INCLUDING OUTWARD MOBILITY IN ACCESS AGREEMENTS

This is part of a suite of resources aiming to help international offices to develop, plan and deliver work, study and volunteer abroad programmes. This document provides guidance on how to include outward student mobility programmes in your access agreements.

Access and Participation plans are annual institutional documents which set out how a higher education provider will sustain or improve access, student success and progression among people from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups. These plans are regulated by the Office for Students (OfS).

Activities included in access agreements vary from outreach projects to financial support such as bursaries, from targeted campaigns to mentoring support and school programmes. We know that mobile students have better degree outcomes, lower unemployment rates and higher starting salaries than their non-mobile peers, and these positive outcomes are more pronounced for students from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds.

Outward mobility can therefore play a role in closing the attainment gap and as such is an area of activity that sits within access agreements success and progression themes:

Success

• To reduce the attainment gaps between students from underrepresented groups, particularly those from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities, and those from other groups.

Progression

• To improve the rates of progression of students from underrepresented groups, particularly those from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities, into graduate-level employment or further study, and to reduce the gaps between these groups and other students.
OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

When considering including outward mobility within your own institutions access agreement teams should think broadly and long-term, build in evaluation from the start, review and reflect on your mobility programmes and work within your institutional-wide approach to access.

1. Be strategic
It is crucial when working with access agreements to undertake an organisation-wide approach. Consider your institutions student makeup and pinpoint which specific demographics are priorities for your organisation.

2. Collaborate
Access agreements and widening participation may be a new area for international or study abroad offices. Your university’s outreach or widening participation teams will be able to advise on institutional priorities and help you to embed activities across the organisation, ensuring long-term sustainability for your mobility programme.

3. Focus
Make sure to include activities that are focussed on supporting students from specific demographics to engage with outward mobility. Institutions are encouraged to undertake proactive activities which target specific under-represented groups. Where new investment is not fully targeted at an underrepresented group you may still include a percentage of the overall costs within your access agreement.

4. Evidence your impact
Evaluation of all activities included within access agreements is required. It is important that you set up ways of monitoring and evaluating your mobility programmes in order to report on these. This is also good practice for measuring impact and ensuring you adapt activities to meet new and emerging challenges for students.

5. Innovate
When choosing your activities think outside the box. Institutions are encouraged to be flexible when responding to the different needs and circumstances of their students. It is important to consider what works for you as an organisation and ensure that you introduce innovative and tailored programmes for supporting different students onto mobility.

Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales
There is no requirement for institutions outside of England to have an access agreement. However, the learning from this section may be applied to other widening participation funding sources.

When bidding for such funding it is important to focus on student success. Outward mobility should be framed as a post-entry activity aimed at supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds to more successful degree outcomes. Outward mobility also supports students in preparing to progress to employment or further study. It is for these reasons that widening participation funding could be used to grow targeted mobility programmes.

For more information
For more information on Access Agreements, please visit:
https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/