

Access Agreement: The University of the West of England

Fees:

The generally applicable fee for full time home / EU students at the University of the West of England (UWE) will be £3000 except for gap year students who defer their places before 1st August 2005 and start in September 2006.

However, the University is concerned that in 2006-07 students are likely to face higher fees at UWE than apply in Wales. For that reason, it is taking legal advice about the ways in which it might mitigate resultant damage to its close relationship with schools, colleges, careers services and alumni in Wales.

Additional fee income to be spent on access measures, including bursaries and other financial support for students to be provided from additional fee income:

Bursaries, scholarships and grants

The University's financial support for students will go way beyond providing the minimum £300 level of bursary support: every student in receipt of any level of the government maintenance grant would be eligible for a UWE cash bursary of at least an average of £750, and, those students receiving the maximum level of government maintenance grant would receive £1250 or more. We estimate this support would be available to approaching 50% of all our students (on the basis of existing thresholds). In addition, other under-represented students (such as those from low participation neighbourhoods); students studying subjects in shortage areas; and, students studying in areas which UWE, in consultation with industry and other partners, identify as being strategically important, may also qualify for a UWE Faculty scholarship or grant worth at least £1000 over the duration of their studies. The University will therefore be committing almost 30% of its estimated additional income to means-tested bursaries which is 'countable' by OFFA. Around 15% of its estimated additional income will be distributed by reference to criteria other than income, which is not currently countable by OFFA, although students who receive such support may be from under-represented groups.

The University of the West of England is therefore making a wise and substantial investment in its students and its future: approximately 44% of our additional income will be returned to and re-invested directly in students.

Full details of our bursary, scholarship and grant schemes will be available on our website once our Access Agreement is approved by OFFA, and through other dissemination arrangements described below.

Distribution of bursaries will be undertaken using the model bursary schemes devised by the UUK/ SCOP advisory group on bursaries.

Outreach activities:

In addition to bursaries, scholarships and grants, the University will increase its budget for widening participation outreach and retention activities by 50%. This will support the collaborative activity which the University undertakes as part of Aimhigher South West (<http://www.uwe.ac.uk/widen/businessplan.htm>), through expansion of the already substantial outreach programme delivered by faculties and services throughout the University. That programme covers a wide range of activities:

- Summer, Winter and Easter schools
- Saturday Schools
- master classes

- subject revision classes
- subject taster days/sessions
- subject enrichment days/ programmes
- visits to schools/colleges
- HE presentations to schools / colleges
- UG / school / college shadowing
- HE:school / college student buddying
- mentoring
- student ambassador scheme
- student tutoring
- aiming higher days
- community outreach
- road shows
- parent focussed activities / events
- teacher / curriculum development
- vocational progression routes
- community volunteering programmes
- other and bespoke activities

those activities are targeted at a broad range of groups:

- years 5-6
- years 7-9
- years 10 -11
- years 12-13
- 19+
- low participation neighbourhoods
- low socio-economic groups
- deprived geographic areas
- little/ no family history of HE
- minority ethnic groups
- groups under-represented in subject areas
- disabled people
- mature learners
- part-time learners
- vocational learners pre-16
- vocational learners post-16
- learners in community settings
- looked-after children / care leavers
- work-based learners

The range of the University's outreach activity is already broad and deep. However, its exact profile, nature of activities and the number of students targeted varies from year to year as the University works in close partnership with schools, colleges and community groups to develop and provide what is believed by individual stakeholders to be most effective at any given time.

From 2004-5, UWE will be keeping a 'baseline log' by reference to which it will seek to measure the extent to which improved performance is attributable to additional expenditure from 2006-07.

The University works hard to ensure that its own activities complement and enhance Regional Aimhigher activity and seeks to avoid duplication and unnecessary competition. The University is currently reaching over 3500 identifiable under-represented students through its central Aimhigher interventions in addition to those reached directly by individual faculties and services. However, we are alert to the risk of creating capacity issues for the schools and colleges with whom the

University, other institutions, private training providers and Aimhigher work. Therefore the 50% increase in monies allocated to widening participation will be used largely to consolidate, embed, and develop further the range of activities we have to offer stakeholders. In particular, we will use the opportunity to target two types of students:

- those in schools and colleges with low attainment records and located in low participation neighbourhoods (where the largest number of students from under-represented groups are likely to be found)
- those in schools and colleges which already succeed in encouraging substantial numbers of applications to the University, but within which there remain pockets of students not currently aspiring to apply to any higher education institution.

We are also hoping that if our submission to HEFCE for a Lifelong Learning Network is successful, we can extend our range of activities with community groups and employers towards the end of the period covered by this Access Agreement.

Arrangements for providing information on financial support available to students and prospective students:

The University already has a wide range of well-established connections with colleges, schools, Connexions services and employers through its Admissions, Marketing, Widening Participation, Student and Careers services. Those services are being more closely integrated to pool their resources, and encouraged to map their outreach interventions and clients, working closely with Regional Aimhigher colleagues. As a result, from 2005-06 the materials and arrangements for providing financial support information to students and potential students will be consolidated and encompassed in a rolling, integrated and targeted programme, which will be carefully monitored. An outline can be found in Appendix A.

Institutional milestones and objectives:

The HEFCE (2002/52) Performance Indicators in Higher Education publication shows that UWE is one of the largest recruiters of first degree entrants from state schools and lower social classes in England and Wales. It is also the largest recruiter of ethnic minority students and first degree students from low participation neighbourhoods in the South West.

Between 1997/98 and 2002/03 the number of young full-time first degree entrants to UWE from low participation neighbourhoods increased by 52.3%, up from 285 in 1997/98 to 434 in 2002/03.

The University also has a substantial proportion (22%) of mature first-degree entrants and the second largest number, in England and Wales, of students with an Access qualification: in 2001-02, 9% of all entrants to fulltime undergraduate studies at UWE had an Access qualification.

Taken overall, the University's student profile already broadly mirrors that of the national student body and thus reflects the 'balanced community' which the University strives to be.

However, the University has set itself a target of even more closely resembling the overall national profile and playing a part in reshaping it to reflect more satisfactorily groups at present under-represented nationally.

To that end, using trend data from 2002-03 - 2004-05, the University will monitor and seek to increase applications to those first degree programmes which currently recruit relatively low proportions of students from under-represented categories i.e. state schools/colleges, lower socio-economic groups, and low participation neighbourhoods. This will be achieved across the life of the Access Agreement through the progressive programme of focussed interventions outlined above. The University will report on the baseline and year-on-year improvements as part

of the monitoring process with OFFA.

By way of illustration, HEFCE benchmarks suggest that increases in the number of young full-time first degree entrants from under-represented groups, broadly as follows, might be appropriate:

- state schools / colleges: approximately 144 additional students
- lower socio-economic groups: approximately 217 additional entrants
- low participation neighbourhoods: approximately 72 additional entrants

We believe that those increases are realistically achievable within the resources we propose to allocate from our additional fee income.

In addition, the University remains committed to targets established by Aimhigher South West which encourage an increase in total applications from regional school and college students to higher education institutions.

The University's progress in increasing applications from under-represented groups will be monitored in the context of the regional tracking / progression project co-ordinated by Aimhigher South West which is looking at the overall pattern of applications from students in the South West to higher education. If the increase in applications to and acceptances by the University is disappointing relative to the pattern of applications by regional students to higher education as a whole, then the University's interventions will be reviewed and refined.

Following the approval of this Access Agreement, the University will consult widely about a revised Widening Participation Strategy to be approved by the end of the 2004-05 academic year. It will encompass this Agreement.

Progress in increasing applications from, and activities targeted at under-represented groups as outlined in this Agreement and in the wider Strategy, will be monitored and measured through a Widening Participation Steering Group, reporting to the University's Academic Board. This in turn will advise the Board of Governors which has ultimate responsibility for determining the mission of the University and for oversight of its activities.

Alfred Morris
Vice-Chancellor

Financial Information for applicants, prospective applicants and schools and college staff

Activity	When	Audience	Information included	Monitoring
Prospectus & other fees specific publications	Sent from March in year prior to admission	Prospective applicants, school and colleges, careers advisers	Clear statement about fees, information about sources of funding including bursaries and cost of living, specialist fact sheets for mature students, those with childcare responsibilities etc.	Feedback from colleagues in sector and students on clarity of information
UWE website including Student Advice and Welfare Services	Information on current year and following year as soon as fees etc set and linked to relevant external websites	Prospective applicants, applicants and current students	FAQs and self assessment pages. Detailed information on fees, sources of funding including bursaries and cost of living	Number of hits, subsequent enquiries. FAQs monitored and updated
Schools and College web pages	New development to support schools and college staff by Easter 2005	Schools and college staff , Connexions and careers advisers	Range of information to help in providing advice to prospective students	Direct feedback sought from audience
External websites such as UCAS with links to UWE	Information on current year and following year as soon as fees etc set	Prospective applicants, applicants and current students	Detailed information on UCAS website will lead through to that contained on UWE pages	Review of competitor information on UCAS website to ensure quality and strength of message
Applicant Enquiry Services	All year round dedicated enquiry service offered by Admissions and International Recruitment and Student Advice and Welfare Services, with referral to other expertise as appropriate	Prospective applicants, applicants, schools and college staff , parents and careers advisers	Bespoke responses by phone, email or in writing on full range of finance, bursary and fees issues	Sharing of best practice, development of standard responses and FAQs, feedback from clients
Schools and college visits	Throughout the year	Year 12 and 13 students planning an application to HE From schools and colleges ranked in top 200 providers of applications to UWE and those in Aimhigher West sub-region	Range of presentations and workshops designed to provide information on fees, bursaries and budgeting	Feedback sought from audience. Number of applications and acceptances received from schools/colleges
School and college staff training programme	Sessions throughout the academic year	Teaching and advisory staff in 14-19 education across Bristol area	Workshops on transition into higher education including full range of financial issues	Feedback sought from audience. Number of applications and acceptances received from schools/colleges

Activity	When	Audience	Information included	Monitoring
Widening participation initiatives	Continuous	Year 11, 12 and 13 students considering HE; learners in community settings and students studying on Access programmes	Range of presentations and workshops, specific mailings targeting key schools, colleges, community and access providers in the region; 1 to 1 advice and guidance targeted specifically at schools requiring support in post 16 attainment	Feedback sought from audience. Number of applications and acceptances received from schools/colleges/ Access providers
Heading Higher Passport	From October each year	Year 12 and 13 students aiming to attend UWE	Support for and recognition of enrichment programmes which prepare applicants for HE	Direct feedback sought from participating schools and colleges, tracking of numbers of students registered for the scheme, monitoring of students performance when at UWE
Open day mailing	When offer made to applicant or on receipt of registration for open day request	Applicants and prospective applicants and their parents	Details of talks available on finance	Numbers registering for open day and feedback sought following attendance on clarity of information received beforehand
Open Day	5 days throughout academic year	Applicants and prospective applicants and their parents	Detailed talks on finance, 1-1 advice from trained advisers	Feedback sought from attendees used to inform future events
Careers conference	Held annually	Schools and college staff and Connexions advisers	Full programme of workshops and talks aimed at informing audience of changes in HE will include update on fees etc.	Feedback sought from attendees used to inform future events
Schools and Colleges Open Day	June each year	Schools and college students considering HE and their advisers	Programme of events including talks on finance and fees	Feedback sought from attendees to inform future events
Chancellor's mailing	From December on a rolling basis	Applicants made conditional or unconditional offer to which they have not replied	Applicant Guide with FAQs on finance, fees and support	Feedback from applicants and number of students accepting offer
Finance mailing	From February (or as soon as details of fees known for following year) on rolling basis	Home applicants accepting UWE offer as firm choice	Fact sheet on bursaries and bursary application form	Number of applications received and nature of enquiries generated used to improve clarity for following years
Faculty of Education and Health and Social Care interim mailing	From April – repeated fortnightly	HSC/EDU UG and PGCE Applicants accepting UWE as firm choice	Includes details of grants and fees from NHS etc.	Nature of enquiries generated used to improve quality
Welcome pack mailing	From July	Applicants holding unconditional firm place	Student Handbook with fees information and the FD1 form which applicants are required to complete detailing how they intend to pay fees	Focus groups at start of term provide feedback

