Alongside the release of the *Annual Admissions Statistical Report*, on 23 May 2018, the University is publishing the *Report of the AdEx Working Groups on Access Targets and the Regionalisation of Access Work through Colleges*. This report, completed in early 2017, represents the output of two working groups which met during 2015 and 2016 under the sponsorship of AdEx (the University’s Admissions Executive Committee). The two working groups were chaired by the Provost of Oriel, Moira Wallace. They produced one report since they shared a common theme – how Oxford can best work to ensure fair representation of talent from all backgrounds in the UK students who are accepted to Oxford each year for undergraduate study. The work was commissioned to ensure the University was on track to meet the access targets it had set in its Access Agreement\(^1\). These targets are due to be achieved by 2019-20.

The report recommended some changes and enhancements to the activity already underway across the University, and the recommendations were endorsed by the Conference of Colleges, the University’s Education Committee, and the University’s Council during the first half of 2017. The report is now in the implementation phase. Work is proceeding on all the recommendations and a number have been completed (see below).

The data published in the *Annual Admissions Statistical Report* shows encouraging progress on the Access Agreement targets. For the generation arriving in autumn 2017, the proportion of the UK intake from low income neighbourhoods was the highest ever, and above the target set for 2019. The proportion from areas of low progression was also the highest ever and almost at the target set for 2019. Initial data on the offers given in the admissions round for 2018 entry suggests further progress.

Some of the steps taken in the follow-up to the report’s recommendations include:

- The University has launched its new digital academic enrichment programme *Oxplore* for school students and set out new plans to work with schools in particular areas to raise attainment.

\(^1\) with the Office for Fair Access, now the Office for Students
- Funding has been identified to support a major expansion in the UNIQ summer school, which from 2019 will offer 1350 young people a year the chance to experience a week in Oxford.

- From 2018 all colleges will pay the interview travel costs for state school candidates who are eligible for free school meals or are applying from the care system. (Accommodation and food are already covered.)

- College and University outreach to black and minority ethnic communities has been stepped up through an expanded partnership with Target Oxbridge, which supports and encourages applications from students with African and Caribbean heritage. Work on forming broader regional collaborations between colleges has begun.

- The undergraduate prospectus has been completely redesigned to focus more on the needs and questions of those who are least likely to have support in considering Oxford; the website is also being redesigned to achieve similar aims. A new social media campaign shares the experiences of current students with potential applicants and their teachers and families.

- A programme of subject-by-subject reviews of the admissions process has begun, aiming to make the best use of all evidence gathered about students’ performance, potential and circumstances, and improvements have already been made as a result.

- The admissions interviewers’ training programme has been updated for the next admissions round.

- The Vice Chancellor’s Access Review has begun, a programme of termly meetings to share best practice and monitor progress.

- The University and colleges have rolled out use of the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) database which is now being used as the base for long term evaluation of outreach activities.

The AdEx Working Group Report is published in the form in which it was written in early 2017. Some of the data is therefore overtaken, and the up-to-date data can be found in the Annual Admissions Statistical Report. A fuller technical note on the use of national data in the report can be found at Annex VIII, which is dated May 2018.
Report of the AdEx Working Groups on Access Targets and the Regionalisation of Access Work through Colleges

Hilary term 2017
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Executive Summary

This report represents the joint report of two working groups convened in late 2015 to look at access and admissions issues at Oxford University: the AdEx appointed Working Group on Access Targets (ATWG) and Working Group on the Regionalisation of Access Work through Colleges (RWG).

The theme of both groups is how Oxford can best work to ensure fair representation of talent from all backgrounds in the UK students who are accepted to Oxford as undergraduates each year (about 2,600) and who currently make up approximately 81% of the total undergraduate intake.

This is an important issue for Oxford, critical to meeting its academic goals. The University can only maintain excellence if it recruits the best, so it is keen to attract as many students as possible with the academic potential to study here, especially those currently under-represented. For the same reason, the University puts great effort into informing potential applicants, their teachers, and families about what the University offers, how it works, and how to apply.

Oxford’s admissions procedures have as their goal to admit those with the greatest academic ability and potential in their chosen subject, on merit alone, using fair procedures. And for those admitted, Oxford offers not just the world-class Oxford teaching experience, centred on high contact time and personal attention, but also unrivalled educational resources and first class pastoral, financial and careers support.

There is also significant external interest in the effectiveness of Oxford’s outreach and the fairness of its procedures, given the excellence of its educational opportunity, the potential career benefits of the educational experience and networks available to Oxford graduates and the predominance of Oxbridge graduates in many prestigious careers.

Oxford has devoted attention and resources to access over many years. Instances of this work include:

- The significant expansion of outreach by the University and colleges over the last ten years with Oxford delivering 3,000 outreach activities last year, involving over 3,400 UK schools and colleges;

- The development of the UNIQ summer school programme which brings over 850 state school students to Oxford annually for a week’s intensive programme;

- Financial support arrangements that have been consistently among the most generous in the country
- In total £14.6m was spent on financial support and outreach in 2015-16, representing 44.3% of the income the University earns from charging the higher fee. This puts Oxford towards the top end of expenditure as a proportion of higher fee income compared to other Russell Group universities: the figure for LSE was 50%; for Manchester it was 42%; for Imperial College London 35%; for Cambridge 32%; for Bristol 31.2%; for Durham 31%; and for UCL 30%.

There is progress to report in relation to access to Oxford in recent years:

- Applications from state school pupils have increased by nearly two percentage points in the last decade and state school pupils accounted for 59.2% of offers made to UK candidates in the 2016 entry round, and 58% of final acceptances (those whose places were confirmed following the release of A-Level results in August 2016).

- The proportion of undergraduate students from households with an assessed income of £16,000 or less has remained steady at around 1 in 10, despite higher tuition fees.

- Oxford’s proportion of UK undergraduates who are from an ethnic minority (13%) is comparable with that at the Russell Group as a whole (excluding London).

However, of the four specific targets Oxford set itself in 2012 in its access agreement with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA),¹ only one (on disability) has been met consistently. The targets are not quotas which the University seeks to achieve at all costs: that would be inconsistent with admission on merit. But they are benchmarks of the University’s success in attracting and admitting qualified candidates from under-represented and disadvantaged backgrounds.

New targets have now been set, to be met by 2019-20. They require Oxford to maintain recent progress and improve on it. The increase in students from target groups required to meet them is not enormous: the most demanding requires an extra 62 students in the 2019 entry compared with 2015, the other two an extra 37 and 23 respectively.² But increases of this scale have been hard to achieve in the past, and the numbers may also be affected by changes beyond Oxford’s control, such as changes to A-Level qualifications in England and the change from maintenance grants to loans. It is therefore timely to review how the system is working and what if anything can be improved.

¹ Oxford’s current and previous Access Agreements can be accessed in full on the OFFA website.
² Note also that some students, if admitted, will count towards more than one target. The overlap is estimated to be 25%.
The report looks in detail at how under-represented candidates and those from disadvantaged backgrounds fare through the different stages they would need to go through to be admitted to Oxford, namely:

- Sufficient attainment to apply to Oxford
- Decision to apply
- Choice of subject
- Admissions tests and shortlisting
- Interviews and offers
- Achieving the offer, being admitted
- Succeeding on the course.

Research shows that of all children who do well at Key Stage 2, significantly fewer poor children than advantaged children go on to do well at Key Stage 4 and 5 or progress to an elite university. Progression to Oxford is therefore likely to become unattainable to many disadvantaged students because even Oxford’s minimum offer level, the AAA grade at A-Level, will be unachievable.

Reflecting this “attainment gap” for those on low incomes, the disadvantaged areas known as ACORN categories 4 and 5, which feature in Oxford’s OFFA targets, are estimated to produce only 15% of the nation’s AAA+ pupils at A level, despite constituting around 20% of UK postcodes. POLAR quintiles 1 and 2 – the areas of the country where young people are least likely to go on to higher education - show an even wider gap, with 40% of the nation’s population, but only 12% of the AAA+ achievers.

There are also significant differences in application rates of high achievers by socio-economic group. 37% of independent school pupils achieving A*A*A or better applied to Oxford in the years 2012-2014, against an estimated 25% state educated and 14% ACORN resident A*A*A achievers. A recent survey by the Sutton Trust found that 43% of state secondary school teachers would rarely or never advise their bright pupils to apply to Oxford or Cambridge. There are strong regional differences: for example, the proportion of AAA+ candidates from state schools in the South East and South West applying to Oxford averages 23%, from London 20%, from the East Midlands 17%, from the North East 15%, and from Northern Ireland 6%. For some regions there are also fewer BAME applicants than would be expected given their representation in the group of young people achieving at AAA+. All of these differential application rates contribute to an applicant pool which is less diverse than it could be.

Course choice makes the path harder for many disadvantaged candidates. This group is much more likely than others to apply for the courses that are most oversubscribed with at least eight applicants per place (Medicine, Law, Economics and Management). This significantly reduces their chances of getting in. In 2015 the three most oversubscribed courses together received 31.3% of the Oxford applications that came from ethnic minority candidates, and 22.9% of those from ACORN flagged applications, but only 15.3% of
independent school applications and 13.8% of white candidates. Low application rates overall, and high rates of applications for those of Oxford’s courses which are perceived to be the most vocational, may reflect concerns about employability, and this may need more attention in the information the University provides to prospective students.

For all of the largest 21 subjects, a greater proportion of independent school candidates are shortlisted than for state schools. Shortlisting, for most courses, is heavily influenced by GCSE results and the admissions tests which are required for most subjects. Admissions flags relating to home postcode, school performance and care status are also used to provide context for candidates’ applications.

In shortlisting, individual students’ GCSE results are contextualised by some subjects to reflect school background but not all use contextual information in this way. University websites maintain that test preparation will not help candidates. However, it is noteworthy that 59% of students coming from independent schools report having received support from their school in preparing for admissions tests, which is double the proportion from state schools (30%) who say they have had help from their schools.

Oxford’s policy on shortlisting is that candidates who have an overall admissions flag (i.e. who come from a deprived postcode and from a school with lower than average attainment, or who have been in care), should be shortlisted, provided they are predicted to achieve the entry qualifications, and meet relevant attainment in any admissions tests. The relevant attainment bar is set subject by subject. Analysis for this project found that over the last three years an average of over 70 flagged candidates a year who had not been shortlisted went on to exceed the standard offer by at least one grade. This suggests that the attainment bars may be set too high in some subjects.

Candidates from state schools again report less school preparation for interviews than those from independent schools (71% compared with 88%). Other issues identified by disadvantaged candidates include travel costs to interview, which are not reimbursed, and late scheduling of interviews meaning there may be little advance notice of the time a candidate is able to go home. After interview, offer rates show that in some subjects a larger proportion of shortlisted candidates from independent schools get offers, while in some subjects it is the other way round.

Every year a proportion of candidates holding offers do not achieve the required grades. In 2016 this amounted to nearly 9% of all offer-holders. This is an issue for offer-holders from all backgrounds, but more common amongst candidates from ACORN category 4 and 5 areas, and those from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2. This group are also slightly more likely than average to feature in the group of candidates who are admitted due to extenuating circumstances, at colleges’ discretion, having not made the terms of their offer.
Once on course, students from ACORN and POLAR backgrounds on average score less well than their peers in their first Oxford exams. However, this differential is eroded during the course: on average these students progress faster than their peers between first exams and finals, so that by the end of the course, on average, progression of students from ACORN and POLAR backgrounds is stronger. The rates of progress vary between subjects but at the end of the course the difference between these cohorts and their peers is ¾ of one percent for POLAR, and 1¼ percent for ACORN.

The two working groups reviewed these data and the current initiatives Oxford has in place to address access. While there is a great deal of good work to build on, and massive goodwill, the working groups found that in places, strategy, coordination and evaluation are all lacking. This led to both duplication and gaps, and as a result some of the young people the University most wants to attract are arguably being less well served than they should be. While this continues, Oxford is likely both to spend money inefficiently and to fall short of its targets.

The college regional link arrangements, in which every local authority area in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is linked to an Oxford college, seem to have been a driver of increased activity and have built college ownership of the issue, as well as forging important links with local areas. The groups were consistently impressed by the work of outreach officers in colleges and also in departments, often achieved in difficult circumstances, with little back-up, and covering great distances in the average working week.

However, the diversity of approach and investment by different colleges, combined with other interventions from elsewhere in the University, means that different local areas receive very different levels of outreach. Annual expenditure varies between colleges from approximately £26,000 to £240,000. Calculating intensity of regional contact from all parts of the collegiate University as a ratio to the number of pupils getting AAA or more at A level, it appears that Yorkshire and Humberside, Wales and Northern Ireland receive outreach from Oxford at around half the intensity provided to the East of England, the South East and the North East. This is not a strategic decision by the colleges and University, but the product of many uncoordinated individual decisions.

The groups felt that further widening the applicant pool is critical, and that more can be achieved in future by prioritising collaborative arrangements, built on a strong evidence base and current good practice, and running at greater scale. Rigorously evidence-based and evaluated programmes ought to constitute the greatest share of Oxford’s spending in this area. This can be achieved by the collegiate University working together on specific regions or target groups, by a shared commitment to impact measurement and evaluation, and also by large cross-University partnerships such as the annual UNIQ summer schools. The groups considered the recent evaluation of UNIQ which shows a highly statistically significant impact on Oxford application rates for target groups after controlling for other factors. They
welcomed the steps that have already been taken to target UNIQ more on disadvantaged groups, and see a case for extending its benefits to more young people if this can be afforded.

Just as importantly, alongside these steps on outreach, the groups identified a number of small but significant changes to Oxford’s admissions processes which are necessary to level the playing field for candidates from under-represented groups when they apply.

Overall, the two working groups concluded that all parties across the University need to give fresh attention to the programmes and structures necessary to deliver the collegiate University’s collective goals and that Education Committee, the Conference of Colleges and Council be asked to empower AdCom and AdEx to do two things:

i. First, to take forward straight away a series of recommendations set out in the report and summarised below, covering: communications, the future development of outreach, development of the UNIQ summer school programme and fundraising for its expansion, focused review of certain aspects of the admissions process, coordination and monitoring. As many of the recommendations as practicable should be implemented in the next 18 months.

ii. Second, to submit for agreement a draft Oxford-wide strategy on access for under-represented and disadvantaged groups, based on the work of these two working groups. This would make the University’s goals and approach clear both to those we hope to attract and to those, within and outside Oxford, whom we hope will help us in the task.

The recommendations referred to in (i) above are set out in section H of the report. They cover all stages of the process, recognising that each needs some improvement to deliver the fair system which is our goal. The following are some of the main points:

- **Communications**: redevelop central, college and departmental admissions websites to improve them and to include more on addressing those who have not yet decided to apply, with a particular focus on employability and financial support.

- **Outreach**: Redevelop the college regional link scheme, to focus it strongly on widening access to Oxford for disadvantaged groups and supporting the overall access targets agreed with OFFA. Develop a common agreed minimum level of provision for each region. Promote a transition from colleges operating largely alone, to outreach consortia of between three and five colleges collaborating on a joint strategy to support access from specific geographical regions and, if agreed in future, other target groups that need support. Ask Conference of Colleges to signal by majority that it favours this development (with no college expected to participate against its will). Ask colleges to cooperate to facilitate it, if necessary “trading” link
areas to assist. Make full use of student ambassadors in outreach and ensure that they are supported, trained and involved in implementation and oversight of this report’s recommendations.

- **UNIQ**: Find ways to allow more young people to benefit from the successful UNIQ programme of summer schools, whether through more activities under the UNIQ brand for those who cannot do the full summer schools or by expanding the programme to more Year 12 students or more at a younger age range. Seek to identify funds to allow this expansion and development.

- **Admissions process**: Move to automatic interviews at second colleges for flagged candidates. Pilot interview travel expenses for candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds and especially those that are travelling a long distance. Require and support courses to publish more material about admissions tests and more past papers; to review their contextualisation, shortlisting criteria, and weightings, and their final offer-making criteria on the basis of statistical evidence.

- **Interviews**: Continue to develop efforts to demystify the interview process, including by embedding mock interviews and interview workshops into outreach activities. Audit the satisfactory completion of admissions training by all involved in interviewing, including unconscious bias training.

- **Additional support for disadvantaged students**: ask each course to analyse the need for additional ‘bridging’ provision in their subject, on the basis of assessment of the subject knowledge and skills of incoming freshers from disadvantaged backgrounds. Evaluate the Lady Margaret Hall pilot foundation year, in a form that can be compared with other initiatives and reviewed alongside other elements of the strategy.

- **Coordination and monitoring**: Ask AdCom and AdEx, supported by UAO, to coordinate the University’s overall outreach and access targets, to take the lead on coordinated evaluation, and to monitor success of the overall strategy.

The working groups look forward to responses and feedback to their report, and thank all those who have helped them in this work. Their members are keen to continue to work on this important enterprise and see great academic opportunities and benefits for the collegiate University if it continues to develop its work in this area.

AdEx Access Targets Working Group
AdEx Regionalisation Working Group
January 2017
A  Background and terms of reference

1. This report combines the findings and recommendations of two working groups convened in late 2015 to look at access and admissions issues for the collegiate University: the AdEx appointed Working Group on Access Targets (ATWG) and the AdEx Working Group on the Regionalisation of Access Work through Colleges (RWG). The key questions set out in their terms of reference are summarised below.

Box 1: ATWG Terms of reference

*Access Targets Working Group*

What additional or different actions should be taken to support achievement of the 2016/17 access agreement with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA).

Box 2: RWG Terms of reference

*Regionalisation Working Group*

Whether and how far the aims of the regionalisation policy adopted in 2009 (including the aims of colleges) have been attained.

Whether there are recommendations for the future of the policy.

2. The membership of the two working groups brought together representatives from colleges, departments and faculties (hereafter, departments), and other constituent parts of the University. In addition, the groups consulted widely outside their main meetings. The two groups present a single, combined report because their areas of investigation are so closely related and their recommendations complement each other. Full terms of reference, membership, and methods of working are set out in more detail at Annex I.

3. This report considers: basic data on Oxford applications and the current policy framework; Oxford’s OFFA targets; the various stages that lead to a successful application; the data about how successful students from disadvantaged backgrounds are in this process; what we know about their experience during the process; Oxford’s current policy interventions; and the recommendations of ATWG and RWG.
B Basic data and policy framework

The field of applicants to Oxford

4. Applications to Oxford have been growing strongly in recent years. More than five applications are received for every undergraduate place:
   a. In the 2015-entry admissions cycle Oxford received over 18,300 applications for undergraduate study.
   b. The number of applications has increased significantly over the last ten years, from under 13,000 candidates for 2006 entry.3
   c. There has been no corresponding rise in the number of places, which has remained static at around 3,200.
   d. Most of those who apply are predicted to achieve AAA+ at A-Level, or other equivalent qualifications. Standard offers for the courses at Oxford range between AAA and A*A*A. Because of the degree of competition for places from large numbers of people with very high academic potential, many very academically able applicants do not get offered a place.

The UK-domiciled group

5. This report relates mainly to the roughly 2,600 UK-domiciled students who made up 81% of the 2016/17 intake. The UK share of acceptances has fallen by 6% in the last decade (155 students). Oxford has neither targets nor quotas for the proportion of overseas candidates admitted, with the sole exception of Medicine, for which there is a government-imposed maximum of 14 overseas students each year.

6. The table below shows the change in applications and acceptances from different domiciles, and the respective success rates.

Table 1: Application and acceptance rates by domicile 2006 v 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Applications</th>
<th>Final acceptances (intake)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK candidates</td>
<td>9914</td>
<td>11729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU candidates</td>
<td>1043</td>
<td>2169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non EU</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>4479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12906</td>
<td>18377</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 There were 19,459 applications for 2016-entry – another significant jump.
Oxford’s policies on undergraduate access

7. Oxford’s goals in relation to attracting and supporting students from under-represented or disadvantaged groups are:
   a. To attract UK students with the academic potential to study at Oxford, especially those who are currently under-represented at Oxford.
   b. To inform potential applicants, their teachers, and families about the University, the selection process, the cost of studying for a degree, and the support available.
   c. To admit those with the greatest academic ability and potential in their chosen subject, on merit alone, using fair, transparent and consistent procedures.
   d. To educate students in a world-class teaching environment marked out by the tutorial system as well as by other benefits of the collegiate environment.
   e. To support them at Oxford—academically, pastorally, financially, and with careers advice.

8. These goals reflect Oxford’s desire to admit the very best to its academic community. There is widespread public interest in this, enhanced by the awareness that the educational experience and networks available to Oxford undergraduates carry enormous potential career benefits, with Oxbridge graduates disproportionately represented in many “top jobs”. That is an additional reason for high external interest in the effectiveness of Oxford’s outreach, and the fairness of its procedures.

9. Oxford takes its work on widening access very seriously, and has devoted attention and resources to it over many years. Instances of this work include:
   a. The significant expansion of outreach by the University and colleges over the last ten years with Oxford delivering 3,000 outreach activities last year, involving over 3,400 UK schools and colleges;
   b. The development of the UNIQ summer school programme which brings over 850 state school students to Oxford annually for a week’s intensive, academic residential programme;
   c. Around 25% of Oxford’s UK and EU undergraduate students receive some form of bursary support (from £200 to £3,700 per year), while 175 new students each year benefit from Moritz-Heyman Scholarships which combine

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*The Commission on Social Mobility and Child Poverty’s 2014 report “Elitist Britain” noted that 75% of senior judges, 59% of the Cabinet, 57% of Permanent Secretaries, 50% of diplomats, 47% of newspaper columnists, 44% of public body chairs, 38% of members of the House of Lords, 33% of BBC executives, 33% of the Shadow Cabinet, 24% of MPs and 12% of the Sunday Times Rich List attended Oxbridge - compared with less than 1% of the UK public as a whole.*
a generous maintenance bursary with a £3,000 tuition fee reduction and enhanced careers support for the poorest students at Oxford.

10. Oxford details its policies in this area each year in its access agreement with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA): all universities in England who wish to charge the ‘higher’ tuition fee (currently £9,000) are required to submit such an agreement. Since 2012, these access agreements have been required to set quantified outcome targets, and Oxford has done so. A first set of targets was incorporated in the 2012-13 access agreement. A revised set was set out in the 2016-17 access agreement.

11. These targets are not quotas but benchmarks for disadvantaged and under-represented groups, which the University seeks to achieve through a variety of measures. If a university breaks the agreement it has made with OFFA through its access agreement, then OFFA can sanction it either through a fine or by limiting the level of fee that can be charged. The access agreement also requires each university to invest at least 35% of its higher fee income back into outreach,\(^5\) based on its identified priorities.

12. There is progress to report in relation to access to Oxford in recent years:
   a. Applications from state school pupils have increased by nearly two percentage points in the last decade and state school pupils accounted for 59.2% of places offered to UK candidates in the 2016 entry round, and 58% of final acceptances after A-Level confirmation in August 2016.
   b. The number of undergraduate students from households with an assessed income of £16,000 or less has remained steady at approximately 1 in 10, despite the introduction of higher tuition fees.
   c. The proportion of UK undergraduate BAME students at Oxford (13%) is comparable with that at the Russell Group as a whole (excluding London).

13. But of the four targets set in Oxford’s first (2012) access agreement, which were due to be met by 2016-17, only one has been achieved:
   a. Target 1, which related to increasing admissions from a large and disparate group of 2,855 schools, has not been met, and the University has now decided to focus on a much shorter and more appropriate list in its revised targets.\(^6\)
   b. There has been more encouraging progress in relation to the University’s two area-based targets: Target 2 (for the proportion of students from less

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\(^5\) Higher fee income is defined as income from UK and EU student fees above £6k per annum (the basic rate).
\(^6\) The previous Target 1 group of schools included schools without sixth forms, special schools, and pupil referral units.
wel-off areas)\(^7\) has shown an upward trend over the period, and the target level was achieved in 2014/15. However, the proportion fell back slightly in the two subsequent years.

c. Steady progress year-on-year has also been seen for Target 3 which relates to areas with low rates of participation in higher education.\(^8\)

d. Oxford has consistently exceeded the HESA benchmark on students with declared disabilities which formed the basis of the 2016/17 Target 4. The revised 2019/20 target no longer uses the benchmark, but instead sets a goal of maintaining the current level of students declaring disabilities or specific learning difficulties, such that it does not fall below the current level of 8.8%.

14. New targets were set in the University’s 2016-17 access agreement and their end year is 2019-20.

15. There are many different ways in which Oxford’s progress in access work might be judged, but the targets for the coming years continue Oxford’s approach of focusing on socio-economic and educational disadvantage.\(^9\) Universities do not have income data on applicants at the application stage, and could not verify it in the time available. That is one reason why socio-economic disadvantage is addressed in Oxford’s access targets on a geographical basis.\(^10\) The targets therefore retain a strong focus on potential students from a list of areas identified by ACORN as economically disadvantaged, and areas identified by POLAR as having low rates of progression to higher education. The University also continues with a refocused target for state schools with lower than expected rates of progression, and with a disability target, as well as a new target relating to widening participation in higher education by local Oxford city students in a deprived area.

16. These targets are set out in the next section and the rest of the report looks at how the University can learn from its successes in the past and where it could improve further.

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\(^7\) ACORN category 4 and 5, explained in more detail in Box 9.

\(^8\) POLAR quintiles 1 and 2, explained in more detail in Box 10.

\(^9\) In its Strategic Plan (2015-2020), OFFA notes that ‘While [our] sector outcome objectives […] examine performance in low participation neighbourhoods, we will continue to take a broad view of disadvantage, taking into account the progress made by disabled students, part-time and mature students, care leavers, students from different ethnic groups, and other under-represented groups.’ More information on other measures of disadvantage – such as the relative proportions of UK undergraduates: from fee paying and non-fee-paying schools; from different household income bands; of various ethnicities; from the regions and nations of the UK; and of different genders is available on the University’s website and some of the key data are summarised in Hilary term 2017Annex II.

\(^10\) Students’ financial needs once they come to study are, of course, addressed on an individual basis.
## Oxford’s access targets with OFFA

17. The targets for the coming years, reflected in the current access agreement, cover three specific measurable indicators relating to admissions, one relating to disability disclosure by applicants and on-course students, and one relating to widening participation in higher education of local Oxford city students.

### Box 3: OFFA Target 1 (2017-20)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target 1</th>
<th>To increase the percentage of UK undergraduate students at Oxford from schools and colleges that historically have had limited progression to Oxford to <strong>at least 15.9% in 2019/20</strong>.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019-20</td>
<td>+37 15.9% (=387*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Assumes unchanged UK-domiciled intake.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Box 4: OFFA Target 2 (2017-20)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target 2</th>
<th>To increase the percentage from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds (ACORN postcodes 4 and 5) to <strong>at least 9.5% in 2019/20</strong>.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019-20</td>
<td>+23 9.5% (=243*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Assumes unchanged UK-domiciled intake.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Box 5: OFFA Target 3 (2017-20)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target 3</th>
<th>To increase the percentage from neighbourhoods with low participation in higher education (POLAR3 postcodes 1 and 2) to <strong>at least 13.0% in 2019/20</strong>.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019-20</td>
<td>+62 13% (=331*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Assumes unchanged UK-domiciled intake.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Box 6: OFFA Target 4 (2017-20)

| Target 4 | To ensure that the proportion of UK undergraduate students with declared disabilities or specific learning difficulties at the University **does not drop below the current level of 8.8%**. |

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11. [https://www.offa.org.uk/agreements/University%20of%20Oxford%201718.pdf](https://www.offa.org.uk/agreements/University%20of%20Oxford%201718.pdf)

12. It should be noted that students may fall into more than one target category; within the pool of ACORN and POLAR target students, approximately 24% fall into both target categories.

13. [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/yp/POLAR/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/yp/POLAR/)
Box 7: OFFA target 5 (2017-20)

| Target 5 | To ensure that at least 55% of students working with the Oxford South-East IntoUniversity centre progress to higher education in 2019/20. |

18. What follows discusses the first three targets in more detail. More detail on action underway in relation to Targets 4 and 5 is set out in Annex III as their subject matter is very distinct: Target 4 seeks to retain the current level of students disclosing disability; and Target 5 does not relate to admissions to Oxford.

Box 8: Further detail on Target 1

Target One: Schools

To increase the percentage of UK undergraduate students at Oxford from schools and colleges that historically have had limited progression to Oxford to at least 15.9% in 2019/20.

Who this target covers

This target relates to a group of 331 English schools and colleges with little or no history of progression to Oxford despite having some students who meet Oxford’s standard entry criteria. These schools are all from the state sector, but their students are not necessarily from disadvantaged backgrounds.

These schools represent an untapped pool of talent in Oxford’s search for the best UK-domiciled candidates, and it is hoped that by targeting specific outreach interventions at them, and in particular at teachers who may have limited experience (or negative perceptions) of Oxford applications, the number and success rates of their applicants can be increased.

Facts on Oxford access for this group

This is a new target, replacing one with a longer list of schools which was not met. It aims to increase the proportion of Oxford’s UK undergraduate intake from a specific group of schools, as outlined above, from the current average of 14.4% to 15.9% by 2019/20.
Chart 1: Progress against Target 1 (2016/17 to 2019/12)*

Proportion of UK admissions from Target 1 schools
milestones and outcomes

* Performance against the original Target 1 was limited, due in large part to the extremely heterogeneous group of schools which it encompassed (including schools without KSS provision, special schools, and pupil referral units). The revised Target 1 comes into force from 2017/18: the 3-year average is given as an indication of Oxford’s current intake. Final figures for the original Target 1 will be reported to OFFA via the annual Access Agreement process.

Box 9: Further detail on Target 2

Target Two: Candidate Postcodes (ACORN)

To increase the percentage from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds (ACORN postcodes 4 and 5) to at least 9.5% in 2019/20.

Who this target covers

Target 2 relates to categories 4 and 5 in ACORN (A Classification of Residential Neighbourhoods), which measures the socio-economic status of households in a particular postcode. This target covers neighbourhoods throughout the UK.

Postcodes which fall into ACORN category 4 are designated ‘financially stretched’. Many people are in lower paid administrative, clerical, semi-skilled and manual jobs. Unemployment is above average. While many people in this category are just getting by, a significant minority are experiencing some degree of financial pressure.

Postcodes which fall into ACORN category 5 are designated ‘urban adversity’. This category contains the most deprived areas of towns and cities across the UK.

14 http://acorn.caci.co.uk/downloads/Acorn-User-guide.pdf
Household incomes are low. The numbers claiming benefits are well above average. Those in work are likely to be in semi-skilled or unskilled occupations. These are the people who are experiencing the most difficult social and financial conditions.

**Regional distribution of ACORN AAA+ candidates**

Around 20% of UK postcodes fall into ACORN categories 4 and 5, but students from these areas are estimated to account for approximately 15% of the national AAA+ pool. For the most part, the distribution of these highly attaining ‘ACORN-flagged’ students is closely aligned with urban population centres as shown in the map below:

*Figure 1: Distribution of AAA+ ACORN-flagged students*

*In the figure above, the scale goes from 3 (smallest dot size) to 27 (largest dot size) AAA+ pupils per year. Scotland is excluded from the analysis as the vast majority of Scottish students take Highers and Advanced Highers, rather than A-Levels. The ACORN target also covers students in Northern Ireland, this cannot be shown in this presentation for technical reasons.*

**Ethnic composition**

The majority of ACORN category 4 and 5 Oxford applicants are white, but this group represents only 8.1% of white UK-domiciled applicants. By contrast, a much higher share of Oxford’s BAME applicants come from ACORN 4 and 5 postcodes. For example, more than half of Oxford’s Asian-British Bangladeshi applicants, more than 40% of

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15 See Annex IV for more details of the estimation method
Black British African applicants, and more than 30% of Asian-British Pakistani and Black British Caribbean applicants come from postcodes classified as ACORN 4 or 5.

Facts on Oxford access for this group

Students with AAA+ at A-Level who come from these areas are less likely to apply to Oxford than the national average for AAA+ students. Raw success rates for candidates from ACORN category 4 and 5 areas are also lower than the national average. However, this does not take into account factors such as prior attainment, subjects studied, or course applied for etc.

The University has had a version of this target for some time, and met or exceeded the milestones on two occasions. However, at the end of the period the final year target was not met. The new and more stretching target is for at least 9.5% of the UK-domiciled intake to come from these postcodes by 2019/20.

The graph and table below shows trends in applications and acceptances, and Oxford’s performance against its past ACORN targets, and the targets for the coming years.

Chart 2: ACORN Target/milestones and outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>ACORN Actual</th>
<th>ACORN Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Target Three: Candidate Postcodes (POLAR)**

To increase the percentage from neighbourhoods with low participation in higher education (POLAR3 postcodes 1 and 2)\(^\text{16}\) to at least 13.0% in 2019/20.

Who this target covers

POLAR is a categorisation system which measures the participation rate in higher education (at any university) of young people in a particular postcode. POLAR classifies local areas or ‘wards’ into five groups, based on the proportion of 18 year olds who enter HE aged 18 or 19 years old. These range from quintile 1 areas, with the lowest young participation, up to quintile 5 areas with the highest rates. POLAR quintiles 1 and 2 represent the 40% of students least likely to progress to higher education, and students from these areas only account for approximately 12% of the national AAA+ pool. This target covers neighbourhoods throughout the UK.

This target identifies a different barrier from ACORN, although there is an overlap. Amongst Oxford candidates, approximately 23% of students in the ACORN or POLAR target groups are members of both and experience a ‘double disadvantage’.

**Regional distribution of POLAR AAA+ candidates**

The distribution of these highly attaining ‘POLAR-flagged’ students tends to cluster less around major population centres than ACORN category 4 and 5 AAA+ students, as shown in the map overleaf:

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\(^\text{16}\) [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/yp/POLAR/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/yp/POLAR/)
*In the figure above, the scale goes from 3 (smallest dot size) to 27 (largest dot size) AAA+ pupils per year. Scotland is excluded from the analysis as the vast majority of Scottish students take Highers and Advanced Highers, rather than A-Levels. The POLAR target also covers students in Northern Ireland, this cannot be shown in this presentation for technical reasons.

**Ethnicity**

Although the majority of POLAR quintile 1 and 2 Oxford applicants are white, BAME applicants are slightly more likely to carry a POLAR flag: 14.3% of BAME applicants, compared to 12% of white applicants. The groups of applicants most likely to be POLAR-flagged are Other Black backgrounds (26.5% of these applicants to Oxford are POLAR-flagged), Black African (22.7%), Chinese (21.1%) and Black Caribbean (21%).

**Facts on Oxford access for this group**

Students with AAA+ at A-Level who come from these areas are not, on average, less likely to apply to Oxford than state school students as a whole, but raw success rates for candidates from POLAR quintile 1 and 2 areas are lower than the national average. However, this does not take into account factors such as prior attainment, subjects studied, or course applied for etc.

The University has had a target on a related measure for some time, and has made modest but improving progress on it. Michaelmas term 2016 saw 305 students from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2 admitted; the highest number to date. The new target uses the most up-to-date version of the classification, i.e. POLAR3 rather than POLAR2.
The graph and table below shows trends in applications and acceptances, and Oxford’s performance against its past POLAR targets, and the targets for the coming years.

Chart 3: POLAR Target/milestones and outcomes (POLAR2 to 2016/17 and POLAR3 to 2019/20)
D The process in stages

19. Charts 2 and 3 (in Boxes 9 and 10 respectively) above show that some progress has been made towards meeting the access targets that Oxford has set itself. But progress has been intermittent and the goals have not been fully achieved.

20. This is the product of many factors. To understand the reasons for this better, the ATWG set out to look in more detail at the “candidate journey” i.e. the different stages a potential candidate would go through to be admitted to Oxford and when they study here. These stages can be portrayed in the diagram below.

Figure 3: Stages of the candidate journey

![Diagram of the candidate journey]

21. An example of how these stages interact is shown in Chart 4 below. This looks at ACORN flagged candidates, who are under-represented in the Oxford application pool relative to their academic success, and show how the growth in applications has not been reflected by equivalent growth at other stages of the process. (The box below the chart analyses change since 2013, once the immediate effects of the 2012 introduction of the £9,000 fee had lessened.)
22. The next chapter looks in more detail at the different stages of the candidate journey and what we know about how under-represented groups. The report looks first at:
   a. The data on where candidates fall out of the system (Chapter E)
   b. The experience of disadvantaged candidates (Chapter F)
Where candidates fall out of the system

Sufficient attainment to apply to Oxford

23. The principal cause of lower progression rates to selective universities amongst disadvantaged young people is comparatively lower attainment.\(^1\)\(^7\) To put it another way, for many very able children, the path to Oxford becomes unattainable long before they reach the end of their schooling.

24. To be competitive in applying for Oxford a student needs as a minimum to have the capacity to achieve at least AAA at A-Level and in many courses the offer is higher. No offers are made below this level and students who have not managed to make their offer are rarely admitted unless there are extenuating circumstances.

25. Though many young people from deprived backgrounds achieve at this level every year, achievement of these grades is negatively correlated with a range of socio-economic deprivation indicators.\(^1\)\(^8\) Through the course of schooling an attainment gap develops between the average performance of poorer children and their better-off peers and this difference is seen at all ability levels. By Key Stage 4 just 33.3% of pupils eligible for Free School Meals obtain 5 GCSEs at A* to C, including English and Maths, compared with 61.2% of those not on Free School Meals.\(^1\)\(^9\) Despite the improvement in attainment by schools, the broader link between family income and educational outcomes has not been eradicated. The attainment gap between the poorest children – eligible for FSM – and all other children (the ‘income gap’) has narrowed between 2005 compared to 2014 at Key Stage 2 but has remained the same at Key Stage 4 and 5.\(^2\)\(^0\) The income gap is larger than either the ethnicity gap or the gender gap in schools.

26. Research for the Social Mobility Commission gave an example of the scale of this effect for elite universities overall. It calculated that of the 7,853 children from the most deprived homes who achieve level 5 in English and maths at age 11, only 906 make it to an elite university. If they had the same trajectory as a child from one of

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\(^1\)\(^9\) Social Mobility Commission, *State of the Nation 2016: Social Mobility and Child Poverty in Great Britain*.
\(^2\)\(^0\) Social Mobility Commission, *State of the Nation 2016: Social Mobility and Child Poverty in Great Britain*. 

25
the least deprived families, then 3,066 of these children would be likely to go to an elite university.\textsuperscript{21}

27. Given this link between social disadvantage and lower educational attainment it is not surprising that as a whole, both ACORN category 4 and 5 areas and POLAR quintile 1 and 2 areas produce lower numbers of high achievers at Key Stage 5 than would be expected on population strength alone:
   a. Around 20\% of UK postcodes fall into ACORN categories 4 and 5, but students from these areas are estimated to account for approximately 15\% of the national AAA+ pool.\textsuperscript{22}
   b. POLAR quintiles 1 and 2 represent the 40\% of students least likely to progress to higher education, and students from these areas only account for approximately 12\% of the national AAA+ pool.

28. From the end of Key Stage 3, students are required to make GCSE and A-Level subject choices which could impact on their future ability to make competitive applications to Oxford and other Russell Group universities. The Working Group on Applicant Course Choice highlighted the importance of good information, advice and guidance at this crucial stage.

Deciding whether to apply to Oxford

29. Although differential attainment is the main cause of lower progression rates to selective universities amongst disadvantaged young people, lower application rates by those who do have the necessary levels of attainment are also a factor. There are noticeable variations in the propensity of different subgroups of the AAA+ population to apply to Oxford.

School type and socio-economic category

30. Chart 5 below shows substantial differences in application rates of pupils attaining at the highest levels depending on school type and socio economic background. For instance, 37\% of independent school pupils achieving A*A*A or better applied to Oxford in the years 2012-2014, against an estimated 25\% of state educated pupils and 14\% of ACORN quintile 4 and 5 students achieving at or above this level.

\textsuperscript{22} See Annex IV for more details of the estimation method.
Regions

31. Charts 6 and 7 below show the regional differences between 2012-2014 application rates of pupils achieving AAA or more.

a. The highest overall AAA+ Oxford application rates are from London and the South of England, where approximately 25% of AAA+ pupils applied to Oxford over the three years,

b. Chart 7, which focuses only on state school pupils, shows that the large share for London is driven by independent school pupils. Looking at state school pupils alone, London application rates remain behind those of the South West and drop behind the South East, West Midlands, and Wales.

c. In both charts, the proportion of the Northern Ireland AAA+ pool applying to Oxford was very much lower than others, at below 6%, and the application rates from AAA+ candidates in the North East, North West, Yorkshire and Humber, and East Midlands, did not go above 20%.

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23 See Annex IV for details of the method by which these pools were calculated.
Chart 6: Proportion of all school students obtaining AAA+ who apply to Oxford, by UK region and nation (2012-2014)

Chart 7: Proportion of state school students obtaining AAA+ who apply to Oxford, by UK region and nation (2012-2014)

BAME applications

32. Further analysis conducted for a related project on access to Oxford for BAME candidates has shown that, for some regions, BAME groups are markedly under-represented in the numbers applying to Oxford compared to their representation.

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24 Scotland is excluded from this analysis, as the vast majority of Scottish students take Highers and Advanced Highers, rather than A-Levels.
in the AAA+ cohort. This was particularly striking in the London, West Midlands and East Midlands regions.

Table 2: The state school AAA+ cohort and Oxford applications from London, the West and East Midlands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All AAA+ applicants</th>
<th>Oxford applicants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BAME</td>
<td>Not known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subject choice

33. Course choice is a key determinant of a candidate’s chances of obtaining entry to Oxford. The average overall success rate across all applicants and courses of 18% conceals a broad range of variation. The three most oversubscribed courses, and their acceptance rates, are:
   a. Economics and Management (8%)
   b. Medicine (10%)
   c. Law (15%)

34. The three courses with the least competition for places, and their acceptance rates, are:
   a. Classics (40%)
   b. Theology and Religion (34%)
   c. Modern Languages (32%)

35. Table 3 overleaf shows the proportion of applicants from different backgrounds who apply for the three most oversubscribed courses, compared with other groups. The key point is that in 2015 these three oversubscribed courses together received:
   a. 31.3% of applications from BAME candidates;
   b. 22.9% of ACORN flagged applications;
   c. But only 15.3% of independent school applications;
   d. And 13.8% of applications from white pupils.
Table 3: Proportion of students applying for the most oversubscribed courses, by applicant characteristic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proportion of different groups applying for top three most competitive UG courses:</th>
<th>UCAS Cycle</th>
<th>% of all BAME applicants</th>
<th>% of all White applicants</th>
<th>% of all POLAR3 flagged</th>
<th>% of all ACORN flagged</th>
<th>% of all state school</th>
<th>% of all independent school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economics &amp; Management</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
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<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>4.2</td>
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<td>9.4</td>
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<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
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<td>Medicine</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>16.1</td>
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<td>9.1</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tests and shortlisting

36. Shortlisting for interview is the first filter for those who have applied. For some courses, tutors in the college to which the candidate has applied (or to which they have been allocated) review all the information that has been gathered and decide, often in collaboration with the relevant department(s), on a shortlist of candidates to interview. Medicine and other courses have a more centralised approach to shortlisting.

37. Shortlisting decisions are influenced by a range of factors and processes vary across courses. These include:
   a. Achieved grades in GCSE exams, in some cases contextualised;
b. Information in the applicant’s personal statement;
c. Teachers’ predictions of grades;
d. Scores in the admissions tests which are now required for the majority of Oxford courses. Initial analysis conducted for ATWG on disadvantaged students who were rejected but went on to exceed the standard A-Level offer, concluded that lower performance in admissions tests was often a significant factor in their deselection. e. Admissions ‘flags’ also identify contextual factors that should be taken into account in reviewing applications at the shortlisting threshold.

38. Some subjects also require candidates to submit examples of their school written work. For the purpose of shortlisting most subjects have established formulae for weighting these different pieces of information (for example, 30% for GCSEs and 70% for the admissions test).

39. Courses vary significantly in the proportion of candidates they interview, from 96% in Classics to 29% in Fine Art. As Chart 8 overleaf shows, for all the largest 21 subjects, a greater proportion of independent school candidates are shortlisted than for state schools.

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25 Admissions tests are subject to annual and five-year reviews to ensure that they remain a fair and valid component of the shortlisting process. Historically, these reviews have not included analysis at a granular level of the impact by characteristics of disadvantage or under-representation, but it was agreed in Michaelmas term 2016 that this should be done in future. This will allow Oxford to robustly examine the performance of its tests for different groups and to identify any risks or areas for improvement.

26 Analysis was carried out of the ‘exceeded not taken’ pool for English, Medicine, Law, History and Physics. Analysis was carried out of the ‘exceeded not taken’ pool for English, Medicine, Law, History and Physics.
Chart 8: Proportion of applicants interviewed and made offers by subject and school background.

40. Shortlisting is a key point at which candidates from all backgrounds fall out of the system. Analysis done for this project has shown that, in total over the three years from 2013 to 2015, the shortlisting process alone eliminated 223 very disadvantaged candidates\(^{27}\) who went on to exceed the standard A-Level offer for their course by at least one grade (e.g. A*AA for an AAA offer). More is said about this in paragraph 46 below.

Interviews and offers

41. Once interviews have taken place, all facets of the application are considered according to criteria agreed for each course and a ranking or banding exercise is undertaken, often at departmental level. Initial analysis conducted for ATWG on very disadvantaged students who were rejected but went on to exceed the

\(^{27}\) Defined as candidates in receipt of an overall contextual admissions flag: i.e. those who are flagged for both educational and socio-economic disadvantage.
standard A-Level offer highlighted relatively weaker scores in interviews as one reason why disadvantaged candidates were not made an offer.

42. Slightly more offers are made than there are places available, due to the inevitable degree of ‘offer failure’ discussed in paragraph 44 below. As Chart 8 above shows, once shortlisted, relative success rates for independent school pupils are higher in some subjects and lower in others.

Achieving the offer and accepting a place

43. Every year a proportion of those candidates holding offers do not manage to achieve the grades required as condition of their offer. In 2016 this amounted to 334 individuals; nearly 9% of all offer-holders. As Chart 9 below shows, this is an issue for offer-holders from all backgrounds, but more common amongst candidates from ACORN category 4 and 5 areas, and those from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2.

Chart 9: Proportion of candidates receiving an offer who do not achieve it

44. Disadvantaged candidates also feature in the group of candidates who are admitted, at colleges’ discretion, having not made the terms of their offer. These exceptions are made on the basis of extenuating circumstances. In August 2016 this category amounted to 160 students, of whom approximately 35% were from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2, and/or from ACORN category 4 and 5 areas.

45. As well as looking at those candidates who received an offer, the ATWG also looked at the outcomes for disadvantaged candidates who did not receive an offer (or who declined). Looking only at those candidates with an ‘overall flag’ – i.e. a smaller
group than ACORN or POLAR candidates – analysis done for the group identified almost 600 such students, over three years, who applied to the 21 largest courses and were not made (or did not accept) an offer, but then went on to exceed the standard A-Level offer for their course by at least one grade. These 600 represented nearly a quarter of candidates from this very disadvantaged group.

46. The table below illustrates this effect. The numbers in brackets show the number of very disadvantaged ‘exceeded not taken’ candidates for each subject over the three-year period. The blue bars show the proportion who did not get an offer because they were not shortlisted: 223 candidates in total over three years. The red bars represent the candidates who were interviewed and did not get an offer, and the green bars the small number of candidates who received an offer and declined it.

Chart 10: The ‘exceeded not taken’ group

On course success

47. Finally, the group looked at academic performance in first public examinations at Oxford (FPE) and at Finals (FHS), to see what could be deduced about the performance of candidates from POLAR and ACORN areas once they reach Oxford.
The group considered the marks of students from different backgrounds in the three-year period 2013-2015. This showed that:

a. Overall, the average marks of ACORN and POLAR cohorts were slightly lower than average for other students at both points;
b. However, on average, progression during the course is stronger;
c. By the end of the course the difference between the overall average of the two cohorts is $\frac{3}{4}$ of one percent for POLAR, and $1\frac{1}{4}$ percent for ACORN

Table 4: Average progression on course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average FPE mark</th>
<th>Average FHS mark</th>
<th>Progression (FPE to FHS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACORN cohort</td>
<td>63.20</td>
<td>64.94</td>
<td>+ 1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-ACORN cohort</td>
<td>64.80</td>
<td>66.16</td>
<td>+1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POLAR cohort</td>
<td>63.89</td>
<td>65.56</td>
<td>+ 1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-POLAR cohort</td>
<td>64.78</td>
<td>66.14</td>
<td>+ 1.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

48. As ever, this average covers a variety of different patterns on individual courses and more detailed analysis is available from UAO for courses to consider.

Career destinations after graduating

49. Analysis done by the Careers Service, and presented to the Working Group on Applicant Course Choice in 2014/15, showed that students from ACORN and POLAR target postcodes were no less likely than their peers to progress to a graduate-level job after completing their studies at Oxford.
F The experience of disadvantaged candidates

50. The last chapter looked at the data for how different groups fare in the candidate journey. This chapter looks in more detail at what we know of the experiences and views of candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is drawn from a variety of sources, including published research and unpublished surveys and evaluations conducted within Oxford, notably a survey conducted for the 2016 ADEX Working Group on Course Choice (AWGCC). This chapter also reflects points made by tutors and outreach officers on the working group or who were consulted, and a small-scale focus group with on-course Oxford students conducted in Michaelmas term 2015.

Deciding to apply and choice of subject

51. There is quite good research-based evidence on sources of influence on students’ decisions.

52. Teachers’ support is often cited as a very important factor by those young people from under-represented backgrounds who do apply. When asked in the AWGCC survey “how important were subject teachers at your schools as a source of advice when choosing this course”, 20% of flagged candidates (double the percentage of non-flagged candidates) agreed with the statement that it was “Extremely important, I wouldn’t have considered applying to Oxford without them.”

53. On the ground, however, the degree of help and support available from schools varies widely. The Sutton Trust publishes polls about teachers’ attitudes to Oxbridge applications, and the most recent data was issued in October 2016. This survey of 1,697 primary and secondary school teachers, found that 43% of state secondary school teachers say they would rarely or never advise their bright pupils to apply to Oxbridge. This is the same proportion as in 2007. The survey also found that 19% wouldn’t encourage their students to apply to Oxbridge because they thought they were unlikely to be successful in their application, with 13% not encouraging their students to apply because they didn’t think they would be happy there.

54. The table below, again from research conducted for the AWGCC report, illustrates variability between school types in the quantity of support for the decision to apply

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28 This survey covered 1,000 undergraduates and 395 participants in the UNIQ summer schools
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State %</td>
<td>Selective state %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help choosing the course to apply for</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help choosing the college to apply for</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help understanding the application process</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help in giving me the confidence to apply</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help drafting my personal statement for the UCAS form</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help visiting Oxford for an open day or other activity</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not receive any support from school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

55. Other sources of advice quoted by students show the importance of personal networks of students currently at Oxford, or others who have attended in the past, as well as the salience of the UNIQ programme. The graph below illustrates this. This survey found that significantly fewer BAME students attended an open day, or applied to a specific college.

Chart 11: Responses to the question “Were there any other sources of advice that were particularly important to you when choosing this course?”
56. In terms of reasons to apply to Oxford University, the same survey found that state school students placed more importance on financial support/bursaries and both state school and BME candidates placed above average weight on the importance of the degree for their career.

Chart 12: Responses to the question “Why did you choose to apply for the course you are on? Answer: It is important for my career”

57. These findings led to the AWGCC recommendation that future outreach work should be informed to a greater degree than at present by applicants’ perceptions of the relationship between career prospects and the courses taken at Oxford. The ATWG Communications Work Stream endorsed this and urged more work on incorporating this into key admissions websites, observing that some of the material aimed at candidates assumes they already know they want to go to Oxford. This may be true of many candidates, but cannot be assumed to be true of all.

58. These findings in Oxford surveys in many ways echo results of the recent UCAS study on how perception of higher education influences applicant choice. This survey, with 16,600 respondents across the UK, found some concerns were common to both advantaged and disadvantaged applicants – for example worries about making friends, loneliness, taking responsibility for yourself, and coping with being away from home were mentioned frequently by both groups. But disadvantaged candidates were more concerned about practicalities like transport

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29 UCAS, Through the lens of students: how perceptions of higher education influence applicants’ choices, July 2016.
and accommodation, and were 30% more likely to say that employers are more interested in the subject you studied than where you studied.

59. Among the respondents to the UCAS survey who had not applied to a high tariff university, certain common themes in their thinking emerged:
   a. 49% said the entry requirements were too high;
   b. 41% said the course they were interested in was not offered;
   c. 20% thought the cost of living would be too high at these universities.

60. Themes arising from free text comments elicited by the survey included;
   a. Lack of transparency about entry requirements and the use of contextual information when considering academic achievement and potential – more students would have applied if they had known they had a chance of getting in;
   b. Lack of understanding of career pathways from ‘academic-sounding’ degree courses;
   c. Lack of relevant outreach and engagement.

Outreach and open day accessibility

61. In this UCAS survey, open days and visits constitute one of the most used sources in helping applicants make informed choices. In the UCAS survey 91% of respondents visited at least one university and 67% visited between two and five. Disadvantaged students cited cost (43%) as the main reason for not visiting more than one, while advantaged applicants cited a lack of time. Three quarters of applicants said that a travel voucher to an open day would have encouraged them to apply to higher tariff universities.

62. The survey found that applicants were happy to visit universities but they also appreciated universities visiting them. Students reported that university visits to schools are a welcome and effective alternative to open days and eliminated the two main difficulties associated with open days – time and cost. Such visits were more valued when university staff were joined by current students and where the information was specific and relevant.

63. The next chapter says more about the variable coverage of different regions by Oxford outreach initiatives. But even when regional visits are organised, cost to schools and candidates can be a problem: some college and University outreach staff consulted during this work pointed out that travel expenses to get to an event in the same region could be significant for schools and prospective candidates. It could still be a one or two hour journey, and some programmes that offered
schools or pupils travel expenses reported that this had boosted attendance from pupils in schools they were otherwise unable to see.

More visits from universities to schools with relevant information on courses and university life, not just ‘we look like Hogwarts and have loads of societies and grades requirements’; but maybe an honest, engaging talk, possibly in small groups about university study and life.\textsuperscript{30}

Preparation for tests and interviews

64. Analysis done for the Working Group on Applicant Course Choice showed that students coming from maintained schools were half as likely as those from independent schools to report having received support from their school in preparing for admissions tests (30\% compared with 59\%).\textsuperscript{31} Anecdotal evidence from the small-scale focus group emphasised the need for multiple past papers, syllabuses (where relevant), mark schemes and guidance on the skills being assessed to be freely available online to support applicants from schools which have limited history of successful Oxford applications.

I found the past […] paper and then just filled that in and got someone to check over it but they weren’t really sure how it was being marked so they didn’t really know how to do that.\textsuperscript{32}

Interview preparation and experience

65. Shortlisted candidates are invited to come to a particular college in December: travel expenses are not paid but free accommodation and food are provided and teams of college staff and student volunteers make sure that candidates are welcomed and well looked after during their stay.

66. Again, levels of support for interview preparation differ between state and independent school candidates (71\% compared with 88\%). Some Oxford outreach programmes, such as UNIQ and the colleges’ Pathways, offer practice interviews to participants who are shortlisted and invited for an interview, and more general interview ‘workshops’ are delivered by outreach officers from across Oxford in the course of their work with schools.

\textsuperscript{30} Comment by a participant in the small-scale focus groups with on-course Oxford students conducted in Michaelmas term 2015.

\textsuperscript{31} Joint research from the Oxford Department of Education and UAO on the effects of admissions test preparation, due to report in autumn 2017.

\textsuperscript{32} Comment by a participant in the small-scale focus groups with on-course Oxford students conducted in Michaelmas term 2015.
67. The cost of travel for interview can be a significant, and even prohibitive, outlay for candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially where a long trip is involved. A number of colleges report that they have been approached to see whether they can pay expenses or provide vouchers and some have provided reimbursement or bought tickets. However, no college has this as its standard policy or publicises such a scheme. This contrasts with the offer of travel costs within the UK for all UNIQ participants, and it also differs from the practice of the University and colleges in relation to those coming for interviews to work in the University.

68. Anecdotally, the lack of clarity around departure times for many subjects is cited as a significant cause of stress for applicants and as a major factor in increasing the costs associated with attending interview, as cheaper travel options cannot be booked in advance.33

_I think ours could have been improved because we were told to constantly keep checking the notice board which was a useful source of information but sometimes my friends would be given an interview. A piece of paper would be put up and they would be like ‘I’ve got an interview in 10 minutes,’ and have to run to a college they had never been to before._

_I was there from the Sunday until the Tuesday but it was not until half way through Tuesday that I found out that I could go home instead of having to stay until Wednesday evening._

69. In 2013/14, AdEx convened a working group to consider the experience of those holding offers from Oxford, prompted by the suggestion that inadequate support might be discouraging flagged offer holders from taking up their offers. The report produced by the working group noted that there were a number of reasons why offer holders relinquish Oxford offers, but expressed particular concern over “the inadequacy which many feel to face the academic challenge, even though this point would seem to have been addressed by them having received the offer.” It was recommended that further work should be done to make Oxford seem less intimidating, and to encourage offer holders to believe that they will be able to cope with the academic challenges and pressures. Some progress has been made since the report, with monthly offer-holder ‘newsletters’ being sent from Student Services in AAD, and some colleges hosting events for offer-holders and their parents in the period between offer and enrolment.

33 The ‘may be required until’ time within which interview candidates may be released early makes it difficult to plan and, crucially, to book travel in advance.
70. These are some of the key issues in the experience of disadvantaged candidates thinking of applying to Oxford. The next chapter sets out the access and admissions policies currently in place to address them.
G Oxford’s current measures to improve access

Overview

71. Collectively the different constituent parts of Oxford invest a great deal of time and money into activities designed to ensure fair access to undergraduate study at Oxford.34

72. The Common Framework on Widening Access provides the organisational structure for different outreach programmes from the collegiate University. The Framework is concerned primarily with activities which develop and diversify the undergraduate student body. The Framework has four guiding principles that should be applied to outreach programmes: supporting the access targets agreed with OFFA; internal collaboration; sustained intervention; and review and evaluation. The Framework was approved in November 2012 by Admissions Committee and its implementation has not been reviewed.

73. Outreach by Oxford falls into three main areas: student recruitment, widening access to Oxford, and widening participation in higher education more generally. The activities can be grouped under the following themes, although some could easily fit in more than one:
   a. General information programmes: websites, prospectuses, open days, and conferences to inform potential students, their teachers and families and the general public about the courses available and how to apply;
   b. Teacher focused programmes: communications and programmes to brief teachers about what Oxford can offer, the type of student who could make a competitive application and the application process;
   c. Regional focused programmes: activities to schools in particular regions with information, advice and other tailored interventions, including curriculum enrichment and interview workshops;
   d. Sustained contact programmes: sustained activities that work over a period of time, including across the school academic year, with particular underrepresented groups and deliver a tailored programmes of information, encouragement, and curriculum enrichment;
   e. Subject specific programmes: activities that aim to address the underrepresentation of particular students on certain courses (MPLS

34 Note that the University as a whole, including all departments, the Oxford Education Deanery, the museums and collections, colleges, students, also conducts a range of activities to support general attainment raising in schools of students of all ages and to encourage aspiration to Higher Education in general. These are not covered in depth in this report.
Division’s programme of work to encourage women into STEM and outreach targeted at state schools from the Classics Faculty).

f. Admissions-based actions: these are policies and processes designed to ensure that shortlisting and offer decisions take appropriate account of candidates’ background circumstances and that interviews are conducted on a consistent basis;

g. Transition programmes: activities that support ‘offer-holders’ to maintain confidence, and curriculum and skills based programmes to support incoming undergraduates on certain courses or from particular backgrounds;

h. Financial support: this activity is to ensure that financial reasons are not a barrier to studying at Oxford.

74. Chart 13 shows the main elements of expenditure targeted at disadvantaged students or potential students. The largest single element of this is the £10m a year spent on financial support to students from lower income backgrounds who have obtained a place at Oxford. This is part of Oxford’s offer to attract students but only directly benefits those who get in.

Chart 13: Oxford University overall spending on outreach
75. Table 6 below gives some key indications of current or planned activity under the headings set out in paragraph 73.\(^{35}\)

76. This chapter will then focus in depth on two of the largest outreach interventions – the college regional link scheme, and the UNIQ summer schools.

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\(^{35}\) These actions are listed in depth in the University’s Access Agreement which can be accessed on the OFFA website.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Detail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General information programmes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Online presence</strong>&lt;br&gt;Main admissions website plus those of departments, divisions and colleges.</td>
<td>Taking account of the number of colleges and courses, these amount to more than 80 websites. Not evaluated in any systematic way and the aims cover student recruitment, widening access and participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prospectuses</strong>&lt;br&gt;The official undergraduate prospectus is complemented by the OUSU Alternative Prospectus <a href="http://apply.ousu.org/">http://apply.ousu.org/</a> and by further information specifically for parents and carers, for teachers, for mature students, for international students and for disabled students.</td>
<td>UAO is reviewing its provision of print materials, and moving to more digital methods of communications. Not evaluated in any systematic way and the aims cover student recruitment, widening access and participation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UCAS Higher Education Conventions</strong>&lt;br&gt;National programmes for local and regional based students to receive face-to-face advice about applying to Oxford and the courses offered. Staffed by regional link colleges and UAO.</td>
<td>151,751 students attended an Oxford-staffed UCAS HE Fair in 2015/16. 856 schools with whom Oxford’s only contact is through the local UCAS convention. Not evaluated in any systematic way and the aims cover student recruitment, widening access and participation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oxford and Cambridge Student Conferences</strong>&lt;br&gt;Held in March each year, these large-scale events are held across the UK to provide local- and regional-based students and their teachers with an opportunity to find out more about the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. <a href="http://www.studentconferences.org.uk">www.studentconferences.org.uk</a></td>
<td>Eight annual one and two-day Conferences across the UK attracting a total of over 9,000 students and teachers. Programme delivery is measured but impact is not evaluated. The aims cover student recruitment and widening access.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oxford and Cambridge Network for Collaborative Outreach</strong>. Funded by the HEFCE National Network for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO) this network brings together the outreach work of Oxford and Cambridge to provide information and guidance on applying to either institution for targeted schools/colleges that have talented</td>
<td>Worked with students and teachers in nearly 1,600 schools across England. The funding for this has ceased but the website <a href="http://www.oxfordandcambridgeoutreach.co.uk">www.oxfordandcambridgeoutreach.co.uk</a> and some of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher focused programmes</td>
<td>students, but historically low success rates in the admissions processes. It encourages collaborative outreach between Oxford and Cambridge colleges for the targeted schools. This is supplemented by a joint outreach website and regular webinars.</td>
<td>the virtual activity will be maintained by UAO and the central team at Cambridge. Evaluated for HEFCE and the aims cover mainly widening access and some student recruitment.</td>
</tr>
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<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OUSU shadowing scheme.</strong> Students are matched to an undergraduate studying a relevant subject and then ‘shadow’ that undergraduate for half a day, going to their lectures, labs and tutorials. Students also receive a tour of Oxford, talks on student life, a personal statement workshop, and an interview workshop.</td>
<td>Run by Oxford University Students Union. Around 200 Year 12 students, day-long visit. Not evaluated in any systematic way and the aims cover mainly student widening access.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TeachFirst and PGCE students.</strong> Briefing sessions for Oxford’s TeachFirst and PGCE students. Information, advice and guidance sessions at the TeachFirst Summer Institute for recruits from across the UK.</td>
<td>Cover wide education issues and how to support students with potential to apply for most selective universities. We anticipate these recent graduates will be ambassadors for the University within the teaching profession. Not evaluated in any systematic way and the aims cover student recruitment, widening access and participation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regional Teachers’ Conferences.</strong> Delivered in a range of national locations, all UK schools will be invited to attend on a biennial basis. The content of the conferences includes detailed information on the admissions process / advice on how to identify and support most talented students.</td>
<td>Attract over 150 teachers and guidance advisers each year. Evaluated in 2016-17 by IES and the findings and recommendations are being considered. Cover student recruitment and widening access.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sutton Trust Teacher Summer Schools.</strong> Two-day CPD conference supporting teachers in building ‘pipeline’ of high quality participants for outreach programmes.</td>
<td>About 30 teachers attended the first year of this residential and the programme’s aim is widening access.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inspirational Teachers Award.</strong> Annual award ceremony and dinner for the teachers and their nominating students. The teachers are nominated by students from widening access backgrounds.</td>
<td>There have been 59 recipients to date. Not evaluated in any systematic way as it is a celebration of the teachers’ achievement. The aims cover widening access.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers’ e-newsletter</strong></td>
<td>This is a summary of key messages, event listings and other news, sent out to teachers who have subscribed to our mailing list.</td>
<td>Coordinated by UAO and reaches 3,500 teachers several times a year. Covers all different types of schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regional focused programmes</strong></td>
<td>This is discussed in more detail in the rest of this chapter, as it was the focus of the Regionalisation Working Group (see paragraphs 88-105 below).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Sustained contact programmes** | The **Pathways Programme** offers activities on a sustained-contact basis for students in Years 10-13 from non-selective state schools with little history of engagement with Oxford. Special focus on postcodes indicating socioeconomic or educational disadvantage and schools without sixth forms. Includes:  
  - Taster days for Year 10 students  
  - “Investigating options” days for Year 11 students, targeted at those in schools without sixth forms.  
  - Study days for Year 12 students, which include free accommodation for those living far away, and some assistance with travel costs. | Run collaboratively by colleges. Funded by the Sutton Trust.  
In 2014/15 worked with around 2,200 students and 300 teachers from 470 schools.  
Annual evaluation to measure the success of the programme and to show conversion rates to Oxford. The aims cover mainly widening access. |
<p>| <strong>UNIQ summer schools</strong> and other activities for UNIQ applicants | This is discussed in more detail in the rest of this chapter, reflecting the scale of the programme and the outcome of the recent independent evaluation. | Evaluated in 2016-17 by IES and the findings and recommendations are being considered. The aims cover mainly widening access. |
| <strong>OxNet Hub Scheme</strong> | Developed by Pembroke College, and supported by UAO and Corpus Christi College, has built partnerships with six schools in London and the North West/ North East of England in 2016 to create “Hubs” | The OxNet Hubs focus respectively on the physical sciences (Cheshire), Modern Languages (London and Wigan), Classics (London), and Theology and Religious Studies (Greater Manchester and Cheshire). |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delivering an academic curriculum enrichment programme drawing on Oxford staff and students. The programme aims to inspire, and to stretch and challenge those who take part, particularly those from disadvantaged and non-traditional University application backgrounds. All pupils are encouraged to think about and engage with subjects they may not have considered studying, and to raise their academic attainment by taking part in sustained intellectually challenging programmes.</th>
<th>Annual evaluation to measure the success of the programme and to show conversion rates to Oxford. The aims cover widening access and widening participation.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outreach to BAME groups:</strong> Annual Access Conference jointly run by UAO and the student-led African and Caribbean Society. Aims to make Oxford more accessible for state school students with an ethnic minority heritage (predominately African and/or Caribbean) by helping to demystify the Oxford admissions process for pupils, teachers and parents. Partnership between UAO and Target Oxbridge (an organisations which inspires, supports and champion students from African and Caribbean communities in London). IntoOxford is a collaborative programme between UAO and IntoUniversity that supports academically talented students from the Into University centres across the UK and from underprivileged backgrounds to aspire to apply to Oxford or Cambridge. Oxford University also sponsors <em>Future Leaders</em> magazine. Their annual publication for high-performing black students includes content from Oxford.</td>
<td>Annual Access Conference attended by around 100 students. Three-day Target Oxbridge residential held in 2016 for 40 state school year-12 students with African and Caribbean heritage. About 40 mainly BAME IntoOxford students in Year 10 attended a residential and will receive continued support from IntoUniversity and UAO through Years 11, 12 and 13. All these programmes are in their pilot phase and evaluation is pending.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### IntoUniversity learning centres

Two learning centres are now supported by the collegiate University. These centres are in areas of high deprivation and are operated by IntoUniversity. The purpose of the centres is to support the attainment and aspiration of targeted schools and students.

The Oxford South East centres is supported by Christ Church and UAO. The recently opened Islington centres is supported by Wadham. At each centre about 900 students from key stages 2, 3, 4 and 5 are supported to apply to selective universities and other destinations. Evaluation is conducted by IntoUniversity.

### Lady Margaret Hall Foundation Year Pilot

In April 2016 Lady Margaret Hall announced the launch of a pilot foundation year for students from under-represented backgrounds from across the UK who have the potential to succeed in undergraduate study at Oxford but lack the prior academic attainment necessary to present as credible applicants in the normal admissions process.

The pilot has begun and ten students started at LMH in Autumn 2016. An evaluation framework is being developed by LMH and Trinity College Dublin.

### Subject-specific programmes

#### Women in STEM

- The Mathematical institute and Department of Statistics host two day-conferences for girls each year called *It All Adds Up*.
- Computer Science Taster Day.

Take place in January. Free to attend. One for Years 9-11 and one for Years 12-13

Open to girls in Years 10 and 11.

#### Chemistry (NNCO-funded project)

Collaborative project with four mixed comprehensive schools in West Yorkshire; a Chemistry research project to enrich the teaching of Chemistry and Physics.

Working with students from Years 10-13.

#### Engineering (NNCO-funded project)

Royal Institution Engineering Masterclass.

Open to students at target schools in Year 9.

#### Classics (NNCO-funded project)

Widening access to Classical languages in the primary sector through training workshops for teachers in Latin and Greek.

Teachers (focusing on Key Stage 2)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sciences</th>
<th>3 day-long conferences for Y10 girls.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>**Multi-science conferences around themes of Health, Technology and **</td>
<td><strong>Environment</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Subject Taster Days and talks</strong></th>
<th>Throughout the year, mostly aimed at Year 12 students but some aimed at Year 9 upwards.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Run by departments and colleges on a variety of subjects, including:</td>
<td><strong>Chemistry; Classics; Computer Science; Engineering; Fine Art; Mathematics; Physics;</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Philosophy; PPE and others.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Philosophy; PPE and others.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Oxplore</strong></th>
<th>Open to all potential applicants, teachers and parents.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital outreach programme launching in Spring 2017 to provide curriculum enrichment materials on a wide range of topics.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Admissions-based actions</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flags and shortlisting</strong></td>
<td>Candidates who come from an area of socio-economic deprivation - i.e. (a) or (b) - and from a school with lower than national average attainment rates – i.e. (c) or (d) are described as “overall flagged” or “WP flagged”. It is Oxford’s policy that they should be shortlisted for interview, provided that they are predicted to achieve the entry qualifications, and meet relevant attainment in any pre-interview tests. “Relevant attainment” is set subject by subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A number of individual flags are added to candidates’ application forms to highlight contextual factors for shortlisting tutors to be aware of. These cover:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Students from ACORN quintiles 4 and 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Neighbourhoods with low participation in higher education (POLAR quintiles 1 and 2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Schools with lower than national average attainment rates at GCSE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Schools with lower than national average attainment rates at A-Level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Applicants from those state schools and colleges which form the basis of Oxford’s Target 1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are special rules (see right) about de-selecting “overall flagged” candidates in the shortlisting process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Candidates who apply from care backgrounds receive particular attention, and are highlighted specifically in the application process for additional consideration by tutors.

**Contextualised GCSEs**
Many courses make use of the contextualised GCSE A* score (cGCSE), which allows tutors to get a sense of whether an applicant has 'outperformed' other applicants to Oxford in their GCSEs, given the performance of the school at which they took these GCSEs. It can be particularly useful for identifying applicants from low performing schools who may not have achieved as many A* grades at GCSE as other applicants, but who have nonetheless done extremely well given their school background.

A refined model for calculating the cGCSE score has been developed under the aegis of the AdEx Working Group on Contextual Data and piloted in both the 2016- and 2017-entry admissions cycles by a number of courses. Evaluated by AdEx Working Group on C GCSE.

**Training of interviewers**
All academic tutors new to UG admissions are required to complete a training course on interviewing and then a refresher every five years. Admitting tutors who were in post before the training was introduced are recommended to undertake refresher training every five years.

Compliance with these requirement is not monitored but anecdotal evidence suggests that take-up of the initial training is not consistent across colleges, and take-up of the refresher training is low. The course content was reviewed in 2016/17.

**Transition programmes**
**MPLS Bridging Programme.** The MPLS (Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences) Division Bridging Programme arose from the need for incoming students in the physical sciences to have certain knowledge in mathematics and in their science subject as a prerequisite for successfully engaging with their course. A one-week residential programme was established in 2012, involving a mixture of

Places are prioritised for particular students, for example those identified in the admissions process coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. Since 2013 the materials have been available in an online format for freshers in Chemistry, Physics, Materials and Earth Sciences. The programme has since been extended to Engineering Science.
### The Univ Opportunity Programme

The Univ Opportunity Programme is a new programme, run by University College, from the October 2016 admissions round. It combines a 10% expansion of the undergraduate intake of University College, with the extra 10% filled through the University’s normal competitive admissions process, but available only to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The selected students, once they have achieved the conditions of their offer, receive targeted academic support in the form of a four-week bridging course to help them to transition effectively to study at Oxford.

The college will offer these students an intensive four-week bridging programme before they start their degree in October. This will consist of subject-specific tuition, wider exploration of academic material, and the development of key academic skills to support their transition to Oxford. The bridging programme is free to the students and there is a £500 grant to every student who attends.

An evaluation framework is being developed by University College.

### Financial support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oxford’s bursary provision for the poorest students, in particular the Moritz-Heyman Scholarships which include a £3,000 tuition fee reduction, is among the most generous in the country. Approximately 1 in 10 of Oxford’s UK undergraduates come from families with an assessed household income of £16k or less each year, and these students receive the maximum level of bursary. In addition to bursaries and tuition fee reductions, colleges and departments provide a wide range of generous additional financial support such as hardship grants, to ensure that financial concerns do not detract from student success.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Around 175 new students each year benefit from a Moritz-Heyman Scholarship, and one in four of Oxford’s UK and EU students receives some level of bursary support (from £200 to £3,700 per year). Monitored by the MHS board and by the Student Services Team.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The two largest programmes: UNIQ and the regional links scheme

77. As shown in Figure 4 above, the collegiate University spends approximately £6m on outreach each year. The two largest elements of this expenditure are as follows:
   a. The single largest element is the UNIQ summer schools programme, at £0.85m;
   b. The sum of colleges’ spending is £2.3m, which includes expenditure on the college regional link scheme, which was the specific focus of RWG.

78. The rest of this chapter will focus in depth on these two areas of work. It should be noted that these two schemes were set up with different aims. Of the two, UNIQ is heavily focused on state schools and less advantaged candidates. The regional links scheme was originally set up with a broad focus, not clearly focused on disadvantaged candidates, or Oxford’s access targets with OFFA, which it predates.

UNIQ summer schools

79. UNIQ is Oxford University’s single biggest access intervention with direct costs of around £850,000 per year.

80. At its heart is a one-week programme in Oxford for high-achieving Year 12 students at UK state schools and colleges, which is totally free to the student, and covers their costs from any region or country of the UK. The programme has 35 subject strands and includes e.g. lectures, labs, field trips, moots, and seminars. All subject strands end in a tutorial and students also receive advice on all stages of the Oxford application process. There are also social activities and students get to stay in a college. More information is available at www.uniq.ox.ac.uk.

81. The programme costs the University **£1,000 per head**.\(^{36}\) In summer 2016 it had 875 participants and nearly **seven applicants per place**. Wherever possible, those who narrowly miss out on a summer school place are offered shorter interventions through college-run programmes.

82. UNIQ has been running since 2010 and was independently evaluated in 2016. The key findings were:
   a. The programme has had positive or significant impact on satisfaction, conversion of participants to applicants, and rates of shortlisting for

\(^{36}\) There is some additional subsidy as colleges charge accommodation to the programme at internal rates rather than those they could achieve on the open market through out-of-term conference or bed and breakfast bookings. Rates vary, but if average market rates were charged, this could increase the per capita cost of UNIQ to as much as £1,400. There are also additional ‘indirect’ costs for departments and faculties.
participants in the undergraduate admissions round at the University of Oxford;
b. This effect was found to be present when UNIQ participants were compared to students from independent schools, and particularly in comparison to students from target ACORN and POLAR postcodes who did not attend UNIQ;
c. UNIQ also had a positive impact on participants’ likelihood of receiving an offer once shortlisted.

83. Some of the data are set out in Box 11 below:

Box 11: Impact of the UNIQ summer schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key UNIQ impact data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(All for 2010-2014 and from the IES evaluation unless otherwise stated)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Likelihood of applying**

- **67% of UNIQ attendees** went on to apply to the University compared with **26% of unsuccessful UNIQ applicants**

- the impact of UNIQ attendance on application rates was **highly statistically significant**, after controlling for attainment, predisposition, subject, and student characteristics

- **UNIQ attendees from target groups were just as likely to apply to Oxford as were those from non-target groups** (65% against 68%)

- **Unsuccessful UNIQ applicants** from target schools and low participation areas were **less likely to apply to Oxford than those from non-target groups**, controlling for attainment and other factors (15% against 30%). This is a **key finding** and highlights a group of target students, who, though unsuccessful in their UNIQ applications, could go on to make viable applications to the University if they had access to additional support and guidance on the Oxford admissions process.

**Likelihood of shortlisting**

- Overall, **80% of UNIQ attendees who made an application** to the University were shortlisted, compared with **56% of all applicants to the University; 56% of unsuccessful UNIQ applicants; 58% of other applicants to the University from state schools; 70% of applicants to the University from independent schools.**

**Likelihood of receiving an offer**
84. The independent evaluation strongly endorses the continuation of UNIQ, and makes further recommendations addressing marketing, selection, and programme content.

85. Some of these recommendations have already been implemented by UAO. Notably, from 2015/16, selection criteria were changed to concentrate on students from disadvantaged neighbourhoods and neighbourhoods with low HE progression rates (ACORN and POLAR) even more sharply than the criteria used before. As a result of this 93% of the 2016 cohort were from target disadvantaged postcode areas, up from 44% in 2015.

86. The impact of these recent changes to UNIQ will be addressed in a follow-up report by the IES. However initial data on conversion rates has already been calculated: from the 2016 UNIQ cohort, 61.8% of UNIQ participants applied to Oxford for undergraduate study in the current admissions round. This is slightly higher than the previous year, when the proportion was 61%.

87. Among 2016 UNIQ participants who have gone on to apply to Oxford, the three most popular courses are Law (45), Mathematics (39) and Medicine (38). The three colleges with the highest UNIQ applications are University College (51), Wadham (41) and Worcester (40). University and Wadham Colleges had a strong presence on UNIQ 2016.

The college regional link scheme

88. The college regional link scheme is now a very significant part of the outreach effort. The concept dates back to 2008, when the University’s Council determined that the University’s access strategy should prioritise increasing the proportion of applications from able students from state schools and colleges, by focusing resources on high-performing state schools and colleges that had not recently been supplying many applicants or entrants to Oxford. The current model was adopted in 2010.
89. To avoid a target group of schools receiving multiple contacts from Oxford, and since teachers wanted a single point of contact, a regional link model was agreed in which colleges would become the lead contact for specific geographical areas.

90. The aims of the regionalisation model were:
   a. Simplification, with every school and college in the UK having a single, named contact in Oxford; and
   b. Targeting of resources, to support higher applications and success rates for state educated students.

91. The scheme was designed to involve outreach only and confer no admissions preference, and colleges would be working on behalf of the University as a whole. Colleges would not be prevented from working with any school or college with which they had an existing relationship; nor from forging new relationships outside of their regional link area(s).

Box 12: Links by region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Northern Ireland</th>
<th>Scotland</th>
<th>North West</th>
<th>North East</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New St Catherine’s</td>
<td>Central University (UAO)</td>
<td>Pembroke Queen’s Corpus Christi St Peter’s</td>
<td>St Anne’s Trinity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Yorkshire and Humberside</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Brasenose Worcester Magdalen Lincoln Mansfield</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>East of England</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td>Keble Oriel</td>
<td>Lincoln Magdalen</td>
<td>Christ Church Hertford</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37 The full list is on the University website (www.ox.ac.uk/linkcolls).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lady Margaret Hall</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Corpus Christi</th>
<th>Balliol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Peter’s</td>
<td>Lady Margaret Hall</td>
<td>Worcester St Edmund Hall</td>
<td>Wadham St Edmund Hall</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>South West</strong></td>
<td><strong>South East</strong></td>
<td><strong>Greater London</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Exeter</td>
<td>Brasenose</td>
<td>Christ Church</td>
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<td>Lady Margaret Hall</td>
<td>Hertford</td>
<td>Exeter</td>
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<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>St Edmund</td>
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<td>Merton</td>
<td>Hall</td>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td>Queen’s</td>
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<td>St Hugh’s</td>
<td>Lady Margaret</td>
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<td>Hall</td>
<td>St John’s</td>
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<td>Magdalen</td>
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<td>Mansfield</td>
<td>Somerville</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Merton</td>
<td>Wadham</td>
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</table>

**Box 13: Geographical spread of college link areas**

The geographical spread of college link areas

This table shows the spread of link areas from the college perspective. Only seven colleges involved in the scheme have a link relationship with just one region. Most have two or more.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions per College</th>
<th>Balliol</th>
<th>Brasenose</th>
<th>Christ Church</th>
<th>Corpus</th>
<th>Exeter</th>
<th>Hertford</th>
<th>Jesus</th>
<th>Keble</th>
<th>Lady Margaret Hall</th>
<th>Lincoln</th>
<th>Magdalen</th>
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<td>Yorkshire &amp; Humberside</td>
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<td>Northern Ireland</td>
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58
Expenditure on outreach

92. Evidence suggests that since the regionalisation scheme was established, colleges’ investment in outreach has increased significantly. In the annual ‘Cost of Outreach Survey’, colleges collectively reported total outreach expenditure of £2.3m in 2014/15 compared with £1.5m in 2010/11, the first full year of the regionalisation scheme.

93. There is considerable variation in spending between colleges with the top spender spending nearly ten times the lowest spender:
   c. Over the academic year 2014/15, the average spend per college was just over £73,000;
   d. However, actual expenditure ranged amongst colleges from approximately £26,000 to £240,000.

94. Most, but not all, of the differences can be attributed to whether the college employed a (full-time) outreach officer:
   e. Ten colleges reported having a full time member of staff whose role was entirely focussed on outreach;
   f. The other 19 colleges reported having a member of staff whose role was either part-time and wholly focussed on outreach, or full-time and combining outreach with another area of work.
Targeting of activity

95. There is also considerable variation in the scale and targeting of college effort. We have two sources of information on this.

Information from the RWG survey conducted by UAO

96. First, in early 2016, the UAO conducted a ‘Regionalisation of College Outreach Activity Survey’ on behalf of RWG. The main findings are summarised in Box 14 below.

Box 14: Focus of college’s work under the regional link scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus of colleges’ work under the regional link scheme</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28 colleges responded to March 2016 survey:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 20 prioritise students in Key Stages 4 and 5;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 17 focus on information, advice and guidance</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 10 do curriculum enrichment instead or as well</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 9 colleges work exclusively with state schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 8 colleges mentioned work with teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 7 colleges mentioned work with parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Most cover general student recruitment as well as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disadvantaged or under-represented groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 24 colleges said they collaborate with other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oxford colleges</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 84% use OFFA Target 1 to focus their outreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>efforts*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 65% use POLAR to focus their outreach efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 52% use ACORN to focus their outreach efforts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The survey did not ask colleges to differentiate between the original and revised Target 1 schools lists.
Information from the University’s Outreach Database

97. The Group has looked in some detail at analysis of the information on the University’s Outreach Database. This recorded a total of 3,045 events in 2014/15, of which 80% (by number, not necessarily intensity) were conducted by colleges.

98. While this database has a number of limitations, it nonetheless provides a top-level picture of the changing patterns of outreach over the last five years, and how approaches differ between different elements of the collegiate University, and across different parts of the country.

99. Chart 14 shows the variety in college activity over six years, with two striking messages:
   a. The overall number of interactions by college over the period varies significantly. These differences may reflect many different factors: multi-school events where many schools are included in one intervention compared with other events that involve fewer; different priorities and policies between colleges; differing needs or levels of engagement in areas; or staffing and budgetary differences between colleges;
   b. Significant proportions of college outreach activity are conducted outside their own link area. The average across colleges is that almost half of interactions (by number) are outside link regions. Again there may be many reasons—historic links, college priorities, collaboration with external organisations that are not based in the link region, or the desire to make an impact in an area that is easier to reach, or more in need, than the college’s allocated area.

38 The Outreach Database (ORDB), launched in 2008, currently provides the best source of information about the activities Oxford has undertaken in a given area, despite some weaknesses in its underlying data and evidence of some incorrect recording. It cannot be used to assess impact since it does not allow users to record the names or characteristics of those who attend an event, or the intensity of an activity. For the future UAO is investing in the HEAT (Higher Education Access Tracker) service – a secure on-line database which is continually developed and updated, which will allow Oxford to tracking the progress of its outreach participants into higher education and beyond.
Chart 14: Colleges’ interactions with their link regions and other areas of the UK (2010-2015)

100. Secondly, Chart 15 shows the variety in what different regions receive in total from Oxford. It shows that college link activity is often greatest in the regions closest to Oxford and in the South East, and that this pattern is sometimes mitigated, but sometimes reinforced by the activities of other colleges and of departments.
One would not, of course, expect the number of interactions in different regions to be the same as they differ so much in population size. But it is fair to ask how this pattern of interactions relates to the population of different regions attaining AAA+. Chart 16 sets this out and shows that relative coverage rates vary significantly:

a. The highest intensity of interventions is in the East of England which receives approximately one outreach intervention for every three AAA+ candidates;
b. the South East and North East regions receive around one outreach intervention for every four AAA+ candidates they produce;
c. for London and the South West the ratio is 1:5;
d. In the East and West Midlands the ratio is approximately 1:6;
e. Northern Ireland, Wales, and Yorkshire and the Humber each receive one outreach intervention for every seven AAA+ students.

It should be noted that this analysis does not account for the intensity or impact of the outreach interventions, and these ratios should be considered alongside the regional application patterns outlined in paragraph 31. Nonetheless the logic behind this distribution of effort is not obvious.
Has the regionalisation scheme succeeded in meeting its original goals?

103. One of the key tasks set for the Regionalisation Working Group was to establish whether and how far the aims of the regionalisation policy adopted in 2009 (including the aims of colleges) have been attained. The goals were to simplify the Oxford outreach offer for schools and teachers by creating a single point of contact, and to target resources so as to increase the number of applications from, and proportional success rate of, students from state schools and colleges, particularly those high performing schools with little history of sending students to Oxford.

104. It is not possible to evaluate this scheme in a rigorous way. The way data has been collected does not allow us to identify precisely which students have been engaged with, or to link actions to outcomes. Many other parts of the University have been engaging with potential students and so effects are difficult to disentangle. To all these complexities must be added the other factors that may have affected applications and admissions, not least changes in schools, in the economic climate, and the introduction of the £9,000 tuition fee in 2012. It should also be noted that the University’s goals have developed during the operation of the scheme with the current OFFA targets being adopted after the scheme had been established.

105. However, the following broad observations can be made:
   a. The regionalisation scheme has coincided with both increased activity and increased investment in outreach;
b. The link area concept is generally well-embedded. All respondents to the Regionalisation of College Outreach Activity survey reported in their responses to that they thought the scheme had met its original aim in relation to simplifying communication with Oxford for schools and colleges across the UK, with the exception of a caveat about whether it was clear to schools in Northern Ireland who their link was (two colleges share this link);

c. The scheme’s performance in relation to targeting of strategic outreach is harder to assess. The advent of link areas has created a focus for colleges’ efforts, and this has often been used as a basis for trying to contribute to the University’s OFFA targets. But this is not monitored or quantified at area-level, and the link area scheme still only guides, on average, half of what colleges do. There is no minimum (or maximum) level of activity expected, and other activity by colleges or the rest of the University is generally not strategically coordinated. So it is hard to say that the collective priorities of the collegiate University are driving activity in a very deliberate way;

d. In terms of increasing numbers of applications or the success rate of students from state schools, for all the reasons given above, causation would be impossible to prove;

e. The overall picture, whatever its cause, is that state school applications peaked in 2010 entry cycle, decreased by over 700 between 2010 and 2014, before once again increasing in 2015 and 2016. The difference between state and independent applicant success rates has also been fairly steady at 6-7% since 2010 (albeit reduced from the 9 point differential seen in 2007).

The role of outreach officers

106. In the course of preparing their report, both the Access Targets Working Group and the Regionalisation Working Group have taken the opportunity to hear from college outreach officers (and outreach officers from departments that have them), through their inclusion in the working groups memberships and through other consultative mechanisms.

107. This group of staff are key players in Oxford’s interactions with potential candidates and their school. Much of the work of visits, talks and open days is done by them personally, although some also involves tutors and other academic colleagues.

108. Being a college outreach officer is an intrinsically rewarding and interesting role, and outreach officers are committed and inspiring ambassadors for the University. They are clearly valued by their link areas and are putting a huge amount of effort into the role. But it has become apparent to the group that there are a number of issues relating to the working conditions and career progression of these staff which deserve attention.
As currently constructed these roles are diverse and pressured, combining administrative work with travel to areas distant from Oxford and distant from each other.

Many outreach officers have to balance a large range of demands and it can be hard to say no to schools and audiences who are not the most in need but may nonetheless feel that they should be priorities.

Most college outreach officers are responsible for the whole workload alone and so do not benefit from cover when on leave and do not have a team with whom they can share the load. There is currently no real career structure beyond quite junior, front-line officer roles.

This ‘lone operator’ model also means that staff are expected to be multi-skilled, and to undertake such diverse tasks as: personally conducting visits and talks; delivering or organising curriculum enrichment; planning priorities and planning programmes; evaluation; working with people of different ages, backgrounds, or ethnicities; coordinating with neighbouring link colleges, with the UAO or departments, or with Cambridge link colleges.

The lone operator model also means that when a staff member moves on, and if there is a gap, the link area loses its Oxford contact entirely for a time: this can be months. In addition, relationships built in that particular area are weakened and the college loses expertise on the specific needs of students and teachers from that region.

Those outreach officers who split their role with admissions are not able to devote much time to outreach during the peak admissions season of Michaelmas term. This means that they are not able to engage much with schools and colleges in their link areas during the key first term of sixth form.

All these factors, combined with the fact that many posts were initially set up on a short term basis, can contribute to high rates of turnover, which in turn generates its own problems and lack of continuity for all concerned.

Though strong informal networks exist amongst outreach officers, the system is run by individual colleges and there is no formal coordination or oversight at University level. This report offers an important opportunity for colleges to think strategically about how to better support and develop this critical and valued group of staff.
Recommendations

Developing an overall collegiate University strategy for access

The recommendations below constitute together a considerable agenda of change for the collegiate University’s work to support and attract students from disadvantaged and under-represented groups, as well as some important adaptations and refinements to admissions processes. To carry this programme through will require concerted strategic effort over many years, coordinated communication, and collective oversight. More is said about these strategic issues, and implementation planning, at the end of this chapter. However, before coming to that, individual recommendations are presented under the analytic themes that have underpinned this report.

Increasing the national pool of high-attaining under-represented students

One of the barriers to Oxford admitting larger numbers of students from our target ACORN and POLAR group, as well those as from certain BAME groups, is insufficient prior attainment, further compounded by A-Level subject choice. Differential attainment of target groups at KS4 and KS5 is not within Oxford’s gift to solve. However, the University can and does provide materials and experiences that enrich and inspire young people who might one day come here and should think strategically about how its strengths can add most value to the cultivation of a talent pipeline in schools.

It is therefore recommended that Oxford devise and implement a strategy for focusing and developing the existing investment of time and resources by the collegiate University most effectively into academic enrichment initiatives, some of which may have an attainment-raising focus. This should take into consideration: the work already being done across Oxford; evidence from educational experts and researchers on the impact and effectiveness of different intervention models; the groups in respect of which Oxford can add most value; Oxford’s overarching outreach strategy (Recommendation 43, paragraph 166); and national policy debates. [Recommendation 1]

As an interim measure, it is recommended that a collaborative approach is taken to collecting new and existing attainment-raising, super-curricular materials – and they should be publicised via a single channel. This should be subsumed into the work programme of the UAO digital outreach project ‘Oxplore’. [Recommendation 2]
Increasing the number of qualified students from under-represented groups who apply to Oxford

121. The second phase in diversifying Oxford’s undergraduate intake is to ensure that more students from target groups are encouraged and, crucially, supported to make competitive applications. While a great deal of good work is already done in this area across the collegiate University, there is scope for further refinement of our joint vision, aims and objectives, communication of messages, greater emphasis on marketing, closer and more efficient operational collaboration, better targeting of outreach interventions, closer and more effective work with teachers, and evaluating our impact against the agreed aims.

Messaging and marketing

122. It is recommended that further research be commissioned by UAO and the Public Affairs Directorate (PAD) jointly on the beliefs and concerns which prevent highly attaining students from disadvantaged groups from applying. The findings of this research should be used to inform the development of a strategic marketing campaign aimed at prospective applicants, their parents and carers, and teachers who are not being engaged through Oxford’s existing communications and outreach mechanisms. [Recommendation 3] Crucially, this research should be undertaken with those who have not applied to Oxford, rather than with current students. In addition to the use of national and regional press, alternative media and other non-traditional platforms should be embraced as part of this approach. It is recognised that this recommendation will entail a financial cost.

123. It is also recommended that Oxford’s undergraduate admissions websites, both central and college or departmental, be reviewed and redeveloped with a view to increasing navigability and the intuitive ordering of content. In order to do so, it will be necessary to bring together those with responsibilities for websites across the collegiate University. Additional messaging should be developed which targets those who have not yet decided to apply, with a particular focus on employability as recommended by the AdEx Working Group on Applicant Course Choice and endorsed by ATWG and RWG. It is recommended in particular that further use be made of student case studies. [Recommendation 4] The role of current students in promoting Oxford’s outreach agenda and providing visible and relatable role models should be strengthened and they should be closely involved in developing this content.

124. The student body is a valuable outreach resource. It is recommended that colleges which do not already have a student ambassador programme should develop one, and that these ambassadors should all have access to a commonly agreed
training programme, building on current best practice in colleges, in order to equip student ambassadors confidently and accurately to represent Oxford. Representatives of OUSU’s outreach work should be part of bodies charged with implementing this report as they have been part of constructing it. Across Oxford, consideration should be given to methods of ensuring that outreach opportunities (both paid and voluntary) are equally available and attractive to students from all backgrounds. [Recommendation 5]

Future of the regionalisation scheme

125. There have been significant changes to the national and Oxford outreach landscapes since the adoption of the regionalisation scheme in 2010. As set out in paragraph 90, the original aims of the scheme were twofold: to provide a single point of contact for all schools in the UK; and to support higher applications and success rates for state educated students. It is recommended that the former aim be reaffirmed, but that the second be revised for the next phase of the scheme to focus strongly on widening access to Oxford for disadvantaged groups and supporting the University’s overall OFFA targets. [Recommendation 6]

126. In order to allow the scheme to meet the new demands being placed on it and to render it more resilient to future changes, while retaining the benefits already accrued, it is recommended that the college link area scheme move to a consortium model based on consortia of between three and five colleges collaborating to provide resilient links with specific geographical regions (and, if agreed in future, other target groups that most need support). [Recommendation 7] This approach could maintain the link between individual colleges and areas, but make it easier for all players across Oxford to coalesce around an integrated approach to working in different regions with different needs and facilitate strategic targeting of resources.

127. While no college can or should be forced to collaborate in this arrangement against its will, it is hoped that Conference of Colleges will signal by majority that it favours this development and that colleges will cooperate to facilitate it, if necessary ‘trading’ link areas to assist. [Recommendation 8]

128. It is recommended that each consortium set a strategy, with support, advice and information provided by UAO, which addresses the particular needs and opportunities within their regions and target groups to contribute to Oxford’s access targets and other outreach priorities, and should also set clear benchmarks for evaluation and systems to collect the required information. The new regionalisation scheme should be supported by the development of the HEAT
database providing collaborations with an overview of Oxford’s connections to their region. [Recommendation 9]

129. It is further recommended that strategic regional responsibility for Scotland and Northern Ireland be allocated to UAO, with assistance from named colleges in hosting in-bound visits and supplying tutors for academic sessions, and that UAO’s ‘back-stop’ function for requests from schools and colleges in other regions should in future be picked up within college consortia. [Recommendation 10] The colleges which currently share Northern Ireland in the regionalisation model would be freed up to join other consortia, according to their preferences and the agreed priorities for college outreach.

130. An additional benefit of the consortium approach would be that it could better enable the scaling-up of promising approaches; facilitate the resilience of colleges’ provision, including providing cover when outreach officers are away or when staff leave; reduce duplication of effort and provide economies of scale; provide better quality data to allow for more robust evaluation of impact and effectiveness; improve working conditions for outreach officers; and develop roles at different levels, providing career development opportunities for outreach officers and reducing turn-over.

131. Some colleges may wish to move early to pilot this new model, but it is recognised that coordination will be required to reach full and optimal coverage of this scheme. It is therefore recommended that AdEx appoint a working group to assist the progress of this development and to ensure a model of ‘best fit’ for schools and colleges. It should liaise with Cambridge counterparts and take account of Cambridge’s arrangements where possible. [Recommendation 11]

132. This group should also seek to facilitate the agreement between colleges and consortia of a commonly agreed minimum level of provision for each region. [Recommendation 12]

133. Regional collaborations should also be encouraged to provide ways for Oxford staff and students with strong links to the region to volunteer to participate in regional work, and that Oxford alumni teaching in the region are informed of the new arrangements and enabled to indicate willingness to volunteer. [Recommendation 13]

UNIQ summer schools

134. The recent evaluation of the UNIQ summer schools shows that this is a scheme with a strong record of success in encouraging successful applications to Oxford
from under-represented groups, at reasonable cost. It has high name recognition amongst target groups, established selection mechanisms, and there are seven applicants per place. It is recommended that the University and colleges convene a working group to find ways to allow more young people to benefit from the UNIQ programme. This could be through developing an expanded suite or ‘menu’ of activity under the UNIQ brand for those not selected for the summer schools themselves, seeking to deliver some of the benefits and foster a positive relationship with Oxford. It could also involve expanding the programme to more of the same age range or some at a younger age range, particularly in relation to pupils where there is a need to intervene early to encourage aspiration and support the choice of appropriate A-Levels. It is recommended that the collegiate University seek to identify funding in support of this activity as a high priority. [Recommendation 14]

Working with teachers

135. Teachers are key influencers of generations of students, but many are either reluctant to recommend Oxford to their students or are do not feel confident in identifying or advising potential applicants. We note that there also are structural and financial barriers to engaging teachers in deprived areas, including the prohibitive cost of supply cover for attending events. It is therefore recommended that the strategy proposed in paragraph 166 should include work with teachers as a high priority. [Recommendation 15]

Monitoring and evaluation

136. A more robust and consistent approach to monitoring and evaluation of Oxford’s outreach is urgently required. The planned roll-out of HEAT during 2016/17 will facilitate student-level tracking of impact by college and departmental outreach officers, which has not previously been possible. In addition, UAO are developing an evaluation toolkit for dissemination to outreach officers, which will provide a common reference for developing and implementing evaluation frameworks.

137. It is recommended that, across Oxford, greater emphasis be placed on designing outreach programmes with defined aims and objectives that can be evaluated and monitored, and on evaluating of the effectiveness and value for money of outreach interventions. [Recommendation 16]

138. It is recommended that AdCom and AdEx actively monitor the success of the University’s overall outreach and access targets. [Recommendation 17] This monitoring should be supported by UAO, who should report on a dashboard of indicators, covering not just the OFFA targets but also other indicators in relation to
underrepresented groups, as well as the key indicators which drive them, such as the success of outreach in increasing applications from target groups, and the success rates of different groups at admission (aiming to eliminate persistent unexplained differences).

139. It is also recommended that UAO continue to take the lead in developing tools to monitor effectiveness and value for money. This should be done in collaboration with outreach officers and those delivering programmes across Oxford. These tools should then be adopted by outreach officers across Oxford. [Recommendation 18] It should be noted that time needs to be made for outreach officers to dedicate to this work, either by increasing resource or identifying efficiencies, or by reducing other areas of work.

Ensuring the admissions process identifies the potential of target students

Supporting target students in applying

140. More than 85% of Oxford applicants now sit an admissions test as part of the application process, and students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to receive preparatory support and advice from their schools. It is therefore essential that prospective applicants from target groups, their parents, and teachers should be encouraged and supported to understand and prepare appropriately for Oxford’s admissions tests. It is recommended that, as a minimum, courses should publish and publicise the following: test syllabus (where relevant); multiple past papers; detailed mark schemes and guidance; information on what skills are being assessed. [Recommendation 19]

141. It is also important that admissions tests are not inadvertently biased towards a particular group, and that admitting tutors are adequately briefed on the effects, and disparity in levels of test preparation. It is recommended that the Admissions Testing Sub-Group continue its work to review fair access issues relating to admissions tests and to improve practice and processes where necessary. Courses should consider the appropriate weighting of test scores in shortlisting and offer ranking and banding, on the basis of the review set out in Recommendation 25 (paragraph 146). [Recommendation 20]

Consistent treatment of applicants

142. A key tenet of the Common Framework is that the criteria and processes on and by which shortlisting and admissions decisions are made should be centrally agreed by departments and consistently applied by colleges. It is recommended that all courses review their admissions criteria, grading and recording processes to ensure that they are being consistently applied across all colleges, on the basis of
the review set out in Recommendation 25 (paragraph 146). Should any inconsistencies be identified, courses should work with the relevant colleges to address and eliminate these. [Recommendation 21]

Shortlisting

143. Admissions flags are used to draw attention to the context in which a candidate has achieved their prior and predicted grades. The current flags have been in use for a number of years and may not capture all the indicators of disadvantage that the University might wish to factor into its decision-making processes. It is therefore recommended that a review be undertaken of the current contextual admissions flags, their continued use, and any alternative or additional measures that might be considered. [Recommendation 22]

144. Oxford’s policy is that candidates with an overall admissions flag who are predicted the standard offer for their course and who perform to an ‘appropriate standard’ in the admissions test (if relevant), are strongly recommended for shortlisting in addition to those who are shortlisted via the usual banding or ranking mechanisms. It is therefore recommended that all courses review their shortlisting processes against the existing policy, on the basis of the review set out in Recommendation 25 (paragraph 146) and take appropriate action in the light of their findings. A report on the outcomes of this exercise should be submitted for consideration by AdEx and AdCom. [Recommendation 23]

145. The pre-16 and post-16 school flags indicate that a candidate has attended a school performing below the national average, but do not inform admitting tutors at a more granular level as to the relative performance of the student in that context. Some subjects have already adopted a shortlisting model in which they consider an applicant’s GCSE grades in the context of their school’s performance (‘contextualised GCSEs’) rather than using the ‘raw’ GCSE scores. This is important, as the grades of some students from target groups might look less impressive at first glance but may be outstanding in their school context. It is therefore recommended that all courses test, and if appropriate adopt, the use of contextualised GCSEs in shortlisting, rather than raw GCSE scores, by the 2019 entry round. Particular attention should be paid to the potential impact of UK qualification reform during this period. [Recommendation 24]

146. It is clear that there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution to ensuring that the potential of students from target groups is accurately assessed during the shortlisting phase. A more nuanced approach is required, with each course investigating its own data and making adjustments accordingly, as has been done by Engineering Science. It is recommended that the shortlisting criteria for every course should be reviewed
by a dedicated team with appropriate statistical expertise who should help them to consider whether: current standards are set at the right level; correct weighting is given to each element of the application; and whether further contextualisation might be merited, including contextualisation of admissions test scores. Where flagged candidates have a lower shortlisting rate, but go on to have a higher offer rate after interview, this should be taken as a potential indication that the shortlisting bar may be being set too high for them. [Recommendation 25]

**Interview**

147. The purpose of an Oxford interview is to test applicants’ problem solving skills in their subject and their ability to handle new information. Interviewers are aware that applicants will have had significant variations in the degree of preparation and practice they have received and take account of this. However, as the interview is such a key part of the Oxford process, and in many ways represents a taste of the tutorial process, it is recommended that the University should continue and develop its efforts to demystify the interview process, including by embedding mock interviews and interview workshops into its outreach activities. [Recommendation 26]

148. It is an underlying principle of the Common Framework that a candidate’s success should not be influenced by their college of application or allocation. It is also the case that students from target groups are less likely to have received extensive support in preparing for interviews. For this reason, it is particularly desirable that every candidate should be guaranteed interviews in two different colleges, to ensure that they have the best possible chance of showing their true potential by this measure. It is recommended that all courses move to automatic interviews at second colleges for flagged candidates as an interim measure. It is recognised that this may require some courses to reduce the total number of candidates called to interview, and this should be considered in parallel with the recommendations on reviewing shortlisting procedures set out in Recommendation 25 (paragraph 146). [Recommendation 27]

149. At present, recording of interview scores on ADSS is not sufficiently consistent to allow for meaningful analysis, with some courses not using ADSS at all. It is therefore recommended that interview scores should be recorded on ADSS by all colleges for courses which use ADSS. It is further recommended that courses which do not use ADSS should record all interview scores centrally and make them available to UAO and SDMA in a timely fashion after the admissions round. [Recommendation 28]
There is a wealth of expertise on interview best practice among admitting tutors which is not shared as well as it might be at present. As best practice is often subject- or discipline-specific, it is recommended that divisions convene working groups on interview best practice within a subject or group of cognate subjects. These should collate and consider examples of effective practice and make recommendations for improvements accordingly. [Recommendation 29]

In addition, each course should investigate its own data in relation to flagged candidates rejected after interview who go on to exceed the standard offer for the course, and make adjustments accordingly. It is recommended that the interview and final offer-making criteria for every course should be reviewed on the basis of data on the ‘exceeded-not-taken pool’ and of on-course performance data by a dedicated team with appropriate statistical expertise who should assist departments in considering whether: standards are set at the right level; correct weighting is given to each element of the application; further contextualisation is indicated, including contextualisation of interview scores. This should be the same team tasked with conducting the review outlined in Recommendation 25 (paragraph 146). [Recommendation 30]

Training and briefing tutors

It is important that all those involved in making admissions decisions are well-informed about the educational and social context in which candidates, particularly those from target groups and less advantaged backgrounds, are making their applications. It is also important that they should appreciate the implications of unconscious bias as it relates to their own decision-making processes. Tutors (and any other persons involved in admissions decision-making, such as DPhil students) should be trained prior to undertaking admissions interviewing. The groups therefore reaffirm the policy set out in the CFA and recommend that colleges actively audit the satisfactory completion by all those involved in interviewing, without exception, of the admissions training course delivered by the Learning Institute. It should also be compulsory for those who have completed the initial training to satisfactorily complete refresher training every five years thereafter. Colleges should be required to certify that this has taken place via the annual AdEx survey following the admissions round. [Recommendation 31]

In order to maximise the benefit of a mandatory training course, it is recommended that a thorough-going review and refresh of the course be undertaken. As an interim measure, it is recommended that the course materials be updated to include illustrative case studies of flagged candidates and their achievements on-course. These profiles should be reproduced in the Admissions Handbook. [Recommendation 32]
154. Tutors should also be regularly briefed on issues including: relevant developments in secondary education, including UK qualification reform; the interpretation of Oxford’s contextual admissions flags; and how Oxford’s access targets relate to the admissions flags. It is recommended that UAO continue to provide these briefings annually to Tutors for Admissions and Admissions Coordinators, and that these be cascaded by them to all those involved in making admissions decisions. [Recommendation 33]

**Offer-making**

155. As noted above, every year a significant number of offer holders fail to make their conditions, and some are granted clemency. At the same time, some rejected flagged candidates who may not have done well in tests or been predicted good grades, go on to outstrip the standard A-Level offer. It is recommended that the size and shape of the ‘failed offer pool’ be monitored annually and that data be gathered on colleges’ reasons for exercising clemency at confirmation. It is also recommended that the on-course performance of ‘forgiven’ candidates be monitored by the relevant course. On the basis of this information, further consideration should be given to the appropriateness of current offers-to-places ratios and to the feasibility of developing a more consistent approach to clemency within courses. [Recommendation 34]

**Perceptions of risk**

156. On several occasions during the Group’s work concerns have been raised about the disincentive to admit students from under-represented groups on the basis that, despite potential, prior attainment may put such candidates at a continuing disadvantage and thus at risk of low performance on course. Some have suggested that concerns about a college’s position in the Norrington table exert pressure not to admit candidates in these circumstances.

157. The Group has not found strong evidence to suggest that such perceptions of risk are justified. The average differential between candidates from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds is small by the end of the course and the latter group progresses faster during the course, on average. Other recommendations in this report may have the potential to improve progression rates for those from disadvantaged groups still further.

158. It remains important for the collegiate University to signal the priority it attaches to making progress in access work and it is therefore recommended that consideration be given to introducing formal mechanisms for recognising the
efforts and achievements of colleges and departments in this arena.  
[Recommendation 35]

Further support for target students

159. Oxford’s current strategic plan includes the aim that no potential student should be deterred from applying to Oxford by financial barriers. One element of the Oxford application process not shared by most other institutions is the interview. While accommodation and meals are provided free of cost, it is possible that interview travel costs may be off-putting to some candidates from low-income families. **It is therefore recommended that Oxford should develop a pilot scheme to offer interview travel expenses. To constrain the costs and avoid deadweight, this might focus on candidates eligible for free school meals and/or travelling a long distance.** [Recommendation 36]

160. Some concern has been expressed about the preparedness of target students to embark on undergraduate study at Oxford. Analysis of the relative progression of on-course students from target groups indicates that while, on average, they do tend to perform less well at FPE and FHS, their rate of progress between FPE and FHS is higher than that of students from more advantaged backgrounds. Moreover, the absolute ‘performance gap’ is generally less significant than might be imagined (on average, ¾ of one percent for POLAR and 1¼ percent for ACORN). However, the picture is far from uniform across courses, and **it is therefore recommended that each course analyse the need for additional ‘bridging’ provision in their subject, on the basis of an assessment of the subject knowledge and skills of incoming freshers from disadvantaged backgrounds. The evidence gathered from this exercise should inform the development of initiatives which could be implemented at a divisional level, or by groups of related subjects. In designing bridging provision, a variety of models should be considered, including: face-to-face residential provision; distance and online provision; revised or expanded induction provision in or around Freshers’ Week; ongoing supplementary support during the first term or year. This should draw on evaluation of existing bridging programmes in departments and of the forthcoming pilot to be run by University College.** [Recommendation 37]

Foundation years

161. In parallel with the writing of this report a pilot Foundation Year scheme has been launched at Oxford by Lady Margaret Hall with a focus on admission in the current round, for entry in 2017 and graduation from 2020 onwards. **It is recommended that the experience and benefits of this initiative in an Oxford context are robustly evaluated, in a form that can be compared with other initiatives and**
reviewed alongside other elements of the strategy. [Recommendation 38] Further details can be found in Annex VII.

Financial support

162. Financial support plays an important role in attracting and retaining target students; Oxford like other universities has been reviewing the financial support it provides to students from low income backgrounds or those in financial hardship. This work is being conducted separately, and it is recommended that admissions and outreach materials and information should continue to be adapted and enhanced accordingly in light of the proposed 2017/18 student support package. These should continue to emphasise the generous support available to students from low-income household. [Recommendation 39]

Implementation, and strategic communication

163. To carry this programme through will require concerted strategic effort over a number of years, coordinated communication, and collective oversight. It is recommended that a continuation working group is appointed, to see this work through to implementation in the light of comments received from committees during Hilary term 2017. It is recommended that the Pro Vice Chancellor (Education) be invited to join or to nominate a member of Education Committee to join this group. [Recommendation 40]

164. The continuation working group should continue to have a representative of the Colleges’ Estates Bursars’ Committee and work closely with representatives of PRAC to ensure that costs are balanced by efficiencies and that there is a clear focus on value for money. [Recommendation 41]

165. The recommendations contained in this report will have not insignificant implications for the bodies tasked with their implementation. It is recommended in particular that consideration is given to the resources necessary in UAO to support the role being asked of them. [Recommendation 42]

166. It is recommended that implementation of this report is backed up by the writing and publication of an Oxford-wide strategy on the targeting, objectives, and evaluation of work in relation to outreach to and applications from under-represented groups. [Recommendation 43] The Common Framework for Widening Access to Oxford (2012) goes some way towards establishing such a strategy, but more work is required in this area to establish a truly cohesive and collaborative framework for Oxford’s access activity. This strategy should set out the analysis in this report, in the light of any changes agreed in its discussion within the collegiate
University, and the key initiatives to be implemented, in order to communicate more broadly Oxford’s position on the following issues:

a. The overall rationale, vision, and goals for outreach work.

b. The place within that of current and potential future OFFA targets, and how these should be met.

c. The respective roles of colleges, departments, UAO and other central functions of the University, museums and collections, and OUSU.

d. The desired strategic balance between work on:
   i. Student recruitment.
   ii. Widening access to Oxford, including:
      1. Support for high-achieving students from under-represented groups to learn about and apply to Oxford.
      2. Summer schools for high-achieving students from under-represented groups.
      3. On-course or pre-course support for high-achieving students from under-represented groups.
   iii. Widening participation in higher education more generally, including:
      4. Support for schools in raising attainment.
      5. Collaboration with third parties such as IntoUniversity.
   iv. Engaging teachers in support of the above, including:
      7. CPD-certified teacher events.
      8. Use of teacher alumni networks.

e. How outreach work is to be coordinated, evaluated, and its success monitored.

f. The impact on access of admissions policies and practices, bridging support and financial support.

g. Support for the ongoing implementation and coordination of policy in these areas.
Annex I

Method of working

1. Both working groups were convened by AdEx in the academic year 2015/16, and their full terms of reference and membership can be found at appendix i (ATWG) and appendix ii (RWG).

2. ATWG met six times over 2015/16 academic year, including the long vacation. In light of the scope of its investigations, ATWG formed five work streams to consider issues in greater detail outside the main meetings:

   a. The communications work stream was tasked with investigating potential changes to communications externally, to help diversify the pool of candidates making competitive applications to Oxford; and with investigating potential changes to communications internally, to ensure wider and better understanding of the access targets with OFFA, the contextual admissions flags, and the challenges Oxford faces in recruiting the best students from all backgrounds.

   b. The access work stream was tasked with investigating potential changes to Oxford’s outreach offer to align more clearly with the access targets, to attract a diverse range of applicants to Oxford, and to support them in making competitive applications. This work stream collaborated closely with RWG.

   c. The admissions work stream was tasked with investigating potential changes to Oxford’s admissions process to ensure that the best students from all backgrounds are admitted, and that adequate mechanisms are in place to assess candidates’ academic potential.

   d. The support work stream was tasked with investigating potential changes to support (including financial support and information) for students or potential students from certain backgrounds offered at key stages: application; admissions, offer-holders; (pre-sessional) transition programmes; on-course students; progression.

   e. Cutting across all four work streams, there was a fifth work stream relating to the financial and resource implications of potential changes to current practice.

   f. In response to the interest across the collegiate University in foundation year provision, a further work stream to give preliminary consideration to the feasibility of an Oxford-accredited foundation year was appointed.

3. ATWG co-opted additional members, including a further Head of House, a representative of Estates Bursars Committee, and the Deputy Director of Undergraduate Admissions and Outreach. The terms of reference for the work stream are set out at Annex C.

4. RWG met six times over 2015/16 academic year, including the long vacation. It co-opted additional members, including a representative of Estates Bursars Committee, a representative of the ATWG access work stream, and the Deputy Director of Undergraduate Admissions and Outreach.
Evidence sources

5. ATWG considered the following sources of evidence:

a. **Data on undergraduate applications**, giving an overview of trends at all stages in the applicant journey of students from one or more of the target groups.

b. **Analysis of on-course student performance** (FPE and FHS), including a model ‘progression mark’ comparing the progress made between FPE and FHS by students from one or more of the target groups with that of non-flagged students.

c. A **literature review**, relating to best practice in outreach and admissions, and to research into the attainment, aspirations and behaviours of groups currently under-represented in UK higher education.

d. An informal **consultative exercise** with members of AdCom and with college and departmental outreach officers.

e. A small **focus group** with first year students who attended the 2014 UNIQ Summer Schools, discussing their experience of the Oxford admissions process.

f. A **literature review**, relating to evidence of the effectiveness and impact of higher education foundation years.

g. Initial findings of a **research project** on the impact of student financial support, conducted by OFFA, in which Oxford participated.

6. RWG considered the following sources of evidence:

a. A **survey of colleges’ experience** of the regionalisation scheme since its launch in 2010.

b. **Data on cold-spots** in UK higher education participation, published by HEFCE.

c. **Data on attainment levels** across the UK and on regional patterns in application rates of ‘qualified’ (AAA+) candidates to Oxford and Cambridge.

d. **Analysis** of activity recorded on the Outreach Database by colleges, faculties and departments, and the UAO since the adoption of the regionalisation scheme.

e. An **independent evaluation** of large-scale UAO outreach initiatives, commissioned by the AdEx-appointed Outreach Evaluation Management Group.

f. **Case studies** relating to current practice in colleges.
Terms of Reference for AdEx’s Working Group on OFFA Targets

Proposal

1. A working group of AdEx is constituted to consider what additional or different actions should be taken to support achievement of the 2016/17 Access Agreement with OFFA.

2. The Group shall make recommendations to AdEx and AdCom on matters which are referred to it by AdEx and AdCom, which shall report on these matters to Education Committee, Conference and other relevant bodies as required.

Aims

3. The working group shall:
   a. Support the development of a communications strategy to raise awareness, in the University and amongst those it works with, of current achievements in access and the further progress implied by the OFFA targets.
   b. Examine the scale of progress required to meet the University’s objectives and identify the specific issues on which attention should be focused.
   c. Support AdEx/AdCom in its planned consideration and recommendations to Education Committee of whether to introduce any other access targets (e.g. for BAME groups).
   d. Consult widely with groups and individuals who are involved in, or could contribute to, further development of access to Oxford.
   e. Draw on the lessons of research and good practice, and commission new analysis and research where required.
   f. Recommend possible changes to policy and practice in order to meet the targets.
   g. Agree an external communications strategy to disseminate any resulting changes in policy and practice to the relevant stakeholders.

4. The work specified in paragraph 3 shall be undertaken having regard to the following:
   a. The considerable challenge represented by the targets, and the need for all parties within the University to work closely together in meeting them;
   b. Advice provided by an Advisory Board (see below) consisting of both internal and external members, as approved by AdEx.
   c. The need to make rapid progress so that a new policy based on AdCom’s recommendations has been adopted by the collegiate University by the end of calendar year 2016.
   d. The value in reaching this objective of starting to implement change as soon as is practicable.
   e. The financial implications of its recommendations for the colleges and for the University.
**Working practice**

5. The working group shall hold its first meeting in Michaelmas term 2015, and shall meet not less than twice a term thereafter.

6. The working group will update AdEx and AdCom regularly, and present an interim report to AdEx and AdCom in Trinity term 2016, and thereafter to Education Committee and Conference.

7. The working group shall present its final report and recommendations to AdEx and AdCom in Michaelmas term 2016, and thereafter to Education Committee and Conference.

**Membership**

8. The working group shall be chaired by the Deputy Chair of AdEx and AdCom, and membership of the working group shall include the following:
   - Chair of AdEx and AdCom
   - Senior Proctor
   - Junior Proctor
   - Dr Rachel Buxton, Merton College
   - Dr Ellie Clewlow, St John’s College
   - Dr Lucinda Rumsey, Mansfield College
   - Dr Fiona Spensley, Lady Margaret Hall
   - Dr Steve Collins, MPLS Division
   - Dr Mark Wormald, Medical Sciences Division
   - Dr Rhiannon Ash, Humanities Division
   - Dr Sarah Green, Social Sciences Division
   - Dr Hubert Ertl, Education Committee
   - William Jensen, Estates Bursars Committee
   - Professor Katrin Kohl, Modern Languages
   - Professor Conall MacNiocaill, Earth Sciences
   - Dr Samina Khan, UAO
   - Brendan Shepherd, Corpus Christi College
   - Mai Musie, Faculty of Classics
   - Catherine Jones, OUSU VP Access and Academic Affairs

   *In attendance:*
   - Representative of SDMA
   - Secretary, UAO

9. The working group is empowered to co-opt additional members where it would be useful in the working group Chair’s view to do so and to establish an advisory board, consisting of both internal and external members, approved for the purpose by AdEx.
Outline and Definition

1. After due consideration, AdEx inaugurated the regionalisation of outreach work involving the colleges in 2009. The original aims of the policy were as follows:
   a. To improve engagement by the University in outreach work (widening participation and raising aspiration to study in higher education, widening access to Oxford from a diverse range of UK applicants, and student recruitment to the collegiate University).
   b. To provide every school in the UK with a named contact point within the University whom they could contact if they required assistance.
   c. To foster stronger relationships between schools, teachers and the University, particularly for those schools with little or no tradition of making applications to Oxford.

2. Work under the programme has developed considerably since then, with the appointment of specialist staff in many colleges (and also in some faculties and departments). It was agreed that once the policy had been in operation for a period of years, providing a chance for its strengths and any difficulties to emerge, a review should be undertaken.

3. The scope of the review was discussed by AdCom in Hilary Term 2015, and the general approach to be taken was agreed. After an initial exploratory phase undertaken by the UAO, with support from colleges, it was agreed that a Working Group (hereafter ‘the Group’) should be appointed to start work in Hilary Term 2016, comprising senior tutors, admissions tutors, outreach/access officers and staff of the UAO. Terms of reference and membership of the group are set out below.

Area of scrutiny

4. The Group will consider:
   a. Whether and how far the aims set for the regionalisation policy adopted in 2009 (including the aims of colleges) have been attained; and
   b. Whether there are recommendations for the future of the policy.

5. Among specific areas the Group may wish to investigate are the following:
   a. The impact regionalisation has had on attainment of the University’s access objectives, including whether intensity of activity can be clearly shown to increase applications generally or specifically to the college concerned
   b. How colleges are interacting with schools within their link regions, and the extent of their activity outside their link regions.
   c. Resource implications for colleges and the UAO of the access work under the policy.
   d. How far the policy is known about, understood and appreciated outside the University, including by the schools and the educational press.
   e. Difficulties experienced in servicing the needs of more remote or harder to access regions.
   f. Any practical issues in the support provided for colleges by courses and the UAO.
   g. Effectiveness and value for money
6. The Group will take a wide view of the evidence which is available, including the following:
   a. Data, for example on regional profiles, assembled in the first phase of the exercise (see paragraph 3 above) by UAO, assisted by SDMA;
   b. A survey of the experience of colleges with regionalisation under the first five years of the policy, the contents of which to be agreed by the Group in advance of the meetings;
   c. Input from the *ad hoc* steering group of college representatives in the first phase of the project;
   d. Information and views provided by AdEx’s Forum on Outreach and Access

7. In addressing these issues, the Group will:
   a. Have regard to:
      i. The objectives adopted by the University in its most recent agreement with OFFA, and follow up work led by AdEx Access Targets Working Group to achieve the new goals;
      ii. The fit of operations under the policy with overall Oxford strategy (as expressed for example by the Common Framework on Access) and the national picture with respect to outreach;
      iii. The development of different fee regimes in different parts of the United Kingdom;
      iv. Outreach activities conducted by other universities, including Cambridge.
   b. Highlight areas of best practice, building on the efforts and achievements of colleges in the first five years of the policy’s operation.

Membership

8. The membership of the Group is as follows:

   One Head of House (Chair) Moira Wallace
   Director of Undergraduate Admissions and Outreach – Samina Khan
   Two Senior Tutors – Andrew Bell (University College); Valerie Worth (Trinity College)
   Three Tutors for Admissions – Nancy Braithwaite (Pembroke College); Rachel Buxton (Merton College); Robert Pitkethly (St. Peter’s College)
   Three College Outreach Officers – Freyja Madsen (New College); Helen Brooks (Mansfield College); Emma Bausch (Oriel College)
   One Admissions Coordinator – Robert Wilkins (Biomedical Sciences)
   Representative of OUSU – Catherine Jones

   In attendance

   Head of Student Recruitment – Lizzie Peachey
   Representative of SDMA – Gosia Turner
   Secretary, UAO

9. The Working Group may co-opt further members bringing special expertise to the work of the group at the Chair’s discretion.
Annex II

Defining disadvantage: beyond the access targets

1. In the local and national policy debate, ‘disadvantage’ is used variously to indicate a wide range of characteristics including: state school students; students eligible for Free School Meals; students who are, or have been, in the care system; students from lower socio-economic groups; ‘first generation’ students; students from areas with low participation in higher education; students from areas of socio-economic deprivation; students from certain minority ethnic groups; students with disabilities; and students with caring responsibilities.

School type

2. Of these, the most prominent in the public consciousness is that of the balance between state and independent school students at Oxford. This is due in part to an often-repeated and somewhat misleading statistic about the relative proportions of young people in private and state education. Nationally, although independent schools educate just 7% of the total UK school population, they account for 15% of all A-Level entries, 30% of all A-grades, and 33% of all those getting AAA+.

3. Nevertheless, for many years Oxford has seen a disproportionately high percentage of applications coming from the independent sector (around 35% of overall UK domiciled applications in 2016) with an even higher share of acceptances (around 41% in the 2016-entry cycle). In the 2016 cycle, independent school applicants had an average success rate of 26%, while state school applicants had an average success rate of 19%.

4. The imbalance in applications and admissions has been reduced over recent years. The number of applications from the state sector is higher now than in 2007, although the majority of that growth occurred pre-2010. The difference in success rates between independent and state school candidates has narrowed over the last eight years, from nine percentage points to seven.

5. At the same time, the distribution of applications across the maintained sector has changed significantly: in 2015 academy students accounted for 29% of the UK applicant cohort compared to 13% in 2013 (the first year recorded); in 2015 comprehensive school students accounted for 14% of the cohort, compared to 28% in 2010; grammar school students accounted for 4% compared to 17% in 2010; and FE colleges accounted for 3%, compared to 5% in 2010. The proportion of applications coming from Sixth Form colleges has remained fairly stable at 11% in 2015, compared to 12% in 2010. It is important to note that secondary schools have converted to academies in great numbers in recent years, and now more than 55% of state secondary schools are academies. Changes in the stated school background of our applicants should be understood in this context.
6. Underlying these headline figures there are different patterns between courses, reflecting the overall demand and competition for places in different subjects. The varying availability of certain subjects at A-Level in the state and independent sectors may also contribute to the variation between courses. There are also variations between colleges, due in part to the combination of courses offered.

Ethnicity

7. There is also considerable scrutiny (both internally and externally) of the overall and relative Oxford application and success rates of students from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds, which is broadly in line with the performance of other Russell Group universities outside London.

8. Detailed analysis of trends in BAME student’s application and success rates is being undertaken in 2016/17, and recommendations from the report on this work will be aligned with the ATWG-RWG recommendations to ensure a consistent and joined-up approach. In addition to the work on admissions and outreach, the University intends to apply for the Race Equality Charter Mark, requiring a whole-institution approach to attracting, retaining, and supporting BAME students and staff at all levels.

9. The following table shows the proportion of applicants progressing at each stage of the admissions cycle. Each category is based on the previous one so that it describes relative success at each stage (i.e. 35% of shortlisted BAME students were made an offer.)
Table 1: Proportion of students reaching different stages of admissions, by ethnicity (2013-15).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n apps</th>
<th>shortlist</th>
<th>offer</th>
<th>accept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BAME</td>
<td>6568</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>26081</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. At each stage the white applicants are more successful – converting higher proportions of their cohort from shortlisting to offer and from offer to accept – having a cumulative advantage, a larger proportion of a larger proportion progressing forward. It is important to note that the proportions retained after offer are very similar – around 90% – for both white and BAME groups.

11. Table 1 above shows raw figures, without controlling for factors such as prior attainment or course choice: BAME candidates are consistently over-represented in applications to the most competitive subjects; Law, Medicine and Economics and Management. Prior attainment is also a contributory factor for some BAME groups.

12. Another factor for some BAME groups is the intersection of ethnicity and indicators of disadvantage, including ACORN and POLAR, where applicants might experience a ‘double disadvantage’.

Table 2: Proportion of flagged applicants among BAME and white groups (2013-15).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n apps</th>
<th>POLAR3</th>
<th>ACORN</th>
<th>pre-16 school</th>
<th>post-16 school</th>
<th>care flag</th>
<th>WP flag</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BAME</td>
<td>6568</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>26081</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. Looking simply at the overall picture, in every category except post-16 school performance, there are higher proportions of BAME applicants holding flags than of White applicants, with

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39 In the following sections the colour code denotes: **Green** where BAME groups have the same or higher percentage or score than white applicants; **Yellow** where BAME groups have lower percentage or score than white applicants; **Orange** for White reference group. The colours are to provide a simple visual reference for any differences in figures, they do not imply significance.
a large difference between the proportions of applicants holding an overall contextual admissions flag (9.6% for white applicants compared to 16.3% for BAME applicants).

Table 3: Proportion of flagged applicants by detailed ethnic group (2013-15).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>n apps</th>
<th>POLAR3</th>
<th>ACORN</th>
<th>pre-16 school</th>
<th>post-16 school</th>
<th>WP flag</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arab</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Asian British - Indian</td>
<td>1533</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Asian British - Pakistani</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or Black British - African</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or Black British - Caribbean</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed - White &amp; Asian</td>
<td>998</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed - White &amp; Black African</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed - White &amp; Black Caribbean</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Asian background</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Black background</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Ethnic background</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Mixed background</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>26081</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. The overall pattern described above – with BAME applicants holding more flags proportionately, with the exception of Indian and Mixed White & Asian applicants. These two groups generally hold proportionately fewer flags than white applicants, including the overall flag. The exception is ACORN where all BAME groups are more likely to hold flags, which may be due to the fact that BAME applicants are more likely to live in urban settings. There are lower proportions of both Chinese and Indian applicants in schools with a post-16 flag than for white applicants.
Annex III
National AAA+ pool size and A*A*A+ pool size calculation method

Qualifications included:
GCE A Level, GCE A Level (double), SQA Advanced Highers, VCE Advanced and VCE Advanced Double Award (QUALTYPEs A, DA, AH, V and V2).

Note that 'General Studies' A-level results are included.

Data selection:
UK domiciled students only
2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14 UCAS cycle undergraduate applicants only*
A-level holders enrolled at a UK higher education institution only
HESA standard registration population only

Data sources:
2012/13, 2013/14, and 2014/15 HESA returns

Rounding:
0, 1, 2 are rounded to 0.
All other numbers are rounded to the nearest multiple of 5.
Percentages based on fewer than 22.5 individuals are suppressed.

Notes
* Acorn and Polar3 flags are approximated based on the postcode sector (outcode+1) information contained within the HESA data. Acorn and Polar3 flags are assigned, based on the average Acorn and Polar3 category for all individual postcodes within a postcode sector area.
Postcode data is unavailable in the latest HESA return. Therefore the Acorn and Polar3 flag results are calculated for 2011/12, 2012/13 applicants only
Annex IV
OFFA targets 4 and 5

Disability disclosures

Target 4: ensure that the proportion of UK undergraduate students with declared disabilities or specific learning difficulties (regardless of whether they receive the DSA) at the University does not drop below the current level of 8.8% (based on the average of the years 2011-12 to 2013-14).

1. During the period covered by previous Access Agreements, Oxford has consistently achieved our target of meeting or exceeding HESA’s annual benchmark on UK undergraduate students at Oxford with disabilities or specific learning difficulties who are in receipt of the Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA).

2. Uncertainty around the current benchmark, in the light of planned government changes to the DSA, means that we have decided to base our new target on the total number of students declaring disabilities or specific learning difficulties and to ensure that it does not fall below the current level of 8.8%. Progress will be reported annually by the University’s Disability Advisory Service.

3. This target will be challenging because there are several factors which could affect declarations in the period covered by the target. DSA currently provides an important incentive to declare a disability in order to secure the support it funded. The rate of declarations has not so far reduced in 2015-16, but the second, and more substantial, tranche of changes due in 2016-17 could lead to a drop in numbers.

Widening participation of local students in higher education

Target 5: ensure that at least 55% of students working with the Oxford South-East IntoUniversity centre progress to higher education in 2019-20.

4. The University recognises its influential role within the local educational landscape, and has set a collaborative target based on our work with IntoUniversity. This target is based on increasing the progression of local school pupils into higher education, and focuses on widening participation to higher education rather than widening access to Oxford.

5. The Oxford South-East learning centre was launched in February 2015 as a partnership between the University, Christ Church (one of the colleges of the University), and IntoUniversity. The evidence from across the higher education sector is that widening participation programmes take longer to show results than widening access programmes. The centre will be in its third year of operation in 2017-18, and should be starting to generate robust progression data.

6. All IntoUniversity centres offer the same academic programme and very similar student support services; the students are selected against the same admissions criteria and the tutors working at the different centres have identical training. However, there is variation in
the progression rates between centres within and outside London, and we have identified the latter as the most suitable comparators.

7. Data from IntoUniversity centres outside London suggest that a target of 55% progression to higher education in 2019-20 will be appropriately stretching. Progress will be reported through an annual return from IntoUniversity and tracked using the HEAT service.
Annex V
Map of the college regional links scheme*

*NB that Northern Ireland is not shown on this map. Two colleges share the regional link responsibility for Northern Ireland: New College and St Catherine’s College.
Annex VI
Terms of Reference and Membership of the ATWG work stream on foundation years

Proposal

1. A work stream of AdEx’s working group on access targets (ATWG) is constituted to give preliminary consideration to the feasibility of an Oxford-accredited foundation year.

2. The work stream will make recommendations to ATWG on matters which are referred to it by the Chair of AdEx and the Chair of ATWG.

Aims

3. The working group will:
   a. Commission and consider a survey of different models of accredited foundation programmes run by or for higher education institutions in the UK and beyond;
   b. Consider the scope for foundation year provision to contribute to Oxford’s future access targets and conduct a preliminary cost-benefit analysis;
   c. Establish the current level of appetite for developing an accredited model;
   d. Identify areas requiring further investigation should Oxford wish to develop an accredited model, including pedagogy, syllabus, academic quality assurance, evaluation, and sustainable funding;

Working practice

4. The work stream will meet not less than twice over the Long Vacation 2016, and will report its findings and any recommendations to ATWG in good time to be included in the Group’s report to AdEx in Michaelmas term 2016.

Membership

5. The work stream will be chaired by the Master of St Peter’s, and it is proposed that membership of the work stream will include the following:

Head of House

Five Senior Tutors/Tutors for Admissions

College Bursar

OUSU Vice-President for Access and Academic Affairs

Representative of Department of Continuing Education

Director, Undergraduate Admissions and Outreach

College Admissions and Outreach Officer

Secretary, UAO
Annex VII

Summary of the findings from the Foundation Year Work Stream

This is a brief survey of the work of the Foundation Year Work Stream underpinning the ATWG recommendation that the experience and benefits of the Lady Margaret Hall Pilot Foundation year are robustly evaluated for an Oxford context, in a form that can be compared with other initiatives and reviewed alongside other elements of the strategy.

Evidence

The group looked at evidence from various schemes in this country and elsewhere. Clearly none of these operates in a context quite like Oxford but the issues and learning that has arisen can be drawn on in the current pilot being undertaken at Lady Margaret Hall. The group found that there is a lack of consistency and quality of evaluation amongst researchers and providers as to what a Foundation Year actually is. With the enormous variations around the world in purpose, targets and methods, and with little to no quality supporting evaluation work, it is difficult to assess their efficacy for an Oxford context. The working group draw on data from the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

Issues

To establish some coherence between disparate evidence sources key themes have been identified:

- **Retention and conversion:** Data available on attrition of Foundation Year students is lacking, due to a general lack of accurate data-keeping in this field. Overall, however, each Foundation Year programme reviewed is subject to a significant rate of withdrawal at some point along the HE trajectory. That being said, when Foundation Year programmes are successful for individuals those individuals go on to achieve.

- **Student performance:** Overall there is incomplete evidence to show the success of Foundation Year undergraduate students compared to their peer group. Where there is data Foundation Year students are successful in going on to achieve in line with their non-WP peers. Some programmes produce consistently better academic outcomes in ex-Foundation Year students (see the UNIFY programme run by SA’s University of the North). Students at Trinity College Dublin on their TAP programme seem to benefit from added social capital and the positive effect of this lasts beyond university stage into the job market. Employment outcomes for ex-TAP students are broadly in line with traditional-entry students.

- **Pedagogy:** Problems with effectiveness arise in bridging and transition pedagogy. There is a tension between teaching which best promotes successful outcomes for under-represented groups and preparing for lecture-style and independent learning demands of UG study. Balancing academic rigour with support for retention might present a hurdle for planning.

- **Cost:** A funded Foundation Year programme will be costly and whether the expenditure is outweighed by the value-added for the students and their contribution toward institution access targets with OFFA is not known yet.

- **Few courses or all:** examples in the UK also exposed the policy choice whether a foundation year should in principle be available for all degree programmes (more
like the Durham model) or only for one or a few (more like the Kings College London Extended Medical Degree programme). This obviously has implications for pedagogy, student numbers, possibly both UG and PG, and cost.

**Key design questions**

Two significant design issues were discussed in more detail in the potential Oxford context: cost, and application method.

(i) **Cost**

The cost issue was explored by the group, discussing how a scheme might operate in Oxford. An academic year’s programme with all course costs and living costs paid for the student is estimated to cost around £23,700 per student. This is effectively the LMH model and presents a challenge in terms of operating at a large scale.

There are different ways a programme could be designed, some of which reduce the cost (by making the programme shorter and non-residential) and some of which shift it more to the student.

The cost to the University could be reduced by making the course accredited and therefore potentially eligible for student loans, for tuition and maintenance. However this would add to the student’s loan debt which could be seen as unattractive. The question would arise whether Foundation Year candidates would be eligible for Oxford Bursaries, but this is still a cost to the University.

The cost to both student and University could be reduced by making the foundation programme shorter (e.g. two terms) and primarily distance learning (reducing the need for significant residential expenditure). But this might be seen as diluting the point of the programme and may increase the risk of student attrition, and does not solve the problem that participants would still need a source of income to meet their living costs.

Other cost issues raised include potential accommodation costs if a model were to operate at large scale, effectively adding a year to many students’ undergraduate course of study.

(ii) **Application process**

The application process could work one of two ways.

- In one, the student is admitted to the Foundation Year only in the first instance and has to apply separately while on course, but shortly after arriving, and subject to meeting the condition of their offer will be admitted to the University. This is the Lady Margaret Hall model. Or
- In the other, admission is to a programme which provides direct entry to the university subject to satisfactory completion of the Foundation Year.

**Recommendation**

In the light of the work that was done, the ATWG-RWG report agreed to recommend that the experience and benefits of the LMH Foundation Year be robustly evaluated for an Oxford context, in
a form that can be compared with other initiatives and reviewed in future alongside evidence on the effectiveness of other interventions.
ANNEX VIII (added May 2018)

Technical note on the HESA data used in preparing the Report of the AdEx Working Groups on Access Targets and the Regionalisation of Access Work through Colleges

In preparing the Report of the AdEx Working Groups on Access Targets and the Regionalisation of Access Work through Colleges, the working groups benefited from analysis that compared the attainment, and the application rates, of various different groups as a proportion of the national A-level pool. This analysis used data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) to provide estimates of:

- The proportion of the nation’s AAA+ pupils at A level who live in ACORN category 4 and 5 areas (quoted on pages 5, 18, and 26)
- The proportion of the nation’s AAA+ pupils at A level who live in areas which are quintiles 1 and 2 of POLAR (quoted on pages 5 and 20)
- The Oxford application rates of, respectively, independent school pupils achieving A*A*A or better, state educated A*A*A achievers, and ACORN resident A*A*A achievers (quoted on pages 5 and 26).
- The Oxford application rates of AAA+ and A*A*A achievers, comparing ACORN and POLAR resident pupils, independent and state-educated, and white and BME (Chart 5 on page 27).
- The proportion of all school students obtaining AAA+ who apply to Oxford, by UK region and nation (Chart 6 page 28)
- The proportion of state school students obtaining AAA+ who apply to Oxford, by UK region and nation (Chart 7, page 28)
- BME and white proportions of the state school AAA+ cohort, and of Oxford applications, from London, the West and East Midlands (Table 2, page 29)

Below is a note prepared in May 2018 on the HESA data which was used in preparing this analysis.

Data Source

- The national figures relating to eligible applicant pools in the report are based on data received from HESA. The data sources used in the report are HESA Student Record 2014/15; HESA Student Record 2013/14; HESA Student Record 2012/13. Copyright Higher Education Statistics Agency Limited. Neither the Higher Education Statistics Agency Limited nor HESA Services Limited can accept responsibility for any inferences or conclusions derived by third parties from data or other information supplied by HESA Services.
- All results presented in the report adhere to HESA rounding methodology: 0, 1, 2 are rounded to 0; All other numbers are rounded to the nearest multiple of 5; Percentages based on fewer than 22.5 individuals are suppressed; Averages based on 7 or fewer individuals are suppressed.
Data Assumptions

- The national AAA+ and A*A*A+ pools are calculated using a ‘top four A levels’ field. Qualifications included are: GCE A Level; GCE A Level (double); SQA Advanced Highers; VCE Advanced and VCE Advanced Double Award (QUALTYPES A, DA, AH, V and V2). That means Scottish Advanced Highers are included in the AAA+ pool for those students achieving AAA at Advanced Highers; students with equivalent qualifications, e.g. equivalent in IB points, have been excluded.

- The AAA+ pool includes 1st year UK domiciled students only, studying at the First Degree level. It is assumed that the vast majority of 1st year students in the given years (2012/13 – 2014/15) would have applied in the respective UCAS cycles.

- In this report, the total number of students who achieved AAA or more at A-level (based on the restrictions described above) are treated as an approximation of the total AAA+ pool in the UK population. It is assumed that only a small proportion of students with AAA+ would not go to university at all or go to university abroad (and therefore would not be included in HESA data).

Data differences with the 2018 Statistical Release

- Data span three academic years: 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15, which is one year earlier than data span used in the 2018 Annual Statistical Release.\(^\text{1}\)

- The HESA data available at the time this report was written is lacking certain detailed data, and thus a number of assumptions are made during the data analysis. The shortcomings of the data resulted in the purchase of additional items from HESA containing more specific information that permits much more robust analyses now included in the Annual Statistical Report. The analysis undertaken in this report therefore differs to that used in the 2018 Annual Statistical Release in the following ways:

Subject mix of AAA+ pool

- The dataset used did not include any detailed information about the subjects of A-levels taken and for that reason students who took General Studies or Critical Thinking are included in the AAA+ pool. These subjects are excluded from the 2018 Annual Statistical Release.

Scottish Qualifications

- The dataset used did not include any information about Standard Higher results and for that reason only students attaining AAA at Advanced Higher are included in the AAA+ pool. In the 2018 Annual Statistical Release students who achieved AA at Advanced Higher and at least AAAAB at Higher are included in the AAA+ pool.

ACORN and POLAR3

- Only a partial postcode (outcode + 1 digit) for each student is available in the data and only for the 2011/12 and 2012/13 academic years; ACORN and POLAR3 classifications are therefore approximated. ACORN and POLAR3 categorisation is based on the average ACORN and POLAR3 category for all individual postcodes within the postcode sector area. ACORN categories 4 and 5 presented here include Type 34 (Student flats and halls of residence) which falls within category 4. This type is routinely removed from internal analyses and the 2018 Annual Statistical Release. More precise analysis is possible in the 2018 Statistical Release as the ACORN categories and POLAR3 quintiles were provided by HESA based on full postcodes.

\(^1\) 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16
ACORN classification is more granular than POLAR3, consequently the differences between this report and the 2018 Annual Statistical Release are more prominent for the ACORN analysis than for POLAR3 analysis.