

# Doncaster College

## Access Agreement

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## 1 Doncaster College

1.1 Doncaster College is the only provider of further and higher education in the Doncaster Metropolitan Borough area. The College has been involved in the delivery of higher education since the 1960's firstly as a teacher training establishment then as a general institute of higher education and currently as a large mixed economy college with about 10% of its provision being higher education.

1.2 In the summer of 2004 the college, in partnership with its only validating HEI, the University of Hull, established the University Centre at its High Melton Campus where the majority of higher education within the College is delivered.

1.3 Within the University Centre of Doncaster College a wide range of programmes are delivered including Intermedia and Performance Arts, Business Studies, Education, Applied Social Science, Sport and Leisure amongst others. Some of the higher education is delivered at the new HUB campus of Doncaster College based in the town centre, including Creative Arts, Engineering, Construction and Computing.

1.4 Within the umbrella of the Doncaster Education City, the College is committed to providing a broad range of educational opportunities to local industry and residents but also provides curriculum which attracts a national and international intake of students. The strategic plan of the College includes development of centres of national excellence such as the Relate Institute within the University Centre providing programmes related to relationship counselling and other related areas.

1.5 The population of the Doncaster Metropolitan Borough is 290,000 with the nearest HEI some 24 miles away to the west. While the majority of the population lives in the urban centres, a significant minority live in isolated ex-mining communities which suffer from high unemployment and extremely low participation. The remainder of the borough is largely rural with a high proportion of agriculture.

## 2 The Challenge

2.1 Doncaster is the largest Metropolitan Borough by geographical area in the country. It embraces a diverse community with Doncaster itself, smaller townships, several villages and rural areas. With the demise of traditional industries, the borough experienced considerable social and economic decline, with high unemployment. Unemployment is still high in some of the Borough's wards, but overall unemployment, in September

2004 was 2.5% compared with the national average 2.2%. In spite of recent inward investment, Doncaster is still one of the most deprived local authorities in England being ranked the 36<sup>th</sup> most deprived out of a total of 354.

2.2 Doncaster has the lowest proportion of the region's workforce in manufacturing industry at 14.4% and, with Sheffield, the lowest proportion of plant and machine operatives. The proportion of the adult population in employment increased between 1999 and 2003 though there is relatively high long term unemployment which is a matter of greater concern.

2.3 Of those young people who complete year 13 studies in the borough only around 55% progress to Higher Education, this being significantly lower than the national average.

2.4 The incentives, in the form of bursaries to local students and those from less well off families, will encourage participation from those who traditionally would not have considered progression to higher education.

2.5 The other measures to improve participation will also help to raise aspiration and breakdown the traditional barriers to progression to be found in the area.

### 3 Fees

3.1 The provisions of this access agreement apply only to students enrolled on full-time higher education programmes of study at Doncaster College.

3.2 Students enrolled on higher education programmes in the 2006/7 session and who are continuing on the same programme in subsequent years will pay the standard level of fee as set by the government for that session.

3.3 Students enrolled on part-time programmes of study will be covered by the Doncaster College fees and bursaries policy as published by the College.

3.4 The level of fee set by the College reflects the College's commitment that :

- the cost of full-time higher education will not act as a barrier to potential students both capable and willing to undertake such a course
- increased income from tuition fees will directly benefit students, enhance their learning experience and encourage further progression and aspiration

- additional revenue gained from tuition fees will be focused towards attracting under-represented groups into higher education.

3.5 The level of fees to be charged for the following programmes will be £2,500 for a full academic year:

- All full-time degree courses
- All full-time foundation degrees
- All full-time Higher National Certificates and Diplomas
- All full-time top-up degree courses

3.6 The £2,500 fee for the above programmes will be introduced in the 2007/8 academic session and will apply to all United Kingdom students and those who are nationals of any other state of the European Union.

3.7 Students who join a full-time programme part way through the year will pay a fee proportional to the number of academic weeks remaining. Students who transfer from part-time to full-time within four weeks of commencement of the programme will be liable for full fees.

#### 4 Bursaries

4.1 In order to encourage participation by under-represented groups within the borough, Doncaster College will create two bursaries aimed at two specific target groups. The first will be aimed at students from less well off families who would qualify for non-repayable support from their Local Authority and the second builds on other work being undertaken in the Doncaster borough, aimed at creating a lifelong learning culture, called Doncaster Education City.

#### 4.2 The Doncaster College Bursary

4.2.1 The Doncaster College Bursary will be available to students who enrol on full-time higher education programmes from 2007 onwards who also qualify for a higher education maintenance grant, irrespective of the amount, from the local authority.

4.2.2 The Doncaster College bursary will amount to an annual payment of £300 for qualifying full-time students on higher education programmes payable in two equal instalments four weeks after the commencement of each of the two semesters. Payment of the bursary is conditional on the student being up-to-date with payment of tuition fees due to the College.

#### 4.3 The Doncaster Education City Bursary

4.3.1 The Doncaster Education City Bursary will be paid to all students, regardless of means, who enrol on full-time higher education programmes at Doncaster College from September 2007 onwards and who have studied, within the previous two years, on level three programmes at schools or colleges within the Doncaster Education City area.

4.3.2 The Doncaster Education City Bursary will amount to an annual payment of £300 for qualifying full-time students on higher education programmes payable in two equal instalments four weeks after the commencement of each of the two semesters. Payment of the bursary is conditional on the student being up-to-date with payment of tuition fees due to the College.

4.4 Students who meet the criteria for payment of both of the above bursaries will receive both of the bursaries i.e. £600 per year payable as above.

#### 5 Provision of Information to Students

5.1 Information relating to all aspects of student finance will be made available to all prospective higher education students prior to the commencement of the of their programmes and will be clear, concise and accessible.

5.2 The information will give details of the annual and aggregate fees for the programme, bursary arrangements and other financial support which may be available thus enabling students to predict the likely cost of the programme and their likely level of debt incurred by the end of the programme.

5.3 The information will be presented in a variety of ways:

- Through the College's Higher Education prospectus
- On individual course information sheets
- Through the College's Advice and Guidance Centre
- In a presentation at HE Open events
- At induction sessions
- Through outreach work including talks at partner colleges and schools on student finance

#### 6 Outreach activity

6.1 The College has identified that there is a requirement to develop a curriculum enabling students who follow vocational pathways

to progress on to HE programmes. In line with Government strategies the College will develop these vocational pathways, including Foundation Degrees, enabling easier transition from level 3 vocational programmes, including apprenticeships, particularly in growth areas identified by local employers and employers' organisations.

- 6.2 The College currently engages in outreach activity partly funded through Aimhigher and partly from within its own resources. Schools contact is organised through the advice and guidance centre of the College but is not specifically focused on raising aspiration and increasing participation in higher education.
- 6.3 The College intends to use some of the income from fees to target level three learners in the local schools and within the college who do not progress to level four.
- 6.4 A Higher Education Schools Liaison Officer will join the current schools Liaison team and will have specific responsibility for providing advice and guidance in order to increase progression to Higher Education within the Doncaster Metropolitan Borough.

## 7 Milestones

- 7.1 The College has identified the following milestones and objectives, which will act as key indicators of progression in improving access

Date	Milestone
July 2006	Publication of details of the College's fees and bursary scheme
September 2007	Appointment of HE Schools Liaison Officer
September 2008	Increase of 10% of internal level 3 vocational progression (2005/6 base line)
September 2009	Increase of 10% of progression to Higher Education from learners at level 3 in the Doncaster Metropolitan Borough (2005/6 baseline)

## 8 Institutional Monitoring Arrangements

- 8.1 An Access Agreement monitoring group will be convened including representation from finance, registry, Advice and Guidance and Higher Education management to monitor the operation of the arrangements being made under the Doncaster College Access Agreement.

8.2 The group will meet at least twice per academic year and be responsible for the production of an annual report and action plan for consideration by the College Management Team in May of each year. The annual report will form the basis for the submission to OFFA of a monitoring report in July of each year.