

Including Outward Mobility in Access Agreements

The Office for Fair Access (OFFA) is the independent regulator of fair access to higher education in England for people from lower income backgrounds and other under-represented groups. Part of the role OFFA play is to approve and monitor access agreements. These are annual institutional documents which set out how a higher education provider will sustain or improve **access, student success and progression** among people from under-represented and disadvantaged groups.

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. Outward mobility can therefore play a role in closing the attainment gap and as such is an area of activity that sits within OFFA's student success and progression themes:

“Student success, and progression to employment or postgraduate study are important aspects of access because the full benefits of higher education are not realised simply by enrolling on a course, but through successful outcomes. We take a broad view of student success and progression, including activities to improve academic success and employability, for example initiatives that help under-represented students access placement years, or a year abroad”
(OFFA Website).

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.

Our recommendations:

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 to help you to imbed 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. OFFA encourage proactive activities which target specific under-represented groups. Where new investment is not fully targeted at an

under-represented group you may still include a percentage of the overall costs within your access agreement.

4. **Evidence your impact:** OFFA requires evaluation of all activities included within access agreements. It is important that you set up ways of monitoring and evaluating your mobility programmes in order to report on these to OFFA. 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. OFFA encourage institutions 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. Check out our case studies section for some inspiration!

For more information on OFFA and Access Agreements please visit the website: <https://www.offa.org.uk/>

See page XX for Kingston University's Access Agreement Case Study

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 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.