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ACCESS AGREEMENT

Writtle College

VARIABLE FEES STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

Writtle College has a long-standing reputation for open access and providing practitioner and vocational university experiences for students across a wide spectrum of academic attainment. The College has a broad spectrum of programmes ranging from sub-degree provision through each of the attainment levels from undergraduate to postgraduate study. The majority of the College's students being accepted to undergraduate programmes enter on middle to lower quartile A level points or their equivalent. The College also has a significant minority of students from non-conventional academic and vocational entry routes.

The College is concerned about the impact of variable fees on the entry levels of students over the first three years of the strategy. These concerns are based around the numbers of students deferring places that may develop recruitment shortfalls in subsequent years

The College has in recent years undertaken a number of initiatives to introduce the College and the opportunities it offers to students. These initiatives include Groundbreakers; a programme offering year round support to schools together with an annual summer event along with limited work in the area of 14 to 16 alternative curriculum activities. Summer Schools funded by HEFCE, have provided an opportunity for school students to experience Higher Education through selected discipline fields at Writtle College. The College is fully engaged with the Aim Higher initiative and has an appointed widening participation officer and an Aim Higher coordinator to ensure a coherent internal strategy is pursued.

Writtle College is in an ideal position to raise student aspiration and attainment by bridging the gap between traditional vocational (FE) training through the use of its Foundation degree programmes to full time undergraduate provision.

ACCESS STRATEGY

The College Access Strategy seeks to address the key areas identified in the DfES publication [Widening Participation in Higher Education](#) and the activities and outputs published previously in the College's widening participation strategy:

1 Attainment

The College will address this issue in two ways:

- a by extending the catchment area for schools within the Groundbreakers programme and in targeting particular post code areas;

- b by extending formal arrangements with feeder colleges at a vocational sub degree level of study.

Through these measures it is anticipated that curriculum on-line and teaching aids developed in association with partner schools can be enriched through access to the College's 250 Ha green laboratory. In this way candidate scholars will be able to develop an appreciation of the relevance and employment opportunities offered through the College's higher education offering.

2 Aspiration

The College's approach to practical problem based tuition coupled to extensive tutor support, builds a highly relevant set of skills for current and future industry needs, thus meeting the aspiration of students seeking preparation for mainstream employment.

The College will address this issue in the following ways:

- a by encouraging schools visits onto the campus from schools with little exposure to rural economic development issues to build an appreciation of environmental issues, food production and citizenship;
- b by encouraging schools to participate in campus based learning activities;
- c by working in association with schools and farm based producers to build practical links to the job opportunities available in the preparation and processing of food.

3 Application

The College is a higher education institution offering a range of specialist provision. It is a practitioner and vocational based curriculum ideal for the development of the more vocationally orientated students. The nature of these courses result in practical skills and aptitude being an important element

The College seeks to raise awareness of its curriculum and collegiate learning experience to a wider group of schools and feeder organisations by:

- a undertaking a series of in-school activities aimed at year 9, 10, 11 and 12 student and their parents;
- b undertaking a series of similar events in feeder colleges to the appropriate sub-degree students or Foundation Degree students and their parents;
- c working with our growing-careers.com, regional and national career adviser services to provide employability information for related industries;

- e to create a series of case studies highlighting role models to discuss with potential scholars;
- f to work with industry champions to establish in-school and campus based activities to develop the vocational employment opportunities related to the study at the College or within the university sector.

4 Admission

The College believes it has a well balanced admissions policy as can be seen from Schedule 1 and has around 40% of its UG student body claiming full maintenance grants.

The College has a recognised history of topping up to degree level qualifications from HND programmes over the years and is seeking to develop further the ability of Foundation Degree pathways to perform a similar function.

The College proposes to use bursary schemes to support the application of students by targeting these funds to students with the necessary academic attainment who for economic or social pressures be:

- a attracted to enter employment immediately;
- b biased by school progression practice not to enter higher education or only specific elements of higher education;
- c biased by social pressures not to enter higher education

FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Variable Fee

The College seeks to establish a set of new financial incentives in addition to existing arrangements to finance these activities through a charge made to students in the form of a variable fee. The basis of the strategy is outlined in Schedule 2. The level of this fee will be set at:

£2,700 per annum for the College's Bachelor Degree programme;
£2,500 per annum for the College's Foundation Degree programme.

The separation of the two areas of College activity reflects the strategy to encourage progression and entry based on elements of prior experiential learning and vocational qualifications. By setting a differential fee the College is effectively providing a general cash-back provision of fees to students thereby providing students with additional choice for the fee element foregone. (Schedule 3)

Student Bursaries

The College will employ a dedicated Bursary Officer to provide advice to students regarding the bursaries available and their conditions. This is in addition to the advice given on hardship funds and residential bursaries

provided through the College and organised through the College's learner support unit. The Bursary Officer will also undertake the development of alternative funds to support bursaries from a variety of sources. The College has estimated for a fixed level of funds to be available for bursaries each year that is equivalent to 14% of the additional fee income. The College will offer two sets of bursaries to students College based funds and Alumni based funds:

A College based funds

The College will aim to provide progressive bursaries of £300, £400 and £500 for three year programmes or pro-rata for the appropriate years of study associated with the programme. Students will only be able to apply for a bursary from the December of the academic year in which they join the College. The progressive nature of the bursary is aimed at promoting retention during those periods of study when economic needs perhaps compromises academic attainment. This strategy will assist in:

- 1 attracting appropriately qualified students from post codes indicating low progression rates into higher education;
- 2 supporting families sending first generation students into higher education;
- 3 supporting student in receipt of the full fee remission from the LEA.

Bursaries amounting to the order of £200,000 in total will be awarded under a points formula and will be available only to students demonstrating that they:

- 1 are in receipt of full fee remission from the LEA; (50 pts)
- 2 are registered to undertake a foundation degree programme; (20 pts)
- 3 can demonstrate a strong academic or vocational learning background; (20pts)
- 4 have a financial restriction or dependent family. (10pts)

The College will support students with a minimum of 60 points but more likely 80 points and above. Students able to demonstrate 80 points or above will be awarded bursaries first followed by reducing points scoreing students to a minimum of 60 points. All students within each band will be awarded bursaries. However, the College reserves the right to review the minimum points threshold each year to ensure adequate funds are available for distribution. The setting of the points scale weights the selection criteria to ensure the target groups are prioritised and hopefully make their personal ranking obvious to applicants.

B Alumni based funds

The College will seek to develop a number of new alumni based bursaries over the five year duration of the current plan. These bursaries will assist the College to widen the basis of its support to students and lead to an increase in participation rates. The bursaries will be set at to provide at least the minimum level of award previously described in the college based fund section.

These funds will be applied on the basis of attracting students from the profiles listed under the College based criteria but will direct students into particular areas of the curriculum or as determined by the sponsor showing. These awards will be directed to students showing high vocational skills and academic attainment from lower income families.

It has been estimated on the basis of the selected criteria that bursaries amounting to £100,000 in total under this heading will be available to all full time undergraduate students demonstrating:

- 1 an alignment to any particular alumni determined criteria; (25 pts)
- 2 strong vocational or academic track record; (25pts)
- 3 how they would benefit from and use the bursary; (25 pts)
- 4 that they are applying from an area with a history of low participation. (25 pts)

The College will support candidates able to generate 75 points and above. The Alumni based funds have been omitted from our calculations on the basis that these bursaries will only become available once £100,000 of distributable funds are raised. We will inform OFFA when sufficient funds are available to distribute to students and the probable percentage of fair access students that will be in receipt of bursaries.

MILESTONES & OBJECTIVES

Description	Objective	Target	Milestone
College Bursaries	100% distribution to eligible groups	Year 1 £ 50,000 Year 2 £125,000 Year 3 £200,000 Year 4 £200,000 Year 5 £200,000	Year 1 refine base data in relation to level of students in receipt of full support and correlation with post code analysis. Currently the College has circa 40% of its UG population in receipt of full support. Year 2 monitor variance Year 3 10% improvement in numbers recruited from target areas in comparison with

			<p>published performance indicators of fair access. In addition College to move towards national averages in recruitment profiles from feeder schools at a minimum.</p> <p>Milestones for Year 4 and Year 5 will be sent to OFFA once a stable data set has been established.</p>
Additional School workshops	Provision of awareness of bursaries and additional curriculum initiatives	£10,000 per annum	Growth in attendance from target schools to Groundbreakers and correlation to enquiries for College programmes by year 3
Additional Feeder College programme	Provision of awareness of bursaries and additional curriculum initiatives	£10,000 per annum	Growth in attendance from target schools to Groundbreakers and correlation to enquiries for College programmes by year 3
Additional Adult learning programme	Provision of awareness of bursaries and additional curriculum initiatives	£10,000 annum	Growth and correlation to enquiries for College programmes by year 3
Alumni Bursaries	Raise profile in sector, both corporate and individual, regarding creation of bursary schemes	£35,000 per annum	£100,000 of distributable bursaries by year 5

	or converting existing prizes into Alumni Bursaries		
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PUBLICITY

Information concerning the Access Agreement together with the range and terms of the bursaries available through the College will be published on the College website and prospectuses. A specific e-mail address will be made available Bursaries@writtle.ac.uk to receive bursary relevant enquiries. The College will also seek to develop a rapid online screening tool to help applicants rank their applications against the criteria.

The College a number of open days as well as attending a variety of recruitment activities outside of the College where students will be able to enquire about bursaries and pick up details of the application process and criteria.

The Bursary Officer will develop a range of information sheets that will be included in enquiry packs distributed to prospective students, along with the relevant contact details. This information will define the application process, bursary levels and assessment criteria.

The College operates an extensive schools and feeder college liaison programme under the brand "Groundbreakers". Through this year round programme information will be available in schools and feeder colleges.

In addition the College's widening participation staff will be specifically engaged in targeting those organizations in fair access catchment areas through a number of events and activities.

In association with AimHigher activities the College will be able to work with the sector as a whole to raise awareness of bursaries and fair access opportunities.

MONITORING

The Access Agreement will be monitored through the provision of an annual report presented to the College Executive Group. Details of the Access Agreement will be included in the College's strategic planning documents and annual operating statements. The Board of Governors discuss these documents prior to their for approval.

The Bursary Officer will be required to submit claims for bursaries under the College existing financial procedures and to prepare regular reports for monitoring.

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A copy of the Access Agreement Annual Report can be forwarded to OFFA as required.

Any modifications required to the Access Agreement will be advised through the Annual Reporting process. The preparation of the Annual Report will be the responsibility of the Assistant Principals.

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SCHEDULE 1

Comparison of Writtle College admissions data with the national average 2003

	Grammar School	Sixth Form Centre	Sixth Form College	Comprehensive school	Independent School	FE/HE	Other Maintained	Other	Unknown	Total
Writtle	11	2	21	60	7	57	26	3	75	262
Writtle percentage	4.2%	0.76%	8.01%	22.90%	2.67%	21.76%	9.92%	1.14%	28.62%	100%
National percentage	5.36%	0.77%	10.22%	25.49%	9.39%	23.40%	5.26%	1.23%	18.87%	100%

SCHEDULE 2**Fee Table**

	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
No of UG Students	737	815	854	954	994	1023	962
No of FD students	132	284	344	363	370	371	373
New entrant UG	239	298	317	339	338	344	342
New Entrant FD	119	165	179	184	186	187	189
Variable UG Fee level			£ 2,700	£ 2,768	£ 2,837	£ 2,908	£ 2,980
Variable FD Fee level			£ 2,500	£ 2,563	£ 2,627	£ 2,692	£ 2,760
Assumed std fee	£ 1,149	£ 1,178	£ 1,207	£ 1,237	£ 1,268	£ 1,300	£ 1,332
Additional UG fee			£473,149	£1,003,859	£1,558,871	£1,644,720	£1,585,718
Additional FD Fee			£231,383	£ 480,924	£ 502,130	£ 517,133	£ 532,573
Total additional fee available			£634,079	£1,336,305	£1,854,900	£1,945,668	£1,906,462
Bursaries expenditure			£ 63,408	£ 187,083	£ 259,686	£ 272,394	£ 266,905
Additional Outreach			£ 65,000	£ 66,625	£ 68,291	£ 69,998	£ 71,748
Exceptional costs for Access			£ 35,000	£ 35,875	£ 36,772	£ 37,691	£ 38,633
Residual fee income for T&L			£470,671	£1,046,722	£1,490,152	£1,565,586	£1,529,176
Bursary distribution			10.00%	14.00%	14.00%	14.00%	14.00%
Fee Inflation	2.3%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
Gap year and Student Withdraw			10%	10%	10%	10%	10%
Student number inflation							
UG	737	815	854	954	994	1023	962
FD	132	284	344	363	370	371	373
Total	869	1100	1198	1317	1364	1395	1336

SCHEDULE 3

Effective fee discount bursaries as a result of fee differentials arising over five year plan
Totals are the cash-back effectively distributed to students on year of entry

General discount from Fee reduction	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11
UG	£256,184	£221,817	£162,320	£94,528	£18,963
FD	£171,987	£158,778	£138,052	£114,319	£ 89,743
Total	£428,171	£380,594	£300,372	£208,847	£108,705