

Birkbeck  
University of London

## Access agreement for undergraduate programmes

### Part 1: Introduction and context

- 1 The College's founder, George Birkbeck, declared "Now is the time for the universal benefits of the blessings of knowledge". When Birkbeck opened its doors for the first time in 1823, it provided learning opportunities to people previously denied access. This early vision of the power of education to transform and improve lives remains at the heart of the College's mission; a commitment to social mobility and widening access, valued by the Government today, has been the College's core business for 189 years. Birkbeck is committed not only to teaching excellence but to the innovative organisation and flexible delivery of our teaching in ways that genuinely respond to the needs, changing circumstances and funding realities faced by our students. Birkbeck welcomes the fact that part-time students are included in the access agreement framework on an equal footing to full-time students. Our access agreement reflects Birkbeck's fundamental values and commitment to widening participation and access.
- 2 The **principal aims** of Birkbeck are to:
  - Provide flexible higher education courses which meet the changing educational, cultural, personal and career needs of adults, particularly those who live or work in the London region.
  - Enable adult students from diverse social and educational backgrounds to participate in our courses.
  - Maintain and develop excellence in research and provide the highest quality research training in all our subject areas.
  - Make available the results of research, and the expertise acquired, through teaching, publication, partnerships with other organisations and the promotion of civic and public debate.
- 3 Birkbeck is a global top-150 university and 'London's Evening University', where the majority of undergraduate students work during the day and study in the evening. Birkbeck has long encouraged applications from students without traditional qualifications and has a wide range of programmes to suit most aspirant students. As London's only specialist provider of flexible evening higher education, the College has a student body as diverse as the population of the capital city itself.

Birkbeck recruits the majority of its students outside of the UCAS system. However, as part of its commitment to flexible study patterns it is now offering an increasing number of three-year undergraduate evening degree programmes through UCAS. Birkbeck's UCAS entrants are typically aged 21-30, and are students who did not enter HE directly as school leavers.

- 4 Between 2007–2011 the College achieved a sustained growth in its non-traditional student population. Against a national picture where part-time participation was static or in decline, enrolments at the College grew by 63% from 2006-2007 to 2010/2011. Comparable data for the sector demonstrates growth of 8% over the same period.
- 5 Despite the increase in recent years, at the time of submission in May 2012 part-time applications are substantially down across the sector and Birkbeck is no exception. Part-time students are mostly not in school or College when they apply to university and do not come through the UCAS system. They are the most non-traditional students in the sector and the hardest to reach. They require the most support and currently receive the least. The communication of loans to this group so far has been inadequate and the processes by which part-time students can apply for loans far from clear. Additionally, national UCAS data demonstrates that mature students and London-based students are among the groups that have experienced the largest declines in full-time university applications in 2012/2013. These groups make up the majority of Birkbeck's students.
- 6 Birkbeck's focus is on genuinely broadening access rather than deepening participation within an already diverse student community. In September 2007 the College launched its major widening participation initiative - Birkbeck Stratford. Birkbeck has added new modes of part-time evening study in new subject areas to the east London HE landscape, targeted at an area of London with the lowest levels of higher education participation. Birkbeck's enrolments in east London have been impressive with 400 FTE students. Birkbeck Stratford has also had a major impact on encouraging east London people to study at Birkbeck's central London campus, with recruitment to the Bloomsbury campus from students living in east London's low participation postcodes increasing significantly. Birkbeck Stratford has provided the platform from which to launch a range of creative outreach initiatives, such as the development of access programmes in Sure Start Centres across London. In 2013 the Birkbeck/UEL partnership will come to maturity with the opening of a new joint building 'University Square Stratford'.

### **Current work to widen access and improve social mobility**

7 Since 2008, there has been a strategic focus on improving the recruitment and retention of undergraduate, non-traditional, part-time, adult learners through a sustained and integrated 'student experience' initiative led by the Pro-Vice-Master for Student Experience. Our investment in outreach and retention remains broadly similar to previous years, and the introduction of the new post of Pro-Vice-Master for Academic Partnerships will further boost our partnership work. Our strands of work to widen access include:

7a Recruitment – pre-entry information, advice, guidance and outreach

- i. Focus on the pre-entry phase of the non-traditional student experience. Part-time students apply directly to their university of choice and not through the UCAS system. They are often not part of mainstream structures when they apply so they find little support on offer. Birkbeck applicants rely heavily on the College for information, advice and guidance. It can take a non-traditional Birkbeck student three years to move from first point of contact to actually applying, yet the application most often arrives only a few weeks before the student wishes to commence study, when they are clear that family, work and finances make study possible.
- ii. Birkbeck has developed excellence in its specialist approach to integrating the many strands of work that bring its students to study. It pulls together all of its marketing, outreach and transition work and delivers an extensive range of pre-entry services to move non-traditional students from enquirer to successful enrolment. Birkbeck's study of 'what works' for the retention and success of non-traditional students demonstrates that the pre-entry phase is of critical importance. Therefore the newly enlarged Widening Access and Retention team now works closely with the Marketing and Recruitment team from the student's first point of contact, throughout the application process, and into the first year of study. Weekly 'Try It' workshops, described in more detail in paragraph 37, ensure that all prospective students are able to receive support and guidance within a week of making contact with Birkbeck, providing support for mature students who would not be able to easily access the support elsewhere.
- iii. The College has developed energetic and effective marketing, outreach and transition approaches that work with mature, part-time learners and hard-to-reach groups. The College targets community groups, libraries, trade unions and runs a high-profile

outdoor advertising campaign on London's public transport to encourage possible students to get in touch. Messages have been developed and fine-tuned over the years and encourage students to 'turn the end of the day into the beginning of your future' at 'London's evening university'.

- iv. Effective national communication regarding the loans for mature and part-time students has been inadequate. During 2011/2012, the College has responded to widespread misinformation among our prospective students around the new fees and funding structure through committing significant resource and effort to ensure that prospective students who are not in schools and colleges are given the correct information.

#### 7b Creating bridges into university – the role of Certificates of Higher Education

- i. The College has established a range of 'getting started' programmes that reach out to the most disadvantaged and non-traditional learners, wherever they are in London, and create bridges that enable them to aspire to a university degree. The College's Higher Education Introductory Studies (HEIS) programme acts as an access-type programme and is now available across London. Success on these programmes often leads students straight into the second year of an undergraduate degree programme.
- ii. Since 2007, these courses have been successfully delivered on-site in Sure Start Children's Centres. By offering this provision in areas where participation in higher education is low, the College provides the opportunity for new learners, who have family responsibilities, to take a step forward into learning in their own communities, before they continue their studies on campus. Under the previous fee structure, over 90% of students who take HEIS modules in these centres were eligible for financial support to pay their fees because they were in receipt of benefits or on low incomes. The new fees have led to a drop in demand for these introductory courses, and the College has committed £57,000 to providing full bursaries for 30 students studying at the Children's Centres in 2012/2013.
- i. In addition to HEIS, students awarded certain other Certificates of Higher Education are offered a place on a related undergraduate degree, and directly onto the second year in some instances. The success of these entry routes is demonstrated by the fact that 23% of applicants to our 2012/13

three year LLB came through the Certificate of Higher Education route, rather than through the traditional A-level route.

- iii. The Certificates that offer progression to undergraduate degrees are fantastic examples of effecting social mobility, providing new routes into higher education for those without previous qualifications. The Certificates have generated new students for the College and opened up access to university in ways consistent with the College's history and mission. Adults who might otherwise be excluded from higher education participation are finding their way onto degree programmes. Birkbeck will continue and expand our provision of these bridging courses where possible.

7c Retention - understanding the retention of part-time and non-traditional students

- i. Birkbeck's retention strategy focuses on the undergraduate degree student journey from first point of contact to transition into the second year. The strategy sets out Birkbeck's approach to retention, confirming our strong commitment to recruiting and maintaining a socially and culturally diverse student population. The retention strategy's objective has been to improve progression and completion rates across the institution for first year undergraduate students, aiming to improve year one retention by 20% by 2014.
- ii. Retention work has engaged many staff across the institution from schools and professional services, and retention now merits equal attention alongside recruitment. Birkbeck's innovative retention work has attracted attention from the sector and can already demonstrate hard outcomes:
  - The percentage of withdrawals and interrupts before the start of year 2 has fallen from 22% to 18% between 2008/2009 and 2010/2011, a particularly impressive feat considering enrolments increased by 53% during the period.
  - One strand of work in the School of Law has seen a 10% increase in 2010/2011 for first year students progressing into year two.
  - In recognition of its work, Birkbeck received HEA funding to run a well attended dissemination event in March 2012.
  - Widening Access Tsar, Alan Milburn, sent his team to Birkbeck for a two-day 'deep dive' visit around recruitment and retention of non-traditional students. Birkbeck will

feature as a case study in his social mobility paper this summer.

- iii. The next phase will continue to develop, integrate and embed work across the college focusing on four key strands:
- support the transition to study for year one undergraduate students, as research shows that pre-entry is a time when retention work can be most effective
  - raise awareness and enhance the understanding of effective pedagogies for first year undergraduates
  - embed and enhance the development of learning support in the institution, its schools and departments
  - support first year undergraduate students with mentors, buddies and advisors.

7d Leadership and structure to support recruitment and retention

- i. Integrated recruitment and retention work is facilitated by dedicated academic (Assistant Dean Recruitment and Retention) and administrative (Assistant School Manager Recruitment and Retention) posts within each of the five academic schools, working closely with the central services. In each school a Learning Support Officer is dedicated to improving retention through supporting the academic progression of students from non traditional groups. The costs of the Learning Support Officer posts, together with a proportion of the senior staff time dedicated to working on retention of students from non-traditional backgrounds, is conservatively estimated as £200,000.
- ii. Since 2008 the College has convened a Recruitment Monitoring Group, and a Retention Strategy Group with a Retention Operations sub group was established in 2010. These cross-College, integrated groups, working with the Widening Access and Retention team, help ensure the effective delivery coherent of recruitment and retention work.

7e Specialist pedagogy

- iii. The College recognises that for widening access to be sustained and embedded it needs to ensure the ongoing development of inclusive curricula and learning and teaching practices. This is a particular focus for first year provision. The College has developed 'Introductions' modules that are specifically designed to encourage new learners to become active, critical enquirers into their own learning experiences and into how these experiences have been affected by the circumstances of their

lives, past and present. The identities and the experiences that learners bring with them to the College are, therefore, actively drawn upon as a resource for learning and teaching. These modules are also designed to provide insights into the evolving, sometimes contested cultures and conventions of the British higher education system and to debates about what constitutes 'knowledge' in students' broad disciplinary field of interest. This provides the stimulus for students to begin to practise the kinds of critical, inquiry-led learning processes prioritised in HE, while they are supported to develop the kinds of written, oral and applied computer skills needed for successful undergraduate study. Where students are keen to link their studies to the achievement of new employment opportunities, these modules also provide structured career-related learning materials.

- iv. Work in critical pedagogy is embedded within the institution and the College works both to enhance pedagogic approaches for its learners, and also to develop critical approaches to learning for practitioners and professionals.

#### 7f Disability support

- i. The College has greatly increased the number of students eligible for Disabled Students' Allowance from 350 in 2008/2009 to 812 in 2011/2012 and increased the number of referrals for dyslexia assessments from 41 to 180.
- ii. The College has set a target of maintaining or increasing the proportion of our undergraduate students who have a disability. The Widening Access and Retention team will work closely with the Disability Office to support applications from students with disabilities and to monitor the retention rates of students in receipt of DSA to ensure that the introduction of the new fees and funding structure does not disproportionately affect applications from people with disabilities.

### **Partnership working**

8 Birkbeck has developed an extensive set of partners across London. Due to our distinct model of HE our partnership work has always been directly funded by the College rather than through the AimHigher initiative, and our partnership work was largely unaffected by the withdrawal of AimHigher funding.

- i. *Other HEIs*

An ongoing strategic partnership between Birkbeck and the University of East London will result in the construction of a major new centre for higher education in east London. University Square Stratford (USS) is a bold and innovative partnership which will bring new opportunities into the heart of Stratford town centre, near the Olympic Park. Opening in September 2013, USS will offer both Birkbeck and UEL programmes in one state-of-the-art building. Our two universities are working in partnership to develop a full range of jointly planned, managed and delivered services for a diverse pre-entry audience and to support student retention and success. At the heart of the collaboration is the student experience and a set of services and enhancements utilising the combined skills and experience of our two institutions. Services will include an impartial information, advice and guidance service at the entrance to the building, a joint student helpdesk and learning centre and a wide range of skills enhancement opportunities.

A set of collaborative targets to assess the impact of the joint services will be developed, and more detail will be included in our 2014-2015 access agreement when USS is ready to open. We are also committed to and planning a joint evaluation of the student experience interventions, drawing on the expertise of our combined academies.

Birkbeck also works in close collaboration with partner 'Bloomsbury Colleges'.

ii. *Networks*

Birkbeck hosts the Linking London network, a unique collection of partners from small adult-focused organisations to large multi-purpose further education colleges and research-intensive universities. Linking London also works collaboratively with an extended network of relevant stakeholders and organisations. As a large and diverse partnership of educational providers we are strategically positioned to encourage and support change aimed at improving progression opportunities for all learners. The Network has brokered progression agreements for students on Access to HE diplomas and NVQs to 12 of our foundation and first degrees and the first students from these agreements entered the College in 2011/2012.

Over the coming year we plan to work to develop a collaborative Linking London HE IAG/Outreach project for partner FE and sixth form Colleges.

Birkbeck has been an active supporter of the Higher Education Liaison Officers' Association. HELOA is the professional association of higher education staff who provide guidance, information and outreach activities to prospective higher education students, their families and guidance advisers. The Association has a code of practice which encourages collaboration, sharing good practice and rigorous standards of impartiality.

- iii. *Further Education Colleges (FECs) and Sixth Form Colleges*  
The College has developed a set of partnerships with key Further Education Colleges, and the new role of Pro-Vice-Master for Academic Partnerships will develop these partnerships further over the coming years. We are committed to working closely with FECs, including through producing an Institutional Progression Agreement with partner FECs that would strengthen and deepen our ties with our academic partners and ensure that increased numbers of students at these FECs are made aware of the range of different modes of HE.
- iv. *Trade Unions*  
Birkbeck's partnership with Trade Unions targets working adults who are looking to develop their careers through flexible higher education.
- v. *Community centres and Schools*  
Birkbeck also works closely with Sure Start Children's centres and the educational charity IntoUniversity to provide introductory routes into HE for very non-traditional learners who otherwise would have no access to university education.

### **Consulting with students**

- 9 The 2012/2013 access agreement and previous Widening Participation Strategic Assessments have all been discussed and approved by the Student Experience and Widening Participation Committee (SEWP), which has representation from the Student Union. The 2013/2014 access agreement is not substantially different to the one agreed at SEWP committee, and the committee received an update on the 2013/2014 access agreement and supported the direction of travel.
- 10 During the year we consulted with students on the workings of our NSP and additional financial bursary package. The feedback was that students preferred additional cash bursaries rather than fee waivers. However, NSP regulations prevent bursaries from being offered to part-time students, so in order to respond to students' wishes Birkbeck is committed to providing, from College funds, a cash bursary of £1000

(pro-rata to intensity of study) to all eligible first year students and continuing students.

- 11 The students union have welcomed the introduction of a Hardship Fund for 2012/2013 of £150,000 that the College has made available to support students who require financial support.
- 12 The College have worked with the Student Union to review and adapt our offering of student support sessions, for example through working with the SU to deliver additional career workshops for current students. Similarly, we actively seek and act upon student feedback for all our pre- and post-entry student support sessions.
- 13 Birkbeck's Student Union is currently experiencing a time of financial challenge and the officers of the College are working closely with a small group of nominated Student Union trustees to secure a future for the Student Union and safeguard essential services for the Birkbeck student body.

### **Equalities and Diversity**

- 14 As part of Birkbeck's long tradition of equity and access we are committed to equality of opportunity for all. Equality and diversity is already an integral part of Birkbeck's practices and is embedded in all that we do. We have strived to build an enabling environment free from prejudice, discrimination and harassment by supporting the diverse and cultural needs of all staff and students through a range of activities as outlined in the College's Single Equality Strategy. The strategy is a high level action plan that focuses on the following themes: 'Birkbeck as an Employer', the 'Student Experience' and 'Corporate Affairs', and will capture the College's aspirations and commitment to deliver on our equality commitments, aims and objectives.
- 15 The College is committed to maintaining the ethnicity profile of the student body that reflects the population of London, and of maintaining increase number of disabled students as a proportion of the student body. The impact of the College's recruitment and retention activities are captured through the College's Equality Strategy and supporting implementation plan which is monitored and reported on a regular basis at the Equalities Committee.

### **Donor support**

- 16 Birkbeck attracts significant support of around £300k each year from donors for bursaries, student hardship and course-related costs. The compelling Birkbeck story encourages donors to support the College. Offering such financial support to students is a vital element of the

College's strategy to attract, recruit and retain students. The College's Development and Alumni Relations team continues to explore new opportunities to further increase philanthropic income to support students.

## Part 2: Access Agreement

### Our programme portfolio

- 17 Birkbeck has a longstanding commitment to widening access and social mobility. We will continue to invest a significant proportion of tuition fee income to support this mission-critical work.
- 18 As an institution focused on evening learning and teaching and with a majority of part-time students, we take a broad and holistic approach in our fee strategies and our spending on outreach, retention and student financial support. The undergraduate student body is, as to be expected, diverse. Our students are on three- and four-year degree programmes, foundation degrees and modules and programmes leading to Certificates of Higher Education, some of them structured programmes and some of them a flexible modular provision, which students study at their own pace. The College's outreach team works to bring students to all of these courses, as appropriate to individual experiences and aspirations.
- 19 Our standard part-time degree model is 75% intensity, enabling students to complete in four years. Since 2010/2011 we have also offered intensive three-year versions of degrees in some subject areas. We are expanding the intensive three-year programme and plan to offer 40 subjects in 2013/2014, while also expanding options for students to study at a slower pace to suit life or financial commitments, completing in up to six years.
- 20 Overall, in 2013/2014, Birkbeck expects to earn £20M from new system undergraduate entrant fee income, of which £6.1M is from fees above the £6K baseline. We plan to spend circa £2.45M on student financial support in 2013/2014, rising from our £1M estimated allocation for 2012/2013. Our cash bursary scheme will build up over four years as students populate the new system. We also plan to continue our already substantial investment in outreach and to increase and consolidate our commitment to retention as the work described above comes to fruition.
- 21 Investment will include:

- maintenance of the major programme of outreach and retention work
- Encouraging participation in higher education within key areas of London through the work of the dedicated Widening Access and Retention team
- development of highly focussed new areas of outreach and retention work
- continuation of a communication programme for part-time students about the new student finance package (this is essential as current BIS communications have focussed on full-time young students and their parents)
- targeted use of National Scholarship Programme money and matched funding
- bursaries and scholarships that suit our particular student body.

## **Fee strategy**

- 22 We will maintain a tiered fee structure in 2012/2013, continuing from the principles already established in the College for differential pricing taking into account our academic, widening participation and lifelong learning missions. FTE fees will range from £4000 and £4800 for some Certificate of Higher Education modules and £6000, £8000 and £9000 for other Certificates and degree programmes. The lowest fee represents a price of £800 for a 30-credit module from a Certificate of Higher Education. These Certificates attract a diverse range of students: some choose to take one or two Certificate modules every year, either to build up credit for a Certificate of Higher Education, potentially leading to entry to the second year of a degree, or to pursue lifelong learning. Some Certificates of Higher Education are designed as access and progression routes, including the HEIS programme described above. Some are taken up by students of all ages engaging in lifelong learning and others lead to a professionally relevant skill or qualification, such as Counselling and Life Sciences for Subjects Allied to Medicine.
- 23 Our degree portfolio relies on our strong research reputation as a member of the 1994 group of research-intensive universities and in the top 25 in the last RAE. The pricing structure is based on criteria including social participation at the lower level and outcomes likely to lead graduates into professional careers at the upper level. Where Certificates of Higher Education and foundation degrees are progression routes to degrees, we are assigning a lower fee to the progression route.
- 24 We are planning an average fee of £6500 FTE, taking fee waivers and part-time programmes into account. We will review these fee rates

every year and, if appropriate, will increase them in line with inflation and in accordance with the rates set by the Government.

## **Student finance**

### **Bursaries**

- 25 For new entrants in 2013/2014 we intend to continue to offer a similar package of support as was offered to our new entrants in 2012/2013. A combination of fee waivers from the National Scholarship programme and a very generous cash bursary scheme will be directed to students on low incomes. These will be offered alongside our other schemes of financial support including hardship funding and access to learning funds.
- 26 In 2013/14, we expect to receive £483K of Government funding for the National Scholarship Programme and will match this with an additional £483K, so the total allocation will be £966K. Our degree students are on programmes lasting for three years (100% intensity / 120 credits per year), four years (75% intensity / 90 credits per year) and six years (50% intensity / 60 credits per year). Our Certificate of HE students study at intensities between 25% (30 credits per year) and 100% (120 credits per year), depending on the programme.
- 27 The NSP guidelines state that the government's allocation of funding should only be used to finance a fee waiver for the first year of a student's programme. However, this puts part-time students at a disadvantage as they would receive a fee waiver for 30, 60 or 90 credits whereas full-time students receive a fee waiver for 120 credits. We believe it is important to ensure the equal treatment of part-time students, therefore we intend to spend part of our match funding, to ensure that fee waivers of £3000 are applied for the first 120 credits of study on all programmes that qualify for the scheme. This will ensure that all eligible full time and part-time students receive the full fee waiver of £3000. To illustrate, eligible three year degree students will receive the fee waiver of £3000 in their first year, four year degree students will receive a fee waiver £2250 in their first year and £750 in the 2nd year, and six year degree students will receive a fee waiver of £1500 in both the first year and second years. We estimate that, using this scheme, we will spend £843K of our £966K allocation on first year fee waivers and the remaining £123K on second year fee waivers. We expect to offer approximately 350 such awards to students who meet the income criteria. Awards will also be ring fenced for students on low income and progressing from one of our partner FE Colleges and also for low income disabled students.

- 28 We believe that the NSP guidelines should allow for equal treatment of part time students. Additionally, due to government regulation we are restricted from offering any of the NSP funds as cash awards to part-time students and therefore must distribute the funding exclusively as fee-waivers. We will review our figures once we have the data for our 2012/2013 student body and investigate how best to remedy the disadvantage faced by part-time students.
- 29 We will also be operating a full fee waiver scheme worth £57,000 for up to 30 students on our community centre based Higher Education Introductory Studies Programme, at two selected centres in east London. In addition we will run our Union Learn scheme, for 10% fee waivers for students referred by trade Union education officers, worth an estimated £30,000.
- 30 We intend to spend £1.4M of College funding in 2013/2014 on cash bursaries, to be used by recipients to fund their costs of learning, which may include equipment, books, travel and childcare, or as partial payment against fees. These awards will be made to all 'new system' students so will be available to continuing student who began their studies in 2012/2013 and new entrants in 2013/2014.
- 31 We are planning to make £1000 awards pro rata to FTE to approximately 2000 students. We have based this offer on feedback from students that they prefer a choice in how to spend their bursary awards, including supporting the day-to-day costs of learning.
- 32 We will continue to operate an extremely generous bursary system for old system part-time students and will honour this as students work their way through the system. Part-time students who started their studies prior to 2012/2013 are eligible for a grant of up to £1250 per annum for which they are means tested by Student Finance England. Our bursary scheme aims to 'top up' recipients of the part-time grant to the level of the College's part-time fee. In the last year of old regime in 2011/2012 we funded over 2000 students and spent in excess of £2.2M. We fund this scheme from a combination of College, donor and Government Access to Learning funding.
- 33 Birkbeck will continue to provide bursaries to our remaining students studying our three-year degrees who began prior to 2012/2013 and are in receipt of the full or partial maintenance grant. For those students receiving the full maintenance grant and paying the maximum tuition fee, we will continue to pay above the minimum bursary and agree to pay at least the difference between the full maintenance grant and the full fee. For those students receiving partial state support and paying the maximum tuition fee we will pay a means-tested bursary scaled to the bursary of those in receipt of the full maintenance grant.

- 34 Alongside the main schemes of fee waiver and bursary support outlined here we also will continue to maintain a number of other financial support schemes that we offer for our students.
- Hardship Fund – In 2012/2013 we introduced a new hardship fund available to all students who experience a change in circumstances during their studies to provide financial support towards the costs of their course. The hardship fund in 2013/2014 is expected to be circa £200k.
  - College Awards Fund – A fund for discretionary payments to old system students who face hardship due to change of circumstance to provide financial support towards fees, maintenance and course costs, circa £150k.
  - Donor Funding – We will continue to seek donor funding to supplement our student financial support, which will be aimed at students from low income backgrounds. For example, £25,000 per year for 2012/13 and 2013/14 has been secured for means tested bursaries for students studying at Birkbeck Stratford.
  - Access to Learning Fund - Distribution of any available government allocated funds from Access to Learning Fund in supporting course costs for part-time students on low incomes and as top-up payments to students in receipt of the part-time grant. Expected to be circa £300k-£400k, for old system students.

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

- 35 2012/2013 will be the first year that part-time students have access to student loans. We are investing significant staff resource into developing communications for part-time and mature students. We will continue to work directly with BIS, UCAS, UUK and SLC to influence effective communication with part-time students at a national level, but there has been a lack of good quality and accessible information targeted at the mature and part-time audiences, with the vast majority of communications for the HE sector being targeted at school leavers and their parents. Part-time students make up nearly 40% of the undergraduate student body nationally so this is important work. Part-time students are mostly not in school or college when they apply and need full support to understand and access the new fees and funding regime. Benchmarking shows that our advertising and recruitment spending is higher than other HE institutions and this is because our students are recruited directly and not via UCAS. We have worked hard to reach out to students directly to tell them about the opportunities of part-time evening higher education and to ensure that they have the correct information regarding the fees and funding, through:

- producing a high-quality video to explain the fees and funding structure
- incorporating the fees messages within our advertising
- fortnightly fees and funding workshops for prospective students, and through regular webinars
- producing an online 'Financing your 2012 Undergraduate Course' tutorial.

We are committed to providing timely information to UCAS and SLC regarding our fees and financial support so that prospective students can find the relevant information as conveniently as possible. We will publish comprehensive information regarding our fees and financial support on our website.

### **Outreach work**

- 36 During 2011/2012 the Outreach and Widening Participation team merged with the My Birkbeck Student Services to create a Widening Access and Retention team. The merging of the teams has enabled us to respond better to students' needs and to provide consistent student support from first point of contact with Birkbeck through to end of a student's first year. The Widening Access and Retention team consists of seven full-time permanent staff members.
- 37 We plan to spend £480K overall on outreach in 2012/2013. The team focuses its work, which is intended to facilitate access to all of Birkbeck's programmes, on the following:
- mature students without previous experience of higher education
  - students in areas with low participation in HE as defined by Government demographics
  - low-income households.
- 38 Reaching out to mature learners from under-represented groups means that the work of the team has to be innovative and creative. The majority of Birkbeck's prospective students are not sitting in a classroom environment, which makes long-term engagement more difficult. The team have worked hard to understand the needs of prospective students from WP backgrounds who may particularly benefit from evening study, and have developed key projects and partnerships to raise awareness of the option of full-time and part-time evening higher education among WP groups. The team's aspiration raising and outreach work includes:
- 39 *Try It Workshops*: A need was identified to provide prospective learners with practical experience of what it means to study part-time in the

evenings. Try It workshops were devised to actively encourage our outreach learners to come onto campus, demystifying university study and explaining the 'rules of the game' to all prospective students. The support contained within the Try It workshops is routinely on offer to students in formal education, whereas many of Birkbeck's prospective students do not have ready access to the information. The series is repeated monthly and consists of:

- *Future Focus - Careers Workshop*: The workshop is facilitated by a qualified, independent freelance careers consultant and is designed to help anyone considering a career change to explore whether returning to education may be the right option for them.
- *Preparing for Higher Education*: Many prospective students who have not been in an educational setting for many years are concerned about the academic requirements of undergraduate study. The workshop explores the potential challenges, and to encourage students to make plans in advance of commencing their studies.
- *Application Workshop*: Schools and colleges invest significant time in ensuring that their students are well informed of the university application process and are supported throughout the application process, whereas many of Birkbeck's students do not have access to this level of support. The Application Workshop provides the necessary support for students to complete applications that reflect their skills, giving advice on the information to include and omit from their personal statements.
- *Financing your university course*: Responding to the widespread confusion regarding the new fees structure, particularly among mature students, the session aims to explain clearly what fees and funding support is available to students.

40 *Further Education Colleges and Sixth Forms*: Birkbeck has a commitment to support people with non-traditional entry qualifications (including vocational studies). After building strong relations with local colleges we plan produce an Institutional Progression Agreement with partner FECs that would strengthen and deepen our ties with our academic partners and ensure that increased numbers of students at these FECs are made aware of the range of different modes of HE. The team is also working with a number of Sixth Form Colleges in response to increased demand for evening study among younger students, as evidenced by the increase in applications to Birkbeck's UCAS provision in 2012/2013.

41 *Trade Unions*: Working in partnership with *unionlearn* to target low paid workers to encourage them to progress to HE. Birkbeck offers a 10% fee discount to these entrants of which 102 members have taken

advantage so far. We have set aside £30,000 annually for these fee waivers.

- 42 *Pre-entry IAG:* Over the past few years, Birkbeck has made a commitment to providing prospective students with access to free, impartial, high-quality IAG. Careers Consultants from the Careers Group London attend all Open Evenings and School Taster Events in addition to delivering the Future Focus Workshops outlined above. We will also provide IAG from University Square Stratford project outlined in Paragraph 8(i). Findings from the Back on Course Research into early leavers, demonstrated 'wrong course choice' as a main reason for withdrawing from study. At Birkbeck, we want to help adults, who have limited access to face to face IAG provision, make the right decision first time.
- 43 *'Learning Cafés:* The Widening Access and Retention team have worked with academic colleagues to develop a Learning Café model, offering informal and unaccredited sessions in community settings, including at Sure Start Children's Centres and primary schools. The sessions aim to provide a taster of returning to study to people who may not have previous qualifications. Those who wish to progress onto formal learning will be able to enrol onto the accredited Higher Education Introductory Studies programmes, also run at the community setting. Birkbeck has set aside a number of bursaries to support these students, and the effectiveness of these bursaries will be evaluated.
- 44 *Try it! Birkbeck in your commUNITY:* We worked with a community partner to deliver a week-long programme of workshops, lectures, performances, debates and information, advice and guidance sessions, to coincide with Adult Learners' Week. The programme of drop-in sessions has been designed to give participants a taste of higher education, encourage a desire for learning, and to provide information on Birkbeck's courses and the new system of student loans and bursaries. We will evaluate the project fully and plan to repeat in future years.
- 45 *Working with IntoUniversity* – We provide facilities for IntoUniversity to use as part of their aspiration-raising activities with disadvantaged pupils. We also hope to support intergenerational aspiration-raising, through working with the children's parents, raising their aspirations and awareness that the benefits of higher education are also available to them.
- 46 Alongside the projects outlines above the team will continue to run a large and varied calendar of events throughout the year, ranging from information stands in shopping centres to bespoke talks for community groups and education advisors.

## Retention and other student support

- 47 The College's aims and progress so far in student retention is described in Paragraph 7c. We have adopted and will maintain an integrated approach to pre-entry advice, orientation, induction and retention measures and intend to work more to ensure that there is sufficient pre-entry guidance on the new system for prospective students.
- 48 Much of the important retention work at Birkbeck happens in the pre-entry phase, including the 'Get Ahead' summer programme of workshops preparing applicants for study, and the associated Get Ahead Stay Ahead website and online tutorials. We also have specialist support including English Language and English for Academic Purposes pre-entry courses and similar support for mathematical subjects, as well as a dedicated Disability Office offering individual advice and support.
- 49 A further development of the Widening Access and Retention team has been to expand our retention activities during the first year of study. The face-to-face sessions are timetabled at key trigger points in the student life cycle and focus on empowering learners by building confidence and self-esteem. Students are encouraged to attend orientation events in September, followed by 'Stay Ahead' events in November, February and March which are designed to provide pastoral support focusing on improving motivation, encouraging growth mindsets and fostering collaborative learning.
- 50 We will seek to expand our transition mentoring projects over the coming years as well as developing more employability oriented projects. Our student centre and website [www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck) draws all student support services and information together.

## Milestones

- 51 The College is committed to monitoring the affect of the fees and financial support available for full-time and part-time students receiving state support. The College will collect baseline data on the family income of each cohort (students entitled to Government financial support) and numbers receiving bursaries and monitor this over time using internal Management Information Systems. We have obtained Mosaic demographic data on our students, with detailed information about patterns of income, spending, housing, education and other social circumstances; and will be giving detailed consideration to this as we continue to plan our provision and student support for the future. We also aim to develop better ways of tracking students targeted by

outreach activities or in receipt of bursaries and fee waivers to assess the impact of our interventions.

### **Institutional Monitoring Arrangements**

- 52 Progress towards milestones will be monitored using College Management Information Systems, reviewed annually by the Student Experience and Widening Participation Committee, which has representation from the Student Union, and reported through Academic Board to the governing body. The effectiveness of the Outreach activities outlined above will continue to be evaluated by the Widening Access and Retention team and overseen through the Student Experience and Widening Participation Committee, and the impact of the financial support will be measured through the College Management Information Systems.



**Table 6b - 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)	Is this a collaborative target?	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)	If you have made any changes to the prefilled data around your milestones/targets, or included additional milestones/targets, please indicate why here.
					2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17		
Contextual data	Birkbeck encourages applicants without previous education or non traditional entry qualifications to apply. We recognise the importance of life experience and passion for a subject. Our certificate programmes support this transition to full UG study		2010/11	2683 headcount, 38% of total UG population	Increase by 1%	Increase by 1%	Increase by 1%	Increase by 1%	Increase by 1%	Most HEIs consider A Levels the primary route into HE. At Birkbeck we encourage those with non-traditional level 3 and below to take up study with us. This reflects our mission and is compatible with our outreach work and activities.	
Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Outreach Events - Continue to develop the team's calendar of awareness raising events and identify new areas for activities		2010/11	185 events, 3127 individuals met	185 events, 2900 people	185 events	185 events	185 events	185 events	The Outreach and WP team organises an annual calendar of events. They target areas of high deprivation and low adult participation local libraries, shopping centres, community organisations, fairs and exhibitions. Our work going forward includes new targeted interventions alongside to complement the outreach work.	
Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Learning Cafes - identify community partners and subject areas for delivery of these free awareness raising classes. Milestone relates to number of projects		2011/12	5	5	5	5	5	5	This new project is about bringing Birkbeck to the community. Delivering with our local partners in areas of deprivation, there will be a series of free, informal subject taster sessions aimed at raising adults' aspirations and understanding of HE study further. At the end participants will be signposted and supported to accredited progression routes.	5 Language Cafes will be run in summer 2012 and we plan to repeat the project pending evaluation.
Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Non-ELQ UG Application workshops - further develop the materials for these workshops and increase frequency and number of participants		2010/11	78 - based upon participants so far this academic cycle	240 participants	240 participants	240 participants	240 participants	240 participants	applications to part-time study (not in schools, colleges etc). We intend to expand this new provision and support more adults. Now we have an understanding of the needs and demands of prospective students when applying to HE, this provision will become better targeted and more widely promoted now we have this depth of knowledge.	
Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	WP targeted Sixth Forms - continue to attend events, fairs, provide lectures have selected progression agreements and advice to sixth form staff		2010/11	9 - WP targeted Sixth Forms, 360 staff and students	11 - WP targeted Sixth Forms, 440 staff and students	11 WP targeted sixth forms	This work is based upon the needs of sixth form students who cannot afford or are unable to commit to day-time study as they have home responsibilities or need to work to contribute to their living costs. Working with these highly targeted groups means we are still delivering to the Birkbeck's mission whilst offering an alternative to young people who might otherwise lose out.				
Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Further Education Colleges - we currently work in partnership with 15 colleges. These are targeted as hubs of WP and non-traditional students. We deliver fairs, talks, advice sessions for front line staff, finance talks, lectures and support workshops		2010/11	32 events delivered, 3700 people met	35 events to be delivered, 3800 people	35 events	35 events	35 events	35 events	This building of relationships has been a central part of the Outreach and WP team's work. Targeting students with non-traditional entry qualifications in some of London's poorest areas has brought a lot to Birkbeck in terms of strategic planning and developing a greater understanding of those students' needs.	

Strategic partnerships (eg formal relationships with schools/colleges/employers)	UnionLearn - 10% discount to unionlearn members as part of memorandum of understanding with unionlearn. Target relates to number of UG students the discount was granted to.		2011/12	37	40	40	40	40	40	The mission of UnionLearn and Birkbeck are very similar in their commitment to educating working adults, especially those in low paid, low skilled employment. To consolidate this partnership, Birkbeck signed a memorandum of understanding in 2010 with UnionLearn. As a result, Birkbeck offers a 10% discount across all levels of study to union members looking to develop their skills. These numbers refer to non-ELQ members who were not entitled to financial from the government or their employer.	Updated baseline data with 2011/12 information. Increased ongoing target due to scheme's popularity.
	Run events, short courses and attend meetings with Union Learning Representatives to raise the profile of part-time study to low skilled and low paid staff. Target relates to number of union members attending the events		2010/11	247	300	300	300	300	300		Clarified milestone
										These projections are built upon 2 years of work and team capacity to deliver quality events	
Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Try It workshops. Targeting the most vulnerable and mainly delivered in the community and on campus, it aims to support prospective students in demystifying HE, offer support around finance, careers support, study skills, lectures and then how to apply.		2011/12	48 workshops	48	48	48	48	48	Rather than offering a one-off intervention, this programme supports prospective students step by step over a number of weeks to build up their confidence and awareness of returning to study and then life as a student.	The Head Start programme has been superseded by our Try It workshops, a series of four workshops that each take place monthly. We will also deliver the workshops at other locations where there is demand. These also incorporate the Application workshops in Row 55 and the Career Provision in Row 63.
Other (please give details in the next column)	develop a new website to reflect our commitment to the recruitment, learning and success of our diverse student body		0	0	Begin the development of a new site	Maintain site	Maintain site	Maintain site	Maintain site		
Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Pathway to Professions - embed and expand this careers planning and transition to HE study project		2010/11	15 (120 attendees)	0	0	0	0	0	Adults have limited access to advice and support about education and careers. This programme targets WP and non-ELQs and offers them the opportunity to receive free professional careers advice in workshops and as 1:1s and then take that leap to apply. This is to ensure their goals, ambitions and decisions are well informed and mapped out.	Our career provision was reviewed and has been superseded by our Try It workshops, which include monthly pre-entry IAG sessions with an impartial careers consultant, and career advice at Open Evenings and subject taster evenings. Our careers interventions support people in making the correct course choice and so helps WP and retention.
Student support services	My Birkbeck website - continue to develop and grow the content of the site to ensure it meets the needs of prospective and current students		2009/10	Annual web statistics: 2009/2010: 982,560 visits, 2,923, 500 page visits; 2010/to date (May 2011) 1423	Annual web statistics: 1,300,000 visits, 3,000,000 page visits	1,300,000 visits	1,300,000 visits	1,300,000 visits	1,300,000 visits	This online, accessible gateway, organised by functions not departments, that gives students easy access to all student support information and online tools they need and supplements School-owned information and signposts where relevant	
Student support services	Get Ahead: Stay Ahead interactive study skills and student support website. Grow and develop further online material to increase number of users. Target relates to page hits.		2011/12	75,000	75,000	75,000	75,000	75,000	75,000	This is a brand new website that is one strand of the College's first retention strategy projects: Supporting the transition to study of year 1 undergraduate student. Interactive tools for prospective and first year UG students aiding transition into HE and supporting students on course familiarising students with HE, addressing concerns about study, encouraging reflections on overall goals and motivation and conveying a sense of the study skills necessary to succeed.	Amended target in line with the number of page hits during the first year of operation.
	Get Ahead programme - increase number of participants on this summer programme for UG applicants offering them a series of workshops and tours to prepare for entry in the autumn term.		2010/11	160 students	190 students	200 students	200 students	200 students	200 students	This is a new programme that is one strand of the College's first retention strategy projects. Students are signposted to support services at Birkbeck, are introduced through workshops to the range of skills that they will need for successful study and get to explore the building and library.	

