

KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

ACCESS AGREEMENT SUBMISSION TO THE OFFICE FOR FAIR ACCESS (OFFA) 2008-09

INTRODUCTION

King's College London has an established reputation as a caring and supportive institution. It has never achieved less than the maximum score for student support in the TQA exercises. More recently, the Institutional Auditors considered that the College's integrated approach to personal support and guidance (for students) was an example of good practice. It is the intention to build on this base as the College positions itself for the challenges of 2008-09 and beyond.

The College intends to continue to charge variable tuition fees for all its undergraduate programmes – the statement at appendix A refers. In so doing it recognises that there is a necessary pre-requisite to satisfy the Office of Fair Access (OFFA) with regard to a number of key headings as detailed in the OFFA guidance to institutions. The details provided below address this requirement.

BURSARIES

Current provision

The College strongly believes that students should not be discouraged from entering Higher Education, or be forced to withdraw from their studies, on purely financial grounds. Therefore, the College has in place a comprehensive provision in support of students with financial difficulties within the current funding arrangements. The College's Access to Learning Fund currently provides a number of awards to current students totalling £484,656 in 2006-7. The new income generated from variable fees will allow the College to improve and expand on these existing arrangements.

Proposed provision

For 2008-9, the College will meet its statutory duty under the HE Act and provide all fully supported students with a bursary of at least £310, payable on the completion of registration and continued attendance to the first census date of 1st December, as part of its overall bursary package, the details of which are presented below.

King's myBursaries

Going beyond the College's statutory duties, the updated King's 'myBursary' scheme will be directly linked to the means tested maintenance grant assessment performed by the student's Local Authority (or Student Finance Direct). Depending on the level of maintenance grant the LA agrees to, King's will grant a corresponding 'myBursary' award. The levels of bursary available to all students who qualify for a Maintenance Grant in 2008-9, and fall within the scope of variable tuition fees in 2008-9 will be as follows:

LA Maintenance Grant	King's myBursary
£2200 - £2835	£1,250
£1500 - £2199	£950
£700 - £1499	£350
£50 - £699	£100

Using an example with figures for 2008-9, a partially funded student receiving a Maintenance grant of £1,400 will receive a King's bursary of £350. Each fully funded student receiving the full Maintenance grant of £2,835 will receive a King's myBursary of £1,250 (£310 committed under the HE Act from the new income plus £940).

The '*myBursary*' scheme includes students in receipt of equivalent LA maintenance grants from Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. For these students, the College intends to grant a '*myBursary*', subject to a maximum value of £1,250, in line with those students in receipt of the standard HE Maintenance Grant.

In addition, students undertaking PGCE courses at the College who are in receipt of an LA Maintenance Grant will also be eligible for a King's '*myBursary*'. Although the College intends to grant bursaries in line with undergraduate bursaries, this will be done only with the means tested portion of the grant. It is expected that for this particular group of students, the first £1,260 of the grant will not be means tested (confirmed by DIUS), and will therefore be disregarded by the College for the purposes of calculating any '*myBursary*' payment.

Using an example of a PGCE student receiving a maintenance grant of £2,060, the first non-means tested £1,260 portion of the grant will be disregarded. This leaves a means tested grant of £800. Using the table shown above, the student would qualify for a King's myBursary of £350.

The College believes this approach is fair as the determination of this extra financial support has been independently assessed via the established LA means testing arrangements and will automatically provide additional financial support in a proportionate way to those most in need. The scheme also has the advantages of simplicity and transparency. The College believes that it is vital that any scheme must be quickly and easily communicated to applicants by recruitment and admissions staff. Applicants and their parents must easily understand what they can expect to receive by way of financial support if they apply to King's.

The College projects that once all full-time undergraduate students (on all programmes of whatever duration) are on these funding arrangements the cost will be in the region of 25% of the additional income derived from variable tuition fees. This projection is based upon the current proportions of fully and partially supported students within the College.

However, the projections cannot fully account for all eventualities, particularly given the significant and unprecedented increases in household income thresholds for students qualifying for LA Maintenance Grants from 2008-9 onwards, and the lack of

historical data from which reliable projections could be extrapolated. As a consequence, the College will keep the bursary scheme under review in order that those students from the poorer backgrounds are equitably treated within the scope of the overall provision.

King's 'myScholarship' Scheme

The College has introduced a scholarship scheme designed to complement the 'myBursary' scheme.

All new full-time undergraduate students starting university from 2006-07 will automatically be eligible to be considered for a King's 'myScholarship'. One Hundred and Twenty 'myScholarship' awards each worth £1,800 will be available in 2008-9, distributed across all Schools of study at King's. All new first, second and third year undergraduate students will be eligible. The myScholarship will be available for 40 students in each year of entry, and will be further divided on a pro-rata basis across the College's nine Schools of study.

At the end of the academic session, each School Board of Examiners will select those students who both:

- excelled in their studies during the year, *and*
- contributed to the student life of their department, School or the College.

Summary

The College believes that the proposed range of support schemes is wide-ranging and fair in that it is based upon independent criteria applied independently. The proposed schemes target financial need both directly through the provision of bursaries based on a means tested need, and indirectly through making additional resources available to existing College financial aid schemes in order to target those in financial need irrespective of their background. Further to this, the College's scholarship scheme seeks to identify those students who excel during their time at the College and make significant contributions to student life at the College, rather than awarding scholarships to those students who may have excelled in their pre-entry studies. Great efforts have been made to keep the proposed schemes simple so that they will be readily understood by applicants, students and their advisors.

There are certain administrative costs associated with these proposals and the College will endeavour to exercise strict control over such costs in order that this does not detract from the monies to be made available for student support.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The College places due importance on the need to inform applicants and students of the aggregate cost of their tuition, and also of the full range of financial help, advice and support which is readily available to them. For 2008-09 and beyond information will be provided in a variety of forms including prospectuses and websites as well as specifically designed 'myMoney' booklets dealing with all the financial aspects of

student life. It is intended to extend the scope of the student web portal, *myKCL*, to cover applicants and, in particular, to include within it a diagnostic facility which will allow intending applicants to assess the possible levels of financial aid which might be available to them.

The provision of information will be supported by Welfare & Information Advisers and the Student Funding Office through which students will have access to advice on how best to manage their finances, the levels of support available through the College including time-to-pay schemes and external sources of finance. For those students who need to supplement their finances through part-time work the Careers Service will be able to provide advice and will continue to organise a part-time work recruitment fair. It is also recognised that the fear of graduate debt can be off-putting to potential applicants and so we will work with them before and during their programmes on money management.

WIDENING PARTICIPATION

The College continues to build on its impressive portfolio of widening participation activities, both in its own right and also in collaboration with others.

Building upon the considerable success of the Aspire AimHigher enterprise, the collaborating HEIs, namely the University of Greenwich, Goldsmith's College, University of London, King's College London and London South Bank University, have come together again to form the South East London Lifelong Learning Network (SELLLN). King's is the lead institution for the Network. The complementarity between Aspire AimHigher and SELLLN is evident, and thus provides a strong foundation from which awareness raising activities focused on entry pathways in HE can continue to grow. Through the Network particular emphasis is being given to the needs of the business communities within South East London, thus addressing the acknowledged skills shortage in the area.

The College does not view outreach activity in isolation from its commitment to a comprehensive network of student support. In identifying students with the academic capabilities and the intellectual potential to take advantage of the teaching and learning opportunities provided through the College, there is a recognition that such students should be properly supported, in order that they can apply their capabilities and thus realise their potential.

The College continues to build the Staff Support for widening participation activities, the latest appointment (September 2007) was that of a Lifelong Learning Coordinator whose remit is to foster links between the College's academic departments and feeder provision in the secondary school sector and Further Education Colleges.

“MILESTONES”

The College continues to focus on its positioning vis-à-vis the HEFCE Performance Indicators (PIs), and maintains its intention to move towards achieving the location-adjusted PI by the end of the agreement period. The College also remains committed to maintaining the PI for the lower social classes and low participation

neighbourhoods at, at least, the present levels. With respect to those HESA Performance Indicators due for publication in 2007, the position is as reported below:

Young people from state schools and disadvantaged backgrounds

- The latest indicators show a significant improvement, both in actual numbers and performance against benchmark. 70.3% of young full time first degree students are now from state schools, compared with HESA's unadjusted benchmark of 79.0% and location-adjusted benchmark of 74.9%;
- The recruitment of students from NS-SEC classes 4-7 lies comfortably within the statistical variation allowed (3 standard deviations, or less than 3% variation). Recruitment from low participation neighbourhoods equals the location-adjusted benchmark at 8.2%;
- Although there is under-performance against the social class and low participation neighbourhoods benchmarks, these are not judged significant if the location-adjusted benchmarks are taken. Also the numbers involved are relatively small.

Mature students

- King's is within the statistical variation allowed for location-adjusted benchmarks and absolute numbers are relatively small.

Students in receipt of the Disabled Students Allowance

- For the third successive year, King's has had a significant increase in the number of disabled students. This however reflects a national trend and there has been a corresponding rise in the benchmark.

At this stage the College believes that in an uncertain and developing market place it would be premature to commit to any additional specific objectives although it will keep these matters under review.

CONCLUSION

The College's impressive record of student support and its comprehensive portfolio of widening participation activities leave it well placed to address the additional challenges in 2008-09 and beyond. The scheme proposed above adds considerably to these strengths and is therefore commended to the Office of Fair Access. These proposals when taken in the round will mean that the College will be committing no less than 25% of the additional income generated through the charging of variable tuition fees to direct bursary and other financial support for students, with the balance being committed generally to the improvement of the student experience in a broader sense.

PW/BES

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