

BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERSITY

ACCESS AGREEMENT

1. Context

Birmingham City University is a large, diverse urban university with a commitment to widening participation, graduate employability, professionally orientated teaching programmes, regional economic development and applied research and consultancy.

The university was formed through a process of merging separate institutions, and has roots stretching back to 1843. The six faculties, located on seven campuses across the city, deliver over 300 courses to more than 23,000 students. The catchment area extends from inner Birmingham to the Far East and the USA and local, regional and international partners play a key role in much of the University's work.

Over 60% of the full-time undergraduate students are drawn from greater Birmingham or the West Midlands and 30% of all students study part-time.

The University has a commitment to widening participation with successfully embedded strategies for outreach activities and pre-entry advice and guidance as well as active collaborative participation in regional Aimhigher projects.

2. Fee Limits

In 2011-12 the University proposes to set a maximum fee of £3,375 for all full-time first degree courses for UK and EU students. In subsequent years we propose to raise the fee by the inflationary increase, as determined by Parliament.

Fees for full-time HND, HNC, Foundation Year 0 and Foundation Degree courses will also attract a maximum fee of £3,375. In some cases, the university may decide to set a lower fee. Full details of any other such reductions will be available on the university's website www.bcu.ac.uk

3. Bursaries and other financial support

Bursaries of £350 will be awarded to all students, responsible for their own fees and in receipt of a full Maintenance Grant or Special Support Grant, studying on a full time undergraduate course with a course fee of £3,375.

The university may decide to offer additional bursaries and/or scholarships to students on certain courses. Full details of any such bursaries and/or scholarships will be available on the university's website www.bcu.ac.uk

4. Provision of information to students

Information on fees will be available to prospective students via the University's website, the University's advice shop, Choices, and other printed information, (please see below). A reference to the fee limit and bursary scheme is placed in the university prospectus each year, with the web address for students to access current information.

Financial information, including current fee and bursary details, will be provided in the following publications:

Prospectus

- Tuition fees, loans, bursaries, NHS bursaries including how to apply and who to contact
- Details of what is provided by Student Services, including financial advice, workshops, debt counselling, hardship funds
- Council Tax and where to obtain student certificates

Pre-arrival Guide

- Tuition fees, banks, working while studying, insurance, accommodation costs
- Details of financial support available including loans, HE Maintenance Grant and Special Support Grant, Disabled Students' Allowance, Parents Learning Allowance etc

Birmingham City University Web site

- Tuition fees and the bursary scheme
- Details of the financial support and advice provided by the Student Services

Student Services Website

- Information about all financial support available to students

Student Services Fees and Funding leaflet

- Information about all aspects of financial support available to full time undergraduate students

Student Services Money Matters Leaflet

- Services offered, frequently asked questions, how to contact the advisors, how to apply for financial assistance

Student Services staff also give information and advice to prospective students and their families at Open Days and subject Visit Days and can be contacted by phone or e-mail by prospective students.

Financial information is also given by the Education Liaison team and student mentors and ambassadors as part of outreach and aspiration raising activities and by staff in Choices.

5. Outreach Work

Birmingham City University has always been committed to delivering and participating in outreach activities. The University's Widening Participation Strategic Assessment contains further information on these and the other widening participation activities undertaken.

The University consistently performs above widening participation benchmarks, particularly against the state school and social class indicators. The proportion of students from Black and other Minority Ethnic backgrounds is high and has been increasing. The proportion of mature students is high, although this has fallen somewhat over recent years. The proportion of female students is high and actions targeted at attracting male entrants in certain discipline areas have been implemented.

The indicator relating to the recruitment of students in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance, however, has in the past shown the University performing below benchmark. While the percentage of students in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance has risen consistently year on year in the student populations analysed, this trend has been matched by a corresponding increase in the benchmark. The University proposes to improve the participation of students with disabilities to match or exceed benchmark. The most recent figures suggest that the university may have now reached benchmark. We will, nevertheless, identify additional resources of 0.5% of the extra fee income to assist us in achieving and maintaining this objective.

Proposed Additional Activity to Increase the Participation of Students with Disabilities.

The activities to support an increase in the participation of students with disabilities centre mainly on improving the transition and retention of such students and include the following:

The creation of a new post of Pre-Entry Disability Adviser which has resulted in improved:

- advice to potential disabled students;
- liaison with applicants in order to ascertain their needs in a timely fashion;
- provision of support in time for the start of the academic year.

The employment of three Disability Support Assistants which has contributed to:

- improvements in the ability to identify swiftly students with additional needs;
- more streamlined arrangements for the assessment of these students;
- increased assistance available to students in their application for Disabled Students' Allowance;

- the introduction of screening of students for specific learning difficulties with an emphasis on dyslexia.

An additional Mental Health Adviser has been recruited which has resulted in:

- the development of a professional mentoring service for students with mental health difficulties and students on the autistic spectrum;
- increased training and support for staff in the institution working with students with mental health difficulties.

Additional induction activities for disabled students
The University's Widening Participation Strategic Assessment places at its centre the on-course support of students recruited from under represented groups. We recognise and appreciate that these students have additional support needs if they are to progress through higher education, gain their undergraduate qualifications and aspire to graduate level employment. Therefore we will continue to commit widening participation funds to pastoral and learner support and initiatives to maximise student progression and retention.

Therefore, except in the area of disability, the University does not believe that additional expenditure on access measures will be necessary, other than for the bursary offer proposed in paragraph 3 above.

6. Milestones

As described in the Widening Participation Strategic Assessment, the University will maintain its position at or above benchmark, as defined by the HESA National Performance Indicators, for the participation of mature students and students from state schools, from NS-SEC SOC classes 4-7, and from neighbourhoods with low participation in HE.

The University will seek to increase the participation of students with disabilities to the benchmark or above.

7. Institutional Monitoring Arrangements

All student statistics are received and analysed by the University's Senate. It will be the responsibility of Senate to monitor the University's progress towards its student participation targets and to recommend remedial action where necessary. Senate will also monitor progress and review of the action plan of the Widening Participation Strategic Assessment, which is also reported to HEFCE as part of the institution's annual monitoring.