

Access Agreement: Office of Fair Access

July 2008

1. Introduction

St Mary's has a long history of providing education for the disadvantaged having been founded in 1850 by the Catholic Poor Schools Committee.

Widening access is framed within the University College's mission statement: "The transformative nature of our work contributes to the creation of new knowledge and inspires our outreach activities in support of social cohesion and economic development." Our statement of values (The Corporate Plan 2008-2012) reflects this commitment "We are a University College which fosters equality of opportunity for all and the integrity of the individual, respects human diversity and actively works towards a more just, prosperous and inclusive society".

The University College is committed to equality and diversity and aims to "foster an environment in which all staff and students can realise their full potential through the development of their skills and abilities, regardless of their background" (Equality and Diversity Policy Statement).

The University College continues to fully support widening access and since 2001 has successfully embedded widening participation in its structures and practices. It has played an active part in Aimhigher London South and Aimhigher London West. We are also a key player in LPE (the south London Lifelong Learning Network).

St. Mary's regards this agreement as another means of demonstrating its commitment to the original principles upon which the University College was founded.

2. Context

Commensurate with its foundation and mission the University College has a well established and successful programme of widening access activities, which has been developed with partners in local education authorities and in a variety of schools and FE Colleges.

The University College has a Vice-Principal to oversee policy and programmes for widening access, and a Widening Participation Officer in its Marketing Department. Cross-University College involvement is ensured through the Teaching and Learning Committee, which has representatives from all academic schools and associated service departments. Linking widening access policies and activity to the University College's Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy is regarded as a key activity. These links help to ensure such things as support for students in their academic work; both through programme specific initiatives and a central programme of skills workshops and advice sessions. The Teaching and Learning Committee reports to the Academic Board.

The University College's admissions policy is reviewed annually to ensure the promotion of wider access to higher education. The University College seeks to give an offer or interview to all those who have the potential to meet the entrance requirements.

3. Financial Information: Bursaries Scholarships and Access Measures

Fees

For 2006/07 undergraduate programmes, the University College agreed to set a fee limit of £3,000 pa, to be increased annually in line with the percentage change in the standard tuition fee as determined by government.

Bursaries

(i) **Bursary Scheme covering 2006, 2007 and 2008 entrants:**

The University College will award every eligible student a St. Mary's Bursary equal to the difference between the tuition fee payable and the maximum grant available.

In addition to the St. Mary's Bursary the University College will award means-tested bursaries, as follows:

<u>Household income</u>	<u>2006 entry</u>	<u>2007 and 2008 entry</u>
Up to £20,000	£900	£700
£20,001 - £25,000	£720	£550
£25,001 - £30,000	£540	£400
£30,001 - £35,000	£360	£250
£35,001 - £40,000	£180	£120
Over £40,000	£0	£0

(ii) **Bursary Scheme covering 2009 entrants onwards:**

All full-time undergraduate students in receipt of means-tested financial assistance and liable for full tuition fees will receive a bursary of £500.

(iii) The balance of the additional fee income will be used for a variety of purposes as follows:

Scholarship Scheme

From 2009, the University College will implemented as follows:

- Entry scholarships up to £1,000 each in value will be available to applicants who can demonstrate achievements in areas related to the University College's mission (sport, creativity, community, etc.).
 - Academic achievement scholarships will be awarded by University College's academic schools each year.
 - The Principal's Scholarship fund for continuing students nominated from a variety of University College activities.
- (iv) In summary, under this proposal the University College will allocate no less than one third of additional income generated by variable tuition fees to student support.

Outreach

The University College will continue to build on its platform of outreach activity based on the Aimhigher London South and extend its activities to priority Roman Catholic schools in underrepresented areas. A dedicated widening participation officer plans and implements the widening access activities with schools and colleges. These activities are nested within the overall strategy for Aimhigher in London South and are offered within the context of an institution which already has an excellent track record in widening access with schools in surrounding boroughs (Hounslow, Kingston, Merton and Wandsworth).

4. Milestones

- (i) The University College intends to make progress on its performance indicators as follows:

	2006/07 (benchmark)	2007/08 (benchmark**)	Targets for 2009 to 2012
% of students from state schools and University Colleges	95%* (91.9%)	95.4* **	Sustain
% of students from social classes 4,5,6 & 7	35.7%* (33.3%)	36%* **	36%
% of students from low participation neighbourhoods	9.3%* (6.7%)	10%* **	Work to meet benchmark

* St Mary's University College: record of students 23rd June 2008.

** Benchmarking data will be available in 2009 from HESA.

- (ii) The University College supports a diverse range of students as follows:
- Academic tutor system based in all academic programmes and linked with Personal Development Plans (PDP) and “Careers in the Curriculum” interventions in each programme.
 - An “open door” policy operated by academic schools and published tutors’ availability hours.
 - Providing academic support systems for students through the provision of skills workshops, one to one advice sessions and on-line support systems
 - An integrated induction programme for new and continuing students run by the academic programmes alongside the centrally organised activities which include social activities.
 - A partnership of Chaplaincy, Student Services and the Students’ Union also offers support to students on an ongoing basis.
 - Pastoral support s available in the Halls of Residence through Wardens and Senior Residents who live on site with specific focus on new entrants.
 - Retention/continuance data is monitored and provided to Heads of Schools and associated support services to identify and provide support to vulnerable groups.
 - Equality and diversity is monitored through the executive dashboard and the Equality and Diversity sub- committee.

5. Providing information for students

The University College ensures that students are made fully aware of the opportunities on offer though a variety of means:

- Detailed web pages on bursaries and scholarships with links to other useful sites.
- In the University College Prospectus (hard copy and online).
- A pull out leaflet on bursaries and scholarships published by the Marketing Department
- The provision to students of full details of the costs of studying at St. Mary’s, including the aggregate costs of tuition, the financial support available and other expenses such as cost of living.
- Open Day and follow-up Visit Days talks given to all students and parents on finance which includes information on bursaries and scholarship.
- The University College’s Recruitment and Widening Participation team have also been trained to ensure that schools and FE Colleges are informed about the University College’s fees and financial support arrangements.

- Direct telephone lines to Student Services (Student Funding Officer and Scholarships Officer) are advertised on the website and in student information materials.
- Online pre-course advice for incoming students, which includes sections on study skills, where to access financial planning, managing budgets, etc.
- The University College uses its network of widening participation partners to create awareness of the bursaries and scholarships and the relevant sources of information.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Academic Board through one of its main committees, Planning and Resources (PRC) oversees the monitoring and evaluation of the Access Agreement: A monitoring group of PRC chaired by the Vice Principal meets at regular intervals to review all sections of the Access Agreement. The group will monitor the financial arrangements for fees, bursaries and scholarships. It will also evaluate the delivery of outreach activities and monitor the progress of the access arrangements against the milestones. The group reports annually to PRC. The Academic Board reports directly to the Board of Governors. In addition, Aimhigher London South has a structure in place to monitor all widening access activity in the sub-region and this scheme have been commended by the Regional Partnership Board as an example of good practice.