

ACCESS AGREEMENT 2013/14

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The University of Westminster was founded in 1838 as the Polytechnic Institution in London's Regent Street, where its headquarters building is still used as a base for full-time and part-time students today. However the University's modern history began in 1882 when Quintin Hogg re-founded the Polytechnic to establish a new model for public education, building on the pattern of his Free Schools, by helping to establish 12 polytechnics in London by 1903. His aim was to provide educational, sporting and social facilities for working adults. The commitment to Quintin Hogg's aim of providing access to learning for those who could benefit, irrespective of social class or income, is a core principle honoured today by staff and Governors of the University.
- 1.2 The University's Access measures encompass recruitment, including the design of pathway programmes into HE, and activities which support student retention and development of students. Monitoring reports illustrate that Westminster's approach is being sustained and enhanced despite significant changes in the operating environment. The participation of young first degree entrants from under-represented groups, including those from state schools and colleges, is over 95% of the new entrant cohort each year (against a benchmark of 93%), of whom some 42% are drawn from socio-economic classes 4,5, 6 and 7 (against a benchmark of 36%).
- 1.3 The planned activities set out below accord with the University's Widening Participation Strategic Assessment submitted to HEFCE in June 2009, and the Interim Widening Participation Strategic Statement for 2012. They also provide direct continuity with the current Access Agreement and the annual monitoring reports by which progress towards its achievement is tracked.
- 1.4 The standard fee for full-time first degree new entrants in 2013 remains at £9k per annum. Course Fee Waivers for continuing students first enrolled in 2012/13 will be allocated by subject. For Electronic Engineering and Life Sciences courses the waiver will be £500, for Built Environment, Business and Law courses it will be £1000, and for Computer Science, and Social Sciences, Humanities and Languages courses it will be £1500. It is predicted that 20% of the additional fee income above the statutory level will be invested in access activities in 2013/14. The National Scholarships Programme will be supported for FT and PT students, in parallel with an extensive range of targeted initiatives to support the selection and development of new students. Westminster re-affirms its commitment to provide clear and information on fees and funding to prospective students, their families, sponsors and

advisers, on its website from Summer 2012 for potential applicants for admission in 2013.

- 1.5 Guidance has been sought from current students, including the University of Westminster Students' Union (UWSU), on the design of the student support package. This includes the criteria for selection of Westminster Scholars, and the levels of information advice and guidance needed on the new loan arrangements and the aggregate cost of tuition and costs while studying.
- 1.6 The University remains committed to match funding National Scholarships (222 entrants in 2012 and 424 entrants in 2013) through its Retention and Development model by allocating funded support in the Scholars' second and final years of study. Students will be offered a choice of funded support, one element of which would be the option of an additional fee waiver. The other options will include credits for a University provided service such as Hall of Residence fees, a study support package including credits with the campus-based Marylebone Books, a travel award, and a Graduate Development award for mentoring, internships and career development support. A maximum cash payment will be included as an option with the total package valued at £6000 (£3000 of NSP funding matched by £3000 from the University of Westminster Scholarship programme).
- 1.7 Students from lower income households, as defined in the period 2006 -2011, remain entitled to a Bursary of either £329pa or £400pa and will continue to be supported with annual payments until they have completed their studies at the University.
- 1.8 **The 2013/14 Access Agreement** continues to reflect Westminster's **founding mission** and long-term commitment to **access and learning opportunities** across diverse communities in London and beyond - in the UK, other EU states, and internationally. Social cohesion within the University community is an important aim: applicants from the widest possible range of backgrounds will continue to be recruited and selected across all subjects.
- 1.9 **Milestones** against which to measure the **longer term re-shaping** of higher education opportunities in England are expected to **take precedence over targets** in the medium term. Access Agreements during the 2013 – 2015 period will continue to be used to inform **iterative discussions with OFFA**.
- 1.10 Westminster's Course Fee Waiver scheme was designed in 2011 to aid the transition to the new fee regime for new entrants who were unaware of the higher fee changes when they first planned to apply for a FT First Degree place. In 2012 some 74% of students are expected to benefit from a Course Fee Waiver ranging between £1500 and £500. Although individual students will benefit these **waivers are not directly targeted** for students from lower Household Income groups. Therefore, **in consultation with student groups**, resources are being focused on student support within Westminster's **retention and development model** from 2013, and Course Fee Waivers will not be extended for new entrants beyond 2012.
- 1.11 **Student views have been canvassed through focus groups** with Student Ambassadors, Student Associates assisting in schools and colleges, and students reaching out to London's migrant communities as well as through the University of Westminster Students' Union (UWSU). The emerging consensus is that students would benefit more from extension of infrastructure support for extra-curricular

activities such as internships and work shadowing, short study abroad programmes, and extension of volunteering opportunities. Development of employability and community engagement attributes are valued more highly by students than reduced fee levels. Westminster's **partnership with UWSU** embodies a shared commitment to find new and **more effective ways of explaining** the new fee regime and the University's policies which underpin its approach to access and outreach, and student retention and development.

- 1.12 The **National Scholarships Programme** (NSP) will be extended in 2013/14 by the allocation of **424** full-time equivalent scholarships funded by HEFCE at £3k equivalent. This will be match funded with £3k funding per capita by the University through the beneficiaries' second and final years of study in accordance with its retention and development model. The core eligibility criteria of £<25k Household Income, and academic or creative potential beyond the level of the admissions offer will continue to be applied for new entrants in 2013.
- 1.13 **Going beyond Outreach** in its established sense, students have initiated their own activities to make a contribution working in partnership with different groups in the Turkish speaking and Somali communities. The emphasis on partnership is significant. These are not research projects for which the students draw on communities as their subject. Rather they are jointly designed activities initiated by Westminster students reaching out to young people and their families in new and longer established migrant communities.
- 1.14 The University of Westminster staff contribute significantly to **collaborative outreach** activities. This includes policy development and research led by *Linking London*, data analysis on achievement, progression and contextual data led by *AccessHE*, and the ongoing National Scholarships Programme (NSP) review.
- 1.15 The University of Westminster's policy commitments and planned access and outreach activities directly support the requirements of the **Equalities Act 2010** using positive action as part of its retention and development model. The University has identified more ambitious milestones to evaluate its collaborative activities supporting access and outreach, through strategic planning within the Westminster Group, and designing in progression through links at course level, as well as supporting potentially vulnerable groups such as disabled students and care leavers.
- 1.16 This Access Agreement and the plans for expenditure to support its implementation in 2013/14 focus on students deemed to be countable for Access Agreement purposes.

2. NEWER INITIATIVES PLANNED FOR 2013/14

Westminster Saturday University

- 2.1 The foundation of the Royal Polytechnic Institution in 1838, and its re-foundation by the philanthropist Quintin Hogg, was based on the principle of providing access to education for all who could benefit regardless of family position or financial security. This has been taken into account again in the adjustment of the outreach programme for 2013/14, to reflect Westminster's links with the Smithsonian Institute in the USA, in the University's 175th anniversary year. The Nobel Laureate series of outreach lectures introduced in 2009 has been adapted to form part of the Westminster

Saturday University programme for 2013/14. Its purpose is to attract and motivate young people in inner city schools and colleges to aspire to study at University. The programme plan will include presentations by leading academics and practitioners across the full range of subjects offered by Westminster. This programme will be delivered initially in partnership with colleagues from the Westminster Group of Associate Colleges, and broadened subsequently to schools, VI Form Colleges, and mature applicants from East and South London as well as Central and West London.

Westminster Group progression pathways

2.2 The Westminster was established in the mid-1990s and expanded and revised in 2010/11. Westminster Group Associate Colleges are located close to the University of Westminster's campuses in Central and North West London. The eight Further and Higher Colleges in the Westminster Group are:

- City of Westminster College
- College of North West London
- Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College
- Hackney Community College
- Harrow College
- Kensington and Chelsea College
- Uxbridge College
- Westminster Kingsway College.

2.3 The development of new strategic partnerships between the University and the individual colleges reflects the particular strengths of each college. Progression pathways to Higher Education are being consolidated within the Westminster Group for new entrants in 2013 by adapting courses for joint delivery. Higher Apprenticeship pathways are also being explored for inclusion within HNDs and Foundation Degrees across several Westminster Group colleges. Customised final Bachelors Honours year programmes are being designed for all students progressing from HNDs and Foundation Degrees on the basis that the students will not be counted as new entrants (as they are already studying at HE level). These are strategic long term partnerships underpinned by a shared commitment to vocational and academic education. The Teacher Education programmes are also being expanded (see 2.14 below).

Westminster's Great Start

2.4 Personalised support for new students is being introduced through a special partnership with the Students' Union (UWSU) in a scheme called "The Great Start". This forms a key element of Westminster's retention and development model, building on the Higher Education Academy (HEA) funded "Sense of Belonging" project delivered with Queen Mary London and London Metropolitan University in 2011. Individual student ambassadors will be recruited, selected and trained as FANS - Friends of Arriving New Students - to help them settle in and make the most of their time at the University.

Westminster's Student Ambassadors

- 2.5 By 2013 there will be a total of 647 National Scholarship Programme (NSP) student ambassadors contributing to the delivery of the University's access and outreach programmes as trained Student Ambassadors. From next year it is intended that these students will be trained alongside the current groups of Student Ambassadors to contribute to access and outreach activities across the full programme of events. It is envisaged that increasing opportunities for students to be trained as part of a regional programme of Ambassador events will become available after 2012 and the University of Westminster is committed to supporting this approach.

University of Westminster Associates in Schools

- 2.6 Student Associates are recruited and selected to work as classroom assistants in schools and colleges, particularly in local areas with high indications of disadvantaged communities. This supports the need to increase selection of students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPNs); currently 5.9% of Westminster's students come from this group (against a benchmark of 6.7%). This scheme, formerly funded by the Training and Development Agency (TDA), has been revised to operate as a scheme solely for University of Westminster students and it is wholly resourced by the University. It will be extended to additional colleges in 2013.

Westminster Summer Schools

- 2.7 Summer Schools delivered for Home, EU and international students are valued for their flexibility and the opportunity to study in a wider cross-disciplinary group while fulfilling academic credit requirements for specified modules. Plans for Summer 2013 include an expansion of Summer schools both for mixed groups of students (as part of the University's retention and development model), and single subject 'taster' programmes for intending applicants. New and imaginative gateways to the profession of architecture are particularly needed to help redress the combined impacts of changes in the HE sector and economic recession. A Summer School of applicants who are considering architecture as their chosen field is therefore planned for Summer 2013.

Volunteering, internships, work shadowing, study abroad

- 2.8 Volunteering connects students with their community and provides opportunities for learning and development. It creates platforms for community engagement and gives students and the University, the opportunity to raise aspirations and widen participation in the wider community. This year, Westminster students gave some 20,000 hours of their own time to take part in a broad range of volunteering activities. In response to student feedback additional support will be focused on providing opportunities for students to identify and take up internships and work shadowing opportunities. Short periods of study abroad pre-semester and post-semester will also be facilitated, through international summer schools and joint projects with UWSU.

Westminster's Scholarships programme

- 2.9 The University's Scholarships scheme was introduced in 2006 to safeguard the interests of academically able students by providing yearly support through a competitive scholarship. This award winning scheme has been adjusted during the last five years to accord with the retention and development model. Scholarships will continue to be allocated to applicants from specific partner schools and colleges such as Quintin Kynaston School (with which the University shares its founder), and the Westminster Group of Associate Colleges. Progression awards and scholarships for part-time students will also be extended in 2013.

Westminster's Connected Communities

- 2.10 The role of the University of Westminster in reaching out to migrant communities in London is derived largely from its languages programmes, ranging from Community Translation to the current Routes into Languages scheme. These programmes are being expanded through jointly designed programmes which support young people and their families in community centres. The aims of the students who lead these initiatives are both to contribute to learning and cultural activities in the centres, and to inspire and motivate engagement with further and higher education. Turkish speaking communities are the main focus. The range of activities is extensive and includes Masters students in Architecture working with young people in community centres on urbanisation and identity, Sociology specialists helping to articulate additional syllabus material for schools, and international relations students using social media to engage wider groups in sharing cultural traditions.

Routes into Languages

- 2.11 Routes into Languages is a highly valued scheme that supports parents and families as well as school and college students. It is co-directed in London from the University of Westminster in partnership with SOAS, and has just secured funding for a further one year period to Summer 2013. Outreach events funded and co-funded by the University of Westminster to complement the London regional activities (such as Employability Activity Days, Film and Cultural Study Days, Careers in Languages Days) have included film screenings, poster events, and exhibitions well as Language Immersion Saturdays for GCSE, Four Day Easter Language Workshops for A-level. All these programmes will be extended in 2013/14, and it is intended that some of the National Scholars jointly funded by HEFCE and the University of Westminster will be recruited as Student Ambassadors for Routes into Languages for 2013/14. Collaborative targets are being developed with SOAS to extend the reach of this successful scheme which will underpin its sustainability beyond the next phases of HEFCE funding.

HE and FE sector initiatives

- 2.12 *Linking London's* sector wide policy initiatives safeguard vocational progression routes to HE, and academic staff and Outreach colleagues take part in a range of events each year. The University is a subscriber with Board membership, and presents its access and outreach case studies on a regular basis. *AccessHE* is also strongly supported, both on a subscriber basis with Board membership, and through participation in sub-groups and events. Both organisations will continue to be supported in 2013.

- 2.13 Care Leavers will continue to be given dedicated support and advice in 2013. The University is committed to subscribing to the Frank Buttle Trust, which conferred its award for Care Leaver support at Westminster in 2006 and 2010.
- 2.14 Westminster's Teacher Education programme in the Further Education and Higher Education sectors will be extended in the London region through the inclusion of two additional FE colleges in the consortium formerly known as the Certificate in Education (CertEd) Consortium. As part of this expansion two new online Masters courses have been developed in Teacher education and Lifelong Learning for delivery from 2013. This forms part of Westminster's long term strategy to support the delivery of higher education within further and higher education colleges, helping to bridge learning in colleges and universities. Westminster's Teacher Education Consortium will also contribute regionally to collaborative outreach through sustaining the network established through its partnership with Oxford Brookes in the Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (CETT) formerly funded by HEFCE.

3. Monitoring and Evaluation arrangements

- 3.1 Progression, Achievement and Employability are monitored routinely in relation to the KPIs identified at University level. The Strategic objectives set at School and subject level are monitored annually as part of the planning cycle. The performance of the academic portfolio is monitored in parallel with the performance of students. Internal statistics are benchmarked with Unistats data at course level. Outreach activities are informed by analysis of applicant and student data by feeder institution and borough.
- 3.2 The Director of Higher Education Policy is the senior postholder with responsibility for the University's policy on Access and Widening Participation, reporting directly to the Vice-Chancellor.
- 3.3 The Learning, Teaching and Student Support Committee is the lead body on behalf of the University's Academic Council with responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the Access Agreements and the Widening Participation Strategic Statements. The annual Student Equality and Diversity reports are based on multivariate analysis of student characteristics and these reports inform University policy and strategy on Access and Widening Participation. Annual monitoring reports are considered by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) which reports directly to Academic Council. Papers are also prepared for the University Executive Board (UEB) both for discussion and debate, and for information on the resource allocations which support this core area of the University's activities.
- 3.4 Monitoring data is rigorously analysed and interpreted through the processes described. Yet the difficulty of demonstrating causality can hamper demonstration of the success of specific interventions. Changes in applicant and student behaviour during transitional periods between funding regimes inevitably pose greater challenges in terms of forecasting. The incompleteness of some data sets arising from students electing not to declare certain types of personal information, and the weaknesses of older data such as POLAR, can also limit the applicability of some reports. For these reasons the University is working closely with peer institutions, both individually and within sectors groups such as **AccessHE**, **Linking London and Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA)** to share findings and case studies, and to set collaborative milestones and targets which can be contextualised

by reference to broader studies of admissions, retention, achievement and graduate destinations.

- 3.5 Students are represented on the Learning, Teaching and Student Support Committee. Regular collaborative meetings are also held between the University's Director of Higher Education Policy and the President of the University of Westminster Students' Union (UWSU) to take forward initiatives to support the recruitment, selection and development of students from a diverse range of backgrounds, particularly those from less advantaged communities.

4. Equality and Diversity

- 4.1 Westminster's framework of policies which safeguard and develop diversity within the University community address the principles which underpin equality in terms of gender, race, religion and belief and disability. Sexual orientation is also encompassed in the diversity policies and the University's commitment is recognised by the title *Stonewall Diversity Champion*.
- 4.2 A significant investment is planned for 2013/14 onwards in the development of students' graduate skills and aptitudes and, with the advice of the Students' Union, this is being focused on workplace experience and education abroad - to be known as the Westminster Enterprise Challenge. Students who are from protected characteristic groups and who are not in a position to travel outside London for work or education abroad experience will be supported through customised options designed collaboratively with the Students' Union. The aim of these additional options will be to provide a directly comparable set of experiences and outcomes.

Activities planned for 2013/14 include:

- A Global Leaders programme - hosted in London, and certificated
 - Connected Communities projects - student volunteers working with migrant families
 - Digital Exchanges - going beyond the classroom, not bound by semesters or timetables
 - UWSU promotion of the extended range of opportunities through videos, radio, and TV.
- 4.3 Customised support packages for students are being designed with the Students' Union to extend the opportunities amongst the whole student body for experience of the transformative effect of study abroad, internships and short work experience periods. The Westminster Scholarships scheme will be extended to help students take up these opportunities, and additional Student Ambassador Contracts for students employed through the University's Talent Bank will be resourced to support them.

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