

BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LINCOLN

ACCESS AGREEMENT

1. Our commitment to widening access

Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln is committed to being a community which welcomes and hosts a diverse population of students and staff and fosters an ethos of mutual respect, trust and care.

We are an open, forward looking community that celebrates diversity and welcomes applications from all students regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religious affiliation or disability. The University College is committed to widening access and aims to encourage applications from all communities, particularly those currently under-represented in higher education generally and at Bishop Grosseteste specifically.

2. Our student population

We have been successful in recruiting students from the state sector, low socio-economic groups and low participation backgrounds as shown in the HESA Performance Indicators table below.

	Performance Indicators 2002-2003			Performance Indicators 2003-2004			Performance Indicators 2004-2005		
	Actual (%)	Benchmark (%)	Location- adjusted Benchmark	Actual (%)	Benchmark (%)	Location- adjusted Benchmark	Actual (%)	Benchmark (%)	Location- adjusted Benchmark
State Schools (entrants)	94.9	90	91.8	97.4	91.7	93.5	96.7	92.2	92.8
Low Social Class (young entrants)	48.9	30.5	33.3	43.5	32	34.3	35.8	30	30.7
Low Participation Neighbourhoods (young entrants)	18.2	14.2	14.8	20.9	15.7	17.2	14.1	14.8	15.3

The HESA Performance Indicators 2001/02 indicated that BG had the highest proportion of first degree students from social classes I, II, III, M and below of any HEI in the country (47% against a benchmark of 31%). More recent Performance Indicators show that recruitment of students from low social classes continues to be strong. We will build on current strategies to increase levels of recruitment from this group.

When we introduced our Access Agreement in 2004/05, of the undergraduate student population at Bishop Grosseteste:

- 44% received full contribution grant (household income less than £21,000);
- 21% received partial contribution grant (household income between £21,000 & £32,000);
- 35% paid fees in full (household income above £32,000).

Our Access Agreement builds on existing strategies to maintain strong recruitment and retention from low income groups.

The recruitment of students from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups has continued to be a challenge for the University College. The current student population has 1.4% from these groups. Whilst recognising the challenge posed by the geographical location of the University College (Lincolnshire has one of the lowest BME populations in the UK - 1.3%, and 48.1% of our current student population come from the county), there is a commitment to continue to undertake work to increase participation from BME groups and to enhance facilities and services to support students from diverse cultures and backgrounds.

The HESA Performance Indicators 2004/05 show improved recruitment of students in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance - 3.9% against a benchmark of 3.5%. Recent adaptations for disabled students, staff and visitors have extended to the whole estate, greatly improving accessibility. Strategies will continue to be implemented to raise the awareness of improved facilities and support amongst potential students.

The University College has continued to achieve high retention rates year on year, exceeding the HESA benchmark. Figures for 2004/05 show a non-continuation level of 5.7% compared with the benchmark of 9%.

This achievement has taken place within the context of students entering BG from an ever-widening range of backgrounds. However, we are not content to rest on this historical record. Given the University College's commitment to recruit increasing numbers of students from diverse backgrounds, it is acknowledged that maintaining high levels of retention will be challenging. Accordingly, our financial plan includes investment in staff and resources to enhance our support of students.

3. Fee levels

For 2008/09, BG will charge a tuition fee of £3,145 a year for most full-time undergraduate programmes. An exception applies to BG's foundation degree programmes, for which the tuition fee will be £1,500. Students on foundation degrees will not be eligible for the bursaries described in 4(i), with the exception of care leavers, who will qualify for an enhanced bursary package - see 4(ii).

Part-time students will be charged a pro rata amount of the variable fee (£525 per 20 credit module in 2008/09) to ensure a comparable rate with full-time students. In recognition that the maximum fee grant available to part-time students is insufficient to cover the total cost of the tuition fees, we will offer additional financial support through the University College's Access to Learning Fund to assist students from low income backgrounds.

For 2008/09, the tuition fee for full-time PGCE Primary and PGCE Secondary programmes will be £3,145. PGCE students will not be eligible for the bursaries described in 4(i) but will have access to a discretionary fund.

The University College will apply only such increases to the fee as are approved by the Government to take account of inflation.

4. Use of additional fee income

A separate finance sheet provides details of the University College's intended use of additional fees to support access measures.

The University College will subscribe to the model bursary scheme as devised by UUK/SCOP (SCOP now GuildHE) for the purpose of providing the poorest students with an annual bursary of at least £310 (for 2008/09 entrants).

A survey of student satisfaction in the bursary scheme's first year showed students were extremely satisfied with the University College's Bursary Scheme. 88% of students who received a bursary thought information about the scheme provided by the University College was easily understood; 83% thought the level of financial support they received was satisfactory; and 92% were satisfied the University College had made a pro-active response to ensure they received their bursary payments. Given this feedback, we have retained all the core elements of our bursary scheme.

Details of our bursary schemes and related support are given below:

- i) Undergraduate students paying a fee of £3,145 whose household income (as determined by their Local Authority income assessment) is £39,250 or below in 2008/09 will receive a non-repayable bursary of £1,050. This bursary is available **each year** of their undergraduate programme subject to an annual household income assessment. The amount of the bursary will increase each year in line with inflation. Any exceptions are noted in section 3.
- ii) BG guarantees an annual minimum University College Bursary of £3,500 for undergraduate students who are care leavers with a household income (as determined by their Local Authority income assessment) of £39,250 or below in 2008/09. This bursary is available **each year** of their undergraduate programme subject to an annual household income assessment. The amount of the bursary will increase each year in line with inflation. The Student Support team will also direct students in receipt of this bursary towards additional sources of income, such as the £1,000 Foyer Accommodation Bursary available via the Access to Learning Fund. The financial support identified in this section is part of a broader package of support for care leavers.
- iii) The bursaries are paid electronically directly into the student's bank account.
- iv) A discretionary bursary fund managed by the Student Support Team allows the University College to offer further assistance to any student whose financial hardship remains unresolved after seeking financial support from all other sources, including the Access to Learning Fund. This is in recognition of the fact that financial deterrents to progression into and within higher education are not only associated with variable fees. The annual value of the discretionary bursary fund is £15,000.

- v) Additional staff have been appointed to the Widening Participation Team to enhance the University College's current outreach and aspiration-raising work with a particular focus on targeting local areas where progression to HE is low and maintaining or improving current recruitment levels from the poorest families. Activities include campus events, curriculum workshops and visits to targeted schools and colleges. Work is also undertaken to support the recruitment of students from other groups currently under-represented at the University College, e.g. those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. The total annual cost of additional staffing and consumables in the first year was approximately £40,000. The level of staff dedicated to widening participation outreach work has been increased by 100%, and it is expected that there will be a comparable increase in the number of people reached through this work.

The bursary schemes are available to all eligible undergraduate students ordinarily resident in the UK. The University College will take note of legal developments relating to the potential obligation to provide support to non-UK EU students and will act appropriately.

5. Provision of information to students

The University College's fees (with appropriate disclaimers) are set out on our website and in our prospectus, together with information about bursaries and other financial support.

The website provides the means of keeping prospective students, their parents and their advisers up-to-date with on-going developments in relation to student finance.

A booklet setting out information about fees, loans and bursaries, together with advice on budgeting and financial management, is produced by the Student Support Team. This is available to all prospective applicants attending open days and other events on campus and is used, as appropriate, at local events designed to widen access. All undergraduate applicants to the University College receive a copy of this booklet.

Our Student Support Team provides a range of services designed to help applicants and students to understand the new fee and bursary arrangements and to develop appropriate strategies to manage their finances. These include:

- Money Management workshops for prospective and current students covering budgeting and strategies to manage limited budgets;
- money advice from experienced money advisers who will provide one-to-one support on budgeting effectively and dealing with debt;
- advisers available to prospective and current students for one-to-one consultations in person, by e-mail or by telephone.

One-to-one support, finance workshops and other supportive activities organised by the University College are made available to all our students.

6. Milestones

<i>Objective</i>	<i>Success indicators to be used</i>
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To continue to recruit state school entrants at a level that exceeds the HESA benchmark.	BG performance to exceed the HESA location-adjusted benchmark by at least 3% annually.
To maintain very high recruitment levels of students from social classes 4 to 7.	BG performance to exceed the HESA location-adjusted benchmark by at least 15% annually.
To maintain high levels of recruitment from low income groups.	Current percentage of new students from low income households (those who receive maximum state support) maintained annually.
To improve recruitment of disabled students.	To progress towards the HESA benchmark each year and to achieve the benchmark by 2009.
To improve the application, offer rate and recruitment of students from black and minority ethnic groups.	Achieve student intake target of 4.6% by 2007.
To maintain high levels of retention with an increasingly diverse student population.	BG performance to exceed the HESA location-adjusted benchmark by at least 2% annually.
To provide high quality information, support and operational efficiency in the University College's operation of the Access Agreement.	Achieve annual student satisfaction levels of at least 75%.

7. Monitoring arrangements

The University College monitors its fulfilment of this Agreement via the Student Recruitment Strategy Group which reports to the Directorate. This Group will consider progress made towards the milestones shown above. In addition, it will consider feedback from students on the new bursary schemes and the new student support systems. The Access Agreement will be a standing item on the agenda for the Financial, Employment and General Purposes Committee of the Board of Governors. Annual monitoring reports will be considered by the Diversity and Equality Committee.