

October 2009/04

Guidance for FECs

This document sets out the information we need from directly-funded further education colleges to carry out our annual monitoring of access agreements.

All FECs with an approved access agreement for 2008-09 must submit a monitoring return to us by Friday 18 December 2009.

OFFA guidance for further education colleges

**How to complete your access
agreement monitoring return
for 2008-09**

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Alternative formats

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How to complete your access agreement monitoring return for 2008-09

To	Heads of directly-funded further education colleges in England
Of interest to those responsible for	Implementation of access agreements, Higher Education Managers, Heads of Finance
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Enquiries to	Chris Scrase Programme Manager chris.scrase@offa.org.uk 0117 931 7053 Richard Smith Policy and Communications Officer richard.smith@offa.org.uk 0117 931 7151

Executive summary

What this document is about

1. This document sets out what we need from you in order to carry out our annual monitoring of access agreements. It asks all **further education colleges with directly-funded higher education** (hereafter referred to as institutions) with an OFFA-approved access agreement for 2008-09 to send us a monitoring return.

The information we need

2. You **must** provide data on:

- additional fee income and number of directly-funded current system students, by fee amount and cohort
- actual expenditure on bursaries and scholarships to directly-funded students from lower-income and other under-represented groups, by income band and cohort
- the number of directly-funded students from lower-income and other under-represented groups in receipt of a bursary or scholarship, by income band and cohort.

3. You **must** also provide:

- information on institutional bursary take-up rates. (Note: we will not require institutions subscribing to HEBSS to provide bursary take-up data, unless they feel it is necessary to do so)
- actual expenditure on additional outreach activities covered in access agreements
- a report on progress against milestones
- confirmation that the information in your monitoring return has been validated and approved as correct.

Additional information we may ask for

4. We **may** also require the following additional information:

- a report on bursary awareness raising activities, where less than 95 per cent of eligible students have been paid a bursary
- an explanation where the actual expenditure on additional outreach is more than 20 per cent below your commitments or estimate set out in your access agreement.

How we will use the information you give us

5. We will use the information you provide to consider the extent to which your institution has broadly met the commitments set out in its access agreement. We will aim to publish a short report in May 2010 regarding the outcomes of the annual monitoring process.

6. In addition, the information provided will inform our annual report to Parliament and provide evidence for the Independent Review on fees and student support which is due to start later this year. This will report on all aspects of the new fee and student support arrangements based on the first three years' operation of the policy. We may also share relevant information with the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills – for example, information relating to widening participation strategic assessments. Additionally, individual monitoring reports may be disclosed on request, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act.

What you need to do now

7. First, you will need to register for the HEFCE extranet, an encrypted and authenticated website (<https://extranet.hedata.ac.uk>). This year we will be using this site to give you information that will help you complete your monitoring return, such as Student Loans Company income distribution data for your institution and details of expenditure paid through HEBSS (where applicable). You will also need to download your monitoring return template and submit it to us via this site.

8. In order to register for the HEFCE extranet, you will need an 'organisation key' (which identifies your institution) and a 'group key' (which identifies the OFFA monitoring return). We will send these organisation keys and group keys by post to all of our registered contacts in early November.

The next steps

Once you have registered for the HEFCE extranet, the next steps are:

- download your 2008-09 monitoring return template from <https://extranet.hedata.ac.uk>
- complete your monitoring return template – checking it carefully against the guidance in this document. If in doubt, ask us for clarification
- submit your completed template to <https://extranet.hedata.ac.uk> by **18 December 2009**.

Definitions of terms used in this guidance

Additional fee income

Additional fee income is defined as any fee income above the standard fee (£1,255 in 2008-09). Where institutions have charged the maximum fee of £3,145 for full-time undergraduates in 2008-09, the 'additional fee income per student' is £1,890 (£3,145 – £1,255).

For some courses, including sandwich courses, courses provided in conjunction with an overseas institution, and some part-time ITT courses, the maximum fee for 2008-09 was £1,570 and the standard fee was £625. Where institutions have charged the maximum fee for these courses, the 'additional fee income per student' is therefore £945.

Current system students

Current system students are those who are not 'old system students' and who started their course in September 2006 or later. Current system students are entitled to current student support and can be charged higher variable fees.

For the purposes of access agreement monitoring, you should not include students who are charged unregulated tuition fees, such as overseas students and those studying for a second or subsequent higher education qualification which is equivalent to or lower than one they already hold.

Old system students

Old system students are those who:

- are continuing on a course that they started before 1st September 2006; **or**
- are treated as gap-year students and started their course in 2006/2007; **or**
- transferred on to their current course from a course that they began before 1st September 2006 or, if the student is treated as a gap year student, that they began before 1st September 2007; **or**
- started an 'end-on' degree or honours degree course (other than a first degree course for the initial training of teachers) after completing a Foundation Degree, Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma or Diploma of Higher Education course which they began before 1st September 2006 or, if the student is treated as a gap-year student, before 1st September 2007.

Cohort

By cohort, we mean the academic year in which 'current system students' started their courses, including students who deferred their entry to subsequent years. For example, students who deferred their entry from 2007-08 to 2008-09 should be classed as 2008 cohort students.

As stated above, however, students who deferred their entry from 2005-06 to 2006-07, and took up a place which was offered before 1 August 2005, are classed as old system students rather than 2006 cohort students.

Under-represented groups and OFFA-countable groups

Where we talk about students being in under-represented groups or OFFA-countable groups, we mean groups that are currently under-represented in higher education at the national level rather than at a particular institution or course, including:

- people from low income backgrounds
- people from lower socio-economic groups
- people from low participation neighbourhoods
- minority ethnic groups or sub-groups that are under-represented in HE
- care leavers
- disabled people.

Outreach

We define outreach as any activity that involves raising aspirations and prior attainment and encouraging students from under-represented groups to apply to higher education. This might mean funding specific new activities or enhancing and growing existing programmes. It can include relevant staffing and overhead costs.

For the purposes of access agreement monitoring, the expenditure you report on outreach should only relate to funds committed from **additional** fee income and other new and additional (post-2006) sources of funding. They should relate to additional outreach activities, or a continuation of existing activities where previous funding may have been reduced or discontinued. You should not report on other funding sources such as Aimhigher or LLN funding.

Background information

Why you need to complete a monitoring return

9. There is a statutory requirement for institutions to let us know about the extent to which they have met the obligations set out in their access agreements, and to report on the progress they have made with their objectives and milestones. We need sufficient information in order to:

- monitor that institutions are meeting their commitments to individual students and are moving towards the milestones set out in their access agreements
- provide an annual report to Parliament containing an overview of progress with access agreements
- collect evidence for the Independent Review on fees and student support, which is due to start later this year.

Changes to the 2008-09 monitoring process

10. The 2007-08 monitoring process generally worked well but there were some areas we would like to improve to ensure that the information you submit to us is robust and also to improve the information we are able to provide to the Independent Review. The main changes for 2008-09 monitoring are:

- we are asking you to provide information by separate cohorts for 2006, 2007 and 2008 rather than in summary form. This information is needed because of the changes to thresholds for the full grant in 2008-09 and will enable us to compare data across years
- we are also asking you to provide information about numbers of current system students by fee charged. This includes those students being charged the standard fee (£1,255) and below. This will allow us to better understand the role of lower fee charges within institutions' fee and bursary policies
- analysis of the 2007-08 monitoring returns indicated that some of the data – particularly relating to the amount of additional fee income and the number of current system students –

needed to be more robust. We have therefore made changes to the monitoring return so that the information required from institutions is more transparent

- we have changed the system for institutions subscribing to the Higher Education Bursary and Scholarship Scheme (HEBSS) full service, as the previous requirement to submit only partial information to OFFA was confusing. All institutions must now submit the same level of information, although if you subscribe to HEBSS we will continue to make available HEBSS data to help you complete your return
- given the improvements in bursary take-up, and now that we have two previous years of data, we are no longer asking you to report against estimated bursary and scholarship expenditure as we consider that actual expenditure is a sufficient indicator of institutional commitment
- we have changed the timetable for monitoring returns so that it coincides with the submission timetable for the first interim progress report against widening participation strategic assessments and HEFCE's annual accountability returns
- we are using the HEFCE extranet facility to make it easier for you to download your monitoring return template and submit it to us once completed.

We will give you data from the Student Loans Company (SLC)

11. To help you complete your monitoring return, we will give you SLC income distribution data for your institution. This information will be available via the HEFCE extranet from early November and will give you a breakdown by income band of the numbers/proportions of new students (UK-domiciled) at your institution in 2008-09.

12. In addition, if your institution subscribes to HEBSS (full administration or information only), we will give you additional SLC information via the HEFCE extranet to help you verify some of the information you are giving us on your monitoring return. This additional information will be as follows:

- 'consent to share' data showing the number of students, and their parents/sponsors, within each household income group described in paragraph 24 who consented or did not consent to share their financial information
- details of the expenditure your institution has paid through HEBSS to Home and European Union students, by household income band (for full HEBSS institutions only)
- the number of bursary holders, by assessed household income bands as set out in paragraph 24 (for full HEBSS institutions only).

13. The data we request from the SLC will:

- be a snapshot provided at **25 October 2009**
- include all payments made since 1 August 2008 in respect of the 2008-09 academic year
- be separated between 2006, 2007 and 2008 cohort students.

14. Last year, many institutions subscribing to HEBSS found the requirement to submit only partial information to OFFA confusing or problematic, as the task of reconciling HEBSS data and institutional data was not always straightforward. This year, we will require all institutions to submit a full monitoring return, regardless of HEBSS status. This means that those institutions subscribing to the full HEBSS service do not need to disaggregate their HEBSS expenditure. **If your institution subscribes to HEBSS, you must therefore ensure that your data includes all expenditure, including that paid through HEBSS.**

15. Similarly, previous monitoring rounds have highlighted that HEBSS and SLC income distribution data may not be directly comparable with institutions' own data on bursary payments or eligibility. For example, students may have been paid manually based on information supplied outside of HEBSS, had their income re-assessed since receiving a bursary, or payments may have been made after the date when the data was provided to us by the SLC. For this reason, we do not necessarily expect the figures you provide in your return to reconcile precisely with those provided by the SLC.

Other information

16. A copy of the monitoring return template for 2008-09 is included at Annex A. This annex is for reference only and is completed as an example. The template for you to complete will be on the HEFCE extranet from early November. We will inform our registered OFFA contacts when this is available to be downloaded.

Your monitoring return checklist

- ✓ **include directly-funded HE students only.** Students on programmes franchised from another institution should not be counted as these will be included by the registering institution
- ✓ **include** all fee income and student numbers for directly-funded Home/European Union, full-time undergraduates (including full and part-time ITT and full-time undergraduate social work students)
- ✓ **include** courses with a lower maximum fee, such as sandwich courses, courses provided in conjunction with an overseas institution, and some part-time ITT courses
- ✓ **include** all directly-funded current system students who have paid a fee or received an OFFA-countable bursary in 2008-09, even if they have subsequently withdrawn from their studies or did not complete the full year or programme of study
- ✓ **include** only expenditure in the finance return that is countable by OFFA – for example, bursaries paid to students above the specified household income levels or payments made from the Access to Learning Fund are not OFFA-countable
- ✓ **do not include** fee income from courses not covered under the 2004 Higher Education Act, such as old system students, part-time courses and courses provided under NHS contracts – for example, nursing, midwifery, allied health professions and medicine (year five onwards)
- ✓ **report** only on those milestones set out in your access agreement covering 2008-09
- ✓ **ensure** that you have completed the validation and assurance statement correctly.

How to complete your monitoring return – step by step

Part One: Additional fee income and bursary expenditure

You must complete and submit institutional data on:

- **additional fee income, by fee amount and cohort (paragraphs 17-20)**
- **the number of directly-funded current system students, by fee amount and cohort (paragraphs 21-23)**
- **actual expenditure on bursaries and scholarships to directly-funded students from lower-income and other under-represented groups, by income band and cohort (paragraphs 24-30)**
- **the number of directly-funded students from lower-income and other under-represented groups in receipt of a bursary or scholarship, by income band and cohort (paragraphs 31-34)**

Table 1

Additional fee income, by fee amount and cohort

Action

17. Please indicate the variable fee you have charged, and how many directly-funded current system students you have charged this fee in each cohort. Where you have charged the maximum fee, you should include these students in Table 1a. Where you have charged other fees above the standard fee, but below the maximum fee, you should include these students in Table 1b. Where there are different variable fees for different courses you should disaggregate the number of students in Table 1b, as set out in the example in Annex A.

Explanatory notes for Table 1

18. The 'additional fee income per student' columns in Tables 1a and 1b are calculated automatically and are equal to the variable fee charged minus the standard fee (£1,255 in 2008-09). Where institutions have charged the maximum fee of £3,145 for 2008-09, the 'additional fee income per student' is £1,890 (£3,145 – £1,255). The total number of current

system students and total additional fee income are also calculated automatically.

19. For some courses, including sandwich courses, courses provided in conjunction with an overseas institution, and some part-time ITT courses, the maximum fee for 2008-09 was £1,570 and the standard fee was £625. Tables 1a and 1b contain separate sections for recording these students.

20. Table 1c shows your total additional fee income. It calculates automatically, using the data you have provided in tables 1a and 1b. The total additional fee income figure in Table 1c should reflect your actual additional fee income for 2008-09 since 1 August 2008. If the formulae in Table 1 mean that the figures in the table are not an accurate reflection of your total additional fee income – for example, where data is affected by students who have withdrawn from their courses and have not paid or been refunded – there is a space for recording this. Similarly, if you do not hold data on additional fee income or the number of students by cohort, and have had to make estimates, you should use the space provided to record this.

Table 2

Number of directly-funded current system students, by fee amount and cohort

Action

21. Please use table 2a to indicate the number of directly-funded current system students you have charged the standard fee (£1,255) or below rather than a higher variable fee.

Explanatory notes for Table 2

22. This information will allow us to better understand the role of lower fee charges within institutions' fee and bursary policies.

23. Tables 2b and 2c calculate automatically, using the data you have provided in table 1 and table 2a.

You should check that these figures are in line with your expectations.

Checklist for Tables 1 and 2

- ✓ **include** directly-funded HE students only. Students on programmes franchised from another institution should not be counted as these will be included by the registering institution
- ✓ **include** fees charged and directly-funded student numbers for full-time, Home/European Union undergraduates (including full and part-time ITT and full-time undergraduate social work students)
- ✓ **include** courses with a lower maximum fee, such as sandwich courses, courses provided in conjunction with an overseas institution, and some part-time ITT courses
- ✓ **include** all directly-funded current system students who have paid a fee or received an OFFA-countable bursary in 2008-09, even if they have subsequently withdrawn from their studies or did not complete the full year or programme of study

- ✓ **do not include** fee income from courses not covered under the 2004 Higher Education Act, such as old system students, part-time courses and courses provided under NHS contracts – for example, nursing, midwifery, allied health professions and medicine (year five onwards).

Table 3a

Expenditure on bursaries and scholarships for directly-funded students

Action

24. You should report your actual expenditure on OFFA-countable bursaries and scholarships as set out in your access agreement. Please split your expenditure by income thresholds as follows:

- students in receipt of full state support
- students in receipt of partial state support, with household residual incomes of up to £39,305
- students with household residual incomes between £39,306 and £49,305
- students from other under-represented groups that are OFFA-countable.

Explanatory notes for Table 3a

25. As with last year, we wish to identify the amount of money being paid to the lowest income group (we define this as students receiving full state support). The threshold for students entitled to receive full state support changed in 2008-09 and, as many institutions have based their bursary levels around this threshold, we need to understand the effect of this change and institutional responses to it. You should therefore provide information for the 2006 and 2007 cohorts with a residual household income in 2008-09 of up to £18,360 and the 2008 cohort with a residual household income of up to £25,000.

26. The threshold for students in receipt of partial state support also changed in 2008-09. We are aware that as a result some institutions extended their schemes in 2008-09 to include those with

household residual incomes of up to £60,005. However, we do not feel that asking institutions to report up to this £60,005 level would be sufficiently targeted, particularly in view of the fact that this upper level was reduced in 2009-10. We have therefore asked institutions to report on expenditure for students in receipt of partial state support with household residual incomes up to £39,305, the same level as for continuing students.

27. We do however recognise that some institutions see students in receipt of partial state support with household incomes above £39,305 as an important target group. We would therefore also like you to report on expenditure to students with a residual household income of up to £49,305.

28. For the purposes of our assessment we will count all expenditure on bursaries and scholarships paid to directly-funded HE students from the household income brackets set out in paragraph 24.

- where the household income of the beneficiary is known – whether it relates to a means-tested payment or a non-means tested payment – you should allocate expenditure to the relevant income bracket
- in some cases, the information on household income may be known, but aggregated within an income band which is inconsistent with the thresholds set out above. In these cases, you may still be able to calculate as an estimate approximately how many bursaries were paid to students from each household income group by using the SLC income distribution data (Note: where students are classified in SLC income distribution data as ‘unknown’, you should assume that their income is above OFFA-countable levels and they should not be counted.)
- similarly, if your institution provides bursaries or scholarships awarded on other measures of under-representation that are countable by OFFA or if you award bursaries regardless of a student’s income, you may still be able to calculate estimated expenditure. Again, use the SLC income distribution data to work out the proportion of students who are likely to fall into each income group. For example, if you award bursaries to students from low-participation

neighbourhoods or make compact scheme awards, you will not necessarily have information on household income, but you may still be able to estimate expenditure for each income group. (Note: You may need to apply a weighting if your experience indicates that beneficiaries are unlikely to be evenly distributed across income groups.)

- expenditure should only be listed under ‘Students from other under-represented groups’ where you know that the students are in an OFFA-countable group but household income is unknown and you are not able to have reasonable confidence in any estimates.

29. Where figures are based on estimates, you should declare this in the monitoring return with a brief explanation of your calculations.

30. In some cases, residual household income may have been reassessed during the academic year, or a student may have withdrawn from their studies or not completed a full year or programme of study. In these cases, a student may have received a particular bursary package even though their circumstances have subsequently changed. For the purposes of our assessment, we are happy for you to include these students in your return based on their household income at the time they were originally assessed for a bursary.

Table 3b

Number of directly-funded students in receipt of bursaries and scholarships

Action

31. Please indicate how many of your directly-funded students received bursaries in 2008-09, disaggregated by cohort. This will help us make sure that you have met your commitments to individual students.

Explanatory notes for Table 3b

32. Where possible, you should tell us how many bursary holders there are in each income band as specified in your monitoring return template. We are

interested in the number of beneficiaries rather than the number of awards. Therefore, if you give a student more than one bursary, you should only count them once. Where a student receives a core bursary based on income and a non-income-related award, you should record them only once based on their income-related bursary.

33. For the purposes of our assessment we will count all students in receipt of bursaries and scholarships from the household income brackets set out in paragraph 24. As with table 3a, you should attempt to allocate students to household income brackets, using estimates where necessary in the same way as set out in paragraph 28. **Where figures are based on estimates, you should declare this in the monitoring return with a brief explanation of your calculations.**

34. We will publish the number of 'OFFA-countable' beneficiaries at individual higher education institutions in our monitoring outcomes report, alongside the proportion of full fee-paying students this number represents. We will also include aggregate data for further education colleges. It is therefore important that your estimates are based on a reasonable rationale. We may need to contact you if a rationale is not provided or is unclear. We may indicate in the monitoring outcomes report where figures are based on estimates rather than known.

Checklist for Tables 3a and 3b

✓ **include directly-funded HE students only.**

Students on programmes franchised from another institution should not be counted as these will be included by the registering institution

✓ **include** actual expenditure since 1 August 2008:

- in respect of the 2008-09 academic year only
- on bursaries and scholarships paid to students from the requested household income groups or from other under-represented groups, and
- on 'in-kind' awards such as discounts on accommodation and provision of laptops¹

✓ **include** all current system students who have paid a fee or received an OFFA-countable bursary in 2008-09, even if they have subsequently withdrawn from their studies or did not complete the full year or programme of study

✓ **do not include:**

- ring-fenced funds which are to be carried forward. Part three of this return contains a separate table for reporting any reallocated funds
- any payments relating to previous academic years that have been made retrospectively – these can be recorded separately in part three of this return
- any payments previously reported to OFFA in prior monitoring returns – you should only count expenditure in the year in which the benefit was received
- expenditure on bursaries and scholarships for students above a household income of £49,305 who are not from an under-represented group
- expenditure that is not paid directly to students as an award with a financial benefit, for example expenditure on the overall improvement of services for students and broader retention measures
- Access to Learning Fund payments; this funding is received by all institutions from the Government and does not form part of any access agreement
- expenditure on historic bursaries and scholarships that were well established before the introduction of variable fees and which are not funded through additional fee income
- expenditure to students not covered under the 2004 Higher Education Act, such as part-time courses and courses provided under NHS contracts – for example, nursing, midwifery, allied health professions and medicine (year five onwards).

¹ Note that some awards, such as laptops, are one-off payments. You should therefore ensure that these are only recorded once in your monitoring returns and are not double counted each year. For example, a laptop given to an eligible student in 2007-08, and recorded in your 2007-08 monitoring return, should not be recorded again in 2008-09.

Tables 3c and 3d

Tables 3c and 3d show your expenditure on bursaries and scholarships and the proportion of directly-funded HE students in receipt of bursaries and scholarships, as a proportion of additional fee income. These tables calculate automatically, using the data you have provided in tables 3a and 3b. All you need to do is check that the figures shown are in line with your expectations. We will use the data from these tables in our monitoring report.

Part Two: Bursary take-up and bursary awareness activities

You must provide your institution's bursary take-up rate for those directly-funded UK-domiciled students who are eligible for a mandatory minimum bursary. These are UK-domiciled students who pay a fee above £2,835 and are eligible for a full maintenance grant.

All institutions with a 2008-09 bursary take-up or 'consent to share' rate below 95 per cent must tell us what steps they took, particularly during the academic year, to make eligible students aware of their entitlement to financial support, and the outcomes of these efforts.

Table 4

Institutional bursary take-up rates

Action

35. This depends on whether your institution subscribes to HEBSS:

- if your institution subscribes to HEBSS (full administration service and information-only), you do not need to fill in Table 4 unless your own data on the number of bursaries you have paid out is materially inconsistent with the 'consent to share' figures provided by HEBSS. We will give you SLC 'consent to share' data for your institution, based on the proportion of directly-funded students entitled to full state support where both the student and their parent/sponsor have consented
- if your institution does not subscribe to HEBSS, you must provide your estimated bursary take-up rate – that is, the number of bursary holders compared to the estimated number of eligible students. Where appropriate, please also give us a brief commentary on the extent to which your bursary take-up rate varies across different cohorts, and any other insights into bursary take-up at your institution.

Explanatory notes for Table 4

36. Our first round of monitoring highlighted that the failure of some students (and/or their parents/carers) to consent to share their financial

information was a significant problem for a number of institutions, resulting in lower than expected bursary take-up. Since then, institutions have made considerable progress in encouraging eligible students to apply for bursaries and as a result take-up has increased significantly, from 80 per cent in 2006-07 to 92 per cent in 2007-08. In addition, we understand from the Student Loans Company that 'consent to share' rates have increased to 96 per cent or more in 2008-09.

37. Our previous monitoring of access agreements has highlighted difficulties with establishing the precise number of students eligible to receive a bursary, because the SLC can only provide a snapshot after the end of the academic year of the number of students who have not consented to share their information. They cannot give personal data. In light of this, and given the small numbers involved at the margins, we are not asking institutions subscribing to HEBSS to provide bursary take-up data, unless they feel it necessary to do so. Our view is that the full reconciliation required to resolve the discrepancies between different datasets would cause an unnecessary and disproportionate burden for these institutions and we are therefore happy to live with a small margin of error.

38. **For institutions subscribing to HEBSS** (full administration and information only), the information we request from the Student Loans Company will be based on the number of UK-domiciled students paying a fee over £2,835 and who are entitled to a mandatory minimum bursary. We will request this information by cohort. This will help us to understand whether there are any continuing issues around the take-up of bursaries for 2006 and 2007 cohorts. For example, forthcoming OFFA-funded research led by

Claire Callender suggests that well over half of all students entering HE and their parents did not appreciate that bursaries were paid annually rather than in just the first year of study. Clearly, we want to make sure that this misunderstanding does not depress bursary take-up among students in their subsequent years of study.

39. **Institutions that do not subscribe to HEBSS** should use the criteria set out in paragraph 38 where possible – that is, showing take-up for students who are UK-domiciled, paying a fee over £2,835 and who are entitled to a mandatory minimum bursary. Please provide this information by cohort. You may wish to use SLC income distribution data as a broad indicator of the proportion or number of eligible students and compare this to the number of bursaries you have awarded to students on full state support. As previously stated, SLC income distribution data may not be directly comparable with your institution's own data on bursary payments or eligibility, so you should not necessarily expect them to be a precise match.

40. We expect to be in a position to send you 'consent to share' data and other SLC data in early November (well in advance of our deadline for receiving your monitoring return) to help you verify your own records.

Table 5

Bursary awareness activities

Action

41. You do not need to complete this table if your bursary take-up is 95% or above. If bursary take-up at your institution is below 95%, you need to tell us:

- what steps your institution has taken, particularly during the academic year, to make eligible students aware of their entitlement to financial support
- the outcomes of any awareness-raising activities.

42. You may also use this section to tell us about any other take-up measures relevant to your bursary scheme, regardless of domicile, fee charged or eligibility for a mandatory minimum bursary.

Explanatory notes for Table 5

43. If you have made all reasonable efforts to make students aware that they are eligible for a bursary, we will consider that you have met the commitments under your access agreement. However, if a significant number of eligible students have failed to take up their bursaries, you may feel it is appropriate to reallocate any unused funds to other widening access measures (as set out in paragraphs 54-55) and/or provide retrospective bursary awards.

Part Three: Additional outreach expenditure

You must provide:

- **actual expenditure on additional outreach activities covered in access agreements**
- **an explanation where the actual amount of expenditure on outreach is more than 20 per cent below your commitments or estimate set out in your access agreement**

Table 6

Expenditure on additional outreach activities and optional expenditure reporting

Action

44. Please tell us how much you have spent on additional outreach in 2008-09, together with the commitments that were set out in your 2008-09 access agreement. We will report on progress against these commitments in our monitoring outcomes report.

Explanatory notes for Table 6

45. We need to know whether your additional outreach expenditure is consistent with the commitments set out in your 2008-09 access agreement.

46. The expenditure you report on outreach should only relate to funds committed from additional fee income and other new and additional (post-2006) sources of funding. They should relate to **additional** outreach activities, or a continuation of existing activities where previous funding may have been reduced or discontinued.

47. We recognise that the outreach commitment in your access agreement may not have been a precise figure, but may have been a proportion, or a flexible amount, or a level of activity. You should describe your commitment in the same terms as set out in, or consistent with, your access agreement.

48. If your institution's access agreement does not make specific commitments on additional outreach activity but in practice you have incurred expenditure on outreach, you can report on this. However, this expenditure must be **additional** to activities or costs

that existed before the introduction of variable fees and should meet the definition on page 3. This can include relevant staffing and overhead costs.

49. We are aware that in many institutions outreach is embedded in the core of your activities, including marketing, and that it is difficult to separate out the money from additional fee income that is specifically used on additional outreach. If this is the case, you can compare year on year budgets for activities that fall within our definition of outreach and include any increase (above inflationary increases) as expenditure.

50. Where actual expenditure on outreach is more than 20 per cent below the estimate set out in your access agreement, please use Table 6c to explain this difference. For example, if you estimated that your expenditure on additional outreach would be £100,000, we would need an explanation from you if actual expenditure was below £80,000.

51. Some institutions set out detailed outreach plans in their access agreements and we recognise that actual expenditure may fluctuate depending on a variety of factors. We are interested in general progress and knowing that outreach commitments have been broadly met. Your explanation should focus on the broad reasons for any difference in the levels of activity – you don't need to give us detailed information.

52. We are asking for an explanation of changes in outreach expenditure based on actual amounts rather than the proportion of additional fee income. This is because generally outreach expenditure will be a fixed budget for specific activities with a less obvious link to additional fee income. However, in some cases, a reduction in financial commitment to additional outreach may be justified. For example, it may be justified if your additional fee income was substantially less than forecast, or your additional outreach aims have been fully met but at a lower

cost. In this situation, you should set out the reasons for outreach budget reductions as part of your explanation and we will apply a test of reasonableness.

Table 7

Optional reporting

Action

53. Filling in Tables 7a and 7b is **optional** and does not form part of our assessment. If you wish, you can use Table 7a to show the administration costs associated with implementing your bursary scheme e.g. the cost of subscribing to HEBSS or additional staffing costs incurred administering bursary payments.

54. Similarly, you can use Table 7b to show details of any underspend that you have reallocated to other access measures or for retrospective bursary awards, either within the academic year or carried forward to future years. You may want to reallocate funds because, for example, significant numbers of eligible students have failed to claim their bursaries, or if you made an explicit commitment to spend a minimum proportion or amount in your access agreement and have not done so. If you have spent money reallocated from previous years, you should include brief details of what the money has or will be spent on.

Explanatory notes for Table 7

55. When access agreements were introduced, some institutions asked us for the opportunity to show how much it cost to run their bursary scheme to demonstrate that administering bursary schemes is not cost neutral. If you choose to fill in Table 7a, we will use the data we have as evidence for the Independent Review on fees and student support but will not publish it as part of our monitoring outcomes report.

56. If you choose to fill in Table 7b, we will include details of any reallocated funds that are countable by OFFA at an aggregated level in our monitoring outcomes report.

57. To avoid double-counting, please indicate if any of the figures you give in Table 7b have been included elsewhere in this return, for example, where underspend from bursaries in 2008-09 has been spent on additional outreach within the academic year and included in Table 6. In addition, please do not include amounts that were reported to us in the 2007-08 monitoring return.

58. Examples of what you might record in Table 7b include underspend reallocated to support outreach, stronger HEI-school links, other institutional widening participation projects or disability/hardship funds. Also, if you have increased the generosity or widened the eligibility for your bursary scheme for 2009-10 to adjust for shortfalls in expenditure, this should be highlighted here.

59. If you have an underspend and do not give us a figure showing how you have reallocated funds, we will assume that any difference in expenditure has been put into general budgets that are not countable by OFFA.

Table 8

Milestones and objectives

Action

60. You must submit a summary report on progress against the milestones set out in your access agreement. This update should only cover the milestones and objectives detailed within the milestones section of your access agreement covering 2008-09.

Explanatory notes for Table 8

61. There is no template for this report; this is because each institution sets its own milestones which makes it difficult to provide a standard template. However, you should:

- re-state each milestone as it exists in your 2008-09 access agreement (including any baseline and target figures)
- set out the current position, and
- provide any commentary as necessary.

62. In previous years, many institutions have given us this information in a table format, together with an explanatory summary statement. This has proved a helpful way of setting out the required information.

63. If you have subsequently updated some of your 2008-09 milestones in a more recent access agreement, please let us know this in your report. However, you will still need to report on your milestones for 2008-09. And, if you don't give us enough information to allow us to gauge your progress against the milestones set out in your access agreement, we reserve the right to ask you for more information.

64. We recognise that it is possible that you may meet all your financial commitments and outreach plans under your access agreement but not achieve your milestones. When we are analysing progress with milestones we will consider whether you have met your commitments and if there is a positive direction towards milestones. We will also take into account the position of the HE sector as a whole.

65. Where progress has been significantly less than expected, or there has been movement away from milestones, you should briefly explain what plans and strategies are in place to review the arrangements under your access agreement and what changes might be necessary in order to make progress. We may also wish to talk to you to gain a better understanding of the situation.

66. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to withdraw or alter milestones in your access agreement – for example, if a current milestone is not measurable, if you have devised a better method, or if data suggest that a milestone was either unrealistic or not stretching enough. If you wish to withdraw or alter a milestone you should articulate this clearly in your monitoring return and submit a revised access agreement with tracked changes².

² For further information on submitting a revised access agreement, visit www.offa.org.uk/universities-and-colleges/revising-your-access-agreement/

Table 9

Validating your monitoring return

Action

67. Your monitoring return must be validated and signed off by an appropriate senior manager. This could be the Principal, HE Manager or Finance Director.

Explanatory notes for Table 9

68. The purpose of the sign-off is to provide assurance that the information you provide has been validated independently from the person responsible for compiling the return. It is up to each institution to determine its own process for checking the accuracy of the information it provides. This could be through internal audit, or a report to the head of the institution, a governors group or a steering committee. All information is subject to audit and you should ensure that the way you validate your information meets your own internal audit requirements.

What happens once you have submitted your form

How we will assess your monitoring return

69. As soon as we receive your return, we will email you to confirm receipt. We will then start to assess your return. In doing this, we will look to see that you have broadly met your bursary and outreach commitments and, where you have not done so, that there is a reasonable explanation and/or appropriate review and re-adjustment of plans.

70. Where 'consent to share' or bursary take-up has been an issue we will consider what efforts you have made to raise student awareness of bursaries and improve take-up rates.

71. We will also look at the progress you have made towards your milestones. We are more concerned with trends over time than year-on-year indicators and will not penalise institutions for not meeting their milestones. However, if the trend indicated by central or institutional returns shows that your institution has made no progress or regressed, we will want to discuss this with you to understand the issues and investigate possible solutions.

72. Within this context, we may still wish to ask you about your return if, for example, some of the information or data:

- is unclear
- does not make sense from our knowledge of your access agreement and institution
- is inconsistent with centrally collected data.

We hope to have completed all assessments by March 2010 and to let you know the outcome of your assessment in April 2010.

We will collect and share some information centrally

73. In order to inform our monitoring, we will ask the SLC for information on the number of students from lower-income backgrounds at each institution. This is so we can monitor progress across the sector and identify any emerging patterns over time.

74. We will also ask UCAS for data on the numbers of applications and acceptances from different socio-economic classes across groups of institutions,

according to bursaries provided and type of institution. Again, this will allow us to monitor any sector trends.

75. We may share relevant information from access agreement returns with the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills – for example, information relating to widening participation strategic assessments.

We will publish the results of the monitoring process

76. We will publish a short report on the outcomes of our monitoring in May 2010. This report will focus on higher education institutions but will also include aggregate level data for further education colleges. This will include the proportions of fee income spent on bursaries and scholarships for lower-income students and the amount spent on additional outreach.

77. Individual level data for FECs will not be available in the report but will be available on request.

78. In addition, we will use the results of our monitoring to inform our annual report to Parliament and provide evidence for the Independent Review on the first three years of variable fee arrangements.

We may audit your monitoring return

79. We reserve the right to audit your monitoring return and the way you are implementing your access agreement but anticipate that we would only do so in exceptional circumstances. If, before taking this step, we identify significant concerns with delivery or progress towards milestones, we will invite you to discuss any emerging issues with us and, where necessary, ask you to provide further information.

How the Freedom of Information Act affects monitoring returns

80. OFFA is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which gives the public a right of access to any information we hold. We have a responsibility

to decide whether individual monitoring returns should be made disclosed on request, or treated as confidential. We can refuse to disclose information only in exceptional circumstances. This means individual monitoring returns are unlikely to be treated as confidential except in very particular circumstances. **Where you consider information in your return to be confidential, please extract the information and insert it into a separate annex, which we will treat as being potentially commercially sensitive. You should still refer to this information elsewhere in the monitoring return.** Where we consider it to be appropriate and practicable, we may seek your views before disclosing information in this annex. Further information about the FOI Act is available at www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk.

How to submit your return

81. Please submit your completed monitoring return template and your milestones report to the HEFCE extranet <https://extranet.hedata.ac.uk> by **18 December 2009**.

Late returns

82. Please note, it is a statutory obligation to report on progress with your access agreement and it is important to submit your return by the deadline. If your return is late we cannot guarantee that we will be able to include your data in the monitoring outcomes report we publish.

83. If your monitoring return needs to be approved at a meeting of your governing body or other relevant committee after the deadline of 18 December 2009 you can submit a draft electronic copy of your monitoring return with a request for a **limited** extension to the deadline for your final version.

Annex A

Access agreement monitoring return academic year 2008-09 – further education colleges

This annex is for reference only and is completed as an example. The template for you to complete is available on the HEFCE extranet at <https://extranet.hedata.ac.uk>.

(See paragraphs 7-8 of the monitoring guidance.)

Contact details for person compiling the monitoring return:

Institution

Name

Post

Telephone

E-mail

Part One – Additional fee income and bursary expenditure

Notes

Report only on directly-funded higher education provision – do not include indirectly funded HE.

Definitions of cohorts, current system students, additional fee income, under-represented groups and outreach can be found in our monitoring guidance.

Starred (*) rows or columns indicate where information/data calculates automatically.

Table 1 – Additional fee income, by fee amount and cohort (paragraphs 17 to 20)

a) Fees charged at the maximum

			Number of directly-funded current system students (per fee charged)		
Fees charged at the maximum		Additional fee income per student*	2006-07 cohort	2007-08 cohort	2008-09 cohort
Degree	£3,145	£1,890	300	300	400
FD	£3,145	£1,890	0	30	50
HNC/HND	£3,145	£1,890	50	25	25
Courses with a standard fee of £625					
Sandwich course	£1,570	£945	30	30	30
Year abroad	£1,570	£945	10	12	14
Part-time ITT, less than 10 wks	£1,570	£945	0	20	20
Number of directly-funded students charged the maximum fee *			390	417	539
Additional fee income from directly-funded students charged the maximum fee *			£699,300	£729,540	£958,230

b) Fees charged above the standard fee and below the maximum fee

			Number of directly-funded current system students (per fee charged)		
Fees charged above the standard fee and below the maximum fee		Additional fee income per student*	2006-07 cohort	2007-08 cohort	2008-09 cohort
Degree	£2,500	£1,245	30	35	40
FD	£2,500	£1,245	0	100	150
HNC/HND	£2,000	£745	10	10	10
Courses with a standard fee of £625					
Sandwich course	£1,000	£375	5	7	9
Year abroad	£850	£225	25	20	30
Part-time ITT, less than 10 wks	£800	£175	0	5	5
Number of directly-funded students charged between the standard fee and the maximum fee *			70	177	244
Additional fee income from directly-funded students charged the maximum fee *			£52,300	£183,525	£255,000

c) Total additional fee income

(This table calculates automatically, using the data you have provided in tables 1a and 1b.)

	2006-07 cohort	2007-08 cohort	2008-09 cohort
Additional fee income – maximum fee * (From Table 1a)	£699,300	£729,540	£958,230
Additional fee income – between the standard fee and the maximum fee * (From Table 1b)	£52,300	£183,525	£255,000
Subtotal *	£751,600	£913,065	£1,213,230
Total additional fee income *			£2,877,895

If the formulae in Table 1 mean that the figures provided are not an accurate reflection of your total additional fee income, you should provide actual figures and a commentary here. Where figures are based on estimates, you should declare this with a brief explanation.

Table 2 – Number of directly-funded current system students, by fee amount and cohort (paragraphs 21 to 23)

a) Number of directly-funded students charged the standard fee or below

	2006-07 cohort	2007-08 cohort	2008-09 cohort	Total
Number of directly-funded students charged the standard fee or below	20	20	20	60

b) Number of directly-funded students paying different fee levels

(This table calculates automatically, using the data you have provided in table 1 and table 2a.)

	2006-07 cohort	2007-08 cohort	2008-09 cohort	Total
Students paying the maximum fee *	390	417	539	1,346
Students paying above the standard fee and below the maximum fee *	70	177	244	491
Total students paying a higher fee *	460	594	783	1,837
Students paying the standard fee or below *	20	20	20	60
Total students *	480	614	803	1,897

c) Proportion of directly-funded students paying different fee levels

(This table calculates automatically, using the data you have provided in table 1 and table 2a.)

	2006-07 cohort %	2007-08 cohort %	2008-09 cohort %	Totals %
Students paying the maximum fee *	81.3	67.9	67.1	71.0
Students paying above the standard fee and below the maximum fee *	14.6	28.8	30.4	25.9
Students paying the standard fee or below *	4.2	3.3	2.5	3.2
Total *	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 3 – Bursaries and scholarships (paragraphs 24 to 34)

a) Expenditure on bursaries and scholarships

Income threshold	2006-07 cohort	2007-08 cohort	2008-09 cohort	Totals*
Students on full state support (1)	£180,000	£185,000	£200,000	£565,000
Students on partial state support, up to £39,305 (2)	£60,000	£70,000	£95,000	£225,000
Students with incomes between £39,306 to £49,305	£	£	£	£
Students from other under-represented groups	£	£	£	£
Totals *	£240,000	£255,000	£295,000	£790,000

Where figures are based on estimates, you should declare this with a brief explanation of your calculations.

b) Number of directly-funded students in receipt of bursaries and scholarships

Income threshold	2006-07 cohort	2007-08 cohort	2008-09 cohort	Totals*
Students on full state support (1)	180	185	200	565
Students on partial state support, up to £39,305 (2)	60	70	95	225
Students with incomes between £39,306 to £49,305	0	0	0	0
Students from other under-represented groups	0	0	0	0
Total countable students *	240	255	295	790
Total non-countable students *	220	339	488	1,047
Total number of students paying a higher fee from table 2b *	460	594	783	1,837

These rows reconcile with the total number of students paying a higher fee from table 2b

Where figures are based on estimates, you should declare this with a brief explanation of your calculations.

Notes

(1) Students on full state support: for 2006 and 2007 cohorts, you should provide information for students with a residual household income in 2008-09 of up to £18,360 and the 2008 cohort with a residual household income of up to £25,000

(2) Students on partial state support: for 2006 and 2007 cohorts, you should provide information for students with a residual household income in 2008-09 between £18,361 and £39,305. For the 2008 cohort this should relate to incomes between £25,001 and £39,305

c) Expenditure on bursaries and scholarships, as a proportion of additional fee income

(This table calculates automatically, using the data you have provided in tables 3a and 3b – you should check that the figures are in line with your expectations.)

Income threshold	2006-07 cohort %	2007-08 cohort %	2008-09 cohort %	Totals %
Students on full state support (1) *	23.9	20.3	16.5	19.6
Students on partial state support, up to £39,305 (2) *	8.0	7.7	7.8	7.8
Students with incomes between £39,306 to £49,305 *	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Students from other under-represented groups *	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Totals *	31.9	27.9	24.3	27.5

d) Proportion of directly-funded students in receipt of bursaries and scholarships

(This table calculates automatically, using the data you have provided in tables 3a and 3b – you should check that the figures are in line with your expectations.)

Income threshold	2006-07 cohort %	2007-08 cohort %	2008-09 cohort %	Totals %
Students on full state support (1) *	39.1	31.1	25.5	30.8
Students on partial state support, up to £39,305 (2) *	13.0	11.8	12.1	12.2
Students with incomes between £39,306 to £49,305 *	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Students from other under-represented groups *	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Totals *	52.2	42.9	37.7	43.0

Access agreement monitoring return academic year 2008-09

Part Two – Bursary take-up and bursary awareness activities

Table 4 – Institutional bursary take-up rates (paragraphs 35 to 40)

Please provide us with the following information:

a) your estimated bursary take-up rate – that is, the number of bursary holders compared to the estimated number of eligible directly-funded students

(Note: For institutions subscribing to HEBSS (full administration service and information-only) we will ask the SLC to provide 'consent to share' data, based on the proportion of directly-funded students entitled to full state support where both the student and their parent/sponsor have consented. You do not need to provide bursary take-up data, unless your own data on bursary awards delivered is inconsistent with the 'consent to share' figures provided by HEBSS)

b) where appropriate, a brief commentary on the extent to which your bursary take-up rate varies across different cohorts, and any other insights into the take-up of bursaries within your institution

Table 5 – Bursary awareness activities (paragraphs 41 to 43)

What steps did you take, particularly during the academic year, to ensure that eligible students were made aware of and took up their entitlement to a bursary? What were the outcomes of any awareness-raising activity?

You do not need to provide this information if your 'consent to share' or bursary take-up rate was 95 per cent or above for students entitled to full state support.

Access agreement monitoring return academic year 2008-09

Part Three – Additional outreach expenditure and reallocation of funds

Table 6 – Expenditure on additional outreach activities and optional expenditure reporting (paragraphs 44 to 52)

Please provide:

a) your actual expenditure on additional outreach expenditure in 2008-09 (£)

b) the amount that you committed to spend/estimated in your access agreement for 2008-09 (£)

c) an explanation where the actual amount of expenditure on additional outreach is more than 20 per cent below your commitments or estimate set out in your access agreement

Table 7 – Optional reporting (paragraphs 53 to 59)

a) Please provide details of administration costs associated with the implementation of bursary schemes, such as the cost of subscribing to HEBSS, or additional staffing costs (£)

e.g. Subscription to HEBSS – £x,000
Additional staffing (bursary administrator) – £x,000

b) Please provide details of any underspend that you have reallocated to other access measures or for retrospective bursary awards, either within the academic year or carried forward to future years. If you have spent money reallocated from previous years, you should include brief details of what the money has or will be spent on.

(N.B. To avoid double-counting, please indicate if any of these figures have been included in the expenditure reported elsewhere in this return.)

Amount (£)	Description of what the underspend was or will be used for
<hr/>	<hr/>

Table 8 – Milestones and objectives (paragraphs 60 to 66)

You must submit a summary report on progress against the milestones set out in your access agreements. Please submit as a separate Word document using the HEFCE extranet.

Table 9 – Validating your monitoring return (paragraphs 67 to 68)

In submitting this monitoring return you are confirming that all the information you have provided (both in the return and in your report on milestones) has been compiled in accordance with our guidance, subject to an independent internal validation process, and signed off and approved as correct.

Contact details for senior manager responsible for validating the monitoring return:

Name

Post

Telephone

E-mail

Signed

Office for Fair Access

Northavon House
Coldharbour Lane
BRISTOL

BS16 1QD

tel 0117 931 7171

fax 0117 931 7083

www.offa.org.uk