Universities UK’s response to the government consultation, *Schools that work for everyone*

**Introduction**

Universities UK (UUK) is pleased to respond to the consultation *Schools that work for everyone*. We support the government’s wish to raise standards and attainment in the school system and in doing so improve social mobility across all parts of society. Universities recognise the important and diverse contribution they can continue to make working in partnership with the school system. The final report of the Social Mobility Advisory Group, *Working in partnership: enabling social mobility in higher education*¹ (October 2016), reinforces the importance of universities across the education sector working collaboratively with schools.

The consultation raises questions over how different parts of the education system can support the raising of attainment and the provision of good school places. UUK’s response focuses on the role that universities can play to support these objectives and the proposal that this be a condition of their fair access requirements. Our response is based on feedback received by members and a roundtable discussion held in November with a range of institutions and including representatives from the Department for Education (DfE).

Our response is structured as follows:

1. A summary of UUK’s position
2. Detailed comments on the questions for universities (pages 19–20 in the consultation paper)
3. Areas requiring clarification

We have included a number of case studies to illustrate the points we make and to demonstrate the many ways in which universities already engage in attainment-raising activities. This is just a small cross-section of a wide and varied picture of activity and partnership; we would be happy to supply further case studies.

Finally, given the many different ways in which universities currently engage with schools, it may be helpful for the department to develop guidance or a toolkit to support schools engaging with the higher education sector – including sponsorship.

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arrangements. This could draw on the evidence of ‘what works’ in the toolkit developed by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to support universities engaging in sponsorship arrangements.

1. Executive summary

The main points we make in this consultation response are as follows:

1. Universities are strongly supportive of the government’s ambition to raise standards across schools and remove the attainment gap between advantaged and disadvantaged pupils. The ambition of this policy aligns with institutions’ efforts to widen participation and support fair access. This is evident in the wide range of activity and partnerships already taking place, including around 65 higher education institutions in England already sponsoring schools. The importance of two-way partnership and collaborative working between universities and schools was also highlighted by the Social Mobility Advisory Group, which recommended that collaborations and partnerships should be extended.

2. To charge higher fees universities already have to commit to the development of an access agreement. Therefore, any requirements on universities to contribute to raising attainment in schools and increasing good school places should sit within, and build upon, this existing process rather than add additional regulatory requirements.

3. To address the challenges set out in the consultation, guidance from the director for fair access (DFA) could set out a clearer expectation for institutions to do more to raise attainment and to sponsor or set up new schools. This must not, however, be overly prescriptive. Different universities come to collaborations with schools with very different contributions to make. How universities engage will depend on an institution’s mission, strengths, size and local circumstances. To maximise the impact of their investment institutions will take account of all these factors when developing their access strategies. Any new expectations from the DFA should take this into account. This would not detract from the DFA setting stretching and challenging expectations for institutions.

4. If the government chooses to adopt the proposals as set out in the green paper, essentially prioritising school sponsorship over other types of contributions, we believe this approach would result in negative unintended consequences. These would include damaging existing partnerships between schools and universities, focusing resources on fewer schools, and skewing incentives for university involvement.

5. In addition, many specialist institutions are too small for school sponsorship to be feasible; to do so would divert considerable resources away from their specialism(s). Specialist institutions already make a valuable contribution to

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2 HEFCE (2016) Practical guide for higher education providers for sponsoring academies, university technical colleges and free schools, [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/workprovide/schools/guide/#d.en.109359](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/workprovide/schools/guide/#d.en.109359)

supporting attainment – particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds – by supporting the delivery of the curriculum in their specialist area.

6. Further evaluation of existing forms of sponsorship is needed to determine which approaches work best within different contexts before a much broader extension in school sponsorship is considered.

7. The proposal that a new school or a school sponsored by a university should be rated good or outstanding is also problematic and is likely to act as a disincentive for innovation or risk taking. A more appropriate approach to measuring success could be for the DFA to encourage universities to set their own stretching targets around the outcomes of their school attainment and engagement work. We believe this could allow the higher education sector to make a better and more meaningful contribution.

In short, we strongly suggest a focus on ends rather than means, with greater flexibility over how higher education can support the government’s objectives. Raised aspirations, improved attainment, increased teacher ability and retention, and improved school success can all be achieved through a number of partnership and engagement mechanisms with schools. These broaden the concept and practice of sponsorship to a wider set of effective mechanisms. One way to view this would be to conceive of schools sponsorship as a continuum in which universities utilise their different capacities and circumstances to contribute to the education system and pupil attainment. This could vary from outreach work with schools, to establishing a new school; all points on the continuum would have value which could be recognised through universities’ access agreements, however, each point would reflect the needs of schools, the local context and institutional strengths and circumstances.

In addition, the policy should be implemented in a way that supports the overall effectiveness of the sector’s efforts to promote fair access and to deliver the greatest benefit for potential students from disadvantaged and under-represented groups, while taking account of any unintended consequences. Our preference would be for an approach which did not make school sponsorship overly prescriptive, but encouraged an environment that could facilitate more growth, whereby over time more institutions engage in sponsorship based on the evidence of what works and tailored to the needs of the local area. We believe that this approach would be more effective in supporting the government’s objectives. Importantly, it would also allow for new and innovative ways of working with schools to raise attainment, and for engagement to be adapted in response to new evidence of what works.
2. Responses to questions for universities (pages 19–20)

Q1: How can the academic expertise of universities be brought to bear on our schools system, to improve school-level attainment and in doing so widen access?

The academic expertise of universities can be utilised for the benefit of school-level attainment in a number of ways, such as:

- Initial teacher training (ITT)
- Continuing professional development for teachers (CPD)
- Teaching provision (eg in A-level STEM subjects)
- Curriculum development, enrichment and design
- Educational research
- ‘Whole school’-level interventions
- ‘Classroom-level’/‘teacher-level’ interventions
- Support for subject-specific departments and subject-specific teaching
- Sponsoring a school (there are a wide range of sponsorship models)
- Establishing a new school (this could include a free school or a university technical college)

UUK members currently employ a range of methods to work with schools to raise attainment and widen access. Each of the activities and interventions listed above were highlighted in the responses we received from our members.

Throughout UUK’s evidence gathering and engagement with members it was clear that the sector fully supports the objectives of the green paper to contribute to school-level attainment. This is demonstrated by the range of innovative ways in which institutions already work with many schools. A number of other examples of the diverse ways in which institutions from across the higher education sector work with schools are presented throughout this response.

Despite the diversity of this engagement the intent of the green paper in relation to sponsorship appears to be relatively narrow, instead of focusing on the many ways in which universities currently utilise their expertise to support school attainment, and exploring how this could be developed and expanded.

Although the green paper focuses on school sponsorship, we note that the evidence on its effectiveness in raising school-level attainment remains underdeveloped. To date there has been limited evaluation of current sponsorship arrangements and the necessary conditions for it to work successfully in the interests of a school, its teachers and its pupils.

In terms of what evidence is available, in 2014 HEFCE undertook an initial analysis of trends in pupil attainment and progression to higher education from secondary schools, with a focus on academies sponsored by higher education institutions. This analysis found that at key stage 4 there had been a significant increase in pupil attainment in all sponsored academies over recent years. Between 2005 and 2013,
the proportion of pupils achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs and equivalent in sponsored academies more than doubled.4

However, the analysis found that this improvement appears to have been driven by achievement in vocational qualifications; between 2005 and 2014 the proportion pupils achieving 5 A*-C from only GCSEs had seen little variation across sponsored academies. Likewise, results from across the sector showed only a slight increase in attainment when looking just at GCSEs. In terms of progression to higher education from sponsored academies, this has increased slightly faster than from all schools but the proportion going on to higher education from all schools remained greater. Although there are examples of universities that have successfully sponsored academies there are also examples where this had proved challenging. This demonstrates that although sponsorship can be effective, it may not always be the most effective way for some universities to use their academic expertise to raise attainment.

This is not to say that sponsorship arrangements should not become more extensive. Just over half of the HEFCE-funded higher education sector is already engaged in sponsorship relationships, involving around 150 schools – and there is clearly scope to do more. However, if the number of these relationships is to be drastically scaled up and made a condition of higher fees, such decisions should be evidence-based and their requirements flexible enough to account for the diversity of both the higher education sector and the requirements of the school’s sector. A one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to encourage the best outcomes and could risk damaging innovative arrangements and partnerships already in place. For example, the University of Essex has developed an innovative approach to engagement by establishing a membership relationship with local schools, which it regards as fulfilling the same role as a sponsorship arrangement (see text box 1).

Box 1: University of Essex, Schools Membership Plus (SMP)

The university plays an ‘anchor’ role in the region for existing schools. The Schools Membership Plus (SMP) programme involves relationships with 32 schools, which benefit from 25 different types of support methods. This includes: specialist A-level plans, dedicated teacher CPD, annual teachers’ conference, free access to university library online resources, twilight subject sessions in schools, access to an online learning platform for students, and fee discounts for teachers studying at postgraduate level. PhD students deliver research methods training to support Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) as well as deliver subject sessions. The university also provides SMP schools with travel grants to enable engagement with activities on-campus and bursaries to support school engagement activities.

The university also has an established governor network so that members of staff already acting as governors of local schools can share experiences and offer support and guidance. Academic and professional staff are encouraged to take on governor roles to contribute expertise, skills and experience for the benefit of primary and secondary schools in the area.

4 http://www.hefce.ac.uk/workprovide/schools/analysis/
**VI6 programme**

As part of SMP, the university also runs the VI6 (six-six) partnership scheme, which brings together six schools in the local area. This involves jointly teaching eight A-level subjects which the schools would not be able to deliver themselves, and providing teaching facilities for this at no charge. Around 170 students study on the university site each week for two years across a range of subjects: further maths, French, law, economics, geography, sociology, art history, philosophy and ethics.

At the end of the first year, 87% of students indicated they would apply to university. Teachers involved in the scheme have been hugely positive, highlighting the lived experience of university life it delivers to students on a regular basis and also pointing out that students have become more engaged when in school.

Box 2 below describes another form of collaborative engagement to support attainment. This involves Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) acting as a ‘key academic partner’ to the Co-operative Academies Trust. This partnership entails activities that would be expected of a sponsorship arrangement, with a specific focus on how the academic expertise of the university can be harnessed to help raise school-level attainment. Box 3 describes some of the ways in which the University of Cambridge harnesses its academic expertise to improve attainment and widen access to higher education.

**Box 2: Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) – ‘Key academic partner’**

MMU has been the ‘key academic partner’ of the Co-operative Academies Trust (CAT) in respect of its academies in Manchester since 2010. CAT currently has eight academies in Manchester, Leeds and Stoke, all serving disadvantaged areas. The trust is regarded as having very strong governance arrangements by the DfE and Ofsted. Pupil outcomes are also improving faster than the national average.

Positive outcomes of this collaboration for students, teachers and the university include:

- creation of a bespoke MA programme focusing on cooperation
- CAT colleagues supporting MMU initial teacher education programmes through delivering sessions to students and staff, including staff development days on the role of academies
- Faculty of Education (FoE) staff leading staff development sessions in co-operative schools, supporting curriculum development and conducting research on teacher recruitment in CAT schools
- CAT sponsoring PhD students in the Faculty of Education
- FoE providing two governors for the Co-operative Academy of Manchester and the Manchester Creative and Media Academy
Box 3: University of Cambridge – harnessing the university’s academic expertise to raise attainment at local schools

**Underground Mathematics**
This programme began in 2012 and is funded by a grant from DfE. Underground Mathematics provides free web-based resources that support the teaching and learning of post-16 mathematics. Many of the resources combine solving problems, mathematical reasoning and fluency. The programme aims to help students build firm foundations for mathematical understanding and are designed to encourage students to pose questions, reflect and collaborate, thereby deepening their individual understanding. A Head of Key Stage 5, has commented that working with Underground Mathematics ‘has been transformative for me as a teacher and has helped to shape how I teach sixth form mathematics lessons. The lessons I teach look very different to the sixth form lessons I experienced as a student (some years ago).’

**Isaac Physics**
This platform offers support and activities in physics problem-solving to teachers and to students transitioning from GCSE (Year 11), through to sixth form (Years 12 and 13), to university. It combines an online study tool with face-to-face events at partner schools and institutions across the UK.

**The collegiate university’s Subject Masterclasses**
These masterclasses offer Year 12 students subject enrichment and the opportunity to explore topics of interest beyond what is covered within the A-level syllabus. Subjects have included chemistry, engineering, genetics, geography, history, languages, mathematics, music and psychology. 27% of the students who attended the university’s Subject Masterclasses in 2013 went on to apply to the university and 47% of those applicants were made offers of a place.

**The collegiate university’s Subject Matters initiative**
This provides guidance for Year 10 and 11 students on A-level subject choice. At these sessions, admissions tutors explore the opportunities that higher education can offer; provide guidance on A-level (or equivalent) subject choice; and outline what universities look for in applications. The constituent colleges of the university also undertake subject workshops, giving secondary school students of different ages the opportunity to experience subjects as they are taught at university.

**Ensuring an evidence-based approach to raising attainment**

Both universities and schools face significant pressures on their time and resources. Directing resources into evidence-based interventions is therefore critical. In view of this we suggest that the DfE should commission quantitative and qualitative research on the impact of different types of university-school engagement. This could build on the recent qualitative work done by HEFCE.

The Social Mobility Advisory Group’s recent report on higher education and social mobility, *Working in partnership: enabling social mobility in higher education*, identified that there was no vehicle for individual universities to share good practice around what works in widening access. To address this the group recommended the establishment of an Evidence and Impact Exchange. This would systematically evaluate and promote the evidence relating to the role of higher education in
supporting social mobility.\textsuperscript{5} Once established this evaluation function should provide a valuable resource for determining what works in terms of raising school-level attainment and support institutions to develop ways of working with schools informed by a robust evidence base. In the meantime, the evidence currently being collated by the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) on the impact of activities to support attainment will provide a useful benchmark for the sector.

**Toolkit for schools to support engagement with higher education**

As part of this approach, there may also be value in the DfE conducting an exercise to determine gaps in expertise or skills within schools. This would help to identify where additional support is needed and the form this would take, and help universities to align their expertise against the requirements of the school. The outcomes of this exercise could be used to develop guidance to support schools in engaging with universities. This could complement the toolkit developed by HEFCE for the higher education sector.\textsuperscript{6}

**Teacher education**

In its submission to the Education Select Committee's inquiry into the supply of teachers (November 2015), the DfE noted that:

Evidence shows that high-quality teachers are the single most important factor in determining how well pupils do in school.\textsuperscript{7}

In support of this, many universities emphasised the importance of the role of university-led Initial Teacher Training in contributing to school attainment.

Universities providing teacher education have longstanding relationships in place with schools in the area for the placement of their students. These students often become teachers locally, as seen at Bath Spa University, where 82% of PGCE graduates go on to work in schools within Bath and north-east Somerset. These teachers have graduated from a professional programme rated ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted.

By building on these ITT relationships with local schools, universities can become more involved in improving attainment, gaining a deep understanding of the particular context of a school and working in close partnership with staff in schools to intervene effectively. An example of the contribution of teacher education is set out in box 4 below.

**Box 4: Brunel University London – the contribution of teacher education**

Brunel University London has a commitment to primary and secondary initial teacher education, offering outstanding provision which demonstrates direct impact not just in

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\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{7} DfE submission to Education Select Committee inquiry (SOT0046), November 2015
mainstream schools but in a range of different settings, by providing teachers locally as well as at a regional and national level.

The university also offers a range of other programmes supporting the profession, such as a BA in education. Graduates from this programme pursue a range of careers in education, such as educational welfare officers, who intervene to ensure the most disadvantaged in society are able to continue to progress in school while experiencing challenging circumstances.

The Masters in education offers academic study that enhances the ongoing professional education of teachers and other professionals working in different settings, developing leaders who will go on to shape the provision that makes a difference to young people’s education.

The university’s professional doctorate also ensures that these leaders are developed across the full span of their career. For example, headteachers use research they have conducted to directly inform school improvement.

Brunel has an extensive partnership network of schools that includes those rated as ‘requires improvement’ because of a commitment to supplying high quality teachers to those schools with the greatest need. The concept of partnership is crucial and this is wide ranging in its scope. This includes:

- working directly with schools in the local London borough on projects which seek to close gaps in attainment between different groups of young people in schools
- coordinating collaborative steering groups with colleagues which examine particular priority areas in schools

The role of educational research in improving education

Universities also carry out research about education, exploring what works and disseminating this research to policymakers and teachers. This can inform the development of evidence-based policy and institutional practice. The University of Birmingham School and Sixth Form (a comprehensive free school) is currently working with the university’s Department of Disability and Inclusion, the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues and the university’s School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences on research around inclusion, the development of character, and transition from primary to secondary school. This draws on significant research strengths of the university and the outcomes will be shared widely across schools. Box 5 below provides further detail on the school.

Box 5: University of Birmingham School and Sixth Form

The University of Birmingham School and Sixth Form is a comprehensive free school, now in its second year of operation. It was established to meet the needs of pupils from a range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds in line with the university’s aspirations to contribute to the city. The university consistently emphasises the importance of the alignment with its mission when taking the decision to set up a school.

The UoB school draws pupils from four ‘nodes’ across the city, including disadvantaged areas. It has made effective use of its status as a ‘free school’ to extend the school day and deliver innovative teaching and enrichment activities to all of its pupils. It draws heavily on
the expertise of the university, with a particular focus on developing character due to the involvement of the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues.

As a University Training School, the UoB school is also developing its role in raising the profile of teaching as a career, and in enhancing all its initial teacher education programmes, as well as becoming a site for the co-creation and dissemination of research and for high quality continuing professional development. Again, this is possible due to the expertise within the university and the mutual benefit gained from establishing the school.

In a similar way to the University of Birmingham School example above, the School of Education at Brunel University specifically highlights the importance of having a strong research culture at the heart of all that they do and this applies to both staff and students. To achieve this, staff and students are encouraged to undertake projects which contribute to the field of education and which can then directly inform policy practice in schools and impact on young people’s experiences.

Box 6 describes how the University of Nottingham, through its School of Education, provides research in education which contributes to raising attainment.

**Box 6 – School of Education, University of Nottingham**

The School of Education at the University of Nottingham is a leading centre for research in education, as well as offering high quality teaching and professional education. It is one of the largest university education departments in the UK, and is ranked 28th in the world in the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2016.

Research projects focus on topics such as subject teaching and learning, community, social justice, and school leadership. Teachers in partner schools are offered free continuing professional development opportunities, for example in relation to teaching specific subjects and to special educational needs and disability, and discounted fees for Masters and higher-level degrees in education.

Through the Schools of Education on their campuses in China and Malaysia, the university brokers international engagement for local teachers, school and student exchanges and comparative research.

**The importance of understanding the local context**

As demonstrated in our response to this question there is no one-size-fits-all approach in terms of how universities support school-level attainment. This is in large part due to the differences in the circumstances of schools and the mission and strengths of a university. This includes characteristics of the school such as pupil and parent demographics, the long-term performance of the school, the quality of teaching, teacher retention, progression rates to higher education and the socioeconomic features of the local area. For universities, this includes factors such as resource (time and financial), areas of expertise, existing relationships and arrangements with schools, and alignment with strategy and core mission.

Ensuring a locally credible and positive contribution is consistently highlighted by UUK members as paramount when considering how to work with schools to raise
attainment. Approaches need to be tailored to ensure they are appropriate for the local context and the need that is being met. Understanding and working in the interests of the local context is also critical for building relationships, which are in turn crucial to universities intervening successfully in the schools sector. Box 7 below describes how Nottingham Trent University has designed its work with schools around the needs of the city.

Universities are keen to avoid a situation where a requirement which is intended to assist the schools sector in improving attainment and school performance results in disruptive or rival interventions from higher education institutions.

**Box 7: Nottingham Trent University (NTU) – Schools and Colleges Community Outreach (SCCO)**

The projects run within this programme reach around 120 schools and educational providers. The programme is designed to address the specific needs of the city, which is among the ten lowest ranking local authority areas nationally for GCSE attainment. For the majority of schools in the city, over half their intake is from areas identified by HEFCE as ‘cold spots’ – low participation neighbourhoods with lower than expected progression rates to higher education when taking account of the schools' Key Stage 4 attainment.

**Students in Classrooms Scheme**

NTU recruits around 500 of its students each year to work in schools, particularly in those communities where progression rates into university are lower than expected. The Students in Classrooms scheme provides pupil support for activities including classroom, literacy, and maths assistance as well as one-to-one mentoring. It has helped to close the gap in educational achievements for children from more disadvantaged backgrounds. The scheme has reached over 30,000 pupils in its twelve years of operation.

**Children’s University**

The Children's University recognises and rewards the learning and activities that children take part in outside normal school hours and is open to children aged 7 to 14 if their school has signed up to the scheme. Participation in the Children's University is voluntary. Children receive a Passport to Learning from their school and they can collect credits for each activity in which they participate. Credits can be given for taking part in learning experiences and activities at after school clubs, sports clubs, museums, activity centres and music groups. This learning does not need to be purely academic; often, it is focused on developing the skills that help children go on to university and many of the activities link with university subjects. If children gain 100 credits they are invited to attend an awards ceremony at Nottingham Trent University.

In addition to the above activities, SCCO also covers:

- **Chemistry Outreach** – funding from The Royal Society of Chemistry supports an extended project which aims to increase pupils' interest and participation in chemistry
- **Summer School and Residential Summer School activities** – provide pupils with first-hand insight into and experience of higher education at subject level
- **Nottingham Trent Volunteering** – matches 1,000 volunteers to a range of associated community projects across the city
University staff act as school governors

More than 40 members of university staff also serve as school governors.

Specialist institutions

Specialist institutions use their expertise in their subject specialism to support attainment in schools. Many of these institutions are too small for school sponsorship to be feasible – the majority are smaller than most secondary schools – and therefore do not have the necessary resources or expertise to establish or run a school across the entire curriculum. To do so would entail diverting considerable resources away from their specialism(s) and areas of expertise. Stretching the limited resources of specialist institutions across the whole curriculum is not an effective use of this expertise, and these institutions have already addressed this by developing ways of engaging with schools which are appropriate for their circumstances.

Specialist institutions currently undertake a range of activity to support attainment in secondary schools, focusing on the expertise they have in their subject areas, which is often less readily available to school students through the state system. The institutions can therefore make an extremely valuable contribution through supporting the delivery of the curriculum in their specialist area. The focus is often on providing learning opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds who might also be disadvantaged by lack of access to specialist disciplines such as art and design, music and drama.

It is in this way that the academic expertise of specialist institutions is brought to bear on the schools system to improve attainment. If these institutions were individually expected to run a school, it is likely that they would be unable to continue with their current activity to the same extent. For example, members of Conservatoires UK all currently run Junior Conservatoires, Centres for Advanced Training or extensive outreach, collaboration and partnership programmes – and in most cases a combination of all three. These Junior Conservatoires make a valuable contribution to higher education in the performing arts as well as to the sector more broadly, with 85% of students succeeding in gaining places in higher education, more than 40% progressing to undergraduate studies at a conservatoire and more than 25% studying music at a university. A further 15% go on to study other subjects at university. Across specialist institutions more generally, many provide governors from their senior leadership teams and so play an important part in the running of a school.

University of the Arts London (UAL) is the largest specialist institution in the UK and carries out a great deal of work with schools. It has developed a model of ‘extended partnerships’, which go beyond outreach to support the development of the art, design and communication curriculum. In some cases, this also extends to school governance. Of these partnerships, UAL reports direct impact on attainment through the Newham Creative Hub, an initiative with schools and further education colleges in East London. The Saturday Club for Year 10 students has resulted in a positive
impact on attainment for GCSE art and design, and has subsequently been rolled out to students in south London (Camberwell site) and north London (King’s Cross site). Box 8 below provides a further example of the type of work specialist institutions already undertake with schools, outlining the initiatives of the Centre for Young Musicians (CYM) run by Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

Such activities are able to reach a much wider group of young people than would be likely through close working with a single school. The latter also risks the concentration of specialist provision and resources, as well as diminution of expertise, rather than expanding the provision of specialist subjects across a much greater area and number of schools and pupils.

**Box 8: The Centre for Young Musicians (CYM), Guildhall School of Music and Drama**

CYM is a division of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama that provides high quality progressive music training for children under 18 years of age from all of London’s boroughs and beyond.

As well as the London centre, it has five branches in Norwich, Taunton, Saffron Walden, Bristol and Peterborough. The Peterborough CYM is designed to enhance progression routes in music education in the area in collaboration with Ormiston Bushfield Academy, with support from Peterborough Music Hub. Bristol Centre for Young Musicians opened in September 2016, working in partnership with the Music Education Hub for Bristol and based at Bristol Cathedral Choir School and Henbury School. The Norwich CYM is a similar partnership between the Guildhall School, Norwich Music Service and local academy, City of Norwich School.

All CYMs offer young musicians from age 7 to 17 a broad programme of activities including tuition with music teachers from the Guildhall School, visiting music teachers from other conservatoires, and players from leading UK orchestras. More than 420 young musicians aged 8 to 18 attend the London Saturday centre alone for 32 weeks of the school year, each following an individual programme of study across a range of genres from classical to jazz, gamelan, folk and music theatre. Still more children benefit from CYM holiday courses, ranging from junior and intermediate courses to participation in ensembles such as the London Schools Symphony Orchestra and the London Youth Wind Band. The CYM Saturday centre is a Centre for Advanced Training within the DfE’s Music & Dance Scheme.

Many students on Guildhall’s CYM and Junior Guildhall programmes are supported by means-tested bursaries, whether through the DfE Music and Dance Scheme, bursaries or Guildhall-funded bursaries and scholarships.

**Current sponsorship activity**

Just over half of UUK members are currently engaged in sponsorship activity, either with an individual school, with multiple schools or with schools in one or more Multi-Academy Trusts (MAT). Some of these arrangements are extensive, such as the University of Wolverhampton, which sponsors 17 schools and regards this as part of its core mission and contribution to the local area. Box 9 below sets out the sponsorship activity Staffordshire University is engaged in. This example illustrates
the extent of the commitment universities make to schools in becoming a sponsor; clearly, not all universities would have the capacity to undertake all of this activity.

**Box 9: Staffordshire University – an example of sponsorship activity**

Staffordshire University sponsors three schools within a multi-academy trust, which began in 2011 and has been followed by two primary schools being converted into the trust in 2014. All of these schools have now been brought out of special measures; this has involved extensive effort across many areas of activity within the ‘sponsorship’ arrangement. An example of the type of activity and support required for the academic year 2015–16 is set out below:

- The release of £100,000 from the reserve at Staffordshire University Academy to target support to the new Year 11.
- With the support of the School Improvement Partner (provided by the School of Education at Staffordshire University) 28 students had their timetables adjusted for the start of Year 11 (of which 25 are boys); 16 of the 28 were students in receipt of pupil premium funding of which 13 were boys. All of these students received additional English, maths or study skills sessions in these slots on their timetables, supported by undergraduates at the university.
- ‘Skillforce’ – the university brokered a meeting with a charity that works in partnership with schools drawing on the skills of ex-forces personnel. The work challenged disaffection and raised aspirations. Towards the end of the 15-week programme, the staff went into lessons to act as mentors and support the raising of confidence and motivation within the students’ lessons. An accredited award was achieved as part of this work
- Advertisement for additional tutors who started in the autumn term to deliver maths and English teaching for targeted Year 11 students.
- Investment in staff training, through the School of Education, to support the continued development of teaching and learning.
- The sponsor brokered support from the Priory School Teaching Alliance (based in Shrewsbury) who provided SLEs (Specialist Leader of Education).

The university carried out its own internal review of Year 11 revision sessions, which revealed a gap in attendance between pupil premium and non-pupil premium students. This will be a focus from September onwards.

Although just over half of institutions in receipt of HEFCE funding are engaged in sponsorship activities, evidence on the impact that these arrangements have on attainment over other types of interventions with schools remains limited. The most recent and detailed research that has been carried out into this area was commissioned by HEFCE; it examines the experiences of 20 higher education providers involved in the establishment, development and sponsorship of academies, UTCs and free schools. It is also worth noting that three quarters of this sample were co-sponsors – not sole sponsors.

This research highlighted the main ways in which universities contribute to schools through sponsorship arrangements. These include:

- Creating new schools or converting existing schools
- Governance, management and advice
- Curriculum design and development
- Resource sharing
- Learner experience and enrichment
- Teacher training opportunities

The HEFCE research also showed that motivation was a critical driver of current sponsorship arrangements – or the setting up of a new school. This was mirrored in the evidence from UUK members, which indicated that arrangements were most effective where there were genuine motivations to improve pupil attainment and aspiration across both partners, and where sponsorship of a particular school – or establishing a school – was closely aligned to the university’s core mission. The institutions involved in the HEFCE study identified a range of motivations, which can be grouped into three broad areas:

- Performance-related reasons – such as raising attainment and addressing school underperformance
- Industry/sector-related reasons – meeting local employer need, promoting specific subjects or approaches to learning
- Community and regeneration – helping to improve the prospects of a local area.

The universities in the study did not cite benefits for their own organisations either as a primary motivation, or at all. If the ability to charge higher fees is tied to a prescriptive requirement to either sponsor or establish a school, there is a risk that these motivations become focused on fulfilling a requirement and ensuring financial stability, rather than on the ultimate objectives of raising attainment, increasing school performance and improving opportunities for children.

**Q2: Are there other ways in which universities could be asked to contribute to raising school-level attainment?**

Institutions provided UUK with many examples of ways in which universities can contribute to school-level attainment, including those which draw on the non-academic expertise of universities. A selection of these are set out in the Box 10 below.

**Box 10: Examples of activities that can contribute to raising school attainment**

- Facilitating strong educational partnerships across the different age phases for example, primary and pre-primary, secondary, post-16 and higher education.
- Providing opportunities for pupils and teachers to visit universities to break down any perceived barriers or normalise the environment of a university (this can be particularly important for pupils with no family tradition of university attendance and under-represented groups such as children in care).

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9 Ibid.
Supplying schools with student mentors. This can include postgraduates who can share their research and expertise as well as mentoring/shadowing between university staff and subject teachers in schools.

Offering bursaries/financial support to disadvantaged students.

Provision of support related to the management of a school. This could include university Departments of Education or Business to support the development of school leadership, support from professional services such as human resources, finance, the estates department for building improvement/managing new buildings.

Establishing infrastructure to facilitate collaboration, partnership, mutual support and sharing of good practice across a group of schools/academies.

Facilitating access to local employers and the third sector and charitable organisations.

Utilising the university sector’s expertise to support skills development and transition across key stages of learning (such as ‘Make your Mark’ at Middlesex University which includes specialist platforms and content to support this).

Opening up university resources and facilities such as libraries to school pupils, teachers and the local community. Using school-level ‘massive open online courses’ (MOOCs) and social media platforms to disseminate subject expertise and curriculum demands.

Providing staff to be members of the governing body or an academy trust board.

Offering discounted access to postgraduate and subject specialist courses for teachers and school leaders.

Box 10 demonstrates some of the different ways in which universities already contribute to raising school-level attainment which would fall out of the scope of sponsoring a school or setting up a new school. To ensure that the government can maximise these contributions it is critical that the final policy provides the conditions that enable institutions to continue to deliver on this broader range of activity. Furthermore, the activities the university engages in should align with the local context, particularly the needs of local schools and pupils. A narrow focus on sponsorship could mitigate against this.

**Working in partnership with the third sector and charitable organisations**

There are many charities working either exclusively or in part to address social mobility in higher education, seeing higher education as one of the best levers available to address wider social disadvantage. It is important that their role is also recognised. The charitable or ‘third’ sector acts as a broker to support universities in widening access and in linking universities with employers at the other end of the student lifecycle.

Given the importance of having a place-based approach to social mobility, it is also worth noting that charitable organisations often have a regional focus; for example, a number work in London and the south east. Sometimes these organisations are associated with particular groups of universities, and can focus on addressing social mobility in a particular professional area, for instance supporting disadvantaged or black and minority ethnic graduates into professional careers. In view of the critical role these organisations play working with schools and universities, the Social
Mobility Advisory Group recommended that a directory should be developed which lists all the educational charities\(^{10}\). Awareness of these organisations, where they are located and their reach will be important in supporting a more coordinated approach between charities, schools, colleges and universities. This information will also be useful to those engaged with HEFCE’s National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) in exploring whether more could be done to link charities with NCOPs.

A number of universities across England work closely with the charity IntoUniversity, by sponsoring local IntoUniversity centres which work with children and young people to raise aspiration, attainment and progression on to university. This work can also provide evidence of what works. The University of Leeds sponsors two IntoUniversity centres in the city, providing partnership funding for the project as well as opportunities for visits to the campus and 85 student volunteers. The centres have worked with over 2,000 young people across Leeds, providing academic support sessions for both primary and secondary pupils. The reach of this initiative is impressive: at one centre a total of 88 primary students and 55 secondary students, from 12 different schools and 13 different schools respectively, attended the academic support sessions.

**Q3: Is the DFA guidance the most effective way of delivering these new requirements?**

To charge higher fees universities already commit to developing access agreements. Therefore, any requirements on universities to contribute to raising attainment in schools and increasing good school places should sit within, and build upon, this existing process rather than add additional regulatory requirements. The DFA guidance is therefore the most effective way of delivering a greater emphasis on support for raising attainment and sponsorship activity. Indeed, encouraging universities to engage in activities to support attainment and engage with schools has been included in the DFA guidance for a number of years now. The most recent guidance for developing access agreements for 2017–18 states that:

> We also want you to place a stronger focus on building strong, long-term relationships with schools and colleges, particularly in those neighbourhoods where there are low numbers of people progressing to higher education, to ensure activity is prioritised in these areas. One way to do this is to may be to have a greater involvement in the governance of schools and colleges, such as sitting on governing bodies, or sponsoring academies, free schools, trust schools and University Training Schools. (Paragraph 42, page 8)

Using access agreements as a mechanism has the added benefit that the guidance already recognises the influence of the wider context within which institutions operate and the importance of obtaining a balance across different types of activities (such as ensuring outreach at primary school level). In addition, universities are encouraged to set their own targets which are then examined and agreed by the DFA. In the

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\(^{10}\) See Recommendation 13 (ii).

Putting responsibility directly in the hands of universities and colleges by requiring them to set their own targets, and to report on progress against these targets, has been key to OFFA’s success over the last decade. (Page 22)

If further emphasis is to be placed on the importance of attainment-raising activity, and made a condition of charging higher fees, we believe this balanced process should continue. In our view, this approach will achieve better outcomes than a blanket mandatory requirement sitting within an otherwise much more intelligent and contextualised instrument.

However, prescribing sponsorship of an academy or establishment of a new school as a condition of an access agreement, above other attainment-raising activities, is problematic. In our view this could result in reducing the overall impact the sector could have on secondary education. As we demonstrate in response to Q1, universities will adopt different approaches and interventions according to their mission, strengths, size and local circumstances. The impact that universities can have on improving attainment should be viewed holistically, taking into account the many different ways in which universities approach this challenge. This may well include sponsorship of schools, but should not be to the exclusion of the many other successful arrangements discussed throughout this response.

Furthermore, our members remain concerned about the potential for unintended consequences arising from a top-down approach. This could damage existing partnerships between schools and universities, focus resources on fewer schools and skew incentives for university involvement. It was also noted that in certain cases, such as for specialist institutions, this could reduce the ability of an institution to deliver existing outreach activity and undermine an institution’s financial viability, particularly in the case of a small institution, where an institution only received a small amount of higher fee income or whose tuition fees were only just above the basic fee level. Such a prescriptive approach may also stifle innovation and discourage universities from taking risks.\footnote{Further details and examples of the potential impact of this approach is set out in our answer to Q4.}

To guard against this, it may be helpful to establish parameters for the DFA’s expectations of institutions in relation to any new requirements to raise attainment. This could be captured through a number of principles that the DFA could be minded to when forming a judgement on whether an institution is doing as much as possible given its particular circumstances. This could include the need for:

- a proportionate approach which takes account of the wide spectrum of engagement, the different contributions that universities can make, the size...
and capacity of institutions, what schools require, the ecology of schools, and existing school and college partnerships; it could also include retaining a balance between different types of relationships with schools

- activities and interventions to be evidence-led
- credible criteria for success in terms of raising school attainment
- a balance between incentives, encouragement and sanctions

The principle of adopting a proportionate response should also apply in terms of the government’s expectation that a university-sponsored school should be good or outstanding after a number of years. Research by HEFCE\(^{13}\) clearly demonstrates that there are a number of challenges in sponsoring a school. Additionally, UUK questions whether reference to Ofsted metrics is appropriate, or required, in this context. Clearly demonstrating accountability is important. However, there is already an accountability process built into access agreements whereby institutions must provide feedback to the DFA on progress made\(^{14}\).

**Financial incentives**

Alongside access agreements, UUK also suggests that a series of financial incentives for both schools and universities could be a useful mechanism to facilitate the raising of attainment.

The new ‘Opportunity Areas’ (Derby, Scarborough, West Somerset, Blackpool, Norwich, Oldham), identified by the DfE as the most challenged when it comes to social mobility will be important here. These areas have access to funding of £60 million to support young people, from nursery age through to starting work. There is also access to a teaching and leadership innovation fund worth £75 million over three years, which is focused on supporting the teachers and school leaders in the area. We understand that in each area the DfE aims to establish local partnerships between early years providers, schools, multi academy trusts (MATs), colleges, universities, businesses, charities and the local authorities. UUK is already working with the DfE to support the engagement universities in these partnerships.

It is also worth noting that Derby, Scarborough, and West Somerset will benefit from successful bids for the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP)\(^{15}\) in higher education. NCOPs provide an important mechanism for facilitating partnership working between schools and universities.

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\(^{13}\) York Consulting report to HEFCE, October 2016: [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE_2014/Content/Pubs/Independentresearch/2016/HE_sponsored_academies_UCTs_and_free_schools/2016_heschools.pdf](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE_2014/Content/Pubs/Independentresearch/2016/HE_sponsored_academies_UCTs_and_free_schools/2016_heschools.pdf)

\(^{14}\) Institutions with access agreements are required to complete an annual monitoring form on progress made.

\(^{15}\) The NCOP is a four-year programme from 2017 to 2020, developed by HEFCE in response to the government’s ambition to double the proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds in higher education by 2020. It will support intensive outreach by consortia aimed at increasing participation in higher education in 997 wards where higher education participation rates are low overall, and lower than expected given Key Stage 4 GCSE (and equivalent) attainment levels.
Consideration could also be given to the ability of a university to draw on the HEFCE Catalyst Fund in return for school sponsorship or establishing a new school.\textsuperscript{16}

**Q4: What is the best way to ensure that all universities sponsor schools as a condition of higher fees?**

Universities are committed to working in partnership with schools to raise attainment and contribute to an increased number of good school places. However, as noted above, we would not support a prescriptive approach to the level of engagement expected of universities through the access agreement. We believe this approach, combined with the tight timeframe for inclusion in the 2018–19 access agreements, could make it hard to implement the policy. Accommodating a broader range of models could make this more achievable, particularly in terms of OFFA’s expectations for 2018–19 access agreements, and allow government to see significant progress towards its goals.

On the basis of the evidence we have received from our members, we believe that a prescriptive approach has the potential to lead to a number of unintended consequences, as set out below.

**Impact on existing relationships with schools**

Focusing time and resource on a smaller number of schools, or showing ‘preference’ for a particular school, risks a negative impact on existing relationships with other schools in the area. The increased time commitment that would be necessary for sponsorship (as currently implied) has the potential to lead to a reduction in the time and attention given to a wider range of schools, which can create a hostile environment.

This risk can be even more prominent when setting up a new school if it is perceived as a rival to other schools in the area, by ‘poaching’ the best pupils and teaching staff. Government’s proposals need to reflect the importance of existing relationships and have the flexibility to enable universities to grow these local links and partnerships rather than damaging them. Evidence from UUK members consistently demonstrates the importance of good local relationships. This should be included in the DFA guidance and form part of the DFA’s judgement-based approach.

This includes the long-standing relationships that universities have with schools in respect of initial teacher training placements. There is a clear benefit for university students in these relationships working effectively. Furthermore, they have often been the foundations of developing more involved partnerships for raising attainment as they can lead to a level of trust and understanding.

\textsuperscript{16} This is a fund used by HEFCE to support the delivery of their strategic aims across teaching and learning.
Reducing the reach of university-school partnerships

Although the sector has no intention of reducing either the breadth or depth of this work, the current proposals have the potential to lead to a refocusing of resource if they are applied as blanket requirements. For example, an institution may not have the resource to continue with current activity in addition to fulfilling mandatory requirements for sponsorship or establishing a new school.

We envisage that this would particularly be the case for small specialist institutions with limited resources and without their own teacher education departments.

Motivations of universities

HEFCE research\ footref{17}\ sets out the motivations for universities engaging in sponsorship arrangements. These include improving school performance and pupil attainment, improving the social capital of an area or for reasons related to industry such as promoting specific subjects or responding to local employer needs.\ footref{18} The driver for all of this is improving opportunities for children and young people – particularly those who otherwise might not have access to such opportunities – and so contributing to local communities in which the university is rooted. There is a risk that a mandatory requirement linked to the ability of an institution to charge higher fees fundamentally shifts the primary drivers for universities to develop arrangements with schools for the raising of attainment. Feedback from UUK members has consistently emphasised the importance of a desire to contribute to improvement that is in the interests of the school and local area, providing mutual benefits and with strong senior leadership commitment to this.

Sponsorship that works for universities and schools

UUK therefore supports a less prescriptive, more flexible approach to the requirements of sponsorship if this is to be a condition of higher fees.

Requirements included in the access agreement should be contextualised according to the type of institution. Taking this into account, UUK proposes that a broad understanding of what is meant by ‘sponsorship’ should be developed. We believe this would work for both universities and schools, and achieve government’s objective of raising attainment and increasing the number of good school places. Importantly, it would also allow for new and innovative ways of working with schools to raise attainment, and for engagement to be adapted in response to new evidence of what works.

The University of Birmingham has suggested that this could be seen as a ‘continuum of sponsorship’. This would encompass the range of activity and collaborations that universities are able to undertake, dependent on their resource

\footref{17} York Consulting report to HEFCE, October 2016: \url{http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE_2014/Content/Pubs/Independentresearch/2016/HE_sponsored_academies,UTCs,and,free,schools/2016_heschools.pdf}
\footref{18} Ibid.
and expertise. All points along this continuum would have value, with particular models only being preferable in the sense that they are most appropriate for the institutions and schools involved. For some institutions this would mean choosing to establish and be extensively engaged in running their own school whereas for others this might be focused on targeted outreach activities with various hybrid models of sponsorship and other types of engagement with schools in between.

A broader understanding of sponsorship would allow for a number of different models of engagement to be incorporated into the proposal, making it less prescriptive and more contextualised to the needs of the school and the resources and expertise of the university. This would enable universities and schools to work together in a way that truly addresses the needs of a particular area and individual schools. It would also give the DFA the ability to operate as it currently does in relation to other widening access work, making a judgement-based decision considering the appropriate context.

This would also facilitate the development of robust relationships and interventions which are based on the needs of the school and local area. It would help to avoid the potential negative perception that university-sponsored schools are rivals for the best pupils and teachers. Furthermore, greater flexibility of sponsorship arrangements would enable evidence collection across an array of activities for different types of universities and schools, allowing DfE, the higher education sector and the schools sector to build up a better picture of what works in different situations.

In terms of accountability, the DFA would still be able to challenge universities to build on and expand their arrangements where appropriate, for example by requiring an institution to progress to a more challenging model, or to expand the reach of their existing arrangements. Where this is the case proportionate timescales for review would need to be built in, with expectations of how progress would be measured. For example, the average time it takes for a new free school to reach capacity is between five and seven years. Where this is the case, the DFA could encourage universities to develop their own targets in line with the current process.

Q5: Should we encourage universities to take specific factors into account when deciding how and where to support school attainment?

The consultation states that the government might ask institutions to consider taking into account other factors such as geography, the number of good school places or higher education participation rates when deciding where to focus their energies. We note that this is an important issue for fair access, in that the government’s proposals will only have a significant impact on fair access to higher education if they require institutions to target resources or areas where there is low attainment or where there are persistently low rates of participation in higher education. Notwithstanding this we would not support the use of a single measure of area-based disadvantage by OFFA. For example, from our discussion with higher education practitioners, schools and

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other bodies, POLAR3 is now regarded as too blunt an instrument on its own; it should be for institutions to decide on the range of data they could use to identify academies or schools.

When planning and delivering work with schools to support attainment, members' responses illustrate that universities already take into account a number of specific factors affecting both the institution and the schools it is working with. It is important that this continues so that university resources are targeted and utilised effectively; the green paper proposals in their current form do not appear to recognise the range of factors that determine whether and how universities and schools work together. This is also critical for meeting the requirements of schools.

Below is a list of core factors that UUK believes need to be taken into account by both universities and schools when deciding how and where an institution might support school attainment.

Circumstances of the school

- Demographics of the school population
- Socio-economic background of the pupils and their families
- Rates of progression to higher education
- Ongoing and historic school performance
- School targets/KPIs
- Local authority constraints
- Education provision in the local area – for example, in Portsmouth no secondary school has a sixth form college attached

Circumstances of the university

- Availability of resource (time and financial)
- Motivation of the institution to work with schools to raise attainment
- Senior leadership commitment
- Existing relationships with schools
- Reach of existing measures
- Interaction of any new activity with existing measures
- The strategic mission of the university

Expertise: what expertise does the university have and what does the school need?

- School of education
- Subject area expertise
- Governance/management/estates/finance expertise
- Access to facilities (eg libraries, laboratories, etc)
- Resource sharing opportunities

In addition to these factors, it is also recommended that universities undertake an effective due diligence process to ensure that the institution has a good
understanding of any performance issues, rather than relying only on external (Ofsted) reports and judgements.

Although this is not an exhaustive list of all factors which might impact on how and where universities support school attainment, these are core considerations that engagement with UUK members has highlighted as crucial in ensuring maximum impact and best use of resources and expertise. Given the extent of diversity across both the higher education and schools sectors – and once all these factors have been taken into account – it is unlikely that it would be appropriate or advantageous for every university to work with a school using a one-size-fits-all, mandatory approach as proposed in the green paper.

3. Further clarifications

There are also a number of further clarifications that would be needed from government before any requirements could be put in place as a condition of charging higher fees:

1. The green paper states that government would expect universities, independent schools and grammar schools to either sponsor, open and otherwise support state schools. However, it is unclear what processes would be put in place to assess the need in a particular area and prevent instances of overlap or the focusing of resources in an area that does not need it.

2. Regional schools commissioners have significant power, which can lack transparency in action. For example, one institution noted that a commissioner had the statutory power to change a lead sponsor through a re-brokering process. This creates uncertainty, reputational damage and could entail further investment by the sponsor to manage the legal process of change – none of which is currently funded by the DfE.

3. Further details on the commitment that government would meet the capital and revenue costs of establishing a new school.

4. In the case of land sales, and wanting to move a school in order to improve it, the DfE retains rights which limit the ability of the sponsor.

5. Where the trust is a subsidiary of a university, there is a lack of clarity regarding equal pay claims between the schools and the university.

6. If the school comes with a private finance initiative (PFI) facilities arrangement negotiated by a local authority, the university may lose the benefit of being included in any local authority negotiations over lowering the PFI charges.

7. If a housing development occurs, which could for example lead to falling rolls and deficits, those responsibilities become the university’s.

8. Pension deficits become the university’s responsibility.