



Access Agreement

(REVISED FOR 2011-12 ENTRY ONWARDS)

1. Context

This revised Access Agreement for Royal Holloway, University of London (RHUL) has been set out to provide the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) with our proposals for 2011-12, taking account of the recently announced 2011-12 student support arrangements for full-time Home and European Union (HEU) students by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. It is submitted in light of our experience of the delivery of financial fair access and outreach measures over the five years covered by the three previously submitted Access Agreements.

Since the introduction of OFFA arrangements in 2006 RHUL has worked within the broad parameters of its Access Agreements, and commitments have been largely met. RHUL remains committed to addressing the needs of under-represented groups, in particular students from low-income backgrounds, and as this Access Agreement demonstrates, we will continue to deliver support well above mandatory bursary requirements in 2011-12. OFFA commitments comprise RHUL's major financial investment in widening participation, and encompass bursaries and scholarships, additional hardship support, and extra outreach work. Given the Widening Participation Strategic Assessment (WPSA) submitted to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), which gives an account of the full extent of RHUL's commitment to, and investment in, widening participation and success, this Access Agreement principally addresses financial fair access measures.

2. Widening Participation and Fair Access

Widening participation is an important strategic objective for RHUL that we seek, as far as possible, to embed in routine activity. RHUL is committed to widening access to higher education by welcoming and encouraging more applications from groups who are under-represented in higher education, and by ensuring fair access for all those who have the potential to thrive at RHUL, especially those who might hitherto not aspired to study at RHUL because of the lack of social opportunity, financial barriers or low expectations.

The main considerations underpinning the thinking behind this document are to:

- work within the region with potential students from low higher education participation areas to raise aspirations and attainment, and encourage these students to view higher education as a viable option for them;
- develop RHUL's capacity to widen participation and promote fair access measures, and establish RHUL as a centre of excellence in these areas;
- work collaboratively with other organisations at national, regional and local levels to improve opportunities to study at a higher education institution, to expand progression routes to higher education, and to remove social, cultural, economic or institutional barriers to participation;

- further develop and embed widening participation within RHUL's pedagogical, academic and support systems to enable students to succeed in their studies;
- operate an admissions process which is demonstrably fair, transparent, professional and underpinned by appropriate and robust institutional structures;
- optimise the impact of the institutional support we offer students in achieving academic success.

3. Intended Fee Level

In 2011-2012 RHUL will charge the full fee to all Home and European Union (HEU) undergraduate students of £3,375 per annum (the maximum fee permitted by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills). This will be for all full-time undergraduate courses on offer at Royal Holloway, University of London.

4. Bursary and Scholarship Provision 2011-12

Bursaries and Scholarships

We know that many prospective students are deterred from seeking access to a university because of financial reasons.

To help with the costs of higher education a series of a generous bursaries and scholarships will be available as cash awards for new students entering RHUL in 2011-12. These awards consist of:

- Non-competitive Standard Bursaries of £750 per annum. These will be awarded to full-time students from England and Wales who are in receipt of a full or partial Government Maintenance Grant for the year of study, with a household income of £39,333 per year or less. Students must be liable for variable tuition fees during their degree programme (£3,375, in 2011-12) and for the year of study. A student repeating a year of undergraduate study is not eligible for bursary support for the repeated year beyond the mandatory bursary requirement (£338, in 2011-12), and will only receive a mandatory bursary if in receipt of a full Government Maintenance Grant. No application is required. Standard Bursaries will be awarded automatically to all qualifying students. This is provided that permission has been given to the Student Loans Company (SLC) to share financial information on the student's maintenance grant application with RHUL, and that this information is available on the Higher Education Bursaries and Scholarships Scheme (HEBSS) portal.

In 2008 RHUL increased the value of the Standard Bursary by 50%, from £500 to £750, and we intend to maintain the Standard Bursary at the £750 value for 2011-12.

- Access Entry Bursaries of £500 per annum will be awarded to full-time students from England and Wales, who are in receipt of a Standard Bursary, full or partial Government Maintenance Grant for the year of study, with a household income of £39,333 per year or less. In addition to this, students must also have achieved a QAA-recognised Access to Higher Education Diploma, and meet their RHUL UCAS offer which must include the Access to Higher Education Diploma as a condition of their offer. Students must also be liable for variable tuition fees during their degree programme (£3,375, in 2011-12) and for the year of study. No application is required. Access Entry Bursaries will be awarded automatically to all qualifying students. A student repeating a year of undergraduate study is not eligible for Access Entry Bursary support for the repeated year.

- Royal Holloway Excellence Scholarships of £500 per annum will be awarded to excellent students from England and Wales, who are in receipt of a Standard Bursary, full or partial Government Maintenance Grant for the year of study, with a household income of £39,333 per year or less. In addition to this, students must also achieve a minimum of AAB grades at GCE A2-level or equivalent, in the specific subject elements of their academic qualifications which are specified in their RHUL UCAS offer as requirements for admission for their programme of undergraduate study at RHUL. Students must also be liable for variable tuition fees during their degree programme (£3,375, in 2011-12) and the year of study. No application is required. Royal Holloway Excellence Scholarships will be awarded automatically to all qualifying students. A student repeating a year of undergraduate study is not eligible for a Royal Holloway Excellence Scholarship for the repeated year.
- Bedford Scholarships of £1000 per annum will be awarded on a competitive basis to full-time students from England and Wales who are in receipt of a Standard Bursary, full or partial Government Maintenance Grant for the year of study, with a household income of £39,333 per year or less. Students must also be liable for variable tuition fees during their degree programme (£3,375, in 2011-12) and for the year of study. In addition to this, students must also achieve a minimum of 3 A grades at GCE A2-level or equivalent, in those specific subject elements of their academic qualifications which are specified in their RHUL UCAS offer as requirements for admission for their programme of undergraduate study at RHUL. Bedford Scholarships are competitive and students must complete an application form to be considered for the award. Bedford Scholarships will be awarded for a variety of reasons that include merit and personal circumstances, and will recognise exceptional achievement gained through determination and commitment as well as talent. Up to 20 awards will be made annually. A student repeating a year of undergraduate study is not eligible for a Bedford Scholarship for the repeated year.
- Founder's Scholarships of £3,500 per annum will be awarded on a competitive basis to full-time students from England and Wales who are in receipt of a Standard Bursary, full or partial Government Maintenance Grant for the year of study, with a household income of £39,333 per year or less. Students must also be liable for variable tuition fees during their degree programme (£3,375 in 2011-12) and for the year of study. In addition to this, students must also achieve a minimum of 3 A grades at GCE A2-level or equivalent, in those specific subject elements of their academic qualifications which are specified in their RHUL UCAS offer as requirements for admission for their programme of undergraduate study at RHUL. Founder's Scholarships are competitive and students must complete an application form to be considered for the award. Founder's Scholarships will be awarded to the top ranked applicants according to a series of measures of academic excellence. Up to 10 awards will be made annually. A student repeating a year of undergraduate study is not eligible for a Founder's Scholarship for the repeated year.

RHUL will offer Masters (3+1) Scholarships as fee related support in 2011-12:

- Masters (3+1) Scholarships are designed to enable students to undertake postgraduate study after their undergraduate course at RHUL. Masters (3+1) Scholarships will be offered subject to the following conditions: satisfactory progress as an undergraduate; the achievement of a 2:1 degree or above from RHUL; and gaining an offer of admission to a taught Master's degree programme at RHUL for the academic year immediately after their undergraduate degree, or the following year. Masters (3+1) Scholarships for study on a taught Masters Degree will be available as a competitive award to students who are in receipt of a Standard Bursary in their final year of undergraduate study at RHUL. The value of the scholarship will be equivalent to the standard postgraduate tuition fee for full-

time Home and EU students (the 2010-11 fee rate was £3,480). Up to 20 awards will be made in 2011-12. It is RHUL's intention to eliminate this scheme in the environment of the new fee regime in 2012-13, and we will of course be reviewing our OFFA commitments in the light of further guidance from OFFA and greater clarity about arrangements 2012-13 onwards.

In 2008-09 RHUL reconsidered its position with regard to compulsory year abroad students, for whom there is no 'mandatory' requirement for bursary or scholarship support. We decided that compulsory year abroad students from 2009-10 onwards would receive a sum equivalent to the reduced fee they pay for their year abroad (the 2010-11 fee rate was £660) or the Standard Bursary, whichever is less (the year abroad fee rate for 2011-12 has yet to be confirmed). A reduced bursary sum or the Standard Bursary, whichever is less, will be awarded to compulsory year abroad students from England and Wales who are in receipt of a full or partial Government Maintenance Grant for the year of study, with a household income of £39,333 per year or less. A student undertaking an optional year abroad will not be eligible to receive a reduced bursary sum, or any other bursary or scholarship support offered as a financial fair access measure, in the academic year spent abroad.

5. Provision of Funding and Financial Information to Students

RHUL has adopted a series of measures designed to reach out to potential students and clarify funding entitlement at the pre-application and post-application stages of the student journey. These include updating web and undergraduate prospectus pages, detailing the financial support available to students, and revising information supplied to UCAS to ensure that there is up-to-date information on the UCAS Bursaries and Scholarships Comparator. In addition, we publish a guide providing full information about financial support and funding opportunities, including RHUL undergraduate bursaries/scholarships. All students receive a copy of the funding guide when they receive an offer of a place at RHUL. We also provide funding talks during RHUL Open Days and UCAS Days, and in schools and colleges, helping prospective students and their advisers to understand the financial implications of entering higher education and the financial help available.

One-to-one funding advice and guidance interviews, for students requiring targeted assistance, are provided for applicants at pre-application and post-application stages. Enrolled students, in particular those from vulnerable groups, also have access to funding, financial advice and guidance, and as part of OFFA arrangements additional hardship support funded from additional fee income.

6. Fee Income and Expenditure 2011-12

Our additional fee income is estimated to be £10.3m in 2011-12. Of this we have provisionally allocated the following:

2011-12	
Bursaries and Scholarships	£2.03m
Outreach and Student Support	£0.45m
Hardship	£0.01m
Administration	£0.03m
Contingency	£0.13m
Uncommitted income	£7.65m
Total	£10.3m

RHUL will spend an estimated 26% of additional fee income in 2011-12 on measures countable for OFFA purposes

7. Outreach

The planned expansion of aspiration-raising and outreach work detailed in our previous Access Agreements has largely been achieved, and a range of outreach work, centrally orchestrated, department-led, and in partnership with external organisations, has been funded from additional fee income. The Widening Participation Strategic Assessment submitted to HEFCE, details the range and scope of outreach work undertaken by RHUL, including additional outreach activities funded through OFFA arrangements. Some substitution of the planned aspiration raising and associated outreach activity has occurred since the submission of this document.

In addition to the outreach activities detailed in previous Access Agreements, in 2007 RHUL introduced, as part of OFFA commitments, an Outreach Competitive Fund (OCF), designed as an enabling mechanism to extend and facilitate the involvement of academic departments in outreach and widening participation. The OCF will have a total value of £30,000 in 2011-12 and will continue to be used to extend the outreach work undertaken in academic departments, including work with secondary target audiences, notably influencers such as parents and teachers, and have the aim of encouraging more students to consider higher education as a viable option for them.

To support and deliver the expansion of outreach work additional funding has been apportioned to the following posts:

- Recruiting an additional WP Officer;
- Upgrading a part- time WP Officer post to full time;
- Recruiting a Fair Access Co-ordinator;
- Recruiting an Outreach Officer;
- Creating a Senior Outreach and Widening Participation post;
- Recruiting a full-time Study Skills Tutor (Student Support);
- Recruiting a part-time Administrator (Student Support);
- Part funding of the Community Action Volunteer Co-ordinator post;
- Part funding of the Science Outreach Officer.

8. Compliance and Review

The Head of Admissions and UK Recruitment is the main OFFA contact. Overall responsibility for widening participation measures, including OFFA arrangements, is ultimately the responsibility of the Deputy Principal.

Following the introduction of variable fees, and the accompanying OFFA arrangements, RHUL introduced various mechanisms through which compliance with the RHUL Access Agreement is ensured. The principal monitoring mechanism, in the respect of financial fair access measures (i.e. OFFA bursaries and scholarships) is through reporting to termly meetings of the Academic Awards Group, to meetings of the Resources Sub-Group, and subsequent reporting to the Academic Board. Other groups and committees having some oversight of widening participation and fair access initiatives include the Learning, Teaching, and Quality Committee, and the Student Recruitment Operations Group.

Progress against HEFCE performance indicators is subject to annual review by a number of RHUL committees and working groups.

9. Institutional Milestones and Targets

In considering the means by which RHUL might seek to measure progress in the area of widening participation for OFFA purposes, we believe that it is important to build upon the work already underway. At the time we submitted our initial Access Agreement we deliberated hard about the form that institutional milestones and targets should take, and decided that the inclusion of a number of targets and milestones based on already publicly available Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data, namely Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) widening participation performance indicators, was appropriate. The most recent available data at that time was for 2004-05. This was used as the baseline against which we would measure progress.

It is not our intention to develop new targets and milestones for the purpose of this revised 2011-12 Access Agreement. It is therefore proposed that the main indicators by which we will seek to measure progress are the five year targets of the previously submitted Access Agreements (Annex A). These targets encompass outreach, provision of information/communication, and undergraduate admissions. We have to date made good progress against these targets. Undergraduate admissions targets include increasing rates of application from mature students with no previous experience of higher education, young full-time undergraduate students from state schools or colleges, full-time undergraduate students from low participation areas, and full-time undergraduate students with 'non-standard' qualifications, including a range of vocational qualifications. We intend reviewing institutional milestones and targets as part of the HEFCE WPSA monitoring arrangements and in preparation for the introduction of the new fee regime 2012-13.
