

UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON

ACCESS AGREEMENT

2006/07 – 2008/09

1. Fee Limits

From 2006/07 the University will charge a tuition fee of £3,000 per year for Home/EU students on its full-time and sandwich undergraduate degree programmes (with the exception of Foundation Degrees).

The fee of £3,000 is expected to rise with inflation.

The £3,000 fee will not apply to 2006 entrants who have had a gap year during 2005/06 (under the definitions to be published by DfES). These students will be required to contribute to the appropriate standard fee for their course, i.e. around £1,200 with the contribution depending on the level of their family income.

Currently the University envisages that the fee level to be charged for full-time HND and Foundation Degree programmes in 2006/07 will remain at the pre 2006 standard fee level, plus inflation.

2. Bursaries and other Financial Support

Arrangements for payment of minimum standard bursaries

Assuming the continuance of current recruitment patterns, the University anticipates that around 50% of its student entrants in 2006/07 will qualify for the maximum Higher Education Grant (HEG) of £2,700 p.a. We will provide these students with an additional bursary of £300 p.a.

In the light of the large numbers involved, the University supports proposals for the national assessment and payment of the above bursary on the institution's behalf by the Student Loans Company. Accordingly, the University intends to sign up to the model bursary scheme as devised by Universities UK (UUK) and the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP).

The University is fully committed to increasing the amount of minimum bursary paid on its behalf by SLC by the same inflation factor applicable to the £3,000 undergraduate course fee.

Additional 'University of Wolverhampton' Student Financial Support Schemes

From 2006/07 the University will provide a new package of additional financial support comprising a combination of bursaries and fee discounts aimed at those with relatively low family incomes who will receive only partial state support, and prospective students from low participation backgrounds.

Start-Right Bursary Scheme

Where the fee charged for a course is £3,000 this scheme offers a cash-in-hand level playing field for all entrants qualifying for some level of HE Grant (other than the maximum) by providing a cash supplement which 'reduces the gap' between an individual's grant entitlement and the fee level, e.g. a student enrolling on a full-time undergraduate degree course costing £3,000 and having been assessed as eligible for an HE Grant of £1,700, would receive a further £1,300 from the University under the 'Start-Right' scheme. The University currently envisages a maximum supplement of £2,150 payable under this arrangement.

The scheme sets out to ensure that all entrants from relatively low income backgrounds start each academic year with a cash resource (whether provided by Government grant or University bursary) approaching that of their course fee.

Based on the proportion of the University's students who are currently paying something towards the present tuition fee, i.e. would be eligible for only proportional grant support under the new system, the University estimates that by 2008/09 between 1,300 and 2,500 students could be in receipt of a Start-Right bursary.

Regional Fee Discount Scheme

Where the fee levied for a course is £3,000 this regional (West Midlands) scheme provides a £1,000 discount on first year tuition fees for young people approaching higher education via the Aimhigher route.

To be eligible for the scheme prospective students must be confirmed as having participated in a number of Aimhigher, aspiration-raising activities organised in any of the six Aimhigher sub regions in the West Midlands, i.e. Black Country; Birmingham and Solihull; Coventry and Warwickshire; Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin; Hereford and Worcestershire; Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

Qualifying activities will include taster events promoting understanding of subjects, the development of independent learning skills, as well as 'lifestyle' activities that convey a sense of what it is like to be a student in higher education. Normally learners will have participated in Aimhigher activities equivalent to 15 hours learning.

Aimhigher targets learners who are under-represented in higher education (both in terms of the institutions engaged and the individual pupils within those institutions). This discount scheme therefore also targets under-represented groups and provides an additional financial dimension to the University's existing Widening Participation/Schools Liaison agenda.

National funding for the Aimhigher initiative currently runs to March 2006. If, for any reason, the initiative was to be discontinued in its present form the University will safeguard the regional fee discount offer by linking eligibility to participation in its own established range of awareness and aspiration building activities, as detailed in its HEFCE Annual Monitoring Statement under 'Widening Access and Participation'.

Based on current geographical recruitment patterns for this age group, and estimates of the proportion participating in Aimhigher initiatives across the West Midlands, the University expects around 1,500 students to benefit from the Fee Discount Scheme in 2006/07.

Inter-relationship between the Schemes

The Start-Right bursary scheme and the Regional Fee Discount schemes are seen as being entirely separate, i.e. a regional pupil applying to the University from an Aimhigher background with a grant assessment below the maximum, would receive both the fee discount of £1,000 from the first year's fees of a course costing £3,000, and a Start-Right bursary amounting to the difference between their grant and the fee level (up to an envisaged maximum of £2,150).

The two schemes in combination thus focus financial support on the most vulnerable groups in terms of financial need and group under-representation.

3. Outreach Activity

The University has a long-term commitment to access and widening participation and has consistently surpassed its benchmarks in national HEFCE performance indicators for the recruitment of full-time undergraduate entrants from poor socio/economic groups and ethnic minorities (see Section 6 – Milestones and Objectives).

In its institutional audit report on the University, published by the Quality Assurance Agency in March 2004, particular attention was given to the ways in which the University had responded to, and continues to respond to, the challenges of Widening Participation (Thematic Enquiry pp 29-31). The QAA report states that:

"The solutions generated and areas identified for future enhancements may contain lessons for the higher education sector as a whole. Of particular note is... the pro-active way the University has worked with its regional education partners and regional agencies to raise aspirations and facilitate entry into higher education..." (Institutional Audit Report p.31 para 240)

The University will maintain and further extend its aspiration building activities during the period covered by its Access Agreement, building upon the programme of events and initiatives detailed in its current HEFCE Annual Monitoring Statement under 'Widening Access and Participation'.

The attached table, included under Milestones and Objectives, is illustrative of the range and nature of Outreach activity undertaken (existing and new), and provides information on the groups targeted and the reach of specific initiatives.

The briefing of advisers and influencers on changing national and University specific financial support arrangements is seen as a vital element of Outreach work. There is, therefore, a cross-referencing of activities categorised under Outreach work and those detailed under Section 4, the 'provision of information to students'.

4. Provision of Information to Students (and their advisers)

A comprehensive and ongoing communications strategy has been designed for launch early in 2005 which targets advisers as well as prospective and current students. It sets out to utilise a broad range of communication vehicles to provide pro-active, customised advice, information and guidance in a variety of settings.

In addition to ensuring a supply of printed and 'real-time' electronic sources of information, the Wolverhampton strategy puts great emphasis on the need to provide year-on-year personalised briefings via conferences, seminars, advice clinics and bespoke presentations geared to specific local audiences.

Website: A key vehicle for disseminating the latest information as quickly as possible. The University will build on existing finance pages and enhance their visibility via a direct and clear banner link from the University's home page. A memorable address has been designated, i.e. www.wlv.ac.uk/money which will appear on all publicity material. The updated money section itself will contain bespoke pages for advisers and parents. It is expected to have the enhanced website money pages in place by April 2005.

Prospectus: Expected to remain a key vehicle for imparting financial, as well as course, information to prospective students. Also continues as a major reference source for intermediary advisers (Careers Advisers, Connexions staff, teachers). The current 2005 prospectus offers a comprehensive summary of the financial regime for 2005/06, including details of grant and loan availability, repayment information, help for particular groups, the Access to Learning Fund, plus a living expenses budget planner. The 2006 prospectus will build on this to set out clearly the costs students can realistically be expected to budget for, both in terms of course related costs and living expenses. It will describe in detail the sources and terms of additional financial support covering national entitlements and the fee discount and bursary schemes unique to Wolverhampton (initially statements on the latter will carry a 'subject to approval by OFFA' caveat). Readers will be referred to the website for the most up-to-date information and contact details for the University's team of Education Guidance Officers will continue to be provided.

Specialised Student Finance Publications: These allow a more detailed coverage than there is space for in the prospectus, and will include worked examples. Tailored versions for prospective students and advisers will be produced from early 2005 building on the University's existing 'Money Matters' leaflets. Publications will be disseminated in enquirer packs sent out by the University's 'call centre' style Central Despatch Unit; via the Schools & Colleges Liaison service (during visits, presentations and activities within regional feeder institutions); the University's High Street-based Higher Education Shop (which handles some 5,000 visitors per year); and the University's series of corporate Open Days in June, August, September and November.

Briefings for Advisers: From March 2005 the University will offer a series of half-day conferences for groups such as regional Connexions personal advisers, teaching staff in schools with responsibility for careers guidance and student services staff in local colleges of further education. Questions and answer sessions will be run by the University's expert education guidance officers and all delegates will receive conference packs containing briefing notes, references to our website information resource, and copies of our specialist financial publications. Head teachers, heads of year, etc. will be offered the opportunity to book bespoke presentations to help inform school governors, parents and other teaching staff.

Briefings for the General Public: Pre-advertised day, evening and weekend advice clinics will be organised via the University's HE Shop facility. These will augment the financial presentations already offered in the context of Open Days, the School/College adviser visit schedule, and the well established and heavily used HE Shop individual appointment and 'drop-in' system.

University Staff Briefings: It is vitally important that all University staff give out accurate information about the national and local situation. The University will therefore organise a series of briefings during 2005 for both academic and non-academic support staff and utilise the University's electronic newsletter and website finance pages to keep staff information up-to-date. Finance briefings will feature from 2005 in the induction programmes for all newly appointed academic staff.

5. Monitoring Arrangements

Progress against targets for Outreach activities forms part of the University's HEFCE Annual Monitoring Statement under 'Widening Access and Participation'. From 2006/07 this statement will encompass all aspects of the University's Access Agreement.

From 2006/07 Aimhigher financial and enrolment data will be used to monitor the take up of the Fee Discount Scheme and its impact on: a) participation in Aimhigher activities b) progression into higher education.

The take up of the Start-Right bursary will be clear from finance records, but focus groups of new entrants will be used to assess the significance of the finance support package on entry to higher education decision making.

Procedures are in place to monitor the effectiveness of specific Outreach activities (i.e. via participant evaluation questionnaires and focus groups) and feedback is incorporated into regular Schools/Colleges Liaison activity reports presented to the University's Executive.

The effectiveness of key elements of the University's strategy for providing financial information to students and their advisers will also be monitored via user evaluation return postcards (as currently used to obtain general feedback on the prospectus), monitoring of usage of specific web pages, event evaluation questionnaires, and so on. Procedures are in place to ensure, where possible, the currency of financial information published.

Overall monitoring of the University's performance in attracting applications from and recruiting under-represented groups will continue to be via a combination of published HESA data (measuring performance against benchmarks) and UCAS/institutional data on applicant profiles analysed by ethnicity, socio/economic and occupational groups, postcode and previous institution. This data will provide the major measure of progress towards the Milestone/Objective of maintaining a performance significantly above benchmark for social inclusion, despite the possible deterrent effect of top-up fees.

Annual reports on the schemes covered by the Access Agreement, including a review of progress made towards the targets set out above, will be made to Academic Board and the Board of Governors. The reports will be drawn up by an Access Agreement Review Group, chaired by the Registrar, which will include Students' Union representation.

The challenge for the University of Wolverhampton is to maintain its existing excellent widening participation profiles and its recruitment of students from disadvantaged groups, under new market conditions.

UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON ACCESS AGREEMENT – MILESTONES & OBJECTIVES

Definition	Source	Base Year 2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	Objectives
<u>Entrant Profile</u> <u>(Successful Applicants)</u> % of young first year full-time under-graduates (Base Year figure reflects projection of known HESA data)	HEFCE PIs	51.5 (Benchmark : 37.3) (Location Adjusted : 41.1)	50	47	50	50	To maintain performance above benchmark
1. % from NS-SEC socio/ economic groups 4, 5, 6, 7							
2. % from low participation neighbourhoods		25.6 (Benchmark : 16.9) (Location Adjusted : 19.7)	27	28	29	30	To steadily increase participation rates via Outreach
<u>Applicant Profile</u> % of total applicants with known classifications	UCAS	36	36	36	36	36	Maintain at current level.
1. % from NS-SEC socio/ economic groups 4, 5, 6, 7							
2. % from Ethnic Minority Groups		34	34	34	34	34	Maintain at current level.
<u>Delivery of Outreach Activities</u>	Institutional Record and Performance Reviews	see attached tables	annual cycle (as detailed)	*annual cycle	*annual cycle	*annual cycle	To maintain annual targets for numbers of pupils, institutions engaged and events delivered

* Assuming Aimhigher initiative continues beyond 2006

UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON ACCESS AGREEMENT – OUTREACH WORK

Type of Activity (Annual Cycle)	Target Group	Reach of Activity (per year)	New or Extension
Learner Information Strategy – i) visits to regional schools/colleges to conduct ‘finance clinics’ with learners ii) ‘finance ‘clinics’ in HE shop week-ends/evenings	Learners in Years 11 – 13 and equivalent in colleges Mature students Parents and public	1,250 learners 90 Schools 12 FE colleges 250-400 parents	New activity to inform learners about new HE finance arrangements
Advisers’ Information Strategy – presentations to staff team meetings informing ‘key influencers’ about HE finance. Supported Conferences and Workshops	Connexions Personal Advisers, Schools and colleges guidance staff, teachers, LEA officers	200 ‘key influencers’	New activity to inform learners about new HE finance arrangements
University Campus Visits – learners gain a taste of University life, meet students and experience different areas of learning. Many activities developed through Aimhigher partnership arrangements	Learners in Years 9 – 13 Mature students	1800 learners	Extension of existing activities
Access to Further and Higher Education: Information, awareness and HE taster sessions supported by guidance and HE finance ‘clinics’	Pre-Access and Access students on FE programmes	300 learners 10 Further Education Colleges	New activity
Mentoring Programme – University students support targeted learners in schools/colleges to provide encouragement, improve confidence, raise aspiration	Learners in Years 10 -13	40 mentors working with 160 – 180 learners	Development of existing activity
Schools and Colleges’ Presentations – increase awareness about HE options and applications process	Learners in Years 10 – 13 Mature students	80 – 100 schools/colleges visited 1600 learners	Existing activity
Careers and Parents’ Evenings – presentations and advice surgeries to learners and parents about HE routes	Learners in Years 10 – 13 Mature students	40 – 60 schools/colleges visited 900 learners 350 – 400 parents	Existing activity

Type of Activity (Annual Cycle)	Target Group	Reach of Activity (per year)	New or Extension
Compact Arrangements – Choose A Real Deal (CARD): Partnership activity with Aimhigher Aspiration-raising activities with targeted learners combined with a guarantee of a place in HE subject to fulfilment of goals	Learners at 14 (Year 9) who are able to benefit from an HE pathway. Particular focus on 'HE interventions' for those without HE family background	Piloted in 18 Wolverhampton LEA schools from January 2005 3000 learners on CARD – 25-30% accessing HE activities Anticipated extension to Black Country schools and possibly other West Midlands sub-regions	Extension of existing activity
Aimhigher and HEFCE supported Summer Schools – residential activities that build confidence, raise awareness and provide an HE experience.	Year 11 learners with no family background in HE	210 places offered regionally nationally to targeted learners in schools	Extension of existing activity
Children's University – project work and awareness raising about HE.	Year 6 learners in primary schools in former Education Action Zone.	200 places offered to primary schools in Telford and Wrekin LEA	Existing activity.
University of Wolverhampton 'Learn-In' – Awareness raising and experience of HE	Year 9 learners in secondary schools, particularly those with no family HE experience	120 learners 16 – 20 schools in Telford and Wrekin and Black Country	Existing activity
Easter GCSE Revision Courses – intensive tuition in different subjects combined with exam practice	Year 11 pupils identified as borderline 'C/D' grade	40 learners 6 schools	Existing activity