

New College Durham

a. Fee limits:

The fee level for the courses listed below will be £3290 for academic year 2010/11. The courses are:

- all foundation degrees and higher national diplomas undertaken by full time study which are directly funded from the Higher Education Funding Council
- all top-up degrees undertaken by full time study.

Courses excluded from this agreement are those currently met by bursary schemes funded by providers from outside the institution. These are the full time honours degrees in community health nursing, podiatric medicine, and social work.

The fee levels for all franchised (indirectly funded) courses are those determined by the franchising institution, the University of Sunderland, and contained in its own access agreement. The fee level will apply equally to United Kingdom students and to students who are nationals of any other state of the European Union.

Students who begin a full time course partway through an academic year will only have to pay a fee applicable to the remainder of their tuition for that year. This could occur in a course that recruits twice in the academic year, or where a student transfers from a part time to a full time course. The maximum fee that would normally be payable in these circumstances would be 50% of the full annual tuition fee.

Over the duration of this agreement the annual tuition fee charged by the institution will be increased to take account of annual inflationary rises. Such increases will not exceed those permissible by regulations published by the government each year. Prospective students will be advised in all institutional publications referring to course costs that tuition fees will be subject to annual inflationary rises.

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

The institution will direct additional revenue to support access measures in the following ways:

- through bursary payments to students (two thirds of additional fee income);
- through outreach activities, involving roadshows, transport, and promotional materials (approximately 5% of additional fee income);
- through funding to support the post of a dedicated higher education academic learning tutor. This additional resource is designed to provide students with enriched study skills over the duration of their course of study to assist and enhance their learning;
- through funding to provide additional support for academic tutors in relation to assessment of students and the provision of work based learning.

Further information can be found elsewhere in this agreement.

c. Bursaries and other financial support for students:

The fee level and bursary set by this institution take account of the policy considerations it has adopted to guide its thinking in relation to increasing the number of students coming from under represented groups. These considerations are:

- that the cost of full time higher education to students should not act as a entry barrier to those capable of benefiting from such an education and otherwise willing to engage in it;
- that a significant proportion of income from tuition revenue should be managed to provide direct financial support for students, and to enhance their learning, and to encourage their progression and achievement; and
- that resources directed towards promoting vocational full time higher education should focus upon under represented groups.

The bursary arrangements the institution will operate are intended to support the fulfilment of these policy objectives.

The majority of students enrolling on full time higher education courses at the institution are residents of the north-east region. Students from County Durham predominate. County Durham has one of the lowest full time higher education participation rates in the country. The proportion of students on courses of the institution coming from widening participation categories has increased over recent years. This is seen as the result of successful Aimhigher activities at institutional and regional level, and the development of new courses, including a portfolio of foundation degrees. For academic year 2004/05, 50% of the students enrolled on full time higher education courses of the institution will have the whole of their tuition fee paid for them. A further 25% will have a proportion of it paid for them.

Research conducted during this academic year by the University of Sunderland, the validating HEI for this institution, has confirmed that students in the region are strongly debt averse. All students on courses attracting the £3290 fee will be entitled to an annual bursary payment. Currently students are not in receipt of any bursary payments, other than those referred to specifically elsewhere in this document. This payment is intended to act as a significant incentive for students from poorer backgrounds within County Durham to engage in higher education. Currently 75% of full time higher education students of the institution can be defined as coming from poorer backgrounds. The methodology for making annual payments is intended to support retention and achievement.

In the case of the honours degrees in community health nursing, podiatric medicine and social work, tuition fees and maintenance support for these programmes are currently met by existing bursary schemes funded by providers from outside the institution. These schemes are unaffected by the bursary proposals contained in this access agreement.

The bursary is a cash award. Bursary payments will be subject to the following criteria:

- all full fee paying students will be entitled to a non means tested bursary of £500, which will be payable upon successful completion of the first semester of their studies in each level of studies they undertake. For these purposes successful completion shall be treated as meaning that all the modules associated with the relevant semester of study have been confirmed by an examination committee or board as having been passed by the student;
- a further £500 will be payable to all students who in each year of their studies are eligible to receive a full maintenance grant.

In addition to bursary arrangements, students will also be eligible for the following financial support:

- payments under the Access to Learning Fund. Payments under this fund can help with payment of tuition fees, provide short term repayable loans, and offer hardship funds in cases of serious financial difficulty. Guidance notes for higher education students seeking payments under this fund are available on the college website;
- an annual per capita amount, currently in the region of between £30-£40, used to assist them in meeting the costs of educational and industrial visits;
- Erasmus and Leonardo da Vinci funding for students undertaking a period of study in another EU state and/or undertaking a European work placement.

d. Provision of information to students:

Full financial information will be made available to all prospective students considering whether to join courses coming under this agreement. Such information will be guided by the principles of accessibility, transparency and clarity.

Information will summarise the annual and aggregate fee for the chosen course, the bursary arrangements, inflationary increase details, and other sources of financial support available to students. It will also identify the sources from which students can obtain advice both within and outside the institution regarding the general financial framework applying to students undertaking full time higher education studies, so that they can establish the likely level of debt they will incur by the end of their studies. The institution is able to provide a full range of financial advice to prospective and current students through its Advice Support and Careers unit (ASC), which employs a dedicated member of staff to assist higher education students. During induction all students will receive a presentation from the ASC team which will cover issues associated with student finance.

All information relating to costs and means of support related to full time higher education studies will be made available to prospective students using the different mediums of communication used by the institution to promote its courses.

A dedicated pamphlet will be published by the institution dealing with costs of studying on full time higher education programmes. This will provide all prospective full time students with definitive information detailing full course costs for the duration of the course, the estimated costs of accommodation, and the estimated costs of subsistence. It will provide details of any additional financial support that may be available, including the provision of loans, and who to contact to discuss any financial issues or concerns. It will include any websites providing useful information on student finance. This publication will be available for prospective students from the Autumn Term 2005.

The website of the institution will provide a direct link to an electronic version of the finance pamphlet.

The higher education prospectus of the institution will incorporate the main elements of the finance pamphlet and will refer students to it if they are seeking detailed information and advice. Individual course leaflets will direct students to the finance pamphlet as the definitive source of financial information.

Staff engaged in outreach activities will be given guidance in dealing with financial questions and concerns, and will be expected to provide the recipients of outreach activities with paper versions of the finance pamphlet or to advise on how to locate the information on the institution website.

e. Outreach work:

The institution currently engages in a range of activities funded through Aimhigher County Durham which is targeted principally at full time students in the 16-18 age range. The target group are students studying within County Durham in sixth forms, 6th form colleges, and colleges of FE, including the institution's own students.

Specific activities which have been and/or are being undertaken within this initiative include:

- an Aimhigher links programme under which designated academic tutors within the institution visit schools in the County to engage in curriculum bridging activities with year 12 and Year 13 students studying vocational subjects. The programme is linked primarily to foundation degree provision within the institution, and its objectives are to raise awareness of two year duration higher education study opportunities available locally, and to encourage progression by building curriculum links and persuading prospective students that higher education is accessible, desirable and affordable;
- a half day foundation degree event targeted at sixth formers in south west County Durham, delivered by staff of the institution in one of the schools in the south west of the County in July. Potential target group size 150 students. The aims are those associated with the Aimhigher links programme;
- presentations on foundation degrees delivered by staff of the institution annually at St Aidans College University of Durham incorporating subject based workshops. Potential target group all Year 12 sixth form students in the County. The aim is awareness raising;
- annual visit to the institution of the Aimhigher roadshow. Target group full time level 3 students on vocational programmes in their final year of study. In academic year 2004/05 approximately 70 students visited the roadshow;
- all full time Year 1 learners studying at level 3 visiting the annual Higher Education Convention for County Durham.

In addition academic tutors undertake visits to promote Higher National and Foundation Degree study opportunities at institutions outside the County but within the region. These are specifically aimed at students within widening participation categories who are undecided about entering higher education. Education providers regularly visited include Hartlepool College of FE, Stockton 6th Form College, and Seaton Burn Community College. Open events in relation to subject specific fields of vocational study such as travel and tourism, business and music management are held annually at the institution to introduce prospective students to the physical environment in which higher education is delivered and to build up relationships of confidence and trust with prospective tutors.

Internal progression is promoted through activities undertaken with full time level 3 learners by higher education tutors of the institution, and through the deployment of academic staff who teach both on specific higher education programmes and their level 3 feeder programmes. Examples include sports and exercise studies, public services and complementary therapies. A management post within the institution is that of Head of Progression and Development. Part of the post holders remit is to support internal progression, and progression from Higher National and Foundation Degrees to top up programmes. In the region of 70% of Higher National completers go on to study at honours level.

Post entry support for learners is provided by a range of academic and pastoral activities built into course curricula. Examples include a personal and professional development module which is incorporated into all foundation degrees in both years of study. A dedicated academic post exists to deliver study and learning support for students on higher education programmes, providing guidance to students in activities such as researching and assignment writing. Retention and achievements rates are rated as good on almost all programmes, with figures for retention commonly in the 80% and 90% bands, and a number of programmes showing 100% achievement.

The institution also undertakes outreach activities within the local community, through the provision of short courses. Primarily this activity engages mature learners who come within widening participation categories.

It is planned to allocate in the region of 5% of additional fee income to support further the outreach work of the institution. The additional income would be used to strengthen engagement with local feeder schools and colleges through initiatives such as foundation degree roadshows, the provision of transport to enable campus visits to take place, and the development of promotional materials.

The institution is particularly keen to resource the promotion of routes into higher education aimed at mature learners within the local community, and anticipates that the costs of producing specific promotional material targeted at this market will be met by the additional fee income.

f. Milestones:

The institution has established the following milestones and objectives in relation to its higher education provision falling under this access agreement:

- Recruitment targets: to meet the planned target intake onto each foundation degree. The development of foundation degrees is ongoing and full recruitment target figures will be submitted to OFFA on completion of the development work.
- Retention targets: to achieve an annual retention rate of 85% in each year on foundation degrees. Full time foundation degrees currently being delivered are in their first year of operation and baseline data is not therefore available for them. When it becomes available it will be supplied to OFFA.
- Progression targets: to achieve an annual internal progression rate from full time FE vocational level 3 programmes of 20% of completers, and to achieve an annual minimum internal progression rate from foundation degree completers onto articulating honours degree programmes of at least 50%. Current data shows

inconsistent internal progression from FE to HE cognate courses, ranging from between 5% and 70%. The progression target has been set to encourage higher levels of internal progression in those courses where historically it has been weak. Where progression is currently strong, which we would define as 50% or above, the target set will be 50%. No baseline data currently exists for progression rates between foundation degrees and articulating honours degrees, however the rate of internal progression from Higher National Diplomas to articulating honours degrees is currently at around 60%. We anticipate that future foundation degree graduates will not see honours programmes as an automatic destination choice, and this explains why the target set is 10% lower than current HND progression figures.

- Achievement targets: to achieve an annual level of 95% of completers at levels 2 and 3 obtaining their qualification. Baseline data for 2003/04 indicates an achievement rate of between 78% and 100% achievement across level 2 provision and 70% at level 3. The level 3 figure is likely to rise when resit data is incorporated.
- Widening participation: to meet the planned target for the proportion of students coming from the widening participation category. The institution defines widening participation by reference to the number of students receiving full or partial tuition fee support. The target set is 75% of enrolled students from County Durham postcodes to be drawn from the widening participation category. This is the current level at which the institution operates and its target is to maintain this high participation level.
- Curriculum development: to respond to the identified needs of employers and students by developing new programmes and offering greater curriculum flexibility. This will involve conversion of any remaining Higher National Diploma programmes to foundation degrees by September 2006, and the adaptation of the foundation degree portfolio of courses to meet the needs of stakeholders, including greater use of the institutional VLE to offer greater accessibility to students.

G Institutional monitoring arrangements:

The institution will undertake annual monitoring of this access agreement to confirm compliance and progress towards the achievement of the milestones it has established. Responsibility for the monitoring report will rest with the Head of Progression and Development. The annual report will be presented to the Senior Executive Group for approval, and following such approval be sent to the Academic Board.

The annual monitoring report will be submitted to the Director of OFFA following its approval by the Senior Executive Group. The report will be presented to the Senior Executive Group at such time as to ensure that OFFA will receive the report by its July deadline.

The report will incorporate the following sections:

- financial data summarising recruitment levels, payment of bursaries, and other financial support made available to students;
- outreach activities that have been undertaken during the year; and
- progress made in meeting institutional targets and milestones.