

Executive summary

This access Agreement between the University of Oxford and the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) covers the academic year 2012-13. It builds on the extensive experience and evidence gained by the University and its colleges in recent years, described in previous access Agreements. Autonomy and diversity characterise the collegiate University, and our access activities and arrangements are designed to strengthen those qualities.

Oxford's aims are: to **attract** applications from all individuals with the potential to study at the University; to **inform** them fully; to **admit** the very best; to **educate** them in an intensive, world-class teaching system, and to **support** them while at Oxford. The following pages contain more information about current and planned activity in:

Attracting UK students with the academic potential to study at Oxford, especially those who are currently under-represented (outreach work, paragraphs 24-62);

Informing potential applicants and current students about the University, the cost of study, the support available to them, and the selection process (provision of information, paragraphs 119-121);

Admitting those with the greatest academic ability and potential in their chosen subject, on merit alone, using rigorous, fair and consistent procedures (fair admissions, paragraphs 63-69);

Educating them in a world-class system marked out by the tutorial system and the collegiate environment (cost and subsidy of education at Oxford, paragraph 12);

Supporting and retaining them at Oxford – financially, academically, pastorally, and in terms of careers advice (noting Oxford's current excellent retention rate of 98%) (student finance, paragraphs 13-23 and on-course support, paragraphs 70-79).

This Agreement therefore details: (i) an extensive but carefully targeted programme of access and outreach work; (ii) a rigorous, academic-led and resource-intensive admissions process; (iii) generous financial support for students from less well-off backgrounds, including measures to support and retain them whilst on course; and (iv) how these measures will in future be monitored against our targets.

(i) Access and outreach (paragraphs 24-62)

We will continue to devote over £1.85m a year to dedicated **access and outreach work**, aimed at attracting applicants from non-traditional backgrounds, and equipping them with the information they need to make competitive applications. We will also ensure that information about our educational provision and the financial support available to students is clear and easily accessible. In addition we plan to spend up to a further £750,000 on developing the access and outreach work outlined in this agreement from 2012-13 onwards. The details will be confirmed through the University's planning and budgeting processes for that year, taking into account our own evaluation of work in 2011-12 and the extent of any continuing level of targeted financial support for access work from HEFCE.

(ii) Admissions (paragraphs 63-69)

This Agreement reflects Oxford's strategy of seeking to attract applications for undergraduate study from all those within the UK (as well as internationally) who can demonstrate the ability and potential to benefit from the intensive and highly academic courses of study which we offer. It also reflects our commitment to an admissions process which is fair and transparent, which assesses academic achievement and potential, and which is capable of distinguishing the very best from a large pool (17,000 plus) of extremely well qualified applicants. We will continue to develop the use of contextual information within the selection process.

(iii) Student finance and on-course support (paragraphs 13-23, 70-79)

We plan to devote substantial additional resources (£1.8m in the first year) to a range of **tuition charge waivers** for students from less well-off households, on top of a continuing package of **generous maintenance bursaries** costing up to an estimated £6.7m in 2012-13. We are planning to spend up to a further £750,000 on a range of additional student retention, support, and employability measures. We estimate £250,000 of this will be specifically used to support students covered by this agreement. The details of this provision will, again, be confirmed through our 2012-13 budgeting process, but will include better information and guidance for applicants and students about the financing of their studies; and additional student support services, such as induction, counselling, provision for students with disabilities, and careers advice.

(iv) Targets and outcomes (paragraphs 82-117)

We have set ourselves a range of targets against which the outcomes of the access, admissions and support measures can be assessed. Success needs to be judged over a period of several years as the lead times involved (particularly for access work) are significant. The activity set out in this Agreement will therefore be kept under review and the

effectiveness of the various measures outlined here, together with experience gained elsewhere, will help to inform future policy.

Our overall objective is that the activities outlined within this Agreement should have long-term effects on widening access to Oxford from currently under-represented groups. We believe that the measures also should have a wider impact in helping to raise attainment in secondary education and improving participation in higher education as a whole.

The measures outlined above will cost up to £11.35m in 2012-13, broken down as follows:

ACTIVITY	EXPENDITURE
Current outreach	£1.85m
Additional outreach (including monitoring and evaluation)	Up to £0.75m
Additional student retention, support and employability(including monitoring and evaluation)	Up to £0.25m
Bursaries (including cohorts on existing scheme, and one cohort on future scheme)	£6.7m
Tuition charge waivers (first year of scheme only)	£1.8m
ESTIMATED TOTAL EXPENDITURE UP TO: £11.35m	

In 2012-13, once the Government’s allocation for the National Scholarship Programme has been subtracted, additional (as defined in the OFFA guidance) spend (£11.35m) as a proportion of the University’s tuition charge revenue (£22m), taking account of the ‘higher’ fee appropriate to each cohort, will be around 50% (as against the expectation in the guidance of 35%). We note that the present Agreement is for one year only. We shall review total spend and the balance of spending between the various measures, including the balance between tuition charge waivers and bursaries, and outreach, access and student support, in the light of evidence of their respective impacts and effectiveness.

The figures above include support for students ordinarily resident in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (except NHS-funded medical students), but exclude students from the rest of the EU who may nonetheless be eligible for our student support. The University intends to make its financial support available to students settled in the UK and ordinarily resident in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on the same basis as students settled in the UK and ordinarily resident in England unless student support arrangements from the devolved administrations make this inappropriate. The figures also include expenditure on bursaries for PGCE students.

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Introduction

1. The six over-arching objectives in the University of Oxford's current strategic plan include the following: '(ii) Provide an exceptional education for both undergraduates and graduates, characterised by the close contact of students with distinguished scholars in supportive collegiate and departmental communities'; '(iv) Recruit the very best students nationally and internationally through an equitable process based on achievement and potential'; '(vi) Deliver outstanding facilities and services and manage them effectively and responsively for the benefit of staff and students'.
2. These objectives as applied to undergraduates involve **informing** and **attracting** applications from all individuals with the potential to study at the University; **admitting** the very best; **educating** them in a world-class, highly personalised teaching system; and **supporting** them while at Oxford in terms of finance, welfare and careers advice.
3. These objectives are delivered in partnership between the University (including its four academic divisions and their constituent departments and faculties), and the Oxford colleges. They are also embodied in the main principles of the Common Framework for Undergraduate Admissions, which governs Oxford's admissions processes. It was adopted by the collegiate University in 2007 and ensures a consistent and rigorous approach to selecting students who show the academic ability and potential to flourish in Oxford's intensive, highly academic and tutorially-based undergraduate teaching system.
4. **Informing** and **Attracting** applicants from all backgrounds: Considerable resource is dedicated to outreach and access activity carried out across the collegiate University, with the intention of widening access to Oxford. Notable activity includes highly targeted work to inform teachers and guidance advisers in schools so that they can best support their students through the admissions process; targeted, frequently residential, activities in Oxford to encourage students from under-represented groups to apply and to help them make competitive applications; activity to assist and inform candidates at key points in their school education about the choices and options available to them; and a coordinated programme of visits to schools and colleges which covers the whole of the UK. The University is also involved, locally, in activities to increase awareness about higher education in general, particularly among pre-16-year-olds. Much of this work is delivered through collaborations with other universities and partner organisations.
5. **Admitting** the very best: Admission to Oxford is on the basis of academic achievement and potential. The selection process aims to identify the most able, by subject, from among a very highly qualified field of candidates. While the purpose of

our access work is to ensure that all students who are likely to be able to meet the required standards have the opportunity to apply, our admissions procedures aim to select those candidates who best meet our published selection criteria. Admissions decisions are made by the academics who will usually teach the candidates they admit. The system is designed to look at the whole field of applicants for any given subject and to identify those best able to excel in that subject. Individual students are admitted both by their college, and by the University (at matriculation). In addition faculties and departments play an important part in the admissions process, and collaborate closely with colleges under the Common Framework.

6. **Educating** students in a world-class system: The cost of educating an undergraduate at Oxford (see paragraph 12) is higher than at almost all other UK HEIs. In large part this is due to its resource-intensive tutorial provision, but it is also due to the very high quality and range of support facilities and infrastructure available at both college and University level. The quality and value of our undergraduate education are recognised worldwide. Oxford is determined to maintain and develop this high quality provision. All of our undergraduate courses are a rigorous preparation for challenging and rewarding careers.
7. **Supporting** students: Increased fees may bring a significant new challenge in attracting students from lower income households, and therefore this agreement contains proposals for a very generous package of financial support for students from less well-off families.¹ Oxford's collegiate system provides every undergraduate with the bedrock of their university career. College tutors guide and support students, overseeing their intellectual and personal development. Tutorials are delivered in colleges, and most students live in their college for at least two years of their course. Each college offers an extensive network of welfare services, ranging from student peer group support, to advisers, chaplains and counsellors, and has a doctor and a nurse associated with it. This is complemented by the services provided by the University, as outlined in paragraphs 70-79.

¹ The information contained in this agreement regarding tuition charges relates to students eligible for student support under the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2009 and entering into education for the first time in 2012-13. It therefore excludes students from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The information regarding bursaries relates to students settled in the UK and ordinarily resident in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and to EU nationals ordinarily resident in the EEA or Switzerland.

The University will need to consider its response to the funding of medical and PGCE students when more information is available. It will also be necessary further to consider carefully the position of part-time undergraduate level provision at Oxford, once future arrangements for funding this mode of provision, and associated student support measures, have become clear.

8. The University of Oxford shares the sector's widespread concern about the potential impact of the current reductions in the HEFCE grant on the stability of the HE sector, and about the rapidity with which these significant changes are being introduced.
9. The University will seek to manage the transition to the new arrangements as carefully as possible, in order to minimise any potential uncertainty amongst applicants to Oxford about their ability to afford to study here, and to benefit from the exceptional teaching and learning environment which we offer.
10. All of the activities that the University and its colleges undertake to widen access will be subject to evaluation against our targets. The findings, along with research into access and outreach that we are currently undertaking, will assist in informing the direction of future access Agreements. Where our findings have a broader application to the higher education sector we will ensure that they are appropriately disseminated.
11. The targets outlined later in this Agreement fall into two categories:
 - Those which relate to specific widening access initiatives and their outcomes;
 - Those which will serve to demonstrate over time that the student body has diversified and includes a higher proportion of UK students from backgrounds where social, economic or educational factors have placed them at a disadvantage.

1. Undergraduate tuition charges and waivers in 2012-13

12. The University of Oxford and its colleges are educational charities, which since their foundation have been devoting substantial resources of their own to supporting the costs of Oxford's resource-intensive education. Provision of financial support for undergraduate students at Oxford has been a prominent feature of the work of the University and its colleges for many years. In addition to bursaries, colleges have always supported students with additional assistance, for example, hardship grants. A considerable benefit of the collegiate system is that welfare provision can be targeted in this individualised manner. We estimate that the average cost of an undergraduate education at Oxford is in excess of £16,000 per student per year (based on TRAC analysis). Current income is approximately £7,600 per Home/EU student per year, demonstrating a subsidy in excess of £8,000 per student per year, from other University and college sources (principally donation and endowment income, together with income raised from commercial activities).
13. Against this background, the University will set a tuition charge for Home and EU students of £9,000² per year from 2012 entry. Based on our current student cohort we anticipate that approximately 15% of students will receive a partial tuition charge waiver, detailed below, making the range of effective charges between c. £3,500 per year and £9,000 per year. Even at a headline fee of £9,000 per annum the University and its colleges will still be subsidising the full £16,000+ cost of an Oxford course from their own sources to the tune of several thousand pounds per student per year. Our undergraduate provision will, therefore, continue to offer exceptional value for money.

National Scholarship Programme

14. The University has been allocated 132 National Scholarship Programme awards for the 2012-13 academic year. If the University is permitted to charge more than £6,000 in tuition fees it will take part in the National Scholarship Programme, and will use the allocated awards as a contribution towards the overall costs of providing tuition charge waivers to students who have a household income below £16,000 per year.
15. The University believes that applicants from households with incomes below £16,000 are likely to be the most debt averse, and are therefore more likely to be deterred from participating in higher education and to face the greatest challenges in making the

² It is anticipated that the proposed £9,000 tuition charge will also cover Medicine, both the undergraduate and graduate entry courses. However, there is uncertainty as to how the changes to student support and the Health and Social Care Bill will affect the funding of medical courses, and the University is concerned about the possible impact on recruitment and access to these courses and therefore the medical profession. There is also concern about potential changes to funding for the PGCE. The tuition charge for year abroad students in Annex B is subject to approval and may be revised. These points will need to be kept carefully under review.

transition from school or college to university education. To address this issue the University intends to allocate all of the National Scholarship Programme funding to ensure that those students who have a household income below £16,000 per year will have a total annual tuition charge in their first year of £3,500, that is, equivalent to the present charge, when adjusted for inflation.

16. Recent cohorts of new students have contained around 280 UK students with household incomes below £16,000. As an extension to the NSP, the University is making a commitment to provide a tuition charge waiver for all those students paying home fees for 2012-13 who have a household income below £25,000. The likelihood is, therefore, that the total funding provided by the University to offset the tuition charge waivers will more than match the NSP allocation. In the unlikely event that this does not occur, the University will engage in discussion with HEFCE to determine how best to utilise any unallocated NSP funds. The University will review this use of the NSP allocation in the light of experience in the 2011-12 admissions cycle.

Extending the National Scholarship Programme

17. The University will extend the NSP³ through a system of generous tuition charge waivers that will be introduced for 2012 entry students as detailed in the table below. For students starting in 2012-13, from households with an income of £25,000 and below there will be tuition charge waivers of up to £3,000 covering the duration of the course. In addition, for those students from households where the income is £16,000 and below there will be a further tuition charge waiver in the first year, making the effective fee c. £3,500 in the first year (roughly what it will be for current students in 2012) and £6,000 in following years.

EFFECTIVE TUITION CHARGES FOR 2012 ENTRY AFTER WAIVERS		
RHI	FIRST YEAR OF STUDY	SUBSEQUENT YEARS
£0 - £16,000	£3,500	£6,000
£16,001 - £20,000	£7,000	£7,000
£20,001 - £25,000	£8,000	£8,000

³ In line with the eligibility criteria for the NSP specified by the Government, the University's tuition charge waivers will be available only to students eligible for student support under the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2009. Arrangements for tuition charge waivers for students settled in the UK and ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales will be confirmed once the devolved administrations have announced their funding arrangements.

18. Increased fees may bring a significant new challenge in attracting students from lower income households. Our tuition charge waivers are intended to reduce the risk that 'debt aversion' might deter students from low income backgrounds from applying. Research⁴ suggests that debt aversion is most prominent amongst potential applicants from the lowest income households. Tuition charge waivers help mitigate this aversion by reducing the size of the loan from government that English students need to take out. Currently around one in ten students at Oxford would benefit from the lowest level of tuition charge and the highest bursary.
19. In addition to the bursaries listed below, students may be eligible for a wide range of generous financial support from colleges and departments, which will augment these core provisions.
20. The University will seek to amend its fees on an annual basis in line with government legislation.⁵

⁴ H. Pennell and A. West. (2005) 'The impact of increased fees on participation in higher education in England', *Higher Education Quarterly*, 59, pp 127-37; P. Davies, K. Slack, A. Hughes, J. Mangan and K. Vigurs (2008), *Knowing where to study? Fees, bursaries and fair access* (Institute for Higher Educational Policy Research and Institute for Access Studies, Staffordshire University).

⁵ The maximum tuition charge for those commencing their studies in 2011 or before has not yet been released, but the University estimates that this will be approximately £3,500, and it will increase the tuition charge to the maximum permitted.

2. Bursary support for students in 2012-13

21. The University and colleges will provide the following bursaries to students⁶:

- A bursary of £3,300 to students from household incomes of less than £16,000 in each year of their course
- A tapered bursary from £3,000 to £500 for students from household incomes of £16,001 to £42,600; and
- An additional start-up bursary of £1,000 to students from household incomes of less than £16,000, and of £500 to students from household incomes of £16,001 to £42,600.
- Students require funds up-front to cover the cost of living. Through the provision of bursaries to supplement government loans and grants, students from the lowest household income backgrounds will be able to cover in full their living costs in Oxford, enabling them to take part in the many additional opportunities which Oxford has to offer. This should also help to maintain Oxford's very high retention rates (see paragraph 70). We estimate that students from households with incomes of less than £16,000 will be able to reduce the amount of government maintenance loan they take out by up to £2,000. Bursaries will be funded jointly by the University and by the colleges from philanthropic sources and from endowment income.

BURSARY PROVISION IN 2012 - 13	
RESIDUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME	BURSARY LEVEL P.A.
£0 - £16,000	£3,300
£16,001 - £20,000	£3,000
£20,001 - £25,000	£2,500
£25,001 - £30,000	£2,000
£30,001 - £35,000	£1,500
£35,001 - £40,000	£1,000
£40,001 - £42,600	£500

⁶ The maintenance bursaries described here will be available to students settled in the UK and ordinarily resident in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and to EU nationals ordinarily resident in the EEA or Switzerland (see footnotes 1 and 3).

22. Oxford terms are intensive. A survey by HEPI⁷ shows that students at Oxford and Cambridge spend a significantly greater proportion of their time studying than those at all other HEIs. The University and colleges strongly discourage students from taking part-time work during term, and expect them to do extensive reading out of term time. Maintenance bursaries ensure that students from the lowest household incomes can apply themselves to academic work without having to take paid employment during term time.
23. The University will continue to provide the Oxford Opportunity Bursary (OOB) to students who commenced their studies in 2011 or before. This support will be available to students with home fee status who are studying for their first undergraduate degree, a PGCE course or undertaking the first year of the Graduate Entry Medicine course. The University will maintain bursary support at current levels in 2012.

⁷ *The academic experience of students in English universities* (September 2007)

3a. Additional access measures: outreach

24. The University of Oxford and its colleges undertake a wide range of outreach activity to support the aim of attracting students from all backgrounds. We seek to attract the most able candidates regardless of their socio-economic, ethnic, or educational background. Our outreach activity is delivered by a central team, along with staff in colleges, faculties, departments, Oxford's world-class museums, and student organisations. In the last five years, this activity has become increasingly coordinated and targeted to relevant groups. At present, we spend about £1.85m annually on access and outreach activity.
25. In recent years Oxford's focus has been on increasing the number of competitive applications from the UK maintained sector. The flagship programmes for this work are the UNIQ summer schools, teacher information activity, and the national schools and colleges regional link programme, all of which are delivered in partnership between colleges and the University.
26. The University also supports increased participation in further and higher education generally. Efforts have therefore also been directed at encouraging participation amongst local pre-GCSE students, with no expectation that this will necessarily result in them applying to Oxford.
27. The significant financial resource committed to outreach activity has been underpinned by systemic evaluation and assessment of its effectiveness. Programmes have been designed to take into account experience gathered at Oxford and other universities, and through the work of Aimhigher, thus ensuring that best practice is embedded in existing and new activity.
28. Our intention is to build upon the existing activity which has been demonstrated to be successful. The University will seek to ensure that by 2016-17 we have made progress in relation to a number of targets, outlined in paragraphs 82-96.
29. The information in the next sections of this Agreement describes current activity, and sets the context for the further targeting and development which we intend to undertake.

(i) Focus of access and outreach activity

30. Outreach activity at Oxford falls within two categories with distinct but overlapping aims: widening access to Oxford and widening participation in higher education. The aim of widening access activity is to convert students from under-represented groups who have the ability to study here into successful applicants. Widening participation

activity promotes progression to further and higher education institutions, including other leading selective universities.

(ii) Widening access to Oxford

UNIQ summer schools

31. In 2010, Oxford, with support from the Helsington Foundation, developed the **UNIQ summer schools** for UK state-educated students. This is a collaborative activity between colleges and the University. Participants are selected using verifiable contextual information. This includes the students' GCSE A* performance compared with their school average attainment, their ACORN (A Classification Of Residential Neighbourhoods) socio-economic post code group, their school's history of sending students to Oxford and their care history if appropriate. A personal statement is also a key part of the application and provides a valuable preparatory activity for students' subsequent UCAS applications.
32. The initial 2010 cohort attracted 3,644 applicants for 507 places in 20 subject strands. Of the 507 participants, 347 subsequently applied to Oxford (a 69% application rate), and 137 were made offers (39% of those who applied, against an overall success rate of 21% for Oxford applicants in that year). That means that 27% of all UNIQ participants have offers from Oxford.
33. This can be compared with the 2009 Sutton Trust Summer School at Oxford which involved 387 participants on 14 different subject courses and resulted in 202 applications to Oxford (a 53% application rate), of whom 53 were made offers (26% of those who applied). That means that 14% of all Sutton Trust summer school participants received offers from Oxford.
34. 17.5% of successful UNIQ offer holders came from the most socio-economically disadvantaged postcodes (ACORN groups 4 and 5); 31% from schools where there are very few students who achieve three A grades at A-level each year, and 86% from schools with a history of limited success in applying to Oxford. This is a strong indicator – albeit based on only one year's experience – that this initiative is proving highly successful in promoting access to Oxford from underrepresented groups from within the maintained sector.
35. The 2011 UNIQ summer schools will involve 25 subject strands, and there have been 3,409 applications for 650 places. In 2012-13, the University plans to expand the UNIQ summer schools programme to provide 850 places with an increased range of subject disciplines offered. The scheme will incrementally increase capacity until 2014, when it

will have doubled the original cohort to 1,000 participants, with all subject areas available at Oxford represented on the programme.

36. In addition the University supports candidates who are not successful in obtaining a UNIQ summer schools place by providing Oxford undergraduates to act as e-mentors. Over 340 students received such assistance in 2010-11. It is intended that other opportunities will in future be offered to students who narrowly miss out on a summer school place, starting with pilot study days in History, PPE, and Medicine in 2011.
37. The University has an agreed target with OFFA through to 2011-12 relating to the UNIQ summer schools outcomes. This target will continue to be applied in 2012-13 and subsequent access Agreements. Further details are given in paragraph 99.

Engagement with teachers

38. The 2007 MORI Teachers' Survey on behalf of the Sutton Trust indicated that only half of those surveyed would recommend that their most able students should apply to Oxford or Cambridge. Other evidence has pointed in the same direction. The University and its colleges have therefore invested considerable resource in developing a range of activities to engage both new and experienced teachers in promoting access and encouraging participation in higher education.
39. In 2008-9, Oxford piloted a series of **Regional Teacher Conferences** across the UK with support from the Helsington Foundation. The successful outcome resulted in receipt of additional funding from the Helsington Foundation to provide further conferences through to 2014. The seven annual one-day conferences are run at a range of locations nationally, and locations are varied, to ensure national coverage, every two years. Typically each year the teacher conferences attract almost 500 participating teachers and guidance advisers, who receive a briefing on all aspects of the admissions process, along with guidance on how best to identify and support their most academically able students.
40. The University has an agreed target with OFFA through to 2011-12 relating to the Regional Teacher Conference outcomes. This target will continue to be applied in 2012-13 and subsequent access Agreements. Further details are given at paragraph 101.
41. The University introduced a teachers' e-newsletter in September 2008, which communicates admissions, access and funding news – and promotes events for teachers and schools – to around 2,500 teachers across the country six times per year.

42. The University also recognises the importance of supporting those entering the teaching profession, and provides briefing sessions for its **Teach First** and **PGCE students**. Participants receive a briefing from Oxford staff on current issues in HE admissions and student funding, and updates on the UCAS admissions process. The events typically attract 150 students per year, and are run annually. The University intends to embed this programme into PGCE training at Oxford to ensure that new teachers are made aware of the current issues related to admission to higher education generally and to Oxford. This will be a cost-effective model which could be incorporated into PGCE courses across the UK.
43. The University's **Department of Education** has a long-established partnership with Oxfordshire and some Buckinghamshire secondary schools as the basis for its highly rated PGCE. It is currently revising the partnership structure to ensure stronger links with schools, to support the continuing professional development of teachers and to engage teachers in research aimed at school development. It also intends to contribute to the teaching expertise available across the county through the development of a University Training School as a laboratory school, once the procedures for developing these schools are clarified. In another initiative it is helping to strengthen the Oxford City Learning Partnership, a network of state-funded educational providers, which aims at improving the life chances of students in Oxford's schools.

Working with schools and colleges

44. The University and its colleges conduct an extensive range of school and college visits each year and maintain a database to record all this activity across Oxford. In 2009-10 Oxford conducted over 1,550 activities, involving over 3,000 schools and colleges in the UK – 76% of all schools and colleges with post-16 provision. This engagement will continue to develop, and as evidence builds of the most effective methods of supporting students and teachers, the work will be adapted so that it provides the best possible support.
45. The vast majority of our outreach to schools is aimed at the maintained sector, in particular at those schools and colleges with significant numbers of students who have the attainment required by Oxford but do not have a strong track record of making applications to the University. Other activities, such as the Regional Student Conferences and UCAS HE fairs, provide information to all students considering an application to Oxford.
46. A **regional link programme** has been developed, to ensure that each geographical local authority region is supported by a named Oxford college, and that schools and

colleges within that region have a clear first point of contact with Oxford. We encourage collaboration between schools which have significant experience of supporting applicants into selective courses and other local schools and colleges with limited knowledge of Oxford. An example of this collaborative working is the Reading Cluster Group, involving eight schools and facilitated by the link college.

47. Oxford currently collaborates with **Cambridge University** to run a series of eight annual one- and two-day regional Student Conferences across the UK. These free events typically attract over 10,000 potential year 12 (or Scottish S5) students and their teachers and guidance advisers, and aim to give an insight into the courses available at both universities. The two universities also provide an element of cross-training to ensure that staff at either institution are able to explain the similarities and differences between the two, including admissions processes and course structures.

(iii) Widening participation in higher education

48. Within our local region Oxford's work concentrates on supporting pre-16 year olds and their families. Our focus reflects the geographical boundary of the Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Aimhigher Partnership, in which Oxford has been an active participant. The University has enjoyed a close working relationship with **Oxford Brookes University** (with whom we run a joint admissions conference each year for teachers and guidance advisers), and with **Bucks New University**. This has resulted in the establishment of a joint Memorandum of Understanding on local partnership working. This helps to ensure that the legacy of successful Aimhigher initiatives is retained and developed, particularly in the areas of pre-16 attainment and aspiration-raising.
49. The **Oxford Young Ambassadors (OYA)** scheme is set to run for three years from 2010-11. In the initial year (2010-11) twenty year 8 students predicted to achieve B grades at GCSE (using Fischer Family Trust data), and who will be first generation entrants to higher education, were selected to participate on the programme. A second cohort of thirty students has been selected to commence the programme in 2011-12. OYA works through a series of activities that run with each cohort over a three-year period. They are designed to raise the participants' attainment to A and A* grades at GCSE, the level of attainment typically used by selective university courses in their admissions processes. A key part of the programme is that the students and their parents serve as advocates for the scheme in their schools and communities.
50. The first graduating cohort of OYA will be those achieving their GCSEs in 2012-13. The scheme is being monitored by an independent research consultant who has

considerable experience of Aimhigher and who will assess impact and advise on the development of the scheme's content.

51. As a university with global reach and reputation, Oxford places a high value on diversity among its overall student population, which is currently made up of people from over 140 different nationalities, accounting for more than one in five of all our students. In a UK context, the University works intensively with partner organisations to promote the value and importance of higher education to pupils from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. We believe that the targets in this agreement have the potential to increase access to Oxford for candidates from such backgrounds. We also plan to explore what additional activities and initiatives might impact positively on the presence of under-represented ethnic minority groups at Oxford.
52. Oxford recognises the importance of promoting **STEM** (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) subjects to young people from an early age, to ensure that students are supported in choosing the right combination of subjects which would allow them to apply for STEM courses at university. A number of the University's specialist outreach staff work with schools to engage teachers and to provide outreach activities for students at primary and secondary levels. Activities include a 'Women in Science' residential for local sixth form students, an Oxfordshire Science Roadshow for children and families, and a series of Christmas science lectures. Research students and academic staff also participate in a range of science outreach events, such as Marcus's Marvellous Mathemagicians, a series of student-run workshops designed to introduce school pupils to new and interesting applications of maths; Accelerate!, a live science show which introduces children from year 7 upwards to particle physics and accelerator physics; and the Big Bang UK Young Scientists' and Engineers' Fair. Additional outreach activities develop understanding of the full range of subjects offered by the University.

Partnerships with other universities and organisations

53. Oxford will continue its strong record of supporting conferences organised by other UK universities aimed at informing teachers and guidance advisers of admissions and access issues. In the last year, Oxford staff have provided sessions at events organised by **Aston University, Edinburgh University, Essex University, Glamorgan University, Queen Mary London, University of Northamptonshire** and **Exeter University**. Oxford has also recently engaged in discussions with the **Realising Opportunities Consortium** of universities to discuss potential for membership or collaboration.

54. Oxford has been a very strong and active supporter of **Teach First**. In addition to the provision for Teach First teachers mentioned earlier, Oxford contributes to the Teach First HEAPS (Higher Education Access Programme for Schools), providing an Oxford taster day for over 200 year 12 students. Oxford's colleges also give significant support to graduates participating in Teach First by providing bursaries to support them during the summer training programme.
55. Oxford holds the 'Buttle UK Quality Mark for Care Leavers', which demonstrates our commitment to students who are currently, or have been, in the care system. We recognise the very specific challenges that this group may face in progressing to higher education, and have considered the needs of care leavers in every aspect of our admissions process, from outreach activity through to on course support.
56. The University also supports the work of the **Social Mobility Foundation**, collaborating with Cambridge to run an admissions briefing and interview session for those students applying to either of the universities in the weeks before the Oxford and Cambridge interviews.
57. Oxford has been an active supporter of the Higher Education Liaison Officers' Association (**HELOA**), the professional body which supports initiatives and training for UK outreach and access staff in higher education. Over the last four years Oxford has provided four members of the National Executive Committee (National Chair, National Treasurer, South East England Group Chair, and National Secretary). The University remains committed to supporting the work of HELOA, particularly as an engine for developing UK-wide initiatives on providing information and guidance to prospective applicants, their parents and guidance advisers.

(iv) Future developments in access and outreach

58. Oxford is looking at a range of further options for future development of access and outreach work in order to achieve our objectives. The details of the further investment we will make in these areas will be finalised as part of our 2012-13 planning and budgeting process, but we aim to spend across the University and its colleges up to £750,000 in additional co-ordinated and carefully targeted access and outreach work. In particular, these measures are likely to include the further development of the UNIQ summer schools; further development of teacher events; evaluation and assessment of effectiveness of the measures described in this Agreement; and the provision of extended guidance and advice (particularly on financial matters) to prospective applicants and their parents and schools.

59. The collegiate University also intends to develop a Common Framework for Access alongside its Common Framework for Undergraduate Admissions. This will allow it better to monitor the outcomes of activity across Oxford, ensuring that best practice in outreach work, such as linking colleges with specific regions in the UK, is effectively coordinated and innovative activity is encouraged (see paragraph 46).
60. In particular, it has established a small group of University and college representatives to consider the potential for development of bridging support or foundation years which might be put in place beyond 2013-14. This will build on experience gained in offering foundation level courses through the Department for Continuing Education as well as on the work undertaken by several subject departments and colleges in offering pre-sessional courses in particular subjects to successful candidates whose pre-university preparation may not necessarily have equipped them well for the demanding nature of an Oxford undergraduate degree course.
61. Discussions are in their initial stages with Ruskin College, an adult education college based in Oxford with which the University has a long-standing relationship, to develop further possible progression routes into Oxford degrees for their mature candidates taking higher education certificates.
62. Once the position of part-time undergraduate student funding and support is clarified, the University will also investigate the scope for development of additional part-time study provision through its Department for Continuing Education.

3b. Additional access measures: admission to Oxford

63. Oxford's resource-intensive admissions process is focussed on identifying an applicant's ability and potential. Applicants are carefully assessed against a range of criteria, including their UCAS application, GCSE results, contextual information about school background, subject-specific aptitude tests, written work, and (if they are short-listed) at least two and up to four interviews.
64. Our guiding principle is that admissions decisions will be made by academic staff who will normally teach the candidates they admit, and that their decisions will be based on academic factors, with the aim of admitting the best candidates in each subject rather than meeting predetermined quotas of students from particular backgrounds. It is fundamental to our approach that all candidates who successfully apply to Oxford should know that they have been admitted on the basis of their academic merit and potential for highly intensive undergraduate courses. The integrity of our admissions process contributes to our excellent retention rates, since the process rigorously identifies those best able to excel on the intense and demanding courses we offer.
65. Our approach to admissions is necessarily highly selective: it is geared towards identifying the best 3,200 candidates from a highly talented applicant pool of over 17,000, of whom about 12,000 are UK nationals. Almost all of these will be predicted a minimum of three A grades at A-level (or equivalent), and will be drawn from a national pool of some 36,000 achieving three As, or equivalent requirements for students undertaking the International Baccalaureate, Scottish Highers or alternative qualifications. It is thus inevitable that, each year, Oxford will be turning away thousands of candidates who are capable of achieving at least three As (or equivalent) at A-level. Unsuccessful candidates will include a large number who will achieve at least one or more A*s at A-level. In 2010, for example, there were 4,626 applicants who did not receive an offer but who nevertheless went on to achieve at least A*AA grades. Of those who were accepted to Oxford for 2010 entry, 88% achieved A*AA or higher, and 38% achieved A*A*A*.
66. The University has also developed the use of admissions aptitude tests in many subjects to supplement the information gained from national examinations. The tests are designed to stretch an applicant and identify aptitude for their chosen subject linked to the published selection criteria for the course. The tests are one part of the process used to shortlist candidates for interview, and are useful in the access context because they depend less on the influence of prior educational support.
67. The University has been using evidence-based approaches to contextual information in the admissions process since the 2008-9 admissions cycle. A common system of

flagging applications has been adopted by all courses to enable tutors to identify candidates who have experienced educational or socio-economic disadvantage. This ensures that applications from these groups are given especially careful consideration at the interview shortlisting stage.

68. Following a review of contextual information carried out in 2009-10, Oxford in conjunction with the University of Manchester has adopted an approach which is based on a candidate's residential post-code, as well as school or college performance at both GCSE and post-16, and therefore places additional emphasis on students who come from backgrounds which indicate both educational and socio-economic disadvantage. Candidates who apply from care backgrounds (looked-after children) receive particular attention, and are highlighted specifically in the application process for additional consideration by tutors. Further refinement of this process will be achieved by incorporating a flag for applicants from low participation neighbourhoods from 2011-12.
69. Interviews with potential tutors are a key part of the Oxford application process. They test the extent to which applicants are able to engage in academic discussion about the proposed subject of study, and they enable tutors to gauge aptitude and potential. Interviewers are able to make allowance for the different kinds of teaching and preparation which students will have experienced in their prior education. The outcomes are carefully collated and taken into account alongside other evidence before final decisions to offer a place are made. All academic tutors new to Oxford are required to complete an online training course on interviewing.

3c. Additional access measures: student retention, success, and employability

70. Oxford already provides one of the most supportive and personalised student experiences in the world. As a result, Oxford has one of the highest retention rates (98%) and highest rates of student satisfaction (93%) in the country. We are highly successful in supporting our students whilst on their course and into further study and employment. Oxford's colleges provide academic communities in which students from diverse backgrounds flourish. As well as teaching, students receive close monitoring and feedback in their colleges and departments on a holistic basis. Students have access to extensive welfare provision and co-curricular activities within colleges. Each college offers an extensive network of welfare services, ranging from student peer group support, to advisers, chaplains and counsellors, and has a doctor and a nurse associated with it.
71. This provision is supported by coordinated services, where these can best be delivered university-wide, e.g. in the areas of careers, disability, counselling, financial guidance, and by the Student Union (OUSU). Oxford will continue to invest in the student experience and in those services which support it. Oxford will make further investment in those areas which have a particular role to play in supporting students from the more diverse backgrounds which it intends to recruit (see Targets section, paragraphs 82-104).
72. We are aware that some students in particular need to know well in advance what support is available to them during their studies. Colleges, departments and faculties, assisted by the Disability Advisory Service, have extensive experience in supporting students with disabilities. The University encourages applications from students with disabilities and is proactive in encouraging disclosure. Upon acceptance at Oxford, all students who did not disclose their disability in their UCAS application are given the opportunity to amend their record so that the appropriate support can be provided prior to commencement of their study. The Service engages and involves students with disabilities throughout their time at Oxford. Oxford will make further investment in supporting students with disabilities, providing practical support and information from pre-application through to graduation and beyond.
73. The Student Counselling Service ensures that all students, regardless of their financial background, have equal access to specialised psychological therapy should they encounter difficulties while at Oxford. Its staff of counsellors, psychotherapists, clinical psychologists and a consultant psychiatrist are expert in helping students to negotiate the transition to Oxford and to meet the challenge of reconciling competing demands

that arise from cultural, family or class contexts. As well as individual work with students, it has a comprehensive programme of workshops with elements targeted at specific groups of students who might find Oxford particularly challenging, such as those who have suffered bereavement in relation to significant family members, who have debilitating examination anxiety, or who have experienced depression.

74. Oxford University Student Union works to improve the student experience at Oxford. The University works closely with the Student Union to develop mechanisms which allow students to shape their own experiences of Oxford and maintain a student community which is both diverse and supportive. OUSU runs the Student Advice Service which offers impartial and independent advice, support and advocacy to all students. Through its six elected sabbatical officers, the Student Union represents students on all issues to the University. The University regards constructive engagement with the Student Union as a fundamental priority in developing its student retention and support work.
75. All potential students are rightly focused on the academic outcomes of their chosen course of study. We also know, however, that they (and their parents/carers) are increasingly mindful of the opportunities for further study and employment available to them after graduation. Oxford already provides unparalleled opportunities for students to develop themselves for later life and a recent survey shows that employers rate Oxford students 'better or much better' than average UK students. Oxford's graduates are highly successful across most fields of human endeavour and across the globe. Keys to this success are the experience, transferable skills and attributes developed through their course and in the many other opportunities available to students from all backgrounds in student clubs, societies, sport, or student representation.
76. The University Careers Service runs a wide range of activities to provide all students with the opportunity to discuss their career plans, add more transferable 'employability skills', meet employers, and apply for hundreds of internships and full-time, permanent vacancies. Over 85% of finalist undergraduates are engaged with activities organised by the Careers Service. The Careers Service has advisers who are fully trained in assisting students with physical or special learning disabilities. The Service's Ability Works programme assists students with disabilities in applying for jobs and with advice on disclosing their condition. Advisers see all students on a personal basis, not only at the Careers Service but also in their college or department, which is particularly helpful for those with mobility concerns.
77. The Careers Service facilitates an increasing number of placement and internship opportunities, with college alumni often playing a crucial role in creating and funding

these opportunities. For example, this year the Oxford University International Internship Programme (OUIIP) will provide externally funded opportunities for over 120 students to work with alumni of the University in a wide range of projects across the globe from USA to China, from Malawi to Denmark. The Oxford Student Consultancy (OSC) facilitates the opportunity for many teams of students to work with local third sector organisations on projects lasting one term and developing solutions for real business issues. Like OUIIP, OSC charges no fees and the programme is open to all students. Oxford will continue to expand the range of such programmes, and will make further investments where necessary to ensure that such career-enhancing opportunities are available regardless of students' background and financial circumstances.

78. We recognise the need to provide clear and accessible information to applicants and students, especially regarding the costs of study at Oxford and the financial support available to those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Oxford has already made significant investments in this area. For example, the University has created the 'Student Gateway' via its website which provides easily accessible information and advice to all students. Particular attention has been given to ensuring that the processes Oxford uses, and Oxford itself, are demystified, and to enabling sources of college and university support to be readily identified. We will continue to develop this area, to ensure that the provision of generic information is enhanced, with the ability for students to be routed effectively to sources of specialist information where more specific advice is required. Colleges' websites provide information on the specific support they provide. A welcome development has been the facility to link current students with prospective students via email and messaging so that a relationship with fellow students and the college begins well before the student arrives. The Careers Service website lists details of first destination of graduates, six months after leaving – split by college, department and gender. Details include average starting salary, location and employer names.
79. Across all the areas covered above, Oxford undertakes to invest up to £750,000 on a range of additional student support initiatives, such as financial guidance, welfare and disability services, and employability. We estimate that about a third (or £250,000) will be spent on students covered by this agreement. Whilst much of this expenditure will be targeted directly at students covered by this agreement (e.g., financial guidance, disability, funded internships for bursary holders), in some areas it is not possible or desirable to target our efforts towards these groups (e.g., welfare and careers support). Updates on work in this area will be covered in our annual reports to OFFA.

3d. Expenditure on current and additional activities

ACTIVITY	EXPENDITURE
Current outreach	£1.85m
Additional outreach (including monitoring and evaluation)	Up to £0.75m
Additional student retention, support and employability(including monitoring and evaluation)	Up to £0.25m
Bursaries (including cohorts on existing scheme, and one cohort on future scheme)	£6.7m
Tuition charge waivers (first year of scheme only)	£1.8m
ESTIMATED TOTAL EXPENDITURE UP TO: £11.35m	

80. In 2012-13, once the Government’s allocation for the National Scholarship Programme has been subtracted, additional (as defined in the OFFA guidance) spend (£11.35m) as a proportion of the University’s tuition charge revenue (£22m), taking account of the ‘higher’ fee appropriate to each cohort, will be around 50% (as against the expectation in the guidance of 35%). We note that the present Agreement is for one year only. We shall review total spend and the balance of spending between the various measures, including the balance between tuition charge waivers and bursaries, and outreach, access and student support, in the light of evidence of their respective impacts and effectiveness.
81. The figures above include support for students ordinarily resident in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (except NHS-funded medical students), but exclude students from the rest of the EU who may nonetheless be eligible for our student support. The University intends to make its financial support available to students settled in the UK and ordinarily resident in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on the same basis as students settled in the UK and ordinarily resident in England unless student support arrangements from the devolved administrations make this inappropriate. The figures also include expenditure on bursaries for PGCE students.

4. Targets and outcomes

Our principles and our approach

82. We have set our targets as the desired outcomes of the full range of our access and outreach activities as described above. Each target is tailored to reflect the outcome of specified activities. However, we do not see the targets as ends in themselves, and we know that there are factors beyond our control which may impact on the outcomes of our activity. Where appropriate we have included milestones to allow us to monitor our progress.
83. Our package of financial support to undergraduate students, through both tuition charge waivers and maintenance bursaries, is expected to contribute in broad terms to meeting the targets and outcomes. As yet, however, the evidence for a demonstrable connection between financial support for students and improvements in access to higher education amongst under-represented groups is unclear. We will continue to review our position on the basis of further evidence and analysis.
84. Against this background, the targets and associated outcomes that we are proposing are designed to ensure:
 - That all those candidates who may have the potential to benefit from an Oxford education, and who can demonstrate a certain level of prior attainment, are encouraged to apply. They should have available full information about the University and courses it offers, and the financial support available to them. This involves working with schools and colleges which may have little track record of putting forward successful applications to Oxford, and ensuring that able students from disadvantaged backgrounds are encouraged to apply.
 - Once they have applied, that our admissions processes are tailored to identify potential as well as prior attainment. Our admissions procedures are designed to ensure that those who come from less advantaged backgrounds are given every opportunity to demonstrate their qualities in the admissions process. This will ensure that those who have benefited from strong support from their schools or their parents are not unfairly advantaged. The use of aptitude tests and a series of personal interviews with tutors contribute towards this outcome.

Target 1: increase the percentage of UK undergraduate students at Oxford from schools and colleges which historically have had limited progression to Oxford

85. At present there are approximately 33,000⁸ students in the UK who achieve AAA grades at A-level (excluding General Studies) annually. Oxford's first target aims to ensure that as many as possible of such students actively consider applying, and that more of them are accepted from schools and colleges with little past success in putting forward successful applicants.
86. There are approximately 3,800 schools and colleges in the UK with post-16 provision, of whom 3,200 offer A-levels. Using historic UCAS data we estimate that in any one year, 800 of these will not have a student who achieves AAA grades, but over a three year period they may produce at least one AAA candidate. The University's intervention here will focus on ensuring that these students are encouraged to apply for our UNIQ summer schools (see paragraph 99) to give such students the best chance of gaining confidence and knowledge of Oxford, and we will make sure that where a student at such a school has the potential to make a competitive application, appropriate information and support is available to facilitate this.
87. There is a much larger group of schools where over a three-year period there will be up to thirty students achieving the AAA level, but where there is limited success in either applying to or securing places at Oxford. Analysis of UCAS data for the three-year period 2007-9 shows that there were on average 2,276 such schools. In addition there are 96 FE and Sixth Form Colleges where there are significant numbers of students achieving AAA, but where the success rate for successful applications to Oxford is also very low (10% or less). We aim to make particular efforts to target access and outreach work on these schools and colleges, since they educate significant numbers of students who should be able to make a competitive application to Oxford, but are currently not doing so.
88. There is no existing annual HEFCE benchmark or target for this area, so we have constructed our own. The University will set a challenging target based on its own historic analysis. In 2010, 21.5% of our UK-accepted applicants were from this group of 2,276 schools and 96 FE and Sixth Form Colleges, so by 2016-17 the University aims to increase the number of UK-accepted applicants from this group to 25%. To

⁸ There are 36,000 UK students who achieve qualifications, including A-level, that are equivalent to AAA grades. 3,000 of the 36,000 are taking qualifications other than A-levels (e.g. Pre-U, Advanced Higher, International Baccalaureate).

assess our progress a milestone of a 0.5% increase a year is expected, and this will be reported through our annual undergraduate admissions statistical release.

Target 2: increase the percentage of UK undergraduate students at Oxford from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds

89. This target is based on analysis of the ACORN dataset which is used to determine socio-economic disadvantage at postcode level. The University has found the ACORN information to be the most accurate source of verifiable information to highlight socio-economic factors that may signify disadvantage, and has used it as a contextual flag in the undergraduate admissions process since 2008-9, and also as a factor when selecting participants for the UNIQ summer schools programmes.
90. There is no HEFCE benchmark or target for this group, so the University will set its own target using the historical evidence gained over the last three admissions cycles, in which socio-economic disadvantage has been a flagged characteristic in the admissions process.
91. UK applicants from ACORN postcodes 4 and 5 are currently flagged in the undergraduate admissions process, and 6.1% of accepted applicants to Oxford came from these postcodes in 2009-10.
92. Looking at the existing pool of applicants, we believe an appropriate target would be to have 9% of accepted UK applicants from ACORN 4 and 5 households by 2016-17. Progress towards this target will be reported in the annual undergraduate admissions statistical release. To assess our progress a milestone of a 0.5% increase a year is expected, and this will be reported through our annual undergraduate admissions statistical release.

Target 3: increase the percentage of UK undergraduate students at Oxford from neighbourhoods with low participation in higher education

93. In line with HEFCE and OFFA recommendations, the University will focus efforts on students domiciled in postcodes which fall within POLAR2 (Participation Of Local Areas, updated) quintiles 1 and 2, who represent the 40% of school leavers least likely to progress to higher education.
94. For the 2011-12 admission cycle the University will flag UK applicants from POLAR 2 quintiles 1 and 2, alongside the contextual flagging of postcodes that identify socio-economic disadvantage. This will enable admissions tutors to identify those candidates who are resident in postcodes with limited progression to higher education.
95. Oxford will also begin more detailed analysis of students on the basis of the POLAR 2 data, and use this to target access activity more accurately to support students from quintile 1 and 2 postcodes. For 2010 entry 9.4% of accepted UK applicants at Oxford are from POLAR 2 groups 1 and 2.
96. Looking at the existing pool of applicants we believe an appropriate target would be to have 13% of accepted UK applicants from POLAR 2 quintiles 1 and 2 by 2016-17. To assess our progress a milestone of a 0.5% increase a year is expected, and this will be reported through our annual undergraduate admissions statistical release.

Target 4: meet the HEFCE Benchmark on disabled students at Oxford

97. The University recognises that it has much to offer to students with disabilities because the tutorial education system and collegiate environment provide a tailored and supportive university experience.
98. The University will aim to continue to meet or exceed the benchmark on participation by students with a declared disability set by HEFCE (3.2%), and will report the outcomes on students with disabilities in its annual undergraduate admissions statistical release. In the most recent year for which applicant data is available, the University reported that 3.6% of its undergraduate population was in receipt of a disabled student's allowance.

	Total full-time first degree students	Number in receipt of DSA	PI for Oxford (%)	Benchmark (%)	Standard deviation (%)
2009-10	9,890	355	3.6	2.9	0.20
2008-09	9,955	370	3.7	3.2	0.20
2007-08	9,925	214	2.2	2.6	0.17
2006-07	10,090	250	2.5	2.5	0.17

Activity targets and outcomes

99. In 2009-10, the target for the number of participants in the **UNIQ summer schools** who applied to Oxford was set at 60%; and the target for the number of participants who became Oxford offer holders was 20% or above. We expected at least 30% of students who applied to Oxford following the summer schools to receive a conditional offer. The baseline was developed from the outcome of the 2008-9 Sutton Trust summer residential at Oxford which resulted in a 53% application rate, of whom 26% were made offers: a total conversion from summer school participation to offers rate of 14%.
100. In 2012-13 the target percentages will continue to apply. Given the emphasis within the UNIQ selection criteria on identifying students from disadvantaged socio-economic postcodes, and from schools and colleges with limited success in making applications to Oxford, there is a clear link between UNIQ and Targets 1 and 2 in this access Agreement. After three years of trend information from UNIQ participants the University will assess whether the current targets need to be amended.
101. The University also established a target for the 2010-12 access Agreement for the success rates and number of students from schools and colleges who have representatives attending the **Regional Teacher Conferences**. The target was to raise participation, application and success levels through contact with teachers from schools and colleges either with low numbers of students attaining the grades necessary to make competitive applications, or where there is limited success in achieving offers where applicants currently do apply. The baseline was the 2007-8 admissions cycle (the year before the teacher conferences existed), when successful applicants from schools and colleges with limited experience or success in achieving offers stood at 15% and there were 70 successful applicants.
102. For 2012-13, the aim of seeing success in achieving offers at above the 2007-8 baseline of 15% still applies. As these schools and colleges reflect some of the most educationally disadvantaged centres in the UK, the attainment of this target will have a direct impact on achieving Target 1 in this access Agreement, and will support the attainment of Targets 2 and 3. The number of attendees at the teacher conferences is increasing each year, so the numbers of students applying to Oxford from schools and colleges with limited applications or success is likely to increase proportionately.
103. Given the use of **contextual information** in the admissions process (as detailed in paragraph 67), Oxford has, from the 2008-9 admissions cycle onwards, monitored and reported the success of applicants who are flagged and then shortlisted for interview. As a milestone for the access Agreement, Oxford will report the offer success rate of

flagged candidates. It is anticipated that flagged candidates shortlisted for interview will achieve at least the same success rate for gaining offers as all applicants to Oxford from the same school or college sector (maintained comprehensive, grammar, FE college, sixth form college, or independent). In 2009-10 there were 500 flagged candidates identified as applicants; the changes to the flagging criteria have resulted in 630 applicants being flagged in 2010-11.

104. As the students who are flagged in the admissions process are so identified on the basis of educational and socio-economic disadvantage (and from 2011-12 onwards low participation neighbourhood) this milestone has a direct bearing on Targets 1, 2 and 3.

Other areas of monitoring and analysis

105. There is considerable media and political attention on the composition of Oxford's undergraduate student body by reference to prior **school type**. The HEFCE adjusted benchmark for Oxford published in 2010-11 indicated a benchmark ratio of state (maintained) to independent schools of 67:33.
106. In 2010-11, percentages of applications to Oxford from UK students in UK schools were 64.3 state and 35.7 independent sector respectively. This compared with 60.5 state, and 39.5 independent sector in 2007-8. In 2010-11, percentages of offers by Oxford were 58.5 state and 41.5 independent, compared with 54.8 and 45.2 in 2007-8. The University believes that the increase in applications from, and offers to, applicants from the maintained sector has been due to the significant increase in its access and outreach activities, particularly the focus on involving teachers and developing programmes to support applicants from state schools with limited experience of Oxford.
107. However, evidence shows that this measure is often misleading as an indicator of social diversity. There are students from relatively wealthy backgrounds at state schools, and students from relatively disadvantaged ones at independent schools. One third (around 410) of the current holders of the full Oxford Opportunity Bursary (students with a household income of less than £25,000) were educated in the independent sector.
108. Our goal is to increase access for under-represented groups. We are not convinced that using school type is the best means to that end. We believe the targets we have identified will be more useful in tackling the challenges of access from under-represented groups.
109. The University will continue to report in its annual statistical release the state and independent mix of UK students attending UK schools who apply and who are made offers. But in current circumstances, we do not believe this would be either a helpful or meaningful target or benchmark in addressing the very complex factors related to under-representation in selective universities.
110. The University will be monitoring the level of students from **households with income of less than £16,000**. It is considered that these are the most financially disadvantaged in society, and it is below this threshold that some qualify for receipt of free schools meals, and consideration for the proposed pupil premium. The University does not consider that identifying simply those students who have actually been in receipt of free school meals provides a suitably robust indicator of disadvantage as

they are not available in every school or college with post-16 provision, nor does every eligible student choose to receive them.

111. There are no national statistics available on the number of students whose household income level is below £16,000 and who attain the required academic threshold to make a competitive application to Oxford. In 2009-10, around one in ten of the University's UK undergraduate intake was admitted from households with this level of declared income. It is likely that this group is especially debt averse, and discussions with our student union have indicated that this group of applicants has limited access to accurate advice and guidance. It will be a significant challenge to maintain this level of participation with the new funding arrangements, and we will monitor this carefully.
112. We will provide significant financial assistance to applicants from households with income below £16,000 who secure places. We will ensure that any potential University applicant who comes into contact with Oxford will have access to all the information required to consider applying to Oxford, or any other University. Activities which will support this work are:
- Tuition charge waivers;
 - Bursary provision;
 - Targeted financial information. The University launched a new webpage in February 2011: www.ox.ac.uk/fundingupdate/. The aim of this page is to give potential applicants continued access to clear and transparent information on funding arrangements for 2012 entry. Any new developments will be added as soon as they are decided, and enquirers will be directed to them;
 - Guidance for those applicants who are made an offer, to ensure that they are fully aware of all of the available financial assistance that they can apply for and receive.
113. Whilst there are no HESA or HEFCE performance indicators showing the expected **ethnic composition** of the undergraduate student body, it is clear that some groups of BME (black and minority ethnic) students do not progress to selective universities and courses at a rate that would be anticipated based upon their percentage in the UK population overall. There are many reasons for this, but course choices and a propensity for some ethnic groups to focus heavily on the most oversubscribed subjects are factors which particularly affect applications to Oxford. However, attainment levels at GCSE and A-level (e.g., in the most recent data available from UCAS, there were only 65 students achieving AAA (excluding general studies) or better, who defined their ethnicity as Black-Caribbean), prior experience of higher

education and school and college guidance also have an effect on successful applications from these groups to Oxford as well as other universities.

114. Oxford will continue to offer support to all those candidates who display the level of academic attainment and potential required to make a competitive application. The University will continue to look for particular interventions which may assist and encourage applicants from BME backgrounds. As part of the annual admissions statistical release, the University will also continue to publish detailed information on the ethnicity of applicants and their relative success rates in securing offers and places at Oxford.
115. The University will seek to encourage and diversify applications and participation by **mature students**, particular in areas which encourage and support social mobility. We will also be working closely with local FE and HE providers who provide routes by which mature entrants can access higher education. Oxford does not, though, view this as a simple issue, particularly when a high proportion of the mature students who are admitted to undergraduate courses (e.g. those which open up the professions such as Graduate Entry Medicine) already have a number of prior qualifications, frequently at postgraduate level. The proportions of mature students on undergraduate courses will be reported in the annual undergraduate admissions statistical release.

5. Monitoring and evaluation

116. The University will monitor progress against each of these targets and milestones on an annual basis and publish the results in its Undergraduate Admissions Statistical Release. Individual access programmes will be evaluated to test their effectiveness in meeting these targets. The University would be interested in working with other selective universities with tuition charge waivers and bursaries to measure the impact of its own schemes. In particular, the University would like to investigate further the impact of initiatives to increase participation from the most financially disadvantaged in society.
117. As described above, the University's record on student retention is excellent. Oxford's highly personalised education and student support ensure that student progress is closely monitored and any issues are picked up and dealt with promptly. We will monitor students in our target groups to ensure that this is done.
118. The Education Committee of Council, chaired by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education), is the senior body responsible for the delivery of this agreement. Education Committee includes representatives of the academic divisions and of the colleges. Two elected sabbatical officers of the Student Union represent students on the Committee.

6. Provision of information to prospective students

119. The University will ensure that all applicants have access to the relevant information to make an application which reflects their abilities through the following mechanisms:

- The undergraduate **prospectus** is designed to explain clearly each stage in the application process, and is accompanied by further publications focussed on student funding, interviews, and information for parents and carers.
- The undergraduate **admissions website** (www.admissions.ox.ac.uk) provides applicants with up-to-date information, as well as contact details.
- College websites and prospectuses provide further information about their provision, including details of degree courses offered, living costs, and daily life in their academic communities.
- Subject-specific prospectuses, websites and handbooks give detail on the curriculum and facilities offered.
- The University's **Admissions information centre** is located in central Oxford and aims to encourage all potential applicants to choose Oxford through the provision of accurate information and sound advice on all aspects of the admissions process. Enquiries are managed in variety of ways, including face-to-face at the information centre and via telephone and email.
- The University also runs a series of large **open days** and on-campus **talks and tours** to provide prospective applicants with a chance to experience the University, talk to current students and obtain specific information on courses, colleges and student life.
- The availability of admissions- and access-related videos on our iTunes U and YouTube channel, as well as lectures which provide an insight into studying at the University, means this material reaches an even wider audience, and on platforms that young people regularly use. Admissions- and Access-related information is also promoted via our Facebook page, which has 180,000 followers.

Provision of financial information

120. The University recognises that the provision of information on finances whilst at University is of particular importance both to prospective students and their sponsors. We are utilising the following mechanisms to address this:

- A **2012 funding website** www.ox.ac.uk/fundingupdate has been established containing up to date information on the decision-making process.
- The **fees and funding website** www.ox.ac.uk/feesandfunding is continually updated with tailored information for current and prospective students.
- A **Finance Guide** is published annually; the University is currently considering how best to do this for 2012.
- A **dedicated email address** student.funding@admin.ox.ac.uk exists to answer queries from current and prospective students.
- Finance presentations are available at every **open day** and advisors are available to answer individual questions.

121. Although students from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are outside the scope of this agreement, the University would wish to provide the same level of information and assistance to prospective students from these devolved administrations, as well as England. Measures taken by the University and its colleges are intended to complement the advice which is available to students from the regional funding agencies. However, the current level of complexity in UK student funding is a barrier to access. It is increasingly difficult for universities to ensure that they have all the information to advise students where information changes frequently, or is difficult to obtain. Problems with obtaining student finance cannot be underestimated, and it is critical that the most vulnerable students do not feel that they stand out on arrival at University because they immediately require additional financial assistance owing to having been unable to obtain the funding for which they are eligible.

Appendices

Annex A	Indication of fee to OFFA by 31 March 2011
Annex B	Details of fees, income, expenditure, and milestones/targets
Annex C	Checklist
Annex D	Baseline data for targets and milestones

Annex A: Indication of fee to OFFA by 31 March 2011

Do you intend to submit an access agreement for 2012-13?

Please complete this pro forma and return it to us at accessagreements@offa.org.uk by 31 March 2011. This is not binding, but it will help us in our planning.

Institution name:	University of Oxford
Name:	Keith Zimmerman
Position:	Director of Student Administration and Service
Telephone:	01865 270 081
E-mail:	Keith.zimmerman@admin.ox.ac.uk

1. Do you intend to submit an access agreement for 2012-13? (Yes/no)	YES
2. What is the highest fee you are likely to charge?	£9,000
3. Are you likely to vary your fees (e.g. by course type or subject)?	no
3a. If yes, - what is your likely fee range?	N/W
- what is your average (mean) fee per student likely to be, approximately? (Note: in calculating this, you should include fees up and including the basic fee of £6,000 as well as fees above the basic level.)	£9,000 but £8,500 with deductions for fee waivers

Annex B: Details of fees, income, expenditure, and milestones/targets

Please see attached spreadsheet

Annex C: Checklist

Please see attached spreadsheet

Annex D: Baseline data for targets and milestones

Background

The University will utilise a range of measures which focus on factors that provide some of the most significant barriers to participation in higher education generally and to admission to Oxford specifically. The research that underpins targets 1-3 in this Agreement has indicated that there may be some overlap between some of the criteria used. The schools and colleges with the lowest success in gaining admission to Oxford may be in catchment areas with low participation neighbourhoods and they may include numbers of students who face socio-economic disadvantage. But there are many divergences from this; in particular, where there are significant geographical catchment areas for schools or colleges in major urban conurbations or very rural areas or where admission to the school or college is highly influenced by academic selection criteria. Baseline data for target 4 is in the main body of the Agreement.

Target One: Increase the percentage of UK undergraduate students at Oxford from schools and colleges which historically have had limited progression to Oxford

Year of Entry	Total number of UK applicants (Total accepted UK applicants)	Total number of UK applicants from target schools and colleges	Target students not shortlisted for interview	Target students rejected after interview	Target students made offer but declined place	Target students failing to meet offer conditions	Target students accepted having met offer	Target students withdrawing from UCAS process	Percentage of Target students as percentage of overall UK accepted students
2008	10051 (2,738)	2,895	882	1,281	11	64	572	85	20.9%
2009	10839 (2,717)	3,180	1,124	1,331	12	42	572	99	21.1%
2010	12284 (2,662)	3,651	1,524	1,374	15	44	572	122	21.5%

Note: The baseline data for this target has been constructed from UCAS A-level school and college performance data for the period 2006-9, and Oxford application and admission statistics. The value for accepted students of 572 that occurs in each year has been checked and is a statistical coincidence.

Target Two: Increase the percentage of UK undergraduate students at Oxford from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds

Year of Entry	Total Number of UK applicants matched with ACORN postcode (Total accepted UK applicants)	Total number of UK applicants from ACORN postcodes 4 and 5 (i.e. target group)	Target students not shortlisted for interview	Target students rejected after interview	Target students made offer but declined place	Target students failing to meet offer conditions	Target students accepted having met offer conditions	Target students withdrawing from UCAS process	Percentage of Target students as percentage of overall accepted UK accepted students (ACORN postcodes)
2008	9,765 (2,675)	876	293	370	4	24	150	35	5.6%
2009	10,725 (2,688)	1,014	381	397	4	17	178	37	6.6%
2010	12,152 (2,645)	1,105	483	398	1	15	162	46	6.1%

Note: The use of ACORN postcode data, which categorises the socio-economic circumstances of an applicant's household, has been used by the University as part of the contextual flagging of candidates since the 2009 entry admissions cycle. The postcode data set is highly detailed, allowing definition down to groups of twelve households, and is updated on an annual basis. It is used as part of the contextual flagging process by a number of other highly selective universities.

Target Three: Increase the percentage of UK undergraduate students at Oxford from neighbourhoods with low participation in higher education

Year of Entry	Total number of UK applicants matched with POLAR 2 postcode participation data (Total accepted UK applicants)	Total number of UK applicants from POLAR 2 quintile one and two postcodes	Target students not shortlisted for interview	Target students rejected after interview	Target students made offer but declined place	Target students failing to meet offer conditions	Target students accepted having met offer conditions	Target students withdrawing from UCAS process	Percentage of Target students as percentage of overall accepted UK accepted students (POLAR 2 postcodes)
2008	9,869 (2,697)	1,236	351	532	8	23	271	49	10.1%
2009	10,765 (2,705)	1,421	493	568	4	25	284	47	10.5%
2010	12,175 (2,644)	1,490	615	555	5	21	249	45	9.4%

Note: POLAR 2 data sets are used by HEFCE to assess participation in higher education by neighbourhood. Whilst it is possible to assign postcodes, the breakdown is at the level of council voting wards, so it is not as finely grained as ACORN postcode data. The POLAR 2 dataset was last updated in 2007, and it has not been used as part of the admissions flagging at Oxford. From the 2011-12 admission cycle it will be used and tutors will be aware of those candidates who live in a postcode where the participation in higher education is in the lowest 40% of school and college leavers.