

## **Dartington College of Arts**

### **Access Agreement 2006/07 to 2010/11**

#### **Summary**

Dartington College of Arts is committed to widening participation and fair access, welcoming and celebrating a diversity of background and experience in its learning community.

As a specialist performing arts institution, from 2006 we shall be charging the maximum level of fee for home/EU full-time undergraduates on all our courses and putting in place a bursary scheme to ensure that this does not have a detrimental effect on our commitment to increasing participation from under-represented groups. We shall provide clear and accessible information about this bursary scheme and other financial support, including specialist advice.

We shall also use additional fee income to initiate and implement a new programme of institution-based outreach work, complementing and strengthening the collaborative partnerships in which we are already involved.

Our approach to learning in Higher Education is based on a continuum from aspiration raising through to supported engagement in the world of work. As an integral part of aspiration raising, we shall promote the fact that additional fee income will be raised and invested primarily for the purpose of making improvements to teaching and student social facilities and the enhancement of key aspects of our practice-led curriculum. This will complement the continuation of our existing commitment to post-entry learning support, to maximise students' potential to progress and succeed both during and after their degree.

This Access Agreement sets out in detail how we will use additional fee income to safeguard and promote fair access and forms part of our Widening Participation and Fair Access Strategy.

#### **Background and context**

Dartington College of Arts' mission is:

- To build upon, sustain and develop our distinctive legacy as a high-quality, small-scale specialist learning community in the creative arts, at the leading edge of innovation in practice-based teaching, research and professional development in contemporary arts practices in performance.
- To provide a strategic and enabling resource for enhanced aspiration and fulfilment, in creative practices and life long learning, for all those capable of benefiting from the Dartington experience, and to add value to the social, cultural and economic life of our region.
- To nurture and sustain distinctive and dependable partnership, through strategic alliances and collaborative initiatives at regional, national and international levels, for the development of our mission within the rapidly changing context of a global framework of higher education in contemporary arts practice.

Our Widening Participation and Fair Access Strategy derives its aims from this mission, namely:

- To provide an equality of opportunity to higher education at Dartington to all those capable of benefiting from it, welcoming and celebrating a diversity of background and experience in the College learning community
- To support learner achievement and fulfilment through an integrated approach to the student life cycle from aspiration raising, pre-entry preparation, fair admissions, first steps in Higher Education, retention and progression through to engagement in the world of work and support for professional development.

and

- To ensure the curriculum and its delivery, staff, structures and systems support these aims, to widen participation from under-represented groups and to benefit all students.

The Widening Participation and Fair Access Strategy is closely linked to the College's other key corporate strategies: Learning & Teaching, Equal Opportunities (including Disability and Race Equality) and Reach out to Business and the Community (including careers education, information and guidance and the promotion of work opportunities), which include compliance with relevant legislation. The Strategy's accompanying action plan is currently being drafted as part of the process of the College's Structural Review.

Dartington College of Arts has a good track record in recruiting mature students, students in receipt of the Disabled Students' Allowance and those from state schools and colleges. We have achieved a significant improvement in recruiting students from lower socio-economic classes, exceeding the benchmarks in 2002-03, and are getting closer to reaching the benchmark for students from low participation neighbourhoods. We have also increased the participation rate of students from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds over the last three years. (See Annex 1).

We are committed to minimising any negative effects on potential students' perceptions of Higher Education and the financial feasibility of study once students have enrolled, that may be caused by the introduction of fees above the standard level, particularly as they affect individuals from groups currently under-represented in HE, and especially those from low-income backgrounds.

### **Level of fees and fee limits**

As a specialist performing arts institution, the College will be charging the maximum fee for all its full-time undergraduate programmes from 2006/07 onwards. This is £3,000 for 2006/07 and will rise with inflation through the regulations published by government each year. Gap year students who defer their places before August 2005 and start in September 2006 will not have to pay the variable part of the tuition fee.

## **Bursaries and other financial support for students**

### *Bursaries*

DCA is committed to the minimum level of bursary support to students on full state support (i.e. the full Higher Education Maintenance Grant) and will target greater support to these students by increasing the value of this bursary to 20% of the full fee. This support will extend to eligible students normally resident in Scotland or Wales as well as England. In 2006/07 this bursary will be worth £600. The bursary will be provided in the form of cash rather than fee remission and increase in line with inflationary increases in the tuition fee.

In addition, from 2007/08, when the additional fee income will increase substantially due to a planned growth in student numbers as well as the basic year on year build, DCA will offer a discretionary scheme of bursaries worth £200 targeted at those students in receipt of partial UK state support. Rather than being tied simply to particular levels of state support, the criteria for support will take into account actual level of parental financial support, travel and accommodation costs. In our experience there is a significant number of students who do not receive the financial support from parents the financial assessment assumes, and therefore experience difficulties that can lead to them leaving their courses. Mature students and those with dependents will also be eligible. Detailed criteria and an accessible, yet robust, application process will be devised and publicised in time for 2007/08 applicants. This discretionary scheme will be kept under annual review in the light of the effects of potentially changing demand.

In addition, outside this access agreement, we shall provide the same discretionary support to non-UK EU students with comparable financial situations. We will also seek to establish an endowment fund from fundraising initiatives to provide an income stream for support of non-EU overseas students.

The College will sign up to the model bursary scheme as devised by the Universities UK (UUK)/Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) advisory group on bursary schemes (see SCOP MM/04/75) to ensure consistent and accurate assessment of eligibility and effective method of payment of the statutory minimum bursary. Decisions on discretionary bursaries will be made alongside applications for Access to Learning bursaries, which are dealt with by a Student Financial Support Panel, supported by the Senior Administrative Assistant: Finance, who specialises in this area.

The College has not provided any bursaries, other than through Access to Learning grants, in the past, so these schemes represent new provision.

### *Other financial support*

We recognise many students will need to have part-time paid employment to support themselves. As well as promoting local work opportunities, we have an active policy on College term-time student employment within Learning Resources, Aimhigher projects and non-medical assistance for students with a disability. Recruitment and selection for these positions (with hours that do not compromise study commitments) is undertaken within the College's Equal Opportunities procedures.

We place great importance on the provision of financial advice and guidance, as even an adequate income cannot guarantee sustainable living if expenditure is not well managed. Our induction programme is being enhanced to include a session on finance, with a self-analysis questionnaire on financial awareness and information on

budgeting. We provide follow-on support for individuals through one-to-one specialist advice and guidance from the Senior Administrative Assistant: Finance. We are also currently seeking funding on a collaborative basis with several other Higher Education Institutions to develop a web-based student financial planning tool-kit.

We shall be enhancing our student leaver interview and anonymous leaver questionnaire procedures to ensure we collect full information on financial matters, monitoring for common issues on which we can take action.

### **Provision of information for students**

We shall provide clear and accessible information on financial matters and support to prospective and existing students covering the following types of content, communication channels and means:

#### Content

- Level of fees and aggregate cost of fees for the duration of the course
- Level and type of bursaries, eligibility and application/payment processes
- Student Loan Company repayment processes (i.e. deferments, eligible salary levels etc)
- Other sources of support within College (e.g. Access to Learning grants)
- Other information sources re funding (e.g. educational grants handbooks, funding databases) and paid work opportunities (e.g. [www.gradsouthwest.com](http://www.gradsouthwest.com), local job centres, internal College advertising)
- Real life student case studies (weekly/termly expenses and sources of income to include range of educational grants, loans, bank arrangements, work, Access to Learning funds)
- Paid work available through College (e.g. Aimhigher student ambassador scheme, Learning Resources employment bank etc)
- Basic budgeting and financial management

#### Communication channels

- Dedicated student finance pages on the College website
- Dedicated student finance section in the College Prospectus
- Promotion and use of Aimhigher print and website material, especially that produced through the Peninsula Programme ([www.gr8choice.org.uk](http://www.gr8choice.org.uk), guide to student finance, alumni profiles, Creative Steps progression website currently in production)
- Finance session within Open Days and Selection Days
- Finance session within Induction programme
- Finance information in the College Information Booklet, Student Handbooks and on the student intranet
- Provision of informed first-level information and signposting through staff within the Student Support and Guidance Network, Academic Advisors and Student Union representatives (supported by regularly updated briefings and training)
- Provision of specialist advice and support through the Senior Administrative Assistant: Finance

#### Communication means

- We are committed to the use of plain English in describing and promoting learning and learning support for students including provision of financial information, advice and guidance
- We undertake to provide information in alternative formats (large print, Braille, audio formats, BSL) where needed
- Staff providing one-to-one financial information will receive further training in communication skills, including listening skills, if necessary

NB Information on fees and bursaries will be given “subject to confirmation” until the Access Agreement is formally approved.

## **Transparency**

We shall also publish, on an annual basis, an analysis of where additional income from fees has been invested in teaching, learning and student social facilities and the enhancement of key aspects of our practice-led curriculum. This will be placed on the website and student intranet, with a summary version in the Prospectus. We will thus actively promote the notion that our students are financial stakeholders in the College with the right to know how fee income is spent.

## **Outreach work**

As small institution, we take an integrated approach to our outreach work. Alongside our schools liaison work, where appropriate we add the value and dimension of widening participation to projects developed through our Reach out to Business and the Community strategy (including projects funded by Higher Education Active Community Fund and Higher Education Innovation Fund). One example of this is a community project with refugees and asylum seekers with artistic, community and economic development aims that has resulted in a participant applying to Higher Education. We work collaboratively within the Aimhigher funded Peninsula Programme and in particular have a significant partnership with Falmouth College of Arts. Our joint project Creative Steps raises the aspirations of young people in and through the creative and performing arts, with a programme of tasters in Higher Education Institutions and Further Education Colleges and workshops in schools and community contexts.

The Director of Enterprise & Participation leads on the development and implementation of the College’s Widening Participation and Fair Access Strategy, liaising closely with institutional colleagues working in marketing, admissions, student support & guidance and subject Fields and with colleagues in Higher, Further and Secondary Education and other agencies across the South West within the regional Aimhigher partnership. Institutional widening participation funds (including the disability premium) support a wide range of measures to support retention and progression including dyslexia testing, specialist learning support and health and welfare.

The current College Structural Review places the enhancement of embedded support for widening participation and fair access at its core. This includes the establishment of the new post of Academic Registrar in 2005, with responsibilities for overseeing the further development of student management information systems and student services. From 2007/08, we shall use additional fee income to support staffing up to the equivalence of a full-time academic post to implement a new programme of outreach activity to enhance the current provision described above.

This programme will draw on best practice from the Creative Steps project (e.g. making use of Student Ambassadors) and comprise four elements:

- Building in-depth relationships with schools within the local area, a minimum of 4 per year, negotiating a programme from a choice of school visits, workshops, staff briefings, attendance at careers evenings, mentoring, tasters at College etc. These schools will be chosen through their widening participation profile (low take up of Higher Education, low income families) and actual and potential engagement with creative and performing arts (i.e. Arts Mark and Specialist Schools status gained or aspired to)
- Building in-depth relationships with Further Education Colleges within the region to develop initiatives promoting progression to our undergraduate programme, a minimum of 2 initiated per year
- Developing the potential of widening participation elements of reach out projects, connections with the network of Arts Education Agencies across the region, and input to the schools work of Dartington Plus, the Arts Council England funded centre of excellence for music and the arts, in which the College is a partner, a minimum of 3 projects per year
- Collaborating with Falmouth College of Arts, targeting outreach in urban areas to reach under-represented groups, especially Black and minority ethnic students, a minimum of 2 projects per year

### **Milestones**

The College will use HEFCE's and HESA's statistical data relating to widening participation to ensure consistency in measuring progress against national benchmarks.

The College's prime aim is to improve recruitment of young, first-degree entrants from low participation neighbourhoods. We also seek to maintain the trend in improvement in recruiting students from NS-SEC Classes 4,5,6 & 7 and to maintain or improve participation by mature students, students in receipt of disabled students' allowance and those from Black and minority ethnic groups.

Specific milestones are:

- To reduce by at least 1% per annum, the number of students leaving their course and not transferring or returning to Higher Education because of financial difficulties
- To improve by at least 1% per annum, the recruitment of young full-time first-degree entrants from low participation neighbourhoods in order to exceed the location adjusted benchmark (2002-03 baseline is 11.4%, with a location-adjusted benchmark of 12.8%)
- To maintain the participation rate of students from NS-SEC Classes 4,5,6 & 7 above the location-adjusted benchmark, each year (2002-03 baseline is 31.1%, with a location-adjusted benchmark of 30.6%)
- To exceed the benchmark for students in receipt of Disabled Student's Allowance, re-gaining previous positive trend in 2000-01 and 2001-02 (2002-03 baseline is 4.4%, with a benchmark of 5.3%)
- To maintain or exceed the participation rate of students from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds (2004-05 rate is 5%, up from 3.2% in 2002-03)
- To maintain the participation of mature full-time undergraduate first degree entrants above the benchmark, each year (2002-03 baseline is 13.4%, with a location-adjusted benchmark of 12.1%)

In addition, when the new outreach programme begins, specific milestones will be set for the number of young people and gatekeepers to be reached, and a methodology devised for ascertaining changes in aspirations and attitudes in relation to entry to Higher Education.

### **Institutional monitoring arrangements**

The College's Enterprise & Participation Committee, a sub-committee of Academic Board, monitors our Widening Participation and Fair Access Strategy. The Committee meets at least three times a year and as well as receiving termly updates on the implementation of the Strategy, formally considers performance indicators relating to widening participation on an annual basis. The Committee is chaired by the Deputy Principal, who also chairs the College's Recruitment and Retention Group. This group meets every three weeks to inform and monitor operational details within its remit, which includes ensuring issues of widening participation and fair access are addressed. The Committee and Group have some shared membership to ensure ongoing links between policy and practice.

From 2006/07, the College undertakes to monitor compliance with the Access Agreement through the Enterprise & Participation Committee, which will review progress against plans and milestones and agree the contents of the annual monitoring report, with a formal sign off by the Principal. The Committee will also discuss any major proposed amendments to the Access Agreement, with recommendations made to Academic Board and/or the Board of Governors as appropriate, prior to the submission of a variation for the agreement to OFFA.

## Annex 1

## Performance Indicator and Ethnic Origin Tables

## Performance Indicator Tables

Source: HESA Performance Indicators in Higher Education in the UK

**Table T1 a : Participation of under-represented groups in higher education**  
**Young full-time first degree entrants 1999-2003**

Year	Total entrants	Number of young entrants	Percent entrants who are young	From state schools or colleges				From NS-SEC Classes 4,5,6 & 7 (formerly Social Class IIIM, IV, V)				From low participation neighbourhoods						
				Percent with known data	Percent from group	Benchmark	Std dev	Location adjusted benchmark	Percent with known data	Percent from group	Benchmark	Std dev	Location adjusted benchmark	Percent with known data	Percent from group	Benchmark	Std dev	Location adjusted benchmark
			%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
1999-2000	156	99	64	81	<b>99</b>	<b>95</b>		<b>94</b>	88	<b>23</b>	<b>29</b>		<b>26</b>	98	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>		<b>12</b>
2000-2001	120	78	65	72	<b>93</b>	<b>94</b>		<b>93</b>	83	<b>15</b>	<b>26</b>		<b>25</b>	100	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>		<b>10</b>
2001-2002	155	107	69	82	<b>98</b>	<b>94</b>		<b>94</b>	88	<b>23</b>	<b>26</b>		<b>25</b>	96	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>		<b>11</b>
2002-2003	115	85	71.8	76.2	<b>93.8</b>	<b>92.6</b>		<b>91.8</b>	72.6	<b>31.1</b>	<b>30.6</b>		<b>28.8</b>	94.0	<b>11.4</b>	<b>14.6</b>		<b>12.8</b>

**Table T2 a : Participation of under-represented groups in higher education**  
**Mature full-time undergraduate entrants 1999-2003**

Year	First degree entrants								All undergraduate entrants							
	Total degree entrants	Number of mature entrants	Percent entrants who are mature	Percent with known data	No previous HE & from low part. neighb'd	Benchmark	Std dev	Location adjusted benchmark	Total UG entrants	Number of mature entrants	Percent entrants who are mature	Percent with known data	No previous HE & from low part. neighb'd	Benchmark	Std dev	Location adjusted benchmark
			%	%	%	%	%	%			%	%	%	%	%	%
1999-2000	156	57	37	95	13	<b>12</b>	4.4		156	57	37	95	13	<b>12</b>	4.5	
2000-2001	120	42	35	100	5	<b>13</b>		<b>8</b>	120	42	35	100	5	<b>12</b>		<b>8</b>
2001-2002	155	48	31	100	8	<b>13</b>		<b>11</b>	155	48	31	100	8	<b>13</b>		<b>11</b>
2002-2003	115	35	28.2	93.9	6.5	<b>13.4</b>		<b>12.1</b>	115	35	28.2	93.9	6.5	<b>13.2</b>		<b>12.4</b>

**Table T7: Participation of students in higher education who are in receipt of Disabled Student's Allowance  
All undergraduate students 2000-2003**

Year	Full-time first degree			Full-time undergraduate			Part-time undergraduate *		
	Total students	Percent from group	Benchmark	Total students	Percent from group	Benchmark	Total students	Percent from group	Benchmark
		%	%		%	%		%	%
2000-2001	357	3.1	3.0	357	3.1	3.0			
2001-2002	378	5.0	4.0	378	5.0	3.9			
2002-2003	365	4.4	5.3	365	4.4	5.1	0		

**Ethnic Origin 2002-2005**

Source: Dartington College of Arts Student Enrolment Records

Code	Origin Description	2004-05	2003-04	2002-03
10	White	0	0	2
11	White - British	171	155	131
12	White - Irish	3	2	3
13	White Scottish	1	0	0
19	Other White background	19	16	12
21	Black or Black British - Caribbean	1	0	0
29	Other Black background	1	0	1
31	Asian or Asian British - Indian	1	2	0
32	Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	1	0
34	Chinese	0	1	1
39	Other Asian background	1	1	0
41	Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
43	Mixed - White and Asian	1	0	2
49	Other Mixed background	1	1	0
80	Other Ethnic background	3	3	1
90	Not known	7	6	2
98	Information refused	0	0	3
		<b>212</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>156</b>