

ACCRINGTON AND ROSSENDALE COLLEGE

HIGHER EDUCATION ACCESS AGREEMENT TO RUN FROM 2007-2008

October 2006

Introduction

The Governors of Accrington & Rossendale College agreed to the continuation of tuition fees at the standard level for directly funded courses from September 2006. However, in order to allow for fee levels to be set above the standard level in the future, under the Higher Education Act 2004, the College is now submitting an access agreement which sets out how it will safeguard and promote safe access if higher level fees are to be levied.

A Fee Limits

A.1 Level of Fees

A.1.1 Full Time Students: all students on full time degree programmes and higher national diploma programmes will be charged a top-up fee bringing the total fee charged to £3070 per student per academic year.

A.1.2 Part Time Students: students on part time degree programmes and higher national certificate programmes will not be charged a top-up fee other than the normal cost of living rise in fees. This position will be reviewed during the first year of the access agreement.

Fees will be subject to the annual inflationary increase announced by the government.

B Use of Additional Fee Income

The additional fees will be used to:

- (i) provide a means tested bursary
- (ii) provide direct support for students during their study at the College
- (iii) invest in the higher education infrastructure of the College to provide resources for both staff and students which will enhance the higher education experience.

C Bursaries and Other Financial Support

Currently the College does not offer a bursary scheme. The additional fees will allow the College to offer a means tested bursary which will be available to eligible students in the year of introduction. The bursary will be determined on a sliding scale as indicated in the table below. It is anticipated that this bursary will be administered

through the Student Loan Company using the local authority income assessment tool. The bursary will be awarded on a cash bursary basis.

Parental Income	Annual Bursary
Less than £17910	1000
£17910 - £27999	750
£28000 -£38330	400
Over £338330	0

For independent students the household income levels will determine the annual bursary using the same thresholds as for parental income in the above table.

Bursaries will be subject to the annual inflationary increase announced by the government. Similarly the threshold levels identified above will be increased in line with government announcements.

A limited, means-tested higher education Access to Learning Fund (ALF) will also be available to all students who can demonstrate an urgent need for assistance. This will be administered through the College's Financial Support Committee using existing procedures.

D Provision of Information to Students

The College proposes to use a number of methods to publicise fees and the associated bursaries and support.

- An insert in all prospectuses already printed indicating the level of fee to be charged in the relevant academic year.
- Current information on fees and bursaries will be published on the College website.
- Through information packs prepared for all prospective students.

E Outreach Work

To build upon the College's good practice for widening participation in higher education:

- the College will work with students in secondary schools with a history of low participation in higher education to develop links with both further and higher education
- the College will look to use its relationships with community centres in the educationally deprived wards of the boroughs served by the College to distribute information about the bursary and the College's higher education provision.
- the College will ensure a smooth transition for mature learners to enter higher education
- the College will ensure progression from higher education programmes by developing employer engagement and identifying further academic/training opportunities with partner HEIs.

These activities are already being undertaken by the college. However the college strategy for Higher Education envisages an increase in student numbers over the next 5 years. The figures in annex B reflect this strategy. Additional funds from top up fees would be used to enhance the listed activities to ensure that such growth is sustainable.

F Milestones

The College will look to achieve the following broad milestones:

- a) increase internal progression from level 3 courses onto higher education courses taught by the college by 20% by July 2008. (In September 2005 31 students progressed from level 3 courses directly to our higher education courses).
- b) to increase retention by 3% on higher education courses by July 2008
- c) to increase applications from under-represented ethnic minority groups. Data gathered from students entering higher education programmes in 06/07 will be used to create a profile which will be used to set targets for addressing this indicator of under-representation.

G Institutional Monitoring Arrangements

The working of the access agreement will be monitored by the Higher Education Board of Study. This cross college committee will have the responsibility for monitoring all aspects of the fees and bursary arrangements with particular reference to sections D, E and F above and will report to the College Senior Management Team and College Governors.