

This Access Agreement between Newcastle University and the Office For Fair Access (OFFA) covers the period from 1 September 2007 until 31 August 2011 (academic years 2007-08 until 2010-11). It relates to undergraduate and PGCE students entering the University from September 2007. Arrangements for students who entered the University in September 2006 are described in the University's separate Access Agreement for 2006 entry.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Newcastle University is committed to widening participation and fair access. We wish to encourage able, highly-motivated and enthusiastic students of all ages, and from all backgrounds and contexts, to apply to our degree programmes.
- 1.2 Our admissions policies and practices are based on principles of integrity and fairness, and involve the assessment of each applicant's ability, achievements and potential.
- 1.3 We wish to admit the brightest and best students, regardless of background. We recognise that some of those students may have concerns about the financial costs of Higher Education. The bursary scheme described in this Access Agreement, available from 2007 entry, will provide additional financial support for many of our students.
- 1.4 We also know that many talented and able people do not feel confident about applying to university. This may be because they have no family experience of higher education, or because they lack confidence about their ability to achieve the necessary entry requirements for a university like Newcastle. We are committed to investing in additional outreach work with schools and colleges in order to encourage more people to achieve their potential and enjoy the life-long benefits of higher education.
- 1.5 For those who choose to study at Newcastle University, we are confident that we offer challenging, exciting and relevant degree programmes, taught by experts whose research enriches the learning environment for all of our students. The overall 'Newcastle experience' is underpinned by our strong commitment to the provision of outstanding opportunities for our students to add value to their academic studies by gaining additional skills and experience which will prepare them for rewarding careers. Our strengths in enterprise education and vocationally-relevant programmes are reflected in our exceptional record of graduate employability.
- 1.6 These commitments and principles set the context for this Access Agreement, details of which are shown in the sections which follow.

2. Fee Limits

- 2.1 Newcastle University will charge an annual (home rate) tuition fee of **£3,070¹** for all of its eligible full-time undergraduate degree programmes and for the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme in the academic year 2007-08 (i.e. from September 2007).
- 2.2 Undergraduate programmes (or parts of programmes) funded under contract by the Department of Health will not be subject to the variable fee of £3,070 (At Newcastle University, this currently includes the following programmes: Speech and Language Sciences; the fifth year of the 5 year programmes in Medicine and Dentistry; years two, three and four of the four-year accelerated Medicine degree for graduates).
- 2.3 Students on four-year programmes who are undertaking a one-year placement, or a year abroad, as a compulsory part of their degree programme, will be liable to pay the relevant proportion of the annual tuition fee (25% of the full fee, i.e. £767.50 in 2007-08).
- 2.4 Subject to regulations published by the government each year, the annual home rate of tuition fee charged by the University is expected to increase to reflect inflation. The fee is reviewed annually, in the light of guidance from the DfES, and the amount payable in any given year will be published in advance by the University in the relevant publicity materials, including the University website.
- 2.5 The University's bursaries and other financial support offered to eligible students will also be reviewed each year.

¹ The fee for subsequent years will be reviewed annually in the light of DfES advice.
University of Newcastle upon Tyne: Access Agreement for 2007 entry revised 20 December 2006.

2.6 Students who are offered a place at the University will be informed of the total fees payable for the duration of their programme of study.

3. **Widening participation context and target groups**

3.1 This Access Agreement is part of the University's overall strategies to widen and increase participation by groups of students currently under-represented at the University. Widening participation is an important element of the University's Corporate Plan and strategic objectives.

3.2 The University's performance in widening participation, as measured by its intake each year of students from key groups under-represented in higher education, is published publicly in the annual HESA Performance Indicators.

3.3 The activities and investment described in this Agreement represent just a small part of the University's overall work to widen and increase progression to higher education. The University has undertaken an intensive programme of widening participation activity, working with schools and colleges in the North East over the past 14 years (see Section 7, below, and Annex 1). This work will be sustained and developed during the period of this Agreement, subject to the continued availability of funding.

3.4 For the purposes of this Access Agreement, the University's *additional* work and financial investment to maintain and safeguard fair access is aimed particularly at the following groups:

- Students from lower socio-economic groups
- Students from low participation neighbourhoods
- Students from black and minority ethnic groups
- Students with a disability
- Students who are from lower income backgrounds
- Students with a range of relevant other personal or educational disadvantage factors, including those who enter the University through the PARTNERS Programme supported entry route.

3.5 The **additional measures** described in Sections 4, 5, 6 and 8 specifically aim to:

- Increase the number and proportion of applicants with appropriate qualifications, ability and potential, from: lower socio-economic groups; low participation neighbourhoods; black and minority ethnic groups; and those with other relevant personal or educational disadvantage factors
- At least maintain the application and progression rates to the University of students with a disability
- Encourage more students from lower-income backgrounds to feel confident that they will receive adequate levels of financial support if they choose to study at Newcastle University
- Contribute to an overall increase in regional rates of progression to higher education
- Increase progression to Newcastle University of students from lower income backgrounds from all parts of the UK.

3.6 Milestones relating to these aims are shown in Section 9 below.

4. **Bursaries**

4.1 The University is committed to providing financial assistance to students from lower-income backgrounds. Students entering the University in 2007, who are ordinarily resident in the UK and to whom the home rate of tuition fee applies (subsequently referred to as 'home UK students') will be eligible for bursary support according to the criteria below

4.2 The terms of the bursary scheme are as follows:

- **All home UK undergraduate students commencing study in 2007, who are assessed as being eligible for full government financial support (i.e. with a household income, as assessed and notified to the University by the Student Loans Company, of £17,910 or less), will automatically receive a Newcastle University Bursary of £1,200 for each relevant year² of undergraduate study.**
- **All home UK undergraduate students commencing study in 2007, whose household income (as assessed and notified to the University by the Student Loans Company) is between £17,911 and**

² Details of the Newcastle University Bursary Scheme are published each year in the **Guide to Student Finance** for the relevant year of entry (obtainable from the University). Full details of bursary regulations, including those which apply to students undertaking repeat years or part-time study, are available on the University website.

£25,583 will automatically receive a Newcastle University Bursary of £900 for each relevant year of undergraduate study.

- **All home UK undergraduate students commencing study in 2007, whose household income (as assessed and notified to the University by the Student Loans Company) is between £25,584 and £30,699 will automatically receive a Newcastle University Bursary of £600 for each relevant year of undergraduate study.**
- **Home UK students following a Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) programme, and who are eligible for the full means-tested element of the Government Higher Education Maintenance Grant, will receive a Newcastle University PGCE Bursary of £305.**
- Eligible students who are undertaking a compulsory placement / study abroad as part of their degree programme, and by whom a reduced rate tuition fee would normally be payable to the University, will receive a bursary reflecting the reduced rate of fee, on a *pro rata* basis.
- The bursary will be paid as a cash award.
- The amount of the annual bursary will be reviewed by the University each year.
- For students from England³ commencing undergraduate degree programmes in 2007, the table below shows examples of the amount of non-repayable support for which students may be eligible each year. In addition, students will be able to take out repayable student loans for living costs and fee deferral.

Annual household income	Government financial support per year	Newcastle University Bursary per year	Total amount of non-repayable financial support per year
£17,910 or less	Full maintenance grant of £2,765	£1,200	£3,965
Between £17,911 and £25,583	Partial maintenance £1,486 and £2,764 (<i>approximate figures</i>)	£900	Minimum: £2,386 Maximum: £3,664
Between £25,584 and £30,699	Partial maintenance grant between £853 and £1,485 (<i>approximate figures</i>)	£600	Minimum: £1,453 Maximum: £2,085
Between £30,700 and £38,330	Partial maintenance grant up to £852	£0	Minimum: £50 Maximum: £852

4.4 PGCE students commencing study in 2007 may be eligible for non-repayable financial support as follows:

Government financial support per year⁴	Newcastle University PGCE Bursary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government bursary of £6,000 ▪ OR Government bursary of £9,000 plus a 'golden hello' of £5000 for maths and science postgraduate trainees ▪ OR Government bursary of £9,000 plus a 'golden hello' of £2500 for other priority secondary subjects. ▪ Means tested maintenance grants of between £1200 and £2,765 	All PGCE students eligible for the FULL means - tested grant of £2,765 will receive a Newcastle University Bursary of £305

4.5 Students' eligibility for government financial support will be assessed on the basis of financial information provided to their Local Authority (LA).

4.6 Students do not have to apply separately for consideration for a Newcastle University Bursary. To be considered for a Bursary, students must indicate to their LA (by checking the relevant box on the LA application form) that they give permission for their financial information to be shared with the Student Loans Company.

4.7 Newcastle University Bursaries will be paid to students through the Student Loans Company

4.8 The Bursary will normally be paid in a single payment in February each year. Details of procedures for payment of the bursary will be provided to all students holding an offer of a place.

4.9 From the information which we have about our current students, we estimate that approximately 1234 (28.7%) of our total 2007 UK undergraduate entrants will be eligible for a Newcastle University Bursary.

³ Details of government student support arrangements for students from other parts of the UK are available from the relevant government websites for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

⁴ These are the most recent available figures.

- 4.10 Of these, we estimate that about 697 (16.2% of the total) will be eligible for the Newcastle University Bursary of £1,200 payable to students who receive full state financial support, 305 (7.1% of the total) will be eligible for a bursary of £900, and 232 will be eligible for a bursary of £600 (5.4%).
- 4.11 We estimate that approximately 70 (20%) of our students commencing PGCE programmes in 2007 will be eligible for the Newcastle University PGCE Bursary of £305
- 4.12 The Newcastle University Bursary scheme subsumes and replaces the previous Alumni-funded bursary schemes in operation for 2004 and 2005 entrants. Alumni funding (estimated to be approximately £250,000 per annum) contributes to overall resources for the Newcastle University Bursary scheme, subject to continued availability of donations for this purpose.
- 4.13 The Newcastle University Bursary scheme will be reviewed annually and may be revised to reflect changing circumstances and requirements and / or government support arrangements.

5 **Recognising outstanding achievement**

- 5.1 In addition to the Newcastle University Bursary scheme described above, the University offers a new **Newcastle Excellence Scholarship Scheme** to support its aim to admit undergraduate students of excellent ability and potential and to recognise outstanding achievement on entry. This recognition will be available to students from all backgrounds.
- 5.2 The following awards, available to entrants from all backgrounds and from all parts of the UK and EU, will be made from 2006 onwards:

Subject areas:	Newcastle Excellence Scholarships	Details
Science, Agriculture and Engineering	48 Scholarships of £1,000 per year	Awarded on the basis of outstanding performance on entry
	At least 50 Scholarships of £500 per year	Various performance-related criteria, depending on the subject
	Up to 38 awards of £1,000 per year from Stage 2 onwards	For students who did not receive an award on entry, but demonstrate outstanding performance in Year 1 at the University
Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences	29 First Year Scholarships of £1,000	For outstanding performance on entry, taking into account all information on the UCAS form
Medical Sciences (including Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical and Biomolecular Sciences)	Approx. 29 First Year Scholarships of £1,000	For outstanding performance on entry, taking into account all information on the UCAS form

- 5.3 It is expected that students from the target groups in this Access Agreement will benefit from these Excellence Scholarships on a proportionate basis each year.
- 5.4 In addition, each Faculty offers specific Scholarships for students entering the University from schools and colleges involved in PARTNERS:

Faculty	Awards linked to PARTNERS schools and colleges :	Details
Science, Agriculture and Engineering	10 First Year Scholarships of £500 for students entering the Faculty through the PARTNERS Programme supported entry route.	Awarded on the basis of outstanding performance in the PARTNERS Programme Assessed Summer School together with achievements of specified examination grades.
Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences	19 First Year Scholarships of £1,000 for students from PARTNERS schools and colleges.	For outstanding performance on entry, taking into account all information on the UCAS form, including average A level or equivalent performance of the applicant's school / college
Medical Sciences (including Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical and Biomolecular Sciences)	Approx. 6 First Year Scholarships of £500 for students entering the Faculty through the PARTNERS Programme supported entry route.	Awarded on the basis of outstanding performance in the PARTNERS Programme Assessed Summer School together with achievements of specified examination grades.

- 5.5 For students entering the University in 2007 (and similarly for subsequent years of entry), it is anticipated that approximately 229 awards, to the value of £492,000 will be made through the Newcastle Excellence

Scholarships Scheme. Of these, it is estimated that at least 105 awards (£227,000 approx) will directly benefit students from the target cohorts identified in this Access Agreement during their time studying at the University.

- 5.6 Information about the Newcastle Excellence Scholarships Scheme is available on the University website and in printed publicity materials.

6 Provision of information to students

- 6.1 A key to the success of our initiatives to promote and safeguard fair access is the provision of clear, timely and accurate information about student finance to potential students, parents, teachers and advisers.
- 6.2 Our Undergraduate Prospectus contains information about student finance and an outline of our bursary scheme.
- 6.3 Our comprehensive **Guide to Student Finance** (produced in the spring each year and revised when necessary) includes information about fees, government financial support, the Newcastle University Bursary Scheme, the Newcastle Excellence Scholarships Scheme, Access to Learning Funds, student loans and other ways of funding study. It also provides advice on budgeting and financial management. A copy of the Guide is sent with the Undergraduate Prospectus to all enquirers and to all UK schools and colleges. Copies are available at all HE recruitment fairs, parents' evenings, school visits, University Visit Days, post-application open days and other relevant events. The Guide is revised annually (more frequently if necessary) to reflect any changes in our Bursary scheme and in government student support arrangements.
- 6.4 Our University website includes up-to-date financial information, including a PDF version of the *Guide to Student Finance*.
- 6.5 The website is being further developed to include resources for those who advise students, including a PowerPoint presentation with notes, which can be downloaded for use by teachers and careers advisers, handouts and budget planner activities for potential students.
- 6.6 Our student recruitment and widening participation teams visit schools and colleges to give presentations to teachers and pupils about student finance matters. In addition, trained graduate Student Ambassadors (part of our new outreach activities) visit schools and colleges to explain student finance issues and our bursary scheme, and give first-hand, credible information about the experience of being a student at Newcastle University. This scheme was developed and piloted during 2005-06.
- 6.7 The University also contributes to Student Finance seminars provided by the regional and sub-regional Aimhigher Partnerships, which also convey the key messages through relevant websites. In addition, the University works to reinforce the messages about student financial support alongside the government's national publicity scheme.
- 6.8 Applicants to the University receive information about student finance and the bursary and scholarship schemes when they receive an offer of a place.
- 6.9 Existing eligible students (from 2006 entry onwards) will be reminded about the bursary scheme and financial support available during each year of study at the University.

7. Current outreach activities

- 7.1 Newcastle University has a coherent and wide-ranging programme of existing widening participation work, which will be continued and expanded during the period of this Access Agreement (see Annex 1 for details). The outreach elements of our Widening Participation Strategy are based on the following key themes:
- Working with young people (from primary school age) to raise their aspirations and awareness of higher education, using our current students as positive role models through our Students into Schools Project, 'Student Guide to Student Life' and residential Summer Schools
 - Encouraging positive aspirations and attitudes in families and communities through work with parents, younger children and disaffected groups
 - Activities and initiatives to help to raise the attainment of young people, including Master Classes, taster events and Summer Schools
 - Building strong relationships with schools and colleges, and working closely with teachers, advisers and others who influence student choice and aspirations
 - Providing opportunities for all potential applicants to find out about the University, together with information which will help them to make an informed choice about their options, through a wide-ranging programme of liaison activities, school / college visits, comprehensive printed and web-based information and opportunities to visit the campus

- Identifying, through our PARTNERS Programme, able, talented young people of high potential, who may be at risk of not progressing to higher education because of socio-economic, personal or educational disadvantage factors, and supporting them in the transition from school or college to the University
- Collaborating with the other universities and colleges in the region, through regional projects and initiatives such as the government's Aimhigher programme and Lifelong Learning Networks, to encourage progression to higher education
- Developing our curriculum to reflect the needs of an increasingly diverse student population.

8. New outreach work

8.1 The University will use a proportion of its additional fee income to support the following additional outreach activities from 2006-07 onwards:

Student Ambassador Scheme – Targeted Outreach Project

8.2 From 2006-07, four of the University's new graduates will be employed each year, on a one-year full-time contract, to work as graduate Student Ambassadors in collaboration with our student recruitment and widening participation teams. A major part of their role will be to carry out visits to schools and colleges throughout the UK to give presentations and interactive workshops to pupils about: the benefits of investing in their future through participation in Higher Education; student finance issues, including the bursary scheme; student life (to dispel myths and misconceptions); and the 'Newcastle experience' about which, as very recent undergraduate students, they will be able to give credible and contemporary information. This scheme has already been successfully piloted during 2005-06, and will be continued in a slightly revised format from 2006-07.

8.3 The graduate Student Ambassadors are fully trained, and undertake many other relevant roles, including work with local schools and colleges, involvement in the PARTNERS Programme and Summer Schools, contributing to relevant University recruitment publicity materials, and the development of projects, resources and materials to support our widening participation work. They also contribute to post-application events, offering accommodation tours and talks on student finance to visiting applicants and their parents. In the process, they gain valuable employability skills preparing them for their own future careers.

8.4 The graduate Student Ambassadors are carefully selected to ensure that they are credible ambassadors in the context of our widening participation target groups.

8.5 Since October 2005, the University's Marketing and Student Recruitment Service has also worked closely with our School of Education and Communication Studies to ensure that each year's cohort of PGCE students is fully trained and equipped to promote the benefits of Higher Education, and the range of subjects available, during their periods of teaching practice.

Strengthening our Widening Participation Team by providing additional resources to Faculties and Schools

8.6 Faculties and Schools play a vital role in widening participation and outreach activities, delivering the essential academic content of many events and participating in our PARTNERS Programme and Students into Schools schemes. Involvement in such work is often on the basis of goodwill and is subject to time constraints and other pressures.

8.7 From 2006-07, the University is providing additional funding to Faculties and Schools so that the enthusiastic champions of our widening participation and outreach work can be supported in their contribution to activities such as: Master Classes; Summer Schools and other residential events; development of exciting materials to enthuse young people about learning; visits to schools and colleges; pre-application open days, taster events and conferences for students; subject-specific development activities for teachers; and work to encourage, retain and 'nurture' applicants from target groups to maximise their opportunities for progression.

Extension of the PARTNERS Programme into schools and colleges with a large black and minority ethnic population

8.8 The University is currently developing links with schools and colleges in the Yorkshire and Humberside region. As part of this process, we are, from 2006, extending the PARTNERS Programme to schools and colleges (up to 10 initially) in key areas (eg Kirklees LEA) which have a high black and minority ethnic population, in order to encourage more qualified young people from these groups to apply to the University. It is estimated that approximately 2,400 additional students per annum will have the opportunity to participate in PARTNERS events, and that up to 100 per annum will potentially benefit from the supported entry route.

Extension of current work to raise awareness of deaf and disabled students

8.9 The University hosted a successful joint awareness-raising event for deaf and disabled students (working with Northumbria University) in March 2004. We plan to offer a minimum of two further events each year

from 2006, aimed at potential deaf and disabled students from the North East and other areas including Cumbria, Yorkshire, Humberside and the North West. We also plan to encourage deaf and disabled students to consider the PARTNERS Programme supported entry route.

Safeguarding Aimhigher activity

8.10 The University will set aside a small amount of additional fee income in 2006-07 and 2007-08 to underwrite essential Aimhigher-related outreach activity in the event of any reduction of such funding from HEFCE.

9. Milestones

9.1 The University uses three sets of data as its baseline for milestones, monitoring and evaluation in the context of this Agreement:

- UCAS application datasets purchased annually by the University
- HESA Performance Indicators concerning student intake (supplemented, where more detailed analysis is required, by the University's own HESA data)
- Data provided by the Student Loans Company regarding eligibility of students for financial support.

9.2 The parameters for considering these data sets will be maintained in successive years to enable meaningful comparisons to be made.

9.3 In some instances, the milestones and anticipated numbers shown below have been revised slightly since publication of the 2006 entry Access Agreement, to take account of recent patterns of application to the University. They assume that overall UCAS applications to the University will increase by approximately 2% per annum from the 2003 entry baseline. They will be further revised on an annual basis.

Young students from lower socio-economic groups (NS-SEC groups 4 - 7)

- Number of applications to increase by approx 3.5% per annum, from 4484 in 2003, to approx 5700 in 2010
- Proportion of applications to increase from 21.6% in 2003 to approx 24% in 2010
- HESA performance indicator for intake of young students to increase from 21% in 2003 to 26% in 2010

Young students from low participation neighbourhoods

- Number of applications to increase by approx 3.5% per annum, from 2543 in 2003, to 3235 in 2010
- Proportion of applications to increase from 11.5% in 2003 to 12.7% in 2010
- HESA performance indicator for intake of young students to increase from 10% in 2003 to 13.5% in 2010

Students with a disability

- Number of applications (of all students indicating a disability, including those with dyslexia) to increase by approximately 2% per annum, in line with overall increase in applications, from 951 in 2003, to approx 1090 in 2010
- Proportion of such applications to remain stable at approximately 4%
- HESA performance indicator for intake of students in receipt of the Disabled Students' Allowance to remain stable at the 2003 entry figure of approximately 3.3%

Students from black and minority ethnic groups

- Number of applications to increase by 3% per annum, from 1414 in 2003, to approx 1740 in 2010
- Proportion of applications to increase from 6.4% in 2003 to 6.85% in 2010
- Percentage intake to increase from approximately 4.7% in 2003 to approximately 6.00% in 2010

Students eligible for bursaries

- Number of eligible undergraduate students on entry to increase from 1234 in 2007 to approx 1420 in 2010.
- Proportion of new undergraduate entrants eligible for bursaries to increase from 28.7% in 2007 to approx 33% in 2010.
- Number of PGCE students eligible for bursaries to increase from 68 in 2006 to 75 in 2010.

Outreach and activity milestones

- 4 graduate Student Ambassadors to be employed each year from 2006 (with a pilot in 2005-06)

- Graduate Student Ambassadors to make approximately 90 visits to schools and colleges in 2006-07, increasing to approximately 120 per annum, to deliver talks and activities to approximately 60 students in each school / college (approximately 34,000 students in total over five years)
- 5 schools and colleges from Yorkshire to join PARTNERS in 2006 (for 2007 entry), increasing by at least 2 per year until 2010
- Up to 20 students from black or minority ethnic groups from these additional participating schools and colleges to apply to the University through the PARTNERS Programme in 2007, increasing to 40 by 2010.
- At least 120 deaf and disabled students and advisers per annum to attend awareness-raising events at the University from 2006-07.

10. Monitoring, evaluation and review

- 10.1 The University's performance against the above applications milestones will be monitored annually in February (on receipt of the relevant UCAS datasets).
- 10.2 Monitoring of performance against HESA benchmarks will be undertaken on publication of the annual Performance Indicators (September).
- 10.3 The University will report to HEFCE on all of its widening participation activity through the Annual Monitoring Statement in July each year. This will include a separate section reporting on progress against the milestones in the Access Agreement. A copy of the relevant section will be sent to OFFA, with accompanying analyses, comments and notes as appropriate.
- 10.4 Within the University, the effectiveness of the activities and bursary schemes included in the Access Agreement will be reviewed and evaluated annually in October / November by University Teaching and Learning Committee. Recommendations for any revisions to the Access Agreement will be discussed initially with OFFA before being considered and agreed by Council and submitted to OFFA for approval.

Annexes:

1. Summary of current widening participation outreach activity at Newcastle University
2. Baseline application and performance data on which the milestones are based
3. Russell Group Statement on widening participation

Annex 1: Newcastle University : Widening Participation outreach activities

Widening Participation Strategy and Priorities

The University's Widening Participation Strategy is based on the following key elements of the student life-cycle:

- Raising the aspirations and awareness of young people and their parents and teachers, adults and other potential learners, to encourage participation in higher education
- Working with schools and colleges to raise attainment
- Working within communities to engage people of all ages in lifelong learning
- Provision of information, advice and guidance to support potential applicants in making informed choices
- Pre-entry activities and encouraging applications
- Facilitating admissions and conversion of applications to registrations
- Supporting student retention and success
- Developing employability skills for undergraduate students and adult lifelong learners
- Developing our curriculum to meet the needs of a diverse student body

In all of its work to widen and increase participation, the University works both as an individual institution, and as part of a number of regional and national initiatives, including: Aimhigher; Lifelong Learning Networks; National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth; the Russell Group Association for Widening Participation; HELOA (Higher Education Liaison Officers' Association) and the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust etc.

A summary of some key elements of current outreach work is given below.

Raising Aspirations

Raising aspirations and awareness is a vital element of widening participation activity and the University has been actively involved in this area of work for a number of years.

The Students into Schools Project, a joint project with Northumbria University, established in 1993, is the focus for a wide range of activities:

- Student tutoring: 700 undergraduate students work in approximately 200 regional schools and colleges and community settings each year to provide positive role models and raise aspirations. Students can be tutors on a voluntary basis, but for most, their involvement is formally accredited as part of their degree programme.
- Community placements include, for example, work at St James' Park Learning Centre: Student tutors assist with delivery of an IT-based programme focusing on literacy, numeracy and ICT set within a football context. Recent NFER research demonstrated that the reading age of participants increased by 2 years on average.
- Student associate Scheme: Involvement in this national initiative is co-ordinated by the Students into Schools Project, 100 Newcastle University students support teaching in schools in priority subject areas (eg Maths and Chemistry). Students receive a bursary to help raise aspirations of pupils and gain an insight into teaching as a career.
- Awareness-raising activity at Newcastle Foyer, with student tutors involved in one-to-one work to promote study-based skills / GCSE / life skills and some residential activities and campus focused events
- Awareness raising hands-on science activities at Newcastle Discovery Museum.
- Males into Primary Teaching: a project to encourage more men to consider teaching in primary schools
- ACE days / ACE weeks: activity days or sessions mainly aimed at Year 10 pupils to give them an introduction to higher education. Two ACE weeks are held each year, involving approximately 550 pupils at Newcastle University. Other single-day events are held at the request of schools during the year.
- Apprentice Students On Campus (ASC Days): Raising aspirations of pupils and their parents. Approximately 688 Year 6 pupils and 100 parents have participated in the most recent event.
- Community Placements: Student tutors take part in a wide range of community placement activities under the auspices of the Higher Education Active Community Fund (HEACF) project
- Support for the PARTNERS Programme and other widening participation activity: student tutors are involved in a wide range of activities, including student shadowing, involvement in parents' evenings, Master Classes, other campus-based events and the University's three annual Summer Schools.

- Looked After Children: approximately 80 Year 10 and Year 11 students will benefit from a programme of residential activities and follow-up work through a new initiative run jointly with Northumbria University and Sunderland University, in partnership with Tyne and Wear Aimhigher and social services.

The HEFCE / ESF-funded Year 10 Higher Education Summer School is a three day residential Summer School for Year 10 pupils from widening participation backgrounds. The University offers 200 places each year. The Summer School is designed to give a taste of University life and introduce students to HE study. Regional briefing sessions are held in April to inform pupils and parents about the Summer School.

PARTNERS Programme Year 11 activities: "A Student Guide to Student Life" uses student tutors in a range of activities to raise awareness of opportunities available in higher education and to dispel myths and misconceptions about university. Approximately 30 local schools (600 pupils) take part each year. The event is targeted at year 11 students who have the potential for higher education, but who are at risk of dropping out of education at age 16.

Raising Attainment:

The University works closely with regional schools and colleges, and with initiatives supported by Excellence in Cities / Aimhigher, and delivers:

- **Year 10 Master Classes:** held over three successive Saturdays on campus in February / March each year. Approximately 10 subject areas and 400 pupils.
- **Master Classes / Taster Programmes for Year 12/13** students in a range of disciplines to support and enrich A Level / AVCE study. Approximately 10 subject areas and 250 students per annum
- **CPD programmes for teachers** and progression coaches, including updating and training sessions for relevant staff on issues to do with higher education progression.

Also under development are a range of activities to raise aspirations, awareness and attainment, and promote progression to STEM subjects, as part of Newcastle University's work as a strategic partner in the Science City initiative.

The University has recently committed £50,000 to support the bid for Specialist Enterprise College status by All Saints College, Newcastle, under a unique partnership arrangement including Newcastle LEA, the University and the Diocese.

Other potential developments include, for example, the provision of facilities at the Newcastle Magnetic Resonance Centre for local schools and colleges providing AS and A2 programmes in physics, chemistry, biology and computing.

Pre-entry and Admissions-related Activities

In 1999, the University introduced the **PARTNERS Programme**, to encourage progression to the University from state schools and colleges in the region. PARTNERS is the vehicle for delivery of many of the University's widening participation activities, including regional initiatives under the Aimhigher programme. Recognised as an example of good practice by HEFCE and UUK, the programme has completed five years of operation. To date, 936 individual students have commenced study at the University with the support of the Programme, which currently involves formal partnerships with 99 schools and colleges in the North East, Cumbria and Kirklees LEA. All academic schools (220+ degree programmes) participate in the PARTNERS Programme.

The PARTNERS Programme offers a range of awareness- and aspiration-raising pre-entry activities, together with an alternative supported entry route, which enables participants to demonstrate their potential for success at the University by completing an Assessed Summer School. It is targeted at young people in state schools and colleges from lower socio-economic groups; low participation neighbourhoods; low income families; schools / colleges where the average GCSE and / or A level performance is significantly below the national average; and individuals recommended for inclusion by schools and colleges on the basis of other identified personal or educational disadvantage factors. Conditional offers made to PARTNERS UCAS applicants include successful completion of the Assessed Summer School together with A level/AVCE achievement at a slightly reduced level than the normal offer for the course (e.g. BBB instead of AAA). The programme is subject to all of the University's normal Quality Assurance procedures and has been approved by University Teaching and Learning Committee.

Year 12/First Year college activities (available to all students from the relevant schools and colleges) include **visits and talks**, **Student Shadowing**; and a residential **Bitesize Uni** (250 places).

Year 13/Final Year college activities include: **talks and visits** (including **advice on UCAS procedures**); a further **subject-specific Student Shadowing visit**; a **Finance and Assessed Summer School Information Evening**; **small-group tutorials** prior to the Summer School; and conclude with the **Assessed Summer School** in June / July.

The Assessed Summer School includes a major Academic Subject strand together with sessions to support the development of HE study skills, personal skills and effective learning styles. Students are assessed on their performance in the academic project and evidence of generic HE study skills. They produce a reflective personal learning record to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and support needs. The Summer School includes diagnostic testing in numeracy, IT and Communications/English, and provides access to facilities including the library and computing networks. Learning is supported by online provision using Blackboard. Entry to the University's degree programmes is determined on the basis of successful completion of the Assessed Summer School together with achievement of specified grades/points at A levels/AVCE.

Overall UCAS applications to the University from PARTNERS schools have increased by 62% since the programme commenced in 1999. The profile of the University has been significantly raised in the participating schools and colleges. Better links with staff in the schools and colleges are facilitating other developments including the establishment of "schools groups" linking academic departments with teachers to discuss curriculum and progression issues, the development of curriculum support materials for schools, and subject or progression-related updating activities for teachers.

Post-entry, a range of initiatives seeks to ensure that the risk of drop-out is minimised. For example, a 'How's it going so far?' individual review session identifies any problems early in the first semester. PARTNERS entrants are encouraged to participate in the Students into Schools Project, and to support widening participation activities, gaining valuable employability skills in the process and often going back to their own school or college to inspire future generations of students. Students who live at home receive additional support, including a home affiliation scheme offering them access to facilities at the University's Halls of Residence. Academic monitoring of students who entered the University through the PARTNERS Programme shows that, in general, they are fulfilling the potential identified in the Assessed Summer School, and progressing at least as well as their peers. Some have been the top students in their year, some have graduated with first class honours and many have won awards and prizes. A number have progressed to careers in work relating to widening participation, for example as progression coaches in local schools.

The following statistics give an indication of the scale of the University's outreach activity:

- Each year, approximately 700 undergraduate students (from Newcastle and Northumbria) act as positive role models to raise aspirations in approximately 300 local schools and colleges.
- Approximately 1600 year 10 pupils attend ACE events each year (across Newcastle University and Northumbria University)
- 795 pupils (years 5 – 8)(and their parents and extended families) attended the ASC (Apprentice Students on Campus) days in December 2006
- Approximately 88,000 students have attended various PARTNERS events since 1999
- At least 3,724 students have taken part in summer schools since 2000
- The Higher Education Summer School and University Survival Guide in 2006 offered residential places for a total of 463 students
- 178 year 11 pupils attended a specialist Biosciences Summer School in July 2004, 2005 and 2006.
- Approximately 636 Year 10 students have attended Saturday morning Master Classes at Newcastle University over the past 3 years
- 936 individual PARTNERS students have entered the University so far
- At the 2005 PARTNERS Programme Assessed Summer School, there were 218 participants, representing over 10,000 learner hours. The 2006 event involved 223 participants
- In 2003, of all students from PARTNERS schools and colleges who applied through UCAS for an undergraduate degree course anywhere in the UK, approximately 30% applied to Newcastle. (later figures not yet available)

FE and Mature students

Considerable work is under way to seek to increase progression from the region's FE colleges.

Recent / current activities include:

- Single Programme FE/HE Progression Project/Personal Progression Pathway (PPP)
- Study skills sessions for FE students on the following topics: Essay and report writing; Critical thinking; Coping with new situations/student life; Interview Techniques; Presentation Skills; Self-esteem and personal development; Time management and University Teaching, Learning and Assessment methods.

- Higher Education- the Inside Story, an event on campus to give FE and mature students an insight into student life and relevant information about progression opportunities.
- Get Ahead: an Aimhigher-funded collaborative project involving all of the region's Universities, and coordinated by Newcastle University. This involves presentations, events and publicity materials relevant to mature students throughout the region.
- A Disability awareness event, which aims to emphasise the range and breadth of opportunities and support available within HE in the North East.
- A dedicated team to deal with FE and mature student enquiries
- Presentations to FE / mature students and attendance at FE events
- FE staff development opportunities on topics such as: the UCAS process and writing a UCAS reference, Student Finance and the PARTNERS Programme.
- Admissions tutor training and FE qualification workshops
- Mature Student Orientation Programme at the beginning of the year
- Visit Day information sessions for prospective mature students

Other activities under development include:

- PARTNERS vocational route for FE students following vocational programmes
- Pre-entry Mathematics module for FE students studying AVCE, BTEC National or Access qualifications who intend to progress to physical sciences and engineering degree programmes at the University but have not studied sufficient Mathematics to be considered for entry at Level 1.
- E-buddying, whereby current undergraduate students give virtual advice and support for FE students considering higher education via Blackboard software or email.
- PARTNERS for Mature students (a pilot project)

Annex 2: Relevant baseline and performance data for Newcastle University, 1999-2003

1. Performance indicators for students from the North East

One indicator of the success of the University's widening participation activities (which necessarily have a regional focus) is the fact that, for students who are from the North East, the University is considerably exceeding HEFCE / HESA key widening participation benchmarks, with 85.44% from state schools and colleges; 39% from HEFCE social groups 3 and 4, and 21.6% from low participation neighbourhoods. Overall, approximately 23.5% of young entrants were from the North East in 2003. Most of the University's widening participation challenges thus arise from its application and intake patterns outside the North East region.

2. Application data:

The table below shows application data (all UK applicants: numbers and percentages) for the key target groups included in the Access Agreement, together with overall growth during the period.

Number of applications in each group, showing percentage of total applicants for whom data is known.											
	1999		2000		2001		2002		2003		% growth in actual numbers since 1999
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	
disabled (all, including dyslexic)	606	3.29%	531	3.10%	754	4.16%	904	4.36%	951	4.22%	56.93%
Black & minority ethnic (all)	1083	6.1%	998	6.04%	1087	6.18%	1344	6.63%	1414	6.4%	30.56%
socio-economic groups III, IV and V / NS-SEC 4-7 (young)	2908	17.67%	2780	18.24%	3002	18.60%	3779	21.04%	4484	21.59%	54.20%
low participation neighbourhoods (young)	1727	10.55%	1804	11.58%	1914	11.50%	2084	10.98%	2543	11.49%	47.25%

3. HEFCE / HESA Performance indicators for relevant groups

This table shows the relevant HEFCE / HESA performance indicators, sector benchmarks and location-adjusted benchmarks for the period 1999-2002 (latest available). The column relating to black / ethnic minority students derives not from HESA Performance Indicators, but from the University's own HESA data.

		Students in receipt of DSA	Young entrants from NS-SEC 4-7	Young entrants from low participation neighbourhoods	Black and minority ethnic students (from University's own data)
1999 entry	University		16%	10%	Incomplete data
	Sector benchmark		20%	10%	N/a
	Location-adjusted bmk		21%	12%	N/a
2000 entry	University	2.2%	17%	11%	6.63%
	Sector benchmark	1.1%	21%	10%	N/a
	Location-adjusted bmk	N/A	22%	13%	N/a
2001 entry	University	2.7%	17%	11%	6.14%
	Sector benchmark	1.6%	22%	11%	N/a
	Location-adjusted bmk	N/A	23%	13%	N/a
2002 entry	University	3.5%	20%	10%	5.48%
	Sector benchmark	2.0%	24%	11%	N/a
	Location-adjusted bmk	N/A	25%	13%	N/a
2003 entry (early draft figures)	University	3.3%	21%	N/a	4.71%
	Sector benchmark	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Location-adjusted bmk	N/A	N/a	N/a	N/a

Annex 3: Widening participation in Russell Group universities: meeting our social responsibilities

The Russell Group universities believe that it is part of our social responsibility to increase and widen participation in HE and that able students from any background should be able to attend universities with the most demanding entry requirements. The Group also acknowledges the educational benefits that flow from a diverse student body.

The educational opportunities offered by Russell Group universities are distinctive, especially in relation to subjects such as Medicine, and the Group is concerned to ensure that a wide range of students can benefit from these opportunities.

Measures to address this include the development of specialist progression pathways to highly competitive and demanding subjects such as Medicine. Experience and good practice from these pilot projects is disseminated throughout the Russell Group in order to support the development of similar projects.

Given the generally high entry requirements within Russell Group universities, measures to raise attainment and support high achievers are an important part of members' widening participation programs. The Russell Group believes that the outcomes of the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth's 'Higher Education Gateway' project could be of real interest to member institutions. The Group is committed to attracting and admitting those most able to benefit from the type of courses we offer and looks forward to contributing to the project as appropriate.

The Russell Group universities are committed to supporting students in financial need through bursaries or other appropriate forms of financial assistance. In 2003-2004 member universities were pleased to provide bursaries from their own funds amounting to well over £3m; provision from 2006 will represent a significant proportion of additional fees income.

Much of member universities' work with schools and colleges helps raise aspirations, awareness and attainment among potential students on behalf of the whole higher education sector. University visits, summer schools, taster sessions and a variety of other learning experiences make significant and substantial contributions to the broader widening participation agenda.

The brochure 'Widening Participation in Russell Group Universities' summarises selected activities and initiatives. This publication was commissioned in 2003 by the chairman of the Russell Group, Professor Michael Sterling, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Birmingham.

The Russell Group Association for Widening Participation was founded in June 2000 and all Russell Group universities are actively involved. The Association's members are united in their primary aim of widening participation in research-led universities. Regular meetings promote the sharing of good practice and the development of joint initiatives. The Group is supported by the Russell Group Secretariat.

October 2004

Statement provided by the Russell Group Association for Widening Participation