UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD

ACCESS AGREEMENT SUBMISSION

1. Introduction

The University of Huddersfield is a teaching and learning led university that places students' needs first. We are proud of our record in widening participation to higher education with a highly socially inclusive student population. This is combined with high levels of student achievement and success in graduate employment. The University is committed to its local community and to actively taking education to students in order to widen participation, as well as delivering excellence in teaching and enhancing student success.

The University's Strategic Plan for 2006-10 commits it to continuing with this success and to ensuring further enhancement of the quality of the student experience through a strategy of improving learning and teaching. As an example of this strategy in action, about £1.2m pa was invested in 35 additional new teaching appointments during 2004-05 to improve student:staff ratios and to enhance student learning. This investment in staff and student support will continue as the new fee regime increases income to the University, **which will be predominantly dedicated to teaching and learning.**

The University has performed well in terms of recruiting regionally and especially from low-income groups and local ethnic-minority communities. Since the publication of the first set of HEFCE Performance Indicators in 1999 the University has performed above the national benchmarks, all-England averages, and the average for universities in Yorkshire in many of them. For example, throughout the last five years, the University has recruited a higher percentage of young full-time undergraduate entrants from state schools, lower social classes and low participation neighbourhoods than any other university in Yorkshire. Despite sector-wide growth in these areas, further improvement has been achieved with the result that we continue to exceed the benchmarks.

Although a number of definitions have changed in terms of the data collection, the charts in Appendix 1 demonstrate how the University's performance compares with all English universities, the HEFCE-assumed benchmark (and a location adjusted benchmark in the last two years) and all eight universities in Yorkshire. These confirm the University's position in terms of securing greater social inclusion with, for example, 46% of our home and EU first year students coming from the three lowest socio economic groups in the latest HEFCE PIs.

Access to HE has been increased by providing opportunities in Oldham and Barnsley, where participation in HE is low and the University now has dedicated stand-alone University Centres in these two towns. It is planned to have about 1,000 extra students in these two centres by 2010.

2. Fees from 2007-08

In accordance with the terms of the Higher Education Act 2004 the University of Huddersfield plans to use the facility for charging variable tuition fees in excess of current standard levels for our current courses, in the academic year 2007-08.

(i) For full-time home and EU students on all undergraduate degree courses (including PGCE students, but excluding those funded by the NHS) the University will charge a fee of £3,070 p.a. This fee will apply to the whole duration of the course for which the student enrols and will be subject to annual inflationary rises.

(ii) To encourage widening participation and access further, indirect financial support will be given to students enrolled on **sub-degree courses** (Foundation Degree, HND) by charging a

reduced fee of £2,050 p.a. To those students who enrol on **foundation, access or other 'year zero' courses**, the fee will be **reduced to £1,225 p.a.** for that year. Students at the University centres in Oldham and Barnsley will have a reduced fee of **£2,050** p.a. to encourage access to HE. These fee reductions are equivalent to a forfeit of opportunity income to the University of about £1.1m.

(iii) Indirect financial support will also be provided by charging **no fee** for those students undertaking a **placement year** to encourage the up-take of this facility and further enhance the employability of our students. This will only apply to those students paying the new higher tuition fee and is equivalent to a reduction in opportunity income to the University of about £300k p.a.

(iv) To facilitate access for students who need or choose to study **part-time** the University will **reduce** the full-time fee (equivalent to £512 per 20 credit module) so that for 2007 the fee will be **£260 per 20 credit module**. This is equivalent to a reduction in opportunity income to the University of £2.4m.

(v) Collaborating institutions that offer our franchised programmes will set their own fee and bursary levels. The Colleges must provide at least the minimum £300 bursary to students on the full state support, if they charge the full fee. However, the University will increase its vigilance of the quality of the provision and the standards of the awards in these institutions. If there is evidence that the fees set by the partner college are having an adverse effect, then we will review this arrangement.

3. Amounts of additional fee income to be spent on bursaries

The estimated additional fee income based on present student numbers and at steady state will be approximately £13m p.a. and is about £6m in the current year, 2006-07. The expenditure on bursaries is estimated to be £3.4m at steady state (£1.4m in 2006-07); representing about 24% of the additional income.

4. Bursaries and other financial support for students

(i) The University's strategy is to increase access by offering a bursary scheme for all full-time home and EU students on all our degree and sub-degree courses (excluding those funded by the NHS). The scheme targets the most economically disadvantaged of our students by the following grants:

- £1,000 to all students in receipt of the full HE Maintenance Grant from the Students Loan Company (SLC) (~37% of students)
- £500 p.a. to those students with residual income of less than £25,000, but more than that qualifying for the full HE Maintenance Grant, as indicated by the family income confirmed by the SLC (~10% of students)
- £305 to all PGCE students in receipt of the full £1,500 means tested element of the HE Maintenance Grant
- £305 to all social work students in receipt of the full HE Maintenance Grant.

The cost of these bursaries is estimated to amount to about £3.4m. Income thresholds will be defined for each of the payment levels and set annually in advance. Thus, in advance of taking up a place at Huddersfield, students and parents will be able to use the ready-reckoner on the SLC's website to find out how much they will receive from the SLC and how much additional bursary from the University. Full details of government maintenance grants and related threshold residual family incomes can be found at:
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/studentsupport/students/

(ii) Bursaries paid to students located in our partner FE colleges, who will set their own fee level, will be at the discretion of the FE college.

(iii) Students at the University centres in Oldham and Barnsley will have a reduced fee of £2,050 to encourage access to HE. Within the next 5 years, we plan to double the FT numbers to 1,400 at these centres creating an extra £2m income, of which an estimated £518k (26%) will be spent on bursaries, using the same methodology as at Huddersfield.

5. Provision of information to students

All prospective students will be given written information about the financial support they could receive and the total cost of their tuition. This will include state and institutional support as well as some other potential sources.   It will describe the direct costs and indications of associated costs such as accommodation and cost of living. It will indicate typical deferred costs in terms of repayment of loans.

The University provides an extensive financial information service to potential students. This provides a wide range of advice and support, including financial guidance, and the administration of financial relief, bursaries and awards. All of this information will be easily accessible through:
- the University's web-site
- the prospectus
- promotional material

6. Outreach work

- The University has a long history of out-reach work to raise aspirations and applications to HE from currently under-represented groups. The University is proud of the success of its outreach programme, which has put the University of Huddersfield at the forefront nationally for recruiting students from low-income families. The activity is fundamental to our Strategic Plan and includes contributing to an improvement in the economic, social and cultural well-being of the region.

On the assumption that HEFCE maintains its financial support for widening participation at its present levels, including special initiatives, the University plans to maintain its current expenditure of about £1.5m p.a. on widening participation and reach-out activities.

Our outreach work will be further embedded into the work of the institution in the period of the Strategic Plan and we do not initially plan to fund additional outreach activity from additional fee income. Our record to date is set out in the charts given in Appendix 1 and our aim is to at least maintain this level of achievement. The University's Widening Participation Strategy is given in Appendix 2.

The University has long held the view that successfully widening participation requires that students succeed in their programmes of study and then move into graduate employment. The University's retention rate continues to be a focus of attention and improved during 2005-06.

The University continues to achieve positive outcomes for graduates in employment and further study. We are particularly proud of our high numbers of sandwich courses, with around 600 students per year undertaking work placements integrated into their full-time studies. This has contributed to the good graduate employment rates in Huddersfield with 92% of leavers from the 2004/05 cohort taking up graduate or graduate track employment or further study.

The Strategic Plan for the period 2006-10 includes commitments to:

- deliver programmes with structures, curricula, and learning strategies matched to students' needs.
- improve the employability of students by ensuring that programmes focus on the needs of professional bodies and employers.
- improve access and completion rates of students from neighbourhoods with low participation in HE.
- provide HE in areas of low participation.

The University's commitment to achieving inclusion goes well beyond the admissions process, and we are fully committed to ensuring that students are supported in a manner that is appropriate for their own circumstance, to ensure that retention rates are good, and that students from all backgrounds have an equal opportunity at success. We are therefore keen to safeguard our current success at attracting, retaining and equipping students from the most under represented groups.

7. Milestones and Objectives

The University is fully committed to the following:
- Enhancing the strong level of participation of older learners
- Maintaining the current ethnic diversity of our population of home undergraduates
- Maintaining our position above benchmarks relating to low socio-economic groups

Baseline Data Definition	Milestones
Participation from lower socio economic groups	To maintain the position against 2005 HESA PI location adjusted benchmark for undergraduates and, through our two University Centres, provide programmes to areas of low HE participation.
Participation of students from low participation areas	Maintain the 2005 position against benchmark for undergraduates.
Participation of Disabled students	To maintain the position against 2005 HESA PI benchmark.
Participation of mature students	To maintain the position against 2005 HESA PI benchmark.

8. Monitoring compliance with the agreement

The University has well established mechanisms by which it monitors its achievements in widening participation, and will continue to use these reporting mechanisms to ensure that the aims set out in this document are fulfilled. Details are given in Appendix 2, but briefly consist of student tracking from pre-entry to employment, comparisons with benchmarks and regional and national performance indicators which are evaluated through the relevant university's committee structures. The University's Strategic Plan for 2006-10 is subject to performance management to ensure that key targets are met. This includes the development of suitable data sets, which will support the monitoring of our compliance to this access agreement.

Appendix 1

Chart 1
Students from state schools and colleges compared with HEFCE benchmark, location adjusted benchmark, all universities in Yorkshire and with all universities in England over a five year period 1998- 2003

Chart 2
Students from low socio-economic groups compared with HEFCE benchmark, location adjusted benchmark, all universities in Yorkshire and with all universities in England over a five year period 1998- 2003
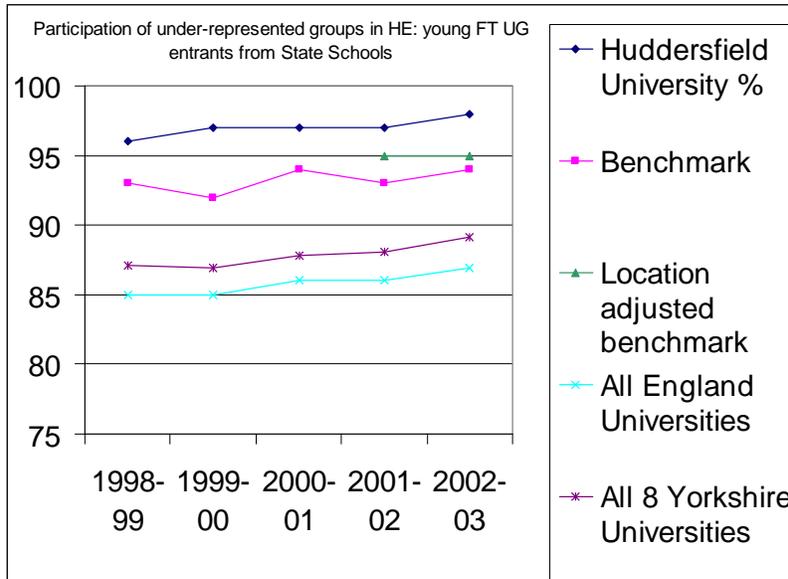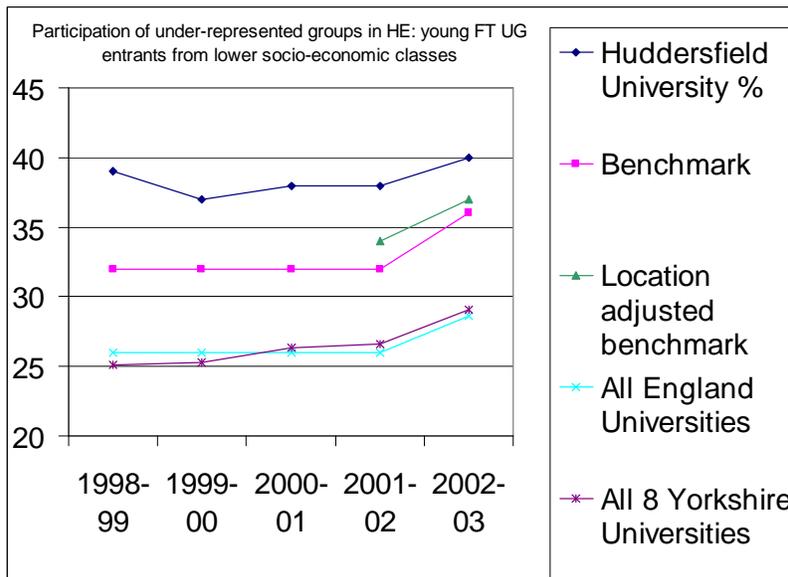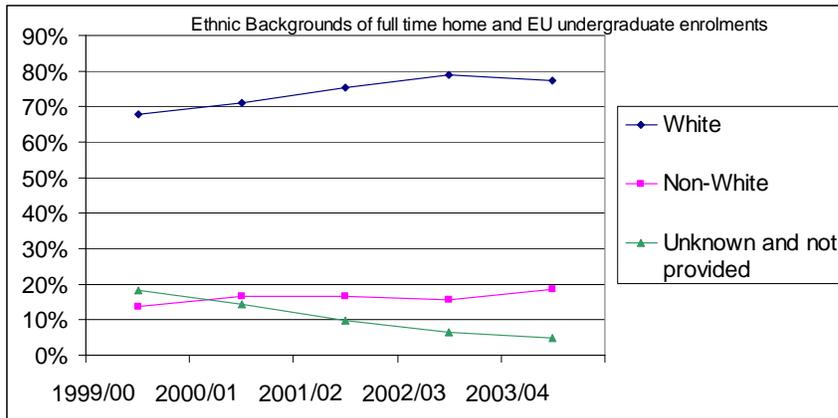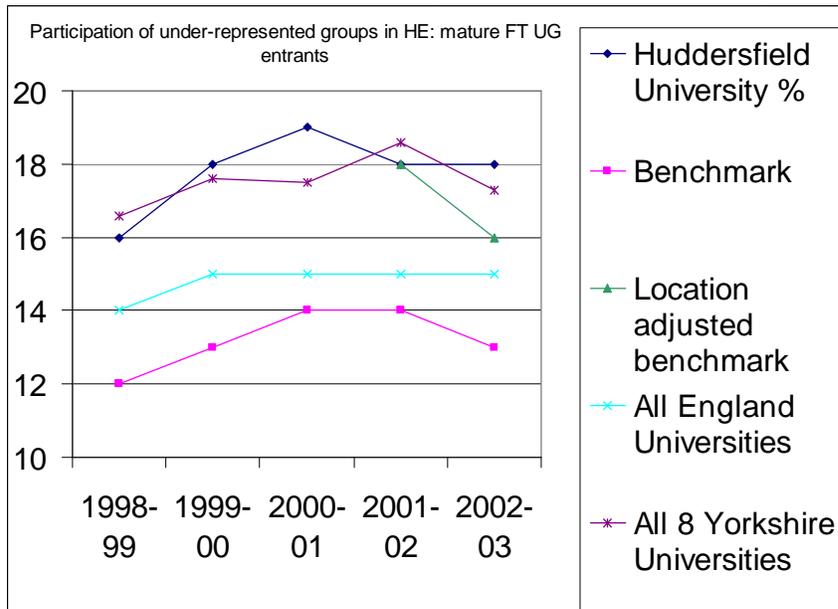

This level of participation level clearly shows the strength of the University's approach to widening participation. It has worked hard with local communities, schools and colleges to seek to provide a student population in accord with the needs of the sub region.

Chart 3
Ethnicity of home first and foundation year students

Ethnic Backgrounds of full time home and EU undergraduate enrolments

- ◆ White
- ■ Non-White
- ▲ Unknown and not provided

(Chart: vertical axis 0%–90%, horizontal axis 1999/00, 2000/01, 2001/02, 2002/03, 2003/04)

The university has enrolled a steadily increasing proportion of non-white home and EU undergraduates over the last 5 years. Those students choosing not to declare ethnicity has declined so improving the accuracy of the data

Chart 4
Numbers of mature students on entry from low participation neighbourhoods

Participation of under-represented groups in HE: mature FT UG entrants

- ◆ Huddersfield University %
- ■ Benchmark
- ▲ Location adjusted benchmark
- ✕ All England Universities
- ✳ All 8 Yorkshire Universities

(Chart: vertical axis 10–20, horizontal axis 1998-99, 1999-00, 2000-01, 2001-02, 2002-03)

The University has continued to exceed its benchmarks throughout the period.

6

WIDENING PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

1. Key Themes

The key themes of the University of Huddersfield Widening Participation (WP) Strategy are:

- Continuation of our highly effective approach to encouraging students from under-represented backgrounds to **access** our programmes,
- Improvement in our intelligence about students via a user-friendly **student tracking and monitoring** system,
- Increased attention to **retention**, progression and completion of such students, with emphasis on **employability,**
- Further development of **partnerships** in widening participation
- Significant improvements in providing **information and dissemination** of good practice, based on more rigorous evaluation.

The WP Strategy will continue to be closely linked to the Learning and Teaching Strategy, and forms a significant element of the University's External Relations Strategy. The implementation of integrated strategies is achieved by the University's Annual Planning Round, in which School and Service Plans are reviewed in a dialogue with the Planning and Resources Group.

2. Objectives for Widening Participation

The University has re-emphasised its commitment to WP as a key strategy in its Strategic Plan 2006-10, some key objectives include:

- *To provide a high quality, supportive and friendly learning environment that is inclusive, accessible and learner focussed.*
- *To deliver programmes with structures, curricula, and learning strategies matched to learning capabilities and entry qualifications.*
- *To improve access and completion rates of students from neighbourhoods with low participation in HE.*

Key performance targets include:
- *Exceed HEFCE benchmarks for*
  - *retention*
  - *progression*
  - *proportion of socially and economically disadvantaged students*

Our Vision Statement also emphasises opportunities for all and a commitment to continuous improvement:
The University of Huddersfield focuses on providing opportunities for all, especially groups not currently well represented in universities, and supporting students to ensure the maintenance of high standards in their qualifications.
- *We will support learners to enhance their knowledge, skills and understanding through initial study, professional practice and lifelong learning.*
- *We will be innovative in the delivery of our programmes, combining face-to-face tuition with high quality IT-based support, offering flexibility of location, timing, speed and content, providing helpful support through services on campus, and looking for efficiency and effectiveness in administration.*

In determining the key themes for its WP Strategy, the University has taken into account these commitments, has considered its strengths and weaknesses in various aspects of widening participation, has reflected on its position re the performance indicators, has consulted widely among staff, and with partners and external agencies, and has reached the following conclusions:
- The first key theme is **access**. Our aims are to maintain the numbers of students from socio-economic groups under-represented in HE in an increasingly competitive market, and to improve the quality of our activities in relation to access.
- Understanding what is happening to students as they pass through our programmes is of crucial importance to decision-making in relation to WP. Although we have installed a new student record system for management information purposes it needs a usable front-end which can provide statistical indicators, based on student tracking. Thus, **student tracking and monitoring** is the second key theme.

- The University's highest priority is to improve rates of retention, progression and completion for students and this is reflected in the first two key performance targets in the University Strategic Plan. We take the view that employability is an important factor in retention, and our third key theme focuses on **retention and employability**.
- The fourth theme is concerned with the development of mutually beneficial **partnerships** to support WP activities. We have many such partnerships in existence, and we intend to develop them and to build new ones in order to enhance our work in WP.
- In reviewing the WP strategy within the University it became apparent that many staff, though enthusiastic supporters of widening participation in their own area, were not aware of national, regional or local developments. The final key theme of the Strategy, therefore, is **information and dissemination** in order to increase awareness, raise interest, tackle culture change and share good practice.

A   *Access*

Work in this area is concerned with enabling students from disadvantaged backgrounds to access the University. We target state-educated students and those without A-level qualifications. It involves all Schools and most Services. It is necessary to ensure that activities are co-ordinated, and to work in close collaboration with family members and the various schools, colleges, community groups and awarding bodies.

The key objectives in this area are to:

A1   raise awareness of higher education among those currently under-represented in HE

A2   reduce anxiety in the minds of potential students

A3   build progression relationships with Schools and Colleges

A4   provide user-friendly information to potential students and their families

A5   attract potential students to the University.

The University's Admissions Policy is closely linked to the Widening Participation Strategy and addresses admissions processes and criteria, including the role of Admissions Tutors and managing the transition into HE.

We seek and encourage admissions in order to widen participation. We aim to improve access and apply the principles of equal opportunity. We provide support for applicants who require additional assistance in order to select the right programme of study, and make arrangements to ensure a successful transition to the university

B   *Student tracking and monitoring*

Student tracking and monitoring is concerned with following students from pre-entry through to employment, and relating this information to national/regional trends and performance indicators. It must have a WP dimension built into it, which can help to identify and monitor targets. Procedures are required to ensure that appropriate data are collected, analysed and disseminated, and that follow-up action is taken

The University collects data on age, gender, ethnicity and postcode from all students on entry. It has information for some students on their socio-economic grouping, usually those entering via UCAS. This last piece of information is much more subjective than the others. As cohorts progress through the University, information will be added on outcome and first destination. This will enable the institution to carry out analyses of performance and compare them with internal and external benchmarks. Each academic year, towards the end of the first semester, Schools are provided with standard sets of analyses to compare performance in the current year with targets, and produce action plans for the next academic year.

The key objectives in this area are to:
B1.   ensure that the student record system is robust and reliable
B2.   continue development of a database, which facilitates useful statistical analysis, ease of access and regular reporting
B3.   track students on a day-to-day basis.

C   *Retention*

Retention is one of our highest priorities. It is concerned with putting more effort into ensuring that retention, progression and completion rates are improved for ALL students without lowering standards. We do not wish to establish a culture which suggests in any way that under-represented groups are expected to under-achieve.   This involves Schools and Services in:

- auditing their provision to identify good practice and gaps
- managing the student experience proactively, especially the 'transition' stages
- working in partnership with FE and schools on 'transition'
- identifying successful pre-entry access and exit initiatives, as aids in tackling retention
- answering the question why do our students drop out and addressing it in appropriate ways
- establishing mechanisms for responding to the learning needs of diverse groups
- developing inclusive learning strategies suitable for a range of learning styles
- developing pathways which might better suit different types of entrants through collaboration with FE, the voluntary sector and employers.

Retention is an area where WP is closely articulated with the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

The key objectives in this area are to:
C1.   improve the induction process for students
C2.   reduce the burden of assessment
C3.   improve access to learning resources
C4.   strengthen support mechanisms for students, including personal tutoring and peer mentoring
C5.   place special emphasis on support for disabled students
C6.   provide more opportunities for identification of needs/study skills
C7.   help students in managing their finances
C8.   establish why students leave
C9.   improve employability skills and awareness.

D   *Partnerships*

This key theme is about encouraging and nurturing partnerships with external agencies in order to widen participation.   It involves setting up networks, providing information across the University about partners, and taking active steps to work with them.   The University has identified a number of partners for its WP programme, including nearby further education colleges in the 'Towns Like Us' initiative, FE colleges that have programmes, including foundation degrees, articulated with those of the University, local schools, the PCET consortium, and the schools and FE colleges in the 'guaranteed places' scheme that gives students a guaranteed place on a number of programmes at the University.

The key objectives in this area are to:
D1.   identify key partners and to seek and articulate mutually beneficial outcomes
D2.   develop closer links in particular instances (e.g. franchises, guaranteed places, foundation degrees.)
D3.   work with other universities in West Yorkshire to raise aspirations
D4.   build on the work of Aimhigher Projects
D5.   work in partnership with other stakeholders including local communities, Learning Partnerships, Huddersfield Pride, Connexions Service etc.

With regard to D4, we will continue to engage proactively with the work of Aimhigher at regional, area-and district level in order to:
- improve coordination and transfer of best practice,
- develop strategic partnerships with providers and partners,
- improve information and guidance to assist learners and others,
- raise aspirations and awareness of the potential of HE,
- develop flexible learning pathways,
- embed best practice through institutional change, and
- monitor and evaluate outcomes.

E   *Information and Dissemination*

Information and dissemination are felt by practitioners within the University to be an essential component of the WP strategy.   They feel unaware of activities in different parts of the institution and that good practice could be better disseminated, and they would like regular meetings of those involved in this type of activity. In addition, external consultation has identified difficulties in communication with the University from outside.

The key objectives in this area are to:
- o raise awareness of WP developments
- o provide staff development opportunities in areas associated with widening participation
- o ensure that good practice is disseminated.

3.   Targets, milestones and outcomes for the use of a WP Action Plan

A set of activities, with targets, milestones, measurable outcomes, and explanation of funding arrangements is published in a separate Action Plan.   The University's approach to the WP funding is to allocate it through its devolved revenue mechanisms to all Schools and Services, on the grounds that all areas contribute to the activity.   The targets in the Action Plan are negotiated with Schools and Services and operationalised through School and Service activity plans.   Co-ordination of, and a learner-focus for, the development of action plans and targets has been encouraged at School and Service level by the production of a common template relating to the student life cycle and key themes of the University strategy. This (see next page) has been used to stimulate discussion and to encourage Schools to consider new ways of addressing the WP agenda.

4.   Monitoring/evaluation

The External Relations Group:
- assists Schools and Services in articulating SMART targets for widening participation, and in embedding them into their planning documents
- receives reports from Schools and Services in order to monitor the achievement of targets identified in the WP Strategy and to report on them once per year via the Annual Operating Statements
- carries out evaluation of selected projects, through discussion of achievements with relevant staff
- identifies achievement/developments which should be more widely disseminated and to initiate that dissemination via the Staff Development Group.

The Teaching and Learning Committee considers its reports and recommendations.   Where there is slippage or there are problems in delivering targets, the School or Service concerned will be visited by one of the Pro Vice-Chancellors and helped to produce an Action Plan to retrieve the position.   In cases where targets clearly cannot be met, funding will be moved to more fruitful areas.

A typical summary sheet for the three key areas of Access, Student tracking and monitoring and Retention is given on the next page.

Widening Participation – Areas of activity/objectives/programmes

| | A - ACCESS | | B - TRACKING/MONITORING | | C – RETENTION/EMPLOYABILITY | |

				Moving through the programme		
	Aspiration raising at a younger age	**Pre-Entry**	**Entry, Induction And term/semester 1**	**Components of the programme**	**Retention, progression, completion**	**Moving On**
1.	Visits to Schools/use of facilities	Pre-entry guidance on website and hard copy	Induction week	Academic counselling	Personal Tutoring (acad. and welfare)	Career planning tools
2.	Lectures/tasters/master classes/subject events	Open Days/Afternoons	Guidance on planning learning	Support for study skills	Peer Mentoring	Advice to part-time students
3.	Summer Schools e.g. UFA and Maths	Role of Admiss. Tutors /Office/external mods.	Introduction to range of personal support	Extra help when needed	Addressing student needs	Alumni society
4.	Excellence Challenge activities	Access/admissions policies with targets	Help for disabled/special needs	Career planning/Career Management module	Personal Action Plans	Talks from alumni
5.	Targeting parents and disadvantaged studs.	Guaranteed Places Scheme	Learning Support Arrangements	Changing programmes	Rapid response to absence	Information about follow-up courses
6.	Developing School-specific links	Clearer progression routes from FE	Improved joining instructions	Learner feedback/ module questionnaires	Dedicated year tutors	Mentors identified
7.	Shadowing existing students	Financial Advice/ promotion of funds	Diagnostic testing skill levels/special needs	Placements	Improved timetabling	Post-graduation advice for careers
8.	Targeting adult learners	Attention to quality/ intelligibility of material	Residence life programmes	Student Ambassadors	Enhance all courses to the best	Feedback success to Schools/FE
9.	Profile raising of University	Bridging course for GCSE English/Maths	Look carefully at individual needs	Open learning workshops	Buddy system	
10.	Targeting ethnic minorities	Guidance Manual for staff on admissions	More use of peer advice	Increased flexibility/more inclusive curriculum	Follow up early leavers via exit interviews	
11.	Student mentoring scheme	Readily available employment statistics	University induction into assessment	Buddy system	Belief in success, regular affirmation	
12.	Emphasis on career prospects/employability	Appoint marketing managers	Early contact with named person	Personal Development Portfolios	Improved statistics on progression	
13.	Compacts, associate students, partnerships	Course-related pre-entry handbooks	Help with managing workload	Engagement strategies		
14.	Improved website	Show-casing student achievements/campus	Help with managing finances	Prompt formative assessment feedback		
D	**Building partnerships**					
E	**Information and Dissemination (including staff development)**					