SOAS Access Agreement

Content of the SOAS Access Agreement

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1. Introduction and institutional context

The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) is a college of the University of London and the only Higher Education institution in the UK specialising in the study of Asia, Africa and the Near and Middle East. SOAS uniquely combines language scholarship, disciplinary expertise and regional focus. It has the largest concentration in Europe of academic staff concerned with Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

SOAS is committed to increasing the social and ethnic diversity of its students, especially by encouraging greater participation from under-represented groups. Diversity is one of the distinguishing features of SOAS, and we strive to ensure equal opportunity for all students regardless of their age, gender, ethnic origin or religious background.

The great challenge for the School is that for the most part the languages and cultures we study are not commonly taught at school and are, therefore, unfamiliar to many potential students. A cornerstone of our work with schools is to broaden the horizons of both teachers and students so that they understand the academic and career benefits from studying subjects offered at SOAS. The School's progress in taking forward the widening participation agenda is set out in the following charts. We are clear that in proposing a standard home/EU undergraduate fee of £9,000 the School must demonstrate that it is setting stretching but achievable targets for enhancing participation and retention. We believe that the following pages demonstrate that the School has a clear strategy for encouraging participation from the most disadvantaged groups and supporting their progression within the School. In setting the targets the School has been mindful of the downward trend since 2002 in LPN participation.

We will review annually our performance against targets and milestones agreeing with you modifications to what is set out here depending on experience.

2. Fee limits and fee income

SOAS proposes to charge a single undergraduate tuition fee of £9,000 for all degree programmes for new home/EU entrants from 2012-13. As a humanities/social science university there is no justification for differential fees between programmes. The fee will increase with the Government's permitted rise each year in line with the regulations. Fees for students on year abroad programmes will be no higher than £3,000 and will rise in line with the regulations.

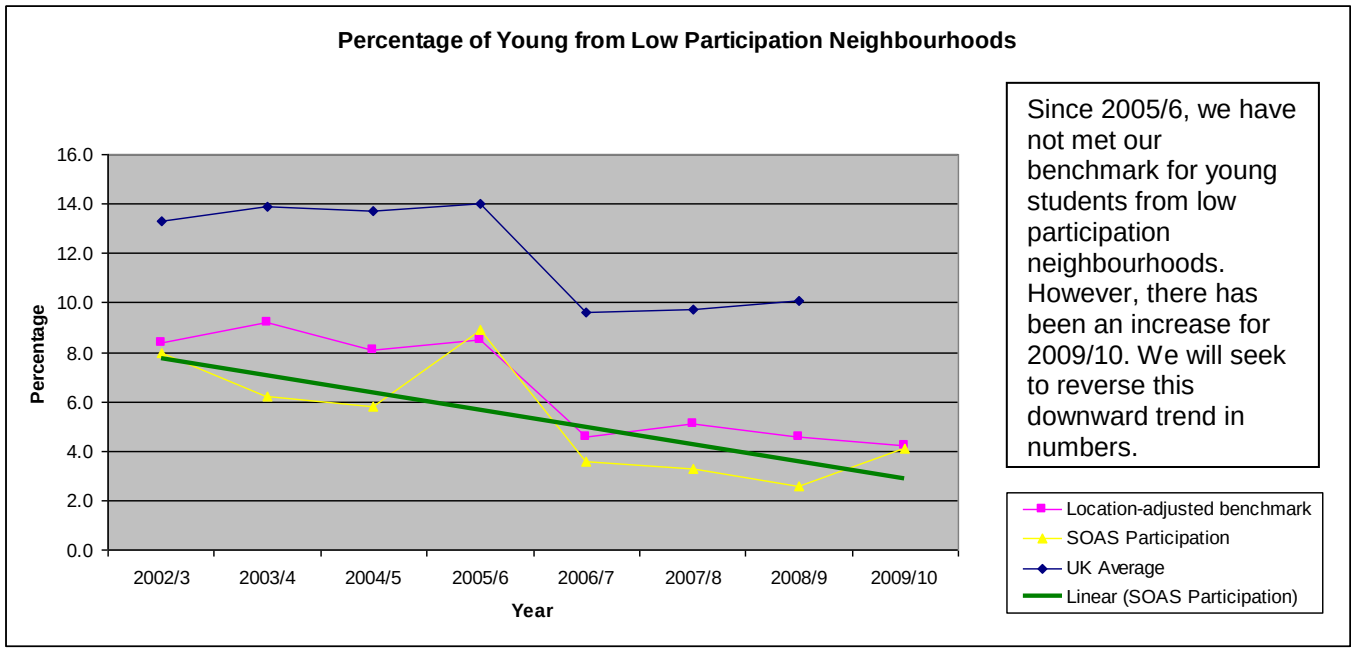
We estimate an intake of 730 FTE undergraduate students in 2012/13.

3. Our current performance in relation to widening access and retention

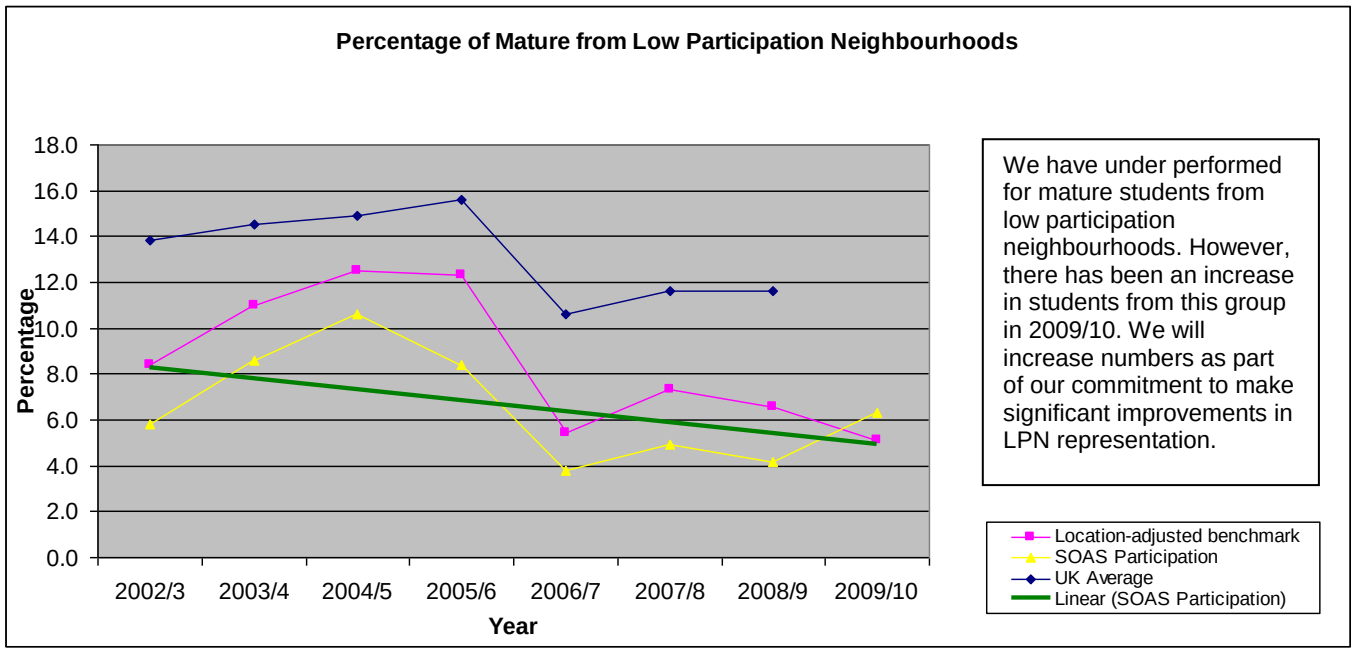
The graphs below outline our performance against Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) location adjusted benchmarks; they also include our performance against the UK average.

Widening Access

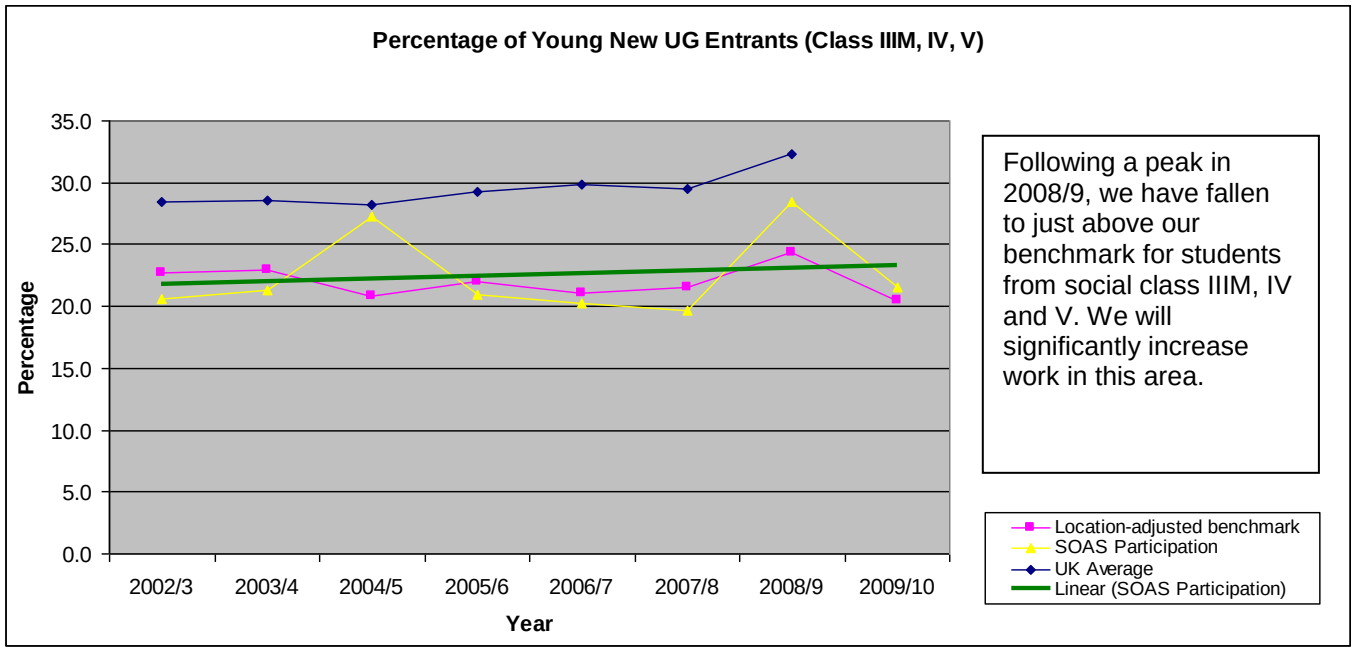
Graph 1



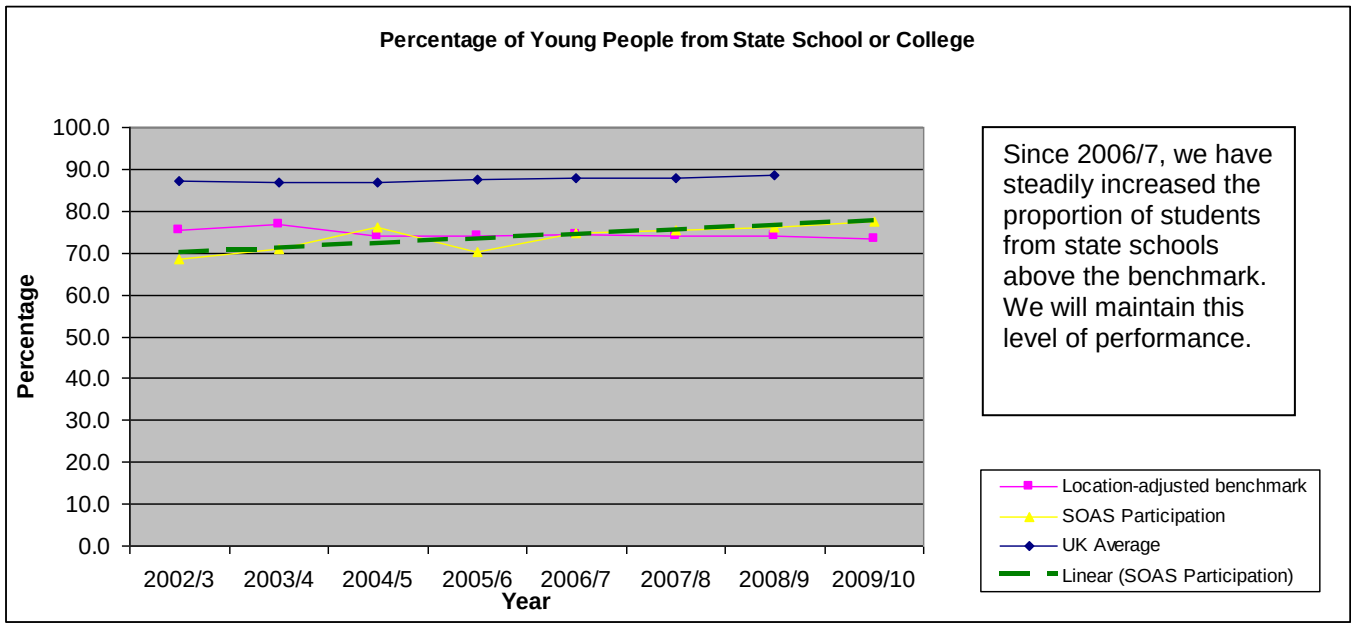
Graph 2



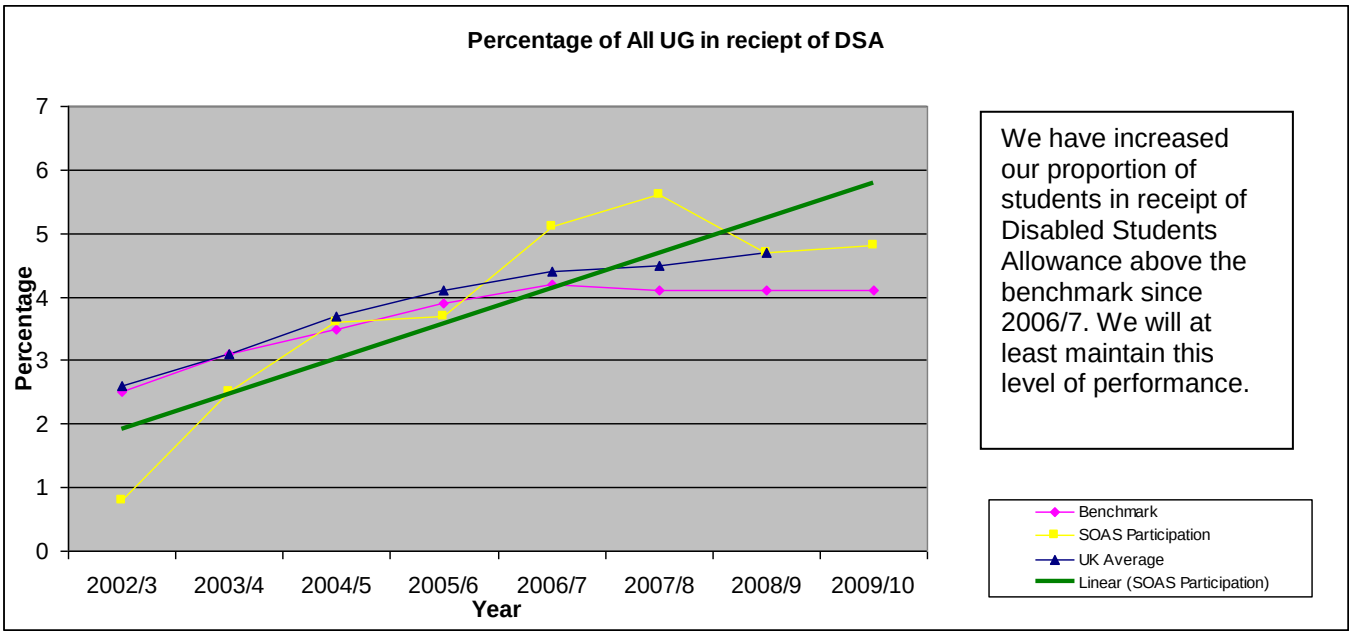
Graph 3



Graph 4

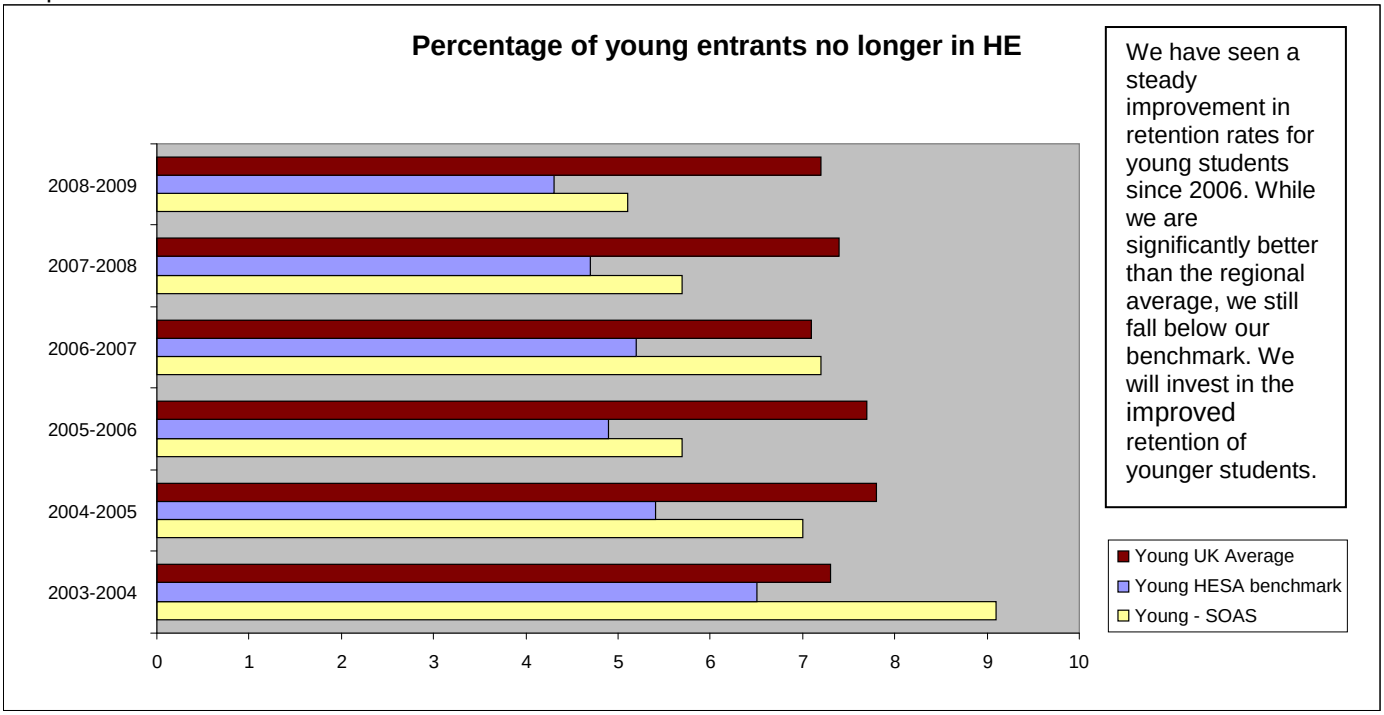


Graph 5

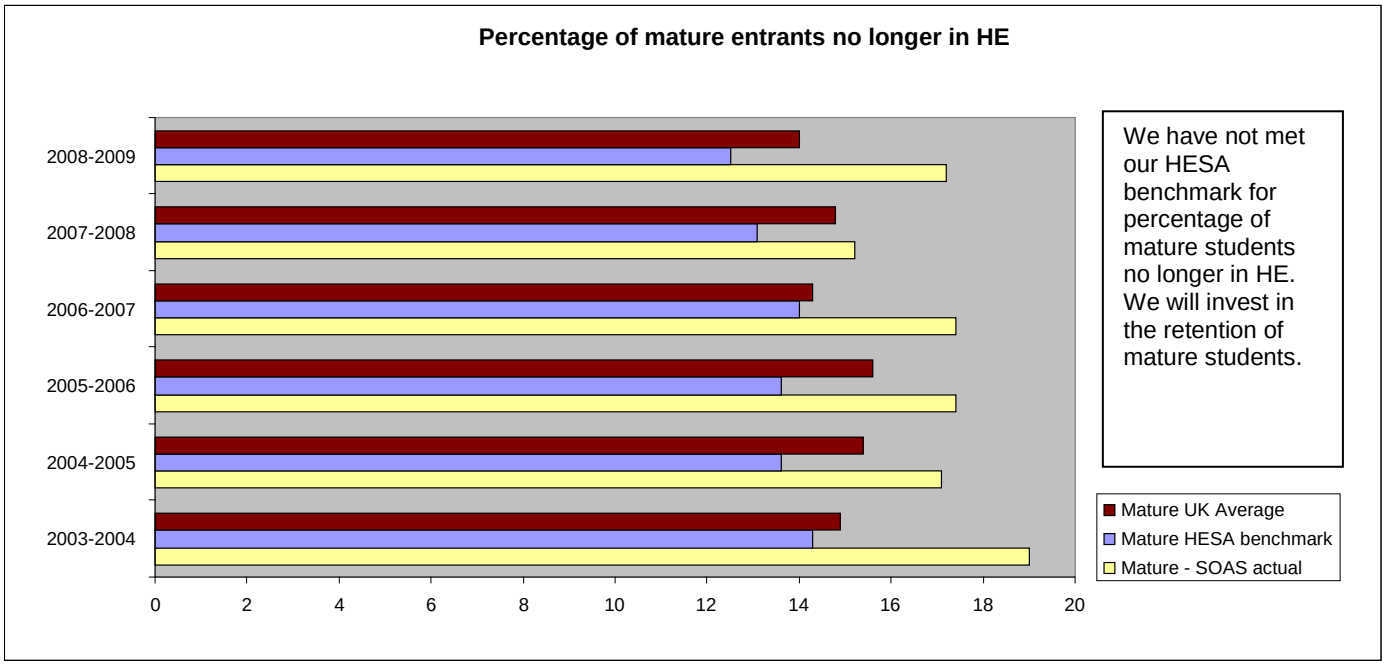


Retention

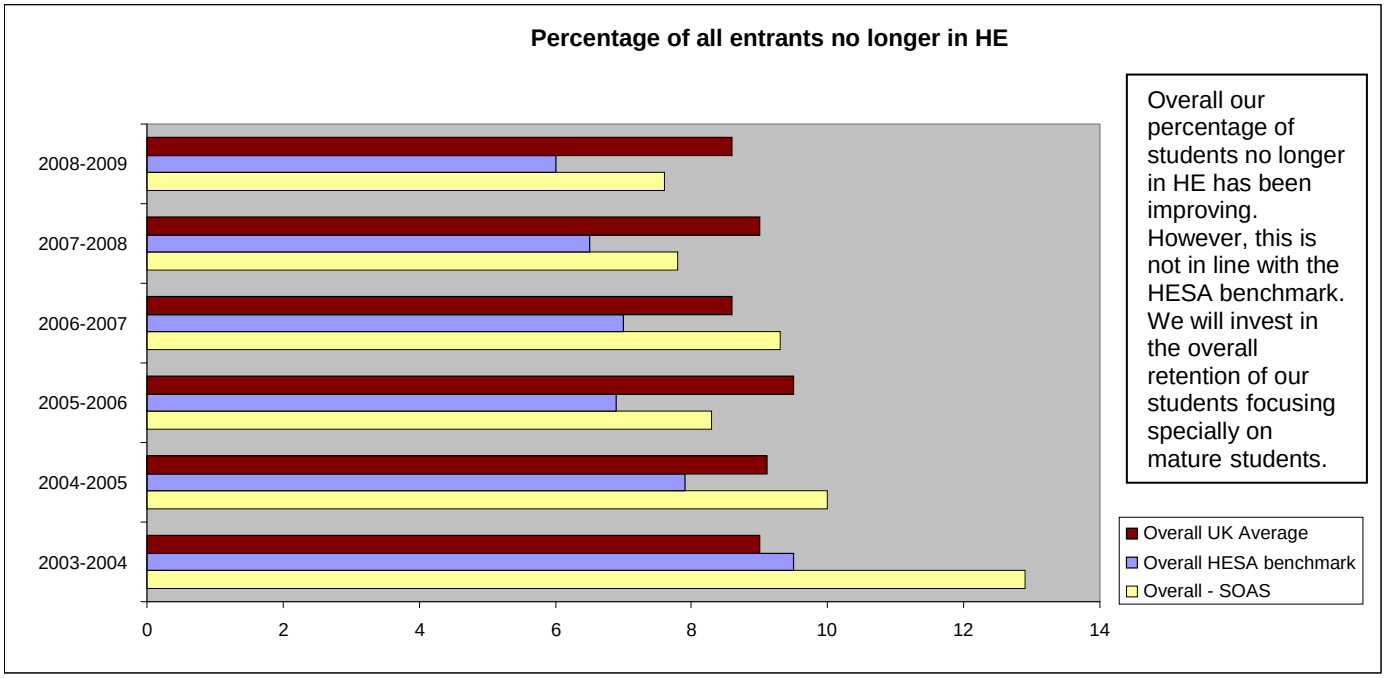
Graph 6



Graph 7

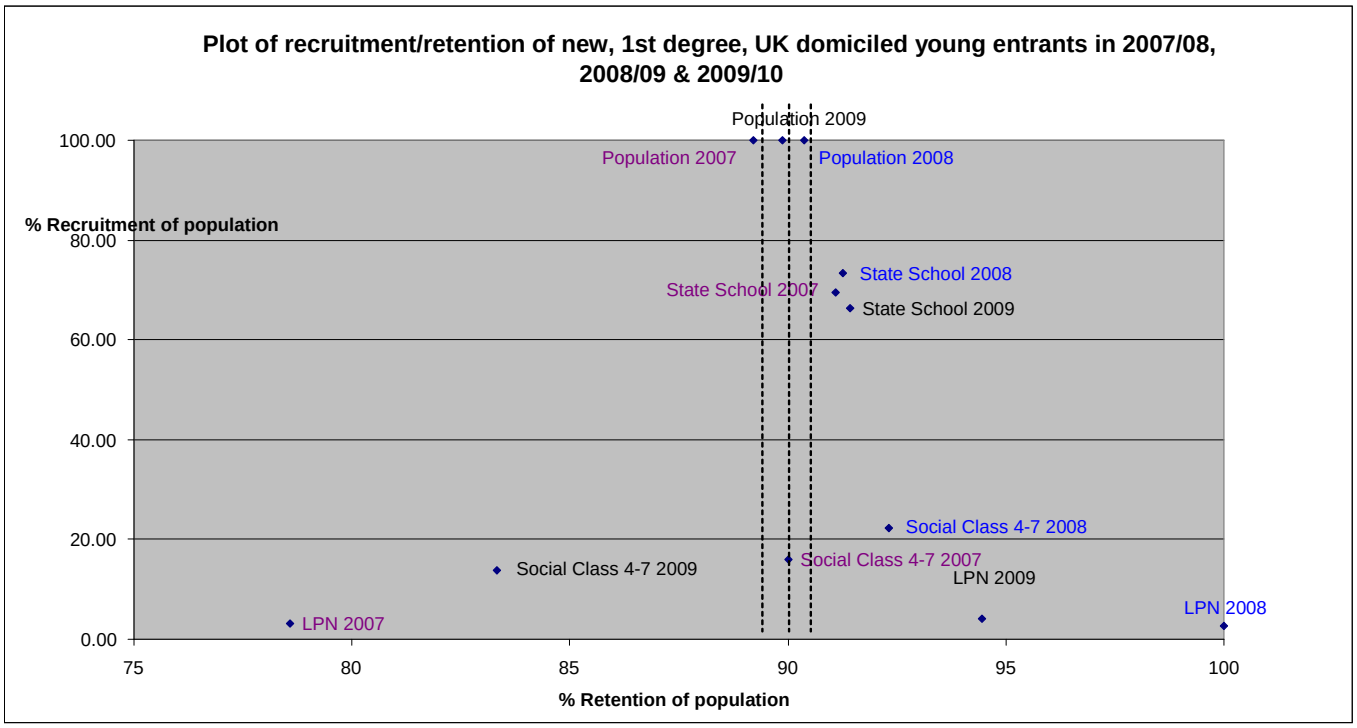


Graph 8



Graph 9 below shows the recruitment and retention of state school students, students from low participation neighbourhoods (young and mature) and students from social classes 4-7. The dotted vertical line indicates the retention and recruitment of SOAS' overall student population.

Graph 9



This graph indicates that we have:

- falling recruitment from social classes 4-7 and these have a lower retention rate than the overall population;
- stable recruitment as a percentage of the total student population from low participation neighbourhoods but these students have a higher retention rate than the overall population.
- maintained recruitment from state schools and these students have a higher retention rate than the overall population.

The School has worked hard to improve its performance in these areas. Sustained increases in participation will require further consistent and focused work with those groups who are least represented in higher education. Support will also be required to ensure that retention rates are improved across the School. With this in mind the School has agreed the following prioritised areas for its outreach and retention work under this Access Agreement:

1. Recruitment and retention of young students from low participation neighbourhoods
2. Recruitment and retention of mature students from low participation neighbourhoods
3. Recruitment and retention of young students from social classes 4-7
4. Retention of mature students
5. Recruitment of students from state schools
6. Recruitment of students in receipt of disabled students allowance

The graphs in the preceding section demonstrate mixed success for the School since 2002. They also indicate that for some groups, such as LPNs, the participation rates are reducing across higher education. Reversing some of these trends will require careful work. The School believes that its aim to increase the absolute numbers attending the School from these key groups represents a realistic but stretching set of targets. These will be delivered by the fee waivers, scholarships and focussed outreach work described in the next sections.

The assessment of priority measures indicates we will be focusing our efforts on widening participation and access on the hard to reach groups. A key feature of our work will be supporting students from low participation neighbourhoods and students from lower socio-economic groups. We have therefore ensured that our approach to outreach in section 4.1 reflects our commitment to addressing these issues.

The Students' Union support these priority areas, and are keen that the School focuses on improving recruitment and retention from traditional non-participant groups across all academic disciplines.

4. Expenditure on additional access measures

Based on OFFA guidance and SOAS' performance against the measures indicated in section 3 above, SOAS will set aside 37% of additional fee income over £6,000 to fund widening access and retention in year 1 of the new regime. It should be noted that this excludes the amount set aside for old scheme bursaries, but includes £90,000 of new expenditure on outreach activities to be expended in 2011/12 in advance of the new agreement.

The table below outlines the total projected expenditure on access and retention from year 1 to year 5 of the new regime.

Table 1: Projected level of SOAS funded expenditure on access and retention

	Year 1 2012/13 £'000	**Year 2 2013/14 £'000**	**Year 3 2014/15 £'000**	**Year 4 2015/16 £'000**	**Year 5 2016/17 £'000**
New expenditure	640*	968	1,352	1,475	1,576
New as % of additional income	*29%*	*23%*	*24%*	*24%*	*26%*
Current expenditure – to be continued	176	176	176	176	176
Total expenditure -continuing	**816**	**1,144**	**1,528**	**1,651**	**1,752**
Total as % of additional income	*37%*	*27%*	*27%*	*27%*	*29%*
Old system bursaries	406	203	-	-	-
Total expenditure	**1,222**	**1,347**	**1,528**	**1,651**	**1,752**
Total as % on income above basic fee	**25%**	**24%**	**26%**	**27%**	**29%**

*includes £90,000 of advance expenditure to be incurred in 2011/12

The sections below outline our intentions with regard to access, retention and financial support.

We will be closely monitoring our outcomes in relation to access and student success and making expenditure percentage shifts were necessary. For example, if we begin to see a dip in our ability to meet our benchmarks, we will increase the proportion of funds spent on outreach from outreach/retention allocations.

4.1. Outreach

SOAS is committed to engaging with young and mature learners to raise aspirations and attainment, and increasing progression to Higher Education. We will increase our commitment in this area by £220,000 for 2012/13. It should be noted that this includes £90,000 of expenditure to be incurred in 2011/12, in advance of the new agreement

Table 2 below, shows total projected expenditure on outreach activities from year 1 to year 5 of the new regime.

Table 2: Outreach expenditure

	Year 1 2012/13 £'000	**Year 2 2013/14 £'000**	**Year 3 2014/15 £'000**	**Year 4 2015/16 £'000**	**Year5 2016/17 £'000**
New expenditure	220*	165	230	240	240
Current expenditure – to be continued	96	96	96	96	96
Total expenditure – continuing	**316**	**261**	**326**	**336**	**336**

*includes £90,000 of advance expenditure to be incurred in 2011/12

SOAS will continue to support collaborative outreach by committing funding to programmes such as National Routes into Languages, Access HE (formerly Aimhigher WECAN) and the Linking London Lifelong Learning Network.

Last year SOAS engaged over 2,100 school and college students in 82 activities. These activities were supported by 81 student ambassadors and 51 academics. These include activities delivered as part of engagement in collaborative networks. SOAS will increase the proportion of institutionally-led activities under this access agreement. Evaluation is a crucial part of all these activities and we will continue to assess measures to ensure impact.

4.1.1. New approaches to widening participation and outreach

We have identified a programme of activities to support and facilitate the transition for targeted groups into Higher Education. Students from areas where there is low participation in Higher Education have distinct characteristics and specific needs which we will address in our targeted programme of activities. These characteristics include lack of role models and debt aversion. For students from low socio-economic groups we know that low aspirations as well as access to resources to support study are barriers.

Specific outreach activity, transition programmes and financial support will be targeted at students in these groups. These are outlined in table 3 below:

Table 3: Target Groups

Target Group	Aim	Outreach	Success and retention	Financial support
Young and mature students from low participation neighbourhoods	Recruitment of young students from low participation neighbourhoods Recruitment of mature students from low participation neighbourhoods	One-to-one mentoring, immersion weeks, Pathways to the Professions	Application support, Bridging Course for First Generation Students, Leadership Programme, Internships	50% reduction in fees - £13,500 for students from LPN
Young students from low socio-economic groups	Recruitment of young students from social class IIIM, IV, V	Mentoring, ambassador-led taster days, summer schools, masterclasses	Application support, Bridging Course for First Generation Students, Leadership Programme, Internships	£9,000 fee waiver/bursary through NSP Excellence Award

We will continue to support the broader aims and targets outlined in section 3 with a specific programme for hard to reach groups as outlined in table 3. All our access and outreach activities are evaluated using a number of tools. These include participant, student ambassador and teacher evaluation forms, activity monitoring forms, focus groups, statistical data and active research.

Based on the use of these evaluation tools and evidence from the sector we know that the following activities have an impact on raising aspiration and attainment and increasing progression to HE for all under-represented groups. Our additional commitment of £130,000 will be used to support the various activities in table 3 in addition to those in tables 4 and 5. The table also includes key outcomes and target year groups for activity.

Table 4: Raising aspirations and attainment

Activity	Outcomes/features	Target Group/s	Milestone reference
Masterclasses	• Increases the understanding of the HE experience to younger students • Assists in providing support to students who may be struggling with the concept of HE • Incorporates IAG (Information, Advice and Guidance) sessions for parents and CPD (Continued Professional Development) sessions for teachers	Key stage 4 and 5	1, 3, 6
Ambassador-led taster days (in conjunction with the SOAS Student Union)	• Provides IAG in an interesting learner-led experience • Provides a forum for extended, meaningful contact with current HE students • Allows scope for introduction of subject-specific workshops	Key stage 4 and 5	1, 2, 3, 6
Language taster days	• Provides participants with opportunities to find out about a wider range of languages • Distinctive SOAS offering • Focus on increasing employability	All year groups in schools and students in	1, 2, 3, 6

		6th Form/FE college	
Immersion Weeks	• Creates a model for accessing hard-to-reach groups • Focuses on improving community language skills (and the increased confidence that comes with this) • Provides greater exploration of HE more generally to groups where progression is low	Key stage 4	1, 2
Mentoring	• Provides sustained, long-term contact with current HE students • Links in to other widening participation and access related projects (e.g. GCSE study support, mentoring for a student who attended a masterclass)	All year groups in schools and students in 6th Form/FE college	1, 2, 3

Table 5: Progression to HE

Activity	**Outcomes/features**	**Target Group/s**	**Milestone reference**
Summer schools (including collaborative summer schools with other HEIs)	• Sustained and intense HE intervention; participants gain a considerable amount of knowledge about how universities / courses work in a relatively short space of time • Provides students interested in particular topics with a broader understanding of the discipline and degree options • Provides sustained, meaningful contact with current HE students, as well as forum for gaining study skills and specific subject knowledge • Includes sessions on careers and employability	Key stage 4 and students in 6th Form/FE college	3, 6, 8, 9
Masterclasses	• Provides a snapshot of university-style learning and teaching • Gives experience of a university campus • Provides meaningful contact with current HE students; who very directly provide role models of people who have come from similar backgrounds, and are enjoying their time at a selective university	Key stage 5 and students in 6th Form/FE college	1, 2, 3, 9
Conference for Access Students	• Impact progression to HE when held at the right time • Provides snapshot of university-style learning; participants value contact with academics • Provides meaningful contact with current HE students; who very directly provide role models of mature students who have recently gone through the application process, and are enjoying their time at a selective university • Creates opportunities for participants to understand the academic topics in an HE environment • Provides opportunities for cross-sector delivery and curriculum understanding between academics and college tutors • Includes sessions on careers and employability	Students in FE College	2, 5, 8, 9, 10
Mentoring	• Provides sustained, long-term contact with current HE students • Links in to other WP projects (e.g. mentoring for a student who attended a masterclass)	Key stage 5 and students in 6th Form/FE college	1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 11
Pathway to the Professions	• Builds and increases confidence and motivation of learners • Provides structured pre-entry advice and guidance • Includes sessions on studying and working towards a career in the professions • Provides tool kit for making informed choices	Key stage 4 and students in 6th Form/FE college	1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 10

These are examples of activities we will be supporting in addition to those outlined in our HEFCE Widening Participation Strategic Assessment. We will continue to develop new and innovative responses to engaging with the most disadvantaged including more highly targeted, long-term activities to positively influence the academic achievements of students from disadvantaged groups. As an integral part of these proposals we will increase joint

working with our Students Union and Careers Service to develop a range of activities which will raise aspirations and achievement levels of students at school and college.
The Students' Union welcomes working with the School in outreach activities and is already delivering , for example, a Saturday School and collaborating in other School WP events A core part of the Student Union mission is to widen participation in SOAS through explaining to potential students the range and diversity of subjects on offer.

4.1.2 Collaborative working

Collaboration with other HEIs and agencies will be key to the successful delivery of improved support for widening participation and access to schools, colleges and local communities. SOAS is an active member in a number of networks relating to widening participation and access. Involvement in these networks have enabled us to increase the scope and reach of our work in attracting disadvantaged students as well as contributing to raising aspirations of students irrespective of which institution they may go to. We will commit resources to key networks such as National Routes into Languages programme and the Linking London Lifelong Learning Network. In addition, we will be supporting new collaborative arrangements such as Access HE (formerly Aimhigher WECAN) and the Bloomsbury Specialist HEI Group.

The Bloomsbury Specialist HEI Group consists of specialist institutions who aim to raise aspirations and widen subject choices for disadvantaged groups. SOAS is actively exploring opportunities for collaborative work across the Bloomsbury consortium based upon the strengths of the respective institutions to form a cost-efficient approach to outreach.

We will review all collaborative arrangements during this year to ensure they meet our widening access and outreach objectives under the new fees regime.

4.1.3 Linking with schools

SOAS has strict criteria for assessing which schools and colleges to work with. This is based on GCSE performance, percentage of young people on free school meals (FSM) and POLAR data. Last year we worked with a total of 78 schools (plus 15 colleges) in London of which 34 have HE participation rates lower that 32%. We will build upon these links by strengthening our work with schools as part of our focus on increasing student numbers from schools in low participation neighbourhoods. We will also develop our work with Academies with a Language Specialism.

We will also extend our links with schools outside London. In particular, we will aim to widen access to our specialist programmes by developing links with schools in the Midlands where there is no local provision of many of the subjects we offer.

We are aware that under these arrangements schools may receive many calls from local universities to set up widening participation arrangements. We believe that it is important universities work together where possible to set up networks to develop links with schools. We are actively working with colleagues in the Bloomsbury Consortium, and especially the Institute of Education, to explore ways that we can work together in developing links with schools.

4.1.4 Use of contextualised data

The School's admission policy encourages applications from a diverse range of students. We welcome applications from students with vocational qualifications or who have studied on access courses. Neither these students nor those who have re-taken examinations are disadvantaged in the application process. Most programmes offered do not require passes in specified subject areas and applicants' wider potential and interest are considered to be extremely important.

We seek to take account when assessing applications of any disruption or hardship during pre-university studies. Offers are at the level published in the Prospectus for all applications regardless of background following assessment of predicted grades, personal statement and academic reference. However, where there are mitigating circumstances these are taken into account at the offer stage. At confirmation, if there are spaces remaining once all applications which have met the terms of their offers have been processed, applications which narrowly miss the terms of their offer may be reviewed at the admissions tutors discretion. This decision is based on the information provided in the UCAS application form. Post-qualification applicants who have completed their studies are considered in a similar manner.

During the coming academic year the School will explore extending its use of contextual data to include variable conditional offers to students who show potential. We are aware that it will be important to develop our existing approaches if we are to meet our targets for increasing participation from the groups most under-represented in Higher Education.

4.2. Student retention and success

SOAS is committed to supporting the success of all its students and helping them realise their career aspirations. Success here is dependent on providing support at all points in the student life cycle – from pre-entry to after graduation. We will increase our activities in this area as is set out in Table 6 below which shows total projected expenditure in this area over the next five years.

Table 6 below, shows total projected expenditure on retention activities from year 1 to year 5 of the new regime

Table 6: Projected retention expenditure

	Year 1 2012/13 £'000	**Year 2 2013/14 £'000**	**Year 3 2014/15 £'000**	**Year 4 2015/16 £'000**	**Year 5 2016/17 £'000**
New expenditure	55	106	119	131	140
Current expenditure – to be continued	81	81	81	81	81
Total expenditure – continuing	**136**	**187**	**200**	**212**	**221**

SOAS currently provides a wide range of activities designed to support and enhance students' learning and success. These include one-to-one essay tutorials, departmental study support sessions and study skills workshops. In addition, we provide free week-long Bridging Courses for mature and first generation HE students to smooth the transition from school, college or work to university.

The School's Employability Strategy sets out how we will promote the development of careers skills. We will target our efforts on disadvantaged groups to ensure that they have focussed support in developing relevant skills to promote their employability prospects. We are currently piloting a programme of internships related students' degree programmes; this is an example of the type of initiative we will make available to our priority groups. The School is exploring the creation of an on-campus jobs recruitment agency for students in collaboration with the Bloomsbury specialist HEI Group, which will be targeted at disadvantaged students across the colleges. A programme for workplace visits will be developed to enable students to understand how to be effective in the workplace, to gather careers-related information and to have the opportunity of networking with individuals working in the professions along with the creation of a programme of work-shadowing.

The School believes that the employability of all of its undergraduate students will be increased if they possess at least a working knowledge of one of the languages of Africa, Asia or the Middle East by the time they graduate. The School has, therefore, established the concept of a 'language entitlement' for all undergraduate students. This means that undergraduates are entitled to register for at least one language course during their time at the School.

Analysis of our performance over the recent years shows that our retention rate for students from disadvantaged backgrounds exceeds that for our overall student population. However, we are aware that given changes in the fees regime and our target increases in the number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds we will need to continue investing in strategies to ensure our retention rates remain high. We will use our additional resources to support the activities set out in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Student success activities

Activity	**Outcomes/features**	**Target group/s**	**Milestone reference**
Bridging Courses	• Transition support for students • Study skills inc. having to write an essay • Early awareness and access to support services • First term support	Mature students and students who are the first in the family to go to university	1, 2, 3, 5, 11
Bridging Out Courses	• Skills for employment • Careers advice after graduation • Workshops supporting transition	Mature students, students who are the first in the family to go to university, students from lower socio-economic groups	1, 2, 3, 5, 11
Leadership Programme	• Developed over the course of programme • Opportunity to document and prove learning	All disadvantaged groups inc. students	1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 11

	• Mentoring	from BME backgrounds	
Buddying Scheme	• For students from the target groups • Management of the transition to HE • Advice and support in the first term • Training for the volunteers who are the buddy supporters	All target groups	1, 2, 3, 6, 7 , 12

4.3. Financial support for students

SOAS is committed to ensuring that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are not discouraged from accessing Higher Education for financial reasons. We are, therefore, increasing financial support for this group as set out in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Projected expenditure on financial support for students

	Year 1 2012/13 £'000	**Year 2 2013/14 £'000**	**Year 3 2014/15 £'000**	**Year 4 2015/16 £'000**	**Year5 2016/17**
New expenditure	365	697	1,003	1,104	1,196
Old system bursaries (to discontinue)	406	203	-	-	-
Total	**771**	**900**	**1,003**	**1,104**	**1,196**

Table 9 below shows the students in receipt of financial support for 2009/10. It details the mixture of targeted and untargeted support as well as the number of recipients. We will be increasing the number of highly targeted financial support to students from 2012/13 onwards.

Table 9: Figures for 2009/10 cohort

Support type	No. of recipients	Value
Full bursary (students receiving full state support, given automatically)	172	£860
Partner college bursaries (given automatically)	44	£800
Progression award (specific criteria, competitive)	8 (40 available, applications on going)	£500
Local excellence award (specific criteria, competitive)	8 (10 available applications on going)	£4,000 (spread over degree programme)

4.3.1 Targeted awards

The School's strategy is to target financial support at the most disadvantaged students. We have combined our contribution to NSP with our Local Excellence Award to create the NSP Excellence award. Students are eligible for this award if they are from lower socio-economic groups and meet criteria such as evidence of academic or personal merit. These awards will be made in each of a student's three years of study.

The Progression Award targets students from areas of low HE participation (LPN) and whose parents did not go to university. This substantial award assists those students that are the most debt adverse and will be made in each of the student's three years of study.

We have worked very closely with our partner colleges in increasing the progression of mature students on Access to HE diplomas; therefore the Partner College Award seeks to continue to support mature learners from vocational programmes to SOAS. In addition, our partner colleges are in areas of low participation. By increasing our NSP Excellence Awards we aim to support more mature students in low participation neighbourhoods into HE.

Many students from disadvantaged backgrounds require one-off financial support to ensure they continue in their studies, such as unanticipated accommodation cost increases. The increased Hardship Funds will provide such students with financial support at critical times. Students will have to meet strict criteria to be eligible for support through Hardship Funds.

Eligibility criteria for awards:

- Excellence Award - Income less than £25,000, attended school with high percentage of free school meals, academic merit
- Progression Award - Student from schools or colleges in LPN, first generation HE student
- Hardship Fund - Need assessed for students from under-represented groups

- Partner College Award - Mature student on Access to HE diploma, attended partner college
- National Scholarships Award - Income less than £25,000, students need to be on specific programmes leading to professional careers (including language based)

Table 11: Receipt profile of award

	First year	Second year	Third year	Total
Excellence	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£9,000
Progression	£6,000	£4,500	£3,000	£13,500
Hardship Fund	£1,000	-	-	£1,000
Partner College	£500	-	-	£500
National Scholarship funding	£3,000	-	-	£3,000

Table 12 below shows the distribution of financial support for 2012/13. The allocation of awards reflects our priorities in recruiting the best students from disadvantaged groups.

Table 12: Distribution of financial support for 2012/13

	Award per student £s			Amount Awarded			
Award	Scholarship	Fee Waiver	Total £	No	Scholarship	Fee Waiver	Total £
Excellence	1,000	2,000	3,000	60	60,000	120,000	180,000
Progression	0	6,000	6,000	25	0	150,000	150,000
Hardship Fund	1,000		1,000	20	20,000		20,000
Partner College	500		500	30	15,000		15,000
Total SOAS funded				**135**	**95,000**	**270,000**	**365,000**
National Scholarship funding	1,000	2,000	3,000	30	30,000	60,000	90,000
Total				**165**	**125,000**	**330,000**	**455,000**

We will continue to refine appropriate criteria for targeted financial support by using institutional data and newly available data provided through UCAS.

Based on table 11 SOAS would offer 165 of the most financially disadvantaged but academically able students fee waivers or awards. This represents 23% of our projected new intake for 2012/13.

Tables 13 & 14 below show the number of awards available up to 2016/17.

Table 13: Number of new awards available by year

Financial support	Year 1 2012/13	Year 2 2013/14	Year 3 2014/15	Year 4 2015/16	Year 5 2016/17
NSP Excellence	60	70	75	80	82
Progression (LPN)	25	28	30	33	36
Partner College	30	35	40	45	45
Hardship funds	20	40	60	60	60
NSP – funded	30	60	90	90	90

TOTAL new awards	**165**	**233**	**295**	**308**	**313**

Table 14: Total number and cost of projected awards

Financial support	Year 1 2012/13 Nos	Year 1 2012/13 £'000	Year 2 2013/14 Nos	Year 2 2013/14 £'000	Year 3 2014/15 Nos	Year 3 2014/15 £'000	Year 4 2015/16 Nos	Year 4 2013/14 £'000	Year 5 2016/17 Nos	Year 5 2016/17 £'000
NSP Excellence	60	180	124	372	189	567	210	630	225	675
Progression (LPN)	25	150	50	267	76	356	84	392	95	443
Partner College	30	15	35	18	40	20	45	22	45	22
Hardship funds	20	20	40	40	60	60	60	60	60	60
TOTAL – SOAS funded	**135**	**365**	**249**	**697**	**365**	**1,003**	**399**	**1,104**	**425**	**1,200**
NSP – funded	30	90	60	180	90	270	90	270	90	270
TOTAL	**165**	**455**	**309**	**877**	**455**	**1,273**	**489**	**1,374**	**515**	**1,470**

We believe that the combination of these fee waivers, scholarships and outreach activities will enable the School to increase its recruitment of disadvantaged students as set out in Table 15 below.

The Students' Union agrees with the way in which the School intends to distribute financial support. They are opposed to the increase in fees, and the potential effect it may have on all students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, however, they believe that under the circumstances the package of support outlined will mitigate some of these adverse effects. They are keen to make sure that financial support is used as an aid to retention and success and not just recruitment.

5. Targets and milestones

SOAS is working to increase the support it gives both local and international communities through its education provision and research activities. As part of this the School is making a significant commitment to improve the participation rate of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. We propose that within five years our student population will be significantly more aligned to the average for English universities. This will be realised through the activities set out above with key groups.

In section 2 we identified that the School's key groups are students from low participation neighbourhoods and students from low socio-economic groups. Table 15 below shows the SOAS baseline targets based on HESA data.

Table 15: Baseline targets

Priority no.	Measure		Current position 2009/10	Year 1 (%)	Year 3 (%)	Year 5 (%)	Target aims
1	Young from LPN	First year intake	18	19	22	26	To target work to significantly improve absolute performance and align more with UK average 11.6%, and to increase above competitor group[1] average 5.7% by year 3.
		Intake as % of population[2]	4.1%	4.5%	4.8%	5.9%	
		All years	40	49	57	68	
2	Mature from LPN	First year intake	5	6	8	10	To target work significantly to improve absolute performance and more align with UK average 11.6%, and to meet peer group average 11.2% by year 3.
		Intake as % of population[3]	6.3%	6.4%	7.4%	9%	
		All years	15	18	19	27	
3	Young from social class 4-7	First year intake	74	75	81	97	To significantly increase work in schools with a high percentage of students on free school meals to align more with UK average 32.3%, and to meet competitor group average 24.3% by year 3.
		Intake as % of population[4]	21.5%	22%	23%	28%	
		All years	235	199	216	253	
4	Retention – Mature students	Number as % of population	17.2%	17%	16%	14%	To reduce the non-continuation rate to align more with the UK average 14%.
5	% from state schools	First year intake	330	330	341	363	To maintain work across London state schools to remain above benchmark and more closely align with UK average 88.5%, and to remain above competitor group average 75.6%.
		Intake as % of population[5]	77.5%	77.5%	80%	85%	
		All years	913	909	922	956	

Year 1 targets are focused on maintaining current performance. While we will commit funds in 2011/12 ahead of this agreement the impact of this will take time to flow through. This is reflected in increases in student numbers across the five years. We will carefully monitor performance in year 2 to ensure year 3 targets are met. We will review UK and regional averages to ensure our targets remain appropriate and achievable.

Our targets are stretching and represent an absolute increase in numbers of our target groups. We know that attracting a larger number of these hard to reach groups under the new fees regime and in a reduced market will

[1] Closest competitors in London as identified through institutional research

[2] HESA undergraduate, first degree entrants that are UK domiciled is 549. Only those with known data counted for young LPN – this is 436 students.

[3] HESA undergraduate, first degree entrants that are UK domiciled is 549. Only those with known data counted for mature LPN – this is 110 students.

[4] Overall HESA undergraduate, first degree entrants that are UK domiciled is 549. Only those with known data counted for young from social class IIIM, IV, V – this is 344 students

[5] Overall HESA undergraduate, first degree entrants that are UK domiciled is 549. Only those with known data counted for state schools or colleges – this is 426 students

be a challenge. In addition, the specialist nature of our programmes presents a challenge in attracting disadvantaged students who may not be aware of the career prospects which studying a language, for example, provides. However, we are committed to our work in this area.

The Students' Union have stressed to us the importance of setting challenging targets for widening participation, across all of our academic subjects, to try to ensure that at least within SOAS the impact of increased fees does not deter potential students . They are concerned that not all SOAS degrees appear vocational and are encouraged to see the School is considering employability issues within degree structures.

In addition, we have identified baseline targets based on the use of our own institutional data. We wish to increase the number and success of applications from hard to reach groups such as students in low participation neighbourhoods. Data to support our targeting of students applying from schools or colleges in areas of low HE participation has been used to formulate targets 8 and 9. Activities that support this include assisting students in the application process as well as reviewing our systems for assessing applications.

Although we do not have institutional data to support conversion rates of students applying from lower socio-economic groups, we expect the activities outlined in 4.1.1 to have an impact on applications.

We are satisfied with our performance against the HESA measure relating to students in receipt of DSA. We will continue with this work to ensure students who receive DSA are encouraged to access the full range of support services available to ensure their success at university study by disclosing any disabilities.

The table below outlines our institutional targets in further detail. .

Table 16: Institutional targets

	Measure	Current position	Year 1	Year 3	Year 5
6	Increase conversion rates of applications from low HE participation	Currently 25% based on analysis of applications 2006-2010 matched against HEFCE LPN data	25%	30%	35%
7	Increase applications from boroughs with low HE participation	Currently 170 applications since 2006.	170	200	260
8	Retention rate of young students from social classes 4-7	Currently 88% based on institutional data	88%	92%	95%
9	Increase conversion rates of applications from partner colleges	Currently 34% based on institutional data	35%	45%	50%
10	Review of processes supporting disabled students in order to establish appropriate benchmark for disclosing of disabilities	To be determined	60%	80%	100%

6. Monitoring and evaluation arrangements

The Pro Director (Learning and Teaching) is the senior manager with ultimate responsibility for access and widening participation. SOAS' commitment to access is further supported by faculties and departments through the planning, implementation and monitoring of various measures, particularly in relation to retention, progression and collaboration.

Performance in widening participation and access are monitored by the Academic Development Committee chaired by the Pro-Director (Learning and Teaching) and are also considered by the External Relations Committee (chaired by the Registrar and Secretary) and the Student Experience Committee (chaired by the Dean (Languages and Cultures) and, at the highest level, discussed at Academic Board and Governing Body.

All areas of SOAS have a responsibility to support widening participation and fair access. The core SOAS Widening Participation Team is based in the Academic Development Directorate (ADD).
The team works extensively with the Student Recruitment and Admissions Office, Faculty Offices (Languages and Culture, Law and Social Sciences, and Arts and Humanities), Registry and Student Services and the Students' Union on issues of access, admissions' criteria, student support and retention. The implementation of this access agreement will be supported by all these areas.

The body responsible for the delivery of the Access Agreement is the OFFA Steering Group comprised of; Pro-Director (Learning and Teaching), Registrar and Secretary, Dean of Law and Social Sciences, Director of Finance

and Planning, Director of Academic Development and Head of Widening Participation. This group reports to the Director of SOAS.

An action plan will be developed, in collaboration with the Students Union, to support the implementation of the Access Agreement and this will be monitored by the Steering Group. The Director of Academic Development will be responsible for delivering the action plan reporting to the Pro Director (Learning and Teaching). A Working Group comprises of key staff working on areas relating to access, student success and finance will provide advice and feedback on the progress of implementation.

7. Provision of information to students

Appropriate and timely information, advice and guidance are crucial for students and for institutions. The Quality Assurance and Academic Teaching Development teams in the Academic Development Directorate are working on improvements to the student-facing information provided by SOAS (including student-friendly programme specifications which will be available to both potential and existing students). Such developments will benefit all students, but particularly those with little experience of higher education. We will also work with our Student Union to establish the best methods of communication for our students. These will be varied and include websites, posters and leaflets.

Information provided to current and year 12/13/access students will include:

- Circulation of new focuses in our access agreement
- Information brochures on financial support available for students, parents and teachers
- Workshops on managing money at university for students

In addition SOAS will be providing financial information to younger students which will include delivery of broader IAG and information to parents and teachers. We also will collaborate on delivery of IAG through the Bloomsbury Specialist HE consortium.

In order to ensure the information is clear and easily understood we will work with the Student Union and SOAS Student Ambassadors on arranging focus groups to test this information on potential applicants.

The Student Union is committed to widening participation within SOAS. The Students' Union will work to help explain, by all the means appropriate, the available support packages to ensure maximum take up from eligible students.