

WPC17D012

Title: Raising attainment in schools through strategic relationships
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Issue

The University is obliged each year to agree with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) a plan to spend a proportion of our fee income above the basic rate on activities to widen participation in higher education, which includes work with schools, specifically:

We want you to review and develop your access agreement so that it sets out clearly what you are doing and/or plan to do, to....increase your work to raise attainment in schools and colleges for those from disadvantaged and under-represented groups, including through outreach and/or strategic relationships¹

This paper is focussed on raising attainment through strategic relationships.

Recommendation

Recipients are invited

To note
the existing strategic relationships with schools.

To note
the progress made towards promoting School Governorship at UEA.

To agree
that the costs of being a School Governor (buyout of staff time and travel) could be met from the Outreach Budget – to be reviewed at the end of academic year 18/19. This can only apply to secondary schools which are a priority for outreach work and their feeder primary schools.

To approve
the setting up of a UEA Governor Network to provide support and training for UEA staff who are school governors and to improve communication between School Governors and our Outreach Team.

¹ <https://www.offa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Strategic-guidance-developing-your-2018-19-access-agreement-FINAL.pdf>

Resource Implications

Costs depend on matching staff to suitable schools, but an indicative budget of £30,000 will be set aside in academic year 18/19.

Risk Implications

It is currently difficult to establish the expectations of OFFA with regard to the nature and scale of the strategic relationships with schools, so this programme is aimed at building capacity at UEA to support local schools, with a particular focus on Outreach priority schools. In addition, raising attainment in schools provides a bigger pool of potential recruits to all higher education providers.

Equality and Diversity

There are no predicted Equality or Diversity impacts of this proposals, but it is hoped that offering funding for time and travel will support all staff who wish to participate in School Governance.

Timing of decisions

The recommendations require approval in academic year 17/18 in order to see progress and assess impact by the end of 18/19.

Further Information

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Discussion

This discussion outlines the steps being taken to set up a network of existing and prospective school governors at UEA with the aim of raising attainment at those schools, by enabling our Outreach team to have a contact on the school's board of governors.

The UEA Outreach team work with schools and colleges across Norfolk and north Suffolk to raise aspiration, knowledge and attainment of under-represented student groups about the opportunities in Higher Education. The main delivery of our activities is through schools. We prioritise schools based on a combination of the percentage of pupil premium students the school has and the schools Progress 8 score (negative scores mean higher prioritisation). This creates a list of approx. 70 schools we target with 20 'A' schools receiving the most intensive support, 30 'B' schools receiving moderate support and 20 'C' schools with less support and a more reactive approach to requests for input from the team. A key strategy for the team is to place UEA Governors in as many of our Outreach target schools (preferably A or B target schools) as possible. This will support our work in two ways, firstly to provide a communication route into the school to maintain an understanding of the schools we are working in, to encourage engagement in our activities and to shape the activities we offer to each school. Secondly, and more importantly, to support attainment raising activity in school which in turn is proven to raise aspiration. This supports the agenda of the Outreach team and the aim to increase progression to HE for students from under-represented groups.

At the beginning of 2017, records showed we had 30 staff in the role of school governors, including supportive relationships with City Academy Norwich (currently in transition between Academy Sponsors) and the relatively newly set up University Technical College.

Since work began, the number of School Governors we have recorded has increased to 44, with 11 of these in Outreach priority schools. It is this last group which the network will aim primarily to increase. We are already actively working with Ormiston Academy Trust to fill governing body vacancies in 8 schools in the Eastern Region which are Outreach priority schools. The next stage will be to make links with other academy trusts and priority schools.

In November 2017 we held a meeting for current and prospective school governors. This was well attended and we have identified a further 24 members of staff who are interested in school governorship. Attendees expressed an interest in meeting again and existing school governors indicated they would welcome an opportunity for support and training in governorship issues through a network at UEA.

The next meeting for both existing and aspiring governors will take place on 15th March and it is hoped at this meeting to discuss training needs and other supportive measures for the newly formed network, if approved by the committee.