



ACCESS AGREEMENT

School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London

Introduction

This Access Agreement has been submitted to the Office of Fair Access to outline the measures that would be taken to ensure that all prospective students, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to benefit from the experience of studying at SOAS.

Current institutional context

1. SOAS is a specialised college of the University of London with a mission to promote understanding of Asia and Africa through scholarship, teaching and research on language, social science and the humanities. In 2003-04 there were a total of 3456 students, just over half at undergraduate level. Slightly more than four-fifths of undergraduates have EU residential status: the undergraduate body is ethnically diverse, with more than 50% in 2003-04 declaring themselves non-white.
2. SOAS is committed to maintaining and increasing the social and ethnic diversity of its student body, especially by providing opportunities for under-represented groups. This diversity is one of the distinguishing features of SOAS, and we strive to ensure equal opportunity for all students regardless of their age, gender, ethnic origin or religious background.
3. Current activity in widening participation straddles issues concerned with encouraging under-represented groups, recruitment and retention. The amount identified by HEFCE in the School's current block grant for widening participation activity is mainly spent on activity relating to retention issues. Within its widening participation strategy, SOAS has several outreach activities designed to ensure that students from all backgrounds are encouraged into higher education and represented within the student body. The main activities currently carried out to ensure widening participation in university education are as follows:

i) Bridging Courses

SOAS offers a variety of Bridging Courses aimed at supporting the transition into university for widening participation cohorts.

The Bridging Course for Mature Students is a free, week-long pre-session course that consists of lectures, study skills sessions, an introduction to aspects of life at SOAS, and the chance for students to develop friendships with each other. Students are expected to complete an essay which is marked and feedback given.

The Bridging Course for First Generation Students is also a free, week-long pre-session course of a similar structure to the course for Mature Students, except that it is young UK undergraduate offer holders who are the first in their family to go to university that are invited to attend.

The Bridging Course for Students with Specific Learning Difficulties is a free, three-day pre-session course, organised in collaboration with Learning Advisors in the Academic Development Directorate, which aims to provide study skills advice tailored to students with specific learning difficulties

ii) Summer Schools

The jointly funded HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) and ESF (European Social Fund) Summer Schools for Year 10 and 11 students give students with no family background in higher education the opportunity to experience what it would be like. These Schools are not aimed at students intending to apply to SOAS, although some may subsequently do so.

Year 10 Summer School

For 3 days during July Year 10 students from across London have the opportunity to visit SOAS and experience a university environment. This Summer School is designed to motivate and encourage pupils at an early stage to consider progression to higher education and other opportunities available.

Year 11 Summer School

The Year 11 Summer School is a week-long programme of lectures, workshops and activities designed to give students interested in languages, humanities and social sciences the opportunity to explore these areas further, and give them the experience of a university environment.

In addition the School also runs a Gifted and Talented Summer School aimed at Year 12 students interested in the humanities.

iii) Mentoring Programme

SOAS has a number of opportunities for SOAS students to become involved with the local community, schools and colleges. The mentoring programme allows our students to work directly with those in local schools and FE Colleges.

iv) College Conferences

SOAS collaborates with several partner colleges to provide a joint conference for Access students interested in studying humanities and politics. The conference offers cross-curriculum intervention and sharing, whilst showing clear transitions into Higher Education through delivering lectures and workshops on a humanity-related topic. The conference forms part of the Access course credits.

v) Aimhigher

Aimhigher WECAN (WEst Central And North) London focuses on raising aspirations and increasing the progression of 14-19 year olds in secondary schools. SOAS is an active member of the partnership which provides mentors and ambassadors as role models in schools as well as developing special projects which meet the partnership aims. This large partnership will enable SOAS to further aid in the progression of young people into higher education in an increased geographical area covering 14 boroughs. In addition to the

partnership SOAS works extensively with Aimhigher Coordinators both in schools and at borough level to provide a menu of widening participation activity that aims to progress students into further and higher education.

vi) Routes into Languages

The London consortium of the national Routes into Languages programme (Capital L) aims to increase the take-up of languages in schools and has a strong widening participation focus. The project is in collaboration with 8 HEI partners including University of Westminster, Birkbeck, Goldsmiths, the Open University, UCL and LSE. SOAS and London Met share joint lead co-directed by the Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching, Faculty of Languages and Culture) who provides strategic leadership to the project.

vii) Foundation Degree in Public Sector Interpreting

This is a new vocational degree, designed for members of diaspora and refugee communities. The programme is designed to equip individuals with the knowledge, understanding and skills required for the role of an interpreter in the public services sector (legal, health and local government). The programme is run in partnership with City University and Praxis Community Projects: it is due to commence in 2005, with the first students expected at SOAS in 2007, where they will undergo one year of specialised study.

4. Recent data on the student body collected in the PI tables (via the HESA returns) show the effect of outreach activity up to now: for additional information, see Tables S1-S6 in the attached appendix:
 - i) The ethnic composition of the SOAS student body is significantly more diverse than the national average.
 - ii) Recruitment to SOAS from low social classes (SEC codes 4, 5, 6 and 7) has risen in line with the national average, but remains below the benchmark.
 - iii) Recruitment to SOAS from low participation neighbourhoods remains steady against the location-adjusted benchmark. The recruitment-level of young entrants from low participation neighbourhoods is at the location-adjusted benchmark
 - iv) The percentage of mature full-time undergraduate entrants to SOAS programmes remains significantly higher than the national average. The percentage of mature entrants with no previous HE and from low participation neighbourhoods decreased in 2002/03; however, we remain in touch with the location-adjusted benchmark, since this has fallen slightly (see Table T2a).
 - v) Retention of young entrants from low participation neighbourhoods is significantly better than the national average, but numbers in this group are small. Retention of mature entrants with no previous HE qualification is significantly better than the national average, but again numbers in this group are small.
 - vi) The growth in numbers of students in receipt of DSA (Disabled Students Allowance) is small and the overall percentage remains considerably below the national benchmark and national average, although the figures continue to

increase year on year. Some progress has been made in improving the capture of this data which may account for the slight improvement in this PI. The number of students declaring a disability to the School is about 7% in 2003/04 - slightly higher than that shown in the PI (Performance Indicator) table below.

Opportunities and constraints inherent in the institutional profile

5. There are a number of institutional constraints to be considered in planning any expansion of existing outreach activity. Many undergraduate programmes at SOAS are concerned with subjects that are not taught at school, and with areas of the world that are not central to the school curriculum. All students at SOAS are encouraged to take instruction in African and Asian languages, and there is a wide range of joint degree programmes that allows them to do this. Several departments teach disciplines that are not common in the 16+ curriculum – such as Anthropology, Development Studies and Law. The curriculum of ‘mainstream’ departments at SOAS, such as History, Study of Religions or Politics, differs from that taught at 'A' level because of the focus on Asia and Africa.
6. Because of the nature of the curriculum, most students who come to SOAS do so because they are already committed to the study of a particular region, and its language and culture. One consequence is that each year’s undergraduate intake contains a relatively small number of students from a relatively large geographical area within the UK. While the largest single geographical base of students is the London area, even here there is significant dispersal across the region. As a result it is difficult to put into place targeted recruitment policies since there is no one obvious compact region to focus on.
7. SOAS has increased its student numbers, including its undergraduate intake, quite substantially in recent years. The undergraduate population rose from 1603 in 2001-02 to 1788 in 2003-04; over the same period the total student population rose from 3013 to 3456.

Proposals for fees and bursaries, 2006-2007 to 2011-2012

8. The current institutional plan aims to admit about 600 new Home/EU undergraduates to the School each year. In 2004/05 38% of SOAS Home/EU undergraduate students had their fees paid in full by their LEA, and a further 10% had these fees paid in part. The proposed income thresholds for which support will be available for 2006 onwards are about the same as those in place in 2004/05.
9. Therefore the School proposes the following arrangements for fees and bursaries:
 - i) The School will charge a flat £3,000 fee to Home/EU students who enrol in or after September 2006 for all undergraduate programmes, except for those who have deferred a place from the 2005 admissions cycle. Because of the inter-disciplinary nature of many SOAS BA degrees, with a high number of joint honours across departments and Faculties, a single flat fee is the only possible system for us.
 - ii) SOAS will make a bursary payment of £700 to all Home and EU students covered by the terms of the 2004 Education Act who are from the ‘poorest

backgrounds', as defined in the legislation, and who will receive the maximum grant from the Student Loan Company.

iii) SOAS will discontinue the partial bursary of £400 to all other Home and EU students covered by the terms of the 2004 Act.

iv) SOAS has negotiated a number of specific arrangements with identified partner colleges in areas of low participation in higher education; students from these colleges qualify for an additional bursary of £800 per annum.

v) The School will provide full financial information about fees and bursaries to prospective and actual students, both as part of the application process and at registration. The Head of Admissions and Recruitment supervises this. The School will make the appropriate administrative arrangements for the allocation and dispersal of these funds, and a small administrative charge has been earmarked for this.

vi) SOAS will pay a bursary of £500 to students who are eligible for our Progression Award following meeting selection criteria and the successful submission of an application.

vii) SOAS will pay a bursary of £1,000 to students who are eligible for our Local Excellence Award following meeting selection criteria and the successful submission of an application.

Proposals for additional outreach activity, 2006-2007 to 2011-2012

10. Because of its unique composition and mission, SOAS has a very strong commitment to providing support and information to encourage participation in university education by members of refugee and diaspora communities, especially from Inner London. For this reason the main focus for additional outreach and widening participation funding from increased fee levels from 2006 onwards activity will be targeting low-participation neighbourhoods in Inner London with a substantial ethnic populations from refugee and new diaspora communities. We regard this as the most important indicator of socio-cultural inclusion for our purposes.

11. The School will maintain its existing widening participation programmes set out above. In addition, SOAS will expand its widening participation activity in a number of fields:

i) To increase admissions from low participation neighbourhoods, especially of mature students.

Target groups are to include:

- Mature students in low participation neighbourhoods;
- 16-19 year olds in low participation neighbourhoods;
- Minority ethnic/diaspora groups from low participation neighbourhoods.

To achieve this goal the School will:

- establish liaison agreements with specific schools and colleges;

- initiate projects focused on transition to higher education with school and colleges;
- provide additional financial incentives for students from colleges in these boroughs, including those with whom we already have a close relationship;
- provide financial information, advice and guidance for prospective students and their families, including translated materials where applicable.

These projects will be focused in the London boroughs of Camden, Haringey, Hackney and Tower Hamlets. This strategy will in particular focus on the expansion of the College Conference to colleges in other boroughs.

ii) To increase support for students, especially those with a disability

Professional support is currently provided by a Student Disability Adviser. The School wishes to encourage and maximise applications from this under-represented group proactively, and to provide support for them. Additional sums will therefore be allocated for:

- mentors and other disability support workers (such as signers, note takers) These workers would be students or casual staff who could be trained to offer these services. In the case of student helpers, the acquisition of these skills would enhance their employability;
- a part-time mental health worker: As widening participation and outreach activities may increase the number of students with mental health needs, a worker will be employed to develop the support needed and liaison between the various internal and external services;
- dedicated administrative support for the Student Disability Adviser all year;
- additional learner support for students with disabilities, and for those not familiar with or confident in a highly specialised study environment;
- additional administrative support to all Student Services over the summer months as more advice will be needed for students from under-represented groups, such as students with disabilities requiring specific adjustments, and students from backgrounds unfamiliar with higher education who may not have parents able to guide or support their applications in terms of welfare and other advice.

iii) To extend existing outreach activities among community groups in London.

SOAS provides language and literacy programmes on a wide range of African and Asian languages. These will be expanded to provide courses in the traditional/religious literatures of London's diaspora communities, and also training in literacy and language skills in community languages at affordable rates in co-operation with local charities and educational bodies, and . The purpose of this activity is to raise general awareness of the benefits of education, including higher education.

This activity will also include:

- providing role models and mentors from these communities;
- providing enhanced support for literacy and language skills classes for refugee and new diaspora communities, including intensive summer schools and training volunteer teachers to run non-formal courses;

- university campus visits and taster courses providing information, advice and guidance in higher education;
- provision of financial information.

Budgets, milestones and monitoring

12. Budgets

A flat fee of £3000 per Home/EU student will bring additional income to the School from undergraduate students of approximately £1 million per cohort above the existing level of fee income (£1,090,800 in 2006-07, £2,181,600 in 2007-08, and £3,272,400 in 2008-09 and thereafter). This estimate is based on the current intake of 606 Home/EU new undergraduates in 2004/05. No substantial increases in the number of Home/EU students admitted to the School are proposed in the current planning cycle, which also stresses the need to concentrate on postgraduate rather than undergraduate activity.

13. Of this additional income of £1,090,800 per cohort, the following amounts will be allocated for bursaries and outreach activity:

a) Estimated direct costs of bursaries of £700 to all Home and EU students covered by the terms of the 2004 Education Act who are from the 'poorest backgrounds', as defined in the legislation, and who will receive the maximum grant from the SLC Company (230 bursaries @£700) = £161,000; Full bursary increased to £860 from 2008/09

b) Estimated direct costs of additional bursaries £400 to all other Home and EU students covered by the terms of the 2004 Act who receive any lesser element of support from the SLC to offset the cost of their fees (61@£400) = £24,400; Partial bursary increased to £420 from 2008/09 then to be discontinued from 2010/11

c) Estimated direct costs of bursaries targeted at specified sender institutions, intended to raise the number of students (especially mature students) from low-participation neighbourhoods (20 bursaries @£400) = £8,000; Partner College Bursary increased to £800 from 2008/09

d) Indirect costs of increased support for students with a disability. The most important element of this expenditure will be increased staffing, with a new full-time post in place by 2008 – £20,000 per cohort (total of £60,000 after 3 years);

e) Indirect costs of additional widening participation activity directly related to admission to SOAS. The most important element of this expenditure will be increased staffing, with a new full-time post in place by 2008 - £25,000 per cohort (total of £75,000 after 3 years);

f) Indirect costs of additional outreach activity among communities, not directly related to admissions to SOAS - £5,000 per cohort (total of £15,000 after 3 years);

g) Indirect costs of administration of bursary scheme: 0.5 post after 3 years (£5,000 per cohort; total of £15,000 after three years).

h) Estimated direct costs of Progression Awards in 2009/10 = £20,000

i) Estimated direct costs of Local Excellence Awards in 2009/10 = £10,000

j) Indirect cost of £25,000 from 2010/11 for a hardship fund for low income Home undergraduate students

14. **On the basis of these proposals, the total additional expenditure by the School on activity designed to increase social inclusion in higher education from 2006 onwards will be £248,400 in 2006-07, rising to £745,200 (at 2006 prices) in 2008-09. This represents approximately 24% of the new income expected from additional fees.**

15. **Key Milestones:**

a) processes and institutions:

i) January 2005: explain outline of fees and bursaries in undergraduate prospectus;

ii) May 2005: set up institutional working group for OFFA;

iii) September 2005: institutional plan submitted to OFFA working group; finalise information for potential students concerning fees and bursaries for entry in 2006;

iv) January 2006: plan submitted to School Executive Board for approval;

v) January 2006: establish links with stakeholders i.e. schools, colleges, DISC (Disability in Camden);

vi) February – April 2006: meeting and partnership building;

vii) May – September 2006: work planning;

viii) September 2006: additional outreach activity begins.

b) Goals and targets:

Group	2002/03 location-adjusted benchmark (%)	Participation at SOAS 2002/03 (%)	Estimated location-adjusted benchmark 2006 (%)	Planned milestone by 2006 (%)	Planned milestone by 2009 (%)	Planned milestone by 2011 (%)
Disability (in receipt of DSA) (all students)	2.5	0.8	4	4	6	8
Young from low participation neighbourhoods (first degree entrants)	8	8	8	8	10	12
Mature from low participation neighbourhoods (first degree entrants)	8	6	8	8	9	11
From Social Class IIIM, IV, V (new u/g entrants)	24	23	25	25	26	28

Note: The data in columns 2 and 3 are taken from the PI tabs produced from the HESA returns.

16. **Monitoring**

i) The chief milestones for widening participation that will be set concern increasing recruitment from low-participation neighbourhoods, and from students with a disability. Data on the proportion of such undergraduates in the student body as a whole will continue to be required by HESA, and we

anticipate that the process of data-gathering for HESA will also be used for internal monitoring process.

ii) Widening Participation policy and its results are reviewed by two internal committees of the School – recruitment issues by the Recruitment Committee, and retention issues by the Learning and Teaching Policy Committee. Both these committees are chaired by the Pro-Director, and their concerns and conclusions are thus fed directly into the School's senior management process.

Marva de la Coudray
Widening Participation Co-ordinator

B.R.Tomlinson
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10/12/04

Student Body Statistics, SOAS, 2001-02 to 2003-04

Data taken from 1 Dec snapshot, not the HESA return

S1: Student population. Number of degree students only

	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Undergraduate	1603	1636	1788
Postgraduate Taught	953	996	1222
Postgraduate Research	457	446	446
Total	3013	3078	3456

Writing up PhD students excluded

S2: Nationality of student body. UG students only

	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
UK	68%	67%	64%
Other EU	17%	17%	17.5%
Overseas	15%	16%	18.5%

S3: Fee status

	2001-02				2002-03				2003-04			
	Home	EU	Full Cost	Overseas	Home	EU	Full Cost	Overseas	Home	EU	Full Cost	Overseas
Undergraduate	1176	222	-	205	1200	144	-	202	1436	115	-	237
Postgraduate Taught	222	193	38	326	416	173	50	357	518	190	55	459
Postgraduate Research	189	72	-	196	179	66	-	201	166	70	-	210
Total	1761	487	38	727	1885	383	50	760	2120	375	55	906

S4: Age on entry (new entrants only)

	2001-02		2002-03		2003-04	
	Young	Mature	Young	Mature	Young	Mature
Undergraduate	68.73%	31.27%	70.12%	29.88%	63.25%	36.75%
Postgraduate Taught	40.44%	59.56%	43.02%	56.98%	45.13%	54.87%
Postgraduate Research	8.09%	91.91%	11.20%	88.80%	14.19%	85.81%
Total	48.72%	51.28%	50.38%	49.82%	48.93%	51.07%

Mature is over 21 for UG; over 25 for PG

S5: % Disability. Undergraduate students only

	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Disability	5%	5%	5%
No Disability	95%	95%	95%

S6: Ethnicity

A) Total students

B) % New entrants 2003/04 by age profile. Undergraduate students only

	2001-02			2002-03			2003-04		
	Non-white	White	Information refused	Non-white	White	Information refused	Non-white	White	Information refused
Undergraduate	45.04%	51.28%	3.68%	46.45%	48.72%	4.83%	50.06%	45.02%	4.92%
Postgraduate Taught	41.66%	52.89%	5.46%	41.37%	50.90%	7.73%	43.62%	52.86%	3.52%
Postgraduate Research	47.05%	47.28%	5.69%	48.20%	46.64%	5.16%	49.78%	45.52%	4.71%
Total Overall %	44.27%	51.18%	4.55%	46.06%	49.12%	5.82%	47.74%	47.86%	4.40%

Young (<21 on entry)			Mature (>21 on entry)		
Non_white	White	Information refused	Non_white	White	Information refused
34.04%	24.40%	4.82%	15.66%	18.52%	2.56%

% split by age group

Mature (>21 on entry)		
Non_white	White	Information refused
42.62%	50.41%	6.97%

Young (<21 on entry)		
Non_white	White	Information refused
53.81%	38.57%	7.62%

According to the 2001 census the non-white/white ratio of the population of inner London was 25.4 to 74.6. In the UK the undergraduate population as a whole in 2002/03, 16% were of ethnic minorities.