



Manchester  
Metropolitan  
University

# **A Commitment to Inclusion**

**An Agreement with the Office for  
Fair Access (OFFA)**

Approved by OFFA

**March 2005**

**Manchester Metropolitan University****Access Agreement with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA)****CONTENTS**

	<b>page</b>
1. Background.	2
2. The Context for this Agreement.	2
3. Courses falling within the scope of the Agreement.	3
4. Tuition Fee limits:	3
4.1 Fees for 2006/07.	3
4.2 The Position for gap year students.	3
5. Bursaries and other financial support available for students.	4
5.1 Assessment for eligibility.	4
5.2 The value of bursaries.	4
6. Mechanisation of the Bursary Scheme.	4
7. Students on Collaborative and Partnership programmes.	5
8. Provision of further information about Tuition Fees and Bursaries.	5
9. Supporting infrastructure.	5
10. The University's Outreach work.	5
11. Milestones and Targets.	7
12. Monitoring.	8
13. Variation.	8
Table 1	9

Manchester Metropolitan University

## A Commitment for Social Inclusion

### Access Agreement with the Office for Fair Access

#### 1. Background

Manchester Metropolitan University is a successful modern institution with an outstanding record of achievement in its teaching programmes, its research activities and in the high quality of the learning experiences provided for its students. External scrutiny in the form of subject assessment, quality audit and accreditation by professional bodies confirm these qualities. It is also an institution which is proud of its long tradition of providing successful routes into Higher Education for those who come from backgrounds without a strong tradition of entry to university. Indeed, the University's mission statement commits it to being

*"..dedicated to the success of all with the ability and motivation to benefit..."*

It achieves that goal by employing a diverse range of access arrangements encompassing full-time, part-time, distance learning and mixed modes of study. Additionally, access to programmes is enriched through a comprehensive network of specific access courses that are fully integrated with higher diplomas and degree programmes to which successful students can progress.

The enrolled student population of the Institution reflects our dedication to meeting the needs of all sections of society and our commitment to equal opportunities. Whilst 47% of those enrolling do so on the basis of their 'A' level qualifications, a further 25% enter with foundation, access or other qualifications. Over 27% study as part-time students; the ratio of male to female students is 40:60; mature students number over 50%; over 94% of our students come from state schools; and over 18% come from what are nationally regarded as areas having low participation rates in higher education. Hence the University has a diverse population that enriches the learning experience provided for all students. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the Institution already performs above the national benchmarks set by the Higher Education Funding Council for England based on its participation statistics.

The University, however, is not complacent about the excellence of its record of social inclusion and is particularly concerned to ensure that students having the greatest financial need are not deterred from entering higher education. Accordingly, it has adopted a policy to ensure that such students will receive a total package of support that not only covers their tuition fees but also makes a further contribution to the expenses they incur as a student. The University's contribution to this will be by means of a cash grant (or 'bursary').

This agreement gives details of what the bursary will amount to for individual students.

#### 2. The Context for this Agreement

The Higher Education Act 2004 gave universities in England the right with effect from the commencement of academic year 2006/07 to introduce tuition fees above the standard level for full-time undergraduate courses. The same Act established the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) to ensure that the introduction of variable tuition fees does not have a detrimental impact on the level of participation by students who are from groups that are under-represented in higher education.

Every university that elects to levy tuition fees above the standard level must have an Agreement approved by OFFA that sets out how it will safeguard and promote access to its courses, particularly for those students from low income groups, through the use of bursaries, other financial support and outreach activities. This document comprises the Access Agreement for the Manchester Metropolitan University and takes effect for those students who commence programmes of study in 2006/07 (but see the note in paragraph 4.2 regarding Gap Year arrangements).

This Agreement sets out which of the University's courses will be subject to variable fees, its approach to the determination of student eligibility for bursaries, and what such eligibility will mean in financial terms to students who meet the requirements.

### 3. Courses falling within the scope of the Agreement

University programmes to which this Agreement shall apply are those for which the University receives income from the Higher Education Funding Council for England or the Teacher Training Agency **and** which lead to the following awards:

- all full-time undergraduate degree programmes (excluding their associated foundation years);
- all full-time programmes that lead to a diploma of higher education or a certificate of higher education;
- programmes that lead to a post-graduate certificate of education (PGCE).

Details of the actual subjects which can be studied and which lead to these awards can be found in the University's current prospectus (available on application or via on-line access at <http://www.mmu.ac.uk/courses>).

### 4. Tuition Fee Limits

#### 4.1 Fees for 2006/07

All UK and EU students enrolled on full-time undergraduate programmes delivered by and leading to an award of the University covered in the scoping statement in paragraph 3 above will have fees set at £3,000 p.a. It is anticipated that this fee cap will rise with inflation through regulations approved by the government year on year.

#### 4.2 The Position for Gap Year Students

Students who are offered, and accept, a place on a programme falling within the scope of these institutional regulations but who notify the University before 1 August 2005 that they wish to defer their entry until academic year 2006/07, will not have to pay variable tuition fees. If such students progress without interruption in their programme, they will also not be subject to variable additional fees in subsequent years (i.e. they will continue to pay the adjusted standard fee).

Students in this position may, however, be required to contribute to the standard tuition fee depending upon the level of household income. This decision will be based on an assessment by the Student Loans Company (see paragraph 5.1 below).

## 5. Bursaries and other financial support available to students

The University will commit approximately one-third of its additional fee income to enhance its access arrangements and to make available cash bursaries to students, thereby enabling them to offset the tuition and related costs incurred by full-time attendance at University; this support will be especially targeted at students from the most financially disadvantaged backgrounds.

The University will schedule staged payments of each bursary award so as to assist students to manage their financial affairs and provide support at critical times during their programmes of study.

### 5.1 Assessment for Eligibility

The University will employ the financial needs assessment undertaken by the Student Loans Company (SLC) for each eligible UK student as the basis of making a determination of the level of a bursary award it will make available to an individual student.

### 5.2 The Value of Bursaries

- a) UK Students assessed by the SLC as being eligible for the maximum HE Mainstream Grant (£2,700 as it will be in 2006) will receive a cash bursary from the University of £300 to which the University will add a further cash bursary of up to £700. This will result in a total cash grant from the University of value up to £1,000.
- b) UK Students assessed by the SLC as being eligible for a lower level of HE mainstream grant will receive a pro rata cash bursary based on the SLC assessment. (For example, a student assessed by the SLC as being eligible for a 50% mainstream grant will receive from the University a pro-rata cash bursary of up to £500 (i.e. 50% of the maximum university bursary of up to £1,000).
- c) The University undertakes to link the levels of its bursary scheme with published government inflation adjustments to ensure that any inflationary rises do not create a gap between the fee charged and the support available.

With the bursary provision outlined above, every student who qualifies for maximum support will be able to obtain £8,000 tax-free per year to fund their education (made up from the maximum grant of £2,700, a University bursary of up to £1,000 and a student loan of approximately £4,300). Associated legislation has determined that students will not have to commence fee and loan repayments until after they graduate, are in employment and are earning (current levels) not less than £15,000 p.a.

## 6. Mechanisation of the University Bursary Scheme

The Student Loans Company will be used as the source of information about the assessed financial status of students who apply to the University;

It is the University's intention to contract the SLC to pay the appropriately determined bursary to each student at the scheduled time. To assist students in managing their financial affairs the bursary will be paid in instalments, commencing at the start of the course.

## 7. Students on Collaborative Programmes

The University has collaboration arrangements with a number of further education and sixth-form colleges whereby students can study part of their University course in another location. These arrangements provide an important contribution to the institution's commitment to access and allow such students to progress into the University in a staged way. The fees set in the colleges will not exceed those that would apply were the student to take the same programme at the University and, in some cases, may be lower. Access to University bursaries for such students will accord with that for equivalent students who study at the University.

## 8. Provision of Further Information about Tuition Fees and Bursaries

Information about tuition fees for University courses is contained in the published prospectus, copies of which (in various formats) are available by contacting the University by telephone (0161 2471055), by email ([prospectus@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:prospectus@mmu.ac.uk)) or by writing to: Manchester Metropolitan University, All Saints, Manchester, M15 6BH. The most up to date reference source is always the electronic document, which can be located at <http://www.mmu.ac.uk/courses>.

While this document gives information about University grants (bursaries) that will apply with effect from 2006/07, subsequent changes in government funding and/or inflation may make it necessary to adjust these thereafter. Up to date bursaries and their value can be found at: <http://www.mmu.ac.uk/courses/bursaries>, or by contacting the Academic Registry (0161 247 XXXX).

Current information about the University's scheme will also be provided to the Student Loans Company and Local Education Authorities. The SLC hosts an on-line student support eligibility checker. This source can be accessed by prospective students to check their possible eligibility for university bursaries.

The University produces a number of publications that are intended to advise students on financial matters including guidance on how to estimate general living costs associated with their period at the University. The overall aim is to ensure that a prospective student is able to estimate the total aggregated costs associated with their decision to attend the University and, additionally, to have information about other potential sources of financial aid that may be available beyond any University bursary.

## 9. Supporting Infrastructure

The University has invested significantly in its learning support infrastructures over a long period of time (averaging an annual capital expenditure of approximately £20M p.a. over the last ten years). Nonetheless, it will use some of the additional fee income to further extend and enhance that infrastructure to the benefit of all students. It will ensure, particularly, that facilities aimed at supporting students from under-represented groups are effective and will include access to open- and distance-learning, counselling and learning support, library and other learning resources.

## 10. The University's Outreach Work

In the context of this Agreement 'outreach work' refers to a wide range of University activities that are undertaken with the aim of raising aspirations and attainment, encouraging those from groups that are under-represented to apply to join higher education programmes of study and supporting the endeavours of those who actually do so. Hence, it also includes activities undertaken during induction and in the first year of undergraduate

study aimed at increasing the likelihood that students from under-represented groups will be more attracted to engaging with higher education and ultimately be successful (see Table 1). Evaluation of such activities within our Foundation Year programme, and through engagement with a specific project established for the purpose (the Transition, Induction and Progression Strategies, or TIPS, project) has indicated considerable impact to date in realising these objectives.

The University has a long-standing and very effective record of participation in outreach activities. These take the form of liaison work with schools and colleges, collaborative arrangements with Further Education college providers, pre-entry support and guidance, curriculum enhancement activities, open and visit days, mentoring, University summer schools and many other initiatives. The University's Widening Participation Strategy ([http://www.mmu.ac.uk/academic/wp\\_strategy.php](http://www.mmu.ac.uk/academic/wp_strategy.php)), its Learning and Teaching Strategy (<http://www.ltu.mmu.ac.uk/atmmu/ltstrategy/index.htm>) and its Equal Opportunities Policy and Action Plan <http://www.mmu.ac.uk/humanresources/pdf/general/EqualOpportunitiesPolicy.pdf> provide the context within which the University operates.

Manchester Metropolitan University is a partner in AimHigher<sup>1</sup> North West, AimHigher Greater Manchester and AimHigher Cheshire and Warrington. Through these activities it works with other higher and further education providers in the region, and with agencies such as Connexions to promote opportunities into higher education. The University leads on several regional and sub-regional projects and also on one of the national AimHigher projects. It will continue to commit institutional resources to this work.

Specifically, for not less than the period covered by this Agreement, the University will:

- enhance the work of the Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance (or any comparable successor body) in which it works with the other four HE institutions and all post-16 providers in the Manchester region to promote and support opportunities for students to progress into HE qualification programmes;
- enhance the work of the Cheshire and Warrington FE/HE Consortium in which it works with all FE Colleges in the Cheshire and Warrington sub-region;
- continue to be an active participant in the AimHigher work which also seeks to promote greater participation of under represented groups in HE;
- continue to promote opportunities in HE through its liaison work with schools and colleges and support the continuation of a dedicated Educational Liaison Unit;
- further develop its pre-entry support and guidance service to underpin confidence building and skills development amongst potential entrants to the University;
- further develop a curriculum enhancement service to complement and support the work of schools and colleges in raising student achievements;
- extend work with community groups targeted at raising awareness, offering role models and learning support.

A priority for the University's outreach activities will be to maintain and extend existing, successful initiatives, including those that have previously attracted external funding, and to do so with the current target groups. These groups include:

- 13+ year-olds living in wards that are amongst the 20% most deprived nationally;
- 13+ year-olds from families with little or no experience of higher education;
- 16+ year-olds taking vocational courses and modern apprenticeships;

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<sup>1</sup> The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) promotes a national programme referred to as AimHigher in which Universities, Colleges and schools work together to identify and support schemes that will encourage and facilitate progression into higher education.

- students on Access to HE programmes;
- ethnic minority students, especially Afro-Caribbean and female Bangladeshi.

Additionally, in consultation with schools, colleges, workforce development providers and with Aimhigher Area Partnerships, it will develop additional initiatives. Some of these, especially, but not solely, with AimHigher providers, will encourage and enable participation in higher education generally. Others will contribute to applications to MMU itself. Current activity already extends to a substantial range of such work and Table 1 appended to this document gives details of some of the principal activities.

The University will commit approximately one third of its additional fee income across outreach activities, pre-entry support and cash bursaries.

## 11. Milestones and Targets

The introductory section to this document shows that Manchester Metropolitan University is an institution that already performs comfortably above a number of benchmarks that provide indicators of the extent to which its admissions and recruitment activities achieve good social inclusion. As other universities strive to improve their own inclusion performance in future, that could subject MMU to a major challenge - even to maintaining its current profile.

Nonetheless, the University has determined that it will establish targets for its activities that will demonstrate its continuing commitment to the recruitment of an appropriately inclusive population of students. To ensure that the University's objectives for access remain effective, it will monitor its performance and check progress against these targets, with some of the data on which these evaluations take place forming part of the information that the University returns regularly to government or funding bodies.

For the University to be confident in tracking achievements against its targets and milestones, it needs to build up data sets that accurately represent key performance parameters. It also needs to establish the baselines from which progress will be measured. These intentions are reflected in some of the specific targets to be achieved during the period of this Agreement, namely:

- (i) Data on ethnic origin of students is critically dependent on willingness to self-ascribe. Typically, hitherto, the rate of return on such data has not been significantly better than 90%. The University's target is to achieve not less than 95% return data on ethnic origin disclosure by 2007/08.
- (ii) Especially for those students in receipt of access bursaries the University will commit to improving progression rates (i.e. the proportion of enrolled students successfully progressing from one stage of study to the next). Specifically:

2006/07	Baseline progression rate
2007/08	Baseline plus 3%
2008/09	Baseline plus 5%
2009/10	Baseline plus 8%
2010/11	Maintain or improve.

- (iii) Especially for those students in receipt of access bursaries, the University will commit to improving retention rates. Specifically, using 2005/06 data as the baseline:



2006/07	Baseline plus 3%
2007/08	Baseline plus 5%
2008/09	Baseline plus 7%
2009/10	Baseline plus 9%
2010/11	Maintain or improve

- (iv) The University will commit to maintaining or improving recruitment from its outreach partners using 2006/07 as the baseline.
- (v) Using 2005/06 as the baseline the University will enhance both learning support and advisory services.
- (vi) Using 2005/06 as the baseline the University will extend the number of accounts that provide access to electronic learning materials and other support services for students by not less than 12% per annum.
- (vii) Based on existing performance in the current recruitment market the University will strive, for young, full time, first degree students to:
- meet or exceed a recruitment benchmark from state schools of 94%;
  - meet or exceed a recruitment benchmark from social classes 4, 5, 6 and 7 of 36%;
  - meet or exceed a recruitment benchmark from low participation neighbourhoods of 18%;
- (viii) Attain graduate progression into employment or further education programmes of not less than 90%.

Whilst these targets will form the basis of planned actions and will be subject to regular monitoring, attainment of specific numerical targets is less important than ensuring that over the period of this agreement the institution's overall profile of having an effective policy of social inclusion is maintained.

Where "baselines" are declared in the above schedule of commitments, the University will declare their values to OFFA when we have reached that juncture (either as part of the first monitoring run or, if available, beforehand).

## 12. Monitoring

The University will assess the extent to which it is fulfilling each of the elements of this agreement annually. At the same time it will monitor performance against its access measures and targets. Reports will be considered by the Directorate, Academic Board and the Board of Governors and a brief annual monitoring review will subsequently be submitted to OFFA.

## 13. Variation

This Agreement has been ratified by the Office for Fair Access and has been drawn up in good faith to cover up to a 5-year period. It has been devised with reference to estimates of what the likely levels of recruitment into higher education will be for 2006/07 onwards. Using the outcome of the monitoring activities referred to above, the University will annually review and assess the impact and effectiveness of its admissions and access policy. In the event that it consequently wishes to vary the Agreement, it will do so by submitting proposed variations to OFFA for approval.

**Table 1: Some Outreach Activities**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Target groups</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Existing/New?</b>
<p><b>Aspirations and attainment</b></p> <p>With the likely cessation of AimHigher funding post March 2006 for MMU's <u>national</u> project, continue project activity supporting homework clubs in two local areas in which it currently operates, with Bolton Wanderers and Manchester City as partners</p>	<p>Year 9-11s in Manchester and Bolton schools located in disadvantaged wards</p>	<p>6 schools, approx 24 students in each = 144 students</p>	<p>Based on existing, but the funding would be newly provided by MMU</p>
<p>Programme of department-led taster events, master-classes and curriculum enhancement clubs</p>	<p>Year 8-13s in Greater Manchester and Cheshire &amp; Warrington schools and colleges for students with families lacking HE background</p>	<p>50 schools involved annually, approx 750 students</p>	<p>Based on existing, but extends current activity</p>
<p>University Foundation School, working with LEAs to provide ongoing curriculum enhancement activities, culminating in guaranteed progression to MMU for those who complete the programme through years 9-13</p>	<p>Schools and colleges in Manchester and South-Mid Cheshire for students with families lacking HE background</p>	<p>12 schools involved annually, approx 150 students</p>	<p>Significant extension of current activity in Manchester, new in Cheshire</p>
<p>Mentoring activity by MMU students, one-to-one work focused on raising attainment, aspirations, homework completion, self confidence, transition to HE</p>	<p>[a] Year 9-11s in E. Manchester and Trafford schools located in disadvantaged wards.</p> <p>[b] Year 13s across Greater Manchester, with families lacking HE background</p> <p>[c] Year 12-13 students with disabilities and with mental health issues, S. Cheshire</p>	<p>140 school students across 6 schools</p> <p>100 college students</p> <p>40 college students</p>	<p>Existing commitment maintained in East Manchester; new activity in Trafford</p> <p>New activity</p> <p>Expansion of existing activity</p>
<p><b>Guidance</b></p> <p>Departments, Educational Liaison Unit and Student Services [inc Careers Service and Learning Support] to provide pre-entry course, applications and careers advice/guidance, and skills support, to potential HE applicants</p>	<p>Year 12 and 13 students, mainly from across Greater Manchester, Cheshire/Warrington and N Staffs – with a particular focus on colleges with high % of students from disadvantaged wards</p>	<p>15 colleges, approx 2000 students</p>	<p>Expansion of existing activity and a greater emphasis on students from disadvantaged wards</p>
<p>Continuation of enhanced pastoral and academic workshop support programme for students from under-represented groups, inc. work on study and research skills, financial management, peer mentoring activity, online programmes; use of additional specialist support staff; staff development programme</p>	<p>All Foundation Year students [particular target groups being social groups IV and V, Afro-Caribbean and Bangladeshi females]; Year 1 students from low income families.</p>	<p>Approx 1500 students</p>	<p>Continuation of current activity, some of which will no longer be in receipt of ESF funding</p>