

YORK ST JOHN University

Access Agreement

Introduction

York St John University (hereafter 'the University') has a long-standing history of extending higher educational opportunity to students who would not otherwise have enjoyed the benefits conferred by HE. The University

“is committed to the provision of excellent, open and progressive higher education that embraces difference, challenges prejudice and promotes justice, and is shaped by the College’s Church foundation. Building on this foundation the College commits itself to provide widely-accessible opportunities for lifelong learning, underpinned by scholarship and research.”¹

The University shows a high level of performance in the higher education sector benchmarks for widening participation.²

The University has a distinctive role as a provider of flexible learning opportunities in rural North Yorkshire and a substantial track record as an effective partner in widening participation. The University leads the *Aimhigher* partnership in its sub-region and works proactively to promote wider access and lifelong learning within *Higher York*: the designated and nationally funded Lifelong Learning Network of further and higher education providers in York. Through both *Aimhigher* and *Higher York* the University's emphasis is firmly on widening the pool of applicants from groups and communities currently under-represented in higher education.

In an already highly competitive higher education environment, the possibility for higher education institutions to vary full-time undergraduate tuition fees brings particular challenges for an institution in which widening participation lies at the very centre of its history, culture, mission and strategic plans and priorities. Some of the current and planned work of the University to widen participation in an evolving context can be seen in the Annex to this agreement. Our students tell us they would not wish to see the value of a York St John award compromised by a relatively low fee level. However, in our consultations during 2004-5 they saw a maximum fee as a deterrent for some potential applicants. We have responded to these challenges accordingly in setting our fee levels for 2006-7 and 2007-8.

This Access Agreement sets out some of the additional ways in which the University intends to meet the new challenges to its mission in an era of variable tuition fees operating from the start of the academic year 2006-7.

Section A (Fees)

The following refers to full-time undergraduate study only. Fee levels for part-time and postgraduate study are not covered by this agreement and will be determined, and published, by the University in the normal way.

1. A maximum fee of £2560 per annum will be charged for all full-time undergraduate programmes of study including full-time 3 and 4 year QTS and

¹ From: York St John College Mission Statement, 2004

² HEFCE (2004) Performance Indicators in HE in the UK 2002-3

PGCE programmes. The following programmes and situations are exempted from application of the maximum fee level:

- (i) Those governed by particular contract arrangements with the National Health Service and the Teacher Training Agency where these specify different fee limits.
 - (ii) The University sees Foundation Degrees as central to its strategy for widening participation. The University will not charge the maximum tuition fee for full-time study on Foundation Degrees during 2006-7 and 2007-8 but it reserves the right to do so in the future. The fee for students progressing to Honours level study from a Foundation Degree will be the maximum tuition fee operating at the time of enrolment onto the Honours programme. However, the maximum fee for Honours study will not apply to students registered on full-time Foundation Degrees at the University before 2006-7 who progress immediately onto a full-time Honours level programme.
 - (iii) Students who defer their place before 1 August 2005 and enrol in September 2006 on a programme charging the maximum fee will be charged only at the standard tuition fee operating at the time they enrol.
2. The maximum fee will be increased annually in line with the percentage change in the standard tuition fee as determined by government. Any change to the fee level beyond this will be notified in advance to OFFA.

Section B (Financial Support for Students)

1. The University will provide financial support in the form of individual bursaries to full-time UK home students enrolled on a programme charging the maximum fee. These bursaries will be known, and publicised, as **Aspiration Bursaries**³. Bursaries will be awarded against a single criterion and provided at the following levels.

TABLE 1

Residual (Annual) Family Income (RFI)	Bursary (Per annum)
< or = £17910	£1535
>£17910 - < or = £20460	£1025

2. The University estimates, on the basis of predicted student numbers and profile that in 2006-7 29% of those students paying the maximum full-time undergraduate fee will be entitled to an **Aspiration Bursary**. This proportion rises to 30% in 2007-8 and is estimated to remain at that level for each of the remaining years of this agreement. These estimates do not include any prediction about either the impact of variable fees on patterns or levels of student recruitment, or the impact of the access measures outlined later in this agreement on the overall student profile.
3. This is a completely new scheme providing financial support generally in addition to any already available to students within the University or via

³ This name will be kept under review in terms of feedback from students about how well it is understood and how effectively it publicises the financial support available under the scheme. The University reserves the right to change the name on the basis of student experience.

national schemes. The relationship between **Aspiration Bursaries** provided by the University and other financial help predicted to be available, on the basis of existing information, from 2006-7 is shown in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2
Student Financial Support

National/ Statutory	Local/ Discretionary	Impact on Aspiration Bursary
LEA contribution to fees based upon RFI		RFI will determine Bursary
SLC Loans for top-up fees		None
SLC Loans for maintenance		None
HE Grant based on RFI		RFI will determine entitlement to maximum Bursary
LEA HE Grants		None
	Access to Learning Fund (ALF)	None, but Bursary will be included in ALF assessment
	TTA Secondary Subject Shortage Scheme (PGCE)	None
	NHS Attrition Fund	Not Applicable
	NHS Hardship Fund	Not Applicable
	York St John University Hardship Fund	None, but Bursary will be included in the Hardship Fund assessment
	York St John University Opportunity Fund	None
	York St John University Stanley Watkin Fund	None
	Association of Ripon & York St John College's former students	None
	SPARK Fund	None

4. Entitlement to bursary support is based on the sole criterion of Residual Family Income (RFI). The University has determined that this scheme targets financial support where it will have most impact on protecting existing patterns and levels of recruitment from particular low income groups and, most importantly, increasing and widening the pool of applicants from these groups in a context of variable tuition fees.
5. The level of bursary in each band will be increased annually by an amount required to maintain its 2006-7 relativity to the maximum additional fee as this is adjusted, as shown in Section A 2 above. The income thresholds and bands used in this scheme are those operated by the government in relation to eligibility for state educational support at the time of writing this Agreement. They will be adjusted in line with any government announcements which change them

- 6 Administration of **Aspiration** Bursaries will be through the Student Loan Company's (SLC) Higher Education Bursary & Scholarship Scheme. Liaison with the SLC will be co-ordinated by the University's Student Finance Support Team (SFST) based within the Directorate of Student Affairs in conjunction with the Directorate of Finance and The Registry. The SLC will make bursary payments to the student, deal with any student enquiries about the payment and maintain changes to student details as necessary. The deadline for receipt of appropriate paperwork from students relating to eligibility for award of an **Aspiration Bursary** will be the deadline being operated by the SLC.
7. The University intends that starting in the 2007-8 academic year payment will be made in two instalments, one in February and one in May of the academic year in question. Those PGCE students who start their studies in March will receive their bursary in July of that year. All payment dates are indicative and may be changed by the University at its discretion.
- 8 The total maximum bursary award for an eligible student who exceeds the norm of three years of study on a three year full-time programme will normally not exceed the total of the annual maximum bursary for the three relevant years. Where a student withdraws from the University (including for transfer to another institution) the bursary paid will be pro-rated in relation to the period of time spent at York St John University.
8. The University will publish, before September 2005 in time for applicants for 2006 entry, a process for appeal against a decision regarding the award of an **Aspiration Bursary**.
9. The University will accept applications for financial support under this scheme from full-time EU students. Such students will be required to demonstrate, through independently verified documentary evidence that their RFI falls within the bands described above. Bursary entitlement will be determined by the University as the SLC Scheme does not include capability for automatic income assessment of EU students. Payment will be made to the student by the University not the SLC.

Section C (Provision of Information to Students)

1. Information for Prospective Students
 - (i) The University's Full-Time Undergraduate Prospectus for 2006-7 will state that the College will be charging additional tuition fees of £2500 and will be offering substantial bursary support, through direct payment to the student, determined in relation to their family income. The Prospectus will refer readers to the University website (or postal address for hardcopy) for full details of fees and the **Aspiration Bursary** scheme.
 - (ii) The University website homepage will include a prominent "flag" entitled "Fees and Financial Support" with a direct link to details of the fee structure and **Aspiration Bursary** scheme, including worked examples of how these would operate in different student circumstances. The website will also include the aggregate costs of tuition and the maximum bursary support available depending on family income levels. The worked examples would also include illustrations of the net costs of studying full-time undergraduate programmes at the University taking into account

estimates for costs of living and the total financial support that could be available. This part of the website would also include information on the processes, timescales and methods of payment of the bursary.

- (iii) The University intends also to provide potential applicants with an electronic Lifestyle questionnaire on the website. This will enable applicants to estimate their own personal total living and study costs as a student in York reflecting key lifestyle choices that they can make.
- (iv) The information contained in (ii) above will also be reproduced in a simple Student Finance and Support booklet written for, and distributed to, schools, colleges, community education providers and locations, and Information, Advice and Guidance agencies, initially in our main geographic areas of full-time undergraduate recruitment but available to any enquirer in person via the Student Centre Reception and by post via normal procedures for postal responses to enquiries via Registry. There will be specific targeted distribution of this information to known under-represented groups in particular areas by the Admissions and Marketing Department especially through its Schools & Colleges Liaison Office. This latter work is an important part of the University strategy to increase the pool of applicants from these targeted groups (see section D).
- (v) The information available on the website and in the Student Finance and Support booklet will be used as the basis for advice and guidance talks/seminars targeted at parents, advice and guidance workers, school tutors (and others who may have a key influence on student decision-making) not only in areas of current student recruitment but also targeted at those currently under-represented on full-time undergraduate programmes in the University (see Section D below). These advice seminars will be co-ordinated by the SFST working with the Schools & Colleges Liaison Office, and representatives from the academic faculties.
- (vi) This information relating to 2006-7 will be prominently displayed for Open Days and Visit Days, with effect from those scheduled in early summer 2005, with (as now) staff expert in student financial matters readily available to answer queries.
- (vii) Students are currently provided with financial advice, guidance and support as a routine feature of the scheduled elements of Induction Week on first arrival at the University. This will obviously continue to be a main vehicle for providing new students with necessary advice and guidance about the new arrangements from 2006-7 and will reinforce information previously provided to them. These advice sessions will also be used to continue the process of explaining the **Aspiration Bursary** scheme. The SFST will provide a series of "Money Matters" workshops open to any student during the first semester to ensure the widest dissemination and reinforcement of accurate, reliable and clear information for new students.

2. Information for Current Students

- (i) The University has engaged extensively with the current student population about the introduction of variable tuition fees and bursary support. Members of the Student Union Executive have been active participants in the formal discussions in University committees, including

the Governing Body, and in working groups considering these matters. The University has also surveyed existing student views on these matters.

- (ii) The Student Union has its own student newsletter (*The Saint*) and University officers will work with Student Union officers to provide clear and accessible information to students through this widely read publication following approval of this Access Agreement. The Student Union Welfare & Guidance Services team works closely with SFST. These teams will be co-located in the new Holgate Centre from 2005 enhancing efficiency of the overall service to students on financial matters.
- (iii) The SFST will provide information on the student homepage of the University intranet (from Autumn 2005) about the future plans, and from Autumn 2006 use this site as a main means of updating the student body on fees, bursaries and other financial support matters. It is hoped that this information will be also available on the Student Union website.
- (iv) All information for current students will emphasise that the new fee structure and **Aspiration Bursary** Scheme applies only to those students first entering the University in the 2006-7 academic session and with clear information regarding those exempted as shown in Section A 1 (i)-(iv) above.

Section D (Outreach and other additional access activities)

1. This section should be read in the context of the summary information on other current and planned widening participation activities by the University, and its approved widening participation strategy, contained in Annex A to this Agreement.
2. The activities outlined below complement, extend and reinforce other activities briefly described in Annex A but are in addition to those that could be delivered without the additional fee income from 2006-7.
3. The three initiatives below share a common and integrating theme: **“influencing the influencers” to generate sustainable growth of the applicant pool in the target groups.**
4. The target populations for these initiatives reflect the University's current performance against its widening participation performance benchmarks in respect of full-time undergraduate students only. Using HEFCE Performance Indicator data related to 2002-3 the University performs at, very close to, or above locally adjusted benchmarks in all indicators except:
 - (i) Young full-time undergraduate students from low participation areas. The University (C) performs well above national benchmark (NB) but below locally adjusted benchmark (LAB): NB= 14.8%; LAB=18.5%; C=15.7%
 - (ii) Mature full-time undergraduate students from low participation areas and with no previous HE experience. The University (C) performs well below national (NB) and locally adjusted benchmark (LAB): NB= 16.1%; LAB= 18.9%; C= 13.2%.

- (iii) Ethnic monitoring data reveals that, excluding those for whom data is not known, just under 7%⁴ of the total student population at the University define themselves as “other than white British”.⁵ However, this data includes significant numbers of international (especially Chinese) students. If this is taken into account, the percentage of students who are of minority ethnic origin falls to just above 3%. This is broadly in line with the “other than white British”⁶ population of North Yorkshire (3.09%) but significantly below that for York (4.89%)⁷. The 2001 Census revealed that 12.5% of the population of England and Wales define their ethnicity as “other than white British”. The University sees minority ethnic students as a particularly important target group within its access and widening participation strategy.
- (iv) All "outreach" initiatives funded under this Agreement, as described below, will be required to monitor and evaluate the impact of the interventions in relation to the overall objectives stated below.

5. **Access Initiative One**

- (i) A series of initiatives aimed at minority ethnic students, parents/carers, and other key influencers especially from York and North Yorkshire but also from other parts of the region as appropriate.
- (ii) This builds upon and extends the recent successes of the work by the University Chaplaincy to promote and make visible multi-faith engagements at the University, and our new partnership with York Unifying and Multicultural Initiative (CulturePoint) involving HE aspiration and awareness raising among minority ethnic communities using arts workshops. The initiative currently (2004-5) targets up to 50 local people from minority ethnic communities to participate in the workshops which are facilitated through collaboration between York St John and York College.
- (iii) The various initiatives will target both potential students from minority ethnic backgrounds and their parents/carers/key influencers in order to establish within these communities an increasing network of ambassadors for the benefits of higher education (and those of York St John University in particular) who are well-informed about all aspects of contemporary higher education study and those of the University specifically.
- (iv) This series of initiatives will be, therefore, an important platform for targeted outreach network-building and recruitment activity within these communities in order, as part of this package, to contribute to the overall objective of bringing the proportion of home UK minority ethnic students in the University student population to reflect at least their percentage of the population of York and move towards their overall proportion of the population of England and

⁴ York St John College, HESA Data 2003-4.

⁵ The generic category “Other than White British” includes those who define themselves as White Irish, “Other White”, and of “Mixed White” ethnic origins.

⁶ The generic category “Other than White British” includes those who define themselves as White Irish, “Other White”, and of “Mixed White” ethnic origins.

⁷ Data extracted from Office of National Statistics, Census 2001, www.statistics.gov.uk

Wales. This objective to be reached at the latest by the final year of the lifetime of this Agreement

Targets for Minority Ethnic Communities Initiatives

Recruitment	2007-8	2008-9	2009-10	2010-11
Students Contacted	50	60	70	80
Influencers Contacted	25	30	35	40

- (v) The particular rural context of the sub-region coupled with the social and geographic distribution of minority ethnic communities, suggests these to be both stretching and ambitious targets.
- (vi) These targets will be reviewed annually in the light of experience and the results of monitoring and evaluation
- (vii) Our target is that 20% of students involved in interventions each year will decide to apply to the University.

6. Access Initiative Two (Outreach – Younger Students)

- (i) This initiative involves outreach activities targeted at younger learners (16-18) in areas with low rates of participation in full-time higher education.
- (ii) The initiative will use data produced through the application of GIS software which maps participation and progression rates by district in York, North Yorkshire and areas bordering the county. The University has this capability and has started to use (2004) the resulting data to shape its forward access and outreach strategy.
- (iii) The outreach work will target not only these younger learners themselves but also key influencers such as school tutors, parents, advice and guidance workers, youth workers and others to attempt to effect some measure of cultural change in these communities in respect of aspirations and achievement relevant to higher education study.
- (iv) The initiative complements but is in addition to Aimhigher projects which are targeted at similar areas not least because although some of those projects stress working with key influencers in schools, they do not focus on building networks of influence to widen the applicant pool from these areas over a sustained period.
- (v) Another feature which distinguishes this initiative from Aimhigher is that whilst the latter quite rightly focuses on general advice, guidance and aspiration/awareness raising, the former will be particularly focused upon increasing progression opportunities to full-time undergraduate study at the University for these learners and building the future applicant pool.

Targets for Outreach – Younger Students

	2007-8	2008-9	2009-10	2010-11
Learners Contacted Directly	175	175	150	150
Influencers Contacted	75	50	50	50

- (vi) The pattern of minimum annual target outreach contacts over the period reflects the strategy of creating sustainable networks of influence. So, for example, the design predicts that by 2008-9 there should be 125 influencers working to positively shape potential younger student decision-making about higher education so that the University's role becomes one of ensuring these networks are refreshed with new “members”.
- (vii) Our extensive and very successful experience of outreach work in the particularly challenging rural context of the sub-region in which much of the planned activity will take place suggests these are both stretching and ambitious targets.
- (viii) These targets will be adjusted on the basis of experiences and the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation.
- (ix) Our target is that 15% of learners contacted each year through this initiative will decide to apply to the University.
- (x) The overall objective is that this initiative will, in tandem with (but additional to) other activities not funded through estimated additional fee income, move the University to its relevant benchmark position by 2010 at the latest.

7. Access Initiative Three (Outreach – Mature)

- (i) This initiative involves outreach activities targeted at mature learners (21+) with no prior HE experience in areas with low rates of participation in full-time higher education study.
- (ii) The initiative will also use data produced through the application of GIS software which maps participation and progression rates by district in York, North Yorkshire and areas bordering the county.
- (iii) The outreach work will target not only the potential mature students themselves but also key influencers such as employers, careers advisors, those working with the unemployed, adult and community learning providers, and others to attempt to effect some measure of cultural change in these communities in respect of knowledge of, and aspiration towards, higher education study.
- (iv) The initiative complements but is in addition to Aimhigher projects which are targeted at similar geographic areas not least because those projects stress working schools rather than older learners, and they do not focus on building networks of influence to widen the applicant pool from these areas and groups over a sustained period.
- (v) Another feature which distinguishes this initiative from Aimhigher is that whilst the latter quite rightly focuses on general advice, guidance and aspiration/awareness-raising, the former will be particularly focused upon increasing progression opportunities to

the University for these learners and building for sustainability of those opportunities.

Targets for Outreach – Mature Students

	2007-8	2008-9	2009-10	2010-11
Learners Contacted	175	175	150	100
Influencers* Contacted	70	30	40	50

* These targets refer to a mixture of individuals and organisations. See 7 (iii) above.

- (vi) Our extensive and very successful experience of outreach work in the particularly challenging rural context of the sub-region in which much of the planned activity will take place suggests these are both stretching and ambitious targets.
- (vii) These targets will be adjusted on the basis of experiences and the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation.
- (viii) Our target is that at least 10% of the learners contacted each year through this initiative will apply to the University.
- (ix) The overall objective is that this initiative will, in tandem with (but additional to) other activities not funded through estimated additional fee income, move the University to its relevant benchmark position by 2010 at the latest.

Section E (Milestones)

The table below sets out milestones in relation to the key objectives for each aspect of this agreement.

Initiative	Objectives	Milestones
Aspiration Bursaries and Information to Prospective and Current students	To create a user-friendly, clear, transparent, cost-efficient and effective bursary scheme Ensure scheme captures all those in the target groups and review	July 2005 Procedures, and information materials produced and “live” July to September 2005 Monitor feedback on information provided Oct./Nov 2005 test all processes and information materials with student volunteers Jan 2006 Evaluate test outcomes March 2006 Refine processes as necessary July 2006 Finalised procedures in place September 2006 Scheme implemented February/March 2007 (and every year) Review data on bursary

	percentage eligibility estimates in this agreement to ensure continued alignment with access strategy	allocations in relation to full-time student recruitment and review access strategy as appropriate
Minority Ethnic Students Initiatives	<p>Achieve target contacts</p> <p>Achieve increased applications from minority ethnic students to the University</p> <p>Progressively increase the proportion of home UK students of "other than white British" origin</p> <p>Progressively increase the proportion of home UK students of "other than white British" origin</p>	<p>March/April launch major publicity campaign with linked work through Schools Liaison Team, Guidance Services, Future Prospects and minority ethnic community networks</p> <p>September/October Monitor progression from each cohort via the SITS system.</p> <p>December 2008 reaches 5% of the total student population</p> <p>December 2010 reaches 7% of the total student population</p>
Younger Students Initiative	Progressively move to at least HEFCE Performance Indicator (locally adjusted) benchmark for young full time undergraduate students from low participation areas, by 2010-11	Achieve an annual increase of at least 1% per annum in this performance indicator from 2007-8
Mature Student Initiative	Progressively move to at least HEFCE Performance Indicator (locally adjusted) benchmark for mature full-time undergraduate students from low participation areas with no previous HE experience, by 2010-11	Achieve an annual increase of at least 1.5% per annum in this performance indicator from 2007-8

Section F (Institutional Monitoring Arrangements)

1. Responsibility for monitoring progress towards achieving the objectives and targets set out in this agreement will reside with the Pro Vice Chancellor responsible for leading the University widening participation and lifelong learning strategy.
2. The Pro Vice Chancellor will submit reports as follows:
 - (i) A monitoring report to the University Executive and Senior Management Team at the end of the first semester in each academic year on the operation, and student take-up (against predicted numbers), of the **Aspiration Bursary** Scheme. These reports will be prepared in conjunction with SFST and the Director of Finance.
 - (ii) A half-yearly report to the University Executive and Senior Management Team on progress against targets and in relation to milestones for the outreach initiatives identified in this agreement. which will include an evaluation of the operation, and achievement against target, of each planned outreach initiative outlined in this agreement. The report to be submitted to College Executive and Senior Management Team.
 - (iii) Each report will include recommendations for action on the basis of the monitoring information.
 - (iv) The Pro Vice Chancellor will submit an annual evaluative report on progress (and any issues) relating to all elements of this agreement to the final Academic Board meeting of the relevant academic year. The Academic Board reports directly to the University Governing Body. There will be an annual report directly to the Governing Body, by the University Executive, during the first three years of this agreement.