



AECC
University College

Access Agreement 2017/18

CONTENTS

- 1. INTRODUCTION**
- 2. FEES, STUDENT NUMBERS AND FEE INCOME**
- 3. EXPENDITURE ON ACCESS, STUDENT SUCCESS AND PROGRESSION**
- 4. EVALUATION OF ACCESS, STUDENT SUCCESS AND PROGRESSION**
- 5. ACCESS AND OUTREACH**
- 6. STUDENT SUCCESS AND PROGRESSION**
- 7. FINANCIAL SUPPORT**
- 8. TARGETS AND MILESTONES**
- 9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**
- 10. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**
- 11. PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS**
- 12. CONSULTATION WITH STUDENTS**

This document was updated in August 2017 to reflect the change in name to AECC University College.

1. INTRODUCTION

The AECC University College is a specialist HEI providing undergraduate and postgraduate education and training in its niche area of musculoskeletal health.¹

Over some fifty years, the AECC University College has built a reputation locally, nationally and internationally for the excellence and quality of teaching in its specialist areas, most notably chiropractic. There is also strong provision of postgraduate education and training in musculoskeletal diagnostic ultrasound. All the University College's courses focus on developing students' clinical and professional skills leading to highly employable graduates.

The University College carries out its responsibilities under the Equality Act (2010) and ensures that all staff, students and other stakeholders are treated fairly and without discrimination. Aligned with these responsibilities, this Access Agreement reflects the University College's commitment to widening participation and to the retention and success of all its students.

This Agreement specifically covers the University College's undergraduate students studying full-time and as such, termed 'OFFA-countable'. Presently, all such students are on the University College's undergraduate chiropractic course, although AECC University College's strategic goal is to grow and diversify its undergraduate portfolio of programmes. Under the current franchise agreement with Bournemouth University, all eligible students access loan support through the University. Reflecting the high cost of clinical course delivery, tuition fees are set at the maximum of £9000, and the course attracts the HEFCE high cost subject stipend at Band B. Currently AECC University College is included in Bournemouth University's Access Agreement. However, from September 2017 the University College intends to award its own degrees. As such, this is the first Access Agreement to be set out by the University College.

As with many vocational degrees, for example medicine, widening access to chiropractic is particularly challenging given the high academic standards required to successfully complete the course as well as the extended length of the course. Moreover, chiropractic is a relatively small profession in the UK (just over 3000 registered practitioners) with almost all chiropractors working in private practice. As such, chiropractic remains relatively unknown to a high proportion of the population, in particular to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

The measures set out in this Access Agreement are designed to both raise the aspirations of, and ensure the success of students from disadvantaged groups. The University College is well aware that some groups are under-represented in the current student body. The aim therefore is to widen access to these groups at the same time as supporting the retention, attainment and progression into employment of all our students. We have evaluated our current metrics and set realistic strategies and targets for future outreach work while maintaining our excellent record in retention and graduate employment. We have also taken this opportunity to revise the University College's financial package of student support to place greater emphasis on helping students from low income backgrounds.

¹ Currently a private alternative provider with specific course designation and in a franchise agreement with Bournemouth University, the University College was designated as a HEFCE-funded institution and granted Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP) in 2016. This Access Agreement has been prepared on the basis that the College will operate as a direct HEFCE-funded institution with TDAP from September 2017 with an Access Agreement in place enabling it to charge the maximum tuition fee (£9000) for its undergraduate programme(s).

2. FEES, STUDENT NUMBERS AND FEE INCOME

The following fee limits apply to all Home/EU undergraduate full-time students (excludes those studying on a course equivalent to, or lower than the one already held (ELOs) and overseas students):

Table 1.

Programme	Tuition Fee	Anticipated number of entrants 2017-18	Anticipated total number of undergraduate students 2017-18	Additional fee income 2017-18
Integrated Masters (undergraduate) Master Chiropractic (MChiro)	£9250	96	96	£296,160

The maximum tuition fee of £9250 (revised in accordance with OFFA advice on fee increases) reflects the quality of education and the high cost of clinical training facilities and resources. The tuition fee for new entrants will rise in line with any future government decisions on the fee cap.

The projected total number of undergraduate students in Table 1 is based on new entrants only to an AECC University College-validated undergraduate chiropractic programme in September 2017. Although we anticipate the majority of existing students on this programme transferring from the BU-validated MChiro to an AECC University College-validated MChiro in 2017-18, as requested by OFFA we have not included these student numbers in this Access Agreement. A revision to this Agreement will therefore be required once existing students have transferred, which we anticipate will occur from September 2017.

3. EXPENDITURE ON ACCESS, STUDENT SUCCESS AND PROGRESSION

Given that this is the University College's first Access Agreement, we set out our expenditure based on comparisons with similar specialist institutions, and in line with OFFA guidance. Thus the University College proposes to spend approximately 30% of the additional fee income (£296,160) on i) pre-entry measures (outreach work and good quality information to prospective students), ii) direct financial support in the form of bursaries and iii) post-entry measures (student success and progression). The expenditure set out for 2017-18 will include new and existing measures and give us a baseline from which to monitor our progress and review our expenditure in future years.

Table 2.

Year	Total Eligible Funding (30% of additional fee)	Access and outreach	Financial support	Student success	Progression

	income)				
2017-18 (Minimum required)	£88,848	£26,654 (30%)	£35,539 (40%)	£22,212 (25%)	£4,442 (5%)
2017-18 (Proposed actual spend)		£143,738	£120,000	£144,218	£22,750

4. EVALUATION OF ACCESS, STUDENT SUCCESS AND PROGRESSION

To understand our current performance in widening participation and student support, we have conducted an analysis of AECC University College data in relation to benchmarks and data provided by HESA. Currently in a franchise agreement with Bournemouth University, the University College's student data are routinely included in the University's returns to HEFCE and HESA. These data have therefore been disaggregated from those of the University for the purposes below.

The following give the University College's performance on access, retention and employment for the last 3 years.²

Performance on Access:

Table 3.

a) Young full-time first degree entrants-from State Schools and Colleges (HESA Table 1a)				
Year	AECC (%)	Benchmark (%)	Location Adjusted Benchmark (%)	UK (%)
2011-12	85.7	92.5	90.8	88.9
2012-13	90.0	93.1	91.4	89.3
2013-14	84.6	93.6	91.8	89.7
2014-15	75.0	94.0	92.2	89.8

b) Young full-time first degree entrants-from NS-SEC classes 4-7 (HESA Table 1a)				
Year	AECC (%)	Benchmark (%)	Location Adjusted Benchmark (%)	UK (%)
2011-12	27.8	33.7	31.2	30.7
2012-13	22.6	36.4	33.6	32.3
2013-14	20.0	36.8	33.9	32.6
2014-15	20.8	34.1	32.2	33.0

c) Young full-time first degree entrants-from Low Participation Neighbourhoods (POLAR 3) (HESA Table 1a)				
Year	AECC (%)	Benchmark (%)	Location	UK (%)

² HESA data for 2014-15 not yet available (DNA).

			Adjusted Benchmark (%)	
2011-12	-	11.0	10.0	10.2
2012-13	0	12.0	10.9	10.9
2013-14	6.5	12.1	10.8	10.9
2014-15	6.5	12.5	11.1	11.4

d) Mature full-time first degree entrants (HESA Table 2a)				
Year	AECC (%)	Benchmark (%) DNA	Location Adjusted Benchmark (%) DNA	UK (%)
2011-12	41.3			20.1
2012-13	39.5			21.1
2013-14	34.9			20.5
2014-15	40.4			DNA

These data show that the AECC University College performs, as expected, below benchmarks on young entrants from low participation neighbourhoods and low socio-economic groups. Similarly, young entrants from state schools are below national benchmarks. In contrast, AECC University College exceeds UK national averages on mature (+21 years) student entrants. Taken overall, these data indicate that more needs to be done to widen participation to disadvantaged groups and to state school students in the years ahead (see section 8).

Performance on retention:

Table 4.

a) Continuation following year of entry-all full-time first degree entrants (HESA Table 3a)			
Year	AECC (%)	UK (%)	
2011-12	93.3	91.4	
2012-13	90.6	90.9	
2013-14	93.0	DNA	
2014-15	88.2*	DNA	

b) Continuation following year of entry-Young first degree entrants (HESA Table 3a)			
Year	AECC (%)	UK (%)	
2011-12	90.5	92.3	
2012-13	93.8	92.1	
2013-14	90.3	DNA	
2014-15	84.5*	DNA	

c) Continuation following year of entry-Mature first degree entrants (HESA Table 3a)			
Year	AECC (%)	UK (%)	
2011-12	100	88.0	
2012-13	85.7	86.3	
2013-14	100	DNA	
2014-15	72.2*	DNA	

* AECC University College data

These data show that retention rates are broadly in line, or slightly above national averages. This is as expected given the vocational nature of the course, and that most students have a strong commitment to achieving their goal of becoming a chiropractor. Nevertheless, the course requires high levels of academic ability and as expected, progression rates are lowest in the year following entry. In subsequent years, retention rates steadily rise. This is illustrated in the table below of the University College's own data of progression rates for each year of the course:

Table 5.

<i>Continuation at each level- All students</i>				
Year	Level 4 (%)	Level 5 (%)	Level 6 (%)	Level 7 (%)
2011-12	89.8*	91.8*	95.3*	99.1*
2012-13	84.6*	95.6*	97.5*	99.0*
2013-14	83.5*	83.3*	98.8*	99.0*
2014-15	76.0*	81.3*	95.5*	96.3*

* AECC University College data

Taken together, these data show very good retention rates for all students, particularly as they proceed on the course.

Performance on employment:

Table 6.

Employability DLHE			
Year	AECC (%)	Benchmark (%)	UK (%)
2011-12	DNA	-	-
2012-13	96.3	92.0	92.1
2013-14	93.0	93.1	93.2
2014-15	DNA	DNA	DNA

These data based on two years (data for 2011-12 are unavailable because of a procedural error in data reporting) show good progression into employment broadly in line with benchmarks and as expected given the vocational nature of the course.

Taken overall, review of these data reveals that while the University College performs well on student success and progression, and targeted financial support, it is, as expected, below benchmarks and national averages in recruiting students from state schools and disadvantaged backgrounds. Access and outreach are therefore priority areas in our work to widen participation and enhance social mobility.

5. ACCESS AND OUTREACH

The University College recognises the challenges in widening participation due to the nature of chiropractic as a predominantly private practice healthcare profession, and the University College's catchment area (south of England) that comprises regions in which the proportion of under-represented groups is lower than the national average. Consequently, the University College must prioritise resources on widening participation through expansion of its current outreach work both locally and as part of wider collaborative networks.

In line with OFFA guidance, we are aware that co-ordinated outreach activities may be more effective and sustainable in the longer term in widening participation compared to direct financial support. Accordingly, we will implement a number of new initiatives in outreach activity, and target resources on increasing the number of entrants from under-represented and disadvantaged groups. Meanwhile, we will continue with current outreach activity including, for example discounted fees for treatment in the University College's outpatient training clinic for low income and disadvantaged groups.

The challenges we face in widening participation are similar to those of, for example, medical schools where narrow social groups still dominate the student population. Work that medical schools are doing with primary and secondary schools provides a helpful exemplar although this must be proportionate to the size and financial means of AECC University College. Nevertheless, targeting young people who live in areas of low progression to higher education or who come from families that have low incomes or lack higher education experience is a common goal, as well as the type of activities that might be undertaken to engage and attract these groups to think about and aspire to a career in healthcare.

We therefore intend to implement a targeted and sustained programme of outreach work to raise the aspirations and attainment of younger age groups, as well as among students at Key Stage 5. We will work with local state schools and more broadly through collaboration with the Southern Universities Network (SUN). As part of this collaboration, we are currently in discussions to contribute to a promotional film by the University of Winchester aimed at increasing the number of male students to health and social care courses, and also to a prospectus aimed at 11 year olds co-ordinated by the University of Southampton.

We will engage with local state schools by establishing a number of link schools, and wherever possible those with a high proportion of under-represented groups as indicated by POLAR 3 data. We will offer a range of activities targeted to Key Stage 2 and 3 pupils including roadshows that bring staff and student ambassadors to visit local schools aimed at raising the aspirations of young children to enter higher education, and on-campus activities to include fun practical demonstrations, hands-on activities, opportunity to learn about health, basic first aid and active lifestyle advice. For older students at Key Stages 4 and 5, we will focus on those

schools with high proportions of students from widening participation backgrounds providing school visits and on-campus activities, but in this case directed to information, advice and guidance on higher education in broad terms and specifically on chiropractic as a subject to study. We will include taster days and shadowing both in the University College and in the AECC University College outpatient training clinic, and the support to prepare and advise students during the application period.

In addition to work with schools, we will work with our extensive network of chiropractic practices throughout the UK, particularly those in low participation neighbourhoods and areas with high proportions of low income families. Here we will prioritise work experience opportunities for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds consisting of a summer school at the University College and providing a realistic picture of what it would be like to study at the AECC University College.

In many ways, engaging with mature learners is even more of a challenge in that this is a group often hard to reach. We will target this group through invitations to our sessions giving advice on managing back pain and inviting participants to experience student life by shadowing activities in the University College and in the outpatient training clinic.

We propose to set aside 30% of the additional fee spend on access and outreach to implement a widening participation agenda and the activities to achieve this. As our first access agreement, this will give us a rational baseline from which to monitor progress, and put forward future agreements with possibly revised targets.

6. STUDENT SUCCESS AND PROGRESSION

The University College recognises that widening participation in itself does not guarantee that students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups succeed on their course and progress into employment or further education. Initiatives in outreach and widening participation must be matched by fair and equitable admissions procedures, and support measures to ensure that each and every student achieves their academic potential and, in this particular case, the target they have set themselves in becoming a chiropractor.

Admissions

Our admissions procedures mark a crucial step at the start of the student lifecycle. At this point, we engage with students on a one to one basis, and provide information, guidance and advice on entry requirements to the chiropractic course. In many cases, prospective students are motivated to become a chiropractor long before the application stage, through either family or friends, or having been treated themselves by a chiropractor. Reaching those who have not previously engaged with the profession remains a particular challenge in our efforts to widen participation in under-represented and disadvantaged groups.

Our aim in educating and training chiropractic students is that they become excellent healthcare professionals working within their scope of practice as regulated by the General Chiropractic Council. Students will be starting on a path to becoming part of a regulated profession with

significant levels of responsibility. It follows that our admissions procedures must therefore be robust and fit for purpose.

Students from disadvantaged and under-represented groups

To safeguard the public, graduates must be safe and competent to practise. As a profession in which manual skills are pivotal in the treatment of patients, chiropractors must be physically capable to manually handle patients and apply what at times are strenuous procedures. Prospective students with a physical impairment must therefore be fully aware of the physical demands, not only while on the course, but subsequently when working as a chiropractor. As a severe physical disability can compromise the student's ability to work, there is a critical discussion to be had with prospective students who are physically disabled. The University College has had experience over a number of years in dealing with such cases, both with due regard to the sensitivities of the individual case and the Equality Act 2010. In some cases, in spite of the disability, the University College has been able to make reasonable adjustment and provide specific support to enable the student to succeed on the course. For example, students with severe visual and hearing impairments and with lower limb amputations have all progressed into employment as chiropractors. In some cases however, it is not possible to admit a student to the course because of a physical disability. As a consequence, the number of students with physical disabilities recruited to the AECC University College is, and will almost certainly continue to be significantly lower than the national average.

Students are trained to enter the workplace, which means in normal circumstances treating and caring for both male and female patients. However, we recognise that some students because of religious beliefs may wish to only treat patients of one sex. While making reasonable accommodation for students it is also the case that the University College has a duty to ensure that graduates are safe and competent to practise as a chiropractor. Similarly, the nature of the subject area requires peer participation in clinical skills training classes, and the need to remove some clothing when acting as a 'patient' to be examined. Again, while the University College makes reasonable adjustments, these issues, including dress codes based on religious beliefs and faith, can pose significant barriers to widening participation to ethnic and minority groups.

Non-standard entry requirements

Since 2012, the University College has delivered a part-time Access to HE course at weekends for students without (science) A levels. This course has widened participation to higher education for students who do not come from the 'typical' A level qualification route. Currently, there are 23 students on the chiropractic course recruited after successful completion of the Access to HE course.

In addition to this 'non-standard' entry route, the University College also recruits students holding the BTEC qualification. As the proportion of students with different entry qualifications increases, we will conduct analyses to determine whether there are any differences in outcomes between A-level entrants and those with other entry qualifications as part of the University College's evaluation of widening participation and student retention (section 9).

Mature students

The University College has historically recruited a high proportion of mature (aged 21+) students, in particular those committed to making a career change to chiropractic. However, in recent years this trend has reversed, in part reflecting the impact of ELQ funding arrangements and the national downturn in mature applicants to higher education, in particular to undergraduate courses. The University College aims to maintain its record on recruiting high proportions of mature students to its undergraduate course above the national average.

Student retention and attainment

The University College has an excellent record of retention significantly above sector norms, in particular for those on the undergraduate chiropractic course (~ 5% total attrition rate). As a small institution, there is a collegiate culture and a strong supportive interface between tutors and administrative staff, and students. AECC University College will continue to provide a range of student support services, aligned to the Equality Act 2010, which is of benefit not only to students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups, but to all students.

At the start of the course, new entrants participate in an Induction Event to familiarise themselves with the University College and with the course. Students are introduced to tutors and to their personal tutors, and each student is paired with a Year 2 student under the 'buddy system'. There is a robust academic structure consisting of the Course Leader, year tutors and unit tutors, which underpins a framework of strong academic support for each student. Student progress meetings are held regularly, and any student identified as making less than satisfactory progress is given individual feedback in face to face meetings with tutors, and in some cases a structured individualised remedial plan to follow. The University College's attrition rate is, in the main, made up of students failing to achieve the required academic standards rather than deciding that a career in chiropractic is not for them after all. It follows therefore that the low attrition rate reflects, at least in part, the robust academic support structures in place for all students. We will maintain these support systems as part of our work on student retention.

Student support services also include counselling, additional learning needs support, chaplaincy and language support. Up to this point, students are able to access these from Bournemouth University under the franchise arrangements between the University and the University College. Again, in anticipation of successful applications for TDAP and institutional designation, and relevant to this Access Agreement, support services aimed at retention of students will be provided wholly by AECC University College in 2017-18.

Employability

The professional orientation of the University College's programmes, not least the undergraduate chiropractic course, ensures high rates of employability. Almost all chiropractic graduates enter private practice, normally as an 'associate' under the mentorship of an experienced chiropractor. Data from the DHEL survey demonstrate high employability rates with 96% of chiropractic graduates in 2013 in work six months later.

To help graduates find a suitable practice, the University College arranges meetings between chiropractors and students in their final year. As a small profession, an active AECC University College alumni and the University College being one of only three chiropractic institutions in the UK, the network between chiropractors and chiropractic teaching faculty is pivotal and effective in introducing senior students to employment opportunities. As with student support, facilitation

of students into employment is relevant to all students and not only those from under-represented and disadvantaged groups, and is included in our expenditure on student success.

We also offer a Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Development (Chiropractic) to all new graduates in their first year out in practice. This is designed to ease the transition from final year student practice in the sheltered and supervised AECC University College training Clinic to autonomous practice as a qualified chiropractor in the 'real world'. In addition, AECC University College provides a number of part-time, blended learning MSc programmes for chiropractors in specialised areas such as rehabilitation and diagnostic ultrasound, which provide graduates with the opportunity to progress to further education. These programmes are strongly focussed on learning in the work-based setting. As such, the AECC University College fully recognises the importance of relevant opportunities for further study for all chiropractic graduates, in particular where this can be undertaken alongside their day to day employment.

7. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Over several years, the University College has provided a number of scholarships for students who attain high grades in their entry qualifications, and also for elite athletes. In considering its Access Agreement, the University College made the decision to rebalance this financial support and offer bursaries to prospective students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups. Consequently, a new Bursaries Policy was approved by Academic Board in November 2015. Given that financial support should be in place throughout the period of study and not only in the first year all bursaries will be awarded on a year by year basis throughout the student's course. As such, students with a household income \leq £16,000 will receive a bursary of £2000 for each year of study. Students with a household income between £16,001 and £25,000 will receive a bursary of £1800 for each year of study. This applies to UK students studying full-time on our undergraduate chiropractic programme and will be given as a choice of a fee waiver or cash bursary.

In arriving at our financial support package, we reviewed practice in other HEIs and found that the principal method of supporting students was based on household income. We also took the deliberate step to ensure that our support package was sustainable throughout the student's period of study and therefore not only as an enticement for entry to the programme. We intend to evaluate the impact of this financial support package through feedback from those students in receipt of the funds and also by reviewing how we are performing against our targets for recruiting students from low income backgrounds.

The University College will continue to provide a Hardship Scheme for students who, during their time on the course, encounter genuine and unforeseen difficulties that may jeopardise their ability to continue. In these cases, students are able to defer up to one year's fees to be repaid once they are in employment.

8. TARGETS AND MILESTONES

As the University College's first Access Agreement we have taken a realistic approach to setting targets, ensuring that those we have set are meaningful and provide a valid exemplar to measure ourselves against. We believe it is preferable to monitor our success through achievements against public information in the form of HESA Performance Indicators allowing a level of comparison with other higher education institutions. At the same time however, we are well aware of the limitations imposed by our catchment area, which is less diverse than some other areas in the UK, and more significantly, the specialist nature of the provision (i.e. chiropractic) covered by this Agreement. For this reason, it may not be entirely appropriate to directly compare our progress against that of other institutions, most of which are considerably larger and generalist in nature. Nevertheless, we appreciate the need to establish a baseline and set targets that will stretch us in achieving widening participation, albeit that any outreach work to raise the aspirations and ambitions of younger school students will take time to materialise in the form of higher entrant numbers.

In setting our targets we have reflected on our historical data to give us a baseline from which to change and improve. We have adopted a cautious approach in this our first access agreement, starting from a baseline that is realistic and building in modest growth in all target areas. This will allow us to demonstrate our progress in these key areas, using this information when writing future agreements.

Access:

Table 7.

%	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
State-educated	78%	80%	82%	85%	88%
NS-SEC 4-7	20%	20%	22%	23%	25%
POLAR 3	6.5%	6.5%	7%	7.5%	8%
Mature	>UK average	>UK average	>UK average	>UK average	>UK average

- *Proportion state schools and colleges*

That at least 88% of our young (≤ 21 years) undergraduate students come from state schools and Colleges.

- *Proportion NS-SEC 4-7*

That at least 25% of our young (≤ 21 years) undergraduate students come from NS-SEC classes 4-7

- *Proportion low participation neighbourhoods*

That at least 8% of our young (≤ 21 years) undergraduate students come from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR 3)

- *Mature*

That we will maintain high proportions of mature (>21 years) undergraduate students above the national average

Reaching the targets on access will be extremely challenging for the AECC University College given the limited exposure of prospective students to chiropractic, and that an integrated Masters degree may be perceived as unachievable, in particular by those very groups we will target. In line with the University College's strategic goals however, diversification of the undergraduate portfolio will facilitate the achievement of these targets.

Retention and Success:

Table 8.

%	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
No longer in HE after 1 year	7	7	7	7	7
Employment	93	94	95	95	95

- Proportion non-continuation

That we maintain our low attrition rates so that no more than 7% of our undergraduate entrants are no longer in HE in the year following their year of entry

- Proportion of graduates in employment 6 months after graduation

That we maintain our high employability rates and that 95% of graduates are in employment 6 months following graduation

9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

As this is its first Access Agreement, the University College is ideally placed to implement an outcomes framework from the start to routinely collect relevant data and evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the measures that we will take on access and retention. In line with our targets, our focus will be on evaluating progress on the proportions of students from state schools, lower socio-economic groups and low participation neighbourhoods as well as mature entrants. Student success will be evaluated by student retention and progress into employment.

AECC University College is currently implementing a new student record system, and will use this to mine student information and provide evidence on the retention, attainment and progression of students from all backgrounds. To do this in a systematic fashion, the University College will identify the information required in terms of independent (causal) and dependent (outcome) variables, and adopt a counterfactual approach in comparing different groups of students. As part of this work, we will look at additional fields that we may wish to add to our application and enrolment processes. We expect to monitor outcomes in terms of degree attainment and progression to employment for different groups of students while adjusting for variables such as gender and entry qualifications. This will not only enable us to understand

'what works' in terms of access and student success, but perhaps more importantly how we can improve our performance in the future in terms of our own provision and student population.

In line with the recent HEFCE Report (Delivering opportunities for students and maximising their success) (2015), we understand that systematic evaluation is a priority area, and that evidence of this type may be used in future quality assessment and the proposed Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). While cognisant that our data may be problematic because of small sample sizes, we will produce an annual report for internal monitoring based on the evidence that emerges from this data evaluation exercise.

This Access Agreement, and evidence of how it is working in practice, will be monitored from a resource perspective by the University College's senior management group. Outreach activities will be reported to the senior management group by the Head of Marketing, and Registry staff will monitor student population statistics against HESA benchmarks. Annual monitoring reports on widening access will also be made available to the Student Staff Liaison Sub-Committee and through this, to the University College's Academic Board chaired by the Principal and the Board of Governors. The University College's Bursary Policy, including the Hardship Scheme, is approved by Academic Board. Payments from bursaries and the hardship scheme are reported to the University College's governors through the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

10. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The AECC University College is strongly committed to the Equality Act (2010), and executes its responsibilities aligned to its Equality, Diversity and Dignity Policy across all its work with staff, students and the wider community. The University College's Policy covers all the characteristics protected by law ensuring that there is no discrimination against a particular characteristic or group in any of its dealings with all stakeholders.

The Executive Director of Administration is responsible for ensuring that the AECC University College Equality, Diversity and Dignity Policy is upheld at all times. As a member of the executive and senior management groups, the Executive Director of Administration ensures that the University College's Access Agreement conforms to the University College's responsibilities under the Act. Given the close links between access agreements and equality and diversity work, the fact that both areas are monitored through the same management systems ensures that the principles and practice of equality, diversity and dignity are firmly entrenched in, and integral to the University College's Access Agreement.

As will be evident in this Access Agreement, the University College is committed to work on widening participation, which is likely to disproportionately impact on groups with protected characteristics. The nature of chiropractic means that we have very few students with severe physical disabilities and from some ethnic groups, but outside of this we can, and will act to access prospective students from all backgrounds.

11. PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

The University College provides clear and accessible information to prospective students (and parents) at regular open days, student recruitment events, website and admissions services. Our Access Agreement will be published in full on our website. The University College interacts with different audiences in a range of ways including prospectuses, website, social media and presentations. We also provide timely information to UCAS and SLC. The Key Information Set (KIS) on the chiropractic course is published on our website.

Specific information, advice and guidance for prospective students will include:

- Provision of financial information including fees, planning advice on how to finance their period of study, extra costs, for example purchase of diagnostic kits, and bursaries and other forms of financial assistance for eligible students in each year of their study.
- The admissions process ('how to apply') and entry requirements.
- Course information, academic support services, and Student Union facilities.
- KIS and current student feedback data (NSS).

As well as published information, the University College offers advice and guidance on a one to one basis with prospective students, including financial and academic information. Moreover, the Student Union is always willing to put a prospective student in contact with a current student for advice and guidance.

All public information for prospective students is regularly monitored and there are clear lines of responsibility for approving the accuracy of the information, and for making it available in the public domain.

12. CONSULTATION WITH STUDENTS

As part of implementing a new structure in 2014, students are represented on all of the University College's academic committees including Academic Board. A student representative is also a full member of the AECC University College Board of Governors. All student fees, and any annual increases in line with government policy, are approved by the Board of Governors. The University College has an established Student Union, and a full-time manager employed by the University College. Student Union Officers act on behalf of student body, and student representatives act in the student interests. Our students are strong supporters of the University College and act as excellent ambassadors in promoting the chiropractic course in outreach activities and in the wider community.

Our Access Agreement was considered by Academic Board in March 2016. In drawing up the new Bursary Policy, students were consulted and have been instrumental in shaping the financial support provided by the University College. The University College's bursary policy for 2017-18 was approved by Academic Board in November 2015. As an integral part of access and student retention and progress, it is critical that students play a meaningful role in the University College's widening participation agenda and as a result consider themselves equal stakeholders in its success.