

NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY

ACCESS AGREEMENT

2008/09 – 2010/11

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The University is proposing a new Access Agreement ahead of the expected date in order to progress not only revised bursary arrangements but also significant changes in the organisation, focus and scale of our engagement with schools, colleges, young people and other agencies concerned to improve attainment and progression in our region.
- 1.2 The East Midlands has a below average profile of educational attainment and progression, but these features are especially pronounced in the University's immediate sub-region of Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City. The University is an important part of its community and we continue to be committed to working, in varied and developing ways, to improve education, achievement and HE progression in our community. We propose to direct a greater proportion of our Additional Fee Income to this work.
- 1.3 Our revised bursary programme has been planned to align with the new national maintenance grant arrangements and to target financial support to those undergraduate students where it will have most beneficial impact on progression to HE, retention and success. Details of the revised scheme are provided in Section 5.
- 1.4 The revisions proposed to our outreach activities reflect the University's long-standing commitment to widening participation and are informed by our continually developing experience and reviews of current activities, by recent developments in national policy and guidanceⁱ, by published researchⁱⁱ and particularly by substantially improved data on HE progression in the East Midlands.ⁱⁱⁱ Over the last decade, our widening participation practices have been cited nationally by UUK as examples of good practice and the Times Higher Educational Supplement identified NTU as one of 28 'access elite universities' with an excellent record in all the areas of teaching, research, retention and widening participation. Our innovative 'Students in Classrooms' initiative led DfES to commission NTU to manage a national pilot of the 'Student Associates Aimhigher' scheme and to develop materials and provide support for other HEIs implementing the revised 'Student Associates' programmes. In 2003 and 2004 the University hosted successful national conferences to share good practice in the fields of raising aspirations among primary school children and their parents and using undergraduates to support learning in primary and secondary classrooms. NTU's commitment to supporting retention and success for diverse groups of learners has also received national attention^{iv}. We work closely with the University of Nottingham on a number of schemes and with the

Nottinghamshire Aimhigher team, which we host and expect to continue to serve as the 'lead HEI' from August 2008.

- 1.5 In addition to our own established and extensive programmes, through partnership in the LEAP AHEAD Lifelong Learning Network serving Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire and in the RDA-funded Collaborative Higher Education Alliance in the northern, former coalfield, areas of the two counties, as well as through collaboration with seven local FECs providing NTU award-bearing programmes, mostly foundation degrees, we are extensively engaged in developing and delivering programmes tailored to the needs of employers and their non-traditional learner workforces.
- 1.6 In addition to our now well established partnerships with schools and colleges in our immediate region, we are working with consortia of schools and colleges in planning and preparing for teaching the first Diploma lines in 2008/09 and plans to extend this work as new lines are in place.
- 1.7 The University is committed to and successful in providing high quality educational opportunities to a diverse student population. Students from BME groups have been increasing in recent years:

**% of Full-time Undergraduates, Home Domiciled:
with BME Ethnic Background**

	2005/06	2006/07
Year 1 %	23.3%	25.8%
All Years %	21.5%	23.0%

and recruitment from lower socio-economic groups has been at benchmark levels, as the data below indicates:

**Participation of under-represented groups in higher education:
Young full-time first degree entrants 2005-2006**

	NTU Actual	NTU Benchmark (location adjusted)
State Sector schools	91.8%	91.2%
NS-SEC classes 4,5,6,7	31.8%	32.1%
Low Participation Neighbourhoods	14.6%	14.9%

**Participation of under-represented groups in higher education:
Mature full-time first degree undergraduate entrants 2005-2006**

	NTU Actual	NTU Benchmark (location adjusted)
No previous HE experience and Low Participation Neighbourhoods	25.2%	20.7%

**Projected learning outcomes and efficiencies:
Full-time students starting first degree courses 2004-2005**

	NTU Projected	NTU Benchmark
NTU	82.2%	77.7%

- 1.8 The University has excellent retention and success rates for all students, including those from low income families. This record prompted a visit by the National Audit Office in 2007 to examine our strategies and practices which consistently secure significantly better than benchmark performance^v.
- 1.9 The scale and extent of our work with schools, colleges and young people has grown significantly: we intend it to grow further. In order to support the effective coordination of this work and ensure fluent and coherent interactions with partners, we are establishing a new 'NTU Schools and Colleges Service' (provisional title). This will draw together our outreach work, individual subject area initiatives, information, advice and guidance services, and new provision designed to support and engage learners, teachers and parents in a coherent programme of activities structured to target schools, colleges and communities and, at a second level, identified learners and their families. We will be extending the team engaged with this work to include posts linked to the design and provision of subject related activities (e.g. tasters, mentoring), a personalised service to identified learners and a new senior post with overall responsibility for this programme and service.

2.0 CONTEXT

- 2.1 Nottingham Trent University is set in the heart of a region of social, economic and educational disadvantage. Nottingham City is the seventh most deprived district in England and has the highest level of deprivation in the East Midlands. Of the City's 176 Lower Level Super Output Areas (LLSOAs), 79 are in the lowest 10% and 155 are in the 40% most deprived nationally. POLAR data show that in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire the young participation rates in higher education are the lowest in the East Midlands (16% and 27% respectively in 2000). Pre-16 educational attainment for the City, one of the most improved LAs nationally, and for Nottinghamshire remain low. DCSF data for 2006 indicate 28.5% and 40.1% respectively of Year 11 pupils achieving 5 A*-C grades (including Maths and English), compared with the national average of 45.8%.
- 2.2 Across the 18 public sector secondary schools in Nottingham City, 70% of pupils reside in the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods (IMD scores). In all but one of these schools, more than 60% of pupils live in the lowest 40% of neighbourhoods (LLSOAs). In Nottinghamshire LA, the picture is more varied but the majority of schools also recruit most of their pupils from the 40% most deprived neighbourhoods.
- 2.3 The extent to which educational attainment is associated with a range of complex cultural and economic factors is well explored by work undertaken by Aimhigher^{vi} and in a recent HEFCE funded enquiry in Nottingham North, the parliamentary constituency with the lowest HE participation rate^{vii}. Both reports support established evidence showing that differential achievement by social class is evident at the earliest stages of schooling and strongly linked to parental education and basic skills, as well as to local cultural and economic history. Interventions to increase HE progression cannot usefully focus only on secondary education, nor only on young people themselves: families and communities are influential. Intervention strategies must be informed, sustained and coordinated with partners.
- 2.4 The University's strategic plan 2004-2010 demonstrates that whilst the institution's excellent teaching and employment records ensure national and growing international popularity, it retains a strong commitment to supporting the regeneration of the community in which it is based, and from which recruitment is also growing. *"NTU is a national and international player with a real commitment to the regional agenda. NTU works actively with its regional community, supporting local priorities such as urban regeneration."*
- 2.5 The structure and organisation of secondary education in our City is in a period of rapid change and development. One Academy is already established and three more are planned to open by 2010. We work closely with the existing Djanogly Academy and are engaged in developmental discussions with two of the three proposed new Academies (The University of Nottingham is sponsoring the fourth).

- 2.6 Given the high levels of local educational disadvantage and our strong commitment to the community, Nottingham Trent's outreach activity has been focused within the region, particularly targeting areas of low educational attainment and progression, and a high proportion of institutional widening participation funding is allocated directly to this work to raise aspirations and attainment locally.
- 2.7 Our first Access Agreement explained in detail the University's then extant widening participation programmes as:
- 'a programme to raise aspirations and attainment in 26 primary schools and 57 secondary schools enabling direct contact with over 30,000 young people, 2,500 parents and 2,000 school and college staff during 2003-2004;
 - an Admissions Compact Scheme with 51 school and FE partners which enabled over 250 local first-generation students to access higher education in 2003-2004;
 - bursary provision for eligible students entering the university through this route (£123,000 in 2003-2004);
 - the co-ordination of the Students in Classrooms initiative which places over 400 undergraduates in local primary and secondary schools to support learning and attainment;
 - a programme of pre and post entry guidance and support work for Access students in 4 local FE colleges;
 - a joint WP Activities Officer post with an FE partner;
 - a first semester retention programme in all university Schools;
 - provision of a widening participation base room at the university.'

It also outlined planned developments to this programme on which we reported in our Access Agreement Monitoring Report for 2006-07. We now propose to extend this work further, as explained later in Section 5.

3.0 ACCESS AGREEMENT: FEES AND BURSARIES

- 3.1 The University will charge the maximum level of fees for all full-time undergraduate provision. It is expected that recent trends in recruitment will continue, further bolstered by our increasing work with schools and individuals, and that the proportions of new students from the region and from low income households will rise. Consequently, we have planned for annual increases in the proportions of students eligible for NTU bursaries over the three year period 2008/09 to 2010/11.
- 3.2 Prior to the introduction of the tuition fee loan scheme in 2006, some 40% of the University's students qualified for full tuition fee support. In 2006/07, under the new arrangements, 2000 first year students, representing 45.5% of the potentially eligible population, received NTU bursaries, with 1087 (24.7%) receiving the maximum bursary.
- 3.3 Our analyses of recruitment trends and strategy for widening participation have informed planning for bursaries on the basis that the proportion of students eligible for bursaries will increase annually over the period 2008/09 to 2010/2011.
- 3.4 The University is committed to providing the £310 bursary (2008-09) to all full-time undergraduate students, including students on full-time PGCE programmes, paying the maximum home tuition fee, who are in receipt of full state support.
- 3.5 The university will also provide the following bursaries to eligible students paying the maximum home tuition fee (2008-09 values):
 - 3.5.1 £740 per annum maintenance bursary to all full time undergraduate students receiving a maintenance grant with a residual household income of £25k or less.
 - 3.5.2 £260 per annum maintenance bursary for all full time undergraduate students whose permanent home address is in Nottinghamshire/has an NG postcode (at the time of their original application for support) receiving a maintenance grant with a residual household income of £25k or less.
 - 3.5.3 A maintenance bursary on a sliding scale between £650 and £350 per annum for all full-time undergraduate students receiving a maintenance grant with a residual household income of more than £25k and no more than £40k.
 - 3.5.4 £110 per annum maintenance bursary for all full time undergraduate students receiving a maintenance grant whose permanent home address is in Nottinghamshire/has an NG postcode (at the time of their original application for support with a residual household income of more than £25k and no more than £40k.

- 3.5.5 A revised competitive academic scholarship bursary scheme, to support the maintenance costs of the best performing first year students in receipt of the maximum NTU Bursary. Scholarship recipients will receive £2,000 per annum in their second and subsequent years of study (excluding paid placements and repeat years).
- 3.5.6 We will also incorporate the University's commitment to provide accommodation bursaries (through a partnership with the Uniaid charity) to five students per year.
- 3.6 The University will continue to allocate an additional £75,000 per annum to a discretionary hardship fund managed by Student Support Services, primarily to assist students who are unable, perhaps for reasons relating to disability, mental health difficulties or family commitments, to work during the vacation.
- 3.7 These bursaries and allocations will increase in accordance with inflationary rises in the fee limit.
- 3.8 We will consolidate the staffing requirements to administer bursaries in an efficient and responsive manner (£100,000 in 08/09 but rising to reflect increased costs).
- 3.9 The University is a signatory to the UUK/SCOP model bursary scheme and the costs estimated do not include any potential payment to the Student Loan Company for any services provided in this regard through HEBSS.

4.0 ACCESS AGREEMENT: FINANCIAL INFORMATION

- 4.1 The University is committed to providing clear and accessible information to all prospective students, including exactly what they will have to pay and what financial support will be in place for the duration of their programme of study.
- 4.2 In August 2005 the University moved to a more centrally managed admissions system which enables trained staff to apply standards consistently and effectively. This provides equality of opportunity for all individuals to gain admission to a course suited to their ability and aspirations. The University seeks to ensure that reliable and consistent information is supplied to applicants on how they will be assessed for entry to the courses, taking into account the increasing diversity of applicants, qualifications and pathways into higher education. This high quality admissions system is the first point of contact for prospective students making enquiries about university courses and will also be best placed to supply comprehensive financial information to students in these initial stages of interest. Applicants from schools and colleges in our planned partnership programme will have a named contact for their enquiries. The development of Gold Standard customer service throughout the university as part of the 2004-2010 strategic plan also highlights the University's commitment to the provision of a high quality service to all enquirers and applicants.
- 4.3 The University will further extend its financial advice services to provide a first rate information service to all potential students and their parents/sponsors offering:
 - 4.3.1 Dedicated webpages on tuition fees and related financial information including course fee information (together with the fact that tuition fees may be subject to annual inflationary rises and what that might mean), frequently asked questions and key contacts. The pages also provide access to a financial support calculator and 'ready reckoners'.
 - 4.3.2 Hard copy literature containing the same information made available, especially locally through Connexions, Aimhigher and schools and colleges to target particular groups of WP students and their parents.
 - 4.3.3 Tailored training for all outreach and admissions staff on student finance.
 - 4.3.4 Clear guidance on University policy provided by senior staff during the induction of new staff to the university.
 - 4.3.5 Informative and high quality publications, distributed nationally and locally through outreach activities.
 - 4.3.6 Financial advice provision enhanced by a further 0.5FTE, (in addition to the 1.0 FTE already indicated in our 2005 Access

Agreement): we will move this work forward by introducing financial capability workshops and education sessions for current and prospective local students, using 'FSA Money Doctors' as an initial framework.

4.3.7 An increasing number of parents' workshops and finance events delivered in target schools (including the primary sector), in colleges and at the University.

5.0 ACCESS AGREEMENT: OUTREACH

- 5.1 As indicated in Section 1, the University plans significantly to extend its already extensive and diverse range of engagements and activities with schools and colleges across the region. A new progression partnership programme has been planned which will draw together, both strategically and operationally, communications and activities with identified schools and colleges, ranging from the generic to targeted work with individually identified pupils. Not all of this work will be focused exclusively on widening participation, but because of the demographic and educational profile of the region, summarised in Section 2 a high proportion of learners are from groups currently underrepresented in higher education. . Our programmes will be coordinated with partner HEIs and, it is anticipated, with the newly configured Aimhigher teams, particularly in Nottinghamshire. We will be making greater provision for subject related activities with partner schools and colleges ranging from 'master classes', taster events and 'activity breaks', in which participants spend a day or more sampling subject areas and fields beyond their experience in school or college, to supporting 'Gateways 1-3' consortia in preparing for and delivering new Diplomas at level 3.
- 5.2 Our first Access Agreement proposed an allocation of £325k to support outreach work with schools and colleges. We now propose to increase that to £1m in 2008/09. This additional resource will support the extension of outreach programmes targeted at neighbourhoods, communities, groups, schools and colleges with low HE progression rates and, within them, identified individuals.
- 5.3 In support of this new programme, we will establish five new posts within the University, one at a more senior level, to support academic teams in the design and delivery of outreach activities, 14-19 diploma developments and subject-linked mentoring; additional administrative support and specialist resource to develop and sustain web-based, subject area linked, review and extension resources for teachers and pupils/students in partner schools and colleges. We will also be making provision for specialists in each subject area to prepare and deliver these events and services, as well as for effective tracking, evaluation and development.
- 5.4 Our outreach and support programme will include:
- 5.4.1 The continued extension of our programmes with primary schools. Recent educational research identifies a close relationship between primary school children's' expectations of their educational futures and their actual outcomes post-16 informs our plans to continue to extend our programme with primary schools in Nottingham City. Early intervention with children and, most importantly, with their families, to extend conceptions of possible futures is an important long-term strategy for improving attainment and progression in areas of Nottingham with the poorest levels of attainment and progression. For reasons explained in our Monitoring

Report for 2006/07, we have reduced our planned rate of expansion of this programme to additional new schools per annum

- 5.4.2 'Activity breaks' targeting learners from social groups currently under-represented in HE.
- 5.4.3 A new partnership scheme for schools and colleges, succeeding our successful but smaller compact programme, to provide all 11-18 schools and further education colleges in Nottinghamshire and, in time, also identified schools and colleges in the wider East Midlands region, with access to expertise, jointly-configured educational interventions, services and use of resources designed to support attainment and progression.
- 5.4.4 The continuing development of the programme of 'Advantage Nottinghamshire', the targeted outreach programme developed and operated from 2006 jointly by the University of Nottingham, NTU and the Open University, supported by Aimhigher, for young people from across the area with no family history of HE.
- 5.4.5 Further development of new 'Students in Classrooms' elective modules which enable undergraduates to gain academic credit for supporting learning in local primary and secondary schools whilst raising the profile of that particularly programme of study with potential students and school staff and building curriculum links.
- 5.4.6 An extension of the strategies developed in the University to provide social support in the days following initial enrolment to enable all students, especially those from non-traditional backgrounds, to feel that Nottingham Trent is a University which will challenge and support them to succeed.
- 5.4.7 Continuation of the programme involving maths study support to encourage students who may lack confidence in maths to nonetheless apply for the programme and to support their early stages of study.
- 5.4.8 Development and provision of new outreach and transition support initiatives for:
 - adults with mental health difficulties
This initiative will build on recent networking with mental health specialists in local further education/employment contexts to strengthen liaison and referral/transition support links for adults with mental health difficulties who may be considering entering higher education. The plan is to establish with two new agencies each year.
 - students with autistic spectrum disorders
This initiative will strengthen links with the National Autistic Society on a local/regional level to develop transition and on-course specialist support for

students with autistic spectrum disorders (such as Asperger's Syndrome). The plan is to develop the specialist support provision available for students in Year One (through partnership with NAS) and move this forward with the introduction of information events for prospective students with ASD and their families in Years 2 and 3.

- disabled students

This initiative will introduce a pre-entry welcome event for disabled students, building on the successful model of current transition support initiatives for mature students. The development will be piloted in Year One, and further developed in Years 2 and 3 following evaluation.

- care leavers

This development would involve the implementation of a project to create a supportive infrastructure for outreach and transition support for young students entering HE/NTU from local authority care and/or Foyer projects. The University aims to achieve the Buttle Trust Quality Mark during Year One and to establish an activity programme for young people in local authority care through collaboration with Leaving Care teams in Nottingham/Nottinghamshire in Years 2 and 3.

5.4.9 Development of an integrated and comprehensive tracking, monitoring and evaluation capability to support effective targeting and evidence based evaluation of the impact of our activities on HE progression and success by a new appointment.

6.0 ACCESS AGREEMENTS: MILESTONES

	Baseline	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
Proportion of f/t First Yr undergraduate students eligible for full and partial support*	44%	45%	46%	47%
Number of schools and colleges in progression partnership programme	-	45	60	75
<u>New</u> primary schools in families programme		4 new	4 new	4 new
'Activity breaks' (each for 40 participants)	4	8	10	12
Programmes offering 'Students In Classrooms' electives	6	8	12	18
Disability Outreach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support links with Mental Health agencies • people with autistic spectrum disorders • Disabled students • Care leavers 		2 New support programme with NAS. Pilot new pre-entry prog. BTQ mark obtained	4 IAG programme Extend programme. Pilot outreach programme	6 Run programme
Improvement in Yr 1-2 progression rates		1%	1%	1%

7.0 ACCESS AGREEMENT: MONITORING

- 7.1 Progress towards milestones will continue to be monitored by the Senior Management Team (SMT). Professor Nigel Hastings (Pro Vice Chancellor), a member of the Team, has responsibility across the institution for the Access Agreement.
- 7.2 The Access Agreement Management Group, chaired by Professor Hastings, oversees operational progress. Members include the Head of Student Support Services, the Director of Finance, the Admissions Manager, the Head of Widening Participation and, from 2008, the Head of Schools & Colleges Services. This Access Agreement Management Group will report annually to the SMT, via Professor Hastings.
- 7.3 The University sets its milestones using NTU enrolment data and HESA statistics and will use this information to monitor and track progress.

ⁱ HEFCE 07/12. Higher Education outreach: targeting disadvantaged learners.

ⁱⁱ Universities of West of England and Nottingham report to HEFCE. Young Participation in Higher Education in the Parliamentary Constituencies of Birmingham Hodge Hill, Bristol South, Nottingham North and Sheffield Brightside. October 2007.

ⁱⁱⁱ Kerrigan, M.: Responding to Change: an update of Higher Education participation trends in the East Midlands. Aimhigher East Midlands. September 2007.

^{iv} Universities UK (2002) Students Services: Effective approaches to retaining students in higher education (pg18) <http://bookshop.universitiesuk.ac.uk/downloads/servsum.pdf>
Social Exclusion Unit (2004) Mental Health and Social Exclusion (Pg 81)
<http://www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk/downloadsdoc.asp?id=134>

^v National Audit Office (2007) Staying the Course: the retention of students in higher education.
http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/nao_reports/06-07/0607616.pdf

^{vi} Kerrigan, M. Attainment and higher education progression: a study of widening participation trends in Nottinghamshire. December 2006.. Aimhigher Nottinghamshire.

^{vii} Gates, P., Coward, S. & Byrom, T. Young Participation in HE in the Parliamentary Constituency of Nottingham North