

SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY

OFFICE FOR FAIR ACCESS – ACCESS AGREEMENT

1. Objectives

Sheffield Hallam University recognises the positive opportunity afforded by this agreement. It will enable the University to reinforce, enhance and, where appropriate, develop new dimensions to its track record and aspirations in widening participation.

Key objectives are to:

- maintain stability and continuity in widening participation, given the changing environment of the Higher Education Act (2004); in particular sustain recruitment to targets set by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Teacher Training Agency (TTA);
- evaluate evidence in order to better target support (bursaries and additional outreach); sustain and enhance performance against Access Performance Indicators and benchmarks;
- research and pilot new ways to stimulate access to Sheffield Hallam University and develop further the inclusivity of the institution;
- further develop partnerships with schools, colleges and other appropriate organisations to raise aspiration and access to higher education; and
- underpin practices with the principle of responsible recruitment and facilitate transition support activity to ensure enhanced retention and achievement.

2. Institutional Context

Sheffield Hallam University has a long tradition of institution wide engagement with access and widening participation to higher education. The *Visions and Values Statement*¹ stresses the University's national profile and continued success in recruiting and retaining a wide diversity of students. The *Corporate Plan 2003-8*² emphasises that sustaining widening participation and inclusivity are key to ensuring the future stability and distinctiveness of the University. The University's commitments have been articulated in the following strategy documents:

¹ Appendix 1

² Appendix 2

- *Widening Participation Statement*³
- *Regional Widening Participation Strategy - Targeting the 11-19 Age Group*⁴
- *Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy*⁵

Sheffield Hallam University has both an institutional commitment and an evidenced reputation as one of the highest performing English universities in widening participation and inclusivity. The University has consistently met and, in the majority of cases exceeded, the Access Performance Indicators⁶ for groups under-represented in higher education. The distinctive aspects of its achievements are the ability to combine high quality teaching and support to a diverse student population, and also maintain good retention levels. Alongside this, the University has national and international centres of excellence in research and is rapidly improving its performance in knowledge transfer.

The performance of the University is underscored further by data relating to the HEFCE Widening Participation Allocation, which is based on access from disadvantaged backgrounds (postcode/low participation neighbourhoods) and improving retention (prior educational attainment). This indicates that 74% of full-time HEFCE funded students at Sheffield Hallam were eligible.

It is anticipated that current trends towards more regional recruitment (currently 37% of new full-time undergraduate students at Sheffield Hallam University are from the local area) will almost certainly continue and are likely to intensify post 2006. The surrounding regions are characterised by:

- fewer people being employed in managerial and professional occupations⁷;
- the previous educational history of adults within the sub-region being one of comparative under achievement;
- low Level 2 performance⁸ by young people⁹;

³ Appendix 3

⁴ Appendix 4

⁵ Appendix 5

⁶ <http://www.hesa.ac.uk/pi/default.htm>

⁷ 32.5% compared with the national average of 39.9%,

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Documents/AboutDocumentsChannel/default.htm>

⁸ measured as achieving five or more GCSE/GNVQs (grades A* - C)

⁹ The level 2 performance of young people in South Yorkshire in 2001/02 was 39.5%, compared with 44.2% for Yorkshire and Humberside and a national figure of 51.5%.

- a low proportion of young people staying on in full-time education at 16¹⁰;
- high levels of deprivation¹¹.

Consequently, young people from South Yorkshire are more likely to come from low-income backgrounds, which do not have a tradition of engaging with higher education. This regional context alongside the evidenced and anticipated recruitment trends will mean a necessary intensification of Sheffield Hallam University's work to provide accessible and attainable opportunities for students from widening participation backgrounds.

The continued enhancement and further investment in the University's partnerships with local schools and colleges is key to widening participation and inclusivity. These partnerships include the Associate College Network, articulated collaboration with schools (including compacts) and the possible development of Lifelong Learning Networks. Much of this work will be mediated through externally funded and/or directed initiatives, in particular *Aimhigher*.

3. Fee Limits

The University will set fees up to the limit allowed from time to time by legislation (£3,070 per annum from 2007/08). These fees will apply to all UK / EU full-time undergraduate students enrolled on a Sheffield Hallam University course (except students on Department of Health funded courses) and to all full time PGCE students. Reduced fees will be charged to students repeating part of their course; and students on sandwich courses will not be charged a fee above the standard rate whilst on the placement element of their course.

4. Financial Support To Students

The University has had considerable success in the recruitment, retention and achievement of students from backgrounds under-represented in higher education, reflecting a significant level of investment in supporting their recruitment and learning experience. Post 2006, the University will invest a significant proportion of its additional fee income in a bursary scheme and this will be a socio-economic focussed investment. The principles on which the scheme has been based take account of the likely trends in recruitment, including a potentially greater regional reliance, and the need to strengthen the positioning of the University in terms of regional regeneration and inclusion.

¹⁰ Only 64.9% of young people who left compulsory education in 2002 continued to study full-time compared with 67.5% for Yorkshire and Humberside and 72.0% nationally. Source: Yorkshire Futures

¹¹ Sixty one percent of wards in South Yorkshire are included in the 20% most deprived in England. Source: Yorkshire Futures, Progress in the Region 2003.

The principles of the Sheffield Hallam University Bursary Scheme will be to:

- (i) target those whose access to higher education is considered most likely to be negatively affected by the introduction of variable tuition fees;
- (ii) ensure prospective students have an early indication of the support available to them, in order to impact positively upon their decisions to progress to higher education;
- (iii) ensure the scheme is readily understood by students and their key influencers; and
- (iv) minimise administration costs and build upon/integrate with other student financial support schemes provided by other bodies.

The University will sign up to the model bursary scheme as devised by the UUK/SCOP Advisory Group. In 2006, Sheffield Hallam University will introduce an initial bursary scheme to provide the following:

- a **Hallam Grant Bursary** - a cash bursary of **£700** to all enrolled full-time undergraduate students in receipt of either a full or partial Higher Education Maintenance Grant, whatever its value, as defined by LEA assessments. The University has identified these students as a key vulnerable group post 2006. It is estimated that approximately 38% of full-time undergraduates will be in receipt of a full Maintenance Grant and approximately 16% will receive a partial Maintenance Grant. An approximate total of 54% of our full-time undergraduate students are therefore expected to benefit from this scheme.
- a **Hallam Access Bursary** - a cash bursary of **£300** for all students who progress from partner (primarily sub-regional/travel to study radius) schools and colleges and enrol on a Sheffield Hallam University full-time undergraduate course. It is estimated that 40% of full-time undergraduates will benefit from this element of the scheme. The University believes that partnership working and local targeting are vital to addressing the systemic cultural and educational attainment issues existing in the local area.
- a Discretionary Bursary - a small number of cash bursaries of **up to £1,000** each will be available to support full-time undergraduate students who may be caught in anomalies within the above criteria and state support systems. This will be provided according to the evidenced circumstances of individual students. The University is currently investigating how the

Sheffield Hallam University Bursary Scheme and state support will affect the aspirations and intentions of students to study at this University.

The bursary amounts detailed above will be reviewed annually.

The University will monitor and evaluate the impact of this initial scheme, amending and/or extending the scheme as appropriate. The University will inform the Office of Fair Access, as circumstances dictate, in line with the published guidance.

5. Information For Students

The University has established mechanisms to address the provision of financial information, advice and guidance to potential and enrolled students. These include a Student Financial Support Service and a partnership with the Student Union Advice Centre. The partnership includes the University resourcing a 'money' advice service in the Student Union Advice Centre. In addition, the University provides an Education Guidance Service and a Schools and Colleges Liaison Office through which financial information and advice are also delivered.

The University proposes to develop and enhance its financial information, advice and guidance to prospective and enrolled students by:

- extending the skills set of the staff within the Student Financial Support Service. This will mean that in addition to advice on the financial support schemes available. Budgeting advice will also be provided;
- developing and producing electronic, printed and multi-media materials, in readiness for 2006; to include information for students about the aggregate cost of their course before the course commences;
- enhancing staff development, and providing briefings and updates to ensure deliverers of student support are well informed and able to provide accurate and timely information, advice and signposting; and
- developing the existing partnership with the Student Union Advice Centre.

Further details of these developments, including estimated costs are provided in Appendix 6.

6. Outreach

Sheffield Hallam University has extensive expertise and is involved in a wide range of ongoing outreach activity. It has a long history of outreach provision focused on progression to the University as well as providing extensive activity addressing raising aspirations more generally. Over the last three years, it has been committed to and fully engaged with Excellence Challenge, Partnerships for Progression and, more recently, Aimhigher. The latter are reported to HEFCE through the National Partnership Board and institutional focussed new, extended or enhanced activities are reported via the Annual Monitoring Return.

A summary of the developments and enhancements Sheffield Hallam University is intending to introduce up to and beyond 2006 is set out below:

- an Enquiry Management Service – the University will extend a telephone and e-based advice and information service, currently offered to post-graduate and part-time enquirers;
- a Pre-Entry Educational Guidance Service – the service currently offered to enrolled students and a limited number of pre-entry students will be extended and enhanced to support widening participation;
- a Schools and Colleges Liaison Office with linked Faculty based resources – the University's relationships with schools and colleges will be re-modelled and capacity significantly expanded to facilitate the general raising of aspiration, encourage an increase in the number of applications from widening participation students, develop further positive action admission strategies and improve transition support to underpin achievement;
- a Schools Partnership Scheme - to introduce and promote formal partnerships with schools in order to facilitate strategic approaches to raising attainment and aspiration;
- development of the Progression Agreement Framework – to introduce new schemes within the existing framework to enable more potential students to benefit from the compact arrangements;
- a Widening Participation Policy and Research Unit – the new unit will provide a strategic understanding of under-representation within the institution to facilitate evidence based planning within the University and with partners;

- extended and enhanced Transition Support Activities, in particular the 'Link up Mentoring' scheme and pre-entry preparation programmes. This will build on pilots and early successes aimed at supporting vulnerable students' progression and transition into the University;
- Maths Support - aimed at enhancing early success and achievement. Detailed evidence has suggested that focusing upon maths and numeracy in the early stages of progression can improve confidence and achievement;
- Enhance support to Disabled Learners – a range of enhancements including further investment in the screening and support of Dyslexic students and enhancing the focus on improvements in inclusive curriculum pedagogy;
- Additional Aimhigher Investment – from 2004, Sheffield Hallam University will host Aimhigher South Yorkshire (including the banker function) and support the Chair of the South Yorkshire Area Steering Group. The University will also provide support for a range of projects over and above revenue funding provided by Aimhigher.

Further details of these developments, including estimated costs are provided in Appendix 7.

7. Milestones

May 2005	Publish and promote details of Sheffield Hallam University Bursary Scheme
July 2006	Ensure all Outreach activity is in place, as outlined in plans
Autumn 2006	Distribute Sheffield Hallam University bursaries according to criteria and published timetable
Dec. 2006	Performance against all aspects of the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Annual Performance Indicators to be maintained (2004/5 as baseline).
Dec. 2008	Performance against all aspects of the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Annual Performance Indicators to be maintained or improved upon (2004/5 as baseline).
Up to 2010	In collaboration with Aimhigher South Yorkshire have contributed to the increase in applications to Higher Education in the sub-region by 10 percentage points

Dec. 2010	Performance against all aspects of the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Annual Performance Indicators to be maintained or improved upon (2004/5 as baseline) and in respect of NS-SEC Classes 4,5,6 &7 and retention has improved against baseline (2004/5) by 3 and 2 percentage points respectively.
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8. Monitoring

This agreement is approved by the Governors of the University, advised through the Vice Chancellor by the Academic Board.

In taking forward the Access Agreement and working towards the milestones included, the University will identify responsibilities for the achievement of targets. Wherever possible, responsibilities for particular targets will be allocated to individual planning units. Institutional targets will be an aggregation of individual planning unit targets, as appropriate. The monitoring of achievement against individual targets will be embedded within and monitored through the University's Annual Planning and Quality Review Processes.

The Academic Board and the Governors will monitor progress against the milestones through the reporting processes established as part of the University's Annual Planning Cycle.

9. List Of Appendices

1. Sheffield Hallam University's Vision and Values Statement
2. Sheffield Hallam University's Corporate Plan 2003-8
3. Sheffield Hallam University's Widening Participation Statement
4. Sheffield Hallam University Regional Widening Participation Strategy - Targeting the 11-19 Age Group
5. Sheffield Hallam University Learning Teaching & Assessment Strategy
6. Financial Information for Students - Action Plan
7. Outreach Action Plan