



Bath Spa University
Access Agreement
2008/09 to 2010/11

(Revised October 2007)

1. Introduction

This Access Agreement sets out how Bath Spa University will safeguard and promote fair access for students. It builds upon a history of successful development of widening participation at the University. Key aspects of the information required for this Access Agreement are embedded and integrated into the University Widening Participation Strategy 2005/06 to 2010/11, which is attached as Appendix One.

2. Aims

The aims of this Access Agreement are to:

1. increase the participation rates of students from under-represented groups, especially young people from NS SEC 4, 5, 6 & 7*, those from disadvantaged backgrounds and disabled people
2. promote fair access, particularly for students from low-income backgrounds
3. ensure that students are fully prepared so that they benefit from higher education (HE)
4. support student success and employability
5. gain approval from the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) to charge variable tuition fees.

3. Scope

This agreement covers all students who are registered on full-time undergraduate courses, including those on franchised courses at further education colleges (FECs). It also covers Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) - funded, full-time Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) courses, where these are not 'end on'.

4. Franchised courses

All of our full-time, undergraduate franchised courses that are delivered by our Wessex Partnership colleges are covered by this agreement. As part of its widening participation activities, and to strengthen its regional role, Bath Spa University has formed partnerships with a number of regional further education colleges. This partnership is known as the Wessex Partnership. We will work actively with the higher education managers in our partner colleges to deliver widening participation activities to students and their supporters, partner schools and employers.

*National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification

4. Small employers and own account workers
5. Lower supervisory and technical occupations
6. Semi-routine occupations
7. Routine occupations.

5. Fee limits

We intend to set our tuition fees at a rate equal to the variable fee ceiling set annually by the Government. For all full-time undergraduate and PGCE courses this will be £3,145 per annum in 2008/09. Tuition fees will increase annually with inflation.

6. Bursaries and other financial support for students

6.1 Full-time undergraduate and PGCE courses

Bursaries will be awarded on the basis of household income and will be worth up to a maximum of £1,200 per annum. In 2008/09, students from households with income of below £16,300 will be eligible for the full £1,200 bursary award. Students from households with income of below £38,330 will receive bursary support of at least £100 per annum. Students from households where income is between these two figures will receive a proportion of the full bursary award, according to their household income band. Students from households with income of £38,330 or over will not be eligible for bursary support.

No student who is eligible for the full state Maintenance Grant will receive less than the mandatory bursary award. While we will always offer at least the mandatory bursary award, we intend to exceed the mandatory bursary award.

We will also award scholarships of £1,000 per annum that will benefit able students wishing to study at undergraduate level in a number of specialist, mainly science-based subjects. Scholarships will be awarded independently of household income and the subjects attracting scholarship funding will be reviewed on an annual basis. The cost of this scholarship scheme is likely to be at least an additional £220,000 per annum by 2008/09. We estimate that of this total cost, some £165,000 will be awarded to students from low income backgrounds and other under-represented groups.

6.2 Total value of bursaries and scholarships

We estimate that approximately 23% of the total additional fee income in 2008/09 will be awarded in student bursary support. The total value of bursaries, scholarships and associated administrative costs for full-time undergraduate and PGCE students will, we estimate, represent approximately 28% of the total additional fee income in 2008/09.

7. Provision of information to students

The University recognises the importance of providing high-quality, clear and accurate financial information, including costs and the financial support available, to enable students to make informed choices. We will continue to work with

students and their advisors to increase awareness and understanding of the latest student finance arrangements, and to help make sure that finance is not seen as a barrier to higher education, especially among those from under-represented groups.

To ensure that we meet this commitment, the following information will be made available to all students:

- a. The costs associated with study including:
 - the level of tuition fees
 - accommodation costs
 - an indication of living costs
 - an estimation of additional study costs such as studio fees, books, specialist equipment, field trips etc.
- b. The range of financial support available to students including:
 - Maintenance Grant, Special Support Grant, Student Fee and Maintenance Loans and other targeted state support
 - Bath Spa University bursaries and scholarships
 - the Access to Learning Fund (ALF)
 - Disabled Students' Allowance (where applicable)
 - other sources of funding, as may be available.

Annual costs and an indication of the likely financial support package will be made available to students as well as a projection of the expected aggregate costs and likely financial support package for the duration of courses.

A wide variety of channels and opportunities will be used to ensure that students have clear and accurate information upon which to make decisions including:

- the University prospectus
- the University website, which will also provide links to useful external sources of information and tools such as cost and support 'ready reckoners'
- information packs for all applicants to the University
- electronic message boards in key communal areas of our campuses, such as the Students' Union, refectories and libraries
- an in-house student financial planning service
- University open days and campus visit days
- school and college liaison visits
- widening participation campus-based events and outreach visits to schools, colleges, Access to Higher Education courses, community groups and workplaces
- open days for employers and employees.

The University will make full use of its facilities and networks to ensure that information is available in broad and diverse locations such as:

- the University prospectus
- the University website
- school and college liaison and widening participation outreach activity on the University campuses and in schools, colleges, community settings and workplaces
- local community groups and support networks such as the Bath and North East Somerset Black Families Education Support Group and those working with children in care
- Connexions and other information, advice and guidance organisations.

Information for prospective and registered students will be made available at the following key times:

- during outreach activity events
- pre-registration, after an offer is accepted
- at pre-registration summer schools
- during registration
- during induction
- throughout first semester and subsequent tutorial meetings.

Information will be made available to:

- all prospective students
- all registered students
- significant others who may be involved in the decision making process with students. This could include parents, carers, partners, teachers, tutors or lecturers, employers, careers services, children in care teams or social workers.

We will endeavour to ensure that information reaches those from groups who are under-represented in higher education and at Bath Spa University, including:

- Young people in local schools, colleges and community groups from NS SEC 4, 5, 6 & 7 backgrounds
- young people who are from low income households, particularly those where there is no parental experience of higher education
- young people who are from low participation neighbourhoods
- disabled people
- mature students with no previous experience of higher education and who are from low participation neighbourhoods
- young people who are in care or are care-leavers
- those from ethnic minority groups
- learners on courses leading to vocational qualifications.

8. Outreach work

The Widening Participation Strategy for the University includes the outreach work that will be implemented through the University Access Agreement along with that funded through the HEFCE widening access allocation and Aimhigher. The outreach work is described in the University's Widening Participation Strategic Action Plan, which is included in the attached 'Widening Participation Strategy – including Access Agreement (OFFA) Outreach Work 2005-06 to 2010-2011' as Table A.

The University has established a firm foundation and high reputation for widening participation. In addition to activity undertaken with HEFCE widening access funding, the University is an active participant in regional Aimhigher and the Aimhigher West Area Partnership. Further significant outreach work activity will be supported by additional Access Agreement investment. These activities are new, or extensions of existing schemes. The level of additional Access Agreement investment, along with other sources of funding available to the University for outreach work is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Sources of funding.

Funding Strands - £s	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
HEFCE widening access funding	236,549	236,549	236,549	236,549
Aimhigher West Area Partnership	135,464	135,464	135,464	135,464
Access Agreement fee income	125,592	131,988	138,607	145,458

Note

The future HEFCE widening access and Aimhigher funding levels are based on 2007/08 figures with no projections for inflation or any other uplift.

9. Milestones and measuring progress

9.1 Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) performance indicators

Our commitment to widen access to those from key under-represented groups is stressed throughout the University's Strategic Plan 2006/07 to 2008/09, and we seek an improvement in key HESA performance indicators by vigorously pursuing our Access Agreement (Bath Spa University Strategic Plan 2006/07 to 2008/09, Section 6.7). The key output statistics by which we will measure progress will be the following HESA performance indicators:

- young full-time undergraduate entrants from state schools and colleges (HESA Table T1b)
- young full-time undergraduate entrants from low participation neighbourhoods (HESA Table T1b)

- young full-time undergraduate entrants from NS SEC 4, 5, 6 & 7 (HESA Table T1b)
- mature full-time undergraduate entrants with no previous higher education and from a low participation neighbourhood (HESA Table T2a)
- full-time undergraduate students in receipt of a Disabled Students' Allowance (HESA Table T7).

We also aim to reach the 2010/11 targets that are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Targets for 2010/11 related to HESA performance indicators and summary of performance to date showing number of students in category and performance indicators as a percentage of total entrants. Location adjusted benchmarks (*LA B/M*) are shown in italics.

Performance Indicator	2002/03 data <i>LA B/M</i>	2003/04 Data <i>LA B/M</i>	2004/05 Data <i>LA B/M</i>	2005/06 Data <i>LA B/M</i>	2010/11 targets
Young full-time undergraduate entrants from state schools and colleges	835 95.4% <i>90.5%</i>	940 92.5% <i>92.6%</i>	915 94.0% <i>91.1%</i>	1,045 95.2% <i>93.9%</i>	96.0%
Young full-time undergraduate entrants from NS SEC 4,5,6 & 7	205 28.8% <i>29.4%</i>	255 30.6% <i>32.5%</i>	240 28.2% <i>29.7%</i>	250 26.9% <i>31.9%</i>	31.0%
Young full-time undergraduate entrants from low participation neighbourhoods	105 11.9% <i>11.6%</i>	115 12.9% <i>12.3%</i>	115 12.1% <i>11.6%</i>	115 11.1% <i>13.9%</i>	13.0%
Mature full-time undergraduate entrants with no previous higher education and from low participation neighbourhoods	50 15.3% <i>11.8%</i>	45 12.5% <i>12.2%</i>	30 8.4% <i>10.7%</i>	45 12.4% <i>14.0%</i>	16.0%
Full-time undergraduate students in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance	180 5.8% <i>3.7%</i>	210 6.0% <i>4.4%</i>	225 6.1% <i>5.0%</i>	280 7.5% <i>5.6%</i>	6.0%

The targets for 2010/11 shown in Table 2 were part of our original Access Agreement, which was written in 2004/05. Since then, a number of external factors related to our achievement of full university status have come into play, which currently makes it difficult to extrapolate new targets for 2010/11 on our past performance.

Since achieving full university status in 2005, the University is undergoing a period of repositioning within the sector and this has implications for applications

and recruitment. Applications for 2005/06 for undergraduate entry showed an increase of 30% on 2004/05, and in February 2007 applications showed a further 25.6% increase on the previous year compared with the 6.3 % overall increase in applications in the sector. At the same time the conversion rate from offers to acceptances has varied. It is not yet clear how this will impact on the long-term application and recruitment patterns of entrants from widening participation target groups, or our future HESA performance indicator location adjusted benchmarks. We expect to review our 2010/11 targets relating to HESA performance indicators when we have more detailed statistical information on our performance from 2005/06.

9.2 Bath Spa University performance indicators

In addition to monitoring our progress in widening participation through HESA performance indicators, we will also monitor our progress in relation to our peer institutions in the sector. As part of the University Strategic Action Plan 2006/07 to 2008/09, we have developed a set of 25 performance indicators relevant to a teaching-led university to use to secure our position as a major teaching-led university (Bath Spa University Strategic Action Plan 2006/07 to 2008/09, Strategic Objective (SO) iv). Four of the performance indicators are directly related to widening participation. To measure progress towards our mission statement and vision, these performance indicators are compared with those of our peer institutions in the sector (Bath Spa University Strategic Action Plan 2006/07 to 2008/09, Section 6). Each one of the set of performance indicators is graded as good (above benchmark), satisfactory (at or about benchmark) or poor (below benchmark) by comparison with our peers. We will actively seek to improve any performance indicators rated as satisfactory or poor to good, including those relating to widening participation (Bath Spa University Strategic Action Plan 2006/07 to 2008/09, 6.7).

9.3 Higher education bursary and scholarship scheme (HEBSS) data

The data that the University will hold on students qualifying for bursaries through HEBSS, including data relating the proportion of students eligible for full state support, will also be used for the monitoring of the Access Agreement and the strategic planning and operational management of the associated widening participation outreach objectives from 2006/07. It was originally planned that the HEBSS data for 2006/07 shown in Table 3 would be used as a baseline for interim monitoring, however, this will now need to be revised in 2008/09 when the new threshold for full state support is introduced.

Table 3. Baseline HEBSS data for 2006/07¹.

Undergraduate entrants including Foundation Degree, Dip HE and HND paying £3,000 tuition fees	Total undergraduate entrants in HEBSS from low-income households (income below £37,425)	Total undergraduate entrants in HEBSS from low-income households as a % of total undergraduate entrants paying £3,000 tuition fees	Undergraduate entrants in receipt of full BSU bursary support	Undergraduate entrants in receipt of full BSU bursary as a % of total undergraduate entrants paying £3,000 tuition fees	Undergraduate entrants in receipt of full DfES Maintenance Grant	Undergraduate entrants in receipt of full DfES Maintenance Grant as a % of total undergraduate entrants paying £3,000 tuition fees
All	832	56.0%	580	39.0%	592	40.0%
Under 21	561	38.0%	358	24.0%	364	24.5%
Over 21 ²	271	18.0%	222	15.0%	228	15.5%

Notes

1. As of the audit date 1st June 2007.
2. For consistency with HESA Performance Indicators, entrants are classified as over 21 if they are 21 years of age on the 30th of September of the academic year in which they enter Bath Spa University.

The HEBSS data will measure our performance in a key area of Government policy set out in the Spending Review of October 2007. The Treasury's Public Service Agreement (PSA) Delivery Agreement 11 describes the Government's commitment over the next three years to build on earlier improvements in PSAs to narrow the gap in educational achievement between children from low income and disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers. The HEBSS data will particularly address Indicator 6: 'The gap between the initial participation in full-time higher education rates for young people aged 18, 19 and 20 from the top three and bottom four socio-economic classes' by augmenting HESA performance indicator data on socio-economic class for young full-time undergraduate entrants. The HESA performance indicator NS SEC 4, 5, 6 & 7 is used as a proxy for low income and disadvantaged backgrounds. However, as explained in Indicator 6, socio-economic class is derived from the student's view of his or her highest earning parent's occupation, so can be subject to error. Furthermore, students whose socio-economic class data are unknown are assigned to a class based on their home postcode, or where there is no postcode are proxied by the whole population average distribution.

9.4 Milestones to measure additional outreach activity

Milestones have also been set out for the additional outreach activity that we will undertake as part of this Access Agreement. The milestones, which are related to the student life cycle, are described in Table A of Appendix One Widening Participation Strategy including Access Agreement Outreach Work 2005/06 to 2010/11. The milestones will be used to measure our progress towards increasing our outreach activity.

10. Institutional monitoring arrangements

10.1 Activities

Progress towards achieving the objectives described in the Widening Participation Strategy will be monitored by an Assistant Vice Chancellor. Also see Section 6 of the Widening Participation Strategy 2005/06 to 2010/11 for a more detailed description of monitoring and evaluation procedures.

10.2 Data

An annual analysis of the relevant HESA performance indicators and a range of additional internal monitoring indicators, including those described in section 9, will be made by the Widening Participation Officer.

10.3 Annual Report

An annual report on progress will be made to the Board of Governors.