

ACCESS AGREEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION.

This Access Agreement covers two academic years commencing September 2006. It will apply to full-time undergraduate students who enrol at the College in either 2006/07 or 2007/08 for the duration of their programme. For example, a student who enrolls on a three-year degree BA programme in 2006/07, who is eligible for a College Bursary, will receive that Bursary each year (subject to them retaining their eligibility) until they complete the programme in 2008/09 (unless they leave the programme earlier). Eligible students who enrol on a Foundation degree in 2006/07 and complete in 2007/08, before transferring to the final year of a BA programme at the College, will receive a College Bursary in 2006/07 and (subject to them retaining their eligibility) 2007/08. Eligibility for a Bursary for the final year of the BA programme in 2008/09 will be determined in accordance with the new Access Agreement that will be in place in for 2008/09. Students who defer their places before 1 August 2005 and start their programmes in September 2006 will not be required to pay the variable fees set out in the Agreement but they may be required to pay or contribute to the standard tuition fee (£1,175 in 2005/06) depending on the level of their household income.

The Agreement is intended to meet the requirements of the Higher Education Act (2004) for institutions intending to charge variable tuition fees for full-time undergraduate programmes from 2006/07 to safeguard and promote fair access; in particular for students from low-income groups.

The Agreement, which has been approved by the Office for Fair Access (OFFA), sets out:

- a) The tuition fees the College intends to charge Home/EU students for full-time undergraduate programmes from September 2006.
- b) The amounts of the additional fee income the College will spend on access measures for students from under-represented groups.
- c) The objectives the College has established to further improve access to its programmes by students from low-income households and those from other under-represented groups and the milestones it will use to monitor performance.
- d) How the College will inform prospective and existing students about these arrangements.

2. BACKGROUND.

The College is fully committed to widening participation in Higher Education and to providing access to its programmes by those with the ability and

commitment to succeed, regardless of their economic, social or ethnic background. In addition, the College welcomes students with a range of physical and sensory disabilities and supports them to gain maximum benefit from their studies.

Analysis of the College's 2003/04 enrolment data (the most recent fully audited data available) confirms that much has already been achieved in terms of fair access.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has published data¹ showing that 93.9% of our entrants came from state schools/colleges. Of our young full-time first degree entrants, 40% came from socio-economic classes 4 to 7 (national average 27.9%). Nearly 20% of young full-time undergraduate entrants came from low participation neighbourhoods (national average 13.0%). Over 22% of mature full-time first degree entrants came from low participation neighbourhoods and from families with no previous experience of Higher Education (national average 13.8%).

In these categories the College performed significantly better than the national average and at, or better than, the benchmarks established for the College by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

The College's own analysis of recruitment by ethnicity for 2003/04 indicates that participation by minority ethnic groups was significantly higher than national averages². In terms of students in receipt of a Disabled Students' Allowance, the College is committed to increasing participation from the current level of 0.9% (national average 2.6%).

Although the College can be justifiably proud of its record to date, still more can be achieved utilising a proportion of the additional funds available as a result of the introduction of variable fees from September 2006.

¹ Source: *Performance Indicators in Higher Education in the UK 2002/03- Higher Education Funding Council for England (September 2004)*.

² Source: *Key Statistics for Local Authorities – 2001 Census*.

3. FULL-TIME UNDERGRADUATE TUITION FEE LIMITS FOR 2006/07 AND 2007/08.

| | £ |
|---|----------|
| All full-time undergraduate programmes (except for Year 0 of programmes). | 3,000 |
| Year 0 of programmes. (Students on full or half year industrial placements, will not be charged a tuition fee for the placement period). | 1,200 |

The College will charge the above fees from September 2006. However, it is expected that, in subsequent years, these fees will rise with inflation through regulations published by the Government annually.

4. AMOUNTS OF ADDITIONAL FEE INCOME TO BE SPENT ON ACCESS MEASURES.

Of the additional monies generated by charging a £3,000 fee to Home and EU students on full-time undergraduate programmes, the College intends to allocate 35.5% (approximately £765,000) to access measures in 2006/07 and 31.2% (approximately £1,100,000) in 2007/08. The access measures to be implemented from 2006/07 are detailed in sections 5 and 7 of this agreement.

5. BURSARIES AND OTHER FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS.

BURSARIES.

From 2006/07 a Bursary Scheme will be introduced to target students on full-time undergraduate programmes from low-income households; those from low participation neighbourhoods and the disabled. The Scheme will be a cash award scheme and will operate as follows:

- a) Students with household incomes of £17,500³ or less (including single, independent students) will receive a Bursary of **£1,000 per annum**. It can be seen therefore that those students in receipt of the full New Maintenance Grant (NMG) of £2,700 (as it will exist in 2006) will be able to meet the difference between the NMG and the tuition fee and, in addition, receive £700 towards the cost of living.
- b) Students with household incomes of between £17,501 and £26,499³ (including single, independent students) will receive a Bursary of **£600 per annum**.
- c) Students with household incomes between £26,500 and £37,425³ (including single, independent students) will receive a Bursary of **£300 per annum**.

Those full-time students on undergraduate programmes in receipt of a Disabled Students' Living Allowance will receive a Bursary of **£1,500 per annum** regardless of household income.

Bursaries will be paid in three instalments in November, March and June each year.

The Bursaries outlined above will rise each year in line with the inflation figure, in relation to fee limits, published through regulation annually by the Government.

The College intends to sign up to the model bursary scheme as devised by Universities UK (UUK) and the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP).

³ Source: 'Student Maintenance Package for 2006/07 (including New Maintenance Grant)' - DfES SSIN 06/06 (August 2005).

OTHER FINANCIAL SUPPORT.

Student Hardship Funds.

An additional £20,000 will be added, annually, to the College's John Slaughter Memorial Fund in 2006/07 and further monies will be allocated in subsequent years. The Fund, established in memory of a former student, provides targeted financial support to students facing financial hardship.

6. PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO STUDENTS.

Information regarding bursaries and other financial support available to students is posted on the College's web site at www.bcftcs.ac.uk (Student Support section). A leaflet, setting out detailed information about fee levels, bursaries and other financial support available from the College, will be sent to all applicants. In addition, a students finance session will be added to the programme for each HE Open Day and Progression Evening, enabling prospective students to hear, first hand, about the support available and to ask specific questions. Students requiring more detailed information and/or advice should contact the Student Services Manager in the Student Information Suite on the 7th floor of the Summer Row site or by telephone on 0121 604 1000 Ext 230.

This Access Agreement is also published on the Office for Fair Access web site at www.offa.org.uk. Details of the financial support available at the College will be posted on the UCAS web site at www.ucas.com - institutional code B35.

Further information on student support can also be found on the Department for Education and Skills web site at www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport and the Student Loan Company's web site www.slc.co.uk.

7. OUTREACH WORK.

The College is actively involved in a range of outreach activities aimed at promoting the benefits of Higher Education and encouraging participation from under-represented groups. This work currently includes active involvement in local and regional AimHigher initiatives as well as specific projects with local schools and community organisations. From September 2006 a number of these initiatives will be expanded and additional activities will be established. During 2006/07 these initiatives/activities can be summarised as follows:

- a) Appointment of a Community Provision Manager. The post holder will work with community-based organisations to raise the aspirations of local people through the provision of accessible Higher Education programmes in 10 localities.
- b) Extension of the Pupil Mentoring Scheme. A further 20 Higher Education students from the College will be paired with Year 10 and 11 pupils in local schools to improve the attainment of those pupils and to raise aspirations of progression into Higher Education.

- c) Work with 8 new key local employers to carry out skills audits of management and technical staff, leading to the creation and implementation of tailored Foundation Degree programmes aimed at increasing take up of part-time undergraduate provision.
- d) The College will offer an additional 300 Year 10 and 11 pupils opportunities to be exposed to the Higher Education environment in order to develop their confidence in pursuing an HE qualification. This will be facilitated by means of a series of short placement opportunities of durations ranging from one day to one week.

8. MILESTONES.

2006/07

- a) As a minimum, the proportion of students from under-represented groups to be maintained at 2003/04 levels (as detailed the document *Performance Indicators in Higher Education in the UK 2002/03* - Higher Education Funding Council for England - September 2004).
- b) The proportion of students in receipt of a Disability Living Allowance to rise to 1.5%.
- c) Achievement of the outreach initiatives detailed in Section 7.

2007/08

- a) As a minimum, the proportion of students from under-represented groups to be maintained at 2003/04 levels (as detailed the document *Performance Indicators in Higher Education in the UK 2002/03* - Higher Education Funding Council for England - September 2004).
- b) The proportion of students in receipt of a Disability Living Allowance to rise to 2.5%.
- c) Further extend the additional outreach initiative/activities commenced in 2006/07.

9. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS.

The College already carries out a detailed analysis of student recruitment, retention and achievement data annually. This data forms part of a comprehensive range of performance measures and targets set and reviewed by the College Corporation and shared with stakeholders on an annual basis. Part of this process includes the identification of under-performance against targets and the remedial action required to address any concerns. The milestones established in Section 8 of this agreement will augment this data from 2006/07. The Performance Measures and Targets document is held by the College Library and published on the web site at www.bcftcs.ac.uk/pi.

The College will report annually to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), through its Annual Monitoring Statement returns, progress against the Milestones established in Section 8.