

Interim Widening Participation Strategic Statement 2012/13

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A. Widening participation priorities for 2012-13

At The University of Manchester, our widening participation priorities are reflected through the three core goals of our Strategic Plan¹: world-class research; outstanding learning and student experience; and social responsibility. This has embedded, in our processes and practices, a set of values and policies that commit us to being an open, meritocratic institution that pro-actively seeks out people capable of benefiting from higher education, minimises barriers to their participation and in so doing contributes to the expansion of higher education opportunities, locally, nationally and internationally.

Within the Russell Group of universities we have an excellent record of recruiting students from under-represented backgrounds. Table 2 outlines our absolute and relative performance according to the main Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and Office for Fair Access (OFFA) indicators. We have the highest absolute number of students across each of the key widening participation indicators and also perform towards the top end in proportional terms among our peer institutions in the Russell Group.

	Low Participation N'hoods (LPN)	Lower Socio-Economic Groups (NS-SEC)	State Schools and Colleges	Disabled Students Allowance	Low Income Household Students
University of Manchester	8.4%	21.2%	77.5%	5.3%	26.6%
Russell Group ²	5.8%	19.3%	74.7%	4.2%	19.9%
England	10.5%	30.1%	88.4%	5.4%	n/a
English Russell Group Ranking (numbers)	1st	1st	1st	1st	1st
English Russell Group Ranking (proportions)	2nd	4th	6th	4th	3rd
Standard Benchmark	7.0%	23.2%	80.9%	4.1%	n/a
Standard Benchmark Difference	+1.4%	-2.0%	-3.4%	+1.2%	n/a

Table 1: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Table 1a Performance Indicators 2010/11: Access Agreement Monitoring Outcomes for 2009/10

Since HEFCE and Access Agreement are used in combination to maximise the resources committed to our widening participation priorities, details of the University's key goals for widening participation and access are outlined in our Access Agreements for 2012/13 and 2013-14³. These are conceptualised through our 'Extended Higher Education Progression Framework' (Figure 1) which was outlined and published in our first Widening Participation Strategic Assessment⁴. This builds on work of the HEFCE in developing a national Higher Education Progression Framework⁵, but extends this by recognising that widening access and participation continues within and beyond higher education entry.

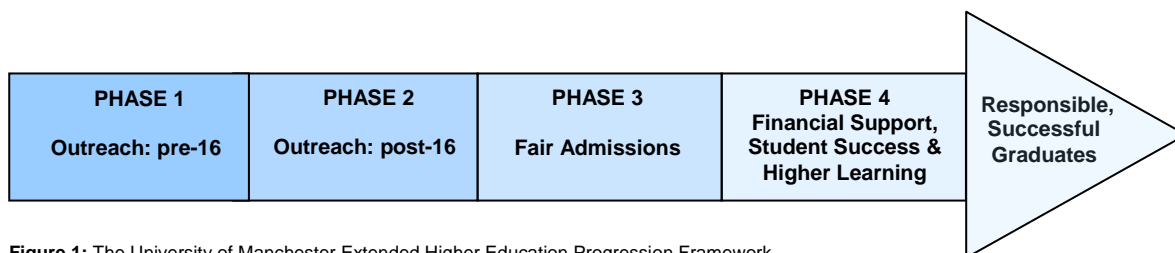


Figure 1: The University of Manchester Extended Higher Education Progression Framework

B. Investment of HEFCE allocation for widening participation

Since the inception of HEFCE widening access allocations these have been strategically set-aside in their entirety to support outward-facing work with under-represented groups to facilitate progression into both higher education generally and The University of Manchester. The University

¹www.manchester.ac.uk/aboutus/facts/vision/

²We have included the new total of 24 Russell Group HEIs (20 in England) who join from August 2012.

³www.offa.org.uk/access-agreements/searchresult?inst=University%20of%20Manchester

⁴<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=8305>

⁵www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/resources/Higher%20Education%20Progression%20Framework%20Jul%202008.pdf

of Manchester also has the largest number of disabled students within the Russell Group of universities. Responding to increases in the number of students accessing the University's Disability Support Office and the number of students disclosing a disability during the year at the University has required continued additional support and investment beyond the HEFCE-specified allocation.

The Teaching Enhancement and Student Success (TESS) allocation underpins our investment in induction and transitional support, which is a key aspect of the University's second key goal: to provide an outstanding and positive learning experience for all students. This framework provides support at various transition points during a students' programme of study and/or life at The University of Manchester⁶.

C. Added value of the HEFCE allocation

The University's Strategic Plan already commits us to the development and wellbeing of the City of Manchester, Greater Manchester and England's North West. Within this, a key aspect of the University's work is to promote access to HE, wherever that might be. The HEFCE widening access allocation, as a stable and continuous funding stream, has made a considerable contribution to the staffing and infrastructure required in developing and delivering a range of successful outreach, admissions and support/retention work that has required longer term investment. Examples include, *inter alia*:

- considerably expanding the number of staff employed to deliver WP-focused work, and doing this on the basis of permanent, rather than fixed-term, appointments;
- developing specific programmes that have become our key flagship WP initiatives to promote access to selective universities, the Gateways Programme⁷ and Manchester Access Programme⁸;
- longer term outreach work promoting access to HE more generally with younger learners such as our primary Children's University of Manchester⁹ and collaborative secondary outreach programme with Manchester Metropolitan University¹⁰;
- employing widening participation-focused Learning Officers in our special and cultural assets such as The Manchester Museum, Whitworth Art Gallery, John Rylands Library and Race Relations Resource Centre;
- work with special target groups such as looked after children, adult returners to education, less advantaged gifted and talented learners, traveller-children, BME groups, girls in science, teachers, parents and careers advisers;
- introducing the use of contextual data into our admissions processes;
- developing and funding pioneering Peer Support programmes such as Peer Mentoring and Peer Assisted Study Schemes that encourage students to take a holistic approach to their learning and development;
- developing a staff infrastructure and contribution to the considerable support costs to allow disabled learners equal access to the full student experience;
- piloting measures to enhance the employability of underrepresented students;
- commissioning, more recently, a major research study into the outcomes of Manchester-students from WP-backgrounds progressing into postgraduate study.

Thus the HEFCE WP allocation is an essential component of the University's capacity to deliver wide-ranging, innovative and responsive outreach and retention/success programmes at all stages of the student life-cycle.

In 2011/12 the University's HEFCE widening access allocation provided around 70% of the total resources committed to outreach work. Even with the additional investment in outreach from the University's new 2012/13 Access Agreement with OFFA, it is estimated that approximately 45% of

⁶www.tlso.manchester.ac.uk/map/studentsupportdevelopment/integrationandsupport/inductionandtransitionalsupport

⁷<http://www.gateways.manchester.ac.uk/programme/>

⁸<http://www.manchester.ac.uk/undergraduate/map/>

⁹<http://www.childrensuniversity.manchester.ac.uk/>

¹⁰<http://www.manchester.ac.uk/undergraduate/schoolsandcolleges/secondary/jointprogramme/>

the total resources committed to widening participation outreach will derive from this important HEFCE allocation.

D. Evaluating the effectiveness of our approach

Specific examples of our assessment of targeting and evaluation of outcomes are provided in our annual report on widening participation¹¹ each year. Monitoring, targeting and evaluation is integral to The University of Manchester's widening participation strategy and a research-based approach is used to assess the impact and success of our work against strategic and operational objectives.

- **Monitoring:** since October 2005, using HEFCE WP funds, we have developed a specific pan-University password protected online-database that has enabled the systematic collection and analysis of individual, area and school/college-level monitoring data for our vast range of outreach work.
- **Targeting:** ensuring that we are targeting the right students is an essential element of the success of our work. For those activities where there is an 'application' process, data are collected and analysed for all potential participants and for these activities all learners selected are from the target groups. For activities in which targeting is primarily done at an institutional level we have developed our own 'Manchester Prioritisation Model', base on pupil attainment and eligibility for Free School meals (FSM), to target our engagement with the most appropriate schools. In addition, and on a regular basis, data collected from participants is analysed to assess whether activities have reached the correct target groups.
- **Evaluation:** this is a more complex process and our approach to assessing the outcome/impact of our work involves 3 strands:
 - short-term evaluation of individual activities;
 - medium and longer term evaluation of participant outcomes;
 - specific research on themes relevant to widening access and participation.

This involves analysis of data, both statistical and qualitative, and assessment against original aims and objectives. In some cases, comparison is made with other data (e.g. comparison groups, the wider cohort, regional and national data) and judgments made, based on the evidence, to the extent to which the desired outcomes can be attributed to a particular programme or the work of the University. Key performance indicators for WP indicators are then embedded into the University's internal Annual Performance Reviews¹².

E. WP allocation to sustain collaborative/partnership work & support equality and diversity objectives

The University works closely with a range of organisations and partners, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. We are an integral part of the Manchester City-region and work closely with other local organisations to support the social, economic and cultural development of Manchester and to widening participation to higher education.

Following the announcement to end the Aimhigher programme, The University of Manchester has worked with partner institutions to ensure there is access to coordinated and free high-quality HE advice and awareness-raising activities for under-represented learners across Greater Manchester and the North West. These activities have been outlined and written into our Access Agreement from 2012-13, but has been planned and developed during 2010/11 and 2011/12, drawing only on funds and staffing employed through the HEFCE widening access allocation. Whilst more resource has been committed to this work in our Access Agreement, it will continue to be underpinned by funding from the HEFCE allocations.

¹¹<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=4294>

¹²<http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/planningsupportoffice/PSO/PlanningPerformanceReview/OPRS/>

The University is mindful of its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and has taken steps to ensure the alignment of widening participation and equality objectives. In particular, funding from the WP allocation will continue to be used to support the routine monitoring of disability, gender and ethnicity data for outreach and recruitment/admissions and the delivery of specific targeted outreach work for groups with protected characteristics. These include adult learner activities; BME-targeted work; gender-targeted activities; specific events for disabled learners;

F. Fair admissions

The University's admissions policy and practices are consistent with the Quality Assurance Agency Code of Practice and all our general entry requirements are published on our website. We annually review and revise our Student Admissions Policy¹³ where there is key input from WP staff.

We have long-recognised that widening participation outreach activities are limited unless professional, fair and transparent admissions processes underpin them. Our investment from HEFCE widening participation resources have ensured that WP staff are fully engaged in the strategic development of our fair admissions processes. Through this resource, investment has been made in specific practices to ensure our admissions processes are cognisant of the particular needs of underrepresented learners, for example:

- policies and processes to make adjusted offers to local WP learners successfully completing our Manchester Access Programme;
- introducing the use of contextual data into our admissions processes, which have been held up by Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) as an exemplar of pioneering practice¹⁴;
- specific applicant support for disabled learners, adult-returners to HE and looked after children;
- the development of distinctive 'Year 0' alternative Foundation Year pathways into key professional and scientific programmes, including Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Life Sciences, Physical Sciences and Engineering.

Attention to the widening participation effects on the new student number controls and deregulated AAB/ABB intake will continue to be an important priority for the University as we enter the new environment for student number management.

¹³<http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=6523>

¹⁴http://www.spa.ac.uk/contextual-data/contextual_data_examples.html