

ACCESS AGREEMENT 2011/12

1 Overview

The University of Hertfordshire has a strong track record of success in raising aspirations and thus in widening participation. This is amply demonstrated by our performance in recruiting students from under-represented groups, and consistency in meeting the relevant HEFCE performance indicators. In a broader sense, the University is committed to contributing to the raising of participation rates at national level.

When variable fees were introduced in 2006 there was considerable concern that they would prove to be a serious barrier to participation amongst the least well off, in spite of the introduction of maintenance grants and student loans. Therefore the University provided bursaries linked to the means tested element of each student's final LA/SLC/DIUS grant assessment. However, analysis of student recruitment and surveys of student opinion carried out by the University and nationally indicate that student loans and maintenance grants have not been very effective in encouraging less well off students to apply to university (OFFA 2010). It is therefore believed that, while maintaining bursaries for the least well off, resources should be redirected to enhancing outreach activities and the support of students after they have enrolled. A range of additional innovative support for WP students will be implemented. This includes:

- A Gifted and Talented e-mentoring scheme targeting those in low performing schools;
- Support for the Access Diploma in colleges;
- Additional support for teaching staff and careers advisors;
- Defined support for care leavers.

To ensure that all students have clear and accessible information about the changes to student funding, the University will continue to invest significantly in a programme of information dissemination. This will be particularly important to disseminate the changes in student funding arrangements.

This Access Agreement covers all relevant University provision delivered on-campus or in our UK partner institutions.

2 Fee limits

For 2011/12, the University proposes to charge £3,375 per annum for all its full-time eligible undergraduate provision. For subsequent years, this figure will be amended in accordance with BIS regulations for index-linking.

3 Bursaries and other financial support for students

3.1 Bursaries

A bursary is a payment made to a student, the level of which is income dependent.

For students with a household income of £25,000 or less, in receipt of a full state grant, the University will provide a bursary of £500 p.a. for students entering in 2011/12.

Bursaries will be payable in two equal instalments for each academic year:

(i) 31 January

(ii) 30 April

To be eligible, students must be in attendance at the University up to and including these dates.

This bursary will be available to students studying on courses funded through HEFCE or PGCE students funded via the TDA. PGCE students in receipt of full state support will receive the minimum bursary of £338.

Students studying on health related courses not funded by HEFCE are not eligible for this bursary.

Students on social work programmes in receipt of a DoH bursary are also not eligible for this bursary.

As a consequence of our successful widening participation activities, a large number of our students are expected to qualify for a bursary payment.

The University acknowledges that additional support may be needed by 'Care Leavers'. The institution reviewed its support arrangements during 2006/07 and entered into an agreement with Hertfordshire County Council to introduce a scheme to provide specific support to care leavers in Hertfordshire. This was further enhanced in 2010 when the University was awarded the Frank Buttle Quality Mark for supporting care leavers. The University now has a comprehensive action plan to support these students which is reviewed on an annual basis.

3.2 Scholarships

Scholarships are sums of money made available to students achieving high academic standards in specific areas. They may be subject-specific or donated by a benefactor for a particular programme of study. A student may be in receipt of a bursary and a scholarship; the two are not mutually exclusive.

A number of scholarships will be made available for specific subject areas within the University.

Chancellor's Entrepreneurial Scholarship: this scholarship is worth £3000 per year for the duration of the students' study. 360 UCAS tariff points in addition to students submitting an application detailing their business ideas are needed to fulfil the criteria for this scholarship. This scholarship is awarded to up to 20 students per year.

Chancellor's Gifted & Talented Scholarship: this scholarship is worth £2000 per year for the duration of the students' study. Eligible students are those that have been identified by their school as 'gifted and talented' and have 360 UCAS points. Students have to apply and up to 40 of these scholarships are awarded each year.

Science & Engineering Scholarship: this scholarship is worth up to £3000 over the duration of the programme. Applicants to Science & Engineering programmes with 300 UCAS points are eligible for this scholarship

We have also developed scholarships for students on foundation degrees and extended degrees offered through our partner colleges.

The College Award: this scholarship awards £1000 for each year of study and is available to FT Home/EU undergraduate students who study at the University's Associate Colleges. This is not means tested but feeds into the University's widening participation agenda as the college students are primarily studying for foundation degrees.

For up-to-date information on the scholarships scheme, please refer to the University's website: www.herts.ac.uk.

3.3 Access to Learning Fund

The University will enhance the HEFCE Access to Learning Fund to maintain the 2009/10 level to support further those students most at financial risk.

4 Provision of information to students

The University recognises the importance of providing clear and transparent information on the financial arrangements for students. It will communicate information on fees, bursaries and scholarships to applicants and potential applicants in several different ways:

- UH web site will include student finance web pages explaining the University's policy on tuition fees and availability and eligibility of bursaries. Where appropriate the web pages will be linked to relevant external web sites.
- The University's undergraduate prospectus will contain information explaining its policy on tuition fees, bursaries and scholarships.
- A separate leaflet will be available at higher education fairs or in response to enquiries.
- All University Open Days will have designated presentations and question/answer sessions on student finance.
- A facility for applicants to see Student Finance staff on an individual basis will be available/

Education / Schools liaison activities – the University will continue to provide support in terms of workshops and briefings to schools, colleges and careers offices throughout the region.

Information provided will include factual details and case studies.

5 Outreach work

As a result of the University's widening participation strategy, the number of students recruited from our target groups – mature students, students from low participation neighbourhoods and students from social classes I, II, III, IV, V – has met or exceeded our benchmarks. However, a significant reduction in Aimhigher funding will result in a reduction of outreach work unless funding is made available from other sources. In keeping with the Aimhigher agenda, this outreach work will also be targeted to areas of serious under-participation and to those students who will benefit most from such activities. In that respect, the University's close links with the 14-19 Strategic Area Partnership Groups in Hertfordshire will be particularly valuable. The University's involvement in programmes for Gifted & Talented students will be maintained in 2010/11 and will be expanded further in 2011/12 working in partnership with Excellence East and Hertfordshire County Council.

The University's collaborative work with local FE Colleges is a core element of widening participation work and the University has maintained its allocation of funded student numbers to the colleges in spite of the imposition of a cap on total recruitment, hence protecting recruitment to foundation degrees. Fundamental to our widening participation strategy is the concept of partnership working – we engage with key stakeholders in the region who have an interface with the under-represented groups that we seek to attract into HE. In doing so, we can exploit the natural relationships which already exist and use them as a lever to raise aspirations. However, within the partnership framework, we also engage directly with pupils to provide them with experience of the University environment, to make HE more accessible and to dispel negative preconceptions, particularly in areas where there is a tradition of low participation in HE.

The provision of accessible, timely and co-ordinated information about all aspects of HE is vital to our success and we have a raft of communication activities aimed at young people, their parents/carers and teachers.

The University is the lead organisation in the Aimhigher programme for Hertfordshire working in partnership with Connexions, the LA, schools and colleges. The University is conducting a review of this activity to ensure the most successful elements are sustainable beyond the current funding period.

The University has an established programme of support for schools and colleges designed to reach out to groups who might otherwise have been excluded from a university career. Specifically, this includes:

- a) Regular briefings for school/college staff to ensure an understanding of current HE developments (examples include student finance, the UCAS tariff, value of key skills, writing references).

- b) Liaison with four Consortium Colleges to foster links and support for students' progression to higher education from further education.
- c) Development of a range of courses provided additional skills support for those who need it prior to their HE studies. This is jointly delivered by the University and its Partner Colleges.
- d) Wide-ranging support for careers activities in schools and colleges.
- e) Partnership working with a range of schools including academies, trusts and consortiums of schools.
- f) Vocational and Further Education Routes to Higher Education, based in the Further Education colleges, including work-based learning opportunities.
- g) A range of talks for years 10 to 13 regarding university. These include 'Getting into University'-usually year 11 or 12, 'Admission Tutors View' about personal statements, "Finance" – year 12 or 13, 'The Student Experience'– year 11 or 12, 'Surviving with a child at university'" – aimed at parents.
- h) University days for year 9 pupils where they work with students on the University campus to explore aspects of going to university.
- i) Routine deployment of 'Student Ambassadors', 'Student Mentors' and 'Student Associates' to work with pupils at schools with low participation rates.
- j) School visits to the University by years 9, 10, 11 and 12.
- k) Supporting and implementing 14 – 19 pathfinder initiatives and events, for example support for the Extended Project and other qualifications.
- l) Summer schools, e.g . 'Artscool ' – particularly targeted at under-represented groups.
- m) University of Hertfordshire students acting as mentors for local primary school pupils – this is targeted at schools which have low rates of progression to higher education. The mentoring programme covers years 6 to 13. The University also runs a well-developed 'Hatfield Ahead' mentoring programme, supporting year 6 pupils with their transition to secondary school.

6 Milestones

HEFCE has well established performance indicators for widening participation. To date, the University has been very successful in exceeding or coming close to the HEFCE location-adjusted benchmarks for widening participation. This is demonstrated by the most recently published figures (2008/09) which are reproduced below:

Participation of under-represented group in HE

Young full-time undergraduate entrants:

from state schools or colleges : from group 97.7%, location adjusted benchmark 94.8%

from social classes 4, 5, 6 & 7 : from group 41.4%, location adjusted benchmark 39.5%

from low participation neighbourhoods (based on POLAR2 method) from group 8.6%, location adjusted benchmark 9.7%.

Note: for 2009/10 social classes 4, 5, 6 and 7 are age adjusted due to the change in question found on the UCAS form. This has now reverted back to the original question.

In terms of milestones, the University will aim to continue to meet the HEFCE location-adjusted benchmark performance indicators set out above.

7 Monitoring arrangements

An annual report on performance in widening participation will be submitted to the Recruitment and Advisory Policy Committee (RAPC), a sub-committee of the Academic Board, chaired by the Pro Vice Chancellor (Regional Affairs). The report will set out the University's performance against the HEFCE location adjusted benchmarks, will review the impact of variable fees and bursaries, and will evaluate the University's performance in the activities listed in sections 4, 5 and 6 above. The Group will agree actions to be taken including changes to the activities.

The annual report and any recommendations from RAPC will be presented to the Chief Executive's Group chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and comprising the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Pro Vice Chancellors, Deans of Faculty and Directors of the Support Services. The final report will be submitted to OFFA through HEFCE's Annual Monitoring Statement for Higher Education Institutions.