

Lancaster University Access Agreement

1. Introduction

Lancaster University aims to maximise the achievement of highly motivated students recruited regionally, nationally, and internationally from diverse experiential and social backgrounds. Our national and international reputation for teaching and research, together with our regional and collaborative partnerships, underpin and define the context in which we approach widening participation.

2. Track record on widening participation

The university has a long and successful record of support for local and regional initiatives to widen access to higher education. Aspiration and awareness raising activities have involved targeted work with young people, their families, unemployed adults, work-based learners and community groups. Activities are delivered by a wide range of staff throughout the university including academic and support staff, and actively supported by students via the Students Union and Lancaster University Volunteering Unit.

Lancaster's Department of Continuing Education (DCE) has developed and co-ordinated a successful portfolio of targeted summer schools and outreach activities. For example, in the academic year 2003-2004, and over the summer of 2004, DCE provided the following:

- Aimhigher HE 5-day aspiration-raising residential summer school for 110 year-11 pupils
- pre-arrival Summer College, an accredited access programme for disadvantaged young people and adults, with regional FE and HE partners. Delivered at Lancaster (residential), Blackburn (non-residential) and through distance learning. In Summer 2004, 66 students achieved certificates.
- individual LEA residential summer school programmes for year 10 and 11 pupils from schools in Halifax, Newcastle, Sunderland, Furness and Wirral (total numbers 510 pupils)
- 20 campus visits for school pupils from low participation areas
- 65 awareness raising activities for school pupils in years 8-10 and 11 events for parents from low participation areas
- two week residential summer school for 150 year 7 to 11 year olds from the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth, of whom 20% came from households of less than £20,000 income p.a.
- flexible, distance and on-line learning programmes providing to home-bound, isolated and rural students credit-bearing opportunities to access the initial stages of higher education

DCE is also the North West regional co-ordinating office for the HEFCE/ESF programme of Aimhigher widening participation year 10 - 12 summer schools taking place in 13 HE institutions (around 3,500 funded places per year). It has established a network for disseminating good practice, staff development, evaluation, and quality assurance. It is also co-ordinating an Aimhigher NW funded programme of summer schools for younger age groups to be delivered through a consortia of partners, including FECs (around 1,000 funded places)

Lancaster's strengths and contribution to past and present widening participation activity include: co-ordination of the Lancashire Adult Compact, and the action research programme, Families And Higher Education Decision-making. We have played a lead role in undertaking projects with partners in Aimhigher Lancashire reaching out to work-based learners and young people from excluded groups and promoting vocational progression routes into higher

education; we have also developed a family focused staff development programme to disseminate our own and others' good practice and develop new materials for use by all FECs and HEIs throughout Lancashire.

The Centre for Training and Development (CETAD) offers part-time courses to mature students, many of whom are from socio-economic groups 4 to 7, particularly women returning to the workforce and learners retraining after unemployment.

CETAD's regional role contributes to the skills agenda in the North West and in particular to the economic and social inclusion policy, delivering projects in partnership with regional agencies such as Business Links, the voluntary sector, community organisations and housing associations. They also provide support for a number of community mentoring programmes providing training for mentors who work with young people and offenders. These mentoring programmes not only raise awareness of higher education, but also provide a first step back into education for the mentors.

The Community Access Programme (CAP) in the Department of Educational Research has delivered culturally and socially relevant access level courses developing higher education skills for community groups in economically disadvantaged areas of east and north Lancashire, in particular working with minority ethnic groups. CAP's action research approach has both encouraged families to consider HE as a possibility for their children and identified issues regarding HE, which have been disseminated and discussed within the university and by other HEIs.

During 2003 –04 CAP delivered 35 access courses, and organised 4 multicultural family learning campus visits for families who would not normally attend open days.

Individual academic departments throughout the university develop and deliver a range of innovative curriculum focused events and activities to raise awareness and attainment by generating an interest in their subject and providing positive experiences and interaction with university staff and student ambassadors. For example, in partnership with the library, the Art and Linguistics departments delivered workshops to pupils from low socio-economic groups which enhanced their GCSE and AS curricula as well as exploring higher education as a future goal. The department of Mathematics and Statistics has developed a partnership with Cumbrian Schools to encourage pupils from low participation neighbourhoods to study mathematics.

Lancaster was one of the first universities to make a commitment to recruiting and supporting disabled students. A dedicated Disability Adviser was appointed in 1990, and we have been building on and extending our experience since then. The Disabilities Service provides detailed information for applicants on support available and works closely with applicants with significant support needs to ensure they are well prepared for HE study. The Disabilities Service also runs a nationally accredited Assessment Centre to ensure that disabled students are equipped with IT and other equipment and services appropriate for Lancaster courses.

Lancaster has regularly recruited state school students at levels which are 6% to 7% above HEFCE/HESA benchmark figures. Retention rates for all undergraduate students remain at very high levels: 96-97% in the last three years.

Other Lancaster initiatives related to widening participation include: the setting up and continued support for the Open College of the North West, responsible for regional access courses; validation of courses for a wide variety of students at the university's accredited and associated colleges; development of a programme of part-time university awards and credit-bearing courses throughout Lancashire and Cumbria open to all adults and presently enrolling around 4,500 students; IT initiatives to ensure that all primary and secondary schools in Lancashire and Cumbria, including those in areas of disadvantage and/or geographical isolation, have up-to-date broadband access; and active participation in University Education in Cumbria, the consortium implementing the Fender Report.

3. Widening participation action plan to 2008

The proposals outlined in this access agreement build on the commitment and activities outlined above and in the university's new widening participation action plan, currently being developed. The action plan includes activities for all stages of the student life cycle. The following achievement aims within the action plan have already been agreed:

- Increasing student diversity, whilst retaining and developing Lancaster's reputation for high quality teaching and assessment
- Establishing appropriate funding and infrastructure to deliver an integrated widening participation strategy
- Using existing regional and national partnerships to promote and develop a strategic approach to widening participation and to carry out aspiration-raising activity
- Extending progression pathways and modes of delivery
- Increasing applications and admissions of students from WP target groups – which Lancaster has identified as: disabled students, minority ethnic students, young students from low socio-economic groups, state school pupils, mature students (prioritising where appropriate, work based learners and students with no, or non-traditional, qualifications)
- Developing new retention activities building on existing good practice
- Developing existing teaching, learning and assessment provision and quality enhancement processes
- Addressing equal opportunities issues in employability / careers provision
- Monitoring and evaluating widening participation activity at all stages of the student life cycle
- Recognising and fostering links that contribute to national, regional and institutional WP research and evaluation

4. Fees

Consistently rated as one of the top UK universities for teaching and research, Lancaster will charge all full time UK/EU students a fee of £3,000 for all undergraduate courses, rising annually with inflation. Decisions about part time fees will be confirmed once we have received government guidance on this matter.

5. Fee income to be spent on access measures

We estimate that we will spend £1,096,000 on access measures in addition to current expenditure.

6. Bursaries and financial support

We are committed to fulfilling our statutory obligation to provide bursaries of £300 per annum to all students on full state support. We will use information supplied from LEA means testing of applicants to pay additional amounts to students within specific income brackets.

We have put together an innovative package of support measures, enabling some students from lower income families to receive up to £2,000 per year from three of the four awards described below. These four sources of financial support for students will be funded through additional fees income. All are additional to previously available support. Based on an expected cohort of 2,500 students and the current socio-economic profile, they will consist of:

- **Statutory Bursaries** of £300 paid as cash award available to an estimated 420 UK students from families where income is below £17,500 (receiving the maximum £2700 HE Grant) Total cost: £126,000
- **Lancaster Bursary Scheme:** additional £700 paid as cash award to an estimated 420 UK students receiving the above statutory bursary (estimated £294,000) OR £500 to an estimated 236 UK students from families where income is between £17,500 and £26,500 (receiving between £2699 and £1200 of HE Grant) (estimated £118,000) Total cost: £412,000. **All bursaries** - total cost £538,000.
- **Subject Awards** of £1,000 available for UK and EU students wishing to study particular subjects. We estimate that 44% of these awards will be allocated to students from families with an income of less than £37,500. (Total cost of 132 awards to students in these income bands: £132,000). These awards also provide a practical means of addressing Government concerns about declining numbers in shortage subjects such as certain science subjects and modern languages.

In the first place, subject awards will be made to all UK and EU students admitted and registered on degree courses (including combined degrees) offered by any of the following departments: Biological Sciences, Combined Science, Communications Systems, European Languages and Cultures, Engineering, and Environmental Science. The number of subject awards made will therefore reflect recruitment levels in any one year. Subject areas may also change from year to year.

- **Scholarships** of £1,000 available for UK students in particular subjects according to level of entry qualifications. We estimate that 44% of these awards will be allocated to students from families with an income of less than £37,500. (Total cost of 132 awards to students in these income bands: £132,000)

Scholarships will be awarded in all subject areas not covered by subject awards (see above). In order to be eligible for a scholarship in one of these areas, a student will have to achieve a specified level of performance at A level (or alternate academic qualifications), normally higher than that required for admission to the degree scheme concerned; in addition, applicants must put Lancaster University down as their firm choice when replying to their UCAS offers. The standard levels of A level performance required for scholarships in each relevant department will be set by 1 October in the year preceding entry. They will vary from degree scheme to degree scheme; and from year to year. Applicants with alternate academic qualifications will be considered on an individual basis. Applicants eligible for the possible award of scholarships who have applied by the UCAS 15 January deadline will be informed of the level of performance required for the award of a scholarship when they receive an offer of a place from the University. The University reserves the right not to offer scholarships to applicants who submit a late application, depending on projected recruitment levels. Numbers of scholarships awarded in each academic year will depend on the eligibility criteria agreed for each department and the number of qualifying candidates.

Directly related administrative costs are expected to total £44,000

Levels of bursaries, subject awards and scholarships will rise each year in line with inflation. The university will ensure that statutory bursaries will be sufficient, together with full state support, to cover the cost of fees each year.

In addition to our package of bursaries, subject awards and scholarships, we will use funds from new fees income to create a new student employment scheme, open to all students. This will provide extra opportunities for paid employment, which may be of particular benefit for students from low- and middle-income families, as well as offering valuable work experience to aid employability.

7. Provision of information to students

Lancaster University already provides information on financial support to students at pre-entry and post arrival stages through a range of methods. Student Support Services manages and co-ordinates the provision of financial information to students through the internal offices and officers of the University.

An information and marketing policy for financial information, advice and support to students has been written to codify, develop and promote communication on financial support and ensure it is accurate, timely and appropriate at all stages. Currently students receive information at two main points:

- Prior to University entry - through the Schools and Colleges Liaison Office, Undergraduate Admissions Office and Student Support Services. The latter is the listed point of contact in the university prospectus. The range of financial support covered includes LEA funding, University discretionary funds (Access to Learning Fund) and University bursaries and scholarships. Comprehensive information on student funding is also provided on the Student Support Services website <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/users/studentssupport/finance>
- After arrival, students can access financial information and advice through an internal support network, which includes a comprehensive range of internal contacts and sources of guidance. This network includes Student Support Services, Student Registry, College and Residence Officers, Departmental Secretaries and Staff, Personal Tutors, and the Student Union. The information provided typically includes details of financial support and discretionary funding.

Information on financial support, including new post-2006 funding, is already available on the Student Support Services website indicated above. It will be updated as new details, including fee levels, become available. An FAQ site will also be available. The prospectus for 2006 entry will include an expanded section on student finance, outlining our fees and financial support package, together with information on statutory support. It will also include information about living costs, to help with budgeting. Cross-references to up-to-date electronic information will be clearly indicated. Hard copy leaflets summarising the fees and bursaries package will be distributed to applicants. Applicants will also receive information at the time an offer is made to them by the Undergraduate Admissions Office. For applicants for 2006 entry, these information sources will include the aggregate amount of fees that the institution will charge for the completion of the course.

8. Outreach activities

To complement bursaries, subject awards and scholarship scheme we will continue to deliver and introduce new activities designed to maintain and enhance recruitment of students currently underrepresented. The new activities have been designed to provide steady, incremental growth in our outreach work, building on our previous wide experience. The following activities will be funded from additional fees income:

Lancaster University Volunteer Unit (LUVU) Schools Partnership (£36,000): a community outreach programme delivered in partnership with 15 primary and 5 secondary schools in the Greater Lancaster, Morecambe and surrounding areas for approximately 600 pupils from low socio-economic and low participation areas. This activity will provide access to university staff, students, resources and facilities, promote higher education and active citizenship, enhance confidence, increase pupil and teacher awareness and knowledge of higher education, and provide voluntary work opportunities for 200 Lancaster undergraduates to enhance their employability. The activity will extend the existing portfolio of LUVU community based activities, complement Aimhigher activities and respond to an identified need discussed with local schools.

Information retrieval and study skills (£32,000): an activity for school and young and mature FE students designed to encourage the development of information and study skills; enable participants to take advantage of university expertise, services and resources for coursework; ease transition into HE; and increase confidence in using an academic library. We will work with pupils from low socio-economic groups in 5 -10 target schools and colleges in Lancashire and Cumbria and approximately 150 pupils attending summer schools. The activity will also enhance employability and informational retrieval skills of undergraduate students involved in delivery. This is a new activity.

Careers Education and Lancaster University Professional Development Planning (LUPDP) - (£60,000): a pre-entry programme of activities designed to highlight the importance of personal development planning and to integrate careers education into pre-entry experiences and preparation for transition into HE. We will develop 12 pre-entry workshops for delivery to pupils from low socio-economic groups with 12 Lancashire schools and colleges, plus workshops for approximately 150 summer school pupils. We will establish a network with schools, colleges and employers to raise awareness of barriers to HE; identify and share good practice to aid transition into and through HE and on to graduate employment. This is a new activity.

Masterclasses and Saturday Schools (£60,000): a curriculum enhancement activity for pupils in years 11 - 13 designed to enrich their school and further education curricula, promote progression to higher education and raise awareness of higher educational opportunities at Lancaster and elsewhere. Activities will target 300 pupils from low socio-economic groups and low participation areas with particular emphasis on pupils from schools in East Lancashire and Cumbria. This new activity will enhance our existing generic HE awareness-raising activities and provide access to university staff, students, resources and campus facilities. Where possible it will involve local delivery.

Regional Community Outreach (£62,000): a series of school, college and community based activities focused on minority ethnic students. It is designed to encourage applications by raising awareness of academic opportunities, and increasing the knowledge of applicants and their families about the welfare and student support available at Lancaster. We will establish links with community groups such as the Council of Mosques, the Lancashire BME PACT and Chinese community organisations. We will work with 15 target schools and colleges in East Lancashire, Merseyside and Greater Manchester. This is a new activity and will build on research into application patterns among minority ethnic groups in the region planned for 2005.

9. Milestones

Data in this section lists the groups Lancaster has selected as targets for widening participation activities since 1999, namely disabled students, students from minority ethnic groups, students from lower socio-economic groups, students from state schools, and mature students. Students from all minority ethnic groups, and mature students, are significantly underrepresented at Lancaster; students in other groups are underrepresented nationally.

Baseline data

Target group	Baseline %	Source of information
1. Disabled students	4.8	Lancaster University Student Information (LUSI) system, November 2003; refers to 2003 entrants
2. Minority ethnic students	4.6	LUSI, November 2003; refers to 2003 entrants
3. Students from NS-SEC classes 4 – 7	19	HESA, October 2004; refers to 2002 entrants
4. Students from state schools	90.7	HESA, October 2004; refers to 2002 entrants

5. Mature students	6.8	LUSI, November 2003; refers to 2003 entrants
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Groups 1 – 4 show data for young students; all groups are full-time

Objectives

As a result of our bursary and scholarship scheme, and existing and new outreach activities, we expect to maintain percentages in each target group throughout the period to 2011 in a context of increasing national competition and in the face of an expanding sector. Additionally, we expect to produce growth in the percentages of minority ethnic students, students from lower socio-economic groups, and mature students following targeted outreach activities, including those described in section 8 above. Our experience suggests that increased recruitment lags behind outreach work by around three years; we have configured our milestones accordingly.

Milestones

Target group	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Disabled students	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8
Minority ethnic students	4.6	4.9	5.4	6.1	7	7.8
Students from NS-SEC groups 4-7	19	20	21	22	24	26
Students from state schools	90.7	90.7	90.7	90.7	90.7	90.7
Mature students	6.8	6.8	6.8	7	7	7.5

10. Institutional monitoring arrangements

An outline report on progress against objectives and milestones will be submitted for scrutiny to Lancaster's Committee for Continuing Education and Continuing Professional Development. It will contain:

- quantitative data about target groups
- a report on bursaries, subject awards and scholarships awarded to students in widening participation target groups
- a summary of progress on relevant outreach activities

The Committee will advise on any adjustments to be made to the access agreement to enable targets to be met.

Reports on progress will also be taken by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and/or Director for Regional Outreach to the University Management Advisory Group.

In addition, the University Council will receive a statement of key performance indicators on equality and diversity each year, which will include data on widening participation target groups.