



## **Buckinghamshire New University Access Agreement 2011-12** (Applies to new entrants commencing courses during 2011-12)

### **Introduction**

Buckinghamshire New University (BUCKS) has a long and continued commitment to widening participation and the various activities which support it.

The Strategic University Plan articulates the vision of the institution as the 'University of the Region'. Supporting this we find that **44%** of full-time undergraduates are recruited from within a 20 mile radius of the main site in High Wycombe and **68%** from within 50 miles.

The total student population at BUCKS is just over **9,500** and **43%** of students are studying on part-time courses, **16%** are studying for either a foundation degree or a higher national diploma/certificate, **6%** studying towards a postgraduate qualification, and **54%** studying full-time towards an undergraduate degree. Of BUCKS' full-time degree students, **50%** are over 21 years old, **15%** are from low participation neighbourhoods, and **33%** are from black and minority ethnic communities.

Non-continuation rates for young entrants from low participation neighbourhoods Level 0 to Level 1 was **10%**.

In addition to playing an active role within the local community and developing links with schools, adult education and training providers, the University has developed formal relationships with a number of the Further Education Colleges in Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire and West London.

The University is also an active participant in the Aimhigher Network and has a proactive and energetic approach to working with Local Schools and Colleges where there are low levels of achievement and progression to Higher Education.

### **Fee limits**

In 2011-12 the University intends to set a standard tuition fee for home and EU students for entry to all full-time undergraduate courses of £3,375. The fee will apply to each year of the course of study undertaken by students enrolling at the University in the 2011-12 application cycle. Tuition fees may of course change due to proposed government legislation.

Students enrolling on BUCKS validated sub degree level courses at Colleges of Further Education will either be charged the same fee as students at the University with entitlement to the same system of bursaries or a lower fee – which recognises the important role that the University's Partners play in Widening Participation in their Local Communities.

Where the lower fee is charged bursaries may be available at the discretion of individual Partners.

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

£500 per student will be designated to support the implementation of the Access Agreement through BUCKS bursaries. These bursaries will be universally available and will be promoted widely as part of BUCKS' strategy to encourage the widest possible range of applicants.

Further investment from the income collected from variable fees will be used to enhance the unit of resource close to the learning experience, to increase the availability and accessibility of the full range of university activities, as well as supporting initiatives and activities to underpin the needs of an increasingly diverse student population.

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

The heart of the University's Access Agreement will be a universal bursary scheme, which will provide bursaries to the value of £500 for home and EU students. Clearly this will impact on a wider cohort of students than those specifically targeted through the Access Agreement.

BUCKS' attracts a significant proportion of students from families earning up to £50,000.

BUCKS therefore still believes that the provision of such a comprehensive bursary is the most effective way to implement the agreed guiding principles and ensure that the needs of all students on full-state support and students from low participation areas are addressed.

Although the aggregate levels of financial support may differ between students, every student will receive a bursary of £500 in the form of cash support or in the case of students enrolled at Partner Colleges a direct fee reduction (at the discretion of the individual Partners)

For 2011-12 part-time tuition fees will not be varied in line with full-time fees and students will not be eligible for support from the main BUCKS bursary fund but part-time students may be eligible for support from the Access to Learning and University Funds. New legislation may change this approach for 2012 entry.

### **Current targeted financial assistance**

In addition to the Access to Learning Fund, BUCKS provides targeted assistance through the University Hardship Fund which currently stands at £15,000 per annum. Both these funds support the Widening Participation Policy by providing assistance to students experiencing hardship in the form of individual grants or advances up to a limit of £500.

Information for prospective students is available in the BUCKS prospectus, the BUCKS web-site and on UCAS profiles. Information also features prominently at BUCKS open days and trained staff and students are available to answer questions about financial support. Presentations and workshops on fees, finance and bursaries are offered at University Open Days. In addition, these workshops are also offered by the Schools and Colleges Liaison Team to be delivered at schools and colleges and other institutions on request.

The University is committed to ensuring that students are aware of, and receive, the financial support they are entitled to.

### **Training**

Training on the financial implications of studying at BUCKS is built into the Training Programme for the BUCKS Student Ambassador Group, who undertake a significant element of the outreach work and play an important role at open days, school choices and parent evenings, HE fairs etc. Staff and students who are involved in liaison and outreach work are provided with a full training and information programme, enabling them to give a clear financial overview to prospective students.

BUCKS see this as a vital element of the Access Agreement and in view of the proposed changes to HE funding, this training and the dissemination of such information will only become more important in order for prospective students to make an informed choice.

### **Outreach work**

The University has a thriving programme of outreach provision focused through the School and College Liaison Team and the Faculties and is an active and committed member of the Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Aimhigher Partnership. The Student Experience Directorate currently hosts and supports members of staff employed by Aimhigher and works closely with the Aimhigher Network in order to ensure that there is a high level of synergy between the two organisations and no duplication of effort.

Activities that are undertaken by the School and College Liaison Team and the Faculties include Taster Days, Master Classes and visits to Schools and Colleges to provide information and support through the UCAS process. These activities are largely targeted at institutions where there are lower levels of achievement, low levels of aspiration and little tradition of progression to Higher Education. The activities are funded through Aimhigher and BUCKS' Widening Access and Improving Retention budget. Aspiration raising is also supported through Summer Schools, funded by BUCKS and Aimhigher South East.

BUCKS' Student Ambassadors Scheme has been recognised as an example of good practice by the Learning and Skills Council. Student Ambassadors are engaged in a variety of supportive roles, including acting as mentors and role models for pupils identified by Schools as having the ability to progress to Higher Education, but who appear not to be considering university as an option.

It is clear that not all decisions to continue into Higher Education are based on academic achievement and BUCKS has therefore instigated a range of supportive measures, designed to allow applicants to make an informed choice prior to any application.

A major vehicle for this support has been the implementation of '**Progression Agreements**', which ensure that those Schools and Colleges, that have signed such agreement with BUCKS are ensured access to the full range of Advice, Information and Guidance regarding the transition to Higher Education. The Progression Agreements replace the previous '*Compact Agreements*' and the University will seek to explore the expansion of such arrangements in the near future.

For example in conjunction with the BUCKS Students' Union, an existing student using text messaging contacts all successful applicants, including those from low participation postcodes.

The BUCKS students who are selected and trained then act as a point of contact between the potential student and the University. The role involves welcoming new students to the University, answering queries and arranging to meet during Freshers Week to ensure that new students do not become lonely and isolated.

The contact continues until the beginning of the second semester of the first year to encourage and support new students to return after the Christmas break.

### Milestones

The University actively monitors the HESA Performance Indicators to 'measure' and consider its performance against the benchmark percentages provided. Where there is any difference between the University and HESA benchmarks these are considered by the relevant committees within the University, action plans implemented and monitored to correct any deviation as required.

Generally the University has a good record on Widening Participation and will seek to maintain or improve this on an on-going basis.

### Performance Indicators summary

*(This is the PI data for Young Full Time First Degree Entrants)*

	From state schools or colleges		From NS-SEC Classes, 4, 5, 6, & 7		From LP Neighbourhoods	
	BUCKS	LA Benchmark	BUCKS	LA Benchmark	BUCKS	LA Benchmark
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>2008/09</b>	<b>96.9</b>	95.2	<b>39.7</b>	38.9	<b>8.7</b>	11.2
<b>2007/08</b>	<b>97.5</b>	95.1	<b>35.7</b>	36.6	<b>8.5</b>	10.5
<b>2006/07</b>	<b>96.8</b>	94.8	<b>36.0</b>	35.2	<b>8.5</b>	10.0
<b>2005/06</b>	<b>97.1</b>	94.7	<b>39.2</b>	34.4	<b>14.3</b>	13.8

Young Students - First time Undergraduates from LP Neighbourhoods						
2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
14% (BM 13%)	14% (BM 14%)	9% (BM 10%)	9% (BM 11%)	9% (BM 11%)	10%	12%