

University College Falmouth Access Agreement 2006 – 2011

1 Introduction

- 1.1 University College Falmouth (the Institution) is committed to widening access both to its programmes of study and to Higher Education (HE) in general.
- 1.2 The Institution recognises that particular groups of students, who are under-represented in HE, may be further deterred from entering HE by higher fee rates.
- 1.3 The Institution also recognises that, whilst it has a good record of recruiting disabled and mature students and students from the state sector, the introduction of higher fees means this recruitment pattern is not guaranteed.
- 1.4 The Institution, therefore, presents this Agreement to outline its plans for higher fees, for greater financial support for all¹ Home and EU students, for increased outreach work and a strategy for clear publicity and information relating to higher fees and financial support at the Institution, over the next five years.
- 1.5 This Agreement will make up part of the Institution's new Widening Participation Strategy, which is currently being rewritten to incorporate changes in the Institutional structure. It is envisaged that along with this document it will also integrate relevant parts of the Institution's Learning and Teaching Strategy and its Policies for Equal Opportunities, Race Relations and Mental Health.



2 Fees

- 2.1 The Institution intends to charge the higher fee (£3,000 per year) for all its undergraduate programmes of study².
- 2.2 The Institution intends to implement these charges from 2006/07.
- 2.3 These fees will not be charged to any student who commences their studies at the Institution before 1st September 2006 or to those students who choose to take a gap year in 2005/06.
- 2.4 The higher fee will cover materials and studio charges for which students previously paid.

¹ For the purposes of this agreement, the term students applies to Full time UK and EU undergraduate students only.

² See Appendix 1 for a full list of undergraduate programmes

3 Bursaries

- 3.1 The Institution has closely examined its student demographic in preparation for this Agreement and has based its bursary allocation upon supporting as many students as possible.
- 3.2 The Institution, in doing so, is recognising the differing needs for particular groups of students. The Institution believes that for those students in the lowest income bracket the main barriers to HE are not only financial but also include knowledge of opportunities and limited aspirations.
- 3.3 Therefore for the lowest income group, whilst additional financial support is provided, it is envisaged that extra funds will also be redirected for outreach and raising aspirations.
- 3.4 The Institution's bursary policy will, therefore, be operated as follows:
- 3.4.1 The Institution has decided to extend the eligibility for the statutory bursary of £300 to all students who have annual household incomes of below £21,000 rather than below £15,200.
- 3.4.2 In addition to the annual £300 statutory bursary students whose household income is below £21,000 will also be awarded an annual top-up bursary of £200.
- 3.4.3 Students whose household income is £21,000 – £37,425 will be awarded an annual fixed bursary of £200.
- 3.4.4 In recognition of the College's geographical location the Institution will award all students whose household income is below £21,000 an annual travel bursary of £175.
- 3.4.5 Students with a household income of £21,000 - £37,425 will be awarded an annual travel bursary of £125.
- 3.4.6 All students with dependants³ will be awarded an annual £250 bursary.
- 3.4.7 The increased fee will cover other costs that students have previously paid, in addition to the tuition fee, which are a materials cost and either an equipment charge or a studio charge dependant on their programme of study. This results in an average saving of £80 per annum for students. Students will still be liable for personal printing costs.
- 3.5 This table illustrates the type and value of bursaries and financial support available to students on an annual basis. Please note the dependants' bursary is subject to proof of dependency.

³ For the purposes of this Agreement, 'dependants' are defined as *"any relative for whom students are the primary carers"*. Proof, such as Benefit books, will be required in order to claim this award.

Income bracket per annum	Statutory bursary	Fixed bursary	Travel bursary	Dependants' bursary (when applicable)	Studio/ equipment cost covered by Institution
< £21,000	£300	£200	£175	£250	£80
£21,000 - £37,425	X	£200	£125	£250	£80

- 3.6 These bursaries will be administered alongside the Institution's Access to Learning Fund and any other bursaries the Institution may have on offer.
- 3.7 The Institution will appoint highly trained staff to administer the bursaries.
- 3.8 These dedicated staff will also administer the Institution's Access to Learning Fund, providing a coherent and simple process for all students in need of financial support.
- 3.9 The Institution recognises that it has a responsibility to help all students access the support to which they are entitled.
- 3.10 In respect of this the Institution will provide one-to-one advisory sessions, telephone and email help lines and will offer "bursary advice" training to a number of other staff already engaged in the student support area (Student Services, Student Union etc). These actions will run alongside the Institution's bursary publicity and promotional work outlined in section 6 of this document.
- 3.11 These bursaries will account for up to 26%⁴ of the Institution's additional income based on predicted student numbers from 2006/07.
- 3.12 In addition to these bursaries the Institution will assist students not covered in the Agreement through Aspiration Raising and Marketing budgets.

4 Outreach Activities

- 4.1 The Institution is already engaged in outreach activities, including work done by the Widening Participation Office, its engagement with the Aimhigher programme and the National Specialist Summer School programme, through the Active Community Fund and through individual programme/department activity.
- 4.2 The Institution is also a lead partner in the Combined Universities in Cornwall initiative, which involves articulation arrangements with partner colleges along with innovative collaborations.
- 4.3 The Institution will continue to undertake such activities but will enhance its provision through a number of new initiatives funded by additional fee income.

⁴ Predicted amounts: 2006/07 – 26%, 2007/08 – 25%, 2008/09 – 26%, 2009/10 – 26%, 2010/11 – 27%

- 4.4 The Institution will initially channel the additional outreach activity in two main areas:
- i) Outreach in urban areas
 - ii) Outreach in the local area (Cornwall)
- 4.5 Outreach in urban areas will initially take the form of five school visits per year by staff and students, including portfolio advice and awareness raising initiatives.
- 4.6 The Institution will identify ten FE Colleges and VI Forms who traditionally do not have a positive conversion rate to our programmes and seek to reverse this by creating informative and progressive links with those providers mainly through staff visits.
- 4.7 Elements of this outreach work will happen in collaboration with Dartington College of Arts, building upon our joint work under the Aimhigher initiative (subject to the current levels of Aimhigher funding continuing.)
- 4.8 Building on the more local outreach work undertaken by the Institution (Active Community Fund, Aimhigher – Peninsula Programme and WP funded activities⁵) we shall develop more formal staff links with the related departments in, initially, four local schools and three FE Colleges.
- 4.9 The Institution will build upon links made with local community groups and organisations such as the Tate St Ives, Cornwall LEA and Carrick Housing to reach a wider audience through four additional community based projects per year.
- 4.10 The Institution will monitor all outreach work and evaluate its effectiveness on an annual basis. Attitudinal change will be monitored through the analysis of questionnaire data.

5 Milestones

- 5.1 The Institution recognises the need to monitor and evaluate its efforts to widen access.
- 5.2 The Institution will use HEFCE's benchmarks⁶ as a base for its own milestones in addition to setting new milestones for outreach activity and application rates.
- 5.3 The Institution is the sector leader in attracting students with a disability and has an excellent track record in attracting mature students and those from the state sector⁵ and intends to maintain these successful levels of recruitment.
- 5.4 With this in mind the following milestones will be set:
- 5.4.1 The Institution aims to improve its recruitment of young, first-degree entrants from Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPNs) and students from minority ethnic groups as priority targets.

⁵ This level of provision will continue as long as current levels of funding for each area (Aimhigher, ACF and institutional WP funding) are sustained.

⁶ See Appendix 2 for HEFCE Statistical Data for the Institution and comparable institutions.

- 5.4.2 Currently the Institution has 9% of students from LPNs. We aim to achieve our location adjusted benchmark of 10% by 2007/08 and continue to improve by at least 1% per annum until we exceed our non-adjusted benchmark of 12% by 2010/11.
- 5.4.3 Currently the Institution has 2.2%⁷ of its HE undergraduate students from Minority Ethnic backgrounds.
- 5.4.4 The Institution will aim to increase the number of applicants from Minority Ethnic groups to its HE undergraduate programmes by 1% by 2007/08 and to see that figure move towards achieving 5%. Whilst these figures may seem low, please note that the Institution is situated in an area with a very low Minority Ethnic population.
- 5.4.5 These milestones are set in conjunction with the Institution's Race Relations Policy and Action Plan⁸
- 5.5 The Institution's Widening Participation Committee, Academic Board and Strategic Management Executive will formally monitor progress towards these milestones. They will be informed by reports from Registry, Marketing, Finance and Widening Participation departments and through the annual HESA⁹ returns.
- 5.6 An annual report and review of the Access Agreement will be made to the Board of Governors.

6 Publicity

- 6.1 The Institution is aware that all potential students and, in some cases, their parents need to be able to access clear and accurate information about the financial support available to them.
- 6.2 This includes both the Institutional support and other external sources of financial support for which they may be eligible.
- 6.3 The Institution will publish a 'Financial Guide' for students and their parents in paper format, which will also be available in large print, Braille, audio etc for those students who may require it.
- 6.4 This will also be published on the Institution's website.
- 6.5 The Institution will also produce a 'bursary calculator' tool on its website to help students estimate the amount of support they would be entitled to from the Institution at the point of enquiry.
- 6.6 The Institution will run special "bursary advice" sessions as a part of its Institutional Open Days, with specialist staff on hand to answer questions.

⁷ Figure taken from the Institution's Annual Monitoring Report (July 2004), Schedule G1.

⁸ See Appendix 3 for the Institution's Race Relations Policy.

⁹ Higher Education Statistics Agency

- 6.7 The Financial Guide will also be available and promoted to potential applicants at Open Days.
- 6.8 The Institution will clearly set out its proposed fee-levels and financial support arrangements for students in its prospectus.¹⁰
- 6.9 The Institution will publish a number of 'case-studies' to illustrate the level of support particular groups of students would be entitled to.
- 6.10 The Institution will make explicit, through the means outlined above, the total predicted cost of tuition for potential applicants.
- 6.11 All 'front-line' staff will receive regular updates and offered training on the new financial arrangements for students to ensure good practice.
- 6.12 The Institution is committed to using 'plain English' for all its promotional materials including that, which relates to increased fees and financial support.

Should you have any questions or queries relating to this document please use the following contact details in the first instance:

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¹⁰ For 06/07 this information will carry a disclaimer, as copy will have gone to print before the Institution has been told if Ofpa has accepted this agreement.