

ACCESS AGREEMENT

2008-09 to 2010-11¹

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

2008 Updated Access Agreement

This new Access Agreement is designed to build on Roehampton's first Access Agreement (2006-07 to 2010-11). The University has submitted a new Access Agreement, to cover the period 2008/09 to 2010/11, to update earlier information and to reflect our experience in the first two years under the new fee regime.

It was initially difficult to estimate what percentage of the University's student population would be eligible for University bursaries and what proportion of bursary holders would also be eligible for the University's new scholarship programme. Original projections also under-estimated additional fee income to the University. We now have additional data that allows us to make more accurate projections of total expenditures and increased revenues. Further, in monitoring our activities, we have a greater awareness of the full range and breadth of the outreach activities in which the University is engaged. While we have been expanding on these activities, and will continue to do so, some of that expansion is also independently direct-funded by agencies such as Aimhigher. The University is therefore focusing increased funding on post-entry support targeted at students who will be the first in their families to attend university. Promoting the increased availability of this support will help to encourage students to participate in higher education.

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. This

¹ In accordance with the guidance provided by OFFA on 2 August 2007, this Access Agreement replaces the earlier agreement submitted by Roehampton University which covered the period 2006/07 – 2010/11.

Agreement is also based on Roehampton's excellent track record in delivering a high quality learning and teaching experience for its students. This was confirmed in the December 2003 QAA Institutional Audit Report and we have recently been advised that the 2007 QAA Institutional Audit Report will also express confidence in Roehampton, with a full report due shortly. Three of the 'Features of Good Practice' in the 2003 Report were: (i) *the variety of mechanisms used to hear the student voice, and the responsive way in which Roehampton has used these to enhance the student experience;* (ii) *the academic and personal support services provided to students by the Roehampton Educational Development Centre;* and (iii) *the accessibility of academic staff to students and the positive way in which they respond to student needs.*

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

"(i) 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 offer a range of scholarships and bursaries to support the brightest students as well as support those who might otherwise be deterred from entering HE. 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 students and have raised this in line with government guidance (i.e. in 2007/08 we are charging £3070 per annum). We anticipate that this fee will normally continue to rise in line with inflation and in accordance with legislation.

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 Steering Group. 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 partner institution of the South London Lifelong Learning Network (SL LLN) and collaborates on initiatives to prepare students with vocational/non-traditional qualifications to successfully make the transition to HE study.

Much of the income for this work is secured through the HEFCE Improving Access Fund, Aimhigher and Lifelong Learning Network funding. It is anticipated that these funding streams will remain and be used to fund these core activities.

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 section e) below. Post-entry support provision in Schools will include the deployment of at least one fte staff member in each School dedicated to student support.

c) Bursaries and other financial support for students

Roehampton will be offering a financial support package of up to £1,300 to students from groups currently under-represented in HE. This will include, at a minimum, awarding a bursary equal to the difference between the maximum maintenance grant and the tuition fee charged by Roehampton, to all students in receipt of the full Higher Education maintenance grant. In fact, in 2006/07 and 2007/08, we offered a £500 bursary to all students in receipt of a full or partial maintenance grant.

In addition to bursaries, the University also offers scholarships of £1,000 per year on the basis of high prior academic attainment. In 2006/07, the University offered over 170 scholarships, of which a significant number (63) were awarded to students who qualified for either full or partial maintenance grants. Continuation of the scholarships beyond first year is subject to a review of achievement.

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. In the unstable market conditions created by the introduction of top-up fees it is committed to maintaining its already high proportion of students from under-represented groups at current levels.

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. Brief details of current activities are outlined below. It is proposed that these activities will continue to be funded through the Improving Access funding received from HEFCE and Aimhigher funding.

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 five years. These are the areas that we are committed to delivering through partnerships and outreach work with schools and FE colleges in the sub-regions of south and west London, and Wandsworth:

- **Foundation degrees:** The University offers a range of Foundation degree programmes some of which are currently delivered at Carshalton College.
- **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 32 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 and Psychology. These are arranged through LEA Borough co-ordinators and through direct contact with our target Schools. It is anticipated that about 10 of these events will take place annually with a maximum of 20 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 eight 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.
- **Dyslexia Tutors Support:** Currently, there are seven Dyslexia Support Tutors offering students one-to-one tutorials and group workshops.
- **Volunteering:** The development of accredited modules to support Roehampton Students who are engaged in voluntary activities in the community. These currently involve bilingual mentoring in local schools and reach-out initiatives into the local community.

In addition, other work outside the Aimhigher partnership continues alongside the above, and seeks to harness the experience and energies which spin off from the initiatives. These include outreach work with the London boroughs of Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith & Fulham, Hounslow and Wandsworth.

Roehampton University has also secured 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, there is a student-run Dyslexia Society at the University offering a support network for students.

All of the work in this area is carried out collaboratively with as many areas of the University as possible and seeks to use the Aimhigher Resource Pack for Engagement and Planning Activity. In particular, the University's Recruitment, Admissions and Student Records Department 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:

- The percentage of entrants who attended a school or college in the state sector
- The percentage of entrants who were returned NS Social Economic Classifications 4 to 7
- The percentage of entrants whose home area is known to be 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.