



**Manchester
Metropolitan
University**

A Commitment to Inclusion

**An Agreement with the Office for
Fair Access (OFFA)
(Revised)**

September 2009

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A Commitment for Social Inclusion

Access Agreement with the Office for Fair Access

1. Background

Manchester Metropolitan University is a successful modern institution with an outstanding record of achievement in its teaching programmes, its research activities and in the high quality of the learning experiences provided for its students. External scrutiny in the form of subject assessment, quality audit, collaborative audit, and accreditation by professional bodies confirm these qualities. It is also an institution which is proud of its long tradition of providing successful routes into Higher Education for those who come from backgrounds without a strong tradition of entry to university. Indeed, the University has a longstanding commitment of dedication to the success of all with the ability and motivation to benefit.

It achieves that goal by employing a diverse range of access arrangements encompassing full-time, part-time, distance learning and mixed modes of study. Additionally, access to programmes is enriched through a comprehensive network of specific access courses that are fully integrated with higher diplomas and degree programmes to which successful students can progress.

The enrolled student population of the Institution reflects our dedication to meeting the needs of all sections of society and our commitment to equal opportunities. Whilst 80% of those are admitted onto undergraduate degrees on the basis of their 'A' level, 'A' level equivalent or higher qualifications, a further 20% enter with foundation, access or other qualifications. Over 20% study as part-time students; the ratio of male to female students is 40:60; mature students number over 50%; over 94% of our students come from state schools; and almost 15%¹ come from what are nationally regarded as areas having low participation rates in higher education and over 35% from social classes 4 to 7. Hence the University has a diverse population that enriches the learning experience provided for all students. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the Institution already performs on or above the majority of the national inclusion benchmarks set by the Higher Education Funding Council for England based on its participation statistics.

The University, however, is not complacent about the excellence of its record of social inclusion and is particularly concerned to ensure that students having the greatest financial need are not deterred from entering higher education. The University's contribution to this will be by means of a cash grant (or 'bursary'). It has also recently approved and begun implementation of a new and more comprehensive widening participation strategy and this Agreement is revised to take account of that further step forward.

This agreement gives details of what the bursary will amount to for individual students and introduces additional milestones for outreach activity to mark its progress.

¹ As measured by the new POLAR2 method.

2. The Context for this Agreement

The Higher Education Act 2004 gave universities in England the right with effect from the commencement of academic year 2006/07 to introduce tuition fees above the standard level for full-time undergraduate courses. The same Act established the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) to ensure that the introduction of variable tuition fees does not have a detrimental impact on the level of participation by students who are from groups that are under-represented in higher education.

Every university that elects to levy tuition fees above the standard level must have an Agreement approved by OFFA that sets out how it will safeguard and promote access to its courses, particularly for those students from low income groups, through the use of bursaries, other financial support and outreach activities. This document comprises a revised Access Agreement for the Manchester Metropolitan University and takes effect for those students who commence programmes of study in 2010/11, to tie in with the end of the original access agreement timescale.

This Agreement sets out which of the University's courses will be subject to variable fees, its approach to the determination of student eligibility for bursaries, and what such eligibility will mean in financial terms to students who meet the requirements.

3. Courses falling within the scope of the Agreement

University programmes to which this Agreement shall apply are those for which the University receives income from the Higher Education Funding Council for England or the Teacher Training Agency, which lead to the following awards and attract variable fees.

- all full-time undergraduate degree programmes (including their associated foundation years);
- all full-time foundation degree programmes;
- all full-time programmes that lead to a higher national diploma (Edexcel award), a diploma of higher education or a certificate of higher education;
- programmes that lead to a post-graduate certificate of education;
- programmes that lead to a professional graduate certificate.

Details of the actual subjects which can be studied and which lead to these awards can be found in the University's current prospectus (available on application or via on-line access at <http://www.mmu.ac.uk/courses>).

4. Tuition Fee Limits: Fees for 2010/11

UK and EU students enrolled on full-time undergraduate programmes delivered by and leading to an award of the University covered in the scoping statement in paragraph 3 above will have fees set at either the enhanced fee of £3,290 p.a. or at the Standard Fee of £1,310 p.a. for 2010/11.

5. Bursaries and other financial support available to students

The University will commit approximately one-third of its additional fee income to make available cash bursaries to students and to enhance its outreach arrangements, thereby enabling students to offset the tuition and related costs incurred by full-time attendance at University; this support will be especially targeted at students from the most financially disadvantaged backgrounds.

5.1 Assessment for Eligibility

The University will employ the financial needs assessment undertaken by the Student Loans Company (SLC) for each eligible full time/sandwich Undergraduate/PGCE self funding student with a UK student support number as the basis of making a determination of the level of a bursary award it will make available to an individual student.

Bursaries will only be paid to eligible students if they are in attendance at the University on the relevant payment dates.

5.2 The Value of Bursaries for 2010/11

- i. Two levels of bursary, parental income related, will be offered to students:

£1,025	for parental income	< £21,000
£475	for parental income	£21,001-£40,000

- ii. Additional bursaries of £200 for students returning to MMU to progress to Year 2 (only) of full-time study will be available for those who received the higher bursary in their first year (2009/10 session).
- iii. Outreach activity will be reported to OFFA, to a maximum of £268,700, emanating from the implementation of MMU's revised Widening Participation strategy.

6. Students on Collaborative Programmes

The University has collaboration arrangements with a number of further education and sixth-form colleges whereby students can study part of their University course in another location. These arrangements provide an important contribution to the institution's commitment to access and allow such students to progress into the University in a staged way. The fees set in the colleges will not normally exceed those that would apply were the student to take the same programme at the University and, in some cases, may be lower. Access to University bursaries for such students will accord with that for equivalent students who study at the University.

7. Provision of Further Information about Tuition Fees and Bursaries

Information about tuition fees for University courses is contained in the published prospectus, copies of which (in various formats) are available by contacting the University by telephone (0161 247 1055), by email (prospectus@mmu.ac.uk) or by writing to: Manchester Metropolitan University, All Saints, Manchester, M15 6BH.

The most up to date reference source is always the electronic document, which can be located at <http://www.mmu.ac.uk/courses>.

Up to date bursaries and their value can be found at: <http://www.finance.mmu.ac.uk/students>, or by contacting Financial & Legal Services by email instbursary@mmu.ac.uk or by telephoning 0161 247 1769.

Current information about the University's scheme will also be provided to the Student Loans Company and Local Education Authorities. Both sources can be accessed by prospective students to check their possible eligibility for university bursaries.

Bursary information is posted under the "Financial Support" link which can be accessed by students when enrolling online, and will also be displayed on electronic screens located at various points throughout the University. MMU will again use any available and appropriate mechanisms to reach students through partner organisations, such as Aimhigher Greater Manchester.

The University produces a number of printed publications that are intended to advise students on financial matters including guidance on how to estimate general living costs associated with their period at the University. The overall aim is to ensure that a prospective student is able to estimate the total aggregated costs associated with their decision to attend the University and, additionally, to have information about other potential sources of financial aid that may be available beyond any University bursary.

The University will continue to strive to find additional means of communicating to students their possible entitlement to bursaries. Specific actions identified at the time of writing include the following.

- The amendment to the "Consent to Share" field on Student Direct (Student Loan Company) applications will prevent accidental unchecking that prevents the University from contacting eligible students.
- Talks on Student Finance will be given at Open Days in October and June each year with a Student Financial Support advice stand available for individual advice. There will be a Student Financial Support stand for individual advice also available at all Visit Days (c23,000 visitors p.a.).
- Student Financial Support Finance Talks/workshops for students in schools and colleges will reach up to 5,000 students who may not have visited MMU.
- The Up2uni project will deliver sessions for teachers and tutors across the Northwest. The Student Financial Support session includes bursaries.
- Me2 workshops for mature students at MMU will cover finance including bursary entitlement (c50 p.a.).
- The University's Enquiries team will provide advice on finance including bursary entitlement by phone and email.

- MMU Student Financial Support Guide will cover bursaries and will be widely circulated at all UG events as above (c23,000 p.a.) and available online for those who can't visit.
- The Spring edition of the Applicant newsletter is usually a Finance special and directs applicants to our Student Financial Support Guide online along with other sources of detailed info on bursaries. It is sent to all undergraduate applicants and enquirers (c50,000 p.a.) and will also be available on-line.
- The Spring term edition of the School and College newsletter is also a Finance special and will direct staff to sources of info and advice for them and their students (direct mailing to c2,000). It will also be available on-line.
- The MMU Welcome Guide will include last minute advice on finance including bursary advice. It is mailed to all new undergraduate students (c9,000).
- The MMU Parents' Guide will contain two pages on Student Financial Support that will including bursary advice. It is widely distributed at all undergraduate events (c23,000 visitors p.a.).
- The advice team of the Students' Union will continue to advise students face-to-face and through its website, where it posts FAQs about the bursaries. It also sends an "all student" email alerting students to the need to apply for their bursaries and includes similar information in its magazine.

8. Supporting Infrastructure

The University has invested significantly in its learning support infrastructures over a long period of time (averaging an annual capital expenditure of approximately £20m p.a. over the last ten years). Nonetheless, it will continue to use some of the additional fee income to further extend and enhance that infrastructure to the benefit of all students. It will ensure, particularly, that facilities aimed at supporting students from under-represented groups are effective and will include access to open- and distance-learning, counseling and learning support, library and other learning resources.

9. The University's Outreach Work

In the context of this Agreement 'outreach work' refers to a wide range of University activities that are undertaken with the aim of raising aspirations and attainment, encouraging those from groups that are under-represented to apply to join higher education programmes of study and supporting the endeavours of those who actually do so. Hence, it also includes activities undertaken throughout the student life cycle aimed at increasing the likelihood that students from under-represented groups will be more attracted to engaging with higher education and ultimately be successful.

The University has a long-standing and very effective record of participation in outreach activities. These take the form of liaison work with schools and colleges, collaborative arrangements with Further Education college providers, pre-entry support and guidance, curriculum enhancement activities, open and visit days, mentoring, University summer schools and many other initiatives. The University's

Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy and its Equal Opportunities Policy are published on the University website.

The University has approved and commenced implementation across the institution of a new Widening Participation strategy. Development of the strategy included an assessment of the previous OFFA Agreement. It became clear that its milestones did not allow us to measure progress against the aims set in HEFCE's own strategic plan. Whilst we might report on increasing numbers of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, for instance, the data is simply not sufficiently fine-grained to show any real distinctions in terms of widening access. We have therefore clarified the objectives in the new strategy in relation to targeting, measurement and evaluation so that they align more closely to government aims for widening access. We are currently in the process of developing tools to allow us to track these. We have revised the milestones in this year's Agreement to reflect this shift: whilst we include still those in the former Agreement, we have added others which relate to targets in our new WP strategy. We believe this will be a more realistic indication of our progress. In some of these instances, the figures indicated will be the base-line for future reporting; in others we will be able to show comparisons with previous years.

Manchester Metropolitan University remains an active partner in Aimhigher Greater Manchester and Aimhigher Cheshire and Warrington. Additionally, MMU is the lead partner in the Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance Lifelong Learning Network and is a member of the Cheshire and Warrington Lifelong Learning Network. Through these partnerships, we work with other higher and further education providers in the region, and with schools to promote opportunities into higher education. The University leads on several regional and sub-regional projects and will continue to commit institutional resources to this work.

Specifically, from 2009/10, through the implementation of the new strategy for Widening Participation, the University will:-

- enhance the work of the Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance (or any comparable successor body) in which it works with the other four HE institutions and all post-16 providers in the Manchester region to promote and support opportunities for vocational learners to progress into HE qualification programmes;
- enhance the work of the Cheshire and Warrington FE/HE Consortium and the Cheshire and Warrington Lifelong Learning Network in which it works with all FE Colleges in the Cheshire and Warrington sub-region;
- continue to be an active participant in the Aimhigher work which also seeks to promote greater participation of under represented groups in HE;
- continue to promote opportunities in HE through its liaison work with schools and colleges, in particular through a new Associate College strategy underpinned by dedicated support from the new Collaborative Partnerships Office;
- further develop its pre-entry support and guidance service to underpin confidence building and skills development amongst potential entrants to the University;
- further develop a curriculum enhancement service to complement and support the work of schools and colleges in raising student achievements, particularly within the framework of the new 14-19 diplomas;

- embed its support for care leavers on arrival at MMU and develop further its support for raising aspiration of young people still in care by asking care leavers to be trained as mentors;
- extend work with community groups targeted at raising awareness, offering role models and learning support.

A priority for the University's outreach activities will be to maintain and extend existing, successful initiatives, including those that have previously attracted external funding, and to do so with the current target groups. These groups include:-

- year 5 and 6 pupils in low participation wards in Greater Manchester;
- 13+ year-olds living in wards that are amongst the 20% most deprived nationally;
- 13+ year-olds from families with little or no experience of higher education;
- 16+ year-olds taking vocational courses and modern apprenticeships;
- adult learners on Access to HE programmes;
- learners in the workplace, especially advanced apprentices;
- ethnic minority students, especially Afro-Caribbean and female Bangladeshi;
- learners with disabilities;
- unemployed adults.

Additionally, in consultation with schools, colleges and workforce development providers, the University will develop additional initiatives in line with its new Widening Participation strategy. MMU is represented on Aimhigher Area Partnership Committees for both Greater Manchester and Cheshire & Warrington, on the Greater Manchester HE group and on a number of Borough Partnerships. Through these links, we have been working in full partnership with the other HEIs in Greater Manchester and Cheshire to maximise opportunities for young people. Some of these, especially, but not solely, with Aimhigher providers, will encourage and enable participation in higher education generally. Others will contribute to applications to MMU itself.

10. Milestones and Targets

The introductory section to this document shows that Manchester Metropolitan University is an institution that already performs comfortably above a number of benchmarks that provide indicators of the extent to which its admissions and recruitment activities achieve good social inclusion. Nonetheless, the University will continue to develop targets for its activities that will demonstrate not only its continuing commitment to the recruitment of an appropriately inclusive population of students, but also the progress made by students from target groups relative to those from more traditional backgrounds. It will monitor its performance and check progress against these targets, with some of the data on which these evaluations take place forming part of the information that the University returns regularly to government or funding bodies.

For the University to be confident in tracking achievements against its targets and milestones, it is aware that it must continue to build on data sets so that they

accurately represent key performance parameters as they develop. It also needs to establish the baselines for new sets of data against which progress will be measured. The first (updated) set of targets below was established in the first Agreement and monitoring against them shall be continued. These are:

- (i) Data on ethnic origin of students is critically dependent on willingness to self-ascribe. Typically, hitherto, the rate of return on such data has not been significantly better than 90%. Having achieved its target to achieve not less than 95% return data on ethnic origin disclosure by 2007/08, the University will continue to monitor the statistics to ensure it continues its progress towards 100%.
- (ii) Especially for those students in receipt of access bursaries the University will commit to improving progression rates from the first year (i.e. the proportion of enrolled students successfully progressing from stage one of study to the next). Specifically:-

2006/07	Baseline progression rate of 73%
2009/10	Baseline plus 8%
2010/11	Maintain or improve.

- (iii) Especially for those students in receipt of access bursaries, the University will commit to improving retention rates. Specifically, using 2005/06 data as the baseline:-

2006/07	Baseline plus 3%
2007/08	Baseline plus 5%
2008/09	Baseline plus 7%
2009/10	Baseline plus 9%
2010/11	Maintain or improve

- (iv) The University will commit to maintaining or improving recruitment from its outreach partners using 2006/07 as the baseline.
- (v) Using 2005/06 as the baseline the University will continue to enhance both learning support and advisory services.
- (vi) Using 2005/06 as the baseline the University will extend the number of active accounts that provide access to electronic learning materials and other support services for students by not less than 12% per annum.
- (vii) Based on existing performance in the current recruitment market the University will strive, for young, full time, first degree students to:
- meet or exceed a recruitment benchmark from state schools of 94%;
 - meet or exceed a recruitment benchmark from social classes 4, 5, 6 and 7 of 36%;
 - meet or exceed a recruitment benchmark from low participation neighbourhoods of 18%.
- (viii) Attain graduate progression into employment or further study programmes of not less than 90%.

Additionally for this revised Agreement, the following milestones, which will provide a more specific measure of progress on widening access, will also apply:

(ix) Looked After Children

We aim to increase the numbers of looked after children accessing our courses and support their retention and progression. We have already been awarded the Frank Buttle Trust Quality mark and have implemented a number of support schemes for care-leavers. At present, Local Authorities' reports suggest that between 30-40 looked-after children entered the university in 2007/8. We aim to increase the confirmed number, which shall become the baseline, and ensure progression and retention and will be devising mechanisms for identification and tracking.

(x) Disabled students and Learners with vocational qualifications

We aim to make our targeting for access for disabled students and learners with vocational qualification more effective by working closely with Aimhigher in Greater Manchester and Cheshire and Warrington to utilise their shared data on identified cohorts. This data will enable the University to set realistic baseline figures to mark progress in future years.

(xi) Retention of these groups

MMU's Retention and Student Success Project, which is benefiting from a Shock Absorber project and a range of other external initiatives, is backed by internal funding. It has generated a new Retention strategy that incorporates specific support for students from diverse backgrounds and a range of other initiatives. As these initiatives roll out, more focused retention statistics for those students from diverse backgrounds and for those receiving bursaries will be devised to establish baseline figures to mark progress in future years.

Whilst these targets will form the basis of planned actions and will be subject to regular monitoring, attainment of specific numerical targets is less important than ensuring that over the period of this agreement the institution's overall profile of having an effective policy of social inclusion is maintained.

Where "baselines" are declared in the above schedule of commitments, the University will declare their values to OFFA when we have reached that juncture (either as part of the first monitoring run or, if available, beforehand).

11. Monitoring

The University will assess the extent to which it is fulfilling each of the elements of this agreement. At the same time it will monitor performance against its access measures and targets. Reports will be considered by members of the Directorate, Academic Board and the Board of Governors and a brief annual monitoring review will subsequently be submitted to OFFA.

12. Variation

Using the outcome of the monitoring activities referred to above, the University will annually review and assess the impact and effectiveness of its admissions and access policy.