

Queen Mary, University of London

ACCESS AGREEMENT

FOR THE OFFICE OF FAIR ACCESS

1. Introduction

This document sets out the plans of Queen Mary, University of London in respect of fees and bursaries and its widening access strategy in the period following the introduction of variable tuition fees in 2006.

Queen Mary has a strong tradition and good track record in attracting able students from a wide variety of social backgrounds and is determined to protect this diversity of intake. Accordingly, the College will take steps to ensure that that it:

- continues to invests in and enhances its already extremely active outreach activities to support aspiration and attainment raising amongst groups of students underrepresented in higher education, especially but not exclusively those from low income backgrounds;
- provides adequate financial support through the provision of bursaries to address possible financial disincentive for students from lower income backgrounds;
- and provide clear and transparent information about this and other financial support to potential applicants with the aim of mitigating the possible deterrent effect of fees.

Given the already high level of representation in the Queen Mary student body of under-represented groups, our objective will be to use bursaries, outreach programmes and communication to protect our current levels of access in the context of the likely deterrent effect of higher fees.

2. The Character and Widening Access Objectives of Queen Mary

The strategy should be seen in the context of Queen Mary, University of London's character as an academic institution and its overall strategic objectives.

Queen Mary, one of the three largest multi-faculty colleges of the University of London, is a leading teaching and research institution, recently ranked 14th in the UK and 100th in the world for its international reputation and academic infrastructure by the Times Higher Education Supplement. As such, Queen Mary is committed to maintaining an international and national outlook in its student recruitment activities.

However, the College is equally committed to its long-standing and extensive contribution to educational provision in its London setting and reflects this in a wide range of outreach activities in some of the most deprived parts of the Capital.

The balance between these two aspects of Queen Mary is one factor that leads to the very diverse nature of our student body and contributes to the particularly lively and stimulating intellectual environment offered by the College. We foster an environment in which all students, from whatever background, feel comfortable and are supported to achieve their potential.

3. Current Access Position

Queen Mary has an excellent record on delivering access to under-represented groups in higher education, especially when it is considered that the College offers a number of highly competitive subjects such as Medicine, Dentistry and Law.

According to figures produced by the Student Loan Company, 642 UK-domiciled students who entered Queen Mary in 2004 were in receipt of a £1,000 higher education grant, and came therefore from households with a residual income of less than £15,200 per annum. Queen Mary's total intake of UK-domiciled 'home' students in the same year was 1,850 which means that one-third of our UK students come from this very poorest group.

Queen Mary meets or exceeds HEFCE benchmarks for the admission of young students from certain under-represented groups as follows (latest figures published for 2002/3):

Category	Benchmark	Actual Performance
State School Students	81%	84.8%
Socio-economic IV –VII	28.4%	35.1%
Low Participation Neighbourhood	9%	9.3%

Queen Mary also has a good record in attracting students from an ethnic minority background. In 2003/4 and 2004/5 students from non-white ethnic groups made up over 50% of the student population.

4. Variable Fees Limit Policy

Variable fees were introduced in the Higher Education Act 2004 with the intention by the current Government of addressing long-standing problems in the financing of higher education and in particular the erosion of the unit of resource. As such, Queen Mary intends to charge a fee of **£3,000 for all subjects of study for each year of study** for the duration of an undergraduate degree, in 2006. We would expect to increase fees in subsequent years in accordance with inflationary increases allowed by government regulations. However, we will seek to give all students at the point of enrolment a clear estimate of such increases.

5. Bursaries Policy

In parallel to the introduction of fees in 2006, Queen Mary will introduce a package of bursaries, funded from the additional fee income. The bursaries described here are additional to financial support already offered by the College funded both by Queen Mary and by a number of external partner bodies.

Queen Mary intends to target bursaries in order to give as much support as possible to the poorest students as defined by the Office of Fair Access in its recent guidance.

With this objective, Queen Mary will operate the following scheme in respect of those students from households of less than **£15,000** household income who will qualify for **full state support**.

- We will fulfil the requirement to make up the difference of **£300** between state support and the tuition fee for those students in receipt of the full Higher Education Maintenance Grant in 2006. Queen Mary intends to sign up to the 'model bursary scheme' as devised by Universities UK/SCOP advisory group on bursary schemes.
- However, we believe that greater financial support is necessary for this group and, additionally, we will pay a larger sum to these students that will bring the total bursary payable to a student in this poorest group to **£1,000** per year of study.

Although the above group of students' need for support is greatest, as recognised in the DfES Maintenance Grant scheme, we also believe that students from slightly better-off backgrounds also need financial support to help with the costs of study.

- Accordingly, we will pay a total bursary of **£800** per year of study to students who qualify for a **partial Maintenance Grant** in 2006, i.e. those who come from households with incomes of **between £15,001 and £33,000**.

Queen Mary is committed to an outreach for widening access strategy aimed at supporting improvement in academic attainment amongst under-represented groups, alongside the College's overriding admissions aim to attract the most able students, whatever their background or financial circumstances. We will adopt two sets of academic criteria aimed at maintaining this strategy.

- In order to qualify for the payment of the above bursaries, students will need to have met the academic requirements of their chosen degree programme and be in receipt of an unconditionally confirmed offer of a place from Queen Mary on that degree programme; and to have enrolled at Queen Mary.

- To encourage the achievement of higher attainment amongst the poorest group of students, Queen Mary will offer a special total higher-rate bursary of **£4,000 in each year of study to students who are from households of less than £15,000 per annum in income and in receipt of full state support from 2006 and who also achieve three 'A' grades in A-levels taken in the same year.**

Queen Mary will pay bursaries to students in three instalments each year, in October, January and April.

Queen Mary will pay bursaries as cash payments to students.

Note. Exact income thresholds for eligibility for the Maintenance Grant from 2006 have not yet been finalised by the DfES. The above thresholds are those given as indicative thresholds by the DfES as of December 2004. Should the actual DfES thresholds for 2006 when published be different from the above, Queen Mary will consider adopting the new thresholds.

6. Provision of Information to Students, Schools and Parents

Queen Mary is committed to communicating clearly to all prospective students the benefits for them of the new mechanisms for repayment of fees: that no student will be required to pay fees until after graduation and until they reach specified minimum thresholds of earnings. Our market research shows that students, teachers and parents have been confused by the media coverage of this issue into thinking fees will have to be paid up-front. We recognise our responsibility to do what we can to correct this mistaken impression.

Queen Mary is also committed to the clearest possible communication to students of the bursaries that will be provided by the College.

We believe that provision of information about these matters to teachers and to parents is also important as they are in a position to advise and influence students about the financial as well as academic aspects of their future studies and may play a crucial determining role in deciding whether or not to progress to higher education.

Accordingly, Queen Mary will implement a communications programme, giving explanation of fees and other costs of higher education and bursaries, which will include:

- the Undergraduate Prospectus;
- a special page on the College Website, the url for which will appear in all College publicity intended for undergraduate students;
- a special leaflet, which will be published following approval of our Access Agreement, to be sent to all applicants to the College and those who enquire about study at Queen Mary;

- regular features on fees and bursaries published in our monthly newsletter for teachers ‘On-Q’;
- regular features on fees, bursaries and other aspects of student finance published in our dedicated leaflets for parents;
- incorporation of all such material into our outreach activities.

7. Outreach Work

Queen Mary has a long-standing and comprehensive programme of outreach activities, which has increased substantially in volume in recent years and is managed through:

- a specialist unit for widening participation, the Learning Development Unit, under the direction of the Director for Widening Participation
- the Educational Liaison Office
- and academic departments.

These activities are monitored by the Widening Access Committee, which reports directly to the Academic Board of the College.

The Queen Mary outreach programme consists of a variety of mutually supporting activities, including Saturday, Summer and Winter Schools, taster classes, student tutoring and student mentoring, subject specialist programmes and support for particular groups. A summary of the major items is attached as **Appendix I**.

Queen Mary also makes a central contribution to generic outreach in East London through collaboration with other institutions. Most notably, Queen Mary is the lead institution in the London East Thames Gateway Aimhigher partnership.

We are committed to maintaining our outreach programme and taking every opportunity to enhancing it. The programme is already funded from College resources (not including Aimhigher funds) to a value of some £550,000 per annum and we feel that this is an appropriate level of resource, which we would seek to maintain in the period 2006-11.

8. Milestone Targets

As noted above, Queen Mary already has a good record on access for under-represented groups and on comprehensive and effective engagement with outreach activities.

Queen Mary is concerned that the introduction of fees from 2006 might act as a deterrent to the above groups to participation in higher education, especially in view of the widespread misunderstandings about fee repayment partly generated by inaccurate media coverage.

Accordingly, given the already high level of representation in the Queen Mary student body of under-represented groups, our objective will be to use bursaries, outreach programmes and communication to protect our current levels of access.

Given our good record we feel that it would not be reasonable to project forward a large increase in the levels of participation by under-represented groups or in outreach activity, although we will always seek opportunities to make positive changes.

We think that the milestone targets set out in **Appendix II** are sufficiently stretching in our particular circumstances.

9. Institutional Monitoring Arrangements

We will revise our Widening Participation Strategy in the light of this access agreement when the agreement has been approved.

The College's Widening Access Committee meets three times a year and will receive a report at each of these meetings about progress in meeting the targets and objectives in the strategy. The Committee will make appropriate recommendations to the Academic Board if it seems necessary to make changes to the activity programme supporting the strategy in order to meet targets.

As suggested at the OFFA seminars in November 2004, we will use the annual report of the Widening Access Committee in order to report progress to OFFA.

10. Other Resources

Queen Mary has committed itself to a fundraising strategy over the next four years, which is in part aimed at raising over £1.3 million in additional student support funds. If successful, we would intend to spend part of these monies on additional bursaries for poorer students.

11. University of London Institute in Paris

The University of London has established a collaborative partnership to support the University of London Institute in Paris. The collaboration includes Queen Mary, Royal Holloway and the University as well as the Institute itself. It has been agreed that the Institute will be included in Queen Mary's outreach work for the purposes of an Access Agreement and will adopt Queen Mary's bursary scheme.

Appendix I: Summary of Outreach Activities

Activity	Description
Pier 18 Saturday School	Saturday morning classes for Year 13. Current recruitment =350
Physics Practical School	Year 12/13 A level physics students attend for 3 consecutive Wednesday afternoons to undertake laboratory work in the Physics Dept.
Year 12 Winter School	Run for local IVth Form and FE Colleges.
Evening Revision Programme	Revision classes of A2 students in a range of subjects running 6pm-9pm.
Year 10 Masterclasses	Approx. 200 Year 10 students from Waltham Forest attend sessions in 7 subject areas.
PIER 17	Revision courses for Year 12 AS level students running either side of the Easter weekend. Run in partnership with London Metropolitan University and City University.
AEA Masterclasses	Series of sessions in a range of subjects for Year 12/13 students from local VI form and FE Colleges to support students aiming for Advanced Extension Awards.
School talks, mock interviews, etc.	A programme of awareness raising visits to and from the College for local schools. Comprehensive programme of activities across the London East Thames Gateway especially, but in other inner-city and low HE participation areas also.
Inward visits to Queen Mary	Some 4,000 school students are involved in inward visit activities in total.
GCSE Maths taster	Morpeth School and QM Maths Department.
Summer Programme	Open Access short courses in Maths, Physics, Academic English, Study Skills and other subjects
Specialist Medical Summer School	Year 11 residential Summer School in medicine and related areas. National recruitment via Aimhigher. 45 places
Generic Summer School	Year 11 Generic Summer School Regional recruitment via Aimhigher. 50 places
Yr 10 Summer School	Year 10 Generic Summer School. Run in partnership with London Metropolitan University, UEL and City University. 160

	places across the 4 HEIs
Yr 12 Health Summer School	Run in partnership with City University. 100 places across the 2 HEIs. Funding yet to be confirmed.
<i>Access to Further Mathematics</i>	Distance learning support for local students taking Further Maths A level. Agreement with Maths in Education & Industry yet to be confirmed.
<i>Student Tutoring</i>	Students placed in local schools providing classroom assistance – 50 students placed in 2003-2004 and 45 are recruited and trained so far for 2004-2005.
<i>Student Mentoring</i>	Mentoring support for year 9/10/11/12/13 students provided by Queen Mary students. 130 student mentors so far in 2004-2005.
Student Assisted Medical and Dental Applications (SAMDA)	Student-led initiative to assist local applicants in their aspirations to gain admission to medicine and dentistry.
<i>Student Placements in a Hospital Setting</i>	Facilitating student placements in the Department of Maxio-facial surgery at the London Hospital.
<i>Student Volunteering in the local community</i>	Placing students in volunteering opportunities in the local community. – volunteers in – opportunities in 2003-2004.
<i>Teaching Shakespeare in the classroom</i>	Students teaching Shakespeare plays in local schools as part of their assessed coursework in the School of English and Drama.
<i>People's Palace Projects</i>	Creative drama workshop work with local schools.
<i>Maths Workshops</i>	Maths workshops for year 10/11 students provided by Maths Department.
<i>Science and Engineering Foundation Programme</i>	'Year 0' programme, intended for students who have shown academic potential, but have gaps in the qualifications required for entry to 'Year One' of a degree programme.
<i>Leadership Role in London East Thames Gateway Partnership</i>	Queen Mary line-manages the partnership coordinator, manages the funding for the partnership, monitors activities within the partnership and participates in a wide range of activities funded by Aimhigher.
<i>Strategic Alliance with City University</i>	A widening participation strand is a key part of the portfolio of activities in the strategic alliance. The aim is to create ladders of opportunity for students, especially into the healthcare professions.

Appendix II: Milestones

Target Group	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	
State School Students	84.8%	84.8%	84.8%	84.8%	84.8%	
Socio-Economic IV-VII	35.1%	35.1%	35.1%	35.1%	35.1%	
Low Participation Neighbourhood	9.3%	9.3%	9.3%	9.3%	9.3%	