

## **Access Agreement 2010/11**

*This Agreement will apply to all students who enter the University College in 2010/11 to commence study towards an undergraduate award. Students who are admitted with advanced standing will be covered by the terms applicable to their cohort*

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### **1.0 Context**

- 1.1 The Arts University College at Bournemouth is a specialist higher education Institution with a commitment to providing all-through provision in the areas of art, design, media and performance from Saturday Art School through further education (FE) to higher education (HE). The University College prides itself on providing a supportive and friendly environment which places students and their work at the centre of its community.
- 1.2 The University College's Widening Participation funding is used primarily to support on-course activity, with some funding set aside for outreach work.
- 1.3 On-course support includes support for student retention through tutor and technician activity; study skills support for students with a disability; financial support for Educational Psychologist's reports; and a contribution to support the wider work of the Student Services team, which provides career education, information and guidance; disability support; counselling services; and an accommodation service.
- 1.4 The University College has acknowledged that much of its outreach work will have medium-term impact, as it seeks to raise aspiration. Our initiatives within this Access Agreement build on these existing services and strategic priorities, but are intended to be more specifically targeted towards under-represented groups, with the aim of more immediate results.
- 1.5 Historically, the University College has been successful in attracting students with disabilities (where its performance is significantly above the benchmark). The local demographics, as well as the nature of the course offer, has posed particular difficulties with regard to the recruitment of students from ethnic minorities, and students from lower socio-economic groups or low participation neighbourhoods. The proposals set out in this document are intended to address these key areas, as well as reinforcing previous achievement.
- 1.6 In accordance with good practice, the University College extends its offers of support to students from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, as well as England.
- 1.7 The University College will continue to keep under review the implications of its Access Agreement, specifically whether there are particular groups of potential applicants who are disadvantaged, but who do not fall within the range of under-represented groups at whom bursaries and other means of support are targeted.

### **2.0 Fee limits and eligibility**

- 2.1 From 2010/11, the University College will charge a standard fee of £3,290 per year for all undergraduate courses (but see 4.1.3 below). This is reflective of the high quality of education provided, and the excellent employment prospects of the University College graduates, as well as the high cost of study within the art, design, media and performance subject areas.

- 2.2 The fee will rise with inflation in accordance with the regulations published by the government on an annual basis.
- 2.3 The University College acknowledges the cost of living in the Bournemouth and Poole sub-region, as well as the additional expense of undergraduate study in art, design, media and performance. Its bursaries are specifically designed to make the opportunities for studying at the University College more accessible through direct financial support. Alongside its package of bursaries, the University College has also introduced a range of measures which are designed to support and simplify the student learning experience. These bursaries and other measures are described in this section.
- 2.4 Foundation degree students who articulate directly to the final year of an Honours degree course at the University College will be treated as continuing students, and will be entitled to the same provisions as students who progress to the final year having followed the Honours degree course.
- 2.5 Students who enrolled on an Honours degree or Foundation Degree prior to 2010/11 will be treated as continuing students and will remain under the thresholds in place in their year of entry (subject to any inflationary increases).
- 2.6 The awards described within this Agreement also apply to any students who have deferred entry for 2010/11.

### **3.0 Amounts of additional fee income to be spent on access measures**

- 3.1 The University College has devised a range of support mechanisms to encourage applications from, and subsequent retention of, students from under-represented groups. This includes the intention to raise the total number of applications from within these groups, which makes a precise determination of the amounts required difficult. However, based on an analysis of the cohorts at the University College in recent years, and taking into account our analysis of the operation of the Agreement, the University College estimates that over 15% of its additional income is dedicated to promoting access to under-represented groups.
- 3.2 The University College will continue to ensure that funding is available to support our target groups; these funds are allocated to discretionary funds such as those to support Educational Visits or times of unexpected hardship, and other on-course support (see 4.5 below).

### **4.0 Bursaries and other financial support for students**

#### **Bursaries**

- 4.1.1 The University College offers a £600 bursary to all students in receipt of the full £2,906 grant, utilising the Higher Education Bursary and Scholarship Scheme (HEBSS). This will be paid in two instalments; one in February and one in July following successful completion of the academic year. Please note that the bursary is subject to annual review, and may not be increased in line with inflation.
- 4.1.2 In addition, the University College will work towards making progress in breaking down the barriers to young people from care entering higher education, by offering them a bursary of £2,000 for each academic year of their undergraduate course. Students who are under local authority care when they enrol at the University College are automatically eligible to receive this bursary. We will also consider offering this bursary to students up to the age of 25 on entry to higher education who have been in care for 3 or more months up to and including the period of GCSE/A level or

equivalent study. (Evidence will normally be required.) This bursary is not means tested and will not affect student entitlement to any other financial support.

The bursary will be paid in February of each year, and is in the form of a grant. This award is in addition to the other bursaries and benefits to which a student may be entitled. The University College reserves the right to claim back a proportion of this grant if the student fails to complete the year, but will consider each case on its merits.

The bursary for care-leavers is subject to annual review, and may not be increased in line with inflation.

#### 4.1.3 *Year Zero*

The University College has introduced a Year Zero for some awards to support recruitment. This may be a suitable route into higher education for some non-traditional entrants who have a clear career strategy, but who currently lack some of the requisite skills for admission onto very highly competitive courses. The fee for Year Zero will be the standard fee, which is £1,310 for 2010/11, but we shall use a proportion of our additional fee income to award a bursary of £600 for students from our target groups. On progression to Level 4, these students will be covered by the standard bursary provision for 2011/12.

#### 4.2 Course material fees

4.2.1 The University College no longer charges a course material fee for all undergraduate courses. This removes the requirement for students to pay an upfront fee in respect of certain course materials.

#### 4.3 Reduction in University College accommodation fees

4.3.1 Up to 15 students from our designated widening participation target groups who apply for a place in Halls accommodation, whose home address is outside a 25-mile radius from the University College or who otherwise fall within the criteria of acceptance for a Halls place, receive a 25% reduction in Halls fees. (Halls fees may differ depending on location and type of room. Allocation to a specific room is at the University College's discretion. Halls costs for 2010/11 have not been confirmed at this time, but in 2009/10 the weekly rate for Halls ranged from £85 - £120, with a standard contract of 39 weeks, and hence a maximum reduction of £1,170.) Applications will be considered in accordance with our Halls Policy. This is particularly intended to support those students from outside the local community, and will normally only apply to students in their first year of full-time study at the University College, but in certain cases (for example, students with a disability which makes shared accommodation impractical) students may be permitted to remain in Halls throughout their course.

#### 4.4 Bicycle Vouchers

4.4.1 All students who are in receipt of the full maintenance grant of £2,906 are offered vouchers to the value of £175 which can be spent on bicycles and cycling accessories.

#### 4.5 On-course support

4.5.1 The University College has already established a fund which provides emergency support for students on-course, which has been successful in supporting retention. We have established a further fund, which is targeted at those students from our target groups and to which applications can be made to support educational visits or in times of particular and unexpected hardship. This fund has been established with a minimum of £30,000, and unspent monies from other funds will revert to this fund as appropriate.

#### 4.6 Appointment of administrative staff to support the Scheme

4.6.1 The University College notes that the administration of this scheme is complex, and has appointed a dedicated member of staff, the Additional Grant Administrator, to support the administration, monitoring and development of the scheme. Some further resource will be dedicated to management support and research costs.

#### 4.7 Disability support

4.7.1 The University College currently supports Educational Psychologists' reports, and applications for the Disabled Student's Allowance, through its Widening Participation funding. We also offer extensive on-course learning support, which has been effective in securing excellent retention levels for these students. In addition students with disabilities may be entitled to apply for a reduction in accommodation costs, as outlined at paragraph 4.3.1 above. We do not therefore intend to fund further work on disability support at this time, but will keep this matter under review.

### **5.0 Provision of information to students**

5.1 The University College acknowledges that the arrangements for fees and bursaries are complicated, and that potential applicants will wish to be clear about bursary provision. We therefore encourage all prospective students to investigate fully the financial support available to them, including non-repayable grants and bursaries.

5.2 A summary of our bursary provision is published on our website, and we also produce an information sheet which is included with course information and available at Open Days. The information sheet summarises the arrangements outlined in section 4 above. These arrangements are also included within our Financial Advice and Support talk at Open Days.

We also target fee and support information at under-represented groups through appropriate outreach activity, and ensure that enquirers from identified schools and colleges (including those who completed their compulsory education before publication of the Access Agreement) are provided with the relevant information.

5.3 Extensive staff briefings, HE tutor briefings and staff development workshops ensure that all those staff who come into contact with potential applicants are clear about the arrangements, and where further information can be found.

5.4 We also work closely with Student Services and Students' Union to inform campaigns to reach the target audience and have a visible presence at induction to reinforce information about bursary support available to eligible students.

### **6.0 Outreach work**

6.1 The University College conducts significant outreach work as part of its Widening Participation Strategy. This work has been extended to develop partnerships with new schools and colleges in support of our recruitment of under-represented groups, which in turn necessitates the allocation of additional resource through the period of this Agreement.

6.2 Following the identification of appropriate schools and colleges, which may not be from the local area, we have developed links which will both raise aspiration within the organisation, and encourage application to the University College. This includes student mentoring, visits to the University College for taster-days, and the opportunity to meet with current staff and students, as well as work within the schools and colleges.

- 6.3 To raise awareness and opportunities in education in art, design, media and performance, the University College holds Portfolio Advice days where target groups of students are encouraged to seek critical advice and discuss career opportunities with current academic staff.
- 6.4 The funding allocation to outreach reflects the fact that much of this work is already conducted through our Widening Participation Strategy, but that this work will develop and extend throughout the period of the Agreement. We will continue to review and develop our wider bursary policies and access plans in such ways that will most effectively promote widening participation and fair access.

## **7.0 Milestones**

- 7.1 The University College's Widening Participation Strategy, to which this Access Agreement is an appendix, notes the importance of monitoring success through achievements against the HESA Performance Indicators, supplemented by targets for the rates of application and offer to non-traditional learners, and overall student satisfaction ratings for those in receipt of support.
- 7.2 Whilst acknowledging the delay in publication of Performance Indicator data, we believe that it is preferable to monitor our performance through publicly available information where possible. We shall of course monitor these same indicators internally to ensure that we are well placed to understand the impact of our work.
- 7.3 In reviewing progress to date, we are aware that early operation of Access Agreements across the sector appears to have had limited impact although it is encouraging that most recent figures show a gradual rise in the numbers of young people from lower socio-economic groups entering higher education over the years since 2002-03. This is a strong achievement which reflects the considerable efforts that the higher education sector is making to ensure that all eligible young people can access higher education, regardless of their financial circumstances. We anticipate continued improved performance as the new arrangements become better known and better understood; and as the University College learns the promotional mechanisms which are most effective. We note varying progress in the University College's performance against its targets, and aspire to consider these trends in future years.
- 7.4 The University College reviews its targets on a regular basis. We routinely monitor performance against these criteria on an annual basis and have noted that because of the relatively small numbers involved, apparent performance can vary considerably year on year. Data to monitor progression and achievement will be most effectively looked at within the periodic review of courses, where trends can be reviewed over a number of years, although the recruitment of non-traditional students has also been introduced as one aspect of the Annual Course Review process.
- 7.5 The University College considers each of its targets to be minima, and hence where targets have been exceeded, there will be no activity designed to reduce subsequent achievement. However, targets will not themselves necessarily be revised upwards.
- 7.6 We shall continue to review the effectiveness of our Access Agreement and its impact on our recruitment, and targets will continue to be revised as appropriate. The targets are attached as Appendix One. It should be noted that the University College has discontinued its targets relating to mature students. The numbers of students within this category were consistently so small that outcomes were the result of individual circumstance rather than targeted activity. The University College will continue to monitor performance against benchmark, but does not consider that targets are meaningful in this category.

## **8.0 Institutional monitoring arrangements**

- 8.1 Annually, the University College reports to the Office for Fair Access, OFFA, in its Annual Monitoring Report. This includes all expenditure from additional fee income on financial support for lower income students and other under-represented groups and reports progress against objectives and milestones.
- 8.2 The University College receives an annual report on its Widening Participation activity which reports on activity, and outcomes. The report is considered in detail by both Equality and Inclusivity Committee and by University College Academic Standards and Quality Committee, with a summary report made to Academic Board. The clearer milestones and targets outlined in this Access Agreement enable a more evaluative consideration of progress, and a regular review of success.
- 8.3 The continuous monitoring of performance against target, and of take-up of the various access measures, also enables these measures to be amended where appropriate to ensure that the identified groups are reached. In order to inform the efficacy of its arrangements, the University College uses its Student Perception Survey to contribute to data collection on the successful implementation of bursary awards.
- 8.4 Specifically, the University College has considered a number of further measures which it might wish to introduce to support its target groups. These include a further increase in the support which is now extended to all those in receipt of the maximum grant to cover additional costs of living and study; support for entry to competitions; and additional support for its outreach work. We shall continue to monitor both the success of our existing measures, and our overall patterns of expenditure, and these will inform any future amendments to this Agreement.

## Appendix One: Targets 2008/11

Group	Performance 06/07	Performance <b>07/08</b>	LAB 07/08	Target 08/09*	Target 09/10*	Target 10/11*
<b>Young full-time undergraduate entrants</b>						
From lower socio-economic groups	32.7	<b>31.2</b>	31.9	29.5	31	32
From low participation neighbourhoods	9.1	<b>7.8</b>	9.1	12	12	12
<b>Mature full-time undergraduate entrants</b>						
Proportion who are mature	21.3	<b>19.5</b>				
Numbers (for reference)						
No previous HE & from low participation neighbourhood	3.9	<b>2.9</b>	6.2	10.5	10.5	
<b>Ethnic minority first year students (UK domiciled) (%) (UCAS data)</b>	11.6			9	10.5	10.5
<b>Non-continuation (not in HE)</b>						
Young	6	<b>6.2</b>	8.4	5	5	5
Mature	9.3	<b>11.4</b>	13.3	12	11	
All students	6.7	<b>7.3</b>	9.5	8	7.5	7.5
Young entrants from low participation neighbourhoods	0	<b>6.3</b>	9.8	10	10	10
Young entrants from other neighbourhoods	6.5	<b>6.2</b>	8.2	4	4	4
Mature entrants with no previous HE qualification	7.8	<b>9.7</b>	13.2		14	14
Mature entrants with previous HE qualification	14.3	<b>12.5</b>	13.3	14	12.5	
<b>Percentage in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance</b>						
Full-time undergraduate	14.8	<b>14.5</b>	8.8	10	10	10
Part-time undergraduate	15.7	<b>18.8</b>	7.0	5	5	5

\* Targets were set initially against 02/03 performance. Some have been revised based on subsequent performance, but the University College has been cautious not to react to individual results which may be unrepresentative.

\*\*The numbers in some non-continuation categories are periodically too small to be recorded. This demonstrates the challenge of setting meaningful targets in this area of work, and hence whilst targets are set, performance must be reviewed cautiously.