1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This is Queen Mary’s Widening Participation Strategy for 2010-15. It sets out the College’s commitment to widening participation in the context of its overall mission and strategic objectives for 2010-15. It identifies clear objectives, priority work areas and targets and milestones, and it explains how these will be achieved.

1.2 The strategy supports Queen Mary’s 2010-2015 Strategic Plan and 2010-15 Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. It cross-references and supports the 2009-12 Widening Participation Strategic Assessment, which was submitted to HEFCE in June 2009.

1.3 Strategic Aim 2 of Queen Mary’s 2010-15 Strategic Plan commits the College to “contributing to the broader educational objectives of the City and East of London, and the Thames Gateway, by providing educational leadership to improve aspiration and ambitious attainment in London schools and colleges and to enrich the learning of their students”. The 2010-2015 Widening Participation Strategy supports this objective through the outreach programme described in detail in section 5. It supports Key Performance Indicator SA2.2 “improvement in student satisfaction as judged by the ranking in the UK National Student Survey (NSS) and the International Student Barometer” by helping to improve student satisfaction through the PASS scheme described in section 5.4. Key Performance Indicator EA1.7 commits the College to increasing the numbers of Queen Mary students undertaking work in local community settings, and the Widening Participation Strategy supports this through the development of the Student Ambassador scheme.

2. WIDENING PARTICIPATION IN THE CONTEXT OF QUEEN MARY’S OVERALL INSTITUTIONAL OBJECTIVES

2.1 Queen Mary is a leading College of the University of London, and its place in the top group of research-led universities was confirmed by the results of the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). Queen Mary has been ranked 13th in the country out of the 132 institutions that submitted for the RAE according to tables published in the Times Higher Education, and 11th according to The Guardian. The College has 15,000 students and 3,000 staff,
and it operates on a global scale with a clear commitment to international excellence in research and teaching.

2.2 Queen Mary has an equally strong commitment to the diverse communities of its east London, City of London and Islington locations, and to those of the wider Thames Gateway area. According to 2007/8 Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) statistics, 66% of Queen Mary’s students are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups, and 4% have declared themselves as disabled. Women make up 50% of the student cohort. Queen Mary has an excellent record in attracting students from a wide range of social backgrounds, and the College is proud of the diversity of its students and of its reputation in supporting and promoting widening participation, alongside its reputation for teaching and learning and research excellence.

2.3 Widening participation for Queen Mary is about raising the aspirations and achievement of students from groups currently under-represented in higher education, and also ensuring that the most able applicants from such groups are able to reach the standards required for admission to Queen Mary and to thrive academically and socially following admission. This includes specific support to improve attainment at level 3, to help students progress to competitive undergraduate courses at Queen Mary. Widening participation is also about providing support to ensure that students who have the potential to do so succeed throughout the student life cycle at the College. Queen Mary’s widening participation strategy goes further than simply bringing students into the institution, extending through their time at the College and beyond.

2.4 The College’s 2008-11 Access Agreement identifies three key target groups, reflecting the main groups highlighted by HEFCE in its guidelines on targeting outreach work with disadvantaged learners\(^4\). These target groups are state school students, students from low participation neighbourhoods and students from National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) Groups 4-7. Queen Mary’s Widening Participation Strategic Assessment gives clear evidence of steady progress over the last four years in recruiting students from these groups, and in meeting and exceeding HEFCE location-adjusted benchmarks\(^5\). The period from 2010-15 will be one of considerable challenge, with proposed funding cuts for higher education and increased competition for university places. The College is determined to maintain and improve its widening participation performance throughout this challenging time, while also achieving its goal of becoming one of the top ten research Higher Education Institutions in the country by 2015. It will do this through the objectives, targets and work programme set out in this strategy.

3 OBJECTIVES OF THE WIDENING PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

3.1 Queen Mary believes that an effective widening participation strategy must be multi-dimensional, and the College will have a range approaches that support widening participation objectives in different and clearly defined ways. There

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\(^4\) ‘Higher education outreach: targeting disadvantaged learners’ (HEFCE 2007/12)

\(^5\) ‘Queen Mary, University of London: Widening Participation Strategic Assessment 2009-2012’, section 2.1.4
will be a particular focus on interventions aimed at supporting attainment in schools and colleges in deprived areas of London, and this will support the College’s objective of recruiting able and well-qualified students from a diverse range of social backgrounds. The College recognises the importance of raising the aspirations of young people at an early age, and the widening participation programme (described in detail in section 5) will include work with primary school children as well as projects with older age groups.

3.2 The objectives of the 2010-2015 Widening Participation Strategy are:

(i) to support Queen Mary’s overall strategic objectives of creating and disseminating knowledge by encouraging well-qualified students from target groups currently underrepresented in higher education to apply to Queen Mary, and by supporting the level 3 attainment of these students

(ii) to support students from key target groups through the applications and admissions process, and to ensure that their applications are assessed fairly to identify whether they are appropriately qualified to succeed in the relevant academic programme

(iii) to work with academic departments to improve retention and non-continuation rates, and to identify explicitly to students opportunities for developing their employability

(iv) to ensure the College meets its commitments set out in its Access Agreement with the Office for Fair Access and Widening Participation Strategic Assessment

3.3 Success in meeting these objectives will be measured by establishing clear targets, which are set out in Appendix 1. The recruitment targets for key under-represented groups are both challenging and realistic, and they will be monitored against data provided annually by HESA and by the College’s Students Records System.

4. TARGETS AND MILESTONES

4.1 The chief criterion for admission to Queen Mary is the academic ability of the student, judged on the best evidence available including qualifications and school recommendations. Through its Widening Participation Strategy the College will select the most able and committed students from a wide range of backgrounds, and will support these students throughout their time at Queen Mary and beyond.

4.2 Targets and milestones for 2010-15 are set out in Appendix 1. These incorporate current targets and target groups identified in Queen Mary’s 2008-11 Access Agreement and 2009-12 Widening Participation Strategic Assessment. There is a new target to reduce the non-continuation rate of full-time first degree entrants. This will improve student satisfaction and retention,
and reflects Queen Mary’s commitment to supporting widening participation in the context of the whole student life cycle.

4.3 The target groups identified in Appendix 1 reflect the main groups prioritised by HEFCE in its guidelines on targeting work with disadvantaged learners. Queen Mary recognises that there are other groups significantly underrepresented in higher education, notably looked after children and care leavers, and will seek to increase the number of students from these groups.

5 WIDENING PARTICIPATION WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2010-2015

5.1 Queen Mary will achieve the objectives of the Widening Participation Strategy through four strands of work that reflect the student life cycle. These strands form an integrated programme that will be delivered by both academic departments and the central widening participation team. Cross communication between departments and the central team will be achieved through a Widening Participation Operational Forum that will be convened by the Head of Outreach and Widening Participation. This will be a way for departments to share best practice and come together to discuss ideas and plan for the future. It will ensure that there is no duplication and will provide an opportunity for departments to feed into central widening participation activities in a constructive and coherent manner.

5.2 Strand 1: pre higher education

5.2.1 This strand will focus on raising student aspiration and achievement and on providing appropriate information, advice and guidance to support students in making the right choices. A widening participation outreach programme will combine projects involving a wide range of schools and colleges with the development of long-term structured interventions with a small number of partner schools. Work will focus mainly, though not exclusively, on schools and colleges in east and north London and in the wider Thames Gateway area. Many of the activities will support the level 3 attainment of students in the target cohorts, and help them either to achieve the grades required for competitive programmes at Queen Mary or to secure access to other appropriate higher education programmes.

5.2.2 Activities in this area will include:

- a summer school programme aimed at students in Years 9-12
- an evening revision programme in a range of subjects targeted at A2 students
- Year 10 and Year 12 master class programmes in a range of subjects
- a school visit programme for primary and secondary school students that will include taster lectures in a range of subjects and question and answer sessions with student ambassadors
- specific curriculum-related activities such as a Physics Practical School to stretch and challenge A2 level physics students
5.2.3 These activities will be supported by a team of student ambassadors who will be trained in presentation skills and in how to work with young people effectively. The training programme will ensure that ambassadors understand the level of professionalism expected of them, and that they gain skills and experience that will enhance their employability when they graduate.

5.2.4 The widening participation team sits within the Education Liaison and Access Office, which will also deliver activities in this strand. These will include general information and advice and guidance talks to students and parents on a range of themes. About 25% of these talks each academic year will be delivered in schools and colleges with a high percentage of widening participation cohort students. Queen Mary students will work as mentors in schools and colleges in east London that have a high number of students in widening participation target groups. A separate scheme will place Queen Mary students as classroom assistants in primary and secondary schools in Tower Hamlets, an area of high social and economic deprivation. An annual conference for teachers and careers advisers will involve delegates from schools or Connexions services with a high proportion of widening participation cohort students. The Education Liaison and Access team will provide information, advice and guidance for schools and sixth form colleges through regular publications that will include an annual parents’ guide to higher education, a teachers’ guide to higher education and regular newsletters for teachers and careers advisors. There will be INSET sessions for teachers on subjects such as the UCAS application process and writing references and personal statements.

5.2.5 Queen Mary is one of the country’s top research institutions, and this strength will be used to enhance widening participation through the role of academic departments. Departments will develop and deliver an extensive range of widening participation activities in addition to the projects offered through the central widening participation team. These will include taster days and lectures, summer schools, targeted workshops and activities organised around events such as National Science and Engineering Week. Other activities will include cs4fn (computer science for fun), an innovative widening participation campaign that uses the web, printed magazines and a programme of school outreach activities to inspire young people about computer science and its interaction with other disciplines such as mathematics, physics, biology, philosophy and psychology.

5.2.6 Queen Mary is committed to working with partners in the community to drive regeneration and to raise the aspirations and academic attainment of young people in socially deprived areas. Two specific initiatives will support the Widening Participation Strategy:

(i) the College will work with the Drapers’ Company as co-sponsor of the new Drapers’ Academy school in Havering, a science and mathematics specialist school that will aim to improve educational standards in an area of high worklessness, economic deprivation and low participation rates in higher education. Queen Mary’s support will include the investment of a significant amount of senior staff time in the planning
process, the provision of three governors and the involvement of academic staff. The College will support the development of a new sixth form from September 2010, and will provide INSET sessions for the new sixth-form tutors. Progression to higher education will be supported by the development of a progression agreement for students from the new school who meet the appropriate academic requirements.

(ii) Queen Mary will be the lead education partner in St Paul’s Way, which is Tower Hamlets’ first Foundation Trust School. Senior members of staff from the College will chair the Trust Board and the Governing Body. Queen Mary will support the school’s aspiration to become a centre of excellence in science through a tailored programme of activities including student mentoring and tutoring projects, curriculum support through taster sessions, master classes and a school visit programme, and continuing professional development support for teachers.

5.2.7 Queen Mary has been the lead partner in the London East Thames Gateway Aimhigher Partnership since April 2003, and was instrumental in setting up the partnership. The College also develops and delivers activities for the WECAN Aimhigher partnership, which works with targeted schools in west, central and north London. Current Aimhigher funding will come to an end in July 2011 and the future of the Aimhigher programme after this date is not yet clear. The College will work closely with partner institutions to try to ensure the sustainability of Aimhigher after 2011, and will work directly with partner schools to embed and continue Queen Mary projects currently funded by Aimhigher.

5.2.8 Queen Mary has been a prominent supporter of the development of gifted and talented education in London through its role as lead partner in the London Excellence Hub. Funding for this three-year project will not continue after 2010, and the College will seek alternative funding from schools, local authorities, education charities and employers to continue work with gifted and talented young people in London.

5.2.9 The College will continue to host and support the Centre of the Cell, an innovative bioscience education centre at the heart of its medical school. This is a resource for schools to stimulate awareness and understanding of bioscience and the careers to which it can lead. Academic departments at Queen Mary will work with the Centre of the Cell to deliver outreach activities that will inspire young people to study bioscience subjects, and appreciate the opportunities that they offer.

5.3 Strand 2: application and admission

5.3.1 Queen Mary’s admissions policy is based on principles of equality and diversity, and the belief that all students should have equality of access to learning based on their ability. The College is committed to ensuring that no student is disadvantaged by the applications procedure. It recognises that students from widening participation target groups may need more support in
making informed decisions in their higher education choices, and it will provide this support from staff who are experienced in giving advice on applications and admissions.

5.3.2 There will be a programme of staff development activities focusing on admissions and incorporating widening participation. This will include training on the range of entry qualifications that students may present at admissions stage, and will incorporate developments in the 14-19 curriculum such as the extended project qualification and the 14-19 Diplomas.

5.3.3 We will provide clear information to applicants and students about Queen Mary’s courses and entry requirements so they are able to understand exactly what they will be studying. This will include web-based information on student finance and available bursary support. Care leavers are significantly underrepresented in higher education, and a particular problem for this group of students is a lack of clear information about the financial and other support available to them. This will be addressed through specific targeted materials. There will be a key contact at Queen Mary who will be responsible for supporting care leavers, and information on this will be included in the targeted materials.

5.3.4 We will ensure that fair consideration is given to mature students who do not apply with common qualifications.

5.3.5 Through its Science and Engineering Foundation Programme Queen Mary has offered alternative routes to science and engineering courses for applicants who do not meet normal entry requirements. The programme is currently under review, and future models to support progression into science and engineering programmes are being explored.

5.3.6 The widening participation team will continue to support SAMDA (Student Assisted Medical and Dental Applicants), a student-led scheme based in the School of Medicine and Dentistry. SAMDA will work with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to support them with their applications for courses in medicine and dentistry. It will deliver a programme of outreach work with schools and colleges in east London, and offer practical support throughout the whole process of application. The widening participation team will work with SAMDA to involve volunteer medical and dental students in other outreach activities that will increase applications from well-qualified students from under-represented groups.

5.3.7 Queen Mary’s Advice and Counselling Service will provide additional support for students that have potential barriers to study at admission stage.

5.4 Strand 3: student support and retention

5.4.1 This strand supports Queen Mary’s strategic objective of improving retention, student support and student satisfaction. Students from widening participation backgrounds sometimes have to overcome more barriers during transition to higher education than students from other cohorts. However, projects that
improve retention of this category of students will support and improve retention across the College.

5.4.2 Queen Mary’s Peer Assisted Study Support (PASS) will continue to support new students. PASS is a course-based mentoring scheme where first-year undergraduates are given the opportunity to explore their problems with higher-year students (mentors) in a friendly, informal environment, to help them settle into university life, the department and their studies. Over the past two years the scheme has expanded to include four new schools and departments. Further developments will include targeted expansion that will respond to interest and demand from academic departments, with their varying and changing needs. PASS benefits all Queen Mary’s students, and not just those from target widening participation groups. The strength of the scheme lies in integration with, not separation from, fellow students.

5.4.3 The benefits of PASS extend beyond supporting retention. Increasingly schemes such as this are valued as a way to help first-year students across the ability range improve their confidence and skills as autonomous learners, getting guidance, encouragement, support and stimulation from their peers to help them arrive at their own solutions.

5.4.4 We will explore other mentoring models with departments, reflecting existing good practice within Queen Mary and elsewhere, with a view to developing pilots for schemes complementary to PASS. These models will look at one-to-one mentoring and a version of PASS that offers mentoring to students beyond their first year. By 2015 it is expected that every academic department will run PASS, or another peer mentoring scheme that addresses its needs.

5.4.5 Additional support for students will be provided through extra mathematics tutorials for first-year undergraduate students who have been identified by their departments as needing to develop their mathematical skills, and through a lunchtime Drop-in Study Centre that will offer free and impartial advice in mathematics, chemistry, physics, biology and statistics.

5.4.6 Queen Mary’s Disability and Dyslexia Service will support students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties from the point of application through to graduation. It will assist applicants to the College and contact each successful applicant who declares a disability, to begin the process of identifying the support that the student will need to engage successfully with their academic programme. A full-time mental health coordinator will provide support for students with mental health disabilities.

5.4.7 Students who feel that they may have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia will be able to arrange for a screening with the Disability and Dyslexia Service. If this indicates that they may have a specific learning difficulty they will be referred for an appointment with an educational psychologist, who will provide a full diagnostic assessment. It is not possible to offer support for students unless they have a diagnosis, and Queen Mary recognises that any financial disincentive to securing a diagnosis is a possible barrier to a student realising their potential. The College will therefore
continue to fund, where possible, the cost of students' diagnostic assessments despite a reduction in funding for this from the Access to Learning Fund. This funding will be available to both home and international students.

5.4.8 Continuation rates for disabled students in receipt of the Disabled Students’ allowance (DSA) are better than those for disabled students not claiming DSA. Queen Mary will work to maximise take-up of DSA by:

- ensuring the involvement of the Disability and Dyslexia Service in College Open Days and other student welcome events
- explaining terminology such as ‘disability’ and ‘disabled’ to ensure that students are aware what constitutes a ‘disability’ and which needs can be met through DSA
- ensuring the appropriate design and sensitive placement of questions regarding disability on the Student Information System
- improving staff awareness of disability issues through training courses organised by the Disability and Dyslexia Service

5.5 Strand 4: employability

5.5.1 There is a clear need to respond to the employability agenda on both a departmental and College-wide basis, and skills and employability comprise a key aim of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. It can be difficult to collect meaningful data from students once they have left Queen Mary, and the College will continue to explore ways in which employment outcomes for students from the widening participation cohort can be identified and analysed.

5.5.2 The development of the PASS scheme will be underpinned by close liaison with the Careers Department. A possible pilot scheme will focus on one-to-one mentoring from local employers to undergraduate students seeking to develop their employability.

5.5.3 Queen Mary will support all students by providing advice on how they should approach employment applications and interviews. Students who work on the PASS scheme, and on other widening participation projects as ambassadors and mentors, will gain experience that will enhance their skills and employability. This is particularly important to those students with less family experience of graduate employment opportunities and recruitment practices. The Provide Student Volunteering scheme will continue to offer Queen Mary students the opportunity to get involved in the local community through a range of projects that will develop their skills and enhance their employability.

5.5.4 Queen Mary aims for all students to develop a sophisticated view of their own employability. A key foundation for supporting this is the development of the Queen Mary Statement of Graduate Attributes that defines the attributes that Queen Mary students can expect to develop by engaging fully in the student experience. Seven attribute themes confirm Queen Mary’s commitment to developing graduates who engage critically with knowledge, have a global perspective, learn continuously in a changing world, and who have rounded intellectual development, research capacity and information expertise. The
statement provides an important reference point for curriculum development, and this will be achieved through a two-year curriculum enhancement project that will involve all Queen Mary’s academic departments.

5.5.5 Students at Queen Mary will have access to a Drapers Skills Certificate or the Drapers’ Skills Award. The Drapers’ Certificate provides structured support to students to identify the learning achieved through engagement in specific extra-curricular activities. Students following the certificate will be provided with a check list of activities that they must complete and submit a personal reflective statement focused on their learning through engagement in a defined period of extra-curricular work. Students will receive formative feedback on their submission. Students’ aiming to further develop their understanding of employability can apply to the Drapers’ Skills Award. The Award is an optional supernumerary module, formally assessed through the submission of coursework, but undertaken over an extended (two year) period of time. The purpose of the award is to provide an opportunity for Queen Mary students to gain academic credit for their involvement in extra-curricular activities and to provide structured support for students as they study and prepare for making the transition from university to work and further study. Students who receive the Award have it recorded on their transcript. One of the clear distinguishing features of the Award is its academic component.

5.5.6 Students will have access to the Queen Mary Mind the Gap employability web site (www.mindthegap.qmul.ac.uk). This innovative web site provides students with information and guidance on developing their employability and advertises additional workshops and events open to students. Students in the medical school will have access to a specialist careers web site called Career Diagnosis (www.cxdx.qmul.ac.uk).

6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

6.1 The Widening Participation Strategy will be monitored by:

(i) using annual HESA statistics and data provided through Queen Mary’s Student Record System as clearly measurable evidence of progress towards meeting targets and milestones set out in Appendix 1

(ii) a series of detailed case studies that will look at the longer-term impact of established widening participation programmes. The first of these will be undertaken on the PASS scheme during the summer of 2010. There will be a case study of a department relatively new to the scheme, based on interviews with key stakeholders in the scheme and data collected through existing evaluation methods, including observation of mentoring sessions. Findings from the study will be used to inform further expansion of PASS at Queen Mary by highlighting both challenges and good practice.

(iii) rigorous evaluation of individual outreach projects, with full evaluation reports produced for each project to inform future planning and to ensure effective targeting.
# WIDENING PARTICIPATION STRATEGY 2010-15

## Appendix 1: Widening Participation Targets and Milestones 2010-15

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Achieve a percentage of 85% of students from state schools for the five-year period from 2010-15</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>HESA Performance Indicator data</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Achieve a percentage of 35.1% of students from National Statistics Socio–Economic Classification groups (NS-SEC) 4-7 for the five-year period 2010-15</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
<td>HESA Performance Indicator data</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Achieve a percentage of 4.8% of students from low participation neighbourhoods for the five-year period 2010-15</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>HESA Performance Indicator data</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Increase the percentage of full time first degree students in receipt of Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) to 4% by 2015</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>HESA Performance Indicator data. College Student Records System</td>
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<td>5. Increase the percentage of postgraduate students in receipt of DSA to 2.5% by 2015</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>College Student Records System</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Improve retention by working with academic departments to reduce the non-continuation rate of full-time first degree entrants following the year of entry to 6% by 2015</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>HESA Performance Indicator data</td>
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