

De Montfort University

Access Agreement 2012-13

Overview

De Montfort University is proud of its sustained track record in widening participation and access to its courses. Diversity and equality are central to the university's mission and extend throughout teaching activities and the wider student experiences. This ethos and a welcoming approach have ensured that the university is unrivalled¹ in addressing the needs of the local area and is nationally recognised for the sustained and transformational effect of its education on its students.

This access agreement takes stock of the university's achievements and recognises its new strategic vision, the changing demographic profile of the city and region and the impact of the global economy on graduate prospects. For these reasons, in 2012-13 the university aims to:

- maintain and enhance its reputation and collaborations for outreach activities (including new constituencies of students such as recent economic immigrants and those returning to education after redundancy).
- sustain efforts concerning retention (and continue to focus on support for black and minority ethnic groups) and quality of the student experience for all.
- enhance preparation for employment throughout the student community and seek new ways of nurturing graduate skills and experiences that will support students into employment.

De Montfort University's new vision for the period 2011-2015 (the document can be viewed at: <http://www.dmu.ac.uk/aboutdmu/mission-and-vision-for-dmu.jsp>) places increased emphasis on the quality and distinctiveness of its student experience. This reflects the university's intention to be a leading provider for the creative industries and professions. Fair access and widening participation remain integral to these disciplinary developments.

De Montfort University's approach to access and its impact

The university:

- is located on a city-centre campus and has an undergraduate population of 12,182 full-time and 1,885 part-time students (of which a quarter of the part-time undergraduate students are in partner colleges on indirectly funded programmes).
- supports 38.5% of full-time students from low socio-economic groupings (HEFCE PI 2009-10). This is 3.2% above benchmark and 8.5% above the UK average.
- supports 11.5% of undergraduate students from low participation neighbourhoods.
- has 16% of the undergraduate student population who are disabled (nearly 50% reporting dyslexia or dyspraxia). The university has thus far achieved a 10% difference between the educational attainment of these students and that of non-disabled students.
- is proud of its diverse student body (52% white, 27% Asian, 11% black, 10% mixed/other). The university enrolls a slightly greater proportion of non-white students than the proportion of those who apply.
- is focused on academic progression with 76% of first year students (2008-09) progressing into study in 2009-10. Improvement in progression rates over a three-year period has been slight. The percentage of black and minority ethnic students progressing

¹ Legacy of AimHigher (HEFCE letter, 11 March 2011)

on programme currently falls below the institutional average. The university has actively sought to lessen this gap and will remain active in supporting these groups of students. There is no significant difference in progression rates between low socio-economic groups and other groups of students.

- has an average tariff point score on entry of 280 (2010-11, and excluding partner colleges). It has begun to increase the quality of students admitted and is actively vigilant to the needs and impact of this on vulnerable groups of applicants.
- has a percentage of students achieving Firsts and Upper Second Honours of 50% (2009-10). In line with the sector, the rate for black and minority ethnic student groups is lower than the institutional average (e.g. 35.4% for Pakistani students and 29.8% for Black African students). The university has actively sought to lessen this gap and will remain active in supporting these groups of students.

The university has a comprehensive approach to building awareness of what higher education is like and what it offers to students; raising aspirations to participate in and benefit from higher education; nurturing and supporting the application process; ensuring fair admission; providing assistance to enhance participation; and nurture progression and achievement once students have joined higher education. From 2006 onwards, the university's primary means of delivering these objectives has been to provide eligible students with income-related bursaries and scholarships which support key groups of students/academic subjects. These direct means of student support have been accompanied by investments as outlined below. Successes include:

Outreach activities

1. the university has been an active participant in AimHigher and has provided activities targeting Year 7 through to Year 11 students. In 2009-10 DMU provided 103 activities for 3,408 participants. Our AimHigher activities, which have been accredited by HEFCE as being unparalleled within the education sector, included schools in low participation neighbourhoods. Since the change in postcode definition of low participation neighbourhoods, we have performed slightly under our sector benchmark in this area, and for this reason we are working together with Leicester and Loughborough Universities to ensure maximum impact of our higher education promotion work in schools in these areas.
2. campus and in-school support covering: problem solving; subject 'taster' courses; creating visual CVs; university experience days; and study skills sessions. The university also runs three residential summer schools each year.
3. three highly popular Gifted and Talented schemes (Drawing School, Performance and Robotics)
4. and an active and effective college liaison team has provided comprehensive information, advice and guidance through Year 12 and 13 – higher education support, master classes, higher education fairs and mature student talks and open days.

Learning and educational support

5. the development of the Higher Education Assessment Toolkit (HEAT) with support from the Life Long Learning Network, which has aimed to develop an academic literacy toolkit that has application and relevance in further education and the first year of higher education. It has been used to support students from some of the university's feeder schools in their transition to higher education at the university.
6. the Self-Assessment Exercise undertaken by all first year students during their induction period, which enables them to assess their competence and confidence in a range of key skills and directs them to sources of support in a non-threatening and confidential manner.
7. language, writing and study skills development, provided through the Centre for Learning and Study Support (CLaSS). This service works in close conjunction with

faculties and much of its delivery is embedded in curricula. Staff in this centre are able to offer specialist educational advice and support.

8. the introduction of peer mentoring, recognising the important contribution that the students can make to the transition and engagement of others, and making a great impact on those whose families have no prior experience of higher education.
9. staff in the Library Disability Team, who are highly trained in this field. They have a significant role in directing students to appropriate library services and support, and in supporting the use of assistive technologies.

Transitions support

10. establishing bursaries for care leavers and estranged students. Our market research confirms this has been an important and well-regarded scheme for this under-represented group. This has contributed to the award of the Frank Buttle Trust Quality Mark for Care Leavers in Higher Education.
11. establishing effective and institution-wide transition support for: 'at risk'; incoming; disabled; cared for or estranged students.
12. collaboration with the Open University and the National Autistic Society to provide specialist on-site support for students.
13. establishment of both a centre and a range of guidance schemes/events to ensure contact and support for students throughout their studies (e.g. e-induction and online materials).
14. creation of the 'Future Options' careers events for disabled students.

Monitoring and understanding the student experience

15. establishment of the Retention and Achievement of Ethnic Minority Students (RAEMS) working group in 2007, whose monitoring and understanding of these groups' experiences has led to focused and relevant support within the faculties and the professional services.
16. evaluating the effectiveness and impact of academic guidance on the student experience (eg student survey, retention rates, performance and progression rates).
17. improving our student surveys to enhance our understanding of first and second year students.
18. collaboration with Back on Course, a HEFCE-funded programme offering students support and guidance to re-engage with their studies (at De Montfort University or elsewhere).

Enhancement of professional service support

19. extending provision and support for special requirements and arrangements during examinations.
20. extending the range of learning and support materials in alternative formats.
21. provision of bespoke and facilitated support for student enquirers (especially in the area of student finance).
22. heightening financial awareness and budgetary skills in the student community through high profile schemes such as the Money Doctors scheme (supported by the Financial Services Authority), Student Money Week and the introduction of financial awareness/capabilities within the undergraduate curriculum.

Fair Access for the 2012-13 cohort

The university has a new strategy in place, which was developed after extensive consultation with students, staff and stakeholders. The strategy seeks to promote quality and distinctiveness in all that we do. Detailed modelling has been undertaken on the funds needed to deliver a high-quality, distinctive, and competitive educational experience to our students, meeting their own expectations, our high expectations of them, and the needs of

employers. This has been complemented by research about our own position in the market place. The fee level which has therefore been agreed by our Board of Governors is £9,000 for full-time undergraduates studying for a full degree.

At the heart of our commitment to improving access to higher education by under-represented groups is our intention to strengthen and enhance promotion of our fair access approach, practices and services to support learners and our capacity to track and monitor the impact of our efforts with a view to continuous improvement. As detailed below, the most disadvantaged students will receive substantial financial and in-kind support while those showing the greatest academic promise will receive support to help them attain their full potential.

Having evaluated our approaches and progress since 2006, we have concluded that we should sustain our outreach programme and enhance both retention and employability support to best serve our students. Particular effort will be placed in supporting students from black and ethnic minority backgrounds (more than 40% of our students), where there is evidence that we need to continue to enhance their experience and success.

Fee levels 2012-13

The university intends to charge the following Home/EU undergraduate tuition fees in 2012/13:

- Full-time degree, DipHE and CertHE courses £9,000
- Full-time foundation degree and HND courses £6,000
- Placement year fees £650
- Full-time partner college courses (public sector college) £6,000.
- Full-time partner college courses (private sector college) £7,800
- As in previous years, in 2012/13, all continuing students will continue to receive the benefits of the Access Agreement which obtained when they started their programmes. They will not be liable for the 2012/13 fee, nor eligible for the benefits of the support package associated with this fee level.

Financial support available for students from 2012/13 – bursaries and scholarships

1. National Scholarship Programme (NSP) (480 scholarships available in 2012/13)

A £6,000 package per student will be available with £3,000 support being offered in Year 1, and this will comprise a cash payment of £1,000, £2,000 in tuition fee and/or accommodation fee waivers. In subsequent years (Years 2 and 3) £1,500 will be awarded in tuition fee waivers, although the university is also exploring the option of providing £500 per year of this via use of student ID cards to help pay for costs related to study. These national scholarships will be allocated according to financial need. As they are limited in number, the university will initially award the scholarships to those students with a household income of £0 as determined by Student Finance England. If, after this first wave of allocation, the university has not awarded all of the national scholarships, it will then consider students with household incomes of £1 - £5,000, using a sliding scale of need, until the 480 scholarships have all been awarded. This package has been designed to correspond with the cases of greatest need at De Montfort University.

2. Student Bursary Scheme

Any student with a household income of under £25,000, as determined by Student Finance England, is entitled to means-tested financial support and will receive a £1,000 cash bursary

per annum. The use of this is unrestricted; through our financial advice service, students will be encouraged to use the funds to support the costs of their studies directly. To be eligible for a bursary, students must not be in receipt of an award under the National Scholarship Programme.

3. Care Leavers and Estranged Student Bursary Schemes

Any student entering the university from a care environment (including all students being looked after by a local authority at the time of application) or any student, who has estranged status as defined by Student Finance England, will receive a cash bursary of £1,000 per annum. As above, there are no restrictions placed on the use of these funds, but our support package for care leavers includes financial advice to help students make the most effective use of these funds to support study costs. In recognition of the work undertaken in this area the university has achieved the Frank Buttle Trust Quality Mark and is widely recognised for supporting students from these backgrounds.

4. Access Scholarship Scheme

The university will provide Access Scholarships of £1,000 per annum (excluding any placement years) for students entering the university on the basis of access course qualifications (rather than A levels or other established qualifications). These will be available as cash payments, supported with appropriate advice.

5. Academic Scholarship Scheme

The university will provide an Academic Scholarship of £1,000 per annum (with the exception of any placement years) to any student admitted on the basis of at least 340 UCAS tariff points derived from 3 'A' levels or other A2 qualifications which are recognised for this purpose by the university as 400 UCAS tariff points from the Advanced Diploma, 32 points from the International Baccalaureate, Distinction in Art and Design Foundation course. Students must apply by 15 January 2012, accept their offer from DMU for entry in 2012/13 and proceed to Conditional Firm/Unconditional Firm status with their application prior to the annual Clearing exercise. Receipt of the Academic Scholarship in subsequent years will be dependent on the student achieving an average of at least 60% in their previous year of study. No student can receive both the Academic Scholarship and an Access Scholarship. The academic scholarship falls outside the requirements of this access agreement, in that any student, regardless of background, is eligible for the scholarship. The costs of the academic scholarship have therefore not been included list of our access-related expenditure in Annex B of this agreement. However, we include this scheme in this main document as an example of another source of support for anyone in an under-represented group who meets these criteria.

Sustaining outreach activities

The university's outreach programmes will comprise:

- the HE Journey – this scheme provides ongoing information, advice and guidance (IAG) for students (Year 9 to Year 13) and their parents. The scheme targets children and students in regional schools and colleges who meet widening participation criteria. It focuses on children from Year 9 and above in around 18 local schools, reaching approximately 500 people. In addition, the scheme includes the running of summer schools. The particular rationale behind this initiative is to provide support to enable students to make the best choices from GCSE onwards. The university's outreach experience has shown that a series of interventions, maintaining a constant presence and developing a relationship will have a greater impact on students than a

one off outreach activity. Introducing students to possible future progression routes early enables them to keep their options open and make informed decisions about their future pathways. The costs of the HE Journey outreach programme will be around £90,000 per annum.

- Leicestershire Universities Consortium (AimHigher replacement). The university has established effective local collaboration as the three Leicester and Leicestershire universities (The Universities of Leicester, Loughborough and De Montfort) are working together. They are in discussions with representatives from the two major local authorities (Leicester City and Leicestershire County Councils), and leaders from local schools and colleges to form a partnership which will co-ordinate a programme of engagements for identified, targeted cohorts of year 7-11 pupils from local schools and colleges. This will fund a regional co-ordinator post, and continue AimHigher activities in Leicestershire working with the local education authority and schools. The target population is Year 7–11 children and students in schools and colleges meeting Widening Participation criteria (low participation neighbourhoods, low income, disability, care status). Eligible children have the potential to achieve 5 GCSEs at Grade C or above. As a consortium, we are committed to continuing the monitoring and evaluation work for Leicester and Leicestershire that has been provided at regional level at Loughborough University through AimHigher in the East Midlands. The rationale behind this collaboration is to ensure that the highly successful AimHigher activities continue after the cessation of AimHigher funding, and that the project is properly monitored. Leicester City and Leicestershire county have seen a marked improvement in attainment and progression rates of students engaging in AimHigher activities. Examples include 60.7% of the City AimHigher cohort achieving 5+ A-C grades at 16, compared to 47.4% of the non-AimHigher group; and 53.6% of the City AimHigher cohort achieving at least 2 Advanced Level qualifications, compared to 46.8% of the non-AimHigher group. It is our intention to build on the AimHigher legacy and to continue to provide effective activity. The three universities within Leicestershire have considerable knowledge and experience of local needs and collaboratively will be able to meet them through shared research, planning and activity. The cost to De Montfort University is £80,000 per annum.
- Gifted and Talented for the Professions. De Montfort University has run highly successful, over-subscribed workshops in the Easter holidays for gifted and talented school students (Years 10 to 13) from schools within a 20-mile radius around the city of Leicester. It has focused on creative subjects, and will now widen this activity to put on additional Gifted and Talented programmes supporting entrance to professional courses (with bursaries and summer schools) to encourage engagement of targeted groups. Courses will include: pharmacy and law. Through these programmes we will maintain engagement with key low participation groups (especially local, white males from lower socio-economic groups) and raise aspirations to make higher education a realistic option, emphasising its benefits, helping students target subjects/courses, providing financial support and guidance, and providing support from advisory stages to graduation on academic, personal and employment matters. We also intend to work with sports clubs on this programme to help raise aspiration with these hard-to-reach target groups. The additional, annual cost of this activity will be £190,000 per annum.
- the Vice-Chancellor's Fund has an initial target of £45k and will help to ensure that philanthropic support enables transformative outreach programmes and reaches those for whom support makes the greatest difference in engaging in higher education at the university.

- bursaries from the prestigious Helena Kennedy Foundation. The university is already a beneficiary, and it seeks to increase such support to 10 bursaries by 2014-15.

Enhancing retention (and progression)

- Remaining on Track. This scheme offers flexible support to enhance retention. We will target key groups of students, initially 100, who statistically are at greater risk of withdrawing from the university. The project will cost £100,000 per annum.
- Digital literacy support. This scheme provides university-wide support to help students use IT and e-learning technologies. While the scheme will benefit all students, we will target all university induction programmes for Year 1 students from key groups. The aim is to improve retention and enhance the learning experience of students during the first year of study. The cost of the initiative is £40,000 per annum.
- Mathematics and English help. Our Learning and Study Support activity will continue, at a cost of £338,000 per annum, with additional targeted interactions for Year 1 students in 2012/13 (£40,000). Based on predicted student profile, we estimate that around 65% of students targeted for this activity will be from under-represented groups, resulting in an overall cost within this agreement of £245,700 per year.
- As holders of the Frank Buttle Trust Quality Mark for Care Leavers in Higher Education, we will endeavour to extend the number of care leaver applicants and to promote and share best practice. The university's engagement with the City Council, the prospective elected mayor, and the County Council brings many benefits for civic engagement, not least being the opportunity to form active relationships with these local authorities and their networks, to support care leavers throughout the student life cycle.
- Our Retention and Achievement for Ethnic Minority Students (RAEMS) Group is shaping the agenda for the institution to improve retention and progression for black and minority ethnic student groups. We will strengthen the links between our RAEMS group and our black and minority ethnic staff group with a view to providing mentoring and buddy schemes, with the longer term goal of closing the gap between black and minority ethnic, and white students in the area of good honours achievement. This will require coordination, effective promotion and monitoring of progress.
- We have a strong tradition of promoting participation in community and professional sporting ventures and activity (we have formal partnerships with the local professional clubs including Leicester City Football Club, DMU Riders (basketball) and Leicestershire County Cricket Club). The university recognises that sports participation among the student body is effective in engaging communities and addressing social exclusion. The university therefore encourages student engagement in sports and related societies and intends to help communities through its sports base to access the professions and key subject areas. Hence, the university is committed to opening a £8.1m leisure centre in 2012-13.
- We will maintain and enhance the students' learning and living experience. Notably development of a world-class leisure centre will foster new opportunities for students

and prospective students to learn about and enjoy the campus culture. Further development of the learning zones across campus will be underpinned by £0.75m investment in 2011.

- We will continue our current and growing work monitoring and enhancing student retention. This is central to student support in all faculties. Key faculty and programme activities include:
 - a. attendance monitoring and completion of course assessments. When failure to attend or engage in assessments is identified the Student Advice Centres are proactive in establishing contact and helping students address these situations in order to reengage and continue their studies.
 - b. Student Advice Centres across the campus provide academic and study skills support.
 - c. the university has an active and effective personal tutor scheme and provides surgeries through which additional personal and study support can be accessed.

Enhancing employment opportunities

We intend to continue to embed employability within curricula (as well as highlighting and articulating the prominence and value of these curriculum features to prospective students). In particular we will:

- Introduce the Front Runner scheme. This is an internship scheme for our students. All students will be eligible to participate. We will aim to sign-up 100 students in the first year of the scheme as part of our effort to enhance our graduates' employability. The scheme will cost £600,000 in the first year, rising year on year as more internships are provided; with an estimated £390,000 being allocated in the first year for work with the 65% of eligible students who are predicted to belong to under-represented groups.
- Introduce the "Enhance your Employability" scheme which will build on our already existing employment service (currently £310,000 per annum, and offer support for students to improve employment prospects, particularly in their final year of study. This represents significant additional investment (£400,000 per annum) in our student employability support work. Again, from this expenditure, 65% is predicted to relate directly to work with students from under-represented groups.
- Enhance our presence at local and regional employment/jobs events through collaboration and partnership with organisations (e.g. Leicester Business Voice, Rotary Club) that are offering and enhancing the role of our alumni and related organisations (e.g. Business and Law Alumni Committee) in such activities and promotions.
- Link employability opportunities for students to our extensive network of industry, commercial employer and professional contacts established through: our commercial, consultancy and knowledge transfer activity; integrating employability features within curricula; and maximising aspects of Leicester's cultural offer (e.g. placements, internships and volunteering opportunities in new landmark cultural industries buildings such as Curve Theatre, and Phoenix Square Film and Digital Media Centre, in which the university has invested).

- Develop the professional support services so that they are able to offer more internships, placements and enhanced careers advice and education. These services are highly experienced in working with under-represented groups in Higher Education.

Additionally, our distinctive profile and concentration of creative industries education enables us to maintain our engagement with sector-specific inclusion and employability projects (examples include the Council for Higher Education in Art and Design's work on widening participation in HE Art and Design; the collaborative project, 'Creative Graduates, Creative Futures'; and 'Crafting Futures, a Study of the Early Careers of Crafts Graduates from UK higher education institutions').

The university also recognises that volunteering builds skills in our students, is valuable in developing self confidence and provides experience of working environments. In partnership with the De Montfort Students' Union (DSU), we are expanding and extending volunteering activities and initiatives, enabling the students to build greater capacity in this field and establish a profile for innovative civic engagement.

Information and context

The university has made significant progress in promoting and communicating its support packages to students and sponsors alike through improvement of websites and a wide range of materials. It already ensures that the production of alternative materials supports those with disabilities, special needs and different language requirements.

The university plans to redevelop its website to include a quick 'ready reckoner' for students to calculate their support package, produce a video with the Students' Union, provide case studies and clear, jargon-free information to support decision-making. Enhancements will also be made to the website to develop a portal for offer holders to support a smooth transition to higher education

More face-to-face advice on finance and DMU's support package will be available via our outreach team in schools and colleges and at university open days. Specific materials will be produced for parents and teachers. The university also plans to introduce an internal communications campaign to ensure all staff are briefed on the support packages for students, which will provide consistency for students when seeking advice, guidance and information.

Institutional monitoring

The targets and milestones will be integrated into the annual planning cycle requiring both faculty and executive scrutiny of progress. This will be reported and discussed with the Board of Governors and the De Montfort Students' Union.

Amended 27 June 2011

