



Liverpool John Moores University Access Agreement

Purpose

This agreement has been prepared following the decision by Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) to raise full-time undergraduate tuition fees above the standard level from the academic year 2006-2007. The agreement is between The Office of Fair Access (OFFA), a regulatory body established in the Higher Education Act 2004, and LJMU. The purpose of the agreement is to demonstrate how the University, in charging increased fees, will continue to safeguard and promote its current high levels of fair access, in particular for students from low income groups.

The access agreement covers a five year period from the academic year 2006-2007 to the academic year 2010-2011.

Context

For the past 182 years LJMU has remained true to its original mission of creating and supporting opportunities for participation in higher education by under-represented groups. LJMU's longstanding and successful track record is evidenced by its performance against the Higher Education Funding Council of England (HEFCE) benchmarks in which it outperforms sector benchmarks.

The University values the diversity of its student population and is committed to providing equality of opportunity and avoiding unfair discrimination on any grounds. Recognising that its success depends on an ability to attract a wide range of students and to respond to a variety of educational backgrounds and life experiences, widening access to higher education is firmly embedded within the culture of the University and reflected in its mission.

LJMU will be seeking to maintain its high levels of widening participation success and ensure that its participation rates are not eroded by the new fee structure or by the increased focus of other institutions on this market. For this reason it has developed a package of student bursary support which, assuming maintenance of its current student profile, will be available to two-thirds of the LJMU student body. In addition, a range of scholarships will be available to students from £1,000 to £10,000 per annum.

As part of its widening access strategy LJMU has worked in collaboration with the local Further Education sector. Currently the University has agreements with a number of Further Education partners, through which it offers a range of Higher Education provision including LJMU franchised degree programmes, foundation programmes, foundation degrees and the validation of partner-owned degrees. LJMU has initiated, negotiated and agreed a regional Foundation Degree Consortium arrangement with its FE partners and has consulted with the consortium in relation to OFFA. Fees charged and bursary support offered by FE partners are available from individual institutions or covered within separate Access Agreements.

Fee limits

For the academic year 2007-2008 LJMU will charge a fee of £3,070 per year to each student studying a full-time undergraduate programme, including Foundation degree programmes. For a student on a placement year the tuition fee will be 50% of the annual fee.

The annual fee for a student studying a Postgraduate Certificate of Education programme is also £3,070, regardless of whether this is undertaken immediately following a degree or at a later stage.

Part-time fees will be set at a rate pro-rata to 75% of the equivalent full-time fee for each programme, as determined by the number of credits studied.

All tuition fees are subject to annual inflationary increases.

Additional fee income

While LJMU has a long and successful history of widening access it is committed to further investment in this area and ensuring that the students that most need support are provided with appropriate bursaries and financial assistance. It is envisaged that the level of support offered to students in lower income groups will not only encourage them to apply to LJMU but also assist in the retention of these students. LJMU recognises that it recruits a high percentage of its students from Liverpool and Merseyside, where many neighbourhoods of low participation in higher education also face other social and economic disadvantages.

Research amongst LJMU students has indicated that, particularly for students from widening participation backgrounds, student learner support is a key factor influencing retention. For this reason, LJMU is investing additional fee income in its teaching and curriculum to ensure that it provides programmes of study that are inclusive, accessible and appropriate to the learning and employability needs of its diverse student population. It will also enable the University to increase investment in retention strategies and its student facilities to ensure that the optimum support mechanisms are in place.

Bursaries, scholarships and financial support

LJMU is committed to ensuring that all students that are able to participate in higher education can do so regardless of their financial circumstances. In deciding how the University will utilise its additional fee income to financially support under-represented groups in higher education, LJMU has made the decision to focus on students that fall within the low income group. Low income students will be those that are eligible either for full state or partial state support. LJMU's existing portfolio of scholarships and bursaries, targeted at specific groups and funded from other sources, will continue to be available.

Bursaries

In addition to the wide range of bursaries already available to students of LJMU, the University will be introducing the following new bursaries.

A student that is in receipt of the full Higher Education Maintenance Grant will be eligible for a bursary of £1,025. This is over £700 more than the minimum level of £305 required by the Government. Based on figures for 2007-2008, to qualify for the full grant household income must not exceed £17,910 per annum.

A student that will be in receipt of the partial Higher Education Maintenance Grant will be eligible for a bursary of £410. This is £410 more than required by the Government as there is no statutory requirement for a bursary to be given to students that are partially funded. Based on current figures, to qualify for a partial grant household income must be between £17,910 and £38,330 per annum.

Based on trends in LJMU's student population, 65% of full-time undergraduate students would be eligible for a bursary of either £1,025 or £410.

Bursaries will be paid either via the Banking Automated Clearing System (BACS) direct to the student's nominated bank account or by cheque. Eligible students will receive the bursary during semester two after their attendance is confirmed through the Higher Education Students Early Statistics (HESES) census data and the attendance confirmation report to the Student Loan Company. Bursaries will be increased each year to reflect inflationary rises and, as with grants and student loans, will need to be applied for each year.

Bursaries will be paid to undergraduate full-time home students as defined by the Department for Education and Skills. They will also be available to PGCE students that meet the residency requirements. A home student will usually meet the residence requirements for living costs and includes students from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland but excludes the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. The bursaries will not be available to students funded by the NHS as they are exempt from fees.

LJMU will use income from fees to supplement the Access to Learning Fund. Through this fund the Student Guidance and Counselling team is able to support students experiencing financial hardship on an individual case-by-case basis. The fund is also available to self-funded students on full- and part-time programmes. LJMU's experience is that the Access to Learning Fund plays a major part in assisting student retention as funds can be directed to help those who need it the most.

Scholarships

Through the fee income LJMU will increase investment in scholarships. These are in addition to the wide range of scholarships and prizes already available at LJMU that recognise excellence in areas such as academic studies or sporting achievement. A student will be eligible for a maximum of one scholarship irrespective of whether or not they have received a bursary. The scholarships will be available to undergraduate, full-time, home and EU students only.

- **“LJMU DPAs” Scholarship** – £1,000 per annum with a maximum of 100 scholarships available each year. Eligible students must have at least three A grades at A level or equivalent qualification. (“DPA” is the shorthand version of the University’s “Dream–Plan–Achieve” brand line.)
- **“LJMU Achievers” Scholarship** – £1,000 per annum. Eligible students must be able to demonstrate an area of excellence above that of their peers, for example through volunteering, academic achievement, the arts or music. Priority will be given to students from within LJMU’s school / college network and should be recommended for the award by their school or college. Consideration will also be given to students that are capable but in danger of not fulfilling their potential due to their specific circumstances.
- **“LJMU Vice Chancellor’s Award”** – a highly prestigious scholarship of £10,000 awarded annually by the Vice Chancellor to the most outstanding, academically-gifted students. There will be a maximum of six scholarships each year.

Existing financial support

A range of bursaries and scholarships currently exist within LJMU – some for recruitment, others for retention – and these will remain post the introduction of variable fees. The LJMU Development and Alumni Relations Office will continue to work on raising increased funds for these initiatives. Details of existing scholarships and bursaries are advertised on the University web pages and on notice boards at appropriate times of the academic year. They will also be published in pre-enrolment material.

Provision of information to students

LJMU has a dedicated Student Guidance and Counselling team that provide advice and support to students on funding their higher education. Staff from the Student Recruitment and Widening Access team and the Student Guidance and Counselling team carry out outreach work targeted at schools and colleges to educate students on how to fund their higher education. Extending this programme, to ensure that students and school/ college staff advising students are fully aware of the financial support available, will form part of LJMU's outreach work.

Outreach work

LJMU has a long-established and successful history of outreach activity designed to raise aspirations and attainment and encourage students from under-represented groups to apply to higher education. Over 60% of its undergraduate full-time students are from lower income families and the University currently exceeds the benchmarks for this under-represented group in higher education. Within this, LJMU will seek to increase participation from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups. According to data gathered via student self-declaration 8% of LJMU's students are from a BME group. This is twice the local average and compares favourably in the regional context.

In October 2004, the University restructured its Student Recruitment and Widening Access departments to form a single new Student Recruitment and Widening Access team. This reflects the synergy between the work of the two teams and recognises the need to take a holistic approach to widening participation strategy and ensure that it is integrated into other areas of the student life-cycle. Much of the team's recruitment outreach activity, for example school and college liaison work, is directed at raising aspirations to under-represented groups.

The University takes an active role in regional widening participation projects, particularly through the Greater Merseyside Aimhigher partnership and the Liverpool City of Learning. In addition, LJMU works on a number of ESF funded widening participation projects. Such projects are often used to pilot widening participation initiatives to ascertain what works well and the results are then used to inform future strategy.

In terms of its track record, LJMU is involved in the following types of outreach activity that is specifically directed at widening participation:

- Subject specific taster days and masterclasses
- Associate student schemes and student advocate activity
- Student and staff volunteering including student mentoring
- Summer schools
- Transitional work from school to further education and then further education to higher education
- Production of promotional material directed at under-represented groups
- Workshops for schools/colleges on higher education and student finance
- Work with parents and pupils on raising aspirations
- Career conventions and industry days
- Working with agencies and advisers to higher education
- Advertising in targeted publications
- Study days targeted specifically at under-represented groups
- Disability and cultural diversity training for LJMU staff
- Disability support work for staff advising students on higher education, recruitment and post-entry support

New initiatives and investment in outreach work

The additional income will be used to fund the following new initiatives:

- Specific resource and activity to engage with prospective learners at an earlier stage in the decision making process. LJMU has traditionally focused its school liaison activity on years 12 and 13. The main focus will be on 200 schools.
- Specific resource and activity to engage with prospective learners from widening participation schools which have little or no experience of students participating in higher education through visits and workshops. LJMU will concentrate on local schools within the region.
- Further develop LJMU's engagement with prospective learners that have chosen a vocational route, primarily work based learning, which can provide a pathway to Foundation Degrees and other higher education qualifications. This will include working with employers in the region and FE College partners.

- Initiate specific programmes of activity to increase participation from BME groups via school/college and local community outreach work
- Staff and student volunteering programmes, including mentoring, specifically targeted on widening participation and community developments. This will build on the work that has previously been funded via the Higher Education Active Community Fund.
- Extend successfully piloted disability support initiative to all LJMU Faculties.

LJMU recognises that post-entry learner support is an important factor in encouraging under-represented groups to apply to higher education and ensuring the retention of these students.

Research suggests that students that make friends at University are more likely to continue with their studies when they face a difficulty. It also shows that students that have a strong sense of self-efficacy are more likely to succeed. The additional income will be used to support strategies in the following areas:

- Induction support
- Facilitation of students getting to know each other
- Provision of more effective systems for tracking students through their programme, linked to targeted support for students at risk
- Targeted support for students that have been in care of their Local Authority, Foyer residents and “Looked After Children”.
- Additional study support for students at risk of under-achieving
- Personal tutorial support
- Staff development programmes for learner support

Milestones

As identified, LJMU will be seeking to maintain its widening participation success and ensure that its participation rates are not adversely affected by the new fee structure or the increased competitive market.

LJMU will therefore look to maintain current levels of participation from lower income groups, identified by students that will be in receipt of either the full or partial Higher Education Maintenance Grant.

LJMU will also continue to measure its success in attracting students with a disability. Currently 5.75% of LJMU's home students have declared a disability and the University will be looking to maintain this percentage.

In terms of students from BME backgrounds, LJMU will seek to maintain its current 8% participation from this group. This is twice the local region's average where the University recruits a high percentage of its students.

Monitoring arrangements

LJMU will monitor progress in improving access by utilising, analysing and reporting on the outcomes of the University's recruitment process and the Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) student record.

LJMU will undertake its own evaluation of projects and initiatives identified in this access agreement. For example, the University will monitor and evaluate the number of beneficiaries reached on specific projects, and feedback from students, colleges, and community groups. Part of this evaluation will be achieved through LJMU's integrated Customer Relationship Management and student record systems.

As a minimum, an annual assessment of the University's progress will be reported in the following ways:

- A formal report via the Senior Management Group of the University to the LJMU Board of Governors
- A report within the University's annual monitoring statement to HEFCE
- Included, where appropriate, in the University's corporate planning statements to HEFCE