



**NORTHBROOK COLLEGE SUSSEX
FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION**

ACCESS AGREEMENT 2008/9

This agreement sets out how *Northbrook College Sussex* will further develop access to higher education as part of an institutional widening participation strategy

Contact for Access Agreement: Simon Ives
Post Held: Director of Higher Education and Resources for Learning
Contact: 01903 606022 or 01903 606301
E Mail Contact: s.ives@nbcoll.ac.uk

Summary

The College expects to invest around 25% of its additional fee income in enhanced access measures commencing in 2008-9. Around £330K will be committed to provision of bursaries to students who fall within the widening participation category.

College Mission

The College Mission is to develop the capabilities of individuals, employers and other organisations by providing high-quality opportunities for learning which are relevant to their needs

Introduction and context

Northbrook College Sussex is a Further Education Corporation with a significant number of approximately 1000 HEFCE directly funded higher education students. By academic year 2008/9 all HEFCE funded FT students (apart from a few intercalating students) will be eligible for payment of Top Up Fees. The College's higher education provision is validated through a range of partners including the University of Brighton, Edexcel and other professional organisations. Provision in higher education includes Higher National Certificates and Diplomas; Foundation Degrees and BA (Hons) Degree and Post Graduate Diplomas.

Widening participation is central to the College's mission and this commitment is reflected in the current student body. A high proportion of current students, around 60%, are in receipt of the government maintenance grant. In 2006/7 51% of students were aged over 21 and 25% of all HE students were in receipt of some additional learning support, with 8% in receipt of the Disabled Students Allowance.

QAA Academic Reviews have consistently praised the College's attempt to widen participation in education through the provision and support of a broad portfolio of courses and inclusive learning opportunities in relation to the College Mission Statement. (QAA SR121/2005)

The College is a lead partner in the Sussex Learning Network with responsibility for the area of Creative Arts and New Media and is thus fully involved with the widening participation agenda.

Fee Levels

The Corporate Governing Body of the College has ratified the decision to charge up to £3000 for the full range of higher education courses where new students are enrolling in the academic year 2008/9. It is the College's intention, subject to the agreement of the Corporate Governing Body, to uprate the fee level for inflation in following years.

Bursaries and other financial support for students to be provided from additional fee income:

Income Assessed Bursaries

All students in receipt of the maximum level of government maintenance grant will be entitled to a bursary of £250 per annum. This will be additional to the achievement bursary they will receive on successful completion of each level of study.

Achievement Bursaries

An Achievement bursary will be awarded, in the form of a refund of £500 to all students (who have paid Top Up Fees) at the end of each level of study, to invest in their future education and career opportunities, provided that they have achieved the learning outcomes of their programme of study. The College's current proportion of students in receipt of state support is around 60% and all these students will be eligible to receive this bursary; although it is anticipated that more than 90% of all HE students will be in receipt for this. The bursary is designed to encourage retention and participation and to reward achievement at each level of the award.

Specific Bursaries

2008/9 Bursary Allocation £55K

These will be normally awarded within four categories:

- Care Leavers
- Progression from FE to HE
- Income Assessed
- Career Change

These are discretionary bursaries assessed by a panel comprising at least one member of the Senior Management Team and the Student Financial Support Officer.

Bursaries will normally be allocated in tranches of £1000 per eligible student. These will be given for one year to successful applicants, and a full re-application will need to be made for future years. It is anticipated that the bulk of Bursaries will be available to support students who receive no parental support but are still classified as non-dependent. These may be targeted at applications to new courses which have yet to be judged in the student market, and will provide financial incentive especially for students previously in employment or who will need to leave full time employment to undertake a higher education programme and who are seeking a career change; for students progressing internally within the college from Level 3 programmes; for students coming from care; and for students on low incomes.

Outreach Activities

As a Further Education College Northbrook has a strong track record in working on outreach activities and encouraging greater access to its higher education provision.

Additional funding for outreach activities will provide opportunities to enhance and develop current activities. These will include Open Days, Taster Days, Summer Schools and Road Shows for local school pupils and our existing FE student community, where progression from level three courses will be targeted. The College is also involved with the Aim Higher initiative which will focus developing clear progression routes through FE to HE . School staff will be engaged through the development of a consortium group, and the sharing of post 16 curriculum delivery with Worthing 6th Form College and local schools, and thus create a much fuller understanding of local progression possibilities. Additional funding will enable further involvement with the Sussex Lifelong Learning Network and greater working in partnership with other universities, colleges and organisations. Further links will also be developed with employers (partly through greater engagement with the College Business Development Unit) as an encouragement to the importance of work related learning and future career possibilities.

Information Advice and Guidance to Students and Prospective Students

The additional income will provide for additional staffing to be made to further enhance the excellent work undertaken by the Student Financial Support Team, enabling prospective and current students to be fully aware of the fees, bursaries, support mechanisms and costs associated with enrolment on a higher education programme of study. This will provide a full financial services package for students.

Improved career advice will be provided by funds set aside for the training of qualified careers guidance officers able to give impartial advice to all prospective and current students. Currently the College is accredited with a Matrix standard, and will use this funding as a means of developing an open access careers centre.

Further funding will be available to fund additional hours for the counselling and welfare sections and for the learning resource centres, enabling the latter to provide additional support to non traditional learners.

The marketing budget for the College will be increased to ensure that all College information and the support services available are widely publicised and promoted to all, and to enable the College Newsletter distributed to stakeholders to raise the profile and awareness of the higher education provision within the College. Planned

improvements to the College website and other publicity material will allow easier and more diverse access to information on the range of HE provision.

Other expenditure to be Funded from Top Up Fees

Money will be allocated to central data systems to allow for the tracking of student destinations, and for this to be readily available to course teams and prospective students to enhance their choices within higher education.

The College will establish a means of tracking alumni to allow for engagement with past students, to promote courses, to develop industrial involvement, and to seek support for new bursaries.

Investment will be made in the College's higher education provision to ensure that resources are updated and further specialised equipment and facilities are provided, and to demonstrate through this improvement a visible and tangible progression from FE into HE.

Further investment will be made in the establishing of facilities and resources that improve the higher education culture and ethos within the college. The College is currently working on a property strategy which will culminate in the building of a new college commencing in late 2008.

Investment in the continuous professional development of academic and support staff will be possible through additional funding of activities which enhance will enrich colleagues understanding and needs of higher education, allow for subject updating and engagement within and without the institution with pedagogic developments taking place in HE.

Institutional Milestones and Objectives

The institution has established the following milestones and objectives in relation to its higher education provision falling under this access agreement.

- To meet the planned target intake for recruitment to each HE programme at Certificate, Intermediate and Honours level
- To work towards an annual retention target of 90% on all HE programmes
- To further develop internal progression routes from level 3 programmes to achieve a target of 20%
- To achieve a target of 50% of successful Foundation Degree students progressing on to Honours level top up programmes
- To continue to meet and further expand widening participation targets for the proportion of HE students being recruited from these categories, and continue to monitor the proportion of students who are in receipt of full state support and seek to maintain this proportion over the course of this agreement

Monitoring Arrangements

Day to day monitoring of Access Agreement will be undertaken by the Director of Higher Education and the Director of Finance as members of the Senior Management Team. Internal monitoring will take place by the Higher education Review Board and Academic Board, who will review the effectiveness and success of the College's widening participation strategy and report on this to the Corporate Governing Body.

Financial Analysis

See Annex A and B

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