The University is required by the Secretary of State and HEFCE to provide a comprehensive widening participation strategy, bringing widening participation and access policies together by June 2009. The submission will be a condition of the continued receipt of the HEFCE widening participation allocation. The first interim report will be required in December 2009 and then annually within a three year evaluation cycle.

The University’s current Participation plan outlines the strategic direction and priorities for operational delivery up until 2010. In response to HEFCE’s request for a three year plan from 2009, the University has decided to indicate broad, high-level participation themes within this document, which incorporate the University’s current plan, meet the requirements of HEFCE’s request and indicate our longer term view towards 2015 when both HEFCE’s return and our own planning cycle will fully merge.
Widening participation strategic assessment

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Section One: Widening participation in relation to other key University strategies

‘It is remarkable to pause and reflect on the step-change that has been achieved within the University of Kent during the last five years. Staff and students at the University have contributed great energy and creativity towards making the University thrive as a large multi-sited entity. They have shown that the passion that people feel for their subject, be it through learning, teaching or research, now lives within the context of a shared awareness of broad participation and physical location. The positive elements of a traditional university now thrive within an organisation that is responsive to its wider environment and is actively engaged in shaping the diversity of the student body.

Furthermore, the University’s Widening Participation strategy and ethos have been instrumental to the effective growth of the institution through successive successful bidding for, and meeting, additional student numbers (ASNs) targets thereby helping to define the fundamental shape of the University.

The current Participation Strategy seeks to build upon this policy and delivery to ensure that the University retains and builds upon its diverse learner profile within the context of emerging agenda and changing circumstances.

We will continue to work towards a demonstrable diversity of our participation profile, which in turn will act as a transformative agent within the University. In other words, our learners will drive the key changes within our organisation. The diversity of our student corpus, our provision, and the diversity of our learning and assessment strategies will strengthen and promote the University’s exceptional student experience.’

Current Participation Strategy (2006-10)
University of Kent

1. Commitment to widening participation and fair access

The University of Kent remains fully committed to the principles that underpin widening participation and fair access. This commitment is embodied within its wide ranging outreach programme across the region and is illustrated more generally through its policies and practice. The University has devised and continuously implemented a widening participation strategy since 1999 and the importance of widening participation and regional presence is highlighted in the University’s new institutional plan (2009).

As outlined in the University’s current participation strategy, widening participation and regional focus has been immensely powerful in shaping the institution. The focus and scale of the University has been characterised and influenced by unprecedented growth in student numbers¹, the building of the Medway campus and correspondingly a range of new academic provision and a host of strategic partnerships with FE Colleges and secondary schools. Some of our strategic intentions had been predicated on continued growth, which would allow a burgeoning and further diversity of investments in relationships with HE in FE, FE progression, and primary to secondary school curriculum development. It is looking increasingly likely for Kent, and the sector as a whole, that such plans will be required to scale back due to the current economic downturn. However, within this bleak context the following section highlights those activities and partnerships which it is possible for the University

¹ University of Kent has been one of the most successful institutions in England with regard receiving and delivering additional student numbers (an increase of 5714 full time equivalents between 1998-2009/10)
There is evidence of strong support for inclusivity and widening participation within the University which is reflected in the views of staff and presence of University-wide systems. Widening participation and outreach exist as 'core activities', reflected in both mainstream departmental funding for outreach and faculty structures such as outreach and recruitment sub-committees. In a recent study, where the majority of staff and a selection of students were interviewed for their views towards outreach and widening participation activities within an academic department, there was a general consensus that working with schools, and a diversity of people, were viewed positively by the vast majority of interviewees. However, it is also the case that the anticipation of a freeze on growth may have a negative impact on widening participation in the future.

To continue to succeed the University will need to continue to drive forward a range of focussed participation objectives, while ensuring that gains over recent years are consolidated. We need to innovate, create and evaluate and review in equal measure. Engaging and maintaining the involvement of staff and students across our partnership work is vital to achieving broad participation, particularly in a world full of competing and unpredictable pressures.

### 2. Strategic aims and objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aims</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serve participation aims through bold innovation and with tenacity.</td>
<td>Undertake partnership work with integrity and transparency.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undertake partnership work with integrity and transparency.</td>
<td>Work to ensure the diversity of our student body and the diversity of engagement across the region and nationally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work to ensure the diversity of our student body and the diversity of engagement across the region and nationally.</td>
<td>Ensure that EU and international learning experiences are created and are accessible to all students.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Contribute toward societal, economic, cultural and educational sustainability via individual and collective engagement within Kent and Medway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribute toward societal, economic, cultural and educational sustainability via individual and collective engagement within Kent and Medway.</td>
<td>Undertake sustainable growth in student numbers, with a greater proportion of students as defined by widening participation criteria engaged in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertake sustainable growth in student numbers, with a greater proportion of students as defined by widening participation criteria engaged in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.</td>
<td>Offer a range of opportunities for teachers, support staff and families from our Partner Schools and Colleges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer a range of opportunities for teachers, support staff and families from our Partner Schools and Colleges.</td>
<td>Provide professional development opportunities for local workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide professional development opportunities for local workers.</td>
<td>Consider the needs of older learners.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consider the needs of older learners.</td>
<td>Develop sustainable learning provision and progression with partners and collaborators.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
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<tr>
<td>The development and maintenance of successful partnerships with schools, colleges, adult education and HEIs.</td>
<td>Making a significant contribution to progression curricula for Kent and Medway learners.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Making a significant contribution to progression curricula for Kent and Medway learners.</td>
<td>Demonstrable success in partnership-based and creative project management.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrable success in partnership-based and creative project management.</td>
<td>International links via local partnerships.</td>
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<tr>
<td>International links via local partnerships.</td>
<td>Student engagement and investment in the wider community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student engagement and investment in the wider community.</td>
<td>Participation to support regeneration and equality of opportunity.</td>
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</table>

Current Participation Strategy
University of Kent
Focus of aims towards 2015

Internal structures

Faculty outreach committees have been established across all three faculties which focus upon curriculum offer and themed events to pre-HE students.

University wide coordination for work with all target schools and colleges, which will combine various initiatives at both strategic and practical levels, will gain emphasis.

Student experience

The Ambassadors scheme will continue to grow and diversify, bringing together voluntary, paid and credit bearing options. Many of our students who provide an important element of the University’s outreach programme will also derive some of their positive ‘student experience’ from engagement in such work.

Regional focus

Schools

Kent will continue to contribute to the general raising of expectation and attainment of students through its Partner School programme, providing subject-based and HE preparatory curriculum and bursary provision.

In addition, Academic departments will work in an increasingly systematic way with a range of subject-specialist schools and colleges in the region, to promote progression.

Although there is data that supports the view that there are some real improvements engendered through the close working between schools and colleges with the University it is also the case that many of the schools that enter a formal agreement to engage in outreach find it difficult to establish the systems and timetable access to take full advantage of the comprehensive offer that the University is offering to students. This failure to embed robust partnership systems between a number of schools, colleges and the university has been one of the main reasons for moving towards trust and academy structures. Although the latter dictate a heavier bureaucratic burden, it is hoped they will yield more positive structural change to facilitate student progression.

Aimhigher

Aimhigher Kent and Medway play an important role in partnership working across the local HEIs, in the funding of activities and data provision. The University intends to continue working with the current project and engage in the necessary subsequent embedding of the most effective elements of the project.

Academies and Trusts

Kent co-sponsors an academy within Kent and may be the lead sponsor on another in Medway. In addition Kent will support a small number of local schools that are in the process of becoming trusts. Subjects of strategic importance, maths, science and languages, will be core to Kent’s academy and trust relationships. There will be a number of crucial elements to the University’s provision with the schools and the wider community we serve:

- Staff development, subject-based forum and updating exchange for staff, in addition to an innovative funded masters and doctoral programmes for trainee and experienced teachers.

- Subject-based community outreach to parents and carers will be offered by University staff as part of the extended school provision.
In Medway, the intention to link the Academy curriculum provision to that of our co-located FE College partner to strengthen vocational provision alongside our development of robust academic routes in Science and Arts.

Europe

The University is committed to ensuring that students who choose a ‘local experience’ of HE will not have an impoverished experience. Part of this commitment will be delivered through ensuring that increasing numbers of students have the opportunity of a ‘European experience’, including cultural exchange, study and work experience as part of their degree programme. Equally we hope to better engage schools and colleges, and their exchange programme, with the University’s provision and European partners.

Medway

The University’s campus at Medway will continue to develop as an essential resource for local people and for the region. Our plans to develop the local Academy, primary feeders and through to FE and HE will be fully expanded throughout 2009 to 2013 as new builds start to come on stream.

Community

The University has continued to offer a wide range of outreach activity across Kent and Medway. In addition to free and open access delivery to engage adult learners the University has also sought to maintain network links by hosting the Community learning forum (CLF) on behalf of a wide range of community providers. Unfortunately, the continuing decline of funding of adult learning has continued to restrict the possibility of progression into higher-level learning. Therefore the University has decided to consolidate its community delivery primarily within extended schools, academies and trusts structures. Although in many ways this is not ideal as schools are problematic learning spaces for many adult learners, we will work with schools and communities to try to transform the perception of these learning spaces and offer a smaller but consolidated progression pathway around our Medway, North Kent and East Kent centres.

Bursaries and scholarships

Targeted scholarships for Partner schools and subject based scholarships for trusts and academies will continue and be developed respectively. However, our general means tested bursaries may be reduced for higher income families in order to sustain our extensive outreach programme.

3. Admissions policy and procedures

The policies and principles through which the University assesses applications and offers places are designed to be fair, transparent and based on procedures that are applied consistently across the University. The University operates a centralised Admissions function for prospective students to help facilitate the effective implementation of the Admissions policy and to help ensure that all applicants have fair access to the University.

The University is continually monitoring and developing its procedures to ensure that all applicants receive fair consideration. The University has established a number of Recruitment and Admissions Committees with which to monitor its Admissions policy and procedures at both institutional and faculty level. This enables the University to respond quickly to national initiatives and to monitor and review, on an annual basis, the effectiveness of our own policy and practices in supporting Fair Access. The University is committed to working with a range of external agencies, such as UCAS and the Delivery Partnership, to identify and implement admissions best practice to support the Fair Access agenda.

Admissions Policy

The University wishes to admit students who have the capacity to benefit from study at degree level, and the capacity to complete their courses in the time and with the teaching and other support that the University can reasonably be expected to make available. The Policy and information on processing
4. Management and organisation

With regard participation policy and strategies, they are developed in light of national policy, regional contexts and Institutional priorities. The Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor has Institutional responsibility for the Participation Policy, which is devised and taken forward for consultation by the Head of the Partnership Development Office.

University-level monitoring and evaluation is undertaken by the Partnership Development Office and the Student Planning Office. Annual reports on University outreach activities are submitted to the Recruitment Committee which is a sub-committee of the Learning and Teaching Board. Every new strategy is presented at Senate and Council members are updated accordingly.

With regard outreach activities these are undertaken across the University. In respect of the Partner School activities (as outlined below in section 2) activities and resource allocation are delivered and monitored centrally by the Partnership Development Office. Each academic department receives an annual budget and provides an annual plan of activities that they will undertake with Partner Schools. Progress is monitored and evaluated in a number of ways but will include discussion and assessment with departmental outreach staff, Subject Specialists with responsibility for outreach at faculty level and their Deans in addition to the committee structure outlined above.

5. Performance

In addition to the annual analysis of the HEFCE performance indicators for widening participation (section 2, 5.c) and the University’s access monitoring report, the Participation strategy has focused upon establishing the baselines, targets and monitoring and evaluation for our work. More details of data and trend analysis are available in the annexes of the Participation Strategy.

Performance Indicators monitoring undertaken by the Student Planning Office show that the University is effective with regards recruitment of full time first degree entrants in terms of state schools, social classes 4-7 and from low participation neighbourhoods. However, the University will monitor retention figures of widening participation categories within the overall positive picture of higher retention trends.

In addition to these measures the University was one of five universities to be selected by CSET to undertake a HEFCE commissioned project to create an evaluative toolkit for widening participation. This plan was completed in 2008 and contains measures for performance up until 2011. The current plan, which outlines evaluation that the University will undertake independently and in collaboration with Kent and Medway Aimhigher, is contained in annex 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation baselines and targets</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of students, as defined by widening participation criteria, who apply and accept places onto undergraduate programmes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase the number of students engaged in flexible and part time learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the percentage of students, as defined by widening participation criteria, who apply and accept postgraduate offers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase the number of older learners engaged in programmes.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Monitoring and evaluation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitor and review annually against applications and acceptances baseline (set 2004-05) from Partner Schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor and review targeting and engagement in Partner Schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertake controlled trials and work with non-participants in UoK activities in Partner Schools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluate Partner-cohorts post entry through linking outreach and student records.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Monitor and evaluate Kent funded work in relation to externally funded partnership-based participation projects.
• Monitor resource allocation for outreach and engagement activities through the use of the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC).

Current Participation strategy
University of Kent

Section Two: Widening participation policy and practice

Delivery

The University's priorities are:
• Progression links with Partner Schools underpinned by diagnostic and subject based curriculum, student ambassador links and merit-based scholarships. Programmes and outreach will be extended to include teachers, support staff and families.
• Mutually beneficial links with Associate and Partner Colleges with a focus upon delivering effective vocational progression routes.
• Community engagement at HE levels 0-6.

We will give additional focus to:
• Improving progression and retention for students from Partner Schools and Colleges with vocational qualifications.
• Involving and recognising all staff in the delivery of the participation strategy, in particular: innovative and systematic curriculum development and delivery in Partner Schools and Colleges; engaging student subject ambassadors and undertaking ‘expert witness’ work within communities.
• Collective and individualised learning.
• Extending the range and reach of our work-based undergraduate and postgraduate offer.
• Extending student ambassador schemes to include paid, voluntary, and credit bearing modes with a focus upon progression to and retention within the University.
• Cohere international, enterprise and participation strategies through targeted local partnerships with schools and colleges.

Current Participation Strategy
University of Kent

1. Framework for widening participation activities

The following section outlines in more detail the delivery aspects of our participation policy. Under each heading there is a summary of rationale and intent. These relate to the volume measures stipulated in HEFCE’s template b. The full delivery framework for activities with schools and colleges can be accessed at: http://www.kent.ac.uk/about/wpstrategy/strategy07-10/delivery.html

a. Schools programmes

One of the most influential factors on the University’s schools local engagement policy is that of selection within the state sector. Selection impacts on curriculum offer, teacher recruitment, attainment levels and therefore the progression of individual students. Whilst generally in England one can understand the need for targeting individuals within schools to help widen participation, this approach breaks down somewhat in the context of selection. 75% of children in Kent and Medway are educated in non-selective schools, which tend to have lower attainment and progression rates to
HE. As a consequence the University took the decision to work with a number of non-selective schools across the County, with the aim of supporting cultural change within those schools by helping to broaden curriculum, raise the expectation of engagement with higher education and latterly to attempt to effect change in the recruitment of teaching staff. As such, the way that we work with individuals within those schools deviates from the prescribed targeting, as we suspect this militates against an inclusive progression culture. However, we do engage in such targeting via Aimhigher activities.

We have retained relationships with our 19 partner schools during the last three years and the efficacy of these relationships is a key strand of our evaluation activities (See annex 1). Within this time the Academies and Trust programme has come on stream and the University is in the process of sponsoring and co-sponsoring two new academies and supporting the development of two new local trusts. Although partner school status is underpinned by a memorandum of association it is likely that the academies and trusts will require more formal input with regard governance and management. It is our intention that those exclusive relationships benefit the wider members of the trust and we plan to offer a range of primary and community based provisions within this emerging context. Widening participation will be a key driver in these developments, but crucially it will be interrelated with other key strands such as regional engagement, older learners and employer engagement.

b. Partner Schools and Associate FE Colleges

Most significant of our activities has been the maintenance and development of partnership agreements with 19 schools in the Kent and Medway region, who have been given Partner School status with the University, to whom we offer progression curriculum, student ambassador support and scholarships.

The collaboration between the University and its Partner Schools prepares students for HE study through provision of a comprehensive offer: this offer includes the Progression Curriculum; the allocation of financial support via the Partner School Scholarship Scheme (the University offers 2 x £1000 scholarships to each Partner School) to local students undertaking undergraduate programmes at the University of Kent; and the creation of a virtuous circle of undergraduate Student Ambassadors engaged with Partner Schools (there will be an opportunity for students from Partner Schools to return as Student Ambassadors of the University to their previous schools).

In addition to this interaction with our Partner Schools, we have a programme of activities with students on vocational programmes in our 4 Associate and Partner Colleges. Each college receives 3x £1000 scholarships per annum (one is ring-fenced for Access students).

The structure and staffing of the scheme has remained stable. We have retained 6 permanent posts within the University to develop and deliver these activities. Three of these posts are located ‘centrally’ and coordinate and lead on the delivery of the University’s progression curriculum and aspiration raising programme, Stepping Up, and the student ambassador programme. The other 3 posts are located within our academic Faculties and report jointly to the Dean of the Faculty and the Head of the Partnership Development Office. This arrangement allows for dedicated subject specialists to provide a wide ranging and coherent outreach offer. Furthermore, resources for outreach have been allocated to all academic departments.

c. Community outreach

The University has developed a highly successful set of modules (4 or 12 week in duration) which seek to engage people in work based or community settings. The modules are free of charge and open access to potential adult learners. Early statistics illustrate that this approach has engaged a wide range of new entrants to the University who are keen to progress and gain HE level credit. As a result of working with 6 community organisations, a total of 121 students took part in ‘Engage and Inspire’ activities during 2007-2008. Of these, 35 students progressed directly onto HE programmes at Kent.

The University has also maintained the Community Learning Forums across Kent and Medway to ensure that the network remained strong when local partnership funding ceased. In total 10 Forums
were delivered in 2007-2008. The database of community-based providers has been developed and currently contains more than 300 different organisations.

d. Employer engagement

In addition to the range of employer engagement activities that are undertaken by the University’s Enterprise Unit, the University has also invested in the development of a new Academic department, the Centre for Work and Learning (CWaL). The Centre is undertaking an innovative approach, which is supporting widening access particularly for adult learners. CWaL’s applied professional practice (APP) degree is for learners who are able to combine both their work based experience with new subject based learning offered by a range of University departments.

e. Student engagement in outreach

Ambassadors at the University are both current undergraduate and postgraduate students. They can participate in a range of modes, from volunteering, paid or credit bearing activities, and it is a main aim of the University to increase the coherence of the scheme. The ambassadors have proved themselves to be a most effective resource in our outreach work. Equally, however, those who engage in the scheme demonstrate that their experience has a profound and positive effect on their own student experience, and often on the quality of their employment prospects.

Ambassadors undertake a wide range of activities including basic duties such as campus tours to general talks in schools about student experience through to helping to devise subject-based modules and offering support through the summer school programmes.

More recently the University has also engaged within the HEFCE Pathfinder Aimhigher Associate Ambassador scheme which will report in Summer 2009.

All ambassadors receive a core training that includes key topics such as child protection, health and safety, equality and diversity and classroom management techniques. Further training includes elements such as presentation skills, preparing a session and student finance. In addition to this programme our newest addition, the Aimhigher Associate Ambassadors, will receive training on how to build sustainable working relationships with mentees. All ambassadors undertake a CRB check.

f. Retention

As part of this Strategic Assessment the University’s Student Planning Office is undertaking further refined measurements for retention of different category students. The University tracks students who enter from our partner organisations, who although targeted through our school based work, may or may not attract widening participation premium. Equally, there are students that attract widening participation premium who have not been individually tracked for progress. Within the next three year cycle of reporting the University will monitor more closely student retention for different categories of widening participation students so that it is possible to evaluate more effectively their progress and assess the potential need for more targeted support services post-entry.

With regard academic support, this is provided to students at departmental level and through a number of learning and study skills programmes offered by the Student Learning Advisory Service that is located in the Unit for Enhancement Learning and Teaching. The first of these programmes was piloted in 2000. The range of provision continues to develop and student demand for the programmes is increasing. The programmes are offered to all students (undergraduate and postgraduate) and the average participation by students categorised by widening participation premium is 30%.

The development of learning and study skills is seen as an integral part of a student’s development and growth. The Advantage Initiative provides academic departments the opportunity of embedding study skills within their core modules with the help of the Student Learning Advisors. It ensures that the study skills are integrated within the core modules and form an integral part of a student’s entitlement. The VALUE Plus programme is a new initiative which ran as a pilot in 2008-2009. It has worked as a partnership between the Student Learning Advisory Service and Kent Law School. It is
aimed at second year students to help them with their academic performance and retention. It offers a more focused programme of revision for subject specific, academic skills and generic study skills. It is hoped that this initiative will be extended to other academic departments in the future. Equally, students can help their fellow students make the transition from school to university by taking part in the Supplemental Instruction programme. The University has expanded the provision, training and support of students’ transition by inviting students to take part in a new initiative called: Supplemental Instruction = academic peer mentoring. This initiative is a partnership between UELT and Kent Union which began in 2007. Second and third year students in participating departments are trained to help foundation or first year students better understand and study traditionally difficult subjects.

Clearly there is a growing demand for the range of academic and learning support that the University provides to all students and it is likely that the resources will need to grow if the University is to keep pace with student demand. As part of the enhanced monitoring of a range of widening participation category students by the Student Planning Office it will be possible to monitor uptake and impact of these support programmes during the next three years. The University will then be in an improved position to categorise underperforming groups and assess whether targeting of particular groups is necessary in order to improve access to support programmes or departmentally based tutorial support for those most in need.

2. Engagement with other partnerships

The University is an active partner in the Kent and Medway Aimhigher and local LLNs. The local Aimhigher is a very high quality project, both in terms of ‘outward’ delivery and through the sound data that it creates and the analysis it provides to partners. As the University’s outreach programme has grown, it has been a priority to work in a complementary fashion with the Aimhigher core team and the wider partnership.

a. Aimhigher Kent and Medway

Aimhigher has continued to be a local success. The Partnership Development Office has contributed to the development of the project’s current regional plan (2008-11) and produced the University’s Aimhigher plan which provides £100,000 per annum to the University to offer outreach activities and campus visits to target schools and FE colleges.

The University chose to undertake the CSET evaluation work in partnership with Aimhigher Kent and Medway as we wanted to be able to establish valid impact measures between our separate and shared delivery strands in schools. The University has built a review of Aimhigher activities into the current Participation Strategy and has indicated the intention to embed best practice after project funding ceases.

b. Kent and Medway Lifelong Learning Network

The University has continued to support the development of two Lifelong Learning Networks - the Creative Way and the Kent and Medway LLN. The University was instrumental in devising the successful bid for the creation of Kent and Medway LLN and is now supporting the transition phase of the network. The University leads the current network in the areas of Learner Focus (APEL and guidance) and Business, Administration and Finance.

3. Evaluation and Monitoring

a. Data collection and analysis

Data is collected from individuals who participate in the University’s outreach on an ongoing basis. Data on numbers is collected at a general headcount level for ‘one off’ type visit activities. Analysis follows a cyclical timetable or a ‘dipstick’ process depending on the type of monitoring and evaluation being undertaken. A full overview of data and analysis can best be gleaned from the individual documents referred to within section 2, under 5.

b. Evaluation cycles and review processes
Our annual evaluation cycle is overlaid with our longer term current Participation Strategy evaluation cycle, our joint Aimhigher cycle and now within the framework of this new Strategic Assessment. This exercise has precipitated an early review of our current strategy but both evaluation cycles will be fully synchronised by 2015. Full details of evaluation cycles can be found within section 2, under 5.

c. Targeting and Monitoring

Monitoring is undertaken (as stated previously in ‘Performance’) for our Participation Strategy and to meet our annual Access Agreement and HEFCE PI measures in addition to partnership-based monitoring undertaken with Aimhigher and LLNs. The University’s rationale for institutional targeting, as opposed to individual targeting has been discussed earlier. However, individual monitoring will be refined with regard retention measures.

4. Resources

It is expected that the University may reduce the level of bursary funding to higher income students from 2011 in order to sustain the University’s burgeoning outreach offer to target schools, colleges and communities in the region.

5. Supporting documentation

c. HEFCE Performance Indicators against benchmarks – http://www.kent.ac.uk/registry-local/spdo/data_request/wp.html
d. Evaluation plan http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/events/capacitybuilding/docs/10E%20RUFDATA_UoK.pdf
e. Admissions Policy and procedures http://www.kent.ac.uk/aps/information-recruitment-admissions/admissions/Admissions-Policy.html
f. Institutional Plan – http://www.kent.ac.uk/about/plan/
h. Internationalisation policy - http://www.kent.ac.uk/international/international-strategy/
i. Equality schemes and policies – http://www.kent.ac.uk/hr-equalityanddiversity/policies/equality-div-policy.html
j. Student Disability Policy http://www.kent.ac.uk/guidance/disabilitysupport.htm

6. Appendix One

Evaluation plan undertaken in collaboration with Aimhigher as part of the HEFCE commissioned CSET Evaluation Toolkit.

University of Kent

Evaluation plan for schools-based widening participation activity 2008-2011

Context

A plan for the evaluation of widening participation activities already exists within the University and is contained within the University’s Widening Participation Strategy (2007-10). Equally, Aimhigher Kent and Medway, of which the University is a part, undertakes a range of evaluation activities throughout
the year. This plan, which has been requested by the HEFCE, will be used as an opportunity to weave together evaluation activities from these two sources and engage in future joint planning.

**Purpose of the evaluation**

The University and Aimhigher have made a considerable investment in trying to widen participation to higher education. Around 75% of children in Kent and Medway are educated in non-selective secondary schools where it is much more likely that there will be low progression to higher education. We have developed a curriculum and activity offer for students that range from ‘tastes of HE’ in year 8 through to a systematic engagement in generic and subject based learning from year 11 to 13. We are committed to working with teachers, students and parents to ultimately create a culture in non-selective schools where there is an engagement in thinking about HE and an expectation that students will be able to progress into further and higher learning.

However, despite this ongoing commitment we need to consider the questions that need asking and the ones to answer. How much is enough? When do we achieve ‘the tipping point’ in individuals’ aspiration and attainment? When do we achieve, in partnership, a stable ethos change within the sixth form? Do we need engagement across the entire school to be effective? What is the right balance between generic skills and academic subjects?

One of the wonderful surprises of our development work has been to experience not only the positive impact that our student ambassadors have on students in secondary school (often their own school) with regard aspiration raising and subject input but to realise the significant impact that the experience has on the ambassador’s own learning. This recognition is something that we wish to move from the anecdotal through to an evidence base that can help to establish the ambassador role more systematically within the student experience at Kent.

During our work with colleagues in schools we have also discovered that many teachers would like to engage in subject based activities. Teachers’ positive engagement with curriculum is key to the positive engagement of their students in learning. This seems an obvious statement, although it is made because often this seems to be a missing link. Therefore, we are interested in building a range of approaches to this issue.

Lastly we want to critically review our practice and ensure that it is the best that it can be. And we want to share with those who may not know about it yet the quality of the work being undertaken by staff and students and chart the truly transformative impact that many students have already felt in their lives through their involvement.

**Key strands of the evaluation**

1. Analysis of participation, progression, retention and achievement trends by drawing on a range of data sets.

   From year one (if available):
   - Flagged information at individual level will be sought from UCAS and HESA for both Partner and Aimhigher school students.
   - Widening Participation premium data for Kent students and UCAS field on parental employment used at individual level for intake from Partner and K&M Aimhigher schools.
   - Predicted and actual GCSE data at individual level available to establish longer term trend analysis.

2. Sample for quantitative and qualitative evaluation established between Partner and Aimhigher schools.

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2 This plan was devised as part of the HEFCE funded CSET development of supporting good practice in evaluation in HEIs engaged in widening participation (2008).
Using Widening Participation premium students as the whole group, impact will be measured using the following categories:

From year one (if available):

- Students from outside of Kent and Medway to act as a second control group (for widening participation) to the first (all home young UG entrants not receiving premium).
- Partner School students in two sub-groups (those recorded as engaged in activities and those not engaged in Kent activities from partner schools).
- Aimhigher school students as part of collaborative study.
- Identify a sample group from those students derived from both Partner and Aimhigher schools for qualitative study.
- Aimhigher and Partner summer school students.

3. Develop a shared measure of engagement for students undertaking activities with Kent and Aimhigher – a ‘touch scale’ – that allows us to assess investment and the relationship to impact. This will link to longer-term measures of retention and degree classification.

- This will be developed in year one and piloted in year two with students in the sample group.

4. Train student ambassadors in qualitative research methods to undertake impact assessments with participants in Kent and Aimhigher activities.

- Ambassadors will be trained in year one.
- Ambassadors will be evaluated as a case study that will be available by year three. The University is interested not only in the impact that the ambassadors have on our school students but also on the impact that their involvement has in their own learning and development.

5. Evaluate the success of subject forums with teachers. Use groups to assess if there has been a change of expectation and ethos in the school. Also looking at indicators of levels of engagement with teachers’ subject engagement and learning.

- Undertake a qualitative study in year two.

**Summary of themes and methods to be addressed in initial phase**

**Year one**

- Analysis of participation, progression, retention and achievement trends by drawing on a range of data sets established and maintained.
- Qualitative study of school students undertaken by trained ambassadors.
- Train student ambassadors in qualitative research methods to undertake impact assessments with participants in Kent and Aimhigher activities.
- Develop a shared measure of qualitative research methods for students undertaking activities with Kent and Aimhigher — a ‘touch scale’.

**Year Two**

- Pilot the ‘touch scale’ with students in the sample group.
- Evaluate the success of subject forums with teachers by undertaking a qualitative study.

**Year Three**

- Ambassadors will be evaluated as a case study that will be available by year three.

**Baseline data**

The University will collect data on participants from partner schools in the following fields:

- Name
• Date of birth
• Gender
• Post code
• School
• Attainment data
• Fields on ethnicity, disability, and occupational background of carer and experience of higher education will be collected through the University’s engagement in Aimhigher.

Information on parental/carer occupational background and experience of HE will not be collected by the University because we believe that the information will not be sufficiently reliable for trend analysis and it is also ethically questionable and potentially counterproductive to reinforce stereotypes through data collection. We do not currently collect data on ethnicity and disability because we do not target our widening participation activities on this basis. However, we will use UCAS and premium information on registering students from Partner and Aimhigher schools to analyse trends and impact.

Collaborative Evaluation Study between the University of Kent and Aimhigher Kent and Medway

The University of Kent Partner School programme targets a number of schools that are also AHKM partners. It makes sense to collaborate and evaluate the effect of these programmes working in tandem. In many cases, AHKM students will attend both AHKM activities and Kent Partner School activities. Student participation in both programmes will be recorded and at the end of each academic year we will identify 3 groups of students:

1. Students in two University of Kent Partner Schools
2. Students in two AHKM Schools
3. Students in two Joint Schools

Students in each of the groups will be tracked, and data relating to attainment and progression collated and analysed. In addition to the data tracking exercise, we will use a variety of methods to collect qualitative evidence to assess the impact of the programmes.

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