

Croydon College Access Agreement

Context

Croydon College is a significant provider of higher education (HE) in South London with approximately 1,500 students studying full time and part time, undergraduate, post graduate and professional programmes. As a mixed economy institution with approximately 17,000 further and higher education students in total, the College is in a unique position to meet the educational needs of a wide range of students from a variety of backgrounds, facilitating progression to higher education through vocational further education (FE) pathways.

In 2004/05 the College had 760 full time equivalent (FTE) directly funded HEFCE students. This is set to rise to 836 FTE students in 2005/06 with the introduction of a broad portfolio of foundation degree programmes. Of the current cohort 53% are full time undergraduate students, 35% are part time undergraduate students and 12% are part time post graduate students. 45% are from black or ethnic minority backgrounds which considerably exceeds the ratio within the local community (24%). 33% are from neighbourhoods with low participation in HE and 62% are from lower income backgrounds. This exceeds the national rate of 12% from low HE participation backgrounds and is in fact higher than any UK higher education institution (HEI) (HEFCE:2003/59). 82% are mature students over 21 on entry, 60% are over 25 and the average age of HE students is 30. This also exceeds the national rate of mature student participation of 26% and that of any HEI within the UK (HEFCE:2003/59).

Croydon College has played a key role in the implementation of the Aimhigher initiative in the London South sub-region. This has included developing partnerships with a number of schools to enhance vocational progression to higher education. The College has considerable experience in meeting the academic and learning support needs of students from under-represented groups as has been evidenced by Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Academic and Subject Review reports which have identified such support as an area of excellent practice.

Croydon College Mission

Croydon College aims to be at the heart of Croydon's communities, stimulating demand for learning through inspirational and supportive teaching which respects all and transforms our futures.

In this context the College's higher education mission is:

To provide excellent, vocationally relevant undergraduate, post graduate and professional programmes of study that meet the needs of the community and its surrounding regions to widen participation in higher education.

Fee Limits

It is within the above contexts that the College sets out the tuition fee limits for its full time undergraduate programmes from 2006. This Access Agreement has been produced in accordance with the guidance published by the Office for Fair Access (OFFA:2004) and describes how Croydon College intends to:

- a. Support improvements in participation rates in higher education from under represented groups.
- b. Increase the amount of funding available for bursaries and outreach.

Croydon College will charge **£3,000** tuition fee per annum for all full time undergraduate courses (Honours Degrees, Diplomas of HE, HNDs and Certificates of HE) with the exception of full time foundation degrees for which a tuition fee of **£2,700** per annum will be charged. This means that the total tuition fee for a full time three year honours degree will be £9,000. The total tuition fee for a two year foundation degree will be £5,400. The total tuition fee for students progressing from a full time two year foundation degree to the third year of a full time honours degree at Croydon College will be £8,400. It should be noted that these fees may rise with inflation in accordance with government regulations.

FT course	Years of FT study	Annual tuition fee	Total course tuition fee**	Available annual cash bursary*
BA (Hons) Degree	3	£3,000	£9,000	£1,000
Dip.HE	2	£3,000	£6,000	£1,000
HND	2	£3,000	£6,000	£1,000
FDA	2	£2,700	£5,400	£1,000
Cert. HE	1	£3,000	£3,000	£1,000

**Bursaries are subject to eligibility criteria **Payable after completing study when earning £15K per annum or over*

Students who have accepted a place on a full time undergraduate programme before August 2005 but have deferred their place until September 2006 will normally be charged the 'standard rate' tuition fee of £1,200 per annum payable on enrolment.

Amounts of additional fee income to be spent on access measures.

Croydon College will charge the above fees to maintain and enhance the quality of its higher education provision whilst providing incentives for under-represented groups to participate in higher education. The College will use the majority of any additional fee income (between 63% and 57% over a five year period from 2006) to provide generous bursaries for students from under-represented groups in higher education and to enhance its outreach activities in accordance with its mission and strong track record of widening participation. This represents a significantly larger proportion of additional fee income than the one quarter to one third that OFFA has indicated some institutions plan to spend (OFFA:2004).

Bursaries and other financial support for students.

The College's excellent record in widening participation in higher education will be maintained and enhanced through the provision of a **£1,000** cash bursary to provide additional maintenance support for full-time undergraduate students in any of the following categories:

- Students eligible for a higher education maintenance grant (full or partial)
- Students progressing from a Croydon College Aimhigher partnership school including:
 - *Addington High School*
 - *Ashburton Community School*
 - *Haling Manor High School*
 - *Selhurst Boys School*
 - *Selsdon High School*
 - *Norbury Manor Girls High School*
 - *Archbishop Lanfranc School*
 - *Stanley Technical School*
 - *Thomas More School*
 - *Westwood Language College*
- Students progressing directly from an FE level 3 Croydon College course
- Mature students (over 21)
- Students eligible for a Disabled Student Allowance (DSA)

The Croydon College £1,000 bursary represents substantially enhanced financial support in comparison with the statutory requirement to provide a £300 bursary for students on full state support both in terms of the amount provided and the range of students eligible for bursaries.

The assessments for eligibility for the higher education grant will be undertaken by LEAs following the recommendation from Universities UK Model Bursary Scheme. The eligibility information will be passed to the Student Loans Company (SLC) who will inform the College about individual students' eligibility for full or partial state support. The College will then provide bursaries to students eligible for full or partial state support accordingly. This is the same process that is currently in place for the payment of tuition fees and student loans. Prospective students will also be able to ascertain their eligibility for state support and therefore a Croydon College bursary by using the SLC on-line eligibility checker. Eligibility in relation to the other criteria above will be determined by information provided through the admissions process and will be assessed by the College.

The bursary will be available as a cash payment to the student in two instalments. The first instalment (£500) will be payable to students who are enrolled on a full-time higher education programme and meet the requirements of the Student Loan Company (SLC) Confirmation of Attendance at the HEFCE census date (currently 1st December) of the relevant academic year of study. The second instalment (£500) will be payable to students who have successfully progressed and are attending the second semester of their studies in the

relevant academic year. The phased payment of this bursary is designed to provide an incentive towards successful progression, completion and achievement.

Part time undergraduate tuition fees and bursaries/fee waivers

Whilst this access agreement exclusively relates to full time undergraduate students, the College wishes to ensure that students studying part time undergraduate programmes are not disadvantaged in the process of widening access. The College's fee policy for undergraduate part-time higher education students is designed to avoid inequitable disincentives towards participation in higher education. However, there is a comparable relationship between tuition fees charged for part time courses based on their full time equivalents.

Part time tuition fees will therefore be calculated from the full time equivalent (FTE) rate and undergraduate part-time students will also receive a £1,000 bursary but in the form of a fee waiver rather than as a cash payment. Through this mechanism the tuition fees paid by undergraduate part-time students can be maintained at an equivalent level to the standard tuition fee. The standard tuition fee for a full-time undergraduate student is assumed to be £1,200 for 2006.

Part time undergraduate payable fees (fee less bursary) are pro rata equivalent to the full time standard tuition fee and the tuition fees are broadly equivalent to the full time undergraduate fees for the same type of course in 2006. This means that payable fees for part time higher education courses will only increase in line with the rise in the standard tuition fee, maintaining equivalence with full time undergraduate fees whilst avoiding a perverse disincentive to participate in part time undergraduate higher education.

<i>PT course</i>	<i>Years of PT study</i>	<i>Annual tuition Fee</i>	<i>Annual bursary/ fee waiver*</i>	<i>Annual payable fee**</i>	<i>Total payable course fees</i>
BA (Hons) Degree	4	£1,900	£1,000	£900	£3,600
FDA	3	£1,800	£1,000	£800	£2,400
HNC/Cert.Ed.	2	£1,600	£1,000	£600	£1,200

** All part time undergraduate students are eligible for the bursary/fee waiver **Annual fees must be paid on enrolment*

Provision of Information to students

The College aims to ensure that all students entering higher education are able to make informed decisions with respect to tuition fees. In addition, the College wishes to specifically target information at students from under-represented groups to ensure that they are aware of the financial support available and to raise aspirations in relation to higher education participation.

The College will publish information concerning the changes to the legislation concerning higher education tuition fees, Croydon College tuition fees and bursaries, the HE

maintenance grant and student loans including frequently asked questions and illustrative case studies. This information will be disseminated in the following ways:

- The published access agreement
- Information in the 2006/07 HE prospectus
- Information and useful links on the Croydon College website
- A Croydon College HE fees, bursaries and financial support publication mailed to all Aimhigher partnership schools and made available at the College Information Centre.
- A local free press 'pullout' document delivered to all households in the Croydon area, detailing tuition fees and available bursaries
- A letter to be sent before September 2005 to all students offered a place detailing annual tuition fees, total fees for the programme and available bursaries including eligibility and payment details
- Information provided at interview detailing tuition fees and available bursaries
- Presentations at College Open Days detailing tuition fees and available bursaries
- Presentations to staff, students and parents at Aimhigher partner schools
- Information and advice will also be available from College Finance as well as student Welfare and Guidance centres
- A letter to all existing students (i.e. those who started their programme of study prior to September 2006) to be sent before September 2006, detailing the standard tuition fees payable.

Outreach work

The College has a good track record of developing outreach work particularly in the context of London South Aimhigher partnership. This has included a range of activities including presentations to targeted Aimhigher schools, staff, students and parents, interview sessions, taster activities, student ambassadors, e-mentoring, road shows as well as a broad range of aspiration raising activities and visits. The College has worked with ten Aimhigher partner schools and approximately 400 students including those studying within the increased flexibility programme. As a mixed economy institution with approximately 15,500 FE students (approximately 17,000 FE and HE students in total) working at levels from entry to level three, Croydon College provides significant opportunities for aspiration raising activities promoting progression to higher education through vocational pathways. The College is currently resourcing an Aimhigher Co-ordinator and several Aimhigher Champion posts within vocationally focussed subject departments to facilitate enhanced progression from targeted schools and Croydon College FE programmes.

The College will enhance this good practice by introducing the following:

- Further promotion, recognition and payment of student ambassadors
- The provision of an enhanced student ambassador training programme
- The growth of the student ambassadors scheme
- A comprehensive programme of vocationally focussed summer schools
- Further resources for Aimhigher Champion posts
- Provision of an Aimhigher vocational progression interactive website.

These activities and resources will be targeted at the existing 10 Aimhigher partner schools and at students studying FE level 3 programmes at Croydon College, as they are highly constitutive of under-represented groups in higher education.

Milestones

The College has an excellent record of widening access to higher education for under-represented groups. The tuition fees and bursaries scheme detailed in this document are specifically designed to meet the needs of the estimated 90% of full time undergraduate higher education students who will be eligible for an annual bursary. However, through targeting outreach work and the provision of bursaries towards Aimhigher partner schools as well as the College's own FE students, the College can further widen the access of students from areas with low participation in higher education. The College will monitor progress towards the following milestones:

- Currently 33% of students are from neighbourhoods with low participation in HE and it is anticipated that by 2011 this will rise to 45%.
- Internal progression through vocational FE pathways to higher education to rise from 11% to 20% by 2007, 25% by 2009 and 30% by 2011.
- A revised Croydon College HE student ambassador scheme training programme will be promoted and fully implemented by 2007.
- The college will increase the number of student ambassadors from 5 currently to 20 by 2009 and 25 by 2011.
- The College will deliver a vocational summer school programme from 2007.
- The Aimhigher vocational progression interactive website will be piloted in 2008 and will be fully functional by 2011.

Institutional monitoring arrangements

Higher education student cohort analysis will be undertaken on an annual basis which will inform the institutional monitoring of the College's access agreement. The access agreement annual monitoring report will be reviewed by both the College's Higher Education Provision Committee and the College's Widening Participation Committee. This will both ensure compliance with the agreement and provide information with respect to progress made towards identified institutional milestones.