

Widening Participation Strategic Assessment

June 2009

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Part 1: Widening Participation Strategy

1 Introduction

The University of Leicester is a leading teaching and research University with a strong track record of admitting the brightest and best, regardless of background. Named Britain's University of the Year Award for 2008-09 by the Times Higher Education, the University was commended by the panel of judges for our commitment to Widening Participation:

"Its continued commitment to, and real success in, widening access to students from non-traditional groups made it the stand-out choice in a very tough competition. On access Leicester is unique among its research intensive peers – it exceeds its benchmark for widening participation."

HESA performance indicators for widening participation evidence Leicester's commitment to widening participation. This Strategic Assessment is intended to demonstrate how we manage our commitment to widening participation, and illustrate the breadth and depth of this commitment and approach to ensuring that all can benefit from our activities.

2 The University's Strategic Vision to 2013

In our Strategic Vision to 2013 we describe our beliefs and values. These include, amongst others, statements which help contextualise the place that widening participation has within the University:

- *We believe that Higher Education is a power for good and makes a significant economic, intellectual and cultural contribution to the world.*
- *We believe that academic potential is the only legitimate means of differentiating between candidates when offering places.*
- *We believe that a diverse student and staff body make the University stronger.*
- *We believe that choosing to study a higher education course requires courage, commitment and effort. We undertake to provide first rate teaching and learning support to release potential in all our students.*
- *We believe we best serve our region by sharing with it the benefits of our internationally-significant research.*

These beliefs and values underpin the ambitions contained within the Strategic Vision. Within the Teaching section of the Strategic Vision, the University states how we will accomplish these ambitions.

We must therefore:

- *continue our broad-based admissions policies, selecting on merit alone, but always with a view to the potential for achievement*
- *support local, regional and national initiatives designed to improve access to higher education and engage in outreach activities in order to raise aspirations*
- *provide targeted financial assistance and study support to minimise barriers to entry and progression.*

The vision goes on to state that

The achievement of our vision will be monitored through the regular scrutiny of evidence relating to:

- *national performance indicators relating to widening participation.*

3 Widening Participation: Aims and Objectives

While the Strategic Vision states our position, belief and values, and how these relate to our teaching activities, it is helpful to state in clear terms in this document what specifically are our aims and objectives with regard to widening participation.

Aims

Our aims, with regard to widening participation are:

- To be, and to be seen as, open and accessible to all who have the potential to benefit from our programmes of study.
- To ensure that all those who have demonstrated this potential are given the support they need to succeed in their chosen programme of study.
- To lead on, and contribute to, initiatives which help to broaden the horizons of young people, raising both their aspirations and attainment, and ensure that progression routes are available which enable them to succeed in achieving their ambitions.

Objectives

In support of these aims, our objectives are:

- To build strong links with schools and colleges, locally, regionally and nationally, to ensure that the University of Leicester is known by potential applicants as a destination where they can fulfil their ambitions.
- To work proactively and positively with a range of local and national collaborators (such as Aimhigher, Excellence Hubs for the Gifted and Talented etc), to deliver high quality aspiration raising activities for young people.
- To provide robust and targeted student support, both through central advisory and welfare services and within academic departments to support strong student retention and remove barriers to success.
- To provide financial assistance through a targeted bursaries scheme, to help minimise the financial barriers faced by many students.
- To work with colleges, and local and national agencies (such as the Lifelong Learning Network), to develop strong progression routes into the University from a wide range of qualifications.
- To develop and offer a range of opportunities for professional and distance learning education.
- To embed work relating to outreach and retention both within the central support services of the University, and within the activities of academic departments and centres.

4 Widening Participation: Organisation and Management

a. Institutional level responsibilities: The committee and management structures

The University will be operating a new committee structure from August 2009. At institutional level, the areas which impact in the most clearly identifiable ways on widening participation strategies can be identified within a number of different areas, through both the new committee structure, and the current management structures.

i. Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee

Setting overall strategy and directing resources, this committee is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, and includes members of the senior management team together with external members. Two key committees, each with responsibilities relevant to the management of widening participation, report directly into this group:

- **Student Recruitment and Admissions Committee**

Policy for student recruitment, admissions and widening participation currently lies with the Student Recruitment and Admissions Committee. This committee is chaired by the Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor. The committee monitors all aspects of recruitment and admission of students to the University, sets the admissions policy, and guides the activities of the Admissions Office, centralised recruitment support offices, and academic departments.

- **Budgets and Resources Committee**

The key committee for providing the funding for all Universities activities, the Budgets and Resources Committee is also chaired by the Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor. This committee receives plans by all departments as part of the annual planning and budgeting round. Plans for each academic department contain specific reference to widening participation aims, objectives and plans, and these are reviewed by the central widening participation staff (see below) each year. In the new structure, plans will be collated and submitted collectively by each College. Each College will consult with the Head of Student Recruitment prior to the submission of their bids to the Budgets and Resources Committee.

Senior management responsibility for this area thus lies with the **Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor**.

Operational responsibility for the area lies with the **Director of Marketing and Communications**, also a member of the Student Recruitment and Admissions Committee, and of the Vice-Chancellors advisory committee, supported by:

- **Director of Admissions:** responsible for the operation of the undergraduate and postgraduate admissions offices, and for carrying out the admissions policies.
- **Head of Student Recruitment:** responsible for undergraduate UK student recruitment activities, including central marketing, school and college services, and widening participation activities.

In addition to the formal committee structure and managerial structure, a School and College Services Advisory Group (chaired by the Head of School and College Services) also meets regularly to steer the work of the School and College Service, and to help disseminate good practice amongst staff working on outreach across the University. The group's membership includes staff with a remit involving outreach work across many sections and departments of the University.

- ii. Academic Policy Committee

Combining the roles of the current Academic Review Committee and the Student Experience Enhancement Committee, this committee is chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Students. The committee is responsible for the Annual Monitoring and the Periodic Review processes for academic departments and certain central support services.

These processes are detailed in the Universities Code of Practice on Annual Monitoring and Periodic Departmental Review.

See www.le.ac.uk/ua/ac/quality/Codes/index.html

- **Annual monitoring** provides a process whereby Academic Departments review their admissions and recruitment, their student satisfaction, staff views, external feedback, student progression, assessment mechanisms etc.
- **Periodic departmental review** typically occurs for a department every five to six years, and provides for a more in-depth review of these areas. It will include external panel members, and the periodic departmental review also covers certain central support services such as the Library, IT Services and the Student Development and Support Services.

These review processes are compliant with the QAA Codes of Practice.

In addition, the committee will identify work themes for review and development. Recent themes which have been reviewed by the current Student Experience Enhancement Committee through specific working groups include the Personal Tutor system, improving assessment and feedback to students, and an in-depth review of the views of the first year student experience.

Senior management responsibility for this area thus lies with the **Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Students**.

Operational responsibility for the student experience and academic support is spread across a number of key staff in positions in different support services across the university. Key responsibility lies with the **Academic Registrar** who manages the Academic and Research Services, responsible for supporting academic quality and standards, governance and planning, and student-related administration. The management of the University's bursaries programme falls within this section.

In addition, operational responsibility lies with the **Head of Student Support and Development Service** who is responsible for overseeing the AccessAbility centre, the Careers Service, Counselling Service, Student Healthy Living, the Student learning centre, Student Support (mental wellbeing) and the Welfare Service – each of which is key to supporting our commitment to widening participation.

iii. Vice-Chancellor's Advisory Committee

Alongside the formal committee structure, the Vice-Chancellor has an advisory group, made up of the senior management team of the University. This group periodically monitors issues pertaining to widening participation in admissions and progression, underpinning the senior management team's commitment to this area.

b. Adult Learning, College Links and Curriculum Development for student progression: The Institute of Lifelong Learning

The Institute of Lifelong Learning encompasses a wide range of activities which support the widening participation aims of the University. These include the provision of adult learning at Vaughan College, The Richard Attenborough Centre and at the University of Leicester Northampton Centre. Also co-ordinated by the institute is the Colleges University of Leicester Network (CULN), fostering collaborations between 21 further and higher education institutions across the East and West Midlands, and the Skills for Sustainable Communities: Lifelong Learning Network (SSCLLN), who collaborate with many education providers regionally to facilitate learner progression through curriculum development.

c. Devolved Academic Departmental responsibilities

As well as providing strong central support for admissions, outreach, schools and college liaison and student retention, the University of Leicester also operates a devolved academic departmental/school structure in parallel. This is seen as key in embedding widening participation into all our plans and activities.

The majority of widening participation funding (the HEFCE allocation) flows directly to departments so each is responsible for setting its own widening participation aims and objectives (within the parameters of the overall University strategies). As has been stated above (section 3.a.iii), departmental annual plans are reviewed and approved by the Budgets and Resources Committee, while the delivery of academic provision is reviewed by the Academic Policy Committee through the Annual Review and Periodic Departmental Review processes (section 3.a.iv.). The structures, however, within each Department are many and varied, as are the plans, strategies and activities. This naturally reflects the diverse nature of different subjects and the differing recruitment and widening participation imperatives.

Lead responsibility for these plans currently lies with individual Heads of Department and Heads of School.

5 Fair Admissions

The University sets out its Admissions Policies in our Code of Practice for Admissions (last updated 17th February 2009).

See www.le.ac.uk/ua/ac/quality/Codes/index.html

The document sets out to describe the principles and practices that underpin the admissions process at the University of Leicester. It relates to all levels and modes of attendance and is informed by the recommendations for good practice as specified by the QAA and other government directives.

Three important principles are set out in the introduction to the document:

- The purpose of the admissions process is to recruit students who will be best able to benefit from the experience of their chosen course at the University of Leicester.
- The University is committed to ensuring a diverse student population. It embraces the principles of widening participation and welcomes applications from mature students.
- The University upholds the key principle that the policies and procedures governing the admissions process should be fair, transparent and implemented consistently. These policies embrace the University's commitment to equal opportunities. No applicant will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, social class, age, disability, colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins. Any conditions for entry to a course will only be imposed if justifiable on academic grounds.

The document then describes the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the admissions process, criteria for admissions, the responsibilities of the University relating to publicity, procedures, communication and relevant legislation, the duties of the applicant, and the appeals procedure. The Code of Practice can be found in full in the appendices.

Part 2: Widening Participation policy and practice

1 Outreach activities

The University has a broad range of aspiration and attainment raising programmes with schools within Leicestershire and in the near counties, many of them contributing to local Aimhigher Widening Participation targets in a highly successful, longstanding collaborative partnership.

a. School and College Services activities

Activities which are primarily led by School and College Services (with involvement in delivery from academic departments) include:

i. Aspiration raising, and Higher Education advice and guidance

Generic aspiration raising activities are developed and delivered by the central School and College Services team and include on-campus events such as University Experience Days, Introduction to HE Events and Enterprise Days, delivering enrichment to over 1500 beneficiaries. In addition, the School and College Services team supports IAG sessions in schools on HE transition, including advice on finance, researching university choices and careers. Staff also support the Aimhigher Roadshow.

ii. Aiming Higher for a Healthy Career

The University has led on a five year project (now in its final year), Aiming Higher for a Healthy Career, supported by Aimhigher sub-regionally and through the regional Healthcare strand. The project retains 36 from an original cohort of 70 targeted students who have received aspiration and attainment raising activities from year 9 and who have been supported through an e-mentoring programme by Leicester medical students.

iii. Routes into Languages

The University is engaged with the national Routes into Languages programme which will offer learning enrichment and e-mentoring to 200 students from the targeted WP cohort in city and county schools in the pilot phase.

iv. Gifted and Talented Programmes: Masterclasses, Taster Courses and Lectures for Schools

These achievement raising activities are supported by academic staff and include large-scale revision sessions for local year 13 students. Activity in this area is currently being brought within the activity provided under the East Midlands Excellence Hub for the Young, Gifted and Talented programme which has strong WP targets. Each year more than 2000 young people will benefit from these programmes.

The University's outreach work is supported by a team of 200+ Leicester Ambassadors, recruited and trained centrally. Ambassadors working on University Experience Days alone represent over 1500 hours of contact time with 500 young people in year 10 each year. Ambassadors who attended state schools are strongly encouraged to re-engage with their old schools, providing IAG and aspiration raising for learners, many of whom are from low participation neighbourhoods.

b. Summer Schools/Workshops

i. HEFCE or HEFCE/ESF funded residential schools

The University has delivered HEFCE or HEFCE/ESF funded residential schools since 2000, developing a robust programme of academic and skills development, together with a social programme designed to give young people a real taste of living away from home and independent learning. Training for mentors includes Safeguarding and the social exclusion agenda. Beneficiaries are drawn from across the East Midlands and are carefully selected to reach those young people who meet

HEFCE/Aimhigher targeting criteria. Approximately 120 students will benefit from this activity each year.

ii. Looked After Children

The University also delivers a collaborative Aimhigher Partnership non-residential school for Looked-After Children. In 2008, 14 hard- to- reach young people took part with support from carers and Social Workers. The University's work with Looked After Children is underpinned by engagement with the national Way Ahead Programme and the awarding of the Frank Buttle Trust Quality Mark in 2007/8.

iii. Space School

Since 1989, The Department of Physics and Astronomy have delivered an annual residential Space School, recruiting 60-80 able scientists from schools across the UK. The school is sponsored by the British National Space Centre and EADS-Astrium. Additional financial support is provided by the Ogden Trust. Financial support allows places to be sponsored, providing low cost or free places to young people from low-income backgrounds. Participants have the opportunity to gain CREST awards as part of the programme. The Department also supports participants of the East Midlands Space Academy, funded through EMDA (the East Midlands Development Agency).

c. Further outreach activities (primarily departmental lead):

Outreach activities are also organised and delivered by several academic departments and centres within the University. These activities include:

i. Chemistry for Our Future

The University is lead institution in a national project in collaboration with the Royal Society of Chemistry and other HEIs to raise aspirations and achievement in Chemistry. Nationally, across six regions and 35 universities, this project reaches 20,000 students, with approximately 8,000 of those students visiting the University of Leicester. Some work in this area is targeted at local Primary Schools, bringing 1500 year 5 and 6 students in contact with exciting science each year.

ii. GENIE Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL)

Staff in GENIE deliver high quality outreach programmes through specialist on-campus laboratory facilities for young learners in the East Midlands. Over 2000 young people benefited from hands-on science learning in 07/08. GENIE staff also contribute to residential programmes, including HEFCE and Aimhigher funded Summer Schools.

iii. Physics and Astronomy

The Department of Physics and Astronomy helps to train young people (Y12) in local schools for the International Space Olympics. The Department also works with a range of collaborators, such as the National Space Centre, to deliver a strong programme of outreach, including rocket workshops and other learning opportunities to support the National Curriculum in science.

d. Developing links with schools through students as role models

i. Initial Teacher Training

The School of Education engages with 131 primary and 65 secondary schools in Leicestershire, Rutland and Northamptonshire to provide ITT training placements for PGCE students.

ii. Student Associates Scheme (SAS)

The University are providers for the Training and Development Agency's Student Associates Scheme. The scheme is run centrally through the School and College Services team and in 2007/8, Over 70 undergraduates were selected and trained to undertake 15-day projects working in 23

strongly targeted schools in areas of deprivation. The scheme also prioritises shortage subjects in Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths, Languages and ICT.

iii. Undergraduate Ambassador Scheme (UAS)

The Departments of Maths, Geology, Engineering, Physics and i-Science offer an accredited module (UAS) to final year students for supported work in the classroom. The students are selected and trained in line with the Core Goals set out by the TDA for the SAS scheme. This year, 18 students will work in 10 schools and more schools are being encouraged to offer placements.

Both schemes allow able scientists to work with teaching professionals in a school setting and to pass on their subject enthusiasm to young people in the community. Participants are encouraged to consider teaching as a career.

The contact time represented by these two schemes is over 1000 full working days in school or about 7000 hours.

iv. Volunteering/CONTACT

CONTACT is one of the largest student-led associations in the University, with over 540 student members working on community projects. Last year, they contributed over 10,000 hours of time to projects, 4,000 of which were dedicated to work with young children. Literacy is a priority and both students and university staff are recruited on the *Right to Read* project in primary schools and volunteers also support a variety of after-school clubs in both Primary and Secondary schools, many of these in areas of deprivation.

e. Trust/Academy Partnerships and Governance support in schools

Leicester currently has one confirmed partnership with a Trust School, Ferrers Academy, Northamptonshire, an area where schools have good attainment at KS5 but low transition to HE. Ferrers is an 11-19 state school serving a wide rural area with a mixed demographic. The School has a Performing Arts Specialist Status and is the only Pathfinder school in the East Midlands.

The University is currently represented on the governing body of 15 local schools, both state and independent.

f. Continuing Professional Development in Schools

The University's School of Education, with support from academics across the University, offers a wide range of Continuing Professional Development opportunities for primary, secondary and post-16 teachers, including a number of Postgraduate certificate courses, covering both subject-specific areas (inc. History, Geography, Maths, Science and English), and general areas (inc. Mentoring and Coaching, Specific Learning Disabilities and Citizenship).

The University also hosts the East Midlands Science Learning Centre where CPD for teaching staff across the region is developed and delivered and the Association for Language Learning, UK's major subject association for teachers of foreign languages.

g. Raising Opportunities: A partnership with 11 research intensive universities in support of fair access

The University is currently a member of a group of 11 research intensive Universities working with the support of DIUS and HEFCE to develop schemes which encourage progression to research intensive universities from under-represented target groups. We are part of a new mutual recognition scheme, which enables students who are undertaking "compact" activity with one

partner university to have this activity recognised by other partner universities. We are also fully involved in work to scope a new broader compact arrangement, whereby students will be able to undertake common activity, with common outcomes and recognition by all partner universities. The University is taking the lead on the strand of the development work related to marketing and communications.

2 Adult Learning, Partnerships and Progression routes: The Institute of Lifelong Learning

Leicester Institute of Lifelong Learning (LILL) encompasses a range of activities including adult learning, professional development, research, and social, cultural and artistic events, as well as the counselling and psychotherapy programme. LILL aims to work closely with partners in the region, including further education colleges, private companies, public-sector organisations and voluntary bodies, to meet their education and training needs and to disseminate research findings. While all aspects of the institute's work underpin our commitment to widening participation in Higher Education, three particular aspects of the work are highlighted here.

a. Colleges–University of Leicester Network (CULN)

CULN was set up in 2001 by the Institute of Lifelong Learning at the University of Leicester. It represents one of the largest groups of Further and Higher Education Institutions in the central Midlands.

Comprising 18 Further Education Colleges and three Higher Education Institutions across the East and West Midlands, the Colleges-University of Leicester Network (CULN) exists to optimise collaboration between Further and Higher Education Institutions for the benefit of staff and learners. Specifically, the network:

- Fosters a cooperative relationship between its members, promoting greater collaboration, particularly in terms of the contemporary lifelong learning agenda and in widening access to higher education.
- Provides a network for sharing information about lifelong learning and other opportunities, enabling staff to work together in their respective fields.
- Creates further links with businesses and local communities, in order to promote fair access and progression to HE and FE, and assists in developing a regional lifelong learning network.

CULN currently supports 18 working groups, including curriculum-specific groups and more cross-cutting groups.

The network provides flexible mechanisms to enable FE and HE institutions in the region to collaborate on a variety of matters of common interest, such as foundation degrees, student activities, progression and research. The network develops by responding to changing needs and priorities so that working groups are formed and dissolved as required.

b. Adult learning provision

The institute offers a wide range of learning opportunities through centres in Leicester and Northampton, including HE Certificates, Foundation degrees, Bachelor's degrees and study by distance learning. In addition a variety of 10-credit courses are offered and a programme of non-accredited short courses and Saturday schools is available in a wide range of subjects.

These programmes make a significant contribution to the diversity of the student population at the University.

c. Skills for Sustainable Communities: Lifelong Learning Network (SSCLLN)

Established with funding from HEFCE and the Learning and Skills Council, this centre, based within the University's Institute for Lifelong Learning was set up to provide a focus on vocational routes into and through higher education. The network consists of Further and Higher Education partners and stakeholders across Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Lincolnshire and Rutland. The University of Leicester is the lead institution.

Some of the first activities of the Skills for Sustainable Communities Lifelong Learning Network are:

- Developing new courses such as Foundation Degrees
- Developing new modules for courses and bridging courses to make them more accessible for vocational learners and learners already in employment
- Developing Progression Agreements that are signed by HE and FE and set out conditions whereby learners can be given an enhanced offer of a place in HE
- Providing opportunities for FE and HE staff to work together and see how their curricula can be aligned more closely
- Mapping existing Information, Advice and Guidance arrangements (IAG) for learners to see where the gaps exist. This will be followed up by the development of a streamlined information system for learners
- Researching staff development needs and providing staff development activities, such as training and updating for Admissions Tutors on vocational qualifications

3. Measuring and evaluating success

a. Institutional measures of success

i. HEFCE performance indicators

The University regards the HEFCE performance indicators as key in monitoring our progress in the area of widening participation.

The performance indicators, which are published annually, are reviewed by the Vice-Chancellors Advisory Committee, and actions to be taken are passed on through the appropriate policy or managements structures, as outlined in 3 above. The latest indicators have been published in June 2009.

The University has met its WP benchmarks for entry from State Schools and for participation from NS-SEC classes 4-7 for each of the last four years (2004 to 2007 entry), and we have seen an actual increase in percentages from each of these groups. The data showing participation from low participation neighbourhoods is only in its current form (Polar 2) for the second year, and the University has seen its participation rise significantly from 6.6% to 7.9% – only narrowly missing its benchmark of 8.1%. These figures indicate strong successes in this area for the University, most particularly when compared with other leading research universities.

The latest benchmarks for retention show some positive indications. Progression from year of entry amongst students from low participation neighbourhoods is strong – substantially exceeding the benchmark set by HEFCE (non-continuation was just 5.3% against a benchmark of 7.4%). This would suggest that both the admissions processes and the support mechanisms in place for these students are working well. Similarly, the projected learning outcomes for the whole cohort also exceeded benchmark. However, the progression from year of entry amongst mature entrants is a

cause for concern with the University missing benchmarks set in this area. This issue has been identified in our OFFA agreement and work continues to address this area.

ii. Offa monitoring outcomes

In addition the Offa monitoring outcomes provide a mechanism for monitoring numbers of students in receipt of bursaries under the Offa scheme, and to assess the effectiveness of these in removing barriers for students.

In 2008, 37.4% of our eligible undergraduate population was in receipt of a bursary under the scheme, including 22% who came from households whose income was under the £17,910 threshold. Offa has noted that our take-up rate for bursaries was above the national rate of 90%, that our expenditure on financial support for lower income students was higher than predicted and so at this point they have no cause for concern over our position.

iii. Internal monitoring of student admissions and progression

Within the new committee structure, the Academic Policy Committee (and/or its relevant sub-committees) will receive reports about the admission and progression of key groups of students. These will include undergraduate students by:

- Socio-economic group
- State school / private education
- Entry qualification (including tariff achievement at entry)
- Bursary eligibility
- Ethnicity
- Disability

These reports will enable the committee to monitor our achievements in widening participation and to steer future developments in recruitment, admissions, retention and progression strategy, as well as providing departmental level data for use within the annual review process for academic departments.

In addition the University's Equal Opportunity Committee monitors retention specifically by ethnicity and disability, raising issues with the relevant departments and support services, in order to take steps to provide the necessary support.

iv. Local and Regional Aimhigher monitoring

All activities delivered in partnership with Aimhigher are monitored and evaluated through central Aimhigher reporting mechanisms. The five Aimhigher funded sub-regions in the East Midlands have formally agreed to fund the continuation of a regional tracking and monitoring service (previously developed and delivered through the regional Aimhigher funding stream).

Data analysis is conducted centrally by the funded regional centre and reporting is carried out through the local sub-regional Executive Group and through the Area Partnership Committee. Both forums have full representation from the HEIs in the sub-region. Information from regional and sub-regional data analysis is reported within the University through the Student Recruitment and Admissions Committee.

Reports show significant successes in progression amongst the Aimhigher cohort, both from pre- to post-16 education and on to Higher Education.

Aimhigher Leicester City and Leicestershire also use government progression measures to monitor and evaluate their success. These also show significant improvements in progression to Higher Education from the most deprived areas of the city and county. Amongst the 10% most deprived areas, progression increased by 40.5% between 2001 and 2008. From the most deprived 40% progression increased by 19.3% over the same period. There has also been success in increasing applications from groups with traditionally the lowest rate of participation in Higher Education – these increased from 16.6% to 20.5% between 2005 and 2007.

These are significant changes when compared with the average for all students and demonstrate the success of the activities in which the University of Leicester has been a key partner.

b. Departmental monitoring and evaluation

Beyond this top level data, each element of our work and practice is subject to a continual process of monitoring and review.

As has been described above, a key element in our widening participation strategy is to embed the processes for planning and delivery of widening participation within both the central services and academic departments.

i. Central outreach activities

All activities undertaken by the Student Recruitment Office are subject to review by the Student Recruitment Committee. The committee are provided with analysis of the activity undertaken, and proposals for the coming years activity for various aspects of their work, including Open days, Applicant visit days, schools outreach work and other areas as the committee requests.

In addition, an annual plan is prepared by the Student Recruitment Office as part of the annual budget planning round. This plan outlines broad office objectives and compares measurable outcomes against previously agreed targets. It is used to prepare the plan for the Division of Marketing and Communications, which in turn is used to inform the annual Corporate Services submission to the Budgets and Resources Committee.

ii. Monitoring of Student Support services

The work of the Student Support and Development Services are subject to review by the Academic Policy Committee. As has been outlined in Part 1 of this document, the Academic Policy Committee operates in practice through working groups exploring different themes relating to different areas of activity (section 4.a.iv.).

In addition, each section within the Student Support and Development Services will report on their activities annually as part of the annual budget planning round. These plans are then used to prepare the Student Support and Development Services plan, which informs the annual Corporate Services submission to Budgets and Resources Committee.

iii. Departmental activities

The process for annual planning and for academic review of academic departments is detailed in Part 1 of this document, which describes the work of the Budgets and Resources Committee in section 3.a.iii and the Academic Policy Committee in section 3.a.iv.

4. Institutional Milestones:

- **HEFCE Benchmarks:** To meet and exceed all main headline HEFCE bench-marks. For most benchmarks this is a matter of maintaining current levels, or making small improvements, however, the University recognises that retention amongst mature students is a particular cause for concern, and is aiming for step improvements towards its benchmarks in this area.
- **Bursary eligibility:** To continue to provide strong financial support to students from low income backgrounds. No targets are to be set for increasing the number of eligible students, though the University would aspire to see this increase, and would regard it as a cause for concern should the numbers of eligible students drop.
- **New reporting/monitoring mechanisms:** The University will put in place new monitoring mechanisms for the areas outlined above (section 3.a.iii. above) by December 2009, and it is expected that this monitoring process will help inform and steer new milestones and/or targets for the University.
- **Aimhigher achievements:** The University will continue to use local and regional Aimhigher measures of improvement in attainment and progression to HE as one measure of its own successes in the delivery of activities in support of the widening participation agenda.

5. Resources committed to the support of Widening Participation

For 2008-09 the University received £1,598,512 from HEFCE for Widening Participation and Teaching Enhancement and Student Success as part of the overall HEFCE teaching grant. We have also, through our OFFA Agreement, committed funds derived from tuition fees to student bursaries and to fund specific posts in support of widening participation and access. Our current OFFA agreement is appended to this document.

Beyond that specific agreement, the University does not hypothecate its HEFCE teaching or research grants, and funds are allocated to academic departments and central services in relation to the University's needs and priorities (including those outlined in this document).

Funding supporting areas relevant to widening participation can be found in four main areas:

a) **Student Recruitment: Schools and Colleges Liaison and Outreach**

Funds are made available for central initiatives for outreach (some of this is as agreed in our Offa Access Agreement), and these are combined with external sources (including Aimhigher and the Teacher Development Agency), to support a wide range of outreach projects. Further activities, such as our recruitment, and schools liaison activities, funded from the core funding of the University, make a significant contribution to supporting our widening participation aims.

In this area of activity, it is possible to approximate expenditure in support of widening participation. A team of 12 staff work in the area of student recruitment, schools and colleges liaison and outreach. Apportioning the amount of time each member spends on WP activity amounts to a total expenditure on staffing support for widening participation in this area of £217,000 in the current year.

Direct non-staff widening participation activity costs for the central team in the current year are expected to be in the region of £160,000. This includes costs for summer schools, University

Experience Days, Master classes, Student Associates, Leicester Ambassadors, special projects and more.

b) Central Support Services, supporting student retention

In addition, the University allocates funds to central services which provide extensive support for our students through welfare, pastoral and learning support initiatives. A small number of posts have been supported specifically through funds made available under the Access Agreement, but a much larger resource is used to support and enhance the student experience, and thus contributes towards the retention of students from widening participation backgrounds. Activities and staff which provide clear support for retention of students from all backgrounds include:

- Financial Advisors
- Information sources (print and web)
- Welfare Advisors
- Sub-wardens in University Accommodation
- Study Skills support
- Counselling
- Mental Health Advisor
- AccessAbility (support for students with disabilities)

In addition, services such as the Chaplaincy, the Student Union and the Careers Service also have a key role to play in successful retention.

It would be misleading to attempt to approximate expenditure specifically relating to widening participation within or across any of these services.

c) Departmental Support

The University allocates funding to academic departments to support their teaching and learning strategies, including support for their commitments to widening participation. Under the new structures, the funds will be allocated to each of four Colleges following a combined submission from each. These funds enable academic departments to undertake the activities outlined in their annual plans, including monitoring and supporting students from widening participation groups, initiating their own outreach programmes and contributing to programmes which are centrally organised.

It should be noted that there are Departments, Centres and Institutes within the University which undertake activities which support widening participation significantly beyond the norm, and who additionally bring in income from external agencies in support of this activity. The Institute for Life-Long Learning, whose activities are described in this document, bring in funding for, and incur expenditure on, a wide range of widening participation activities and initiatives, while our three Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning also bring in funds from national agencies in support of their extensive outreach programmes.

d) OFFA Access Agreement Student Support Bursaries

Funds are allocated under the Access Agreement to fund bursaries for less well off students. Our expenditure is reported to Offa annually.

Current Senior Staff and Managers with remits covering widening participation

- Vice-Chancellor: Professor Robert Burgess
- Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor: Professor Mark Thompson
- Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Students: Ms Christine Fife
- Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College of Science and Engineering: Professor Martin Barstow
- Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College of the College of Social Science: Professor Elizabeth Murphy
- Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Arts, Humanities and Law: Professor Douglas Tallack
- Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Medicine, Biological and Psychological Science: Professor David Wynford-Thomas
- Academic Registrar: Miss Kathy Williams
- Head of Student Support and Development Service: Mr Paul Jackson:
- Director of Lifelong Learning, Ms Jackie Dunne
- Director of Marketing and Communications: Mr Richard Taylor
- Director of Admissions: Mrs Jenny Dnes
- Head of Student Recruitment: Mr Jonathan Clapham
- Head of School and College Services: Ms Jean Baxter

25 June 2009

University of Leicester
Admissions Office

Code of Practice for Admissions

- 1. Introduction**
 - 2. Roles and responsibilities**
 - 3. Criteria for Selection**
 - 4. Responsibilities of the University**
 - 5. Duties of the applicant**
 - 6. Appeals against decisions**
-

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out to describe the principles and practices that underpin the admissions process at the University of Leicester. It relates to all levels and modes of attendance and is informed by the recommendations for good practice as specified by the QAA and other government directives.
- 1.2 The purpose of the admissions process is to recruit students who will be best able to benefit from the experience of their chosen course at the University of Leicester.
- 1.3 The University is committed to ensuring a diverse student population. It embraces the principles of widening participation and welcomes applications from mature students.
- 1.4 The University upholds the key principle that the policies and procedures governing the admissions process should be fair, transparent and implemented consistently. These policies embrace the University's commitment to equal opportunities. No applicant will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, social class, age, disability, colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins. Any conditions for entry to a course will only be imposed if justifiable on academic grounds.
- 1.5 The University's admissions procedures operate within the legal framework of the University's ordinances and the relevant legislation. This includes the Race Relations Amendment Act, the Sex Discrimination Act, and the Disability Discrimination Act.
- 1.6 The University ensures that admissions decisions are made by those members of staff who are equipped to make such judgements.

2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Senate

The authority to regulate the admission of persons to courses of study in the University, subject to the Ordinances of the University, is invested in the Senate under Statute 19.8.

2.2 Heads of Departments/Schools and admissions tutors

2.2.1 This authority is devolved through Faculty Boards and Heads of Departments/Schools, to a nominated member of the academic staff who takes on the role of admissions tutor.

The admissions tutor needs to:

- be aware of the courses for which he/she has responsibility;
- be familiar with the policies and procedures governing the admissions process;
- understand the intake targets which provide the context for admissions decisions;
- be adequately equipped with the necessary knowledge about the relevant qualifications framework;
- be aware of the potential bias that can arise from cultural difference.

For research programmes, postgraduate tutors have the additional responsibility of seeking appropriate supervisors and theses committee members to ensure that the best students are recruited and the most appropriate committees are constituted. They are also responsible for building and maintaining a critical mass of doctoral students to effectively conduct research within the department. In some cases, the postgraduate tutor's role may be delegated to a member of staff responsible for admissions to research programmes.

2.2.2 Exceptionally, the admissions tutor may delegate their responsibility to an appropriate member of the non academic staff. In these circumstances, selection criteria are set up with the Head of Department/School which include not only the expected level of qualifications upon entry, but also other qualitative criteria that may influence a selection decision. Any decisions that need to be made outside these criteria are referred back to the admissions tutor.

2.3 Student Recruitment and Admissions Committee

The Student Recruitment and Admission Committee is chaired by the pro Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for admissions and comprises the Deans or their representatives and key officers in corporate services who are responsible for student recruitment and admissions. Its remit is to advise Policy and Strategy Committee on recruitment and admissions policies, strategies and objectives and to monitor their implementation.

2.4 Director of Admissions

2.4.1 The Director of Admissions is responsible for ensuring that admissions are conducted in a fair and equitable manner and for the management of the admissions process. This includes checking that applicants at least meet the minimum requirements for matriculation, in addition to the entry requirements for a particular course. He/she is also responsible for communicating any decisions to applicants in a timely, appropriate and accurate manner.

- 2.4.2 The Director of Admissions should provide clear operational procedures, which define the roles of staff involved in the admissions process and lay down the framework for a transparent and fair admissions process.
- 2.4.3 The Director of Admissions should provide appropriate advice and training for admissions tutors who are new to the role. He/she should also give regular updates to all admissions tutors concerning changes to the relevant qualifications and/or the legislative frameworks.
- 2.4.4 The Director of Admissions will advise an admissions tutor if:
- an offer has been made to an applicant who is not expected to reach the established criteria;
 - an offer has not been made to an applicant who is expected to reach the established criteria.
- 2.4.5 If the Head of Department/School or the Admissions tutor disagrees with any decision made the Director of Admissions, then the matter will be referred to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for admissions.
- 2.4.6 The Director of Admissions should provide admissions tutors with application statistics on a regular basis to monitor overall progress in meeting recruitment targets.

3. Criteria for Admission

- 3.1 Every student will at least meet the requirements for matriculation, as laid down in the University regulations. Exceptionally, a case can be made for special matriculation, which must be agreed by the Pro Vice Chancellor with responsibility for admissions for undergraduate courses, and the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies, for postgraduate courses.

Specific requirements for individual courses are laid out in the University prospectuses.

- For undergraduate courses, the University accepts a wide range of qualifications, including A levels, Diplomas, International, European and Welsh Baccalaureates, BTEC, OCR, Access to HE and other qualifications that may be approved from time to time.
 - For postgraduate courses, the University requires a good first degree, normally upper second class honours or above or an equivalent qualification.
- 3.2 The University also accepts a wide range of international qualifications. All applicants whose first language is not English and who have not lived in a country where the first language is English must demonstrate a satisfactory standard of written and spoken English by obtaining the necessary level in an appropriate qualification (e.g. IELTS or TOEFL).
- 3.3 For some subjects (eg Medicine and the PGCE) and for research programmes, the offer of a place may be dependant upon a satisfactory performance at interview. In addition, for some subjects there is a requirement to sit an admissions test, the results of which will influence the selection process.
- 3.4 In the case of applications to some courses that carry professional recognition, the decision to make an offer will also be informed by the relevant professional body's requirements for pre-registration screening (eg Fitness to Practice).
- 3.5 If the nature of the course involves the student coming into contact with children and/or vulnerable adults, the offer of a place will be subject to the satisfactory completion of a check with the Criminal Records Bureau.

- 3.6 Admission for some applicants may be dependant upon the applicant having met Home Office requirements to study in the UK.
- 3.7 When selecting between applicants with broadly similar qualifications, admissions tutors consider other indicators of merit and potential to succeed, such as evidence of personal initiative or team working abilities. In order to make such judgments, admissions tutors are made aware of the impact of cultural diversity and the variation of opportunities available to applicants to demonstrate such potential.

For research programmes, postgraduate tutors also consider the merits and feasibility of the project that it is being proposed by the applicant and the availability of an appropriate supervisor.

- 3.8 If an applicant declares a criminal record, the University will request further information. In certain circumstances, this information may influence the decision to offer a place on a course or a place in University accommodation.
- 3.9 Applicants who request exemption from part of a course on the basis of prior learning must provide suitable evidence to support their request. Such prior learning can be certified or experiential.

4. Responsibilities of the University

- 4.1 The University seeks to ensure that its promotional activities, literature and website are accurate, relevant, and allow applicants to make an informed choice about both the University and the relevant course. In the case of undergraduate courses, the University maintains detailed and accurate information on the UCAS database, including entry profiles.
- 4.2 The University maintains clearly documented procedures that govern the admissions process. Applications are dealt with promptly, allowing time for the collection of further information, if required, and decisions are communicated to applicants as soon as possible. Any offer of a place will specify the level of fee to be paid. The University complies with Home Office guidelines on the assessment of an applicant's fee status. For overseas students, the outcome of this assessment is explained in the letter which offers a place.
- 4.3 Details of registration and induction are sent once any conditions are met. These include full details of the arrangements for arrival at the University.
- 4.4 All applications are dealt with confidentially and are only seen by those staff who make decisions or administer the admissions process.
- 4.5 All applications received by the relevant deadline will be given equal consideration. Late applications will also be considered, depending upon the availability of places at that time.
- 4.6 The University provides appropriate feedback to unsuccessful applicants on request.
- 4.7 The University aims to provide the range of provision as advertised in promotional literature. However, if there are any significant changes after an offer is made, these will be communicated to applicants promptly and the options available will be explained.
- 4.8 The University complies with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. It also undertakes to make reasonable adjustments in order to ensure that students who have declared a disability can effectively pursue their studies.

- 4.9 The University complies with the requirements of Data Protection Act (1998) and its own data protection policy, retaining an applicant's details as appropriate.
- 4.10 The University undertakes to review the policies and procedures which relate to the admissions process on a regular basis, at least once every five years.

5. Duties of the applicant

- 5.1 If the applicant is offered and accepts an unconditional place on a course, they are responsible for the payment of the relevant tuition fee. Arrangements can be made to invoice a third party, but this does not excuse the applicant from liability for the tuition fee. Tuition fees can be paid by instalments, in accordance with the relevant scheme laid down by the Finance Office.
- 5.2 All applicants undertake to provide true and accurate information to support their application. If an application is found to include inaccurate or fraudulent information, after an offer is made and before the applicant registers, the offer will be withdrawn immediately. If an application is found to include inaccurate or fraudulent information, after the applicant registers, their place on the course will be terminated and any fees paid will not be refunded.
- 5.3 Applicants undertake to allow any data they supply to be shared with staff involved in making selection decisions, and to provide the University with the information needed to compile student records.
- 5.4 Applicants should inform the University of any change of circumstance during the period of application (eg change of address).
- 5.5 Applicants who need to obtain appropriate clearance before registering on a course are responsible for obtaining that clearance.
- 5.6 If an applicant has a criminal record, they are obliged to declare this fact on their application form. The University will ask for further information, as appropriate (see 3.8 above).
- 5.7 Applicants with a disability which may affect their participation in their chosen course of study are advised to declare this in their application. Suitable adjustments and support arrangements can then be put in place, as appropriate.

6. Appeals against decisions

- 6.1 The University endeavours to conduct a fair and transparent admissions process. However, there may be occasions where an applicant wishes to request that a decision be reconsidered. The grounds for an appeal are as follows:
- there has been a procedural irregularity;
 - new information emerges, which was not available at the time of application;
 - there is evidence of bias or prejudice.
- 6.2 In the first instance, the applicant is encouraged to contact the relevant admissions tutor or the Director of Admissions.
- 6.3 If the applicant is not satisfied with the outcome of the initial enquiry and wishes to pursue the matter further, he/she should write to the Director of Admissions, specifying their concerns, and including any relevant supporting documentation. The Director of Admissions will endeavour to seek a satisfactory solution to the matter by undertaking a prompt investigation. The applicant should expect to receive a written response within two weeks.

- 6.4 If the applicant is not satisfied with the outcome, they may present an appeal, in writing, to the Pro-Vice Chancellor with responsibility for admissions who will conduct a further investigation. The outcome of this review will be considered final.

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 2006) is 6753. 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 performs against its benchmark as follows:

	Leicester	Benchmark (locally adjusted where applicable)
Young students from state schools	87.9%	81.4%
Young students from classes 4, 5, 6, 7	25.3%	24.6%
Young students from low participation neighbourhoods	11.3%	11.1%
Projected learning outcomes: Degree Non-continuation (% not in HE after one year): Low participation neighbourhoods	86.4%	84.2%
Other neighbourhoods	6.9%	6.2%
	4.6%	4.9%

Performance is therefore strong in relation to benchmarks, but in relation to the retention of students from low participation neighbourhoods relative to their peer group from other neighbourhoods, improvement is required, and this is informing the ongoing development of the University's pastoral and learner support systems.

3. Prior to the introduction of variable fees, 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 original calculations for bursary payments were based on this figure, providing both support to those with the lowest incomes, and a lower level of assistance to those in the low to middle income group, who we believed might 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 (Appendix A).

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, funding for which has now been extended to 2011. 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. Prior to the introduction of variable fees, the University had no existing bursary arrangements for home undergraduates, and therefore no infrastructure was in place to support new schemes. The additional fee income therefore has to provide for relevant administrative support (see paragraph 14).

Scope of access agreement and intended fee levels

7. This access agreement relates in the main to full-time students. It is the University's 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.
8. The University charged £3000 to all undergraduate students entering its full-time programmes in 2006/07, other than to those accepted for 2005 who request a deferral before 1 August 2005. It also charged £3000 to students registered for the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). The University is applying only such increases to this fee as are approved by the Government to take account of inflation. The fees to be charged for each whole programme are set out in the University Prospectus and on the University website, and are notified to each applicant (see 18 to 21 below).

Utilisation of additional fees to support new access measures

9. The University provides OFFA with estimates of its investments in access measures arising from the availability of additional fee income, and provides in this agreement an indication of the sums to be made available for specific support measures.
10. The University subscribes to the HEBSS bursary scheme for the purpose of providing all students qualifying for full state support with an annual bursary of the difference between the maximum Maintenance Grant and the annual tuition fee.
11. In addition to this minimum amount, the University is providing annual cash bursaries to full time undergraduate and PGCE students on a sliding scale ranging from £1000 to £100 depending on family income.
12. The University recognises that financial deterrents to progression into HE are not just associated with variable fees or full-time study. It has therefore created from additional fee income an annual fund 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 is managed by its Welfare Service alongside other hardship funds.
13. The bursary schemes and enhanced welfare support are only 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.

14. As the University did not offer bursaries to undergraduates from the UK prior to the introduction of variable fees, it did not have an administrative infrastructure to support the arrangements set out above. It therefore now utilises additional fee income to pay for a bursary manager and assistant in order to ensure that disbursement arrangements are undertaken promptly, fairly and accurately
15. In order to assist with student retention, the additional fee income also funds one financial adviser (in addition to an existing post); this adviser has 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.
16. The University is utilising fee income to enhance the support to registered students provided by its Student Support and Development Centre, with the aim both of providing focused learner support to students from disadvantaged backgrounds to ease the transition to HE and to enhance the prospects of academic success and also of enhancing welfare and pastoral care to benefit this group.
17. Details of current bursary and student financial support arrangements derived from variable fees are set out in Appendix B to this Agreement.

Provision of information to students

18. The University refers to this access agreement in its Prospectus. There is a fees website so that developments can be broadcast without delay, and the access agreement is published on this site.
19. Each applicant is 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 emphasises the long-term aspects of loan management (i.e. after graduation), provides information about the potential economic benefits of degree-level study.
20. The University's Prospectus includes a substantial section on fees and support, with illustrative examples of income and costs.
21. In the run up to 2006, returning students were periodically reminded that they were liable for higher fees, and the University continues to send specific reminders to applicants about bursary entitlements and application procedures.

Outreach work

22. The University's outreach work is conducted both on its own behalf and through Aimhigher. The current focus of local post-16 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. Activity in the pre 16 sector is led through the School and College Services team which provides a central focus for managing university wide activity. The team oversees targeting, tracking and monitoring, child protection and risk assessment issues and has responsibility for the training programmes which enable both undergraduate and postgraduate students to work alongside young people on outreach programmes.
23. The University supports a range of outreach activities, including Summer Schools, mentoring programmes, master classes, academic lectures for schools, visits and presentations. 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.

24. The University is also engaged in a number of long-term initiatives to promote progression into HE by disadvantaged groups. Alongside the collaborative partnership work undertaken through sub-regional Aimhigher, the university is also engaged in regional partnerships to support targeted work for gifted and talented students from the widening participation cohort through the Excellence Hub and is engaged with East Midlands Routes into Languages. In addition, the university is a provider of the Training and Development Agency Student Associates Scheme. The University wishes to have the capacity to manage a wider range of projects and to undertake the necessary longitudinal research, and is therefore using a proportion of variable fee income to broaden its own capacity for outreach.
25. Our research also tells us that students from local schools and colleges who enter the University are already more likely to be from lower socio-economic groups than those coming from outside the region. In recognition of this pattern, the University has strengthened its schools and colleges liaison team to support progression from the local area. Around forty schools and colleges have been targeted, to which a range of services are provided, including student finance workshops and guidance on application procedures.
26. The University is utilising CULN (see 22 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 30-50 students a year to University science courses), a dedicated Chemistry Year 0 programme is now offered by the University itself, and other 1+3 and other guaranteed pathways are planned.
27. Details of current outreach costs supported by variable fees are set out in Appendix B to this Agreement.

Milestones

28. 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.

29. During the period up to 2011, 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:

/continued.....

- 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

30. 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.

31. Monitoring will be undertaken by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Resources) as Chair of the Admissions and Recruitment Advisory Committee, reporting to the Policy and Strategy Committee.

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.

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

ACCESS AGREEMENT 2006/07 TO 20010/11

BURSARY AND STUDENT SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS 2008/09

The University subscribes to the HEBSS bursary scheme for the purpose of providing all students qualifying for full state support with an annual bursary of the difference between the maximum Maintenance Grant and the annual tuition fee. In 2008/09, this means that all students with a residual household income of £25,000 or less will receive an annual bursary of £310.

In addition to this minimum amount, the University is also providing annual cash bursaries to full time undergraduate and PGCE students on a sliding scale ranging from £1,000 to £100 depending on residual household income. In 2008/09, total bursary entitlements will be:

Household income up to £20,000:	£1,310*
Household income from £20,001 to £25,000:	£1,010*
Household income: from £25,001 to £30,000	£400
Household income from £30,001 to £35,000	£250
Household income from £35,001 to £40,000	£100

*including £310 minimum bursary

The University will also provide from its variable fee income annual additional support to students as follows:

Additional Hardship Fund	£70,000
Additional Financial Advisor	£36,000
Additional learner/pastoral support	£40,000
Bursary administration and advice	£55,000

Outreach work

The total cost of outreach work in schools, colleges funded by variable fee income in 2008/09 will be approximately £200,000, including staff and activity costs.