



SWINDON COLLEGE

ACCESS AGREEMENT

1. Introduction

Widening participation and access to Higher Education is a key part of Swindon College's Higher Education Strategy and as such is reflected in the College's mission statement, aims and objectives.

The development of Foundation Degrees with partner Higher Education Institutions and through association with the regional Lifelong Learning Network reinforces the College's commitment to widening participation.

The College also works with AimHigher as part of its widening participation agenda as well as offering several Access programmes to enable students to progress to Higher Education. The College strives to ensure fair and equal access to HE programmes for all those who wish, and are able to, benefit from this level of study.

Student Profile

Swindon College currently has 318 fte students who are directly funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and 102fte that are indirectly funded by HEFCE via collaborative partnerships with HEI's.

Of the number of full-time students currently enrolled on directly funded provision in 2007/8:

- 54% paid no fees. 13% paid partial fees. The remaining 33% paid the full fees.
- 32% of students are aged over 25.
- 26% of students come from ethnic minority groups compared with a total ethnic minority population of Swindon of 4.8%.
- 10% of students have some form of registered disability.
- The vast majority (78%) of students currently studying on a higher-level programme at the College live within Wiltshire.
- 6% of students come from backgrounds, for which the College receives 'Disadvantage Uplift' funding for.
- At present 43% of students enrolled on higher-level programmes at the College have progressed from the College's own level 3 provision.

This Swindon College Access Agreement is for a period of 5 years to 2012 and is subject to reasonable annual adjustment for inflation.

2. Fee levels.

Programmes covered by the agreement

This agreement applies to all full-time programmes for which Swindon College receives funding directly from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). The fees charged for indirectly funded programmes will be determined by the University providing the funding and detailed within the relevant institutions Access Agreement.

Students included within the agreement

All Home and European Union students studying a full-time programme are included in this agreement. If Swindon College recruits any students who are classified as overseas students, they will pay a separately arranged tuition fee, which will be determined by the College.

Students who begin a full-time programme part way through the academic year will pay a fee proportionate to the number of academic weeks remaining.

However, if students transfer from another institution or from part-time to full-time study within one month of the programme commencing they will be liable for 100% of the fee.

2.3 Agreement renewal

This agreement will be reviewed annually from September 2007

2.4 Tuition fees

For the academic year 2008/9 Swindon College will charge a tuition fee of £2,800 per annum to students on full-time undergraduate programmes.

2.5 Part-time students

The College does not currently intend to charge fees at the higher rate for part-time provision. Fees for part-time undergraduate programmes will be set at the rate of 50% of the full-time fee as set by the Government.
(for 2008/9 this was set at £1255 for full-time and £628 for part-time)

2.6 Information on Fees

Financial information will be made available to all prospective students prior to the commencement of their programme and will be clear, concise and accessible.

The information will state the annual and aggregate fees for the programme; bursary arrangements and other financial support i.e. the hardship fund which may be available.

This information will be provided through a variety of channels and media including:

- The College's Access Agreement as published on the OFFA website
- The College's Higher Education prospectus
- The College website
- During HE Open Days
- During Adult Learners Weeks
- At UCAS fairs
- Via the College's Advice and Guidance team
- Via the College's Admissions Team
- Via the College's Call Centre
- At Parents' Evenings
- Through our AimHigher events
- On individual programme information leaflets
- During interviews
- Within the offer of a place letter

3. Bursaries and other financial information

Swindon College's approach to student bursaries aims to widen access and participation in vocational higher education by addressing financial barriers to participation.

It will also aim to encourage progression from the College's own level three provision, and particularly for those students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

The bursary is a cash award. Payments will be made in the following way:

- An initial payment of £430 will be made to all those students in receipt of a full Higher Education maintenance grant following enrolment onto their programme of study. It is anticipated that this payment will assist students in acquiring personal learning resources for their programme.
- An initial payment of £215 will be made to all those students who qualify for a partial Higher Education maintenance grant following enrolment onto their programme of study. It is anticipated that this payment will assist students in acquiring personal learning resources for their programme.
- Students who do not qualify for a Higher Education Maintenance grant, but experience financial hardship will be eligible to apply to the Colleges' Higher Education Hardship Fund
- Subsequent payments of £200 for those students in receipt of a full Higher Education Maintenance grant and £100 for those who qualified for a partial Higher Education Maintenance grant will be made at the beginning of the Spring and of the Summer Terms in each year of study, to provide general financial support, and to act as an incentive to assist retention, achievement, and progression between levels of study.

- 3.1 In addition, the College will provide a grant of £520 in the first year of study to any student progressing to an eligible HE programme from a full-time level 3 programme successfully completed within the College up to two years prior to enrolment.

In addition to the bursary arrangements, students will be eligible to apply for the following financial support:

- 3.2 Payments under the Access to Learning Fund. Payments under this fund can be used to help support students in the purchase of learning resources or provide short-term repayable loans.
- 3.3 Hardship funds will also be made available in cases of serious financial difficulty.

4. Additional fee income

The additional fee income will enable Swindon College to invest further in its teaching and curriculum to ensure that it provides programmes of study that are inclusive, accessible and appropriate to the learning and employability needs of its diverse student population. It will also enable the college to increase investment in retention strategies and its student facilities to ensure that optimum support mechanisms are in place.

An HE Administrator will be appointed to manage the process of administering and coordinating the various aspects of the access agreement.

10% of the additional fee income will be used to support an HE Student Hardship Fund.

Year	Additional Income	Bursaries	Hardship Fund	Outreach	Exceptional Costs
2007/8	£128,325	£60,456	£12,833	£12,833	£19,249
2008/9	£286,110	£157,346	£28,611	£28,611	£14,445
2009/10	£377,300	£179,068	£37,730	£37,730	£18,865
2010/11	£388,969	£184,440	£38,897	£38,897	£22,295
2011/12	£400,638	£189,973	£40,064	£40,064	£22,964

5. Outreach work

The College intends to use a minimum of 10 % of the additional fee income to fund further outreach work. This will principally involve the appointment of a full-time Widening Participation Officer who will continue to develop the work currently undertaken by the College with the following organisations:

- Aimhigher
- University partners
- Swindon Schools:
 - Hreod Parkway
 - Churchfields
 - Dorcan Technology College
 - Headlands

- Greendown

Activities related to outreach work include:

- Student Enrichment Programmes
- Student Mentoring and E-Mentoring
- Other Aimhigher events

6. Milestones

Swindon College has established the following milestones and objectives in relation to its Higher Education provision falling under this access agreement:

- 6.1 Recruitment targets:** to meet the planned target intake onto each undergraduate programme. The development of Foundation Degrees is ongoing, the two programmes currently running have recruited to target and full recruitment figures will be submitted to OFFA on completion of the development work.
- 6.2 Retention targets:** to achieve an annual retention rate of 90% in each year on all programmes (currently 85%). In all QAA Subject and Academic Reviews to date, the support for students has been considered a strength of the College provision. We are committed to maintaining and enhancing this level of support through:
- a) thorough programme-based inductions;
 - b) high quality tutorial support on an individual and small group basis;
 - c) accessible specialised support (welfare, counselling, accommodation, finance, and careers guidance) through the College Services to Students Team;
 - d) regular review of programmes via Programme Committees to identify academic barriers and the means of supporting students over these;
 - e) enhanced monitoring of students' reasons for withdrawing from a programme;
 - f) continued development of flexible modes of delivery so that students with external barriers to study may continue through a different mode or defer to a later date.

All evidence to date suggests that the main reason HE students withdraw is associated with financial barriers. The measures outlined in section 3 should therefore help to address this issue.

- 6.3 Progression targets:** to achieve an annual internal progression rate from full-time FE vocational level 3 programmes of 60% of completers (currently 43%), and to achieve an annual minimum progression rate from Foundation Degrees completers onto articulated honours degree programmes of at least 60% (no current data available)

- 6.4 Achievement targets:** to maintain an annual level of 95% of completers.

6.5 Widening participation targets: The College defines widening participation by reference to the number of students in the following categories:

- a) Those students in receipt of full or partial maintenance support
- b) Those students with a registered disability
- c) Those students from ethnic minority groups
- d) Those students who are over 25
- e) Those students who draw down disadvantage uplift funding

The college expects to see an annual 2% increase in the number of students in receipt of full or partial maintenance support across the life of this agreement.

With reference to the remaining widening participation categories above, the profiles are already positive (*see section 1.*) and the college expects to maintain them over the duration of this agreement.

6.6 Curriculum Development: The College will continue to respond to the identified needs of employers and students by developing new programmes and offering greater curriculum flexibility. This will be focused particularly through the development of a portfolio of Foundation Degree programmes designed to meet the needs of stakeholders, including a greater use of e-learning resources including the institutional VLE in order to offer greater accessibility to students.

7. Institutional Monitoring Arrangements:

Swindon College will undertake annual monitoring of this access agreement to confirm compliance and progress towards the achievement of the milestones it has established.

Responsibility for the monitoring report will rest with the HE Coordinator. The annual report will be presented to the College's Senior Management Team for approval, and following such approval be sent to the Governing Body.

The annual monitoring report will be submitted to the Director of OFFA following its approval by the Senior Management Team. The report will be presented to the Senior Management Team at such a time as to ensure that OFFA will receive the report by its July deadline.

The report will incorporate the following sections:

- Financial data summarising recruitment levels, payment of bursaries, and other financial support made available to students;
- Outreach activities that have been undertaken during the year; and
- Progress made in meeting institutional targets and milestones