

Croydon College Access Agreement

Context

Croydon College is a significant provider of higher education (HE) in South London with approximately 1,400 students studying full time and part time, undergraduate, post graduate and professional programmes. As a mixed economy institution with approximately 14,000 further and higher education students in total, the College is in a unique position to meet the educational needs of a wide range of students from a variety of backgrounds, facilitating progression to higher education through vocational further education (FE) pathways.

In 2005/06 the College had 760 full time equivalent (FTE) directly funded HEFCE students. Of the current cohort 53% are full time undergraduate students, 35% are part time undergraduate students and 12% are part time post graduate students. 45% are from black or ethnic minority backgrounds which considerably exceeds the ratio within the local community (24%). 33% are from neighbourhoods with low participation in HE and 62% are from lower income backgrounds. This exceeds the national rate of 12% from low HE participation backgrounds and is in fact higher than any UK higher education institution (HEI) (HEFCE:2003/59). 82% are mature students over 21 on entry, 60% are over 25 and the average age of HE students is 30. This also exceeds the national rate of mature student participation of 26% and that of any HEI within the UK (HEFCE:2003/59).

Croydon College plays a key role in the implementation of the Aimhigher initiative in the London South sub-region. This has included developing partnerships with a number of schools to enhance vocational progression to higher education. The College has considerable experience in meeting the academic and learning support needs of students from under-represented groups as has been evidenced by Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Academic and Subject Review reports which have identified such support as an area of excellent practice.

Croydon College Mission

Croydon College aims to be at the heart of Croydon's communities, stimulating demand for learning through inspirational and supportive teaching which respects all and transforms our futures.

In this context the College's higher education mission is:

To provide excellent, vocationally relevant undergraduate, post graduate and professional programmes of study that meet the needs of the community and its surrounding regions to widen participation in higher education.

Fee Limits

It is within the above contexts that the College sets out the tuition fee limits for its full time undergraduate programmes assessed as home students. This Access Agreement has been produced in accordance with the guidance published by the Office for Fair Access and describes how Croydon College intends to:

- a. Support improvements in participation rates in higher education from under represented groups.
- b. Increase the amount of funding available for bursaries and outreach.

Croydon College will charge **£3,070** tuition fee per annum for all full time undergraduate courses (Honours Degrees, Diplomas of HE, HNDs and Certificates of HE) with the exception of full time foundation degrees for which a tuition fee of **£2,760** per annum will be charged. It should be noted that these fees may rise with inflation in accordance with government regulations.

<i>FT Course</i>	<i>Years of study</i>	<i>Annual fee</i>	<i>Available annual bursary*</i>
BA (Hons) Degree	3	£3,070	£1,025
Dip HE	2	£3,070	£1,025
HND	2	£3,070	£1,025
FDA	2	£2,760	£1,025
Cert HE	1	£3,070	£1,025

**Bursaries are subject to eligibility criteria*

Amounts of additional fee income to be spent on access measures.

Croydon College will charge the above fees to maintain and enhance the quality of its higher education provision whilst providing incentives for under-represented groups to participate in higher education. The College will use the majority of any additional fee income (between 63% and 57% over a five year period from 2006) to provide generous bursaries for students from under-represented groups in higher education and to enhance its outreach activities in accordance with its mission and strong track record of widening participation. This represents a significantly larger proportion of additional fee income than the one quarter to one third that OFFA has indicated some institutions plan to spend (OFFA:2004).

Bursaries and other financial support for students.

The College's excellent record in widening participation in higher education will be maintained and enhanced through the provision of a **£1,025** cash bursary for full-time undergraduate students in any of the following categories:

- Students progressing from a Croydon College AimHigher partnership school
- Students progressing directly from an FE level 3 Croydon College course
- Mature students (over 21)
- Students eligible for a Disabled Student Allowance (DSA)

The Croydon College £1,025 bursary represents substantially enhanced financial support in comparison with the statutory requirement to provide a £310 bursary for students on full state support both in terms of the amount provided and the range of students eligible for bursaries.

Students who are classified as overseas students will be subject to variable tuition fees and are not covered by this agreement.

The bursary will be paid to the student in two instalments. The first instalment (£500) will be payable to students at the end of the first semester who are enrolled on a full-time higher education programme and meet the requirements of the Student Loan Company (SLC) Confirmation of Attendance at the HEFCE census date of the relevant academic year of study. The second instalment (£525) will be payable to students who have successfully progressed and

are attending at the mid point of the second semester of their studies in the relevant academic year. The phased payment of this bursary is designed to provide an incentive towards successful progression, completion and achievement.

Part time undergraduate tuition fees and bursaries/fee waivers

Whilst this access agreement exclusively relates to full time undergraduate students, the College wishes to ensure that students studying part time undergraduate programmes are not disadvantaged in the process of widening access. The College's fee policy for undergraduate part-time higher education students is designed to avoid inequitable disincentives towards participation in higher education. However, there is a comparable relationship between tuition fees charged for part time courses based on their full time equivalents.

Part time tuition fees will therefore be calculated from the full time equivalent (FTE) rate and undergraduate part-time students will also receive a £1,025 bursary but in the form of a fee waiver rather than as a cash payment. Through this mechanism the tuition fees paid by undergraduate part-time students can be maintained at an equivalent level to the standard tuition fee.

Part time undergraduate payable fees (fee less bursary) are pro rata equivalent to the full time standard tuition fee and the tuition fees are broadly equivalent to the full time undergraduate fees for the same type of course in 2006. This means that payable fees for part time higher education courses will only increase in line with the rise in the standard tuition fee, maintaining equivalence with full time undergraduate fees whilst avoiding a perverse disincentive to participate in part time undergraduate higher education.

<i>PT course</i>	<i>Years of PT study</i>	<i>Annual tuition Fee</i>	<i>Annual bursary/ fee waiver*</i>	<i>Annual payable fee**</i>
BA (Hons) Degree	4	£1,950	£1,025	£925
FDA	3	£1,840	£1,025	£815
HNC/Cert.Ed.	2	£1,630	£1,025	£605

**All part time undergraduate students are eligible for the bursary/fee waiver **Annual fees must be paid on enrolment*

Provision of Information to students

The College aims to ensure that all students entering higher education are able to make informed decisions with respect to tuition fees. In addition, the College wishes to specifically target information at students from under-represented groups to ensure that they are aware of the financial support available and to raise aspirations in relation to higher education participation.

The College will publish information concerning the changes to the legislation concerning higher education tuition fees, Croydon College tuition fees and bursaries, the HE maintenance grant and student loans including frequently asked questions and illustrative case studies. This information will be disseminated in the following ways:

- The published access agreement

- Information in the HE prospectus
- Information and useful links on the Croydon College website
- A Croydon College HE fees, bursaries and financial support publication mailed to all AimHigher partnership schools and made available at the College Information Centre.
- A letter to all students offered a place detailing annual tuition fees, total fees for the programme and available bursaries including eligibility and payment details

Outreach work

The College has a good track record of developing outreach work particularly in the context of London South AimHigher partnership. This has included a range of activities including presentations to targeted AimHigher schools, staff, students and parents, interview sessions, taster activities, student ambassadors, e-mentoring, road shows as well as a broad range of aspiration raising activities and visits.

Milestones

- Currently 33% of students are from neighbourhoods with low participation in HE and it is anticipated that by 2011 this will rise to 45%.
- The number of students coming from AimHigher partnership schools will increase by 20% by 2011.
- The College will develop a Summer School Vocational School programme

Institutional monitoring arrangements

Higher education student cohort analysis will be undertaken on an annual basis which will inform the institutional monitoring of the College's access agreement. This is reported by the Head of the HE college to the Senior Leadership Team. This is then used to inform annual decisions on fees and bursaries for approval by the Corporation of the College.