

ACCESS AGREEMENT 2012 -2013

1. Context

Edge Hill University has been a champion of Widening Participation since its establishment in 1885 as the country's first women's non-denominational teacher training college. The University's Vision 2015 includes 'exemplary performance in increasing access and progression to higher education, and in supporting learning.' The theme of opportunity for all is embedded in the University through its outreach activity and its support for student achievement. This is demonstrated by:

- Consistent performance well above benchmark on all indicators for Widening Participation;
- Commitment to the continuous enhancement of and investment in the student experience;
- Significant year on year investment (£125m over 10 years) in student facilities, creating one of the best campuses in the country;
- High quality support to students which has been endorsed by students through the National Student Survey, internal Student Satisfaction Surveys and by external agencies (QAA, OFSTED, NMC) through quality review processes;
- Strong financial performance which has been confirmed by internal and external auditors and the HEFCE Audit Service;
- Year on year improvement in our market position – like-for-like applications have quadrupled in a decade and applications for 2011 are ahead of the national picture and that of our competitor group;
- Substantial and wide ranging outreach and access programmes funded through a variety of sources;
- A commitment to fair access at the heart of our Admissions Policy for many years, supporting the principles of the Schwarz Review and adopting good

practice from the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) Programme;

- Working with the Frank Buttle Trust to raise aspiration amongst Care Leavers;
- Partnership with a wide range of FE providers to deliver relevant local HE provision, and leadership of the Greater Merseyside and West Lancashire LLN;
- Development of a Research Centre for Widening Participation to investigate, identify and disseminate best practice in this area;
- Offering highly successful Access programmes (Fastrack) providing entry routes to a range of our undergraduate provision including teaching and health programmes and offering bridging opportunities for those in employment to Foundation Degrees;
- Nationally recognised Summer School provision;
- Experience as the regional lead institution for Aimhigher North West and of delivering a wide ranging aspiration-raising and attainment programme in partnership with Lancashire and Greater Merseyside.
- Leading and hosting the national co-ordination team for widening participation, Action on Access;
- Excellent employability outcomes, ranked second out of all English for universities for graduate employment (Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2009, all graduates, full & part time, first & foundation degrees);
- Shortlisted twice for the THE University of the Year since 2007.

In developing this agreement, and despite the decision to withdraw support for the continuation of Aimhigher, we are concerned to maintain our position as a major provider of higher education for mature students, first generation students, students from low income families and those from low participation neighbourhoods through the continued development of outreach activity including partnerships with schools and colleges. At the same time, we recognise the need to sustain appropriate retention and employability rates, to increase our recruitment from areas currently under-represented in our student profile and to recognise excellence. We seek to achieve this through a co-ordinated strategy of bursary and scholarship provision, outreach and infrastructure support.

2. Fee Levels 2012/13

The University recognises the considerable investment students make in their higher education. As the major funder of their education, they have a right to expect and receive the highest quality learning and living experience and that the investment they have made will enhance their employability. The University has a proud record of delivery in these areas but this cannot be maintained or further developed without an appropriate level of resource. In considering fee levels, the University has also taken account of the need to extend current outreach activity to accommodate the loss of the Aim Higher programme which was a key support to aspiration-raising in the North West and especially in areas of high deprivation.

The University intends to charge all students undertaking full-time honours degree programmes £9,000 per annum. Fees for Foundation Degrees (including those offered at Partner Colleges) will be set at £6,000 per annum. Fees are expected to rise each year in line with permitted levels set by government.

Fees for part-time students undertaking first degrees will be set when government regulation has been approved.

3. Expenditure on additional access and retention measures

In determining the level and type of expenditure from additional income, the University has assessed its record on Access and Retention.

Assessment of Access Record

The University has a robust track record in Widening Participation which is a central plank of the University's mission and which we intend to maintain. This has involved many years of deliberate activity, working with schools and colleges in the region to raise aspiration. Our success is borne out by all the HESA Performance Indicators where we perform above both the sector average and our benchmark on every indicator except for part-time students in receipt of DSA where although we perform above benchmark, we are slightly below the national average. A selection of indicators is given below:

Category	Characteristic	Actual %	Benchmark %	National Average %
Young FT	NS SEC classes 4/5/6/7	41.0	37.6	30.0
Young FT	Low participation neighbourhoods	21.3	13.9	10.3
All Mature FT	No previous HE qualification and LPN	18.6	13.3	12.0
All FT	DSA	5.9	5.3	4.8

Whilst the University's performance on Access measures is strong the infrastructure support necessary to achieve this is high and will need to continue if our success in this area is to be maintained. The loss of the Aim Higher programme will need to be addressed, including the work with younger children which we believe to be central to raising aspiration in low-participation and deprived neighbourhoods.

In addition, whilst we have improved the representation of black and minority ethnic students in recent years, we believe there is more we can do in this area. We are also concerned to address the growing under-representation of young men in higher education which is particularly apparent in the professional areas of teaching and pre-registration nursing but is also affecting many of the traditional arts and humanities subject disciplines.

Assessment of Retention Record

Retention is a challenging area for the University and, whilst we acknowledge that the reasons students leave, or do not succeed in higher education, are complex, there is undoubtedly, a strong relationship with the recruitment of Widening Participation students. This is not about potential or ability but is more concerned with culture and the level of caring responsibilities carried by many of our students both young and mature. Health, physical and mental, is also a significant factor for a number of our students. We are very aware of our responsibilities not only to provide opportunity but to ensure that potential is realised and, whilst we are cognisant of the studies which have been undertaken in this area, we are particularly concerned to address the issues as they manifest themselves at this University.

In this regard, we know that the retention of young students is dramatically improved if they are resident on campus for their first year – improving their integration with university life. From a relatively small base of around 600 places on campus, we are now able to accommodate over 1,000 students each year. These places are considerably over-subscribed and we plan to increase this, subject to resources, to 1200 in 2012 with a longer term aim to have 1700 places available.

Our own research tells us that poor attendance is a key indicator of 'at risk' students, albeit that the reasons for sporadic or erratic attendance are immensely varied. We have been active in improving our tracking and monitoring processes in this respect so that appropriate interventions can be made early. We now employ tracking officers in two of our Faculties and have well established follow-up processes to identify and address issues for individual students. Working with our students, we are revising our personal tutorial system for 2011/12 to provide them with more opportunities for direct contact and supplementing this with an increased emphasis on formative assessment and a more structured approach to feedback.

We have just opened a new Health and Well Being Centre where our students can receive the highest level of personal care and support and we will be opening a major new Building 'The Hub' in September 2011 providing more social and personal learning space alongside improved guidance services. Our investment in the physical and human infrastructure required to support good retention rates has been extensive and there are further evidence-based projects, such as working with young men, which we intend to support from additional income which are detailed elsewhere in the agreement. We also intend to continue to support some students financially through the National Scholarship Scheme and our own Excellence Scholarship Scheme which has proved to be an excellent motivator for student achievement.

Recent years have seen improvements in retention which we are seeking to build on. We are above benchmark in terms of the number of students leaving with no award but we are concerned to continue to improve the progression of both young and mature students from year 1. The percentage of our students who resume studies after a year out is roughly in line with the national average but the fact that a much higher percentage return to this University than is the case nationally bears out the nature of our student profile and the difficulties many of them face in seeking to complete a degree.

Some relevant indicators in relation to retention are given below:

Category	characteristic	Actual %	Benchmark %	National Average %
All UG FT	NC following year of entry	12.7	9.9	7.9
Young FT	NC following YoE from low participation neighbourhoods	15.3	10.7	8.7
Mature FT	NC following YoE with no previous HE qualification	15.6	12.7	13.4
All UG FT	Resumption of study after year out	74.3	-	76.1
All UG FT	Resumption of study after year out – returning to same HEI	20.0	-	12.6
All UG FT	Not in HE 2 years after leaving	13.7	-	13.7
All UG FT	Projected degree	74.7	74.8	78.8
All UG FT	Leave with no award	14.5	15.1	12.3

Employability

The University has a strong performance for employability with the second highest rate in the country. This is a strong motivator for retention and an area we are increasingly emphasising in terms of the skills acquisitions of our students.

Category	characteristic	Actual %	Benchmark %	National Average %
All UG FT with first degrees	In employment or study	93.1	91.4	89.9
All UG FT - other	In employment or study	98.1	97.0	95.3

Expenditure

In terms of the analysis above, the University needs to support both access and retention and expects to commit around 15% of additional income to these activities (including student financial support) from new system students. This equates to £450 per student and is estimated at £1,058,400 for 2012/13. This is broken down in roughly equal parts between three areas as follows:

Outreach:	33%
Retention:	31%
Student Financial Support:	36%

These proportions may need to be rebalanced beyond 2012/13 in the light of experience.

In addition, the University will continue its commitments under previous Access Agreements until the new system covers all years.

Measure	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Outreach (old system)	£650,000	£300,000	-
Outreach (new system)	£350,000	£900,000	£1,300,000
Bursaries and scholarships (old system)	£998,841	£468,032	£22,500
Waivers & bursaries (new system – includes NSP)	£375,333	£750,666	£1,126,000
Retention	£333,067	£339,234	£443,650
Totals	£2,707,241	£2,757,932	£2,892,150

4. Additional Access and Retention Measures

.01 Outreach

Our approach to outreach will remain focused on working closely with schools and colleges to raise aspiration and identify and nurture potential from an early age. In this way we seek to increase the number of applications received from under-represented groups. We intend to continue and develop our support for raising aspiration and achievement through our successful VI Form Academic Subject Conferences and General Studies Project. These activities bring pupils onto campus for lectures and discussions which support the work done in schools. We will also continue to offer our Access to HE programme which provides opportunities for mature students, generally with no family experience of higher education, to gain the necessary skills and confidence for degree level entry. This intense programme regularly recruits around 100 students with the majority progressing and completing successfully.

In addition, there will be new targeted activities in those areas where we are seeking improved representation amongst the student body including interventions geared to young, white working class males; Black and Minority Ethnic Groups and Looked-After Children.

We will also be developing the success of our 'Hi' website for applicants through the development of our CRM system and an increased online social media presence using student success stories/advocates in specific subject areas to reach under-represented groups and encourage wider access to programmes.

We will continue to cover some elements of Aim Higher work and will be funding this during 2011/12 as additional expenditure. We are open to collaborative partnerships in this area where this adds value.

.02 Retention

Our approach to retention recognises the need for considered life-cycle support with targeted interventions at key transition points such as first assessment and progression. Our activities will remain evidence-based focusing on improving early integration into the university through application and induction processes and increasing the level of one-to-one support whilst on course through an enhanced personal tutorial system with strong departmental involvement. We also plan to pilot a new peer mentoring scheme. Both of these projects will commence in 2011/12. We have committed to the appointment of an additional Careers Adviser from 2011/12 which will help us to further embed employability skills early in the student lifecycle and we will continue to bring higher levels of sophistication to our attendance tracking and monitoring systems to identify early

disengagement. We estimate that 60% of the University's spending on additional retention-based activity will support under-represented students.

.03 Bursaries and Scholarships

The University has been awarded 114 places under the National Scholarship Scheme which we will match. The University will use this scheme to support its commitment to excellence. Places will be allocated (in excess of 228 if required) to all students with a verified household income at or below £25,000 who meet our offer requirements and achieve at least 170 UCAS tariff points at AS level¹ or who achieve at least 360 UCAS tariff points at A2 or equivalent². If less than 228 students qualify, we will reduce the specified A2 tariff score until all places have been allocated. The £3,000 awards will be given as a £1,000 cash bursary with a £2,000 contribution to university accommodation costs. Students who do not take up accommodation will be given a £2,000 fee waiver.

We also intend to continue our successful bursary and scholarship schemes for:

- Excellence Scholars
- High Achievers
- Access
- Care Leavers
- Helena Kennedy bursaries
- Academic Merit

The Excellence Scholarship Scheme (Entrance) provides bursaries of £1,000 in year 1 and £500 in years 2 and 3 to students who demonstrate excellence in Sport, Creative Arts, Performance Art and Volunteering. Applications are required and awards are made on the basis of open competition. A similar scheme operates for on-course students with bursaries of £500 available.

¹ 170 UCAS Points:

- The 170 UCAS points must be achieved from a maximum of 3 AS levels taken together at first sitting

² 360 UCAS Points:

- The 360 UCAS points must be achieved from a maximum of 3 A Levels, or other equivalent Level 3 qualifications (AS Levels, and qualifications equating to AS Levels, will *not* be accepted);
- Only qualifications attracting a UCAS tariff score will be accepted. For the full list of valid qualifications please refer to the [UCAS Tariff Tables](#);
- The 360 UCAS points must be achieved in the year of entry and no later than 31st August 2012.
- The final award must be achieved in one sitting.
- Qualifications achieved in previous years will not be included in the 360 count.

The High Achievers bursary is worth £1,000 on entry and is awarded to any student covered by this agreement who achieves at least 360 UCAS points at A2.

Access Scholarships worth £1,000 in year 1 and £500 in years 2 and 3 are awarded by nomination to students from the Access to HE programme who have demonstrated particular commitment in the face of adversity. This scholarship particularly benefits mature students.

Bursaries of £750 per annum are awarded to Care Leavers.

The University supports up to 4 Helena Kennedy bursaries (£1,000) each year.

A range of academic merit scholarships are awarded to recognise achievement in year 1.

Not only do these schemes have a proven track record of supporting commitment and providing important ways of celebrating achievement but our Scholarship students also act as mentors and student ambassadors in our aspiration-raising activities. It is anticipated that the Scholarship schemes will be extended to cover part-time students when approval for fee regulation has been granted.

We estimate that 50% of the University's Scholarship funding will support under-represented students. Further scheme details are on the University's website.

5. Milestones and Targets

The objectives of the Access Plan are:

1. To further enhance our recruitment and retention of students with excellent potential from under-represented backgrounds.
2. To ensure the maintenance and development of a high quality environment and academic experience for students which recognises the challenges of disadvantage and enhances retention and achievement.

Success can be measured in many ways, not all of them easily translated into simple performance indicators. Specifically however, we will be looking to:

- Maintain the proportion of recruited students from low participation neighbourhoods. (HEFCE Performance Indicators)
- Raise the proportion of recruited young, white working class men and black and minority ethnic students by at least two percentage points over the five year

period (one percent after two years). (HEFCE Performance Indicators and internal data)

- Raise the number of recruited Care Leavers from 20 to 30 over the life of the Plan. (Internal monitoring)
- Bring Year 1 retention rates within benchmark over 5 years. (One percent after two years) (HEFCE Performance Indicators)
- Improve the retention of young men by at least two percentage points over 5 years (One percent after two years) (Internal data)
- Ensure employability rates remain at least one percentage point above benchmark over the life of the agreement. (HEFCE Performance Indicators)

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

The University Secretary, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students and External) and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) will have the lead responsibility for ensuring delivery of the agreement and will meet termly with the President of the Students' Union to discuss progress. In line with standard university practice, discrete projects will be subject to an annual effectiveness review and may be revised or terminated in the light of the outcomes. Formal monitoring and evaluation will be through the Equal Opportunities and Student Support and Learning and Teaching Committees which are sub-committees of Academic Board. Both committees have student representation. Revisions to targets and milestones will be considered and approved as part of the formal monitoring process. Revisions to the financial commitments will be subject to approval by the Board of Governors prior to submission to OFFA.

7. Provision of Information to prospective students

Raising aspiration must be accompanied by clear and accurate information about the opportunities available and the costs involved in higher education. It is in the best interests of the individual and the sector that students make well-informed choices about their higher education options. Edge Hill has been an active supporter of the Higher Education Liaison Officers' Association (HELOA), the professional body which supports initiatives and training for UK outreach and access staff in higher education. The University currently chairs the National Association and is committed to supporting the work of HELOA, particularly as an engine for developing UK-wide initiatives on providing information and guidance to prospective applicants, their parents and guidance advisers.

Edge Hill already provides prospective students and their families with a range of information including financial support options. These are reviewed annually to

ensure new initiatives are included to give a complete and integrated picture of student financial support which demystifies what can often be seen as a complex area for both students and their sponsors. We see the provision of high quality information in this area as key to the success of our strategies.

Our commitment to the provision of information to prospective students is underpinned by the following principles:

- Ensuring that clear information about the financial implications of the University's learning opportunities is available to all potential students through their channel of choice including websites, printed information, face-to-face contact at outreach events and Open Days – incorporating the exploitation of new technologies such as internet social networking to engage and communicate with potential students about all aspects of progression to HE;
- Presenting information in a clear, consistent style in easy to understand, consistent language and terminology;
- Continued training and development of front line IAG staff and a commitment to sharing best practice with other organisations;
- Developing and delivering financial support advice sessions in the region in conjunction with students, sponsors, advisors, agencies and other Associations and stakeholders;
- Researching the effectiveness of communication of the Edge Hill financial package and adapting information accordingly;
- Highlighting the benefits of HE coupled with affordability messages based on national and EHU initiatives.

Planned activities include:

- Annual revision of prospectus information
- Provision of information directly to students through the University's CRM system
- Development of web-based applicant and general guidance services
- Inclusion of financial advice sessions/resource packs in all our recruitment events and outreach activities
- Working collaboratively with other HEIs to ensure a consistent breadth of coverage of IAG across the region
- Using our local connections to ensure coverage in print and broadcast media.
- Further development of the 'Red-Alert' budget management materials and the on-line 'Survival' financial guide for prospective and current students.

Specific information on bursaries and scholarships and general financial information will be posted out in response to enquiries and specifically to all applicants who are made an offer of a place as well as clear information on our open access website.

The development of this agreement has incorporated consultation with the university community including the Students' Union and is approved by the Board of Governors.

Table 5 - Milestones and targets

Table 5a - Statistical milestones and targets relating to your applicants, entrants or student body (e.g. HESA, UCAS or internal targets)

Please select milestone/target type from the drop down menu	Description (500 characters maximum)	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)
				2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	
NS-SEC (HESA Table T1a)	Maintain recruitment level from NS SEC classes 4/5/6/7	2009/10	0.41	41%	41%	41%	41%	41%	We believe there will be a fall-off in applications from this group under the new funding arrangements so maintaining levels is a stretching target.
LPN (HESA Table T1a)	Maintain recruitment level from low participation neighbourhoods	2009/10	0.213	21.3%	21.3%	21.3%	21.3%	21.3%	We believe there will be a fall-off in applications from this group under the new funding arrangements so maintaining levels is a stretching target.
Mature	Maintain recruitment level for those with no previous HE and from low participation neighbourhood	2009/10	0.186	18.6%	18.6%	18.6%	18.6%	18.6%	HESA Table t2a. We believe there will be a fall-off in applications from this group under the new funding arrangements so maintaining levels is a stretching target.
Care-leavers	Increase number of enrolled care leavers	2009/10	20	22	24	26	28	30	Internal data
Ethnicity	Increase recruitment of BME students	2009/10	0.068	7%	7.25%	7.5%	7.75%	8%	internal data
Gender	Increase recruitment of young working class men	2009/10	0.198	20%	20.5%	21%	21.5%	22%	internal data
Non continuation: All (HESA Table T3a)	Reduce non-continuation rate for all students to benchmark	2008/09	0.127	12%	11.5%	11%	10.5%	10%	Given the nature of our student profile, this is a challenging target but one we are determined to meet
Non continuation: Young (HESA Table T3a)	Reduce non-continuation rate for young students to benchmark	2008/09	0.153	14.5%	14%	13.5%	13%	12.5%	low participation neighbourhoods
Non continuation: Mature (HESA Table T3a)	Reduce non-continuation rate for mature students to benchmark	2008/09	0.156	15%	14%	13.5%	13%	12.5%	no previous HE qualification
Gender	Improve retention of young men by 2%	2009/10	0.198	19.5%	19%	18.5%	18%	17.5%	internal data

