

## **Worcester College of Technology Access Agreement**

### **Introduction and Context.**

The College was established in 1896 and is the largest provider of Further and Higher Education in the counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire. The College has successfully supported local industry and commerce since inception and has provided Higher National provision for over 42 years. Some 17 years ago the College embarked on further strengthening progression opportunities by providing full time Higher National Diploma and Professional Diploma courses.

In parallel over the last 11 years the College has been very successful in providing career progression opportunities with the Institute of Legal Executives (ILEX), Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA), Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM), Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT), the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) and the Chartered Institute of Management (CMI).

Through our extensive partnership arrangements throughout the West Midlands the College is a provider of Initial Teacher Training with the Universities of Wolverhampton and Warwick. Professional qualifications with the Institute of Pensions & Payroll (IPP), the LLB Bachelor of Law (Hons) Degree, the Graduate Diploma in Legal Studies (CPE) in partnership with the University Of Staffordshire, Foundation Degree and Degree Top-Up with the Universities of Aston, Birmingham City and Worcester.

Five years ago the College introduced the Foundation Degree tailored to the local commercial and industrial sectors for students studying on part-time modes of study.

To further support progression to Higher Education whether at WCT or elsewhere, the College runs a number of Access and Foundation Courses which provide a non-traditional route into higher education which is tailored to adult students. Much of this provision is in partnership with our local HEI, the University of Worcester.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education have confirmed the quality of our provision and the extent of actions to widen participation and the excellent achievement levels and success rates for students who top up their HE qualifications from us when going onto an HEI.

The College has been in the business of widening participation for many decades and through this Access Agreement continue to promote and further develop opportunities for those with non traditional qualifications and experience and provide additional support for students from lower income groups.

The College is a member of the Mixed Economy Group.

## **Contents of the Access Agreement**

### **Scope**

This agreement covers students designated as full time students for HEFCE funding purposes. It does not cover those designated as part time students.

### **Fees**

Since 2006 the full time fee has been set at £2500 per annum. For 2010 entry the fee has been increased to £2600 per annum. The fee level described will apply for the whole duration of the course.

### **Amount of additional fee income to be spent on access measures**

The estimated amount of additional fee income to be spent on access measures is based upon three elements.

Firstly all full time HEFCE funded students will receive free of charge the loan of a laptop appropriate to their course of study. It will be insured and will be loaded with standard software.

Secondly bursaries will be available as described below

Thirdly as an active participator in the AimHigher programme the College secures funding to support this activity.

Fourthly the College provides an HE 'hardship fund'.

### **Bursaries and other financial support for students**

The structure for bursaries is based on four levels and is awarded for each year of study.

1. Students who are from 'looked after' environments and care leavers receive the highest bursary of £750 (figures are quoted for the 2008-09 year).
2. Students who are assessed for the full state support receive the next highest level of bursary of £540.
3. Students who are assessed for state support between £1000 and £2830 receive a third tier bursary of £300.
4. Students who receive state support up to £999 receive the fourth level bursary of £100.

Other financial support by way of 'in kind' support' will be offered to all full time students by the provision of a laptop computer on loan for the period of their course.

### **Provision of information to students**

The College has a central Student Support Centre and this is the focal point for all existing and prospective students to obtain clear unbiased advice on all aspects of financial support and College life.

Information is made available through the

College Webpage ([www.wortech.ac.uk](http://www.wortech.ac.uk)) by clicking on the following:- [Home](#) / [student info](#) / [fees & finance](#) / Undergraduate tuition fees for prospective students and for existing students through the College Portal. There are in both cases links to relevant external sites.

The College also provides paper based materials such as the HE Prospectus where case studies and examples are given relating to finance.

At interview all FT students receive full information concerning fees and bursaries as well as course-based information. This is followed up during induction.

For internal FE students of the College, an HE Fair and taster days are organised to provide information concerning the course and costs associated with HE study. The College also takes part in county-wide and some national HE Recruitment Fairs to promote the HE provision.

### **Outreach work**

The College does not explicitly seek to attract more applications from under represented groups since that is already its *raison d'être*. However through the close working relationship with AimHigher, the Local Life Long Learning Network in Worcester and the franchise and validation partnerships with the Universities of Wolverhampton, Warwick, Staffordshire, Aston, Birmingham City, Glamorgan and Worcester the College is well placed to provide comprehensive progression and support opportunities to students.

The College is an active member of two 14-19 consortiums and is leading on four Diplomas in 2009 and as such is providing widening participation awareness opportunities to a much younger age group than had previously been possible.

### **Actions and Milestones**

Following the submission of a Higher Education Widening Participation Strategy in June 2009 the following actions will take place in the 200910 academic year :-

To review whether the College needs an HE 'admissions policy'  
To review whether the College has sufficient HEI partnerships  
To consider the implications of the current HE numbers cap within a WP context  
Review opportunities with providers to reduce validation costs.  
Review Offa agreement and hence WP measures of success.

### **HE Milestones**

The overarching targets are:-

- Further develop the 14-16 curriculum offer to enable compulsory age pupils an opportunity to study in and be made aware of the progression possibilities to Higher Education. Target of 100 students during 2009-10 and a further 100 students in 2010-11.
- Enhance College communication media to raise awareness of HE opportunities through web base applications, open days and evenings
- Further development of an HE culture within the College

- Maintain existing provision and apply for additional ASN's in core and co-funded provision. Additional ASN's will be requested from HEFCE for entry in 2010 and 2011. 18 FTE's will be requested for a 2010 start and 18 FTE's in 2011.
- Focus attention on employment sectors related to the FD curriculum areas
- Continue to transfer HNC/D provision to FD
- Maintain and expand where possible provision for students where income, background and social status would normally have precluded accessing higher education.
- Investigate further FD and degree level opportunities.

### **Institutional Monitoring Arrangements**

Performance around each of these overarching targets will be reviewed in December and June each year. This will be carried out by the cross-college Higher Education group.

Carl Flint November 2009.