

# **The Open University Access Agreement**

## **Background**

1. The Open University (OU) has a Widening Participation Strategy which covers all its taught provision, and a Fees and Financial Support Strategy, both of which are kept under regular review. This agreement is consistent with the principles underpinning these strategies.

## **The scope of this agreement**

2. The Open University (OU) has only one course, the Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), falling under the variable tuition fee legislation. The PGCE at the OU offers five secondary priority subjects and one secondary non-priority subject. All other Open University courses are considered part-time for the purposes of fees and student financial support, and as such are not within the remit of this access agreement.

3. This Agreement is to be kept under regular review.

## **The level of fees**

4. For home students, the proposed PGCE tuition fee for 2008/09 is £2835 per student. The University expects that it will receive approximately £410,800 in additional tuition fees in this year.

5. It is expected that beyond 2008/09 fees will continue to be set below the maximum fee payable, subject to regular review as mentioned in 3, above, and in line with policy changes within the University and external regulatory changes.

## **Bursaries and financial support**

6. The OU PGCE cohort amounts to approximately 260 students each year, the majority of whom study the course part-time. Approximately 15% of registered students come from target groups for widening participation (against a national target of 12%). The PGCE offers a route into teaching for many students who otherwise might find it difficult to undertake teacher training, such as those in low income brackets who need to continue working while they train and those in geographically remote areas long distances from other institutions.

7. As the University is not proposing to charge the maximum fee possible it will not be making additional bursaries available.

8. PGCE students will be eligible for a TDA funded bursary, with most receiving £9,000 and a minority receiving £6,000. They will also have access to the Student Maintenance Loan and may receive the Maintenance Grant (a proportion of which will not be means-tested).

## **Provision of information to students and prospective students**

9. Currently, home PGCE students do not pay their own fees, and University publications indicate this. As the TDA will continue to pay the higher fee in 2007/08 for OU PGCE students, this information remains correct. Information in the University's brochures, other advertising material and on the University's website referring to fees beyond September 2008 will reflect any changes to fee levels.

## **Milestones**

10. The University is required to make returns on the student body to TDA as a requirement of funding. This information is also collected and monitored internally and feeds into review of the University's strategic objectives. The TDA sets certain targets (e.g. for achieving target numbers of students from minority ethnic communities) and both the TDA and the University monitor progress against these milestones.

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