

Reporting access and participation expenditure in Table 14 of the Annual Financial Return (AFR) and Disclosure Note in Financial Statements for 2020-21 onwards

Q. How will the Office or Students (OfS) use the information provided in a provider's disclosure note in its financial statements and Table 14 of its AFR in respect of access and participation expenditure in its monitoring of access and participation plans?

A. The OfS will undertake its standard verification checks of the information provided in the financial statements and annual financial return. In addition, as part of the access and participation plan monitoring process, the OfS will check actual spend on access, financial support and research and evaluation against the levels of spend predicted in the financial forecasts providers submitted in their financial return the previous year. We may query cases in which actual spend is lower than forecast.

Q. Should providers include student premium funding as part of their access and participation expenditure?

A. Student premium funding is allocated to providers primarily to support student success. Providers are no longer required to set out their forecast investment to support student success in their access and participation plans or report against it in Table 14 of the AFR. Given its purpose, the OfS does not anticipate that significant sums of student premium funding would be used to support access activity. However, in cases where some funds from the student premium have been used to support access activity and research and evaluation, providers should include it in Table 14. We would expect disabled students premium to be reported within expenditure to support disabled students.

Q. Should providers include expenditure on student hardship funds within the financial support expenditure?

A. Those providers that included hardship funds as part of their financial support package to students in their access and participation plans should include their actual hardship expenditure in the financial support line of the table.

Q. How do providers report spend on access and participation as a proportion of higher fee income within the monitoring process?

A. The OfS is primarily concerned to ensure that the expenditure forecast and subsequently delivered is sufficient to deliver the commitments in the access and participation plans, rather than the percentage of higher fee income. We are particularly concerned to ensure that providers meet, in full, their commitments in respect of financial support to students as set out in our letter to providers of 25 March 2020.