



Access Agreement 2012-13

Institution: Sussex Downs College

Contact: Tim Whitmore
Head of Higher Education and Park College (both part of Sussex
Downs College)
t: 01323 637685
e: tim.whitmore@sussexdowns.ac.uk

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1 College mission

SDC is a large general FE college with Beacon College status which is based in East Sussex. The College recruits 12,000 students per annum from aged 14 upwards, across 15 sector subject areas, and from entry level up to Higher Education (HE). The largest group of students (5,000) are between the ages of 16-18 and approximately 3,000 of these are studying for level 3 courses with realistic expectations of progressing onto HE.

The current Sussex Downs College's Strategic Plan, 2008-2013, '*Outstanding College, Outstanding Futures*' sets out the College's vision for a world-class college:

- Focused on the employability of all our learners
- Based on excellent teaching and learning, high academic standards and a rich learner experience
- Where we promote inclusivity and the acquisition of skills and qualifications as determinants of economic well-being and personal fulfilment
- Where we work with employer and education partners for the benefit of learners and our communities

- Where high-performing, well-rewarded and valued staff are central to our success

The College offers HE to:

1. Provide opportunities in the key priority sectors for non-traditional learners who previously may not have considered HE, thereby increasing progression rates for a number of students.
2. Meet the needs of local employers wishing to up-skill their workforce by developing work related learning in collaboration with the Sussex based Centre for Work and Learning.
3. Provide learning opportunities at HE level for those who wish to study in their own community.
4. Provide Level 4 progression routes for students on FE programmes in the College.
5. Provide training for direct entrants wishing to develop both relevant vocational and academic skills at HE level.

The College defines its Higher Education provision as that which is funded by HEFCE through a franchise arrangement with the University of Brighton. The current provision is made up of 8 foundation degrees and 2 top up degrees. In addition the college has a further 3 foundation degrees validated, but not currently operating. We have approximately 400 HE students with 320 of them on full time programme.

Widening participation is central to the college's mission. This is reflected in the student body with approximately 80% of our students in receipt of government financial support and around 15% of our HE students in receipt of some additional learning support [6% are in receipt of the Disabled Students Allowance]. A slightly higher percentage of students from SDC Eastbourne reside in lower participation neighbourhoods (Polar 2) than both the University of Brighton and the Partner College average of 23%. Through HE Fairs, Introduction Evenings, advertising and visits to local partner schools and colleges we will be aiming to reach out to under-represented groups such as lower income families, apprentices (interview pledge on our website), mature and the unemployed.

Currently, NS-SEC 4-7 stands at 22%. SDC Eastbourne has a slightly lower participation neighbourhood LPN (Polar 2) than the University of Brighton and Partner College average of 23%. Also, 86% of SDC students from the Eastbourne campus and 81% from Lewes come from the state sector. The University of Brighton average is 63% and Partner College average is 78%.

2 Level of fees

We propose to charge the following fees for full-time HE;

Foundation Degrees £7,000

We intend to charge part-time students on a pro-rata basis.

3 Expenditure on additional access measures

We intend to continue make progress on our widening participation milestones and targets and we propose to spend 24.9% of our additional fee income above £6,000 on access measures. This amounts to an estimated £56,000 in the academic year 2012-13. In this transitional year, where there is no NSP allocated funds, the College will allocate £20,000 to fee waivers from institutional spend, together with £26,000 for outreach activities and £10,000 for retention.

4 Financial support for students

As a franchise partner with the University of Brighton the allocation to the National Scholarship Programme (NSP) and cash bursaries or fee waivers have been their responsibility and the amount of funding passed onto the College has been reduced to support these activities. For the transitional year 2012/13, when there is no NSP allocation, the College will allocate £20,000 for fee waivers, £26,000 for outreach activities and £10,000 for retention. From 2012/13 to 2015/16, the College's projected spend above the basic fee increases from 24.9% to 33.2%.

We will offer financial support, in the form of fee waivers, to students with family incomes below £25,000 and in Polar 2, group 1 in the year 2012/13. Awards will be in the range of £500 - £2000 and will be awarded once over the course but will be reviewed annually. The awards of between £500 and £2000 will be given in the form of fee waivers and will also be dependent on income, disability and status e.g unemployed. In 2012/13 income and unemployed status related awards will be as follows:

Income <£25,000	£25001 – 27,500	£27,500 - 32,500
£500	£300	£200

Disabled student awards for the above income categories will be £600 / £400 and £300 respectively. Retention related awards would be focused on year 1 to year 2 progression and will be set at £50 per student. Although the College will have no NSP students in 2012/13, it is committed to matching NSP expenditure from 2013/14 onwards. Expenditure on NSP places will be £120,000 in 2013/14 and awards will be at a minimum of £3000 per student.

Other awards will be made in the following areas:

- Who were previously looked after children: cash bursary of £200
- With disabilities: cash bursary of £100

5 Outreach

We welcome the new emphasis placed by OFFA on outreach activities and on supporting retention and success. We plan to spend £26,000 in 2012-13 and increase

this by £4,000 each year, all funds specifically targeted to the widening access to HE agenda. The resource from this access agreement will enable us to provide focused outreach activity that includes the following:

- Partnerships with the local community [£5k]
- Taster events for local schools [£3k]
- Progression agreements
- Subject specific outreach activities [£5k]
- Mentoring and student ambassador scheme [£2k]
- Focus on improving retention [£10k]
- 'Keeping warm' campaign for all applicants throughout the year through a range of communication strategies [£1k]

Partnerships with the local community

We will continue to work with local schools and colleges to develop links from primary school through to mature learners on Access to HE programmes. We will continue to build on work previously undertaken by Aim Higher in Sussex. Our productive partnerships with the University of Brighton and other FE Colleges in Sussex enable us to work collaboratively and make best use of our resources.

Subject specific outreach activities

These activities are being developed to link our current HE offer with partners in the community. A key priority is to address the gender imbalance across complementary health, computer games development, dance and music production foundation and top up degrees. Initiatives include awareness raising days involving local schools, employers, including shadowing opportunities, live projects and visits. Other key areas for subject specific outreach activities are in sports development where we are planning collaborative events and activities. To support progression from Access to HE courses, we are targeting HE experiences for specific students, such as shared common rooms and peer mentoring. Innovation projects across each curriculum area will also develop subject specific activities with local partners.

Mentoring and student ambassador scheme

The pilot mentoring scheme has been launched for the start of 2011-12, with a proposed roll-out across college for 2012-13. Students will have the opportunity to gain credit for their mentoring activities and engage in student ambassador initiatives, e.g. awareness raising and taster events.

Focus on improving retention

Retention amongst the 2009/10 entry was slightly lower than our partner college average with sport, computing and complementary healthcare all having disappointing levels. A number of strategies have been put in place since then and retention rates for 2010/11 are much higher.

Our initiatives to support improvements in retention rates include pre-entry activities to help students prepare for HE study. We will embed support in

programmes for students from lower socio-economic groups, mature students, care leavers and students with disabilities. Activities to support retention will include the following:

- Effective advice and guidance pre-application through information events and online communication e.g. through the HE Administrator/Welfare Officer
- Pre-entry activities that are further developed at the start of the course
- Induction activities that support the development of independent learning skills
- Use of contextual data as part of the admissions criteria
- Effective and timely additional learning support
- Mentoring scheme piloted in 2011-12
- Peer assisted learning, reviews, assessments and study skill sessions
- Effective study skills support
- Further develop our Virtual Learning Environment to facilitate research cluster and enable peer learning
- Effective subject specific flexible learning areas such as beauty facilities for complementary health, recording studio for music production Mac studios for computer gaming and digital media studies
- Effective monitoring of learner data at course, department and college level

6 Targets and milestones

Sussex Downs College has set focused targets that aim to maintain our good rates of widening participation and to ensure these learners are well supported and achieve.

Our targets include:

- increased diversity across our HE cohorts
- improved retention
- increased internal progression from FE to HE
- increasing the flexibility in our modes of delivery
- utilising robust statistical monitoring of HE cohorts
- growing our links with local schools
- student ambassador and mentor scheme
- effective information to prospective students

7 Monitoring and evaluation

Sussex Downs College will undertake an annual monitoring of this access agreement to confirm progress, and to take any corrective action necessary towards the targets and milestones. The Head of HE will report progress through the College Leadership Team [fortnightly monitoring meetings], the Higher Education Learning Board [termly], the HE Review Body [termly] and to the Governors' Curriculum and Standards Committee [termly]. The report will incorporate financial data, outreach activities, retention and achievement.

8 Provision of information to prospective students

Sussex Downs College will publish clear, accessible and timely information on HE fees and the range of financial support to all HE applicants. This will be done primarily through our website and also through promotional materials, the UCAS website and through HE information events both at local schools and at the College.

