Social Mobility
Widening Participation
Access to Higher Education

Dr Anca Greere
Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in the UK
The national strategy’s vision is that all those with the potential to benefit from higher education have equal opportunity to participate and succeed, on a course and in an institution that best fit their potential, needs and ambitions for employment or further study.

State of the Nation 2016 Report: 
Social Mobility in Great Britain

Press release

“The Social Mobility Commission welcomes the high priority that the current, as well as successive, governments have given to social mobility, and finds that some real progress has been made.”

... “lays bare the scale of the social mobility challenge facing the government”.

Executive summary

“The sector is committed to tackling social mobility and inequality. ... However, ... there is more still to do, particularly in widening participation for under-represented groups.”

“Age poses different challenges, including the importance of the availability of opportunities to study flexibly. Mature students also need to be part of the solution.”
Embedding Equality and Diversity in the Curriculum
Published 2015

The Higher Education Academy’s discipline-specific practitioner guides

https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/heav/social-mobility
Higher Education and Research Bill

- currently progressing through Parliament
- creation of Office for Students (OfS)
- confirms that access and participation plans should be broader than just entry to higher education
- HEIs to publish application, offer and progression rates by gender, ethnic background and socio-economic background through a Transparency Duty
- admissions bodies (UCAS) will be required to provide “application-to-acceptance” data

http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/highereducationandresearch.html
independent regulator of fair access to higher education in England
(2005 first access agreements approved)
OFFA makes sure that universities and colleges that charge higher tuition fees have adequate measures in place to attract and support disadvantaged students, by supporting and challenging them to do the following things:

1. Remove barriers to entry for people from groups that are under-represented at that university or college.

2. Support them to complete their studies and achieve the best they are able.

3. Support them as they prepare to progress to jobs or further study.

https://www.offa.org.uk/about/
Professor Les Ebdon, Director of OFFA says:

“Fair access is not just about getting in, it is also about getting on. As well as breaking down barriers so that talented people from disadvantaged backgrounds can get into higher education, all students need appropriate support so that they are able to achieve to their highest potential and go on to a good job or further study. Anything else is a waste of talent and a disservice to hard working, fee paying students.”

Access agreements

Press release September 2016

“The Office for Fair Access (OFFA) has today published 198 access agreements for 2017-18. The access agreements were approved following negotiation between OFFA and universities and colleges, and are the most ambitious yet.”

“Universities and colleges have pledged to increase both the work and the investment that they put in to improve fair access to higher education for under-represented groups.”

“This includes predicted future investment of £833.5 million under 2017-18 access agreements which is an increase of over 10% in cash terms compared to 2016-17 access agreements”.

Access agreements, and thus OFFA’s remit, concern students from ‘under-represented and disadvantaged groups’. These groups can include (but are not limited to):

- people from low income backgrounds (the definition of ‘low income’ varies from year to year: more details)
- people from lower socio-economic groups or from neighbourhoods where higher education participation is low, including White males from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (more details)
- black and minority ethnic groups
- disabled people
- mature and part-time learners
- care leavers
- carers
- people estranged from their families
- people from gypsy and Traveller communities.
- refugees
- people with mental health problems, Specific Learning Difficulties, and/or who are on the autism spectrum.
Entry rate of 18 year-olds from the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods

73% increase 11.2% 19.5%

Source: UCAS

Entry rates to higher tariff universities for 18 year-olds from the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods

2.3% 2.4% 3.6%

2006 2010 2016

Source: UCAS

https://www.offa.org.uk/about/
“The introduction of access agreements ... has had a positive impact on strategic planning and priorities at an institutional level and has ensured resources for widening participation are ring-fenced”

The uses and impact of access agreements and associated spend
CFE Ltd/Edge Hill University, 2013
value for money to students and will “introduce a framework to recognise universities offering the highest teaching quality; encourage universities to expand their reputation and financial incentives; widen participation of people from disadvantaged backgrounds; provide greater focus on employability; open up the sector to greater competition from new high quality providers; and reform our regulatory structure so that it drives value for money for students and taxpayers.

For too long, teaching has been regarded as a poor cousin to academic research. The new Teaching Excellence Framework, which we promised in our manifesto, will hard-wire incentives for excellent teaching and give students much more information both about the type of teaching they can expect and their likely career paths after graduation.

The TEF should change providers’ behaviour. Those providers that do well within the TEF will attract more student applications and will be able to raise fees in line with inflation.

provide clear information to students about where the best provision can be found and should encourage providers to improve teaching quality to reduce variability.
Purpose of TEF

- Better inform students’ choices about what and where to study
- Raise esteem for teaching
- Recognise and reward excellent teaching
- Better meet the needs of employers, business, industry and the professions
Key characteristics

• **Building on QA arrangements**, making use of QA

• **Voluntary process** => 299 universities, colleges and alternative providers (Year 2-2016/2017)
  

• Excellence in context, reflecting diversity, **inclusive**
• Using existing metrics as **proxies**

• **Institutional**, adding on discipline level in near future

• **All HE providers which are designated for public funding**
• **All modes of delivery**, including distance-learning
  • Level 4 and 5 on FHEQ + **undergraduate**
  • No postgraduate provision (yet)
  • No transnational education
TEF: who can participate?

Scope

• UK wide

• Undergraduate provision

• All modes of delivery

• UK and international students studying in the UK

• Franchised provision is assessed at the teaching provider

Eligibility

Designation for student support

Widening access and participation

Quality requirement

Suitable metrics: determines the type of award
# TEF Assessment framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of quality:</th>
<th>Teaching Quality</th>
<th>Learning Environment</th>
<th>Student Outcomes and Learning Gain</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criteria:</td>
<td>Teaching quality criteria</td>
<td>Learning environment criteria</td>
<td>Student outcomes and learning gain criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence:</td>
<td>Teaching, assessment and feedback (NSS results)</td>
<td>Academic support &amp; non-continuation (NSS results and HESA)</td>
<td>Employment / further study, including highly skilled (DLHE)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Evidence:**
  - Metrics
  - Submission

- **Outcome:**
  - TEF rating & Statement of findings

- **Metric splits:**
  - Provider submission
# TEF assessment criteria

## Aspects of quality:

### Criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Quality</th>
<th>Learning Environment</th>
<th>Student Outcomes and Learning Gain</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Student Engagement</td>
<td>1. Resources</td>
<td>1. Employment and Further Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Valuing Teaching</td>
<td>2. Scholarship, Research and Professional Practice</td>
<td>2. Employability/Transferable Skills</td>
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<td>4. Feedback</td>
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</table>
Components of an application

- **Contextual data**
  - Data on the student profile
  - Data maps

- **Metrics**
  - Core metrics
  - Split metrics

- **Submission**
  - Additional context, explanation and/or evidence

Prepared by HEFCE

Prepared by the provider
# Qualitative

## Teaching Quality
- Teaching provides effective stimulation, challenge and contact time that encourages students to engage and actively commit to their studies.
- Institutional culture facilitates, recognises and rewards excellent teaching.
- Course design, development, standards and assessment are effective in stretching students to develop independence, knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect their full potential.
- Assessment and feedback are used effectively in supporting students’ development, progression and attainment.

## Learning Environment
- The learning environment is enriched by linkages between teaching and scholarship, research or professional practice.

## Student Outcomes and Learning Gain
- Positive outcomes are achieved for students from all backgrounds, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds or those who are at greater risk of not achieving positive outcomes.

Full assessment criteria on page 24 @ [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,2014/Content/Pubs/2016/201632/HEFCE2016_32.pdf](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,2014/Content/Pubs/2016/201632/HEFCE2016_32.pdf)
### Quantitative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teaching on my course</td>
<td>National Student Survey (NSS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Assessment and feedback</td>
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<td>3. Academic support</td>
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<td>4. Non-continuation</td>
<td>HESA/ILR student records</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Employment/further study</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Highly skilled employment or further study</td>
<td>Destination of Leavers from HE (DLHE)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Ratings

Consistently outstanding and of the highest quality found in the UK Higher Education sector.

Of high quality, and significantly and consistently exceeds the baseline quality threshold expected of UK Higher Education.

Of satisfactory quality awarded on QA baseline.
Regulated by
the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)
https://www.accesstohe.ac.uk/Pages/Default.aspx
What is Access to HE?

• The Access to Higher Education Diploma is a qualification which prepares people without traditional qualifications for study at university.

• Access to HE courses are delivered by colleges in England and Wales, and are available in a range of different subjects, such as nursing, social studies, law, and art and design.

• Courses are validated by Access Validating Agencies (AVAs), licensed by QAA.
Development of the Diploma

- QAA responsible for the recognition of Access to HE programmes (1997)
- Access to HE Development Project (2004), QAA
- The Access to HE Diploma and credit specification (2006)
- Introduction of grading (2009) = Level 3 credits
- Current Access to HE Diploma specification (2013)
Current status

• Inclusion in UCAS from 2017, made possible by new specification - consistency of structure and volume of academic content

• Evidence from entry requirements as published that the significant majority of higher education courses accept Access to HE Diploma as an alternative to 3 A Levels

• Methodology therefore positions the Diploma as **equivalent in size to 3 A Levels** for calculation purposes
Department for Higher Education Grant Letter to HEFCE for 2017-18

Notes
• “the valuable role of QAA-regulated Access to HE courses to widening participation.”

and comments;
• “… we would like you to support this valuable scheme to ensure the Diploma is regulated for 2017/18.”

• “…. we wish to consider how best the QAA could optimise the take-up of the Diploma, including future activity and funding levels, to most effectively assist in the achievement of our social mobility goals.” [subject to the Higher Education and Research Bill]
The contribution of the Access to HE Diploma to widening participation
HESA data showing the number of Access to HE students entering their first year in university higher education in England and Wales.
Access to HE 2014-15

Widening participation in higher education

25,480
Diploma students entered higher education in England and Wales

88% over 21 years old

22% from low participation areas

29% from ethnic minority backgrounds

17% had a disability or learning difficulty
Mature applicants to higher education through UCAS (2015-16)
Access to HE students in higher education

• 4.4% of all undergraduate entrants in 2014-15, but a higher proportion at certain institutions and in certain subject areas

• 53 universities recruited between 200 and 900 students with an Access to HE Diploma - up from 47 in 2013-14

• 10% of entrants with an Access to HE Diploma went to a Russell Group university
Access to HE in 2014-15

Contributing to UK economy and society
Testimonials/Real life stories

Nneka's story

I was in a waitressing job, working anti-social hours for very little money. I had to step back and look at my options

- Nneka Akudolu - Criminal barrister
- Yvonne Brissett - Broadcast journalist
- Richard Deacon - Doctoral researcher
- Dr Mark Field - Senior Lecturer in Politics and Public Policy
- Gabrielle Holmes - Midwife
- Erik Johansson Cox - Research scientist
- Susan Nelson - Access to HE course coordinator
- Stuart Prior - Lecturer in Archaeological Practice
- Alan Searle - Business psychologist
- Ian Webber - Primary school teacher

https://www.accesstohe.ac.uk/Access/RealLife/Pages/Default.aspx
Next steps

International Access to HE Diploma