



Queen Mary University of London

Access Agreement 2018-19

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This is the 2018-19 Access Agreement for Queen Mary University of London (QMUL). It demonstrates the university's commitment to maintaining its strong tradition and good track record in supporting widening participation and fair access in the face of higher tuition fees and the new arrangements for funding higher education introduced in September 2012. It builds on previous Access Agreements submitted to the Office for Fair Access (OFFA), sets out QMUL's tuition fee charges for new entrants from September 2018, and describes the programme of access and student support and progression measures that will be put in place to ensure that we continue to recruit and support talented students from all backgrounds. The Access Agreement reflects three overarching themes of a whole student lifecycle approach, the need for evidence-based practice, and the importance of effective collaboration and partnership.

SECTION 2: TUITION FEE CHARGES FROM SEPTEMBER 2018

2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 QMUL's five-year Strategic Plan makes it clear that widening participation is at the heart of the university's vision and ambitions. It sets out our plans to achieve the highest international standards in education and research, while continuing to serve our local communities through public engagement and the promotion of opportunity to individuals less favoured by financial or social background. These objectives reflect QMUL's ethos, as summarised below:

“QMUL has a proud record of providing a university education of the highest quality to a diverse population of students, including many from backgrounds lacking financial or social privileges. We celebrate the resulting diversity of our student body and aspire to be recognised as a prime destination for high-achieving students from lower participation backgrounds.”¹

- 2.1.2 According to 2015-16 HESA undergraduate student data, 57% of QMUL's students from known ethnicities are from black and minority ethnic groups, and 12% of undergraduate students have declared themselves as disabled. Women make up 54% of the undergraduate student cohort. In addition, we have an excellent record in attracting talented students from a wide range of social backgrounds, and 25% of our home undergraduate students come from families with a household income of less than £10k. We are proud of the diversity of our students and of our reputation in promoting widening participation and the social mobility that this supports.

2.2 Charges for tuition fees for new entrants in 2018-19

- 2.2.1 QMUL's proposed tuition fees for new entrants from September 2018 are set out in Table 1 of the 2018-19 Resource Plan. These are for full-time students only, as QMUL does not currently offer part-time undergraduate courses.

¹ 'Queen Mary University of London, Strategy 2014 – the next five years', strategic aim 1 page 6

2.2.2 For 2018 entrants the university is proposing to charge £9,250 for all full-time courses. This figure may change, subject to Government decisions on maximum fee caps following decisions on Year 2 of the Teaching Excellence Framework.

2.2.3 Students on year-in-industry placements will be charged £1,850 for this year for all courses. This figure may change, subject to Government decisions on maximum fee caps following decisions on Year 2 of the Teaching Excellence Framework.

2.2.4 Year-abroad students will be charged £1,385 for the year that they study abroad. This figure may change, subject to Government decisions on maximum fee caps following decisions on Year 2 of the Teaching Excellence Framework.

2.3 Real-terms inflationary increases from 2018-19

2.3.1 Tuition fees for new entrants for all undergraduate courses will be £9,250 from September 2018 (subject to decisions on Year 2 of the Teaching Excellence framework). Subsequently, QMUL may apply annual increases to fees each year in accordance with the inflationary increases allowed by Government regulations.

SECTION 3: ASSESSMENT OF QMUL'S ACCESS AND RETENTION RECORD

3.1 QMUL has a strong record in recruiting students from under-represented groups, and we work hard to support student retention, success and progression. As in the 2017-18 Access Agreement, we have assessed our proportion of under-represented students as slightly above average, and our record on retention as in need of further improvement. Evidence for this assessment is found in the table below, which uses HESA data for the two-year period from 2014-15 to 2015-16.

2014-15 entrants	QMUL actual performance	HESA benchmark for QMUL	HESA location-adjusted benchmark for QMUL
young full-time first-degree entrants from state schools	87.9%	84.5%	81.4%
young full-time first-degree entrants from low-participation neighbourhoods (POLAR 3)	4.2% ²	8.3%	4.6%
young full-time first-degree entrants from National Statistics Socio-economic Classification groups (NS-SEC) 4-7 ³	37%	25.9%	27.9%
2013-14 young full-time first degree entrants not in higher education in 2014-15	5.5%	3.9%	

² See section 7.1.2 regarding POLAR3 and specific challenges for London HEIs

³ HESA NS-SEC data not available after 2014-15

2015-16 entrants	QMUL actual performance	HESA benchmark for QMUL	HESA location-adjusted benchmark for QMUL
young full-time first-degree entrants from state schools	88.7%	85.6% %	83.5%
young full-time first-degree entrants from low-participation neighbourhoods (POLAR 3)	4.2%	8.5%	4.5%
2014-15 young full-time first degree entrants not in higher education in 2015-16	5.7	3.9	

- 3.2 In 2018-19 we will commit 30.4% of the additional fee income raised from tuition fees above the basic fee level to support additional outreach and retention measures. Details of how this significant level of additional investment will be spent are set out in Tables 4 and 5 of the 2018-19 Resource Plan. The total countable expenditure for the 2018-19 Access Agreement is £10.2 million.

SECTION 4: DEMONSTRATING A STRATEGIC APPROACH IN THE LIGHT OF CHANGES TO THE FAIR ACCESS LANDSCAPE

- 4.1.1 Research has indicated that widening participation activities have the greatest impact if they are delivered in a sustained way, as part of a long-term partnership with target schools. In 2018-19 QMUL will deliver an extensive outreach programme that will focus on raising student aspiration and achievement and on providing appropriate information, advice and guidance to support students in making the right choices for successful progression to higher education. This will combine projects involving a wide range of schools and colleges with the development of long-term structured interventions with a smaller number of partner institutions.
- 4.1.2 We have taken effective steps to identify schools with the largest proportion of students from groups that are under-represented in higher education. Previously, we utilised standalone metrics in helping us to determine which schools to target and we had some concerns that this method could be overly simplistic. Now, our approach makes use of a number of metrics in combination, from which we calculate a point-score for every state school in our target boroughs. This score is then used to help us determine which schools to prioritise.
- 4.1.3 We have a five-year Widening Participation and Enhancing Opportunities (WPEO) Strategy, which sets out our institutional approach up to 2020. Details can be found at <http://www.arcs.qmul.ac.uk/docs/policyzone/150851.pdf>. The strategic priorities of the WPEO Strategy, supported by the work undertaken through the Access Agreement, are:
- Maintaining a whole-institution approach to widening participation throughout the student lifecycle and working collaboratively to achieve this

- Developing longer-term and more intensive interventions, ensuring these are embedded and sustainable
- Reviewing the targeting of all areas of work to ensure that it is focused on those who would benefit most. This will be done by:
 - redefining the targeting methodology for outreach work, using school-based and individual indicators
 - refining the targeting for student retention and support work
 - using data about the progression of graduates to support the development and delivery of work focused on graduate outcomes
- Grounding work in available research and data and growing the evidence base through better evaluation and monitoring of widening participation work throughout all areas of the student lifecycle.

4.1.4 We use online applications for our intensive outreach programmes. This enables us more easily to gather detailed information about the applicant's socio-economic background and whether the student has any close family members who have been to university. Additionally, through our engagement in the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) we can now undertake further postcode profiling of potential outreach participants. Students are selected if there is good evidence that they are in one or more of the key target widening participation groups. Whole-group activities are targeted at schools and colleges that have a high percentage of students from low-participation neighbourhoods, or who are entitled to free school meals. The ongoing refinement of our targeting of schools and colleges ensures that we are working with appropriate cohorts.

4.1.5 We have reviewed our decision-making process for initiatives that involve students applying to us directly (for example, our summer schools). We understand that young people are affected by multiple dimensions of disadvantage, and our approach attempts to recognise this. As with our schools-targeting rationale, we take into account a range of widening participation indicators to calculate a point-score for each application. This method enables us to prioritise students impacted by the largest number of factors that may negatively influence higher education progression. It also allows us to, where beneficial, factor in project-specific aims, for example allocating points for female students in a STEM activity or male students in a literacy scheme.

4.1.6 We support raising attainment in areas of social and economic deprivation through our long-term work in developing two local multi-academy trusts. We started work with St Paul's Way Trust School in Tower Hamlets in 2009, when it was a failing school. We took on the role as lead education partner for the then Foundation Trust, and by 2013 the school was judged "outstanding" by Ofsted. In September 2016 St Paul's Way Trust School (SPWTS) became an academy and simultaneously a multi-academy trust (called the University Schools Trust, East London (UST), with QMUL as lead sponsor, and bringing in the Royal Greenwich Trust School (converting from a UTC) as the second 11-19 UST school. This is an ambitious development and with QMUL's support the UST will be expanding to approximately 12 schools (primaries and secondaries) over the next three years. Senior members of staff from QMUL chair the UST Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) Board and the Governing Body of STWTS. We also support SPWTS through a

balanced programme of short- and long-term initiatives, which will be extended to all UST schools. SPWTS now supports other schools in the area as a national teaching school.

- 4.1.7 We also continue to work with the Drapers' Company as co-sponsor of the Drapers' MAT in Havering. The Drapers' MAT comprises the Drapers' Academy (11-19) and three primary schools. The Drapers' Academy was failing when QMUL took on the role as co-sponsor, and it is now graded "good" by Ofsted. GCSE and A level scores continue to improve, and in 2016 the number of students gaining five good GCSEs (including English and maths) was 56.4% (up from 52% in 2015). Our support for the MAT includes the provision of governors for the primary and secondary schools, a programme of outreach activities for Year 6-13 students, and continued support for the development of the Drapers' Academy sixth form (introduced in 2012).
- 4.1.8 Both MATs are situated in areas of considerable social and economic deprivation, but their schools have very different student cohorts. For example, St Paul's Way Trust School has a high percentage of pupils of Bangladeshi heritage and the Drapers' Academy has a high percentage of disadvantaged white British pupils.
- 4.1.9 QMUL will also seek to raise attainment in schools by developing a Teacher Degree Apprenticeship programme with a STEM focus. The programme development will begin once the Teacher Standard has been approved by the Department for Education and Institute of Apprenticeships, but it is hoped that the programme will be offered by QMUL from 2019 onwards. The aims of the programme are twofold. Firstly, it will provide trainee teachers with specialist curriculum knowledge, particularly in the areas of physics and mathematics, combined with school-based practice. Secondly, it will support the recruitment and retention of high quality teachers in STEM subjects.

SECTION 5: PROGRAMME OF ACCESS AND STUDENT SUPPORT AND PROGRESSION MEASURES (PLEASE REFER TO FOOTNOTE)

5.1 Financial support for 2018-19 entrants (please refer to footnote⁴)

- 5.1.1 QMUL will provide targeted financial support for students from low-income backgrounds through the QMUL Bursary Scheme. This scheme has been restructured for 2018-19, following evidence produced from a comprehensive review of the existing scheme carried out in 2016. This review, and the evidence produced, is described in detail in section 6.2.
- 5.1.2 The QMUL Bursary Scheme will offer a £1,700 cash bursary per year of study to 2018-19 entry undergraduate entrants who come from households with a residual income of £15,000 or less and who qualify for income-assessed UK government financial support for living costs for higher education students.

⁴ Following a further review of the available evidence and discussion with our staff and students, we have increased our bursary provision. Please refer to the [QMUL bursaries webpage](#) for the up to date information.

- 5.1.3 We will also offer a cash bursary of £750 per year of study to students who come from households with residual incomes of between £15,001 and £30,000 and who qualify for income-assessed UK government financial support for living costs for higher education students.
- 5.1.4 The QMUL bursary schemes described above will apply to full-time undergraduate students who start a course at QMUL in the academic year 2018-19. Students who start a course before the 2018-19 academic year, and who are already in receipt of a bursary, will continue to receive their bursaries based on the current schemes described in the relevant Access Agreement.
- 5.1.5 In addition to the main bursary schemes, we have allocated £50,000 for Article 26 Bursaries to support undergraduate students who are asylum seekers, children of asylum seekers or those holding Discretionary Leave to Remain in the UK. Two students per academic year will be awarded a tuition-fee waiver plus maintenance support. This will consist of a non-repayable grant worth the equivalent of a Student Finance Maintenance Loan and a QMUL Bursary. In addition, all asylum seekers or children of asylum seekers who meet the academic programme requirements will be eligible to pay the 'home rate' of tuition fee while their asylum application is under consideration by the Home Office. In 2018-19 QMUL will commit funding for two further bursaries for Article 26 students, in addition to those funded through the Access Agreement.
- 5.1.6 We will provide a Financial Assistance Fund of £250,000 to provide assistance for students who may need extra financial support to access and remain in higher education. The fund will be used to assist students who need extra financial help to meet specific costs that are not already met from statutory or other sources, to help students in financial hardship by providing emergency payments for unexpected financial crises, and to intervene in cases where a student may be considering giving up their course because of financial problems. As described in section 5.4.10, provision has also been made within this allocation to address issues arising from changes to the Disabled Students' Allowance from September 2015.
- 5.1.7 Students studying undergraduate programmes at the University of London Institute in Paris (ULIP) are registered through QMUL. They will, for the purposes of this access agreement, be considered the same as QMUL students. They will therefore be eligible for all the support outlined above, subject to meeting the same eligibility criteria as other QMUL students.

5.2 Year 6-13 Outreach Programme

- 5.2.1 The 2018-19 outreach programme will address the strategic priorities described in section 4.1. Examples of our longer-term targeted work are:
- We will continue to work closely with St Paul's Way Trust School and the Drapers' Academy, offering an intensive programme of outreach support to students studying secondary and post-16 education in both schools. We will also continue to support teachers at both schools.

- We have developed a programme of intensive support for primary-age children. This currently includes the delivery of a primary coding club and reading challenge. We have prioritised our primary school work to benefit our long-term partner schools. The formation of the Drapers' Multi-Academy Trust (which includes primary schools) and the development of St Paul's Way Trust School into an all-through-school from Reception to Year 13 has allowed us to do this more effectively.
- We have developed, and continue to deliver, long-term projects such as *Bridge the Gap*, an access to medicine and dentistry programme. This work is focused on targeted secondary schools and colleges and their feeder primary schools, and aims to raise aspirations and awareness of medicine and dentistry as career pathways among students from groups that are significantly under-represented within the profession. It offers age-appropriate interventions at three stages – stage 1: Year 6, stage 2: Year 8-9, and stage 3: Years 10-13. The programme works with experienced external partners such as the Brightside Trust, who provide support for the e-mentoring strand of the programme. In addition, support is offered to parents, carers and teachers through online resources and an insight event held at the university. This event provides parents and carers with information on how they can support their children in pursuing medicine or dentistry, and gives them an opportunity to take part in some medicine and dentistry taster activities. All students who have completed the *Bridge the Gap* programme, and who meet QMUL's minimum entry requirements, will be guaranteed an interview for a place on the undergraduate dentistry or medicine course. We are exploring ideas for academic research that will focus on the long-term impact of the Bridge the Gap programme.

5.2.2 In addition to the intensive work with partner schools detailed above, we will deliver a broader outreach programme targeted at students from lower socio-economic groups, students from low-participation neighbourhoods and students who are the first in their family to consider university. This programme includes the innovative work of the Centre of the Cell (a bioscience education centre at the heart of our medical school). It is supported by an ongoing review of our schools-targeting methodology to ensure we are working where we can add most value. In 2018-19 we will continue to develop this full range of activities, including work from primary school upwards:

- Primary
 - A primary campus-visit programme for schools.
 - A primary summer school for Year 5 children run for the first time in 2017, in partnership with City University. This will inspire younger children to think about studying languages, and support their learning by helping them develop a “growth mindset”
- Secondary
 - A secondary school campus-visit programme specifically to support Year 8 and Year 9 students making GCSE choices
 - Developing subject-specific support, including a range of summer schools, to feed into that offered for post-16 students.

- Post-16
 - Continuing to provide enhanced subject-specific support through intensive and multiple interventions, for example a summer school programme with pre- and post-event follow-up activities, the *Bridge the Gap* programme and a Year 12 Coaching Programme.
- Transition
 - Offering a programme of transition activity to students in Years 12 and 13 in target schools and colleges. This programme of work will continue to add value and support other areas of the outreach programme, for example by including care leavers in this activity.
- Work with parents and carers
 - QMUL has always recognised the importance of parents' and carers' influence on young people's aspirations and future education. We have incorporated parents and carers into our general information, advice and guidance work where feasible. In 2018-19 we will run a programme of specific work for parents and carers, delivering talks and activities at parents' evenings.

5.2.3 Care leavers are significantly under-represented in higher education. QMUL will continue to enhance its work to support the progression of young people in care and care leavers. We worked originally with Buttle UK to design and implement a new programme of support measures, including improved data collection on care leavers. We now have a defined package of support for prospective students embedded within the university. Our strategy includes proactively contacting students who declare via the UCAS tick box to advise them of the provision available. We have also set up our own monitoring of students at pre-enrolment stage to capture additional information as required.

5.2.4 We have developed outreach events for young people in care, their carers, care leavers and local authority staff. Collaboration has been central to this, and we have established links with local authorities and the Greater London Authority (GLA) to continue this work. Students in Year 12 now benefit from intensive one-to-one support via an Undergraduate Shadowing Scheme. We continue to support the Higher Education Liaison Officer Association (HELOA) London group in delivering an annual collaborative university taster day for looked-after children. We play an active role in the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL), and a member of QMUL staff is Co-Chair of the National Strategic Group.

5.2.5 QMUL works in partnership with the UNITE Foundation to offer the UNITE Foundation scholarship scheme to five students each academic year. This scheme is targeted at young independent students who have previously been in Local Authority care, or residing in a Foyer or similar residential provision for young homeless adults. It offers the provision of free accommodation and a cash sum of £4,000 per year to each student for the duration of their academic course.

5.2.6 In 2018-19 QMUL has allocated £205,000 for the outreach programme delivered through the central widening participation team. This will allow for the

continuation and expansion of the work described above. Measurable outcome-based targets have been set for these activities and these are set out in Table 7b of the Resource Plan.

5.3 Student retention, success and progression programme

- 5.3.1 QMUL is developing an innovative initiative to broaden the undergraduate educational experience for all students; the approach is referred to as the QMUL Model. The Model will create an integrated and credit-bearing programme for all undergraduates with approximately 10% of each year of study supporting the development of social and cultural capital, and enhancing the student experience and the contribution that students and graduates are able to make to society. The 10% integrated component will develop students' networking skills, cross-disciplinary critical thinking, entrepreneurialism and global perspectives, enabling our graduates to develop as leaders in their chosen fields. This initiative will support graduates' career prospects (employability) but will also focus on maximising their future opportunities in the broadest sense and will ensure that our students achieve outcomes commensurate with their talents. In our view, the QMUL Model takes widening access to the next stage, i.e. to *widening opportunity*, such that the usual barriers to future success created by disadvantaged backgrounds are minimised. The QMUL Model will allow students to personalise their programmes by choosing, with the guidance of their Personal Tutor, the most appropriate credit-bearing options in each year of study to strengthen their profiles. In some cases the new credit-bearing options build on existing extra-curricular activities. Inclusion of these options within the curriculum and within usual teaching hours is, however, an important part of the Model as this limits any unintentional widening of the gap between the least and most advantaged students; the former being less likely to take up extra-curricular opportunities because of part-time working, caring responsibilities etc. The QMUL Model will be introduced for first-year students in September 2017 and roll forward until all undergraduate years are included, and Access Agreement funding from 2018-19 will support the development of this ambitious initiative, in which QMUL is investing heavily. Supporting student wellbeing will be a key priority, and an example of our approach to this is the development of a Student Wellbeing and Resilience module by our Wolfson Institute Centre of Psychiatry. This will be available to all undergraduate students through the QMUL Model. Other existing initiatives with good evidence of impact, such as the structured study-abroad programmes, and QConsult programme (described in detail in section 5.3.6), will be modified and expanded significantly through the QMUL Model, enabling active learning and co-creation.
- 5.3.2 In addition to this important new initiative, QMUL's academic schools and professional services departments will continue to work together to support delivery of a range of specific interventions to address student engagement, retention and success. These include a focus on areas such as monitoring student engagement, measuring and closing any attainment gaps for black and minority ethnic (BME) students as part of a HEFCE-funded Catalyst project, and participation in a second HEFCE-funded Catalyst project to investigate potential differences in outcomes for students who have BTEC entry qualifications, developing staff in academic advising roles, seeking to enhance the first-year experience to improve the transition into higher education, and supporting students in achieving good honours degrees

and graduate-level employment. QMUL has established a dedicated team to drive forward this work, which is monitored and evaluated through the QMUL Engagement, Retention and Success Steering Group.

- 5.3.3 The programme is underpinned by an evidenced-based approach. This is demonstrated in our research to identify any gaps in the performance of BME students. Early results from the analysis of all students at QMUL confirm gaps in attainment, but not retention, compared with entry qualifications for BME students. The admission of BME students is under review to compare the proportion of applications with offers and enrolments, controlling for entry qualifications and degree subject. These quantitative findings complement a new qualitative research project to understand the BME student experience. The initial findings for this, following in-depth interviews with over 40 students, will be reported in September 2017. This will initiate institutional work, overseen by the QMUL Equality and Diversity Committee, to support BME students through the student lifecycle, seeking to close any attainment gaps. In addition, we will undertake exploratory work to better understand a particular cohort, those reporting £0 household income (c. 6% of home undergraduates) through to £10k household income (c.25% of home undergraduates). According to our initial analysis, controlling for entry qualifications, this group is less likely to achieve higher grades and are more likely to withdraw.
- 5.3.4 We continue to enhance our systems to monitor engagement of students. QEngage monitors individual students' engagement in their programmes of study, and Co-tutor provides the tools to manage the staff-student relationship. This is aligned with our training for personal tutors, providing a three-hour session for academic colleagues to be effective in the role, sharing experiences and good practice, and helping them to understand the specialist services available to students. This training will be further modified through the introduction of the QMUL Model in 2017-18 (see section 5.3.1) and the extension of the role for tutors to have conversations with their students about their social capital and QMUL Model module selections.
- 5.3.5 A specific area of focus for progression work is to target students in receipt of a QMUL bursary for additional support. An analysis of the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey showed that, when compared against degree outcome, bursary holders were less likely to progress into a graduate-level job than those who did not receive a bursary. As a result, QMUL's Careers & Enterprise Centre developed, and continue to deliver, a number of projects (as follows) to address this issue while continuing to monitor progression outcomes for bursary holders.
- 5.3.6 QConsult places bursary holders into mini-consultancy projects in East London businesses. Local organisations are able to solve a business problem while building the employability of students who, although high-achieving, may lack the social capital to compete for graduate jobs. While conducting their projects the students receive advice from relevant industry professionals and training and support on project management, presentation and professional skills from QMUL's Careers & Enterprise team. The impact of this project in supporting students from lower-income families was recognised in the 2016 Guardian University Awards, where

QConsult was the winning entry in the Employability category. JP Morgan (who funded the project initially) also won the 2016 Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) award for Careers Service Engagement for its work on QConsult, after being nominated for this award by QMUL. The project was described by the judges as *“a wonderfully affirmative example of employer and university working together to support students from low-income backgrounds achieve their full potential”*.

- 5.3.7 QMentoring connects current students with QMUL alumni, or UK-based professionals, who act as mentors by providing first-hand insights into their industry. Targeted at students from lower-income families, the scheme runs for six months, helping students to set and achieve career goals and making a significant impact on students’ confidence, knowledge and awareness of wider career opportunities. The evaluation and monitoring of QConsult and QMentoring continues to inform and determine the specific support delivered to bursary holders in future years.
- 5.3.8 QMUL’s Students’ Union runs multiple schemes every year that contribute to the transition of school leavers into university as well as enhancing retention and success. One example is the annual peer-mentoring scheme, which pairs first-year students with students in the later years in the same academic school to provide support. The scheme trains current students to provide pastoral support to new students, helping them develop confidence and make a smooth transition into university life. The Students’ Union also runs the Halls Representatives Scheme alongside Residential Support, which aims to increase opportunities to meet people in residences and create additional support networks for students.
- 5.3.9 The Students’ Union runs a scheme aimed at enhancing student employment. Working with QMUL’s Student Services department, the Students’ Union has developed and piloted the QM Skills Award. This provides additional training opportunities for students engaged in areas such as societies, volunteering, club sport, and student representation as well as allowing them to log their activity and then reflect on the skills they have developed in the context of their future employment or progression to further study.
- 5.3.10 Other examples of the Students’ Union contribution to this work include:
- development of a club sport hardship fund so that students in financial hardship can participate in club sports
 - training for course representatives to ensure that all students who wish to feel confident to stand
 - subsidising the costs of running for the Students’ Union elections so that financial costs are not a barrier
 - providing short-term welfare loans of up to £100 to combat the possibility of needing to use payday loan companies.
- 5.3.11 Data has shown that QMUL’s undergraduate students identified as meeting widening participation indicators – such as coming from a low-participation neighbourhood or low-income family – have progressed to postgraduate study at an

equal or higher rate compared to students not meeting these indicators. However, evidence suggests that students within these categories are not necessarily making informed choices about their postgraduate studies. The Careers and Enterprise Centre provide impartial information, advice and guidance to all undergraduate students through one-to-one appointments, workshops and online resources to support students in making informed choices about their future career direction.

5.4 Support for Disabled students

5.4.1 QMUL’s Disability and Dyslexia Service supports disabled students, including those with mental health difficulties and specific learning difficulties, e.g. dyslexia and dyspraxia, from the point of application through to graduation. The staffing levels in the Disability and Dyslexia Service have increased in the past two academic years to reflect the growing number of disabled students studying at the university, particularly in the areas of mental health and specific learning difficulties.

5.4.2 We now have two full-time mental health specialists and a variety of full and part-time staff to advise students with specific learning difficulties and provide them with specialist one-to-one study skills support.

5.4.3 QMUL has funded the full cost of diagnostic assessments for students with suspected specific learning difficulties for over five years. This level of support is provided to all students. This provision is centrally funded via the Disability and Dyslexia Service’s own budget and costs in the region of £55,000 each year.

5.4.4 We offer group revision study sessions to students with specific learning difficulties; and we plan to expand this provision.

5.4.5 The Disability and Dyslexia Service increased the number of students in receipt of specialist mentoring (for students with mental health difficulties and what are referred to as autistic spectrum disorders) and specialist one-to-one study skills tuition (for students with specific learning difficulties) over the past three academic years:

Academic year	Activity	Number of students supported
2013/2014	Specialist mentoring	84
2013/2014	Specialist one to one study skills	143
2014/2015	Specialist mentoring	101
2014/2015	Specialist one to one study skills	188
2015/2016	Specialist mentoring	128
2015/2016	Specialist one to one study skills	202

5.4.6 The Mental Health Adviser has a specific brief to support students with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD), as it is recognised that this cohort of students has particular needs. One of the activities that we offer for students with ASD is an

autism specific induction session, which lasts for two days immediately prior to the start of the academic year, but crucially before the majority of students arrive. We offer students a room on campus for the session at no cost to the student and provide a less hectic university induction experience to new students with ASD compared with their neuro-typical peers. We have also instigated a 'social circle' for students with ASD, a dedicated resource for them on QMUL's virtual learning environment and we offer two drop-in sessions for the exclusive use of these students each week to recognise the difficulties they have with keeping to firm appointment times.

- 5.4.7 We fund a series of Mental Health First Aid training sessions for staff across the institution. These are designed to complement in-house training offered by the Mental Health Co-ordinator and the Advice and Counselling Service.
- 5.4.8 The Disability and Dyslexia Service assists applicants to QMUL and contacts each successful applicant who declares a disability to begin the process of identifying the support that the students will need to engage successfully with their academic programme. Once the students have enrolled, we work with them to ensure that they have access to the reasonable adjustments to which they are entitled and to support them in realising their academic potential.
- 5.4.9 QMUL has responded to the various changes that have been made to the Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA) and has provided funding for disabled students required to contribute £200 towards the cost of their DSA-funded computer on a means-tested basis through the university's Financial Assistance Fund.
- 5.4.10 QMUL has a budget of £50,000 to continue to provide the non-specialist human support (e.g. note-taking support) that was removed from the Disabled Students' Allowances at the start of 2016-17. The Disability and Dyslexia Service now assesses the needs of students who require this form of support and provide it as appropriate.
- 5.4.11 QMUL has lecture capture provision (known as 'Q-review') which uses the Echo 360 system. This captures around 40% of all taught sessions at the university, although the equipment is installed in around 80% of lecture venues. The current policy, which applies to the majority of programmes, is that staff are required to opt out of using the system, meaning that sessions will ordinarily be recorded and immediately made available to students.
- 5.4.12 We also use a customised Moodle virtual learning environment (known as 'QMplus') and have an excellent online resource within the Library Services called 'Reading Lists Online' which allows academic staff to electronically curate their module reading lists so that students with reading-access issues, e.g. visual impairments or dyslexia, are not disadvantaged.
- 5.4.14 In the summer of 2016, we commissioned a piece of research to review how inclusive, in the widest possible sense of the word, QMUL's teaching, learning and assessment is and where we can improve. The recommendations have been sent to academic schools and to QMUL's Centre for Academic and Professional Development for action.

5.5 Collaborative working between institutions

- 5.5.1 QMUL understands the impact of well-targeted collaborative work with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and other external partners. We are a partner in Advancing Access, a national collaboration of 24 selective universities. Through this collaboration we work with schools and colleges to develop and deliver continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers and advisors that supports student progression to selective universities and courses. Advancing Access has a particular focus on schools with low levels of progression to such universities. We deliver the majority of CPD events and resources online to allow easy access for all schools, regardless of their location. Advancing Access complements the work already carried out at QMUL and other partner institutions by engaging those areas that have historically been hard to reach and may be in geographic ‘cold spots’. It is a cost-effective approach to equipping teachers and advisors with the information they need to advise students with confidence.
- 5.5.2 QMUL is not currently a member of the National Collaborative Outreach Programme, but complements its work through a significant programme of outreach work in four of the thirteen target London wards. In particular, we are a sponsor of the Drapers’ MAT in Havering, which has schools in one of the target wards. We offer substantial support to all the schools in the MAT, through primary and secondary outreach activities and governance support (there are three QMUL-appointed governors on the Governing Board of the Drapers’ Academy, which is an NCOP target school). QMUL’s Head of Widening Participation has met with a representative of the London NCOP to discuss QMUL’s work in the target areas, and to ensure that any new work complements rather than duplicates what is already taking place.
- 5.5.3 The University of Warwick and QMUL entered into a collaborative agreement in 2012, and a substantial branch of this partnership is widening participation. Both institutions’ outreach teams are continuing to share good practice and draw on experience of working to widen participation in two quite different geographical areas to enhance and strengthen existing initiatives and approaches. Following successful evaluation of our collaborative summer school we have continued to deliver a five-day residential summer school split across both institutions’ campuses. Maintaining a focus on medicine and health pathways, this collaborative event allows participants to understand better different subject and career options as well as exposing these participants, who will be likely to consider only local universities, to a different region and the idea of geographical mobility. QMUL and the University of Warwick will continue jointly to evaluate all collaborative activities to ensure that plans for activity in 2018-19 are evidence-based.
- 5.5.4 We continue to commit resources to collaborative work with charities and other external organisations involved in widening participation and access. This includes a partnership with the Sutton Trust, which involves the delivery of a two-year Pathways to Coding initiative, supporting students interested in coding throughout Year 12 and 13. The programme constitutes a mix of sessions with both an academic and a careers focus, incorporating taster sessions, a residential hackathon, e-mentoring with current students and talks from interesting industry figures and academics. We also collaborate with the Sutton Trust on the Pathways to Law

programme. We continue to work with groups such as Into University, a well-established programme that supports young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to progress to higher education. We also support the Barts Cancer Institute and their collaboration with the Access Work Placements Project, to embed their week-long summer school programme, giving Year 12 students first-hand experience of medical research.

- 5.5.5 Collaboration is an important component of work to support the progression of care leavers, and we play an active role in the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers. A member of QMUL staff is Co-Chair of the National Strategy Group, and we provide support through engagement in conferences and meetings and internal strategic leadership.
- 5.5.6 We are part of the Russell Group Widening Participation Association, which has provided a forum for collaborative work across these highly selective institutions for many years. As well as providing peer support for senior widening participation staff, the group plans and delivers collaborative activity including the biennial Teachers' Conference and practitioner networks.
- 5.5.7 QMUL hopes to join the Realising Opportunities programme in 2018-19, and has had positive initial discussions with the Realising Opportunity central team.

5.6 Use of contextual data in admissions

- 5.6.1 We are committed to attracting the most able students from a range of backgrounds, and to ensuring that our admissions processes are able to identify students of outstanding achievement and potential. We have adopted the following principles to developing our contextualised admissions policy: (i) it will be data-driven and will use a range of weighted contextualised admissions factors to flag high-potential students from disadvantaged backgrounds; (ii) contextualised admissions factors may then be taken into account at one or more stages of the admissions process, including invitation to interview, offer-making and confirmation; (iii) a commitment to transparency in communicating our contextualised admissions policy at subject level to applicants and advisers. Further information can be found at <http://www.qmul.ac.uk/undergraduate/entry/contextual-admissions/index.html>
- 5.6.2 Implementation of our contextualised admissions policy is being overseen by the Marketing Recruitment and Admissions Group (MRAG) chaired by the Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning) to ensure responsibility and accountability for this development. Final responsibility for approval of admissions policy rests with Senate. The introduction of a contextualised admission policy requires reliable access to information sources and robust systems to support automated flagging of relevant applicants. A programme of system and process developments is planned to support the roll-out of a comprehensive QMUL contextualised admission policy for the 2018 year of entry (for admission in September 2018). A pilot scheme, focusing specifically on care leavers, is running for the 2017 year of entry.

5.7 Provision of clear information to existing and prospective students

- 5.7.1 We are committed to the clearest possible communication of information to all our students. Information on new tuition-fee levels and financial support arrangements from September 2018 will be available on the QMUL website from July 2017, together with information about fee levels and financial support for existing students. All information will make it clear that no student will be required to pay back loans until after graduation and until they reach specified minimum thresholds of earnings.
- 5.7.2 We will provide clear information to applicants and students about our courses and entry requirements so they are able to understand exactly what they will be studying. This will be provided as web-based information and through our printed prospectus. To support this there is work ongoing to ensure a clear and coherent content strategy for all QMUL communications.
- 5.7.3 Provision of clear and accurate information to teachers and to parents and carers is important, as they are in a position to advise and influence students about the financial as well as academic aspects of their future studies. This can play a crucial determining role in deciding whether or not to progress to higher education. This work is undertaken across the university, for example by colleagues in the Advice and Counselling Service who provide information to offer holders and current students, and the UK Student Recruitment Team who provide information, advice and guidance for schools and sixth-form colleges through regular publications such as a parents' and carers' guide and communications targeted at teachers and career advisers. Academic Schools also provide information to prospective students, parents and carers, and teachers who wish to find out more about their courses and studying at QMUL.
- 5.7.4 Sessions on student finance are incorporated into outreach activities and included in information, advice and guidance work with schools and colleges.
- 5.7.5 We will ensure that clear and timely information on our tuition-fee levels and financial support for students is provided for UCAS and the Student Loans Company to enable them to populate their applicant-facing web services.

5.8 Level of investment as compared to arrangements for previous years

- 5.8.1 We will in 2018-19 commit 30.4% of the additional fee income raised from tuition fees above £6,000 to support additional access and retention measures, and the detail of how this will be spent is found in Tables 4 and 5 of the 2018-19 Resource Plan. The total proportion of OFFA-countable spend will be over 27% of additional tuition fee income raised above £6k for all years included in the submission. The higher level of spend of 30% for 2017-18 and 30.4% for 2018-19 is in part due to the fact the bursary levels were agreed prior to our decision not to increase fees to current students beyond £9000. Additional investment in access measures for the years 2018-19 to 2021-22 will ensure that activities previously funded through the widening access strand of the HEFCE Student Opportunity Fund will continue, and will allow this work to grow. We are committed to maintaining the OFFA-

countable spend at 27% beyond 2021-22 until we are able to demonstrate improved outcomes.

- 5.8.2 QMUL commits substantial resources to support outreach work in addition to the funding allocated through the 2018-19 Access Agreement. This is set out in Table 4 of the 2018-19 Resource Plan.
- 5.8.3 Examples of this additional spending are the resources committed to areas of work such as the links with the UST and Drapers' Academy MAT and additional outreach work that takes place with local post-16 institutions. We also allocate substantial financial support to the award-winning Centre of the Cell biomedical outreach centre based in the School of Medicine and Dentistry. Academic schools offer taster days and lectures, summer schools, targeted workshops and activities organised around events such as National Science and Engineering Week. Other activities include cs4fn (computer science for fun), an innovative widening-participation campaign that uses the web, printed magazines and a programme of school outreach activities to inspire young people about computer science and its interaction with other disciplines such as mathematics, physics, biology, philosophy and psychology.
- 5.8.4 QMUL's Centre for Public Engagement has a major focus on outreach work. It builds upon the extensive tradition of the university in public engagement that can be traced back to the foundation of the People's Palace in the 19th century, and continues to the present day with established activities that include the Centre of the Cell, cs4fn, People's Palace Projects and the Mile End Institute. It further reinforces our commitment to engaging with individuals and groups outside the university including schools, government agencies and politicians. The Centre for Public Engagement pulls together existing components of excellence in outreach and engagement activities throughout the university and enhances their profile. It supports student retention, widening participation and social mobility at all levels. Further details are found at <http://www.qmul.ac.uk/publicengagement/>

SECTION 6: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

6.1 Our approach to monitoring and evaluation

- 6.1.1 QMUL monitors the measures set out in its access agreement by:
- (i) using annual HESA statistics, data provided through our Student Information System, and data recorded in our Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) database, as clearly measurable evidence of progress towards meeting targets and milestones set out in Annex B
 - (ii) rigorous evaluation of individual outreach initiatives, with evaluation reports produced for each project to inform future planning and to ensure effective targeting
- 6.1.2 The senior strategic group responsible for monitoring the access agreement is the OFFA Access Monitoring Group, which is chaired by the Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning). Our approach to evaluating outreach

initiatives is constantly evolving as we learn from our own efforts, as well as take on board best practice emerging from the sector and findings from the latest research in the field of widening participation.

- 6.1.3 Research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies has identified a socio-economic gap in university attendance at ‘high status’ institutions which cannot be explained by attainment differences.⁵ One thing that we aim to do with our programme of activities is to work to close this gap, by encouraging academically able young people from under-represented groups to consider Russell Group institutions like QMUL as an option for themselves. As such, a primary concern of our evaluation strategy is establishing which activities appear to have the most positive impact on a young person’s self-belief and sense of belonging in relation to higher education. Beyond this, we seek to assess how well our activities convey practical information about securing access to competitive courses which may not otherwise be readily available to students whose parents did not attend HE, or whose school or college lacks appropriate careers guidance.
- 6.1.4 Our methodology for evaluating the impact of an initiative on participant outcomes is principally quantitative in nature, utilising a mixture of: pre and post-engagement participant surveys, in which we are looking for statistically significant differences in attitudes and aspirations; concise knowledge quizzes, in which we are looking for evidence that key learning objectives have been achieved; and long-term education destination tracking, in which we are looking for progression to HE in general, and to research-intensive institutions in particular. In some cases, where it is appropriate, we employ qualitative participant interviews and focus groups. We are realistic about the feasibility of robustly evidencing attainment gains. The size of our individual project cohorts, which typically number less than fifty students (and are often smaller in our most intensive, bespoke initiatives), is not large enough for us to identify modest but educationally important differences. Furthermore, given the widespread over-inflation of predicted grades at KS5, we are wary of the use of these grades as a baseline attainment measure⁶. Given the exam burden already endured by young people, we are also reluctant to subject them to further additional testing in relation to the evaluation of outreach projects. For these reasons, we feel unable at this time to employ the use of experimental designs, which we firmly believe to be the only robust way to measure attainment changes.
- 6.1.5 Now that we have a robust framework in place for evaluating our outreach activities, our ambition is to explore how we might take our methodology to the next level by utilising relevant theories such as Bourdieu’s theories of ‘habitus’ and ‘cultural capital’, theories of ‘possible selves’ and the realist evaluation ‘theory of change’.

6.2 Further developing an evidence-based strategy

- 6.2.1 The approach described in section 6.1 has provided QMUL with a sound basis to evaluate the effectiveness of individual outreach activities, develop and improve them when necessary, and assess their value for money. A full time post within our widening participation team dedicated to evaluation drives this work forward, and

⁵ <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/8799>

⁶ <https://www.ucas.com/file/71796/download?token=D4uuSzur>

our five-year *Widening Participation Evaluation and Monitoring Strategy*, running alongside our *2015-20 Widening Participation and Enhancing Opportunities Strategy*, provides us with a guiding framework for our long-term ambitions. This document outlines our vision for building on our existing foundation of evaluation and monitoring processes in a way that adds value to the institution as well as the wider sector. Some long term goals within this document that have already been achieved include the development of a Youth Forum, which has provided an innovative and meaningful opportunity for young people to have a voice in our work, and a large-scale research project into the impact of our core financial support measures.

- 6.2.2 In our previous access agreement, we set out our commitment to evaluating the impact of our bursary scheme for low income students. As acknowledged elsewhere in this document, QMUL commits a high level of resource to bursaries and as such considers assessing the impact of this kind of support to be of high importance. In March 2016 we started work on a mixed-methods research project which included analysis of three academic years of progression and bursary datasets, in addition to a survey of undergraduate QMUL students.
- 6.2.3 The data analysis aspect of this research found small but statistically significant differences in the progression rates of students on the basis of household income, controlling for gender, age, entry tariff and ethnicity. Those in receipt of a full bursary (household income £25,000 or less) had a slightly lower rate of progression than those from high income households. Those in receipt of a partial bursary (household income £25,000-£42,600) were found to have a slightly higher rate of progression than those from high income households. Those in a ‘near miss’ category, with an income above but within £10,000 of the upper threshold for a partial bursary, were not found to have statistically significantly worse progression than any other income group. Further analysis found considerable variation in progression within the £0-25,000 income bracket, with the lowest income students having the worst rates of progression.
- 6.2.4 Based on these findings, we have made the decision to continue to offer financial support in the form of bursaries, but to refocus this support to our lowest income students. Our new approach will increase the size of individual bursaries given to students with a household income up to £15,000, decrease the size of individual bursaries awarded to students in the £15,001-£30,000 bracket, and remove bursaries for students with a household income assessment above £30,000. The continued use of bursaries as a means of scaffolding student progression and success is supported by a recent large-scale analysis of administrative data which indicates that “unconditional financial aid in the form of an annual bursary increases students’ likelihood of obtaining a good degree by 3.7 percentage points for each additional £1,000 of aid awarded.”⁷
- 6.2.5 An aspect of this work, which explored the relationship between a student’s financial factors and their wellbeing, is being written up for publication by a member of the WP team as part of an OFFA initiative to enable more WP evaluators to transform their research into academic journal articles for publication.

⁷ <http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/dp1396.pdf>

Participation in this programme is part of our commitment to contributing to the widening participation evidence-base through undertaking and disseminating robust research projects. Another example of this is the research surrounding our access to medicine and dentistry programme *Bridge the Gap*, which started in September 2012. A PhD student registered at QMUL is undertaking a longitudinal study of the programme as the basis for her research. The study has followed a cohort of Bridge the Gap participants between 2013 and 2016, and is currently being written up. It has involved the collation of documents and resources developed for the project, and interviews with a range of stakeholders (including participants in the scheme, teachers, student mentors and those involved in project delivery) over the four-year period. The study will provide original insight into the impact of a long-term medicine and dentistry outreach programme, and add a valuable contribution to this currently under-researched field which we hope will be of use to the wider sector.

6.3 Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT)

- 6.3.1 QMUL is a member of the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) membership service which assists Higher Education Institutions in England to target, monitor and evaluate their outreach activity. Subscribing to HEAT helps us to take an evidence-based approach to planning outreach delivery so that we can continue to invest in outreach activities that optimise progression with disadvantaged cohorts. Furthermore, being an active member of HEAT, by participating at Steering Group and Research Group level, allows us to be contributory in helping HEAT to realise its wider research aims.
- 6.3.2 Our institution records data about its outreach and participants on the HEAT database. This is entered into the HEAT longitudinal tracking system which matches records on individual outreach participants to administrative datasets spanning Key Stage 2 data through to postgraduate study and employment. Tracking reports received from HEAT will help Queen Mary to better understand the relationship between our outreach provision and the attainment and progression of disadvantaged young people. We are able to track student progression to any HEI, so that we can assess the extent to which we are contributing to the increased participation rates of disadvantaged young people as a whole, not only to our own institution.
- 6.3.3 Being part of the HEAT service also enables us to engage with collective WP sector research. By using data from all members as an aggregate, the HEAT service is now able to explore new multi-dimensional ways of defining under-representation, disadvantage and differential outcomes and the effect that outreach can have on different groups of participants. Analysis of this aggregate data by the HEAT service tells us that outreach participants who engage in a sustained programme of activities, including a campus visit, have higher rates of progression. These findings have influenced our decision to continue our campus visit programme for Year 8 students and to incorporate a visit to our university into all of our initiatives. Similarly, students who engage in outreach early in KS4 in a sustained programme are found to be more likely to attain good GCSE results, suggesting that outreach contributes to raising attainment. These findings support our decision to introduce

more multi-engagement initiatives at KS4, including a Year 10 study skills coaching scheme and Year 10 reading initiative for boys.

SECTION 7: TARGETS AND MILESTONES

7.1 Setting targets and milestones

7.1.1 QMUL reviewed its targets for the 2017-18 Access Agreement, and we have chosen to maintain these rather than make significant changes. We have set a new target that is focused on raising attainment. This relates to the delivery of a coaching programme that works with Year 12 and 13 students. The aims of the programme are to support students to successfully progress into Year 13 and to enable students to develop a personal post-Year 13 plan. The impact of the programme will be evaluated by:

- Individual monitoring data collected from all participants
- Pre and post coaching online questionnaires with participants
- Post coaching online questionnaire with coaches
- Debrief meeting with Project Lead
- Long-term tracking of higher education progression using the Higher Education Access Tracker (results available January 2020).

7.1.2 The targets and milestones are set out in Table 7a of the Resource Plan. We believe that these are challenging in the context of the current higher education environment and QMUL's position as a leading research institution. They include achieving a yearly percentage increase in the proportion of students from low-participation neighbourhoods using the POLAR3 categorisation. This is particularly challenging as the re-categorisation of low-participation neighbourhoods based on the implementation of POLAR3 data has had a significant impact on HEIs that target outreach activities at students based in London, where there are now fewer postcodes in Quintile 1.

7.1.3 The proportion of first-year full-time first-degree students at QMUL in receipt of the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) has increased over the three-year period from 2012-13 to 2015-16. We aim to ensure that this progress is maintained in light of uncertainty over the DSA and any further changes to tuition fee charges. We have set a target to ensure that this increase is maintained over the next five years. Recognising that DSA is the current HESA Performance Indicator for Disabled Students, we will retain this as our institutional measure. This will be reviewed should there be any further confirmed changes to DSA in the future.

7.1.4 QMUL has committed significant resources to supporting and improving student retention, success and progression. This is reflected in a target to improve the successful completion rate for our students over a five-year period. For this target we will use baseline and reporting data from our own Student Information System rather than HESA data, as this will allow us greater flexibility to generate and analyse detailed reports.

SECTION 8: CONSULTING WITH STUDENTS

- 8.1 We value the contribution made by our students to both the planning and delivery of our widening participation programme. Submission of the 2018-19 Access Agreement was managed by the Access Agreement Strategic Review Group and OFFA Access Monitoring Group. Both of these were chaired by the Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning) and reported directly to the QMUL Senior Executive. Both groups comprised appropriate senior managers from the university and four representatives from QMUL's Students' Union: the President, Vice President for Welfare, Vice President for Education and Vice President, Barts and the London.
- 8.2 We aim to develop our capacity to facilitate more student involvement in widening participation activities and build on our partnership with the Students' Union by collaborating more closely on some of the Students' Union initiatives aimed at enhancing retention, success and progression detailed in section 5.3.

SECTION 9: EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

- 9.1 The purpose of the 2018-19 Access Agreement is to support access and student success and progression from groups currently under-represented in higher education. Target groups identified as under-represented in higher education include state-school students, students from low-participation neighbourhoods, and disabled students. The access agreement also supports a fair-access policy that seeks to ensure that all applicants are assessed fairly to identify whether they are appropriately qualified to succeed in the relevant academic programme. No aspect of this access agreement is likely to have an adverse effect on any member of the nine key groups defined as having protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.
- 9.2 QMUL is an international and diverse community, and promoting equality is essential to make it a world-class institution. We are committed to providing an environment for students and staff where respect is shown to all and where everyone is enabled to achieve their full potential. The university has a comprehensive action plan to ensure that it fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010, and this supports the objectives of the 2018-19 Access Agreement in a number of key areas. There are detailed actions plans to:
- enhance gender equality for staff and students
 - reduce the attainment gap by ethnicity and investigate the withdrawal of black and minority ethnic students
 - enhance access to QMUL's buildings and virtual environment
 - ensure that disabled students and staff feel supported at work and study, and that disability awareness is raised among students and staff
 - promote a culture in the university where staff and students can be themselves
 - ensure adequate facilities and policies are in place to allow the practice of religion and promote good interfaith relations
 - ensure students of different ages have access to support and facilities required.

- 9.3 Full details of work in each of these areas can be found at <http://www.hr.qmul.ac.uk/equality/equalityobjectives/index.html>.
- 9.4 All the activities in the widening participation programme described in the Access Agreement are open to everyone in the target cohorts of under-represented groups. Selection is based on this alone, and applicants are judged against clear criteria that are discussed and agreed with participating schools and delivery partners. All activities are advertised widely to targeted schools and colleges to ensure maximum take-up.
- 9.5 Activities described in the strategy have been designed to ensure that they will appeal to everyone in the relevant target groups. For example, science and engineering summer schools are designed to cover a wide range of engineering subjects to try to encourage higher take-up from girls, who often do not apply for these activities in the same numbers as boys. Section 6 of the Access Agreement describes how all outreach projects will be evaluated rigorously, and patterns of take-up will be monitored as part of this process.