

ACCESS AGREEMENT

2011-12¹

Introduction

Roehampton University is committed to improving participation and ensuring fair access to higher education. With a strong history of attracting students from a diverse range of social and cultural traditions, Roehampton has already achieved considerable success in recruiting large numbers of students from diverse backgrounds and under-represented groups. The most current data indicates that:

- Over 94% of young first degree students at Roehampton come from state schools and colleges, exceeding the institution's location adjusted benchmark of 91.2% and the significantly above the national average of 87.4%
- The proportion of students from the NS socio-economic groups classification 4, 5, 6 or 7 at Roehampton also significantly exceeds both the institution's benchmark and the national average
- 25% of first degree entrants are mature students, with the vast majority having no previous experience of higher education
- The proportion of first degree students that come from areas defined as low participation neighbourhoods at Roehampton is above the London average

2011 Updated Access Agreement

This revised Access Agreement is designed to build on Roehampton's previous Access Agreements, the first of which covered the period 2006-07 to 2010-11 and which has undergone various iterations over the intervening years to reflect changes to the higher education landscape. The University has submitted this revised Access Agreement to cover the period 2011-12, to reflect changes to our bursary offer, to update earlier information provided, and to take account of recent research and guidance including OFFA's '*Have bursaries influenced choices between universities?*' (September 2010).

Further, as a result of the process undertaken to deliver the University's first Widening Participation Strategic Assessment (WPSA 2009) in June 2009, we have a greater awareness of the full range and breadth of the post-entry support and its promotion, and pre-entry outreach activities in which the University is engaged. These activities also inform this revised Access Agreement, and details of these can be found in the Roehampton University WPSA 2009.

The Context

This Agreement reflects our already significant success in attracting students who will be the first in their families to participate in higher education – well above the national average. It is also based on Roehampton's excellent track record in delivering a high quality learning and teaching experience for its students. As confirmed in the QAA Institutional Audit Report of 2007, Roehampton "is adopting a sustained and reflective approach to improving students' learning opportunities, underpinned by well-constructed strategies linked to its overall vision; this is coupled with effective action planning and progress monitoring."

{NOTE:1 In accordance with the guidance provided by OFFA on 26 October 2010, this Access Agreement replaces the earlier agreement submitted by Roehampton University which covered the period 2009 - 10 to 2010 - 11}

Three of the 'Features of Good Practice' in the 2007 QAA Report were: (i) *the progressive development of management information relevant to all levels of activity, from programme annual reviews to the implementation of institutional strategies;* (ii) *the holistic approach to addressing student retention;* (iii) *the contribution made by the Graduate School in establishing a community of research students and, in particular, assisting the integration of part-time students.*

The University's Academic Strategy emphasises the importance of diversity, inclusivity and widening participation in higher education. It provides:

Diversity

"Roehampton University seeks to provide an enriching experience for all its members and is committed to diversity, which is a fundamental element of the Vision of the University. Diversity provides enrichment for all concerned, allowing the exchange of different ideas from diverse groups of staff and students with their particular social and cultural backgrounds and traditions."

Inclusivity

Roehampton University is committed to attracting well qualified undergraduates and postgraduates from all sectors of society. We celebrate the diversity this engenders as a source of learning. We are committed to fair access and to enabling equal opportunities. Recruitment policies are geared to inclusion and attracting excellent students that are able to benefit from the educational experience of Roehampton as defined by their academic potential. Students demonstrate their potential through a wide range of qualification routes...

We will continue to support outreach activity in order to raise the aspirations of those in our local community. Mature students and those who are the first in their family to enter University are well represented in the University and we will seek to maintain that representation."

a) Fee limits

Roehampton University's programmes of study are of high quality. We invest significantly in well-qualified, experienced, full-time academic staff, and in curriculum design and student support. We therefore charged tuition of £3000 in 2006/07 for new undergraduate honours students and have raised this in accordance with government guidance over the intervening years to £3,290 for 2010-11. For new students starting their full-time undergraduate honours degree in 2011-12, we will charge £3,375 per annum, and we anticipate that this will rise in line with inflation in subsequent years for those students. Foundation degrees will be charged at a level below this maximum fee limit, and for 2011-12 entry specifically, will be charged at £1,750.

b) Amounts of additional fee income to be spent on access measures

Roehampton belongs to the Aimhigher London South partnership and is represented on its Area Partnership Committee. It also has links with and offers outreach activities through Surrey Aimhigher, London West Aimhigher and Aspire, being an affiliate member of the last of these. The University is also a subscription member of the South London Lifelong Learning Network Extension (SL LLNE), is represented on its Partnership Management Group and collaborates on initiatives to prepare students with vocational/non-traditional qualifications to successfully make the transition to HE study.

The University has developed a strong programme of widening participation, and will build on this by using additional fee income to make significant additional investments to fund (i) an outreach campaign to persuade potential students of the lifetime benefits of investing in their higher education, (ii) increased post-entry support provision and (iii) focused outreach activities such as activities targeted at vocational learners.

The University's outreach activities are described in its WPSA 2009.

c) Bursaries and other financial support for students

Roehampton will be offering a bursary of £350 per annum to students in receipt of the full Higher Education maintenance grant.

The University is committed to maintaining the vitality and diversity of its applicant base through promotion of awareness of its investment in, for example, dyslexia screening, assessment and support; disabilities support; and WP initiatives. These activities are described in the Roehampton University WPSA 2009.

In the unstable market conditions created by the proposed fee increases, it is committed to maintaining its already high proportion of students from under-represented groups.

Furthermore, the University is determined, as a priority, to allocate substantial additional funds from top-up fees to further enhance the student learning experience through investment in staff and the learning environment, and thus improve retention. Though retention is not the direct concern of OFFA, it is, for a university such as Roehampton, a vital area for investment of top-up fees, as evidence indicates that excellent post-entry support is in itself a sound strategy for underpinning current participation rates.

d) Provision of information to students

Full details of the levels of financial support available to prospective students of Roehampton University will be published in a variety of formats. These will include:

- Marketing & promotional literature
- Prospectuses
- Web-based information

Information presented for prospective students will be clear, concise and enable prospective students to make informed choices based on accurate financial information.

e) Outreach work

Through its existing work with Aimhigher and its strong track record in widening participation, Roehampton has developed a wide portfolio of access measures. Details can be found in the University's WPSA 2009.

The work of the Widening Participation team at Roehampton has focused on a number of key areas, which have seen substantial development in the past six years. These are the areas that we are committed to delivering through partnerships and outreach work with schools and FE colleges particularly in south and west London, and the local borough of Wandsworth:

- **Foundation degrees:** The University offers a small number of Foundation degrees.
- **Roehampton Student Ambassador Scheme:** Trained Student Ambassadors work in Schools and on-campus with groups of school children and young people on various activities. Roehampton has 55 trained Student Ambassadors working in this area.
- **Shadow a Student:** School and college students 'shadow' Roehampton students for a day and encounter different HE teaching methods in 'live' sessions, as well as study and social activities, giving them a true "day in the life" experience.
- **Masterclasses for Gifted & Talented Students:** These are run in various areas such as

Modern Languages, English, Psychology, Philosophy and Creative Writing. These are arranged through LEA Borough co-ordinators and through direct contact with our target Schools. It is anticipated that about 5 of these events will take place annually with a maximum of 25 students per class.

- **Taster & Progression Days:** These are run in response to School requests and specifically for Schools in our region that are identified as having low progression rates to HE. There will be twenty events of this type annually.
- **E-Mentoring Pilot project:** This project is being developed with two Secondary Schools in the region, to offer both academic and aspirational support to pre-GCSE students. Its effectiveness will be evaluated and compared to traditional mentoring methods.
- **Academic Mentoring:** Roehampton undergraduates work with Secondary Schools in the region to offer academic support to pre-GCSE students. These sessions are delivered in school and are designed to improve motivation and performance.
- **Disability Support:** Roehampton University has full Access Centre Status. At the centre, we undertake assessments for DSA and ensure that students with disabilities are assisted to participate in and successfully complete programmes of higher education. Dyslexia assessments are also carried out at the University and Dyslexia Support Tutors offer individual tutorials and group workshops. Additionally, we participate in a sub-regional Dyslexia Conference in collaboration with Aimhigher, and we host this on a rolling three-year basis. Seventy students with dyslexia, and staff, attended this conference when it was last hosted by Roehampton.
- **Volunteering:** The development of accredited modules and other awards to support and recognise Roehampton Students who are engaged in voluntary activities in the community. These currently involve bilingual mentoring in local schools, reading activities in prisons and reach-out initiatives into the local community.
- **Partnerships with schools:** Roehampton University is committed to working closely with schools and colleges to foster collaborations that engender good practice, opportunities for inter-institution staff development, and the provision of sound information, advice and guidance to potential university students. Recognising the need to work more strategically with secondary schools in order to best achieve these commitments, the University has established a Secondary Schools and University Partnership group and has signed Memoranda of Understanding with participating schools – more details can be found in the Roehampton University WPSA 2009.

All of the work in this area is carried out collaboratively with as many areas of the University as possible and seeks to use Aimhigher and HEFCE guidance for targeting, engagement and planning activity. In particular, the University's Widening Participation staff continues to strengthen the University's commitment to maximise its relationship with schools and colleges in the London Region and South-West London Sub-Region.

f) Milestones

The University is committed to maintaining the overall proportion of students from under-represented groups at a level above the national average as measured by the primary widening participation indicators used by HESA, namely:

- 1.) The percentage of entrants who attended a school or college in the state sector

- 2) The percentage of entrants who were returned NS Social Economic Classifications 4 to 7
- 3) The percentage of entrants whose home area is known to have a low proportion of 18 and 19 year olds in higher education

The University will support this commitment by its investment in widening participation and outreach activities, in the light of annual monitoring of student recruitment and progression.

g) Institutional monitoring arrangements

Monitoring of compliance and progress will build on the tools the University has developed, and continues to refine, on recruitment, admissions and retention. This data will enable us to analyse student cohorts from the moment of engagement prior to application, through application, admissions, enrolment and retention and, finally, into employment. The University will be monitoring annually the composition of its full time home undergraduate population, using a range of internal and external WP indicators. Monitoring will be undertaken by the University Planning Office, and data will be regularly viewed by the appropriate individuals and committees across the University.