Summary

1. Imperial College London is committed firmly to providing higher education to all who have the potential to benefit from academically challenging study. It has traditionally aimed to take a leading role in increasing awareness among young people of the importance and excitement of higher education, and of science in particular. As part of this, the College has sought to encourage and assist school children in the selection of a suitable subject and place of study, and to support science teaching in schools. The College has additionally sought to avoid any student being deterred from studying at the College for financial reasons, and to maximise student retention, both of which are now more important in the higher fee environment.

2. The Widening Participation Strategic Statement (WPSS) 2012-13 reflects the next step in the development of the College’s widening participation strategy. Whilst the College remains committed to its original objectives (as articulated in its Widening Participation Strategic Assessment (WPSA) submitted in 2009), it is building on these general aims through the development of additional targeted outreach activities aimed specifically at disadvantaged school children who are capable in science, with a view to encouraging and enabling them to apply successfully to a selective university, including the College. In 2011-12, the College developed and delivered a new targeted outreach pilot programme, aimed at 100 disadvantaged children who are capable in science. Feedback from the programme has been positive and, building on this success, the College will invest an additional £400k to expand this programme in 2012-13 to include a larger number of students and a broader range of activities. The post-school destinations of participants will be monitored with a view to ensuring the continued success of these activities and to inform further development where necessary.

3. Alongside the development, and delivery, of new activities, the College has also maintained its existing programmes. For example, the Reach Out Lab has continued as a flagship initiative, helping to support science teaching in schools by providing access to a unique laboratory environment to school pupils. Other schemes include the Pimlico Connection, a voluntary tutoring scheme in which College undergraduate and postgraduate students participate in regular sessions at a local primary or secondary school, INSPIRE (Innovative Scheme for Postgraduates in Research and Education), through which some of the College’s postgraduate students and post-doctoral staff spend time in partner secondary schools teaching and studying towards qualified teacher status, and an extensive programme of summer schools and science activities.¹

Background

4. Imperial College London is an international university which provides rigorous, intensive and research-led degree courses in science, engineering, medicine and business (single honours business degrees are not offered at undergraduate level). The College’s undergraduate courses are designed to produce graduates for either fast-track graduate employment or postgraduate study and are intended to educate the next generation of academic, professional and business leaders.

5. There is a degree of overlap between the WPSS 2012-13 and the College’s Access Agreement. Linkage with the Access Agreement has been indicated with reference to specific paragraphs.

Strategic Aims

6. The College’s widening participation aims for 2012-13 are framed by its mission, science focus, admission requirements and commitment to fair access and widening participation. Priority is placed on encouraging the most able students from disadvantaged backgrounds to apply to, and succeed at, the College and other selective universities. The College’s approach therefore spans the life cycle of the student; supporting students from their primary school career, and maintaining that support throughout the years of the degree programme (Access Agreement 2013-14, Paragraph 3).

¹ An overview of the activity conducted by the Outreach Office can be found on the College’s website at http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/outreach
7. The College aims to identify and attract students of the highest academic ability and potential, and would not want financial considerations to deter suitable applicants. This is particularly important for the College because London costs, compounded by its relatively long courses, make the provision of sufficient financial support necessary to encourage applicants and retain students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

8. The College is committed to maintain excellent standards of achievement in education and research and is thus committed, through its Admissions Policy, to attracting and admitting students of the highest calibre, irrespective of age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief, or sexual orientation.

Objectives
9. The College’s success in achieving its strategy will be measured through consideration of specific targets. The following targets are highlighted in particular in relation to the WPSS. Further Access targets are included in the Annex of the College’s Access Agreement 2013-14:

a. The College aims through its outreach strategy to increase the proportion of College outreach participants who apply successfully to the College. In the longer term this will be measured by an increase in the proportion of successful applicants who have previously participated in the College’s outreach programme. In 2011-12, 5.1% of successful Home applicants to the College had previously been involved in Outreach activity and the aim is achieve a 20% increase on this proportion by 2016-17 (i.e. to 6.1% of successful Home applicants).

b. The College aims to ensure that its revised outreach strategy will be of benefit to the UK higher education sector as a whole. In the longer term this will be measured by an increase in the proportion of outreach participants with known destinations who go on to study at a selective university. In 2012-13, the College will enhance its ability to collect and record details of outreach participants and their subsequent post-school destinations in order to measure this target (Access Agreement 2013-14, Paragraph 39).

c. The College aims to ensure that financial circumstances do not impact on retention following entry. This will be measured, over the longer term, by narrowing the gap in continuation between entrants from low participation neighbourhoods and young Home UG students from 2.5% in 2008-2009 to 0% in 2016-17.

d. The College aims to ensure that its financial support package is advertised in a timely, clear and accessible manner, so that financial considerations do not deter applicants. This will be measured by the proportion of respondents to the ICU’s annual survey of recipients who knew about the College’s financial assistance package before accepting an offer of a place.

Mechanisms
10. In 2012-13, the mechanisms underpinning delivery of the College’s widening participation strategic aims are:

e. Development of new outreach activity: The College will, through the development of new additional, targeted outreach activity, work towards increasing the percentage of new outreach participants who apply successfully to the College or another selective university (Access Agreement 2013-14, Paragraph 19).

f. Maintenance of existing outreach activity: The College will maintain existing outreach activity. For example, the number of pupil contacts from disadvantaged schools or backgrounds gaining experience of hands on science activities through the Reach Out Lab will be maintained (Access Agreement 2013-14, Paragraphs 20-24).

g. Student Support: The College will deliver a targeted package of financial support for Home students from low income families and liaise closely with the student body
(including Imperial College Union) to ensure that the College attracts and retains capable, disadvantaged students (Access Agreement 2013-14, Paragraphs 28-33).

h. **Retention:** The College remains committed to undertaking a range of activities to support the full diversity of the student population. These mechanisms include, for example, student counselling, student feedback, support for disabled students, staff training programmes bespoke to the needs of individual teachers, programme review and additional academic support for students who require the further development of their basic academic, literacy, numeracy and study skills.

i. **Evaluation and Monitoring:** The College will evaluate the success of its activities and refine them as necessary with a view to achieving maximum impact. Enhancements to the outreach database will be delivered as part of this (Access Agreement 2013-14, Paragraphs 36-40).

**Resource**

11. The College is committed to invest at least 35% of additional fee income to support commitments within its Access Agreement and thereby benefit capable disadvantaged groups (Access Agreement 2013-14, Paragraph 4).

j. At least 3% of additional fee income will be invested directly into additional Outreach activity, a figure further bolstered by HEFCE funding and support leveraged from external partners.

k. At least 32% of additional fee income will be invested directly into student support.

12. The College remains committed to co-funding pastoral and welfare support services, with the continued support of HEFCE. For 2011-12, the College spent around £1.9M on such services, including HEFCE funded support. The College intends to maintain expenditure in 2012-13.

**Collaborative Activity**

13. The College has sought to maximise the cost effectiveness and impact of its school outreach activities through strategic partnership with Exscitec, an organisation aimed at providing outreach STEM activities for widening participation and gifted and talented students (Access Agreement 2013-14, Paragraph 27). The College will invest £400k to develop this relationship further in 2012-13 and enable Exscitec to deliver a suite of targeted activities aimed at disadvantaged school children who are capable in science with a view to encouraging and enabling them to apply successfully to a selective university, including the College.

14. The College will engage with other institutions and organisations where such collaborations will advance its mission and educational objectives. Hence, collaborative outreach activity is focussed on organisations with a focus on STEM-capable, academically excellent, disadvantaged students. Current College collaborations with both corporate and third sector bodies include the BG Group, the Sutton Trust, IntoUniversity and Generating Genius.

**Fair Admissions Policy**

15. The College’s courses are designed to benefit students of high ability, irrespective of age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief, or sexual orientation, in accordance with the College’s Equal Opportunities Policy. Selection for entry is therefore based on consideration of academic ability, motivation for study, interest in the subject area and the potential both to benefit from the experience and to contribute to College life whilst on the course.²

Imperial College London

June 2012

² The College’s full undergraduate admissions policy is available online: https://workspace.imperial.ac.uk/registry/Public/Admissions/Undergraduate%20Admissions%20Policy.pdf.