

# University of Kent

## **Access Agreement 2011-12**

### **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. The University of Kent has developed its vision as a multi-sited University with two major campuses (Canterbury and Medway) and Associate and Partner College relationships with: Mid-Kent College, Canterbury College and the newly established K College (formally South Kent and West Kent Colleges) with locations in Chatham, Maidstone, Ashford, Folkestone, Dover, Canterbury and Tonbridge as well as providing higher education courses in Tonbridge and at Adult Education and Community 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 likely dramatic increase in tuition fees makes this task even more difficult. The impact of higher 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. 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 funds generated through variable fees will be invested to enhance the student experience, 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 impact of 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 £3,375 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 set their own level of fee below the maximum fee level.

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 may 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 are charged the maximum tuition fee and qualify for the full Higher Education maintenance grant; 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 South East, we will make a contribution to all those having residual family income of £40,000 or less.

<b>Financial Framework</b>	
Levels of residual income triggering support:	Bursary award (including minimum £338 bursary)
<£25,000	£1000pa
>£25,001 < £28,500	£750pa
>£28,501 < £34,000	£500pa
>£34,001 < £40,000	£250pa
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 and year abroad students; however the University will still make its bursary scheme available to these students.

**For MPharm students in the Medway School of Pharmacy, the following Bursary scheme will apply:**

<b>Medway School of Pharmacy Financial Framework</b>	
Year 1-3 students with a household income of less than £25,000	£338 p.a.
Frequency of payment	1 payment per annum
Final Year Students Levels of residual income triggering Support:	Bursary award (including minimum £338 bursary)
<=£25,000	£1000 p.a.
>£25,001 <=£30,000	£750 p.a.
>£30,001 <=£35,000	£500 p.a.
Frequency of payment	2 payments per annum

Eligibility for all University of Kent and Medway School of Pharmacy bursaries will be assessed by LA/Student Finance England. Both schemes will be reviewed annually in light of the level of tuition fees set by the Government.

## **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 has established 49 such scholarships at £1000 p.a. These scholarships will be awarded by the University in collaboration with the school or college, based on criteria established in conjunction with the institution.

The University is also minded of the particular needs of Care Leavers. We have been awarded the Frank Buttle Trust Mark. Currently the University has a named contact who offers support and advice to Care Leavers; Care Leavers are also a priority group for Access to Learning Funds. Acknowledging the hurdles faced by this particular group the University will provide additional support to ease transition to University life for Care Leavers, to include a one-off 'starter' grant of £250 to assist in the purchase of materials and supplies, a lap-top computer and provision of accommodation over the holiday periods as well as consideration for accommodation in years 2 and 3 of their study.

## **Scholarships**

The University also makes provision for scholarships to which all students are 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 costs for students and the means of support available, its bursary schemes and eligibility criteria in its annual prospectus. As this document is published well 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. More recently the University has undertaken the sponsorship of a new Academy in Medway, thus further developing the reality of an all age learning environment within one of the most deprived areas of England. 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.

The University continues to invest in curricular developments to attract a wider range of students and to address untapped markets. In spite of the tight controls on student numbers, the University has continued to develop and update its portfolio of courses taught in its Associate and Partner Colleges. These include Foundation Degrees, Higher National Certificates and Diplomas and one year top-up degrees. The University has supported retention and attainment of its students through induction and Summer School programmes.

In addition to this, the University is engaged in a range of activities to widen access and participation. 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.
- The maintenance of core elements of the Aimhigher partnership once project funding ceases.
- 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 and Partner Colleges, Adult Education Services and the voluntary sector.
- The creation of a viable 6<sup>th</sup> form at the University's new Academy.
- The development of work with primary feeders to the University's new Academy, with a focus upon maths, science, critical thinking and creativity.

While 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:** To maintain the level of visits and activities at the current level. Visits from target schools stabilised in 2009/10 at 152 in line with the University's original target of offering 150 visit-type activities a year by 20011/12. These activities attracted 6043 participants (some of whom attended more than one event). The number of individual events offered decreased slightly over the previous year in line with the University's policy of working more intensively with smaller cohorts of students. The number of students attending the generic "Stepping Up" programme where University work in depth with a small group of students over a ten week period increased from 996 in 2008/9 to 1215 in 2009/10. The impact of these programmes is being monitored.
- To maintain core elements of the Aimhigher partnership once project funding ceases. Core elements of the offer currently funded by Aimhigher include campus visits and residential experiences, a range of ambassador support and the engagement of parents.
- **Student Ambassador Network:** To support and enhance the existing student ambassador

network. The University has increased the number of funded hours available to students to support outreach activity. The number of paid hours of student work increased to 6632 in 2009/10 - higher than the original target of 4000 hours. There were over 130 paid ambassadors in 2009/10 with an additional 100 working within the volunteering scheme.

- **Accredited progression pathways:** The University will further develop its innovative programme of progression pathways in partnership with target schools and communities. A number of modules which range from preparation for HE, vocational enrichment and academic attainment to bridging level 3 to 4 are being offered in a range of 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 very good. Participation for young full-time undergraduates from: state schools or colleges is 93.2% against a location adjusted benchmark of 88.5%; participation from low participation neighbourhoods is 10.3% against a location adjusted benchmark of 7.8% This year participation from social classes IIM, IV, V is 28.5% and has fallen against the adjusted benchmark of 31.1% compared to a benchmark and Participation rate of 21% last year<sup>1</sup>. Participation for part-time undergraduate entrants with no previous experience of Higher Education and from low Participation neighbourhoods, both young (12.6%) and mature (9.4%) entrants, is greater than the location adjusted benchmarks of 11.9% and 8% 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.

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 and, 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.

jaw/kent access agreement final 11-11-10

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<sup>1</sup> There was a change to the UCAS 2008/09 application question which feeds into the NS-SEC indicators and as a result, the NS-SEC indicators for 2008/09 (published 2010) are not comparable with those published previously. Further analysis is required to determine whether these percentages reflect a real change in participation, or the reporting of that participation, particularly in light of the other indicators remaining positive