

# University of Kent

## *Access Agreement*

### **Preamble**

The University has a strong commitment to widening access and has made significant investment and progress over the last decade in the diversification of our student body. In the last few years, the University of Kent has widened its vision; we have moved from being a single campus based institution to a University with two major campuses (Canterbury and Medway) and two Associate Colleges: Mid-Kent College and South Kent College (with locations in Chatham, Rochester, Maidstone, Ashford, Folkestone and Dover) and two Partner Colleges: Canterbury College and West Kent College, as well as providing higher education courses in Tonbridge and at over 20 Adult Education Centres throughout the county. Our presence in diverse locations with multiple providers has strengthened our ability to target and support adult learners from areas of deprivation and to raise aspirations and develop progression routes for young learners. We have done this whilst maintaining our core academic standards and research led mission as well as our commitment to expansion in Europe. We are proud of our track record. Nonetheless there continue to be considerable challenges to the University; despite the efforts that we, and our partners, have made, HE can continue to appear remote and irrelevant and raising aspirations remains difficult.

The introduction of tuition fees has made this task even more difficult. The impact of variable fees remains to be seen, but the University has no illusions that even more will need to be done to encourage those least financially able to engage in higher education. However, the University is committed to ensuring that all those who are able to benefit from HE have the opportunity to do so. While the bulk of the additional funds generated through variable fees will be invested to enhance the student experience (we will improve our academic, social and sporting facilities to the benefit of all our students), we will commit a significant proportion of our additional fee income to bursary schemes which will encourage and ensure the affordability of a world-class education to students from less privileged backgrounds

The University's widening participation strategy is underpinned by an ongoing commitment to broaden access and to deliver a bold range of developmental outreach activities with target groups; the specific requirements of OFFA will be incorporated within the strategy.

The University recognises the potential impact of variable fees, particularly upon learners with no family history of higher education and on part-time and flexible learning. We will attempt to mitigate the impact of fees by offering a wide range of bursaries based on financial related criteria. Scholarships designed to improve the wider quality and diversity of the student community will also be available. We will carefully review responses from our target groups to the fee and bursary framework and assess the impact upon our admissions profile.

In addition to the generous financial support to students outlined in this document, the University will use additional fee income to extend its outreach programme with learners of all ages, in formal learning and community settings, to continue to encourage and enable learners to engage in higher education at Kent.

## Level of Fees

The University will set fees of £3070 for all undergraduate degree level programmes of study with the exception of the foundation year programme (1 year pre-degree access course leading to admission to a bachelor degree programme) which will be set at the standard level of fees as prescribed by the Government. Similarly, the University's Associate Colleges will not charge variable fees but will also set the standard level of fees.

Fee levels will be published in the prospectus, on the web and in the financial aid documentation available to students. Fees will be reviewed annually and will be subject to annual inflationary rises.

## Bursaries and other financial support for students

### Minimum Requirement for Financial Assistance

Students from families who are least able to give financial support to their children require more support to maintain themselves and to act as an inducement in overcoming debt aversion. The University will provide the minimum bursary to those students who qualify for the full Higher Education maintenance grant so that there is no gap between the fee charged and the maximum maintenance grant available; this award will be subsumed within a more generous scheme which will offer greater support to those on the lowest household incomes. We have established a bursary scheme to provide larger bursaries to those who demonstrate greatest financial need, but in recognition that the trigger level for full government support is set low relative to family incomes in the Southeast, we will make a contribution to all those having residual family income of £38,500 or less.

<b>Financial Framework</b>	
Levels of residual income triggering support:	Bursary award (including minimum £300 bursary)
<£20,500	£1000 p.a.
>£20,501 < £27,500	£750 p.a.
>£27,501 < £33,000	£500 p.a.
>£33,000 < £38,500	£250 p.a.
Frequency of payment	2 payments per annum

Whilst the University will charge variable fees for its degree programme courses it will only charge the standard rate of tuition for its foundation years; however the University will make its bursary scheme, dependent upon residual family income available to these students.

Eligibility for the non-standard bursaries will be assessed by the SLC/LEA in the modular bursary scheme.

### Additional Financial Assistance

The University provides a range of services and activities to local schools to support efforts to improve retention and raise aspiration. The county of Kent has a selective secondary system and there are a number of schools, particularly the high schools, where there is a limited tradition of progression to higher education. We are focussing our most intensive aspiration raising and preparatory work in such schools. The creation of an additional barrier to HE will

further affect retention rates in schools. In a continued effort to support our partner schools, we will provide additional financial aid for these schools to assist in the retention of their students.

The University's financial support scheme will therefore include Regional Schools Scholarships aimed at students from target schools and colleges. Criteria to identify target schools will include pass rate at GCSE (25-60%), geographical areas of strategic importance, cohort analysis, subject analysis and partnership activity both with the University and Aimhigher. The University will establish 40 such scholarships at £1000 p.a. These scholarships will be awarded by the University in collaboration with the school, based on criteria established in conjunction with the school.

### **Scholarships**

The University will also establish a range of scholarships, for which all students will be eligible to apply, to support the strategic aims of the University as the intellectual and cultural focus for the county, to encourage academic excellence, student diversity and regional economic development and success. Scholarships will be awarded on the basis of academic attainment and to those who demonstrate excellence in, and a commitment to, the sporting and cultural community of the university. Scholarships will be limited in number and applicants will be selected against specific criteria in each of these areas on a competitive basis.

A Regional Schools Scholarship and/or University Scholarship can be held in addition to the standard bursary awarded on residual family income.

We will advise on careful budget management to help students to avoid incurring costs in excess of the loan and personal income. A condition of holding a University Bursary will be engagement with a student support programme which will give support (from departments and the Unit for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching) and financial counselling (from the Financial Aid Office) to encourage achievement and retention.

## **Provision of information to students**

### **Publication of information**

The University will publish full details of the costs for students and the means of support available, its bursary schemes and eligibility criteria in its annual prospectus. As this document is published considerably in advance of registration, supplementary information will be produced and a dedicated handbook and web site developed. Documentation will provide detailed information of how to calculate bursary eligibility and a web based ready reckoner to determine the financial aid package available.

The Information, Recruitment and Guidance Unit, Schools and College Liaison Officers, Outreach Coordinators and Development Officers will have a role in the dissemination of information to the wider community and stakeholders. This information will be part of their portfolio of talks and presentations and they will deliver this information to schools, students, teachers, parents and community groups. The University is committed to supporting students through the application process.

The university will provide full and accurate information of the aggregate amount of fees and other costs required to complete our degree programmes.

## **Outreach work**

The University has developed a major new campus at Medway, an area with a low level of provision of HE facilities. This will allow the University to extend its range of programmes into new and, in particular, vocational areas (with progression from vocational level 3 qualifications) while providing HE to a community that hitherto had limited access to it.

In addition to this development, the University is engaged in a range of activities to widen access and participation. These include: the successful embedding of the Medway compact agreement with 6 schools in the Medway, the development of a youth access programme in Dartford, the continued support of a student mentoring programme, continued aspiration work with targeted students through visits and residential stays, an increase in the range and number of taster programmes. The University has contributed additional funding to support an increased number of dyslexic students.

The University continues to invest in curricular developments to attract a wider range of students and to address untapped markets. Of the 20 new programmes developed, the majority are Foundation Degrees delivered in our Associate Colleges. The university has supported retention and attainment of its students through induction and Summer School programmes.

Outreach activities funded through additional fee income will build upon this development work. The strands to be strengthened and extended are:

- An increase in the number and variety of visits and activities offered to community venues and formal learning settings such as target schools and FE colleges, and an increase in invitations to visit the University.
- An increased capacity to work in partnership with Aimhigher and the Lifelong Learning Networks, particularly with regard to input from academic colleagues.
- The establishment of a sustainable student ambassador network to support outreach events and progression pathway delivery.
- The further development of accredited progression pathways, including skills, vocational and academic elements, within community and formal learning environments.
- The further development and strengthening of progression routes between vocational and academic pathways in partnership with the University's Associate Colleges, Adult Education Services and the voluntary sector.

Whilst not exclusive to them, these activities will support those schools and colleges who are recipients of the Regional Schools Scholarships.

## **Milestones and objectives**

The University has established milestones and objectives for its range of outreach activities, which are set out within the HEFCE annual operational return and the University's widening participation strategy. In addition, the University will set the following objectives which will be assessed on an annual basis for impact on targeted cohorts.

- **Visit and outreach activity:** Visits from target schools rose from 6 in 2002/03 to 13 in 2003/04 and the University plans to increase the number of visits and activities to 60 in 2006/07. By year 2011/12 the University will offer 150 visit-type activities per year. The nature of targeting activity means that the scale of these visits will vary from masterclasses for a range of schools of 250 participants to in-depth subject visits by a target cohorts of 12. Impact will be monitored and the balance between the various types of events reviewed annually.
- **Increased capacity for work with Aimhigher and Lifelong Learning Networks:** The majority of work undertaken by academic departments in partnership with Aimhigher is carried out on a good will basis and is not sustainable at the levels required. The additional funding will be used to fund, on a professional basis, academic staff time to carry out high quality presentations and learning activities with target learners.
- **Student Ambassador Network:** The University will increase the number of funded hours available (currently 1000 paid hours) to students to support outreach activity. If the network is beneficial to the University's widening participation strategy it is expected that over 4000 hours of student ambassador time – voluntary, paid, or credit bearing work – will be engaged in outreach-related activities five years into the delivery plan.
- **Accredited progression pathways:** The University will further develop its innovative programme of progression pathways in partnership with target schools and communities (we are currently working with two schools). A number of modules which range from preparation for HE, vocational enrichment, academic attainment to bridging level 3 to 4 in outreach settings will be piloted through the 5 year period to establish a progression programme. It is expected that the programme will be delivered in at least 15 outreach venues.
- **Vocational and academic articulation:** The University will invest in smoothing the progression through, and the continued exchange between, vocational and academic routes. Programmes will be identified in partnership with other providers, including FE, AE and the voluntary sector.

## Baseline data and institutional monitoring arrangements

For a number of years the University has worked hard to widen participation and to establish successful partnerships that support us in this endeavour. As a result the University's position vis-à-vis the national benchmarks is good. Participation for young full-time undergraduates from: state schools or colleges is 88% against a location adjusted benchmark of 82%; participation from social classes I, II, III, IV, V is 21% against a location adjusted benchmark of 21%; participation from low participation neighbourhoods is 10% against a location adjusted benchmark of 9%. Data for part-time undergraduate entrants, both young and mature entrants, also aligns with the location adjusted benchmarks of 16% and 7% respectively. A significant factor that does not emerge from national statistics is that over 50% of our current students receive partial fee remission. We have achieved this level of participation through considerable effort and will seek to maintain our position in the changed climate from 2006.

Targets for widening participation are included within the HEFCE annual operational return. The bursary and scholarship schemes and the outreach activities described in this document

are all additional to previous support and activities as such we will monitor their effectiveness on an annual basis to assess impact on targeted cohorts. Impact measures will include quantitative and qualitative evaluation of participant engagement, undertaken independently and in partnership with Aimhigher and reviews of application, offer and acceptance data.

### **How access measures complement existing activity**

The measures outlined here complement and extend our activity as outlined in the University's widening participation strategy and in the targets in the University's annual operational return to HEFCE.

x:mph/kent revised 06-07 access agreement/20.02.07