

The University of East London

Access Agreement

Our Vision

To achieve recognition, both nationally and internationally, as a successful and inclusive regional university, proud of our diversity, committed to new modes of learning which focus on students and enhance their employability, and renowned for our contribution to social, cultural and economic development, especially through our research and scholarship.

Our achievements

We are one of the leading universities in the United Kingdom offering students opportunities to improve their position in life. Key characteristics of our student body in the context of this proposed access application are shown in table 1 below.

Table 1. Proportions of full-time undergraduate EU students with a variety of widening participation characteristics

	Students with a disability receiving the Disabled Students Allowance	Students aged over 30 on entry	Students from East London	Black and Minority Ethnic Students
2000-01	3.0%	17.8%	46.6%	52.8%
2001-02	4.9%	17.8%	48.0%	54.9%
2002-03	7.1%	18.3%	49.3%	54.1%
2003-04	8.1%	20.4%	49.5%	56.5%
2004-05	5.1%	19.8%	49.3%	56.8%
2005-06	7.4%	20.7%	50.1%	59.4%

Source: UEL MIS, selections: current students; last week in July; FT; current; EU; undergraduate; UEL campuses.

A growing proportion of our students have a disability and receive the Disabled Students Allowance. A majority of our student body is mature in the sense that this word is used in UK higher education statistics. In this application we have used a slightly more demanding definition of mature (that is to say aged over 30 on entry to the programme). A substantial proportion of our students are seizing a “second-chance” opportunity. Half our students come from East London. Our access agreement is not the place to explore the geography of disadvantage within London but in general residents of East London are characterised by lower wages, higher unemployment, lower participation in post compulsory education and training, and fewer level 3 academic qualifications than other sub-regions of the capital. We are serving our local population to address those issues. A majority of our students have categorised themselves as Black and Minority Ethnic (BME), and many do not have English as their first language, nor is it the spoken language within the family home. Again our proposed access application is not the place to explore all the implications of this but we believe it is powerful supporting evidence that supports our contention that a significant proportion of our students have been disadvantaged.

It can be seen that we are currently making a powerful contribution to improving the life chances of a student body that is rich in characteristics that have traditionally distinguished people with disadvantages.

Our history

The history of the University of East London has been one of the foresight of civic leaders who have striven to give a disadvantaged population access to educational opportunities that would enable them to compete for the best jobs that were available in London. From the creation of our Stratford campus in 1898 and the decision of West Ham borough council to create “a people’s university” to the London Docklands Development Corporation who wished to see the

regeneration of the old docks area and proposed that our Docklands campus should be a legacy to support this intent. The decision to site the 2012 Olympics in East London is further evidence of the intention to invest in the regeneration of our area.

Our Context

Our development has been closely tied to the development of East London, and the surrounding region. The areas surrounding our university include some of the most disadvantaged parts of the country, in which the proportion of the local school population proceeding to any form of higher education has consistently been among the lowest in the country. Furthermore, the industrial base of the region has been in long-term decline. We and our predecessor institutions have sought to address these serious problems through our educational mission and the specific plans which derive from it. This means that we have given a high priority to widening access for mature, minority ethnic students and those without conventional academic qualifications

East London and the Thames Gateway (TG) region is changing, and is now an area of rapid economic regeneration and social renewal but local people lack the qualifications and skills to access the new employment opportunities. The proportion of the adult population in Thames Gateway with a degree/level 4+ qualifications is below the national average and substantially lower than the proportion for the rest of London. A Department of Community and Local Government 2006 report states that in order to have the same percentage of level 4 qualified residents as the rest of London and the South East TG needs a further 20,000 graduates:

- Over a third of the TG adult population have no qualifications
- Although there have been significant increases, a lower proportion of 15/16 year-olds are achieving five good GCSEs/level 2 than in the rest of London or the UK

- London TG has a lower rate of adult educational participation generally and in HE than the rest of London or the UK
- the majority of the jobs created (and replaced) will be at level 3/4+ (managerial and professional), with significant job loss at level 2 and below

Residents of East London are less likely to hold a university qualification than those living elsewhere in London. In some local communities participation rates in higher education are less than 8%; examples include people of Bangladeshi origin in Tower Hamlets, of white working-class origin in Barking and Dagenham, of African-Caribbean origin in Tower Hamlets and Hackney, of Pakistani origin in Newham and neighbouring boroughs and of Indian origin in Newham.

Raising skill levels and educational aspirations throughout East London and Thames Gateway is critical for economic success and social justice, and we are committed to working with local providers and strategic agencies to ensure that the local population acquire the skills and qualifications needed to enable them to benefit from the regeneration of our region.

Widening and Deepening Access at UEL

Our student profile (see table 1 above) reflects our long standing commitment to widening access to groups traditionally under-represented in higher education and is very different to that of a hypothetical average university. We are a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural institution. We take pride in our inclusiveness and our commitment to providing access to higher education for socially disadvantaged groups.

Comparative data from HESA indicates that we recruit significantly more mature students and students from minority ethnic backgrounds than comparable institutions. In addition, geo-demographic data

supplied by HEFCE and used as the basis for calculating the widening participation premium indicates that UEL recruits one-fifth of new entrants and one-third of mature entrants from the lowest socio-economic classification.

The aims and objectives of our 2001–2004 Widening Participation Strategy submitted to HEFCE will continue to inform our work with sections of the community under-represented in higher education and it underpins this proposed access agreement. Specifically these are:-

Aims

- to maintain and extend participation by members of groups traditionally under-represented in higher education and to ensure that these learners progress and succeed;
- to contribute to social inclusion among our local communities through working in partnership with other organisations to develop a lifelong learning culture and a range of educational progression routes.

Objectives

1. to raise awareness of and stimulate interest in higher education in our region, particularly among communities with low rates of participation in post-compulsory education;
2. to make strategic partnerships with education and training providers and other organisations in public, private, voluntary and community sectors in order to identify, encourage and support new groups of potential learners;
3. to develop new flexible educational progression routes for young people and adults, whilst maintaining our strong links with local and regional access courses;

4. to maintain and develop our pre-entry guidance provision to support the recruitment and retention of non-traditional students;
5. to improve upon and to integrate established mechanisms of support for student learning and welfare, including financial advice;
6. to develop curricula and approaches to learning, teaching and assessment appropriate to the needs of a diverse learning community;
7. work with schools and local education authorities to raise aspirations.

Our student profile

Table 1 (above) provides data for a number of widening participation indicators. The student profile reflects UEL's continuing commitment to widening access to groups traditionally under-represented in higher education. Indicators derived from HESA data suggest that UEL recruits significantly more mature students and students from minority ethnic backgrounds than comparable institutions. Just under half of our students come from our local area.

The diversity of the student profile at UEL largely reflects the multicultural and socio-demographic characteristics of the local community. The London Borough of Newham where both are main campuses are based has an ethnically diverse population comprising relatively high proportions of residents of Indian, Pakistani, African-Caribbean or African origin. Groups which are traditionally under-represented in the higher education sector constitute a significant proportion of the student population at UEL. For example, Black-

Caribbean men constitute 1.2% of the sector-wide population yet make up 7% of our student population.

We already have a demonstrable commitment to widening participation and can be seen to have performed significantly above the sector average across a range of student categories traditionally under-represented in higher education. Our strategic commitment is to maintaining that diversity in our student body and to introduce specific initiatives which will target groups still under-represented from our local communities.

This access agreement is intended to cover the five academic years 2006-07 to 2010-2011.

Our proposals for full-time fees for European Union students studying undergraduate programmes and postgraduate certificate of education programmes

In order to be able to sustain and enhance the quality of our education we will charge the full higher amount to each full-time European Union student studying an undergraduate or PGCE programme in the United Kingdom from September 2006. This fee will apply to all students studying for honours, ordinary and foundation degrees and for those studying for higher national diplomas, diplomas in higher education, higher national certificates and certificates in higher education. Additionally this fee will apply to students studying for the postgraduate certificate in education. For these students the fee for 2006-07 will be £3,000. We envisage that the government will raise the higher amount each year by some measure of inflation and we would envisage that we will raise our fees to follow the government's changes.

We shall **not** charge this higher fee to students who started their course of studies before September 2006.

Scholarships and bursaries

We will offer the Minimum Standard Bursary (MSB) as proposed by Universities UK. Each full time undergraduate student who (or PGCE student) who meets the eligibility criteria in 2006–07 will receive £300 paid into their bank account towards their maintenance costs. We envisage that this sum will increase each year as the government varies the “higher amount” and changes its student support regulations. Therefore for 2007–08 we shall be making the recommended payment of £305 per student. We do not propose to discriminate between European Union residents but rather we will offer the MSB to all European Union students. Within our community we refer to this bursary as the **UEL student bursary**.

In addition we propose to introduce or continue with the following bursary and scholarship schemes:

- a) **The UEL Achievement scholarship**– we will award 200 new scholarships each year worth £1,000 apiece. These will be awarded on the basis of academic achievement broadly defined – including for example sporting achievement and achievement in the performing arts. Prospective students applying for any full–time under–graduate programme with us will be able to apply for a scholarship. The criteria for awarding a scholarship are based on achievement prior to joining UEL and prospective students will be informed whether or not they have been successful before they join us. Whilst not specifically directed at under–represented groups alone the very nature of our intake will lead to many of these awards being secured by students from under–represented groups. Each award will provide the recipient with greater confidence that they will be able to sustain their studies in higher education.
- b) **Refugee Scholarships**. We are the United Kingdom’s leading centre for the study of forced migration. We hold the Refugee Council’s archives and our MA in Refugee Studies is the leading post graduate programme of its kind. We intend to maintain our current practice of awarding up to 50 scholarships per annum to refugees for

the difference between the home and overseas tuition fees.

- c) **The UEL Progress Bursary.** We intend to apply some of the additional income that arises from the government's policy on "top-up" fees to providing bursaries in kind (worth at least £300 per annum) on such items as books, academic equipment and arrangements for field study to those of our under graduate students who are in academic good standing. The minimum value of these "in-kind" bursaries over a standard three year programme of study is £900. Whilst these bursaries will not be directed to under-represented groups alone the majority of such bursaries are likely to be claimed from students from such backgrounds. We believe that bursaries of this nature will improve our retention of undergraduate students. For 2006-07 and 2007-08 the minimum value of the bursary in the first year will be £500. For the first three years of this scheme we will operate this bursary in partnership with John Smiths Booksellers.

We intend to put in place additional bursary schemes to support our part-time undergraduate students. We believe our part-time programmes also offer valuable opportunities for students to improve their life chances.

Information on the costs of study and the financial support available

We will make information about the financial support available to students and prospective students through the following means:

- i) A generic description in our prospectus and a financial support leaflet
- ii) Through our web-site
- iii) Through our telephone help-lines for prospective and actual students
- iv) Through walk-in information and guidance services

We will inform all prospective students of the fees that we will charge for each programme through our prospectus and through our web site. We also provide through these media an estimate of the total cost of tuition.

Outreach activities

Our intention is to maintain and extend our strategic partnerships with education and training providers and other organisations in public, private, voluntary and community sectors in order to identify, encourage and support new groups of potential learners and to develop new flexible educational progression routes for young people and adults, whilst maintaining our strong links with local and regional access courses.

We currently fund the following outreach activities from our own resources which includes the WP premium:

- *Highway*: an integrated, linked progression programme for 14 – 19 age group to encourage wider participation in higher education
- Information, Advice and Guidance shop in Barking Town Centre in partnership with Barking College and Connexions
- Schools and Colleges Partnership development team
- Compact programme with local schools and colleges
- A mature student advisory service
- Student ambassadors to undertake outreach activity with local schools and colleges
- Open days
- Access course programmes
- Skillzone – a programme of study skill support , identified by QAA as an example of good practice in the sector
- A dedicated post to work with BAME communities
- Two Education & Training Fairs for Asian Girls and Women

Our team of out-reach workers was expanded in 2005–06 to prepare for the new fee and student support regime.

Funding for such work in future years will depend on our overall financial health, and decisions taken on the WP element of Hefce's funding model – as does all the work in this area to which we are not specifically bound as a result of this access agreement.

In addition a number of projects such as the ones below are funded through specific grants:

- Aim Higher funding to support extension of the *Highway* programme, to include work with parents, work with primary schools, and IAG activity in local shopping centre
- Teacher Development Agency student associates scheme – providing role models in local schools
- HEFCE Aim Higher summer schools
- Local LEA funded master class programmes
- 2 new Education & Training Fairs for BME girls and women funded by local Councils
- Learning and Skills Council London East funding for extended IAG service
- Community mentors programme

We would hope to continue to run such activities although in the absence of a continuing government commitment to these specific projects we cannot be sure that we will be able to do so.

An innovative lifelong learning centre developed in conjunction with Barking and Dagenham Council and Barking College in Barking Town Centre is scheduled to open in 2007. .

Our strategic plan, *Innovation and Renewal (2002)*, suggests that we will develop further such centres and we expect to do so but until funding and contractual arrangements become clearer we would not wish to become committed to specific arrangements within our access plan.

As part of our estates strategy we have built a nursery at our Docklands campus, which opened Autumn 2006.

Additional expenditure on out-reach and access

We will support the MSB.

We intend to support the following two additional student financial support measures:

- a) Achievement scholarships
- b) Bursaries in-kind

Two additional out-reach workers.

Table 2: Total estimated cost of outreach and access measures :

£'000s	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Minimum Student Bursaries	389	731	1,055	1,113	1,140
Academic Achievement Scholarships	200	200	200	200	200
Bursaries in kind	1,583	2,400	2,700	2,700	2,700
Additional out-reach workers	80	84	88	92	96
Total	2,252	3,415	4,043	4,105	4,136

These figures do not include the administrative costs of supporting this scheme.

We will continue to develop additional access and out-reach activities not specified above and in particular a bursary scheme for part-time students (we currently remit at least half of the fees for part-time students) and further lifelong learning centres.

Monitoring our performance

For our own purposes we have a number of indicators from our Management Information System that we can use to track our performance in widening participation. For our access agreement we concluded that we should use information that is readily available through a HESA dataset. One of the advantages this brings is ready comparison with other universities.

After consideration we concluded that the best indicator for benchmark purposes is given in Table T1b of the standard HESA performance indicators and in particular younger FT undergraduate students from the “lower” social classes. (Virtually all our UK students come from state schools so it would be pointless to set ourselves a target of increasing this proportion.) This indicator has been affected by a recent definitional change.

Table 3: Proportion of young FT undergraduates from “lower” social classes shown in performance indicator table T1b

Year	Our proportion	Benchmark
2000-01	42%	34%
2001-02	45%	34%
2002-03	43%	37%
2003-04	42%	37%
2004-05	40%	37%

Sources: HESA website for data for the most recent three years and HEFCE website for the earlier two years.

Notes: the data for the first two years are classes IIIM,IV and V. The data for 2002-03 is for NS-SEC 4,5,6 and 7.

There appears to be some fluctuation from year to year and the new definition appears to reduce our reported proportion. To allow for this fluctuation and this reduction we propose to commit ourselves to achieve a proportion of at least 40% throughout the period of the access agreement. (The national proportion is 29% so by achieving 40% we shall be making a significantly greater contribution than the English average).

In addition we intend to use information about disability, students from black and ethnic minorities, mature students and students from East London as diagnostic indicators of our widening participation performance. Our current performance in these areas is shown in table 1 above.

Our corporate management team, our academic board and our governors will receive a formal monitoring report on the progress of our access agreement once a year whilst reviewing our annual monitoring statements. This review will take place in the summer term.