

THE PEOPLE'S COLLEGE, NOTTINGHAM



ACCESS AGREEMENT PROPOSAL

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The People's College has a long-standing commitment to the ethos of widening participation and has a national reputation in this field. The College is committed to providing high quality educational opportunities to a diverse student population where nearly half of all students (46%) are classed as widening participation.

1.2 This success and the College's already diverse social and ethnic student population is evidenced by strong benchmark indicators and the fact that black and minority ethnic students are not under represented in the student population.

2.0 CONTEXT

2.1 The People's College is set in the heart of a region of social, economic and educational disadvantage. 40.8% of Nottinghamshire's wards fall into the bottom 10% of the indices of Multiple Deprivation 2000, with 44% being in the lowest 10% in terms of Educational Deprivation. POLAR data shows that in Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire the young participation rate in higher education is the lowest in the East Midlands (15% and 27% respectively). Pre-16 educational attainment for Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire has remained persistently low. DfES statistics for 2003 demonstrate 34.3% and 46.5% respectively of Year 11 pupils achieving 5 A*-C grades, compared with the regional average of 50.3% and the national average of 52.6%. Dr Leon Feinstein of the Centre for the Economics of Education has shown the educational disadvantage begins as young as 22 months and, in Nottingham City where LEA Key Stage 2 results were the 4th lowest in the country in 2004, this can be clearly seen.

2.2 Given the high levels of local educational disadvantage and its strong commitment to the community, much of People's outreach activity has been based within the region, particularly targeting areas of low educational attainment and progression.

3.0 ACCESS AGREEMENT: FEES AND BURSARIES

- 3.1 The College will charge the £3000 for all full-time undergraduate provision from 2006. It is assumed for the purposes of this Access Agreement that recruitment will continue to follow existing social and geographical patterns and that the institutional widening participation and Access to Learning funding will continue at present levels. It is recognised that some changes may occur in the sector after 2006 and, therefore, this Access Agreement is for three years in the first instance.
- 3.2 This Access Agreement sets out how The People's College will safeguard and promote fair access – in particular for students from low income groups – through bursary and outreach work. Given that the OFFA guidance states “There is concern that students with the least financial resources may be put off applying to higher education because of the cost”, the College’s key target group is students from low income families who qualify for full or partial maintenance grant, i.e. the “poorest students”.
- 3.3 The College recruits some 30% of its students from backgrounds where the family income is sufficiently low to enable them to qualify for full maintenance grant. The proportion of students recruited from the NG postcode who have a low family income is higher than that for the College as a whole.
- 3.4 The College is committed to providing the £300 bursary to all full-time undergraduate students on full maintenance grant which will be provided through maintenance support.
- 3.5 The College will also provide (either in cash or vouchers):
- 3.5.1 £700 per annum bursary to all full-time undergraduate students on full maintenance grant.
 - 3.5.2 £250 per annum bursary for all full-time undergraduate students with an NG home postcode on full maintenance grant.
 - 3.5.3 A maintenance bursary of £250 per annum for all full-time undergraduate students on partial maintenance grant.

3.5.4 A competitive academic scholarship bursary scheme of £2,000 per annum to support the maintenance costs of 10 gifted students applying to the College who are eligible for full maintenance grant (£20,000 per annum in total).

3.5.5 The College will allocate an additional £20,000 per annum to a discretionary hardship fund managed by Student Support Services, primarily to assist students who are unable, perhaps for reasons relating to disability, mental health difficulties or family commitments, to work during the vacation.

3.5.6 It is anticipated that the College will require £35,000 per annum to administer the bursaries 2006-2007.

3.5.7 These figures will increase in accordance with inflationary rises in the fee limit.

4.0 ACCESS AGREEMENT: FINANCIAL INFORMATION

4.1 The College is committed to providing clear and accessible information to all prospective students, including exactly what they will have to pay and what financial support will be in place for the duration of their programme of study.

4.2 From August 2005 the College is moving towards a more centrally managed admissions system which will enable trained staff to consistently and effectively apply standards which will provide quality of opportunity for all individuals to gain admission to a course suited to their ability and aspirations. The College will be seeking to ensure that reliable and consistent information is supplied to applicants on how they will be assessed for entry to the courses, taking into account the increasing diversity of applicants, qualifications and pathways into higher education. This high quality admissions system will be the first point of contact for prospective students making enquiries about College courses and will also be best placed to supply comprehensive financial information to students in these initial stages of interest.

4.3 The provision of information to potential students and their parents/sponsors will include:

4.3.1 Dedicated web pages on tuition fees and related financial information including course fee information (together with the fact that tuition fees may be subject to annual inflationary rises and what that might mean), frequently asked questions, key contacts.

4.3.2 Hard copy literature containing the same information will also be available, especially locally through Connexions, Aimhigher and schools and colleges to target particular groups of WP students and their parents.

4.3.3 Tailored training for all outreach and admission staff on student finance.

4.3.4 Clear guidance on College policy provided by senior staff during the induction of all new staff to the College.

4.3.5 An increase in the number of parents' workshops and finance events delivered in Nottinghamshire schools (including the primary sector) and colleges and at the College by the outreach team, again particularly targeting areas of low progression.

4.3.6 **Outreach Activity**

We also plan to extend the number of summer schools for mature applicants from the current one per year to six per year so that they cover all Departments.

We are already working with Aimhigher on a number of activities.

As a result of the injection of extra funding as a benefit of additional fee income we intend to expand these activities by introducing:

- Year 11 and 12 summer schools
- HE experience days for years 6, 9 and 10
- Masterclasses for years 11 and 12
- Tasters for years 8 and 12
- Student shadowing for year 11

5 ACCESS AGREEMENT

5.1 The College proposes to use £30,000 of additional fee income to support new and extended outreach activities. The College's bursary scheme is designed to support all students on low incomes. The new outreach/first semester retention activity will be more targeted, using analysis of data to identify study programmes with low numbers of applications from students from under-represented groups and those with lower than average completion rates. 2.1 outlined the specific challenges facing the local area and the College's commitment to working in partnership with the community on a shared agenda to raise aspirations and attainment. The new and extended outreach activity therefore focuses on the geographical region of Nottinghamshire in areas of low progression to further and higher education and will include:

- 5.1.1 An extended primary programme to enable further schools in EIC EAZ areas to be included in the activities which include visits to the College, interactive HE notice board displays, after-school sports coaching.
- 5.1.2 New "activity breaks" targeted on subject areas which have few WP students (according to HEFCE weightings) and aimed at Years 8, 9 and 10.
- 5.1.3 Participation of an Admission Compact Scheme to include all 11-18 schools and further education colleges in Nottinghamshire with activities delivered in a range of locations to suit the needs of the local community.
- 5.1.4 The development of a new county-wide Admission Compact Scheme incorporating the above, facilitated by Nottinghamshire Aimhigher and involving collaborative work with the University of Nottingham and local FE partners offering higher education programmes.

5.1.5 An extension of the strategies being developed in College including attendance officers, social events, improved pastoral support, peer buddying and academic tutoring to enable all students, including those from non-traditional backgrounds, to feel that The People's College is a College which will nurture their potential and encourage success. This support will be targeted through analysis of non-completion rates, which will be monitored to measure impact, and will include WP data. There will be dissemination events to share good practice around the College

5.1.6 Development of a pilot programme involving maths study support to enable all Higher Education Programmes to benefit from this provision and to encourage students who may lack confidence in maths to nonetheless apply for the programme.

5.1.7 **Disabled Applicants**

We aim to raise participation for disabled students by the application of our policy for support, which is geared towards taking positive steps to seek and identify need at the application stage and agreeing, at that stage, a means of satisfying that need. Intended provision includes:

- Alternative format for printed materials available, e.g. Braille, large print.
- Enquiry Centre fitted out with facilities for enquirers with disabilities, e.g. wheelchair access, text phone, confidential interview room.
- Provision of a special leaflet on dyslexia.

6 ACCESS AGREEMENTS: MILESTONES

1. Year on year maintenance at, or above, benchmark performance levels in relation to proportions of student population with regard to social class, ethnic make-up, low participation and neighbourhood background (*2004/05: 38% from underprivileged areas*).
2. Take up of bursaries and retention rates of students with bursaries, monitored annually in relation to estimates.

- 3 Increase in numbers of ethnic minority students (*2004/05: 95*).
- 4 Expansion of visits to College of prospective students.
- 5 Expansion of mature summer schools
- 6 Achievement of 2006 application targets. Consequent annual setting and reviewing of targets and supporting activities (*2004/05: 474 students*).

7 ACCESS AGREEMENTS: MONITORING

- 7.1 Progress towards milestones will be monitored each term by the Senior Management Team (SMT). Brian Elgie, a member of the team, will take responsibility across the institution for the Access Agreement.
- 7.2 An Access Agreement Monitoring Group will be established, chaired by Brian Elgie, and including the Finance manager, the Higher Education Manager and the Head of Student Support Services. This Access Agreement Monitoring Group will report each term to the SMT, via Mr Elgie.

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