

# KINGSTON UNIVERSITY

## **Access Agreement for the Office of Fair Access (For programmes commencing 2008 -09)**

### **1. Introduction**

The University's Access Agreement for 2008-09 is based on the original agreement of 2006-07 but adapted in the light of our experience of two years' intake of students and developments at the university with respect to widening participation and social inclusion.

The Access Agreement remains a key element of the university's mission which is:

"The mission of Kingston University is to promote participation in Higher Education, which it regards as a democratic entitlement; to strive for excellence in learning, teaching and research; to realise the creative potential and fire the imagination of all its members; and to equip its students to make effective contributions to society and the economy."

(Strategic Plan 2005/06 to 2009/10)

One of the key themes of the Strategic Plan contextualises and develops the above statement:

"Widening Participation and Student Growth

Kingston University is committed to widening participation. Despite the rapid increase in applications to the University (and, consequently, an enhanced capacity to select students and reduced dependence on Clearing), the University will continue to choose students on the basis of their ability to benefit as well as their prior qualifications – and both to take account of and also to challenge historical patterns of disadvantage. A specific aim is to play a leading role in the establishment of a Lifelong Learning Network. It will continue to be among the fastest growing English universities in order to meet increasing demand for its courses and also to satisfy the aspirations of young people and adults in the diverse communities it serves."

(Strategic Plan 2005/06 to 2009/10)

### **2. Institutional Context**

In the autumn of 2006, the Academic Board of the university approved a Quality Enhancement Strategy (QES). The QES brings together all the objectives of the university's Widening Participation Strategy (including the Access Agreement), the Learning and Teaching Strategy, "academic" staff development from the HR Strategy and contains objectives about ensuring quality assurance and enhancement are effectively linked. The QES is based on The Student Life Cycle and also provides accountability for expenditure of

HEFCE special initiatives associated with some of the objectives such as Widening Participation, TQEF, Professional Stand and Research Informed Teaching.

A number of the QES objectives are particularly relevant in the context of the Access Agreement:

“1. Awareness and Aspiration Raising

1.1 To ensure that potential entrants into HE, whether currently at school, at college, in HE, in the community or in the workplace are engaged with by the university to raise their awareness of undergraduate, postgraduate and CPD opportunities in higher education generally and at KU in particular.

1.2 To provide new opportunities for Non Traditional Entrants (NTEs) to enter higher education, particularly from vocational backgrounds by establishing a HEFCE funded Lifelong Learning Network that improves existing, and establishes new, vocational progression pathways and new programmes of study to meet employment sector needs.

2. Application and Pre-entry

2.1 To provide increased opportunities for students from more diverse backgrounds to enter the University from school, college, the workplace and the community.

6. Employability

6.1.3 NTEs are supported in their transition to the workplace or further study and have an equal opportunity for success with other graduates and diplomates.

7. Review and Evaluation

7.1 To put in place mechanisms to track, monitor, review, evaluate and disseminate all widening participation initiatives to ensure that targeting, monitoring and evaluating work with NTEs is informed by a clear evidence base and is of clear benefit to students.”

(Kingston University Quality Enhancement Strategy 2006)

In line with the above all faculties are provided with the datasets referred to in Section 3 and complete an annual Widening Participation Action Plan with key priorities and areas for investigation including documenting initiatives they will be engaged with concerning the following:

- Raising awareness amongst under represented groups at school, college, HE or the workplace of undergraduate, postgraduate and CPD opportunities in higher education in general and at Kingston University in particular
- Providing new opportunities for learners from vocational backgrounds to enter and be supported on undergraduate, postgraduate and CPD programmes through engagement with Lifelong Learning Networks and particularly through the development of progression agreements and new programmes of study which meet employment sector needs
- Improving the information, advice and guidance offered to underrepresented groups prior to and during their application to the university

- Implementing the University's compact scheme targeted at applicants from local schools, colleges and workplaces (and care leavers nationally) with year-on-year growth as detailed in the OFFA agreement targets
- Ensuring that admissions practice is based on fair access principles
- Ensuring that non traditional entrants are supported in their transition to the workplace or further study and have an equal opportunity for success with other graduates and diplomats

This process of completing the action plan enables the university Education Liaison Team based within UK Marketing to support the faculties in a range of activities aimed at widening participation.

### 3. Recent Widening Participation figures and ongoing analysis

Our most recent Access performance indicators for full time undergraduate entrants in 2005/06 show a continuing trend of attracting higher numbers than expected from low socio economic classes; 36.8% as against a location adjusted benchmark figure of 33.7%.

Within the institution, a forum set up to encourage close collaboration between the Planning, Student data, Marketing, Careers and Widening Participation sections has enabled us to develop datasets that are now being used by faculties to inform their planning, monitoring and evaluation of WP initiatives aimed at specific stages of the student lifecycle from Access to employment (see May & Hill 2007a)<sup>1</sup>. The five datasets comprise:

**Headline dataset.** Key HEFCE Access, retention and employment performance indicators. This gives each faculty an overview of their performance and contribution to the published data for the university. The table below shows the published University indicators and benchmarks.

Headline Data	Kingston University HEFCE Performance indicator (location adjusted benchmark)
<b>Access</b> low SEC (PI T1b) (%)	
2005/06	36.8 (33.7)
2004/05	37.6 (33.7)
<b>First year retention</b> Non continuation to Y2 ( T3a)	
2004/05 entry Young (%)	6.9 (9.4)
Mature (%)	14.7 (14.7)
2003/04 entry Young (%)	9.4 (10.5)
Mature (%)	15.7 (16.1)

<sup>1</sup> May, S., & Hill, M. (2007a). *Plan - Monitor - Evaluate: Datasets to measure the impact of Widening Participation interventions*. Paper presented at FACE Annual Conference, University of East London – July 2007

<b>Degree completion</b> Projected (PI T5) 2003/04 entry (%)	68.4 (69.4)
<b>Employment</b> Six months after graduation indicator (PI E1) 2004/05 Exit (%) 2005/06 Exit (%)	93.9 (90.2) 90.3 (89.9)

A breakdown of the underlying data is used to show the contribution of each faculty to these figures and commentaries points the reader to the relevant section of the data suite for further detail:

**Access dataset.** Conversion rates for specific cohorts at each stage from application to student enrolment through the RAFYR instrument. (see May & Hill 2007b)<sup>2</sup>. This enables detailed comparisons to be made of the ways in which traditional and non-traditional applicants progress through the application/offer/acceptance route into the university.

**Retention dataset.** The first year retention and progression from year 1 to year 2 of student cohorts by type and level of entry qualification (see May & Hill 2007c)<sup>3</sup>. The entry qualification categories are those used by HEFCE in their allocation of funding to support the retention of students from non traditional backgrounds, this provides a focus for the measurement of the effectiveness of its utilisation.

**Degree Classification dataset.** Degree classification awarded by entry qualification bands used in the allocation of additional funding to support retention. This gives an important measure to the university of the relative performance of non-traditional students completing their degrees.

**Employment dataset.** Type of employment or further study by entry qualification band and degree classification. This links the outcomes from the Destination of Leavers in Higher Education survey (DLHE) to the University HESA return to give a breakdown of student first destination by risk based on

<sup>2</sup> May, S., & Hill, M. (Expected 2007b). Using institutional data to monitor student progression into Higher Education. *Journal of Access Policy and Practice*

<sup>3</sup> May, S., & Hill, M. (2007c). "Development and use of Faculty Profile data sets as a tool to support embedding institutional strategic objectives relating to fair access and progression of students at one Higher Education Institution". *Transformation, Progression and Hope: whatever happened to lifelong learning?* eds. M. Abramson, T. Acland, M. Hill, T. Hudson, P. Jones, R. Kop, A. Lines, D. Saunders, J. Storan & C. Trotman, Forum for Access and Continuing Education, London, pp. 255-265.

entry qualification. All alumni employed either part-time or full time in any sort of graduate work are separated from those not involved in graduate work but involved in graduate study. This breakdown enables tracking of non traditional students through the transition from graduation into employment or further study.

#### 4. Level of Fees

The standard undergraduate fee for 2008/09 is £3,145. Exceptions to this include the following foundation degrees;

	£
Foundation year 0 Business Administration Early years	1,255

#### 5. Bursaries

##### 5a. University Bursary Scheme

We will use the “HEBSS” administration system provided by the Student Loans Company to administer the bursaries. Students will need to apply to their local authority (or Student Finance Direct) for income assessed support and they, and any parents or partners who give financial information to support the application, must give consent for their information to be shared with the University to allow the assessment to take place.

Students who are subject to the £3,145 tuition fee who have a household income below £39,305 as assessed by the local authority will be eligible for the bursary. The levels will be as follows:

Household Income	Level of Bursary
0 - £1,000	£1,000
£1,001 to £25,000	£ 600
£25,001 to £39,305	£ 310

This includes the statutory minimum bursary of £310 payable to students with a household income below £25,000.

PGCE and BA Social Work students will be eligible for the statutory bursary only.

##### 5b. Kingston University Compact Scheme

As described in Section 9 the Compact Scheme is proving to be an effective vehicle for easing the progression of students from under-represented groups entering the university. We will continue with the scheme and from 2008/09

offer up to 500 compact bursaries of £300 for every year of study to students from local schools and colleges who have no family tradition of going to university or who are in receipt of the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA). Additionally we will offer the bursary to all careleavers and to all applicants to full-time foundation degree programmes who are being charged the top-up fee. This latter category emphasises our commitment to employer engagement and work based learning. We plan to use the compact scheme to add value to our work welcoming LLN progression agreements and students applying to the university with the new diploma qualifications.

Other applicants are considered on a discretionary basis, e.g. students who for personal reasons can only attend a local university (e.g. health). We will additionally set aside £75,000 to ensure the effective management of the compact scheme.

### **5c. Careleavers**

The university's work with careleavers has been recognised by the award of the Frank Buttle Quality mark and the university will now build on this with the award of £1000 per annum for each careleaver entering or continuing study the university in 2008/09.

### **5d. Widening Participation International Mobility Fund**

The university is committed to internationalisation and in that respect is promoting opportunities for undergraduates to study abroad as part of their studies. The university recognises that for students from low-income backgrounds, the costs involved can be a barrier and so from 2008/09 we are implementing a Widening Participation International Mobility Fund that will offer students in receipt of either a full or partial Higher Education Maintenance Grant an International Mobility Bursary. We will set aside £50,000 for this fund and pilot an approach for the allocation of bursaries up to this figure in 2008/09 and reconsider the scheme in subsequent years.

### **5e. Variable fees fund**

The University will add £60,000 of the additional fee income to the student hardship fund to provide additional hardship support to those students subject to the £3,145 tuition fees. This fund will continue to be administered by the Student Funding Service.

## **6. Provision of Information to students**

UK Marketing works closely with Student Funding to ensure that the appropriate communication tools are developed and employed to raise awareness of financial issues and to promote the support services available for prospective and current students. More specifically:

- Information is included across the suite of prospectuses and on the University website.

- Specific Student Funding publications are produced for issuing at awareness raising and recruitment events/activities as well as enrolment and induction periods (including a session targeted at enrolling Compact Scheme students – see Sections 6b and 8)
- Student Funding staff support a range of schools and college liaison activities often using Money Doctor focussed activities.
- Student Funding staff attend recruitment events such as Open Days and Applicant Days.
- Student Funding provides a personal information and advice service to prospective and current students throughout the year.

£25K per annum is allocated from the additional fee income as a contribution to fund the above approach

## **7. Outreach work**

The Education Liaison team works closely with the London South Aimhigher Partnership and the South London Lifelong Learning Network, both of whom are housed at the university. The team delivers an extensive range of interventions with over 60 regional schools and colleges, a Gifted and Talented programme, a Student Ambassador scheme, and two dedicated websites for school and college students and staff. Last year the team delivered interventions with over 3000 students from Year Five upwards and worked with over 60 schools and colleges.

### **Kingston University Compact Scheme**

This Scheme is funded through the Access Agreement and thus commenced its first intake in 2006. The scheme specifically targets students who have no family tradition of going to university, Local Authority care leavers, those in receipt of the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and mature applicants to full-time foundation degree programmes. Other applicants are considered on a discretionary basis, e.g. students who for personal reasons can only attend a local university (e.g. health).

The scheme eases the transition to university amongst these students by providing them with:

- A bursary of £300 per progressive year of study
- Flexible entry requirements (a possible reduction of up to 30 UCAS points)
- A single point of contact for information, advice and guidance throughout the admissions process

All applications to the scheme must be supported by a member of staff within the school/college in the form of a Compact reference. The Compact reference can form the basis of a reduced offer if sufficient evidence is provided why a student's predicted grades may not reflect their potential.

The scheme is in its third year and has grown steadily since its pilot in 2006: 150 enrolled places were available in 2006, rising to 300 for 2007 entry and 500 for 2008 and thereafter. Named contacts within faculty admissions and within the schools and colleges have enabled this scheme to be implemented.

A new website and online application process has recently been launched for students applying for 2008 entry.

Nine schools and colleges accepted our invitation to be involved in the pilot year, this number grew to 16 in 2006/7 and there are now 23 schools and colleges participating in the scheme for 2008 entry.

**69 Compact students enrolled in 2006. 254 were enrolled in 2007 and we expect to reach the target of 500 enrolled places in 2008.**

The scheme has enabled us to form closer working relationships with guidance staff in local schools and colleges. Feedback through the scheme has helped to ensure that students receive better advice and apply for more appropriate courses. There were strong conversion rates amongst Compact applicants during the pilot year (46%, 48% and 63% for A Level, AVCE and BTEC applicants respectively). We are currently carrying out detailed analysis of data for 2007/8 but expect conversion and retention rates to be comparatively good. Feedback from enrolled Compact students about the scheme has been positive. The vast majority of those surveyed found the scheme helpful, particularly in terms of the enhanced advice and guidance and financial support offered. The scheme has helped us to identify care leavers and ensure they receive appropriate support from relevant departments where this is required (e.g. accommodation, student funding, health and counselling).

#### Careleavers

In 2006 the university was awarded the Frank Buttle Quality Mark in recognition of its commitment to careleavers. The university works with local authorities to ease the progression of careleavers to university and support them effectively whilst they are studying. Careleavers in any part of the United Kingdom are now eligible to join the Kingston University Compact Scheme (see 6c).

### **8. Milestones and Monitoring arrangements**

Because of our commitment to widening participation we already monitor progress as part of our Quality Enhancement Strategy (see Section 2). We will continue with this activity, which will be critical if we are to continue to reach our primary targets of year on year improvement against HEFCE Performance Indicators in the context of the new fees regime. The headline targets for the University as a whole will be complemented by a number of locally sensitive targets for courses, schools and faculties which are informed by the data sets described in Section 3.

Our proposals themselves have a number of inbuilt monitorable indicators and milestones, for example:

- meeting the objective of bursaries for all students eligible for state support;
- reaching our year-on-year targets for the increase in students receiving compact/scholarship awards;
- overall reaching our objective of utilising 25% of additional fee income;



- (providing the minimum statutory bursary for those entitled to it at all times);
- monitoring satisfaction with the marketing, administration and value of the various schemes described above.