approved this monitoring return in the final section of each workbook.

234. It is up to each institution to determine its own process for checking the accuracy of the information it provides. This could be through internal audit, a report to the head of the institution, a governors' group or a steering committee. All information is subject to audit (see paragraphs 247-248) and you should ensure that the way you validate your information meets your own internal audit requirements.

235. We do not require you to submit a signed paper copy.

Submitting your return

236. Submit your completed monitoring return via the HEFCE extranet <https://data.hefce.ac.uk> by noon on **Wednesday 20 January 2016**.

237. If you have any technical queries relating to the use of the HEFCE extranet please use the contact details in paragraph 232.

Returning your monitoring templates on time

Your access agreement and SO allocation monitoring return

238. It is a statutory obligation to report on progress with your access agreement and it is important to submit your return by the deadline. If your return is late we cannot guarantee that we will be able to include your data in OFFA's monitoring outcomes report. Providing accurate data to report on progress against your access agreement is a statutory requirement, and the Director of Fair Access to Higher Education can impose sanctions where these requirements have not been met.

239. If your access agreement monitoring return needs to be approved at a meeting of your governing body or other relevant committee after the deadline of 20 January 2016 you may submit a draft electronic copy of your monitoring return with a request for a limited extension to the deadline for your final version.

240. Tables 3a and 3b of this return will collect the monitoring information HEFCE needs and completion of these tables by the deadline date will fulfil your obligation for the receipt of SO allocation under the Memorandum of assurance and accountability between HEFCE and institutions (formerly the Financial Memorandum).

Your NSP monitoring return

241. HEFCE requests a monitoring return from every participating institution, so that we and BIS can ensure that funds are being appropriately used, and so we can conduct sector-level analysis. This information is reported to BIS. You should plan appropriately to ensure that any approvals from your governing body or a relevant committee are obtained before the deadline.

242. **It is a condition of NSP funding that institutions provide the requested information by the deadline date.** As set out in the Memorandum of assurance and accountability, HEFCE may withhold funding where an institution fails to meet the deadline for the 2014-15 end-of-year monitoring return.

What happens once you have submitted your form

How to tell your return has been submitted successfully

243. When you have successfully uploaded your return, you will see an automated message on the extranet confirming that your return has uploaded successfully.

We will collect and share some information centrally

244. In order to inform our monitoring, OFFA will use information from the SLC on the number of students from lower-income backgrounds at each institution. We will also use sector data from HESA, UCAS and others to monitor progress across the sector and identify any emerging patterns over time.

245. OFFA and HEFCE will work together closely in assessing returns and, where relevant, may share information with other partners, such as BIS.

We may need to contact you for further information

246. We may need to ask you for further information about your return if, for example, some of the information or data:

- is unclear
- does not seem to make sense from our knowledge of your access agreement, SO allocation, NSP allocation and institution
- is inconsistent with centrally collected data.

We may audit your monitoring return

247. OFFA reserves the right to request an independent audit review of the access agreement element of your monitoring return which may assess how you are delivering progress towards your access agreement commitments.

248. Similarly, HEFCE reserves the right to audit participating institutions in respect of the NSP.

Some of the results of the monitoring process will be published

249. OFFA and HEFCE will publish reports on the outcomes of access agreements, SO allocation and NSP monitoring by mid-2016. This will include the amount spent on access, student success, progression and hardship, the proportions of fee income spent on institutional financial support to OFFA-countable students, and the proportion of students receiving an award at each institution.

250. OFFA will publish your institution's report on your progress against targets and milestones on its website.

251. Individualised NSP data will be anonymised and may be published by HEFCE and BIS. Information provided to BIS and Ministers in relation to the NSP may be published in various ways by BIS.

How the Freedom of Information Act affects monitoring returns

252. OFFA and HEFCE are subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which gives the public a right of access to any information we hold. We have a responsibility to decide whether the information in individual monitoring returns should be disclosed on request, or treated as confidential. We can refuse to disclose information only in exceptional circumstances and where the information is covered by the exemptions outlined in the legislation.

253. This means individual monitoring returns are unlikely to be treated as confidential except in very particular circumstances. If you consider any part of your return to be confidential, please alert us to this and the reasons why.

254. HEFCE does not share individualised student data, as this is covered by the Data Protection Act.

255. Where we consider it to be appropriate and practicable, we will seek the institution's views before disclosing information in response to an FOI request.

256. Further information about the Freedom of Information Act is available at www.ico.gov.uk.

How the information will be used

257. The data gathered through the monitoring process supports a number of important functions within OFFA and HEFCE. These are outlined below.

258. OFFA will use your return to:

- assess whether you have broadly met the commitments set out in your agreement. Where you have not done so, OFFA will expect to see a reasonable explanation and/or appropriate review and re-adjustment of plans
- improve its understanding of trends in access agreement expenditure and outcomes across the sector
- gather examples and evidence for our topic briefings, and other projects to support and inform the sector about effective practice
- look at the progress you've made towards your targets and milestones, with a greater focus on trends rather than single data points. If the trend indicated by your monitoring return shows that you are making limited progress or regressing, OFFA may wish to talk to you about this further, if we are not already in dialogue
- take into account your current performance, and whether your access agreement plans are sufficiently addressing any areas of concern, when considering your next access agreement.

259. OFFA will use qualitative data analysis software to help analyse monitoring returns. This will enable us to gain a more meaningful understanding of the work being done across the sector, and to provide more in-depth analysis on institutions' approaches.

260. OFFA and HEFCE will use your return to improve our understanding of:

- institutional expenditure on WP activity, including how institutions bring diverse groups of students into higher education and support them through their study to achieve successful outcomes. We will look at the impact of this expenditure and how institutions are evaluating it, and the wider

evidence available on the impact of WP activity and funding. This will help us continue to build our evidence base on what works best to improve fair access and student success

- how your OFFA-countable expenditure and HEFCE SO allocation fit within the wider context of your total spend.

261. HEFCE will use the WP activity expenditure data to understand the activity institutions are engaged in, the cost of this activity and how the SO allocation is used towards funding these activities. This data will be an essential element of the outcomes framework currently under development through which the HE sector will be able to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of its student opportunity activity.

262. HEFCE will use the NSP return to gain assurance that funds have been spent appropriately, and to collect information from participating institutions on the delivery of their NSP schemes and recipients.

263. The individualised NSP data returned by institutions will be linked with Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data. This will allow HEFCE to analyse the characteristics of NSP recipients compared to the wider student population.

264. OFFA and HEFCE will also use information from monitoring returns to inform our continuing dialogue with institutions.

Annex A

National Scholarship Programme – Institutional criteria groupings

The following are definitions and examples of what we understand by the institutional criteria used in Table 13. These criteria groupings are based on our analysis of the information that institutions provided in previous monitoring exercises.

Care leaver	For example, the student was a looked-after child, or spent time in a foster family or in care.
Income-related	Any further income-related restrictions below the national threshold of £25,000, for example the lowest income.
Achievement	Related to the academic excellence or potential of the student, either pre-university or during the studies (for example achievement of a particular qualification or grade, or in the top 25 per cent of entrants).
Disability	For example, a student who declared a disability or receives Disabled Students' Allowance or incapacity benefit.
Polar/LPN⁹	Students from low participation neighbourhoods, for example POLAR3 quintiles 1 and 2.
Other benefits	Students receiving or having previously received other benefits - for example Education Maintenance Allowance, free school meals or maintenance grant - or living in social housing.
School/college	Students who attended a particular school or college, for example a low achieving school or selected partner schools in the local area.
Carer	Students with dependants, for example a student who is a single parent, receives a childcare grant or an Adult Dependants' Grant, or cares for a disabled relative.
Tuition fee	Students paying a particular fee, for example £6,000 and over.
Course-based	Students who chose a particular area of study or qualification, for example science, technology, engineering and maths subjects, or a foundation degree.
Firm choice	Students who made the institution their firm choice upon application.
First generation HE	For example a student with no parental history of higher education (HE), or who is the first in their family to undertake HE.
Refugee	Students who hold refugee status.
Full-time/part-time	A criterion based on mode of study, for example that students must be full-time, or studying with at least 50 per cent full-time equivalence.
Proximity/location	For example a student who lives in a local area postcode.
Ethnic minority group	Students from ethnic minorities
Travellers	For example Gypsy Roma or Irish Travellers.

⁹ Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) is a classification of small geographical areas across the UK ranging from regions to wards, demonstrating the participation of young people in higher education. An 'LPN' is a low-participation neighbourhood, as classified by the POLAR data.

Socio-economic group	This covers broader socio-economic background, for example students from NS-SEC 4-7 ¹⁰ , or low socio-economic backgrounds.
Age	For example a mature student, a student over 25 years old.
Resident in England	For example a student who was resident in England at the time of application, a student with 'home' status (rather than European Union students who are also eligible).
Accommodation	Students residing in university or college accommodation.
Access to HE	Students who have completed an Access to HE course.
Written assessment	An assessment based on a personal statement or written application, for example 'Write 300 words explaining why the scholarship would benefit you.'
'Good' ambassador	Students who demonstrate commitment to working in a community or representing the institution, for example evidence of commitment to college values, or potential to be a student ambassador.
Timely application	For example students who applied to the institution on time, applied for student finance on time, or enrolled on time.
Progression at institution	Students progressing within the same institution.
Financial need	Students demonstrating further financial need, for example requiring additional support for living, accommodation or for other reasons, or who require additional help to meet the high costs of materials.
Commitment to study	Students demonstrating commitment to study, for example a student with minimum 90 per cent attendance, or excellent punctuality.
Engagement in outreach activity	Criterion based on students' links with the institution through outreach, for example a student who took part in at least two outreach activities, or is progressing through an access programme.

¹⁰ National Statistics Socio-economic Classifications: (www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/classifications/current-standard-classifications/soc2010/soc2010-volume-3-ns-sec--rebased-on-soc2010--user-manual/index.html)

Glossary

Basic level of fee	The level of tuition fee up to which an access agreement is not required. For new system students in 2014-15, this was £6,000 for full-time students and £4,500 for part-time students. For old system students, the basic level of fee was £1,380. There are different basic fees for sandwich and year abroad/Erasmus years.
Collaborative activity	By collaborative activity, we do not just mean collaboration between providers of higher education. While we would normally expect collaborative outreach to include many stakeholders rather than be between a single HEI and schools, colleges or other stakeholders receiving outreach, collaboration could be formed in a number of ways, for example between one HEI and further education colleges, other higher education providers, employers, third sector organisations, schools, colleges, training providers, local authorities and so on.
Entrants/year of entry	When we refer to entrants, or year of entry, we mean the academic year in which students started their courses, including students who deferred their entry to subsequent years. For example, students who deferred their entry from 2013-14 to 2014-15 should be classed as 2014-15 entrants. The definition of academic year is covered in the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2011 (SI 2011/1986) within regulation 2.
Higher fee income	Any fee income above the basic level of fee (see definition above). Where institutions charged the maximum fee of £9,000 to new-system full-time undergraduates in 2014-15, the 'higher fee income per student' was £3,000 (£9,000 – £6,000).
NNCO	National Networks for Collaborative Outreach. This scheme aims to encourage more young people into higher education (HE). It brings together universities and further education colleges into local networks to provide coordinated outreach to schools and colleges. For more information see: http://www.hefce.ac.uk/sas/nnco/ . NNCO allocations to institutions and network hubs should not be included in this return as they will be monitored separately.
New system student	Any student who is charged regulated fees for a year of instance under the fees regime introduced in September 2012. In this context, a part-time student is treated as being charged regulated fees under the fees regime introduced in September 2012 if they are eligible to apply for a tuition fee loan under the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2011 (SI 2011 No. 1986), as amended. A student who commenced study in 2011-12, but intermitted within two weeks of starting and then returns to study in 2012-13, should be treated as having deferred entry until 2012-13. They should therefore be treated as a new system student.
Old system students	For the purposes of this monitoring, old system students are those who started their course in September 2006 or later, and before the introduction of the new fee regime from September 2012.
Outreach	We define outreach as any activity that involves raising aspirations and attainment among potential applicants from under-represented groups and encouraging them to apply to higher education. This includes outreach directed at young or mature students aspiring to full- or part-time study. We particularly encourage sustained, co-ordinated activities that work with pupils and other potential applicants over a number of years. For the purposes of access agreement monitoring, you should only report on outreach expenditure related to funds committed from higher fee income and other new and additional (post-2006) sources of funding. This might include

funding specific new outreach activities, or enhancing and growing existing programmes, and may include relevant staffing and overhead costs. You should not include ring-fenced funding expenditure from Government and HEFCE funded programmes (such as the Access to Learning Fund and NNCO funding) when you are reporting on **access agreement** expenditure. If you are unsure as to whether expenditure can be included in your access agreement monitoring return, please contact OFFA for advice.

Progression

Work to support undergraduate students from disadvantaged backgrounds as they prepare to progress to employment or postgraduate study. This might include measures such as internships or help with interview skills, or other activities which are designed to help disadvantaged students progress to employment or postgraduate study

Protected characteristics

Under the [Equality Act 2010](#) the following personal characteristics are protected by the law: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Student success

Work to retain and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds through their studies, for example through induction programmes and study skills support.

Under-represented groups/OFFA-countable groups

Both these terms normally mean groups that are currently under-represented in higher education at the national level rather than at a particular institution or course, including (but not limited to):

- people from lower socio-economic groups or from neighbourhoods where higher education participation is low
- people from low income backgrounds
- some ethnic groups or sub-groups
- disabled people
- people who have been in care.

Office for Fair Access

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Higher Education Funding Council for England

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