

Imperial College Access Agreement 2012-13

Background

1. Imperial College London is an international university which provides rigorous, intensive and research-led degree courses in science, engineering, medicine and business (single honours business degrees are not offered at undergraduate level). Our undergraduate courses are designed to produce graduates for either fast-track graduate employment or postgraduate study and are intended to educate the next generation of academic, professional and business leaders.
2. The College's Access Agreement is framed by its mission, science focus, admission requirements and commitment to widening participation and fair access. Priority is placed on raising the aspirations and attainment of school children, supporting science teaching in schools, informing subject choice at GCSE and A-level and encouraging the most able students from disadvantaged backgrounds to apply to, and succeed at, the College and other selective universities.

Summary

3. The College will spend *at least* 35% of additional fee income on commitments within its Access Agreement. This will be split between additional expenditure on outreach, concentrated strategically at specific groups, and targeted financial assistance for those most in need. The College aims to identify and attract students of the highest academic ability and potential and would not want financial considerations to deter suitable applicants. This is particularly important for the College because London costs, compounded by our relatively longer courses, make the provision of sufficient financial assistance necessary to encourage applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds. Targeted financial support therefore forms the majority of the College's projected expenditure.
4. The College commits to increase expenditure on outreach activities by *at least* £550K once all undergraduate cohorts are on the new fee system (steady state will be reached in 2017-18). This will be in addition to the College's expenditure on outreach aimed at widening participation prior to the implementation of higher fees in 2006-07 and will more than double existing expenditure. With this resource, the College will develop a long-term outreach strategy that aims to target our offering at capable disadvantaged school children who have potential in science and mathematics.

Fees

5. The College proposes to charge the maximum fee to all undergraduate Home/EU students entering the College from 2012-13. This will be £9K in 2012-13 and will rise on an annual basis in line with the Government's recommendations for inflationary increases.
6. The vast majority of the College's undergraduate courses are at least four years in duration, with clinical medical courses taking six years. Hence, it will not be until 2017-18 when all undergraduate cohorts studying at the College will be on the new fee system (steady state).

Admissions: principles and processes

7. In accordance with its mission and educational objectives, the College aims to identify and attract students of the highest academic ability and potential who are most able to benefit from its courses. Students will succeed at the College only if they have sufficient pre-requisite subject knowledge and proven ability to cope with, and thrive on, STEM courses of the highest academic standard and intensity. Hence, the majority of our programmes require A* or A grades at A-level (or equivalent) in physics or physical

sciences and in at least one mathematics subject. The average A-level tariff score on entry in 2010, based on the best three grades, was better than the equivalent of one A* and two As.

8. The national improvement in A-level performance has made it more difficult for the College to distinguish between candidates by virtue of their A-levels alone, which has placed greater emphasis on the importance of considering applications appropriately.¹ During the admissions process, we therefore consider broader information to identify the best applicants from those who meet our criteria, including broader academic achievement, information in UCAS applications and, for most academic departments, performance at interview. Hence, our access targets (see Annex B) commit us to improving, and increasing, our activities in this regard.

Current access performance

9. The College's access performance is in accordance with its subject mix and entrance criteria. Whilst HESA benchmarks are only one of a number of access indicators, we are in alignment with almost all adjusted sector level benchmarks on widening participation (and all of those pertaining to disadvantaged students).
10. Students from state schools are not a disadvantaged group in themselves. The proportion of students recruited from independent schools (currently 37%), reflects the gap in performance at A-level between different types of schools, which is particularly prominent in science and mathematics subjects. For example, in 2010, 38% of all A* grades awarded in Physics and 37% of all A* grades awarded in Mathematics and Further Mathematics were awarded to pupils from independent schools.
11. The demographic profile of the College's UK undergraduate applicants demonstrates that our existing access commitments, which focus on bursary provision, have ensured that a diverse range of prospective students are not deterred from applying to our courses. In 2010-11, we received around 4,300 applications from state school pupils. Of these, almost half were offered a conditional place subject to A-level performance, 14% of whom did not come to the College because they did not then meet our entrance criteria. This means that more would have been admitted if they had performed better at A-level. We anticipate that the development of our selection processes and outreach strategy will lead to more candidates accepting an offer and meeting our requirements. As demonstrated within our access targets (see Annex B), the ultimate aim will be to focus our activities on the most capable students who are least likely to apply and, for example, to have a higher conversion rate between offers and admissions for applicants from state schools.

The outreach strategy

12. The primary objective of our current outreach programme is to take a leading role in raising awareness amongst young people of the importance and excitement of higher education, and of science in particular, and to encourage and assist them in identifying a suitable subject and place of study. Whilst many may not wish to study science at the College, we take seriously our responsibilities in this regard. Hence, our current outreach programme is targeted clearly at raising interest in science, supporting science teaching in schools and promoting informed decision making around GCSE and A-level subject choices. Through this, we make an important contribution to promoting higher

¹ The percentage of A or A* grades awarded nationally at A-level has increased from 12% in 1990 to 27% in 2010. The proportion of candidates gaining at least an A grade in 2010 was particularly high in subjects frequently required for entry to the College's courses, including Mathematics (45%), Further Mathematics (59%), Physics (33%) and Chemistry (34%).

education and science generally amongst disadvantaged groups. These aims will therefore remain a core component of our outreach programme over the longer term.

13. Following a review of outreach within the College, we are developing a more evidenced based and targeted strategy. We will invest, by steady state (2017-18), at least an additional £550K on outreach (£430K in 2012-13) to develop and deliver a revised strategy. Building upon the success of our existing activities and relationships, we will provide a programme which is targeted specifically at disadvantaged students who have demonstrated potential in those subjects required for entry to the College. The ultimate aim is to encourage and enable capable students who are least likely to apply to a selective university to do so and to meet the requirements to enter it.
14. The College's revised strategic objectives for outreach are:
 - to pursue activities targeted at capable disadvantaged school children who have potential in those subjects required for entry to the College;
 - to help to address the problems caused by a shortage of well qualified science teachers in state schools, namely the decline in interest and attainment in science;
 - to pursue activities which raise the aspirations of school children, towards HE generally and science in particular, from primary education through to A-Level and thereby encourage them to apply to the right university for them irrespective of their background.
15. The College's access targets for outreach (see Annex B) reflect both our intention to raise aspirations and interest in HE and science generally, and also the additional emphasis placed on increasing aspirations and attainment amongst disadvantaged students who are very able in science. We aim to gather, analyse and understand more detailed data about the profile of our applicants which, over time, will help us to ensure that our outreach programme is targeted appropriately at capable disadvantaged students. A range of activities will be developed and delivered to support participants in meeting our offers, including, for example, post offer revision classes and mentoring support. We also aim to foster more long-standing relationships with disadvantaged students who have the potential to study at selective institutions which, in turn, will enable us to increase our understanding of their post-school destinations. We seek to increase the proportion of participants within our outreach activities who enter a selective university (see Annex B).
16. It is neither in the College's interests, nor those of prospective students, to encourage applications to the College from those who are not likely to meet our entrance requirements and, therefore, to succeed at the College. In accordance with our educational strategy and broader mission, we have no plans to increase our I Home/EU undergraduate student population because our existing population size enables us to maintain appropriate student:staff ratios in support of a high quality education and student experience. The types of students we recruit will therefore continue to be influenced by differential levels of achievement at school. Whilst it will take time for our revised outreach strategy to be implemented in full, it will take longer for its impact to be evidenced by any changes in the profile of applicants and new entrants to the College and other selective universities.

Examples of the College's existing school outreach activities

17. The College's current outreach programme reaches a significant number of disadvantaged school children, being underpinned by established relationships with a network of over 300 schools and colleges in London and the South East that meet specific widening participation criteria. Many schools are involved in multiple initiatives.

For example, our **Widening Participation School Visits Programme** benefits around 15,000 pupils and parents per annum from disadvantaged schools and provides a comprehensive service covering all aspects of higher education awareness and application. As demonstrated in our access targets (see Annex B), we aim to increase our understanding of the effectiveness of our activities in these regards with a view to, over the longer term, increasing the number of participants who, following their engagement with our outreach programme, aim to progress to higher education, including the College, or science generally (see Annex B).

18. Building on the College's long-standing **summer schools** and **science activities**, which involve over 6,000 pupils per annum, the **Reach Out Lab** was opened in 2010 to provide additional facilities to deliver practical programmes and an experience of university for pupils aged six to eighteen, specifically from schools without ready access to laboratories. Involving over 4,000 participant days in its first year, the College provided the £1M capital start-up required in addition to reported expenditure through its existing Access Agreement. Operationally, the Reach Out Lab is currently self-funded through external donations and by charging users, particularly for activities that are not targeted specifically at disadvantaged students. Currently, at least 75% of users (3,000 school children) come from disadvantaged schools; however, this provision relies on external funders who are often themselves dependent on public sources of funding. The College is committed through its access targets (see Annex B) to at least maintaining the number of disadvantaged school children using this service and will therefore meet its costs should external funding not be forthcoming.
19. Many of our initiatives are aimed at supporting science teaching in schools. The **Pimlico Connection** is an example of a voluntary tutoring scheme in which our undergraduate and postgraduate students participate in regular sessions at a local primary or secondary school to engage in tutoring and mentoring in science-related subjects whilst raising aspirations and providing positive role models for both science and higher education. Through **INSPIRE** (Innovative Scheme for Postgraduates in Research and Education) some of the College's postgraduate students and post-doctoral staff spend time in partner secondary schools teaching and studying towards qualified teacher status. Around ten new teachers now qualify through the scheme per annum and an evaluation of the scheme in 2010 found that it delivers many benefits, over and above those provided by traditional teacher training. For example, the scheme recruits highly qualified scientists with experience of research who inspire their pupils in science and contribute to the development of other teachers who might not have engaged in scientific research before. External funding is secure until 2014 and the aim is to continue to resource **INSPIRE** with the assistance of our partners. In light of the success of the scheme to date, the College is committed within its access targets (see Annex B) to ensuring its continued delivery; hence, we will meet its costs should external funding no longer be forthcoming.

Targeted financial assistance

20. Targeted financial assistance is integral to the College's access programme, encouraging capable prospective students from low-income families to apply to, and study at, the College and aiding their continued retention. This is particularly important given the higher costs of London, and is compounded by our relatively longer courses. A survey of current bursary holders undertaken by Imperial College Union (ICU), indicated that around a quarter of those who knew about our bursary provision before applying to the College would not have applied to Imperial if the bursary system had not existed. It also confirmed that such support is necessary to cover the cost of living and studying in London, with over 95% reporting that it was at least helpful (around 70% said it was

essential). Without our current generous financial aid package,² it is therefore unlikely that we would be aligned to our benchmarks pertaining to the recruitment of students from disadvantaged groups. Targeted financial assistance will become more important to our ability to attract applicants from disadvantaged students under the new fee system.

21. The College's financial assistance package will provide a combination of upfront support (cash or partial accommodation fee waivers) and fee waivers through a tapered system, with the level of support adjusted according to need. As such, the College aims to enable disadvantaged students to meet the difference between government maintenance support and the cost of living and studying in London, whilst ensuring that those who are more likely to be debt adverse are not discouraged from studying at the College.
22. The package will pertain to eligible students entering the College from 2012-13 for each year of their study at the College (clinical medical students, normally in their fifth and sixth years of study, will not be eligible if they receive an NHS bursary). Students in their first year will have the option of receiving their direct aid in the form of a partial accommodation fee waiver. By way of illustration, the provision for new entrants in 2012-13 at three different points in the tapered scale is outlined below.

Household income	Total aid	Proportion delivered as a fee waiver	Proportion delivered as direct aid
Up to £25K	£6,000	£2,500	£3,500
£32K	£4,600	£1,100	£3,500
£42K	£3,100	£0	£3,100

23. For students who entered the College in 2008-09 (the most recent year for which data is available), over 94% remained in HE following their year of entry. Whilst we are aligned to our adjusted HESA benchmark on the non-continuation of disadvantaged students (as measured by low participation neighbourhoods), a higher proportion were no longer in HE a year after entry than College students generally. We aim to understand further the reason behind such departures and ensure that no student is forced to leave the College as a consequence of financial hardship. As demonstrated within our access targets (see Annex B), by monitoring this closely, we will ensure that the College's package of financial assistance supports sufficiently those who are most in need.³
24. The College recognises the Government's concern that financial assistance to students should not place unnecessary burden on the public purse. Hence, direct financial aid to students will be provided through private income streams where possible.⁴
25. The College is committed through its access targets (see Annex B) to providing timely, clear and accessible information to prospective applicants to ensure that the best prospective students from disadvantaged groups are encouraged to apply to the College. Hence, it will be necessary to ensure an appropriate awareness amongst school children of the financial assistance available before they apply. Information and advice will be provided through the College's outreach programme, prospectus, website and other materials. Careers advisors within schools will be targeted and a range of tools will be developed to assist understanding about potential costs and support.

² In 2009-10, the College spent £3.5M on the provision of targeted bursaries for disadvantaged Home undergraduate students.

³ Changes to the methodology for collating HESA benchmarks may lead the College to adapt its measures as appropriate.

⁴ The College is also seeking donations to support studentships for students from different geographical areas.

26. Existing students will be informed that the College's current bursary scheme will be maintained. The last cohort of old system students studying at the College will complete their courses at the end of 2016-17.

National Scholarship Programme

27. The College is committed to match fund its National Scholarship Programme allocation, which is embedded fully within the College's wider package of financial aid (see paragraph 22 above).

Expenditure

28. The College will spend *at least* 35% of additional fee income on commitments within the Access Agreement. Funding will derive from a range of sources, including recycled tuition fee loans, private income and fee waivers. Total expenditure includes the College's commitment to match its National Scholarship Programme and provide other targeted financial assistance (for those from families with a household income up to £42,600). It also includes the College's commitment to increase expenditure on outreach activities by at least £550K once all undergraduate cohorts are on the new fee system, which is more than double current expenditure (£430K in 2012-13). All expenditure is additional to that spent prior to the implementation of higher fees in 2006-07 and does not include the resource leveraged from external partners. In the event that the College is required to meet some, or all, of the costs of the Reach Out Lab and *INSPIRE* in subsequent years (see paragraphs 18 and 19), such resource will be in addition to that committed to outreach within Annex B.
29. The College has sought to maximise the cost effectiveness and impact of its school outreach activities through strategic partnership with Exscitec, an organisation aimed at providing outreach STEM activities for widening participation and gifted and talented students. EXICOE was established by the College and Exscitec in 2007 and, in 2009-10, spent £800K in support of outreach activities delivered on the College's behalf. This resource is additional to the expenditure commitments within our Access Agreement.

Monitoring and evaluation

30. The College's Management Board (chaired by the Rector) will be provided with regular updates from an appointed committee responsible for developing and monitoring the impact and effectiveness of the commitments within our Access Agreement. Including representation from ICU, the appointed committee will also review progress against our access targets and milestones and be responsible for the ongoing development of our outreach strategy. It will monitor closely the implementation of College's package of financial assistance for disadvantaged students with a view to ensuring that it continues to make a difference to applicants' decision making and the retention of disadvantaged students. In this regard, a survey was conducted by ICU of current bursary holders to inform the development of the Access Agreement. This will be repeated annually by ICU and form a key part of the College's ongoing development and monitoring processes.
31. This College is limited in the analysis of the socio-economic profile of our applicants by virtue of the data available. For example, 85% of applicants for 2010-11 entry did not provide information on their social class. Our access targets commit the College to improve data collection processes, in line with OFFA's proposal to work more closely with UCAS on the development of new systems, with a view to increasing knowledge about applicants to our courses and ensuring our outreach programme is targeted effectively.
32. The College will undertake more detailed monitoring of its outreach activities with a view to ensuring that its efforts convey maximum benefits in terms of both the impact on

individuals specifically and on the sector generally. Through our access targets, we are committed to gathering and analysing information on the post-school destinations of disadvantaged groups who benefit from our outreach activities, developing a mechanism through which to measure aspiration and using the information derived to inform the progression of our outreach strategy.

33. It should be noted that the achievement of the College's targets pertaining to gathering, analysing and interpreting further data on our applicants and the post-school destinations of participants within our outreach activities will depend, in part, on the data collection processes of bodies external to the College. UCAS will have a particular role in this regard.
34. Specific targets and milestones are listed at Annex B. Some of these propose more general measures on the grounds that further work is needed to understand the baseline from which we need to progress. The intention is to provide baselines and refine our quantifiable milestones once we have improved related data collection processes and have a more complete understanding of what might be appropriate and achievable (see Annex B)

Imperial College London
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Table 5 - Milestones and targets

Table 5a - Statistical milestones and targets relating to your applicants, entrants or student body (e.g. HESA, UCAS or internal targets)

Please select milestone/target type from the drop down menu	Description (500 characters maximum)	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones/targets (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
				2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	
Non continuation: LPN (HESA Table T3b)	The College aims to ensure that its package of financial aid assists sufficiently those students who are most in need. The ultimate aim will be that financially disadvantaged Home undergraduate students are no more likely to leave the College following their first year of entry than young Home undergraduate students generally.	2008-09	2.5% more LPN young entrants (as a proportion of all LPN young entrants) were no longer in HE following their first year of entry, than young entrants generally.	2.0%	1.5%	1.0%	0.5%	0.0%	The aim is to reduce the gap between LPN young entrants and young entrants generally. The percentages given represent a closing of the gap and are approximations.
Applications	The College aims to increase its knowledge of the financial circumstances of its applicants and to use this to ensure outreach activities are targeted appropriately at capable disadvantaged groups.	2010-11	15% of applicants with known socio-economic data	In process of developing improved data collection.					The College will improve data collection processes, in line with OFFA's proposal to work more closely with UCAS on the development of new data systems. This will take time to achieve and will be dependent, in part, on the data collection processes of bodies external to the College. The intention is that numerical targets will be established once OFFA and UCAS have made clear the mechanism for collecting such information.
Socio-economic (other measure - please give details in the next column)	The College will revise its outreach strategy by developing additional activities targeted specifically at disadvantaged students who have demonstrated potential in those subjects required for entry to the College. This will be measured by an increase in the percentage of Home new entrants who accept our offer, who meet our entrance standards and who have benefitted from participation in our outreach programme.	2011-12		Increased understanding of post-school destinations.				20%	Subject to refinement once baseline data and the effect on the student cohort is understood. Baseline data is due to be established by the end of 2011-12 as we will be able to survey our own entry cohort. Our target is a 20% increase on this to be determined baseline percentage (ie not a 20 percentage point increase). Revised programme in place by 2012-13.
Socio-economic (other measure - please give details in the next column)	In line with our stated objective to raise aspirations to higher education and science, the College aims to ensure that its revised outreach strategy will be of benefit to the UK higher education sector as a whole. This will be measured by an increase in the percentage of outreach participants with known destinations who go on to study at a selective university (other than Imperial College).	2012-13		Increased understanding of post-school destinations.				20%	Subject to refinement once baseline data and the effect on the student cohort is understood. The baseline for entrance to other selective universities is likely to be in place by the end of 2012-13 since this is dependent on the anticipated improvements to UCAS data collection. Our target is a 20% increase on this to be determined baseline percentage (ie not a 20 percentage point increase). Revised programme in place by 2012-13.

