

YORK ST JOHN University

Access Agreement

Introduction

York St John University (hereafter 'the University') has a long-standing history of extending higher educational opportunity to students who would not otherwise have enjoyed the benefits conferred by HE. The University

“is committed to the provision of excellent, open and progressive higher education that embraces difference, challenges prejudice and promotes justice, and is shaped by the University’s Church foundation. Building on this foundation the University commits itself to provide widely-accessible opportunities for lifelong learning, underpinned by scholarship and research.”¹

The University shows a high level of performance in the higher education sector benchmarks for widening participation.²

The University has a distinctive role as a provider of flexible learning opportunities in rural North Yorkshire and a substantial track record as an effective partner in widening participation. The University leads the *Aimhigher* partnership in its sub-region and works proactively to promote wider access and lifelong learning within *Higher York*: the designated and nationally funded Lifelong Learning Network of further and higher education providers in York, and as a founding partner in the *Yorkshire Rural Academy*. Through *Aimhigher*, *Higher York* and the *Yorkshire Rural Academy* the University's emphasis is firmly on widening the pool of applicants especially from lower socio-economic groups and communities currently under-participating in higher education.

Section A (Fees)

The following refers to full-time undergraduate study only. Fee levels for part-time and postgraduate study are not covered by this agreement and will be determined, and published, by the University in the normal way.

1. 2008-09 entrants will be charged a maximum fee of £3,145 (2008-09) per annum for all full-time undergraduate programmes of study including full-time 3 and 4 year QTS and all PGCE programmes. Pre 2008-09 entrants will be charged £2,625 (2008-09) per annum. These fees will not apply to the following programmes of study:
 - (i) Those programmes governed by particular contract arrangements and fee structures with the National Health Service where these specify different fee limits.
 - (ii) The University sees Foundation Degrees as central to its strategy for widening participation. The University will not charge the maximum tuition fee for full-time study on Foundation Degrees but it reserves the right to do so in the future. The fee for students progressing to Honours level study from a Foundation Degree will be the maximum tuition fee operating at the time of enrolment onto the Honours programme.

¹ From York St John University Mission Statement 2007-12

² HEFCE (2006) Performance Indicators in HE in the UK 2004-5

2. The maximum fee for full-time undergraduate programmes will be adjusted annually in line with central government advice.

Section B (Financial Support for Students)

1. The University will provide financial support in the form of individual bursaries to full-time UK home students enrolled on a programme charging the maximum fee. These bursaries will be known, and publicised, as York St John Bursaries / YSJ Bursaries. Bursaries will be awarded against a single criterion and provided at the following levels.

TABLE 1 -

Residual (Annual) Family Income (RFI)	Bursary (Per annum) 08/09 entrants	Bursary (Per annum) pre 08/09 entrants
Up to £18,360	£1,570	£1,570
£18,361 to £20,970	£1,050	£1,050
£20,971 to £25,000	£525	£0

RFI and Bursary amounts are stated for 2008-09. YSJ Bursaries will normally be increased in line with government inflation indicators.

Students will continue under the fee and YSJ Bursary scheme operating at the time they first joined the University throughout the period of their full-time registration until completion of their target award.

2. YSJ Bursary

This scheme is in addition to any already available to students within the University or via national schemes. The relationship between YSJ Bursaries and other financial help predicted to be available, on the basis of existing information, is shown in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2: Student Financial Support

National/ Statutory	Local/ Discretionary	Impact on YSJ Bursary
LA contribution to fees based upon RFI		RFI will determine Bursary
SLC Loans for top-up fees		None
SLC Loans for maintenance		None
Maintenance Grant based on RFI		RFI will determine entitlement to maximum Bursary
HE Grants		None
	Access to Learning Fund (ALF)	None, but Bursary will be included in ALF assessment
	NHS Attrition Fund	Not Applicable
	NHS Hardship Fund	Not Applicable
	York St John University Hardship Fund	None, but Bursary will be included in the Hardship Fund assessment
	York St John University Opportunity Fund	None
	York St John University Stanley Watkin Fund	None
	Association of Ripon & York St John University's former students	None
	SPARK Fund	None

3. Entitlement to bursary support is based on the sole criterion of Residual Family Income (RFI). The University has determined that this scheme targets financial support where it will have most impact on protecting existing patterns and levels of recruitment from particular low income groups and, most importantly, increasing and widening the pool of applicants from these groups in a context of variable tuition fees.
4. Administration of YSJ Bursaries will be through the Student Loans Company (SLC) Higher Education Bursary & Scholarship Scheme (HEBSS). Liaison with the SLC will be coordinated by the University's Student Finance Support Team (SFST) based within the Directorate of Learner Development Services in conjunction with the Directorate of Finance and with Registry. The SLC will make bursary payments to the student, deal with any student enquiries about the payment and maintain changes to student details as necessary. The deadline for receipt of appropriate paperwork from students relating to eligibility for award of a YSJ Bursary will be the deadline being operated by the SLC currently 30th May 2008
5. The University intends that payment of the YSJ Bursary will be made in two instalments, one in February and one in May of the academic year in question. Those PGCE students who start their studies in March will receive their YSJ Bursary in July of that year. All payment dates are indicative and may be changed by the University at its discretion with due regard to ensuring students have reasonable advance notice of any change.
6. The total maximum bursary award for an eligible student who exceeds the norm

of three years of study on a three year full-time programme will normally not exceed the total of the annual maximum bursary for the three relevant years. Where a student withdraws from the University (including for transfer to another institution) the bursary paid will be pro-rated in relation to the period of time spent at York St John University.

7. The University publishes a process for appeal against a decision regarding the award of a YSJ Bursary
8. The University will accept applications for financial support under this scheme from full-time EU students. Such students will be required to demonstrate, through independently verified documentary evidence that their RFI falls within the bands described above. Bursary entitlement will be determined by the University as the SLC Scheme does not include capability for automatic income assessment of EU students. Payment will be made by the SLC in February and May. EU Bursaries will be added onto the HEBSS system via a manual award by the Student Finance Support Team.

Section C (Provision of Information to Students)

1. Information for Prospective Students

- (i) The University's Full-Time Undergraduate Prospectus will state the additional tuition fees (if finalised at time of print) and that the University offers substantial bursary support, through direct payment to the student, determined in relation to their family income. The Prospectus will refer readers to the University website for full details of fees and the YSJ Bursary scheme.
- (ii) The University website will include information on "Fees and Financial Support" with a direct link to details of the fee structure and YSJ Bursary scheme, including worked examples of how these would operate in different student circumstances. The website will also include the aggregate costs of tuition and the maximum bursary support available depending on family income levels. The worked examples would also include illustrations of the net costs of studying full-time undergraduate programmes at the University taking into account estimates for the cost of living and the total financial support that could be available.
- (iii) The information contained in (ii) above will also be reproduced in a simple Student Finance and Support Booklet and/or in electronic format (as appropriate to changing needs of target audience) written for, and distributed to schools, colleges, community education providers and locations and Information and Advice and Guidance Agencies, initially in our main geographic areas of full time undergraduate recruitment, but available to any enquirer in person via the Student Centre Reception, via email and post via normal procedures for postal and email responses to enquiries via Admissions and Marketing . There will be specific targeted distribution of this information to known under-represented groups in particular areas through the Admissions and Marketing Department (especially through its Schools and Colleges Liaison Office) and others involved in widening participation work across the University. This latter work is an important part of the University Strategy to increase the pool of applicants from these targeted groups (see Section D).
- (iv) The information available on the website and in the Student Finance Support Booklet will be used as the basis for advice and guidance

talk/seminars targeted at parents, prospective students, advice and guidance workers, school tutors (and others who may have a key influence on student decision making) not only in areas of current student recruitment but also targeted at those currently under represented on full time undergraduate programmes in the University (see Section D below).

- (v) This information will be prominently displayed for Open Days, and Visit Days, with staff expert in student financial matters readily available to answer queries.
- (vi) Students are currently provided with financial advice, guidance and support as a routine feature of the scheduled elements of Induction Week on first arrival at the University. This will continue to be a main vehicle for providing new students with necessary advice and guidance about fees and financial support arrangements and will reinforce information previously provided to them. These advice sessions will also be used to continue the process of explaining the YSJ Bursary scheme.

2. Information for Current Students

- (i) The University engaged extensively with the student population about the introduction of variable tuition fees and bursary support when the possibility of charging additional tuition fees for full-time undergraduate students was first mooted. Members of the Student Union Executive were active participants in the formal discussions in University committees and other forums.
- (ii) The Students' Union has its own student newsletter and University officers work with Students' Union officers to provide clear and accessible information to students through this widely read publication. The Students' Union Welfare & Guidance Services team works closely with SFST. These teams are co-located in the new Holgate Centre enhancing efficiency of the overall service to students on financial matters.
- (iii) The SFST provides information on the student homepage of the University intranet about fees, bursaries and other financial support matters. There is a link to the YSJ Student Finance pages from the SU website.

Section D (Outreach and other additional access activities)

1. The University's widening participation strategy is wide-ranging, linking access initiatives to those for student progression and success to community engagement and even business development activities. It is designed around the key concepts of inclusivity and diversity and in this sense targets a range of groups and communities under represented in higher education. For example the University has been awarded the Frank Buttle Trust Quality Mark for its approach to working with students leaving care. Whilst this group and others with whom the University works as part of its widening participation strategy are not specifically noted in the initiatives below, individuals in the target groups below may of course have other characteristics (such as being a care leaver) and are in that case included in these initiatives. The University wishes to emphasise that such groups remain central to the widening participation strategy and the University's mission and plans.

2. The groups identified below are those which the University will specifically target funds from the additional fee income, as identified in the financial return to OFFA which accompanied this Agreement. The University reserves the right to target other groups with this funding as the University student population changes, widening participation targets are reached, and/or changes to government funding and other relevant policies make appropriate or necessary. Such changes will be notified to OFFA.
3. The three initiatives below share a common and integrating theme: **“influencing the influencers” to generate sustainable growth of the applicant pool in the target groups.**
4. The target populations for these initiatives reflect the University’s achievement against its widening participation performance benchmarks in respect of full-time undergraduate students only. In the following sections LAB is “Location Adjusted Benchmark”, NB is “National Benchmark”, and “U” is York St John University.
5. Using HEFCE Performance Indicator data related to 2005-6 the University performs at, very close to, or above locally adjusted benchmarks in all indicators. except:
 - (i) Young full-time undergraduate students from low participation areas. The University performs well above its NB but below its LAB: NB= 15.6%; LAB=19.8%; U=18.9%
 - (ii) ‘Returners to Learning’ (referred to as “mature students” in the indicator data) full-time undergraduate students from low participation areas and with no previous HE experience. The University performs well below its NB and LAB: NB= 15.7%; LAB= 20.0%; U= 14.0%.
 - (iii) Ethnic monitoring data reveals that, excluding those for whom data is not known, 7.6%³ of the total student population at the University define themselves as “other than white British”.⁴ However, this data includes significant numbers of international (especially Chinese) students. If this is taken into account, the percentage of students who are of minority ethnic origin falls to just above 5.4%. The 2001 Census revealed that 12.5% of the population of England and Wales define their ethnicity as “other than white British”. The University sees minority ethnic students as a particularly important target group within its access and widening participation strategy.
 - (iv) All "outreach" initiatives funded under this Agreement, as described below, will be required to monitor and evaluate the impact of the interventions in relation to the overall objectives stated below
6. **Access Initiative One**
 - (i) This involves a series of initiatives aimed at minority ethnic students, parents/carers, and other key influencers especially from York and North Yorkshire but also from other parts of the region as appropriate

³ York St John University, HESA Data 2006-07

⁴ The generic category “Other than White British” includes those who define themselves as White Irish, “Other White”, and of “Mixed White” ethnic origins.

- (ii) The initiative builds upon and extends the success of the work by the University Chaplaincy to promote and make visible multi-faith engagements at the University: for example, our work with York Unifying and Multicultural Initiative (Culture Point) involving HE aspiration and awareness raising among minority ethnic communities.
- (iii) The various initiatives will target both potential students from minority ethnic backgrounds and their parents/carers/key influencers in order to establish within these communities an increasing network of ambassadors for the benefits of higher education (and those of York St John University in particular) who are well-informed about all aspects of contemporary higher education study and those of the University specifically.
- (iv) This series of initiatives will be, therefore, an important platform for targeted outreach network-building and recruitment activity within these communities in order, as part of this package, to contribute to the overall objective of bringing the proportion of home UK minority ethnic students in the University student population to reflect at least their percentage of the population of York and move towards their overall proportion of the population of England.

Indicative Targets for Minority Ethnic Communities Initiatives

Activity	2008-9	2009-10	2010-11
Students Contacted	60	70	80
Influencers Contacted	30	35	40

- (v) The particular rural context of the sub-region coupled with the social and geographic distribution of minority ethnic communities, suggests these to be both stretching and ambitious targets. Much of this outreach work will therefore focus on developing links with communities in West Yorkshire as well as in York and North Yorkshire.
- (vi) These targets will be reviewed annually in the light of experience and the results of monitoring and evaluation

7. Access Initiative Two (Outreach – Younger Students)

- (i) This initiative involves outreach activities targeted at younger learners (16-18) in areas with low rates of participation in full-time higher education.
- (ii) The initiative complements but is in addition to *Aimhigher* projects. The University is the lead HEI and Area Banker for *Aimhigher North Yorkshire* and specific attention will be paid on an annual basis, through monitoring and reporting arrangements, to ensure that the work of the University and of the *Aimhigher* partnership are mutually supportive and complementary and do not duplicate efforts in this specific field/age range.
- (iii) The outreach work will target not only these younger learners themselves but also key influencers such as school tutors, parents, advice and guidance workers, youth workers and others to attempt to effect some measure of cultural change in these communities in respect of aspirations

and achievement relevant to higher education study.

(iv) **Indicative Targets for Outreach – Younger Students**

	2008-9	2009-10	2010-11
Learners Contacted Directly	175	150	150
Influencers Contacted	50	50	50

- (v) The pattern of minimum annual target outreach contacts over the period reflects the strategy of creating sustainable networks of influence. So, for example, the design predicts that by 2008-9 there should be 125 influencers working to positively shape potential younger student decision-making about higher education so that the University's role becomes one of ensuring these networks are refreshed with new "members".
- (vi) These targets will be adjusted on the basis of experiences and the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation.
- (vii) The overall objective is that this initiative will, in tandem with (but additional to) other activities not funded through the estimated additional fee income, move the University to its relevant benchmark position by 2010-11 at the latest.

8. Access Initiative Three (Outreach – Returning to Learning)

- (i) This initiative involves outreach activities targeted a learners (with no prior HE experience in areas with low rates of participation in full-time higher education study) who can be facilitated and encouraged to return to formal learning after a significant break from it.
- (ii) The outreach work will target not only the potential students themselves but also key influencers such as employers, careers advisors, those working with the unemployed, adult and community learning providers, and others to attempt to effect some measure of cultural change in these communities in respect of knowledge of, and aspiration towards, higher education study.
- (iii) The initiative complements but is in addition to Aimhigher projects which may be targeted at similar geographic areas and learners. The University is the lead HEI and Area Banker for *Aimhigher North Yorkshire* and specific attention will be paid on an annual basis, through monitoring and reporting arrangements, to ensure that the work of the University and of the *Aimhigher* partnership are mutually supportive and complementary and do not duplicate efforts in this specific field/age range.

Indicative Targets for Outreach – Returning to Learning Students

	2008-9	2009-10	2010-11
Learners Contacted	175	150	100
Influencers* Contacted	30	40	50

The overall objective is that this initiative will, in tandem with (but additional to) other activities not funded through estimated additional fee income, move the University to its relevant benchmark position by 2010-11 at the latest.

Section E (Milestones)

The table below sets out milestones in relation to the key objectives for each aspect of this agreement.

Initiative	Objectives	Milestones
YSJ Bursaries and Information to Prospective and Current students	<p>To create a user-friendly, clear, transparent, cost-efficient and effective bursary scheme.</p> <p>Ensure scheme captures all those in the target groups and review percentage eligibility estimates in this agreement to ensure continued alignment with access strategy.</p>	<p>February/March every year Review data on bursary allocations in relation to full-time student recruitment and review access strategy as appropriate.</p> <p>Report annually to Executive and SMT</p>
Minority Ethnic Students Initiatives	<p>Achieve indicative target contacts</p> <p>Achieve increased applications from minority ethnic students to the University</p> <p>Progressively increase the proportion of home UK students of “other than white British” origin</p>	<p>See Access Agreement Section 5(i)-(vi)</p> <p>December 2008 reaches at least 6% of the total student population</p> <p>December 2010 reaches at least 8% of the total student population</p>

Younger Students Initiative	Progressively move to at least HEFCE Performance Indicator (locally adjusted benchmark) for young full time undergraduate students from low participation areas, by 2010-11	Achieve an annual increase of at least 1% per annum in this performance indicator from 2007-8
Returning to Learning Student Initiative	Progressively move to at least HEFCE Performance Indicator (locally adjusted) benchmark for mature full-time undergraduate students from low participation areas with no previous HE experience, by 2010-11	Achieve an annual increase of at least 1.5% per annum in this performance indicator from 2007-8

Section F (Institutional Monitoring Arrangements)

1. Responsibility for monitoring progress towards achieving the objectives and targets set out in this agreement will reside with the Pro Vice Chancellor responsible for leading the University widening participation and lifelong learning strategy.
2. The Pro Vice Chancellor will submit reports as follows:
 - (i) A monitoring report to the University Executive and Senior Management Team at the end of the first semester in each academic year on the operation, and student take-up (against predicted numbers), of the YSJ Bursary Scheme. These reports will be prepared in conjunction with SFST and the Director of Finance.
 - (ii) A half-yearly report to the University Executive and Senior Management Team on progress against targets and in relation to milestones for the outreach initiatives identified in this agreement. which will include an evaluation of the operation, and achievement against target, of each planned outreach initiative outlined in this agreement. The report to be submitted to University Executive and Senior Management Team.
 - (iii) Each report will include recommendations for action on the basis of the monitoring information.
 - (iv) The Pro Vice Chancellor will submit an annual evaluative report on progress (and any issues) relating to all elements of this agreement to the final Academic Board meeting of the relevant academic year. The Academic Board reports directly to the University Governing Body. There

will be an annual report directly to the Governing Body, by the University Executive, during the first three years of this agreement