

KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

ACCESS AGREEMENT SUBMISSION TO THE OFFICE FOR FAIR ACCESS (OFFA)

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 2006-07 and beyond.

The College has previously announced its intention to charge variable (i.e. top-up) 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 £634,683 in 2005-06. The new income generated from variable (top-up) fees will allow the College to improve and expand on these existing arrangements.

Proposed provision

For 2007-08, the College will meet its statutory duty under the HE Act and provide all fully supported students with a bursary of £305, 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 "Match 50% of HE Maintenance Grant Assessment" Bursaries

The new 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). Whatever level of maintenance grant the LA agrees to, King's will match it '50p for every pound'.

Using an example with figures for 2007-08, a partially funded student receiving an HE Maintenance grant of £1,400 will receive a King's bursary of £700. Each fully funded student receiving the full HE Maintenance grant of £2,765 will receive a

King's bursary of £1,382.50 (£305 committed under the HE Act from the new income plus £1,077.50).

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 match the grant with a '*myBursary*' worth 50% of the grant up to a maximum value of £1,382.50, 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 HE Maintenance Grants will also be eligible for a King's '*myBursary*'. Although the College intends to match 50% of the grant, 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 £1,230 of the grant will not be means tested (yet to be confirmed by DfES), and will therefore be disregarded by the College for the purposes of calculating any '*myBursary*' payment.

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 (top-up) tuition fees. This projection is based upon the current proportions of fully and partially supported students within the College. Furthermore, 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*'. Eighty '*myScholarship*' awards each worth £1,800 will be available in 2007-08, distributed across all Schools of study at King's. All new first and second year undergraduate students will be eligible.

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 2006-07 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 has an impressive portfolio of widening participation activities, either on its own or in collaboration with other institutions. The full extent of this activity is provided at appendices B and C.

The College intends to extend its outreach activities through the development of a network of local providers both in Further Education and at the secondary level. It will explore with these providers the opportunities which exist for collaboration

through developing access or foundation courses where the curricula have been developed jointly with the College; through the sharing of resources and teaching; through the provision of advice and experience to local students who are contemplating entry into Higher Education and through support to teachers, careers advisers and other key staff in these local institutions.

The current level of expenditure on widening participation activities in the College is currently in excess of £2m. This level of financial commitment will be maintained and, enhanced where necessary, in order to support the delivery of the local providers network.

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 appointment to a number of key posts within the College and augmentation of the governance structure signals its intent in this regard. The appointment of the Vice-Principal (Students) complements the other Vice-Principal posts and provides an input into the relevant strategic and governance thinking at the highest level. The appointment in 2004 to the newly created post of Deputy Director of Student Services will catalyse the delivery of a comprehensive and universal student support system. This post, in tandem with the introduction of a revitalised Student Affairs & Welfare Committee, has the specific remit to bring together the broad provision of student support operating within the College, to ensure that the proper linkages existed between them and to foster their development. Also, the appointment within the King's Institute for Learning and Teaching (KILT) of a Lecturer who will support and facilitate academic staff understanding of students' study skills, demonstrates the recognition that there needs to be support to those members of the College staff who have a regular interface with students. The support and training needs of others such as personal tutors, departmental secretaries/administrators and hall managers are also being addressed.

“MILESTONES”

The College intends to initially focus on its positioning vis-à-vis the HEFCE Performance Indicators (PIs). It currently (2003/04) meets the expected benchmark in respect of the PIs for student wastage and students from disadvantaged backgrounds. In 2003/04 we were within the statistical variation allowed for recruiting from NS-SEC classes 4 to 7. Our recruitment from low-participation neighbourhoods fell below the location-adjusted benchmark, however, this was within the statistical variation allowed. We fell short, though, of the PI relating to the proportion of students from state schools. In 2003/04 the relevant HESA PIs describe a percentage of students recruited from state schools by the College of 67.1% against a location-adjusted benchmark of 73.5%. The College intends to move towards achieving this location-adjusted PI by the end of the agreement period and has commissioned research into developing a better understanding of its current positioning. It will then introduce such changes as are deemed necessary to its recruitment and selection

strategies in order that there is an early increase in the proportion of students from state schools. It is hoped that the bursary scheme described above will also contribute to the closure of this aspirational gap. This will be monitored through the Admissions Office which will provide feedback to the governance structure via the Admissions Committee and to senior management through the College Committee. Alongside the College's intentions to achieve the location-adjusted PI for state school entrants, it is explicitly committed to maintaining the PI's for lower social classes and low participation neighbourhoods at, at least, the present levels.

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 2006-07 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 (see again appendix A).

PW/BES

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