

## **ACCESS AGREEMENT 2012/13**

### **Introduction**

Roehampton University is committed to widening participation and ensuring fair access to higher education. With a strong history of attracting students from a wide range of social and cultural traditions, Roehampton has already achieved considerable success in recruiting large numbers of students from diverse backgrounds and under-represented groups and is committed to their success, as evidenced by its strong record in retention and employment.

The most current benchmark data (2009-10) indicates that:

1. 95% of young, full-time first degree entrants to Roehampton come from state schools and colleges, substantially above the national average of 89%;
2. The proportion of young, full-time first degree entrants from the NS socio-economic groups classification 4, 5, 6 or 7 at Roehampton is 35%, substantially above the national average of 30%;
3. 27% of full-time first degree entrants are mature students, with the majority having no previous experience of higher education;
4. The University has been particularly successful at attracting BME students: Roehampton has twice the average proportion of BME students (36% of students who declare their ethnicity are from BME backgrounds, compared to the national average of 18%);
5. The University's non-continuation rate is 8.1% (representing those no longer in HE), very close to the national average (7.9%).

In 2010 over 54% of the first year intake qualified for a full maintenance grant (having a household income below £25k).

### **Fee limits, tuition fees above £6k**

Roehampton is a distinctive liberal arts university with a strong sense of collegiality and a commitment to social justice. Through its strong commitment to its students, and given their diverse backgrounds, the University has been very successfully in building the social capital and increasing the life chances of its students. A Roehampton degree therefore offers substantial value to graduates while at the same time benefitting society at large.

The University is committed to keeping fee levels as low as reasonably possible so as to promote access. However, the University is also conscious of the need to cover costs, to manage the uncertain HE environment, and to invest in the quality of the teaching and learning of its students. The University is expecting to lose more than 95% of its HEFCE teaching funding by 2014 and must in future be entirely reliant on tuition fees. At the same time we are taking significant steps to reduce costs and drive up other income. Between 2010 and 2012, staff and other costs will have reduced by over 15%. As well as managing the sustainability of the University, we are looking to provide students with high levels of support to enable them to secure a successful and fulfilling career. At the same time we aim to set a fee that is fair and reasonable, as well as transparent and easily understood.

The University has undertaken a great deal of work in preparation for the introduction of higher fees in 2012. In addition to extensive discussions at Senate, Council and Student Senate, we have consulted widely among staff, and engaged a leading consultancy firm to conduct an extensive market research survey among more than 1500 current students, enquirers, applicants and their parents. In addition, we have been able to draw on the emerging findings of an externally sponsored research project, looking at the attitudes of 16-18 year olds in one of the poorest parts of our city, undertaken by researchers in the Department of Social Sciences.

Based on this extensive research, and given that the majority of our students are from under-represented groups, the University has concluded that the best way to continue its success in widening participation is to focus on keeping fee levels as low as possible, rather than to redistribute a high proportion of fees paid by some students to others. It is understood from previous experience and from recent guidance that bursaries have been an ineffective tool for widening participation. Having considered the guidance from OFFA, and in light of its retention record and diversity profile, the University has decided to redistribute just over 10% of additional fee income over the £6,000 threshold. More will be redistributed in years one and two of the new scheme, as existing mandatory bursary commitments are seen through.

Given its mission and the nature of its student population, the University is committed to delivering value for money in how it prices its degrees. In order to maintain and develop the quality of its current offer, Roehampton intends to charge fees across three bands:

- Band A - £8,250;
- Band B - £7,900;
- Band C - £7,500.

The allocation of courses to bands is set out in the annex to this document. We intend to charge a lower level of fee for Foundation Degrees as a way of encouraging access. At the same time we believe that there is a case for charging a premium fee for programmes with high cost and/or specialist provision. We expect 70% of our students to be charged a fee of less than £8,000. All fee levels will rise annually in line with RPI.

For full-time undergraduate students entering under the new regulated fee regime from September 2012, the University will introduce a merit-based tuition fee waiver scheme that is in line with the existing Vice-Chancellor's scholarship scheme. The scheme will give scholarships of between £1,500 and £2,000 per year of study for students who achieve a tariff score of 340 or above. There will be no cap on the number of scholarships available and they will be available for all qualifications within the UCAS tariff scheme.

Under the new scheme, spend on fee waivers will impact the average full-time undergraduate fee, bringing the September 2012 regulated fee for new regime students under £7,500. In line with our commitment to widen access to students from under-represented groups, it is forecast that 14.1% the new fee waivers will go to students from OFFA's specified under-represented groups and 9.7% of new fee waivers will go to students in receipt of full state support.

The University has discussed this approach with the Student Union and they are convinced that this is a fair and equitable approach that current students will support. A letter indicating that support can be provided if required.

This new scheme will support the significant improvements the University has made in retention during recent years reflected in the achievement of the national average for non-completion for students starting in 2009/10.

The University is committed to informing current applicants of the change as soon as the new Access Agreement has been approved by OFFA. The proposal has been discussed with new applicants at recent open days and there was significant enthusiasm amongst applicants for it.

## Outreach

The University has developed a strong widening access programme. As part of its Strategic Plan, in 2006 the University adopted the goal of reaching every student in the Roehampton ward, which has one of the lowest participation rates in the country. This goal has now been achieved, in large measure through Aimhigher activities with partner institutions. The University intends to continue that work. Where these activities have previously been funded by AimHigher, the University will now use funds from additional fee income in order to maintain that current level of investment whilst continuing to review and evolve the activities, particularly focusing work on the key target group mentioned below.

Detailed information of Roehampton's access measures can be found in the University's WPSA 2010, but a brief overview is included below:

Roehampton focuses its access work on a number of key areas through partnerships and outreach work with schools and FE colleges particularly in south and west London – the University's home region:

- **Roehampton Student Ambassador Scheme:** trained students work in schools and on campus with groups of school children and young people on various activities.
- **Shadow a Student:** school and college students 'shadow' Roehampton students for a day and encounter different HE teaching methods in 'live' sessions, as well as study and social activities.
- **Subject Masterclasses:** these are designed to enhance understanding in GCSE subjects.
- **Sport, work and study:** effective time management sessions to enhance ability to cope successfully with competing pressures.
- **Activities for Gifted & Talented Students:** these include masterclasses in various areas such as modern languages, English, psychology, philosophy and creative writing.
- **Taster & Progression Days:** these are run in response to school requests and specifically for schools in our region that are identified as having low progression rates to HE.
- **Student Finance sessions and Student Life Q&A sessions:** with current undergraduates.
- **Academic Mentoring:** in-school sessions in various subject areas; Roehampton undergraduates work with secondary schools in the region to offer academic support to pre-GCSE students.
- **Year 12 and Year 13 Induction Days:** on-campus whole year group days to introduce students to and prepare them for university life.
- **Primary School Students' Campus Visits:** initial visits with generic information and activities.
- **Activities for Primary School groups:** age-appropriate activities designed by the University of Liverpool.
- **Mock Interview sessions:** confidence building sessions.
- **Community Sport activities:** working with local community and sports clubs.

- **Disability Support:** Roehampton University has full Access Centre Status. The Centre undertakes assessments for DSA and ensures that students with disabilities are assisted to participate in and complete HE programmes successfully
- **Partnerships with schools:** Roehampton University is committed to working closely with schools and colleges to foster collaborations that engender good practice, opportunities for inter-institution staff development, and the provision of sound information, advice and guidance to potential university students. The University has established a Secondary Schools and University Partnership group and has signed Memoranda of Understanding with participating schools – more details can be found in the Roehampton University WPSA 2010.

## **Retention**

The University has made significant improvements in its student retention. The latest figures for the 2008/9 cohort show that the University's non-continuation is very close to the national average. This is a significant achievement, particularly considering its relatively high proportion of non-traditional students. It is a clear indication of how studying at Roehampton is a path to improved social capital and a worthwhile qualification. Furthermore, the University will continue to allocate substantial funds to enhance the learning experience - through investment in staff and the learning environment.

## **Employability**

The University is committed to supporting its students to succeed on their courses and then move on to a fulfilling career. Whilst Roehampton has a strong record in employability it intends to build on this even further. In 2008-09, 88% of graduates were in employment or further study six months after graduation, compared to a UK average of 90%. We have this year created a new Student Development Office to enhance the support provided to students in developing their employability skills, bringing together the employment and careers service, placements, student entrepreneurship, volunteering and wider activities like extracurricular sports. In addition the University will be offering more opportunities for students to study abroad for a semester and is also looking at increasing opportunities for students to be employed on campus so as to provide both income and work experience.

## **National Scholarship Programme**

The University has been allocated 74 scholarships for 2012. We wish to keep our scheme simple and transparent: a complex system of selection would only add to the confusion inherent in the new funding system, as well as incur high administration costs, which we do not believe is an appropriate use of student fee income. We therefore welcome the Secretary of State's announcement that 'the programme will remain flexible in its initial years'. To keep in line with our financial model we will need to spread our contribution equally over 2 years – the recipients 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years of study. This also encourages retention and helps students at each stage of their studies. We will distribute the scholarships based on a combination of household income and prior attainment, which supports our strategy to encourage aspiration among under-represented groups. In doing so we will acknowledge attainment through achievement at A level as well as other qualifications.

The University will allocate the National Scholarship Programme recipients a £1,000 cash bursary during their studies with the remainder of the award allocated as tuition fee waivers. The cash bursary will be made up of £300 in years 1 and 2 of their studies and £400 in their final year. Tuition fee waivers will be £2,700 in year 1, £1,200 in year 2 and £1,100 in year 3.

Awards will be made to the top 74 new entrants in year 1 by their tariff score that are in receipt of a full maintenance grant.

## **Targets and Milestones**

The University is committed to:

- Consistently out-performing the national average on a range of widening participation indicators: ethnicity, state school attendance, percentage of students from socio-economic groups 4,5,6 and 7
- Consistently meeting the national average rate for non-continuation
- Consistently meeting the national average rate for employment

Targets and milestones will be developed to reflect these priorities. Details are included in the attached template.

### **1. Monitoring and Evaluation arrangements**

The University will be monitoring annually the composition of its full-time home undergraduate population, using a range of internal and external WP indicators. Monitoring will be undertaken by the University Planning Office, and data will be regularly viewed by the appropriate individuals and committees across the University.

### **2. Provision of information to prospective students**

Full details of the levels of financial support available to prospective students of Roehampton University will be published in a variety of formats. These will include:

- Marketing and promotional literature
- Prospectuses
- Web-based information

Information presented for prospective students will be clear, concise and enable them to make informed choices based on accurate financial information. The University has brought in digital and marketing specialists to help re-design promotional material and especially using digital communities to help achieve this goal.

Government allocation of NSP funding will be matched in full. The government allocation will provide the basis for a student bursary in year one (£300) with the rest being allocated in fee waivers. Our contribution being paid in subsequent years of the course £300 in year 2 and £400 in year 3, applied pro-rata with the rest being allocated in fee waivers. This method encourages retention and helps students at each stage of their studies.

For full-time undergraduate students entering under the new regulated fee regime from September 2012, the University will introduce a merit-based tuition fee waiver scheme that is in line with the existing Vice-Chancellor's scholarship scheme. The scheme will give scholarships of between £1,500 and £2,000 per year of study for students who achieve a tariff score of 340 or above. There will be no cap on the number of scholarships available and they will be available for all qualifications within the UCAS tariff scheme.

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Table 5 - Milestones and targets

Table 5a - Statistical milestones and targets relating to your applicants, entrants or student body (e.g. HESA, UCAS or internal targets)

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	
Ethnicity	Consistently out-perform the national average of the proportion of UG entrants from BME backgrounds	2009/10 entrants	51% white entrants	<60%	<60%	<60%	<60%	<60%	
State School (HESA Table T1b)	Maintain our current level of UG entrants from State Schools	2009/10 entr	95.10%	>95%	>95%	>95%	>95%	>95%	
NS-SEC (HESA Table T1b)	Consistently out-perform our benchmark for UG entrants from socio-economic groups 4,5,6 and 7	2009/10 entr	35.10%	35.2%	35.2%	35.2%	35.2%	35.2%	
Non continuation: All (HESA Table T3a)	Consistently meeting the national average rate for non-continuation	2008/09 entr	8.10%	7.9%	7.9%	7.8%	7.7%	7.6%	
Other (please give details in the next column)	Employment - consistently meeting the national average rate for employment	2008/09 Gra	88.40%	>90%	>90%	>90%	>90%	>90%	

