

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE

Access Agreement

This access agreement sets out the fee limits for higher education courses at Sparsholt College Hampshire for 2007/8 – 2008/9. It describes the amount of additional fee income to be spent on access measures and how this income will be spent in order to safeguard and maintain fair access.

A. Fee limits

The maximum fee limit for full time students on all higher education courses at Sparsholt College Hampshire will be £2456 in 2007/8 (this is 2.33% higher than 2006/7). Fees will be subject to the annual inflationary increase announced by Government.

B. Amount of additional fee income to be spent on access measures

The College will have a 'Widening Participation Fund' of 25% of the additional fee income earned from variable tuition fees. This means that in 2006/7 with 140 first year students (excluding deferrals from 2005/6), the Widening Participation Fund will be £42,000; this will increase over a three-year period to £90,000 at the maximum fee limit set by the College.

C. Financial Support for students

The main target groups for financial support to help widen participation and increase access to higher education include those students who receive full or partial state support, i.e. all students in receipt of part or all of the Higher Education Maintenance Grant. This information is provided by the Student Loan Company's online eligibility checker which is available to the College.

Sparsholt College Hampshire has a high proportion of students receiving state support, reflecting the effort made to widen participation to date. Currently 40% of our full time higher education students receive full state support for tuition fees and 10% receive partial state support for tuition fees.

The level of the Bursary Fund will be 66 % of the Widening Participation Fund. Therefore in 2006/7 the fund is £28,000 and is anticipated to increase to £60,000 in 2008/9 at the maximum fee limit and present student numbers.

All full time UK students who receive full or partial state support will receive a flat-rate cash bursary. The minimum bursary award for each eligible student will be set at £300 for 2007/8 (Increased from £200 in 2006/7). It will be subject to the annual inflationary increase announced by Government.

Sparsholt College Hampshire will continue to provide financial support through the Access to Learning Fund whereby students are assessed individually, based on criteria laid down by DfES. Any funds not allocated from the bursary fund are also used to assist those in hardship in this way.

D. Provision of information to students

Information for students on the fees and financial support available will be detailed in the College prospectus and on the College web site. Case studies will be used to illustrate the aggregate costs of their tuition if they are successful in gaining a place. Illustrations of the net costs of studying on their courses will be provided, including estimates on the cost of living for students living on and off campus.

The prospectus will also advise prospective students of the targeted support that will be given to them to study on Higher Education courses and achieve their qualifications. Sparsholt College prides itself on its high level of academic and pastoral support given to students.

Admissions, Course Tutors and the Marketing team will provide information regarding the fee level and financial support available at Careers Events, Taster Days and Interview Days. This will be in addition to the many off site marketing events attended throughout the year.

Information regarding the fees and the financial support available through the College will be sent to the students with their offer of a place. The Student Handbook, provided to all students, will include information about the fees, financial support and who to ask for more information.

The Registry Student Finance Team provides guidance to students on the fees and financial support available. The team are happy to discuss financial arrangements before starting a course and are available on site for students whilst on their course.

E. Outreach work

The College is already committed to widening participation and has worked with Aim Higher on a number of projects since 2000. In 2003/4 the total value of Aim Higher projects was circa £25,000.

The Outreach Fund will be 33% of the Widening Participation Fund, therefore in 2006/7 the Outreach Fund will be £14,000 increasing to £30,000 in 2008/9 at the maximum fee limit and present student numbers.

The College commitment to Aim Higher and widening participation will be enhanced by the additional Outreach Fund to promote activities that encourage participation in higher education in the land based industries by disadvantaged groups in Hampshire and the south of England.

Key aspects will include:

- Developing activities to raise the profile of HE and land-based careers in schools and develop school-college consortium arrangements
- Supporting the development of Access Programmes
- Providing IAG to adult FE learners
- Liaison with employers to increase the numbers of employed people pursuing part-time Foundation Degrees

Target groups for Outreach are students from disadvantaged backgrounds including:

- low incomes;
- ethnic minorities;
- mature students returning to study with non-traditional entry qualifications;
- students with disabilities

Currently the College marketing team works with schools and colleges in Hampshire to encourage participation in education and training in the land based industries.

National statistics show that the cities of Southampton and Portsmouth have a high percentage of disadvantaged families and currently outreach work is very limited in those areas. The ODPM has released the 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation (an update to the 2000 Index) that ranks Southampton as 96th out of the 354 Local Authorities in England, where 1 equals the most deprived.

Portsmouth has a number of neighborhoods that have been allocated priority status and are the focus of Neighborhood Renewal activity in Portsmouth. These neighborhoods were identified as having the lowest quality of life (for example in terms of income levels, educational failure, ill health and child poverty) according to detailed statistics from the Government's latest Index of deprivation.

The College HE Marketing Team will target Southampton and Portsmouth areas working with:

- 4 schools with sixth forms
- 9 Further education and sixth form colleges
- Community groups in Portsmouth and Southampton to widen access to ethnic minority and disabled groups

This will be additional to the existing outreach work and marketing with other sixth form colleges including Peter Symonds in Winchester, Cricklade in Andover and Queen Mary's in Basingstoke.

F. Milestones

The College will work towards the following milestones:

- Increase in the baseline proportion of financially disadvantaged students receiving full or partial state support at 40% by 5% by 2008/9
- Increase in the baseline proportion of higher education students from disadvantaged areas at 2% by 1% by 2008/9
- Maintenance of the baseline proportion of higher education students age 25+ at 48%
- Increase in the baseline proportion of higher education students from ethnic minorities at 0.7% by 0.3% by 2008/9
- Maintenance of the baseline proportion of disabled students on higher education courses at 13%

G. Institutional Monitoring Arrangements

Progress towards milestones will be monitored by the College Management team and reported annually to the Academic and Quality Standards Board and the Board of Governors.