

EXPECT TO ACHIEVE

# Newman University

## Access Agreement 2018/19



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### 1. Introduction

Newman University is proud of its successes in providing access to university education to students from a comprehensive range of backgrounds. It consistently exceeds sector averages and location adjusted benchmarks for recruiting students from under-represented groups including mature students, disabled students, students from low participation areas and students from families with no previous H.E. experience. It is a fundamental part of Newman's Catholic mission and ethos to offer a high quality, supportive yet challenging formative education to all sections of society and it is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive community. Due consideration is given with regard to the protected characteristics at all stages from pre-application to completion.

This agreement has been developed in consultation with members of academic and support staff and with the Students' Union and covers all courses offered by Newman University including initial teacher education and part-time courses.

We are striving to improve progression and success for all students and feel that the measures we undertake will particularly benefit students from disadvantaged and under-represented backgrounds.

### 2. Recruitment of nationally under-represented groups

Young full time entrants	From NS-SEC classes 4,5,6 and 7			From low participation neighbourhood (Polar2**)		
	Actual %	LAB* %	Sector %	Actual %	LAB* %	Sector %
2015/16	56.0	Data no longer recorded by HESA		20.5	15.8	15.1
2014/15	56.2	44.4	42.1	18.6	16.7	15.7
2013/14	55.8	43.2	40.7	20.2	15.3**	14.8**
2012/13	52.1	44.2	40.8	23.3 (22)	18.6 (16.3)	15.7(15)
2011/12	44.6	39.5	37.1	19.8	15.8	14.4

LAB\* location adjusted benchmark Source <http://www.hesa.ac.uk>

\*\*Polar 3 data for 2013/14 comparable with bracketed figures for 2012/13

Newman recognises that the definition and categorisation of widening participation is, in itself, complex. The institution considers how data on social class, gender, ethnicity or disability is gathered and analysed enabling it to consider the relationship between recruitment, progression and success with a view to improving the outcomes for all students. As the table above shows, we have consistently

performed far better in both the sector average and location adjusted benchmarks for the recruitment of students from NS-SEC 4, 5, 6 & 7 and from low participation neighbourhoods. Although the NS-SEC data is no longer provided by HEFCE we will continue to monitor our internal data to assess the percentage of students from this background.

### **3. Fees**

The fees for 2018/19 have not yet been confirmed, however, in 2017/18 Newman University will charge up to and including £9,250 for its full time and up to and including £6,935 for its regulated part time programmes covered by this access agreement. Postgraduate courses for the initial training of teachers and full-time Foundation Degrees will be charged at up to and including £9,250. Fees will not remain fixed and we expect them to rise each year broadly in line with inflation or/and in line with changes agreed by government.

### **4. Access and Student Success Measures**

As part of its Mission of Service, Newman continues to invest significantly in its widening participation activities. As Newman has approximately half of students classified as under-represented or disadvantaged, we have included proportional costs for key members of staff involved in retention and student support on a pro-rata basis. Newman intends to spend £591,000 on additional countable access measures in 2018/19, some 10.1% of additional income, based on an undergraduate tuition fee of £9,250. The following two sections of the Agreement specify measures in relation to outreach and the needs of specific learners.

Newman is developing an infrastructure to embed inclusive practice, within the curriculum and assessment, and the estate. Support for under-represented and disadvantaged students are embedded within processes and systems at the University. We undertake measures to improve the attainment rates and outcomes for all our students. Recent statistics show that students at Newman, regardless of background, are generally as likely to progress and to succeed. As detailed elsewhere in this Agreement, we work with students from the very start of their time at Newman, with pre-entry transition programmes, through their time as a student using appropriate academic and non-academic processes, including extra-curricular activities, and ending with a supportive careers and alumni service.

#### Long Term Outreach

We are a learning destination for the Children's University and provide opportunities on campus for young children to engage in interactive sessions linked to areas of the curriculum and both pupils and students reflect positively on this experience. In addition, we have hosted the Children's University Graduation Ceremonies for Birmingham school pupils and their parents/teachers from 2014-15 onward. These activities provide an opportunity to make contact with primary school children and

normalise the concept of university to non-typical potential applicants at an early stage. Specific efforts have been made in reaching target groups such as parents, running Parents Evenings in association with Children's University has allowed us to support parents and guardians to overcome any myths or barriers regarding Higher Education at an early stage

We are founder members of Citizens UK Birmingham and this provides an opportunity to further develop relationships with schools, local community groups and specific faith groups.

### Pre-application Outreach

Information, advice and guidance to students across years 10-13 continue to receive significant investment through targeting our outreach work by working in close partnership with selected schools and colleges. This work is supported by the use of a database of schools and colleges which identifies areas of low engagement with HEI's. However efforts will continue to be made into considering new ways of reaching debt averse groups, and also under-represented groups such as white working class boys and specific faith groups.

Our outreach work also includes a range of diverse activities, including raising awareness of university education amongst younger pupils and interactive sessions to facilitate students' exploration of post 16 and 18 options including university. We provide IAG to students and their parents on the student finance regime, particularly focusing on the repayment structure and the fact that no fees have to be paid up front and offer advice regarding the changes to student finance and DSA. Support is also provided for students researching university options, including information regarding the current changes within the UCAS Tariff System, the UCAS Applicant process, writing effective personal statements and interview technique. In addition, targeted outreach activities focus on links with further education colleges and schools, both locally and nationally, whose students have a particular need for support and IAG. This year we have delivered over 232 off campus schools visits to a more than 130 schools and colleges, both locally and nationally, engaging over 20,000 learners.

The Education Liaison team is making every effort to provide positive outreach to Teachers and Advisers through CPD, especially in those schools and colleges where transition to HE is lower. This has included on campus visits such as the HE Advisers' Conference, where practitioners can access a wide range of internal and external expertise within the changing environment of education, including changes to the GCSE and A-Level framework. This work will continue through the development of more on and off campus events to help schools and colleges support their students with the transition to university.

Taster sessions remain an important part of our outreach work, enabling disadvantaged students to visit the University, meet staff and students and understand the differences between school/sixth form and university level learning. This year we have had over 500 learners on campus from a diverse range

of backgrounds. These sessions are designed to demonstrate the diversity of students attending university, the level of independence expected of students and to dispel some myths which prevent application to higher education. To support pre-entry transition we are planning to increase the number of on campus visits to Newman by one third over the next 2 years.

We have, and are further developing, links with a network of schools and FE partners. Newman shares best practice in relation to outreach and other matters with other HEIs including through formal links including HELOA.

Newman is a member of the AimHigher West Midlands collaborative partnership, working with various Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), schools, academies and colleges. Together, the partnership aims to ensure that young people from less advantaged backgrounds have access to high quality, exciting and challenging experiences that enhance their careers education, motivate, inspire and provide accurate and impartial information, advice and guidance about higher education. This collaboration will enable Newman University to expand its existing outreach activities & services within schools and colleges across the West Midlands.

#### National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP)

Although not included in the financial expenditure related to this agreement, Newman is also a partner in AimHigher West Midlands' NCOP programme, delivering outreach activities to students in identified key wards. This activity will be co-ordinated with 5 other HEIs, schools and FE colleges to deliver a consistent 'wrap-around' support using dedicated staff, graduate ambassadors and mentors to meet government targets of increasing participation in HE from wards where GCSE attainment suggests participation in HE should be higher.

#### Support for specific student groups

Care leavers receive targeted support from pre-application and whilst on course. Care Leavers have the opportunity to attend pre-induction events to assist with the smooth transition into university life, such as meeting key Newman staff and familiarising themselves with the campus. Care leavers have priority acceptance on Newman's pre-entry course for undergraduates. Care Leavers also have guaranteed access to year round accommodation as well as specialist student support to enable them to reach their academic potential.

At the end of 2015/16 we had approximately 550 students declaring a disability, including dyslexia, (around 20% of current total student numbers) with approx. 275 students accessing DSA. Because of our particular demographic at Newman, with high proportions of mature students, students from non-traditional backgrounds and other widening participation categories, our students are likely to be impacted by potential changes to DSA. Reasonable adjustments will continue at an individual level, as well as measures to embed inclusive practice for all students in teaching and learning. We recognise that there may always be a small number of students for whom anticipatory reasonable adjustments and inclusive practice is insufficient to enable them to fully participate. To help to address this in 2016/17, we have made



provision for a small number of students to whom this applies and intend to continue to make similar provision in 2017/18 and beyond. We will continue to develop our access, student success, and progression activities.

### Other support

Newman University is committed to grow opportunities for flexible learning in ways which support our values and vision of formative education. We are developing flexible pedagogies to enhance flexibility of pace, place and mode of study. We seek to encourage flexible learning in our students and support them to learn in ways which build together with their other life experiences. We therefore provide flexible learning opportunities which are designed to enable students to have greater control over the pace of their programme, allow them to manage their learning around other commitments (such as employment, volunteering and family), encourage them to blend formal and informal learning experiences and allow them access to learning opportunities on and off site.

Contextual admissions were introduced in 2012, using additional data supplied by UCAS. This enables us to more effectively identify applicants with the ability to be successful at university but who have not yet been able to demonstrate their potential due to a lack of previous academic opportunities. All courses implement contextual admissions, including the most selective oversubscribed degrees.

### Raising attainment in Schools

The core mission of the University is to create newly qualified teachers in order to improve school performance and student outcomes.

By raising the attainment levels of pupils it is anticipated that more students will be enabled to undertake higher education. The Newman Institute of Leadership in Education (NILE) is a University research centre dedicated to work in educational leadership across all phases of education and multi-professional practice. This, along with the educational Continuing Professional Development courses offered at Newman, enable the University to provide bespoke CPD and consultancy within a range of educational themes and offers the opportunity to enhance their professional practice. We offer reduced fees for teachers at partner schools to encourage them to participate in CPD. In addition, we provide support networks for both primary and secondary schools so that they can share best practice and disseminate information. We believe that the support offered has a direct effect on pupils by providing an opportunity to influence key practitioners to provide aspirational guidance and pastoral care at the heart of their teaching community in order to improve student attainment.

## 5. Improvements in Retention and Success

### Non-continuation following year of entry

Year of entry	FT young first degree entrants		Mature first degree entrants		Total	
	Actual %	Sector %	Actual %	Sector %	Actual %	Sector %
2014/15	8.3	8.1	21.4	11.6	11.8	9.0
2013/14	9.0	7.7	13.4	11.8	10.2	8.8
2012/13	6.9	7.6	18.6	12.5	10.4	9.0
2011/12	7.6	7.6	6.6	10.0	7.2	8.4
2010/11	10.1	8.7	10.4	11.0	10.2	9.4

Source <http://www.hesa.ac.uk>

The proposals outlined below identify how Newman continues to invest its resources in activities designed to enable distinct groups of students with very different needs to successfully complete their studies. Recent figures suggest that the measures undertaken have had a positive effect on retention.

Following the development of the institutional Strategic Plan 2014-20, a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy was developed. It is anticipated that this will improve the outcomes of disadvantaged students. This will be reported at, and monitored by, the Learning and Teaching Committee and Equality & Diversity Committee as appropriate. The findings of on-going evaluation will be disseminated to staff and students and used to inform refinements to the retention strategy.

#### Pre Entry support: Higher Education Academic Development activities

We offer a series of events detailed below that are designed to support student transition in and through the University. Student participant's comment that such events provide the opportunity to build relationships with peers being 'what they needed in anticipation of the next level of study', and 'reassured them about the support available' to them should they need it.

**HEADstart** is a three week pre-entry blended learning course delivered prior to enrolment for all confirmed undergraduate applicants. The course promotes academic and social integration through on campus and online activities to foster a sense of belonging that contributes to a positive experience of HE.

**HEADspace** is a two day student conference in September to support student transition from level four to five. This provides an opportunity for students to discuss

any fears and dispel myths with peers and students who have successfully completed their own level five studies.

**HEADsup+** is a three week intensive preparatory course for students entering straight into level 6 having completed relevant work experience or level five qualifications.

Incoming students who disclose a disability through UCAS are sent a questionnaire about any reasonable adjustments or arrangements they may need, prior to entry, and invited to meet with the Inclusion Coordinator to discuss any requirements.

### On course support

Newman continues to invest in Academic Support Advisers (ASA). They are available to assist students on single and joint honours degree programmes with pastoral or personal concerns that are affecting their studies. They can also help with non-subject specific academic support such as time management planning, drafting a study action plan or making sense of feedback. Students frequently agree that ASA were supportive in dealing with their query and helped them feel more confident in tackling problems and/or concerns (ASA/SAST survey 2016/17).

We have further expanded our programme of peer mentors, including buddies for first year students, writing mentors and IT mentors with their services being offered throughout the year. The mentoring programmes allow second and third year students to support all students in their academic writing, including tips on appropriate referencing and essay structure. This less formal support complements the University's Learning Support Tutor service. Evaluation of the programme indicates that this service builds the confidence of students who want to achieve high grades, particularly mature students. The peer mentoring service enables first year students to address queries they may not feel comfortable raising with a member of staff, and are often reassured by the experiences of second and third year students.

Academic Professional Tutors (APTs) also provide support to ITT students, both through pre-arranged appointments and also through regular open-access sessions where students are invited to meet with an APT to discuss any problems associated with their learning.

We recognise that non-academic factors contribute to non-completion of degree courses and, as a fundamental part of Newman's ethos is developing the whole person, we invest resources in providing an enhanced welfare provision. This investment develops additional partnerships with outside agencies, and facilitates greater pastoral care. A Welfare Advisor is employed specifically to support students who face multiple barriers to staying on course and completing. Our Student Hardship Fund provides emergency hardship support for home and EU students who are at risk of withdrawing from Newman University due to unforeseen financial pressures. Numbers of students disclosing mental health issues have been



increasing year on year over the past 4 years and we have doubled the resource to support student with mental health issues.

In addition to the activities supporting retention previously outlined, our 20 credit modular structure offers a framework where transition activity is embedded within the curriculum. A recent progression analysis suggests a correlation between improvements in student progression across the institution and the implementation of the 20 credit modular structure; this will continue to be monitored and assessed. The structure includes two level four fundamental modules that act as an introduction to higher education study from a subject specific perspective. At level five a third fundamental module running across the year exists, and is designed to prepare students for their capstone module (dissertation or extended project) at level six. Academic regulations are constantly under review to ensure they support retention and success whilst upholding standards.

Newman was involved in phase 2 of the *What Works? Student Retention and Success Change Programme (2012-2016)* and developed strategic level activities to support student progression. An example of this work is using student engagement data to inform teaching practice and support students. Following previous investigations into correlations between student activity on virtual systems and progression, activity gathered from various data points across the institution indicated a group of inactive students after four weeks of programme registration. Students listed were contacted to offer support and help with any concerns or challenges. Progression across the year is subsequently monitored and reported back to Learning and Teaching Committee. Newman is also working with JISC to implement their learning analytics architecture to enable staff to offer proactive support, and is piloting pedagogic interventions informed by student engagement data as part of HEFCE's Catalyst fund.

## **6. Developing Employable Graduates**

Newman University issues a HEAR to all graduating students across all programmes and is currently developing an interim HEAR to be used at the end of each level of study. This provides a basis for reviewing academic progress and planning future activities, whether individually or with support from a tutor, supporting student engagement in opportunities beyond the curriculum, and the recording of appropriate achievements in relation to these. It additionally acts as an *aide memoire* for students in making applications which may be needed before the final award is made, e.g. for internships; permanent employment; further study or training opportunities. A voluntary accredited awards scheme which enhances employability is in place.

The Careers Service aims to enhance the employability of all students and support them in developing careers management skills. There are a variety of flexible services provided including one-to-one support, workshops, integrated sessions in the curriculum and careers events and fairs.

All full-time and flexible degree programmes at Newman have a work placement module and an important focus for the curriculum is developing and embedding transferable skills useful for further study or employment after graduation. This is particularly important for disadvantaged students as it gives them direct experience of graduate level work, which can then lead to enhanced mobility through enabling opportunities to network, an increased awareness of career and work opportunities and allows for reflection of aspirations as well as an awareness of legal rights and responsibilities at work. Students are encouraged to initiate and manage their own placements, increasing their research skills and strategies as well as gaining knowledge of employment markets.

Newman University Volunteering Programme supports students to successfully manage volunteering independently; to develop their knowledge, skills and experiences which will contribute to their future employability and success upon graduation.

## 7. Newman Scholarships

Newman has a number of scholarship schemes awarded on the basis of academic achievement ranging from £2,000 to £12,000. Payments will be made over 3 years, providing students meet certain conditions, and we expect over 50% of these scholarships to be awarded to applicants from disadvantaged or under-represented backgrounds. In 2017/18, in order to be eligible for a Newman scholarship single (excluding Initial Teacher Education) and joint honours students must:

1. Achieve **either** a minimum of BBB or ABC from three full A-levels (A2) awarded in one year
2. Be studying on a full-time, three year undergraduate course that charges the full tuition fee and must have selected Newman as your conditional firm or unconditional firm choice.
3. Be classed as a Home student by the Student Loans Company

Eligibility criteria and awards details for 2018/19 entry will be provided via the University website.

## 8. Targets and milestones

One of the University's key targets relates to year-on-year stabilisation or improvement in retention on all courses. As outlined earlier, Newman is implementing robust plans to improve retention rates, based on demonstrable successes within the institution and in other parts of the sector.

### 8.1 Targets for recruitment of nationally under-represented groups

Newman remains committed to supporting access to higher education for all students with the academic ability to benefit from university level study and, as

mentioned earlier, has increased the provision of flexible routes specifically for these students. We aim to exceed national and location adjusted benchmarks for the recruitment of the following under-represented groups:

Young full-time entrants	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
From NS-SEC classes 4,5,6 and 7	50.8%	50.8%	50.8%	50.8%	50.8%
From low participation neighbourhoods	23.1%	23.1%	23.1%	23.1%	23.1%

Newman will undertake over 100 activities per year in relation to outreach, including taster sessions, higher education events in schools, colleges and non-traditional settings, IAG and events aimed at raising aspirations and encouraging applications from under-represented groups.

## 8.2 Targets for non-continuation following year of entry

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
FT young first degree entrants	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%
Mature first degree entrants	9%	8%	8%	8%	8%

The University is progressing its Retention Strategy and this will draw together the many threads associated with retention improvement.

## 9. Monitoring & Evaluation

We have improved the data available across protected characteristics so that we have a clear picture of how all students' progress. Retention levels are monitored by the Learning and Teaching Committee, and performance in relation to recruitment and retention of under-represented groups is evaluated by the Equality and Diversity Committee.

Research is being undertaken across the institution evaluate and inform interventions. A review of the effectiveness of Academic Support Advisers has been undertaken which demonstrated that the ASA system adds value within the University. We participated in the HEA Student Retention and Success Change Programme 'to deliver institutionally coherent and participatory educational practices that promote successful progression through strategies which enable our heterogeneous student body to succeed'. The final report (published April 2017) notes that institutional HESA non-continuation rates of full time students in their first year at Newman have not been positively affected. However, there has been a reduction in the number of students needing to re-sit and retake assessments.

There are a number of other small scale research projects across the institution which will inform effective practice and contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of the Access Agreement. Newman is for example in the process of reviewing the impact of its financial support to students in consultation with staff and students with a view to informing its on-going institutional policy in this area. Academic staff have contributed to sector knowledge by attending seminars organised by SRHE/OFFA and presenting papers on widening participation and the student experience at national and international conferences and seminars.

## **10. Equality & Diversity**

The University is currently reviewing and updating its Equality Policy in recognition of the interrelated nature of equalities legislation in line with the Equality Act 2010 duties. We have already made significant progress in driving forward the equality agenda through its disability, gender and race equality schemes, action plan, guidelines relating to the other equality protected characteristics, equality impact assessments processes and diversity planning. Newman's equality policies are framed within Catholic social teaching and have been approved through consultative committees and Senate together with approval, as appropriate, by the University Council.

We ensure that Equality Impact Assessments are part of any programme validation or re-approval process so that consideration is given to the needs of all students. Staff are encouraged to become Fellows of the Higher Education Academy which gives them an opportunity to map their teaching practice against the UK Professional Standards Framework and to undertake CPD modules to develop the inclusive curriculum.

The University's Equality Policy sets out the actions that will be taken across functions and activities to promote equality and raise awareness. The Equality Policy and action plans are monitored and reviewed by the Equality & Diversity Committee, which is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor.

## **11. Provision of information to prospective students**

Information is made readily available across a number of online platforms; on the Newman website, UCAS and SLC websites, AimHigher and HELOA, alongside social media platforms; Newman's Facebook page, Twitter and Instagram. In addition, at institutional Open Days, there are specialist staff available to provide advice and support to applicants and their families on issues such as disability and finance.

The student liaison team are heavily involved with leading sessions within schools and colleges that break down barriers around Higher Education. Sessions allow prospective students to investigate the opportunities available to them and how they can access a university education. Sessions are created around a wide range of topics included but not limited to: Introduction to Higher Education, Personal

statements, UCAS Application Process, Student Finance, Interview preparation, Student life and Preparing for university. These sessions are developed to meet the requirements and needs of the school/ learners and support the pre-entry transition stage.

## **12. Engagement with students**

A Student Charter has been developed in consultation with the Students' Union, to clarify the expectations students have regarding the support and involvement from the University. It also sets out the obligations students have in relation to attendance and engagement which will enable them to benefit from the opportunities and support provided to become effective independent learners. The Charter has been in place since September 2012 and is evaluated and updated periodically.

With regard to the Access Agreement, a member of the Students' Union Executive is a member of the working groups for both drawing up and monitoring the Agreement.

The Students' Union is represented on all University committees, including the Learning & Teaching Committee and the Equality & Diversity Committee and through active involvement in committees makes a contribution to issues relating to under-represented and disadvantaged students.

The University and Students' Union actively pursue student consultation through a range of methods including social media and the Course Representative system which are designed to promote a greater involvement and feedback across a range of subject and support areas.

We are also investing heavily in partnership working with students both to integrate students into our learning community and to enhance it. We are developing our pedagogy of partnership; valuing the lived experiences of our students, the contributions they make to our learning, and the sense of affiliation and belonging this engenders. Funded student partnership projects provide students with a greater sense of belonging to, and even ownership of, the University. Students also have the chance to target developments they want to see, earn as they learn and contribute to University research and publication. Projects have engaged many students from disadvantaged and under-represented groups and have addressed issues of direct relevance to them including themes of inclusion, internationalisation, decolonising the curriculum, community engagement and reading, assessment and communication strategies in the digital age. Newman is a member of the collaborative REACT project, which is managed and organised by collaboration between students and staff. The project seeks to increase student engagement, particularly for hard to reach students, and supports their retention and progression.

### **13. Summary**

The main concerns of the Access Agreement, i.e. widening participation and student progression and success, are of strategic importance to Newman University. As a Catholic institution, we have full regard for Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities Ex Corde Ecclesiae ('from the heart of the Church') 1990 and we are particularly passionate about the constitution's mission of service: "34 ... (the university) will be capable of searching for ways to make university education accessible to all those who are able to benefit from it, especially... members of minority groups who customarily have been deprived of it."

This mission is at the heart of what we are and what we do and we will continue to strive to improve outcomes for disadvantaged and under-represented students from pre-application stage through to degree completion and employment. It is our aim to provide a formative student experience which instils a sense of vocation and increases motivation thus impacting positively on retention and success.