

Lancaster University Access Agreement

1. Introduction

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

2. Track record on widening participation

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

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

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

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

Lancaster's strengths and contribution to past and present widening participation activity include: co-ordination of the Lancashire Adult Compact, and the action research programme, Families And Higher Education Decision-making. We have played a lead role in undertaking projects with partners in Aimhigher Lancashire reaching out to work-based learners and young people from excluded groups and promoting vocational progression routes into higher education; we have also developed a family focused staff development programme to disseminate our own and others' good practice and develop new materials for use by all FECs and HEIs throughout Lancashire.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. Widening participation action plan

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

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

4. Fees

Consistently rated as one of the top UK universities for teaching and research, Lancaster will charge all full time UK/EU undergraduate students a fee of £3,290* in 2010, rising annually with inflation. Fees for part time study are charged at a pro-rata full time rate.

* The level of fees may be uplifted each year in line with the inflationary increases announced by the Government.

5. Fee income to be spent on access measures

We estimate that we will spend £2,314,255 of annual fee income on access measures.

6. Financial Support – University Award scheme

Award information in this section relates to 2010* entry. For current fee and financial award information please see: www.lancs.ac.uk/ugfinance/

With monies received from additional fee income we have put together an innovative financial award package for selected UK full time students, enabling those from lower income families and those achieving excellent academic results to receive substantial extra funding from the University. This is additional to any Government (statutory) support. Based on an expected cohort of 2,500 students and the current socio-economic profile, they will consist of:

- **Lancaster Bursary:**

There will be an estimated 700 awards to UK full time students of £1,000 where household income is below £34,000. The Lancaster Bursary award **includes** any statutory minimum bursary due. The value of the statutory minimum bursary is 10% of the annual full fee rate. All Universities are obliged to pay UK full time students paying full fees a statutory minimum bursary.

Providing there has been a means tested application for Government funding AND consent to share income data by both the student and parent(s) we will use income data supplied from the Student Loan Company to the University to assess any bursary entitlement.

- **Lancaster Scholarship:**

There will be an estimated 400 awards of £1,000 per annum available across all subjects for UK full time students who make the University their firm UCAS choice and meet the scholarship grade criteria for their course. Continued payment of this award after entry is subject to satisfactory academic performance.

Part time students

Additional University support will also be available to UK part time students receiving the maximum Government (statutory) support package. A Part Time Additional Fee Support Scheme (PTAFSS) for eligible students will be provided through the Access to Learning Fund. (ALF)

7. Provision of information to students

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

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

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

Information on financial support is already available on the Student Based Services website indicated above. It is updated as new details, including fee levels, become available. In addition there are FAQ resources for students. The annual prospectus includes comprehensive sections on student finance, outlining our fees and financial support package, together with information on Government (statutory) support. It also includes information about living costs, to help with budgeting. Links to other web information are also given. Hard copy leaflets summarising the support package are available to applicants at all stages. Applicants will also receive information at the time an offer is made to them by the Undergraduate Admissions Office. This information includes links to the amount of fees that the institution will charge for the course.

8. Outreach activities

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

Lancaster University Volunteer Unit (LUVU) Schools Partnership (£46,000): a community outreach programme delivered in partnership with 18 primary and 9 secondary schools in the Lancaster, Morecambe, Blackpool and surrounding areas for approximately 2000 pupils from low socio-economic and low participation areas. Activity will build on initiatives from 2006/07:

- Campus-based curriculum days for year 10 students
- Supporting 6th form students with leadership training and helping them create and run social businesses. Additional match funding from the charity "v" has expanded the scope of this work.
- Significant student placement in WP schools to assist with basic skills
- Creation of University credit bearing activity for students to provide subject expertise to needy schools. Students develop teaching resources for projects and lead specialist teaching sessions

Developments will include expansion of the University credit bearing scheme to other subject areas and planned expansion of the social business activity in partnership with Burnley Football Club which will target "difficult to reach" young people.

In general the activity will provide access to university staff, students, resources and facilities, promote higher education and active citizenship, enhance confidence, increase pupil and teacher awareness and knowledge of higher education, and provide voluntary work opportunities for over 100 Lancaster undergraduates to enhance their employability. The activity will extend the existing portfolio of LUVU community based activities, complement Aimhigher activities and respond to an identified need discussed with local schools.

Masterclasses and Saturday Schools (£60,000): a curriculum enhancement activity for pupils in years 11 - 13 designed to enrich their school and further education curricula, promote progression to higher education and raise awareness of higher educational opportunities at Lancaster and elsewhere. The 06/07 target of 300 pupils from low socio-economic groups and low participation areas was comfortably exceeded and the plan in future years is to at least double this number. The activities involve significant input from academic departments and will be designed to tie directly into the school curriculum while still raising aspirations about higher education amongst the students. Schools will be targeted according to need. This activity will enhance our existing generic HE awareness-raising activities and provide access to university staff, students, resources and campus facilities. Where possible it will involve local delivery.

Gifted, Talented and Disadvantaged (£50,000): an activity to encourage and develop bright young people who might otherwise not consider higher education. Lancaster was recently appointed leader of the NW Excellence Hub, which is a collaboration including the Universities of Liverpool and Manchester, to support the development of young people in the North West who are classed by their teachers as gifted and talented.

This additional funding will be provided by the University to strengthen specific targeting on disadvantaged young people. Indeed a key aspect of the NW Excellence Hub will be its determination to seek out, and to support, giftedness and talent among children who come from poorer homes and homes which have no tradition of higher education. The Hub will provide free or subsidised courses to around 550 disadvantaged youngsters who will take up to at least a third of the places available. There will be summer schools, masterclasses with academics, weekend events and online learning. Courses will take place not just at the three universities in the Hub but also at outside organisations such as museums and art galleries, orchestras and football clubs.

Innovative developments will include awarding credit for university modules taken by the youngsters, and developing parent and children learning so the families do not feel left out of their offspring's education.

BME Community Outreach (£94,000): a series of school, college and community based activities focused on regional disadvantaged minority ethnic students. It is designed to encourage applications by raising awareness of academic opportunities, and increasing the knowledge of applicants and their families about the welfare and student support available at Lancaster. Following detailed research in 06/07 into the most effective means of engagement the following activities are planned for 07/08:

- Continue to focus on work with target schools and colleges in East Lancashire, Merseyside and Greater Manchester. This will provide a wide and coherent variety of activities, enrichment programmes and support the decision-making and application process together with a level of post-entry support and services.
- Address the issue of poor daily transport between East Lancashire and the University by piloting a subsidised regular bus service.

- Foster a limited number of special partnerships with particular schools such as the new Burnley 6th Form Centre.
- Pilot the development of student ambassadors in other major UK cities including with 5 London Colleges

9. Milestones

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

Baseline data

Target group	Baseline %	Source of information
1. Disabled students	4.8	Lancaster University Student Information (LUSI) system, November 2003; refers to 2003 entrants
2. Minority ethnic students	4.6	LUSI, November 2003; refers to 2003 entrants
3. Students from NS-SEC classes 4 – 7	19	HESA, October 2004; refers to 2002 entrants
4. Students from state schools	90.7	HESA, October 2004; refers to 2002 entrants
5. Mature students	6.8	LUSI, November 2003; refers to 2003 entrants

Groups 1 – 4 show data for young students; all groups are full-time

Objectives

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

Milestones

Target group	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
Disabled students	7.2	7.2	7.2	7.2	7.2	7.2
Minority ethnic students	4.6	4.9	5.4	6.1	7	7.8
Students from NS-SEC groups 4-7	19	20	21	22	24	26
Students from state schools	90.7	90.7	90.7	90.7	90.7	90.7
Mature students	6.8	6.8	6.8	7	7	7.5

10. Institutional monitoring arrangements

Monitoring will be carried out by the OFFA Review Working Group, which reports to the Vice Chancellor via the University Management Advisory Group (UMAG). It will consist of an outline report on progress against objectives and milestones containing quantitative data about target groups and a summary of progress on relevant outreach activities. The Committee will advise on any adjustments to be made to the access agreement to enable targets to be met.

Financial monitoring of bursaries, scholarships and outreach activities will also be carried out by this group.