

Chesterfield College Access Agreement

Chesterfield College is a Learning and Skills Council Beacon College and provides education and training to the communities of Derbyshire, North Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire. These communities have within them pockets of extreme deprivation and low educational achievement. Hidden unemployment in Chesterfield and Bolsover is estimated to be 15%. In Derbyshire 22 wards are in the 10% most deprived in the country and the districts comprising our local catchment area have the lowest participation rates in learning in the county.

A key strategic objective of the college is to improve participation in Higher Education, to both meet regional needs to develop a high skill high qualification workforce and to develop individual ambition and aspirations. Only 35% of employees in Derbyshire are in higher order occupations compared to 40% nationally, while 25% are in lower order occupations compared to 20% nationally, a low pay, low qualification culture exists in the region.

The College has over 3,250 full-time further education learners, 25,000 part-time learners, 300 Higher Education learners and over 250 learners participating in work based learning.

The College is committed to meet the challenge of widening participation by the development of new Foundation Degrees, with our partner higher education institutions and the developing Lifelong Learning Network. Foundation degrees will be available by both full time and part-time modes of attendance, while the development of our existing directly funded Higher National provision will continue to respond to employers needs.

The college has 300 higher education students studying on 9 separate courses, 5 Foundation degrees are running at present with 2 scheduled for start in 2005/2006, 6 Higher National Diplomas, and 6 Higher National Certificates. The higher national continue to be highly regarded and well supported by local employers The estimated full time higher education cohort for September 2005 is 110, 90% of whom will come from the locality.

The agreement is for the period of 5 years to 2011 and subject to reasonable adjustment for inflation.

Level of fees

The fee level for the following categories of courses funded by HEFCE will be up to £3000:

1. Higher National Diploma programmes

2. Foundation degrees undertaken by full time study

The fee level, for courses indirectly funded by HEFCE will be set by our lead partner institution, these fees will be specified in the franchise partners particular access agreement.

Part-time fees will remain at their present level until the situation regarding the funding of part-time Higher Education is clarified.

This statement covers all full-time directly funded HEFCE courses at Chesterfield College.

The fee of up to £3,000 will be introduced in the academic year 2006/7 and applies equally to United Kingdom and students who are nationals of any other state of the European Union.

Students who begin a course part way through the academic year will pay a fee proportionate to the number of academic weeks remaining. Any student transferring from another institution or from part-time to full-time within one month of the course commencing will be liable to 100% fee payment.

Bursaries and Financial Support for Students

The level of tuition fee set by Chesterfield College reflects the following college commitments:

That the cost of full-time higher education study will not act as a barrier to those students who are capable and willing to undertake higher education study.
That increased income from tuition fees will directly benefit the students, enhancing their learning experience and encourage further progression and achievement.

That additional revenue gained from enhanced income from tuition fees will be focussed towards attracting under-represented groups, in our local communities, into higher education through focused outreach activities and the introduction of bursaries that are not currently available in the College.

The Bursary Scheme will be characterised by:

A mandatory bursary of 10% of the full-time higher education fee set by the college and paid by the student will apply to all students over 25 years of age at the beginning of the course. It will also apply to all students in receipt of either full or partial state support, in the form of the Higher Education Maintenance grant.

Bursary payments will be made during the Spring Term

A discretionary bursary - ranging from £100 to £300 will be used for those who face economic hardship and will be administered on an individual, means tested, basis.

A means tested payment for course materials and equipment of up to £500 will be made at the beginning of the academic year.

Provision of Information to Students

Financial information will be made available to all prospective students prior to the commencement of their course and will be clear, concise and accessible.

The information will state the annual and aggregate fees for the course, bursary arrangements and other financial support i.e. the hardship fund which may be available. This will enable students to predict the likely level of debt incurred by the end of the course.

This information will be provided through a variety of channels and media including:

- The College's Higher Education Guide produced in June 15 months prior to the start of the course
- On the college website
- In our in-house Higher Education weeks in October
- On individual course information leaflets
- At parents evenings
- Through the student guidance and admissions office
- At careers talks with our local partner institutions and schools
- Briefings and talks in-college by our team of higher education advocates, especially to our level 3 vocational students
- During Adult Learners weeks
- At all Higher Education inductions

Outreach work

The college currently engages in extensive outreach work with schools and partners aiming to engage members of the local community in the North Derbyshire and North Nottinghamshire Coalfields, which are areas of high deprivation.

An extensive new building has been constructed in Clowne. It is an accessible centre for this region and the College aims to stimulate interest in a wide range of accessible educational opportunities through a range of targeting strategies.

A substantial community education programme has been developed to meet perceived demand and the College has recently introduced a staffing structure that specifically targets engagement with local employers and community organisations to service their staff development requirements. This forms a bridge to higher education learning opportunities, for individuals who have not traditionally participated and progression routes for employers to enhance their staff skills

Active targeting of school persons is designed to improve and encourage progression to higher education via further education this area includes:

- Schools challenges for year 10 students
- Schools careers talks
- Aim Higher activities in partnership with Connexions such as:
 - taster days
 - using role models students from Widening Participation areas who
 - are high achievers in further education
 - study skills
 - examination revision techniques
 - finance talks to potential student and parents

The additional investment will be used to both enhance the existing outreach activity and also extend outreach work through the appointment of higher education advocates. These advocates will be charged with raising awareness of opportunities and benefits of higher education with those courses and groups of people traditionally underrepresented in higher education.

Milestones

June 2005	Publication of College Higher Education fees and bursary scheme
September 2006	Outreach activities implemented
September 2007	Increase applications for full-time programmes from Derbyshire residents by at least 10%(2004/2005 baseline = 67)
September 2008	Retention on all full time courses to rise by 5% (2004/2005 baseline)
September 2008	Increase by 10% internal level 3 vocational progression (2004/2005 baseline = 40)
September 2008	Increase of 5% in level 4 and 5 completion (2004/2005 baseline)

September 2009 Increase by 5 % students from Social Class 4-7
(2004/2005 baseline = 19)

Monitoring Arrangements

The colleges Higher Education Manager will present an annual report to the Higher Education Strategy Steering group on the progress to achievement of the milestones and will produce an updated 3 year development plan to the same group detailing future strategies.

This report will be presented to the Colleges Senior Management team by the chair of the steering group. Any remedial activity required and progress made will be incorporated into the Colleges Strategic Plan. This report will form the basis of the return to OFFA by the end of July each year.