

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE PLYMOUTH ST MARK & ST JOHN

ACCESS AGREEMENT

1. Introduction

Widening Participation lies at the heart of the Mission of the University College Plymouth St Mark & St John; the University College has been committed to access and inclusion and the provision of life chances through education throughout its 170 year history. Almost 40% of full-time undergraduate degree entrants are from lower socio economic groups and the University College consistently performs in the top deciles of institutions in the recruitment of Widening Participation students.

The University College (UC) revised its Widening Participation strategy in 2011 to provide an integrated approach to Widening Participation through its strategy, Widening Participation Strategic Assessment (WPSA) and Access Agreement. These three interrelated documents form the new approach to Widening Participation in the context of the emergent new fees and funding environment. The integrated Access Agreement, WPSA and WP Strategy relate closely to the University College's mission and strategic plan and its emphasis on the provision of a high quality teaching and learning environment underpinned by research and advanced scholarship.

The institution's long standing commitment to Widening Participation is informed by the student life cycle and the aim of building support activities across the student journey, providing both young and more mature learners in both full and part-time modes with access to a seamless pattern of contact and choice at various stages of their HE experience. A number of activities and initiatives will be prioritised at each stage from outreach work on raising aspirations and attainment, to pre-entry to HE, admissions and induction, to student support and retention while students are on course through to graduation and entry into employment. The University College has an excellent record of attracting and recruiting students from widening participation backgrounds and there is recognition that outreach activities have played an important part in supporting the diversity of the student body and the institution's commitment to access and inclusion; such activity will remain an important part of future work. Ensuring and supporting success throughout the students' time in higher education is a key priority and the Access agreement will focus on the improvement of transition, retention and success rates for widening participation, and indeed for all, students.

2. Fee Limits

The following fees limits will apply for all full-time home (including EU) students enrolling on a University College Plymouth St Mark & St John undergraduate programme from September 2012.

Type of provision	Max Fee p.a.	Anticipated student numbers 2012/13
All three year undergraduate honours and foundation degree programmes full-time*	£7,800	450
Accelerated two year undergraduate degrees	£8,700	70
Foundation degrees for the children's workforce	£4,900	45

**Exceptions to this general fee level may be introduced for programmes designed for employers where a component of tuition fee costs will be covered by the employer. This will be lower than the above fee.*

*** Subject to validation*

The University College has franchise arrangements with two UK Further Education Colleges and the tuition fees for students studying there will be:

Exeter College

Type of provision	Max Fee p.a.	Anticipated Student Numbers p.a.
Foundation Degrees and other 'sub-degree' programmes full-time	£5,995	20

Richard Huish College, Taunton

Type of provision	Max Fee p.a.	Anticipated Student Numbers p.a.
Foundation Degrees and other 'sub-degree' programmes full-time	£7,500	15

Fee increases - the fee limits for 2012/13 will apply throughout the student's programme of study, subject only to an annual inflation-related rise in accordance with the amount set by the Government each year.

3. Expenditure on additional access and retention measures

In line with the access guidelines we have reviewed our data, drawing on the HESA widening participation and student retention performance indicators and benchmarks which confirm that the University College has a high percentage of under-represented students accessing the institution significantly above the sector average, but a higher than benchmark non-continuation and non-completion rates.

In line with OFFA guidance the University College expects to spend an amount equating to 18% of expenditure above the £6,000 fee level. The emphasis will be on targeted outreach and collaborative activity and on retention and completion activities; it is proposed that the balance of funding will be a one third / two thirds split between these two sets of activities. A number of fee waivers and financial bursary arrangements will be offered to students, and their success in influencing student behaviour will be closely monitored. The University College will also participate in the National Scholarship Scheme (see Section 4.4). Students accessing the institution before 2012/13 will continue to be supported through the current Access Agreement arrangements.

The expenditure on access measures indicated in this agreement relate to provision for new entrants in 2012/13 and also to retention and support measures for continuing students. The total sum that the University College will spend on access measure is estimated to be c. £490,000; this relates to anticipated expenditure for students on all three years of undergraduate degrees in 2012/13.

The trend data for the University College in relation to its performance indicators and benchmarks over the last five years is detailed in the following table.

a) Participation of under-represented Groups in HE: young and mature entrants 2004-2009

	Young Full time First Degree - State Schools (Table 1a)			Young Full Time First Degree - From Social Class IIIM, IV and V (Tables 1a)		
	UCPM	Benchmark	UK	UCPM	Benchmark	UK
2004-05	96	93.8	86.7	34.3	35.3	28.2
2005-06	95.5	94.9	87.4	39.5	36.9	29.3
2006-07	97.5	94.4	87.8	44	36.7	29.8
2007-08	98	94.4	88	38.3	37.2	29.5
2008-09	100	95.2	88.5			

	Young Full time First Degree - From low participation neighbourhoods (Table 1a)		
	UCPM	Benchmark	UK
2004-05	15.3	17.8	13.7
2005-06	11.5	18.5	14
2006-07	11.4	11.9	9
2007-08	12.9	13.6	9.7
2008-09	12.8	13.8	10.1

b) Non-continuation following year of entry - all FT First Degree entrants 2003-2008

	Young entrants not in HE following year of entry (Table 3a)			Mature entrants not in HE following year of entry (Table 3a)		
	UCPM	Benchmark	UK	UCPM	Benchmark	UK
2004-05	10.5	9.7	7.2	11.7	13.3	14.4
2005-06	9.6	9.8	7.1	11.6	13.5	14.3
2006-07	14.2	10.8	7.4	14.1	13.1	14.8
2007-08	9.8	11.5	7.2	15	12.9	14
2008-09	8.9	9.6	6.5	11.6	12.4	12.9

	Mature non continuation with no previous HE (Table 3c)			Projected outcomes - neither award nor transfer (Table 5)		
	UCPM	Benchmark	UK	UCPM	Benchmark	UK
2004-05	10.6	13.2	14.7	20.5	21.4	14.2
2005-06	11.4	13.7	14.9	19.2	17.6	14.1
2006-07	11.4	13.2	15.1	21.9	17.6	13.8
2007-08	14.8	13	14.6	18.5	16.7	13
2008-09	12.7	12.2	13.4	14.3	16.4	12.3

4. Additional Access Measures

Participation with success is the primary goal of the University College's Widening Participation Strategy. The University College intends to continue with a level of targeted outreach activity, including some local collaborative activity building on the work undertaken through Aimhigher, and will spend c. one third of its contributed Access funding in this area. It will, however, place an enhanced emphasis on the retention and success of students which will account for two thirds of its access funding.

We believe that access to higher education only has real value if those students who are recruited into the University College continue and succeed in their studies. However, some students do not complete their awards and the improvement of retention rates is an institutional priority; the University College has set a target to reduce non continuation rates to at or below the institution's benchmark.

The University College has a well developed culture of strong student support and aims to provide a high quality system of pastoral, personal and academic support for all students. Such support is viewed by the University College as of central importance in encouraging students from underrepresented groups to study at the University College in the knowledge that a wide range of support mechanisms exist.

The University College's widening participation work undertaken as part of the Access Agreement will be in line with its widening participation strategy and the six key themes across the student lifecycle viz:

- Outreach - Pathways to Learning
- Information, Advice and Communication
- Supporting Transition
- Transition and Progression - Student Experience and Support
- Employability
- Researching Impact

4.1 Outreach Activity

Outreach activity will focus on the following main sets of activities:

- Taster, Learning and HE preparation days
- Links with target schools and colleges
- Student ambassadors, mentoring and support
- Progression Accords and Compacts
- Advice and information
- Pre Entry Courses

Through the Aimhigher Peninsular Programme the University College actively and successfully participated in aspiration raising activities, developing a reputation for innovative work with schools. It is intended that this type of work will continue with a range of taster days and support programmes being offered to pupils in targeted schools and colleges. This work will be supported by a mentoring scheme, particularly aimed at those pupils where there is no family history of higher education.

Pre-entry support will be provided through further development of progression agreements with schools and colleges, building on the previous progression scheme run by the University College, with a particular emphasis on preparing for higher education and learning and study skills for post 16 learners. A number of mini modules and summer learning courses will be offered as tasters and to support entry to higher education for young people, adults and community groups.

As part of Widening Participation activity, provision of information to both students and parents takes place on a regular basis through open days, information evenings and schools and colleges liaison activity. With the introduction of the new system of fees and funding support it is recognised that students need more than ever to be given clear and accurate information. The University College Students' Union (MSU) will also play an important role in providing additional support and in telling students about sources of information and help.

The University College has adopted a number of strategies, building on existing good practice, to ensure that prospective students are provided with the appropriate information both through the Key Information Set, UniStats and the University College website. The Schools and Colleges Liaison team will continue to work with schools and colleges with low progression rates, and those situated in communities with low post-compulsory participation rates to ensure that clear information and guidance is available to pupils and their families.

4.2 Student retention and Success

Participation with success is a key priority and in recognising that the University College is below benchmark in student retention a focus of the Widening Participation Strategy, WPSA, and the Access Agreement is to provide further support to improve student continuation and success.

Transition into higher education and post-entry support is essential to improve both retention and success rates and the revised WP strategy targets these areas through a range of specific activities which will be of benefit not just to widening participation students but to all students. Activities include:

(i) Enhanced Induction Programme

This programme, running over the first four weeks will provide support for students making the transition into higher education through:-

- Study skills and early formative assessment
- Personal tutorial support
- Programme of subject based cohort identity building / orientation activities
- Buddy and peer mentoring

(ii) Student Experience and Support

The provision of specific academic support, over and above the pastoral support system, through specific activities focusing on three main areas:

- Academic, personal and professional skills – personal tutoring, study skills
- Enhanced Student support e.g. disability, counselling, mentoring
- Transition summer learning courses

4.3 Employability

As a vocationally focussed institution with a large range of professional programmes the provision of opportunities for students to enhance future employment prospects is essential to successful outcomes. The University College will invest in support for the development and delivery of focussed volunteering activities, specific work-related learning opportunities for all students and the development and operation of a post-graduation job club.

4.4 Financial Support for Students

Additional emphasis is being placed on pre-entry information, advice and communication and the provision of both on-line and face-to-face support to enable applicants to plan how to finance their study and provide information about the level of support available through fee waivers, scholarships, bursaries and other forms of financial assistance.

4.4.1 Advice and Guidance

Specific actions for prospective students include:

- The provision of financial information, with 'Frequently Asked Questions' and illustrations of the cost of study for students on different types of courses, through a dedicated and interactive section of the University College website and a named financial adviser with particular responsibility for provision of fee information relating to variable fees, state support, bursaries and scholarships
- Incorporation of financial and fees advice as an integral part of information provided for prospective students through open days, the website, the prospectus and other publications
- Inclusion of information about finance in 'Preparation for HE' taster days which form part of the University College's range of outreach activity
- Information sent to all full and part-time students receiving offers of places on programmes, directing them to the dedicated space on the website for fees and financial support
- A communications campaign developed by the Marketing and Communications Office

4.4.2 Financial Measures

Three specific financial measures will be provided and these have been updated following clarification from HEFCE with regard to criteria for the averaging of fee levels. In revising our offer to students we have reviewed the equality implications and confirm that these changes will not impact the overall package of support available to students, nor will it change the eligibility arrangements.

i) The University College Plymouth St Mark & St John Financial Support Fund

The University College will provide targeted and generic support initiatives for students through a range of support measures to the maximum value of £70,000 p.a. to supplement the University College's Access to Learning Fund. This will allow targeted support for students who during their programme of study encounter genuine and unanticipated difficulties which jeopardise their continued study. This adds to the existing 'Access to Learning Fund' which provides assistance for students in financial hardship.

ii) The National Scholarship Programme

The University College will participate in the National Scholarship Programme and proposes to allocate funding to support specific under-represented group(s) entering the University College. The University College has been allocated 24 National Scholarships equating to £72,000 for 2012/13. The University College will 100% match this funding at £72,000 giving a total fund of £144,000 in 2012/13. It is the intention to use the funding to support up to 48 students from disadvantaged backgrounds entering the University College. Funding will be allocated on a competitive basis according to defined criteria relating to identified targeted groups and will take the form of fee waivers, bursary payments and discounted accommodation.

On Campus Students	£
Fee waiver	1,500
Accommodation discount (for students living on campus)	750
Dining in Card – meals and subsistence or cash bursary	750
TOTAL	3,000

Non Resident Students	£
Fee Waiver	1,500
Contribution to travel costs, books and IT equipment or cash bursary	750
Dining in Card – meals and subsistence	750
TOTAL	3,000

Eligibility criteria for UCP Marjon applicants:

Students are eligible to apply for the NSP if their declared household residual income is less than £25,000 – this provides the ‘gateway’ to application.

In the event that there are more applicants at this stage than the available 48 scholarships, applicants will be invited to demonstrate which of the following criteria they meet. Points will be awarded to ‘weight’ each of these in order to differentiate each applicant’s priority:

- Student is a Care Leaver or was a ‘Looked After Child’ (30 points)
- Learners from schools and colleges with whom UCP Marjon has a partnership agreement and who were eligible for free school meals and / or Pupil Premium in the year prior to entering the UC (30 points)
- Mature students living alone (30 points)
- Students from disadvantaged socio-economic areas identified using the POLAR quintiles (20 points)
- First in family to enter higher education (20 points)
- Traveller (15 points)
- Refugee (15 points)
- Mature students with dependants¹ and a household residual income of less than £20,000 (10 points)
- Students from families with a household residual income of less than £17,500 (10 points)

The applicant’s household residual income will be used as the final deciding factor to avoid exceeding the number of scholarships available and to differentiate between applicants where there is a points tie.

iii) *Scholarships and Non-NSP fee waivers*

¹Over 25 years

A limited numbers of financial assistance measures will be available to all qualifying students on honours degree programmes except for NHS and TDA funded programmes (where alternative government funded schemes for student financial support apply).

- Full-time student Scholarships: £500 pa (maximum of 3 years, years 2 and 3 dependent on satisfactory progress). Cash scholarships for UK students with UCAS tariff scores from A-level or equivalent qualifications (excluding A/S level) and obtained in a maximum of two consecutive years in excess of 360 points.
- Partial fee waivers for students from other OFFA countable groups who have not fully met the eligibility criteria for the NSP

These schemes are not available to students in partnership institutions or for co-funded students and will be targeted at disadvantaged students defined as above.

Expenditure on the current financial support arrangements for continuing students will be maintained in line with the previous Access Agreement.

5. Targets and Milestones

Given the good baseline which already exists in relation to Widening Participation a major aim of the University College's Access agreement is to retain existing levels of recruitment and to maintain performance at or above the benchmarks.

The HESA performance indicators set out in the Widening Participation Strategy will be used as indicators of success and will provide the overall measures against which the University College will assess its progress. The targets and milestones detailed in the WP Strategy will also underpin the achievement of the Access Agreement; each has clear impact measures. The two main areas where the University College will seek to develop Widening Participation work are first, in outreach activity and in maintaining its commitment to recruitment and support of WP students and second, in student retention as part of the aim of reducing rates of non completion to at or below the University College's benchmark.

Targets and milestones of the Access Agreement:

- (a) Achievement and maintenance of the benchmark levels for the recruitment of students in relation to Widening Participation as evidenced by HESA performance indicators
- (b) Improvement in retention and success to benchmark levels, or lower, within 3 years
- (c) Development of a process for effectively capturing and measuring application rates from defined under-represented groups and target activities to improve these levels annually for a three year period
- (d) Development of a programme of outreach activities focused on developing progression routes to HE for young and mature learners and assessing their impact

Each of these milestones is underpinned by a specific set of activities as indicated in the institution's Widening Participation Strategy.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation arrangements

The Access Agreement, Widening Participation Strategy and WPSA will be monitored through the strategic plan and annual operating statement and through annual reports to the Senior Management Team. Regular reports will also be made to the University College's Learning Enhancement subcommittee which has a particular responsibility for learning enhancement and student achievement. The Senior Management Team and the University College Council annually

review HESA student data, including the performance tables for widening participation. The Fees and Financial Support Group and the department of Student Support will also play a key role in monitoring activities.

Evaluation will take place across the Widening Participation themes and stages of the student lifecycle outlined in the Access Agreement and detailed in the WP Strategy. The University College has recently developed a WP database which is linked to its Unit-E student records system. The rationale behind this decision is recognition of the need to evaluate effectively the impact of future WP activities. This will enable analysis of evaluation questionnaires, including quantitative and qualitative data, attitudinal and shifts in perception and longitudinal studies. These methodologies will enable the University College to track future WP students throughout their student lifecycle and will be monitored regularly by the WP team.

The University College will evaluate the impact of WP activity through a number of means and WP activity will be reviewed regularly alongside the new WP strategy and Action Plan. The University College will assess the outcome of outreach work with young people in schools and colleges contrasting both target schools and those with whom there is a special relationship, e.g. where the University College sponsors an Academy School. It will be included in the First Impressions survey, the post induction student survey, to ascertain the nature and extent of previous contact with the UC through outreach activity. Further work will look at adding an additional data field to application and enrolment forms to capture such information. The intention will be to also monitor the performance of students recruited as a result of WP activities. Progression and retention statistics will be monitored as will impact of support measures through the annual programme monitoring and business planning processes.

Differing methodologies will be used to assess the impact of interventions, such as questionnaires to collate core data on the participants and attitudinal shifts pre and post event, focus groups with current HE students, case studies to capture student success and also data from target and partner schools and colleges and progression data to assess impact of interventions. Evaluation will include:

- Regular review of application, enrolment, retention and completion data
- Questionnaires to event participants
- Student tracking
- Evaluation through outreach activities and tracking and monitoring work
- First Impressions Survey
- Unit-E student progression data
- HESA performance indicators
- DLHE (for student employability)

The outcomes of the evaluation process will be used to keep the activity and expenditure on the Access Agreement under review and to engage in an ongoing process of refinement.

Table 5b - Other milestones and targets

Alongside applicant and entrant targets, we encourage you to provide targets around your outreach work (including collaborative outreach work where appropriate) or other initiatives to illustrate your progress towards increasing access. These should be measurable outcomes based targets and should focus on the number of pupils reached by a particular activity/programme, or number of schools worked with, and what the outcomes were, rather than simply recording the nature/number of activities.

Please select milestone/target type from the drop down menu	Description (500 characters maximum)	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones/targets (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
				2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	
Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Visit/activity days facilitated partly by students as part of placement activity or as student ambassadors	2011-12	300	300	300	300	300	300	19 subject taster days, 500 learners in 2010-11. 10 activity days, 300 learners in 2011-12.
	student ambassadors, mentor training for WP activity	2010-11	50	50	50	50	50	50	50 UCP Marjon HE students
	Mentoring in schools and colleges	2010-11	60	60	60	60	60	60	12 Aimhigher associates, 60 year 10-12 learners
		2010-11	12						
	Links with schools and colleges	2011-12	27	27	27	28	28	30	27 in-school visits in 2011/12
	VI form evenings	2010-11	2	2	3	3	3	3	2 VI form induction events
Other (please give details in the next column)	Progression agreements compacts	2010-11	10	12	12	12	14	14	Compacts to be developed from a range of 24 WP target schools
	Careers, Pre-entry information and advice	2010-11	74	75	75	75	75	75	74 Careers , information and guidance events
	Pre-entry courses and mini-modules for year 13's	2012-13	n/a	2	2	3	3	4	These will be piloted in 2012-13
	Foundation degree and direct entry 'top up' taster and transition days and CPD	2010-11	2	2	2	4	4	4	Continuation of current programmes
Student support services	Peer mentoring between year 1 and year 2 students during first term	2011-12	10	12	12	15	15	15	Pilot mentoring in 2011/12
	Extended induction including seamless transition and teaching and student support	2011-12	n/a						All new undergraduates
	Enhanced induction including seamless transition and teaching and student support	2011-12	n/a						All new undergraduates

	Personal academic study and scholarship skills	2011-12	n/a						All continuing undergraduates
	Post entry transition summer learning courses	2011-12	n/a	4	4	5	5	6	4 summer credit bearing short courses, 15 learners per course
Other (please give details in the next column)	Work related learning, including work experience/work related activities, e.g. Volunteering; student ambassador; SU clubs and societies, accreditation of activity	2011-12	n/a						170 student ambassadors, 50 SU clubs and 70 societies for all undergraduate students