



## **2019 – 2020 Access and Participation Statement**

### **Introduction**

Regent's University London is a private, not for profit, Higher Education Institution. Regent's is a Registered Charity, regulated by the Charity Commission and a private company limited by guarantee. Regent's University London is applying for 'Registered Status' and this document is its Access Statement for 2019 – 2020.

Regent's University London offers excellent education, research and expertise and it has the aim of making its services more accessible to eligible, financially disadvantaged learners and increasing overall participation in higher education. This is underpinned by our commitment to contributing to the public benefit that extends beyond being a provider of education to our students and as an employer.

Regent's has a more internationally diverse student body, in breadth and depth, than any other university in the United Kingdom. Its student demographic is to a significant extent determined by the ability to pay the level of fees, which are the same for all nationalities, including home/EU students, and is radically different to the student demographic of any state-funded university.

As an institution, Regents is only slightly more than a decade old. It has more than doubled its student body in this time period. All students on the same programme, unless recipients of scholarships, pay the same fees, which are above the UK fees cap, to fund the special experience offered by the university. With 78% of its students from outside the UK paying high fees and living in London, the University contribution to the UK economy is substantial. Using the usual multiplier, the total contribution would be in excess of £200 million per annum to the London economy.

Regent's is almost wholly funded by tuition fees, with modest reserves and financial sustainability and is very much dependent upon student recruitment. This is a very different position from long-established universities with significant owned estates, endowment funds and diversity of income. This position guides investment and the Trustee board will need to judge affordability of all activities, including access, as part of the annual budget-setting process and assess the impact on the sustainability of the business. By doing so they will protect current students and ensure they receive Value for Money (VfM) for their fees. This has implications for the outreach that it can offer, the nature of access support that it can provide and its access reach.

Regent's had a student body in 2016/17 of 2,545 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) students, as measured by the criteria applied by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). The university has a very broad international and ethnic base. With students on campus from 142 nationalities. 22% of students are UK domiciled but

only half of these (11%) are UK citizens. 32% are from other European Union (EU) countries and 57% from other nationalities.

Excluding 412 students who elected not to declare their ethnicity, the ethnic groups are:

- 63% of students are from White Backgrounds,
- 8% are from Arab countries
- 7% from Indo Pakistani ethnicities
- 6% from other Asian ethnicities
- 4% Black British
- 2% Chinese

The remaining 10% are from a wide variety of other ethnic backgrounds

For operational reasons, the university will concentrate its access initiatives on UK domiciled students at present but progression projects will apply to all students.

It provides substantial support to students with disabilities – physical, learning and mental health. It has a strong gender balance of students, staff and trustees. 55% of staff are female and 45% male. Regent's has a mean gender pay gap of 11.5% which is below the norm and is reducing.

65% of independent trustee Board members are women. The whole Board including staff trustees is 55% women. There are currently 2 BAME trustees (10%) and 1 disabled trustee (5%).

Inclusion is the key to our public benefit activities and a new strategy is being developed, led by a trustee 'task and finish' working group and our focus is on providing a Regent's education that extends beyond our core student cohort by working with a range of schools, community organisations, local and not-for-profit stakeholders, including socially excluded people and their representative groups.

Regent's works within a framework of "Corporate Social Responsibility", 'Outreach' and 'Public Benefit'. Corporate social responsibility (CSR), is a form of corporate self-regulation integrated into its business model. It permeates every aspect of the operations of the institution. CSR policy functions as a self-regulatory mechanism whereby a business monitors and ensures its active compliance with the spirit of the law, ethical standards and national or international norms.

An organisation's implementation of CSR can go well beyond compliance and statutory requirements and to engagement in actions that appear to further some social good, beyond the interests of the institution and that which is required by law. It seeks to maintain high ethical standards to reduce business and legal risk by taking responsibility for corporate actions. Organisations with strong value systems, like Regent's, adopt CSR strategies that encourage staff to make a positive impact on the environment and stakeholders including consumers, employees, investors, communities and others. These activities may not fall within the definition of 'public benefit' for charitable purposes as they do not fall within the stated charitable purpose.

Regent's maintains a strong values system and the values in its strategic plan are:

- Excellence
- Professionalism and employability

- Entrepreneurship
- Personal attention
- Maximising individuals' potentials
- Internationalism
- Diversity, mutual respect and inclusion
- Citizenship
- Public benefit

The university seeks to deliver services to the community that may not directly come within the strict, former HEFCE definition of public benefit. For example, providing time for staff to contribute to valuable community activities that are not directly educational. Outreach may include volunteering, providing facilities for community organisations or pro bono services to the community. Regent's seeks to develop a culture of volunteering among its staff and students as part of its overall institutional culture. It supports the Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation whose central philosophy is Ubuntu - the recognition by everybody that they are not simply individuals but are part of a community in which everybody's well-being depends on everybody else and in which skills, talents and time should be shared.

### **Public Benefit**

Every charity must have an approved charitable purpose that is consistent with one of the thirteen approved purposes listed in the Charities Acts 2016 and 2011. The relevant purpose for Universities is 'Advancement of Education'

In its registration with the Charity Commission, Regent's Objectives under this purpose are:

'The advancement of education for the public benefit; and the foundation, maintenance and support of a university or universities and other educational colleges or institutions for students both male and female to include residential accommodation and all necessary and proper ancillary services for such establishment.'

As a charity, the University has an obligation for public benefit. In the past, simply the provision of education was viewed as 'Public Benefit'. However, today there is a requirement to provide a range of services above and beyond simply running an educational institution.

There is no clear definition of what such services should be and what proportion of an institution's revenues or surpluses should be dedicated to them. It is the responsibility of a charity's Board of trustees to decide what 'public benefit' activities can be undertaken sustainably and to ensure that they are directly linked to the institutional objectives.

The Office for Students (OfS) requirements for improving access and participation for the registration of a Higher Education provider predominantly rest within the charities public benefit requirements. These are included in the section below on 'Ambition and Strategy'.

The first strategy of the then, Regent's College, stated that the aspiration was to become fees-blind eventually. This would mean that student applications would be judged solely against student potential. The requirement to pay all or part of fees would be judged once offers had been made. However, it was recognised that this approach to access, common among wealthy American institutions, would require the establishment of a substantial endowment fund which must come predominantly from fund raising. However, it will take a considerable period before this can be achieved.

Nonetheless, in 2010, the Board of trustees agreed a proposal to provide 40 fees-free places per annum on undergraduate programmes to potential students who came from financially disadvantaged backgrounds. Progress against that ambition is described in the next section. In the first instance at least, Regent's would focus on the provision of such bursaries to UK domiciled students but it was the desire not to alter the balance of nationalities in the student body as this is part of the university's special nature and contributes to the pedagogy applied.

The University seeks to grow its student numbers to 3500 FTEs (as measured by HESA) by 2021. This would mean that the total target for UK domiciled students would be 770 students. The board also sought to identify other areas of public benefit in which it could become engaged. This target may now be ambitious, bearing in mind the changes in the external environment, the changed demands of students and employers, international competition and socio – politico changes, such as BREXIT. Nonetheless this remains the target to be achieved by recruitment growth and enhanced retention.

### **Assessment of current performance**

Despite considerable efforts and expenditure, the University has not met its own objectives on provision of public benefit on its premier bursary scheme. Regent's recruited an outreach manager reporting to the Vice-Chancellor. Her responsibilities were to collaborate with all key internal staff with responsibility for bursaries. These included the Pro Vice-Chancellors of the two faculties, the head of student recruitment, the head of student services and the finance director. She was also briefed to work with schools in the London area and eventually more widely and with community groups.

The total cost of the 40 full fee bursaries in the first year was expected to reduce revenue by £600k. At the end of five years it was expected that there would be 120 students, less retention losses of 20%, resulting in Public Benefit bursaries per annum with a value of c.£1.5 million against a projected university revenue of c.£35 million (c.4.2%).

Contacts were made and relationships developed with a number of schools including Regent High School, the Central Foundation Boys' School and the St. Marylebone

school. The Bursaries were also advertised more widely. Regrettably, this initiative was not successful and very few bursaries were awarded. An analysis of the reasons for the low applications pointed to two major issues. It was found that many careers advisors in schools advised their students not to apply to Regent's on the grounds that they would not fit in. The second reason was that while the bursaries covered the full fees, students felt that they needed additional funds for maintenance, subsistence and other costs.

Regent's was more successful with another initiative in collaboration with Hillcroft College. Hillcroft was a charitable institution that had been set up for the education of adult women. By this century, it provided Further and Higher Education to students from a largely non-white English and financially disadvantaged background.

Regent's established a three-week summer programme to provide a taste of university for a cadre of these students. At the end of the programme, candidates were encouraged to apply for a University bursary and a number were selected and completed their programmes successfully. They proved to be challenging but rewarding students. In 2012 Regent's was shortlisted for the Times Higher 'Access University of the Year' for this initiative.

During this period, the Outreach Manager developed further schools contacts and relationships with community associations and ran a number of events for and with them. Regent's established the 'Schools and Youth Model United Nations' annual event on the campus to bring in teams from many schools of different types. This event continues and now more than 20 schools are involved with a number from the continental EU as well as the UK. While working on the UN projects, potential students are encouraged to apply for bursaries to Regent's.

Led by the Vice-Chancellor, the University also initiated a project named 'The Regent's Park Educational Village'. This project started to bring together all the broadly educational institutions around the Park to share knowledge about outreach and their activities designed to offer educational opportunities to individuals, schools and organisations around Regent's Park.

Considerable efforts have been made and resource expended. The outcomes have not met the access and outreach objectives of the University.

### **Ambition and Strategy**

At recent regular Board and Executive Strategy Days, the Board of the University has discussed its concern about the institution's failure to meet its public benefit ambitions. It has now determined to establish a 'task and finish group' to develop a new public benefit strategy which, of course, will include access provisions. This will be introduced alongside the University's culture development programme to ensure that all staff, students, the student union and alumni are engaged fully. This culture development programme, being managed by 'Human Synergistics', an independent external consultancy, commenced in October 2017 and is now commencing phase two. It is expected that the task and finish group will report to the Board meeting in December 2018.

The Office for Students (OfS) requirements for improving access and participation for the registration of a Higher Education provider predominantly rest within the charity's

public benefit requirements. The activities in which Regent's does and will engage in include:

- The provision of scholarships and bursaries for potential students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Active work with schools and colleges to motivate students who for financial or social reasons might not have considered Higher Education.
- Running fees-free short programmes to facilitate entry to Higher Education for those who may not meet the required entry criteria academically or the English language requirements.
- Accepting some students from disadvantaged backgrounds on lower entry criteria than normally required if they show ability and motivation.
- Sharing of both staff and physical resources with other educational institutions and with community projects.
- The organisation of open events to the public to promote specific areas of knowledge.

The Task and Finish group will seek to review the whole life cycle model of the student journey and consider interventions at the following points:

#### **1. Pre-entry access and outreach.**

Raising awareness of HE study from targeted schools and colleges and raising aspirations in relation to HE level study. We could also consider raising the attainment of students such that they can successfully transition into HE, e.g. GCSE support in English, Maths and languages. Undergraduate student ambassadors working in schools and colleges.

The activities under this heading would include reinforcing existing activities. Discussions have commenced with the newly merged Richmond and Hillcroft Adult Community College to revive the previous relationship (noted above) and to provide HE experience programmes to encourage students to apply for bursaries.

A new Outreach Manager has been appointed to increase Regent's relationships with schools. She will collaborate with the faculties, student services and recruitment to encourage bursary applicants. Students from the network of schools will be invited onto the campus for special events such as the Desmond Tutu Peace Conference, the schools Model United Nations annual events, seminars run by the Senior European Experts (supported by Regent's, chaired by Lord David Hannay), regular 'International Affairs' seminars, events encouraging participation in learning about specialist areas such as acting and screen writing for which bursaries will be available.

Schools will be offered more master classes from University academics for their staff and students and joint projects to encourage applications from students eligible for public benefit bursaries.

The University intends to increase the offer of English language and other language courses to the local communities.

Subject to security issues, it is also hoped to be able to offer more use of parts of the campus to other educational institutions and charities when they are not

required to support the core business. Regent's Marylebone Theatre on Paddington Street offers considerable opportunity for this. In addition, Regent's hopes to build one more new building on its park campus which has been designed to provide an area for easy use by external organisations.

## **2. The provision of means tested bursaries for students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds.**

It is probable that the new strategy will include the continuation of the aspiration that in the very long term, the University should become fees-blind. To fund this aspiration across a long period, among others, the University has established a 'Board Development Committee' to provide oversight of fundraising activities and monitoring of achievement against targets.

In the intervening period before achieving the fees- blind target, the University will seek to recruit more students receiving bursaries each year until these are received by a reasonable proportion of UK domiciled students, a figure of 5% is suggested as an initial target. This would result in a steady state figure of c.40 students. Such a figure would not place undue strain on the resources required and would allow assimilation into the cultural context of the university.

The University itself will fund the fees for such students from operating surpluses. However, as noted before, additional funds are required to subsidise other activities such as living costs, study abroad, travel, additional maintenance and certain social costs for sports and society activities. As students at an 'alternative provider', our eligible students are only permitted to 'borrow' £6250 per annum from the student loan company. Regent's would expect students to draw down this sum to assist them and although this money would be paid directly to the university against fees. Regent's would provide bursaries for an equivalent sum.

Students may also be able to access maintenance loans which have a maximum value of £11,354 for students studying in London and not living with parents. However, we would be seeking for students to minimise building up high student debt by providing them with the support funds from fundraising, as this may be demotivating them from making applications.

Such additional sums as are required would be funded from an annual alumni fundraising project entitled 'Spirit of Regent's. This project has already commenced and an external consultancy, Grenzebach, Glier and Associates, has been retained to assist with this activity. At the same time, a new Director of Alumni and Development and a new support team are being appointed.

In the light of the strong international diversity of its student population, the Board will also consider whether a similar number of non-UK residents should be supported each year. It is proposed to target the admission of 5 full fee-waiver bursaries for the year 2019/2020 and will move towards a target of 12 new

entrants per annum by 2023. Bearing in mind retention loss, this should lead to the steady state target of 40 bursary students on campus by 2023.

### **3. Transition into HE.**

Regent's will investigate running more bridging programmes, open days, taster days and pre-commencement activities for those students transferring to us or coming into the Foundation year.

### **4. Entry onto a programme of study.**

The induction programme will be developed further and will involve pre-sessional and early support from personal tutors, analysis of any additional skills requirements, support from current students and from alumni. The university has recently established a 'Student hub' (physically, on-line and through a telephone management system) to help students with any problems – academic, financial, mental health and disability. This will be accessible to students before they start their programmes.

### **5. Support on the programme.**

Students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds and lower performing schools, may have lower academic entry qualifications than those from more advantaged circumstances. There is also the possibility of an increase in lack of progression. Such students may require additional support.

The philosophy of Regent's is to maximise the potential for all students and to deliver the highest value added to optimise the Value for Money (VfM) that students gain from the investment of their time at university. To this end, Regent's has appointed 'Achievement Advisers' whose role is to monitor attendance and performance and to alert personal tutors to potential problems.

The aim is that although some students may enter with lower academic achievement, they will leave at the end of their study at the same high level as everybody else. The University is also piloting the big data, JISC Data Analytics system, to provide more sophisticated support in future. Additional, support tutors have been appointed in subjects such as numerical skills. English language support is also available from the Regent's Institute of Language and Culture (RILC).

Academics acting as personal tutors need additional training and constant assessment and update of tutorial skills.

Regent's has very strong links with its alumni and many of them, particularly in London, provide mentoring to current students as well as work experience, internships and eventually employment.

These support services are, of course, available to all students. However, past experience has shown that students on public benefit and other bursaries may require a greater use of the student services and tutorial support. Further investment is being made in this area in 2018/19.

## **6. Provision through the programme and progression.**

During their studies, students, particularly those on public benefit bursaries will be encouraged to provide feedback through course evaluations and will be asked to provide suggestions on how their experience can be improved. Furthermore, a new retention system is being implemented to ensure that retention and student progression are high and that the bursary students achieve their optimum results.

## **7. Post study progression.**

Graduates will be encouraged to make use of the Careers and Business Relations (CBR) department both while enrolled, and after graduation to gain advice on work opportunities and further career development. Working closely with academics in the faculties, the new Entrepreneurship and Family Business research centre, students and alumni, the CBR Regent's has just established an 'Entrepreneurial Hive' to assist students and alumni to develop their own business through advice on financing, marketing, people management and other essential skills.

It may also be possible to provide opportunities for graduates to spend periods outside the UK to enhance their experience.

## **Volunteering**

Although not strictly public benefit or access, Regent's will continue to promote volunteering by students and staff as this should develop the important outcome of citizenship, one of the core values of the university, for staff, students and alumni.

## **Access, student success and progression measures**

As part of its development of the new public benefit strategy a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be defined and monitored against agreed forecast targets. A regular audit of performance will be undertaken by Mazars, the university's independent internal auditors. Performance against these targets will be reviewed by the Trustee Audit and Risk Committee. These KPIs will include:

- Number of bursaries awarded
- Retention of access bursary students
- Long term career success of access students
- Number of events and attendance figures
- Use of the campus by others

## **Investment**

It is not possible at present to be precise about the investment that will be made in improving access. The current expenditure on personal tuition and other aspects of student services, skills development and counselling is close to £4.3 million in 2017/18. A full review of the University's strategy is underway currently and will result in a revised five-year business plan. This will be informed by the work of the

Public Benefit task and finish group. An initial estimate suggests that the investment in the support of access for students and the provision of full bursaries will be in the region of £860k, 1.9% of revenues, in 2018/19 and rise to c£1.95 million, about 2.7%, of projected revenues in 2023/24.

### **Provision of Information to students**

The university is currently investing in a new website. The website will have an area devoted to access and public benefit. In addition to the access and participation statement, there will be clear information on what support can be offered and how to apply. There will be case studies of those who have benefitted in previous years. All information presented and any data bases retained will be CMA and GDPR compliant.

Schools will be visited to explain the opportunities. Open days will be offered on the campus for potential bursary students. Staff in the student hub will be available online and by telephone to answer enquiries.

An annual report on public benefit will be published on the website and as a component of the Annual review.

### **Conclusion**

As a charitable Higher Education Institution, Regent's University London recognises and welcomes its obligations to provide public benefit within which a major element will be ensuring access for potential students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds.

Since the establishment of Regent's in 2006, the University, and before that Regent's College, has sought to support a variety of access and other outreach projects. However, its major focus has been on establishing itself as a high quality, sustainable, Higher Education institution through gaining Taught Degree Awarding Powers and University title, while maintaining growth in student numbers and reserves.

Regent's is now at the point when it can develop further its public benefit activities, access and outreach.