The costs of widening participation in higher education

A report to HEFCE, UUK and SCOP by JM Consulting Ltd

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Contents

Executive summary

1. This is a summary of the main findings of the study that was carried out to identify the costs of widening participation in higher education. The purpose was to provide a cost that could be used to inform the submissions to the Government's Spending Review in 2003 by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), Universities UK (UUK) and the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP).

Methodology

2. The study was commissioned in June 2003, and was carried out to a tight timescale. A case study approach was adopted, with a sample of 21 institutions invited to participate. Eighteen provided data for the study, mainly by way of structured telephone interviews.

3. Each institution identified the activities that were carried out (in 2002/03) with the aims of either attracting or retaining 'widening participation' students. This was informed both by a 'full list' of activities that we created, and with reference to each institution's widening participation strategy and subsequent action plan. The activities covered outreach, recruitment and retention, and included training, management, and institutional learning and teaching frameworks.

4. The institutional representative then gave a broad estimate of the resources (time or costs) spent on each activity, or for all activities. This was sometimes based on information from a small sample of academic departments. We included additional costs at a high level to allow for areas that could not be quantified by individual institutions: in particular, the additional costs of retention; and the additional costs of a flexible learning framework.

5. Only costs relevant to HEFCE funded students have been included. There are therefore other costs within the institutions that are not included in the totals reported, relevant to other groups of students funded for example by the Teacher Training Agency and the Department of Health.

6. The activities and costs that were included were closely scrutinised to ensure that there was no over-statement of costs or inclusion of costs covered by HEFCE funding streams other than the allocation for WP. Activities that related to other parts of the HEFCE funding allocation were excluded – e.g. mainstream course provision (including development of these courses aimed specifically at improving access), and foundation degrees. Costs which would have been incurred as part of the institution's wider learning and teaching strategy were also excluded – e.g. e-learning support. Where all students used a particular service (e.g. pastoral support), only the extra usage by widening participation students was included in the costs.

7. The study drew on each institution's definition of widening participation, but encouraged institutions to use an inclusive definition, incorporating educational background (state schools, prior educational attainment) as well as socio-economic factors. Equality issues (such as disability, gender and ethnicity) were also to be considered. Part-time students were included

where they met 'widening participation' criteria.

Issues

8. The complexity of widening participation activities arises particularly through the lack of a common definition of the students for whom outreach or retention activities are being undertaken, and similarly, the lack of a common definition of the activities that should be carried out.

9. Widening participation (WP) implies some sort of disadvantage that needs to be addressed. However, defining disadvantage in any one circumstance implies that there is a 'norm' (e.g. of attainment) against which disadvantage can be measured so that the WP students can be distinguished from others. In practice there is no 'norm', either at a sector level, or at an institution level.

10. Institutions did not generally use one definition for a WP student. They used definitions of student disadvantage (and therefore a 'norm') that differed by activity, and were particular to their institution and their student population. In most cases these students were sub-groups of the definitions used by HEFCE in its WP funding allocations (i.e. low participation neighbourhood and/or prior educational attainment) or in the performance indicators (benchmarks). But for some activities, they sat outside these definitions. Institutions with embedded activity often preferred the term 'social inclusion' to 'widening participation'. Other institutions talked about students from non-traditional backgrounds.

11. Particular activities were used to attract or support students from particular groups. However, what might be considered an activity to support WP students in one situation (one discipline or institution) might be 'normal' in another. In many institutions (particularly the post-92 universities), activities that other institutions consider to be widening participation are embedded in mainstream activity and are considered to be the norm. This type of institution typically has a very diverse student population, and its whole pedagogic framework has been designed around supporting this diversity.

12. This is a highly complex area, and institutions rarely had a full set of cost data available. In particular, there is a considerable amount of activity taking place in individual departments that was not known about by the institutional representative providing the costs, and only broad estimates of this could be made. To ease the burden on institutions, full case study visits were not done. In any future study such visits might improve the comprehensiveness of the results.

13. To address these issues, resource and cost estimates were reviewed to make sure that they were fair and reasonable. Overall, we believe that the costs identified from this study represent a reasonable set of additional costs of widening participation activities for the individual participating case study institutions. If anything, these are likely to be an understatement, as there is academic effort not known about at the centre and which would therefore not have been included. This could only be ascertained from a wider survey of academic departments, which could be carried out as part of any further study.

14. The costs identified for the individual case study institutions vary widely. An average of the 18 case studies is reported below.

Findings

15. The additional costs of widening participation from 18 case studies are given in Table 1. These are shown as a total cost figure (A), a cost per HEFCE-fundable full-time equivalent (FTE) student (B), a cost per HEFCE-fundable WP student (C), and WP costs as a percentage of base price funding (D).[1] Costs generally relate to 2002/03 activities, indexed to 2003/04.

Table 1 Costs of WP activity in 18 case study institutions

Institution	A	B	C	D
	Total WP costs	Cost per HEFCE-fundable FTE student	Cost per HEFCE-fundable WP FTE student	WP costs per student (C)as a % of base price (£2808)
	£	£/student	£/WP student	
a	7,066,795	780	1051	37%
b	5,002,795	654	803	29%
c	2,592,136	454	635	23%
d	5,743,899	646	868	31%
e	239,771	1,170	1,776	63%
f	6,770,692	969	1,375	49%
g	1,877,439	771	1,012	36%
h	1,419,243	396	546	19%
i	8,475,031	658	997	35%
j	2,765,201	401	1,133	40%
k	5,552,934	519	782	28%
l	4,439,720	256	671	24%
m	638,941	328	1,486	53%
n	101,097	169	1,233	44%
o	898,246	75	345	12%
p	34,081	310	1,549	55%
q	691,207	855	1,252	45%
r	2,141,069	255	800	28%
Weighted average		486	879	31%

16. There is no correlation between the type of institution (pre-92, post-92, colleges of HE, etc) and their WP spend. There is little correlation between the size of institution, or the size of their WP population, and the WP cost per WP student.

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[1] Total FTE is the total full-time undergraduate, HEFCE-fundable completions from the HESA 2001/2 record. WP FTE is the subset of these students that have weighting in one or more WP allocations (which use definitions such as low participation neighbourhoods/prior educational achievement – a more complete definition is given in paragraphs 2.13 et seq in the main part of this report). Both figures include part-time students. Part-time students in the WP FTE figure are only those with a weighting in the widening access part-time (postcode) allocation – not all part-time students. The average has been calculated from column C figures (WP costs per WP student), weighted for each institution by the number of WP students in that institution.

17. The cost figures can be expressed in a variety of ways. Three methods are shown above: a cost per HEFCE-fundable student, a cost per HEFCE-fundable WP student, and a cost per HEFCE-fundable WP student as a percentage of base price. In Table 2 the average, expressed as a percentage of base price (£2808), is compared with WP funding for 2003/04, also shown as a percentage of the base price.

Table 2 Costs and funding of WP as a percentage of base price

	Average WP cost (case studies)	Average WP funding (the English HE sector)[2]
Per HEFCE-fundable WP student (defined as above)	£879	£486
As a % of base price of £2808	31%	18%

18. This shows that on average, WP costs are 31% of the base price, compared to the 2003/04 funding allocation of 18% of the base price.

19. WP costs as a percentage of base price in the participating institutions range from 12% to 63%. Half of the participating institutions had WP costs per student that were between 21% and 41% of base price.

20. The costs of senior managers on Aimhigher: P4P programmes have generally been included by institutions in the WP costs, but no Aimhigher funding has been included (institutions generally do not allocate this time to that funding stream). Therefore the funding for the WP costs is slightly under-stated.

21. However, the costs are also considered to be under-stated for the reasons given above. Therefore, overall, the figures are broadly comparable.

22. Other costs, and percentages, have been quoted in previous studies of costs and funding.[3] These have been prepared on a different basis and are not directly comparable.

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[2] Funding includes widening access for those with disabilities; full-time widening access; part-time widening access; full-time improving retention; the 5% part-time premium for part-time students which supports students from areas with below average participation; aspiration funding; and HEFCE summer schools funding.

[3] In particular, 'Determining the costs of widening participation: report of a pilot study', April 2002, PA Consulting for Universities UK and HEFCE. A more inclusive approach to costs was probably taken here, and a wider survey of academics; however it was only a pilot study of two institutions. The costs (indexed for two years) could be calculated on the above basis at £1094 and £819 per HEFCE-fundable WP student, leading to percentages (of £2808) of 39% and 29%. This produces a weighted average of 37%. It restates the 35% quoted in the study that was calculated on a different basis. www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/wideningparticipation/wideningparticipation.asp

1. Introduction

1.1. This is a report on a study which aimed to provide a more robust understanding of the costs involved in widening participation in English higher education institutions (HEIs). This study does not cover further education colleges (FECs).

1.2. At the outset it was recognised that there were considerable conceptual difficulties in designing a definitive costing study in this area, and this study was considered as a first step towards this.

1.3. The aim of the study was to:

provide information on the cost implications for institutions of responding to the government agendas in terms of widening participation, to inform the submissions to the next Spending Review by HEFCE, UUK and SCOP.

1.4. Chapter 2 of this report provides a contextual description of widening participation (WP) – covering policy drivers, current funding, and widening participation students, activities and issues. In chapter 3 the study methodology is outlined. Key findings are given in chapter 4.

2. Context

Overview

2.1. As a first step, an overview of widening participation policy, funding and issues was prepared to provide the context and inform the development of the methodology for the study. This paper is included in this chapter as it provides valuable background.

2.2. This chapter looks at the policy drivers of WP and the current funding streams that the sector can access. It then attempts to identify those characteristics that typify a WP student and define what is meant by WP in more detail.

2.3. Finally the chapter discusses some of the issues that have been highlighted in previous studies, including institutional organisation, staff awareness and development, funding limitations, access and retention.

Policy drivers

2.4. The HEFCE Strategic Plan 2003-08[4] has widening participation and fair access as one of its four core strategic aims. The funding council has stated within its strategy that it aims to 'ensure that all those with the potential to benefit from higher education have the opportunity to do so, whatever their background and whenever they need it'. In addition, in January 2003 the Government published its White Paper presenting its vision of the future of higher education in England which stated that 'education must be a force for opportunity and social justice, not for the entrenchment of privilege. We must make certain that the opportunities that higher education brings are available to all those who have the potential to benefit from them, regardless of their background.'[5]

2.5. The above should be considered within the context of previous policy drivers, recent research and legislation that has had an impact on the WP agenda.

2.6. Firstly, in 1997, the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education suggested that 'increasing participation in higher education is a necessary and desirable objective of national policy over the next 20 years. This must be accompanied by the objective of reducing the disparities in participation in higher education between groups and ensuring that higher education is responsive to the aspirations and distinctive abilities of individuals.'[6]

2.7. In the light of the recommendations in the NCIHE report, HEFCE consulted with the sector on its proposed strategy to encourage institutions 'to increase the participation of under-represented groups and to ensure that such students succeed'.[7] In April 1999, the Council announced a combination of funding approaches through the mainstream teaching funding method, the allocation of additional student numbers, and a special funding programme with the majority

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[4] HEFCE Strategic Plan 2003-08. HEFCE 2003/35, July 2003.
www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2003/03_35.htm
[5] The Future of Higher Education. DfES, Jan 2003. ID 127837 1/03
www.dfes.gov.uk/highereducation/hestrategy/
[6] Higher Education in the Learning Society. Report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education. NCIHE, 1997. ISBN 1 85838 254 8
[7] A consultation document – Widening participation in higher education: funding proposals. HEFCE 98/39. Aug 1998. www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/1998/98_39.htm

of funds being provided through formula funding.[8]

2.8. In 2000, the Government announced that 50% of all 18 to 30 year olds should have experienced higher education by the year 2010. The Government looked to HEFCE to achieve this target. In response to this, HEFCE issued a consultation to the sector that addressed the issue of supply and demand within the HE sector.[9] This report argued that the sector had reached saturation point with regard to traditional students and that most of the population growth for this age group would be in the lower socio-economic groups. Therefore, in order to fulfil the Government's 50% participation target institutions would need to recruit and retain students from non-traditional backgrounds. In doing so institutions would widen as well as increase participation in HE.

2.9. In 2003 the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) produced an update to the HEFCE supply and demand report.[10] The updated study show that, following the Qualifications for Success initiative and other reforms in schools, there has been an increase in the number of 17 year olds with two or more A-levels between 1996/97 and 2002/03. The paper implies that, should this trend continue, the 50% target may be met with an increase in the numbers entering HE with traditional qualifications. This depends, critically, on the propensity of students with the 'curriculum 2000' A-levels behaving in the same way as students with A-levels 'pre curriculum 2000' regarding entry to HE (i.e. that 90% of them enter HE). It is widely acknowledged that post-16 staying-on rates for the lower socio-economic groups are lower than for other groups. Therefore, the increasing numbers of students with A-level qualifications (traditional or curriculum 2000) may not necessarily include a largely increased proportion of students from these groups, and so would not move the social inclusion agenda any further forward.

2.10. In September 2002, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) came into force, incorporating amendments to Part 4 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The legislation included not only the education provision but all of the administrative and support services provided by the institution. It made it unlawful for an institution to discriminate against a disabled person on the grounds of their disability and it compelled it to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate students with disabilities.

2.11. In addition to SENDA, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 came into force in September 2002 and this placed a general duty on public authorities to promote race equality. For the purposes of the legislation, HEIs were defined as public bodies and were therefore subject to its requirements. Under the new duty and through all relevant functions, HEIs were required to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

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[8] Widening participation in higher education: funding decisions. HEFCE 99/24. April 1999.
www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/1999/99_24.htm

[9] A consultation document - Supply and demand in higher education. HEFCE 01/62. Oct 2001.
www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2001/02_62.htm

[10] Higher education supply and demand to 2010. Higher Education Policy Institute, 2003.
www.hepi.ac.uk/articles/docs/hedemand.doc

Current funding for widening participation

2.12. In April 2002 HEFCE consulted the sector on WP funding for 2003-06 and in March 2003 it set out in greater detail information on the WP funding allocation included in institutions' grant letters, and provided an analysis of the consultation responses.[11]

2.13. This document confirmed that for academic year 2003/04 a total of £255 million would be allocated to HEIs in the allocation for WP. This included £188 million that would be allocated using a combination of geodemographics and prior educational attainment. It was hoped that this allocation method would more accurately reflect the costs associated with the two main aspects of the student life-cycle: pre-application costs and post-application costs. This would allow the WP allocation to be used for both raising aspirations and supporting student success. A further £62 million was allocated to support the additional costs of part-time students.

2.14. There are therefore three main parts to the WP allocation. The pre-application funding is allocated on the basis of postcode analysis using a geodemographic classifier. For each institution, postcode information from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) or Individual Student Record (ISR) data is used to assign each student to one of 160 neighbourhood types. These neighbourhood types are then mapped to four categories of participation which are weighted according to their participation rates. A weighting of 0 is applied to those with above average participation, with a maximum weighting of 6 where average participation is below 50%. From this data, the weighted proportion of English domiciled full-time and sandwich undergraduates who were under 25 on entry is then derived for each institution. This proportion is then applied to the assumed numbers of HEFCE-funded students for the academic year and funding is distributed pro-rata to this result.

2.15. A similar calculation is made for part-time WP students, with the allocation also calculated pro-rata to assumed full-time equivalents (FTEs) for the academic year. The 5% part-time premium which was previously included in HEFCE's main teaching funding method is also now distributed through the WP allocation pro-rata to unweighted part-time FTEs.

2.16. Post-application funding is allocated using age and pre-entry qualification data from HESA/ISR data. There are two age categories (young and mature), each of which has three associated risk categories of non-completion (low, medium and high). These six categories are then weighted to reflect the sector average risk of such students not completing their studies. A weighted proportion of students is then derived from this data and multiplied by the assumed student numbers for the academic year. Total funding is then allocated at a rate of £249 per weighted FTE.

2.17. The remaining £5 million in the WP allocation for 2003/04 was retained, to allow institutions to review their data sets for pre-entry qualifications, and then allocated where appropriate in the final run of funding to enable them to make any changes as necessary. Further information on the allocations can be found in HEFCE 2003/14.

2.18. Also from the academic year 2003/04, HEFCE and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) provide a minimum of £10 million each per year for the Aimhigher:P4P initiative; and HEFCE provides an additional £4 million per year

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[11] Funding for widening participation in higher education. Responses to consultation and funding for 2003-04 to 2005-06. HEFCE 2003/14. March 2003. www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2003/03_14.htm

for summer schools which is to be rolled into the Aimhigher:P4P programme. In addition, HEFCE is to add a further £6 million to the programme to fund outreach work from 2004/05. Under a year-on-year agreement, the LSC will match the additional funds being provided by HEFCE.

2.19. The DfES also funds WP through the Aimhigher programme which was formerly known as Excellence Challenge. The programme began in September 2001 with over £190 million. It has since been extended to 2006 with further funding of £130 million. The programme engages in five strands of activity including aspiration raising in schools, HE summer schools and outreach, a publicity campaign, Opportunity Bursaries and an evaluation.

2.20. It has been agreed that from April 2004 Aimhigher and Aimhigher:P4P will be integrated to form one national Aimhigher programme.

2.21. The above represents the targeted funding for WP. However, WP activity is also supported through HEIs' core teaching grant and other funding streams. For example, institutions are encouraged to consider the needs of a diverse student population when developing and implementing their learning and teaching strategies. Institutions receive funds in addition to their core teaching allocation to facilitate the implementation of these strategies.

Widening participation students

2.22. HEFCE uses the term 'widening participation' to denote activities to recruit and retain students from groups that HEIs have identified as under-represented. These groups may include disabled people, either as a group in their own right or as students who are disabled and belong to another under-represented group. Such groups could be people from a particular cultural or socio-economic background, or even a particular gender, if they are under-represented on a programme.

2.23. The 2002 evaluation of the HEFCE WP support strategy[12] found that in terms of disabled students, institutions tended to focus on those that were already admitted, and that relatively little attention had been given to aspiration raising and recruitment of this group despite clear and continuing under-representation. In the course of our survey, several institutions noted that, despite some success in increasing enrolments of disabled students at their institution, there had been less success in attracting disabled students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

2.24. When seeking to identify the characteristics that determine a 'WP student' it would be helpful to have a starting point or 'norm' against which to compare. However, a recent report by Action on Access looking at retention[13] found that the concept of a 'normal' student is difficult to sustain. It argues that 'students are highly diverse, and rather than examining whether an institution's culture "fits" the abstract student, it is perhaps more appropriate for institutions to examine how "person centred" and flexible they are able to be'. In addition, the National Centre for Social Research found, in their its feasibility study for the evaluation of the Aimhigher:P4P programme, that there are major difficulties in

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[12] Evaluation of the HEFCE WP support strategy. A report to HEFCE by the Higher Education Consultancy Group (HECG) and the National Centre for Social Research (NCSR), May 2003. www.hefce.ac.uk/Pubs/rdreports/2003/rd11_03/

[13] Student success in higher education. Volume 1. Action on Access, University of Bradford, 2003. www.actionanaccess.org/resource/aoadocs/studntsuc.html

attempting to define 'WP students'.[14]

2.25. Indeed, HEFCE funding is allocated as a resource to institutions not for specific students. The HEFCE funding allocation for 2003-04 includes a weighting based on age, prior educational achievement and a classification based on the participation rate of the student's home neighbourhood area. This is designed to support WP costs including aspiration raising, additional tuition and student support costs.

2.26. The National Audit Office (NAO) report on WP in higher education in England[15] identified that the most under-represented groups in HE were students with disabilities and those from poorer backgrounds. It further reported that representation of women and ethnic minority groups was high, with women comprising 57% of all students (including nursing), and ethnic minorities comprising 15% of all students in comparison to 6% of the working age population. However, the report does not attempt to distinguish between the representation of specific ethnic groups nor does it distinguish participation rates in different subject areas for ethnic minorities, though it does make a reference to this in terms of gender.

2.27. Prior educational attainment is seen as key in determining the preparedness of students for higher education. And preparedness is one of the main cost drivers in WP (with modes of delivery being the other). This driver is now reflected in the HEFCE WP allocation as described in paragraph 2.25.

2.28. In a report to the Learning and Skills Development Agency in February 2001 on the costs of disadvantage,[16] it was suggested that prior attainment is useful for certain age groups but should not be the sole measure of disadvantage. Other proxies – including personal or environmental factors – could also be taken into account such as gender, socio-economic group, mother's education, type of school attended, peer group and parental expectations, etc. The government signalled in the White Paper that it favoured a move towards more sensitive indicators similar to those mentioned above to measure HEIs' performance in WP. However, these factors should only be used to signal a possible predisposition to educational disadvantage rather than to define it.

2.29. When looking at the 18-30 year old age group, prior educational attainment has been found to be a good measure of preparedness for HE. A correlation between this and socio-economic group has been found to exist inasmuch as students with low prior educational achievement are more likely to come from the lower socio-economic groups. These are the groups that are being targeted for WP, and a lot of the outreach work that HEIs are currently engaged in is specifically designed to attract students from these under-represented socio-economic groups. Identifying the costs associated with this outreach, while difficult, would not be impossible.

2.30. However, the real difficulty comes in identifying the costs associated with post-application activities in terms of providing appropriate support for such students to succeed. A study carried out for HEFCE in 2001[17] listed a number of activities that institutions might undertake to support students, and many of

[14] Evaluation of Aimhigher:P4P. National Centre for Social Research, 2003.
www.hefce.ac.uk/Pubs/rdreports/2003/rd15_03/

[15] Widening participation in higher education in England. National Audit Office, January 2002. HC 485 2001-02; IBSN: 010291348X. www.nao.gov.uk/publications/nao_reports/02-02/0102485.pdf

[16] The costs of disadvantage. Report to the Learning and Skills Development Agency, J M Consulting, February 2001

[17] Student demand and the costs of recruiting and supporting diverse students. A report for HEFCE by KPMG, August 2001. Unpublished.

these had as their main requirement additional staff time. In addition, many of the activities designed to support WP students are made available to all students, and are so embedded in the institutional structures and processes that attributing an additional WP cost to them is made very difficult.

Issues

Mature students

2.31. Before the current focus on the participation of young people in HE, much of the work in WP was focussed on returners to education who were over 21. Their numbers have been growing over a number of years due to the impact of the access movement. The recent Action on Access report on retention[18] found that many of the HEIs that had targeted this group had engaged in activities which have since been used to shape much broader student support policies within the institutions.

2.32. However, with the emphasis in recent years on the 18-30 age group the report expressed a concern that the 'trailblazing work developed in this area will disappear and be a considerable loss to the sector as a whole'.

Modes of delivery

2.33. HEFCE currently pays a part-time premium to institutions in recognition of the fact that part-time provision is more costly for institutions to provide. The recent evaluation of WP strategy[19] found that many part-time students are not, in fact, from under-represented groups.

2.34. Further, a recent UUK report[20] found that part-time provision was considered inappropriate for 18-30 year olds from low socio-economic groups. The 23 case study institutions included in the study perceived part-time modes for these particular students as high risk undertakings because of the uncertainty of recruitment and the absence of data to indicate a demand. In addition, several believed that part-time routes would be inappropriate as there could be a potential for demotivation due to the increased length of the course; the perception that such students require more, not less, contact time and support; and the view that young people want to experience the social side of university life which is much harder to do on a part-time basis.

2.35. The study found that HEIs emphasise their commitment to part-time study and flexible modes of delivery but not generally as a means to widen participation of 18-30 year olds from low socio-economic groups.

2.36. A recent report for HEFCE[21] reviewed a number of different modes of delivery – including e-learning, distance learning, work-based learning and the Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning (AP(E)L). The study found that most provision is 'blended' rather than 'pure' and that a great deal of it is offered as 'cottage industries' which often depend on the enthusiasm and interest of individual academics rather than on a structured, corporate strategy. As a

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[18] ibid. Action on Access, 2003

[19] ibid. HECG and NCSR. 2003

[20] Social class and participation in HE: from elitism to inclusion. UUK, 2002. www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/speeches/show.asp?.sp=46

21 The costs of alternative modes of delivery. A study for HEFCE by J M Consulting. 30 June 2003. www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2003/rd14_03

result, it is very difficult to unpick the additional costs of this type of activity. In addition it is not immediately obvious whether much of this provision is aimed at or taken up by 'WP students'.

2.37. The one area that is particularly important for WP is the growth of foundation degrees as it is through this mode that the Government wishes to see most expansion. This does have a cost implication that will be driven by the scale of the activity, the size of the cohorts and the degree of standardisation. However, this is being covered by HEFCE under another specific funding stream.

<u>Funding issues</u>

2.38. The issue of funding was a common theme running through the reports analysed for the study. The recent WP evaluation found that most HEIs with a commitment to WP felt that the funds allocated to them at that time (£28 million in 2001-02 and £38 million in 2002-03) were too low. Recommendations were also made by the Education and Skills Select Committee in July 2002 and by its predecessor committee, the House of Commons Education and Employment Committee in February 2001, to increase the WP allocation. (These recommendations were addressed to a certain extent by the funding council in its announcement in March 2003 that the funding for WP would be raised to £255 million for the period 2003-04.)

2.39. The evaluation also found that those HEIs that have consistently performed above their WP benchmarks and have a shared mission associated with teaching are almost wholly dependent on HEFCE funds. Conversely, most of those that perform poorly in WP have missions in which teaching is only one part and where there are conflicting priorities caused by multiple funding strands, many from non-HEFCE sources. The evaluation argued that it follows that under-funding of WP would hit the former and most WP-focussed HEIs hardest.

2.40. A future consideration for HEIs with regard to WP funding is the proposed Office for Fair Access (OFFA). Under government proposals, institutions that wish to charge variable fees in excess of the standard fee would be required to enter into access agreements with OFFA. These agreements would cover the institution's plans for outreach, financial and other support for students, and its own milestones for assessing progress in WP. Agreements would subsume the current WP strategies and, once approved by OFFA, would be published by the institution. The main role of OFFA would be to exercise judgements in ensuring that institutions are taking the actions they see as necessary to achieve their WP objectives should they introduce variable tuition fees.

In summary

2.41. The issues surrounding widening participation are many and complex, not least with regard to funding. All of the evidence pointed to the need to increase the amount allocated to HEIs for WP. HEFCE responded to the calls for additional funding by increasing the WP allocation to £255 million for 2003-04. Given that much of the activity that will benefit disadvantaged students is available to all students, there are real issues about the ability to distinguish between mainstream and WP activity and thereby identify all of the costs of WP to HEIs. A study that identified the WP costs in two institutions was carried out in 2002[22],

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[22] Determining the costs of WP - a pilot study. A report for UUK and HEFCE by PA Consulting, 2002. http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/wideningparticipation/wideningparticipation.asp This drew upon a list of activities given in the KPMG report 'Efficiency and the marginal cost of expansion' (2002).

and this provides a useful starting point from which to begin developing a costing model.

2.42. Even before this, the current study needed firstly to determine the level of engagement with WP within HEIs and the kinds of activities that would be considered as WP activities.

3. Study methodology

3.1. The study started in June 2003. The methodology was designed around the principles that:

- the findings were to inform the submissions from HEFCE, UUK and SCOP to the Government's next Spending Review;

- the study was to lay the basis for a more robust study to be carried out subsequently, when more time was available.

In terms of practicalities:

- the study work had to be carried out in July/August;

- no institutional visits would be made, or questionnaires sent, to minimise the burden on the sector;

- previous studies had looked at this area, but the sample sizes and activities lists needed further attention.

3.2. The work was carried out by J M Consulting with the support of HEFCE officers who undertook much of the research work.

3.3. Two inherent challenges in this type of work were acknowledged:

- defining (potential or actual) students who are either targeted, or supported once in the institution, who are deemed to be 'widening participation' students;

- defining the activities to be costed. Many institutions are carrying out activities that are an embedded part of their provision, and are irrespective of any categorisation of the students who are being recruited or taught by these activities.

Definitions of widening participation students

3.4. We did not use a single definition of widening participation for this study; we used institutions' own definitions where appropriate. Institutions have selected the activities that they are carrying out both to attract the particular groups of students from non-traditional backgrounds that they are interested in; and to support students from these groups once in HE.

3.5. The study included widening participation activities designed to address equality issues (such as disability, ethnicity and gender). It includes both young and mature students. It does not include any extra costs of teaching part-time modes of study.

3.6. Where necessary to assist in allocating costs (see paragraph 3.13 below), WP students were defined using HEFCE benchmark definitions.[23]

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[23] Full-time (FT) students are FT undergraduate (UG) students from low-participation neighbourhoods; and part-time (PT) students are those from under-represented groups in HE (with no previous HE and from low participation neighbourhoods). PT numbers were converted to full-time equivalents (FTEs) through a high-level comparison of FT headcount and institutional FTE numbers. The resulting student total was not used in any material way.

3.7. These costs, and the associated widening participation funding, were shown as totals per WP student (FTE). The total student population was defined for this purpose as the full-time undergraduate, HEFCE-fundable completions from the HESA 2001/02 record. WP FTEs were defined for this purpose as the subset of these students that have a weighting in one or more HEFCE WP allocations (see paragraphs 2.13 to 2.17).

Participating institutions

3.8. Nineteen institutions participated in the study, covering a range of types of institution and geographical areas. The sample was provided by HEFCE.

3.9. A total cost of the WP activities carried out by each institution was established for the 18 institutions that could participate fully within the timescale.

Activities being considered

3.10. The activities considered as potentially relevant to attracting or retaining WP students are given in the Appendix. These were informed by two previous costing studies in this area, as well as the evaluation of the HEFCE widening participation support strategy.[24] They have been reviewed by each case study institution.

3.11. The activities exclude those that relate to:

- the development or provision of foundation degrees (covered under a separate funding allocation);

- part-time students (covered under a separate funding allocation, albeit now within HEFCE's WP allocation);

- infrastructure (either for disabilities, or for access – e.g. multi-campus provision).

3.12. They generally exclude the costs of the following, except where stated:

- e-learning. Although e-learning is generally more costly, it is being introduced for all students, not just WP students. There is no reason why use by the latter should be more expensive. There will be the occasional costly course focussed on WP students – as part of foundation degrees for example – but these are generally deemed to be covered under other funding e.g. for foundation degrees, or by the Department of Health for nurse education. However, the development of strategies for flexible learning, and staff training associated with this, was included if the institution felt that this was relevant to WP provision;

- distance learning courses, howsoever defined;

- employability – where the link with WP is not clear. The costs of careers advisors who specifically advised WP students were included;

- departments of continuing education, unless there were specific deficits, i.e. after mainstream funding had been taken into account, that were attributable by the institution to WP activities;

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[24] ibid. HECG and NCSR, 2003.

- licensing and franchising activities, unless the HEI's costs in this area were considered by them to exceed the relevant mainstream funding;

- 2+2 and other 'access' provision, unless the HEI's costs in this area were considered by them to exceed the relevant mainstream funding;

- smaller cohort sizes (i.e. courses running at less than optimal numbers, expressed in financial terms). The reasons for this could include general difficulties in recruitment, a need for module review, etc. The costs of remedial classes, taster courses, were however included.

Costing of activities

3.13. To assist with defining relevant activities and the appropriate part of those activities' costs, several principles were adopted. These include the following:

   i   if the activity is wholly carried out for the 'WP students' then all the costs are included;

   ii if a service is being provided that was primarily developed for the 'WP students' (e.g. outreach) but is relevant to all students, then 50% of the use is deemed a 'fixed' WP cost, and only an appropriate part of the remaining 50% of cost of that service is included (i.e. the part which relates to WP);

   iii if a service is being provided which has always been available, but which is used to a greater degree by WP students, then only the costs of the extra use would be included;

   iv if a service is being provided which is an embedded part of the institution's provision, then the costs are only included if:

   - they are additional to the costs of alternative services which might be provided in other institutions without such diverse student populations; or

   - the service is developed in a particular way because of the diverse nature of the student population.

3.14. Most of the participating large post-92 institutions found that the embedded nature of their provision, and the large number of activities that they undertook, meant that they could not cost each activity specifically. In these institutions, senior managers were able to identify specific dedicated staff (WP units or equivalent, counsellors etc) and non-staff costs that should be attributed to WP activities. They then made an estimate of academic staff time. Inter-institutional comparisons were carried out, where possible, to assess the reasonableness of these estimates.

3.15. Even where institutions could provide an activity-by-activity build-up of costs, there was some degree of uncertainty of the whole scope of activities, with central units not generally aware of the full range of activities carried out by the academic departments. Because many activities are carried out for all students, not just WP students (e.g. outreach activities in institutions that recruit, as well as select, students) then institutions often did not identify these as WP activities. The study team did considerable probing to identify these types of embedded activities.

3.16. Overall, the activities and costs identified can only be considered as broad estimates of the levels incurred by institutions. They are likely to be under-estimates (only the costs that were known about, and could be justified according to the above principles, were included).

3.17. All activities were included, irrespective of source of funding, with the exception of European Social Fund (ESF), Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), PT-related activities and costs, capital/infrastructure, hardship funding, and local authority disability support (e.g. Disabled Students Allowance). Costs that related to mainstream funding (i.e. the development of new courses, or the provision of courses) were not included, even where the course related directly to WP students (any 'extra' costs of this provision were, however, included).

3.18. Standard costs were used where possible for staff salaries, and a standard indirect cost charge was applied (on academic staff only).

3.19. Costs for 2002/03 were identified. If development costs (of a new initiative targeted at WP) were incurred prior to this year, they were not included. Institutional plans (or wish-lists, subject to additional funding) were not taken into account. In this context it should be noted that the HEFCE funding stream for WP – which is one of the main drivers of spend in this area – was only increased significantly after 2002/03.

3.20. A 'fair and reasonable' judgement was made on the costs that resulted.

3.21. Only costs relevant to HEFCE-funded students have been included. There are therefore other WP costs within the institutions that are not included in the totals that we are reporting, relevant to other groups of students funded for example by the Teacher Training Agency and Department of Health. Often an institution could only provide total WP costs that covered all students – in which case we excluded a proportion of the costs, using student numbers as a proxy. This assumed that all students, irrespective of their disciplines or funding streams, incur the same WP costs. This was not however investigated during this study, or based on previous evidence.

Use of proxies

3.22. Commonly, three areas could not be costed in most institutions: non-traditional modes of delivery, flexible learning, and retention.

Non-traditional modes of delivery

3.23. The costs of developing and providing distance learning courses, e-learning courses, and foundation degrees were not included, as discussed above. Sandwich degree provision is not strictly relevant to WP.

3.24. Work-based learning (WBL) and APEL can both support widening participation. There is very little of it taking place in the sector.[25] We took into account costs in this area that relate to WP in the flexible learning cost premium, below.

Flexible learning

3.25. A key feature of provision for a diverse student population is flexible learning, encompassing, for example: modularisation/Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CATs) schemes; semesterisation; combined honours schemes; different entry points; flexible progression schemes (e.g. 2+2, access courses etc); the ease of PT/FT conversion; study breaks; reviews of academic regulations; resits; the number of credits for defining a full-time student; and so on.

3.26. These activities are an embedded part of the activities of a post-92 institution.

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[25] ibid. J M Consulting, 2003.

However, their costs could rarely be identified. For these institutions, the additional costs were recognised by a notional 3.3% addition to the 'base/mainstream' costs of each WP student (not subject weighted). This percentage reflected broadly the same levels of costs in these areas that were identified in detail by two institutions.

<u>Retention</u>

3.27. There is a correlation between lower entry qualifications and lower levels of completion.[26] There is a higher cost associated with lower levels of completion (the institutions incur teaching costs that are not fundable). This extra cost was reflected in this study with a notional 5% addition to the base/mainstream costs of each WP student (not subject weighted).

Phases of work

3.28. The study methodology changed as the project developed. Initially, a short interview at each institution was to be used to develop a list of activities, and the costs of those were to be estimated through a Delphi process of iteration and refinement (basically through comparison of the estimates) by appropriate experts.

3.29. However we soon found that the officers in the institutions with whom we were speaking could give a considerable amount of information up-front, and this then formed the base of the costing work. This will have led to an improved quality of the cost results overall.

3.30. The work was carried out in three phases.

3.31. The **first phase** established a full list of activities, case study institutions, and context. The list of activities is given in the Appendix.

3.32. The **second phase** involved direct contact with institutions, collecting information on activities and costs. Up to three stages were undertaken:

Stage 1: a structured telephone interview with an institutional representative - the WP officer or senior manger (often pro vice-chancellor or head of institution) - to confirm the activities that are being carried out and who provides the resources (i.e. a central unit, academics, or senior managers). (Discussions were based initially on the institution's last WP strategy, compared to the full list of activities already prepared.) This was typically a one-two hour telephone conversation, but in some cases involved face to face meetings, where the institutions requested this.

Following this discussion, the activity list for that institution was sent to the interviewee for confirmation. At this stage it was often updated for the latest action plans (i.e. those recently submitted to HEFCE as part of the annual monitoring return).

Stage 2: a second interview with the institutional representative to identify costs of the activities of which s/he has knowledge. This commonly included all relevant central units' activities and budgets, and the time of senior managers. Again a one-two hour telephone conversation was used. In

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[26] Schooling effects on higher education achievement. Issues Paper, HEFCE, 2003.
www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2003/03_32.htm

practice Stage 2 was generally a finalisation of costing work started in Stage 1.

Whilst the original intention was to focus on establishing the costs of the most resource-intensive activities, in practice all activities have been covered, as it is not possible except after detailed discussion to identify which activities are the most costly to undertake. This has increased the quality of the findings.

As described in paragraph 3.14 a different approach to phase two was adopted in a number of post-92 institutions where WP is deeply embedded. Senior managers with considerable insight into the area identified staff time (academic and other) dedicated to WP activity. This was done on the basis of job title, rather than by individual WP activity. The levels of costs identified by this approach were broadly consistent with those achieved by our standard method.

Stage 3: a conversation between the institutional representative and a small sample of academics; or an email/phone exchange between the consultant, relevant senior manager and the sample of academics. The purpose was (a) to identify activities that the academics are carrying out which are not recorded centrally; and (b) to establish the levels of resource input into those activities. Two types of academic input were identified here – outreach only (in most institutions) and outreach and retention/achievement (in institutions where WP is most embedded). These were established for a couple of 'enthusiastic' departments, and another 'not quite so involved' department and the institutional representative was asked to indicate the percentage of students that these departments cover. The results were extrapolated for the whole institution.

Stage 3 was not necessary in all institutions – e.g. where the institutional representative was aware of all initiatives and was able to make informed estimates of resource inputs.

Occasionally other contacts were necessary, i.e. to pick up on the disabilities unit's work.

3.33. In the **third phase** data were consolidated and aggregated. Calculations were made for salaries, indirect costs, and the flexible learning element. A cost total was struck for each institution. Retention and APEL/WBL costs (at notional rates, see paragraphs 3.26 and 3.27) were added.

3.34. This then provided an estimate of the total WP cost for each case study institution. This is likely to be an under-estimate – only the costs of activities that we were made aware of were included, and there is a considerable amount happening that is difficult to identify precisely or to categorise as WP.

3.35. The total is also less than institutions considered they need to spend on these activities.

3.36. The identified WP costs were indexed to 2003/04, and calculated as a cost per HEFCE-fundable FTE student; and a cost per HEFCE-fundable FTE WP student. The latter was then compared to the 2003/04 funding allocations for WP, calculated on the same basis.

3.37. Some costs have been included for Aimhigher:P4P activities (the time of senior managers, not project staff) whereas funding (often covering marginal costs

only) was not.

3.38. A policy overview of findings and issues was discussed at a workshop on the 21st October, attended by representatives of the UUK, SCOP and HEFCE widening participation committees, Action on Access, and officers from UUK, SCOP, HEFCE, the Teacher Training Agency and the Department of Health. Separate discussions were also held with the DfES.

4. Key findings

Types of institution

4.1. The approach taken to widening participation differed between the institutions. We found it helpful to consider the six categories given in the evaluation report:[27]

Strongly committed – institutions that claim explicitly in their strategic statements that WP is central to their main mission, and have also consistently performed well against HEFCE benchmarks. In these HEIs, WP is a mainstream activity, embedded in teaching and student support as well as recruitment processes. These institutions are generally post-92 institutions, or colleges of HE.

Committed – institutions that claim a commitment to WP, and where there is evidence to support this claim. They are likely to have modified their curriculum and structures to encourage students from under-represented groups and to have mechanisms for monitoring retention. They include most post-92 institutions and colleges of HE, and a small number of pre-92 universities.

Emergent – this group includes most of the pre-92 universities, many of whom claim to treat WP seriously, although some report that they have only just begun to do so. Within this group there are widely divergent views about what WP means. They are less likely to have adapted their existing curriculum and teaching to address WP issues. Many are institutions that are able to select students from a large number of applicants rather than having to recruit them.

Committed specialists – a small proportion of specialist institutions (mainly art and design colleges) make some claim to commitment to WP.

Specialists – who are, in general, least involved in WP activity.

The Open University – by virtue of its size it is by far the largest numerical contributor to WP, although its percentage recruitment from under-represented groups is relatively low.

4.2. For the purposes of this study we grouped these definitions to try to identify possible correlations with costs:

Highly engaged – institutions whose involvement in access pre-dates HEFCE's WP policy. They use terminology such as 'social inclusion' rather than WP. Activity is embedded in teaching and learning, and links to (e.g.) their teaching and learning strategy. Most activities are considered to be part of their core-funded work – WP permeates the whole culture of the institution. Activities cover both outreach and retention, but the outreach activities are focussed on particular groups within the broader WP definitions.

Targeted – in addition to responding to the Government's agendas, these institutions have a particular interest in a particular aspect of WP, or activity. For example, a pre-92 institution has a well resourced disability support unit; a specialist institution auditions all applicants to assess potential, rather than requiring pre-existing qualifications which tend to be held by students who have attended private lessons; a pre-92 institution undertakes a great deal of outreach activity disproportionate to its size, not with the aim of recruiting to the

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[27] ibid. HECG and CESR, 2003

institution, rather to engage the potential students in HE in general. (It does this to a high level of quality and puts effort into raising funds from other sources to support the activity.)

Responding or emergent – responding to Government agendas on WP. WP students are 'different'; there are pockets of activities linked to committed individuals. The activities do not form an integral part of their teaching and learning strategies. They are carried out as special initiatives, often with ring-fenced funding and, for this reason, these institutions often find it easier to identify WP spend. There is a tendency amongst these institutions to focus on outreach.

4.3. Whilst this categorisation was helpful in understanding the range of activities, some institutions again did not fall neatly into any one of the categories. There was in addition little correlation between an institution's place in one category and the final cost per WP student that was calculated for that institution. Very few of the case study institutions felt their WP spend was optimal, but it was rather a reflection of what they felt they could 'afford'. Indeed, resources often limited an institution's ability to interpret its WP agenda as broadly as it might wish. For example, one post-92 institution found it necessary to target outreach resources on the most accessible WP groups (at the expense of those who are harder to reach) in order to meet its targets. Another noted it could not afford the level of tutorial support it felt its diverse student population required and felt its retention rates suffered accordingly.

4.4. However, we also found examples of institutions targeting significant resources at very closely defined groups (for example prisoners and ex-offenders, very specific ethnic groups, and care-leavers) for reasons of social inclusion that went beyond economic effectiveness. These initiatives were as likely to be the result of the initiative of a committed individual in an emergent institution, as they were to be the result of institutional policy.

4.5. We also found that the costs per WP student did not correlate with the type of institution (pre-92, post-92, colleges of HE etc). There was also very little correlation between spend and the size of institution, or the size of the WP population relative to the whole.

Types of students

4.6. Different institutions had different target student groups in terms of WP, although most included HEFCE benchmark groups as targets. Very few participating institutions regarded state school students as the primary definition of WP students, as they accounted for such a high proportion of student numbers - although they might still be target groups. The more embedded the institution's WP activity, the tighter the targeting tended to be.

4.7. Of the more defined target groups, those receiving the most spontaneous mentions during our interviews were ethnic groups and those with no parental experience of HE. However, institutions did not define WP internally, for their own purposes. Once the students had been recruited, many highly engaged institutions were concerned not to identify such students as being 'WP' as this might been seen to be negatively differentiating them from the rest of the student body.

4.8. Where an institution's WP/access activity was embedded, then all students were deemed equal in terms of the support that they needed, and received, to assist with their retention and achievement. Such institutions' outreach work often targeted very specific groups where they had identified under-representation or opportunity – e.g. a particular community, or group of individuals, within the much wider definitions used, for example in the funding method.

Emergent institutions

4.9. Institutions that were newer to WP were typically engaged in lower levels of retention/recruitment WP activity. The activity undertaken in these areas was generally aimed at students in the whole student population who needed it – not just 'WP students'. For example, formal student entitlement to tutor support was often already in place. This might have been strengthened, in response to the WP agenda, however it was aimed at helping the particular students who needed it. There was again no attempt to classify these students as WP or not – failing students were failing students.

4.10. In terms of outreach, activity was often focussed on student populations defined as WP by the HEFCE funding methodology. But as with the highly engaged institutions, this was very targeted – one pre-92 institution had considerable numbers of state school entrants, and specifically targeted particular state schools where there was under-representation in HE.

Specialist institutions

4.11. Institutions with a strong subject-focus, particularly in performing arts and in art and design, aimed to identify and recruit students who had ability, but perhaps had not had the sort of formal training or opportunities available to them that others did. These institutions tended to feel that a high proportion of their students arrived having been made to feel that they had 'failed' in their school education. Some developed foundation years to allow targeted students to gain essential experience in the particular specialism before joining the main course.

4.12. These institutions often had a high proportion of students with dyslexia or dyspraxia, some of whom were being identified as having a learning disability for the first time.

Overall

4.13. The activities that institutions could call 'WP' (when asked) were developed to meet the needs of particular types of students, not specifically or solely WP students. This applied whether or not they supported outreach or retention, and whether or not the activities were embedded or new/marginal to the institution.

4.14. Institutions valued their freedom to target the student groups that they felt most appropriate. For example, several institutions that had been successful in attracting mature students from non-traditional backgrounds expressed their concern that their efforts in these areas might be undermined by the shift in focus towards 18-30 year olds inherent in Aimhigher and the Government's target of enabling 50% of this age group to experience HE.

Range of activities

4.15. The activities which were included as 'WP activities' are listed in the Appendix. These fell into six categories:

- A: to attract students (publicity, outreach in the community, working with schools, working with FECs, foundation years/Year 0s);

- B: to recruit students (accepting students with lower A-level requirements, selecting, induction, pre-entry contact);

- C: to promote retention and achievement (tutorial support, teaching to smaller groups, different teaching and learning methods, using flexible learning, different assessment methods, pastoral support, financial support and counselling)

- D: to provide the curricular structure and educational framework (progression, flexible provision, CATs schemes and modularisation, staff training and development)

- E: planning and management (developing policies and strategies, management information systems, assessment of progress and effectiveness)

- F: other (physical infrastructure and attrition).

4.16. Institutions were encouraged to consider this list, as well as their own WP strategies. Many institutions initially drew the list of activities either more tightly or more widely than that above: more tightly because activities such as those in category D are so difficult to cost (and are only partly to do with WP/access); more widely to include activities such as e-learning, foundation degrees, year 0 (where either their inclusion as a WP cost is debatable, or they are funded through other funding streams).

4.17. In general, institutions found it easier to cost <u>outreach (category A)</u> than activities in some of the other categories. However, in some institutions, where WP budgets and activities were largely devolved, or where there was a great deal of outreach activity, even this proved difficult. And whilst actual costs could often be clearly identified, more probing was required to identify academic staff time; academics did not receive payment for these activities and it was often regarded as just another part of their job.

4.18. The levels of activities carried out did vary quite significantly between institutions. The effectiveness of outreach activities was difficult to measure, and there was little commonality in terms of the type of activity deemed most effective by participants. Instead the common theme tended to be supportive working relationships and clear, shared goals between the HEI and its partners.

4.19. One activity that was generally seen as highly effective was the use of student ambassadors and mentors (the latter could be involved in retention activities as well). Not only were these schemes felt to be effective as outreach activities, they were also felt to bring benefits to participating students. Some institutions had built the skills and experience acquired by ambassadors into accredited modules.

4.20. As well as mentoring schemes, most institutions ran summer schools and school visit programmes. Institutions would engage with targeted schools and

undertake recruitment visits with pupils, teachers and parents, as well as hosting open days to potential applicants. Some ran taster days for specific pre-entry student groups. Others would make great efforts to engage parents and teachers by running other events specifically targeted at these groups.

4.21. Some institutions developed provision to be delivered in the community rather than expecting the community to come to them, whilst other institutions would target very specific groups for particular courses. For example one college targeted young men from lower socio-economic groups for teaching and nursing courses as they are under-represented in both the course and the profession as a whole.

4.22. Recruitment activities (category B) were either readily identifiable (where interviews were only carried out with students with low entry qualifications, for example); or had to be teased out (where all students are interviewed or pre-entry contact with parents/schools is the norm – the WP element of the work involved had to be extracted).

4.23. Several institutions were running schemes that used UCAS data to identify students who had just missed getting enough A-level points, then working with interested students to develop their potential and encourage their participation in HE. These schemes were time-intensive (although technology may remove some of the effort in the next three to five years) but felt to be effective both in terms of resources and meeting the widening participation agenda.

4.24. Some institutions had engaged in compacts to give points for non-academic achievements (e.g. completion of a Duke of Edinburgh Award). Some had invested in central support systems to keep up-to-date records of applicants from under-represented groups, and to provide pre-entry advice and guidance to such students concerning, for example, bursaries and finance issues, what to expect on entry, and the student support infrastructure.

4.25. Retention activities (category C) were more difficult to identify, especially where WP students were an embedded part of the student population. Most institutions do not monitor or track WP students after entry. The activity in this area is targeted at 'at risk' students whatever their background.

4.26. Financial advice and guidance was one area that several institutions identified as being of particular relevance to WP students and its ready availability was felt to be an important retention activity.

4.27. Most institutions were running a range of study skills initiatives and some had specialist centres. These were invariably seen as highly effective. Schemes that had proved effective in this area included: building increased tutor support into the preparation of written assignments in a specialist institution; the development and provision of personal planners in a post-92 HEI; and running a non-compulsory summer school at the end of the first year for 'at risk' students.

4.28. Pastoral and tutorial support was another key area of activity. However, unlike other initiatives to support retention in the WP area, formal tutorial schemes can be as common amongst the emergent, as much as the highly engaged, institutions.

4.29. Otherwise, emergent institutions tended to have less retention activity than highly engaged institutions. What there was in the former tended to be in the form of 'bolt-on' activity rather than embedding activity through the mainstream provision. So, for example, some institutions might organise a special event for incoming targeted students and follow this up with academic or fortnightly

sessions, or organise additional tutorial sessions in maths, for example.

4.30. By contrast, an institution with a more embedded holistic approach had adjusted the assessment process across the board so that all students had the same opportunities to prove the success of their learning. Some departments within a highly engaged institution had introduced diagnostic assessment to all students as a mechanism of providing early feedback on progress. Another implemented a system whereby all students that failed a module were contacted by the student support services and offered advice and guidance on how to proceed, with reassurance that their failure in one module did not signal failure of the entire course.

4.31. Institutions with embedded WP provision generally taught within different curricular and educational frameworks (category D) – incorporating modularisation, different entry points, flexible provision, progression frameworks, collaboration with partner institutions (particularly in the FE sector), etc. These were felt to be an essential part of recruiting and supporting a diverse student population and could involve changing an institution's regulations. For example, one post-92 institution had found that a significant proportion of students who 'failed' modules had never in fact attended them – they were finding it difficult to take the minimum number of modules the institution required, for a wide variety of reasons, particularly in the first year. Regulations were changed to accommodate this and, whilst it is early days, retention rates are expected to improve.

4.32. Some student groups may also 'zig-zag' between full-time and part-time study, which can be difficult to accommodate within current funding mechanisms. Some institutions were using technology to make provision available in the community, particularly in rural areas, and were encouraged by its potential.

4.33. In most institutions, information on the senior management time spent on planning and management (category E) of WP activities was, compared to other categories of WP activity, readily available. However, it was also an area where institutions felt insufficient funds were available to support it. Many participants noted that senior management support for and involvement in WP was important to securing resources and commitment throughout the institution. However, many externally-funded initiatives do not fund senior management time. The costs of senior managers on Aimhigher:P4P programmes have generally been included by institutions as a WP cost, as institutions often contribute such time rather than charge it to the Aimhigher programme.

4.34. The final category (F) covered two large but unconnected areas. One related to infrastructure (multi-campuses, disabled access, opening hours etc). This is a complex area to cost, and some of the additional costs are arguably covered by the part-time premium or specific capital funding streams. Therefore costs relating to infrastructure were not included.

4.35. A second area under category F related to attrition. As HEFCE only funds students who complete each year, students who start but fail during the year have incurred costs (of teaching) but there is no funding. Despite the WP activities taking place to improve retention and achievement, some of the institutions told us there was a link between some of the factors defining WP, and attrition.

4.36. Most studies in the area have suggested that the only clear link between retention and influencing factors is with entry qualifications. Several factors militate against studying the costs in this area in more detail, most notably the (perfectly justifiable) desire of most institutions not to identify students as WP

students once they have enrolled, and the fact that existing HE statistics on retention are not collected in such a way as to permit this kind of analysis in any detail. This is a complex area, with many variables. Whilst a more detailed examination could provide valuable insights into targeting resources for all students, it was not within the scope of this study to cost attrition. Instead, a notional cost was included for all WP students, to take into account the costs of the higher attrition assumed for those students.

What affects the volume and nature of these activities

4.37. We did not systematically identify which factors affected the volume and nature of WP activities. However, in the course of our study several factors came to light. These are not in any particular order. They have been included to help inform any further debate in this area.

The type of institution

4.38. The balance of these activities differs by institution and depends to a large degree on whether the institution is highly engaged or emergent. Not surprisingly, the highly engaged institutions tend to have a wider range of WP activities and initiatives, across a broader spread of categories. Specialist institutions tend to have fewer, more highly targeted initiatives and these are often more costly to run. In the emerging institutions, outreach activities tend to predominate, although it is not unusual to find innovative and highly effective targeted programmes of activity surrounding highly committed individuals in these institutions.

4.39. Almost all the participating institutions had links with target schools, FECs and community groups. Open days, taster courses and student ambassador or mentoring schemes were also widespread, as were summer schools. In support of these activities, the majority of participating institutions were committing significant amounts of senior management time to developing and maintaining links with partner organisations.

4.40. Outside of these outreach areas, the most common activities were around retention and most notably, centralised study support services especially for students with disabilities, and more generally offering support and guidance to all students. In addition, pastoral and tutorial support, study skills, and staff development and training on meeting the needs of diverse student populations, were also common.

4.41. Targeted institutions had their own focus, often concentrating on a certain activity (e.g. interesting potential students in HE in general), or a suite of activities for one group of students (e.g. learning support, and teaching methods, for those with disabilities).

Funding

4.42. Funding appears to be an important cost driver, but not the only one.

4.43. HEFCE WP funding is often earmarked within an institution – split between the central WP unit and additional allocations to departmental budgets (depending on the extent of delegated responsibilities). The central WP unit will then commonly ask for plans against this spend – although usually on a marginal cost basis (excluding academic staff time or infrastructure costs). This method of internal resource allocation has meant that WP funding has generally only covered marginal costs (and therefore a higher level of activities is leveraged).

This might change with institutions' increased knowledge of their costs, coupled with the increase in the WP allocation (and associated changes in other HEFCE funding streams).

4.44. Ring-fenced funding such as Aimhigher:P4P is a significant driver for a considerable amount of outreach activity. The activity is of course determined by the scheme's scope and funding criteria. Other initiatives include European Social Fund schemes, or more locally derived programmes – for example one HEI received funding from the local council to provide student mentors for local schools.

4.45. Our study suggests that many HEIs are absorbing a range of 'hidden' costs associated with widening participation activities, in areas including academic staff, support staff (e.g. finance, counselling), and the use of facilities. As institutions become more aware of their costs and their cost drivers these might become more visible – although the difficulties of defining 'WP' activities and 'WP' students will militate against this. However, institutions are currently generally aware that ring-fenced funding such as Aimhigher:P4P is used only to cover marginal costs, not the full economic costs of the activities.

4.46. This obvious differential between funding and cost has not prevented some institutions from actually increasing the level of activity in an area that they thought effective e.g. a scheme for training student mentors was expanded to fund double the number that was covered by the external funding.

4.47. Most of the participating institutions claimed they would do more if the funding was available. Whilst some emergent institutions were concerned that WP activity should not draw effort and resources away from their core teaching budgets and responsibilities, the highly engaged institutions did not make this distinction.

4.48. Some institutions are more active than others in their search for funding outside HEFCE and LSC funding for WP activities. European Social Fund money is available for certain initiatives that meet its criteria, and many participants had funding for one or more projects from this source. Other sources of funding included local authorities, a number of regional funders, discipline-specific national funders, charitable trusts and, in a small number of institutions, commercial sponsors. In almost all these cases, funding was provided for a specific and highly targeted activity of relevance to the funder's own goals. The process for applying for these funds is often time-consuming. In general, the highly engaged institutions tend to put more effort into generating external sources of funding. However, we also came across a number of examples of committed individuals putting effort into this area.

Committed individuals

4.49. We have already mentioned the important part a committed academic will play in initiating and following through a WP initiative.

4.50. Although we identified academic staff time as the single biggest area of 'cost' in most institutions, this cost was largely hidden; academic staff were generally expected to undertake these activities as 'part of the job'. However, in the institutions where we collected some cost data from academics, there were signs that this was beginning to be an issue, with increasing demands on academics in other (measured and rewarded) areas making it more difficult to take on these 'voluntary' activities, no matter how socially responsible.

4.51. This pressure on staff time discourages workload such as WP that is not measured as a discrete staff activity, or formally recognised in the workload

planning models. The inclusion of WP funding in the departmental resource allocation models does help to mitigate this – but the difference between full and marginal costing means that academic staff input is still not formally recognised.

4.52. Where individuals are not committed to the WP agenda (and this can be the case in some specialist subjects, for example) this will influence the level of activities, as well as its effectiveness. An example is a flexible admissions system developed by a pre-92 HEI which is used by different admissions tutors in different ways. This impacts on the scheme's effectiveness in addressing the issue of the admission of non-traditional student groups to the institution.

Recruiting and selecting departments

4.53. We had anticipated that there might be differences between recruiting and selecting departments within institutions. Although this may be the case in some participating institutions, these differences were smaller and less predictable than we might have expected.

4.54. Highly engaged institutions tended to have an approach that had become so embedded in the ethos of the institution that selecting departments also took it for granted.

4.55. In emergent institutions the involvement of committed individuals could mean similar policies in both recruiting and selecting departments. For example, in one institution two highly selective departments had significant and innovative schemes in place to encourage widening participation. At one pre-92 institution, where approximately one-third of departments were selecting, there was no reported difference in the level of activity engaged in by these departments as opposed to the recruiting ones.

4.56. However, there was some indication that selecting courses demanding high academic entry requirements might be unable to show flexibility around minimum A-level grades on application (only perhaps dropping one or two grade points in special circumstances).

4.57. In some institutions, recruiting departments, particularly in the more traditional subject areas, have sometimes shown more reluctance to embrace the WP agenda. This is very much a hearts and minds issue at the individual subject and departmental level, and so it is very difficult to draw general conclusions based on whether a department is recruiting or selecting.

Disciplines

4.58. Some activities are discipline specific. They do not always tie in precisely with general definitions of WP students – the activities support all potential or actual students in that discipline area. For example, engineering departments might offer access courses or foundation courses, or remedial courses, to bring maths or basic science to HE level. Performing arts institutions or arts schools would generally carry out extensive recruitment work, such as interviewing and portfolio review, or auditions, to identify those who have ability but no formal qualifications. Medicine and law can offer year 0 entry courses.

The needs of the wider student population

4.59. Activities which supported WP students were commonly seen, particularly in highly engaged institutions, to be as important to other students, irrespective of their WP fit. Some institutions noted that students from more traditional HE backgrounds (e.g. 'white middle-class students') who had under-performed at

A-level could be more likely to be 'at risk' than students from non-traditional backgrounds. Whilst WP was considered to be an important and valid recruitment goal, it was felt important not to make class-based assumptions about academic potential.

4.60. The highly engaged HEIs undertake activities that benefit all of their students (e.g. changes to assessment, modularisation, foundation years), but specific sub-groups are not necessarily targeted.

Effectiveness

4.61. Effectiveness can be defined in many different ways. In particular, there may sometimes be a conflict between cost-effectiveness and effective social inclusion policies, which can require costly targeting of hard-to-reach groups with hard-won results. This conflict of interests was an issue even for some of the most highly engaged institutions.

4.62. Again, our study was not aimed at providing a comprehensive overview of effectiveness, or cost-effectiveness. However, issues were raised during our work that could help to inform further debates in this area.

4.63. In terms of outreach for example:

- much might be described as altruistic. Activities are designed to get students into HE who otherwise would not have gone, but they are not necessarily designed to get those students into a specific institution. This applies particularly to some institutions in the pre-92 sector and to regions such as London, where there is a high density of institutions;

- it can be very long-term in its impact. Some participants suggested that the more disadvantaged a particular group is, the earlier aspiration-raising needs to begin if it is to be effective (e.g. from primary school). Clearly this may also prove more resource intensive;

- effectiveness is not about the numbers attending (e.g. a summer school) but how many students are then recruited to HE. Again, participants in summer schools may enrol in another institution and this can make effectiveness of the activity difficult to monitor. Views were split as to the relative efficacy of residential and non-residential summer schools; some claimed that residential summer schools, by 'immersing' students for a whole week really gave prospective students a chance to 'escape' any discouraging pressures in their environment; whilst others felt that they discriminated against some target groups (e.g. female Muslims);

- easier conversions could be targeted, such as sub-groups with high GCSEs from the target WP populations as a whole, rather than sub-groups with lower qualifications or in harder-to-reach groups. Highly targeted initiatives (e.g. prisoners, refugees) can be effective but also expensive per head – both in terms of outreach and subsequently in terms of retention;

- as more WP students are recruited as a result of the outreach activities, it will be more difficult to reach the remaining pockets of under-representation – the costs will increase.

4.64. In retention, the level of activity is in part determined by external factors as it is remedial in nature – this activity is correcting imbalances elsewhere in the educational, social or economic systems.

4.65. In economic terms, a focus on retention activities is likely to be more cost-

effective than outreach purely because there has already been an investment in outreach which will be lost if the student is unsuccessful (not to mention the emotional cost to the student of 'failure'). However, retention activities are more difficult and less visible/direct in terms of understanding effectiveness. Nonetheless, this is an increasing area of focus for HEIs, although hampered in some institutions by a lack of funding.

4.66. Our study suggested that many institutions are increasingly focussing on the student lifecycle as a basis for developing their WP strategies. Almost all participating institutions had outreach activities in place, whilst the level of recruitment activity was more variable. No institution wants to see its students leave or fail; those that had more experience of the differing needs of a diverse student population tended to have retention activities in place that reflected these differing needs.

4.67. In terms of individual activities, we reported some views on effectiveness in paragraphs 4.15 to 4.36. We received positive comments on a range of activities, including targeting UCAS 'near-misses', partnerships, pastoral and tutor support, study skills support, financial advice, student ambassadors and mentors, taster days and open days, credit and flexible learning, targeted retention initiatives, university regulations, local provision, internal training and development, and senior management time.

Measuring effectiveness

4.68. However, there are few tools or mechanisms to measure effectiveness.

4.69. There are few good management information systems yet in place that can even help to identify problems (let alone plan and track the activities to redress these).

4.70. This was an area that several institutions felt would benefit from more investment in support of WP activity. Improved student tracking (of all students) would contribute greatly to their ability to identify 'at risk' students earlier and to take timely and appropriate action to deal with any presenting problems: current models tend to be more reactive than proactive. However, these will never create a database ring-fenced for WP only. Such systems will always cover all students, not just WP sub-groups (and students will never be categorised as WP anyway).

Resource implications

4.71. The additional costs of widening participation from 18 case studies are given in the table below. These are shown as

    A. a total cost figure
    B. a cost per HEFCE- fundable FTE student
    C. a cost per HEFCE-fundable WP student[28]
    D. WP costs per student (C) as a percentage of the base price (£2808).

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[28] Total FTE is the total full-time undergraduate, HEFCE-fundable completions from the HESA 2001/02 record. WP FTE is the subset of these students that have weighting in one or more HEFCE WP allocations (see paragraphs 2.14 et seq for a detailed definition of these). Both figures include part-time students. Part-time students in the WP FTE figure are only those with a weighting in the widening access PT (postcode) allocation – not all part-time students.

Additional costs of WP from 18 case study institutions

Institution	A Total WP costs £	B Cost per HEFCE-fundable FTE student £/student	C Cost per HEFCE-fundable WP FTE student £/WP student	D WP costs per student (C)as a % of base price (£2808)
a	7,066,795	780	1051	37%
b	5,002,795	654	803	29%
c	2,592,136	454	635	23%
d	5,743,899	646	868	31%
e	239,771	1,170	1,776	63%
f	6,770,692	969	1,375	49%
g	1,877,439	771	1,012	36%
h	1,419,243	396	546	19%
i	8,475,031	658	997	35%
j	2,765,201	401	1,133	40%
k	5,552,934	519	782	28%
l	4,439,720	256	671	24%
m	638,941	328	1,486	53%
n	101,097	169	1,233	44%
o	898,246	75	345	12%
p	34,081	310	1,549	55%
q	691,207	855	1,252	45%
r	2,141,069	255	800	28%
Weighted average		486	879	31%

Costs generally relate to 2002/03 activities, indexed to 2003/04. The average has been calculated from column C figures (WP costs per WP student), weighted for each institution by the number of WP students in that institution.

4.72. The cost figures per student can be expressed in a variety of ways. Two methods are shown above – a cost per HEFCE-fundable student, and a cost per HEFCE-fundable WP student.

4.73. Different denominators could be used – for example:

- the student numbers could include weightings for franchised students according to the proportion of the total resources required for their teaching that are borne by the HEI. (The HEFCE-fundable students in the above table include franchised students. WP costs borne by the HEI that relate to these students would also be included in the totals shown. In some cases this specifically included the 'deficit' on mainstream funding deemed to be borne by the HEI. However, the costs would not include any WP activities carried out by the FEC, and might be understated for this reason);

- the use of HEFCE-fundable students meant that only those who complete a year were included.

4.74. Costs can also be shown as a percentage. In column D of the table the costs are expressed as a percentage of the 2003/04 base price (£2808). The average cost, as a percentage of base price, can then be compared with WP funding for 2003/04. This is funding in addition to the base price, and can also be shown as a percentage of the base price.

WP costs and funding

	Average WP cost (case studies)	Average WP funding (the English HE sector)[29]
Per HEFCE-fundable WP student (defined as above)	£879	£486
As a % of base price of £2808	31%	18%

4.75. This shows that on average, WP costs are 31% of the base price, compared to the 2003/04 funding allocation of 18% of the base price.

4.76. Institutional costs show percentages that range from 12% to 63% of the base price. This variation in percentages result directly from:

- the volume and nature of activities being carried out (the factors driving these are described in paragraphs 4.37 to 4.60);

- the number of WP students for whom these activities are carried out – which in turn depends on definitions of WP used (see in particular those in paragraph 4.72).

4.77. The figures shown in the tables are an average across the student's lifecycle. A significant proportion comprises outreach costs that are incurred prior to the student's entry into the institution. The level of these costs will vary in each year of the student's learning experience (as do other teaching and learning costs).[30]

4.78. Some costs have been included for Aimhigher:P4P[31] which are not in the funding totals, therefore the funding is slightly under-stated. However, the costs are also considered to be under-stated for the reasons given above. Therefore, overall, the figures are broadly comparable.

4.79. Other costs, and percentages, have been quoted in previous studies of costs and funding.[32] These have been prepared on a different basis and are not directly comparable.

4.80. These costs exclude the WP costs of students who are not funded by HEFCE (e.g. teacher training education, or nursing and health profession education). In order to do this however, it was assumed that the same level of activity and cost applied to all students irrespective of their discipline. This is unlikely to be the case, with the different levels of entry qualifications, attributes, and type of education that is provided in these particular disciplines. If the costs of these students are lower than those of the HEFCE students, then the HEFCE-fundable student costs shown in the tables above would increase. Conversely,

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[29] Funding includes widening access for those with disabilities; FT widening access; PT widening access; FT improving retention; the 5% PT premium for part-time students which supports students from areas with below average participation; aspiration funding; and HEFCE summer schools funding.

[30] See for example HEFCE Report 00/15, Study of comparative costs of first degree and sub-degree provision, December 1999: www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2000/00_15.htm

[31] Time of senior managers, not project staff. These types of costs are not considered by many institutions as attributable to Aimhigher: P4P funding streams.

[32] See for example, PA Consulting, 2002. A more-inclusive approach to costs was probably taken here; and a wider survey of academics (which may also have contributed to higher costs than this study); however it was only a pilot study of two institutions. The costs (indexed for two years) could be calculated on the above basis at £1094 and £819 per HEFCE-fundable WP student; leading to percentages (of £2808) of 39% and 29%. This leads to a weighted average of 37% which restates the 35% quoted in the study that was calculated on a different basis.

if the per capita costs in initial teacher training and nursing are higher than the average, then the HEFCE-fundable student costs shown in the tables above would reduce.

4.81. The cost figures show that, overall, WP activities cost 31% of the base price. This means that the costs of a WP student are 131% of a Band D student (i.e. one studying a standard classroom-based subject).

Possible next steps

4.82. Most of the institutions that participated in this study found it helpful in understanding their work in this area. This study has used a methodology that could be developed, in conjunction with finance directors in institutions, as an institutional tool both to identify the full range of WP activities that they might be carrying out and to identify the resource implications of this. If taken forward in this way, it would be worthwhile involving a larger sample of academic departments in identifying all that is taking place.

4.83. A closer focus on discipline differentials would then be possible.

4.84. It would also be advisable to confirm the assumptions about WP costs for students who are not HEFCE-fundable; and to obtain information from FECs about the WP costs of franchised students.

4.85. A closer look at the costs of attrition could be undertaken.

4.86. It should be possible, given further analysis, and some further questioning of institutions, to categorise all costs in most institutions against a group of activities – such as outreach, recruitment, retention etc. Matched to performance (perhaps from the existing benchmarks), this could inform reviews of effectiveness.

4.87. Any further study should ideally focus on the most productive or effective activities – outputs and outcomes, rather than just on the inputs – but a much better understanding of effectiveness would need to be made before the costs could be focussed in this way. Without proper consideration, use of measures of effectiveness could simply act to refocus efforts on the easiest-to-target groups.

Appendix

Establishing activities and costs of WP:
Detailed list of activities for discussion with institutions

Items shown with ** have generally been included in the total costs using methods other than institutional data. Those shown with *not included* have not been included in the total costs.

A To attract students

1. Publicity
    targeted material and campaigns
2. Influencing particular groups
    identifying the groups and their learning needs
    (i.e. partnerships, market analysis, development of strategies)
    working with community groups or parents
3. Outreach in the community
    local delivery of taster courses
4. Working with schools
    maintaining partnerships
    HE awareness events
    tasters
    careers guidance
    summer schools
    managing compact schemes
    student mentors
5. Working with FECs
    collaborative provision (licensing, franchising)
    partnerships,
    feeder courses
    compact schemes
6. Foundation courses/year 0s
    (e.g. low cohort numbers, or heavily discounted fees).

B To recruit students

1. Accepting students with lower A-level requirements
    developing policies/criteria
2. Selecting
    interviewing/portfolio review /test
    contact with schools or parents
3. Induction
    assessment of needs (including learning difficulties), learner contracts/agreements
    basic skills (remedial learning needs) workshops
    language skills workshops
    learning/study skills workshops
    induction programme
4. Pre-entry contact (to ensure that the student arrives)

C   To promote retention and achievement

1. Tutorial support (by academic)
      one to one
      small group
2. Smaller groups in conventional taught courses
      for what amount of their contact time?
3. Adapting course material or adapting teaching and learning methods
      e-learning support – *not included*
      effective course design**
      materials for the disabled, transcription services
4. Using flexible learning **
      PT to FT conversion
      different entry points
      regular recognition of achievements/intermediate qualifications
      (certificate, diploma)
      breaks in study
   or
      non-conventional modes of delivery [e.g. small groups? extra admin?]
      access courses – *see foundation year/year 0 under A above*
      bite-sized courses – *see Taster courses under A above*
      PT evening/day release; foundation degrees – *not included*
      APEL; WBL **
      e-learning – *not included*
      sandwich year out/ work experience – *not included*
      2+2 – *not included*
5. Using different assessment methods**
      more costly assessment (e.g. more feedback, dyslexia)
      additional resits or retakes
      special support for first assessment, or failed assessment
6. Pastoral support from academics
7. Financial or personal support and counselling from specialists
      welfare counselling support/advice from central teams
      special initiatives (e.g. buddies, motivational counsellors etc)
      peer mentors
      job centres
      career advice
      publications/materials
      fees remission
      childcare
      assistance with travel or other financial support
      shuttle buses
      hardship funding/bursaries/scholarships
8. Special initiatives or procedures to identify and support failing students
      administration (to identify and track students)
      exit interviews
      diagnostic testing
      top-up courses
      extra study skills
9. Initiatives to support employability – *not included unless WP specific*
      careers guidance; post-graduation skills (interviewing, writing CVs etc).

D To provide the curricular structure and educational framework

1. For the progression framework **
2. For flexible provision **
3. For CATs scheme/modular provision **
4. Strategies and investment in new initiatives - *include under E below*
5. Staff training and development.

E Planning and management

1. Developing policies and strategies for WP
    senior managers with specific responsibilities?
    central WP groups or disabilities office?
    WP groups and forums?
    head of department/deans involvement
2. Working with partners – *or cover under A5 above*
3. Management information systems
4. Good practice; assessment of progress and effectiveness.

F Other

1. Physical infrastructure *- not included*
    'friendly atmosphere' (non-threatening feel)
    location, multi-site
    security
    delivery in local centres
    capital spend to assist access for disabled – *not included*
    other physical requirements e.g. religious study space
2. Attrition **
    despite all of the above, retention may be lower than for students from 'traditional' backgrounds (educational or social and economic).

Abbreviations

AP(E)L	Accreditation of prior (experiential) learning
CATs	Credit accumulation and transfer schemes
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
FT	Full-time
FTE	Full-time equivalent
HE	Higher education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher education institution
HEPI	Higher Education Policy Institute
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
ISR	Individualised student record
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
NAO	National Audit Office
PT	Part-time
SCOP	Standing Conference of Principals
SENDA	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act 2001
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UUK	Universities UK
WBL	Work-based learning
WP	Widening participation