

1. Introduction

Salford University is an enterprising institution offering a range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes supported by high quality research and academic enterprise. It was established in 1896 as the Royal Technical Institute, Salford, to provide advanced training and education to develop a skilled workforce for the world-renowned industries of the region. Since its inception the institution has provided educational opportunities that have enhanced the employability of local people, especially those who would not otherwise have had the opportunity of higher education. Throughout its history of close engagement with the local community the University has specialised in education for capability, and its programmes are still closely linked to the major employment sectors locally. The University consistently outstrips its performance indicators and benchmarks in the area of widening access and has recently been awarded the Buttle Trust UK quality mark for care leavers.

In 2009 the University released a new Strategic Plan for the period 2009/10-2017/18.

Mission: Salford is an enterprising University which transforms individuals and communities through excellent teaching, research, innovation and engagement.

Vision: The University of Salford will be, by 2017, an outstanding University renowned for the quality of its engagement, humanity, global reach and leadership in research, innovation and education.

The Strategic Plan was followed by the development of an Admissions and Retention Policy to support Goal 1 of the strategic plan, Transforming Learning and Teaching. This policy brought together widening participation, admissions and retention for the first time.

Since this development, the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy themes have been defined under the acronym 'ASPIRE':

Theme 1: Accessible higher education

Theme 2: Student focused

Theme 3: Pedagogically excellent

Theme 4: Internationally orientated

Theme 5: Research informed

Theme 6: Employability and enterprise

Theme one of this strategy, along with the Admissions and Retention Policy, aligns to this Access Agreement and achievement to our goals will be monitored in parallel.

2. Fee limits and fee income above £6,000

2.1 Intended 2012/13 tuition fees and estimated entrants at each fee

Intended tuition fee	Subject areas
£8,000	Acoustics; Audio Technology; Business; Business Information Technology; Computing; Digital Broadcast Technology; Economics; Environmental Studies; Finance; Geography; Hospitality; Housing and Regeneration; Human Resource Management; International Foundation Year; Leisure/Sport/Tourism Management; Management; Marketing; Mathematics; Multimedia and Internet Technology; Physics; Professional Sound and Video Technology; Psychology; Social Care; Social Policy; Sport; Tourism
£8,250	Computing and Video Games; Film Studies; Music
£8,500	Architectural Design; Art; Bioscience; Construction; Contemporary History; Criminology; Design; Engineering (excluding Petroleum and Mechanical); English; English as a Foreign Language; Environmental Health/Management; Fashion; Languages; Law; Linguistics; Performance and Performance Arts; Photography; Politics; Property Management; Surveying; Social Work; Sociology; TESOL; Theatre; Translating and Interpreting; Wildlife and Zoo Biology
£8,750	Animation; Journalism; Media Technology; Mobile and Internet Television; Television and Radio
£9,000	Petroleum and Mechanical Engineering

Joint programmes spanning two fee points will be charged at the higher point.

2.2 Intended fees for franchised programmes

Fees for students on franchised programmes will vary. Prices will consider fees of the home institution, cost and market circumstances, and the decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis by the Fees Advisory Group, who will ensure parity across the portfolio. A policy will be developed to support this.

2.3 Intended fees for placement and sandwich years

In accordance with OFFA rules, the University will normally charge up to 50 per cent of the full fee for students studying on a placement or sandwich year, or studying abroad (entering 2012/13).

2.4 Permitted real term fee rises

Fees will be reviewed on a regular basis.

3. Expenditure on access measures

3.1 Intended expenditure on access and retention measures 2012/13 (excluding financial support)

The University is committed to investing at least 15% of fee income above £6,000 in widening access measures. See appended template for further detail.

3.2 Assessment of current access and retention record

Performance indicator	2008/09 performance	2008/09 benchmark	2008/09 location-adjusted benchmark
The number of young full-time undergraduate entrants who attended a school or college in the state sector (HESA T1b)	98.1%	94.1%	95.1%
The number of young full-time undergraduate entrants who were returned with National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) categories 4 to 7 (HESA T1bi)	43.0% ¹	38.7%	39.8%
The number of young full-time undergraduate entrants whose home area (as denoted by their postcode) is known to have a low proportion of 18 and 19 year-olds in higher education (HESA T1b)	20.7%	12.6%	17.1%
The number of mature full-time undergraduate entrants whose home area (as denoted by their postcode) is known to have a low proportion of HE qualified adults & have no HE entry qualification (HESA T2a)	27.1%	15.7%	23.6%
The number of all full-time undergraduates in receipt Disabled Students' Allowance (HESA T7)	5.9%	5.4%	N/A
The number of all part-time undergraduates in receipt Disabled Students' Allowance (HESA T7)	4.7%	3.0%	N/A

As the performance indicators above show, the University has been very successful in attracting students from widening participation backgrounds, consistently outstripping benchmarks. The University is committed to developing a further range of programmes designed to address the transition and retention of students from widening participation backgrounds.

¹ 2008/09 figure is not comparable to 2007/08 and 2009/10 due to change of wording of UCAS question

3.3 Access measures: outreach, retention and success

In 2010, the University signed strategic partnerships with Salford City College and The Manchester College, focusing on the following areas:

- Improving higher education progression opportunities for further education learners to study at the University;
- Widening participation in higher education from under-represented and disadvantaged groups;
- Collaborating in innovative developments in curriculum and in support for learning;
- Influencing policy, particularly in relation to non-traditional learners.

The University plans to extend its partnerships to support collaborative delivery of outreach activity across Greater Manchester.

Please note, all costs detailed in Annexes B and C relate to expenditure on outreach, retention and success measures specifically targeted at students from disadvantaged and under-represented groups.

3.3.1 Pre-entry

In October 2010, the University launched a pilot compact agreements programme – ‘Get Ahead’ – designed to encourage progression to, and transition into, higher education from learners from widening participation backgrounds. Over the two year period of the pilot – 2010/11 to 2011/12 – the University will work with five further education colleges, identifying widening participation learners with the potential to succeed in higher education, championed by their college tutors, at the start of their level three study. The University will work with the individual learners for the two years of their level three study, providing multiple raising aspirations and attainment activities. Development of the programme has included the creation of a ‘Skills for HE’ module at level three, designed to prepare students for higher education and to bridge the learning gaps between further and higher education. The module has been accredited by ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) and is equivalent to two wider key skills or 40 UCAS points. This programme has been carefully designed to provide the skills and confidence required to succeed at higher education, including familiarisation with key academic and pastoral support, as well as providing a residential experience on campus. This programme clearly supports the retention and progression of students from a widening participation background, and introduces the use of contextual data to inform our decision making in admissions. Early indicators show that this programme will be a success and will form the structure for the University’s post-16 outreach provision from 2012/13 onwards.

Monitoring of the ‘Get Ahead’ compact agreement programme will include thorough analysis of targeting to widening participation learners, module completion rates, applications to the University, registrations at the University, transition and engagement in the first six weeks at University, progression from level four to five, progression from level five to six, completion and award, and employment outcomes (or progression to further study). In addition, attitudinal surveys and activity feedback will be conducted throughout.

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In light of the demise of Aimhigher, the University has begun work to develop a new delivery model for outreach to pre-16 learners and mature students at pre-entry and levels one and two. Through collaboration, the University intends to work with further education partners to offer outreach to an identified cohort in schools, using the further education college as a hub to deliver across the local authority area. Through this method the identified cohort would receive a series of outreach interventions over the course of their 11-16 study, providing a clear progression pathway on to further and higher education. In many cases, the learners will have the opportunity to join the 'Get Ahead' programme described above if they progress on to the partner further education college for level three study. This provides a clear route through, supporting transition at each stage, and allowing longer term monitoring and tracking of learners to demonstrate clear outcomes.

In line with HEFCE targeting guidance², the University defines widening participation targeting criteria to be: lower socio-economic groups; learners from areas of deprivation where participation is low; learners with a disability; care leavers and looked after children; ethnic minorities and other groups under-represented in higher education. The University will utilise the extensive data legacy from Aimhigher to inform targeting for future activities. The key to the University's mission is access to higher education for all people with the potential to succeed.

3.3.2 Post-entry

The University currently offers a series of programmes to support current students with their academic studies: The Study Skills team in Student Life offer support across all areas of study including literacy and numeracy. The team offers individual appointments, workshops and drop in sessions all year round and can be contacted via Skype and email. In addition Wordscope is a programme designed to develop and improve academic writing skills and is delivered through a series of ten progressive workshops; Mathsscope is a support unit for students experiencing difficulties with mathematics in whatever subject they are studying; and English for Academic Purposes is designed to provide English language support to students and to help them to develop the academic skills required for study.

The University is developing a series of key actions to further support the retention and progression of learners. Actions include:

- Development of a single data set to be used consistently to monitor Schools' retention and progression rates, and access for Schools and Colleges to timely and appropriate management information;
- Development of a student participation policy at institutional level and centrally supported system which will include attendance monitoring as one aspect of establishing student engagement with their studies;
- Development of the Personal Tutoring system to support retention activities, particularly focusing on the support needs of widening participation students;
- Consideration of retention and progression rates of students on taught programmes in the University's Academic Portfolio Review process. This process will specifically consider the needs of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, focusing on the internationalisation of our curriculum to promote social mobility amongst this cohort. The eight design principles focus on delivering a high quality learning experience and aim to improve retention through inter alia minimum module sizes of 20 credits (UG) and 30 credits (PG) to increase depth of learning; regulating the number of assessments and stipulating feedback requirements to help students learn more effectively and support staff to develop innovative assessment strategies; and establishing minimum levels of support for learning using the virtual learning environment to maximise the use of electronic learning resources;

² HEFCE guidance (2007) 'Higher education outreach: targeting disadvantaged learners', http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2007/07_12/

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- Production of a good practice guide, supported by meetings between PVC (Academic) and Heads of School to discuss the data and explore the range of measures to improve undergraduate retention and progression. This work is being taken forward by the University's Widening Participation and Retention Forum, the remit of which is specifically focused on considering the retention issues of disadvantaged groups;
- Development of a retention 'toolkit' in conjunction with Human Resources Development. Again, this work is being taken forward by the University's Widening Participation and Retention Forum to specifically consider the support needs of disadvantaged and under-represented groups (as described above);
- Proposed changes to the Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes to help to support student retention, including the modification of Regulation 8.8.2 to permit a reassessment for affected students and to remove the exemption procedure; and the introduction of new regulations to provide for the de-registration of non-participating students after the first six weeks of any year through a framework for the monitoring of students' attendance and other forms of participation provided by a Student Participation Policy.

Following the pilot of the 'Skills for HE' module at level three, developed for the 'Get Ahead' compact agreement programme, the University will explore how this module can be rolled out to support all learners from disadvantaged backgrounds prior to commencement of their level four studies. This represents a significant investment for the University in targeted support for the retention agenda amongst disadvantaged and under-represented groups.

Graduate employability is a key theme for development at the University over the coming period, including the development of employability and enterprise learning outcomes and bespoke modules to be embedded into core curriculum or delivered in parallel to existing programmes. This co-curriculum will dovetail with the skills module developed for learners at level three and is progressive across all levels of study. Further work will build upon recent developments such as the Graduate Gateway programme, providing high quality, intensive training developing employability and encouraging reflection on personal and professional strength, including interaction with local employers.

The University's Student Life Award develops leadership and engagement in students by recognising involvement in extra-curricular activities such as volunteering, mentoring, student union involvement, work experience and enterprise activities. The University offers employment opportunities to a large number of its students, particularly through the University of Salford Student Ambassador programme. This programme utilises current students to add value to the delivery of widening participation outreach activity (as detailed above). The majority of these students have, themselves, come from disadvantaged backgrounds and benefit from inclusion in the Student Life Award and other activities which clearly enhance their development and ultimately employability. In addition all students at the University are encouraged to take part in some form of work-experience. The University is implementing a flexible approach to placement activity to ensure maximum accessibility - to include short internships, part time relevant work experience through to full year industry placements – all underpinned with mentoring, critical reflection and the tools to evidence this experience to future employers.

The University is also working on defining the "Salford Advantage": the premium that each and every student will gain by choosing us as the place to study and qualify.

3.3.3 Comparison to arrangements prior to 2012/13

The approach described above differs from the current approach to widening access as we propose to develop structures to deliver a coordinated outreach offer to an identified cohort over a number of years across multiple subject disciplines. The current arrangements, with both Aimhigher and the University's internal arrangements, produce a disjointed offering which is difficult to measure due to multiple contact points. A coordinated plan across the institution will enable us to deliver a coherent and measurable outreach package to areas of highest need.

The University's approach moving forwards incorporates the themes of transition and retention into pre-entry outreach as well as post-entry support. The retention and progression agenda will take a far sharper focus and develop rapidly following the recent appointment of the Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic) and the development of the Learning and Teaching themes.

3.4 Financial support

3.4.1 Investment in institutional contribution to National Scholarship Programme:

We intend to offer a discount of £2,000 plus a cash bursary of £1,000 to first year students from the Greater Manchester area with a declared income of less than £25,000 per year..

3.4.2 Spend on waivers, bursaries and scholarships for new and continuing students

See appended template for full details.

3.4.3 Amounts of support and eligibility criteria for new entrants

Award	Eligibility	Amount	Total value to student
National Scholarships Programme	Declared income <£25,000 and from Greater Manchester area	£2,000 discount + £1,000 cash bursary for year 1 of study	£3,000
Vice Chancellor's Excellence Scholarship	340 UCAS tariff points (or equivalent)	£1,000 discount + £1,000 cash scholarship for Year 1 of study	£2,000

Students may be eligible to receive both the National Scholarship and the Vice Chancellor's Excellence Scholarship. It is anticipated that many of our 'Get Ahead' learners might benefit from both funds.

The University is currently considering proposals for other awards to support the widening access agenda. These awards will be finalised and publicised by July 2011 for 2012 entry.

4 Targets and milestones

Target and milestones covering the following areas are detailed in the appended template:

- HESA performance indicators³
- Applications and registrations (UG FT Home/EU) from care leavers and mature
- Market research on awareness of awards package
- Cohort analysis of 'Get Ahead' compact agreement programme

Targets and milestones have been set in line with institutional policy and strategy and should be considered in light of the University's current performance in this area, as detailed in section 3.2. Given the current environment, we regard these targets to be stretching and sustainable.

5 Monitoring and evaluation arrangements

5.1 Approach to monitoring and governance

Quarterly monitoring will take place as performance indicators align with Strategic Plan key performance indicators for Goal 1, Transforming Learning and Teaching, and Goal 3, Transforming Engagement. The University's Widening Participation and Retention and Progression Forum will be responsible for day-to-day delivery of targets, as owners of the 'Accessible higher education' theme of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. The Student Information Directorate will remain responsible for ensuring delivery in accordance with the University's Admissions and Retention Policy. Annual reporting will take place through the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee to Council. The University of Salford Students' Union is represented on the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee and the Widening Participation and Retention and Progression Forum. Ultimate responsibility for delivery of this Access Agreement lies with the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Registrar and Secretary, devolved to the Director of Student Information.

5.2 Approach to evaluation

All outreach activities delivered by the University will incorporate evaluation, which will be fed in to tailor future activities. The University has developed a widening participation evaluation toolkit based on sector best practice to enable all members of staff to carry-out the appropriate form of evaluation of activity.

Quantitative evaluation will include monitoring against the targets and milestones described above, in addition to tracking an identified cohort through from the pre-16 outreach activity described under section 3.3.1 and other internal metrics.

Qualitative evaluation will include feedback from learners, teachers, parents and carers, partners and student ambassadors, and extensive market research such as the University's annual Acceptors and Decliners research and other syndicated pieces.

³ Targets and milestones dependent upon continued application of performance indicators by HESA

Annually, academic Schools and relevant professional service departments are required to complete a report on widening participation and retention and progression for submission to the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee. University-wide reports are compiled to support the production of monitoring returns to OFFA and HEFCE.

6 Provision of information to prospective students

The University of Salford is committed to providing clear and transparent information to prospective and current students in a timely manner.

6.1 Prospective students

From July 2011, the University will embark on a large scale campaign to promote fees and finance for 2012/13 to undergraduate audiences. The University is very aware of the misinformation currently in circulation, and the resultant concerns of prospective students, their parents, advisors and other influencers and stakeholders. Communication channels will include clear web resources and other digital content such as short pieces of video on budgeting; electronic communications to contacts including enquirers, applicants, teachers and careers advisors and key partners (including agents for EU markets); print materials; and student finance talks delivered to key feeders, plus tailored face-to-face sessions for specific audiences such as mature students. The University will also be delivering an advertising campaign to highlight the University's fees and finance announcement.

The University is currently redeveloping its 'course finder' web-based programme directory, to be launched in July 2011. Fees will be detailed on a programme by programme basis within this new facility for 2012. In addition, as the University prepares for the introduction of the Key Information Set, all requirements, including fees and financial support information, will be developed and published accordingly.

6.2 Current students

Specific communications will be developed for current students to advise and inform about the changes to student finance for new entrants. These communications will emphasise that the changes will not affect continuing students. The University will liaise with the Student Union and produce additional communication campaigns for current students as they advise.

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	
State School (HESA Table T1b)	The number of young full time undergraduate entrants who attended a school or college in the state sector	2009/10	0.976	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	Tolerance of +2%; the University aims to maintain its current position, however targets have been developed using extensive research and analysis of HESA location adjusted benchmarks and are considered prudent in the current policy environment
NS-SEC (HESA Table T1b)	The number of young full time undergraduate entrants who were returned with National Statistics Socio Economic Classification (NS-SEC) categories 4 to 7	2009/10	0.389	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	Tolerance of +5%; the University aims to maintain its current position, however targets have been developed using extensive research and analysis of HESA location adjusted benchmarks and are considered prudent in the current policy environment
LPN (HESA Table T1b)	The number of young full time undergraduate entrants whose home area (denoted by postcode) is known to have a low proportion of 18 and 19 year olds in higher education	2009/10	0.218	0.18	0.18	0.19	0.2	0.2	Tolerance of +5%; the University aims to maintain its current position, however targets have been developed using extensive research and analysis of HESA location adjusted benchmarks and are considered prudent in the current policy environment
Mature	The number of mature full time undergraduates whose home area (denoted by postcode) is known to have a low proportion of higher education qualified adults and have no HE entry qualification (HESA T2a)	2009/10	0.242	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	Tolerance of +5%; the University aims to maintain its current position, however targets have been developed using extensive research and analysis of HESA location adjusted benchmarks and are considered prudent in the current policy environment
Disabled	The number of all full time undergraduates in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance (HESA T7)	2009/10	0.054	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	Tolerance of ±2%; the University aims to maintain its current position, however targets have been developed using extensive research and analysis of HESA location adjusted benchmarks and are considered prudent in the current policy environment
Disabled	The number of all part time undergraduates in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance (HESA T7)	2009/10	0.026	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	Tolerance of ±2%; the University aims to maintain its current position, however targets have been developed using extensive research and analysis of HESA location adjusted benchmarks and are considered prudent in the current policy environment
Applications	Applications from care leavers	2010/11	188	188	188	188	188	188	Tolerance of ±9 applications; the University aims to maintain its current position, however targets have been developed using extensive research and analysis of HESA location adjusted benchmarks and are considered prudent in the current policy environment

