

Annex B Compacts study: report on the survey

Report by ACL Consulting to HEFCE

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The web questionnaire as distributed to institutions in November 2007 can be found at
<http://hefce.n4p.co.uk>

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1 The scope of the project

Introduction

101 *ac/* consulting limited were commissioned by HEFCE in November 2007 to undertake research work on compact schemes operating within higher education institutions (HEIs) in England¹. We were commissioned to carry out web searches and administer a questionnaire survey (on which a first report was to be written) and then to conduct five case study visits to chosen HEIs (on which individual reports have been written²).

102 This is the first report mentioned above.

103 It is important that we articulate the definition of a 'compact' that forms the basis of this project. As we found during our fieldwork, different HEIs use (or, as noted below, prefer not to use) the word 'compact' to mean many different kinds of arrangements. The definition we use is therefore given below.

The definition of a 'compact'

104 For the purposes of this study, a compact has been defined as:

'a set of arrangements between HEIs, schools and colleges that provide special conditions or consideration for entry into the HEI'.

105 'Entry' in this context can be taken to mean applications and enrolments for full-time undergraduate programmes of study made by young people aged around 19 or 20 (i.e. straight from school/college, or possibly after a 'gap year').

106 We made clear in our introduction to the questionnaire, and in our call for more general written information, that our definition of compact was not limited to arrangements which provided alternative offers or 'UCAS points credit', but also included any programme that offered the opportunity to take part in dedicated summer schools, the guarantee of an interview, the guarantee of an offer of a place on some course (not necessarily the one chosen), etc. We advised respondents to err on the side of inclusion, and to regard their activity as a 'compact' even if they were in some doubt.

107 In carrying out the web searches, the only activities we specifically did not regard as evidence of a 'compact' were generic 'widening participation' (WP) activities such as taster days, visits, summer schools etc *that were open to any young person or school, and did not tend to show any 'membership' aspect.*

¹ The summary report 'Compact schemes in higher education institutions' (HEFCE 2008/32), to which this document is an annex, can be found on the HEFCE web site, www.hefce.ac.uk, under Publications.

² The case studies are published as Annex A of the summary report 'Compact schemes in higher education institutions' (HEFCE 2008/32).

- 108 It should be noted that a number of our respondents (particularly those that sent supplementary emails) did not particularly like the label 'compact', and were not happy that it should be applied to their arrangements. They believed that the label had some unwelcome connotations concerning intrusion into individual learners' private behaviour, and perhaps moral judgements of learners' worth. In an education context, 'compact' is also seen as a US term, with connotations reaching back to its origins in disadvantaged inner cities; on the other hand, the term is being increasingly used in the UK for relationships (e.g. between Government and voluntary sector organisations) that are entirely different. The number of instances in our fieldwork where HEIs carefully avoid the use of the word compact is significant.
- 109 We acknowledge and respect this antipathy to the 'compact' label. However, for ease of reading, and to reflect the commission we were originally given, we have continued to use the label 'compact' in this report to refer to arrangements falling within the definition above, even when (as more often than not) it is not used by the HEI concerned.

The fieldwork basis of this report

- 110 This report is based on three types of fieldwork evidence:
- Responses to the online questionnaire available to higher education institutions during December and January 2007
 - More general responses from institutions to a straightforward request for 'any information about compact arrangements operating in your HEI', issued by HEFCE in early November 2007
 - Information gained from a search of institutions' web sites, particularly for any references to WP, carried out by us during November 2007.

The questionnaire

- 111 A copy of the online questionnaire is available for viewing online, at least during the early currency of this report, at <http://hefce.n4p.co.uk/>. Every institution was sent an email giving details of the proposed research and including this web link; institutions were encouraged to contact the research team if they had any queries or concerns over the project. Emails were directed to each institution's WP contact where this was known, and to the office of the Vice Chancellor or Principal where it was not. A further email was sent to non-responding institutions after three weeks and a number of institutions were also telephoned directly by HEFCE.
- 112 By the end of the eight-week questionnaire period, we had received 80 responses from a total of 131 institutions³. This represents a 61% response rate. However, institutions differ in size, and a number of institutions are quite small or only admit a small number of undergraduates (or none). Based on Higher Education Statistics

³ The definition of 'an HE institution' for our purposes is not entirely clear at the margins, so we have worked with the 131 English institutions funded by HEFCE that are listed on HESA table 0a for 2005/06.

Agency (HESA) undergraduate student totals⁴, our response covers 73.7% of the sector by volume⁵.

113 In addition, we have received a further 11 emails from institutions (who did not subsequently complete the questionnaire) stating that they do not have a compact. If these are included as 'responses', the response rate is 91 out of 131 or 69%.

114 The questionnaire analysis is based on questionnaires received by midnight on 31 January.

Collaborative compacts

115 It is worth a few words to clarify our treatment of collaborative compacts.

116 In a number of instances, HEIs collaborate on providing compact arrangements. Under such collaborations, HEIs may share the administration of a compact and may also provide 'transfer of compact credit' between institutions (i.e. activities carried out at one institution will 'count' towards admission to another).

117 Our approach in this study has however been to focus on the institutional level, to frame questions in such a way as to identify *institutional* participation, and broadly to count 'institutions with compacts' rather than compacts as such. Thus we have regarded one compact shared across three HEIs as 'three HEIs with compacts'. We believe this better represents the scale of compact activity.

118 There is of course a danger of double-counting compact members in schools and colleges, for instance (in the hypothetical example above) where each of the three institutions counts all the compact members as members of its own compact. Similar points might apply to 'participating schools'.

119 It is impossible to eliminate this double-counting entirely. However we have scrutinised the individual questionnaire responses of the members of the main collaborative or multi-institution compacts (see paragraph 122 below) and believe that most, if not all, of the double-counting has in practice been allowed for. For example, although there are 11 institutions listed as participants in the CARD scheme we have not counted those institutions where returns indicated 'no compact' or 'no decision yet taken about compacts', and we excluded Aberystwyth as a Welsh institution.

120 To be completely open, we provide alternative statistics in some tables where the effect of double-counting may be most pronounced. See paragraph 236.

⁴ I.e. across all years.

⁵ Institutions representing 1,091,805 of the 1,481,985 England undergraduates shown on HESA Table 0a.

The generic call for information

121 The generic call for information was contained in an email from HEFCE to all institutions (using the same address list) sent on 8 November 2007. Information was received from 16 institutions and a further two referred us to web sites.

122 Information received included, variously, compact handbooks; draft agreements between HEIs and schools/colleges; reports on scheme operation; publicity leaflets. As anticipated there was significant variation in the quantity and specificity of materials sent. Most material sent related to the individual institution concerned but there were references to four specific multi-institution schemes:

- The 'HE CARD' scheme in the West Midlands
- The Sussex Progression Accords (universities of Brighton, Chichester and Sussex)
- The Medway Progression Compact offered by the University of Kent, the University of Greenwich, the University College for the Creative Arts at Rochester, Canterbury Christ Church University and Mid-Kent College
- The Leeds Metropolitan University scheme including LMU itself, Huddersfield, Trinity and All Saints, Bradford College, University of East London, and Bucks New University.

The first was initially developed by the Black Country Aimhigher office and has been supported by the Aimhigher Regional Office concerned, and has participation from most of the HEIs in their regions.

The web survey

123 Finally, we carried out searches of the web sites provided by every HEFCE-funded HEI in England. We searched for any reference to 'compacts' using sites' search functions where these were available; if no direct evidence was found, we then searched under 'widening participation' for any reference to WP activities that could fit the definition of compact activity adopted for our work (see above).

124 We found 20 web sites that gave more or less detailed descriptions of their compact or other arrangements, sufficient for us to conclude that they fell within our definition. Two other web sites gave some information (or in one instance different information from that subsequently received). The count of 20 institutions quite reasonably includes instances where two or more institutions that were members of the same consortium arrangement described it on their web sites: it does not follow that there are 20 different schemes.

Drawing together the information

- 125 For our quantitative work, priority has been given to the evidence in the order of priority stated above:
- Information from the survey
 - Information from documentation provided
 - Information from our web search.
- 126 Respondents to the questionnaire all gave answers to the same questions, so therefore their responses can be directly compared.
- 127 Information available from documents sent to us can be used to supplement these responses, and also, in some cases, to extrapolate the likely responses of institutions that did not reply to our questionnaire invitation.
- 128 Information on web sites can be useful in confirming that compact arrangements are in place, but cannot necessarily be taken as definitive. By no means all compacts are referred to on institutional web sites; moreover, despite our best efforts we cannot be certain that our search of any given institution's web site would have yielded all available information. In general, information on web sites often appears to be more limited than that provided through other means in terms of both its breadth and depth.
- 129 However, in the more descriptive sections of our report we will of course draw on all the information available to us.

2 The extent of compact arrangements

Introduction

201 In this section, we start to explore the profile of compact activity, drawing on the questions set in the questionnaire alongside other information where it is available. For ease of reference, we will follow the order in which the questions were set.

Respondents to the questionnaire

202 The background information on the survey asked for the job title of the person completing this questionnaire. Although this was originally intended for identification in case of any queries, it does yield valid information about where responsibility for (or interest in) compacts sits within an institution.

203 Our 80 responses contained 79 references to job titles, of which 72 were distinct. Clearly there is little standardisation of job titles across institutions. However, it is possible to make some generalisations from the responses, as shown in the table below. Where a job title included references to two functions, then *both* functions receive an endorsement in the 'shared' column.

204 Figures in brackets refer to job titles mentioned by those institutions that do have a compact (n = 45: see below):

<i>Job function (appears to include)</i>	<i>No of references to this function</i>	
	<i>Whole responsibility</i>	<i>Shared responsibility</i>
Senior staff (first three 'tiers')	11 (5)	-
Widening participation	23 (12)	4 (1)
Partnerships, liaison or outreach	12 (7)	4 (2)
Recruitment or marketing	7 (6)	4 (2)
Access	3 (3)	4 (0)
Admissions	3 (1)	1 (1)
Community or public relations	3 (3)	-
Project staff	2 (1)	1 (0)
Compacts specifically referred to	2 (2)	-
Business development	2	-
Student services	1 (1)	-
Other	1 (1)	-
Total⁶	70 (42)	18 (6)

⁶ $70 + (18 \div 2)$ (since each shared responsibility counts twice in the right hand column) = 79. $42 + (6 \div 2) = 45$.

How many institutions have compacts?

- 205 Question 1 on the survey asked whether institutions operated compact arrangements with schools or further education (FE) colleges. Out of the 80 institutions that responded to our questionnaire, 45 believe they are offering some form of compact that fits our definition from Section 1. Of the 80, 13 claim to have made a conscious decision not to offer a compact scheme and 22 are as yet undecided⁷.
- 206 This suggests that (based on those responding to the survey) around 56% of institutions offer compacts. However, there are a number of qualifications that should be applied to this figure.
- 207 First, as already noted HEIs vary greatly in size and indeed in the extent to which they offer undergraduate programmes. A number of HEIs with little or no undergraduate teaching were kind enough to return our questionnaires, even though the questions did not appear to apply particularly to them. Using the same measure of total undergraduate students, the HEIs that offered compacts represent 58% of the sample⁸.
- 208 Secondly, it is probably unreasonable to assume that the response to our questionnaire was representative. It is *prima facie* more likely that an institution without a compact, and without any member of staff whose task it is to promote compact arrangements, might find it more difficult to respond to our questionnaire or might simply not bother to do so.
- 209 The 'worst case', therefore, would be where *all* of our non-respondents did not offer a compact. This would imply that only 45 out of 131 institutions (34%) offered compacts, representing 42.5% of the institutions by undergraduate volume⁹.
- 210 The answer, however, is likely to lie somewhere between these extremes¹⁰. To assess this, we have drawn on the information gained from our call for documentation and from our web searches.
- 211 These suggest that:
- Of the 51 non-responders, 16 definitely do not have a compact. Either they have emailed us to this effect, or we are confident from the level of description of WP activities on their web site that any compact arrangements would have been referred to (and were not)

⁷ One of these 22 went on to answer the rest of the questionnaire in detail, as if there were a compact in place. These responses have to be taken at face value, in the absence of other evidence, which is why the number of respondents to subsequent questions about the nature of a compact is sometimes 46 rather than 45.

⁸ 629,845 undergraduates out of 1,091,805.

⁹ 629,845 out of 1,481,985.

¹⁰ A purist might argue that there could conceivably be a *greater proportion* of compacts in the non-respondents than in the respondents to our survey, or indeed that *all* the non-respondents offered compacts and did not think to tell us. We think these possibilities can be discounted.

- On the other hand, six of the 51 definitely do have a compact. Either they have sent us information about it (and subsequently not completed the questionnaire); or it is described on their web site; or they are members of one of the five consortium schemes mentioned above
- 15 of the 51 non-responders arguably should be discounted, either because they are largely or exclusively post-graduate institutions (six of the 15) or because they are conservatoires, for whom different recruitment considerations apply (11¹¹ of the 15).

212 Thus there are only 12 institutions for which we have no information. The best estimate of the national picture we can make is as shown in the following table:

Total number of HEIs that could have completed the survey		131
<i>Less: institutions that should have been excluded:</i>		
▪ Conservatoires	11	
▪ Primarily/exclusively post-graduate institutions	6	17
<i>Less: institutions for whom we have no information:</i>		12
Total number of HEIs that we have some information on		102
<i>Institutions that we know currently offer a compact:</i>		
▪ From the survey	45	
▪ From web searches and documentation provided	6	51
<i>Institutions that we know currently do not offer a compact:</i>		
▪ From the survey	35	
▪ From web searches and documentation provided	16	51

213 In terms of undergraduate numbers, the equivalent figures are:

- 703,410 undergraduates attend institutions known to offer or be involved in compacts
- 637,940 undergraduates attend institutions known or believed not to offer compacts
- data is uncertain regarding the remaining institutions (140,635 undergraduates).

Thus we might estimate that around 52.4% of institutions offer compact provision by undergraduate volume.

¹¹ This includes one conservatoire that responded to the survey, claiming to have a compact but giving little in the way of detail and one that responded to us stating that it did not offer a compact.

Involvement of schools and colleges

- 214 Question 1 also asked whether compacts involved both schools and colleges (FE, sixth form and tertiary). Question 2 asked how many schools/colleges were involved in the compact.
- 215 Of the 45 questionnaire respondents that offered compacts, the vast majority involved both schools and FE colleges. Five respondents indicated either 'schools only' or 'colleges only', but closer scrutiny of their responses elsewhere in the questionnaire suggested that in fact both school and college learners could take part.
- 216 The number of schools in 'membership' of the compact varied from less than 10 (nine instances) to over 100 (one instance). Figures given by the 37 institutions that responded to this question total to 1,230 schools (a mean of just over 33 schools per HEI)¹².
- 217 A distribution is shown in Figure 1. Each vertical column represents one response, and the columns are shown in decreasing order of size:

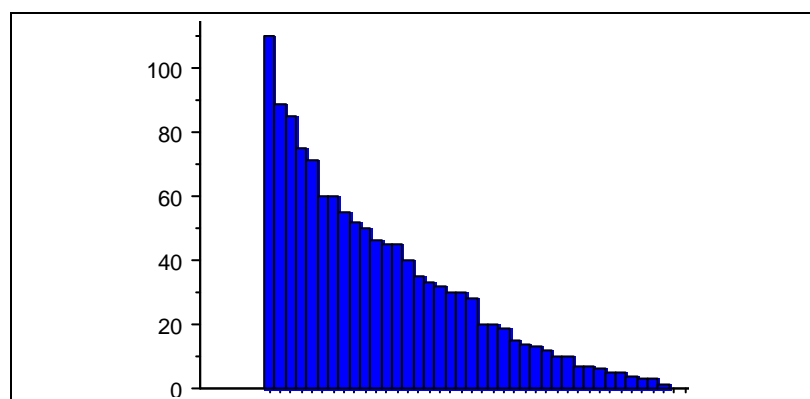


Figure 1. Distribution of size of compact network (schools)

- 218 Institutions were also asked to report on the number of colleges involved in their compact network. Responses here varied from fewer than five (nine instances) to over 40 (one instance). Figures given by the 41 institutions that responded to this question total to 513 colleges (a mean of just over 12 colleges per HEI).¹³

¹² Though note the possibility of double-counting across collaborative or consortium compacts, referred to in paragraph 115 above.

¹³ Though note the possibility of double-counting across collaborative or consortium compacts, referred to in paragraph 115 above.

219 Again, a distribution chart is given in Figure 2:

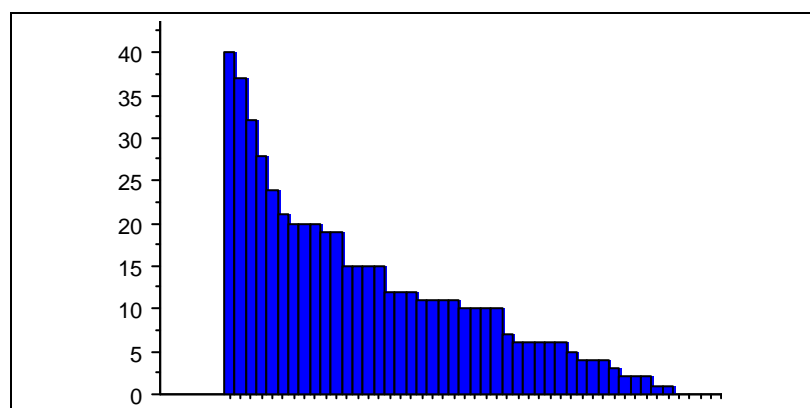


Figure 2. Distribution of size of compact network (colleges)

220 Higher numbers of schools and colleges were more common among the London institutions, as might be expected.

221 Of course it does not follow that just because a school or college is in membership of a compact then all its individual eligible pupils/students are. The number of 'learner' members is the subject of a subsequent question (see paragraph 234 below).

Criteria for school and college membership

222 Question 3 asked about criteria that applied to schools and colleges seeking 'corporate' membership of the compact. Of the 46 respondents¹⁴ who gave criteria for school and college membership, 17 either invited all local schools and colleges to take part or said that any school or college was welcome to join. A majority (29) had some kind of selection criteria to target specific colleges although the criteria was frequently very broad, for example, 'all state schools and colleges', or a simple geographical limit.

223 Not all respondents indicated what these criteria were, but responses included:

- Geographical criteria (three responses, one which specified a 60-mile radius)
- Identification of the schools concerned as 'disadvantaged' by Aimhigher or by local authorities; schools already involved in Aimhigher activities; schools identified by the institution itself as being disadvantaged in some way (10 responses)¹⁵
- Schools and colleges already in membership of an institution's Lifelong Learning Network (two responses) or already working with the institution in some way

¹⁴ One more than actually said they had a compact.

¹⁵ Of course it is the *learners* that are disadvantaged because of their home and socio-economic background, not the schools *per se*.

- State schools only, but no other stipulation
- Schools with a good 'fit' to the institution's mission, in terms of the programmes they provide (two responses)
- Schools that already send a number of students to the institution
- Schools already involved in delivering the institution's Foundation Degrees and other validated programmes.

Membership of more than one compact

- 224 Question 4 asked for details of how many compacts were in operation at the responding HEI. Around three quarters of institutions just offered one set of compact arrangements. However 12 out of 46 offered, or were members of, more than one compact.
- 225 In almost all cases this was because, in addition to its own compact, the institution concerned also participated in one or more additional consortia or a locally based compact arrangement. One institution offered its own compact but was also a partner in two different geographically based compact schemes run by others. A number of institutions were members of one of the regional schemes mentioned in paragraph 122 as well as offering their own programmes.
- 226 One institution had, however, devised two specific compact programmes of its own, targeting different groups of schools and colleges, as well as belonging to a regional partnership.
- 227 One institution regarded each arrangement with a named school as a separate compact, perhaps indicating that particular arrangements applied in each case.

Compact coverage

- 228 Question 5 asked for details of the geographical focus of compacts. Respondents were offered the choice of 'local', 'regional', 'subject-based' or 'other'. A comment box was provided.
- 229 Out of the 46 respondents,
- 22 regarded their compact as 'local'
 - 31 regarded it as 'regional', with a further four adding that they regarded it as 'national'
 - six regarded it as subject or vocationally specific.

- 230 Of these latter six:
- One offered an access compact specifically linked to seven subject streams (and by implication not – yet at any rate – to others in the HEI)
 - Three responses were from specialist institutions, and therefore had to be subject-specific, but were not, as far as we can tell from other information, specific to some subjects but not others offered by those institutions.
- 231 In two cases, there was no web site evidence to support the response made in the survey that the arrangements were subject-specific and the response may have been in error.

Length of existence of compact arrangements

- 232 Question 6 asked for details of how long the compact had existed. Respondents stated that their compacts had been in place for anything up to 10 years. Half of the compacts were five years old or less, and half more than five years old, with a surprising number of respondents (nine out of 42) actually responding ‘10 years’. On the other hand, seven of the 42 had either put in place or radically amended their arrangements within the past year.
- 233 Fifteen out of the 42 agreed with the statement that elements of their compact had been around for ‘much longer’, suggesting that these figures were understated.

The number of young people on a compact

- 234 Question 7 asked for the number of learners actively involved in the compact and 34 respondents were able to state how many members their compact had. Eight did not answer this question; this suggests – but no more than suggests – that some at least of these other eight compacts did not keep records of membership, at least at HEI level.
- 235 The numbers quoted varied considerably, from 12 to 7,500. A breakdown of the responses is given in the table below.

<i>Range¹⁶</i>	<i>Number of institutions whose membership fell in this range</i>
10 to 31	3 (2)
32 to 99	5
100 to 316	9
317 to 999	6 (4)
1000 to 3162	7
3163 to 9999	4 (3)

236 As noted in paragraph 115, for certain collaborative compacts (i.e. where young people join a central ‘scheme’ rather than a compact run by an individual institution) there is a danger of double-counting membership, since each institution might in response to our questionnaire count *all* compact members as its own. The figures in brackets in the above table, and in some subsequent tables, adjust for this by removing from our sample the four responding institutions known to be part of a centrally run collaborative compact; as will be seen, the change makes very little difference to the overall picture.

237 The median number of members is 348, and as might be expected there is a cluster of results around this point.

238 Clearly ‘membership’ means something different in different contexts. It may be that the smaller numbers of learners represent targeted ‘compact schemes’ with carefully selected membership and intensive programmes provided to the young people concerned, while the higher numbers apply to schemes that provide ‘membership’ to all young people within the schools targeted for the compact. On the other hand, differences in size of compact may reflect the point at which a young person is entered into ‘membership’. Becoming a member may mean as little as attending a school that is registered as a compact school, or may at the other extreme involve the signing of an agreement of some kind.

239 It is also interesting to look at the size of compacts related to the size of the institution concerned. Again, the most convenient ‘size’ measure is the total undergraduate population, though it should be borne in mind that this covers all three/four years and is not an annual figure.

240 We also need to be cautious here. ‘Total undergraduate population’ also covers undergraduates that we would not expect to come through a compact route. In the main, compacts are generally for those going ‘straight through the system’ (straight to HE at 18 after A Levels or equivalent qualifications). Some HEIs can have a

¹⁶ The ranges are calculated using a log scale, so as to give appropriate weight to the variation in both small and large numbers. The upper boundary of each class is 3.162 times its lower boundary.

significant proportion of non-traditional-route undergraduates. This will clearly affect any conclusions we draw in this context.

241 Nevertheless, the figures are interesting:

<i>Ratio of compact members in schools and colleges to overall undergraduate population</i>	<i>Count (n=34)</i>
<i>1 to 20 or smaller</i>	22 (19)
<i>Between 1 to 20 and 1 to 10</i>	3
<i>Between 1 to 10 and 1 to 5</i>	4
<i>Between 1 to 5 and 1 to 2</i>	2
<i>Larger than 1 to 2</i>	3 (2)

242 Again, figures in brackets are after removal of the known collaborative compacts, as discussed in paragraph 236.

243 The interpretation of these figures suggests that for the majority of HEIs the compact scheme is relatively small, and can only have a small effect on student recruitment by volume although this will be more important for some than for others. .

National coverage

244 Is it possible to estimate how many young people in schools and colleges nationally are members of HEI compacts? This cannot be answered with any great degree of accuracy. The mean of our sample (1,179) is distorted by the presence of the two HEIs that claim over 7,000 members each. However a simplistic calculation might be hazarded as follows:

1	Number of learners in compacts for our 34 respondents	40,083
2	Total undergraduate population of these 34 respondents	484,105
3	Total undergraduate population of English institutions	1,481,985
4	52.4% of institutions by undergraduate volume offer compact provision (see paragraph 213). Undergraduate population represented	776,560
5	Gross up figure (1) by the ratio between figure (2) and figure (4)	64,297

245 This suggests (one puts it no more strongly) that around 64,000 young people in schools and colleges in England *may* be involved in some form of compact arrangement.

3 The design of compact arrangements

Introduction

301 In this section, we discuss those responses of the questionnaire that describe the design of compact arrangements.

Compact coverage

302 Question 8 asked whether the compact covered Year 12, Year 13 and other year groups in school or college. Multiple answers were accepted.

303 Out of 41 respondents who addressed the question:

- All 41 said that their compact involved Year 13 pupils and students, as one might expect
- Only 31 said that involved Year 12 pupils and students also
- 17 said that it involved other (earlier) years.

304 The fact that 10 institutions appear not to involve Year 12 in their compact arrangements should not be taken as read. Anecdotally, many institutions that appear on paper to have a 'Year 13 only' compact in fact offer a great deal of school liaison or widening participation activity in Years 12 and earlier: it is only in Year 13 that the formal activities that carry 'points credit' (or whatever) begin.

305 The 'other, earlier years' figure suggests that a significant proportion of HEIs are using compacts to make earlier interventions because decisions made during GCSE, and particularly the level of commitment to GCSE study, are key to future progress in HE.

Learner eligibility

306 Question 9 asked about the way in which learners were selected for compact membership. Of the 45 respondents from institutions that offered compacts, 16 stated that all learners in schools selected for membership of the compact were automatically members of the compact. Unsurprisingly, these tended to be the larger compacts by membership. A further eight respondents said that learners who volunteered were 'in'. In total this represents just over a majority of compacts.

307 In contrast, eight compacts stated that learners had to be selected by the schools, and 12 indicated 'some other arrangement'.

308 These arrangements were typically designed to select out WP students, as the following examples show:

'Learners are selected by the school/college depending on a number of WP criteria (parental occupation, family history of HE etc) and then learners are selected by the University depending on how closely they meet these criteria.'
'Up to Year 13, it involves all learners. At Year 13, elements of the supported entry route are only available to widening participation students.'
'All must meet one of the following criteria to be eligible: first-generation HE (or a mature applicant with no previous experience of HE); in receipt of an Education Maintenance Allowance or Adult Learning Grant; local authority care leaver. The applicant's school or college must also be willing to provide a reference in support of the application (employers may provide a reference for mature applicants who are not currently in education).'

309 In total, nine respondents described some form of selection process involving WP or Aimhigher criteria similar to the examples above.

Data collected about compact participants

310 Question 10 asked about the data that institutions collected on compact participants.

311 40 respondents (out of a possible 45) gave information about data collected; one might therefore conclude that some at least of the remaining five institutions did not collect any¹⁷. Data collected (from the list provided on the questionnaire) was as follows, with percentages shown out of 45:

<i>Data item</i>	<i>Count</i>
Age	38 (84%)
Gender	39 (87%)
Ethnicity	28 (62%)
Disability	29 (64%)
Postcode	35 (78%)
Occupation of chief wage earner of household	13 (29%)

312 The immediate message from these responses is the reluctance of institutions to collect information on the one socio-economic measure. Discussions during the case study visits confirm this reluctance. The view of at least some HEI interviewees was that asking young people to specify the occupation of their household's chief wage

¹⁷ This is probably because the HEIs do not track 'membership' of their compacts, as previously noted. In perfect hindsight, the questionnaire should arguably have included an option 'We collect no data on participants' for question 10. It is *always* worth ensuring that questionnaires differentiate between negative answers and no answer.

earner was unnecessarily intrusive, and might actually reinforce some of the feelings of difference that WP programmes were targeted to reduce. Far better, these interviewees felt, to collect postcode data (which no one seems to object to) and then run this data through a Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) analysis in order to obtain the necessary socio-economic data. This would not, of course, provide evidence related to the HEFCE social class performance indicator or the public sector target for closing the social class gap.

Scope of compacts within the HEI

- 313 Respondents were asked in Question 11 whether their compact arrangements applied to the whole of the HEI, or just to parts of it.
- 314 43 respondents out of 46 (93%) stated that the compact applied to the whole HEI, though eight noted that in practice arrangements only operated in certain areas. Three respondents stated that their compacts were designed to be specific to certain subject areas.
- 315 One HEI indicated that the compact only applied to one faculty (Health); another indicated that the compact had begun in one faculty, but had now spread to two other faculties (though with specific faculty variations). Another commented that 'some professional courses i.e. medicine and other Health faculty courses cannot sustain the offered points reduction due to competition for places.' A third referred to 'a few excluded subjects' without being specific. One multi-site institution found that different sites fell geographically into different local compacts.

The design of the compact

- 316 A major portion of the questionnaire (Questions 12 and 13) was designed to identify salient features of the design of each institution's compact. First a list of generic features of a compact was provided, and respondents were asked to indicate which of these features applied. Secondly, respondents were specifically asked if their compact arrangements or activities led to 'points credit' for admissions purposes, and if so how many points could be earned.
- 317 The full list of compact features from Question 12 is given in the table below, together with a note of the number of respondents choosing each feature. Overall 43 respondents identified one or more feature from the list as being an element of their compact. Since it is highly unlikely that a compact would have *none* of these features, percentages out of 43 are given¹⁸.

¹⁸ Though see the note to paragraph 311.

<i>Compact element</i>	<i>Count (% out of 43)</i>
<i>Prior to entry to HE</i>	
1 Learners from compact schools/colleges are required to meet certain standards of behaviour that demonstrate their commitment to learning	15 (35%)
2 Learners from compact schools/colleges are offered the opportunity to access additional learning activities provided by this HEI	28 (65%)
3 Learners from compact schools/colleges are required to complete additional learning activities provided by this HEI	15 (35%)
4 Learners from compact schools/colleges are offered the opportunity to access other events provided by this HEI	26 (60%)
<i>Applying to HE</i>	
5 Learners from compact schools/colleges are offered additional support with their HE application	36 (84%)
6 Learners from compact schools/colleges are guaranteed an interview by this HEI if they include this HEI on their UCAS form	19 (44%)
7 Learners from compact schools/colleges are guaranteed an interview by this HEI or reduced grade offers (if these apply), on the condition that this HEI is given as their first choice	7 (16%)
8 Learners from compact schools/colleges are made reduced offers in terms of the grades required to secure a place at this HEI	9 (21%)
<i>Within the HEI</i>	
9 Learners from compact schools/colleges are offered additional support once they are at this HEI	10 (23%)
10 The activities we offer our compact learners would benefit them in their application to any HEI	32 (74%)
11 Our compact has the support of professional bodies, Royal Colleges or Chartered Institutes where appropriate	2 (5%)
<i>Support for teachers</i>	
12 Teachers from compact schools/colleges are offered support with their role in the HE admissions process	38 (88%)
13 Teachers from compact schools/colleges are required to participate in programmed activities	8 (19%)

318 Taking a charitable view of missing entries, the ‘core’ of any compact offer seems to involve:

- Additional learning activities (and possibly other events)
- Support for the application process (for both teachers and students)

and is believed to convey general benefit to learners as well as benefiting them in their application to this particular HEI¹⁹.

319 Eighteen of the institutions responding offered this core package (statements 2, 5, 10, 12 above).

320 In terms of more positive benefit, 19 institutions (nearly half) guarantee an interview to all compact students, and 17 offer points credit in certain circumstances²⁰.

321 In response to question 13, 16 institutions were able to say what points credit they were prepared to offer for a learner who had completed the necessary activities. The responses were:

30 points credit	five institutions
40 points credit	nine institutions
60 points credit	two institutions

322 This suggests that compacts that offer specific credit for entry to HE represent around 37% of the total offering compacts.

323 The questionnaire did not ask what activities (if any) young people had to undertake in order to receive points credit. However, our information from web sites, case studies, and compact literature, together with discussions with HEFCE, suggest that institutions make points credit conditional on the completion of some additional learning, often a module of study of some sort, or other evidence of potential that provide admissions tutors with a basis for judgement on individual applications.

Progress of compact students to application and admission

324 Question 14 asked how many compact students (a) applied and (b) started programmes at the institution in October 2006 (chosen as a convenient census date). 28 respondents were able to give information on the number of applicants, 24 on the number who actually started programmes.

325 Technically the question asked referred to the number of applicants and starts from *schools* involved in the compact (whether or not the individual applicants/starters had been compact members). This was to avoid the problem that not all HEIs keep track of compact members individually. But it does mean that in some instances the

¹⁹ All these scored 26 or more responses out of a possible 43.

²⁰ Figure from responses to question 13, not from the table in paragraph 317 (as already noted).

number of applicants exceeds the number of members previously reported. In other instances (where particular compact members are very carefully tracked) it is likely that statistics refer to actual compact members²¹.

326 The number of applicants varied between zero – two respondents definitely entered zero in the box as opposed to leaving it blank (as many did) – and 9,411. The number of admissions varied between 0 and 2100. The lowest non-zero numbers of applicants were 10 (in a small specialist college) or 14 (for a major university). The lowest non-zero numbers of students who actually began a course were five (out of seven, again in a specialist college) and 10 (out of the 14).

327 The tables below show the necessary information.

<i>Numbers of applicants from the compact</i>	
<i>Range</i>	<i>No of institutions falling into this range²²</i>
4 to 9	-
10 to 31	2
32 to 99	6
100 to 316	6
317 to 999	5
1000 to 3162	5
3163 to 9999	4

²¹ It might have been clearer if we had asked an additional question 'How many *compact members* from your compact schools/colleges applied to your institution ...'

²² E.g. two institutions had between 10 and 31 applicants from their compact, six had between 32 and 99, etc.

<i>Numbers of Enrolments from the compact</i>	
<i>Range</i>	<i>No of institutions falling into this range²³</i>
4 to 9	2
10 to 31	3
32 to 99	6
100 to 316	6
317 to 999	5
1000 to 3162	2
3163 to 9999	-

328 The larger numbers refer to compacts where a large number of schools are involved and learners from those schools are all encouraged to take advantage of the compact offer.

329 Of course, the size of the compact in the first place is key to the possible number of applicants. Nevertheless, in our sample the median number of applicants from compact members is 248 and the median number of entrants 105, suggesting that the impact of compact schemes on *overall* undergraduate recruitment is not likely to be high in most institutions.

Conversion of applications to enrolments

330 By dividing the number of enrolments by the number of applications one arrives at a figure for 'conversion' of applicants from compact schools. Data is available for the 22 respondents who answered both parts of Question 14.

331 Again the proportion varies considerably, as shown in the table below. The table also gives the corresponding figures for 'conversion' for those eight of the 16 institutions that offer 'points credit' (see paragraph 321) who gave sufficient student number data.

²³ E.g. two institutions had between four and nine enrolments from their compact, six had between 32 and 99, etc.

<i>Range</i>	<i>Number of institutions in this range</i>	<i>Number of institutions offering points credit</i>
Less than 20% of compact applicants enrol	2	-
20% to 39%	10	4
40% to 59%	5	-
60% to 79%	4	2
80% or more of compact applicants enrol	1	1

332 What is interesting here is the number of high entries, suggesting 'hand-picked' compact students following a carefully designed programme. One might expect these programmes to be among the smaller ones. Indeed, comparing conversion rates with size of compact (log scale) gives the following comparative graph (Figure 3):

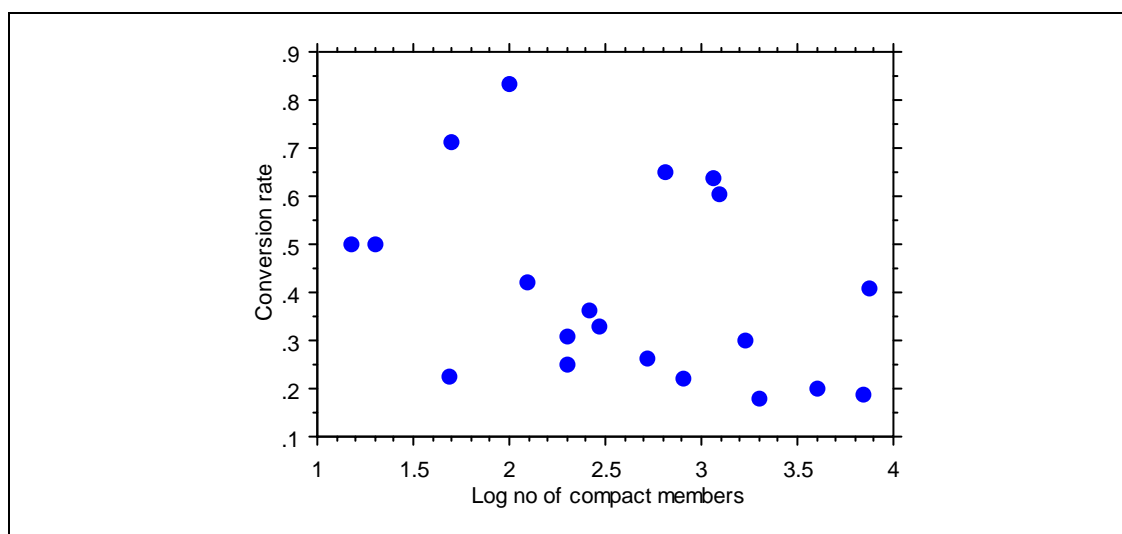


Figure 3. Conversion rate compared to compact size

333 There is some negative correlation here ($r^2 = 0.129$), confirming the hypothesis of the previous paragraph, though not a great deal.

334 Looking at the data more closely, the two smallest compacts (of those for which all relevant data is available) both achieve 50% conversion rates. The next compact up is, as can be seen, a small one with a poor conversion rate (49 compact members, 49 applied, 11 were successful) but it may be that this particular HEI only tracks compact members when they apply so the size of the compact may be understated. Only one institution, however, with 100 compact members, managed to offer places to over three quarters of those that applied.

335 'Application' counts include *all* UCAS choices and not just the first, so applicants that do not proceed to enrolment may (having benefited from the compact) subsequently choose to study elsewhere. There is evidence here that HEI inputs into compact programmes may have indirect effects on their own or other HEIs' enrolments in due course.

4 Monitoring and assessing the impact of the compact

Introduction

401 In the last of our sections analysing the questionnaire, we pull together responses from those questions that asked respondents to comment on monitoring and evaluating the compact.

Monitoring the progress of the compact

402 Question 15 asked whether HEIs collected information that helped them to monitor the performance of the compact year on year. Almost exactly half of respondents did, and half did not. This does not seem a particularly high positive proportion, and one might have expected that more than half of institutions would be concerned to monitor the impact of the (presumably) significant effort and resource that is being applied to compact activities.

403 Those 21 respondents who did indicate that they monitored the performance of the compact were then asked two specific questions (Questions 16 and 17):

- How compact students compared with their peers in terms of retention and completion
- How they compared in terms of academic performance e.g. final degree classification.

Again, many had no information. The information respondents did report is in the table below:

	Number of institutions	
	Retention/completion	Attainment
Better	3	1
About the same	7	2
Worse		
Mixed picture (some subjects better, some worse)	3	4

404 It is encouraging that no respondent reported worse retention or attainment from compact students, and a number of cases reported better.

The impact of compact arrangements on the institution

405 The questionnaire concluded with three questions (20 to 22)²⁴ directly focused on the impact of compact arrangements on the institution concerned. In each case a range of options was given, usually 'better', 'the same', or 'worse'. The results are shown in the table below. Note that the first and last questions have different response option headings.

		<i>Number of institutions</i>		
		<i>No change</i>	<i>Easier</i>	<i>Very much easier</i>
1	Institutional ability to meet widening participation targets	15	23	6
2	HEI relationship with neighbouring schools and colleges	<i>Worse</i>	<i>No change</i>	<i>Better</i>
3	Quality of student recruitment to the HEI or to the relevant programmes		3	43
4	Diversity of student recruitment		27	16
5	'Culture' of the HEI in inclusion terms		22	20
			15	29
6	Value of the compact to the HEI	<i>None</i>	<i>Some</i>	<i>Very valuable</i>
		3	16	26

406 This data is encouraging. The respondents to the questionnaires are in the main either positive or highly positive about the impact of their compact arrangements. Quality of student recruitment has not suffered, and in a majority of cases relationships and institutional culture have improved.

²⁴ Questions 18 and 19 asked about management information and standard literature available on compacts, with the intention of prompting respondents to send any such information to us. This intention was not realised. There was also a final question (23) that enquired whether respondents would be prepared to take part in further fieldwork; we selected the five case study institutions from the group that replied 'yes' to this question.

407 For completeness, and perhaps to highlight some of the hazards, it is worth looking at the supplementary comments of those three institutions that did not believe the compact added value to their institution.

'...The arrangement is likely to discontinue as it has become dormant over the last couple of years. We did not guarantee anything more than a standard offer, but nonetheless some students saw the compact as an easy way in for those who were less bright. Ultimately we decided that the compact [should not continue].'

'The compact scheme was developed over 10 years ago and invitations [were sent] to all schools (independent/state/FE etc) ... This will be the last academic year for our university's compact scheme. After this year the scheme will be discontinued.'

'[Ours] is a very low-level compact and we have plans for a more involved and expansive programme in the future.'

408 As against this, the following positive comments will be of interest:

'As the University enters an increasingly competitive HE marketplace, our strategic partnerships with feeder institutions are key to collaborative arrangements.'

'The compact scheme has been particularly valuable in helping to develop links in schools and colleges in the region and this has helped increase recruitment generally.'

'Also offers invaluable experience to Student Ambassadors, many of whom go into teaching or education-related careers after their experiences on the programme.'

5 More general findings from the web and literature survey

Introduction

- 501 This final section is more general and qualitative than the previous sections. It is based on an analysis of the literature we have been sent from institutions and our own researches on the internet. It aims to give a general 'flavour' of the range of compacts currently in operation in England. Inevitably our descriptions are limited by the information we have been able to source – and it is not always easy to find information on compacts on HEI web sites, not least because many avoid the word 'compact' as already noted in favour of other, sometimes obscure, terminology. However our findings may still be of interest and can be read as a supplement to the case studies set out in the accompanying report.
- 502 We have some information (even if it is only an email stating that no compact arrangements exist) on 66 institutions out of the 131 on the Higher Education Statistics Agency list. This information source is independent of the questionnaire responses. We do not intend to describe each of the 66 in this section, but have instead chosen what we hope will be some 'representative types'. Where the information on which we draw is entirely public and generally available, rather than drawn from emails sent to us, we have felt able to name the institutions concerned.

Consortium and collective schemes

We have been able to access details of four consortium or collaborative schemes during our researches. We do not include the White Rose collaboration between the Universities of Leeds, York and Sheffield at this point because these are separate schemes that have agreed to give 'special consideration' to applicants from the other two universities. The collaborative schemes detailed here are:

- The HE CARD scheme in the West Midlands, based at the University of Wolverhampton – CARD has the agreement of a number of institutions to offer a 'collective guarantee of a place in higher education' (Birmingham City University, Keele University, Loughborough University, Manchester Metropolitan University (Cheshire), Staffordshire University, the University of Worcester, Aberystwyth University, Harper Adams University College, Newman College, and the OU (West Midlands))
- The Sussex Progression Accords (universities of Brighton, Chichester and Sussex)
- The Medway Progression Compact offered by the University of Kent, the University of Greenwich, the University College for the Creative Arts at Rochester, Canterbury Christ Church University and Mid-Kent College
- The Leeds Metropolitan University scheme including LMU, Huddersfield, Trinity and All Saints, Bradford College, UEL, and Bucks New University.

We discuss each scheme briefly here.

- 503 This is not necessarily a complete list of such agreements in the UK, nor is there any suggestion that the schemes we discuss are better than those we do not mention.

However, the four schemes we describe do, respectively, provide examples of a 'guaranteed offer' compact, a 'preferential consideration' compact, a local agreement to market compacts jointly, and a UCAS Points credit compact. These are likely to represent a fairly full typology of consortium or collaborative agreements.

The HE CARD Scheme

- 504 The HE CARD scheme is a collaborative programme operated by Aimhigher Areas in the West Midlands, in conjunction with HEIs in the region and further afield; 11 HEIs are listed as members²⁵. The scheme runs from Year 10 and is offered to chosen pupils in schools that are in membership of the scheme. Broadly any school can join if it wishes; schools are then given guidance as to how to select pupils that might benefit. It is suggested that schools choose pupils who have the potential to gain at least five A* to C grades at GCSE, and thus the potential to go to university, but who otherwise might not have the encouragement or motivation to do so. However the choice of pupil is entirely up to the school concerned.
- 505 During Years 10 to 13, pupils work towards three goals: study, commitment and experience. The study goal requires them to complete successfully the qualifications they will require for higher education. The commitment goal requires them to demonstrate good personal organisation, punctuality and work ethic. The experience goal requires attendance at a range of activities, mostly offered by HEIs, to help the young people understand how HE can contribute to their future plans. These activities may be specific to HE CARD, or equally may be generic open days or taster courses provided by HEIs in the normal run of recruitment events.
- 506 Learners keep a log of progress in a dedicated logbook and these are subsequently assessed by their schools to see if – in the school's view – the learners have met their goals. This assessment is not based on strict criteria in a mechanistic way, but is a judgement call by the school. However logbooks are moderated in sub-regional meetings to ensure a common standard. In any event, it is rare for a young person who believes that he or she has achieved the objectives to be told that this is not the case.
- 507 The 'CARD' in HE CARD stands for 'choose a real deal'; and the deal on offer is a guarantee of a place of higher education study available to everyone who completes the HE CARD goals. The guarantee is not a guarantee of a specific course or programme, and not absolutely a guarantee of a chosen institution²⁶, but is designed to act as an encouragement to young people that their efforts towards a place in HE are not going to be wasted.

²⁵ Birmingham City University, Keele University, Loughborough University, Manchester Metropolitan University (Cheshire), Staffordshire University, Wolverhampton University, the University of Worcester, Aberystwyth University, Harper Adams University College, Newman College, and the Open University (West Midlands).

²⁶ CARD offers a 'collective guarantee' of a place at one of the participating universities; other universities in the West Midlands have agreed to look favourably on applications supported by a CARD portfolio.

508 Although one institution lists thousands of learners included in the scheme, only a handful of learners have actually taken up the guarantee.

The Sussex Progression Accords

509 The Sussex Liaison and Progression Accord (the Universities of Brighton, Chichester and Sussex) provides a guarantee to all learners from a range of schools and colleges in Sussex²⁷ that they will be made an offer on their chosen course at the standard offer level for the course in question. The only stipulation is that their predicted grades at 'A' level must be somewhere near the standard offer concerned. Learners have to apply by the UCAS deadline and indicate 'ACCORD' on their UCAS return: they do not need to take part in any other activities or fulfil any other criteria (for instance WP criteria).

510 The accord therefore gives a local student the confidence that his/her application can be successful but does not alter the qualification standard that would otherwise be expected for admission.

The Medway Progression Compact

511 The Medway Progression Compact (the University of Kent, the University of Greenwich, the University College for the Creative Arts at Rochester, Canterbury Christ Church University and Mid-Kent College) offers all Medway students:

- A guaranteed offer (or an interview for certain programmes with external requirements) on an appropriate programme at one of the participating HEIs
- Up to 40 UCAS points credit towards the standard offer for their chosen course.

512 The points credit is dependent on the student completing recognised activities in each of:

- Preparation for higher education
- Wider key skills
- Enrichment.

513 Up to 10 points are available for each area, and a learner who gains 10 points in each area is credited with a further 10 as a 'bonus'. Activities that are eligible for points credit are shown in the box below.

²⁷ East and West Sussex and Brighton & Hove.

- Medway Learning Skills course
- Medway Plus Certificate
- Higher Education Fair
- Wider Key Skills gained in part-time work
- Medway Active Communities Volunteer Programme
- Community Sports Leader Award
- Robotics Course
- Duke of Edinburgh Award
- Millennium Volunteers
- Mid-Kent College Enrichment Card

The Leeds Metropolitan University joint scheme

514 This scheme was developed by LMU and is offered by Leeds Metropolitan University (lead institution), The University of Huddersfield, Trinity and All Saints, Bradford College, University of East London, and Bucks New University (they are described as ‘partner institutions in the scheme’). This is a ‘progression module’-based scheme that carries points credit (30 points); although each partner runs the scheme itself, there are reciprocal recognition arrangements. So, for example, if a student studies the scheme through LMU but applies to Huddersfield instead then Huddersfield will recognise the progression module completed through LMU and give the student 30 points credit towards the offer even though he or she did not study with them.

Individual compacts

515 The range of individual compacts is so great that it is difficult to classify them easily. However the following summary by type may be of interest. It is strictly our own summary and classification, based on the information made available to us: other classifications may be possible.

<i>Broad outline of compact</i>	<i>Additional details</i>
1 Access schemes offering points credit to WP individuals that meet certain criteria (often with a particular WP or social disadvantage focus) and fulfil the requirements of the scheme	Typically up to 40 (occasionally 60) points credit is offered, provided eligible young people complete an appropriate access module or accumulate ‘points’ through other activities. There may be exemptions related to certain subjects

<i>Broad outline of compact</i>	<i>Additional details</i>
2 Programmes of additional activities to support identified WP students through the process of applying to an institution	No points credit is offered, and participation in any of the activities is voluntary: they are offered for their intrinsic benefit. Specific bursaries may be available for learners that come to an HEI via this route
3 Bursaries reserved for local/partnership applicants	These applicants are encouraged to attend open and taster days and advice sessions Similar to 2 but with a slightly different emphasis
4 Additional scrutiny or special consideration given to applicants from WP backgrounds	In some, but not all, institutions, extended interviews, or the guarantee of an interview, may be offered. May require attendance at a programme of activities, or some other demonstration of commitment to HE. Sometimes an alternative offer may subsequently be made where there is evidence of potential not captured in predicted/actual results
5 Auditions offered in the community rather than at the college	Applies to conservatoires seeking to broaden their WP base
6 Guaranteed interview, offer or place for local/WP students	Usually the guaranteed place is subject to criteria or limitations, particularly where external agencies are involved ²⁸ . Again, there is usually a programme of support activities involved (or required) of the learner. There may be other benefits too, including ring-fenced bursaries
7 Places on high-demand programmes reserved for appropriately qualified local/WP candidates	Relatively rare; where they do exist, for example the Sheffield University Outreach And Access To Medicine Scheme, places are only filled where the applicants meet the entry standards required. These schemes involve the learner in additional learning, often an extended programme over a number of years.

²⁸ E.g. teaching, nursing.