

The University of Manchester's Access Agreement with
The Office for Fair Access

2006/07 – 2008/09

(revised in Autumn 2007 for the final year of the current 3 year agreement)

1. Introduction

The University of Manchester, formed from the unification of UMIST and The Victoria University of Manchester on 1 October 2004, has developed an ambitious strategic plan¹ to become one of the world's leading universities *and* the UK's most accessible research-intensive institution by 2015. This "Manchester 2015 Agenda" positions widening participation prominently as one of our nine core strategic goals and is underpinned by a commitment to become an internationally distinguished centre of research, innovation, learning and scholarly enquiry that embraces equity of access to higher education opportunities locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

This three-year Access Agreement forms a sub-set of a much broader and progressive strategy that commits to the promotion of social inclusion, higher education learning opportunities and provision of first class student-support programmes for home students from traditionally underrepresented sections of society and international students from educationally-deprived backgrounds. We see our commitment to levying raised tuition fees² for all home³ full-time⁴ undergraduate programmes of study as an opportunity to reinvest a significant proportion of these monies into our strategic plans for ensuring fair access to higher education and develop further our exemplary position in relation to widening participation.

2. Access Performance and Regional Context

The University of Manchester is already positioned favourably against a range of publicly available indicators of fair access. Among our research-intensive Russell Group peers we perform at the very top end in relation to the number of students progressing from state schools and colleges, lower socio-economic groups and low participation neighbourhoods and have consistently met "benchmark" figures laid down by the Higher Education Statistics Agency. Since data on performance in relation to these access indicators have been published it is possible to see an overall improvement in our performance (figure 1) and the University intends to maintain this progress over time.

Our priorities for ensuring fair access to our degree programmes are also drawn up in the context of the high levels of deprivation and depressed levels of educational performance within our locality and the unambiguous commitment to serving to address this within our strategic plan. Our 2015 Agenda sets out our vision of being at once an international and Manchester institution – dedicated to serving the people of Manchester and England's North West by working with the local community and its leaders to enrich the social, economic, cultural and intellectual life within the region we serve. The Greater Manchester Sub-Region contains two major cities, Manchester and Salford, and eight metropolitan authorities, each containing large towns with their own character. Across Greater Manchester 32% of the population live in income support dependent families, increasing to 54% in the most deprived wards. In England's 100 most deprived Super Output Areas (SOAs), Greater Manchester features 32 times including significant parts of Manchester, Rochdale, Oldham and Salford⁵. Currently only 26%⁶ of young people from Greater Manchester enter higher education each year and in the cities of Manchester and Salford progression drops to 18% and 17%⁷ respectively. In addition, average achievement in Greater Manchester at GCE/VCE level is some 238 points compared to the English average of 259.⁸ The University therefore takes seriously its role raising aspirations to, and awareness of, higher education learning opportunities

¹ *Towards Manchester 2015: The Strategic Plan of The University of Manchester*

² In 2006/07 the tuition fee level was set at £3,000 and will rise thereafter at an inflationary rate as set out by the SLC and DIUS.

³ Bursaries relating to fees will need to be provided to all EU students, whereas bursaries for maintenance will only have to be provided for English students. We plan not to provide minimum or discretionary financial support to non-UK EU students as our bursaries relate to maintenance costs. However, we will not differentiate between English and other UK students for maintenance bursaries.

⁴ We understand that information on fees and support for part-time students is not required as part of this Access Agreement.

⁵ The English Indices of Deprivation 2004, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

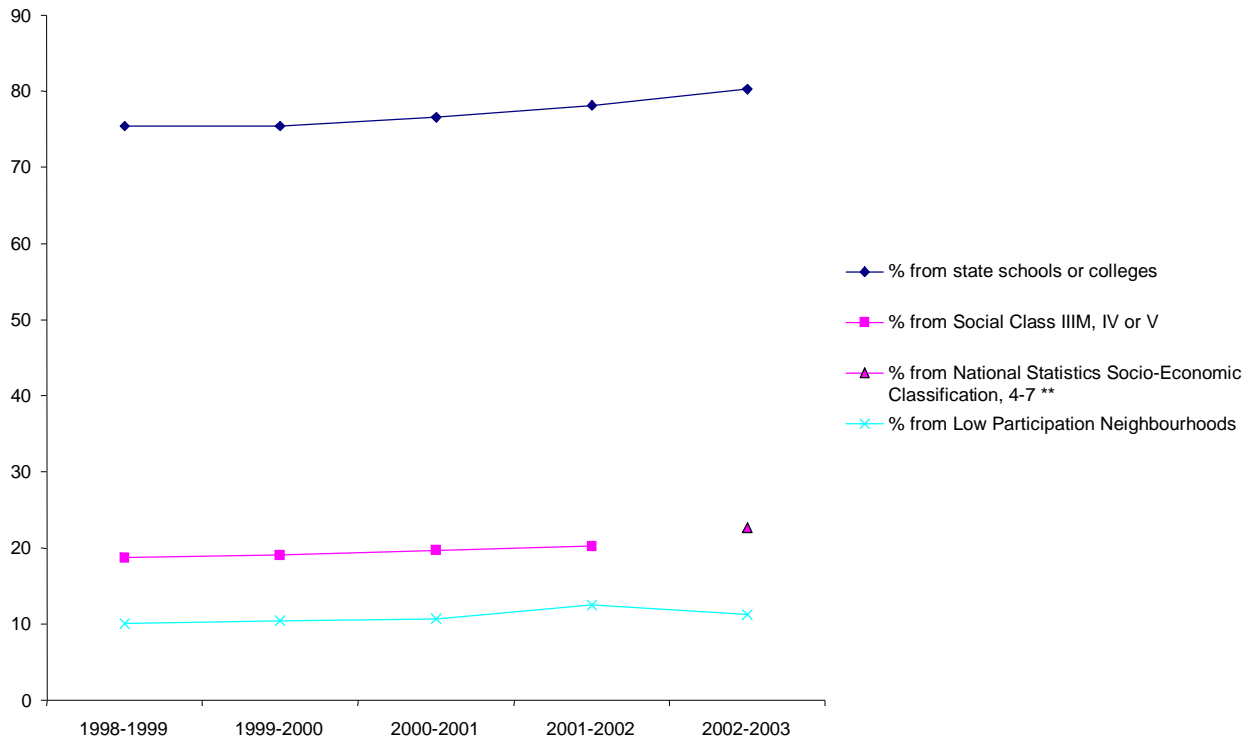
⁶ Polar data

⁷ Polar data

⁸ www.dfes.gov.uk/performance/tables/16to18_03/region2.shtml

among the citizens of our environs through the rich academic, cultural and economic resources at our disposal.

Figure 1. HESA Performance Indicators: Participation of young full-time first degree entrants at The University of Manchester*



* Data are all combined figures from UMIST and the Victoria University of Manchester

** Following the revision by the Office of National Statistics of the Social and Occupational classification, the social class indicator was redefined for 2002-3 data; this means that comparison with figures from earlier years cannot be made.

3. Strategy, current activities and Access Agreement milestones

3.1 Strategic Goals

The unequivocal goal set out in our strategic plan is that by 2015 The University of Manchester will be *“the UK’s most accessible research-intensive university by providing international students from educationally deprived backgrounds and home students from traditionally under-represented sections of society with a supportive learning environment in an inclusive and welcoming University community⁹”*.

A strategy for widening participation for home students has been developed for the next three years to move towards this goal and is based around the following thematic headings:

- i. **Contributing to national and regional initiatives:** in particular contributing to the Government’s multi-faceted approach to promoting social inclusion that aims for 50% of those under 30 to have benefited from higher education by 2010. Through active partnership with Aimhigher Greater Manchester we are leading on a number of initiatives to meet regional targets for increasing participation in higher education learning. This necessitates work that has a long lead-in time and involves working with parents, teachers, careers guidance workers, family, friends and community leaders to nurture a prevailing culture of participation;

⁹ *Towards Manchester 2015: The Strategic Plan of The University of Manchester*

- ii. **Widening participation target groups:** understanding which cohorts of students are underrepresented in higher education and at The University of Manchester and ensuring our outreach activities are demonstrably and efficiently targeted at these groups;
- iii. **Institution-specific outreach activities:** in particular promoting student engagement, leadership and ambassadorial work in widening participation activities in the local region to raise aspirations and awareness of higher education;
- iv. **Increasing motivation and enriching the curriculum:** by conferring upon students from underrepresented social groups access to our rich teaching, learning and cultural resources and thereby seeking to increase motivation, enrich the curriculum and raise attainment levels;
- v. **Ensuring Fair Admissions:** identifying and developing valid and fair admissions criteria, understanding the impact of the University's admissions activities on widening participation target groups and developing and recognising alternative progression routes for non-traditional students;
- vi. **Research and Evaluation:** to use a research-based approach to inform the development and fine tuning of the University's widening participation strategy and ensuring impact and success of our initiatives can be effectively measured and demonstrated;
- vii. **Embedding Widening Participation:** ensuring staff are conversant with the University's aims in respect of widening participation and that structures are in place to enhance linkages to our teaching and learning, student support and retention, recruitment and human resource strategies.

3.2 Current Outreach Activities

The University of Manchester is recognised nationally and regionally for the range and effectiveness of its widening participation activities. The five-year Targeted Access Scheme has been acknowledged as an example of good practice in widening access in the UUK publications *From Elitism to Inclusion* (1998) and *Social Class and Participation* (2002) and we organise the largest residential summer-school operation of any UK HEI. As part of our commitment to embrace widening participation in its wider sense we also organise an outreach and student support programme for prospective and enrolled mature students.

The distinctiveness of Manchester's approach to widening participation concerns a commitment to embedding activities into the work of Faculties so that activities can be delivered by staff and students active in teaching, learning and research. The following are some illustrative examples of this approach:

- the Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences have trained and deployed PhD 'Teaching Fellows' to develop interactive learning materials in schools, devise experiments and support attainment-raising alongside classroom teachers and thereby inspire more young people from underrepresented social groups to continue studying Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics into higher education;
- the Faculty of Humanities have been pioneering in their work to raise modern foreign languages attainment and enrich the curriculum in schools and colleges with low progression to higher education by using native speakers of European languages to deliver targeted GCSE and A level tuition to local pupils;
- the Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences have a team of staff who advise, train and inform key influencers of the higher education decision making process by matching healthcare professionals with Year 10 pupils with no family tradition of HE to provide a four-year programme of one-to-one mentoring;
- within our Faculty of Life Sciences, we are working alongside teachers in schools with low progression to higher education to develop our exciting teaching and research into genetics and bioinformatics to enthuse and motivate young learners.

Our cultural and academic services have also received recognition for their commitment to widening participation:

- we are the only UK institution to employ a dedicated Widening Participation Officer within our library to promote access to its resources among underrepresented groups in the local community;
- the Whitworth Art Gallery was the first gallery in the UK to develop a specialist post-16 programme of outreach activity for learners using our rolling programme of exhibits to increase motivation and extend the curriculum of learners;
- within our Manchester Museum we have used collections to develop a citizenship programme embedded in the curriculum for schools with low progression rates to higher education to challenge pupils to think how they might play a role as active citizens in a cohesive and sustainable modern society.

The commitment to enhancing progression rates into higher education within our locality has also allowed us to play a pivotal role in the establishment and subsequent work of Aimhigher Greater Manchester. Under its auspices we work collaboratively with a range of educational providers and local HE institutions and lead a number of projects on behalf of the Greater Manchester region e.g. the Student Ambassador Scheme, Aspiration-Raising in targeted African and Afro-Caribbean communities, 'Open Minds', an Arts Roadshow and a Disability Outreach project. Through this work our links with schools and colleges across Greater Manchester have expanded and we are able to make a contribution to the progression of students to a wide range of other higher education institutions in the region.

3.3 Access Agreement Milestones

The University of Manchester is in the unusual position of being a new institution, and we will use the first twelve months of its existence to define benchmarks in each of the key areas outlined below. To assist in the delivery of our broad strategic objectives the following set of milestones are submitted as part of our access agreement from September 2006-2009.

Goals	Objectives	Milestone
To ensure The University of Manchester builds upon its excellent track record in widening participation and acts as a socially responsible and inclusive institution committed to serving the people of Manchester and England's North West.	i. Work in partnership with local primary, secondary and further education providers and in collaboration with other universities to ensure there is year on year improvement in the number of young people in the local region who can enjoy the benefits of higher learning. (see paragraph 2, page 1)	In April of each year regional progression performance to HE will be analysed and the University's contribution in achieving any change assessed.
	ii. To actively promote student engagement and leadership in the community through involvement of undergraduate and postgraduate ambassadors in widening participation activities.	In September of each year coordinated campaigns to promote student engagement will be launched.
	iii. To maintain our current strong position in relation to performance against the three available "access indicators": the number of students from lower socio-economic groups, low participation neighbourhoods and state schools and colleges. (see Figure 1, page 2)	Each December a statistical analysis of University's performance in relation to access indicators will be undertaken and comparisons made with peer research-intensive institutions.
To provide staff with the skills and resources required to engage effectively in measures to widen access to higher education.	iv. To increase the number of admissions and outreach staff engaged in training, professional development and activities in relation to widening access.	At the end of each academic year we will demonstrate improvement in the number and/or range of training opportunities

		taken up,
To ensure prospective students are aware of the long-term financial benefits of higher education, our own specific bursary and scholarship packages and any financial costs associated with attendance at The University of Manchester.	v. To produce a specialist publication, develop webpages and offer a team of support to outline the financial assistance and costs for prospective students for entry to The University of Manchester.	Work will be completed and published for prospective students each March preceding the year of entry.
To develop further linkages between our pre and post entry support for students from underrepresented social groups.	vi. To appoint a student support and retention officer with specific responsibility for developing strategies for identifying and working with groups most at risk of non-completion.	An appointment to this post will be made in before September 2006.

4. Resources committed to widening access

To contribute towards the delivery of the objectives and milestones set out above, The University of Manchester is committing in the region of some additional £3.2million from 2006 for 1) bursaries 2) outreach work and 3) provision of financial information and advice for students.

4.1 Bursaries and other financial support for students

A range of bursaries and scholarships¹⁰ are being established for entrance in 2006. These will help us progress towards achieving one of the Key Performance Indicators of the Manchester 2015 Agenda – the availability of Equity and Merit awards for home students¹¹ from traditionally under-represented sections of society. These awards are being targeted strategically to facilitate the admission of able students irrespective of their background or financial situation. The University of Manchester will not limit the number of scholarships available in any one year: if a student meets the eligibility criteria of a scholarship, they will receive it.

Four levels of award are available for students from 2006:

Type	Target Group	Level
Manchester Guarantee Bursary	All home students from households with incomes less than £27,120 per annum (approx). ¹²	£1,000 per annum.
Manchester Advantage Scholarships	All home students from households with income of less than £17,910 (approx) achieving 3 x A level grade As or equivalent. ¹³	£5,000 per annum.
Manchester Achievement Scholarships	Students in Greater Manchester who have successfully participated in the University's Manchester Access Programme and local students progressing through an Access to HE route.	£2,000 per annum.
Manchester Success Scholarships	For designated programmes at The University of Manchester where students achieve excellence in examinations results.	£1,000 per annum.

¹⁰ For purposes of this Agreement a bursary is a non-repayable financial award granted on the basis of financial need to those who qualify and a scholarship is an award made to recognise achievement and/or potential.

¹¹ As part of our Manchester 2015 Agenda progress is also being made towards the development of Equity and Merit scholarships for qualified students from educationally deprived backgrounds in developing countries.

¹² Assessment and income bands will be revised in accordance with criteria used by the DIUS and SLC.

¹³ This figure will be revised in light of any inflationary changes made by the SLC and DIUS. A level equivalences in terms of IB, BTEC, Scottish Highers and the Irish Leaving Certificate will be clearly outlined to students in advance of the recruitment cycle. Assessment and income bands will be revised in accordance with criteria used by the DIUS and SLC

Faculty and school based scholarships	Designed to meet particular academic quality and market needs of programmes, according to a range of eligibility criteria. Some may be income contingent and may include those in income brackets up to the maximum level for receipt of statutory student support, others may be purely merit based, some a mixture of both. Full information is available at www.manchester.ac.uk	Variable
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4.2. Additional Outreach Work

More than £1 million is already committed to outreach work delivering against our institutional strategy from a range of HEFCE, ESF, Aimhigher and other monies. We plan to invest in the region of an additional £400,000 into a range of innovative schemes from 2006 as part of our commitment to enhancing opportunities and ensuring equity of access to higher education for potential students, particularly within our local communities in the North West. Over the three year period of the agreement we intend to undertake a number of new initiatives designed to deliver against our strategic objectives for widening participation alongside a commitment to evaluate and demonstrate the efficacy of this work in widening access institutionally and regionally.

4.3 Provision of information to students

The University of Manchester is taking seriously the potential impact that the introduction of variable tuition fees may have on students from underrepresented social groups and have therefore set ourselves a milestone in relation to the provision of financial information to prospective students. We believe it will be increasingly important for students from underrepresented social groups and with little or no family tradition of higher education to highlight the financial benefits as much as the costs of higher education. We will also engage our own admissions staff, parents, teachers and other key advisers in promoting understanding of new student support arrangements which we believe will be increasingly complex for prospective students.

We therefore commit ourselves to providing all prospective students, with information on the total and aggregate cost of their tuition throughout their course, and information on their eligibility for financial assistance at the start of the recruitment cycle in the preceding year of entry. Information will be provided through the prospectus, website and a dedicated publication. We will also ensure dissemination of this information through mail shots, attendance at higher education fairs, and other outreach activities, and will take advantage of other opportunities to provide information to national sources of information such as those offered by UCAS. This information will be reinforced at the application and offer stage. Existing students, and those entering in 2005, will continue to benefit from the range of support packages already in place at The University of Manchester¹⁴ and are able to access information on the levels and criteria of assessment within published brochures, the website and the Undergraduate Prospectus.

5. Monitoring Arrangements

Progress against this Access Agreement is monitored by the University's Planning and Resources Committee (PRC). PRC serves, *inter alia*, as the primary source of advice to the Board of Governors and the President and Vice-Chancellor on matters relating to the development and allocation of resources of the University. It is chaired by the President and Vice-Chancellor and its membership includes the Faculty Vice-Presidents and Deans, the Policy Vice-Presidents, the Registrar and Secretary, the Director of Finance, the Head of the Planning Support Office and the General Secretary of the Students' Union.

¹⁴ For further information see www.manchester.ac.uk/studyhere/undergraduate/sourcesoffunding/