

This Agreement is dated the 20th December 2004 and made between **The University of Birmingham**, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT (hereinafter called '**the University**') and **the Office of Fair Access** of Northavon House, Coldharbour Lane, Bristol, BS16 1QD (hereinafter called '**OFFA**')

WHEREAS

The University of Birmingham has a demonstrably successful record in widening participation and a continuing commitment to activities of this kind as witnessed by the initiatives set out in this Agreement. It reserves the right to revise or cancel any of the commitments made in this Agreement if there is a material change in legislation or Government policy affecting the ability of or the terms on which the University may charge fees to UK and EU undergraduate students.

This agreement sets out the University's plans for fee levels for the five year period, 2006-2010 for home/EU, undergraduate and PGCE students following programmes for which the fee levels are subject to the provisions of the 2004 Higher Education Act.

It provides details of the University's strategy to diversify its recruitment base and explains the measures it intends to take to ensure that the fee levels it has set do not deter students from low-income backgrounds from applying to the institution.

1. Tuition Fee Levels for 2006/07 – 2010/11

- 1.1 Full-time, home/EU undergraduate and PGCE students entering in September 2006 will be charged a fee of £3,000.
- 1.2 It is expected that the £3,000 fee will increase annually in line with inflation.
- 1.3 Gap year students who have indicated in their application that they wish to defer their offer of a place on an undergraduate programme before 1 August 2005 and start in September 2006 will be liable for the standard tuition fee.
- 1.4 The fee levels for students on health-related courses e.g. Nursing and Physiotherapy are not yet known because discussions between the universities and the the Department of Health are still ongoing. Students are advised to visit the University's web-site from time to time to check for further information (www.bham.ac.uk)

2. The University Bursary Scheme

- 2.1 From 2006/07 students who are in receipt of the full Higher Education Maintenance Grant of £2,700 will be awarded a mandatory £300 bursary by the University.
- 2.2 We believe that the financial support package, which the government has put in place for students from the very poorest backgrounds, will go a long way in safeguarding their position. However, the University recognises that the perception of debt may deter some students from applying to University, especially those from groups which are already under-represented. Consequently, the University will increase the mandatory bursary for the very poorest students by £500 to £800, and extend it to all students with a residual family income of £33,000 (for 06/07)
- 2.3 It is expected that the bursary will be increased annually in line inflation conditional upon any increase in the level of the tuition fees outlined in section 1.
- 2.4 The primary aim of the Bursary Scheme is to ensure that no student need be deterred from applying to the University solely for financial reasons. It is also our intention that the University's Access to Learning Fund will ensure that no student need withdraw from his/her studies solely for financial reasons.
- 2.5 It is possible that the bursary will be paid to students by the Student Loan Company acting on behalf of the University. However, this is subject to ongoing discussions between the sector and the SLC.

3. The University Scholarship Scheme

- 3.1 In addition to the Bursary Scheme the University will launch a Scholarship Scheme for full-time, home undergraduate students. The primary aim of this scheme will be to encourage high achieving students from low income backgrounds to apply to an elite university. This addresses concerns raised by DfES and the

Sutton Trust that such students are proportionately less likely to apply to a university like Birmingham than their more affluent counter-parts.

- 3.2 The University's Scholarship Scheme is an important part of our strategy for maintaining and diversifying the profile of our student population. (The University's Widening Participation Strategy is attached as appendix I.) The Scheme is aimed primarily at undergraduate students from low-income backgrounds. However, our analysis of its likely impact has indicated that, as one might expect, students from ethnic minority groups are more likely to be eligible for an award. We anticipate that just under 10% of undergraduate students admitted each year will be eligible for a scholarship.
- 3.3 Undergraduate students who meet the criteria for our Bursary Scheme and achieve >28 points at A-level (or in an equivalent performance graded qualification recognised by the UCAS tariff scheme) will be eligible for a scholarship of £1,200 pa over their period of study. Full details of this scheme will be available on the university website from late February 2005.
- 3.4 The University is an international university which retains a firm commitment to its region. The West Midlands is an important recruitment area for us. The University recognises that students who come to this University from the region are more likely to come from groups, which are under-represented in higher education. It is important to note therefore that we predict that over half of those students eligible for a scholarship will come from the West Midlands.
- 3.5 The University also offers some discipline-based undergraduate scholarships in shortage subject areas (currently in Physics, Computer Science and Engineering) as well as some other endowed scholarships. Details of these can also be found in our 2006 prospectus and from February 2005 on our website.
- 3.6 All of the University's scholarships will be overseen by a Scholarships Board chaired by a Pro-Vice-Chancellor. The Board will report on a quarterly basis to the Strategy Planning and Resources Committee of Council.

4. Other Support

- 4.1 The University is committed to encouraging students to develop employment-related skills. The University offers students an integrated employment and skills development advisory service that engages with them from application through to graduation.
- 4.2 The University will offer a range of part-time employment, paid volunteering or placement opportunities as part of a structured package bringing together skills development, work experience and paid employment. This will enable students to factor into their financial calculations the income from employment opportunities available to them during their studies.

5. Provision of Information to Applicants

- 5.1 The University recognises the importance of clear, comprehensible information for applicants when they are considering whether to enter higher education and which institution to choose. The two primary sources of information for candidates are the University's prospectus and its website. Both will contain details and illustrations of the cost of studying at Birmingham and give advice on where to find financial help and support.
- 5.2 The website will be available for students from February 2005 and from September the site will offer an online scholarship application procedure.
- 5.3 The University will extend its existing communication activity by producing a Financial Advice booklet. The booklet will:
 - Explain the details of the University's Bursary Award and Scholarship Scheme and other discipline-specific or endowed scholarships;
 - Describe and illustrate the costs of a typical student at the University and indicate where there are additional costs associated with particular courses or activities, e.g. equipment purchase;
 - Give details of where students may go for financial help and advice;
 - Include a budget planner;

- Include information about the support the University provides to students in finding part-time employment.

The booklet will be free of charge. It will be available to students on request and copies will be sent to contacts in a wide range of schools and colleges.

- 5.4 The University intends to launch a help and advice line for students with concerns or queries about the cost of studying at university. Each year we will also run a regional seminar, on "The Cost of University". This will be aimed at the parents and guardians of prospective students as well as the student themselves.
- 5.5 Staff from our Recruitment Office will also be visiting schools and colleges across the region throughout 2005 to explain the financial situation students will face post 2006. This will be done in conjunction with the regional AimHigher partnership to ensure that schools and colleges are not overwhelmed by offers of visits from the region's eight universities.

6. Current Student Profile

- 6.1 The University's mission statement makes clear its commitment to maintaining a broad profile of students. Over the years we have introduced a number of initiatives to help meet this objective, the most high profile of these has been our Access to Birmingham Scheme (A2B). Now in its third year, the Scheme has been commended by the Funding Council as a model of good practice. Details of the scheme and our other outreach activities are described in our Widening Participation Strategy attached as appendix I.
- 6.2 The University's strategy for widening participation is based on three elements:
- raising aspirations and raising attainment;
 - maintaining and widening the recruitment base;
 - improving and supporting retention.
- 6.3 The University's objective is at least to meet its HEFCE benchmarks (as published under the 2001 methodology) by attracting and converting applications from high-achieving students from a diverse range of backgrounds, and to provide ongoing support to enable them to achieve their full potential.
- 6.4 The University's initiatives and activities in this area are underpinned by research. The University has also tried to avoid initiative overload by focusing on those activities which have had a positive and demonstrable impact. (Further details are available from the Annual Monitoring Statement submitted by the University to the HEFCE.)
- 6.5 The performance indicators published by HEFCE demonstrate the success of the University's widening participation strategy to date. Appendix II shows the steady progress the University has made towards meeting a range of its widening participation benchmarks. Appendix III shows the University's position relative to a range of similar institutions.
- 6.6 The University's efforts to diversify its student profile have also been recognised by the Sutton Trust and in November 2004 they published data which also demonstrated the success of our outreach activity. (Attached as appendix IV.)

7. Additional Outreach Activity and Targets

- 7.1 The University is currently committing significant resources to initiatives and activities which have successfully broadened on student profile. However over the period of the Access Agreement the University proposes to invest considerable additional resources in its outreach activity. The investment will be focused on the following initiatives because the University has found them to be particularly effective:

7.1.1 Access to Birmingham (A2B)

Since its introduction in 2001/02 the scheme has been limited to a relatively small number of schools in areas of Birmingham where progression rates in higher education are known to be low. Additional investment will allow the scheme to be rolled out across the West Midlands region.

The target is to have 450 students (10% of the University intake) entering via A2B and 150 participating schools and colleges by the end of the first period of the Access Agreement (i.e. over 50% more than currently).

7.1.2 Mature Students A2B

In 2004/05 the University is piloting a mature students entry route via A2B. Again, the objective post 2006/07 would be to offer the scheme to mature students from across the West Midlands region.

7.1.3 Residential 'Summer' Schools

In 2003/04, 120 young people from 15 schools, in three LEAs participated in the Easter residential programme. The week-long Summer School accommodated 90 local year 11 children from 15 different schools, and the Specialist Summer School in Medicine and the Health Professions attracted 45 children from 20 schools from across the country.

It is reasonable to assume that with additional investment, by the end of the period of the first access agreement these participation rates will be significantly increased, and a target of 500 children participating from 100 schools across a range of Easter, summer and specialist schools has therefore been set.

7.1.4 Outreach work with schools

In 2003/4, over 2,500 learners participated in an extensive programme including visits to the University, workshops in schools and other seminar and workshop activities aimed at raising aspirations and attainment. This work is vital in building strong links with our target schools and in giving young people a taste of University life.

The University will continue to develop this work, often in conjunction with Aimhigher initiatives. It is envisaged that the target number of young people involved in these activities will reach 4,000, across at least 75 events, by the end of the period of the first access agreement.

7.1.5 Mentoring and Tutoring Programmes

In 2003/04, over 250 University students participated in three schemes, providing support for several hundred school children in 58 local schools and colleges. The students who act as GCSE and A level mentors are paid for their work. All the students undergo training and development for their various support roles. Consequently, this initiative benefits both the students and the school children.

It is anticipated that additional investment will more than double the number of students involved to a target of 500, and increase the number of schools participating to over 100.

7.1.6 Working with and Supporting Teachers

Over the last two years, the University has, for example:

- Offered training days to Connexions Advisors across three regions to 60 people and workshops to 12 INSET training days for teachers at the University;
- Run two, half-day programmes for 30 physics and biology teachers through a Birmingham teachers' network;
- Hosted a conference in June 2004 for 50 FE lecturers and advisors to encourage dialogue between practitioners at this level.

It is anticipated that by the end of the first period of the access agreement that up to 300 teachers will be offered support through a range of such initiatives.

7.1.7 Research

It is important that the University's widening participation strategy continues to be underpinned by research. It should be noted that while funding for research is available from a number of agencies they rarely cover the full cost, and consequently the University will continue to maintain a budget to provide matched-funding and from which it can support its own research projects.

7.2 Milestones

7.2.1 The University will continue to use the Performance Indicators published by HEFCE as both milestones and as a record of its progress in broadening its student profile. These indicate the proportion of young, full-time, first degree entrants from state schools or colleges; from NS-SEC classes 4,5,6 and 7; and from low participation neighbourhoods. The University recognises that, as the efforts all universities make in widening participation increase the representation from these groups, so the indicator will change. The University remains committed to working to achieve its benchmarks² throughout the period of the Access Agreement.

7.2.2 The University has also set a range of performance targets for the activities outlined in Section 6 and these are repeated in Table 1 showing milestones over the period of the Access Agreement. The University believes the targets to be challenging but achievable over the period of the Access Agreement.

Table 1

	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
Access to Birmingham (enrolments) Paras 6.1.a and 6.1.b refer	100	120	150	180	200
Learners participating in events Para 6.1.d refers	4,000	4,000	4,500	4,750	5,000
Outreach visits and visits in to the University Para 6.1.d refers	75	80	85	90	90
Summer/residential school participants Para 6.1.c refers	250	300	350	425	500
University students participating in activities Para 6.1.e refers	300	350	400	400	500
Working with teachers and careers advisors – numbers of teachers/tutors engaged Para 6.1.f refers	100	200	250	300	300
Research activity Para 6.1.g refers	Retention/impact of fees	Retention/impact of fees	Post 16 choices/guidance in schools and colleges	Post 16 choices/guidance in schools and colleges	Post 16 choices/guidance in schools and colleges

7.2.3 These milestones show the progress the University expects to make to meet the targets set for the end of the first period of the Access Agreement. They show year-on-year growth that will result from the additional expenditure being committed to this activity.

7.2.4 The University's ability to achieve these targets is subject to the level of funding from the Funding Council for, in particular, Widening Participation and Improving Retention. If the overall level of resource available to the institution were to be reduced then the University would wish to revise the performance targets accordingly. In 04/05 for example, the University received a total of £2.1m in

² The University bases this judgement on the assumption that the methodology for presenting these figures will be based on the methodology which underpinned the figures published in 03/04 and not those published in 04/05, where the methodology was criticised by many universities.

funding under these funding streams. This supports the University's existing outreach activity (appendix I refers). Evidently, if the funding available to support our existing activity was reduced then the additional outreach activities detailed in Table 1 would have to be reviewed.

7.3 Monitoring Arrangements

- 7.3.1 The University's monitoring arrangements will encompass both quantitative and qualitative elements. The information gained from the monitoring process will be scrutinised through the normal management and governance processes of the University including the Vice-Chancellor and his senior management group. The Senior Management Group will review progress on a periodic basis and an annual report will be submitted to Council for their consideration.
- 7.3.2 Each year the University publishes a detailed Statistical Profile of its student population. The Profile contains a wide range of analyses from the ethnicity and social class of our applicants to the relative progression rates of different groups of students e.g. disabled students, international students and those from different social classes. When considered together with HEFCE's performance indicators it forms an important data set which provides the institution with a clear picture of its student profile and evidence as to where there maybe problems and where initiatives are have a positive impact.
- 7.3.3 The University's Widening Participation Advisory Board is responsible for the institution's Widening Participation strategy. Consequently, it will be the Board's job to monitor the targets and milestones the University has set itself as part of this Access Agreement. The Board meets four times a year and reports quarterly to the Educational Development Committee, which is a sub-committee of the Academic Board. An Annual Report from the Board is considered by the Senate and Council at their June meetings. The Report is a public document and is published on the University's website.
- 7.3.4 The Board is chaired by a Pro Vice-Chancellor and has a membership which includes both academic and administrative staff.
- 7.3.5 On a day to day basis the University's Widening Participation Unit is responsible for delivering the University's outreach strategy. The Unit is in the Academic Office and consequently the Academic Registrar is the Senior Officer responsible.
- 7.3.6 A particular focus for the research strategy of the Widening Participation Unit will be to monitor the impact the University's Bursary and Scholarships Schemes have on particular groups of applicants. The Widening Participation Unit have already engaged in research to examine the factors influencing the choices local students make about their HE careers and it is envisaged that this work, together with the analysis of our applicant base, will allow the University to assess the impact the University Scheme is having. This research will inform future development of the University Scheme.

Signed

Dated

Professor Michael Sterling
Vice-Chancellor
The University of Birmingham

Revised August 2005 to take account of PGCE students and bursary threshold
Revised November 2006 Outreach Activity targets