

IMPERIAL COLLEGE LONDON

ACCESS AGREEMENT

BACKGROUND

1. This Access Agreement for Imperial College London is framed by the College's mission, our admissions requirements and our commitment to widening participation.

2. The College is an international university which provides rigorous and intensive degree courses in science, engineering and medicine. Our undergraduate courses are designed to produce graduates for either fast-track graduate employment or postgraduate study. The majority of our courses require A-level passes in physics or physical sciences and in at least one mathematics subject. In order to cope with, enjoy and succeed on these courses, our students need to be well-qualified on entry. The average A-level points score for our academic departments for 2004 entry was 28.5.

3. Our courses are intended to benefit students of high ability, whatever their ethnic or national origin, religion, politics or sex, in accordance with our Equal Opportunities Policy. Our student population is cosmopolitan and diverse: in the 2003-04 academic year, 21% of our full-time undergraduate students were from countries outside the EU. To improve the gender balance among students in the College, efforts are being made to encourage a greater proportion of females to study science and engineering subjects. In 2003-04, our female undergraduates comprised 37% of our undergraduate student population compared with 31% in 1997-98. In terms of students' backgrounds, HEFCE/HESA Performance Indicators show that in 2002-03 63% of our young ⁽¹⁾, full-time first degree entrants were from state schools; an increase of 9% since 1997-98. Similarly, the College's proportion of full-time first degree entrants from low participation neighbourhoods, as defined by the Government, has increased from 5% to 6.5% during this period. It is intended that the College's outreach activities and the introduction of the Bursary Scheme, as detailed below, will enable this trend to continue.

Strategy for Admissions and Widening Participation.

4. The College places a high priority on maintaining its admissions standards and attracting high calibre students from all backgrounds. In our outreach work, we seek to raise awareness of, and aspirations towards, higher education in order to increase the overall pool of candidates. We do not expect that our work will necessarily result in increased numbers of applicants to the College. Rather, our objective is to take a leading role in increasing awareness among young people of the importance and excitement of higher education, and of science in particular, and to offer practical help in these subjects. Our strategic aims in this area are therefore to:

- a. Pursue activities which raise aspirations, change perceptions and stimulate and support interest in science, engineering and medicine from primary through to A-level education.
- b. Enhance the College's reputation among key audiences of capable young people from a wide range of backgrounds.
- c. Help to address the shortage of qualified science teachers in state schools.
- d. Continue to develop ways in which the College supports applicants/students with disabilities.

1. Those aged under 21 on the 30 September of their year of entry to the College, as defined by HEFCE.

- e. Retain and support the College's students from under-represented groups ⁽²⁾ to enable them to succeed.

5. The delivery of these objectives is met through a diverse programme of outreach activities with a proven track-record. Overall, the College is now working with 33 London Boroughs, as well as UK regions (Huddersfield, Durham, Doncaster and Kent). Specific programmes are targeted at boroughs (e.g. Islington, Wandsworth, Westminster and Hounslow) which have areas with low rates of participation in HE. In the academic year 2003-04, over 50,000 pupils benefited from our outreach programme. Some specific examples of our activities are:

- a. **Pimlico Connection Student Tutoring Scheme** in which undergraduate and postgraduate volunteers spend time in schools working with pupils. In 2003-04, 3,000 school pupils were involved and received tuition over a period of 17 weeks. The College founded this initiative in 1975 and it has been widely emulated across the UK and overseas.

- b. **School Visits Programme** in which the Widening Participation Officer visits schools within, and around, London to offer information about higher education opportunities and to help with application forms. In 2003-04, 60 schools were visited with 64 repeat visits, involving around 10,000 pupils and 500 parents. Schools targeted are those which achieve an average of between 180 and 300 tariff points at A-level.

- c. **INSPIRE (Innovative Scheme for Post-docs in Research and Education)** where post-doctoral researchers spend 50% of their contract in partner secondary schools teaching and studying towards a postgraduate teaching qualification. The remainder of their time is spent as a researcher. Ten schools in London and the South East are supported by the scheme at present.

- d. **Summer Schools and Masterclasses.** A range of residential and non-residential programmes are available which, between them, serve all year groups from ages 6-12. Almost 1,000 pupils attended these activities in 2003-04.

- e. **Demonstration Lectures, Workshops and Open Days** which benefited over 10,000 pupils in 2003-04.

- f. **METRIC.** This project provides on-line assistance with mathematics to undergraduate and A-level maths students. Online tools and interactive resources have been made available to all schools in the London region, and departments in the College also use these materials to assist their first year undergraduates.

6. We also have a number of mechanisms in place to support students once at the College and help them succeed in their studies. We have an extensive range of welfare and pastoral support, as provided by, for example, College and Departmental Tutors, the College's Disabilities Officer and the Students' Union Welfare Advisor. As noted above, a version of our METRIC Project provides additional mathematics support to those undergraduates who require this. We also provide assistance to students who are experiencing financial difficulty through the Access to Learning Fund, the College's Hardship Fund for overseas and European students and the Student Opportunities Fund, as detailed at Paragraph 14.

2. In the context of this Access Agreement 'under-represented groups' means groups that are currently under-represented in higher education at the national level.

Development of the Access Agreement.

7. The College has given detailed consideration to the content and format of its Access Agreement. We recognise that our objective to maintain standards and quality is dependent on our ability to recruit and educate students of the highest calibre. Hence, we would not wish to see some of the brightest pupils from under-represented groups being deterred from entering, or staying within, higher education.

8. When developing our Access Agreement, we considered carefully the types of activities that the Agreement might cover. Our view was that the desire to encourage, and certainly not deter, access to our courses, would be most usefully effected by devoting a significant amount of the additional fee income to the Bursary Scheme detailed in this document. Some additional funding, of the order of £70,000 *per annum*, has been allocated to our outreach work and, in particular, to the appointment of a Director of Access. It is hoped that this appointment will take forward the existing outreach programme which, of course, remains embedded within the College's activities. The Bursary Scheme and our outreach programme provide a solid foundation to deliver our strategic objectives for widening access.

Further detail is provided within the sections below.

FEE LIMITS

9. The College proposes to charge the maximum fee allowed of £3,000 to all Home and EU students studying undergraduate courses from 2006 entry. The College intends to increase these fees on an annual basis in line with DfES recommendations.

BURSARIES AND OTHER FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

10. The Bursary Scheme has been designed to ensure that financial circumstances do not deter potential students from applying to the College. It is envisaged that over 30% of our undergraduate students would benefit in the first year of the Scheme.

11. Through the Bursary Scheme, the College will offer cash awards for maintenance purposes, and, as such, only students assessed as 'Home' by both Imperial College and their Local Education Authority (or other relevant body) will be eligible to apply for bursaries. The College would expect to sign up to part of the model scheme proposed by the UUK/SCOP advisory group on bursary schemes, specifically the option to receive information about an applicant's eligibility for student support. However, as the College expects that the majority of our bursaries will be at non-standard rates, we plan to manage the assessment and award of our bursaries.

12. The College has committed to set aside at least 29% of the additional fee income (estimated at £744,000 in 2006-07) for its Bursary Scheme, with this proportion expected to rise in subsequent years. A minimum of 75% of these funds (*i.e.* 22% of the total additional fee income in 2006) will be awarded to eligible students on the basis of their LEA (or equivalent awarding body) assessment. The College guarantees that all students in receipt of the £2,700 Higher Education Maintenance Grant will receive a bursary of at least £300 a year (to rise annually in line with any changes in state support). Students who receive a partial Higher Education Maintenance Grant will also be eligible for a bursary, the amount of which will be determined by the level of government support they receive. The graduated scale for these awards will be established once the DfES publishes the thresholds for the Higher Education Maintenance Grant, but the following table provides some guidance concerning the amounts involved:

Level of HE Maintenance Grant	Amount of Bursary⁽³⁾
Maximum HE Maintenance Grant	At least £2,700
Mid point	At least £500
Minimum HE Maintenance Grant	At least £100

13. The remaining 25% of the funds available to the Bursary Scheme (*i.e.* 7% of the total additional fee income in 2006) will be allocated for scholarships to reward exceptional performance at A-level or equivalent⁽⁴⁾. These funds will be available to those students who have already received a bursary in accordance with Paragraph 12, and who have achieved the highest grade at A-level (currently 'A') or equivalent in at least 3 subjects. Students who are in receipt of the full £2,700 Higher Education Maintenance Grant, have the highest grade at A-level (or equivalent) in at least 3 subjects and who have firmly accepted a place by the UCAS deadline in May will receive the College's maximum award (see Appendix 1). For 2006-07, this will consist of £4,000 *per annum* (to rise annually in line with any changes in state support) for the duration of a student's course, up to a maximum of 4 years⁽⁵⁾. In subsequent years, the College will set the maximum award following the annual review of the Scheme. Students who receive a partial Higher Education Maintenance Grant and attain the highest grade at A-level (or equivalent) in at least three subjects will also be entitled to receive a scholarship in recognition of their exceptional A-level (or equivalent) performance.

14. As part of the College's aim to widen access, over the past 2 years we have provided a number of new undergraduates with bursaries from the Student Opportunities Fund, financed through fundraising from alumni. These awards provide a maintenance grant for each year of study (up to 4 years), dependent upon satisfactory progress, and are made to candidates on the basis of proven widening participation criteria (financial and educational disadvantage). In total, the College has already committed over £100,000 to supporting undergraduates in this way and intends to continue with fundraising initiatives for this purpose.

PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO STUDENTS

Target Groups.

15. The College is committed to ensuring that information about fees and the support available to students is clear and accessible to the following target groups:

- a. Potential applicants to higher education
- b. Enquirers for study at the College
- c. Applicants for 2006 entry and beyond
- d. Applicants for 2005 entry
- e. Existing students

Further detail of this provision is given below.

Potential Applicants to Higher Education

3. These amounts do not include the scholarships for exceptional performance at A-level (or equivalent) detailed in Paragraph 13.

4. The College will define how non A-Level qualifications equate to the required A-level grades.

5. Students on courses of greater than 4 years' duration will be eligible to apply for bursaries for the first 4 years of their course only. However, they may opt to spread these payments over the entire duration of their course.

16. The College's School Visits Programme forms one of our outreach activities and is described in Paragraph 5b. An important part of this work is to make school pupils aware of the general financial support available, should they enter higher education. The College intends to continue with this initiative, providing information about the College Bursary Scheme and support offered by other institutions, as well as giving advice on where to find further details.

Enquirers and Applicants for 2006 Entry and Beyond.

17. All those enquiring about or applying for undergraduate entry from 2006 onward will be supplied with the following:

- a. Clear details of the likely fees for courses to include current fees and information about the expected rate of fee increases in future years for all courses.
- b. Clear details of the Bursary Scheme, detailing the amount of support that will be available from the College and the criteria for eligibility.
- c. A breakdown of the likely costs associated with living expenses that students can expect to encounter during their course.
- d. Directions to the College website where information will be posted, as it becomes available.
- e. Contact details of the College Registry, which will deal with any questions related to fees and financial assistance.

18. Principally, the above information will be provided in the College Undergraduate Prospectus, which is available to potential students at the end of April for entry the following year (*e.g.* April 2005 for 2006 entry). Details will also be made available on the UCAS website and on the College website, where they will be updated as and when more information is available.

Applicants for 2005 Entry.

19. In addition to informing applicants for 2005 entry of their fee liability and costs under the current arrangements, we will also notify them of the expected changes to the College fee structure and give details of the Bursary Scheme. This information will make clear that students entering the College in 2005 and those applying for deferred entry in 2006 will not be liable for the increased fee and neither will they be eligible for the new bursaries. However, from 2006 they will not need to pay fees up-front, but can do so after graduation. The details will also outline the existing financial support measures that will continue to be available to these students.

Current Students.

20. The College will inform all current undergraduate students of the changes in the fee structure for students entering the College in 2006 and explain that these will not affect students continuing on their current programme of study, with regard to their fee liability. As a result, they will be ineligible for assistance from the Bursary Scheme. However, from 2006 students will not need to pay fees up-front, but can do so after graduation. Again, the information will reiterate the financial support that will continue to be made available to these students. This information will be placed on the College website and will also be published in the College student newspaper.

OUTREACH WORK

21. Some of our additional fee income will be used to fund the appointment of a Director of Access. This will be a new post within the College, created to oversee and develop the College's outreach work. The Director will provide coordination of, and strategic direction for, the College's portfolio of interaction with schools. These include, but will not be limited to: voluntary and salaried participation of Imperial staff and students in local schools, widening participation activities, open days at College and development of events in individual schools. Novel techniques will also be considered for the independent assessment of the specific abilities and skills appropriate for applicants and potential students at the College.

22. The College currently has a network of more than 60 schools and the Director of Access will aim to increase this number. Work will take place with these schools at several levels with an aim to increase awareness of the opportunities within higher education and to assist school pupils with their applications. School visits will also be used to identify students from all backgrounds who have the potential to succeed at the College.

23. The extent of the College's outreach work and the target groups are detailed in Paragraph 5. It is anticipated that the Director of Access will expand these over the period of the Access Agreement.

MILESTONES

24. The College's milestones and objectives in implementing this Access Agreement are outlined below.

a. The College will ensure that at least 29% of the additional income from the increased fees will be available to support eligible students in the form of bursaries.

b. The College aims to raise awareness of the Bursary Scheme so that all those eligible to apply for bursaries receive the appropriate information in time to do so.

c. The College will develop an efficient and effective system for the administration and award of bursaries and will ensure that this is targeted to those most in need. The College will regularly evaluate the system, make recommendations and implement any necessary changes.

d. The College will appoint a Director of Access to oversee and develop the College's outreach activities and to form a detailed strategy for our outreach work.

e. Following the appointment of the Director of Access, the College intends to set further milestones in the area of outreach. These are likely to include:

- (1) Expansion of the Schools Visit Programme
- (2) Expansion of the project based activities programme
- (3) Work with a set number of new Aimhigher areas per year

f. As a consequence of its commitment to outreach work and the introduction of the Bursary Scheme, the College expects to increase the number and proportion of students from under-represented groups who apply here. For entry to the College in 2004-05, 13.2% of applicants were from the following socio-economic groups – lower supervisory and technical occupations, routine occupations and semi-routine

occupations⁶). It is intended that this figure should rise over the period of the Access Agreement.

g. Using the additional information on LEA assessments to be gained from the UUK/SCOP proposed administration scheme, the College will analyse on an annual basis how student numbers according to Higher Education Maintenance Grant are affected by the introduction of the new Bursary Scheme and the development of outreach work.

INSTITUTIONAL MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

25. The everyday administration of the Access Agreement will be the responsibility of the Academic Registrar. The Academic Registrar will be able to direct any issues that arise to monthly meetings of the College's Management Board and will also provide a report on the Access Agreement on an annual basis. The Management Board will be responsible for making decisions on all of our access measures and will monitor with the appropriate Senate sub-committees the College's progress towards meeting the above milestones. It will also approve the Annual Monitoring Statement to HEFCE, which will include information on the College's Access Agreement.

6. According to data provided by UCAS, based on the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification Analytic Classes. The data used does not include the group entitled 'Unknown'.

Eligibility for Bursary Scheme

