

Queen Mary, University of London

ACCESS AGREEMENT

FOR THE OFFICE OF FAIR ACCESS

SEPTEMBER 2008 TO AUGUST 2011

1. Introduction

1.1 This document sets out the plans of Queen Mary, University of London in respect of fees and bursaries and its widening access strategy for a three year period from academic session 2008-09. This follows the introduction of variable tuition fees in 2006.

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

- continues to invest in and enhance its already extremely active outreach activities to support aspiration and attainment-raising amongst groups of students under-represented 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;
- provides clear and transparent information about this and other financial support to potential applicants with the aim of mitigating the possible deterrent effect of fees.

1.3 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

2.1 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.

2.2 Queen Mary, one of the three largest multi-faculty colleges of the University of London, is a leading teaching and research institution, recently ranked 15th in the UK and 99th 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.

2.3 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.

2.4 These two elements are embedded in our Strategic Plan 2006-10 and 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

3.1 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. The College consistently meets or exceeds HEFCE benchmarks for representation from key target groups, as shown by the table below, which is based on the most recent HESA data available:

	HEFCE location-adjusted benchmark	QM actual performance
2005-06		
State school entrants	80.0%	83.6%
LPN entrants	9.4%	10.6%
National Statistics Socio –Economic Classification groups (NS-SEC) 4-7	26.7%	32.4%

3.2 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

4.1 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 decided to charge a fee of **£3,000 for all subjects of study for each year of study** for the duration of an undergraduate degree from their introduction in 2006. Subsequently, we expect to increase fees each year in accordance with inflationary increases allowed by government regulations. For session 2008/9 this will mean a fee of **£3,145** will be charged. We will continue to give all students at the point of enrolment a clear estimate of such increases.

5. Bursaries Policy

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

5.2 Queen Mary will 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 guidance.

5.3 With this objective, Queen Mary for session 2008-09 will operate the following scheme in respect of those students from households with income less than or equal to **£25,000** who

qualify for the **full HE Maintenance Grant of £2,835:**

- We will fulfil the requirement to make up the difference of **£310** (the minimum bursary) between the level of full HE Maintenance Grant and the tuition fee charged.
 - 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 **£1,050** per year of study.
- 5.4 In subsequent years, we expect to apply the annual inflationary increase announced for fees, loans and grants to both the household income threshold levels for state support and to our £1,050 bursary for students who qualify for the full Higher Education Maintenance Grant. The required increase to the minimum bursary (i.e. the difference between the level of the full HE Maintenance Grant and the fee charged) will be implemented within the inflationary increase applied to the larger College bursary.
- 5.5 Although the above group of students' need for support is greatest, as recognised in the DfES Maintenance Grant scheme, we believe that students from slightly better-off backgrounds also need financial support to help with the costs of study. We will therefore pay a total bursary of **£839** per year of study to students who qualify for a **partial HE Maintenance Grant** in 2008/9 and who come from households with incomes of **between £25,001 and £34,613**.
- 5.6 In subsequent years, we expect to apply the inflationary increase announced for fees, loans and grants to both the household income threshold levels for state support given above and to our £839 bursary.
- 5.7 Queen Mary is committed to a 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. 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 be enrolled at Queen Mary.
- 5.8 Queen Mary will pay bursaries to students in two instalments each year: we intend to pay these in February and May, depending on the time at which Queen Mary receives fee income with which to pay the bursaries.
- 5.9 Queen Mary will pay bursaries to students by cheque or BACS payment.
- 5.10 From the academic session 2006/7 Queen Mary has also offered a special higher rate bursary of £4000 in each year of study to students from households of income of less than £18,360 (at the threshold rate for 2008/9), who qualify for the full HE Maintenance Grant and who also achieve three 'A'-levels taken in the same year. This scheme will continue for new students who start a course at Queen Mary in the academic year 2008/9 and for students who started a course before this date and are already in receipt of the bursary. The scheme will not be available to students who start a course at Queen Mary in the academic year 2009/10, or in subsequent years.
- 5.11 The household income threshold level of £25,000 referred to in sections 5.3 and 5.5 above

reflects the increase to the threshold level for a full HE maintenance grant to students announced by the Department for Innovation, University and Skills on 5 July 2007. The two bursary schemes described in these sections will apply to full time undergraduate students who start a course at Queen Mary in the academic year 2008/9. Students who started a course before the 2008/9 academic session, and who are already in receipt of a bursary, will continue to receive their bursaries based on assessment at the previous household income threshold rates for full and partial maintenance grants. For continuing students in 2008/9 these threshold rates will be £18,360 and £34,613 , and the bursary payments will be £1,050 and £839 respectively.

6. Provision of Information to Students, Schools and Parents

6.1 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.

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

6.3 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 can play a crucial determining role in deciding whether or not to progress to higher education. Accordingly, Queen Mary will continue its 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;
- 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.

6.4 Queen Mary recognises that care leavers are significantly under-represented in higher education and that a particular problem for this group of students is a lack of clear information about the financial and other support available to them. The communications programme described above will address this through specific targeted materials.

7. Outreach Work

7.1 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 under the direction of the Head of Education Liaison and Access
- academic departments.

7.2 These activities are monitored by the Widening Participation Committee, which reports

directly to the Academic Board of the College.

- 7.3 The Queen Mary outreach programme consists of a variety of mutually supporting activities, including Saturday, Summer and Spring Schools, taster classes, student tutoring and student mentoring, subject specialist programmes and support for particular groups. A summary of the major activities is attached as **Appendix I**.
- 7.4 Queen Mary also makes a central contribution to generic outreach in east London through collaboration with other institutions. It is the lead institution in the London East Thames Gateway Aimhigher partnership and the London Region Excellence Hub, which provides a central point for information for parents, children, schools and third parties on local and national outreach provision for Gifted and Talented learners in London.
- 7.5 We are committed to maintaining our outreach programme and taking every opportunity to enhance it. The programme is already funded from College resources (not including Aimhigher funds) to a value of some £450,000 per annum and we feel that this is an appropriate level of resource, which we would seek to maintain in the period 2008-11.

8. Milestone Targets

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 Queen Mary is concerned that the introduction of fees 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.
- 8.3 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.
- 8.4 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.
- 8.5 We think that the milestone targets set out in **Appendix II** are sufficiently stretching in our particular circumstances.

9. Institutional Monitoring Arrangements

- 9.1 This Access Agreement has been embedded in Queen Mary's newly revised and updated Widening Participation Strategy and the milestones in the Access Agreement adopted as targets under that strategy. These in turn are embedded in the Strategic Plan 2006-10. The College's Widening Participation 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 if it seems necessary to make changes to the activity programme supporting the strategy in order to meet targets. An annual report to Academic Board on these matters will be made and this will also serve as a report to OFFA.

10. Other Resources

- 10.1 Queen Mary has committed itself to a fundraising strategy over the next four years, which is in part aimed at raising 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

- 11.1 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	A series of A2 revision and enrichment classes that take place on Saturday mornings. They are open to Year 13 students attending a school or college in Barking and Dagenham, Hackney, Havering, Newham, Redbridge and Tower Hamlets.
Physics Practical School	The Physics Practical School is targeted at A2 physics students. Five groups of classes are offered, with each group of 16 students working for three hour sessions on three consecutive Wednesdays. The project aims to give students the opportunity to carry out open-ended investigations using equipment not normally available in school and college laboratories. The sessions are very 'hands-on' and students work in groups of two on each experiment, solving practical problems of experimental design and data collection.
Spring School in Science and Engineering	A three day activity that is open to Year 12 students attending Sir George Monoux and Leyton Sixth Form Colleges in Waltham Forest. Students attend subject taster sessions in engineering, materials and science and mathematics.
Evening Revision Programme	Activity offered to all Year 13 students attending a London or Essex school or college. Subjects offered include mathematics, sociology, psychology and government and politics, and will cover one syllabus with past examination questions and case study material. Classes run for two and a half hours each evening on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings at Queen Mary
Year 10 Masterclasses	This well established masterclass programme involves all of the secondary schools in Waltham Forest. The scheme is delivered over three Saturday mornings in seven subjects, to include biomaterials, English, geography, history, mathematics, modern languages and physics. Two students are selected from each school and they work with academic staff on activities and topics that stretch them beyond the established GCSE syllabus.
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.
Advanced Masterclasses	This programme is open to Year 12 students attending local sixth form schools and colleges. Classes include biology, chemistry, economics, English, history and physics. There are four classes throughout the year, and students work with current university undergraduates and academic staff on activities and topics designed to stretch them beyond the current A2 exam syllabuses. Students are also given information on how to apply to university to study their specialist subject.

School visits	A programme of school visits to the Queen Mary campus for Year 7-11 pupils to raise their awareness and aspirations. This work is supported by a team of undergraduate student ambassadors, who will visit schools and colleges on request to talk about studying at university, and what to expect from student life.
Hackney Year 10 subject taster days	Series of Year 10 subject taster days developed in response to a request from schools in Hackney. Queen Mary works in partnership with two other HEIs to offer six subjects over three days. Students pick two subjects and attend an HEI on the day of their choice. Queen Mary offers taster sessions in computer science and biology
Yr 10 Summer School	This well established and popular summer school is organised in collaboration with three partner HEIs. 140 Year 10 students from six east London boroughs take part, and all the students will spend one day at Queen Mary working on the specialist subjects of computer science and biology.
Year 12 Health Summer School	This five day summer school takes place in partnership with City University. It is open to students in the boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Barnet, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Havering, Kensington and Chelsea, Newham, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest and Westminster who are interested in studying a health-related subject at university. Students choose to participate in a range of different health-related subject taster sessions, to include biology and medicine at Queen Mary. There is also a range of careers talks. Students research one graduate health-related career in small groups, and then present their findings to their peers at the end of the week.
Student Mentoring	Mentoring support for Year 9-13 students provided by Queen Mary undergraduate students.
Student Tutoring	Queen Mary students are placed in local schools to provide classroom assistance
Student Assisted Medical and Dental Applications (SAMDA)	SAMDA is a student led scheme based in the School of Medicine and Dentistry at Queen Mary. It works with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to support them with their applications for competitive courses in medicine and dentistry. The project is delivered through a programme of outreach work with schools and colleges in east London, and it offers practical support throughout the whole process of application.
Science and Engineering Foundation Programme	'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.

Leadership role in London East Thames Gateway Partnership	Queen Mary is the lead partner in the LETG, which is the largest Aimhigher partnership in London.
Leadership role in London Excellence Hub	In April 2007 the Government established nine Excellence Hubs, which are part of a national programme to support the education of 3-19 year olds with outstanding gifts and talents. Queen Mary is the lead HEI in the London Region Hub.

Appendix 11: Milestones 2008- 2011

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