

THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Widening Participation Strategy

HEFCE Submission

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1. VISION

1.1 OUR VISION

The University's mission¹ is '*to deliver excellent teaching and research in a context of continuing development and innovation within an organisation which is effective, efficient and accountable*'. This is further expanded into the following objectives:

- To sustain international *excellence both in learning and teaching* and research
- *To serve a range of constituencies including students, professional communities, the industrial and commercial sectors, government agencies and society at large*
- To advance in the core disciplines, distinctive specialist areas and interdisciplinary development
- *To provide a fulfilling education for all students*
- To carry our high quality research and to apply the outcome of that research
- *To maintain and enhance close relations with other educational institutions*
- To enhance the local and regional presence of the University through collaboration and partnership programmes.

Within this framework our vision for widening participation is to have a University in which:

- Widening participation is embedded into the University's core activity
- There is equality of access and recruitment regardless of background, social class, disability, ethnicity or age and based solely on academic potential
- Every student has the appropriate guidance and support to reach the high levels of achievement traditionally associated with University of Leeds study
- We meet our HEFCE benchmarks

The University of Leeds has taken widening participation to cover variables such as age (mature - 21 years or over), gender, ethnicity, race, disability, entry qualifications (non-standard entry qualifications), educational background (state school education), geodemographics (disadvantaged neighbourhoods) and social class. Within this definition, there is considerable scope to widen participation at the University of Leeds to ensure that we provide equality of access and support to students, regardless of background or social class.

This requires not just new investment but also co-ordination of existing activities to ensure that there is clarity and focus across the institution in support of the University's Widening Participation Strategy. Already a number of strategies established across the University help to promote widening participation, including the Learning and Teaching, Human Resources and Estate strategies. Yet, we are aware, that there are still groups who are under-represented in Higher Education which include very many people capable of high levels of achievement who, for a variety of social, financial and educational reasons, are not given, or do not choose a university education. Many of the University's activities already address these issues; our aim is to strengthen what we already do, particularly, in those areas where we recognise that our own practice could be improved.

Widening participation is not about addressing recruitment difficulties in specific subjects, but must operate across the institution and cover its total subject base. In order to achieve a real step-change in the performance and equality of the University's widening participation activity we are to further develop and enhance three areas: aspiration raising and pre-entry; application and admission; on-course study; support and employment. To recruit students, and to retain them, we must address issues from the pre-entry stage through to graduation and, ultimately, employment.

We recognise that we cannot do this alone. To build on our successes and to remedy our weaknesses we need to further enhance our relationships with key players locally, regionally and nationally.

¹ Corporate Plan 1999-2000 to 2002-2003

Positive working relationships with Excellence in Cities Partnerships, Local Education Authorities, Schools, Colleges and community groups amongst others will be vital to ensure that we meet our aims and objectives.

1.2 UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

In the last thirty years there has been immense change in the composition of the student body, range of subjects studied, methods of teaching and the support available to students. In particular, (over the last ten years) there has been major expansion of higher education which has resulted in many sections of the population being able to access University study. The University of Leeds has always been committed to expansion and is now one of the largest and most popular universities in the country for school-leavers, with a long and strong commitment to adult education.

Over the last 10 years at Leeds total student numbers have increased from 11,000 to over 27,000 making it one of the largest of the traditional ‘big civic’ universities. In 2000/01 there are 19,711 undergraduates (comprised of 17,904 full-time students and 1,807 part-time students). If we add students taking continuing education courses and those in affiliated colleges whose programmes are validated by the University, then the total number of students associated with the University is over 55,000. The University offers one of the widest ranges of academic courses in the UK with over 570 first-degree programmes. We have strong professional and vocationally oriented departments such as law, textiles, medicine, mining, education and engineering. The University has a high, average intake A-Level score of 23.6 compared with a national figure of 19.4.

As well as being a major national and international university, we have a strong commitment to our local and regional community. For example, the School of Continuing Education has catered for adult learners in the regional community for more than 50 years. One key aspect of the widening participation agenda is the development of appropriate partnerships - with other educational bodies and institutions, with employers, with the voluntary sector and with various specialist agencies. We already have well-developed partnerships in all these areas at both regional and national levels, but we intend to develop these further. We are currently in the process of merger with Bretton Hall College which will facilitate enhanced higher education provision in an economically disadvantaged part of the region in Wakefield and South Yorkshire. The University of Leeds will establish the Wakefield Centre (which will include the School of Continuing Education) and will focus on working with partners in both Wakefield and South Yorkshire to develop pathways into higher education, and on the development of appropriate higher education programmes on the Wakefield campus.

The University has supported and resourced the development of base-level provision for disadvantaged students for many years. We have many specialists in key areas such as the School of Continuing Education, Sociology and Social Policy, Institute of Lifelong Learning and the School of Education. Central resources such as the Office of Part-Time Education, Access and Information Centre and Disability Services have served to enhance support to key constituencies of students. This work is being supported by the HEFCE, European Social Fund and Single Regeneration Budget funding.

Over the last five years, we have also expanded work-related and flexible learning programmes and embedded these within core provision. The University has approved a new Flexible Learning Strategy under the auspices of which Academic departments, supported by central University resources, will pilot new programmes including those oriented specifically towards widening participation.

The following table summarises some of the key statistics relating to full-time undergraduate figures for 2000/01 with appropriate comparators:-

	Leeds Population (%)	Leeds Benchmark (%)	National Average (%)
Social classes III, IV or			

V (young)	16.2	20	26
State School Entrants	74.1	77	86
Low Participation Neighbourhoods (young)	8	10	13
Ethnicity	8.4	n/a	n/a
Mature Entrants (aged over 21)	6.5	n/a	26
Disabled students	6.2	n/a	4.8%

1.3 CURRENT INITIATIVES

Over previous years we have initiated and collaborated on a variety of projects which seek to address the broad widening participation objective of providing equality of access regardless of social class, background, disability, ethnicity or age.

To this end, many of our current initiatives seek to outreach across the local community, raising the aspirations and awareness of all groups of society currently under-represented at the University. For example, the University of Leeds is a member of the regional partnership of the **Yorkshire and Humberside Universities Association** and, in particular, we are one of a number of partners in the 'HEFCE Widening Participation: Special Funding Programme 2000-02'. This Programme, funded by HEFCE, provides the framework for the development of a regional widening participation strategy involving the three sub-regions of South Yorkshire, North Yorkshire with Humberside and West Yorkshire. The Scheme is also linked with the Universities of Bradford and Huddersfield. Other projects include, the recently hosted **HEFCE funded Summer School** involving 90 year 11 Excellence Challenge pupils from across the region. Student volunteers to assist with the Summer School, are co-ordinated through the University's **Campus Connect**, an initiative which works with over 250 student volunteers on a variety of projects including student mentoring, workshops, tutoring, e-mentoring, out of school activities and campus trails. Campus Connect also co-ordinates the **MELODY Project** which utilises the experience and enthusiasm of over 40 students to assist in musical education within local schools.

We also aim to develop and enhance our current good practice across the areas of disability and widening participation through the **LINK Project**. This initiative seeks to raise aspirations and change perceptions of higher education of disabled students from the lower socio-economic groups through summer schools, flexible learning level 1 programmes, field trips and pre-entry guidance to higher education.

Several collaborative projects and schemes have been set in train to engage in increasing the application and admission of students to the University from under-represented groups. For example, the **White Rose Compact Scheme** involves collaboration with the universities of York and Sheffield, providing one-to-one support for year 12 pupils in Leeds, York and Sheffield Schools. This Scheme gives special consideration to pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and with no familial history of higher education. In addition to this, the **Robert Ogden Scholarship Programme**, co-ordinated through the University of Leeds offers scholarships to first-generation applicants to higher education from Barnsley, Rotherham and Doncaster whose families could not otherwise afford to send them to higher education. Under the programme, successful applicants will receive up to £11k to help them complete their A-levels and a university degree course.

A number of current initiatives and collaborative activities seek to address, through the School of Continuing Education, the educational needs of the Community. For example, the **Leeds Islamic Studies Course** provides a pathway giving new learners access to higher education. This programme has been a collaborative venture between the University's Widening Provision Project and the local Muslim community to provide under-represented students with an opportunity to progress from pre-university study through to a university Level 1 Certificate in Islamic Studies. Similarly, the University's Office of Part-time Education provides a number of integrated pathways to higher education study. One example of this is **OPTIMISE**, an integrated programme of undergraduate study, work experience and vocational guidance for unemployed lone parents and carers aged 25 and over.

In support of this work we are, currently, one of the few universities in the Country to achieve guidance accreditation at both pre-entry and exit points. The University's Access and Information Office and Careers Centre offer fully accredited guidance services and are network members of the **Leeds Information Advice and Guidance Network**. The Network aims to maximise the benefits of information, advice and guidance to the adult community of Leeds within the spheres of education, training and vocational opportunities.

These examples cited above provide a broad cross-section of our current widening participation initiatives. However, we are committed to enhancing our current good practice in the future, embedding the widening participation agenda into the culture ethos of the University of Leeds. Section 1.4 over leaf explains how we intended to drive this commitment forward through five strategic objectives.

1.4 THE WAY FORWARD

Over the next three years the University's priority is to ensure that our widening participation activities make a deep and lasting impact on our performance. We must strengthen that which is already in place: continuity and consistency are crucial. For example, the University's admissions provision needs further investment and refinement to ensure that our performance continues to improve. Similarly, the outreach activity performed across the University needs to be firmly embedded and co-ordinated. In addition we need to develop new activities and initiatives.

The University's strategic approach will not be static and we will need to re-evaluate and re-define existing policies and practice as experience dictates. In this way we will seek continuous improvement. It is also important that we adopt approaches which are relevant to individual departments: what may be appropriate for one subject area may not be appropriate for another. However, we recognise that dissemination of best practice and sharing of experience across the institution is important and much has been achieved in this way already.

In the succeeding chapters we outline our proposals and action for the next three years. These proposals are based on a set of five strategic objectives:

1. To increase participation of under-represented groups as students of the University
We will work regionally and nationally to recruit students from under-represented groups onto

our full-time and part-time degree programmes to meet HEFCE benchmarks. This accords with the Government's Excellence Challenge to tackle disadvantage and reduce barriers to entry into higher education.

2. To co-ordinate the development and expansion of widening participation activities across the University
This will ensure that we appropriately manage and enhance activity at all levels within the University so that we outreach into the wider community, offer appropriate pre-entry, guidance, admissions processes and support students during their studies.
3. To promote an acceptance across the institution that widening participation is a strategy that is wholly consistent with excellence in teaching, learning and research and can both complement and enhance an institutional mission rooted in academic quality
Widening Participation should not be seen as a lowering of standards but will maintain the achievement and requirements traditionally associated with a University of Leeds qualification. Widening participation will be embedded into institutional practice.
4. To enhance the local and regional presence of the University through collaboration and partnership programmes
The development of positive working relationships with local and regional communities and partnerships through Excellence in Cities, Local Education Authorities, schools, colleges and community groups amongst others will be vital to ensure that we achieve our goals. Regional relationships will need to be built on and enhanced as a primary focus for our widening participation activity.
5. To provide the practical means to monitor and quality assure widening participation developments
This will involve research to elicit the real barriers to access with specific regard to the University of Leeds and to explore the reasons for non-retention across the student body. The University will need to ensure that we are on course for meeting targets and key milestones.

2. ASPIRATION RAISING AND PRE-ENTRY

- a. The needs of our prospective students have decided the priorities in this area. In response we will:
 - i) Increase awareness of higher education and raise levels of aspiration by continuing to promote access to higher education to under-represented groups at national, regional and local levels, having regard for HEFCE's strategic aims and the University's mission
 - ii) Renew and enhance the support and guidance for non-standard entrants both on and off campus at departmental and institutional level
 - iii) Further develop pathways for students with the Accredited Colleges, Affiliated and Recognised Institutions and with other universities and colleges in the region and nationally for a richer range of partnership arrangements, including the development of academic provision in sub-degree programmes
 - iv) Continue to take account of the specific requirements of individuals, including disabled people, in inclusive pre-admission activities and events
 - v) Continue to ensure that those involved in recruitment activities have training on widening participation (including disability) issues
 - vi) Understand more fully the nature of applicants and why under-represented groups are not generally evident as undergraduates. To achieve this we will establish and collect appropriate data for use as the foundation of an enquiry into application choice.

2.1 GENERAL INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

- a. Students should be encouraged to attend the institution from which they will derive the maximum benefit regardless of social standing. The University of Leeds' aspiration and awareness raising activities aim to encourage students to think about further and higher education in general, regardless of individual institutions. One of our greatest resources in terms of aspiration and awareness raising is our own students who can be used as sources of information and as role models. The University offers a range of activities which can be combined in different ways to meet the needs of individual schools, colleges and communities. For example, one school may wish to have only a campus trail while another may wish to have a package of student tutors, campus trails and pre-entry guidance. To attract students from those areas currently under-represented the University will utilise its established expertise by enhancing our active outreach strategy which will be initially focussed in Yorkshire.
- b. We will build on our links with schools across Yorkshire by:
 - i) Developing further subject specific projects in areas such as Modern Languages, Mathematics, Science and Engineering. Each subject specific project will be organised, supported or led by students from the individual departments and faculties - ideally local students from the Yorkshire region
 - ii) Enhancing our support to secondary schools in curriculum areas which are not as popular (such as Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry) as others through programmes of masterclasses, shadowing, day schools, and competitions
 - iii) Linking undergraduate Robert Ogden Scholars to schools and colleges in Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham, preferably to their former place of study, to establish continuity and provide an additional bridge between the University, pupils, parents and teachers
 - iv) Expansion of the e-mentoring programme to schools outside the 'local' area
 - v) Expanding Campus Trails to include adults and families with pre-entry pupils and subject related discovery trails.
- c. We will build on our good practice in pre-entry guidance in the following ways:

- i) Expand on a centralised guidance service operating across the University to help prospective students choose the right course and pathway to success. This will be in support of the information and advice offered by individual departments
- ii) Continue to offer guidance that encompasses lifestyle and careers information
- iii) Work to ensure that guidance within schools and colleges is appropriate and contemporary with the current higher education experience so that Year 11 pupils can consider both academic and vocational routes of study
- iv) The Careers Centre will seek to develop an increased number of partnerships with employers to ensure that the positive messages regarding Leeds graduates' employability communicated within pre-entry information can be a reality for a more diverse student population. The Careers Centre will engage with positive action projects as appropriate
- v) It is recognised that issues of career success are increasingly important considerations for prospective students; the Careers Centre will examine ways in which its expertise in relation to the opportunity structure for graduates and career management skills can benefit not only prospective students but their families as well.

2.2 PARTNERSHIP

- a. Reaching prospective students from disadvantaged backgrounds will require partnership with schools (including parents), colleges, local education authorities and others.
- b. Campus Connect will need to work with new partners. We will:
 - i) Build on our close relationship with Leeds' Excellence in Cities (EiC) programme and ensure that all local schools and colleges covered by EiC can be involved in Campus Connect
 - ii) Expand Campus Connect provision to encompass Yorkshire, in particular Wakefield, North Yorkshire, Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham.
- c. To develop appropriate programmes in schools we will:
 - i) Establish closer liaison with school teachers to increase understanding and remove barriers
 - ii) Develop more group guidance work within schools and colleges linking with the (planned) Connexions Service.
- d. In addition we need to develop a richer range of partnership arrangements with the Accredited Colleges, Affiliated and Recognised Institutions and with other universities and colleges both in the region and nationally. To achieve this aim we will:
 - i) Further develop academic provision in sub-degree programmes
 - ii) Develop partnerships with a wider variety of careers network
 - iii) Develop further partnerships with LEA's in research project activity
 - iv) Work with the South Yorkshire Widening Participation Partnership and Wakefield Learning Partnership
 - v) Appoint a Partnership Co-ordinator and a Development Officer (to work on new areas opened up through the merger of Bretton Hall College with the University of Leeds).

2.3 PATHWAYS FOR PROGRESSION

- a. Pathways for Progression encompasses pre-entry guidance, partnership programmes with other education providers and the portability of credit and qualifications from one institution to another.
- b. The University aims to develop and enhance collaborative work between schools, FE colleges and other higher education institutions in order to provide the smooth transition and progression of young people and students to higher education.

- c. To develop appropriate pathways for progression we will work with students from the age of 16 and engage them in a programme that will enable them to make informed choices. To enhance provision in this area we will:
 - i) Liaise closely with academic departments
 - ii) Develop and enhance pre-entry and induction information which takes account of the requirements of different groups of students
 - iii) Work more closely with schoolteachers and college tutors to increase understanding, remove barriers and negotiate suitable programmes
 - iv) Explore and pilot Year 13 Summer Schools with two academic departments
 - v) Ensure continuity of mentoring support as Robert Ogden Scholars and others progress to the University of Leeds and establish a system of referral for those who progress to other institutions

- d. We will also encourage the participation and retention of adults within higher education across the region, in particular, those from ethnic minorities and low participation neighbourhoods. To achieve this we will:
 - i) Continue to develop pathways which include accredited Continuing Education provision in socially deprived communities
 - ii) Develop further part-time sub-degree and level 1 programmes using flexible modes of learning
 - iii) Provide pre-programme study, guidance and key skills across curricular areas to enhance the retention of students from low participation neighbourhoods studying within the continuing education framework.

3. RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSION

- a. In order that procedures and policies reflect the needs of all prospective students, we plan address the following objectives:
 - i) Continue to promote an image of approachability so that the University is perceived as being relevant to all types of potential student
 - ii) Ensure widening participation is encompassed within the admissions process and policy
 - iii) Ensure widening participation is addressed through the Academic Planning Cycle in all departments
 - iv) Develop resource centre responsibility for widening participation priorities and targets through targets linked to funding allocation to support widening participation activities
 - v) Develop central guidance on good practice and policy and work with Faculties and Resource Centres to meet their specific needs as well as the needs of the University
 - vi) Monitor the admission and retention of under-represented groups, including people with disabilities and those from disadvantaged localities, both rural and urban.

3.1 PUBLIC PERCEPTION

- a. The University of Leeds attracts applicants predominantly from one market segment: four out of five students come from social classes I, II and III. We attract more UCAS applications than any other University in the country. The University needs to ensure that its 'brand image', evident in our promotional materials, is attractive to the diverse constituency which we seek to attract.
- b. The University is now seeking to manage its brand more proactively across the whole spectrum of its activities. The objective will be to reinforce the quality image that is already evident, and to build alongside it a perception of flexibility, responsiveness and value for money. Widening participation will be a core objective of the new marketing strategy. Steps to be taken include:
 - i) Further brand development, in consultation with Riley Consultants, and re-definition of target groups
 - ii) Re-evaluation of existing marketing tools (for example, prospectuses and open days) and their suitability for reaching target groups, and incorporation of brand messages into these
 - iii) Dissemination of key brand messages to academic resource centres and all central offices engaged in marketing and promotion.

3.2 RECRUITMENT AND APPLICATION

- a. It is important to ensure that the University attracts and more importantly recruits able and talented young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. In order to do this the University will:
 - i) Support departmental activity in recruiting students from relevant backgrounds
 - ii) Link, more explicitly, outreach work with recruitment based activities
 - iii) Encourage University and departmental relationships to be built between schools and colleges
 - iv) Establish more regionally based recruitment initiatives aimed at relevant groups.
- b. Predicted A-level grades are not the only criteria that the University uses to determine a student's academic potential. Many departments look carefully at applicants who have attended access courses or who are highlighted as requiring 'special consideration'. Family background, the student's life experience, teaching and study restrictions are often key areas for consideration for potential applicants. However, to ensure equality of opportunity we need to be more explicit about the qualities a department may look for in a prospective student and we will investigate ways of supporting Admissions Tutors in identifying students from under-represented groups.

- c. In order to extend those schemes which offer special consideration, we will:
- i) Link with the local Connexions Service so that students can be identified by the Personal Advisors
 - ii) Embed special consideration schemes across the University such as the White Rose Compact.
- c. The University's School of Medicine has recently been awarded over £1.5M to widen access to Medicine. In conjunction with the University of Bradford the programme will ensure that the admission to Medicine will be from a broad range of social and ethnic backgrounds which will reflect the patterns of populations which are served by the NHS. Currently the Afro-Caribbean community and the non-professional socio-economic classes are under-represented as doctors and particularly those from families who have no previous higher education experience. The intake to Leeds Medical School will increase to an overall 258 students per year. The programme will:
- Outreach into schools in West Yorkshire
 - Identify and mentor able students from disadvantaged backgrounds
 - Provide an access course
 - Develop flexible, innovative, culturally sensitive teaching and learning methods
 - Increase opportunities to access medical education
 - Broaden the social and ethnic mix of people entering the medical profession.
- d. The University is a member of the "Going-On" project, a higher education access scheme established in 1993 which aims to practically and actively encourage young people from Bradford to participate in a university education. For 2001/2 the University of Leeds is to build links with schools across Bradford to encourage and increase participation in HE through the provision of campus trails and activity days. It is envisaged that these links will seek to support young people in their choices and, will work with the School of Medicine to assist with the recruitment of school students to Medicine and medical-related courses.

3.3 SUPPORT FOR DEPARTMENTAL ADMISSIONS PROCESS

- a. The departmental admissions process is central to ensuring prospective students who have the potential to succeed can access the University. Leeds is participating in an admissions development project ("Fair Enough? Widening Access to University Through Improved Assessment of Potential to Succeed"), funded by the Innovations Scheme and directed through Universities UK. The project aims to explore in detail the admissions procedures and criteria used in selection, and to identify A-Level scores which are reliable predictors of subsequent academic achievement. The departments involved are Joint Honours Modern Languages, Physics and Philosophy.
- b. We need to further our work with Admissions Tutors in relation to:
- i) Enhancing the status of Admissions Tutors within departments by direct investment
 - ii) Ensuring that disability issues are embedded into the induction training for all future Admissions Tutors
 - iii) Including widening participation issues within Admissions Tutors training
 - iv) Providing appropriate data and management information to Admissions Tutors
 - v) Work with HEFCE on a research project to investigate methods of measuring academic potential.

4. ON COURSE STUDY, SUPPORT AND EMPLOYMENT

- a. In order that on course study, support and employment reflect student priorities and needs we will:

- i) Seek to ensure that retention rates and results for under-represented groups are comparable to those for other student groups
- ii) Review the quality of support and other student services which are essential in meeting the needs and aspirations of an increasingly diverse student constituency
- iii) Provide staff development programmes for teaching staff that focus on issues of equality of opportunity in the curriculum
- iv) Make better use of IT and other communication technologies in order to respond to the needs of students by developing more flexible routes (computer based, open and distance learning) through courses
- v) Enhance guidelines on good practice and policy and work with Faculties and Resource Centres to meet their specific needs.

4.1 CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENTS

- a. Planned developments are integrated with the Learning and Teaching, Flexible Learning and IT strategies, and linked to the University's Disability Statement & Estate Strategy. The University's principal aims in learning and teaching are to:
 - Enhance the importance of learning and teaching
 - Provide increased support for learning and teaching
 - Maintain the high quality of taught courses
 - Enhance the student focus of learning and teaching
 - Promote lifelong learning
 - Provide a greater opportunity for under-represented groups to participate in Higher Education
 - Increase learning and teaching collaborative links.
- b. Although these aims have been developed to benefit the whole student body some are particularly pertinent to under-represented groups and will thereby ensure that widening participation is embedded into standard practice. The reviews of the modular structure and assessment practices are two resultant initiatives that have particular relevance, as course design and assessment methods need to be appropriate to ensure they meet the needs of a diverse student constituency. Similarly, sub-degree provision (certificates and diplomas in higher education) will allow greater flexibility for students to leave and re-enter courses.
- c. In addition a TQEF funded project (which will be further developed through the Flexible Learning Strategy) to support the incorporation of web-based learning and resources into existing and new courses is providing additional access, support and flexibility for students. These efforts will be enhanced by the planned STUFF (Stuff To Use For Free) CD. This low cost set of generic resources will include (for example) study skills guides, useful software and campus security information in addition to material related to specific programmes of study.
- d. As a result of these curricular developments we plan to:
 - i) Provide a CD-based starter pack for students which incorporates study guides
 - ii) Continue to ensure that we provide the appropriate academic support (see also 4.2)
 - iii) Ensure continuity of mentoring support as Robert Ogden Scholars and others progress to the University of Leeds and establish a system of referral for those who progress to other institutions
 - iv) Enhance the access to, and flexibility of, programmes of study through on-going review of programme structures and use of the WWW
 - v) Review and further develop library services to support students studying off campus for extensive periods of time
 - vi) Explore ways in which all disabled students might have the required specialist equipment and personal support in order that they can access the learning and teaching environment on

an equal basis. To support this, we will ensure that disability issues are embedded into the institutional framework of the University through induction training for all future Admissions Tutors.

4.2 STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

- a. The University of Leeds recognises that a high proportion of students entering the University from a 'widening participation' background may require additional support. However, we are anxious not to label these students or to differentiate them from their peers. We need to ensure that there are proactive systems in place that monitor for student distress and that the student services infrastructure is such that it can respond quickly and effectively to the needs of the diverse student constituency.
- b. We need to ensure that students are supported throughout their course by departments, so that once enrolled they remain in higher education, we will:
 - i) Review the University's Personal Tutor Scheme and new guidelines for Academic and Pastoral Tutoring will be published
 - ii) Investigate the link between Progress Files (which at Leeds promote a learning support and enhancement initiative) and the Academic and Pastoral Tutoring Scheme
 - iii) Expand the buddy and 'early warning' tutorial methods across the University
 - iv) Provide pre-programme study and key skills across curricular areas for students from low participation neighbourhoods studying within the Continuing Education context
 - v) Monitor the effectiveness of the services that are provided through the UNIQUoLL surveys (see 5.3.2).
- c. The University's Estate Strategy will develop the University's physical Estate, readjusting the campus to better suit the needs of students and staff. The University has a Plan to meet the physical needs of disabled people and access on campus is being improved year on year. A new Disability Services Centre was constructed in 2000. Free parking is available for disabled staff and students who are supported by the Disability Services Officer. The University's Fourman Nursery and Children's Centre have recently been combined into a new building. This new Centre offers 75 places in purpose built accommodation conveniently situated on campus.

4.3 STUDENT FINANCIAL SUPPORT

- a. There are a number of areas within the University which offer a range of financial support for students. As part of the merger between the Student Office and the student related parts of Accounts Receivable a Student Financial Aid section is being established to bring together as many University financial aid functions (for example, hardship funds and bursary payments) as is practicable. The ultimate aim is to be able to provide a service which is able to take account of the full range of aid which may be available to students and be able to advise on matters relating to fees, payments and undergraduate scholarships and bursaries.
- b. The University is working towards providing comprehensive and cohesive information about all of the funding available to current and prospective students. We will also endeavour to ensure that the package, as a whole, will cover all sections of potential students and take steps to fill in gaps.
- c. Leeds University Student's Union Welfare Office provides extensive advice and help to students in financial difficulty. For example they offer:
 - Short term loans <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/welfare/finance_stloans.html>
 - Hardship Fund financial assessments
 - Debt counselling and budgeting
 - Advice and advocacy on state benefits.

- d. It will become increasingly important to link those students who are on 'pathways to progression' with financial assistance where appropriate. White Rose Compact Students, for example, should be identified as priority for Opportunity Bursaries if they meet the other criteria. Robert Ogden Scholars who progress to other universities will receive some level of continued financial support for the duration of undergraduate study.

- e. We need to recognise that student financial support is not primarily the University's responsibility and must be considered outside individual institutions and within the wider framework of Government policy. For example, there are problems in financing students who wish to study less than 60 credits. This particularly affects mature students who often wish to study in 'bite-sized' chunks due to caring and other responsibilities.

4.4 CAREERS AND EMPLOYMENT

- a. The University of Leeds recognises that all students, especially those from a ‘widening participation’ background require support to identify, further develop and articulate the transferable skills needed for effective career management. From a Careers Centre perspective this fits into an overall strategy of providing support for students throughout their progression.
- b. The Careers Centre works with students from the start of their university career. At induction and Level 1 this involves supporting and encouraging students to “Make the Most” of the opportunities University provides; to strategically manage their career planning and development whether that be through part-time work experience, exposure to workplace skills, placement, a year abroad, or a Career Management module at Levels 1 to 3. Through this activity by the time they reach Level 3 students can be in the strongest position therefore to “Make the Most” of themselves in transition.
- c. For all students including those from a ‘widening participation’ background, targeted help needs to be available from pre-induction onwards. For the under-represented student groups however such interventions are potentially more crucial and demand a coherence in their timing and scope. Their needs, therefore, require the development of appropriate and specific provision to maximise chances of effective career management by the student throughout their university life and beyond.
- d. Careers Centre modules have demonstrated that where career management and other skills have been integrated into a student’s programme they have provided an effective delivery mechanism. To effectively service a ‘widening participation’ population, the Careers Centre will want to establish and develop a broader range of support mechanisms (currently the Impact and Optimise projects offer two such models of good practice).
- e. The Careers Centre has a strong commitment to local, regional, as well as national and international employment focus that reflects the aspirations of the student body as a whole. Widening participation is expected to re-affirm the partnership between University and regional employer partners. Subsequent student led demand for access to the fullest range of opportunities including those local and regional will call for increasing collaborative action and partnerships with local businesses (for example, through HEROBC) and other organisations such as Yorkshire Forward.

5. DELIVERY

5.1 UNIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

- a. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Learning and Teaching has responsibility for Widening Participation to ensure that it is embedded into standard teaching and learning practice. This is in addition to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for Student Affairs.
- b. A Widening Participation Standing Group of the Learning and Teaching Board has been established to ensure that widening participation activity is addressed within the formal committee structure. The terms of reference for the group are:
 - To monitor national developments in widening participation and report on their implications to the University
 - To advise the Learning and Teaching Board on the development of the University's Widening Participation Strategy
 - To monitor the effectiveness of the University's Widening Participation Strategy
 - To identify and disseminate good practice in relation to widening participation.
- c. It is envisaged that the Widening Participation Standing Group will meet at least once a term during 2001/2 and is chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Learning and Teaching who has responsibility for Widening Participation. The Group is composed of:
 - Faculty representatives
 - Representatives from the School of Continuing Education
 - Student Union Executive Officer for Education, and
 - Relevant administrators working in the field of widening participation.
- d. To support the work of the Standing Group throughout the next phase of implementation and monitoring of the University's Widening Participation Strategy it is proposed that:
 - the Faculty Learning and Teaching Boards incorporate widening participation, as a substantive item on their agenda once a term, providing a mechanism for developing widening participation activities within individual schools and departments report on progress to the meetings of the Learning and Teaching Board
 - a University-wide widening participation Forum convenes to provide an opportunity for discussion and information sharing and dissemination amongst all university staff involved in widening participation related activity. The business of the Forum will be reported back to the following meeting of the Learning and Teaching Board providing feedback and advice on the development of the University's Widening Participation Strategy.
 - The Learning and Teaching Board Management Group will ensure that widening participation is embedded within the learning and teaching agenda and provide the Learning and Teaching Board with information and advice on the Widening Participation agenda as appropriate.
- e. As outlined in the University's Estate Strategy, we will establish a Widening Participation Support Unit which will draw together staff from the centre who are working in areas such as aspiration and awareness raising, pathways for progression and pre-entry guidance. This will ensure that we co-ordinate widening participation activity centrally and support and communicate to departments more appropriately. The relocation of certain departments, such as Access, to more appropriate locations will also be undertaken.
- f. The University's Human Resources Strategy takes as its starting point that the University Staff is its most important asset. It aims to stimulate staff development and innovation, and proposes to fuse the continuous development of individuals with the growth and aspirations of the University. As identified in the University's Human Resources Strategy we will continue to review and implement ways of reducing fixed term contract numbers. This is especially pertinent to staff working in the widening participation area.

5.2 DATA MANAGEMENT

- a. The provision of management information at institution, resource centre and recruiting department level is vital. During 2000/01 we have made progress in the provision of management information through:
 - i) Advertising for an additional post in the Academic Support Unit to support management information provision with a focus on widening participation
 - ii) Establishing a dialogue with UCAS.
- b. The availability of appropriate management information with the associated analysis and dissemination tools, will enable a fuller understanding of the University's student population to be developed. This will highlight areas requiring improvement and assist in identifying the action needed.
- c. Outreach project beneficiaries will be tracked where possible to determine their ultimate destination (whether this be the University of Leeds, another HEI or elsewhere) success and their eventual qualification. This will enable us to follow their progress from their initial participation in aspiration and awareness raising activities through to entry and beyond. To a degree, this already occurs within the University Foundation and the beneficiaries of the Robert Ogden Scholarships. However, we aim to expand this so that the provision of such management information can inform and support the development of pathways for progression. Indeed, work has already begun with Education Leeds to enable information such as this to be shared under the auspices of Excellence Challenge.
- d. Through the interrogation of UCAS data management statistics and current student data we will obtain detailed departmental and course level data on the current student population and provide a comparison between the two sets of data. Whilst the Student Union already co-ordinates an Early Leavers Survey, we will invest in a programme to gain qualitative information on the retention of students at the University of Leeds.
- e. Over the medium term, this improved student management information will enable us to:
 - i) Develop fuller understanding of the data currently available
 - ii) Input more strategically to recruitment and marketing strategy
 - iii) Maximise funding through better data quality and analysis of key (HESA) data.
 - iv) Identify sources of additional data of use in informing widening participation activities
 - v) Develop systems to disseminate the information cross the University in an easily accessible format.
- f. More specifically however, our priorities for 2001/02 are to:
 - i) Review the available data from the perspective of developing a formula driven method to allocate funds to resource centres on the basis of their performance in recruiting students from non-traditional backgrounds
 - ii) Develop systems for the production of reports on the University's current student population with an emphasis on widening participation data.

5.3 MONITORING AND REVIEW

- a. We will monitor progress in widening participation initiatives and projects through a formal reporting mechanism to the Widening Participation Standing Group. The Group will receive update reports on the progress of new widening participation initiatives at quarterly intervals or,

more frequently, if considered appropriate. The overall success of widening participation activities and projects across departments and resource centres will be reviewed at the end of each academic year, forming an integral part of the annual academic planning process. This overall framework for monitoring and review will be supported by:-

- The Student Support Network which involves the exchange of information and best practice from the International Student Office, Careers Service, Fees Office, Research Degrees Office, Student Office Disability Services, Student Counselling Service, Leeds University Union (and its Welfare Services Office) Flexible Learning Development Unit, Leeds Student Medical Practice, Residential and Commercial Services, Access and Information Office, Security Service and the Chaplaincy.
- UNIQUoLL, a joint initiative between the University and the Student's Union to provide a comprehensive survey on the Quality of student Life and Learning. The main aims of UNIQUoLL are to:
 - Monitor student well-being over time, on a University-wide basis
 - Explore relationships between student perceptions of the quality of the University's academic and service infrastructure, and indicators of their own well-being
 - Promote enhancement in academic and service infrastructure in the light of emerging findings, and any related formal recommendation through departmental and University Committee structures.