

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

ACCESS AGREEMENT 2006/07 to 2010/11

Information about the University relevant to this agreement

1. The University's current home/EU undergraduate population (as at 1 December 2004) is 7082. 52 per cent of this population is female, 11 per cent is mature (over 21), and 15 per cent comes from an ethnic background (predominantly of Asian origin).
2. In terms of HESA Performance Indicators relevant to this agreement, Leicester's current position is as follows:

	Leicester	Benchmark (locally adjusted where applicable)
Young students from state schools	87.5%	83.5%
Young students from classes 4, 5, 6, 7	26.1%	25%
Young students from low participation neighbourhoods	10.8%	11.3%
Projected learning outcomes: Degree	85%	84.4%
Non-continuation (% not in HE after one year): Low participation neighbourhoods	5.8%	6.9%
Other neighbourhoods	6.8%	5.3%

Improvement is therefore required in the recruitment of students from low participation neighbourhoods, and this is informing the University's outreach work.

3. In 2003/04, approximately 40% of the University's students were receiving full or partial LEA/SLC support on the basis of family income below c.£33,000. Our calculations for bursary payments are based on this figure, providing both support to the those with the lowest incomes (i.e. with family income below c.£15,200, 10% of our population), and a lower level of assistance to those with an income up to £33,000 (£30% of our population), who we believe will also be potentially deterred by the new fees regime.
4. The University's *Strategic Plan 2004/05 to 2007/08* includes the following statement:

The University's approach to student recruitment is demonstrably non-discriminatory. It has, for example, one of the highest proportions of state school students of all the pre-1992 universities, it has a very broad international and ethnic mix of students, it has strong lifelong learning provision and it serves the needs of national and global business and commerce through provision which extends from undergraduate certificate level to taught doctorates through a variety of flexible routes and modes of delivery. The challenge for the University is to maintain the quality of its provision whilst also meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse population. Strong student support systems are therefore regarded as a priority.

The Widening Participation Sub-Strategy reflects the University's strategic intentions for learning and teaching and is appended to this access agreement to give context to the intentions set out in this document.

5. The University is working in a sub-regional partnership with De Montfort and Loughborough Universities to deliver the regional targets for widening participation set by the Aimhigher initiative. Although there is current speculation about the possibility of a review of funding for Aimhigher, no account has been taken of this in the financial assumptions which underpin this access agreement. The agreement also assumes that the Access to Learning hardship funding will continue.
6. The University is currently unable to expand its Home/EU undergraduate numbers because its student population is in excess of that permitted by its funding contract with HEFCE. It is therefore the case at present that changes in the balance of the student population after 2006/07 must be achieved through redistribution of the existing population, improved retention and/or bidding for such additional funded numbers as may be released by HEFCE.
7. The University has no existing bursary arrangements for home undergraduates, and therefore no infrastructure in place to support new schemes. The additional fee income will therefore have to provide for relevant administrative support (see paragraph 19).

Scope of access agreement and intended fee levels

8. This access agreement relates in the main to full-time students. There is insufficient information about future levels of student support for part-time study available at the time of writing to allow any assumptions to be made about the viability of charging variable fees to part-time students (but see 17 below), but the University can confirm its intention to apply the bursary and support arrangements set out in this agreement to all those paying a variable fee during the period of this agreement, and to comply with any national agreements on qualifying candidates.
9. The University intends to charge £3000 to all undergraduate students entering its full-time programmes in 2006/07 and thereafter, other than to those accepted for 2005 who request a deferral before 1 August 2005. It will also charge £3000 to students registered for the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE).
10. The University will apply only such increases to the fee as may be approved by the Government to take account of inflation.
11. The fees to be charged for each whole programme will be set out in the University prospectus and on the University website, and will be notified to each applicant (see 22 to 25 below).

Utilisation of additional fees to support new access measures

12. The University has provided OFFA with an estimate of its new investment in access measures arising from the availability of additional fee income, and has provided in this agreement an indication of the sums to be made available for specific support measures.
13. The University will subscribe to the model bursary scheme as devised by UUK/SCOP for the purpose of providing all students qualifying for full state support with an annual bursary of £300.
14. The University will review the minimum bursary payment annually, and increase it as necessary, in order to ensure that students qualifying for full state support have no fee liability (providing that they use the bursary to pay the fee).

15. In addition to this minimum amount, the University will provide bursary support to those qualifying for full state support as follows:

First-year undergraduate students

Either

The following package of goods and services designed to overcome the immediate financial deterrent of entered HE experienced by those who cannot rely on parental income:

- loan of a laptop computer, with an option to purchase at the end of the course (estimated value £650)
- a £200 reduction in the first term's University accommodation
- a local bus pass for the first term (current value £100)
- a sum credited to University SNAP Card (for the purchase of meals) (value £50)
- a University print card (value £50)
- a sum credited to a University Bookshop account (value £50)
- a further sum to be used at the student's discretion for a University sports card (current value c.£45), credit towards services offered by the Students' Union or additional purchases from the Bookshop (value £100).

[Total value per student c.£1,200 plus minimum bursary = £1500]

Or

A cash bursary of £1000 **[Total value per student £1000 plus minimum bursary = £1300]**

Returning undergraduate students and PGCE students

In the second and subsequent years of undergraduate programmes (assuming successful progression), and in the single year of PGCE registration, a cash bursary of £1000 will be paid to students qualifying for full state support in addition to the standard £300 award **[Total annual value per student = £1300]**

16. The University recognises that those in receipt of partial state support may also require financial assistance, and it will therefore offer an annual bursary of between £950 and £50 to students with a residual family income in the range £17,501 to £37,425 (in 2006/07, adjusted in future years in the light of Government recommendations relating to income bandings). The precise value of the bursary will be determined by reference to a sliding scale which will favour lower-income families. Details will be published annually in the financial information provided by the University to new applicants **[Total annual value per student = between £950 and £50 annually]**
17. The University recognises that financial deterrents to progression into HE are not just associated with variable fees or full-time study. It will therefore also create from additional fee income an annual fund of **£100,000** to provide support to home undergraduate students (including part-time undergraduate students) experiencing hardship because of family background or other adverse domestic circumstances. This fund will be managed by its Welfare Service alongside other hardship funds.
18. The bursary schemes and enhanced welfare support will be available to all eligible students ordinarily resident in the UK. The University will take note of legal developments relating to the potential obligation to provide support to non-UK EU students, and will act appropriately as necessary, in line with the recommendations of its own legal advisers.

19. As the University does not currently offer bursaries to undergraduates from the UK, it does not have an administrative infrastructure to support the arrangements set out above. It will therefore utilise additional fee income to appoint a bursary manager and assistant in order to ensure that disbursement arrangements are undertaken promptly, fairly and accurately [**Total annual cost = c. £50,000**]
20. In order to assist with student retention, the additional fee income will also fund one financial adviser (in addition to an existing post); this advisor will have a remit which focuses on the specific needs of those from disadvantaged backgrounds, in terms of both one-to-one financial advice and debt counselling, and also the provision of generic advice to prospective students, applicants, existing students and their families. [**Total annual cost = c.£33,000**]
21. The University will also utilise fee income to enhance the support to registered students provided by its Student Learning Centre, with the aim of providing focused learner support during the first term to students from disadvantaged backgrounds to ease the transition to HE and to enhance the prospects of academic success. [**Total annual cost = c. £17,000**]

Provision of information to students

22. The University refers to this access agreement in its Prospectus for 2006 (with suitable disclaimers relating to its approval by OFFA). It has set up a special fees website so that subsequent developments can be broadcast without delay, and it will publish its approved access agreement on this site.
23. Each applicant for 2006 will be provided with a booklet setting out information about the fee for each programme and the bursary arrangements, and providing advice on budgeting and financial management. This booklet will also emphasise the long-term aspects of loan management (i.e. after graduation), and provide information about the potential economic benefits of degree-level study.
24. The 2007 Prospectus will include a substantial section on fees and support, with illustrative examples of income and costs.
25. In the run up to 2006, returning students will be periodically reminded that they are not liable for higher fees.

Outreach work

26. The University's outreach work is conducted both on its own behalf and through Aimhigher (the latter tending to benefit recruitment to other institutions in the region). The current focus of local activity is the Colleges-University of Leicester Network (CULN), which brings together 21 FE colleges into a non-exclusive partnership with the University and its two validated Colleges of Higher Education.
27. The University already supports a range of outreach activities, including lectures for schools, visits and presentations and master classes, and it utilises its own students as guides and mentors. Presentations to prospective students and their parents on financial matters already feature in our national outreach work, and will be developed further to take account of the new fees regime.

28. The University is also engaged in a number of long-term initiatives to promote progression into HE by disadvantaged groups. These are currently associated with Aimhigher, but the University wishes to have the capacity to manage wider a range of projects and to undertake the necessary longitudinal research. It will therefore fund a project manager/researcher plus clerical support and an enhanced budget from the additional fee income, with initial responsibility for securing the sustainability of projects such as the following:

- *Doctor in the House*: The University is working in partnership with De Montfort and Loughborough Universities with Year 9 white and Afro-Caribbean working class males in Leicester and Leicestershire in a long-term project to stimulate progression to Medicine and the Health Sciences.
- The GO Project: This is targeting Year 8 students in a local college with a very poor record of progression, applying skills developed by game-playing to other forms of strategic thinking (learning through play).

[Total annual cost = c. £60,000]

29. Our research tells us that students from local schools and colleges who enter the University are more likely to be from lower socio-economic groups than those coming from outside the region.. In recognition of this pattern, the University will strengthen its schools and colleges liaison team to support progression from the local area. Forty schools and colleges have been targeted, to which a range of services will be provided, including student finance workshops and guidance on application procedures. Additional fee income will provide funds for two liaison officers.

[Total annual cost = c. £60,000]

30. The University is utilising CULN (see 26 above and widening participation strategies attached) to support new access strategies, and the development of progression routes is a priority. A long-standing foundation programme is franchised to one college (delivering over 30 students a year to University science courses), and other 1+3 and other guaranteed pathways are now planned. Additional fee income will provide funds for a liaison officer plus clerical support and an enhanced budget to encourage and support these developments.

[Total annual cost = c. £60,000]

Milestones

31. During the first three years of this Agreement, the University will utilise the HESA Performance Indicators to measure achievement of its aims. It will review the usefulness of this approach at the end of this period, and will at that time either seek OFFA's approval for a continuation of the use of these measures, or for the introduction of new milestones if additional, reliable monitoring information is available at that time.

The initial **milestones** will therefore be:

- to continue to meet year on year the benchmark relating to state school entrants
- to improve performance against the low participation neighbourhood benchmark
- to improve the extent by which other benchmarks listed in paragraph 2 of this Agreement are met by at least 1% over the first three years of this agreement.

The ethnicity, gender, disability and retention profile of PGCE students will be monitored annually utilising the Performance Profile produced for the TDA.

32. During the period up to 2010, the University will also measure its performance through the successful delivery of the sub-regional (i.e. Leicester and Leicestershire) AimHigher recruitment target, which is to increase the number of young entrants to HE by 627 over the number admitted in 2002. This is being undertaken through initiatives designed to:
- raise aspirations and the motivation to enter HE in young people aged 13 and above who are drawn from the lower socio-economic groups IV and V
 - raise the achievements of these young people through work undertaken with schools and colleges to improve their learning skills and capacity to undertake higher-level study
 - strengthen progression routes from FE colleges and the workplace.

Institutional monitoring arrangements

33. The University will monitor the fulfilment of this agreement through:
- analysis of applications, acceptances and registrations
 - feedback from recipients of bursaries on the operation of the bursary scheme and from students in general on the provision of other new support systems
 - reviewing the academic performance of students in receipt of bursaries
 - close monitoring of progression and retention data
 - reviewing HESA Performance Indicators annually
 - regular checking of financial outlay relative to income.
34. Monitoring will be undertaken by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Resources) as Chair of the Student Admissions and Recruitment Advisory Group, reporting to the Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee at its monthly meetings with Deans and other academic officers.

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

STRATEGIC PLAN 2004/05 TO 2007/08

LEARNING AND TEACHING SUB-STRATEGY: WIDENING PARTICIPATION AND IMPROVING ACCESS

Aim

To ensure that all students are selected for entry on the basis of their ability to study at university level, and that unless there are limitations on the availability of places, the only barriers placed in the way of admission to or progression through a programme of study relate to the need to maintain academic standards.

General expectations

That all staff responsible for recruiting and teaching students will adhere to best practice and comply with relevant legislation in the operation of admissions procedures, and that registered students are provided throughout their courses with a level of support appropriate to their needs.

Objectives

To have fair and transparent admissions policies in place which differentiate between applicants on the basis of academic potential and proven achievement

To provide academic support to students as they progress into the University and through each level of their chosen programme which will optimise their ability to fulfil their potential.

To offer, and to expand as far as restrictions on student numbers permit, foundation programmes in local colleges to facilitate progression to first degree courses in the University.

To operate responsive and flexible admissions policies to encourage the participation of mature (over 21) learners

To provide welfare support, including dedicated support for students with disabilities and financial guidance as appropriate, in order to optimise retention and successful completion.

To facilitate non-graduate entry to postgraduate programmes in appropriate disciplines by providing flexible entry routes through University diplomas, the recognition of professional skills and competences, and the accreditation of relevant prior learning.

To offer foundation degrees in areas which reflect the University's academic strengths.

To meet all the requirements of the Excellence Challenge: AimHigher initiative, and to contribute fully to other programmes designed to facilitate improved access to HE nationally and in the region.

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Commentary

The University's widening participation strategy has four strands.

Full-time undergraduate courses are offered across a range of disciplines to students from across the UK; the population is drawn predominantly from the state school sector.

The University offers postgraduate and post-experience training in full-time, part-time and distance-learning modes, with a concentration of student numbers in the last of these. Pathways have been developed for entry to postgraduate study which do not require students with business experience to have completed a first degree in the discipline, and for many students, these courses form their first experience of higher education.

The University also has a long-standing history of involvement in adult education provision, and undergraduate part-time study opportunities have found a new focus through the establishment in August 2000 of the Institute of Lifelong Learning. All certificate-level provision has now been internally accredited at undergraduate first-year level, and pathways are being developed between certificates and other provision, including foundation degrees.

The foundation degrees themselves constitute the fourth strand of the University's widening participation strategy. At the time of the publication of this Plan, the University has five foundation degrees in operation and has funding for two more.

The University's developing widening participation strategies are supported by a much more pro-active approach to collaboration than was the case in the 1990s. The University seeks from its educational partners a compatibility with its general ethos, and it has been fortunate to find a number of collaborators who are sympathetic to its aims. The most significant examples of close collaboration are the 'validation plus' relationships established in 2003 with Bishop Grosseteste and Newman Colleges of Higher Education, and the long-standing partnership with Wyggeston and Queen Elizabeth I College through which undergraduate foundation programmes are offered (from 2005, this partnership will also support a foundation degree). The University is unfortunately prevented by external funding constraints from engaging in new activities which would lead to an increased home/EU student intake, but it will continue to forge links with schools and colleges to facilitate progression and to broaden the student profile within existing numbers (including collaborations arising from the Colleges-University of Leicester Network).

The University has been seeking opportunities for non HEFCE-funded collaboration (an example is the Diploma in Higher Education in Operating Department Practice funded by the NHS). The University is a partner in the UKHEP initiative designed to provide post-qualification for nurses and it is also participating in the NHSU teaching partnership led by the University of Warwick.

The 'skills ladder' human resources strategy of the NHS is likely to provide the University with many other opportunities for involvement in the training and development of hospital workforces, including the provision of new foundation degrees, certificates and diplomas, and CPD programmes. A major development in this regard is partnership with De Montfort University and the University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust to develop the Multi Professional Education and Training Centre (MPET) as a major strand of the Pathway Project at the General Hospital site.

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The Colleges-University of Leicester Network has twenty four member colleges, including Bishop Grosseteste and Newman Colleges of Higher Education, whose awards the University validates, as senior members. CULN is a non-exclusive grouping which is specifically designed to explore opportunities for collaboration, student progression and the sharing of expertise, and has stimulated activities ranging from the development of foundation degrees to staff and curriculum development.

The University is a committed partner in local and regional widening participation initiatives, and works closely and profitably with the other Leicestershire universities on a number of specific widening participation projects. It also collaborates with other East Midlands universities in specific projects which take forward the general aim of enhancing opportunities for access to higher education. The University relies heavily on the involvement of academic departments in reach-out activities, but it has recently expanded the administrative support provided for widening-participation, and it has embraced additional opportunities such as expanded summer school activities; it will continue this pro-active strategy for the duration of this Plan.

The University will undertake the activities set out above alongside its ongoing commitment to the Excellence Challenge AimHigher: Partnerships for Progression initiative, the activities and targets for which are not incorporated here.

The University will also focus increased attention on issues of access, equality, progression and retention. The aim will be to optimise student performance, irrespective of background. The University will extend its annual and periodic monitoring and review processes to ensure that any problems in learner support systems are revealed, and it will deepen its on-going scrutiny of assessment outcomes in order to reveal patterns of performance differentiated by academic and social background, gender, race and disability.

It is the University's intention that in terms of social background, its undergraduate student profile should remain broad-based after the introduction of variable fees in 2006, and it will therefore endeavour to operate recruitment procedures, including bursary schemes, which will sustain its general widening participation strategies. It will work with sector representatives, Government and other relevant parties with the aim of establishing fair, transparent and operationally efficient student funding procedures to underpin the new fees regime.

Key Performance Targets

To meet, and where possible exceed, the widening participation Performance Indicator benchmarks published by HESA (ongoing through the period of this Plan).

To continue to recruit predominantly from the state school sector (ongoing through the period of this Plan, to be measured by the relevant HESA PI) (see above).

To continue the process of developing progression data to inform retention strategies, and in particular, to capture information about performance to support the University's equality policies and to act on this as necessary (ongoing through the period of this Plan).

To develop by 2005/06 an undergraduate access strategy and a fair and transparent bursary system to support widening participation after variable fees are introduced.

To bring together and publish the University's policies on the accreditation of prior learning (to be finalised in 2004/05).