

London Metropolitan University

Access Agreement 2006-11

1 Preamble

- 1.1 London Metropolitan University has, since its inception, demonstrated a sustained commitment to widening participation. Indeed, we do not conceive of ourselves as merely '*doing* widening participation': we *live* widening participation and continue to make a disproportionate contribution to the regional and national agenda of raising participation rates among previously under-represented groups.
- 1.2 Our performance in terms of providing opportunity for aspiring students from traditionally under-represented groups may be seen in annual statistics published the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). The commitment to combating social injustice expressed in our mission statement involves making higher education accessible to all, including students from lower-income backgrounds and from low participation neighbourhoods, to those coming from families with no previous experience of higher education, to mature students, and to students presenting with disabilities.
- 1.3 The University does not anticipate any significant or sudden diversification of its range of widening participation activities in response to the introduction of Access Agreements. As indicated above, we already make a disproportionate contribution to the regional and national effort in this respect. Our well-developed core commitment to widening participation remains: we will adjust our activities from time to time, but we will not do so reactively.
- 1.4 We will maintain our current discipline of setting and monitoring widening participation targets as set out in our Widening Participation Strategy, and we will fold the setting and monitoring of Access Agreement baseline data, targets and milestones into this wider context. Periodic reports will be made to the University's Board of Governors, alongside reports on the University's strategic work on student retention, progression and achievement. In terms of milestones and performance indicators, we will seek at all times to achieve the various published benchmarks (HEFCE and HESA) which apply in this context.

2 The University's approach to setting fees and bursaries

The University's Board of Governors, meeting on 16 December 2004, discussed and approved a paper *Tuition fee and bursary policy from September 2006* setting out the University's approach to setting fees and bursaries. This approach remains essentially unaltered.

London Metropolitan University's fees and bursaries policy applies to all full-time home¹ undergraduates enrolling for the first time to courses from September 2006 onwards, and to all full-time EU undergraduates² enrolling for the first time to courses from September 2007 onwards.

2.1 ***Tuition fee policy***

- 2.1.1 The base fee for all full-time undergraduate courses for 2006-07 is £3,000 pr annum (in 2008-09 £3145 per annum). Students will be encouraged to apply for fee loans to pay their fees, so that they do not have to bear the cost of studying whilst at the University. Future repayment of the loan will depend upon each student's earnings level post graduation.
- 2.1.2 The University has confirmed with OFFA that it can reduce fees without reference to them, if our Access agreement is based on the full fee. This will allow us flexibility to review the fee charged for each programme, should we wish so to do. It is assumed that tuition fees will be subject to annual inflationary rises.

2.2 ***Bursaries policy***

- 2.2.1 London Metropolitan University's mission includes a strong commitment to social justice. This is reflected in our bursaries policy, which aims to assist students from households with low income with a bursary towards their living expenses while at University.
- 2.2.2 For simplicity, to assess the entitlement to a London Metropolitan bursary for home students we will use the household income assessments carried out by each student's Local Education Authority to determine whether a student is eligible for grant and the level of that grant. For EU students the income assessment will be carried out by the Student Loans Company EU team on the University's behalf
- 2.2.3 The bursary will be paid in two instalments to all eligible students who demonstrate satisfactory academic progress and attendance in terms of definitions of completion or progression used by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. In particular, students must have taken the final assessment of their year of study in order to qualify for the second instalment. For September starters, the first instalment will be paid at the end of February, and the second (subject to the above) at the end of July. For February starters, the dates will be at the beginning of August and the beginning of November.
- 2.2.4 The University recognises the higher cost of studying in London. A minimum bursary of £300 in 2006-07 (£310 in 2008-09) will be paid to every full-time, home undergraduate student with a household income up to £40,000: that is, approximately £2500 over the national threshold for grant eligibility.
- 2.2.5 The bursary will be granted on a sliding scale as follows:

¹ Home students are defined as those assessed as eligible for statutory support by their Local Education Authority in the UK

² EU students are defined as those assessed as satisfying EU domicile rules by the Student Loans Company

LONDONMET BURSARY POLICY

Phasing by income band

Household income		LondonMet
£minimum	£maximum	Bursary
		£
0	18,000	1000
18,001	18,800	975
18,801	19,600	950
19,601	20,400	925
20,401	21,200	900
21,201	22,000	875
22,001	22,800	850
22,801	23,600	825
23,601	24,400	800
24,401	25,200	775
25,201	26,000	750
26,001	26,800	725
26,801	27,600	700
27,601	28,400	675
28,401	29,200	650
29,201	30,000	625
30,001	30,800	600
30,801	31,600	575
31,601	32,400	550
32,401	33,200	525
33,201	34,000	500
34,001	34,800	475
34,801	35,600	450
35,601	36,400	425
36,401	37,200	400
37,201	38,000	375
38,001	38,800	350
38,801	39,600	325
39,601	40,000	310

3 Discretionary hardship fund

London Metropolitan University will also maintain a further *additional* discretionary hardship fund to address individual cases of hardship. The fund will be open to all students at the University, awards being made on the basis of individual applications, assessed by a Hardship Panel.

4 Scholarship policy

All students will also be eligible to be considered for London Metropolitan University scholarships, which are based on academic achievement.

5 Use of additional funds

We have identified six areas where we will direct additional funding foreshadowed in the University's Strategic Plan 2003-08. They are:

- 5.1 *To improve the quality of the learning environment and improve availability of access.* We propose to review, for example, the opening hours of the Learning Centres, to expand teaching hours, and to ensure that other support activities are available outside the current standard hours.
- 5.2 *To invest in an expanded programme of pre- and post-entry activity aimed at identifying and providing additional teaching and study skills support,* particularly through the University's new undergraduate scheme of study [UUMS], which has seen the introduction of a much-enhanced regime of induction and enrolment, the establishing of new undergraduate advice centres, the introduction of a new cadre of personal academic advisers, plus the embedding within the first-year curriculum of a 'higher education orientation' module which, in a discipline-specific context, seeks to familiarise students with the demands and skill requirements of higher study and to embed them safely in the context of their studies.
- 5.3 *To expand our programme of work with local schools and colleges, raising awareness and aspiration through mentoring, Summer schools and through progression agreements.* The University's Department of Education leads on aspiration-raising and its activities and attendant targets and milestones are routinely reported through the Widening Participation strategy monitoring reports . Our relationships with local FE Colleges continue to become increasingly strategic and are designed to interlock with our commitment to a range of lifelong learning networks. Our relationship with Croydon College will allow both institutions to plan progression arrangements for a wide range of students.
- 5.4 *To identify locations where there are pockets of under-representation and to develop targeted programmes to address these, perhaps by developing locally-provided programmes.* Again, the Department of Education leads on this: typical examples include work with local Bengali, Afro-Caribbean, Turkish and Somali communities, as well as the work of the Refugee Advice and Guidance Unit, all tracked and evaluated through the Widening Participation Strategy annual monitoring reports.
- 5.5 *To invest in new academic and academic-related initiatives to allow us to respond better to market forces.* The University has created a development fund which is now enabling it to invest in a number of initiatives, some directly related to enhancing student retention by creating the conditions for success for initially disadvantaged students. The 'year 0' science course, for example, attracts large numbers of students into initial science study; attrition has historically been of concern, but we have been working and will continue to

work on a practical measures (student support, buddy mentoring) and on the research-led front (design of re-usable learning objects) to ameliorate this and thus to buck the trend in terms of recruitment of under-represented students in science, particularly women and students from a BME background.

- 5.6 *To improve the sustainability of the University's commitment to widening participation by investing in its staff, its infrastructure and systems and by building a higher level of surplus to cushion the University's students against risk.*

Proposals allocating the additional funding on a prudent basis will be put forward in the University's budget paper annually. We cannot at this early stage put precise annual figures to individual project strands.

6 Information for prospective students

The University is committed to making accessible the necessary information about the cost of study: both fees and the support available to prospective students. Schedules permitting, such information could appear in the printed prospectuses; the 'default' location for such information, however, will be the University's website and its on-line information systems. Training will be provided for all student advisers and for recruitment and admissions staff to ensure that the correct information is given to all students, including direct applicants, whether in writing, by telephone, or in person at Open Days. We will also continue to raise awareness about our bursaries and how to access them, to students in year who may be eligible for bursary but have not yet consented to share their financial information with the University.

7 Milestones and monitoring

As indicated above, the University is not embarking on a novel widening participation programme in response to the introduction of Access Agreements. It will maintain its historic commitment to widening participation, and, whilst varying from time to time the blend of activities associated with what it regards as part of its core business, it will always seek to maintain its current positive position in terms of meeting and exceeding widening participation performance indicators and benchmarks.