

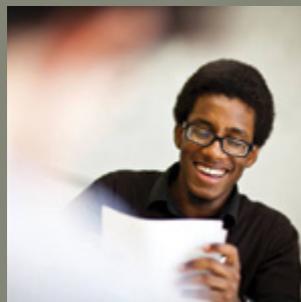
# PEM-BROOKE LONDON & PEMBROKE NORTH

**A New Approach to  
Widening Participation  
2012 – 2016**



*“The important thing is  
not to stop questioning.  
Curiosity has its own  
reason for existing”.*

Albert Einstein



## Pembroke's Access and Outreach Programme

Fifteen years ago 1.9% of the lowest social quintile went to an elite university such as Oxford, now it is just 2%. Students from the highest social class groups in the UK are three times more likely to enter university compared to those from the lowest. Oxford draws almost a third of its intake from four Independent schools and one Sixth Form College. 'Most able, least likely' students often apply to the most competitive subjects: 14% of A grade state school students choose subjects that Oxbridge does not do; 41% apply to oversubscribed subjects.

In response, we offer something quite different from recent widening participation strategies. The objective is an academic approach that ensures that young people are prepared for intensive learning in competitive universities more generally and encouraged to go beyond the school curriculum. Students are made aware of niche subjects by actually studying those subjects in the regions where Pembroke has university responsibility: parts of London and the North West.

Sixth-formers who apply to join the Pem-Brooke or Pembroke North scheme alongside their A-level studies, are interviewed for the places available and then spend a year following a demanding academic programme of lectures and classes in the humanities provided by Pembroke academics, as well as benefiting from mentoring by Pembroke students. There is a Study Skills School in Hackney during the Easter holidays, and the climax of the year is a week-long residential summer school held at Pembroke College during which participants are treated to a taste of life as an Oxford undergraduate.

This intensive academic approach is successful. Students on our programmes have gone on to Oxford, Cambridge and other research-intensive universities. One hub college has experienced a 500% rise in Russell Group places while others have reported cross-college awareness that Pem-Brooke London and Pembroke North students are going further in their university careers than they ever thought possible.

*"My personal opinion and stereotypes on Oxford have been completely changed. Everyone we have met has been really friendly and approachable."*

Gemma Williams,  
Pembroke North

*"Pembroke is looking for bright and motivated individuals to join its academic community, and we are proud to be working alongside our partner schools and colleges to ensure that more young people across the country are inspired to think of an Oxford education as an option for their future."*



Dame Lynne Brindley, Master, Pembroke College

### Our aims

- Encouraging and informing credible applications among disadvantaged and non-traditional groups to research-intensive universities throughout the UK and beyond; thereby increasing rates of application, admission and retention
- Working with teachers in our hub schools/colleges to augment student attainment through sustained academically intensive and subject driven enrichment courses
- Connecting teachers in our partner schools and colleges with Pembroke academics via the exchange of subject expertise, to boost and inform teaching strategies
- Emphasising the benefits of a broad conceptual education that is not limited by school curriculum, whilst raising awareness of the opportunities opened up by non-vocational degrees
- Working with Coordinators in our designated hub schools/colleges and Subject Centres to facilitate the above in the wider surrounding area, whilst incorporating support from charitable and third sector collaborators to intervene in lower age groups, consistently using academically focussed outreach activity that addresses the root causes of unequal access to higher education

## Academic and Subject Driven: The Hub Colleges and the Academic Programme

- BSix (Brooke House) Sixth Form College, Hackney
- South Cheshire Further Education College, Crewe
- Ashton Sixth Form College, Tameside
- William Morris School, Hammersmith
- Connell Sixth Form College, East Manchester (from September 2014)

From a single relationship between one Oxford college and one Hackney sixth form college in 2008, the Raising Aspirations programmes have become award-winning national enterprises, noted as far away as the United States and Australia, bringing together universities, schools, and colleges from all over the country. Plans are afoot to continue this expansion so that, by 2015, the programmes will run out of five local hubs and involve a still greater range of universities and schools.

The Pembroke-led course is taught over three terms, examining the Enlightenment. It goes beyond A-Levels, leading students towards undergraduate levels of thinking and working. There is a course set book and reader. A two-day Study Skills School is taught by Oxford and Cambridge undergraduates at BSix in Hackney. It draws students from not only the Pem-Brooke London and Pembroke North programmes but also those students on parallel courses that are offered by partner universities. The academic year culminates in a residential school which replicates a week in the life of an Oxford undergraduate.

The hub college, through the work of its Coordinator, acts as a portal to the schools and colleges in its region while Pembroke acts as a portal to Oxford and other competitive universities.

*“Many of the pupils I meet through the Pem-Brooke and Pembroke North programmes have great talent. Engaging with them through teaching the humanities programme is a lively and enjoyable experience, and it’s a privilege to watch them develop their own thinking and aspirations for their future.”*

Dr Peter Claus, Access Fellow, Pembroke College



## Enlightenment and Romanticism: The Shaping of the Modern World

Our academic Access courses are concerned largely, though not exclusively, with the humanities. This is not to downplay or undermine non-humanities subjects but it is to lay claim to what humanities can still achieve in these utilitarian and skill-obsessed times. They can, as the late Earl Shorris put it, provide the *really* valuable skills of reflection and critical thinking as well as laying out a career path for students who embark on a humanities degree.

Oxford humanities graduates have been historically successful in their careers, sending graduates to the professions of ‘public good’ such as education and the civil service. In recent decades we have witnessed their prominent influence in growth sectors of the economy, such as finance and creative media. So a humanities approach and a degree in the humanities promise the real riches of the world in all of its senses.

On our Pem-Brooke London and Pembroke North programmes, we examine the intellectual and cultural facets of the Enlightenment and Romanticism, looking at a range of subject areas including economics, politics, literature, philosophy and history. We assess how far these trends influence our thinking in a range of subjects to the present day.

Seminar or class notes are prepared on a weekly basis. Recommended reading for each class means that students are expected to contribute actively. Students are required to write an introductory essay, meet assessment points during the skills school and residential school, including a formal examination.

The course introduces students with potential to go on to research intensive-universities to a range of humanities-related topics. There is an historical emphasis but the texts under review are treated in their own terms. The course provides opportunities to read and to learn vital study skills such as note-taking and writing techniques, acting as a bridge between school and higher education.

*“I never thought that I would enjoy this programme as much as I have. I thought it would have been a chore but it’s been consistently the best parts of my year. I got to experience what going to Oxford would be like if I attended and it has been more fun and relevantly educational than I thought it would have been.”*

Paige Bowry, Pem-Brooke London

## Broadening the disciplinary spectrum – Subject Centres

Working out of the hub schools or colleges, Pembroke Subject Centres offer something different to the core academic courses. They deliver academic activities in subjects perceived to be non-vocational, including seminars, lectures and summer schools. These centres reach a much greater number of students in each area, as well as teachers and the wider community – which, it is hoped, in turn contributes to a change in mindset and perception of a wider constituency in the local area.

The subject centres are: The East End Classics Centre based at BSix, Hackney (with partners including Wadham College Oxford), The North West Science Centre at South Cheshire College (with Corpus Christi College Oxford) and a Theology and Religious Studies Centre at Ashton Sixth Form College. The latest hub is The London Centre for Languages and Cultures (with the Open University) at William Morris School in Hammersmith, and the last will be established in 2014: The Oriental Studies Centre at Connell Sixth Form College in East Manchester. All attract university and industry experts and reach students and teachers from wider geographical areas.

*“It [the Pembroke College Access Strategy] recalls what one ‘settler’, R.H. Tawney, in 1917 called a spiritual approach to education. We have set our faces against the current utilitarianism where ‘public education [is] neither venerable, like a college, nor popular, like a public house, but merely indispensable, like a pillar box’. Oxford undergraduates and graduates are again promoting a sense of fellowship with the disadvantaged, confronting the divisions of a chronically unequal society but this time demonstrating that Oxford is open to all the talents, representative of a truly national culture and not simply a set of venerable traditions relevant only to itself. We... argue that social division has educational causes and that education for citizenship should not be confused with training for production. As a Warden of Toynbee Hall, Canon Barnett put it: [we] ‘must export thoughts and hopes as well as machines’”.*

Peter Claus, ‘A University Settlement Movement for Our Times’, The Oxford Magazine (Trinity, 2013).

### International Partnerships

Prize-winning Pem-Brooke London and Pembroke North students will have the opportunity to visit and study in other parts of the globe. Pembroke undergraduates will accompany those students nominated for a Scholar or Exhibition to Tufts, Boston.

Earl Shorris’ Clemente Courses influenced many poor communities in the United States and around the world and impact still on those that attend them at Bard College, New York. We are delighted then to be developing our relations with Bard High School Early College in Queens and hope soon to share online classes where students from East London, Manchester and the Bronx can learn together.

*“Mr. Shorris wrote in a 1997 Harper’s essay: Poverty was an absence of reflection and beauty, not an absence of money. It was comparable to the experience of people chained to the wall of the cave in Plato’s Allegory of the Cave, he said: They see shadows on the walls, and assume that is all there is in the world.”*

New York Times obituary of Earl Shorris, 2012





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**Dr Peter Claus**, Access Fellow  
Pembroke College, Oxford  
Email: [peter.claus@pmb.ox.ac.uk](mailto:peter.claus@pmb.ox.ac.uk)

**Rebecca Wilson**, Access & Admissions Officer  
Pembroke College, Oxford  
Tel: +44 (0)1865 276412  
Email: [admissions@pmb.ox.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@pmb.ox.ac.uk)