



Briefing Note: National Student Forum

Introduction

- 1 The National Student Forum (NSF) was set up by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), in early 2008 to give a greater voice to students in higher education courses across England and to ensure that policies are better informed by the student voice.
- 2 This report provides a summary of the recommendations of the first Annual report of the Forum and gives preliminary consideration to any action Leeds Met might need to take in response to the findings.

The Methodology of the Forum

- 3 The NSF has sixteen members drawn from a range of Government, student, education and partner organisations. The purpose of the Forum is to:
 - provide a student perspective on emerging policy areas
 - help to evaluate the impact of existing policy on students in different circumstances
 - initiate discussion on areas of potential policy development
- 4 The work of the Forum was informed by a series of five student juries consisting of students from a range of backgrounds, institutions and subject areas and which were held in London, Bristol, Manchester and Sheffield.
- 5 The issues of particular concern identified by the Forum included:
 - Information, advice and guidance (IAG) prior to entering higher education
 - IAG during and on preparing to leave higher education
 - Key aspects of the student finance system
 - Concerns about the lack of adequate affordable accommodation
 - Quality of teaching and arrangements for personal tutors
 - Issues faced by particular groups of students (eg. International, disabled, postgraduate, part-time and mature students)

Summary of Recommendations

- 6 At this stage in its work, the forum gave particular consideration to formulating recommendations relating to Information, Advice and Guidance and to student finance. The accompanying grid provides a summary of these recommendations. Many recommendations refer to developments required at national level, where there is an implication for Leeds Met a comment is made in the action/response column.

1	Recommendations on Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)	Action or Response
1.1	Develop a 'first port of call' IAG Portal	National Level response
1.2	Professionalise and raise the profile of School and College Careers advisers	National level, however through its school partners and regional university network Leeds met can contribute
1.3	Increase the use of student ambassador schemes	Leeds Met already has a very comprehensive outreach scheme run by the Get Ahead Team, supported by student ambassadors bringing prospective students from non-traditional backgrounds into the University
1.4	Define and introduce best practice guidelines for pre-entry information provided by Universities and Colleges	We welcome the publication of such a guide and will use it to benchmark our services
1.5	Introduce an entitlement for all Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) students to visit at least 2 universities or Colleges	National level. Such a policy would help more EMA holders to visit Leeds Met – a policy we would strongly support.

2	Recommendations on Student Finance	Action or Response
2.1	Monitor progress on the Student Loans Company (SLC) reforms	Relates to work required by SLC.
2.2	Introduce a choice of loan instalment options	This recommendation relates to DIUS policy.
2.3	Increase student loans to reflect increasing costs	This recommendation relates to DIUS policy.
2.4	Employ transparency over tuition fee income and allocation	There is likely to be further guidance from Universities UK to which Leeds Met will respond appropriately.
2.5	Raise awareness of student financial advisory services	At Leeds Met the services are available through Helpzones and are present at

2 Recommendations on Student Finance	Action or Response
	Open Days and Freshers' Festival. They are also advertised in student publications and promoted by Student Liaison Officers. Further consideration will be given to additional ways of publicising services.
2.6 Introduce more flexibility in tuition fee payment schedules	Leeds Met already allows some flexibility, invite finance team to give further consideration to this issue in the light of any guidance issued via Universities UK.
2.7 Provide a guaranteed 'cap' on fee levels for the duration of the course (for international students)	Leeds Met already operates such a policy.

Proposals for future consideration

- 7 In addition to the recommendations made to the Forum, sub-groups have made proposals in respect of the following areas:
- Proposals on Employability
 - Proposals on Disabled students
 - Proposals on International students
 - Proposals on Postgraduate students
- 8 These issues will be the subject of detailed discussion at the Forum and will, in due course, form the basis of further recommendations; such recommendations will be brought to a future meeting of this committee.

David Arblaster
 Director of Services to Students
 November 2008